

EXTENSION SNAPSHOT

Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit

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Illinois Extension

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Conservation@Home inspires action across Central Illinois

University of Illinois Extension deepened its commitment to local conservation through a year of engaging, community-rooted [Conservation@Home](#) programming across Fulton, Mason, Peoria, and Tazewell counties. The initiative encouraged residents to take simple, meaningful steps toward creating healthier landscapes, starting at home.

The season began with a kick-off event hosted at [Pleasant Prairie Nursery](#). Staff and volunteers engaged with 35 participants who came to learn how native plants and thoughtful landscaping choices can support pollinators, reduce runoff, provide habitat, and restore ecological balance.

Ellen Denler, Extension Master Gardener, and [Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle](#), Extension horticulture educator, introduced the Conservation@Home program and shared why it matters for the local environment's health. Pleasant Prairie Nursery generously opened its native plant inventory to attendees, helping them take immediate action. Nine participants became Conservation@Home members that day, committing to conservation-minded changes in their yards.

Throughout the year, programs in local communities shared practical strategies and inspiring stories that highlighted the value of Conservation@Home. These sessions helped residents see how their yards are personal spaces and part of a larger ecological network.

In August, the [Conservation@Home Garden Tour](#) was a way for people to see yards with conservation-minded landscaping. Four Conservation@Home members in Tazewell County opened their yards to showcase native plants, rain gardens, and other sustainable features. Fifty-five people registered to attend, gaining ideas and encouragement from neighbors already using conservation practices in their yards.

The year wrapped up with the second annual [Native Seed Share](#), celebrating biodiversity and community connection. Participants exchanged locally adapted seeds to increase biodiversity in their yards while networking with like-minded individuals. The mushroom costume contest and potluck added to the fun of the evening.

Conservation@Home is rooted in education and action. Extension is helping build a more resilient and ecologically healthy landscape by connecting people to practical tools and local landscapes.



Photo by Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle | Illinois Extension

The Conservation@Home Garden Tour was one of the special events held this summer to inspire more people to incorporate thoughtful, conservation-minded landscape practices into their yards.

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