



Extension Connections Newsletter

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Holiday Hours: Our offices will be closed on Monday, January 19 for the Martin Luther King Day.

January Wellness: Focus on Circulation

Kristin Bogdonas, Illinois Extension food and nutrition educator

As we ring in the New Year, January offers an important reminder to take care of our circulation during the coldest months. Blood is the body's lifeline, delivering oxygen and nutrients to every organ, and winter can make that job a little harder. When temperatures drop, blood vessels naturally narrow to conserve heat, which can lead to cold hands and feet, slower circulation, and added strain on the heart. Reduced physical activity, dehydration, and heavier comfort foods can further affect how efficiently blood moves through the body.

For individuals managing conditions such as diabetes or heart disease, winter can be an especially important time to focus on supporting healthy blood flow. But everyone can benefit from simple habits that keep circulation strong:



- **Staying active throughout the day**—short walks, stretching, or chair exercises help keep blood moving.
- **Dressing in warm layers**, including gloves and thick socks, helps blood vessels stay open and maintain warmth.
- **Staying hydrated**, even when you don't feel thirsty, supports overall cardiovascular function.
- **Choosing nutrient-dense foods** like leafy greens, citrus fruits, salmon, and nuts can improve blood flow and reduce inflammation.

January is also recognized as National Blood Donor Month, a time to acknowledge the ongoing need for a stable blood supply. While donating blood is a personal choice, it remains an important community resource that supports patients recovering from accidents, undergoing surgery, receiving cancer treatments, or managing chronic conditions. Winter often brings seasonal illnesses and weather disruptions that reduce donor turnout, making awareness especially important this time of year.

This January, consider taking steps to support both your personal wellness and your community. By prioritizing healthy winter circulation and learning more about the role of blood donation, you can make a meaningful difference in your own health and the lives of others.

8 Dimensions of Wellness: Healthy Living Series

Wednesdays, January 7, 14, 21, 28 | Time: 1:00–3:00 PM

Butterworth Center | Deere-Wiman Carriage House | Moline, IL

Kick off the new year with intention and insight!

Join Illinois Extension educators and local experts to explore the 8 Dimensions of Wellness—key areas that contribute to a balanced, fulfilling life. Each week we'll dive into two dimensions through interactive sessions, hands-on activities, and thoughtful discussion.



What Are the 8 Dimensions of Wellness?

Physical, Spiritual, Environmental, Emotional, Intellectual, Vocational, Social, Financial.

These interconnected aspects of our lives influence overall well-being. By nurturing each dimension, we can create a more resilient, vibrant, and purpose-driven life. This series invites you to reflect on your current wellness, explore new strategies, and set meaningful goals for the year ahead.

Weekly Topics & Presenters

January 7 – Physical & Spiritual

• Physical Wellness

Tai Chi is effective for improving muscular strength and overall wellbeing. Learn about the health benefits and engage in a Tai Chi demonstration including a warm-up and cool down. *Presenter: Kristin Bogdonas, Illinois Extension Food and Nutrition Educator.*



• Spiritual Wellness

Explore indigenous spirituality and how it can guide personal growth, decision-making, and resilience through experiential practices. *Presenter: Kathleen Collins, Mental Health Specialist.*



January 14 – Environmental & Emotional

• Environmental Wellness

Our environment can have a profound impact on our health and wellbeing. Discover how a nature-inspired design in our homes, landscapes, and community can enhance our wellbeing, the environment, and lead to deeper connections. *Presenter: Emily Swihart, Illinois Extension Horticulture Educator.*



• Emotional Wellness

Explore simple, arts-based stress-reduction practices that support emotional balance for busy lives. No art experience needed; activities are designed to be low-pressure, calming, and restorative.



Presenter: Elaine Kaple, 4-H Metro Youth Educator.

January 21 – Intellectual & Vocational

• Intellectual Wellness



Researchers agree that intellectual challenge is beneficial throughout life. Learn about lifestyle factors that contribute to brain health, and strategies to enhance thinking. *Presenter: Kara Schweitzer, Illinois Extension Family Life Educator.*

• Vocational Wellness –



Learn how to adapt to vocational changes, build new skills, and explore continuing education opportunities. *Presenters: Kole Shuda & Olivia Gonzalez, Black Hawk College PaCE Department.*

January 28 – Social & Financial

• Social Wellness



Discover how social engagement supports brain health and emotional well-being. Learn about the aging brain and what you can do to keep your brain engaged. *Presenter: Tessa Hobbs-Curley, Illinois Extension Family Life Educator.*

• Financial Wellness



Learn about the rising threat of fraud and what it means for both individuals and financial institutions. Hear real cases, methods scammers use, and how they target customers. *Presenters: Amy Hood & Jennifer Kline, Blackhawk Bank & Trust.*

Pre-registration required.

Cost: \$10 per session or all 4 for \$35.

Includes: Light refreshments, a take-home self-assessment tool, and a wellness-related gift.

Sign up at: go.illinois.edu/8Dimensions2026

or call Illinois Extension in Milan, IL at (309) 756-9978.



Illinois Extension

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

University of Illinois Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment. If you need a reasonable accommodation to participate, contact us at uie-hmrs@illinois.edu



Community Tree Care Webinar Series

Fridays, Jan 13-Feb 17 | 9-11 AM | Online

Tree care isn't just for certified arborists—everyone can benefit from research-backed practices that keep our trees healthy. Healthy trees improve air quality, reduce stress, and enhance comfort in our neighborhoods. Join Illinois educators to gain practical skills and insights for supporting tree health in your local landscapes.

2026 Webinar Schedule | Fridays, 9-11 AM

Jan. 13 – Trees for Pollinators & Evergreen ID
Jan. 20 – Forest Health Updates & Fungal Mutualists
Jan. 27 – Construction Impacts & Urban Soils
Feb. 3 – Chainsaw Safety & Pruning Young Trees
Feb. 10 – Climate Change & Historic Pests
Feb. 17 – Tree Care After Planting & Branch Management

Cost: \$10 general access | \$50 with CEUs

Register Today go.illinois.edu/TreeCareSeries



Lessons for Living Webinars

Discover practical tools for a healthy life

Join Illinois Extension educators for free online sessions designed to empower adults of all ages with practical guidance for a fulfilling life.

Session Topics:

- **What's in My Food? Decoding Chemicals & Safety, Feb. 10 | 10 a.m.**
Learn to decode food labels, bust myths, and take control of your plate.
- **Gardening on a Budget, Apr. 14 | 10 a.m.**
Start a container garden that nourishes both body and wallet.
- **Fur Real Companionship, May 14 | 10 a.m.**
Explore the healing power of companionship—even if you can't care for a pet yourself.

Register: go.illinois.edu/lessonsforliving2026

Branching Out: A Botanical Workshop Series

Thurs. Jan 22, Feb 12, March 26, 1-3 pm, Milan

Led by Emily Swihart, Illinois Extension Horticulture Educator, and Tracy Jo Mulliken, Horticulture Coordinator, this series blends practical learning with creative take home projects included with your \$15 fee.

Cut Flowers 101: Grow & Arrange | Jan 22 | 1-3 PM

Discover the joy of homegrown bouquets. Learn how to cultivate a beautiful cut flower garden and gain skills in selecting, planting, and caring for species that combine into stunning arrangements. Then, create your own bouquet to take home.



Propagating Houseplants: Multiply Your Collection | Feb 12 | 1-3 PM

Expand your indoor garden! Learn simple propagation techniques to multiply your favorite houseplants. After the educational portion, practice propagation methods and take home plants you started yourself.

Seed Starting for Spring Success | March 26 | 1-3 PM

This beginner-friendly program covers the essentials of starting seeds at home. Learn how to select containers and soil, time your sowing, manage light, and troubleshoot common challenges. Leave with confidence—and your own seed starts ready for spring.

The cost is \$15 per session, or sign up for the series of three for \$40.

Register at: go.illinois.edu/Botanical





Nursery School: Lessons in Gardening

Sat. Feb 21, 2026, 8 am - 3 pm

Vibrant Arena, Moline, IL

Join University of Illinois Extension staff and Master Gardeners for a full day of inspiration, practical workshops, and community connection. Horticulture experts will lead workshops and share tips, pointers, ideas, and information everyone can use - from the novice to the most experienced gardener. Here's a look at the featured speakers and sessions:

Opening Keynote | 8:30–9:45 a.m.

Rebuilding Our Forests Amid Climate Challenges *Justin Vozzo, Forestry Specialist & ISA Certified Arborist* Justin will explore how Midwest urban forests are adapting to climate change and share innovative tools and strategies to strengthen resilience.

Chapter 1 Sessions | 10–11 a.m. (Choose one):

- **Soak it Up: Rain Gardens in the Home Landscape** *Emily Swihart, Horticulture Educator* Learn how rain gardens can manage stormwater while adding beauty to your yard.
- **Harvesting Happiness: Growing Fruit Trees at Home** *Dr. Elizabeth Wahle, Agriculture & Agribusiness Specialist* – Discover cultivar selection and pest management tips for apples, pears, and cherries.
- **Planting Herbs to Attract Pollinators** *Jennifer Fishburn, Horticulture Educator* Explore how culinary herbs can bring fragrance and pollinator activity to your garden.

Chapter 2 Sessions | 11:15 a.m.–12:15 p.m. (Choose one):

- **Reclaiming Runaway Landscape** *Chris Enroth, Horticulture Educator* Practical strategies for restoring overgrown, chaotic garden spaces.
- **Explore the Foods, Flavors, and Health Benefits of the Mediterranean Diet** *Kristin Bogdonas, Food and Nutrition Educator* – Taste samples and learn how to incorporate this celebrated eating style into daily life.
- **Support Biodiversity by Landscaping with Native Midwestern Shrubs** *Rob Liva, Ecological Land Management Consultant* – Discover how native shrubs enhance seasonal interest and provide habitat for pollinators and birds.

Lunch Buffet | 12:15–1:15 p.m. Enjoy a buffet featuring pulled pork or black bean burgers with warm sides — plus time to visit the vendor area and enter the giveaway drawing.

Closing Keynote | 1:15–2:30 p.m. Plants of Concern: 25 Years of Rare Plant Monitoring

Grant Fesseler, Coordinator, Plants of Concern Program – Grant will highlight the impact of this unique community science program, its partnerships, and how volunteers help protect Illinois' rare plants.

Registration Details – Save with early bird!

Early Bird Rate: \$60 — available through January 31, 2026
Standard Rate: \$70 — from February 1 to February 15, 2026

go.illinois.edu/NurserySchool2026

