



Rock Island County

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Henry-Stark County

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Mercer County

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Don't miss the Spring Series of Home Horticulture, Mondays in April! See page 5.

Supporting Your Gut Health: Small Steps, Big Impact

Kristin Bogdonas, Illinois Extension food and nutrition educator

Your gut health plays a vital role in digestion, immunity, and overall well-being. At the center of gut health is the microbiome, a community of beneficial bacteria that thrives when properly nourished and supported.

One of the most powerful ways to support your gut is through diet. Eating a variety of fiber-rich foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds helps feed beneficial bacteria and maintain balance. Yet most adults fall short of recommended fiber intake. Women should aim for about 25–28 grams of fiber daily, and men should aim for 30-38 grams. Variety is key. Try to include 30 or more plant-based foods each week which will help nourish the good bacteria in your gut.

Probiotics can also support gut health by helping restore balance when it's disrupted by illness, stress, or antibiotic use. Foods like yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut, and kombucha naturally contain beneficial bacteria, just look for “live active cultures” on the label. When selecting a probiotic supplement, look for the full strain name (such as *Lactobacillus rhamnosus* GG), the number of live organisms listed as colony-forming units (CFUs), and proper storage instructions. Choose reputable brands that ensure quality and potency. Probiotic benefits are strain-specific, so it's best to consult a healthcare provider for guidance.

Beyond diet, lifestyle habits matter. Regular physical activity, quality sleep, stress management, and avoiding smoking all help maintain a healthy gut. Limiting added sugars and artificial sweeteners may also prevent harmful bacteria from thriving.



When the gut becomes imbalanced—a condition known as dysbiosis—you may notice symptoms like bloating, fatigue, or digestive discomfort. If these persist, it's important to consult a healthcare provider or registered dietitian for guidance.

This week, take small steps to support your gut: eat more plants, move your body, manage stress, and prioritize rest. Over time, these habits can help create a healthier, more balanced gut.

Learn more about gut health: Attend Kristin's program: Nourish the Garden Within, April 9 at the Coal Valley library (details page 3) or at Spring Series on April 27 (details page 5).



Leaf it to the Library: Spring Horticulture Programs

Join Illinois Extension horticulture educator Emily Swihart for free gardening programs at local libraries and community centers this spring. Each date features two expert-led sessions on practical, research-based topics. Register through the hosting library for the sessions you'd like to attend.

Library Program Schedules:

April 9 – East Moline Public Library

Register: menagel@eastmolinelibrary.org | 309-755-9614

10 AM – Soak It Up: Raingardens in the Home Landscape Learn how rain gardens manage stormwater, how to assess site suitability, and key design and plant selection considerations.

11:30 AM – Landscape Design 101 Get an introduction to core design principles, common styles, and simple strategies for creating a functional, attractive landscape.

April 15 – Galva Senior Citizen Center

Register: galvalibrary@gmail.com | 309-932-2180

10 AM – Landscape Design 101 Get an introduction to core design principles, common styles, and simple strategies for creating a functional, attractive landscape.

11:30 AM – Soak It Up: Raingardens in the Home Landscape Discover how rain gardens work, what makes a site suitable, and how to choose plants that support effective stormwater management.

April 29 – Edwards River Library, Aledo

Register: edwardsriverlibrary@gmail.com | 309-582-2032

10 AM – Four Seasons of Unique Garden Tasks Learn essential seasonal tasks that support a healthy landscape, with guidance on planting, repotting, lawn care timing, and more.

11:30 AM – Flowers in the Home Garden Explore how to grow and care for cut-flower varieties and use simple “garden recipes” to plan beautiful bouquets.

April 30– Robert R. Jones Public Library, Coal Valley

Register: edwardsriverlibrary@gmail.com | 309-582-2032

10 AM – Landscape Design 101 Build your understanding of design principles and approaches for creating a cohesive, functional home landscape.

11:30 AM – Four Seasons of Unique Garden Tasks Review key seasonal tasks that keep your landscape thriving and get answers to common gardening questions.

Nutrition Programs at Local Libraries

*With Kristin Bogdonas
food and nutrition educator*



Illinois Extension is partnering with local libraries this spring to offer a series of practical, research-based nutrition programs led by Kristin Bogdonas, Food and Nutrition Educator. Each session explores a timely health topic and provides clear, actionable steps you can use at home. Register through the hosting library to attend.

Library Program Schedules:

Nourish the Garden Within April 9 • 6 PM Robert R. Jones Public Library, Coal Valley
Register: kfloyd@robertjoneslibrary.org | 309-799-3047

A thriving garden depends on healthy soil, sunlight, and care—and your gut works the same way. In this program, you'll explore how the gut microbiome influences digestion, immunity, and overall well-being. Kristin will highlight foods that help “feed” beneficial bacteria, including fiber-rich produce, fermented foods, and a diverse mix of plants. Participants will leave with practical strategies for building meals that support gut health and simple habits that make a meaningful difference over time.

Nourish Your Heart April 23 • 5:30–6:30 PM East Moline Public Library
Register: 309-755-9614 ext. 103

Heart disease remains the leading cause of death in the United States, yet many contributing risk factors can be reduced through everyday lifestyle choices. This session focuses on the role of nutrition in supporting cardiovascular health. Kristin will break down heart-healthy eating patterns, label-reading tips, and strategies for planning meals that are both nutritious and satisfying. Participants will gain tools to make informed food choices, shop with confidence, and take proactive steps toward protecting long-term heart health.

Introduction to the MIND Diet: Eating for Brain Health

Two locations and dates:

May 6 • 6 PM, Robert R. Jones Public Library, Coal Valley - Register: 309-799-3047

May 13 • 2 PM, Kewanee Public Library - Register: 309-852-4505

The MIND diet combines key elements of the Mediterranean and DASH diets to support cognitive function and reduce the risk of Alzheimer's disease. In this program, Kristin will explain the research behind the MIND diet and highlight the foods most strongly linked to brain health. Participants will learn how to build balanced meals, incorporate brain-supportive ingredients into everyday cooking, and use simple planning tools to make healthier choices easier. Recipes and practical examples help bring understanding of how small dietary changes can contribute to healthier aging.



Growing a Butterfly Garden: Illinois Butterflies Their Host Plants, Four Seasons Webinar Tues. April 7, 1:30-2:30 PM

Butterflies use a variety of plants for nectar, but often their caterpillars are more picky. Learn about the benefits of using native plants to attract more butterflies to yards and which ones will give the most bang for the ecological buck.

Presenter: *Jamie Viebach, horticulture educator,*
Register at go.illinois.edu/FourSeasons



Gardening on a Budget, Lessons for Living Webinar | Tues. April 14, 10 AM

Starting a container garden can benefit your budget and be a fruitful hobby that satisfies your taste buds. Learn about the start-up expenses for a container garden and plan your produce to supplement your budget.

Register here for [Gardening on a Budget](#)



The Memory of Tomorrow: Everyday Memory Slips Webinar | Wed. April 8, Noon

Why do we forget a medication, miss a call, or leave something behind—and when is it simply normal aging? Learn what brain science, including EEG research, reveals about “remembering to remember,” and take home practical, evidence-based strategies to support prospective memory in daily life.

Presented by Eliza Baby, University of Illinois PhD candidate in Speech and Hearing Sciences
Register for [The Memory of Tomorrow](#)



Veggie Visions: Unveiling New Flavors in 2026, Four Seasons Webinar Tues. May 12, 1:30-2:30 PM

Embark on a culinary adventure with the exciting lineup of new vegetables unveiled for the 2026 season. Learn about the unique characteristics, growing tips, and delectable uses of these fresh additions. Be among the first to discover the latest in vegetable gardening trends and get ready to transform kitchens with a harvest of vibrant and enticing produce.

Presenter: *Bruce Black, horticulture educator*
Register at go.illinois.edu/FourSeasons

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
Early requests are strongly encouraged.



Get gardening answers from a trusted source

Horticulture Helpline

Illinois Extension Master Gardeners are available **Wednesdays, 9 AM - Noon** in-person at **Illinois Extension, Milan** and by phone at **217-300-0240**

Submit your questions anytime at go.illinois.edu/AskTheMasterGardener

Spring Series of Home Horticulture



Mondays, April 13, 20, & 27
6–8 PM | Hauberg Estate
Carriage House | 1300 24 St,
Rock Island, IL

Grow your knowledge with Illinois Extension's annual spring horticulture series!

Explore hot topics in home gardening, landscaping, and wellness with expert Extension educators.

Sign up for the series or pick the weeks that work for you.

Cost | \$15 per evening | \$40 for all three | Light appetizers provided.

Location: Hauberg Carriage House | Doors open at 5:30 PM | Sessions run 6–8 PM

April 13

Good Bugs in the Garden

Ken Johnson, Horticulture Educator



Learn how to recognize the many beneficial insects in your garden and explore strategies to attract them. Many insects play vital roles such as pollinating plants, preying on harmful species, enriching soil, and keeping ecosystems in balance. Discover how these “good bugs” help gardens thrive and how you can invite them into your landscape.

Building Healthy Soil for Your Landscape

Chris Enroth, Horticulture Educator



Healthy soils are the foundation of a thriving landscape. Explore the science and the strategies behind building and maintaining soil that supports plant health. Chris will share strategies for testing and improving your soil with compost, cover crops, and sustainable practices.

April 20

Pollinator Pathways: Using the Illinois Pollinator Website to Guide Action

Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle, Horticulture Educator



Discover the world of Illinois pollinators and learn how to support them through gardening and conservation. Nicole will also introduce you to the Illinois Pollinator website, a statewide resource for pollinator identification, habitat creation, and citizen engagement.

Landscape Design with Natives: How to Avoid Growing a Jungle

Emily Swihart, Horticulture Educator



Home landscapes have long reflected residents' needs, often using non-native plants. As interest in native species grows, it's important to choose those that work well in home settings. Emily will cover design basics, selecting well-behaved native plants, and practical tips for creating native landscapes.

April 27

The Garden Within: Nourishing Your Gut for Better Health

Kristin Bogdonas, Food & Nutrition Educator



Just like a thriving garden needs the right soil, sun, and care, your gut depends on balance, nourishment, and variety to flourish. Learn how to “feed” your gut microbiome through foods rich in fiber, fermented favorites, and plant diversity. We'll dig into practical tips that support digestion, immunity, and overall wellness. Learn how to tend to your inner garden for lasting health.

Growing, Drying, and Using Fresh Herbs

Carol Longley, Illinois Extension Master Gardener, and Retired Dietitian



Herbs can enrich your cooking, support pollinators, and add fragrance and beauty to your garden. Explore techniques for cultivating, preserving, and enjoying herbs such as basil, lemon verbena, rosemary, thyme, lavender, and lemongrass. Get practical methods for drying and storing herbs so you can savor their flavors and uses year-round.

Sign up at:

go.illinois.edu/SpringSeries2026

Cost \$15 week or \$40 for all 3 weeks.



New location: Hauberg Carriage House!

4-H Spring Happenings



4-H Easter Egg Hunt, 10 AM, Sat., April 4, Rock Island County Fairgrounds

The Rock Island County 4-H Teen Federation is hosting an Easter egg hunt, fun games, and prizes at the fairgrounds in East Moline on April 4. Check-in begins at 10 a.m. in the Copeland Building, egg hunt starts at 10:30 a.m. 4-H members are welcome to bring a friend to join the fun.

[Sign up here](#)



Rooted in Service: 4-H Community Tree-Planting Day, Sat. April 11

4-H members, families, and community partners are coming together to plant trees and support local green spaces. Join one of the planting events for a meaningful way to give back.

Mercer County 4-H Tree Planting, 9 AM, AutoZone, Aledo [Sign up here](#)

Rock Island County 4-H Tree Planting, 9 AM, Moline Memorial Park [Sign up here](#)



Mercer County 4-H Fishing Club — Starts April 18 in Aledo

Learn fishing basics, practice new skills, and explore local ponds with guidance from volunteers. It starts with an information meeting Sat, April 18, followed by five fishing sessions held on Saturdays from 9 - 11 a.m., April 25 to May 23 at various ponds throughout Mercer County.

Register thru ZSuite under “2026 Mercer Fishing Club” at <https://4h.zsuite.org/events>.

The cost is \$10, plus the \$20 4-H enrollment fee for those not already enrolled.



Cookout to benefit Henry County 4-H, Friday, April 24, 11 AM–1 PM, Fareway, Geneseo

Grab lunch at Fareway and support Henry County 4-H! Bring friends, family, and co-workers for a fresh-off-the-grill menu featuring pork chop sandwiches, hamburgers, brat patties, pork patties, brats, hot dogs, chips, and drinks. We appreciate your support and hope to see you there.



4-H Parking Lot Party Sat, April 25, 10 AM–Noon, Illinois Extension, Milan

Kids ages 5–8 are invited to a morning of hands-on fun and learning. Enjoy a free petting zoo, explore a fire truck from the Blackhawk Fire Station, and visit activity stations including: Jelly Bean Engineering, Ribbon Dancer Bracelets, Elephant Toothpaste/Volcano, Quilt Squares, Monarchs on the Move, Animal Pelts, Face Painting, and a Healthy Snack Station.

Come for the fun—stay to discover the world of 4-H!

RSVP: go.illinois.edu/4-HParkingLotParty



Rock Island County 4-H Pork Chop Dinner

Thurs, April 30. 4–7 PM, Blackhawk Fire Station, Milan

Enjoy a delicious meal while supporting local 4-H programs. Choose a **\$10 Pork Chop Meal** or **\$5 Hot Dog Meal**, each served with chips, baked beans, applesauce, and dessert. Dine inside or use the convenient drive-thru for quick to-go orders. Whole pies and slices will also be available to support the 4-H Teen Federation. We hope to see you there.

