

VOL 3 ISSUE 3-June 2026

# ILLINOIS GREEN CONNECTIONS

Extension Master Volunteers' Newsletter  
Fulton, Mason, Peoria, and Tazewell Counties



## Summer

by Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle , Horticulture Educator

June is here, and life is bursting all around us. Gardens are waking up, ready to grow into the long, warm days ahead. We begin this season with National Pollinator Month, a reminder that even small actions can support the bees, butterflies, and other insects that keep our ecosystems thriving.

It's a wonderful time to be outside, whether you're gardening, hiking, or simply enjoying a quiet evening. We've planned many ways for you to connect with the natural world this summer, and we hope you'll join us.



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## Landscapes that support life: Replacing invasives with natives

by Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle, ILRiverHort

Many people recognize bush honeysuckles (*Lonicera maackii*, *L. tatarica*, etc.) and autumn olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*) as invasive species. Still, some lesser-known plants are also on Illinois' invasive species list. Invasive plants are the ones hiding in plain sight, including shrubs, grasses, and perennials that are planted in yards every year.

Here are five overlooked invasive plants and native alternatives that support pollinators, birds, and healthy ecosystems.

[READ MORE](#)



## Provide resources to pollinators in any space with container gardens

by Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle, ILRiverHort

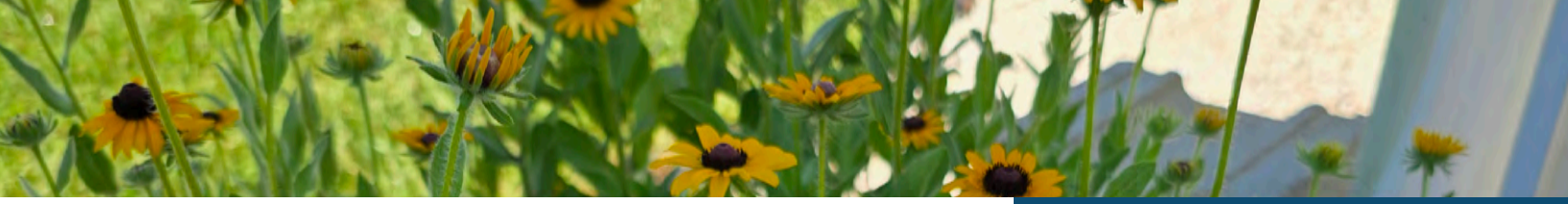
Supporting pollinators is more important than ever, and even the smallest spaces can help. Container gardens make it easy to offer nectar and pollen for bees, butterflies, and other pollinators.

From simple single-plant pots to layered, season-long displays, containers create flexible, beautiful habitat almost anywhere.

[READ MORE](#)

**Pollinator Month reminds us that every space matters. Whether it's a single container or a full landscape, our plant choices shape the ecosystems that support life.**





## Conservation@Home 2026 Kick-off Event

Join us on Saturday, **June 13 from 9:30 to 11 am** at the **Morton Public Library, 315 W Pershing St, Morton**, for the 2026 Conservation@Home West Central Illinois Kick-Off.

Enjoy native garden tours, plant identification, and an introduction to simple practices that support wildlife and reduce runoff. The first 15 new member applications will receive a free native plant to start their habitat journey.

[READ MORE](#)



## Conservation@Home Yard Tours

Explore real examples of environmentally friendly landscaping during the 2026 Conservation@Home Yard Tours. These self-guided tours feature certified yards across Fulton County, giving you the chance to see how local homeowners are reducing runoff, supporting wildlife, and creating beautiful, eco-minded spaces.

Tour at your own pace between **10 a.m. and 2 p.m. on Saturday, August 22**. Registered participants will receive the garden locations in advance.

[REGISTER](#)

## Illinois Pollinator Website

This Pollinator Month, explore tools and plant guides that make supporting pollinators easy in any Illinois landscape.

Visit the Illinois Pollinator website to find plant lists, habitat tips, and resources.

[go.illinois.edu/IllinoisPollinators](http://go.illinois.edu/IllinoisPollinators)





## Nature Journaling

Discover the joy of noticing more in nature through a Nature Journaling Series. No artistic or naturalist experience is needed, just curiosity. Together, we'll explore simple techniques for observation, reflection, and connection, then put them into practice with guided prompts outdoors. Bring a journal, your favorite writing tools, and an open mind.

[Follow Link to Register](#)

**July 29** - [Nature Journaling: Watercolor in Nature](#)

**October 10** - [Nature Journaling: Nature in Words](#)



## Contact Local Extension Office

### Phone

Fulton 309-547-3711

Mason 309-543-3308

Peoria 309-685-3140

Tazewell 309-347-6614

## Mindfulness Hikes

Slow down, step outside, and reconnect with the present moment. Our guided Mindfulness Hikes offer gentle walks that help you unwind, tune into your senses, and enjoy the natural world with intention. Each month features a new scenic location and simple practices to support presence, calm, and curiosity.

[Follow Link to Register](#)

**June 17** - [Mindfulness Hike at Sand Ridge State Forest](#)

**July 15** - [Mindfulness Hike at Emiquon Nature Preserve](#)

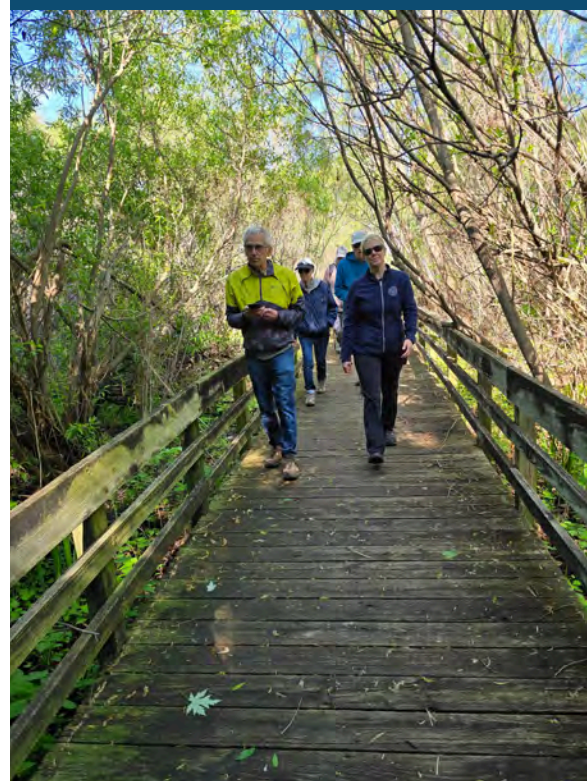
**July 25** - [Mindfulness Hike at Farmdale Reservoir](#)

**August 26** - [Mindfulness Hike at Spring Creek Preserve](#)

**September 16** - [Mindfulness Hike at Tawny Oaks Singing Woods](#)

**September 26** - [Mindfulness Hike at Dixon Mounds](#)

**October 14** - [Mindfulness Hike at Big Creek Park](#)





## Wellness in Nature Yoga

Reconnect with your body and the outdoors through gentle, accessible yoga designed for those who love spending time in nature. As the flyer notes, this series invites you to “breathe deeply, stretch gently, and reconnect with your body” while moving at your own pace.

### Follow Links to Register

#### Gentle Hatha Yoga

A slow, grounding practice focused on foundational poses, breathwork, and mindful movement to support balance and flexibility.

**July 24 • 9–10 AM :** [Havana Nature Center Pavilion](#)

#### Chair Yoga

A supportive option using a chair for seated and standing poses—ideal for older adults, gardeners, and anyone wanting a joint-friendly practice.

**September 17 • 9–10 AM —** [Jubilee College State Park, Butterfly Garden](#)



## little gardeners' day Down in the Dirt

Tuesday, July 21 | 9 to 11:30 am

Join us at the ICC Horticulture Land Lab for little gardeners’ day, a fun, hands-on morning designed for children and families to explore the natural world. This year’s theme, Down in the Dirt, features interactive stations on soil, seeds, plants, insects, composting, native plants, and more. Kids ages 2–10 with chaperones can dig, taste, move, and discover through play-based learning that brings the garden to life.

It’s a wonderful chance for families to connect with nature and enjoy outdoor learning together.

# 2026 Wellness in Nature

Programs that help you slow down, move with ease, and enjoy restorative time outdoors. Explore, notice, and reconnect with nature all season long.

Mindfulness Hikes  
Outdoor Yoga  
Nature Journaling



Illinois Extension | Fulton



## Floral Design Workshops

Join us for a hands-on series of Seasonal Floral Design Workshops led by Christine Wright, Hy-Vee Floral Manager. Each session highlights a new seasonal style, with all supplies provided and plenty of practical tips for creating beautiful arrangements at home. As the flyer notes, Christine “shares her tips and tricks for creating gorgeous floral designs for every season. Registration and prepayment are required to reserve your space.

### Follow Links to Register

**July 17** at 1 pm: Flowers and Fruit

**September 25** at 1 pm: Dried Flowers and Preserved Leaves

**December 4** at 1 pm: Holiday Centerpiece Grandeur



## Illinois Green Connections: Mycellium

Join us on **Thursday, July 9 at 5:30 p.m.** at the **Lillie M. Evans Library**, 207 N Walnut Ave, Princeville, for our next Illinois Green Connections gathering. Valerie Wolfe of Diverse Metamorphosis will lead a program on the hidden world of mycelium and its essential role in natural systems.

Please bring: Water bottle and a snack to share

[REGISTER](#)

## Illinois Green Connections Events

Green Connections brings together Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, and Conservation@Home members to learn, share ideas, and strengthen our stewardship of Illinois’ natural spaces.





## Chautauqua Bioblitz

Join us on Monday, June 15 from 10 a.m.–12 p.m. at Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge for a BioBlitz using iNaturalist.

We'll explore community science, practice documenting biodiversity, and enjoy a morning outdoors together.

Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge, 19031 E CR 2110N, Havana  
Bring: Notebook, pen, and your phone for iNaturalist.

[REGISTER](#)



Emily Hodapp USFWS public domain

## 2026 Naturalist Core Training

**Naturalist Core Education:** September 28–October 2, 2026  
The five-day Master Naturalist Training features field experiences and instruction in Illinois ecology, natural history, and conservation. Master Gardeners can take for an Advanced Ecology Certificate

Register at [go.illinois.edu/mn26](http://go.illinois.edu/mn26)

[REGISTER](#)

Mark you Calendars for  
Extension Master Naturalist  
2026 Continuing Education

June 15  
August 15  
September 15  
October 15  
November 15



# Upcoming Events

Mark your calendar

- **June 6 at 10 am:** Nature Journaling: Field Sketching & Close Observation, Quail Meadow, Jubilee Register: [go.illinois.edu/journal2](http://go.illinois.edu/journal2)
- **June 8-12 9 am to 4 pm:** Horticulture Core Education.
- **June 13, 9:30 to 11 am:** Conservation@Home 2026 Kick-Off, Morton Public Library, 315 W Pershing, Morton
- **June 15, 10am** - Bioblitz @ Chautauqua Natl. Wildlife Refuge 19031 E CR 2110N, Havana Register: [go.illinois.edu/MNJJune26](http://go.illinois.edu/MNJJune26)
- **June 17, 9am** - Mindfulness Hike - Sandridge State Forest 25779 E Cty Rd 2300 N, Forest City Register: [go.illinois.edu/MindfulnessSandRidge26](http://go.illinois.edu/MindfulnessSandRidge26)
- **June 22, 5:30pm** - Grow-A-Row - TCHD WIC Garden 21306 IL-9, Tremont
- **June 24, 5pm** - Tree ID Walk - Donovan Park, Peoria 5805 Knoxville Ave, Peoria
- **June 25 at 6 am:** Charter Coach Trip to Chicago Botanic Garden meet at University of Illinois Extension, Peoria Branch Office 4810 N Sheridan RD, Peoria.
- **July 9, 2026, 5:30 pm** Illinois Green Connections: Mycellium, Lillie M. Evans Library, 207 N Walnut Ave, Princeville Register: [go.illinois.edu/GCmycelium](http://go.illinois.edu/GCmycelium)
- **July 15, 9am** - Mindfulness Hike - Emiquon Nature Preserve 11304 North Prairie Road, Lewistown Register: [go.illinois.edu/MindfulnessEmiquon26](http://go.illinois.edu/MindfulnessEmiquon26)
- **July 17, 1pm** - Summer Floral Design - Flowers & Fruit 15411 IL-100, Lewistown Register: [go.illinois.edu/SummerFloral26](http://go.illinois.edu/SummerFloral26)
- **July 21, 9am to 11:30am** - little gardener's day - ICC East Peoria, Demonstration Garden
- **July 24, 9am** - Wellness in Nature - Gentle Hatha Yoga Havana River Park Register: [go.illinois.edu/MGMasonYoga26](http://go.illinois.edu/MGMasonYoga26)
- **July 25, 10am** - Mindfulness Hike - Farmdale Reservoir 810 W Bittersweet Rd, Washington Register: [go.illinois.edu/MindfulnessFarmdale26](http://go.illinois.edu/MindfulnessFarmdale26)
- **July 27, 5:30pm** - First Ladies Gardens - Ellen Denler 1505 Valle Vista Blvd, Pekin
- **July 29, 9am** - Nature Journaling: Watercolors, Emiquon Nature Preserve Register: [go.illinois.edu/journal3](http://go.illinois.edu/journal3)
- **July 29, 4:30 pm** - Summer Garden Visit - ICC East Peoria Demonstration Garden
- **August 8, 9am to 5pm** - Ignite Peoria! - Interactive STEM Peoria Civic Center
- **August 14, 6pm** - Fantastic Fungi - Movie & Book Night 15411 IL-100, Lewistown
- **August 22 10am to 2 pm:**, Conservation@Home Yard Tour, Register at [go.illinois.edu/CHTour26](http://go.illinois.edu/CHTour26)
- **August 24, 5:30pm** - Leaf Castings - Ella Maxwell 1505 Valle Vista Blvd, Pekin
- **August 26, 9am** - Mindfulness Hike - Spring Creek Preserve Lot off of Spring Creek Road Register: [go.illinois.edu/MindfulnessSpringCreek26](http://go.illinois.edu/MindfulnessSpringCreek26)
- **August 26, 5pm** - Summer Garden Tour- Jubilee Butterfly Garden, Jubilee State Park, Near Historic Site

## Details

Check online for more information about upcoming events

[Illinois Extension FMPT Events](#)

[U of I Extension ILRiverHort Facebook Page](#)





## Volunteer Opportunities

- **Pekin Giving Garden:** [Julie Dantone](#)
- **Morton Giving Garden:** [Pam Scott](#), Monday & Thursday am.
- **Tazewell County Health Department Garden:** [Trudy Yazujian](#), Tuesday & Friday, 8 am - noon.
- **Canton Giving Garden:** [Gayle Blodgett](#)
- **4-H Learning Garden:** [May Bach](#), Tuesday & Thursday 9 - 11 am.
- **Holy Family Church's St. Fiacre Gardens:** [Bob Reading](#), Wednesday & Saturday, 9 am - noon.
- **Rt 150 Garden:** [Polly Wagner](#), Tuesday from 7 - 9 am.
- **Kim St John Butterfly Habitat:** [Randy Huber](#) and [Louise Bassett](#), Wednesday from 8:30 - 11:30 am.
- **ICC Demonstration Garden:** [Jennifer Bass](#), Tuesday 9 - 11:30 am.
- **Morton Public Library:** [Janine Donahue](#) and [Sarah Smith](#)
- **Jubilee Butterfly Garden:** [Patricia Melaik](#), Thursday 9 - noon.
- **St. Anne's Garden of Hope:** [Mike Brooks](#), Please sign up on our [website](#).
- **Peoria Academy's Vegetable Garden:** [Laura Hertz](#), Wednesday 9 - 11 am.
- **Peoria Zoo Pollinator Garden:** [May Bach](#), Tuesday &/or Wednesday am.
- **Friendship House:** [Kendra Belk](#)
- **Native Plant Demonstration and Herb Gardens:** [Ainsley Olsen](#) and [Brittany Chambers](#). Every other Monday at 9 am.
- **Spring Creek Work Days:** [Mike McGraw](#), 2nd Wednesday of the month.
- **Elwood Work Days:** [Ed Coleman](#), 3rd Sunday & 3rd Wednesday of each month, 9 am - noon.
- **Donovan Park workday:** [David Pittman](#),
- **Rocky Glen Work Days:** [David Pittman](#)
- **Gardening Helpline:** [Anne Blindt](#) or [Debbie Lane](#)
- **Conservation@Home Evaluator:** [Ellen Denler](#) or [Karen Weigelt](#)
- **Speaker's Bureau:** [Ainsley Olsen](#) and [Fran Stroemer](#)
- **Newsletters:** [Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle](#) and [Jennifer Bass](#)

## Native Plant Demonstration and Herb Garden

Master Volunteers are invited to help care for the native demonstration beds and herb garden at the Fulton County Farm Bureau this season. These gardens support education, workshops, trainings, and community engagement, and your time makes a meaningful difference.

Workdays take place bi-weekly from 9–11 a.m. Volunteers will walk the gardens together to water, weed, monitor plant health, and complete seasonal tasks. .

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## Work Days

Check with project lead about specific dates, work days can change due to conflicts and weather issues.



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