

# EXTENSION SNAPSHOT

Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit

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Illinois Extension

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

## U of I Extension brings Conservation@Home program to West Central Illinois

The “typical” yard can easily be improved to help reduce water run-off, increase wildlife habitat, and improve the soil, which ultimately improves the environment. The [Conservation@Home](#) (C@H) program was created by [The Conservation Foundation](#) and thanks to a partnership with University of Illinois Extension Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit and [Fulton County Farm Bureau](#), local residents can now apply to become certified through this program.

Conservation@Home is the ultimate everyone-can-do-something program. By making some earth-conscious choices in a home landscape, such as replacing some turf grass with beautiful and drought-resistant native plants, installing a rain barrel or two, and reducing or eliminating chemical use, homeowners can enjoy environmental benefits such as reduced water usage, more birds and butterflies in their yard, and less lawn mowing.

The local Extension horticulture and natural resources team worked with The Conservation Foundation to introduce the program in late April. Since that time, a group of 18 [Extension Master Gardeners](#) and [Master Naturalists](#) have gone through C@H evaluator training and begun the process of working with local homeowners to have their yards become certified. C@H evaluators also provided information and best practices for creating an eco-friendly yard.

By joining the C@H property application process, members will receive access to continuing conservation education opportunities and a quarterly newsletter. Once their property meets all of the necessary requirements, they will receive a metal yard sign they can proudly display announcing their C@H certification and hopefully inspire their neighbors to make similar improvements to their yard.

On May 16, 2023, the second phase of the local C@H education program began as volunteers installed a native plant demonstration garden at the Fulton County Farm Bureau building.

“We are so excited to offer this native plant demonstration garden as an educational tool,” says Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle, Extension horticulture educator. “Visitors will be able to see native plants in a typical home landscape setting and hopefully be inspired to add some to their own yard. In addition, the Farm Bureau will be able to reap the benefits of reduced water runoff, low maintenance, and a beautiful landscape that attracts beautiful pollinators.”

This phase of the program was thanks to additional support from the Fulton County Farm Bureau, native plant donations from EMG Susan McCabe, soil donation and delivery from [BH Materials, Inc.](#), and Extension and Farm Bureau volunteers who labored to install it.



Photo by Anita Wilkinson | Illinois Extension

*Laura Hertz (far right), Extension Master Gardener, volunteered her yard as a training location for the first local group of Conservation@Home evaluators. The goal of the new program is to help home owners learn and implement easy, but impactful things they can do on their property to improve conservation efforts.*

### Conservation@Home

[extension.illinois.edu/fmpt/conservationhome](https://extension.illinois.edu/fmpt/conservationhome)

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