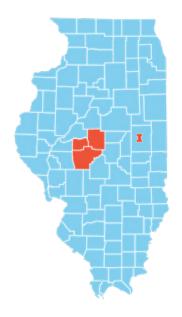




Terri Casey County Director



# Community partnerships are the key to meaningful impact In 2024, Illinois Extension made a significant connected with the Lincoln Land Comm

In 2024, Illinois Extension made a significant impact in Logan, Menard, and Sangamon counties by partnering with nearly 100 community organizations. These collaborative endeavors allowed us to more effectively leverage resources and deliver programs, reaching more people with a wider array of meaningful experiences.

Community partnerships have been crucial in providing experiential learning opportunities for our youth. For example, Menard County 4-H collaborated with many organizations to offer activities such as fishing, tree planting, and emergency preparedness. Additionally, over 1,000 students across the three counties participated in 4-H in-school programs, learning about mental and physical health, cooking, science, and career readiness through tailored lessons and activities.

A notable program developed through a partnership nurtured by Extension Horticulture staff was the two-day Summer Horticulture Institute, co-hosted by Illinois Extension and Lincoln Land Community College's Agriculture program. This event offered area elementary educators valuable strategies for teaching students about plants and soils, enhancing their ability to integrate natural sciences into their curriculum.

The SNAP-Ed program has expanded its reach, offering nutrition education and resources to families and partnering with schools, food pantries, and healthcare organizations to promote healthy choices. In Springfield, staff

connected with the Lincoln Land Community
College Child Development Center for a new
partnership focusing on nutrition programming
with the school's toddlers and their parents. In
Logan County, they started a new partnership
with the Birth to Five Center, delivering the Eat,
Play, Grow curriculum.

Other new partnerships have been developed through the efforts of two new Educators joining the staff. Commercial Agriculture Educator Reagen Tibbs has quickly connected with local producers and youth, sharing agricultural knowledge with area producers, as well as hosting educational workshops and conferences. Metro 4-H Youth Development Educator Michelle Norberto-Whipple has leveraged her extensive teaching experience to enhance youth development programs, including hands-on gardening education in cooperation with our Master Gardener volunteers. They partnered with Motherland Gardens Community Project to offer vegetable gardening education to summer camp participants at the Garvey-Tubman Cultural Arts & Research Center.

I wish to thank all of our community partners and dedicated Extension staff for the work they do each day. With ongoing community support and collaboration, Illinois Extension continues to make a positive difference in the lives of individuals and communities in Logan, Menard, and Sangamon counties.

Terri Casey County Director

Cover photo: Titus Sullivan from Menard County caught a fish during the Free Fishing Fun with 4-H event.

## Illinois Extension Makes an Impact

The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign's landgrant mission thrives each day through Extension's programs, resources, knowledge, and dedicated staff that are responsive to eight strategic priorities:



Community



Health



**Economy** 



**Partnerships** 



**Environment** 



**Technology and Discovery** 



**Food and Agriculture** 



**Workforce Excellence** 

2024 Engagement

Extension leaders, staff, and stakeholders define priorities that create meaningful, mission-centered outcomes throughout the state:

730 Communities Served 805K+
Program Attendees

9.7M+
Webpage Views

22.4M+
Social Media
Impressions

2.5M+
YouTube Impressions

547
Educational
Sessions/Week
(28K+ Annually)

Online Courses Accessed by 12K+ People 12,484
Local Government
Education
Webinar Reach

**1,840** 4-H Clubs

20,339

**67,917**Fair Exhibit:

**261,012**4-H Experiences

#### **Partnerships**

5,563
Program
Volunteers

266 Community Gardens 2,922 School and Community Partners

\$15,735,213
Value of Volunteer
Contributions

\$514,316 Value of Donated Produce Grown or Facilitated

**Resource Generation** 

\$4.7M+
External Funds
Secured for
SNAP-Ed Partners

#### **Community Connections in 2024**

Local Illinois Extension staff partnered with or provided services for the following organizations and schools in 2024:

Adams School	Harvard Park Elementary School	Lincoln Memorial Garden	Petersburg Veterinary Clinic
Adams Wildlife Sanctuary, Illinois Audubon Society	Hazel Dell Elementary School	Lincoln Memorial Hospital Market	PORTA Community School District
Addams Elementary School	Heartland Beef Alliance	Lincoln Public Library District	Prairie State Beekeepers
Association of Illinois Soil and	Henson Robinson Zoo	Lincoln YMCA	Project SCOPE
Water Conservation Districts	Holy Family Food Pantry	Lindsay Elementary School	Ridgely Elementary School
Athens National Honor Society  Athens High School	Illinois 4-H Youth Leadership Team	Logan County Fairgrounds	Rigney's School of Archery
Athens Junior High School	Illinois Department of	Marsh Elementary School	Salvation Army 360 Life Center of Lincoln
Athens Municipal Library	Innovation & Technology	McClernand Elementary School	Sandburg Elementary School
Birth to Five Illinois, Region 17	Illinois Department of Natural Resources	Menard County Emergency	Sangamon County Department
Blackhawk Elementary School	Illinois Environmental	Management Agency	of Public Health
Boys and Girls Club of Central	Protection Agency	Menard County Fairgrounds	Sangamon County Farm Bureau
Illinois	Illinois Farm Bureau	Menard County Fair Women's Club	Sangamon County Home and
Butler Elementary School	Illinois State Fairgrounds	Menard County Farm Bureau	Community Education
Cantrall Elementary School	Illinois State Police	Menard County Housing	Savannah Kolba Outdoors
Christ the King School	Illinois State University Center for Mathematics, Science &	Authority	Scoular Company
Compass for Kids	Technology	Menard County Sheriff's Department	Sherman Public Library District
Emden Grade School	Illiopolis Summer Recreation	Menard County Soil and Water	Sojourn Shelter & Services
Enos Elementary School	Kickapoo Creek Park, Logan County Parks and Trails	Conservation District	Southern View Elementary School
Fairview Elementary School	Foundation	Midwest Mission	Springfield Lincoln Land
Farmingdale Elementary School	Kiwanis Club of Lincoln	Motherland Gardens Community Project	Chapter, American Sewing Guild
Feitshans Elementary School	Lee Elementary School	Mt. Pulaski Grade School	Table of Life Ministries
Friends of the Sangamon Valley	Lefthanders Gun Club	New Berlin Elementary School	Village of Williamsville
Garvey-Tubman Cultural Arts & Research Center	Lincoln Community High School	New Salem Children's Center	West Lincoln-Broadwell Elementary School
Glenwood Middle School	Lincoln Daily News	Northwest Elementary School	Williamsville Public Library &
Green Prairie Animal Hospital,	Lincoln Home National Historic Site, National Park Service	NPR Illinois	Museum
San Jose	Lincoln Land Community	Oasis Senior Center	Zion Lutheran School
Greenview Booster Club	College Child Development Center	Petersburg Chamber of Commerce	
Greenview Elementary School		Petersburg Fire Department	
Hartsburg-Emden Junior/	Lincoln Land Community College Kreher Agriculture	Potorshurg Observer	

Petersburg Observer

Senior High School

Center



Youth in Menard County interacted with members of the Petersburg Fire Department while learning about disaster preparedness during the Zombie Apocalypse Funshop.



## New educator brings agriculture expertise to Logan County and beyond

Central Illinois has some of the most productive farmland in the world, and Illinois Extension is now better equipped to support local producers with the hiring of Reagen Tibbs to fill the new role of Commercial Agriculture Educator for Logan, Menard, and Sangamon counties. Tibbs has family farming roots in Logan County, which has allowed him to quickly make connections and start providing educational services.

Along with sending information to local news outlets, starting a blog, and providing expert consultations, Tibbs is sharing agriculture knowledge with local youth, including the agriculture classes at Lincoln Community High School.

Looking ahead, Tibbs will be using information gathered in a recent needs assessment to guide his work as he makes more connections with farmers and other stakeholders in Menard and Sangamon counties. Tibbs will also be utilizing the 17-acre Hartsburg Plot in Logan County to conduct local research trials and demonstrations.



## Community partnerships enable hands-on experiences for Menard County youth

Youth thrive when they can try new things through experiential learning, but these exciting and interactive programs are only possible when Illinois Extension staff can partner with community members who have the expertise and connections needed to create these experiences. Menard County 4-H Program Coordinator Stacie Skelton connected with many individuals and organizations to create memorable, fun, and educational experiences.

Youth in Menard County were able to try fishing by partnering with Savannah Kolba Outdoors; plant an oak tree savanna

by partnering with Greenview Elementary School, Greenview Booster Club, the Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and the Menard Soil and Water Conservation District; practice emergency preparation skills by partnering with the Petersburg Fire Department, the Menard County Emergency Management Agency, and the Sangamon County Department of Public Health; and use their investigation skills to solve a crime by partnering with Menard County Sheriff Mark Oller, the Illinois State Police, the Menard County Farm Bureau, and the Athens National Honor Society.

## Master Gardeners and 4-H staff team up to teach gardening in Sangamon County

Illinois Extension activities are growing in Sangamon County since the addition of Michelle Norberto-Whipple to the staff as the Metro 4-H Youth Development Educator. Norberto-Whipple possesses over 20 years of experience teaching diverse populations at the elementary level and in higher education and holds a doctoral degree in curriculum and instruction with a specialization in gifted studies.

One of Norberto-Whipple's first projects involved local Master Gardener volunteers and Horticulture Educator Jennifer Fishburn. The team partnered with Motherland Gardens Community Project to offer vegetable gardening education to summer camp participants at the Garvey-Tubman Cultural Arts & Research Center. Fifteen youth participated in the camp and received hands-on lessons in gardening.



Master Gardeners shared information about growing vegetables during a session at the Motherland Gardens Community Project.









## 4-H reaches youth through classroom programs

Over 1,000 students in schools across Logan, Menard, and Sangamon counties received 4-H experiences in 2024 through special in-school activities. Sessions were coordinated and taught by local 4-H Youth Development Educator Carissa Davis. Working in consultation with each classroom teacher, Davis wrote or adapted lessons that would enhance the teacher's lesson plans and meet the specific needs of the students.

Some students learned to better understand themselves and their own mental health through the Mindful Explorers program, while other students gained knowledge about their physical health through the Health Rocks program. Through the Cooking 101 and Kitchen Chemistry programs, students at several schools learned basic cooking skills, food safety, and nutritional information.

The Welcome to the Real World program prepared junior high students to start thinking about their career choices and the value of the money they will be earning and spending as adults. Young students had a variety of hands-on experiences through 4-H Cloverbud activities, including stomp rockets, bubbles, catapults, banana sushi, harmonicas, butter in a jar, and dinosaurs.

Some programs were a special one-time activity for the students, but many programs contained multiple sessions, allowing Davis to better connect with students and reinforce learning. The 4-H Cloverbud programs demonstrated meaningful growth in participants over multiple sessions. At



A student at New Salem Children's Center demonstrates her skills with chopsticks while eating banana sushi during a lesson about healthy foods.

New Salem Children's Center, during the six-session program, a second grader who initially exhibited shyness and hesitation became more confident and engaged with each activity. By the final session, this student actively participated, asked questions, and assisted peers with tasks, showing improved social skills and decision-making abilities.

Similarly, at Cantrall Elementary, returning participants showed enthusiasm by recognizing the four H's and recalling previous activities, indicating retention of subject knowledge and familiarity with the program. This enthusiasm encouraged them to embrace new challenges and interact positively with peers. The consistency and structure of the sessions supported growth in confidence, physical coordination, and teamwork, highlighting the program's impact on participant development.



### Youth gain skills and try new things through 4-H activities

4-H believes in "learning by doing," and local staff made handson experiences available to many youth through workshops, day camps, and fun activities held throughout the year. These programs were available to any youth to attend for free and not limited to only current 4-H club members.

4-H staff wrote and implemented a Leadership Adventure Camp, held on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, to help youth gain confidence in their ability to be leaders now and in the future. The 30 participants did a service activity of weaving plastic sleeping mats. They also took part in hands-on workshops led by peers in the Illinois 4-H Youth Leadership Team and learned how to improve their communication skills through an interactive presentation by two hosts from the local National Public Radio station.

The summer was filled with a series of day camps on topics that would appeal to youth of many ages and interests, including mental health, gardening, cooking, emergency preparedness, fishing, geology, cheerleading, and more. These interactive programs were designed and coordinated by local 4-H staff with assistance from many community volunteers who shared their particular expertise. Over 250 youth attended 4-H day camps throughout the summer.

Other special activities held in 2024 included a Rabbit and Poultry Workshop, during which youth learned about caring for and showing animals; a Crime and Spy Funshop, during which attendees discovered clues to solve a crime; a 4-H Family Cooking Night, in which families join via Zoom from their home kitchens to cook a meal with live step-by-step instructions; and several programs held at local libraries.



Youth expressed their creativity during Explore Arts and Cultures with 4-H day. They learned about Chinese shadow puppetry and then produced their own puppet plays by analyzing a story, making stick puppets, rehearing, and performing. Other activities that day included Huichol yarn painting and a drum circle.



**551**4-H Club Memberships



64
Adult 4-H Volunteers



**38** 4-H Clubs

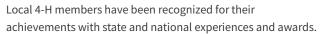


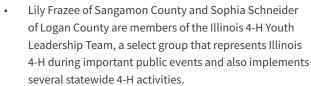
1,128 4-H Show Exhibits



**5,147**4-H Experiences (youth reached through special programs)

## Local 4-H youth and volunteers honored for their accomplishments





 Sophia Schneider and Alex Steffens of Logan County were selected as Illinois 4-H delegates for the National 4-H Congress, where they met 4-H members from across the county and developed their leadership skills.

 Members of the Middletown 4-H Club in Logan County were honored as Illinois State Club Award Winners in the

category of Community Service for their accomplishments during the previous year.

During the Illinois State Fair,
Windell Milner of Menard County
was inducted into the Illinois
4-H Hall of Fame in recognition
of 30 years of dedicated
service. Milner's knowledge
and experience have been
especially impactful in finding
ways to increase participation
in livestock projects and in



Windell Milner

teaching youth how to care for animals. He also serves as an effective and sincere spokesperson for local 4-H efforts.

It's for the kids. I want them to know how to take care of something and know what life is about. Windell Milner



Learn more about local 4-H activities extension.illinois.edu/LMS/4-H-youth-development





## Local educators learned hands-on strategies for teaching about plants and soils

Local elementary educators got their hands dirty while learning strategies for teaching about plants and soils during a two-day Summer Horticulture Institute hosted by Illinois Extension and Lincoln Land Community College's Agriculture program.

"You can't learn about plants and soils without making messes," according to LLCC Agronomy Professor Bill Harmon. While in Harmon's favorite room in LLCC's Kreher Agriculture Center, the plants and soils lab, attendees learned about soil composition and erosion through hands-on activities that they can replicate in their classrooms. They felt the differences in the texture of soils with higher sand, higher silt, and higher clay content. By filling bottles with soil and water, followed by vigorous shaking, participants saw the sedimentation of components found in different soil samples.

Other lessons covered the parts of a plant, types of plants, growing plants, trees, insects, and an interactive demonstration of how drones are used in agriculture. The expert presenters, including LLCC Professor Bill Harmon, LLCC Instructor Liz Conrady, and Illinois Extension Educator Jennifer Fishburn, also allowed ample time for attendees to ask questions and have open discussions about the practical uses of these lessons in their classrooms.

"We want to empower teachers to incorporate more science activities into their classrooms," said Fishburn. "If they feel more

comfortable with their own understanding of plant sciences, and if they have hands-on experiences with the lessons, they will be able to teach these important science concepts in a fun and engaging way."

By participating in this two-day institute, teachers earned professional development hours, which are required for maintaining their teaching credentials. Most funding was provided by the LLCC Kreher Agriculture Trust, with teachers paying a minimal amount to attend.

The institute was developed through a collaboration between Illinois Extension and LLCC's Agriculture program, which both strive to share knowledge with learners of all ages.

You can't learn about plants and soils without making messes.

LLCC Agronomy Professor Bill Harmon



Learn more about local horticulture activities extension.illinois.edu/LMS/horticulture



82

Master Gardener Volunteers



25

Master Naturalist Volunteers



540

**Expert Consultations with Master Gardeners** 



7

**Extension-Supported Gardens** 



115

Pounds of Produce Donated



102

**Educational Sessions** 



## Master Gardeners share time and skills by caring for community gardens

Local Master Gardener volunteers share their time, skills, and knowledge with the community through demonstration gardens. Each garden focuses on a different type of gardening, and the public is welcome to visit the gardens to look and learn. Along with gardens that showcase native plants, volunteers also care for gardens used for educational programs. The Children's Garden at Henson Robinson Zoo is the site of handson educational activities during special events. The Dean Home Heirloom Garden located at the Lincoln Home National Historic Site includes examples of plants and gardening techniques that would have been familiar to Abraham Lincoln. The Herb Garden, Idea Garden, and Lorraine DeSouza Perennial Garden at the Illinois State Fairgrounds are the location of educational programs throughout the year and a connection to visitors from across the state during the Illinois State Fair.



Master Gardener volunteers welcomed Extension Academy members to the Dean Home Heirloom Garden located at the Lincoln Home National Historic Site.

## Future beekeepers learn new skills through Extension classes

Through a series of six classes, future beekeepers and those interested in understanding the process of creating honey gained insight into the fascinating world of honey bees. Topics included the life of the bee, common pests and diseases, bee equipment, how to inspect a hive, and care of the colony. This series is a partnership with Prairie State Beekeepers and the Sangamon County Farm Bureau. Forty-six learners participated in the classes, including eight youths. Attendees could join classes in person or via Zoom.



The volunteer team at the Dean Home Heirloom Garden received a State Master Gardener Teamwork Award.

## Local volunteers honored for outstanding service

The volunteer team that cares for the Dean Home Heirloom Garden at the Lincoln Home National Historic Site was honored with a State Master Gardener Teamwork Award for their efforts in 2024. This garden is a special partnership with the National Park Service and serves the unique purpose of demonstrating historical gardening to the thousands of worldwide tourists who visit Lincoln's Home. The award recognizes Master Gardener projects that are especially impactful or innovative.



**Dennis Suttles** 



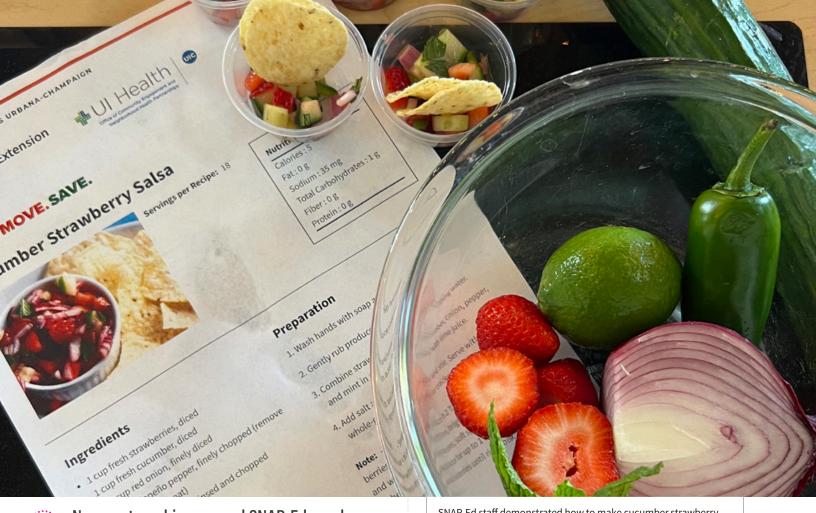
Don Wisniewski

Two local Master Gardeners were honored at the state level for their outstanding contributions in 2024. Dennis Suttles and Don Wisniewski received the State Outstanding Master Gardener Award, which is given to individuals who demonstrate leadership and have volunteered more than 180 hours.











#### New partnerships expand SNAP-Ed reach

Local SNAP-Ed Community Workers Amy Hallmark and Sarah Swaar continually seek out new partnerships and new ways to reach people with information and resources to help them make healthy choices. In Springfield, Hallmark connected with the Lincoln Land Community College Child Development Center for a new partnership focusing on nutrition programming with the school's toddlers and their parents.

In Logan County, Swaar started a new partnership with the Birth to Five Center, delivering the Eat, Play, Grow curriculum. The first collaborative event was a family night at which 50 kids and their grown-ups learned about how eating vegetables is important for our bodies. The kids also traced outlines of their bodies and colored and decorated them. Each child was able to participate in a physical activity session and snack time. The adults also received informative handouts and recipes to take home.



1/

Partnerships with K-12 Schools and Early Childhood Centers



16

Partnerships with Emergency Food Sites and Other Organizations



Learn more about local nutrition education activities extension.illinois.edu/LMS/nutrition-education

SNAP-Ed staff demonstrated how to make cucumber strawberry salsa at the Lincoln Memorial Hospital Market using fresh ingredients purchased at the market.

## More resources available to support work with healthcare organizations



SNAP-Ed educators across the state have seen an increase in requests for policy, system, and environment (PSE) work in healthcare settings, an environment that SNAP-Ed educators have not typically worked in until recently. In response to this growing need, local SNAP-Ed Educator Kayla Swaar worked with a statewide team to create a healthcare toolkit for guiding current and future educators in working with healthcare systems. This toolkit includes examples of PSE work that has been done or could be done, along with resources to share with partners. The team is reviewing toolkits from other state agencies to get a better understanding of what information is currently available and how to better fill the gaps. The hope in creating this toolkit is that Illinois Extension staff will have the tools necessary and readily available to help healthcare settings succeed in implementing PSE work throughout the state.



335

**Nutrition Education Classes** 



31

Policy, Systems, and/or Environmental Changes Adopted by Partner Organizations



#### 2024 Impact Summary



**34,507** Program Attendance



1,018 Educational Sessions



**171** Volunteers



5514-H Club Memberships

#### **Extension Council**

The Extension Council is authorized by the University of Illinois Board of Trustees to cooperate with Extension staff in planning, promoting, developing, implementing, evaluating, and financing programs designed to meet the needs, interests, and resources of local communities served.

#### **Council Members**

Zach Dixon	Charlotte Judd	Vera Small
Menard County	Logan County	Sangamon County
Daniel Fulton	William Kennett	Emma Wankel
Logan County	Logan County	Menard County
Kindall Helton	Samantha O'Neill	Jadyn Wheat
Logan County	Menard County	Sangamon County
Steve Holliday	Elise Ransdell	Ellie Wrage
Menard County	Sangamon County	Logan County
Clay Irwin Logan County	Sophia Schneider Logan County	

#### **County Board Appointees**

Keenan Leesman	Brad Miller	
Logan County	Sangamon County	
David Mendenhall	Ed Whitcomb, Jr.	
Sangamon County	Menard County	



540

**Expert Consultations with Master Gardeners** 



33

SNAP-Ed Partnerships with Schools, Emergency Food Sites, and Other Organizations

#### FY2024 Financial Report

University of Illinois Extension is funded through a combination of locally raised funds, county board allocations, and state and federal dollars, which are reinvested into the community through educational programming. This three-way funding partnership includes the State of Illinois, the United States Department of Agriculture, and the county boards of Logan, Menard, and Sangamon.

#### **REVENUES \$667,701**

Percent	Dollar	Source
51%	\$337,513	Local
41%	\$270,884	State
9%	\$59,304	Federal

#### **EXPENSES \$667,700**

Percent	Dollar	Source
61%	\$408,212	Personnel
39%	\$259,488	Non-Personnel

\*Fiscal data does not include information related to SNAP-Education in the three counties, as this program is funded by a federal grant from the USDA and administered centrally.

#### **STAFF**

Sherri Bishop 4-H Youth Development Program Coordinator

Melissa Bland Office Support Assistant

Kayla Breedwell Extra Help, Ag in the Classroom

Terri Casey County Director

Carissa Davis 4-H Youth Development Educator

Jennifer Fishburn Horticulture Educator Joey Fonseca-Islas Region 2 SNAP-Ed Specialist

Rachel Frost Extra Help, Ag in the Classroom

Amanda Gray Extra Help, Clerical

Amy Hallmark SNAP-Ed Community Worker

Barbara Hedden Extra Help, Clerical

Michelle Norberto-Whipple 4-H Youth Development Metro Educator Pam Schallhorn Region 2 Community & Economic Development Specialist

Shirley Schwing Office Support Associate

Rachel Skelton Extra Help, 4-H

Stacie Skelton 4-H Youth Development Program Coordinator

Shawna Stake-Charron Office Support Assistant Kayla Swaar SNAP-Ed Educator

Sarah Swaar SNAP-Ed Community Worker

Reagen Tibbs Commercial Agriculture Educator

Jane Willman Extra Help, Horticulture

Amy Zepp 4-H Youth Development Program Coordinator

#### OFFICE INFORMATION

#### **Logan County Extension**

980 N. Postville Dr. Lincoln, IL 62656 (217) 732-8289 Mon - Fri, 8 am - 4:30 pm closed noon - 1 pm

#### **Menard County Extension**

420 S. 7th St.
Petersburg, IL 62675
(217) 632-7491
Mon & Wed, 8 am - 4:30 pm closed noon - 1 pm

#### **Sangamon County Extension**

700 S. Airport Dr.
Springfield, IL 62707
(217) 782-4617
Mon - Fri, 8 am - 4:30 pm
closed noon - 1 pm

#### **ONLINE**



facebook.com/ExtensionLMS facebook.com/LMS.4H facebook.com/UIExtension.MasterGardener.MasterNaturalist



If you need a reasonable accommodation to participate, please contact the event coordinator. Early requests are strongly encouraged to allow sufficient time to meet your needs.

#### College of Agricultural, Consumer & Environmental Sciences

University of Illinois, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Local Extension Councils Cooperating. University of Illinois Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.

The Illinois Nutrition Education Programs are funded by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP).

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