



CONSERVATION@HOME

shaping private and community landscapes in a conservation-minded way



HELLO THERE, SPRING

“Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts. There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature - the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter.”
– Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*



Dearest Reader,

Welcome to Volume 3, Issue 1 of the Conversation@Home Newsletter. We hope that you all have had a restful winter. Of course, we are all excited to start getting our hands dirty and begin spending more time outdoors! Throughout this issue, we have included some tidbits to align with the season of renewal and growth. In this issue, you will find:

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Best Regards,

Your Extension Horticulture & Natural Resources Team

GROWING CONSERVATION@HOME

IN FULTON, MASON, PEORIA, AND TAZEWELL COUNTIES

As we anticipate our upcoming growing season, I wanted to take a moment to reflect upon the growth that you all have contributed to your communities. Whether your yard is certified with Conservation@Home or not, your interest in conservation is appreciated.

In the Spring of 2024, on a long walk through my hometown of Pekin I stumbled upon a gorgeous yard. While taking it all in, I noticed a sign that celebrated the green space. Once I got home, I consulted the internet - Conservation@Home, University of Illinois Extension. It would be fitting to say “Well, the rest is history.” In the Fall of 2024, I participated in the Master Gardener training. Earlier this year, I began the role of Horticulture Program Coordinator in University of Illinois Extension serving Fulton, Mason, Peoria, and Tazewell counties. Currently, the Conservation@Home Criteria checklist rests in my gardening notebook as I work towards my goal of certification. I hope to be one of many new Conservation@Home members in the coming year.

I am beyond grateful to be able to support horticulture programming as part of Illinois Extension. In particular, I am excited to promote Conservation@Home throughout our four counties and potentially expand to schools, workplaces, and/or community spaces. If you have any ideas or suggestions regarding the programming, I would value your input. Please feel welcome to reach out to me at rdriv2@illinois.edu.

Peace,
Rachel Driver



VIRGINIA BLUEBELLS

Mertensia virginica

These precious purple tubular flowers are visited by long-tongued bees, butterflies, and the occasional hummingbird. Their unique, light-green foliage and showy clusters of terminal flowers provide early spring beauty.

Virginia Bluebells is an herbaceous perennial that thrives in zone 3 to 8. This native perennial can grow to be between 1 to 2 feet tall and spreads about 1 to 2 feet.

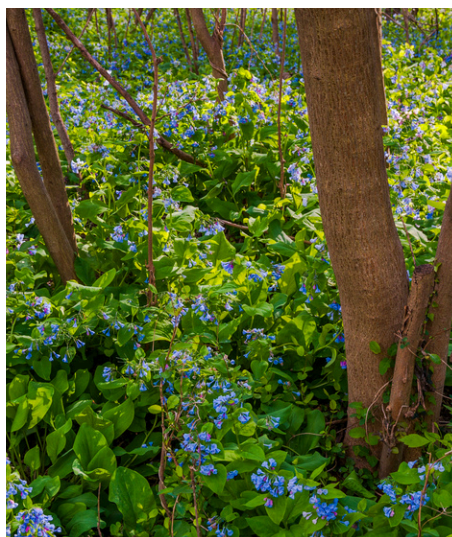
The purple and blue flowers of this spring ephemeral bloom in March, April, and May. As a true spring ephemeral, the foliage will die back by mid-summer. To avoid an empty space in the garden, make sure to plant with other summer blooming plants.

Mertensia virginica grows best in shade to partial shade. It is difficult to start from seed, so starting with a bareroot or plug may be best.

Over time, they will spread to form colonies. Typically, pests and diseases are not major issues.

For more information on Virginia Bluebells check out this article:

- [*A plant of many colors: Virginia Bluebell*](#)
by Ken Johnson



EVERYDAY ENVIRONMENT EXTENSION SERIES HIGHLIGHT



“Everyday Environment explores the intricate web of connections that bind us to the natural world. From water, air, energy, plants, and animals to the complex interactions within these elements, we aim to unravel the ties that link us to our environment. Through podcasts, blogs, webinars, and videos, you’ll gain a deeper understanding of and appreciation for these connections in Illinois and beyond.”

[READ MORE](#)

SUPPORTING POLLINATORS WITH NATIVE PLANTS



The [Illinois Pollinator Website](#) has a plant selector tool to help you choose the right native plant for the right place to support pollinators. Including both host plants and nectar resources support pollinators throughout their entire life cycle.



SPRING PLANT SALES

Local native plant sales are a great way to add diversity to your yard. Genetically diverse populations are more likely to have individuals that can survive as environmental changes occur.

- May 2 - 5, 10am to 5pm: Luthy Annual Plant Sale at Luthy Botanical Garden, Peoria
- May 5, 8 to 12pm: Spoon River Garden Club Annual Plant Sale at 245 North 4th Street, Canton
- May 10, 8am to 12pm: Master Gardener Plant Sale at the Peoria Metro Center

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **April 8, 2025: 4:30 pm**, Illinois Green Connections Event. Paul Resnick presents “A Little Patch of Prairie” and we will learn more about the Nature Discovery Preschool. *United Presbyterian Church 2400 W Northmoor Rd, Peoria*
- **May 6, 2025: 10 am**, Illinois Green Connections Event. Guy Sternburg will share information about “Trees in a Changing Climate” and tour the Starhill Arboretum. *River Bank Lodge, 522 S 6th St, Petersburg*
- **June 12, 2025: 7 am to 7 pm**, Bus Trip to Quad Cities to visit Quad Cities Botanical Garden, Van der Veer Conservatory, and more. Watch for registration details.
- **July 17, 2025: 1 pm**, Illinois Green Connections Event Gayle Blodgett will share information about “Energy Efficient Landscapes” and we will learn about the energy- efficient high school building. *Cuba High School 20325 N State Rte 97, Cuba*
- **September 16, 2025: noon**, Illinois Green Connections Event. Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle will share information about Creating a Bird-friendly Yard. *Grace United Methodist Church, 601 N. Fourth, Pekin*
- **November 13, 2025: 11 am**, 2025 Habitat Garden Book Study Zoom meeting. Details at facebook.com/ILRiverHort events
- **December 9, 2025: 5:30 pm**, Illinois Green Connections Event End of the Year Gathering. A time to enjoy each other’s company and celebrate all of the accomplishments and experiences of 2025 *Peoria Zoo, 2320 N Prospect Rd, Peoria*



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