

VOL.2 ISSUE 2· MAY 2025

# ILLINOIS GREEN CONNECTIONS

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



Illinois Extension  
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN



## May

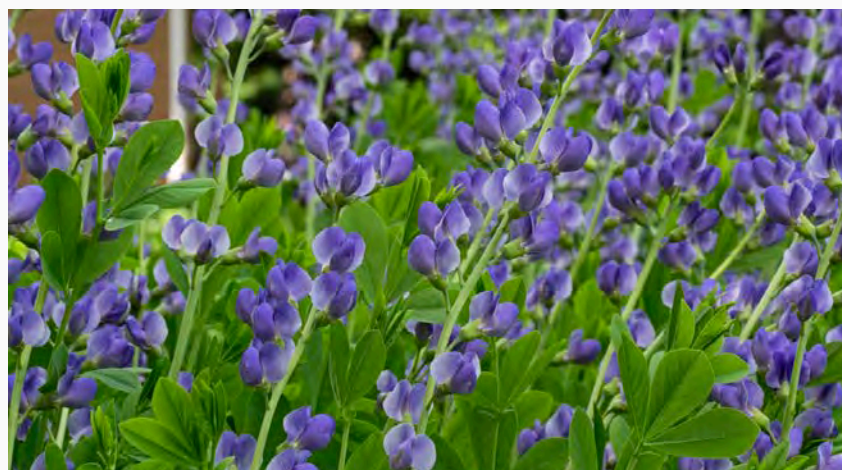
BY NICOLE FLOWERS-KIMMERLE

It's May! It feels like 2025 is racing towards summer. May is packed with activities on our calendars, in our gardens, and throughout natural spaces. This month brings numerous changes, including longer days, warmer weather, and an abundance of outdoor activities. It's a busy time of year!

### In This Edition

- Discover how to utilize small spaces to support pollinators
- Learn how to attract hummingbirds and honey bees to your yard
- Celebrate initiatives like Local OPAL and Golden Garden Days

Be sure to mark your calendar with upcoming events and plan to get involved in some of the local ongoing projects. We look forward to seeing you soon as we transition into summer!



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

BY NICOLE FLOWERS-KIMMERLE, [ILRIVERHORT BLOG](#)

Container gardens are one solution for growing pollen and nectar resources that pollinators need in small spaces. Containers offer many options, from simple, single-plant systems to multi-level and extended blooming displays.

[READ MORE](#)



## Welcoming hummingbirds to your yard

JENNIFER BASS, EMG & EMN, [ILRIVERHORT BLOG](#)

This past weekend I pointed out to my grandkids the first goldfinch of the season I spotted at my feeders. Bird watching is enjoyable for many of us I feed the birds all winter and am excited when I spot a different species. It is fun to also point out to my grandchildren and neighborhood children different birds and their calls. But one bird we especially enjoy seeing throughout the late spring to early fall and that is the hummingbird.

[READ MORE](#)

Supporting pollinators is crucial due to declining populations. Even small spaces can offer resources for bees, butterflies, and other pollinators.







## Celebrating 5 Years of Local OPAL website

BY JULIE ROBINSON, EMN, [ILRIVERHORT BLOG](#)

It is hard to believe that 2025 finds Local OPAL's (Local Outdoor Playing and Learning) website celebrating its fifth birthday. What began as a mere (and somewhat crazy) idea during 2018 Master Naturalist training has become a website with information about 663 areas in sixteen central Illinois counties and had over 26,000 visitors in 2024.

[READ MORE](#)



Photo by Anita Wilkinson

## Planting for honey bees

BY TRUDY YAZUJIAN, EMG, [ILRIVERHORT BLOG](#)

I used to tease that I was a public-school teacher to support my gardening habit. While there was a little truth to that, I loved being a teacher and had wanted to be a teacher since I was in 8th grade. But after all the lessons were planned and all the papers were graded, I headed outside to the garden. It was the garden that made my heart sing. As time passed, I retired from teaching and started daydreaming about other things. Gardening was always in my heart, but I began thinking of honey bees. I was fascinated with everything about them. Could I become a beekeeper?

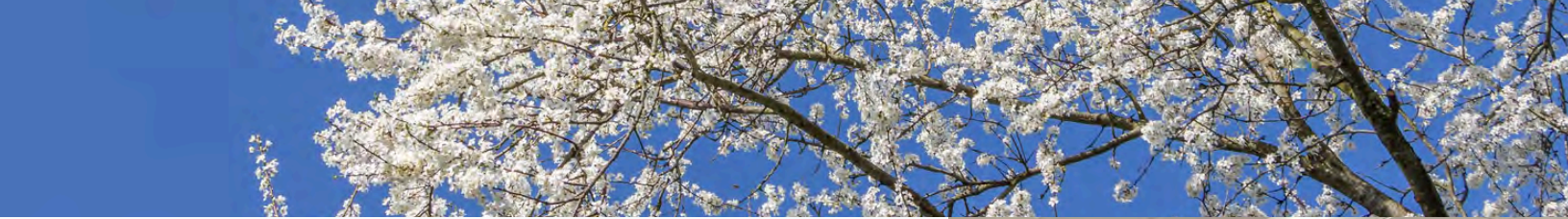
[READ MORE](#)

Local OPAL is a website a website with information about 663 areas in sixteen central Illinois counties and had over 26,000 visitors in 2024

JULIE ROBINSON







## Master Naturalists launch new Accessible Nature Exploration program

After years of leading active nature groups, Extension Master Naturalists Peggy West and Jen McDaniel suddenly found themselves unable to keep up with fast-paced groups. So they started a different kind of group that elevates the priorities of accessibility, inclusion, and healing, Accessible Nature Exploration or ACORN for short.

When people experience barriers such as mobility limitations, sensory and processing disorders, or phobias and overwhelmedness, it can limit their opportunities to engage with nature. With a passion for encouraging everyone to enjoy the outdoors, EMNs knew they could provide the leadership and expertise to offer a different approach to help people connect with nature. Since their first adventure in September 2024, ACORN adventures have happened in the Peoria and Central Illinois region almost every week.

[READ MORE](#)

University of Illinois Extension, Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit

### Gardening Helpline

Contact Master Gardeners with your gardening questions.

**uiemg-peoria@illinois.edu**

309-685-3140

[extension.illinois.edu/fmpt](https://extension.illinois.edu/fmpt)  
"Helping Others Learn to Grow"



**Illinois Extension**  
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN



Thank you to the  
planning committee,  
presenters, vendors,  
and attendees for a  
wonderful  
Gardeners' BIG Day!

[PHOTO ALBUM](#)





## Christine Belless' retirement ice cream social

Thank you to everyone who sent cards and came to the ice cream social to wish Christine well as she begins her retirement from Illinois Extension.

[PHOTO ALBUM](#)

## Volunteer appreciation week

Valuable is the work you do.  
 Outstanding is how you always come through.  
 Loyal, sincere and full of good cheer,  
 Untiring in your efforts throughout this year...  
 Notable are the contributions you make.  
 Trustworthy in every project you take.  
 Eager to reach your every goal.  
 Effective in the way you fulfill your role.  
 Ready with a smile like a shining star,  
 Special and wonderful - that's what you are.

[PHOTO ALBUM](#)

## Golden Garden Day: West Central Celebration

Grow your gardening knowledge and skills as we celebrate 50 years of Master Gardener impact through tours and connecting with fellow Master Gardeners! We will begin the day at OSF St Ann's Garden of Hope, break for lunch, and meet at Wildlife Prairie Park to celebrate the Extension Master Volunteer work that is done at the park.

[REGISTER](#)

Register Now







## Extension Master Naturalist Impact Report 2024

[EXTENSION.ILLINOIS.EDU/MN](https://extension.illinois.edu/mn)

In 2024, nearly 900 Master Naturalists put in more than 70,800 hours removing invasive species, monitoring the health of waterways, raising and releasing monarch butterflies, teaching youth about the environment, and investing in the future of our natural areas. Explore more examples of how Master Naturalists across Illinois are putting knowledge to work in the 2024 Impact Report.

[READ MORE](#)



## Extension Master Gardener Impact Report 2024

[EXTENSION.ILLINOIS.EDU/MG](https://extension.illinois.edu/mg)

In 2024, over 2,200 Master Gardeners contributed over 120,000 hours to the program's mission of "Helping Others Learn to Grow." These hours were dedicated to providing gardening education to the public, donating produce to local food pantries, and community garden projects that attract individuals and pollinators. Gain more insight into how Master Gardeners across Illinois positively impact the community in the 2024 Impact Report.

[READ MORE](#)

As we seek a new Master Naturalist Coordinator, please reach out to Karen Weigelt at [kweigelt@illinois.edu](mailto:kweigelt@illinois.edu) or Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle at [nflower2@illinois.edu](mailto:nflower2@illinois.edu) for any EMN-related inquiries.







## Explore Flexible Opportunities to Positively Impact Your Community

Are you seeking innovative ways to contribute to your community while maintaining a flexible schedule? We will be hosting training sessions for current team members as well as welcoming new participants. Keep an eye out for details regarding the following teams:

- Conservation@Home Evaluators
- Speaker's Bureau
- Garden Helpline



## Quad Cities Bus Trip

[go.illinois.edu/quadbustrip](https://go.illinois.edu/quadbustrip)

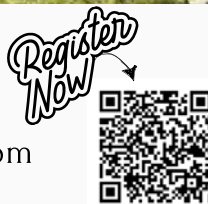
Thursday, June 12, 2025 7 am to 7:30 pm

Boarding begins at 6:30 am in Pekin

\$40 Includes transportation, snacks, and entrance fees to venues.

Enjoy the day with friends and visit a variety of beautiful spaces throughout the Quad Cities:

- Riverside Park
- Deere-Wiman House for a garden tour
- Vander Veer Botanical Park
- Quad Cities Botanical Gardens
- Green Thumbers/ Aroma Coffee & Cafe
  - Lunch provided at an additional fee



[REGISTER](#)

email: [uiemg-peoria@illinois.edu](mailto:uiemg-peoria@illinois.edu)

phone: contact local office

Fulton	309-547-3711
Mason	309-543-3308
Peoria	309-685-3140
Tazewell	309-347-6614







## Upcoming Events

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

- **May 16** at 10 am: Adult Garden Class at Forman Valley Library 404 S Harrison St, Manito
- **May 19** at 5:30 pm: Shakespeare Flowers with Suzanne Cook, 1505 Valle Vista Blvd, Pekin
- **May 20** at 1:30 pm: Four Seasons Gardening Webinar: Managing Common Squash and Pumpkin Pests. Register at [go.illinois.edu/FourSeasons](http://go.illinois.edu/FourSeasons)
- **May 21** from 9-11:30 am, Garden Volunteer Opportunity at Camp Big Sky 17185 McCord Road, Fairview.
- **June 12:** 7 am to 7 pm, Bus Trip to Quad Cities. Register at [go.illinois.edu/quadbustrip](http://go.illinois.edu/quadbustrip)
- **June 23** at 5:30 pm: Plant Bingo at Miller Center 551 S 14th St, Pekin
- **July 17:** 1 pm, Illinois Green Connections Event Gayle Blodgett will share information about "Energy Efficient Landscapes". Cuba High School 20325 N State Rte 97, Cuba
- **July 22:** 10 am to 3 pm, Golden Garden Day West Central Celebration. Meeting. OSF St Ann's Garden of Hope and Wildlife Prairie Park. Register at [go.illinois.edu/goldengardendaywestcentral](http://go.illinois.edu/goldengardendaywestcentral)
- **August 20** at 1:30 pm: Life Underground with May Bach, 4810 North Sheridan Rd Peoria
- **September 4-5:** State Master Gardener Conference Crowne Plaza, Springfield
- **September 16: noon**, Illinois Green Connections Event. Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle will present Creating a Bird-friendly Yard. Grace United Methodist Church, 601 N. Fourth, Pekin
- **September 29 to October 3**, 9 am to 3 pm: Extension Core Horticulture Education.
- **October 9-10:** Master Naturalist State Conference, Oglesby
- **October 13 to 17**, 9 am to 3 pm: Extension Naturalist Core Education.
- **November 13, 2025:** 11 am, 2025 Habitat Garden Book Study Zoom meeting. Details at [facebook.com/ILRiverHort](https://facebook.com/ILRiverHort) events
- **December 9, 2025:** 5:30 pm, Illinois Green Connections Event End of the Year Gathering. Peoria Zoo, 2320 N Prospect Rd, Peoria

## 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:** Megan Steier
- **Morton Giving Garden:** Pam Scott, Monday & Thursday am.
- **Tazewell County Health Department Garden:** Janine Donahue, Tuesday & Friday, 8 am - noon.
- **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.
- **Mission of Hope Community Garden:** Carol Cihla
- **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
- **Lettuce Share Romaine:** May Bach
- **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:** Steve Maxwell
- **Gardening Helpline:** Larry Stratton or Holly Teig
- **Conservation@Home Evaluator:** Ellen Denler or Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle
- **Speaker's Bureau:** Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle
- **Newsletters:** Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle and Jennifer Bass

## Project Spotlight Video: Morton Public Library

The Morton Public Library team has added and maintains native plant species to the existing landscape beds that lies between the parking lot and the street at the Morton Public Library. The educational display and new publications inside the library showcase the benefits of using native plants in home landscapes. The team has also worked to create a self-guided tree walk.

[WATCH](#)

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL, CONSUMER & ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES  
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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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