

VOL.2 ISSUE 1· MARCH 2025

ILLINOIS GREEN CONNECTIONS

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



Spring

BY NICOLE FLOWERS-KIMMERLE



We all eagerly anticipate the coming of Spring. We look forward to spending time outdoors, witnessing the emergence of new life in our gardens and favorite natural spots. The warmer weather and extended daylight hours are a welcome change. As early pollinators begin to emerge, it's important to consider planting spring bloomers to provide them with resources. Leaving leaves in flower beds and beneath trees not only offers insulation for budding plants against the temperature fluctuations of Central Illinois but also serves as a habitat for beneficial insects to overwinter. If you can hold off until we've experienced several days of 50 degrees Fahrenheit, you can safely remove the leaves and trim back perennial stems with less concern about disturbing pollinators and beneficial insects.



This issue:

Spring	1
A layered landscape, Spring tree tips	2
4-H Learning Garden utilizes hügelkultur, Habitat Garden Book Study for 2025	3
Introducing Rachel Driver, Gardeners BIG Day 2025	4
Christine is Retiring, Grow a Row 2025	5
Diving into Watershed Basics, Avian Flu effects on wildlife in IL	6
Cool Season Annuals, The Marvels of Spring Ephemerals	7
Upcoming Events	8
Volunteer Opportunities & Project Spotlight Video	9



A layered landscape provides space for wildlife all year

BY NICOLE FLOWERS-KIMMERLE, ILRIVERHORT BLOG

There are many ways to support pollinators and other wildlife in home landscapes, such as providing floral resources throughout the season, planting host plants, and planting native plants. In addition, consider creating a space for them to live out their life cycles by creating vertical layers in the landscape.

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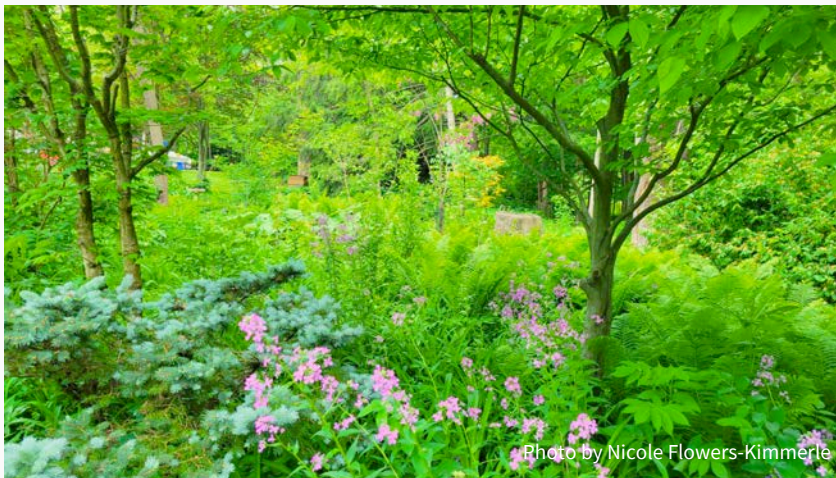


Photo by Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle

Root awakening: spring tree tips

SARAH VOGEL, GARDENERS CORNER

As winter fades and the first signs of spring emerge, it's time to give trees the care they need to thrive. Trees, like all living things, require attention and maintenance, especially as they transition from dormancy to the growing season. Help trees recover from winter damage, boost their health, and promote strong roots and lush leaves throughout the spring and beyond.

[READ MORE](#)

Soft Landings consist of diverse native plantings beneath keystone or regionally appropriate trees, offering essential shelter and habitat for various life cycle stages of moths, butterflies, and beneficial insects.

HEATHER HOLM



Photo by Gary Fultz on Unsplash



4-H Learning Garden Club utilizes hügelkultur bed

BY MAY BACH, EMG & EMN, [ILRIVERHORT BLOG](#)

In the spring of 2024, three Extension Master Gardeners created a hügelkultur bed inside the Wildlife Prairie Park 4-H Learning Garden.

Hügelkultur means hill garden. The most remarkable thing about a hügelkultur is you create this “hill” from simple left-over organic elements you might find in your trash pile or in the things other gardeners might haul to the landfill.

[READ MORE](#)



Photo by Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle

New reading series launched focused on habitat gardens

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

We're excited to announce a deep dive into considering conservation minded additions to the home landscape through a reading series. This journey will take us through six books, each offering unique perspectives on different aspects of habitat gardens.

[READ MORE](#)

Hügelkultur, or "hill garden," is a compost mound used as a base for seeding or nurturing transplants, similar to a raised bed or gardening area.

MAY BACH



Photo by Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle



Introducing Rachel Driver, Horticulture Program Coordinator

ILLINOIS EXTENSION STAFF DIRECTORY

We are happy to introduce you to Horticulture Program Coordinator, Rachel Driver. We are so excited to have her on the Master Volunteer team. Please take time to introduce yourself to her as you see her out and about at our upcoming events. You can find her staff bio by following the read more link below.

[READ MORE](#)



"Hello there, everyone! As the new Extension Horticulture Program Coordinator in the Fulton, Mason, Peoria and Tazewell unit, I am looking forward to working with and learning from you all!"

RACHEL DRIVER

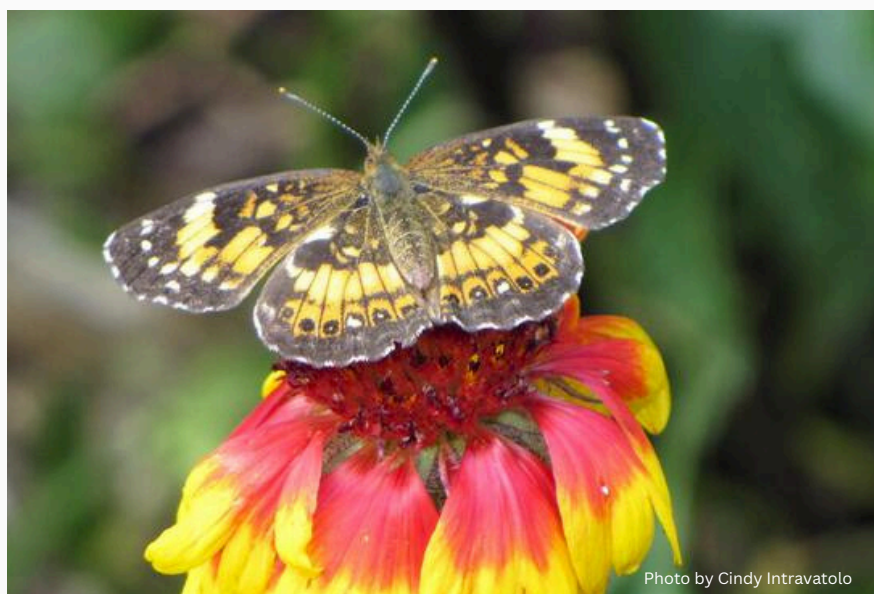


Photo by Cindy Intravato

Gardeners' BIG Day

APRIL 5, 2025

Join us for Gardeners' BIG Day at Spoon River College in Canton. Gardeners of all skill levels are invited to Gardeners' BIG Day. The day includes a keynote address, three educational sessions, snacks, door prizes, and vendors. Sessions filled on a first-come, first-served basis. Keynote speaker is our good friend, Master Naturalist, Master Gardener and Conservation@Home member Gayle Blodgett who will share her presentation titled "Butterfly Buffet for Native Butterflies." Register by March 24. We hope to see you on April 5, 2025.

[READ MORE](#)



Christine is retiring

Open House April 25, 2 - 4 p.m.

Best Wishes to Christine Belless as she looks to retire from Illinois Extension on April 30, 2025. Christine has been the Extension Master Naturalist Program Coordinator in Fulton, Mason, Peoria, and Tazewell counties since its start here in 2012. While we will surely miss her smiling face and positive energy, we hope that she enjoys the next chapter in her life. Join us on April 25, 2025 for a time to send her off with best wishes. 2 to 4 pm at the Illinois Extension office at 15411 N IL 100 Hwy, Lewistown. We would also love to shower her with cards. Send cards to 1505 Valle Vista Blvd, Pekin, IL , 61554.



Grow A Row 2025

The Grow A Row project starts in March, aiming to donate 26,000 pounds of fresh produce to food charities. Participants can donate to any preferred organization or designated locations like TCHD, OSF Garden of Hope or Illinois Extension offices. To register your garden, email growarow@tchd.net with the garden name, address, contact name, and phone number. A list of drop-off locations will be provided before harvest season.

Send celebratory cards for Christine to 1505 Valle Vista Blvd, Pekin, IL 61554.

We will present all the cards to her on April 25.





What watershed do you live in? Diving into watershed basics

LAURA KEEFER, ILLINOIS STATE HYDROLOGIST

When rain falls, the water doesn't just disappear; it has to go somewhere. Some of it soaks into the ground, replenishing groundwater, while the rest flows downhill over the land's surface. As water moves, it gathers into small rivulets, which join creeks, which then merge with larger rivers and lakes.

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How avian flu is affecting wildlife in Illinois

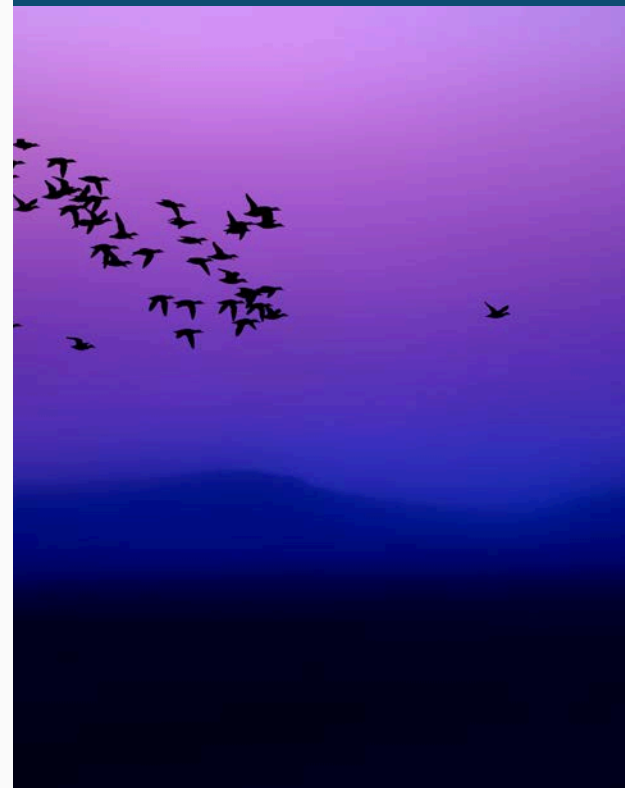
EMILY STEELE & JOY O'KEEFE, EVERYDAY ENVIRONMENT

The nationwide spread of highly pathogenic avian influenza, HPAI, also known as avian flu or bird flu, has many concerned about livestock, food safety, and public health. You can read more about HPAI in the article [What to know about avian flu in wild birds, poultry, and pets in Illinois](#), but we wanted to explore the science behind how this virus is affecting wildlife and what you can do.

[READ MORE](#)

Bird flu is not common in wild birds, but it is more likely to be found where there are large concentrations of birds. It mostly affects waterfowl — ducks, geese, swans — gulls, terns, and shorebirds.

JOY O'KEEFE





Plant cool-season annuals now!

BY BRITNAY HAAG, FLOWERS, FRUITS, & FRASS

Cool-season annuals thrive in cool weather, growing best in spring and fall, and will tolerate a light frost. They can be used to extend the growing season, add color to the garden before other plants even think about showing up for the season, and make beautiful companions for blooming spring bulbs in the landscape.

[READ MORE](#)



email: uiemg-peoria@illinois.edu

phone: [contact local office](#)

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

The Marvels of Spring Ephemerals

BY NANCY KREITH

Spring will be arriving soon, and with the new season comes brand new foliage followed by a burst of flowers. Gardeners poking around the yard may discover plants emerging here and there.

Some of the earliest of these plants are native spring ephemerals. Ephemerals, or short-lived plants, are often misunderstood and I refer to them as the mystery plants of the Eastern U.S. deciduous forest. That is because they seem to emerge suddenly and vanish almost as quickly as they came.

[READ MORE](#)





Upcoming Events

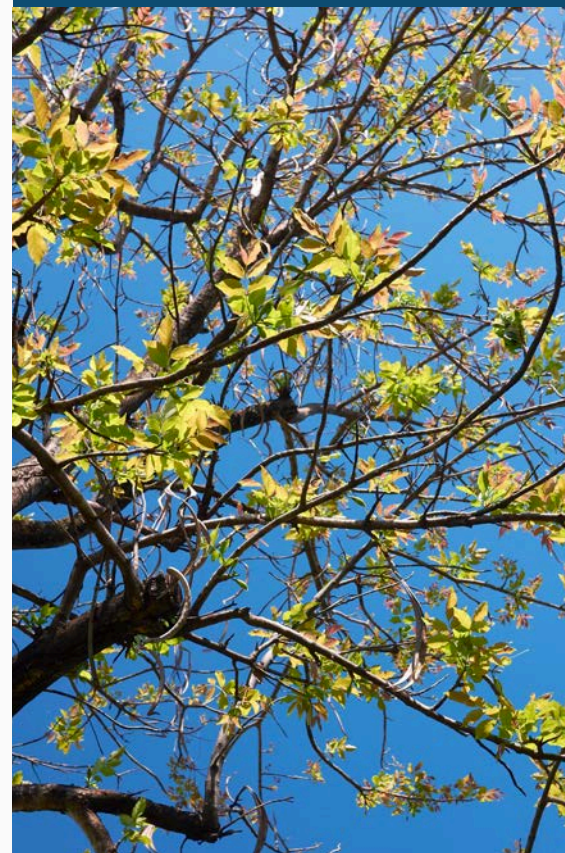
MARK YOUR CALENDAR

- **April 5, 2025:** 8:30 am to 12:30 pm, Gardeners' BIG Day, Spoon River College Conference Center in Engle Hall 23235 N. County Hwy 22, Canton - go.illinois.edu/GBD2025
- **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
- **May 10, 2025:** 8 am to noon, Plant Sale Peoria Metro Center.
- **May 22, 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
- **July 22, 2025:** 10 am to 3 pm, 50 years of MG Regional Meeting. OSF St Ann's Garden of Hope and Wildlife Prairie Park.
- **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

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 and Chris Schmidt
- **Newsletters:** Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle and Jennifer Bass

Project Spotlight Video: Gardening Helpline

The "Gardening Helpline" in the Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit handles hundreds of inquiries each year, supported by dedicated volunteers. Questions cover various topics, including turfgrass, annuals, perennials, and pests. The volunteers' commitment and the growing public interest in gardening help keep this valuable Extension service thriving.

WATCH

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. If you need a reasonable accommodation to attend, call 309-347-6614. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the US Department of Agriculture by the Director, Cooperative Extension Service, and University of Illinois.

Work Days

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



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