

VOL.2 ISSUE 3· JULY 2025

ILLINOIS GREEN CONNECTIONS

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



Illinois Extension
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN



Summer

BY NICOLE FLOWERS-KIMMERLE

July is here, and the summer season is in full swing. Take care when working outdoors on these beautiful days full of sunshine and heat. Sunscreen and water are essential to have on hand to protect your health. Make sure you plan your outdoor activities during the cooler parts of the day and take as many breaks as you need to prevent heat-related issues. Enjoy the beauty and bounty of July and August. Whether you are in the garden or enjoying nature, summer is a time to get outside and appreciate the season. We hope to see you out and about at events or volunteer opportunities as we make our way through the days of summer.



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Grow your own vegetables to benefit your health and the environment

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

There are many reasons to grow your vegetables, including health benefits, better flavor, and environmental protection. The health benefits are exponential with the combination of nutrients, sunshine, and exercise gained through vegetable gardening.

[READ MORE](#)



Spring Creek Preserve: A haven for spring ephemerals

MIKE MCGRAW, EMN, [ILRIVERHORT BLOG](#)

Even as a teenager, I loved the ephemeral wildflowers that grew in the woods near my home in Alton, Illinois – plants with wonderfully evocative names like Harbinger of Spring, Spring Beauty, Dutchman's Breeches, Bloodroot, Dog-Tooth Violet, Jacob's Ladder, and Jack-in-the-Pulpit. Each spring, the forest floor would be carpeted with thousands of these beautiful and interesting wildflowers.

[READ MORE](#)

[Spring Creek Preserve](#) is one place where you can still see a spectacular display of spring ephemerals, such as sharp-lobed hepatica and the delicate snow trillium.

MIKE MCGRAW





Spring and summer care of irises

BY MARGARET KELLY, EMG, [ILRIVERHORT BLOG](#)

July is the time to reflect on the garden and add, remove or change things around. Think about dividing irises, as tall bearded irises are divided every 4-5 year and standard dwarf irises are divided every 3-4 years as they multiply quicker. Plan to order new irises or attended an iris sale for new irises and ideas!

[READ MORE](#)



Photo by Anita Wilkinson

Until you can easily identify poison ivy, the adage “leaves of three, let it be,” are pretty good words to live by.

RICHARD HENTSCHEL

Beware of poison ivy's different forms

BY RICHARD HENTSCHEL, [OVER THE GARDEN FENCE](#)

Experienced gardeners know where poison ivy is likely to be found in the home landscape, and what it looks like in its various forms and stages of growth. That may not be the case for newer gardeners or those having moved from an area relatively free from poison ivy to a wooded area or neighborhood. Without knowing it is in the yard, it is all too easy to get the oils on your hands and clothing while clearing beds of otherwise harmless weeds.

[READ MORE](#)



Photo by Richard Hentschel



Little Gardener's Day - July 24 at ICC

July 24, 9 to 11 am. 1 College Dr, East Peoria, IL 61635
We are once again planning Little Gardener's Day at ICC! Our theme this year is Birds of Illinois, so we need both Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists to facilitate educational stations during the event. All curriculum and materials will be provided, but we do need assistance in leading these small groups.



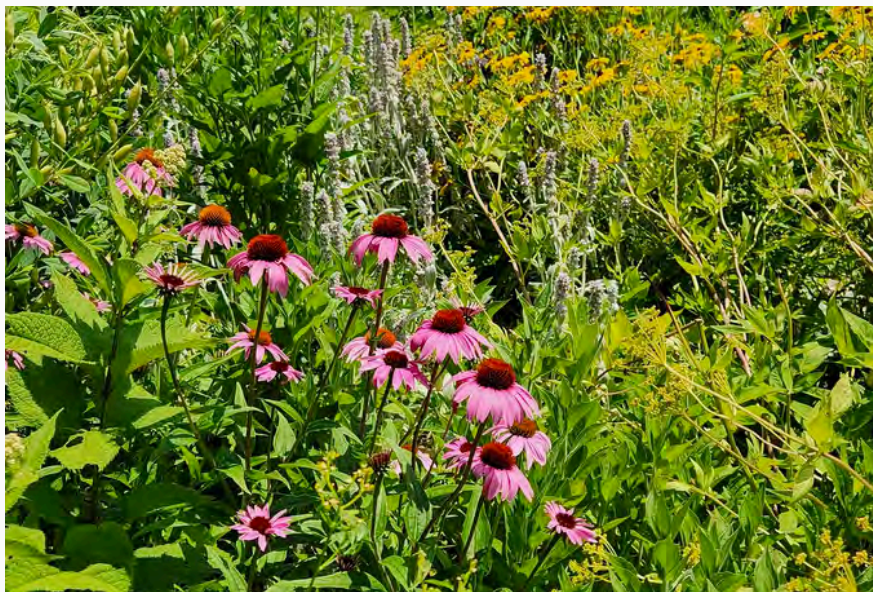
Ignite Peoria - August 9 at Civic Center

August 9, 9 am to 5 pm. Peoria Civic Center, 201 SW Jefferson Ave, Peoria

We have been invited to host an educational booth at Ignite Peoria this year! If you could please consider taking a 2-hour shift, we should be able to make quite an impact on our community in one day! They anticipate nearly 1,000 or more attendees, and we need all the help we can get with our leaf craft and sensory plants! Register here to let us know you can assist during the event: [Registrations | Illinois Extension](#)



**Check out these
volunteer
opportunities:
little Gardeners Day
or Ignite Peoria**



Conservation@Home Yard Tours

August 2, 10 am to 2 pm.

Conservation@Home Certified Yards in Tazewell County. Join us for a day of viewing beautiful gardens already certified by the Conservation@Home program. You will be able to view other approaches to conservation to plan for your own ecologically-minded landscape! This is a self-guided tour where you will be going to different C@H Certified yards at your own pace. All gardens on this tour are located in Tazewell County. Location addresses will be sent out to registered attendees.

Registration required for this free event:

[REGISTER](#)

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](#)

Mark your calendar
with these upcoming
events:

Conservation@Home
Yard Tours
and
Golden Garden Day:
West Central
Celebration





Explore Flexible Opportunities to Positively Impact Your Community

Are you seeking innovative ways to contribute to your community while maintaining a flexible schedule? Let us know if you would like to join one of the following teams, and we will help you get started.

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



Welcome Ainsley Olsen as Horticulture Program Coordinator

Ainsley Olsen joins Rachel Driver as an additional horticulture program coordinator with University of Illinois Extension as of May 2025, where she supports and recruits Master Gardener volunteers, coordinates programming, and brings garden-based education to the community.

Ainsley completed her Master Gardener training in 2021 and internship in 2022. With a deep passion for community and conservation, she quickly became involved in projects focused on food security and pollinator protection. As a Master Gardener she led the educational booth at the Peoria RiverFront Market, where the team of volunteers share gardening information, answers questions, and connects people with the program. A lover of native plants and sustainability, Ainsley is dedicated to making gardening more accessible and impactful for people and the planet.

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Tazewell	309-347-6614





Upcoming Events

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

- **July 17** at 1:30 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** from 10 am to 5 pm: Golden Garden Day West Central Celebration. Tours of OSF St Ann’s Garden of Hope and Wildlife Prairie Park. Register at go.illinois.edu/goldengardendaywestcentral
- **July 24** from 9 to 11:30 am: Little Gardener’s Day, ICC Gardens 1 College Dr, East Peoria.
- **August 2** from 10 am to 2 pm: Conservation@Home Certified Yards in Tazewell County. Register for this free event at extension.illinois.edu/events/2025-08-02-conservationhome-garden-tour
- **August 9** from 9 am to 5 pm: Ignite Peoria 201 SW Jefferson Ave, Peoria. Sign up to volunteer for a 2-hour shift at [Ignite Peoria Registration](#)
- **August 9** from 9 am to 4 pm. Kickapoo Creek Festival at [Sommer Park](#). Contact [Karen Weigelt](#) for details about this volunteer opportunity.
- **August 15** at 9 am. [Donovan Park](#) Guided Hike with MN Jill Meints. 5805 Knoxville Ave, Peoria
- **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** at noon: Illinois Green Connections Event. Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle will present Creating a Bird-Friendly Yard. Grace United Methodist Church, 601 N. Fourth, Pekin
- **September 19** from 9:30 to 11 am: Mindfulness Hike at Springdale Cemetery, 3014 N Prospect Rd, Peoria
- **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**: 11 am: 2025 Habitat Garden Book Study Zoom meeting. Details at facebook.com/ILRiverHort events
- **December 9** at 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](#)

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL, CONSUMER & ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

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Volunteer Opportunities

- **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**
- **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:** **Holly Teig**
- **Conservation@Home Evaluator:** **Ellen Denler** or **Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle**
- **Speaker's Bureau:** **Fran Stoemer** or **Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle**
- **Newsletters:** **Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle** and **Jennifer Bass**

Work Days

Check with project lead (click on name to email) about specific dates, work days can change due to conflicts and weather issues.



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Good Growing: Exploring Native Grasses

Explore native grasses and how to use them in our landscapes. Dive into how these grasses function in a prairie and how that translates to your yard, and get suggestions for what native grasses might work best to transform your landscape!

