

Madison-Monroe-St Clair Unit

Below the Canopy

For Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists



May
2023



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Elizabeth's Open House

Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, and a guest are invited to tour Elizabeth and Pete Wahle's garden on **May 24 from 4 to 7 p.m.** Come and see what is in bloom at her jungle. Their address is 269 Collinsville Street, Glen Carbon, IL. Bring bug spray, hat, and a chair if you wish to stay and visit. Bottled water and some refreshments will be provided. Contact Sarah at 618-344-4230 or ruth1@illinois.edu if you plan to attend.

Project Updates

Willoughby Farm, Collinsville

Volunteers are researching the use of biochar as a soil amendment. Potatoes have been planted in three beds; one bed using biochar, one using regular charcoal and the third planted using compost. Look for more updates throughout the growing season

The Gardens at SIUE, Edwardsville

The Gardens at SIUE was selected as 1 of the 10 best botanical gardens in the Mid west and South by AAA Travel Magazine. It is the only garden in Illinois that was mentioned. Thank you to the many Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists who volunteered at the project. Check out the article [here](#).

Garden Tour Info

Sign up sheets to assist at the gardens will be emailed out on Friday, May 12.

Gardens in Bloom—June 2 and 3 in O'Fallon/Shiloh

Donations are also needed for the Gardeners Market on Saturday June 3. We will resell garden tools, containers, yard art, book, and other garden related items. Donations can be delivered to the Extension office before May 26 or brought to the Gardeners Market at St. Michael's Church in O'Fallon on June 3 before 8 a.m. The Gardeners Market will also include a plant sale. Jumping worms are still a concern in Illinois. If you are going to divide plants, please following the [guidelines](#) to reduce the spread of jumping worms. Proceeds from the event benefit St. Clair Foundation.

Madison County Garden Tour—June 23 and 24 in Maryville/Glen Carbon.

The event includes a container raffle. Container donations are appreciated from projects or individuals. We welcome a variety of container themes. Previous years have included sun, shade, succulents, and pollinator friendly. Please contact Sarah if you will contribute a container. Proceeds from the event benefit Madison Foundation.

Naturalist Phenology for May 2023

Bill Klunk and Elizabeth Frisbie, Master Naturalists

During this month, be on the lookout for:

- ⇒ Rose-breasted grosbeak (*Pheucticus ludovicianus*) are returning to our region, which is in the southern portion of their breeding range. Most will fly through on their way north, although some may stay to nest and raise their young.
- ⇒ White-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) fawns will be born mid-May through early June.
- ⇒ May 21: The night sky this evening features a bright triangle formed by 2 stars, Castor and Pollux, as the top points and Venus to the west of (below) them. Mars will also be easily found below the moon.

Continuing Education Programs

WEBINARS

Master Naturalist Continuing Education Series Climate, Climate Data Rescue, and Citizen Science May 17 from 6 to 7 p.m.

From 19th Century US weather data to weather observations of today, learn about how they were and are being rescued, and how they are being used. Find out how citizen science has augmented data collection and now rescues weather data here and abroad, and the importance of these data. Presented by Nancy Prescott. Registration is available at: <https://go.illinois.edu/climatedata>

Recognizing and Reporting Herbicide Drift May 23 at 7 p.m.

Join U of I Plant Clinic Director and State IPM Coordinator, Diane Plewa, as she teaches about herbicide drift damage and the proper way to report it. Register [here](#).

Illinois Indiana Climate Webinar Series May 25 from 1 to 2 p.m.

If you need soil temperature and other weather information throughout Illinois, it is readily available through the Illinois Climate Network, which will be the topic for the May Illinois/Indiana Climate webinar series. Jennie Atkins, Program Manager for the Water and Atmospheric Monitoring (WARM) program, will be the featured speaker. The Illinois Climate Network (ICN) collects real-time weather and soil data at 19 stations across Illinois. ICN data are trusted by farmers, local governments, engineers, and many others for decision-making from planting to long-term planning. In this seminar, we will discuss the network, the data and tools available, and how professionals in Illinois and beyond use ICN data. Register [here](#).

Everyday Environment Series

Register to participate online [here](#).

- **June 8 at 1 p.m.—Flatwater Kayaking**

IN PERSON or WEBINAR

Four Season Webinar Series

Register to participate online [here](#).

The program is also available at both offices. Call or email ruth1@illinois.edu to reserve a spot.

- **May 16 at 1:30 p.m.—Invasive Plants-Beyond What's Outlawed**

IN PERSON

Growing Food, Growing You: A Conservation Story!

May 19 from 10 to 11 a.m. at Collinsville office

Join Caia Gillett, Custom Foodscaping and Audubon Center at Riverlands employee, for a discussion on food insecurity conservation efforts with edible landscape design. There is a \$5 fee for the program that you can pay at the door. Space is limited. Call 618-344-4230 or [email Sarah](mailto:sarah@illinois.edu) to RSVP.

Native Snakes of SW Illinois

May 21 at 1 p.m. at White Rock Nature Preserve, Valmeyer

The program is hosted by Clifftop and presented by Justin Elden, Curator of Herpetology & Aquatics at the St. Louis Zoo. Learn about the reptiles that make our area home. Hugh Gilbert will provide a few live snakes for up-close examination. As an added bonus, attendees will get to visit Rattlesnake Glade, if they so choose. Space is limited to 25, so contact Joann at cliffmbr@htc.net to reserve your spot! White Rock Nature Preserve is located at 6438 Bluff Road, Valmeyer.

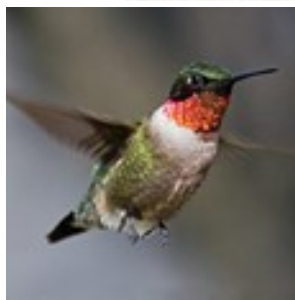
Check out the Unit Webpage for the most up to date info.

<https://extension.illinois.edu/mms>

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University of Illinois Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.

If you need a reasonable accommodation to participate in the program, please contact the Madison-Monroe-St. Clair Unit.
Early requests are strongly encouraged to allow sufficient time for meeting your access needs.

Wondering While Wandering
Naturalist Ponderings for May 2023
Elizabeth Frisbie, Master Naturalist

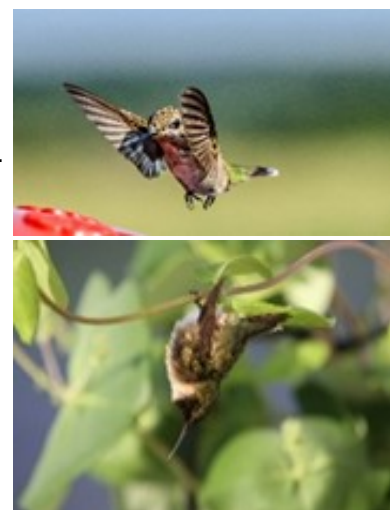


This week out at the flower farm we were delighted to see our first Ruby-throated hummingbirds (*Archilochus colubris*) as they returned from their wintering grounds in southern Mexico and northern Panama. We were visited by males, who arrive a week or two ahead of the females. Notably, Hummingbirds (*Trochilidae*) are solitary migrators; they do not fly in flocks as other birds do during their long journey. As I watched them buzz around my sister's flowers, I realized how quickly they move compared to other birds in the air. I also realized I have never seen a Hummingbird walking on the ground. These observations made me wonder how Hummingbirds' movements compare to those of other birds and how they accomplish their aerial feats.

Hummingbirds do in fact move much more quickly than other birds. On average, they beat their wings more than 50 times per second allowing them to fly almost 30 mph. Their rapidly beating wings create a humming buzz sound, from which their name derives. While 50-80 beats per second is their average, Hummingbirds are capable of 200 beats per second depending on air conditions, the direction in which they are flying and the purpose of their flight. For instance, during a courtship dive, these birds reach speeds topping 45 mph. During migration, the Ruby-throated can complete the 500-mile journey across the Gulf of Mexico in less than a day, which they do by flying nonstop. In addition to flying quickly, Hummingbirds are real acrobats in the air. They are able to hover in place for long periods of time. They can also fly backwards and even upside down!

How do these birds fly so quickly and with such agility? First, the Hummingbird's pectoral muscle accounts for 25-30% of its overall weight. These broad muscles are utilized by all birds when flying. Proportionally the Hummingbirds' are larger than those of other birds. Additionally, Hummingbirds have fewer feathers than other birds (1,000-1,500 on average compared to a large waterfowl which may have 25,000). This results in them weighing less in proportion than other birds. On average, a Ruby-throated hummingbird weighs about 3 grams, or as much as a penny (unless they are pre-migration weight, 6 grams - about a nickel, where their body weight doubles following increased food consumption). Like the Common swift (*Apus apus*), Hummingbirds belong to the bird order *Apodiformes*. This Latin term means "footless" pointing out these birds' proportionately small feet. Small feet are a flight asset making them more aerodynamic by reducing drag in flight. Their heart rate also contributes to their rapid speed. Their rate is over 1,200 beats per minute which quickly circulates their blood (compare to our average Human range of 60 to 100 beats per minute). These combined factors contribute to their rapid wing-beat speed, while their flexible shoulder joints allow for 180° wing rotation, enabling stationary hovering and backward flight. Even though Hummingbirds are acrobats in the air, it is notable their movements are quite limited once they have landed. The reason we don't notice them walking or hopping on the ground like other birds is they are not able to do so. When they are perched, Hummingbirds can scoot along a branch from side to side. They can also use their feet to preen and to grip as they rest, which they often do upside down.

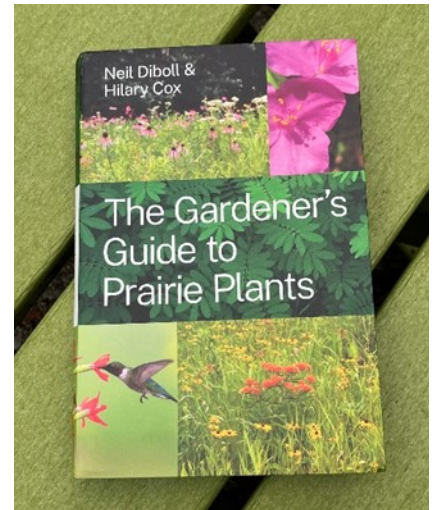
Other than adding to our visual enjoyment with their beauty and flying feats, Hummingbirds are important to our ecosystem. Because of their high metabolic rate, these birds need to eat frequently to stay alive. While awake, they eat every 10 to 15 minutes, consuming about half their body weight in nectar and insects each day. They eat wasps, mosquitoes, gnats and aphids, thereby making the environment more enjoyable for Humans. Additionally, Hummingbirds are champion pollinators. Each bird visits 1,000-2,000 flowers every day. In fact, ornithologists rate the Ruby-throated (our most common Hummingbird in Illinois) a "prolific" level pollinator of flowers. Research indicates that Rubies deposit 10 times as much pollen as Bumblebees (*Bombus*) in a day.



Welcome to My Jungle

Dr. Elizabeth Wahle, Extension Educator

'The Gardener's Guide to Prairie Plants' by Neil Diboll and Hilary Cox just came out and I already want the authors to start working on volume two just to expand from the 148 grasses, sedges, and flowers of the North American tallgrass prairie covered in this guide. The bulk of this book is a photographic field guide, showing each plant throughout the season, from early emerging seedlings to late season seedheads. As if that is not enough, the authors have provided detailed notes on each species' distinguishing characteristics and how they differ from lookalike natives and/or weeds, as well as site preferences. Other chapters include topics on establishment, propagation, the prairie food web, and prairie seed mixes. And at the end is an impressive set of tables categorizing prairie plants every way there is to aid in selecting, siting, and propagation. I give this book an A+.



Newly released 'The Gardener's Guide to Prairie Plants' by Neil Diboll and Hilary Cox.

Like many gardeners, I am dealing with more than normal winter injury to several woody perennials this spring. In my jungle, the Japanese maples, azaleas, weigelas and Knock Out roses were the hardest hit, necessitating significant pruning to remove dead wood. Thorny roses are never fun to prune, but the Knock Out roses "seem" to have extra-large, extra-hard and extra-sharp thorns that snag on everything, especially hair and skin. I find a hooded Carhartt jacket and leather gloves provide the best protection, but nothing is perfect. To describe how much winter damage occurred, from my 12-plant, four-foot-tall hedge, the dead canes made a pile three feet high by six feet wide. Several of the plants had to have all previous growth removed, relying on new canes to restart the plant. Even with so much damage, all look to survive. Unfortunately, that was not the case with other plant species.

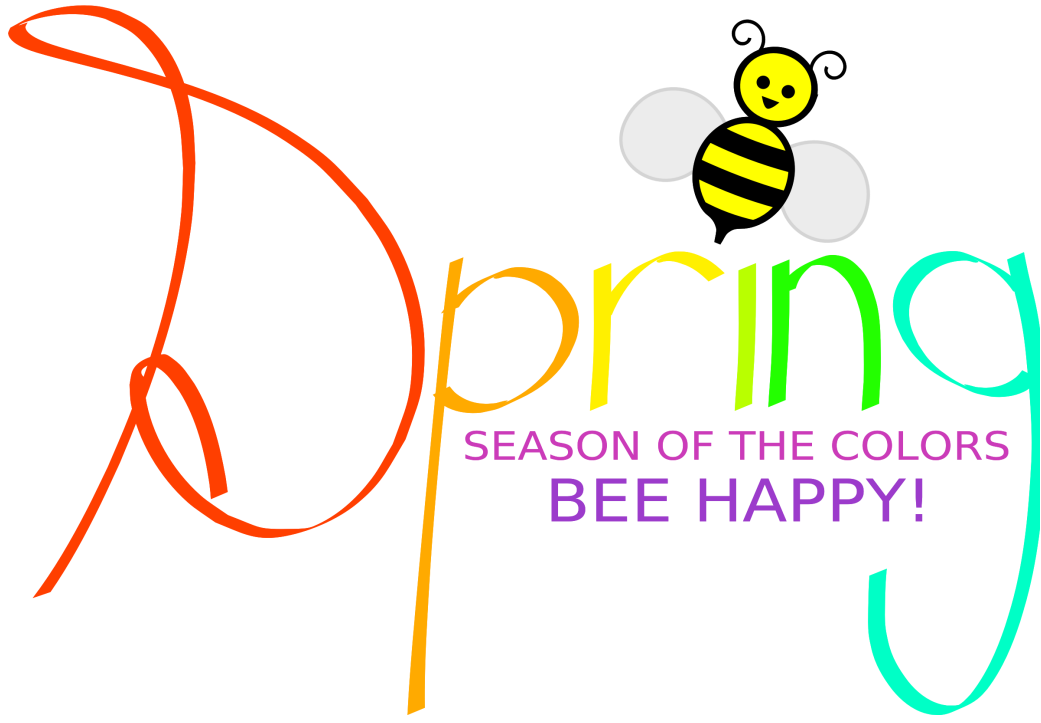


Pruning pile from a winter-injured Knock Out rose hedge.

I need to keep reminding myself to take the time to thoroughly enjoy my garden, and not view it from the standpoint of how much work still needs to be done to keep it somewhat under control. This past week I took a week off just to work in the yard, but I made sure to take some time just to relax and enjoy what I have created, as well as the animals I have invited in the process. For the most part I treasure wildlife, but when you invite wildlife into your yard, there are consequences. They eat plants you don't want them to, they bring in their fur and poop seed of undesirable plants, and some dig holes and tunnels where you don't want them to. I could go on and on, but in the end, I would not trade just a day's bloom of a yellow trillium for a week if it meant to deer who ate it was absent from my garden.



Yellow trillium in bloom one day (l), the next day blooms nipped off by deer (r)



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