

VOL.1 ISSUE 1 · APRIL 2024

ILLINOIS GREEN CONNECTIONS

Extension Master Volunteers Newsletter
Fulton, Mason Peoria and Tazewell Counties

Photo by Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle



Getting ready for Spring

BY NICOLE FLOWERS-KIMMERLE

Spring is officially here according to the equinox. We are all looking forward to getting outside, to observe new life whether it is in the garden or in our favorite natural area. We welcome the warmer weather and more hours of daylight. Some of our early pollinators will be out and about so thinking of spring bloomers to provide resources is something to consider. Leaving the leaves on flower beds and under trees not only provides some insulation for emerging plants against our Central Illinois temperature swings, it also provides a place for beneficial insects to overwinter. If you can wait until we have several 50 degree Fahrenheit days, you can then move the leaves and cut back perennial stems with less worry of disturbing pollinators and beneficial insects.



Photo by Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle



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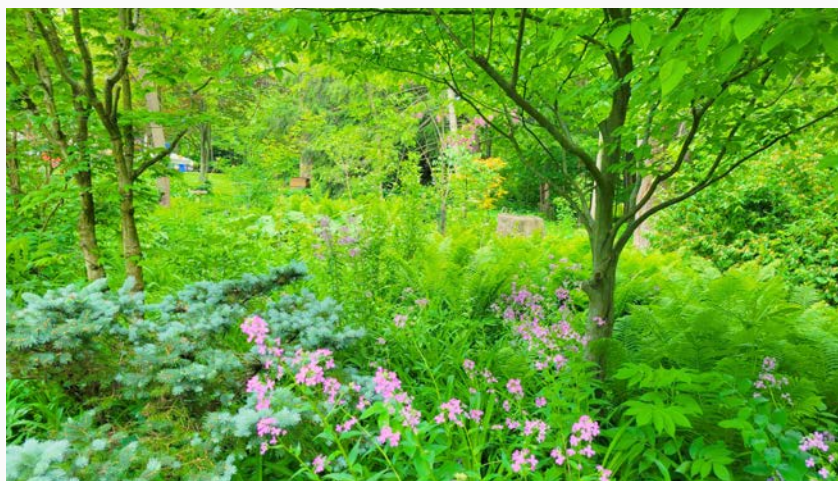


Spring Gardening: When is the best time to get started

BY ELLA MAXWELL, EMG TAZEVELL COUNTY

The temperatures this spring have been up and down which forced some of the earliest flowering plants to begin blooming at least two weeks earlier than normal in my garden. My winter aconite and snowdrops began flowering on February 5 (Don't you just love cell phone pictures with a date stamp). Then by early March, they had already set seed. The warm weather also brought out some of my early pollinator plants. Currently my hellebores and spring bulbs have a beautiful floral display.

[READ MORE](#)



Spring Plant Sales

Master Gardener Plant Sale, May 4, 8 am to noon

Grand Prairie Friends, online May 5-18

Friends of Rocky Glen May 11

Wild Ones IL Prairie Chapter Sat May 18 8am-1pm

IL Native Plant Society Central Ch., May 11 9am-noon

Local native plant sales are a great way to add diversity to your yard. Plants started from seed help to ensure that genetic diversity is conserved. Genetically diverse populations are more likely to have individuals that can survive as environmental changes occur.

My takeaway is don't rake or expose your perennial garden beds too early in the spring. Actually, later is better. Concentrate on other garden activities.

ELLA MAXWELL



Photo by Anita Wilkinson



SO.... what's the BIG DEAL about Conservation@Home??

BY ELLEN DENLER, EMG TAZEWELL COUNTY

You may have heard a lot about a relatively new program called Conservation@Home.... but..... WHAT is it? HOW does it impact me? And even more.WHY should I be interested in it?

"The Conservation@Home program recognizes a property for its environmentally friendly landscape....." But what does that mean?

How should that relate to ME and MY garden practices?

Simply put this means that we change our thought process by looking outward at the world around us instead of inward at our own little yards. We examine what and how we plant; we realize by changing some practices, we can help creatures that we share the planet with. What landscaping principles can we alter or adjust?

Ask yourself, "Do I have any native plants, trees, or shrubs in my yard? Do I plant with pollinators and birds in mind? Am I careful with water usage and provide a water source? Do I limit my chemical usage? Leave leaf litter in the fall? Have a compost pile? Have I left plant stems as a seed source through the winter?"



Photo by Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle

Above are most of the questions evaluators use when they visit your yard during the certification process for C@H. The volunteers who come to your property are most likely certified themselves. They are not there to "grade" "rate" or "judge" you. Evaluators look for at least 10 native plants, 3 native trees or shrubs, that you show a desire to create a more purposeful garden. Perfection is NOT the goal--it's not a garden walk. Evaluators just want to see that you care for the environment.

I hope this article has helped clear up some of the mystique and that you will begin the process of certifying your yard.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Perfection is NOT the goal--it's not a garden walk. Evaluators just want to see that you care for the environment.

ELLEN DENLER



Photo by Anita Wilkinson



Branching Out: Launch your book journey into the world of trees

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

Are you curious about trees, their hidden stories, their ecological significance, and how they shape our world? If so, join us as we start our 2024 book study.

We're excited to announce a deep dive into the world of trees through a reading series. This journey will take us through six books, each offering unique perspectives on different aspects of trees.

[READ MORE](#)

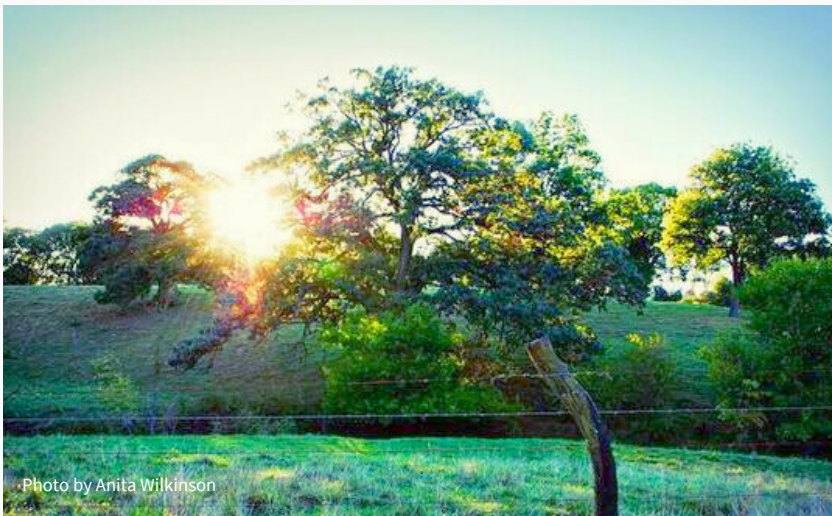


Photo by Anita Wilkinson

Select the best mulch for your garden

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

There are many types of mulch that can be used in landscapes and gardens. Here are some things to consider as you choose the mulch that works best for your space.

[READ MORE](#)

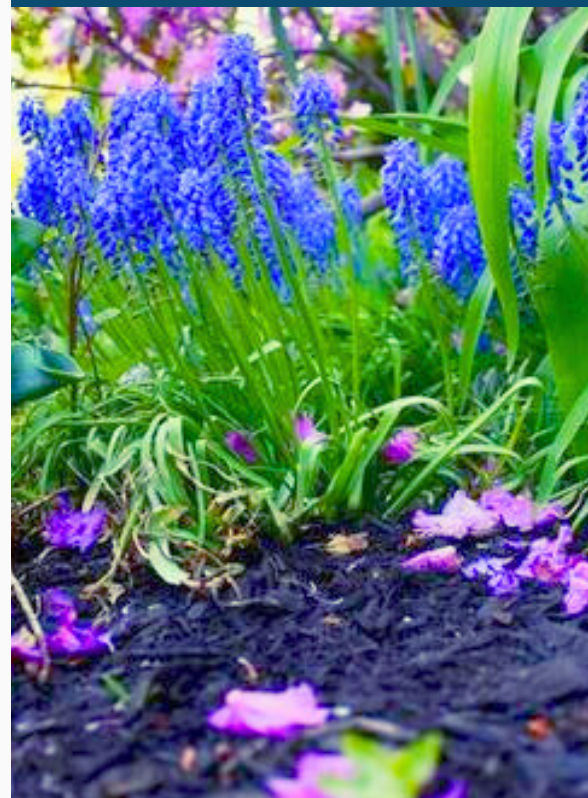
2023 Master Naturalist Annual Report

In 2023, more than 880 Master Naturalists put in nearly 70,500 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 MNs across Illinois are putting knowledge to work in the 2023 Impact Report.

[READ MORE](#)

2024 Book List

- [The Overstory](#) by Richard Powers
- [American Canopy: Trees, Forests, and the Making of a Nation](#) by Eric Rutkow:
- [How to Read a Tree: Clues & Patterns from Bark to Leaves](#) by Tristan Gooley
- [The Nature of Oaks](#) by Doug Tallamy
- [The Tree: A Natural History of what Trees are, How they live and why they matter](#) by Colin Tudge
- [Forest Walking](#) by Peter Wohlleben





Upcoming Events

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

- **April 13, 2024, 9 am to 4 pm:** Gardeners' BIG Day, Spoon River College, Canton IL. Keynote speaker, Chris Enroth: Gardening for Pollinators. Registration closed March 31.
- **April 17, 2024, 1 pm** at the Illinois Extension Office, Peoria Branch 4810 North Sheridan Rd, Peoria Local Food and the Environment with Tara Heath
- **April 22, 2024, 5:30 pm** at the Illinois Extension Office, Tazewell Branch 1505 Valle Vista Blvd Pekin: Conservation@Home Panel Discussion
- **May 4, 2024, 8 am to noon** Plant Sale at the Metro Center, 4700 N University St, Peoria: This annual event is an opportunity to buy plants, started and grown in sterile mediums by your local Master Gardeners and learn from their experiences.
- **May 13, 2024, at 5:30 pm** at the Illinois Extension Office, Fulton Branch 15411 N IL 100 Highway Lewistown: DIY Botanical Art with Allie Goudy
- **May 21, 2024, 5:30 pm** at ICC Horticulture Land Lab East Peoria IL: Corinne Brown will share information about "Native Trees and Shrubs" and tour the ICC arboretum. Social time begins at 5:30 pm, program begins at 6 pm.
- **June 10-14, 9 am to 3 pm.** Core Naturalist Training. University of Illinois Extension's Naturalist Core Education Training is designed for adults of any age who love to learn about the natural world. The 5-day course will include hands-on learning at natural outdoor areas throughout the four-county unit and digital learning on your own. [Register here](#)
- **July 16, 2024, 5:30 pm** at the Fulton County Farm Bureau Building: Dr. Mike Wiant will share information about "Native American Use of Plants." Social time begins at 5:30, program starts at 6 pm.
- **September 17, 2024, 5:30 pm:** Log Room, Wildlife Prairie Park, 3826 N Taylor Rd, Hanna City, IL Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle will share information about Invasive Species and Wild Spotter. Social time begins at 5:30 pm, program starts at 6 pm.
- **December 10, 2024, 5:30 pm:** Wallace Park 250 S Ave D, Canton, IL 61520. End of the Year Gathering. A time to enjoy each other's company and celebrate all of the accomplishments and experiences of 2024.

Details

Check online for more information about upcoming events

- [Illinois Extension FMPT Events](#)
- [U of I Extension ILRiverHort Facebook Page](#)



Volunteer Opportunities MARK YOUR CALENDAR

- **Morton Giving Garden:** Pam Scott, Monday and Thursday am
- **Tazewell County Health Department Garden:** Trudy Yazujian, Tuesday & Friday at 8 am- noon
- **4-H Learning Garden:** May Bach, Tuesday and Thursday 9-11 am
- **Holy Family Church's St. Fiacre Gardens –** Bob Reading, Wednesday & Saturday 9am-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 and/or Wednesday am
- **Friendship House:** Kendra Belk
- **Lettuce Share Romain:** May Bach
- **Spring Creek Work Days:** Mike McGraw, second Wednesday of the month
- **Elwood Work Days:** Ed Coleman, 9 am -noon 3rd Sunday & 3rd Wednesday of each month
- **Rocky Glen Work Days:** Steve Maxwell
- **Gardening Helpline:** Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle
- **Conservation@Home Evaluator:** Tara Heath
- **Speaker's Bureau:** Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle and Chris Schmidt
- **Newsletters:** Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle and Jennifer Bass

Project Stoplight Video

LAWNS TO BLOOMS TO BIRDS

Master Volunteers Jeff and Nancy Staecker have developed a program named Lawns to Blooms to Birds. Learn all about the work they are doing to provide education on how to shrink turf in lawns and transform it with more blooms creating habitat for birds and other wildlife. Lawns to Blooms to Birds will be at

- Hoerr Nursery on April 27 from 10am to 3pm
- Washington Greenhouse on June 8 from 10am to 3pm
- Greenview Nursery, TBD

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.



Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle
Horticulture Educator
nflower2@illinois.edu



Christine Belless
Natural Resources
Program Coordinator
cbelless@illinois.edu



Tara Heath
Horticulture Program
Coordinator
tsheath@illinois.edu



Karen Wiegelt
Special Projects
Program Coordinator
kweigelt@illinois.edu

