

# EXTENSION SNAPSHOT

Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit

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Illinois Extension

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

## New horticulture Facebook Group Leverages State-wide Expertise to Reach Thousands

For many years, University of Illinois Extension has utilized social media to share educational content. Last year, the state horticulture team started the Illinois Extension Horticulture Group on Facebook that has taken this approach to the next level. Extension educators across the state synergize their areas of expertise to moderate the group and provide information and resources to thousands of people.

Local horticulture educator Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle provides content, moderates comments, and shares her weed science expertise to the group regularly. Since going public in May 2020, the group has grown to 2,600 members and has had over 1,300 original posts.

The Facebook group is open to the public and includes Extension Master Gardeners, plant growing enthusiasts, and beginner gardeners. Group members can access the educational content, ask gardening questions, and share their garden successes with plant growers all over the state.

“Posting about new projects or garden techniques provides ideas for the rest of the group,” Nicole explained.

“The group has become a virtual community where members can ask questions and share expertise,” she continued. “Our stats show that there have been 9,807 comments and 23,906 reactions to the original posts. This is an 88% activity rate.”

Members are very good at helping answer questions such as “what is happening to my plant, can you identify this, or what would grow best in this environment?” Horticulture educators not only respond to the questions they also keep an eye on the information shared by other group members to help maintain the high-quality, research-based information that Extension is known for. They also add new content created specifically for the group and announce upcoming events.

The estimated reach is 238,654. This number is calculated by adding all the views, posts, comments, and reactions. This indicates that the group members are actively engaged in learning new information.

“A bonus of this Facebook group is that we can use it to bring attention to important issues,” Nicole stated. “This year we highlighted National Pollinator Week and Invasive Species Month.”

This is one more way to connect people with horticulture information in the Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit. The Gardening Helpline, the Riverfront Farmers’ Market Master Gardener booth, and direct contact with staff and Master Volunteers are other ways people get answers to their gardening questions.



*Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle, Extension horticulture educator, joins her teammates across the state to moderate a new Facebook group that is reaching thousands with educational content and solutions to their gardening questions.*

Illinois Extension Horticulture Group

[facebook.com/groups/ILExtensionHorticulture](https://facebook.com/groups/ILExtensionHorticulture)

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