

# EXTENSION SNAPSHOT

Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit

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Illinois Extension

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

## Tara Heath Joins Extension Horticulture Team

Horticulture has been a part of [Tara Heath's](#) life since she was a little girl. After a 20 year career focused on landscape management, Tara has joined the University of Illinois Extension team as the horticulture program coordinator serving Fulton, Mason, Peoria, and Tazewell counties.

"One of my first memories as a child was a trip to scout a soybean field with my father," Tara explained. "He dug with his pocketknife and showed me how the seedlings emerge – the stems bent over in little arches before the first leaves unfold. To me, that was pure magic!"

Her love of all things horticulture started young and continued through her life. She received a bachelor's degree in agriculture, with an emphasis in horticulture, from [Western Illinois University](#). From there she joined their landscape management team where she eventually served as the Superintendent of Grounds.

"I have never lost that sense of wonder and excitement about growing plants, whether it's food gardening, landscaping, or houseplants," Tara continued. "I'm really looking forward to helping others discover that same feeling through the Master Gardener program. I'm also so impressed by the work being done by our Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists – there are so many exciting projects they are working on! I can't wait to explore them all."

"We have a strong team of staff leading our horticulture and natural resource programs," stated Earl Allen, Extension county director. "Tara joins Horticulture Educator [Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle](#), Ag and Natural Resources Program Coordinator [Christine Belless](#), and Office Support Assistant [Deb Balagna](#) to provide excellent educational information and programs as well as support for our Master Volunteers. We are excited to welcome her to the team."

In her free time, Tara finds agriculture to be at the heart of what she loves to do. She can be found gardening in her own backyard or helping out on the family farm in rural McDonough County.

While Tara's role will take her throughout the four-county unit, her headquarters is located in the Fulton County office in Lewistown. She can be reached at 309-547-3711 or [tsheath@illinois.edu](mailto:tsheath@illinois.edu).



*Tara Heath is the new Extension horticulture program coordinator for the Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit. She will work closely with the 150 local Extension Master Gardeners as well as provide support for horticulture programs.*

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