

EXTENSION SNAPSHOT

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Illinois Extension

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Young Garden Explorer's Day triples in attendance

Sunshine, beautiful gardens, space to play, and educational activities make for a great day. Those are the key elements [University of Illinois Extension Master Gardeners](#) had in mind as they planned the second annual Young Garden Explorer's Day at [Illinois Central College \(ICC\)](#). This year's event almost tripled in attendance with 112 youth and adults exploring the gardens.

As the name implies the event was a fun opportunity for pre-school through elementary school children and their families to learn about the natural world. Activities included vegetable tasting featuring produce grown in the ICC vegetable plots, story-time, lessons about insects, making a butterfly craft, a garden scavenger hunt, and more. Of course, the children also loved the multiple spaces to dig in the soil and play in the water.

"One of the guests told me her kids loved the morning. They were busy from the time they got out of the car until they were leaving," commented Jennifer Bass, Extension Master Gardener and event planning committee chair. "The kids were engaged, interested, and listening to what was being taught at each table. I think we accomplished our mission."

The Extension Master Gardener's demo garden was a favorite place to walk the paths, learn about each of the plots and find the hidden monarch caterpillar on the milkweed.

A participant, Dee Hohensehell said, "This is a wonderful event. Fun horticulture activities for toddlers to older kids in a beautiful garden setting made the event enjoyable for everyone. The staff and volunteers are knowledgeable and so very willing to help children develop an appreciation of gardening."

The Extension Master Gardeners started the demo garden at ICC in 2000 and have been working in it diligently ever since. The garden space is divided into small sections: cut flower garden, day-lily display, ornamental grass display, sensory garden, miniature garden, small fruits, vegetables, and a host/nectar garden for butterflies. Each section of the garden has educational signage to help visitors learn more about different garden styles and plant names.

The ICC Horticulture Program and University of Illinois Extension have been working together to bring new educational opportunities to the community. The Young Garden Explorer's Day is one outcome of this partnership.

Extension Horticulture Educator [Nicole Flowers-Kimmerle](#) says, "We will keep looking for more ways to work together to positively impact the community. Working with the ICC Horticulture Program is a way Extension Master Gardeners can further their mission of Helping others Learn to Grow."



Photo by Anita Wilkinson | Illinois Extension

Playing in the soil was one of the favorite activities at Young Garden Explorer's Day at Illinois Central College horticulture lab and gardens. This is the second year U of I Extension Master Gardeners have coordinated this program and it drew a large crowd this year.

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