

Madison-Monroe-St Clair Unit

Under the Canopy

For Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists



February
2016



Main Office

901 Illinois Avenue
P.O. Box 117
Waterloo, IL 62298
(618) 939-3434
FAX (618) 939-7708

Branch Office

1 Regency Plaza
Suite 200
Collinsville, IL 62234
(618) 344-4230
FAX (618) 344-5602

<http://web.extension.illinois.edu/mms>

Staff:

Pamela Jacobs
County Director
jacobsp@illinois.edu

Elizabeth Wahle
Extension Educator,
Horticulture
wahle@illinois.edu

Sarah Ruth
Program Coordinator,
Horticulture & Natural
Resource
ruth1@illinois.edu

Paige Brown
Office Support Associate

Mary Kay Rahn
Office Support Associate

Patty Stanton
Office Support Associate

Reporting 2016 Hours

The 2016 Volunteer Time Tracking Website is updated, and you can begin to enter your hours for this year. Thank you for your patience while the office worked on the website rollover.

2015 By the Numbers

Thanks for all your support and assistance in 2015!!!

Master Naturalists *volunteered 4,564 hours.*

Master Gardeners *volunteered 10,165 hours.*

Volunteers *received 2,207 hours* of continuing education.

Master Gardeners *answered 267 questions* on the Horticulture Helpline.

Here are some of our top projects.

Baebler 4-H Educational Farm-220 hours
(105 MG hrs & 115 MN hrs)

Clifftop Projects- 314 hours

Demonstration Gardens @ Godfrey-594 hours

Drost Park-882 hours

Eastside Health District F.R.E.S.H. Garden-184 hours

Garden Tours-660 hours

The Gardens at SIUE-1,806 hours
(1,099 MG hrs & 707 MN hrs)

Glik Park-341 hours

Henry White Farm-1,511 hours
(766 MG hrs & 745 MN hrs)

Horticulture Helpline-409 hours

The Nature Institute-316 hours

O'Fallon Community Garden-1,516 hours

Riverlands-220 hours

Speaker's Bureau-379 hours
(85 MG hrs & 294 MN hrs)

Stephenson House-409 hours

The Watershed-595 hours

Willoughby Heritage Farm-1,025 hours

Youth Programming-346 hours
(280 MG hrs & 66 MN hrs)



The Gardens at SIUE and the Henry White Farm are listed in the Top 20 Projects List published by the State Master Naturalist Coordinator. The list is based on the total number of hours reported by the volunteers. The State Master Gardener Coordinator does not currently compile a list of the Top 20 Projects, but I'm sure we would have some projects on that list too. Looking forward to 2016!!!

Annual Agreements

The Extension Office will mail annual volunteer agreements to Master Gardeners and Master Naturalist in February. Look for your letter in the mail. Be sure to return it to the office to remain active with the program.

Speaker's Bureau Info Needed

The office gets numerous requests throughout the year for guest speakers. I am putting together a formal list of titles and descriptions that will be posted to the Unit website so the requesters will know what topics are currently available from our volunteers. Please email me at ruth1@illinois.edu information about your presentation so it can be added to the website.

Volunteer Training for RiverWatch

Are you looking for a new volunteer opportunity? Do you want to monitor the water quality of local streams? RiverWatch is a Citizen Scientist opportunity where volunteers are trained to observe and test water samples, and report what they find. The National Great River's Research and Education Center in Alton offers training on April 2 and June 4. For more details about RiverWatch, visit <http://www.ngrec.org/riverwatch/>.



State Master Naturalist Coordinator Update

Rhonda Ferree stepped down as the State Master Naturalist Coordinator on February 1, 2016. David Shiley was named as her replacement. David works as a Local Foods and Small Farms Extension Educator in the Coles-Cumberland-Douglas-Moultrie-Shelby Unit. David has many years of experience working with natural resources. We appreciate Rhonda's support and guidance for the past 2 years, and we are excited to have David's leadership.

Have a great month, Sarah

Unit Master Naturalist Meeting and Program

Join Unit volunteers for a meeting and program on **March 25 at 10 am in the Collinsville Office**. St. Louis Master Gardener, Betsy Alexander, will present "A Dark Side to Your Garden." There are villains lurking in the garden. Find out if you are harboring one. Over millions of years, plants have developed adaptive means to protect themselves. Learn about their methods and some of the plants now growing in your garden that need to be labeled with a danger symbol.

RSVP to Sarah by March 21.

Fundraising Events

Check out these upcoming events and support University of Illinois Extension. Events are sponsored by St. Clair County Extension and Education Foundation. Call 618-939-3434 for more information.

Schnuck's eScrip Community Card-

Pick up a card from the Extension Office. Register the card. Present your card when you checkout, and Schnuck's will donate a percentage back to Foundation.

Eckert's—Feb. 24 at the Belleville Store

Make a purchase at the Restaurant, Country Store, or Garden Center and 15% of your purchase will be donated to Foundation. **Offer is only valid at the Belleville Location.**

Mention St. Clair County Extension and Education Foundation to the staff at Eckert's when you check out so they know to give back to Extension.

Taste of the Area—April 1 from 5-8 pm at The Regency Conference Center, O'Fallon

Sample food and drink from area restaurants. Tickets are \$25.

4-H Trivia Night—April 2 starting at 7 pm at Scheve Park, Mascoutah

Gather your friends and test your knowledge. \$12 per person. Up to 8 people per table. Mulligans available. Plus Silent Auction and 50/50 drawing.



What's Going on Out There?

Naturalist Phenology Report for Mid-February– Mid-March, 2016

By: Bill Klunk and Elizabeth Frisbie, Master Naturalists



- Peek outside 45-60 minutes before dawn tomorrow morning until late February to catch a fantastic view of our five brightest planets in a diagonal line. Mercury, Mars, Venus, Jupiter and Saturn will be visible beginning with Mercury about a fist-width up from the eastern horizon line. The planets are aligned from low in the east with the line increasing in height towards the southwest. Unfortunately in our area Mercury will sink out of sight below the horizon by the second week of February, but the other four planets will still be visible with Venus and Jupiter (which is furthest west) being the brightest of the four. Mars glows red-orange and the sand-tan colored light is Saturn.
- Listen for the familiar “cong-a-lee” call of the male Red-winged blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) to return to our area around Valentine’s Day. Males return from the winter grounds in the southern US and Mexico ahead of the females to scout for food and shelter and to establish territories.
- Late February begins the birthing period for Eastern moles (*Scalopus aquaticus*) in our area. Following a 42-48 day gestation period, young are born from late February through early June.
- Eastern Newt (*Notophthalmus viridescens*) are active in the frigid water of February for mating. These small olive green to yellowish brown (reddish brown in efts) salamander, with small scattered black dots are typically found in or around ponds and sloughs of wooded areas.
- Vernal Witch hazel (*Hamamelis vernalis*) is the first shrub to bloom early in the year. It is also known as Ozark Witch hazel and has yellow flowers with a purple-red center.
- Winter fish kills can occur when snow covers the ice on lakes and ponds for extended periods, which blocks the passage of light. Without any light, tiny aquatic plants cannot produce oxygen and die. This greatly reduces the amount of oxygen for fish respiration needed under ice. In addition, the decay process of dead aquatic plant and animals also uses up oxygen, which further compounds the fish kill problem.
- Mourning Cloak butterfly (*Nymphalis antiopa*) are typically the first Lepidoptera order of insects seen early in the year. Adults will hibernate in hollow logs and tree holes, occasionally becoming active on warm winter days during this period.
- Temperature conditions typically prevail in early March for sap flow from the Sugar Maple, also called Hard maple, tree (*Acer saccharum*). Once the temperature of the wood rises to about 45 degrees, the sap comes pouring out of tapped trees.
- Brown Creeper (*Certhia americana*) are migrating back to Canada during this period. This small tree climber with a slender curved bill can be seen crawling in a spiral manner from bottom to top of trees looking for insects overwintering under the bark.
- Fox squirrel (*Sciurus niger*) and Eastern gray squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) are both in their second breeding season during March. Their cousin the Eastern chipmunk (*Tamias striatus*) are entering their first breeding season during this reporting period.



References: Audubon, eBird, INHS, MoBot, NASA, Univ of IL Extension

Continuing Education Programs

Four Season Webinars

Both offices will host these sessions at 1:30 pm. Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists receive free black and white handouts. Color handouts are \$5. Register by calling the office one week before the program. Recordings of the presentations will also be posted to YouTube.

- February 23--How to Kill a Tree: What NOT to Do
- March 8--Unique Terrariums
- March 22--Naughty, Nasty, and Annoying Plants

OR Participate in the webinars from home. Register for the online program at go.illinois.edu/4seasons_webinars

- How to Kill a Tree: What NOT to Do February 23 @1:30 pm or February 25 @6:30 pm
- Unique Terrariums March 8@1:30 pm or March 10 @6:30 pm
- Naughty, Nasty, and Annoying Plants March 22@1:30 pm or March 24 @6:30 pm

Owl Prow

February 20 from 6-8 pm at White Rock Land and Water Reserve

Bundle up for a hoot as Clifftop once again listen and watch for nocturnal raptors. Owls are calling out territorial claims and beginning their annual mating and nesting season. Please join us for this enjoyable — despite bracing weather — outdoor evening field trip. RSVP to 458-4674 or clifftop@htc.net by Feb. 18. Field trip is sponsored by Clifftop.



Native by Design: Landscapes Beyond Beauty Seminar

February 26 from 8:30 am-noon at the Lewis and Clark Community College, Nelson Center, Edwardsville

Learn more about native plants and the role they play in our landscape. The Keynote address will be given by Doug Tallamy. The program also includes a panel discussion to learn key concepts and methods for integrating natives into your landscape. Finally, enjoy a presentation on sound stewardship practices from various speakers. Registration is \$30. Register at <http://grownative.org/events/feb-26-native-by-design-landscapes-beyond-beauty>

Gateway Green Industry

March 1-2 at the Gateway Convention Center

NEW FORMAT: Lower Registration Fee! Lunch on your own!

Brochure/Registration at <http://web.extension.illinois.edu/mms/> Discounts available for MG and MN.

Weekend Gardener

March 5 at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows

Gather your gardening friends and register before the classes fill up. <http://web.extension.illinois.edu/mms/>

Beginner Beekeeping Class

March 12 from 8 am-4 pm at the St. Clair County Farm Bureau, Belleville

Are you interested in beekeeping? Topics at the program include obtaining bees, bee colony management, hive products, diseases, and pests. Fees are \$45 per person, \$60 per couple, and \$20 for minors/students. Registration is available at www.stclairbees.com. Program sponsored by St. Clair Beekeepers' Association.



World Daffodil Convention

April 6-10, St. Louis

Participate in tours and presentations focusing on daffodils. Program details and registration is available at <http://stldaffodilclub.org/wdc2016/index.html>

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

<http://web.extension.illinois.edu/mms>

Welcome to My Jungle

By: Elizabeth Wahle, Extension Educator

Had it been the middle of summer, the weather we all just experienced the last weekend of January would have been downright cold and worthy of a sweater. But temperatures in the mid to upper 60's in the middle of winter just begs for short sleeves and working in the yard...at least for this spring fevered gardener. I chose to spend some of my time outdoors gathering all the fallen branches and twigs on the property and chipping them. There was only one thing that was going to possibly stand in my way—getting my Chipper/Shredder/Vacuum to start. But what do you know, two yanks on the cord and it started right up! I've had my machine for at least a dozen years and I'm pretty sure it was already 20 years old when I bought it used from a friend, but it still performed beautifully and, in 4 hours, helped me reduce several depressingly large piles of brush to a nice tidy pile of small wood chips.



TAKE THE TIME! Always wear hearing protection when you will be exposed to any loud noise and eye protection when flying debris and other eye trauma is a possibility



When is the best time to prune fruit plants? Technically, fruit plants can be pruned any time during the dormant season but for some species it is best to delay the pruning date to just before bud swell (late dormant). Most fruit plants are pruned hard in the dormant season, with the expectation that everything left behind is desirable plant material. Given that partial freeze damage is more severe on outer shoot tips, fruit plants pruned early in the dormant season have a higher chance of injury to desirable fruit buds than those pruned later. The cold hardiness of each species also dictates the order in which to prune; in general always pruning the hardiest first and the least hardy last. For example, most dormant apple buds can survive -60°F without injury. In contrast, most dormant peach buds would on average sustain a 90% kill at -18°F , so it makes sense to prune apples first and save peaches for later when there is less chance of killing winter temperatures.

As an added note, once buds begin to break through, and growth is evident, the trees rapidly and irreversibly dehardens and become more susceptible to cold injury at an ever increasing rate. For example, apple buds in silver tip stage and peach buds at swollen stage would on average suffer a 90% kill at 2°F , and start showing injury at 15°F and 18°F , respectively. Apple and peach would begin to show injury at 28°F and a 90% kill at 25°F anywhere from full bloom to fruit set—making them somewhat equal once they get to the bloom stage.

If you are seeing fresh green growth in your flower beds, there is a good chance it is a common winter annual weed, like henbit or purple deadnettle. Winter annuals complete their life cycle in one year, but instead of germinating in the spring, they germinate in the fall. They over-winter as a rosette, then flower and set seed in the early spring before dying in the late spring. Both henbit and purple deadnettle are members of the mint family (square stems) and because they are closely related, are sometimes difficult to distinguish with only subtle differences between the two. If you ever see a farmer's field in a sea of purple in early spring before field operations start, it is most likely henbit and/or purple deadnettle. Creeping Charlie (*Glechoma hederacea*) is another weed in the mint family that is often confused with henbit and purple deadnettle. Whereas henbit and purple deadnettle are winter annuals, creeping Charlie is a perennial that flowers in late spring. In addition, creeping Charlie is more challenging to hand weed because, as the name suggest, it commonly creeps through the lawn, making it almost impossible to control without the use of selective herbicides.



Henbit (*Lamium alexicaule*)



Purple dead nettle (*L. purpureum*)

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Fax: 618-344-5602
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EXTENSION



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901 Illinois Ave.
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