

Time to think spring at the Iowa City library

Just when it feels like winter is never going to end, signs of spring start creeping in. Robins begin appearing at bird feeders, and as snow melts, you start to see the little green tips of daffodils and crocus pushing up through the mud.

Encouraged by gardening catalogs appearing in mailboxes, gardeners throughout Iowa City start dreaming of spring. Those without garden space of their own eagerly await 7:30 a.m. April 1 — not for April Fools festivities but to sign up for an Iowa City's Community Garden plot. So as winter winds down, remember that the Iowa City Public Library is a great place to start thinking spring.

For more than 20 years, the library has partnered with Project GREEN in Iowa City to host the Second Sunday Garden Forums each winter. Held from February to April at the library, gardeners gather to hear local, regional or national speakers talk gardening. Each event is broadcast live on The Library Channel, and DVDs of each program are added to the library's circulating collection (we have more than 30). From creating backyard prairies, gardening with conifers or hostas, or creating an herb garden, the Project Green DVDs contain something for every kind of gardener. Search the library catalog ([http:// catalog.icpl.org](http://catalog.icpl.org)) with Project GREEN as the author to see a list of what's available. The next Sunday Garden Forum is 2 p.m. April 7 in meeting room A.

And don't miss the Gardening & Home Improvement book display on the second floor, and of course take a peek at some of the new gardening books on the New Book shelves. This week I found two new books that piqued my interest: "Homegrown Honey Bees: An Absolute Beginner's Guide to Beekeeping: Your First Year, From Hiving to Honey Harvest," by Alethea Morrison and Mars Vilaubi, is full of amazing photography. This is a great book for newbees (sorry, couldn't resist). From planning and acquiring your supplies and setting up your hive, to understanding the bee life cycle and behavior, it's all here. The authors share what they went through their first year, from replacing a dying queen bee and keeping their hive alive during a hard winter to their first honey harvest. It's a fun read, even if you only wish you could own a hive.

"Powerhouse Plants: 501 Top Performers for Multi-season Beauty," by Graham Rice, is another good choice. One of the hardest things for me to learn about gardening is how to choose a plant that will provide lasting interest. Sure it looks pretty when it blooms, but then what? Rice has put together a guide to power houseplants — those that provide more color or shape or structure to the garden. How about all three? Shrubs, trees, bulbs, and common perennials — they're all here. His lyrical descriptions of plants might make you see them in a new way. As with any good garden book he also includes planting suggestions worth paying attention to, "Plant near a path where the bark can be admired." Definitely a book to read on a cold snowy night.

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From the Stacks

