

News Letter

City Hall, Iowa City, Iowa 52240
www.projectgreen.org

GROW TO
REACH
ENVIRONMENTAL
EXCELLENCE
NOW



FALL 2024

Second Sunday Garden Forums welcome all gardeners in 2025

Project GREEN has another exciting lineup for the Second Sunday Garden Forums series of 2025. Speakers will focus on enhancing the soil, pollinator micro-prairies, and protecting biodiversity. The forums will be offered on **January 12, February 9, and March 9**, in the Iowa City Public Library, 123 S. Linn St., from 2 to 4 p.m.

Project GREEN programs are free and open to the public. Presentations will also stream live on Iowa City Public Library's YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/thelibrarychannel>. Gardeners can earn CEs for the programs.



John Weeg

JANUARY 12, 2025 HÜGELKULTUR, WATER, AND ROOTS: WHY BURY OLD WOOD?

John Weeg is our lead-off speaker on **January 12**. He has a bit of experience with this topic: "Hügelkultur, Water, and Roots: Why Bury Old Wood?" Although

John has been gardening for most of his life, he trained only a few years ago to become a Master Gardener. This transplanted Iowan's focus is on the soil, the foundation of gardening. He has constructed several hügelkultur sites to determine which configurations improve soil performance. *Hügelkultur* (German for "mound culture") is a horticultural technique that begins with a mound of decaying wood debris and compostable biomass plant materials. The structure is planted as a raised bed. Erected with minimal cost, Hügelkultur offers a blend of ecological benefits and practical advantages, making it a valuable tool for gardeners interested in enhancing soil health and sustainability. John earned his BS degree from the University of Iowa in computer science and completed postgraduate work at Michigan State University. He is a database administrator at ACT, a for-profit organization that offers programs, services, and research focused on education and workplace success.



Karelyn Pohl

FEBRUARY 9, 2025 CREATING A POLLINATOR MICROPRAIRIE IN YOUR LANDSCAPE

Karelyn "Kari" Pohl will present "Creating a Pollinator MicroPrairie in Your Landscape" on **February 9**. Ninety-three percent of Iowa's land is dedicated to mono-

crops, making the state one of the most-altered landscapes on earth. Learn how to create a native sanctuary in whatever space you have available, and do your part to give a bit of nature back to the pollinators. Kari worked as a science teacher in the Cedar Rapids Community School District before joining Integrated DNA Technologies as a development scientist. She holds a BA in biology from the University of Northern Iowa and an MA from Montana State University-Bozeman. A Master Gardener since 2018, Kari has been involved in gardening for many years, starting with small containers and raised beds. She is passionate about sustainable agriculture and supporting pollinators, and is developing her acre of land into a homestead. Kari enjoys sharing her gardening knowledge and regularly attends classes and workshops to expand her expertise.



MARCH 9, 2025 PROTECTING BIODIVERSITY: AVOID INVASIVE SPECIES

Just as the weather is warming (we hope) for a new season, **Nick McGrath** will address “Protecting Biodiversity: Avoid Invasive Species.” A certified arborist, Nick

Nick McGrath

joined Trees Forever as a full-time field coordinator in 2021. He led the Eastern Iowa TreeKeepers 2024 spring course, a six-week program covering tree advocacy, biology, identification, maintenance, pests, and pruning. Previously, he worked as a retail nursery manager and for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, where he collaborated with private landowners, cities, and counties across east central Iowa, in their recovery from the historic derecho and in replanting for the future. Nick holds a BA from the University of Northern Iowa. He began his career as a public school educator. His passion for education and arboriculture is strengthened through his work, teaching Iowans about the importance of trees with innovative instruction and research-based science. Outside of work, Nick is a cross-country track and soccer coach, husband, father, and caregiver to many redbud cultivars. ❁

We hope to see you at the 2025 Project GREEN Winter Garden Forums!

Mary Gantz GREEN Grants trees planted for area kindergartens

By Jo Pattschull

Once again in 2024, Project GREEN has provided trees for the kindergarten classes at twenty Iowa City School District elementary buildings. The five-to-six-year-old trees planted this year belong exclusively to, and are entrusted to the care of, each kindergarten class. Each tree culminated the classroom study of trees, their parts, what they need to grow, and what they give to the environment. This year the kindergarten kids at Longfellow Elementary welcomed an ironwood tree (*Ostrya virginiana*), planted in the nature area of the playground. The students promised to nurture it and, as they walked back to their classrooms after the planting ceremony, they were deciding on a proper name for their tree. ❁

A gift to Project GREEN your legacy for the environment

Are your loved ones aware of any plans you have in your will to leave a gift to Project GREEN? Do your loved ones know where your will is, and how to get access to it? If you have any questions about naming Project GREEN in your will, please contact us.

Having a valid will or trust in place is the best way to ensure your wishes are carried out and your loved ones are provided for after you're gone. During a difficult time of loss, your family will need clear instructions from you.

Here are some tips to help make things easier for your loved ones:

- Make sure your will or trust accurately reflects your current wishes and relationships.
- Store the original signed document, along with a copy, in a secure but easily accessible location, such as a fireproof safe (not a safe deposit box at a bank). Your estate-planning attorney may also be able to store your will securely.
- Destroy old drafts of your documents to avoid confusion.
- Inform your executor or personal representative of the location of your will or trust, as well as the contact information for your attorney.
- If your will is stored at a bank, ensure your executor has access to it after you pass away.

By taking these steps, you can provide your loved ones with the guidance they'll need during a challenging time.

Project GREEN wants to honor your wishes. Our nonprofit organization supports efforts to educate citizens about the importance of conservation practices and preserving the natural beauty of the environment.



Use this QR code to donate to Project GREEN online

Open Gardens Weekend 2024

By Beth Cody

Project GREEN's Open Gardens Weekend 2024, held the weekend of July 13–14 was a great success. The event featured more than 20 private gardens in Iowa City and Coralville, some never before open to the public.

Despite the sultry weather, hundreds of garden lovers enthusiastically visited the wide variety of gardens shared by our generous garden hosts. Holding the event over two days allowed time for friendly chats between hosts and visitors—a wonderful opportunity to meet knowledgeable gardeners and enjoy the beautiful results of their work!

Maps showing the participating gardens were available only at sponsor locations and at Ashton House during the event. Sponsor funding covers event costs, and remaining funds are used to support Project GREEN's community beautification projects. Eight local businesses sponsored the **Open Gardens Weekend 2024**, allowing the event to be free of charge. We are so grateful for the generosity of our 2024 business sponsors:

- City of Coralville
- Fiddlehead Gardens
- Forever Green, Inc.
- Hills Bank and Trust
- Hy-Vee
- Iowa City Landscaping
- Lenoch & Cilek Ace Hardware
- Rindy, Inc.
- Sanders Creek Co.

The Open Gardens Weekend 2025 will be held the weekend of June 28–29, 2025, a bit earlier than in previous years, to show different plants (and to increase the chance of cooler temperatures).

We would love to include your garden in our event, and if you know of a beautiful garden in Iowa City or Coralville, please let us know the address, and we'll contact the garden owner.



Don and Lynn Bolin's atmospheric garden is filled with meandering paths through rare and beautiful plants, their sculpture collection creating the ambience of a Garden of Good and Evil.



Crowds thronged Dr. Rajagopal's fantastically flower-filled garden, which he generously shared for the first time in our event (and we hope not the last time).



Lisa & Mike Haverkamp's 1920s historical landscape was the perfect setting for displaying their heirloom seed collection—and for sharing samples of Mike's home brew!



A peaceful corner of Paula Sanan's Japanese-style garden under curly, weeping foliage.



Cheryl Svatos's garden is filled with brightly colored plants, beautiful statues, and lovely vignettes such as this corner seat.

Welcome to the 2024 Project GREEN Gardens! 820 Park Road, Iowa City

By Diane Allen

It's been another busy and successful year at the Project GREEN Gardens. Our volunteers began their first week's work on Monday, May 6, and will finish the last of their garden chores October 28, week 26. We will meet November 4 for a 2024 volunteer brunch celebration. Each week the volunteer work is recorded: It's very possible the 2024 volunteers may match last year's total of one thousand hours! What a wonderful accomplishment for a talented group of extraordinary gardeners.

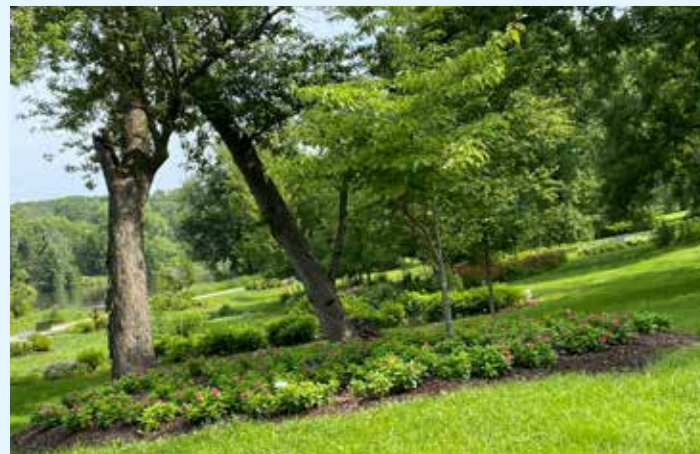


Left to right: Volunteers Chris Ostrander, Herky, Pat Yeggy, and Cindy Parsons

Project GREEN cares for the eight-plus-acre property that surrounds the Ned Ashton House. Volunteers have worked for eleven years to make the gardens a special place for all who visit. This Iowa City park is surrounded by the meandering Iowa River, on one long side, and by Park Road and Normandy Drive on two short sides. (To help you visualize its location, Hancher Auditorium is at the corner of Park Road and Dubuque Street, and Park Road eventually becomes Rocky Shore Drive: The Project GREEN Gardens are at the Rocky Shore Drive end of Park Road.) There are twenty-six parking spaces available off 820 Park Road; more parking can be found along Normandy Drive. You will know



Elephant ears and lantanas are becoming favorites at the gardens.



Looking north from Mary's Tree.

you're in the right spot if there's a Ned Ashton Herky in the NW corner of the parking lot.

The long list of flowerbeds that Project GREEN continues to care for and share with anyone passing by includes the Triangle, the Quilt, Mary's Tree, the Circle, Evelyn's Corner, Max and Susie's memorial tree bed, the Nancy Seiberling peony and line-out beds, Jim's Berm, the Little Free Library, seven beds called the Dashes, Ligularia Dell, plus six containers and two red wagons. Our newest 2024 flowerbed additions include West Oval 3, a catalpa bed, the Master Gardeners & Project GREEN prairie bed, and a patio garden along the house.



Looking from the Triangle east to the Quilt.

Project GREEN hosted several events at the gardens during the summer months. One fundraiser, which we called the Party in the Park, was held June 22. Despite very hot temperatures, guests enjoyed cookies and lemonade along with tours of the gardens.

Project GREEN has been given permission by the Iowa City Parks and Recreation department to use the Ashton House garage.



A jazz combo band, SloMoBop, entertained guests at the June 22 Party in the Park.

Many items from Project GREEN's past and present are stored therein. When a volunteer noticed printed signs that Project GREEN had used in the past, it was decided to use them again around the park. In fact, one volunteer printed a few new signs with new wording and color, telling the story of Project GREEN.



Our Project GREEN volunteers continue to be our VIPs. Each week we have a different group who show up at 9 a.m. and work until 11 a.m. Some volunteers have been with Project GREEN for decades, and others have decided to join our merry band of



gardeners for the first time. All are welcome! We have tools to lend anyone needing a rake or shovel. We share bug spray and sunscreen. Experienced gardeners match up with newcomers. It's a happy and friendly group.

This year's big project was to trim the over-twenty-foot-tall 'Blue Muffin' arrowwood viburnums. These shrubs, growing on the north end of the parking lot, were cut back to waist high and pruned to perfection by volunteers. Now the front yard will get more light and air. Each viburnum has been watered and mulched. Time to rest over the winter months and return in the spring of 2025.



To keep up with the gardens from May to October, check Project GREEN's website (www.projectgreen.org), and read my weekly blog telling of our gardening progress. Thanks to Beth Cody for including the blogs each week on our website.

Please consider joining our volunteers! Our first meeting next spring will be May 5, 2025; our year will end October 27, 2025. Please contact me, dlallen16@hotmail.com, if you are interested in joining us. Until then, happy gardening! ☘

Photo at left: Week 22, September 30th's All-Star Gardeners were (left to right) Pat Yeggy, Mary Laughlin, Jim Peters, Linda Schreiber, Evelyn Frey, Monica Hoherz, Lisa Haverkamp, Rina Sjolund, and Susan Ahrens. Not pictured, but other All-Star Gardeners for September 30 were Hetty Hall, Cindy Parsons, Chris Ostrander, Erin Buscher, Dhyana Kaufman, and Diane Allen.

2023 Project GREEN Donors

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in memory of Mary Gantz
Jane McCune
William Rubright
in memory of Emilie J. Rubright
Ken Williamson
Frank & Gail Zlatnik
in memory of Nancy Seiberling
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Art Tellin
Nan Trefz
Marcia Wegman
Eugene and Nancy Wehrheim
Pat and Betty White
Kathleen Williams
Larry Wilson and Mary Matthews
Martha Wilson

We are so grateful for our wonderful donors and volunteers. Your gifts make our beautification work possible. Project GREEN funds continue to be needed for our plantings of colorful annuals, tree maintenance and protection, and watering trees as needed - which this year was a large expense! Our funds also continue to provide Open Gardens Weekend garden tours and the Second Sunday Garden Forums to the public, all for free. Project GREEN is proud of all that we are able to accomplish each year, and we could not do it without your help!

Project GREEN adds a Prairie Garden in 2024

By Linda Schreiber

Are you longing for a day trip to explore a unique garden? Whether you are searching for ideas, beauty, or inspiration, Project GREEN Gardens, 820 Park Road, is the place to visit. Located along the busy Iowa River Trail, visitors will see multiple gardens—from colorful annuals to combination annual/perennial layouts, and now a new prairie garden. The effort reflects the collaborative work of dedicated volunteers and Iowa City staff.

Master Gardener Linda Schreiber, with a team of Master Gardener volunteers, worked with Iowa City Superintendent of Parks and Forestry Tyler Baird, Project GREEN co-presidents Diane Allen and Cindy Parsons, and volunteers Bill Blair and Jim Peters to select appropriate plants for the mostly shady location facing the Iowa River.

Tyler Baird met with volunteers on Sunday, May 19, outlining the benefit of prairies, the City's efforts with natives, including the use of a "drift" design employed in many of the City's green spaces. This design mimics natural plant communities by grouping plants instead of scattering them individually. It not only replicates nature but also supports movement and distribution of seeds, enhancing the garden's biodiversity. Since arriving in Iowa City, Tyler and the City's Park crews have transformed public spaces with native perennials. These efforts are helping the City achieve its environmental climate goals.

The 60' x 24' oval prairie garden was prepped in 2023. Three existing serviceberry trees, three buttonbushes, Joe Pye weed, goldenrod, and Canada anemone were retained. More than three hundred plants—in all sizes from plugs to gallon containers—were installed with the help of twelve MG volunteers.

Plants installed include *brome sedge*, *Carex bromoides*; *Arkansas bluestar*, *Amsonia hubrichtii*; *white wood aster*, *Eurybia divaricatus* 'Eastern Star'; *Culver's root*, *Veronicastrum virginicum*; *little bluestem*, *Schizachyrium scoparium*; *rattlesnake master*, *Eryngium yuccifolium*; *nodding onion*, *Allium cernuum*; *wild geranium*, *Geranium maculatum*; *butterfly weed*, *Asclepias tuberosa*; *prairie blazing star*, *Liatris pycnostachya*; *white yarrow*, *Achillea* 'New Vintage White'. Plans included *red switchgrass*, *Panicum virgatum* 'Shenandoah'; however, it was not available.

A few weeks after the plant installation, a June storm took out one of the existing serviceberry trees and a portion of a nearby silver maple that landed in the new prairie. Iowa City crews quickly removed the damage and the new garden immediately recovered.

Master Gardeners also planted a 14' x 44' area on Melrose Avenue near Westgate Street with two hundred plants of *Sporobolus heterolepis* (prairie dropseed) and *Calamintha nepeta* (calamintha). Melrose Gardens are affectionately called the Dottie Ray Gardens for the longtime Iowa City broadcaster who lived along the street.

Ample spring and summer rains have given the new prairie garden a great start. Volunteers visit both gardens weekly to remove weeds and check their progress. 🌱

Twelve Johnson County MG volunteers, including four interns—Angela Lambertz, Celeste Ptak, Kathryn Hall, and Kelly Vinquis—plus Linda Schreiber, Chris Parizek, Laura Bonifazi, Sadia Embree, Michael Hesseltine, Jean Holtzhammer, Roger Jensen, and John Weeg helped plant the new garden.



Photo at right: Project GREEN Gardens, 820 Park Road, now features a prairie garden. The new garden was planted in May 2024. This view faces the historic Ashton House.

Winter Seed Sowing

By Sue Terveer-Mullins

In the dead of winter, Iowa gardeners often begin dreaming of new plants to grow, seeds to start, and the design of new garden beds. This coming winter, the 2025 volunteers at the Ashton House Project GREEN Gardens will try our hand at winter seed sowing. This involves sowing seeds in opaque or clear "mini-greenhouses," then allowing them to remain outside for the winter to experience the cold stratification that many seeds need to germinate. Varieties that work particularly well in Iowa are self-sowing species native to Iowa, as well as those needing a cold period to germinate before warmer spring temperatures arrive. In the next few weeks, PG volunteers will look at design plans for the 2025 garden beds and purchase seeds to try the winter seed-sowing method.

Very few of our PG volunteers have tried this way of seed starting. My search on YouTube yielded a plethora of tutorials on how to cut open and prepare plastic vessels with drainage holes (jugs, in our case), plant seeds in dampened regular potting soil, properly label the variety, close the jugs securely with tape, and, later, keep the seeds moist. Iowa's dry winter winds are harsh so we will watch our winter weather; if we do not have sufficient snow and rain to filter through the open cap area of the jugs, we may need to spritz an occasional bit of water inside the jugs to keep the seeds from drying out.

All gardeners know that planting seeds (inside or outside) proves to be an economical way of trying new cultivars to enhance any garden space. We're hopeful that this outdoor winter seed-sowing project will be as easy as it sounds. Compared to indoor seed starting, we will bypass the necessities of indoor space we often lack in our homes, seed-starting mix, constant attention, pricey grow lights, and transplanting seedlings to larger pots. Indoor seed starts also must be hardened off before seedlings can be planted outdoors. With winter sowing, you plant seeds and provide little care before transplanting seedlings directly into the warm soil of spring ground.

Please check in with us in the spring of 2025 to see the results of our winter seed sowing. We are hopeful we will have sprouting green seedlings come April and May. Green thumbs and fingers crossed for success—it's all about trial-and-error and having fun with gardening along the way! 🌱



Photo credit: TheReidHomestead.com

PROJECT GREEN

City Hall
410 E. Washington St.
Iowa City, Iowa 52240

Return Service Requested



Project GREEN is a nonprofit organization that supports efforts to educate citizens about the importance of conservation practices and preserving the natural beauty of the environment. The organization celebrated fifty-five years of service to the community in 2023!

CLIP AND SAVE

Second Sunday Garden Forums for 2025

Sunday, January 12, 2025, 2 – 4 pm, Second Sunday Garden Forum at Iowa City Public Library, "Hügelkultur, Water, and Roots: Why Bury Old Wood?" with John Weeg

Sunday, February 9, 2025, 2 – 4 pm, Second Sunday Garden Forum at Iowa City Public Library, "Creating a Pollinator MicroPrairie in Your Landscape" with Karelyn "Kari" Pohl.

Sunday, March 9, 2024, 2 – 4 pm, Second Sunday Garden Forum at Iowa City Public Library, "Protecting Biodiversity: Avoid Invasive Species" with Nick McGrath.

Project GREEN Gardens at Ashton House

We will meet every Monday, beginning May 4, 2025.
Project GREEN Gardens, 9–11 a.m.
820 Park Road, Iowa City
Project GREEN volunteers—& new volunteers are welcome!

Our work will finish Monday, October 27, 2025.

Open Gardens Weekend 2025

Saturday, June 28, 4–8 p.m.
Sunday, June 29, 10 a.m.–2 p.m.

Check www.projectgreen.org for information

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Roger Swartz begins his end-of-year improvements to the Little Free Library (LFL) at the Project GREEN Gardens at Ashton House on a cool October day. Roger is the designer and master carpenter of the LFL. It stands at the edge of the Triangle flowerbed and is open for business year-round. Read more about Project GREEN Gardens on page 4.

Please contact us at iowacityprojectgreen@gmail.com to reach any of the above individuals and for address changes.

Be sure to check out our updated and easy-to-navigate website: www.projectgreen.org, and follow us on Facebook.