



# the cultivator

The newsletter for Master Gardeners serving  
Champaign, Ford, Iroquois, and Vermilion Counties



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### Nature's Own Remedy

Cold and flu season is upon us. The signs are all around us—sniffling, sneezing, coughing, and wheezing. Is it allergies, a cold, the flu, or something more sinister?



There are some simple steps we can all take to try to stay healthy when those around us are not. Wash your hands often as many of these viruses can remain active for a very long time on surfaces such as doorknobs, shopping carts, phones and remote controls (one of the germiest places in a hotel room!). Stay well rested, well hydrated, and well nourished. And perhaps consider taking a good dose of .... *Nature*.

Research shows that our immune systems are strengthened when we partake in the great outdoors, according to an article in Science Daily (<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/09/150916162120.htm>). And this research is coming from our own University of Illinois, folks! According to Ming Kuo, Director of the Landscape and Human Health Laboratory at the U of I., "Nature doesn't just have one or two active ingredients. It's more like a multivitamin that provides us with all sorts of the nutrients we need. That's how nature can protect us from all these different kinds of diseases-- cardiovascular, respiratory, mental health, musculoskeletal, etc. -- simultaneously."

The original article appeared earlier this year in the journal *Frontiers in Psychology*. If you would like to learn more about this "natural" health aide, you can visit the original article with all the why's and how's and details by visiting this link: <http://journal.frontiersin.org/article/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.01093/full>.

Now get out there, go for a nice leisurely stroll, and get healthy. ..And why not invite a friend along?



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Garden Swap or Sell Event by Anne Hudson  
November 7, 10 AM to 2 PM  
U. of I. Idea Garden

Now that it's November, what are you doing? You may have helped clean up a community garden; you have likely cleaned up your garden. Perhaps you realize you have gardening "stuff" you don't need anymore, but you also have holes in your gardening "stuff" collection. We can help!

Join the Champaign County Master Gardeners for a "Swap or Sell" event at the Idea Garden from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM on Saturday, November 7.

The idea behind the "Swap or Sell" is to help us all find good homes for those gardening/yard care items we have but just don't use and that are taking up space in the garage/shed/basement. [Note: this does NOT include old tennis rackets, bicycle parts, or holiday decorations! Also, we ask that you don't bring any chemicals, fertilizers, or other potentially harmful materials.] If you have garden tools, pots, nifty gizmos, equipment, pink flamingos, general supplies, or other similar items (even garden furniture) that are usable but that you want to clear out, this event is for you. Bring the gardening "stuff" you don't need anymore; your colleagues will do the same. We'll even have some things from the Idea Garden Shed that are not needed any longer for the Idea Garden.

Put a price tag on your "stuff" and sell it off. Or mark it "Free" if you just really want it gone. If you find a like-minded Gardener, swap your "stuff" for something of theirs. This is an opportunity to find a good home for the stuff you've been moving around or tripping over in your shed/garage/garden and find things you can really use.

We'll be Putting The Garden to Bed that same morning, so this is a special \*two-for-one\* opportunity! Putting The Garden to Bed starts at 9:00 a.m. Swap or Sell will start slightly later (we do want the work done first, please) Feel free to stop in any time before 2:00 p.m. If you have many items, heavy or bulky items, limited parking will be available on the grass next to the Idea Garden Shed.



### Holiday Gift Wish List

Looking for that perfect gift for your favorite gardener—or a hint for someone wondering what to get YOU? Here are suggestions from Sara Taber, and she even drew us some illustrations. She REALLY wants these!

- A hose bubbler--put on the hose end to dissipate water force, for new delicate plantings in loose soil.
- A garden knife—this one looks useful for so many situations--opening bags, weeding, cutting through root balls—it might replace 3 other tools!



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Champaign County Master Gardeners  
Annual Business Meeting, Potluck, and Program  
November 17, 6:00 PM, Auditorium  
by Dixie Jackson



Join Champaign County Master Gardeners on **Tuesday, November 17, 2015** at 6 p.m. The evening will consist of a potluck dinner, the Annual Business Meeting, and a program featuring University of Illinois Extension Horticulture Educator, Jennifer Schultz Nelson. All festivities will be held in the Farm Bureau auditorium at 801 N. Country Fair Drive.

The potluck begins at 6:00 P.M. Bring a main dish, salad, or dessert to share with fellow Master Gardener volunteers. Assorted chicken will be provided. The business meeting, with reports and election of officers, will start promptly at 7:00 P.M.

Registration is required as food will be provided. Please register in advance at the University of Illinois Extension website: <http://web.extension.illinois.edu/cfiv/>

Following the meeting, Jennifer Schultz Nelson will discuss “Winter Houseplant Care,” focusing on tips to help our indoor plants flourish throughout the winter. Jennifer will also address special needs of popular holiday gift plants.

Jennifer is the horticulture educator for University of Illinois Extension in DeWitt, Macon and Piatt Counties. She joined the staff in August 2004. Her responsibilities include development and coordination of horticulture programs. She holds a B.S. in biology from Benedictine University in Lisle, Illinois, and a Ph.D. in horticulture from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She was fascinated with houseplants from an early age, thanks to her mom, and has grown her own houseplants since grade school. Today, the tradition continues, as her young son, Andrew, loves to help her with the evolving collection of houseplants at the Nelson home.

## Herb Salt from Judith Liebman

4 c. Morton’s Kosher Salt

Large bunch of sage, fresh, washed, stems and roots included

1 1/2 to 2 tsp. red pepper flakes

Large bunch of fresh thyme, washed, stems and roots included

2 to 4 cloves of fresh garlic



1. Place 2 c. of salt and rest of ingredients into a food processor.  
Blend until herbs and garlic are completely ground.
2. Pour mixture into bowl and add remaining 2 cups of salt. Whisk until well blended.
3. Store in glass jars. [I save my glass peanut butter, jam, and mustard jars for this purpose.]
4. Enjoy!

The salt smells wonderful and makes a lovely gift for friends. I keep a jar by the range and use this salt for all of my savory cooking, including seasoning the water for pasta.

*Tip for storing sage and thyme from the garden:* Tuck bunches into zip lock bags with a paper towel and store on a lower shelf in the refrigerator. The herbs often last for several months.



## 2015 Terrific Annual Trial Plants by Ann Tice

We were again fortunate to receive annuals from the wonderful Ball Horticultural and Proven Winner companies to evaluate—87 different types. A few of the Ball plants did not germinate well at Country Arbors who so kindly grow the Ball plants for us. The Proven Winner plants are all plugs and are grown at Parkland by our Master Gardener greenhouse group. Many are new and will not be released. What a thrill to see these come in, be planted, and thrive despite record breaking rains (and sometimes in torrents of 3” at a time) in June & July followed by intense heat in August!

They are all evaluated in groupings around the Champaign County Master Gardener’s Idea Garden each month and rated as to:

- Overall impression,
- Percent of bloom coverage,
- Pests,
- Diseases, and
- Comments made on most of them.

Let’s face it—we get GREAT plants, and even the “average” annuals trialed were mostly lovely. But anything that achieves a “medal” is worth noting. A Gold Medal is extremely difficult to attain (and wow, are we fussy judges!!), so these are absolutely FANTASTIC plants. This is a summary of the incredible plants we trialed this year—from the four absolutely perfect scoring ones, to monthly winners, September Show Stoppers (always great plants to look for), to some that were, . . . Well . . . *duds* in the long run. The last part has some general notes on the plants.

PLEASE, if you really want the best information, email me for the detailed Excel form—it says SO much more about these incredible annuals, and gives you information on the Silver and Bronze Medal Winners as well! You may email me at: [dermgood@gmail.com](mailto:dermgood@gmail.com).

\*\*\* AND NOW, THE PERFECT WINNERS ARE ... \*\*\*



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[Trial Plants, continued]

PERFECT scores ALL season (scoring an AMAZING 5 out of 5 rating ALL season!):

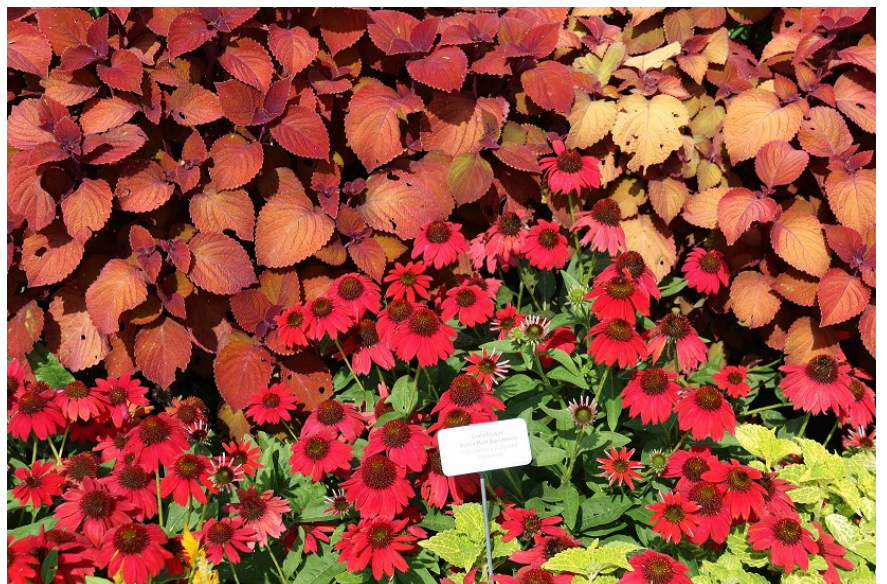


## Coleus 'ColorBlaze Velveteen'

This was perfection. In a container, it can be 3 to 3 ½ feet tall, and fabulous in the ground also—sun OR shade. A gorgeous bushy plant, with no “spindly naked legs,” that can fill up the border in front in a mass planting or in back, with richly colored burgundy and jewel like fuchsia centered leaves. All of the ‘ColorBlaze’ series of coleus were developed in Florida and bred to take the heat AND sun—yay!

## Coleus 'Campfire'

Stunning, full plant with an incredible color blend. Full healthy leaves are suffused with rust, purple, orange, and a touch of magenta. This baby can set off so *MANY* other plants in a color scheme—from the hot colors of ruby, yellow, and orange to deep, mysterious purples and deep burgundies. It seemed to do well in shade or sun also. What a delight! It gives one of my favorite coleus, the coleus ‘ColorBlaze Sedona’, a run for its money.



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*[Trial Plants, continued]*

PERFECT scores ALL season (scoring an AMAZING 5 out of 5 rating ALL season!) [continued]:

## **Petunia 'Supertunia Orchid Charm'**

It stood out from a distance with a free flowing waterfall of lavender pink blooms with deeper violet eye and subtle veining on a full lush plant. Like most of the 'Charm' series, this also "buries its dead" so there is no need for deadheading. Definitely a "Lovely Lavender Lady!"



## **Petunia 'Supertunia Morning Glory Charm'**

For the second year in a row, this was a smash hit. Billowing blooms of lavender blue with white eye and silvery white backs as they flutter in the wind. It was a top winner last year and keeps its title as a Blooming Wonder.



*(Note: For the rest of this, I am cruelly leaving off the single quotes - ' - for the plant cultivar names—it makes reading it so much easier in a packed paragraph listing. Please forgive this grievous error!)*

[Trial Plants, continued]

## GOLD MEDAL WINNERS 2015:

- Angelonia Orchid Pink
- Coleus types: ColorBlaze Apple Brandy; ColorBlaze Velveteen, Campfire.
- Dahlia Mystic Illusion.
- Marigold Taishan Yellow Improved
- Petunias: Supertunia Honey, Supertunia Orchid Charm, Supertunia Pink Star, Supertunia Rose Blast Charm, Supertunia Sangria Charm, Supertunia Violet Star Charm, Supertunia Vista Bubblegum, Supertunia Vista Fuchsia, Supertunia Vista Silverberry, Supertunia Morning Glory Charm.
- Phlox Intensia White,
- Rudbeckia Tiger Eye,
- Sedum Lemon Coral.



All of these were fabulous and highly recommended—they were the Super Stars of the year!

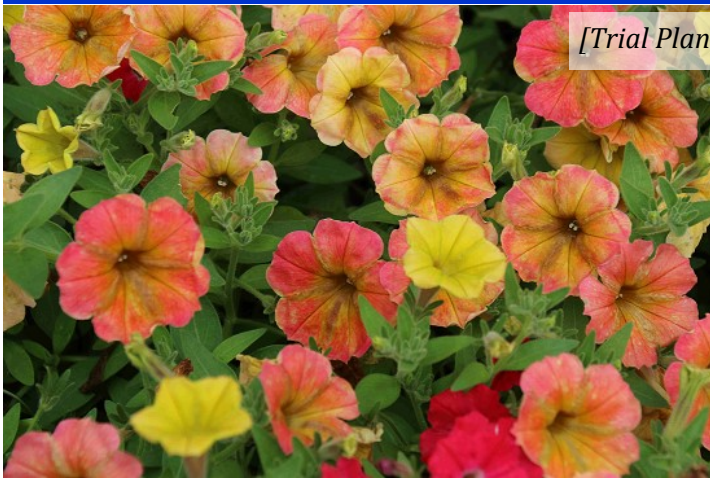


**Angelonia 'Orchid Pink'** (left) was a petite delight filled with frilly pinkish lavender blooms nearly all season.

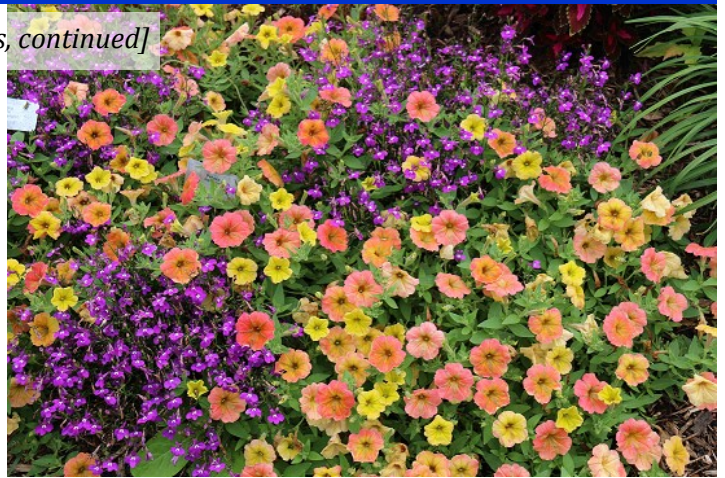
**Dahlia 'Mystic Illusion'** (right) was spectacular again, and is quite resistant to powdery mildew. Its majestic deep black-burgundy foliage sets off the bright sunny blooms infused with peachy orange near the center of the dark "eyes".



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[Trial Plants, continued]

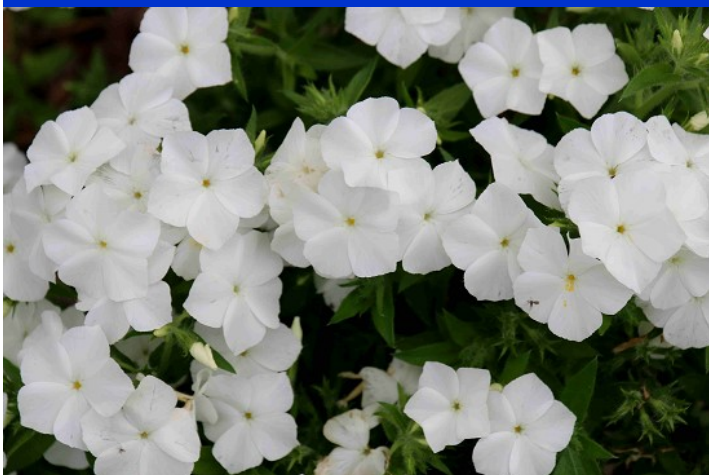


**Petunia 'Supertunia Honey'** was a sweet delight with a kaleidoscope of colors all season. Blooms change with age from fluttery yellow to honey gold, pretty pink, and orange sherbet colors. It makes an incredible pairing with purples or violets, such as with Lobelia Lucia Ultraviolet, above right.

**Petunias 'Supertunia Pink Star Charm'** (right) and **'Violet Star Charm'** (below left) enchanted us with incredible pinwheels of lively color completely covering the plants all season. They were stand outs, as was the dazzlingly brilliant fuchsia and soft pink **Petunia 'Supertunia Rose Blast Charm'** (below right), a vigorous knockout bloomer spreading a yard wide from just one amazing plant.



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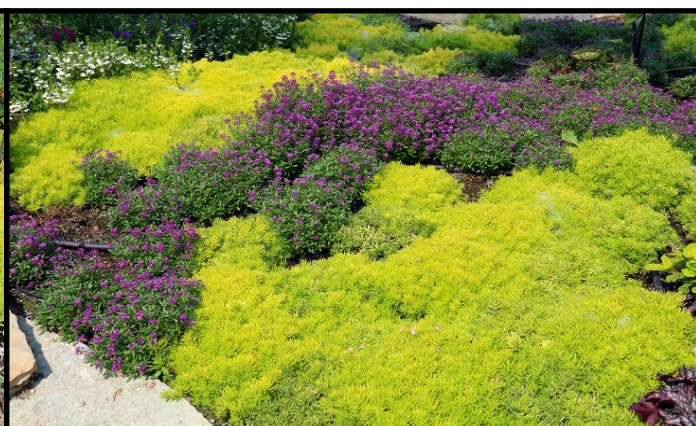


*[Trial Plants, continued]*

Phlox 'Intensia White' was quite impressive and seemed so much more vigorous than others we have tried. It was COVERED with happy frilly pure white blooms ALL season. Just don't plant this with any aggressive garden "thug" plants that might overtake its beauty.



Two other plants stunned us with their beauty: Rudbeckia 'Tiger Eye' and the foliage-only Sedum 'Lemon Coral'. Rudbeckia 'Tiger Eye' was an INCREDIBLE eye catcher with brilliant huge yellow blooms evenly covering the top of the plant for most of the season. Sedum 'Lemon Coral' was a compact, full, neat and tidy ball of blazing yellow-chartreuse fine foliage. It supercharged other plant colors it was planted next to (see below) and was undaunted by weather, disease, or pests. I just wish this were a perennial here!



[Trial Plants, continued]

## SILVER MEDAL WINNERS:

- Coleus Flame Thrower Chipotle
- Coleus Flame Thrower Spiced Curry
- Impatiens Rockapulco Wisteria
- Marigold Taishan Orange Improved
- Petunia Easy Wave Silver
- Petunia Tidal Wave Red Velour
- Phlox Intensia White Improved
- Portulaca Mojave Fuchsia
- Portulaca Mojave Yellow
- Zinnia Double Zahara Cherry Improved
- Zinnia Double Zahara Salmon Rose.



## BRONZE MEDAL WINNERS:

- Coleus Flame Thrower Chili
- Diascia Flirtation Glacier White
- Ipomoea (Sweet potato) Sweet Caroline Sweetheart Lime
- Lobelia Lucia Ultraviolet
- Petunia Supertunia Indigo Charm
- Petunia Supertunia Watermelon Charm
- Petunia Tidal Wave Red Velour
- Portulaca Mojave Red
- Portulaca Mojave Tangerine
- Verbena bonarienses Meteor Shower
- Verbena Superbena Burgundy
- Verbena Superbena Pink Shades
- Verbena Superbena Royale Red
- Zinnia Double Zahara Yellow



Email me for info on the above great plants.

**MONTHLY WINNERS.** Some plants show particularly well at various times of the season, so if someone wants a good show for, say, June—look into those for that month. These are the plants out of ALL 87 varieties which we tried out that looked the best that month—they had that “WOW!” factor and stood out.

### June Winners:

Bidens Campfire Fireburst, Marigold Taishan Yellow

### July Winners:

Coleus Campfire, Petunia Supertunia Rose Blast Charm, Petunia Supertunia Honey, Petunia Supertunia Violet Star Charm, Rudbeckia Tiger Eye, Sedum Lemon Coral

### August Winners:

Petunia Supertunia Honey, Petunia Supertunia Pink Star Charm, Petunia Supertunia Rose Blast Charm, Petunia Supertunia Violet Star Charm, Petunia Easy Wave Silver, Rudbeckia Tiger Eye, Sedum Lemon Coral

**September Show Stoppers:** These are plants that looked GREAT by mid September, earning them bonus points. It is hard to look spiffy after a hot, dry humid August and so many annuals have completely given up by September—but not these stunners:

**Coleus:** ColorBlaze Apple Brandy; ColorBlaze Velveten, Campfire.

**Petunias:** Supertunia Pink Star, Supertunia Sangria Charm, Supertunia Violet Star Charm, Supertunia Vista Bubblegum, Supertunia Vista Fuchsia, Supertunia Vista Silverberry, Supertunia Morning Glory Charm. Marigold Taishan Orange, Phlox Intensia White, Portulaca Mojave Fuchsia, Portulaca Mojave Yellow, Rudbeckia Tiger Eye, and Sedum Lemon Coral.

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*[Trial Plants, continued]*

## **PLANTS THAT POOPED OUT:**

NOTE: just about all of our plants were great, with an average score of “3,” meaning a nice average plant—but some really bombed out by early August and definitely looked bad by early September. It might have been the weather; it might have been other factors; but these poor babies just didn’t last well.

**Gerbera Hello! Pumpkin** (contrast that one with our no-trial EZ Days Tangerine on the east border which did well!). Hello! Pumpkin had only a few small blooms and just sat there a lot.

**Isotoma (Laurentia) Beth’s Blue.** Slow to develop, finally bloomed in July, insignificant for first half of season, then browned out and mostly died by early September.

**Nemesia Sunsatia Blood Orange.** It was exciting for the first part of the season and gorgeous, but by early August crumpled and looked unimpressive. By September, one would hardly pay attention to it—no blooms.

**Petunia Supertunia Picasso in Blue.** Average plant with pretty colored blooms, but by early August it was struggling, had yellowed foliage and few blooms, and by September it looked an awful mess of yellow and pitiful.

**Verbena Superbena Sparkling Ruby.** This was average to start with, although had very nifty bi-color blooms, but by early August was just limping along with few blooms and weak looking plants.

**Verbena Superbena Peachy Keen.** This has been a substandard plant for many of the years we have trialed it. I only know one gardener who can keep it looking nice and she keeps it in a container. It does have a pleasant peachy color, but they started out weaker plants than the other verbena, then were struggling and substandard all of July and August, ending up dismal by early September.



## **GENERAL NOTES ON PLANTS AND PLANT TYPES:**

**VIGOR = A measure of how big and how fast a plant will grow.** I noticed recently in a growers catalog that they have started putting a 1 to 4 rating of a plant’s vigor. I wish this would be noted on plant tags and advertised more. Why?? . . . Because it helps when planting combinations in the ground, but also especially in containers! When planting a lovely, Vigor “2” plant with a sweet potato, Cleome ‘Senorita Rosalita’, or Petunia ‘Supertunia Vista Bubblegum,’ all of which have a Vigor rating of 4, the latter would quickly overshadow the less vigorous plant. Phlox ‘Intensia White’ or Angelonia ‘Orchid Pink’ are delicate, delightful blooming wonders, but each would be “eaten” by more aggressive plants unless adequate space is given between them.

## **Overall Plant notes:**

Angelonias have fabulous blooming for most of first 2/3 of the season with perfect shiny foliage all season. The blooms, however, dwindle in most by mid- to late-August, and by early September are mostly gone—time to plant mums! An exception was the more petite, frilly, little bloomer, Angelonia ‘Orchid Pink’ and to a lesser extent Angelonia ‘Sky Blue’. In some areas these kept on going if they were not crowded out by other plants nearby, and they looked sweet and perky in mid- to late-September.

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*[Trial Plants, continued]*

We got to try out several black-burgundy leafed dahlias this year: Dahlia ‘Mystic Illusion’ (which has been improved), and also new ones—‘Dahlightful Lively Lavender’, ‘Dahlightful Georgia Peach’, and ‘Dahlightful Sultry Scarlet’. These have gorgeous colored blooms, but the Dahlightful series were quite disappointing as they suffered fairly severe powdery mildew on most of the leaves—except the Dahlia ‘Mystic Illusion’—it came through quite well with just a tad of mildew. ‘Mystic Illusion’ got a Silver Medal for performance, but the others sadly were “medal-less”. All are tubers.

“Gramma’s” petunias of the past have had a problem with becoming long and leggy and turning into “petunia on a stick”—a zig-zag of yellowed/brown stems with a single bloom at the very end—pathetic. That is, unless regularly deadheaded, fertilized, and babied. Newer petunias like the ‘Supertunia Vista’ series, ‘Supertunia Charm’ series, some of the ‘Easy Wave’ (especially this year’s ‘Easy Wave Silver’ was a delight!) and ‘Tidal Wave’ series tend not to do this and last much better. The Vista and Charm series in particular are notable for prolific floods of blooms that cover the older blooms like a waterfall, making them gorgeous ALL season as they just bloom their little hearts out!! We have had fabulous success with these over the years and, amazingly, they have done this WITHOUT our deadheading OR regularly fertilizing them. Ahhhh, just what the gardener wants—easy, nonstop blooming without much care except watering, by golly!! So, plant these with Osmocote or slow release fertilizer at the beginning of the season and sit back and enjoy the show!

It is common for verbena to “take a summer vacation” with the heat of early August and for most of rest of season by surviving but not blooming much. An exception was Verbena ‘Superbena Pink Shades’, and Verbena ‘Superbena Large Lilac Blue’. They had fewer blooms during the early season but still looked good.

Zinnias are prone to mildew, and many often have some die in the middle of a grouping. This can happen occasionally with the ‘Profusion’ series, but less so than in other zinnias, and is quite rare in the ‘Zahara’ series. The Zaharas seem to have it all—disease resistance, good clean foliage, bigger and more abundant blooms, and a nice rounded, compact habit overall. There is some sprawling of all zinnias by mid-September, however.

Well, I hope you are getting excited for the 2016 “New Annuals” articles that will be splashing covers of the mid-winter gardening magazines. We will already have an advance idea of what is great and would work well in our own gardens! I’m looking forward to shopping for *any* of the Gold Medal Winners next spring!!

Again, our thanks to the two companies, Country Arbors, our greenhouse volunteers, and all the wonderful volunteers that make our plant “infants” grow and thrive at the Idea Garden from the May planting onward!



## The BEST of the BEST—Amazing Easy Care Annuals

by Ann Tice, Champaign County Master Gardener Trial Plant Chair  
and Avid-Rabid Gardener



If you want to add a dash of season-long color to your garden, what better way than to pop in some annuals? However, some are good only in spring, some fizzle out in summer heat like July fireworks duds, and some are fussy “fiddle with” plants. So, what plants will thrive all season? If you want to put your money into annual plants that come the closest to no care, no deadheading, long blooming, AND showy, THESE are the best I have seen in 15 years of evaluating annual trial plants. Apply a long-acting fertilizer like Osmocote at planting, water as needed, and sit back and enjoy the show!

- Cleome 'Senorita Rosalita' —repeat winner, tall and floriferous.
- Coleus: 'ColorBlaze' series: PW, 'ColorBlaze Dipt in Wine', 'ColorBlaze Kingswood Torch', 'ColorBlaze Royale Glissade', 'ColorBlaze Velvet Mocha', 'Colorblaze Lime Time', 'ColorBlaze Sedona', 'ColorBlaze Alligator Tears'. Coleus 'ColorBlaze Velveteen' was spectacular in 2015 and will be out in 2016[Note: the ColorBlaze series was developed in Florida to withstand sun OR shade], and Coleus 'Campfire', a 2016 release with fantastic colors.
- Helenium 'Dakota Gold'—reseeds (usually good, but might be annoying) and is lovely; great for hot, dry areas.
- Impatiens; These resist downy mildew and are FULL blooming interspecific New Guinea hybrids—amazing mounds of blooms! Impatiens 'Bounce White', 'Big Bounce White', 'Bounce Pink Flame', 'Bounce Violet' (takes quite a bit of sun also; I completely LOVE THIS PLANT and now can't live without it!) Most of the Bounce & Big Bounce impatiens are wonderful.
- Lobularias are alysums on steroids. They are sterile so they don't set seed and say goodbye mid-summer. The best two are Lobularia 'Snow Princess' and 'Dark Knight', but Lobularia 'Blushing Princess', 'White Knight' (bred to be smaller), and 'Frosty Knight' are also good but a little less vigorous.
- Petunias : Any of the Vista series by Proven Winners; any of the Charm series by Proven Winners ('Watermelon Charm' is not as vigorous). The best ones are 'Orchid Charm', 'Morning Glory Charm', 'Pink Star Charm', 'Violet Star Charm', and 'Sangria Charm'.
- Sedum 'Lemon Coral' was fantastic in 2015. It is foliage only but oh, my!—BRIGHT, perfect rounded chartreuse/lemon yellow balls that set off nearly ANY other color of annual! They were even used in in the Kentucky state Capitol for their famous "Flower clock." Stunning! I wish it was a perennial here.
- Salvia 'Victoria Blue' is an old standby that is hard to beat for vigor and intense color.
- Vincas: 'Icy Pink', 'Mediterranean XP Cherry Halo', 'Titan Dark Red', 'Titan Apricot', 'Titan Burgundy', 'Titan Lilac', 'Titan Rose Halo'.
- Zinnia Zahara Series: 'Zahara Fire', 'Zahara Double Fire'. 'Zahara Scarlet', 'Zahara Sunburst', Zahara 'Double Salmon Rose', 'Zahara Double Cherry', - I truly think this whole series (there are other colors) is better than the Profusion series!



## Beans for the Holidays By Margaret Schrock

We all have holiday traditions and recently Christmas Beans have been added to mine. By their very name, Christmas Beans called me to find a way to include them in my holiday festivities. Yes, a lowly bean has found its place alongside cookies and candies, turkey and dressing.



I first discovered Christmas Beans three years ago when I searched for a pole lima bean to include in a “Three Sisters” planting. I found an heirloom variety called “Christmas Speckled Bean” (*Phaseolus vulgaris*) (85 days) at a local garden center (seed is also available online). Although the festive coloring and chestnut-like flavor earned them the name Christmas Limas, these large flat burgundy and cream beans go by several names, including Speckled Calico Beans, Chestnut Limas, and Giant Speckled Beans.

These red-swirled beans are beautiful to look at and with a rich nutty flavor tasty to eat. They have become one of my favorite beans. Christmas Limas were popular in the South in the 1840s, but fell into obscurity in the 1900s with the advent of large-scale commercial production. Now listed as an endangered vegetable heirloom variety, these beans are primarily grown by specialty farmers and gardeners. I’ve grown these beans successfully for the past three years. After the first year, I saved my own seed for future plantings. The seeds germinate well, and the plants have been pest-free. Because they produce long, lush vines, they require tall sturdy supports.

When I was a child, my mother always fixed oyster stew for Christmas Eve dinner. Over the years, the variety of soup changed, but the Christmas Eve tradition of soup and crackers continued on. So when I found a recipe online for Christmas Lima Bean Stew, I knew I had found my way to incorporate Christmas Beans into my holiday traditions. Even if soup doesn’t fit into your holiday traditions, this recipe makes a great vegetarian soup, perfect for cool fall and winter weather. If you don’t have Christmas Limas, they can be purchased online but are rather pricey—a good reason to grow your own next year.

There are many recipes online for Christmas Bean Stew, but the one I like is from the “Cabin Kitchen” of Aimee Bumgarner (<https://calicomoon.wordpress.com/2011/01/26/from-the-cabin-kitchen-christmas-lima-bean-stew/>).

This recipe, with a few of my modifications and preferences, is on the next page.





Shelled Christmas beans

Cooked Christmas beans

## Christmas Bean Stew

- 1 cup dried Christmas lima beans (sorted, rinsed and soaked 6 to 8 hours and drained)
- 4 cups vegetable broth (or chicken stock) divided
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin, divided
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 to 3 cups sweet potato, peeled and cut into 1 inch chunks
- 1 quart canned or frozen tomatoes (or 14-28 oz can crushed tomatoes)
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 1/2 cups fresh or frozen corn

Place soaked and drained beans, 2 cups of stock, and 1 teaspoon of cumin in a pot; bring to a boil. Cover and simmer until beans are tender (50 to 60 minutes) or pressure-cook (45 minutes).

In a 4 quart pot, add oil and sauté the remaining cumin, oregano, and cinnamon for about 30 seconds. Add onion, salt, and garlic; sauté until onion is soft (about 4 or 5 minutes). Add sweet potatoes, tomatoes, and chili powder. Adding just a touch of sweetness helps to bring out the flavor. Bring to a simmer and cook until sweet potatoes are soft (about 20 -25 minutes). Add 1/2 to 1 cup of vegetable stock if mixture looks too dry. Add cooked beans and corn; simmer until corn is tender. Adjust seasonings to taste. Makes 6-8 servings

# the cultivator

A Tranquil Garden: Vegetation, Stone and Water  
by Sara Taber

The September Champaign County Master Gardener program was held at Japan House on a beautiful, early fall evening. It had been up to 80 degrees that afternoon, but we were sliding down into a cool, pleasant evening as Jim Bier came to lead a tour of the garden for 30 visitors. Jim designed and developed the Japan House garden in 2000 and has maintained it since, contributing plants and moving rocks, with limited help from volunteer and donations. His interest in Japanese gardens stems from a year when he was stationed in Japan during the Korean War. He visited gardens there and, on his return to the US, it became a hobby. Jim studied the history of Japanese gardens and the design of different styles, visited gardens here and on return trips to Japan, and adapted the principles to his own garden.

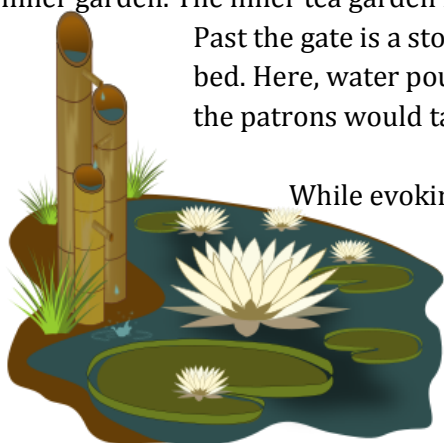


We started our tour in the tea garden, entering through the gate on the northwest corner of Japan House. A Japanese teahouse garden is integral to the building, providing a place for patrons to wait to be invited in to the ceremony. It is an intimate area with restricted access. At Japan House, the tea garden is a larger, more public space due to the size of the building and its various functions. Nonetheless, privacy is established by a bamboo screen immediately inside the gate. Following the path that leads around the screen, one begins to slow down and observe, experiencing the quiet and contemplative environment. Stone steps lead up to a gazebo, a place to sit and look at the garden. A Japanese teahouse garden typically includes a similar structure. This area of the tea garden, the outer garden, is more formal, and consists of a grassy area surrounded by pruned shrubs, including several evergreen varieties and viburnum. Beds of *liriope spicata* and *filipendula* edge the path and borders.

Asymmetry is a basic principle of Japanese gardens, and even in this formal area nothing is split down the middle, but grouping and balance work to create a unified design. Throughout the gardens at Japan House one notices subdued color and few flowering plants. Blooms are considered a distraction from contemplation and are kept minimal. Texture is used to create variation in plantings, just as hardscape surfaces and fencing employ varied materials. Jim has made all gates and fences using actual and approximations of Japanese materials and techniques. Similarly, about 50 percent of the plant matter in the gardens has origins in Japan, China, and Korea. There is limited availability locally, but mail order shopping has improved access to appropriate plants.

Moving down the path from the gazebo, there is a gate where one passes from the outer, formal garden into the inner garden. The inner tea garden is a more natural environment, meant to give a feeling of being in wilderness.

Past the gate is a stone water basin intended to evoke a mountain stream trickling down a rocky bed. Here, water pours from a bamboo spout amplifying the sound of moving water. At a teahouse the patrons would take a sip of the water, symbolic of cleansing before the ceremony.



While evoking wilderness, there is a more enclosed feeling in the inner tea garden. The plantings are more dense and taller with less evidence of pruning, beds, and edging. Near the building there are hosta, spirea, and carex planted among Japanese maples. Back by the west fence, a group of tall honeysuckle and junipers are fronted by cotoneasters spilling about, and a rocky terrace

suggests an outcrop. A small clearing is filled with low-growing ground cover and moss. The stepping stone path leads up again to a sitting area where one is in a cove of Siberian maples on the south end of the inner garden. Under this tree canopy are more hostas and colonies of epimedium, ferns, ginger, and trillium.

Exiting the tea garden, the walkway leads to the east of Japan House. There one finds the dry garden, which refers to the rock garden. The raked gravel suggests water, an essential element of a Japanese garden, with larger rocks representing islands. In Japan, a specific kind of granite rock with black veining is used, the veins keeping the otherwise white rock from being blinding in sunlight. Jim found rock in a North Carolina quarry with similar qualities. Yews surrounding the rock-water are pruned to suggest a mountain range and the bayberry behind are clipped in such a way as to suggest clouds above the mountains. Jim also pointed out that beyond those “clouds” is the east side of U. of I. Arboretum, with further walkways, ponds, and garden areas, some of which become “borrowed scenery”—another Japanese landscape idea. Our tour concluded here as the sun set and the scene took on a rosey glow, with Canada geese flying overhead against a darkening sky.

If you visit Japan House on your own, be sure to pick up the maps that Jim Bier has made of the tea garden and the dry gardens. They provide some historical landscaping background in addition to detailed lists of all the plant material in the gardens. If you are interested in volunteering to help in the garden at Japan House, contact the office at 244-9934 to let Jim know how to contact you.



Other Japanese gardens nearby include those at the Chicago Botanic Garden, The Missouri Botanic Gardens, and Anderson Japanese Gardens in Rockford.



## Creating a Holiday Wreath featuring Master Gardener Mary Stonecipher

Fresh wreaths fill the senses with memories of past holidays. Not only do they look beautiful, but they perfume the air around them. Pine boughs, spruce, and holly are just a few kinds of fresh greenery you can use to make wreaths. Winter containers filled with greenery provide color and inexpensive style during those long, cold, dreary winter months.

Master Gardener Mary Stonecipher has won several awards for her beautiful garden designs at Sunset Memorial Garden in Danville and will be teaching this class on Holiday Wreath Making on December 1. The class starts at 6:00 PM at Crossroads Church, 3613 N. Vermilion Street in Danville. You will learn how to make a fresh wreath. We will furnish a metal wreath ring for each participant, and a variety of fresh greenery. Bring your own garden gloves and decorations to add your own personal style.

This fun event is open to the public and is a hands-on ‘*Make and Take*’ class. We ask that attendees pre-pay so we can adequately supply materials. The cost is \$15.00, payable at the Vermilion County Extension Office, 3164 N. Vermilion, across from Village Mall in Danville, or by credit card online at the U. of I. Extension Website (<https://web.extension.illinois.edu/registration/?RegistrationID=11472>). For information, call 217-442-8615.

We are unable to take entries at the door because both space and materials will be limited, and this class fills up fast so register early. Proceeds from our monthly classes fund Master Gardener programs and community gardens in Vermilion County.

# the cultivator

## My Experience as a JDC Volunteer

by: Annette Donnelly

Sarah Palin famously described kid-shuttling soccer moms like me as a “pitbull with lipstick.” I don’t normally think of myself as a lip-painted pup, although my children would probably argue that I have my moments in the female canine world. Don’t get me wrong—I’m not as thorny as a barberry all of the time. I’m also no ‘shrinking violet’, or should I say withering *viola*, to put it in botanical terms? I like to think of myself more like a cheery *Bellis perennis*—but, there are days, I must admit, when I’m strictly *Rudbeckia hirta* and would rather not venture out into the greater world, feeling perfectly comfortable planted firmly in my own little garden. My first foray leading the Master Gardener’s lesson at the Juvenile Detention Center (JDC) was on one of these “Lazy Susan” days. I wasn’t feeling very adventurous, but gave it my good natured, albeit skeptical, best (sort of like a hosta in the sun—you can try it, but don’t expect too much.)

I knew I was in for a rare treat when the JDC front desk graciously held my mobile phone and car keys—rent-free—while I was in the building. I would find out this is one of the many thoughtful courtesies offered by JDC concierge services. I, and the JDC team, was treated to double-locking doors, which means doors lock firmly behind you while you wait in a sealed ante chamber for the door in front of you to open. I find these moments of sanctuary amidst four close walls offers a time to reflect on freedom. I couldn’t help but wonder if the mail-order painted fern delivered earlier in the day had felt like this before I let it out of the box? I said a small prayer of gratitude that there weren’t any foam packing peanuts keeping me firmly in place in this larger cement and steel container. The next series of doors opened into an industrial kitchen and our JDC team prepared for our favorite moments until it was time for them to occur. At long last, a door in an adjoining room unlocked and our students entered for their lesson.

“Are you some sort of Master Gardener, or something?” Asked a tall young man in navy blue loose fitting ‘scrubs,’ the uniform indicating status as a temporary, recalcitrant guest of the State’s Juvenile Court.

“Yes” I replied with a raised eyebrow. “I’m a Ninja-Jedi Master Gardener” I stammered out. This answer made the boy laugh. Six teenage boys, similarly dressed and seated at tables, lifted their eyes, listening to the exchange. After a moment, they began to lean forward and started to smile.

“For real?” He replied with a tonal inflection that made the phrase a tiny two-note song.

I brandished my arms in response, as if fighting an imaginary enemy with a gourd, “Cuke!” I said, in the lowest slow voice I could muster, “I am your father!” The boys laughed and jostled each other on their seats, the way teenage boys do in camaraderie. For a moment, they forgot to watch each other scuff the floor in their identical blue canvas, slip-on shoes and were just boys, blooming on the vine.

I am always smiling on my way home from the JDC and noticed that I say a little prayer in my head to say ‘thank you’ for my two boys, my friends and colleagues in the MG program, and for the opportunity to *help others to learn and grow*, beautifully.

*[Come try us out and see what the experience brings you! We meet Thursdays, 2:15-4:30 PM, at the Juvenile Detention Center in Urbana. Contact Dottie Davito ([bocce7@aol.com](mailto:bocce7@aol.com)) or Sara Taber ([sftaber1@gmail.com](mailto:sftaber1@gmail.com)). We’d be glad to answer any questions and can add you to the schedule as a guest.]*

## **Annual Champaign County Master Gardener Holly Day Party**

**Wednesday, December 9 at 11:30 AM**

**Wednesday, December 9** is the *Champaign County Master Gardener Annual Holly Day Celebration* at the Urbana Country Club. Doors open with a cash bar at 11:30 am, followed by a plated lunch of your choice at noon. Entertainment will follow the lunch. You have a choice of one of three entrees (select when registering). All entree's include a desert of peppermint ice cream, cookies, and gratuity. Reservation for this event is required. Master Gardeners are encouraged to invite a guest.

Please register by **Thursday, November 19**. Registration can be done online with a credit card ([Click here to register](#)), or pay by check via mail or drop off at the Extension Office. Contact Ava Heap ([carmien2@illinois.edu](mailto:carmien2@illinois.edu)) or call the Champaign County University of Illinois Extension office at 333-7672 for more information.

## **CONTINUING EDUCATION: Upcoming Webinars**

**Tuesday, December 1 and Thursday, December 3**

**\*\*\*Webinars can be viewed from home OR your Extension office. Email Ava ([carmien2@illinois.edu](mailto:carmien2@illinois.edu)) if you will be viewing it at the Champaign office.\*\*\***

***Mitigating Pollinator Decline in Landscapes.*** December 1 @ 11:30 AM to 1:00 PM

This 90-minute webinar is designed for Extension Master Gardeners and Extension Educators to learn more about IPM (Integrated Pest Management) for bees in landscapes. The webinar features Dr. Dan Cariveau, Assistant Professor, University of Minnesota, on native bee populations; Dr. Karl Foord, Extension Educator, University of Minnesota, on IPM for bees; Ms. Heather Holm, Author and restorationist; Drs. Mary Meyer and Vera Krischik, the University of Minnesota, will serve as hosts. There will be time dedicated for questions and answers.

Participants must pre-register and complete a survey on knowledge of IPM.

Pre-register: <https://umn.webex.com/umn/onstage/g.php?d=740120354&t=a>

***Invasive Species in Landscapes.*** December 3 @ 11:30 AM to 1:00 PM

This 90-minute webinar is designed for Extension Master Gardeners and Extension Educators to learn more about IPM (Integrated Pest Management) for a few invasive species in landscapes. The webinar features Dr. Christelle Guédot, Assistant Professor, University of Wisconsin, on Spotted wing drosophila; Dr. Paul Blotch, Research Associate, Michigan State University, on mamorated stink bug; Dr. Jonathan Larson, University of Nebraska on Japanese beetle; Dr. Angela Orshinsky, University of Minnesota, on downy mildew in impatiens. Drs. Mary Meyer and Vera Krischik at the University of Minnesota will serve as hosts. There will be time dedicated for questions and answers.

Pre-register: <https://umn.webex.com/umn/onstage/g.php?d=747140652&t=a>.

Contact Mike McDonough at [mjmcdon@umn.edu](mailto:mjmcdon@umn.edu) for more information.



## Growing Small Fruits in the Home Garden

September, October, & November

Whether you are interested in small fruits for fresh eating, processing, or even winemaking - this program will show you the basics of planning the small fruit garden and how to produce a successful harvest.

Join the Ford-Iroquois Master Gardeners as they host their Fall Community Education Series. The Fall series will feature Horticulture Program Coordinator, Trent Hawker who will discuss growing small fruits at home.

Each session is free to attend, but pre-registration is required. To register, call our office at (815) 268-4051 or visit our website at <http://web.extension.illinois.edu/cfiv/fordmg>.

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If you need a reasonable accommodation to participate, please call (815) 268-4051.

This session will be  
presented at three  
locations in  
Ford and Iroquois Counties



### Moyer District Library

Monday, Sept. 21 - 7:00 pm  
618 S. Sangamon Ave.  
Gibson City, IL



### Watseka Public Library

Tuesday, Oct. 13 - 6:00 pm  
201 S. 4th St.  
Watseka, IL



### F-I Extension Office

Tuesday, Nov. 17 - 1:30 pm  
916 W. Seminary Ave.  
Onarga, IL



For a complete listing of upcoming events, please visit the official Master Gardener Calendar of Events:

<https://www.google.com/calendar/embed?src=ecimgcalendar%40gmail.com&ctz=America/Chicago>.

Or click [HERE](#).



## Report Your Volunteer Hours NOW!!!

To remain an active Master Gardener volunteer, you are required to earn 30 hours of volunteer service and 10 hours of continuing education hours annually. Master Gardener Interns are required to complete a 60-hour internship prior to committing to the annual hour requirements. Volunteers must also sign an annual Volunteer Agreement form.



**PLEASE RECORD ANY VOLUNTEER HOURS BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR  
(DECEMBER 31, 2015).**

The easiest way to record hours is to go to our website. Please follow these directions:

1. Go to: <http://web.extension.illinois.edu/cfiv>
2. Click on: Champaign County Master Gardeners (on the right side of the page)
3. Click on: Volunteer Hour Reporting (on the right side of the page)
4. Click on: "Click here" on the page
5. Enter your email address and password.

If you cannot remember your password or need to set a new one, follow these directions:

1. Follow steps 1 through 4 as stated above, and then:
2. Click on: "Click here to set your password"
3. Enter your email address
4. Click on: Send Password Link

The only way we know that hours have been earned is if you report them before that date. These hours are also submitted to the state to support our funding. The sooner we have the information, the better.

If you need help with the reporting process, contact Horticulture Program Coordinator, Ava Heap, at 217-333-7672 or by email, [carmien2@illinois.edu](mailto:carmien2@illinois.edu), for assistance.

May your days be merry and bright . . .



. . . Wishing you all Happy Holidays and Happy New Year!

## Submission Guidelines for *the Cultivator*

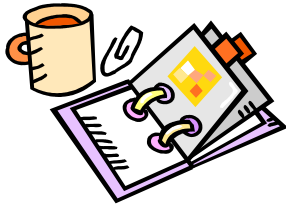
*The Cultivator* is published bimonthly. **The deadline for the January/February edition is DECEMBER 15th.** Please follow these guidelines for submissions.

- All submissions must be your own work. If not, you are responsible for getting permission from the work's author and you must provide proper credit. Articles/photos cannot be copied from the Internet.
- All submissions undergo editorial screening and may be edited for accuracy, clarity, and length as needed.
- Please submit articles as Word documents (not PDFs).
- Photos must be submitted as JPEG files separate from articles. All photos should be accompanied by a list of photo captions.
- For photos accompanying an article, you may indicate where you would like the photo inserted, but please know that the final layout is at the Editor's discretion.
- If you submit photos that are not your own, please credit the photographer and be sure they are free of any copyright restrictions—get permission for use.
- Photos cannot be pulled off the Internet due to copyright.
- If you are submitting photos that include recognizable people, be sure to get permission from everyone who is shown before submitting their image for publication. Please identify each individual shown by their full name.

Your articles, pictures, and thoughts are all welcomed! Please send them in!

Send all items to [Lorikgarrett@gmail.com](mailto:Lorikgarrett@gmail.com).

# the cultivator



## Save the Date!

All Master Gardeners, including trainees, interns, and actives, are encouraged and welcome to attend any programs or meetings.

### November:

- 7 Put the Idea Garden to Bed. 9 AM, 2001 S. Lincoln Ave., Urbana.
- 7 Garden Swap or Sell Event, 10 AM to 2 PM, Idea Garden, 2001 S. Lincoln Ave., Urbana (p. 2).
- 17 Growing Small Fruits in the Home Garden, 1:30 PM, Onarga Office, 916 W. Seminary, Onarga.
- 17 CCMG 6 PM—Potluck, Annual Business Meeting; 7 PM—Winter Houseplant Care (p. 3).

### December:

- 1 VCMG Program: Make and Take Holiday Wreath, 6:30 PM, Crossroads Christian Church, 3613 N. Vermilion, Danville. Cost is \$15 in advance (p. 17).
- 9 CCMG Annual Holly Day Gathering. 11-12:30, Urbana Country Club, 100 E. Country Club Rd., Urbana. Register by Nov. 19. Cost is \$19 (p. 19).



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Deadline to submit material for future editions:  
December 15; February 15

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