

News Letter

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Civic Center, Iowa City, Iowa 52240
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PROJECT GREEN

PUBLISHED IN EARLY SPRING AND LATE FALL

FALL 2008

GREEN Projects Sustain Serious Flood Damage

The June 2008 flood caused major damage and loss to Project GREEN's Foster Road–North Dubuque Street project. Recreating this attractive entrance landscape, completed just one year ago, will require substantial restoration and replanting.

The ornamental grasses and shrubs along the drainage channel between Foster Road and Taft Speedway on the west side of North Dubuque didn't survive being covered by the flood waters for more than four weeks. This area will need a new planting plan, possibly with some different types of plants. Sixteen trees, including two 'Autumn Spire' maples, six tulip trees, two black tupelos, three Serbian spruces, and three Norway spruces,

significant loss. The plantings were, however, heavily overgrown with weeds by the time the maintenance



contractor could get into the area. On the east side of Dubuque Street, some 'Gro-Lo' sumacs were lost and weeds were also a problem.

In other areas of interest to Project GREEN, losses include four trees near Hills Bank on the Highway 6 Bypass and many others in City Park and Terrell Mill Park. Japanese beetles were a major problem with some trees along Melrose Avenue and with the new trees in College Green Park. The additional demands of flood cleanup have delayed the replanting of Iowa Avenue to restore the tornado-damaged median.

Our above-average rainfall had other consequences for Project GREEN areas. Weed growth was very vigorous, making control efforts difficult for the maintenance contractors. This will translate into increased maintenance costs in 2009.

Project GREEN is committed to restoring these damaged areas and maintaining attractive entrances to our community. Your support is essential. Together we can make our community look greener in 2009.

—Jim Maynard



also drowned. The strong flood current tipped several of the trees planted in 2007, and an attempt will be made to straighten and save them.

Laura Hawks, the landscape architect who designed this project, has volunteered to document the damage and prepare a grant application for replacing the lost trees; MidAmerican Energy, through its "Trees Please!" program, is making grants available to communities that suffered tree losses from 2008's tornado and flood disasters. The estimated cost of replacing the lost trees alone is nearly \$5,000.

The plantings in the four quadrants of the Foster Road–North Dubuque Street intersection were not damaged by either the flood or this year's greater-than-normal rainfall. Farther south, at the Park Road bridge, there was minor damage but no

2008 Project GREEN Garden Fair: Another Success

When the doors opened at Carver-Hawkeye Arena on May 10, 2008, long lines of shoppers were waiting to get inside. It was a beautiful morning with sunshine and a promise of gardening in the fresh air. The arena's concourse was filled with thousands of plants ready for a new home. Project GREEN volunteers were standing behind the heavily laden tables, prepared to help customers make decisions ranging from sunny perennials, groundcovers, and shady perennials to trees and shrubs. Each plant for sale was donated by a local gardener and had proven itself winter-hardy for our eastern Iowa temperature zone. Hundreds of Project GREEN volunteers had spent months in preparation. Their work included meetings, digging, potting, watering, identifying, pricing, and transporting the plants. Their work was overshadowed by swarms of customers who filled the aisles.

The Information Ladies greeted customers and distributed flyers showing the location of plant booths and describing upcoming Project GREEN events. There were booths of gardening information by the Johnson County Master Gardeners



and other local flora and fauna experts. There was a long table filled with garden sculpture donated by a local artist, Judy Allen. Hot coffee and yummy muffins were available. The two Plantsitter locations saved the day for those whose arms were unable to hold all their choices while they shopped. Cashiers tallied and made change for the sales. The Boy Scouts carried boxes of plants to customers' cars (parking was free in the lots surrounding the arena!).

The sale began at 9 AM. When the doors closed two and a half hours later, it was apparent that the thirty-eighth annual sale was a success! Everyone cheered when the Finance group announced that Project GREEN had earned over \$34,000.

The few plants that remained were taken by volunteers to be lined out. It was time to begin thinking about next year's sale to be held on May 9, 2009.



Left: Joanie Parsons and Linda Fisher are both members of the Trees and Shrubs Booth. Linda is a valuable worker as she loves to weed.

Above: Information Ladies Jean Dobyms, Nancy Kienzle, and A.K. Traw are ready to welcome shoppers at the fair.

Groundcover Booth

The Groundcover Booth group is small but mighty, and we are always on the lookout for new volunteers. Please contact us if you are interested in volunteering with our group as a plant donor, digger, or potter, or as a booth volunteer on fair day. For anyone who thrives on working under pressure and has neat handwriting, we have openings for that last-minute job of writing plant-ID tags! Some of the plants we offer have a bad reputation, but don't let that scare you away from volunteering with other nice gardeners.

Groundcovers have their place in the landscape as energetic hardy perennials and are the perfect solution for steep banks that are difficult or dangerous to mow and for areas under trees where you want a carpet of green. Some of our favorite groundcovers are real beauties — European ginger (*Asarum europeana*) will slowly fill a shady area with its rounded, shiny leaves, and all of the Solomon's seals (*Polygonatum*) emerge in spring as perfect fingerlings which grow to produce dainty white bell-like flowers. The Groundcover Booth chairpersons are Ted and Kay Carpenter. Their address is 612 Seventh Avenue, Coralville. You can reach them by calling 351-7634 or by email at TCarpe8615@msn.com.

Shady Ladies Line Out Hostas



It's not a fairyland cemetery, but a slumber party for hostas! Members of the Shade Booth group lined out 1,510 hostas for a winter of rest before next spring's garden fair.

GREEN Grants Will Beautify New North Bend School

Project GREEN was delighted to participate in the completion of the area's newest elementary school, North Bend Elementary, in North Liberty. During the past year, as the new principal, Brenda Parker, was named, proactive parent committees encouraged early involvement with the new building and helped to organize tasks needing completion before students arrived this fall.

One of those tasks was landscaping. Parent Lisa Green-Douglass contacted Project GREEN last winter with questions and requests, resulting in applications for our help with a design plan and with matching plant materials. Sturdiness and hardiness of plants and trees, variety, locations on the school grounds, usefulness in curriculum, and seasonal interest and color were some of the variables considered by the landscape architect Brenda Nelson as she worked with the parent committee and Project GREEN representatives.

Parents and staff were excited that their budget could be doubled, Project GREEN representatives were happy to contribute ideas and funds, and students will once again benefit from the ongoing collaboration between Project GREEN and our local school districts through the GREEN Grants program.



Brenda Nelson (landscape architect for the North Bend Elementary School project), Paula Vincent (superintendent of the Clear Creek-Amara schools), Brenda Parker (North Bend Elementary principal), Lisa Green-Douglass (a North Bend Elementary parent), and Project GREEN vice-president Diane Allen stand in front of the newly built school in North Liberty.

Knight Pavilion Hosts Steering Committee



Members of the Project GREEN Steering Committee met at the Knight Pavilion of Kent Park in July. From left, Jim Maynard, Jean Dobyns, Marilyn Long, Diane Allen, Janet Maas, A.K. Traw, and Cindy Parsons.

Volunteers Needed

Volunteers are needed for the **Fair Refreshment Booth**. If you are interested in helping to serve coffee and visit with the fairgoers and other volunteers, please contact Fern Allison at 338-8580 or frdallison@msn.com.

The **Finance Booth** can use more cashiers. Please contact Jo Tigges at 626-3057 or jbtigges@southslope.net.

Anyone interested in developing an **Herb Booth** for the garden fair, please contact Fern Allison at 338-8580 or frdallison@msn.com.

The **Sunny Perennial Booth** needs volunteers to dig plants in donors' gardens. We also need volunteers to pot plants that have been dug for the plant sale. A lot of potting is done at the Treloar barn on Sugarbottom Road. Join us there in April. If you are interested, please call Shirley Lekin at 338-0041 or slekin@awwelt.com; Suzie Treloar at 624-7175 or rscalt@aol.com; or Melanie Hauptert at 351-1149 or melaniehauptert@gmail.com.

Muddy Creek Wine Company Benefits Project GREEN



A first-ever wine-tasting and silent auction to benefit Project GREEN was held at the Muddy Creek Wine Company on June 25th. The auction included planted containers used as centerpieces on each table and many other donated items. Good wines, good food, and good company combined to produce a generous boost to the GREEN Fund.



Favorites and tips, please!

Two questions asked of our GREEN Garden booth chairpersons—What’s your favorite plant? What gardening tip can you offer to other gardeners?—brought many bright ideas, some consensus, and suggestions to make gardening easier and smarter.

Editors’ note: We’ve used the usual horticultural conventions for plant names in this article. The species name (for example, *Viburnum*) is in italics, as is the subspecies name, if any (e.g., *Viburnum sargentii*). The cultivar name follows in single quotes and no italics (e.g., *Viburnum sargentii* ‘Onondaga.’ Good nurseries and mail-order plant sources use these names; using them means you’ll buy what you hope you’re buying!

Anne Hesse, chair of the Shade Plants Booth and owner of an extraordinary garden of mostly shady delights, says that the *Hellebore* species has become her favorite shade perennial over the years because it thrives in the shade, is pest- and disease-resistant, blooms among the earliest garden-brighteners in the spring, and holds its bloom long into summer. It is a semi-evergreen perennial in Iowa City, multiplying very slowly but eventually covering a generous area with its twelve-inch-high stems. Its many cultivars offer a bounty of different colors and different heights.

Carole Knutson, another experienced shade gardener, suggests her favorite hosta—‘Sum and Substance.’ Huge and very showy, it’s easy to grow and content in shady spots that get some sun.

Melanie Hauptert, chair of Sunny Perennials, says that naming favorites is “very difficult, you know,” but chooses *Brunnera*, *Baptisia* (false indigo), *Clematis* (many, many cultivars), and *Chelone* (turtlehead—like *Baptisia australis*, a native American) among her favorites, adding that there are “many more!”

Anne too found it very difficult to select a favorite shrub, but says that the *Viburnum* species with its many, many cultivars is the most versatile in the Iowa City landscape. She particularly enjoys the doublefile viburnum, *Viburnum plicatum* var. *tomentosum* ‘Newport,’ *V. sargentii* ‘Onondaga,’ *V. juddii*, and the dwarf Korean spice viburnum *V. carlesii*.

Carole and Melanie agree that the oakleaf hydrangea, *Hydrangea quercifolia*, is definitely a favorite. Carole notes that it seems to change with the seasons: its beautiful leaves, shaped like those of oaks, precede big white blooms that become a tawny brown that’s great for fall arrangements. Its final splash is gorgeous red late-season leaf color.

Anne finds that there are too many favorite trees to choose among! *Magnolia* ‘Ann,’ one of a group of magnolias called “The Girls” and hybridized by the U.S. National Arboretum, grows easily to a height of 6–10 feet with a 10-foot spread. Its deep purple-red, seven- to nine-petaled flowers bloom in late April to early May, often avoiding late spring frost. Hardy in zones 5–8, ‘Ann’ likes sun, but will tolerate some shade and is pest- and disease-resistant.

Halesia carolina, Carolina silverbells, can reach 30–40 feet in height and a spread of 20–35 feet. It’s hardy in zones 4–8 and exceptionally pest-resistant. The white bell-shaped flowers bloom April to early May. The fruit is an oblong or ovoid four-winged drupe (like a cherry, with a fleshy fruit and thick outer skin over a seed), changing from green to light brown in the fall. This native is a favorite of the famous tree expert Michael Dirr and makes a handsome residential specimen set off by an evergreen background. It has a place in the shrub and woodland borders and can tolerate some shade. Rhododendrons grow well beneath the Carolina silverbell.

The katsura tree (*Cercidiphyllum japonicum*) can reach 40–60 feet in height within twelve years in zones 4–8. The small, soft, leatherlike leaves open a reddish purple that gradually changes to bluish green in summer and then to yellow in the fall. Its flowers and fruit are not showy, but it is an overwhelmingly attractive tree in shape and form. It serves well as both a street and residential tree, but prefers a moderately moist root zone. It has no serious diseases or pests. Michael Dirr states that if he could choose only one tree as his favorite, this would be the one.

Anne’s gardening tip is really a Japanese landscape-design technique: Consider what you can see from various windows in your house. Let the windows frame different parts of your garden which are at their peak at varying times. Planning your views brings the garden indoors all year round.

Carole suggests what she calls a garden secret: Place an old mailbox on a post in your back garden. Keep gloves and small garden tools in it, so that whenever you see a weed or a plant that needs transplanting, you can do it as Johnny-on-the-spot. She adds that you can make a focal point by painting your mailbox and adding interesting plants around it.

Melanie’s tips come from her sunny-perennial garden: Cutting back certain plants in June—including *Platycodon*, *Phlox*, and *Aster*, among others—will encourage them to become shorter and fuller when full-grown. And putting a blanket of composted manure on the garden in late fall will produce amazing results in the spring!

Thank you to our MANY volunteers and donors of plants. We couldn’t do it without you! Look for a listing of those individuals to soon be posted on our website.



Judy Allen's Creativity Benefits GREEN Garden Fair

Three years ago, a neighbor of Judy Allen's, delighted with the hand-crafted molded garden sculptures lining all the available shelf space in Judy's garage, encouraged her to use her talent to become involved in the GREEN Garden Fair. Judy did just that! Over the past three years, she has selected trunkloads of her whimsical garden sculptures to be sold at the fair. All of the proceeds were given to Project GREEN.

Upon her retirement after thirty-six years as the orthopedic trauma nurse coordinator at University Hospitals and Clinics, Judy feared she'd run out of challenging things to do. A magazine article with directions for making casts of hosta leaves led to



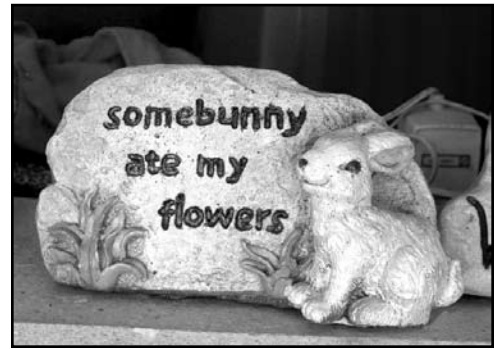
Judy Allen

the purchase of cement—and a pile of sand on her garage floor. Results soon filled the garage, but none of them pleased Judy. A woman whose business was selling molds for concrete

sculptures on eBay recommended using white concrete for better definition. Gradually Judy expanded her collection of molds and refined her techniques.

She gave her garden sculptures to her gardener friends

who, by word of mouth, provided her with clientele eager to place orders for her playful creatures and garden-oriented objects. "I think I still give away more than I sell, and those gifts have brought many a smile to an unsuspecting soul," muses Judy.



One of Judy's playful, whimsical creatures to be sold at the Garden Fair.

Her creatures range from "rock faces" (both smiling and grumpy) to toads, frogs, rabbits, squirrels, and cats. Her objects include stepping stones, garden messages, leaves, mushrooms, and birdhouses. Recently she has begun seasonal pieces (pumpkins, jack-o'-lanterns, snowmen, and a special cat) for Halloween and Christmas. Judy ponders her favorites. "The 'rock faces' are fun, but the huge Gunnera leaf is the most stunning. Even though it is the most difficult and time-consuming mold, it has to be my favorite."

Judy has obviously not run out of challenging things to do, even though she recently reinstated her nursing license to return to part-time work with the College of Nursing. Meanwhile, Project GREEN has been the beneficiary of her time, energy, and creativity.

2008 Garden Tour Cancelled

We sincerely regret having to cancel the 2008 Garden Tour because of Iowa City's record flooding. The flooding put three of the scheduled gardens on Normandy Drive under water. The difficult decision for us was whether to continue the tour with the remaining two Marcy Street gardens, or cancel altogether. With only two gardens, our concern was that both tour-goers

and hosts would be disappointed; at the time we also expected road closures that might make Marcy Street inaccessible to many. Another possibility was overcrowding at the two gardens, making it difficult to appreciate the hard work that had gone into them. Parking and traffic were also major concerns, and substitute gardens are never easy to find, especially at the last minute. We were delighted to learn that the Marcy Street gardens found a place on the Lions Club tour held later in the month.



The Lions Club tour provided a glimpse of garden glory on Marcy Street.

We remain very grateful to those gardeners whose creativity, effort, and talent made showpieces of their yards. Our hearts go out to those who continue to cope with the flood's devastation, and we wish them well.

Thanks to all: Julie Dahlberg, Keo Hoang and Paul Measells, Sue and Sam Mullins, Jack and Pat Sallady, and Greg and Linda Schrock.



Sue Mullins and Julie Dahlberg greeted visitors admiring their side-by-side yards on July 6 during the Lions Club Garden Tour. Both Sue's and Julie's gardens were to have been in the flood-cancelled Project GREEN Garden Tour.

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Trees and the Flood: What Next?

“Water, water everywhere . . . ” from Coleridge’s Rime of the Ancient Mariner seems appropriate for this summer, especially for all those—people, and plants too—that experienced damage. Terry Robinson, Iowa City’s city forester, offers his thoughts on caring for flood-affected trees.

What can we expect next? Based on our experience in 1993, we will see a few more trees die, but probably not this year. Next spring they will either not leaf out or just give up when the first heat stress hits. Those that showed early fall color this year are obviously already stressed, and they need our help now. Even though flooding is the likely issue, examine your trees closely for insect pests or other problems, and correct what you can.

In Lower City Park, even though we have worked aggressively, we still have sand to remove. Even if you find no sand, you should also look for very fine silt—the stuff that is like grease when it’s wet. Even a thin layer of silt can put a nice little cap on the soil, preventing water from draining and altering the oxygen content of the soil below. In City Park we found silt even in areas where the grass survived and one would assume everything was OK. Break up the silt, either through some type of aggressive aeration or, in extreme cases, completely tilling up the soil and starting over.

In the turf world, the motto is always aerate, aerate, aerate. This year it is also the tree motto. Moving air through that top two or three inches of soil and getting it closer to the tree’s root system is very helpful in overcoming the saturation of the summer.

It would be great if I could tell you exactly which species are

going to succumb to the after-flood effect, but unfortunately I can’t. We know that some species just don’t like wet conditions but we have experienced losses across the whole species spectrum. Just as the young and old of the human species don’t seem to have the ability to absorb extremes, so it goes with trees. Among our young trees (those planted within the last five years) we have lost oaks, maples, ashes, birches, and even sycamores. Among the large, older trees we have lost silver maples, hackberries, honey locusts, and one ash. Each of these old trees, however, failed at the roots or very low on the trunk, indicating they were on their way out before the flood.

I expect to see maples having some additional difficulty, especially sugar maples and reds or ‘Red Sunset’s planted on marginal sites. If things follow 1993, oaks, birches, sycamores, and ashes will come back if they were healthy going into the flood. In the spring of 1994 we had some ashes that leafed out and then just fell over with the first moderate wind. We concluded that their root systems were so compromised before 1993 that they used up their reserves recovering and could not reproduce the roots needed to keep them solidly in the soil. It seems that pin oak and ‘Skyline’ locust actually enjoyed the water and did well. During the flood some ginkgos died as though someone flipped a switch and just turned them off, but if they made it through the initial inundation they came back. Generally most ornamentals are like ginkgo—the effect is very clear-cut and decisive, and I suspect by now you already know.

If mental telepathy can help, we all need to be thinking “average, average, average weather” for next year.

CLIP AND SAVE

Come to the 2009 Garden Forums Next Spring!

Sunday Garden Forums sponsored by Project GREEN and the Iowa City Public Library begin on February 8, 2009, in Room A of the library, at the corner of Linn and College Streets in downtown Iowa City. Each two-hour forum, beginning at 2:00 PM, will consist of an hour-long presentation by a speaker, followed by refreshments, door prizes, and plenty of time for discussion with the speaker.

February 8—Mark Zilis, “Hosta Highlights”

Mark will bring his new book on hostas, *The Hostapedia*, covering 7,400 hostas with 1,800 photos. Come early to buy a signed copy. Mark is returning to our forum after his successful appearance in 2004. An entertaining speaker with expertise to boot, he is in demand.

March 8—Deb Walser, “Perennial Selections: New, Old, And Unusual”

Deb is a lifelong gardener and Master Gardener. You may have heard her on the WMT Saturday morning Master Gardener show. She works at a popular garden center in Cedar Rapids, specializing in perennials. Deb

knows a lot about her specialty and will provide an interesting program. Bring your gardening questions for her.

April 5—Dr. Donald Lewis, “Good Bugs, Bad Bugs in the Garden: How to Tell the Difference!”

Note the date for this forum, a week earlier than usual because in 2009 Easter falls on the second Sunday of the month, when we usually have our program.

Dr. Lewis, an experienced and interesting speaker, has long been an important part of the Iowa State Entomology Program, specializing in outreach programs on insect-pest management. His presentation will teach us which insects help our plants and how best to rid the garden of less-welcome little critters.

All forums are free and open to everyone. Each will be televised live on the library cable channel 10 and videotaped for checkout from the library’s nonfiction video collection a few weeks after each presentation. These forums qualify as education credits for Master Gardeners.

Oh, fair containers!

The Project GREEN Garden Fair requires lots of plastic containers for potting the plants that we sell. We welcome the chance to recycle these pots again and again. Here are a few tips if your garage is overflowing with potting supplies:



1. We use only *plastic* containers that are 4 1/2" or larger.
2. Containers must be made of sturdy, *reusable* plastic—that flimsy plastic often used for potting annuals is not reusable.
3. Please remove all labels and tags.
4. Please give your pots a quick rinse outside with your garden hose. They don't have to be spotless, but should be free from most dirt.

5. We also welcome flats or trays that are in solid condition, are open (with no compartments), and have drainage holes.

6. Bring your donations in a tied garbage bag to Ted and Kay's house at 612 Seventh Avenue, Coralville, and leave them in their driveway by the other pots. You can reach them at 351-7634 or TCarpe8615@msn.com.



Project GREEN OFFICERS

Cindy Parsons, president	337-9659 cparsons@icialaw.com
Diane Allen, vice-president	354-5720 dlallen16@hotmail.com
Jean Dobyms, treasurer	345-3220 icdobs@aol.com
Betty Kann, secretary	338-1816 bekann@mchsi.com
Jim Maynard, project maintenance coordinator	351-4636 JLMaynardASLA@aol.com
Mary Gantz, GREEN Grants for Schools	338-4406 margantz@yahoo.com
A.K. Traw, garden tour	337-5472 akandchuck@mchsi.com
Melanie Hauptert, garden forums	351-1149 melaniehauptert@msn.com
Garden Fair Management Team	
Fern Allison	338-8580 frdallison@msn.com
Barb Gartner	(H) 338-5781 (W) 335-3476 barbara-gartner@uiowa.edu

Editing: Goodfellow Printing, Gail Zlatnik, Diane Allen, and Cindy Parsons

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