



Cucurbits: Plants in the gourd family such as cucumbers, squash, pumpkins or melons



Hours of operation:
Dawn to dusk

Location:
The Center is located
on Raab Road in Normal
between Heartland and Lincoln Colleges.

The ISU Horticulture Center is part of the Department of Agriculture.

For more information about the Center contact Jessica Chambers at 309-438-3496 or e-mail at horticulture@ilstu.edu



Autumnal Festival II: A Hot Success!

Despite 90 degree plus temperatures, an estimated 300 people attended the Autumnal Festival last October, again making it a huge success in only its second year. With various activities throughout the day and over 40 different varieties of pumpkins, gourds, and squashes available for sale, many families and individuals braved the heat and humidity to see what the festival had to offer.

The morning began with children's activities sponsored by the Children's Discovery Museum, The Ecology Action Center, Normal Public Library Children's Department, McLean County Master Gardeners and the Horticulture Center. The kids spent the morning playing games or even painting their very own dried gourd birdhouse.

New to the festival this year was a 3-acre corn maze, which was open throughout the day on the west side of the Center. An estimated 150 people ventured in to



Reggie Redbird in the pumpkin patch.

test the twists and turns of the maze. It is not sure yet how many people actually made it out.

Another new addition to the festival this year was

"Scarecrows on Parade," an opportunity for university organizations, local businesses and families to create one-of-a-kind scarecrows, which were auctioned off at the festival in order to raise money for the Horticulture Center Children's Garden. The parade consisted of 10 scarecrows, provided by organizations and businesses, most of which went to good homes at the end of the day. You may have counted 11 scarecrows at one point, as volunteer, Kent Seymour, donned a scarecrow costume in order to spark interest.

The afternoon wrapped up with Susan Waltrip, a dietetic intern in the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences, demonstrating her own tasty pumpkin and squash recipes. JR



2007 Prairie Planting

Land in Illinois began as prairie, and prairie it shall be again—or at least that is the case for three acres of low, creek-side land at the Horticulture Center. This planting has been around for a couple of years so you may already be familiar with it, but like any other garden, it still needs to be tended and cared for.

It is for this reason that one slushy December day, several of the HC volunteers and staff forged out to the prairie area for a planting party. Of course, the prairie had already been planted in years past, but new seeds

needed to be distributed to help diversify the planting. Those present also got to witness some diversity of prairie wildlife when a fox and a family of voles decided to join the party. Fortunately, the flock of birds that flew overhead did not join. They must have found some seeds to eat somewhere else.

Part of the seeds being scattered at the party were purchased from a prairie seed company, and the rest of them were donated by Don Schmidt, the Dean of Green, and the Sugar Grove Nature Center. Several of the

HC volunteers had gone out to the Sugar Grove prairie to collect seeds earlier this fall, and after going to the final seed cleaning event, the Dean of Green kindly donated a large amount of seed.

So, this spring as you head out to the Horticulture Center, make sure to keep your eyes peeled for new prairie plants as they begin to show up. JD



Horticulture Center History 101

It occurred to me in the first newsletter back in October that a history of the HC would not only be appropriate with a first issue but also informative, especially to those of you who are not a part of the ISU community. But alas, in the hecticness of getting ready for the second annual Autumnal Festival, some things just needed to be finished and saved for another time.

So before we get to Volume 5, let me share with you a little history of how the ISU Horticulture Center came to be.

Plans for the Center were started in the late 1990s at the same time that the ISU Farm was planning for its relocation. The Gregory ISU Farm site had a Crops of the World Garden that was maintained by Dr. Churdinsky, the soil professor at the time. This garden was a beacon for the department and used in many classes, as well as for outreach within the community. The department had a steady number of students enrolled in horticulture. The Aquaculture Center, which was also being phased out, was located at the Gregory site as well. The occurrence of these situations lead Dr. Winter, the chair of the department at the time, to the conclusion that the department needed to maintain an area that was visible for horticulture research, teaching and outreach through the ISU Farm relocation process. Additional support came from Dr. Rossman, the dean of CAST at the time.

The original thought was to maintain the Crops of the World site along Gregory, which also had a small greenhouse at the time. During the relocation process, the ISU Farm moved from its Gregory location to the new Lexington location, but the space for horticulture was moved from the Gregory site. The allocated space is its current home along Raab Road, north of the University Golf Course, and across the street from Heartland Community College in Normal.

If you haven't been out there it is a wonderful 12 acres. There is a swale on the west side that has a creek that runs diagonally through the site. The creek carries the overflow from Heartland Community College's pond, so during late summer it tends to dry up. There are about two acres of reestablished prairie located north of the creek. As you move further east, you climb the knoll which offers a dryer setting than the area around the western half. And finally, the land levels out and is bordered by the Constitution Trail on the east side.



The Prairie

After the final approvals, a conceptual design was produced in February of 2005. The Aquaculture position was transformed into the Horticulture Coordinator position, which I accepted in August of 2005.

The plans for the Horticulture Center include a central building including classrooms, offices, laboratories, greenhouses, horticultural field plots for faculty and student research, re-establishment of natural areas and gardens such as the Children's Garden and the Literary Garden.

The Center has three official staff members which include Jenna Rozum, our graduate assistant, Jonathan Damery, our undergraduate assistant, and I am the Horticulture Coordinator. The Center also started a Volunteer Program last year and has about 15 volunteers.

As we go into the third year of the Center's establishment, we are so anxious to share the Center with you and all its new developments. Our spring newsletter will talk more about our featured garden for 2008, the Nutraceutical Garden, our wind turbine and solar array additions, as well as other great activities that are going on. Until then. . . . Jessica Chambers



Jenna and Jonathan

Volunteer Spotlight

Denny Mays



HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OF YOU! Another year has passed and what an eventful year it was. I was very fortunate to become a volunteer with all the other volunteers at the Illinois State University, Horticulture Center. I was uncertain if that was what I wanted to be a part of. I had no idea what I would be able to give to the organization. I had never done anything in the field of horticulture before. What an experience. It has become the beginning of a fulfillment of a goal I have had for a long time wanting to be involved and learn more about plants, gardening, visiting other greenhouses, landscaping ideas, etc. and maybe someday having my own small greenhouse and growing plants of my own. I know I have a lot of learning ahead in order to accomplish those goals. It was fantastic to see all the hard work come together as a final product, and at the same time, it is somewhat sad to see it all come to a season finale.



Denny mowing on a Friday afternoon on the old Simplicity mower.

A lot of growth has taken place in the past year at the Horticulture Center. My most favorite was the purchase of a Kubota tractor/mower, which I had the opportunity to learn to operate. We are able to mow a much larger area in less

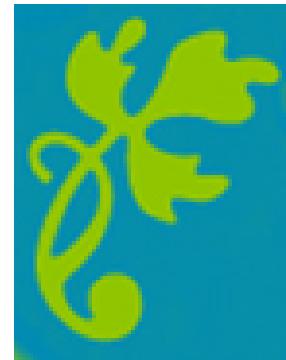
time. Before we had a mower that was half the cutting width. The bucket on the new tractor allows us to move mulch, dirt, etc. without having the ISU farm bring their bobcat and driver to do the work for us. We also now have underground running water for watering the gardens. It's really exciting when you know what we had before these editions. Having to lay miles of garden hoses from one central location and forever having to move them to accommodate your needs. There is a lot of growth yet to come for the Horticulture Center, and I am looking forward to those experiences. It is an exciting feeling every day as I drive to work taking the exit off 1-39. I can look across the field and see the whole layout of the Hort Center and everyone's hard work. A great feeling comes over me knowing that I am a part of that development and knowing it will only become bigger and better as each day and year goes along.

I also had the privilege of conducting the layout work and construction for a few of the landscape pieces for some of the gardens. Working on these projects gave me the opportunity to be able to bring my 11 year-old grandson, Tristun, in to help me and spend precious time with him. This experience also allowed him to learn a few things about construction, and I must say he was also a great deal of help to me. He and I built the fences for the 1857 Garden and cut the material for the identification plaques. While working in the garden projects, I was able to bring my other grandkids out to the Center. They were able to help with the planting of different plants in the Children's Garden, which they thought were the greatest.

We are very fortunate to have an amazing leader and friend, Jessica Chambers, Horticulture Center Coordinator, at the reigns. She is the type of person that even if you mess up her only answer to you is "You Rock" which is her response to most every-

thing. No matter how little you know about horticulture, Jessica is very appreciative and patient to explain to you the ins and outs. All the other volunteers are extremely great people to know, and I am very fortunate to be a part of the growing volunteer group. They are not afraid to tackle any kind of job no matter how hard it may be. I know of nowhere else where people sweat, work extremely hard and are happy and enjoy them at the same time. We do have a lot of fun and have a lot of work ahead of us and as a close knit group I am sure it will come together.

I haven't regretted my choice to volunteer for a second. I was hooked immediately. We are always looking for more volunteers. Come tap into what Mother Nature holds in store for us in 2008. As the ground lies dormant waiting for spring to bring new life and color, won't you consider joining us? Nothing ventured, nothing gained.



Share your knowledge, Share your time, Share your experiences

by volunteering at the Illinois State University Horticulture Center.

To become a volunteer at the ISU Horticulture Center go to <http://www.horticulturecenter.ilstu.edu/events/Volunteer.shtml>

jon's tid bits



The Rock

The world's largest cornmaze—built last year in Dixon, CA—covered an area of 40 acres. In fact, it was so large the designers had to install phone lines so that lost visitors could find their way out.

All cucurbits—pumpkins, squash, zucchini, and so forth—have male and female flowers. Therefore, when growing these plants you may notice that not all of the flowers produce fruit. This is not a problem. Only female flowers produce fruit. The male flowers simply produce pollen for pollination.

Prairie once covered 61 percent of Illinois. Only about one percent still exists today. (<http://www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/ecosystems/studentguide2.html>)

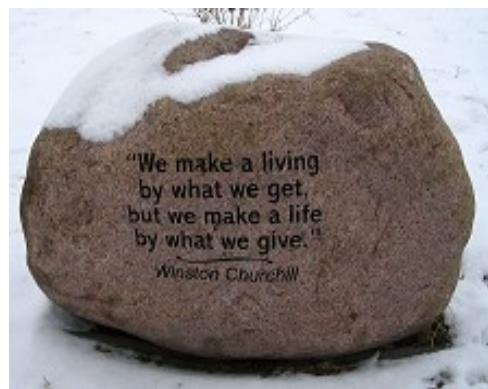
There are over 850 plants native to Illinois prairies. (<http://www.inhs.uiuc.edu/~kenr/prairieplants.html>)

JD

I can honestly say that establishing a volunteer program was the best thing I did in 2007. Not because of 900 hours plus that were generated, nor for the opinions, suggestions and advice that was so desperately sought. It was simply for the new friendships that evolved. Friendships grew between our volunteers, my students and my family.

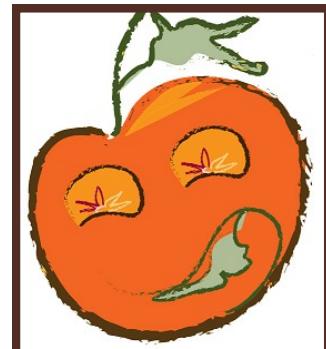
In November, at our end of the year Volunteer Bash, I was presented with *The Rock*. The boulder itself was donated by Facilities Management. The inscription that was engraved with Winston Churchill's quote was a gift from my volunteers.

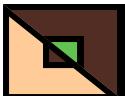
I often tell my volunteers "they rock" and that is because they do. My volunteers have a great work ethic, they have a good sense of humor, are dedicated and each of them bring their own special niche to the Center. They have inspired my students, my children and me.



Their gift continues to inspire. In return for their generous and kind words that are engraved on the boulder, a new garden will be created to house *The Rock*. This garden will be of modest size, contain a collection of perennials and shrubs and will sit on top of the knoll, keeping watch and overlooking the entire Center. The garden will be appropriately named, "The Volunteer Garden."

JC





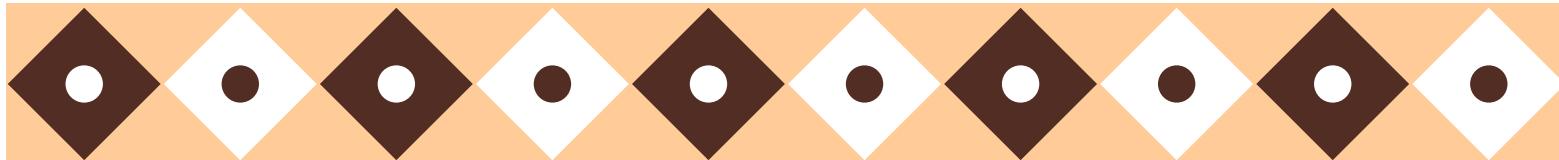
Schedule of Events

- March 8, **Home, Lawn & Garden Day** sponsored by University of Illinois Extension-McLean County Master Gardeners from 8:00 am – 3:00 pm at Central Catholic in Bloomington
- March 20, Field Trip to Fox Willow Pines, Woodstock, Illinois
- April 9 **Nutri-Fest 2008** sponsored by ISU Wellness Program Wednesday, April 9 from 11:00 am – 1:30 pm in the Circus Room, Bone Student Center, ISU
- April 11-12, **Illinois Sustainable Living & Wellness Expo** sponsored by Ecology Action Center and Illinois Wesleyan University Friday: 10:00 am -3:00 pm and Saturday 9:00 am — 4:00 pm in the Shirk Center, IWU
- April 26, Field Trip to Allerton park & Retreat Center, Monticello, Illinois

Field trips are open to Friends of the Center and their families, as well as horticulture students, faculty and volunteers. If you are interested, please call Jessica to learn more at 309-438-3496.



Dietetic Interns in the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences cooking up some fun at the Autumnal Festival.



Acorn Squash Soup

Yields: 6 cups

Acorn Squash

Cut squash in half horizontally. Scrape out the seeds and pulp. Save the seeds. Bake skin side up, in a microwavable dish, with 1/4-1/2 inch of water covered for 10 minutes. Remove and let cool slightly. Scrape out the acorn squash leaving enough of the squash in each half to use as a bowl. Mash removed squash and set aside for soup.

Acorn Squash Soup Ingredients

I small onion
I stalk chopped celery
3 Tbsp Canola Oil
1 Tbsp butter
2 Tbsp all-purpose flour
1/2-3/4 tsp poultry seasoning
1/2 tsp dill weed
1/4 tsp curry powder
Dash cayenne pepper
2 cups Low Sodium Chicken Broth
1 1/2 cups skim milk
3 cups mashed cooked Acorn squash
Salt & Pepper to taste

In a large saucepan, sauté the onion and celery in canola oil. Add butter, once melted stir in flour, poultry seasoning, dill, curry and cayenne until blended. Gradually add broth and milk. Bring to a boil; cook and stir for 2 minutes. Add the squash, salt and pepper; heat through. In a blender, process the soup in batches until smooth. Serve in Acorn squash bowls.

Recipe created by Susan Waltrip a Dietetic Intern in the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences for the ISU Horticulture's Autumnal Festival on October 6, 2007.



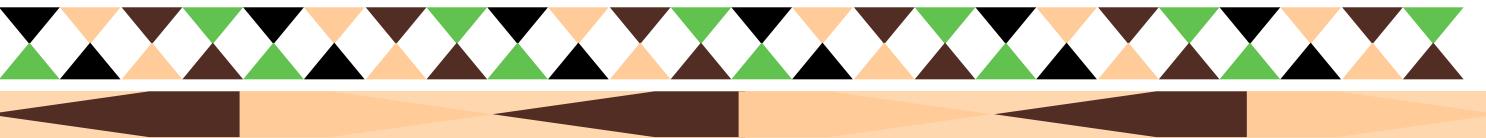
**The ISU Horticulture Center would like to thank you
our Volunteers, Friends and donors
for a successful season in 2007!**

Mary Jo Adams
Mike and Linda Busing
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Kent Seymour
Richard Stephen

Susan Waltrip
Kevin Wiand
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Casey's Garden Shop
Funks Grove Prairie Home – Bill Case
Green View Garden Center
Growing Grounds
Growmark – Dave Gentry
Illinois Prairie Community Foundation
ISU Geology Department – Bill Shields



Become a Friend of the Horticulture Center

Your support is essential to the Horticulture Center's growth and development.

With your help the Center can continue to provide high-quality learning, research and facilities to students and the community.

Gift: Student \$10.00 Non-student \$25.00 Additional Gift \$_____

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◊ I DO NOT WISH TO BE RECOGNIZED IN THE NEWSLETTER.

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