

Q-CUR BITS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ISU HORTICULTURE CENTER

CUCURBITS: PLANTS IN THE GOURD FAMILY SUCH AS CUCUMBERS, SQUASH, PUMPKINS OR MELONS



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October 5, 2007

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Schedule of Events

- } October 6, Autumnal Festival
- } November 15, Healthy You Healthy Earth Wellness Fair Bone Student Center
- } November , Prairie Planting ISU Horticulture Center

Hours of operation:
Dawn to dusk

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



2nd Annual Autumnal Festival

This year the 2nd Annual Autumnal Festival will take place on Saturday, October 6th from 9:00 am until 4:00 pm. The Festival offers many opportunities for students, faculty, the community and the Center. It allows ISU horticulture and agriculture students to engage in alternative agriculture, and it also provides opportunities to build relationships throughout the community as several businesses and groups have offered to participate in the event. The event also serves as a fundraiser for the Horticulture Center as it sells many of the fall amenities it has grown this past season. Those

include over 40 varieties of pumpkins, gourds, and squash as well as mums and corn stalks.



The Center grows over 40 types of cucurbits.

The event starts with a Bird Stroll with Dr. Capparella at 8:00 am at Heartland Community College. From 9:00-12:00 there will be several

family activities under the big white tent at the Horticulture Center. These activities are 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 Center will also have a three acre corn maze, toddler maze and is showcasing our first "Scarecrows on Parade" throughout the Center. At 1:00 Susan Waltrip will demonstrate how to cook with squash and pumpkins. At 3:00 Jenna Rozum will showcase simple ways to decorate for fall.



Sesquicentennial Garden

The Horticulture Center's featured garden for 2007 was the 1857 Garden. The garden is part of ISU's sesquicentennial celebration and showcases the different types of vegetables grown in McLean County in the 1850s. Many of these heirlooms are still grown today. Some of the more interesting varieties

include Red Seeded Citron, which has white solid flesh, which raw, is inedible. This citron has been used for centuries in making preserves and "sweetmeats," which are added to fruitcakes, cookies, and puddings. Another interesting plant is the Lazy Housewife Bean, which was introduced in 1820 and is said to be the first completely stringless bean. This

bean gets its name from the fact that it is extremely productive, making it very easy to gather. It has a pole habit and produces pods, which are one-half to six inches long.

While the garden has passed into the "cool season" phase there are still many different vegetables to see in the garden.



Children's Garden Opening



Her Royal Highness
Queen Alyssa

One of the first gardens to be installed at the Horticulture Center was the Children's Garden. The reason for establishing a garden for children was multifaceted but the main purpose was clear — to reconnect children with nature. In a time where our children are living in an electronic world and struggling

with health issues such as obesity, meaningful experiences with nature can be part of the solution. While the garden does not attempt to replace those wild places children need to "get lost in" (woods, cornfields, streams) it does offer a location for some one-on-one with nature. It is a magical place where children can touch and smell many different types of plants, where they can watch butterflies and hummingbirds, or maybe just get lost in a grassy hideout.

When you visit the Children's Garden you will enter through the sunflower tunnel and you will be greeted by the decision of which

way to explore. A sharp left takes you into the Rock and Roll Garden where you may find a leopard rock, feel the texture of a stonecrop leaf, or find a smooth rock.

A quick pass through the banana trees and you have entered into the Fairytale Garden. There are so many plants to examine such as the wand flower with its delicate pink flower at the end of its long stem or the whimsical colors of the Court Jester flower or the funny shape of Juliet tomatoes. You may also choose to pretend you are flying to an undiscovered land on Waldo the resident dragon, or maybe you would prefer to sit on the throne and tell your subjects a story.

Now if you choose to lurk in the Spider Garden then you will need to enter through the spider pergola where you will encounter a mass of blue and red flowers (spiderman's colors). In this garden you can sit on a tuffet and recite Little Miss Muffet, count the legs on the spider or perhaps feel the texture of celosia.

So much to explore and we haven't even mentioned the Rainbow Garden, the Cereal Garden, the Pizza Garden, the Chocolate Pool or the PB&J Garden. Come and explore the garden and don't forget to bring your parents!



Waldo the Dragon



During our Sneak Peak of the Children's Garden in July the Center held its first garden planting party! The evening events included rock painting, designing plant labels, planting annuals and naming our dragon.

The dragon was constructed by Anise Bertram of Over the Fence Designs. Many names were listed on the board that night including Norbert, Frankle and Inferno but Waldo got the most tally marks and was bestowed the honor.



Every child is born a naturalist. His eyes are, by nature, open to the glories of the stars, the beauty of the flowers, and the mystery of life.

- R. Search





Volunteer Spotlight



So many ideas, so little time. That seemed to be a common theme while volunteering at ISU's Horticulture Center this past year. And as the growing season begins to wind down for 2007, I'm already getting excited about 2008 as I can't wait until a new volunteer season begins.

Transition to Fall, 2006

Kent Seymour

I recall driving by what is now the Horticulture Center off Raab Road in north Normal and being captivated by the mass planting of sunflowers (which I could not help but feel I was being looked at by thousands of smiley faces ☺). When I read about the first annual Autumnal Festival to be held in October, I knew I had to attend to see what else this little known area was growing and harvesting. Talk about seeing some of the most interesting and unusual shaped pumpkins, which I later learned were from the cucurbit family, poor things. I recall making an early visit that day and asked the simple question to Jessica Chambers, HC coordinator and horticulturist on duty, whether or not weed pulling and watering on a volunteer basis would be entertained for the next growing season. Not only did I hear one yes, but I think I heard the question answered as if I were in an echoing cavern.....yes yes yes yes! That warm, enthusiastic welcome to a simple request helped make the Illinois winter of 2006/2007 seem a little more tolerable for me.

Transition to Spring/Summer/Fall, 2007

Little did I know the volunteer idea was like a seed planted at the right depth and with all the nutrients needed to grow and thrive. Talk about a synergistic environment when a small group of interested individuals get together, each bringing a subset of horticulture skills and wheelbarrows full of ideas! Our volunteer group consisted of fewer than 10 individuals, but when we got together, ideas and landscaping blueprints became realities. Earth was moved, mounds were created, fences were built, seeds were planted, transplants were transplanted, mulch was laid, weeds were pulled and pulled and pulled, and water was frequently dispersed. I quickly discovered that not only could the volunteers freely contribute time and sweat, but it was fair game to express ideas.

As this year's growing season comes to a successful and eventful end, I can't wait for the volunteer season to begin next year! I discovered literally a playground where every idea was never discounted. Where else can you go in Bloomington/Normal and find a "rock and roll" garden, a "peanut butter and jelly" garden, a "pizza" garden, a "spider" garden, a "cereal" garden, a "rainbow" garden, a "blueberry hill" garden, a "viney" garden, a "fairy tale" garden, a "sesquicentennial" (aka 1857) garden, a "secret" hideaway, a large pumpkin patch or take a walk through the viburnums? If it weren't for mother nature's own calendar, I suspect more gardens would have appeared. Alas, all good things have an ending. But have I mentioned I can't wait until volunteer season begins next year? How about you?



Kent hard at work!



Friends of the Horticulture Center

Illinois State University

The basic mission of the Center aims to reconnect people to nature, increasing the quality of life at the University and Bloomington-Normal communities. Become a friend of the ISU 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, facilities and gardens to students and the community.

Membership includes:

- ◇ Subscription to Q-cur Bits published quarterly
- ◇ Invitation to members only events which include the Children's Garden Planting Party in June
- ◇ 25% Discount on ISU Horticulture Center apparel
- ◇ Discount at our annual Autumnal Festival
- ◇ Contribution is tax-deductible

Join in on the fun and excitement of being part of something that is new. Become a member today!

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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