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McLean County HCE

McLean County disaster preparedness event set for May 3

When disaster strikes, families and communities need to be prepared to act quickly and effectively. McLean County Association for Home and Community Education (HCE) will host a second Disaster Preparedness Event on Saturday, May 3. The event will be held at the Interstate Center, 1106 Interstate Drive, Bloomington (County Fair site), from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Presentations, activities and informational displays to help area residents of all ages learn how to be better prepared for emergencies are open to the public at no charge.

Noted disaster preparedness expert Eddy Weiss will speak at 12:30 p.m. Weiss is the founder of Chasing4Life, an internationally known organization involved in training, teaching and disaster response. His presentation will cover severe weather and severe weather safety. Saxby, the readiness squirrel from Chasing4Life, will be featured at 11:30 a.m. with the focus on encouraging families with children to create their own home disaster kits. For photos or to set up advance interviews with Eddy Weiss, visit the website: www.Chasing4Life.org, click contact us and Brandi Weiss or Melanie Ramiro.

Representatives from local and area emergency services agencies, as well as fire and rescue units from local fire and police departments will be on hand with equipment, vehicles and educational displays. Captain Brad McCollum of the Bloomington Fire Department will present a puppet show at 10:30 a.m. A Red Cross Blood Drive will run between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Walk-ins are welcome but appointments are encouraged by calling Kathryn, 309-473-2283. There will be various children's games and activities and information booths and displays highlighting emergency safety. The event will also feature door prizes, and lunch will be available for purchase.

For further information, contact Kathleen Emery, 309-728-2784 or Kathryn McNeely, 309-473-2283.



Photos from last year's Disaster Preparedness - (left) Saxby the Readiness Squirrel; (middle) Eddy Weiss speaking to Kathleen Emery; (right) Captain Brad McCollum with Dusty the Dragon.

McLean County Association for Home & Community Education Presents

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Prepare for Tomorrow ~ Today is the Day Before



Street in Washington, IL ~ Same view before and after November 17, 2013

**Saturday,
May 3, 2014**

10 AM to 2 PM

INTERSTATE CENTER

McLean County Fair Site
1106 Interstate Drive, Bloomington, IL

FREE ADMISSION

Red Cross Blood Drive 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
(for appointment: Call Kathryn, 309-473-2283)

Puppet Show 10:30 - 11:00 a.m.
(Captain Brad McCollum of Bloomington Fire Department)

Saxby, The Readiness Squirrel Program 11:30 a.m. - 12:00 noon
(with his Tree House ~ Chasing4Life.org)

Eddy Weiss, Speaker on Severe Weather 12:30 - 1:30 p.m.
(and Severe Weather Safety ~ Chasing4Life.org)

EMERGENCY RESPONSE VEHICLES - INFORMATION BOOTHS
LOCAL RESPONDER BOOTHS AND DISPLAYS - DOOR PRIZES
FAMILY ORIENTED ACTIVITIES - CHILDREN'S GAMES

LUNCH WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE

Questions: Kathleen, 309-728-2784 or ksemery@frontiernet.net
or

Kathryn, 309-473-2283 or kamcneely@frontier.com

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UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS EXTENSION - Livingston-McLean-Woodford Unit



Garden Tips

by Helen Leake - McLean County Master Gardener



When you see holes in the hosta or a slimy trail on the sidewalk, you know you have slugs. Slugs are a mollusk, they don't have a shell to protect their body. They rely on copious production of slimy mucous to prevent water loss or repel predators.

Since the slugs are very sensitive to moisture loss, it helps to control the moisture in your garden. Cut back on irrigation, clean the garden and remove weeds. Expose the soil surface to the drying effects of sunlight. A week of dryness can kill many slugs and may cause the slug eggs to dry up before they hatch. Autumn is a good time to take these measures.

Slugs love mulch because it keeps the soil moist and provides a place for them to hide while they are not eating. They also thrive where frequent overhead irrigation keeps leaves wet. Keep mulch away from the crown of perennials to discourage them and limit watering to once every 2 weeks, even in dry weather.

Frogs and toads are very effective in reducing slug population. The larvae of fireflies feed on slugs and can help control the population. Therefore you need to restrict the use of pesticides in your garden and lawn.

You can trap the slugs by saturating small pieces of wood in water, then place them on the soil surface. In the middle of the day, pick up the piece of wood and scrape the slugs into a bucket of soapy water to drown them. You can also place a cat food or tuna can with beer near the plants.



We hear people talking about deadheading, pruning, cut back and rejuvenate, what is the difference? They all improve the looks of the plant.

Deadheading is when we remove the flower that is no longer attractive. A seed is supposed to produce a plant, then a flower. The flower will turn into a seed and then the plant is finished growing. If you keep removing the old flowers, the plant will continue producing more flowers.

When we prune or cut back a plant or shrub, we are removing the tired foliage and restoring the youthful look of the plant. It will also help improve the beauty of the garden. It will also help control the size of the plant. If you remove 1/3 of the oldest canes in a shrub, it will send up new branches.

If you cut back or prune mums, asters, or sedum before July 4, you can have a more attractive shaped plant. A nip and tuck in mid summer also keeps balloon flower, salvias and Joe-Pye weed, that seems to keep them more in control.

Last, but not least, is rejuvenate. As our shrubs get taller, sometimes they lose some of their beauty. A deciduous hedge, for example, loses its leaves in the winter. As it gets taller and is trimmed, the top is wider and the sun can not reach the bottom, so the lower branches die. If the hedge is trimmed to an A shape, wider at the bottom than the top, it can be more attractive. The first year, cut out the dead or crossing branches. Then the second year, make the top more narrow, so the lower branches can grow outward. Just a snip off the tips will start making the base wider. It could take 3-4 years to get the hedge to be completely covered with leaves.



It looks like spring has finally arrived and we want to get all the things on our list completed. However, we need to avoid working in the soil when it is too wet. Take a handful of soil, squeeze it into a ball. If it breaks apart easily, the soil is dry enough to work. If not wait a couple of days and check again. If you work in the soil when it is too wet, it will stay hard all summer.

It's time to remove the mulch from the perennials. If you want to divide the perennials, now is the time to do it, except the peony and bearded iris. When you divide them, it is best to take a clump of the plant, rather than just one stalk.

Now is the time to apply pre-emergence to control crabgrass. However, don't reseed the turf at the same time. The pre-emergence will prevent the seed from coming up.

Watch for spider mite damage on the spruce. Shake the needles over a piece of white paper to see if any fall out. If the spots on the paper move, you need to spray.

Check your houseplants to see if they need to be transplanted. If you see roots growing out of the hole in the bottom of the pot, it is time to move them up to a pot one size larger.

Now is a good time to plant rhubarb and asparagus crowns.

After you have finished work in the yard and garden for the day, be sure to clean all the soil off of your tools before putting them away for the night. Clean tools are much easier to use than tools caked with dry soil.

When Walking Dogs...



Most pet owners probably know that it's common courtesy to take plastic bags with them when they walk their dogs and to clean up any "deposits" the pups may leave along the way. (This is a great way to recycle all those plastic grocery bags!) This includes all public areas, as others, including children, use those spaces.

If you're planning an extended walk, be sure to bring water for your dog -- especially if it's warm outside. Don't forget the goodies! Walks are great training opportunities. Bring Fido's fave treats along and practice tricks and obedience while you're out in the world.

Towanda American Legion

The Towanda American Legion will have a breakfast on Sunday May 4th from 7:30 – 11:00. Breakfast includes eggs, egg casserole, sausage, bacon, hash browns, pancakes, French toast, fresh fruit, biscuits and gravy, juice, milk and coffee for \$8.

There will be a pork chop dinner on Friday May 9th from 5:00 to 7:00. Dinner will include pork chop sandwich, French fries, green beans, dessert and drink for \$9.00.

All dinners are open to the public. Carry outs are available. Thank you for your continued support of the Legion and our Veterans.

Legion, Sons of the Legion and the Legion Auxiliary will have their regular meeting on Thursday May 15th at 7:00 at the Post. The Legion is available for rent for reunions, parties and meeting. For more information contact Mike Potts at 728-2384 or Tom Wagner at 287-7861.



Towanda HCE

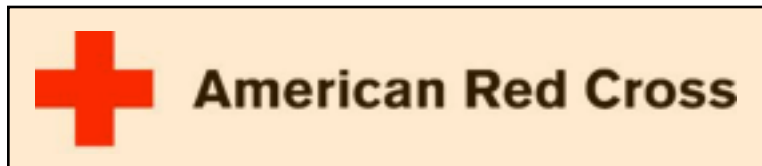
The Towanda Home and Community Education Unit will meet on Monday, May 12, at 7 p.m. at the Towanda Community Building. Two programs will be presented: Exercise and Mobility by Jeanie Wager and Container Gardening by Cindy Kelley. The fact find on the Mustard Seed will be given by Dorothy Brickey. Helen Guth and Sharon Joplin are hostesses.

The public is invited to attend county HCE programs and workshops: May 12, 1-4pm, potted plant class, RSVP/fees by May 8, Eileen- 309-533-1135; May 13, 9-noon, Card Making class, free, Barb-309-242-6187; May 19, 9-noon, HCE Comfort Quilts and 1-4 p.m. Children's dresses and shorts free workshops, Eileen-309-533-1135. County programs are held at Evergreen FS Auditorium, 402 N. Hershey Rd, Bloomington. The spring trip will be May 20, 8am-4pm, "Meander Southwest McLean County" with Don Meyer, RSVP/fees by May 10, Jane-309-808-0740.

A special free event is Saturday, May 3, 10 am-2 pm, Disaster Preparedness at the Interstate Center and open to the public. Many Towanda HCE members will manning displays. To volunteer, contact Kathleen Emery, 309-728-2784.

For more information about attending HCE meetings, call Cindy Kelley, 663-4796 or Robin Pearson, 815-579-1650. Guests are cordially invited to attend.

Towanda Busy Bees 4-H



**Towanda Busy Bees 4-H & Towanda HCE will sponsor
a Red Cross Blood Drive on Tuesday, June 24
3:00 – 7:00 p.m.
Towanda Community Building**

**Schedule your BLOOD DONATION by calling: Pat Pulokas 309-728-2118,
Martha Rients 309-728-2178, Clara Lehan 728-2374, or
e-mail Pat at palp@mchsi.com or
visit www.redcrossblood.org**

*The need is constant. The gratification is instant. Please save this date on your calendar
and if possible call for an appointment. We also welcome walk-in donors.*



Towanda Library

STORY HOURS at 10:30 Wednesday mornings: May 7 - Sunshine Days; May 14 - Outdoor Fun; May 21 - Very Ready Reader. The weekly Preschool Story Hours resume again after Labor Day.

TOWANDA READS: Join the book discussion on Tuesday, May 13 at 5:00 at the library! *Empty Mansions* by Bill Dedman and Paul Clark Newall, Jr. traces the life of an eccentric of the highest order - who lived life on her own terms. The family story spans nearly all of American history in three generations. *People* magazine calls the book "Fascinating . . . [a] haunting true-life tale."

All-School Assembly at Towanda Elementary at 2:15 on Friday, May 23: Illinois Arts Council endorsed performer - Chris Vallillo - shares folk songs about animals - to help the library introduce its Summer Reading Program to the students. As Chris says, "I believe our rich heritage can be illuminated through the use of folk songs... This is an exciting, engaging tool for students and teachers, opening up a door into the past in an interactive, participatory way. I believe in a hands-on approach using a variety of vintage instruments."

Summer Reading Sign-Up Begins May 27: Pre-Register your children for the Summer Reading Program which runs from June 9 through July 23. *PAWS to READ* is the summer theme for the Monday evening (5:00 to 6:00 pm) and Wednesday morning (10:30 to 11:30 am) sessions. Tuesday evenings individual *READ to the DOGS* appointments are offered (5:00 to 6:30). Pre-registering your child enters you in a prize drawing. Help us plan. Please pre-register!



Adult Summer Reading Program: Reading three hours per week qualifies you for prizes at summer's end. Adult Summer Reading Bingo Cards are available June 1st. Pick up your card and have it stamped by our staff weekly. Become one of the *Reading Role Models* in our community. When children see adults reading, it is one of the strongest statements a person can make - "We endorse reading!" Let children see you reading and using your library! The children of our community WILL notice! They WILL get the message!

McLean County Art Center's ROVER: Free art workshops from 2:30 to 4:30 on June 2, 4, 6, 9, 11, and 13 at the Towanda District Library. Youth ages 10 to 18 will create works in 3-dimensional ceramic, 2-dimensional paper/canvas, and in fiber media. Professional artists lead the 2-hour sessions. Classes meet under the shade trees - unless there is inclement weather. Come join the fun! Learn something new! Spend time with your age-mates on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoons - the first 2 weeks in June.

Towanda District Library is seeking a part-time Youth Services worker to help implement the Summer Reading Program. Applicants with teaching degrees or classes leading to teaching certification are preferred. Familiarity with online library circulation tools is a plus. Willingness to learn advanced online e-book and circulation applications is necessary.

Summer hours for this position include Monday and Tuesday evenings until 7:00, as well as Wednesday mornings in June and July. Saturday hours are required for 5-hours per day on alternate weekends.

If you love to work with youth and have a strong desire to promote literacy, please apply in person. Pick up applications at 301 South Taylor Street between 1:00 and 5:00 on weekdays. View the library's website at: www.towandalibrary.org.



12 Things You Can Do to Help Native Bees

"Honey bees pollinate one in every three bites of food we eat."



Taken from <http://insects.about.com/od/antsbeeswasps/tp/12-ways-to-help-native-bees.htm> by Debbie Hadley

Whether we know it or not, we've declared war on our native bees. Habitat destruction, overdevelopment, and shrinking plant diversity all impact native bee populations. At a time when honeybees are disappearing, we need our native pollinators more than ever.

If you're a gardener or homeowner, you can make a difference. Here are 12 things you can do to help native bees thrive:

1. Cut back on the mulch.

Gardeners love mulch, and it does have its benefits. But look at the mulch from a bee's perspective. Ground-nesting bees dig nests in the soil, and a layer of mulch will discourage them from taking up residence in your yard. Leave a few sunny areas free of mulch for the bees.

2. Minimize your use of weed barriers.

Ditto on the weed barriers. If you don't like to weed, barriers of black plastic or landscape fabric may be an easy solution for keeping the garden weed free. But bees can't tear through these barriers to reach the soil surface, so rethink your weeding strategy. If you must use a barrier, try laying down newspapers instead – they'll biodegrade over time.

3. Plant a variety of flowers that bloom from early spring to late fall.

Don't expect native bees to wait around until your vegetable crops bloom. Bees need pollen and nectar to live, and if they can't find flowers in your yard, they'll move elsewhere. Digger bees begin foraging as soon as spring arrives, while [bumblebees](#) and dwarf carpenter bees are still active in the fall. Plant a variety of flowers to provide blooms from early spring to late fall, and you'll keep native bees happy all year.

4. Leave some sunny areas of your yard free of vegetation.

Many native bees nest in the ground; these bees usually seek out loose, sandy soils free of vegetation. Leave a few patches of ground so they can burrow, and they won't have to travel so far to pollinate your flowers. Remember, bees like it sunny, so try to designate plant-free areas where there's enough sun exposure to please them.

5. Provide some wood for carpenter bees.

[Carpenter bees](#) look for soft wood, such as pine or fir, in which to make their homes. While you might consider them pests when they burrow into your deck or porch, they rarely do any structural damage. Carpenter bees don't feed on wood (they feed on nectar and pollen!), but do excavate nests in lumber. Let them be, and they'll pay you back by pollinating your fruits and veggies.

6. Plant pithy vines or canes for dwarf carpenter bees.

Dwarf carpenter bees, which grow to just 8 mm, spend their winters nestled inside hollowed out canes or vines. Come spring, the females expand their pithy burrows and lay eggs. Besides providing these native bees with homes, you're providing food; dwarf carpenter bees love to forage on raspberries and other cane plants.

7. Limit pesticide use.

This much should be obvious, right? Chemical pesticides, particularly broad spectrum pesticides, can negatively impact native bee populations. Use pesticides conservatively, or better yet, not at all. By doing so, you'll also encourage beneficial predators to stick around and feed on your insect pests.

8. Leave some leaf litter in your yard.

Digger bees burrow in the ground, but they don't like their homes exposed. They prefer to make their nests in places with a little leaf litter to camouflage the entrance. Put down that rake and leave a few areas of your yard the way Mother Nature intended it.

9. Don't mow your lawn so often.

Bees like to hang out in your lawn, especially when on warm, sunny afternoons. Many "weeds" provide good sources of nectar and pollen, so bumblebees and other native bees may be foraging underfoot. Mowing kills bees, and trims the flowers that feed them. Try to let your lawn grow a little longer before you mow. When you do need to trim the lawn, do it during the cooler parts of the day or when it's cloudy to avoid killing foraging bees.

10. Provide a source of mud for mason bees.

Mason bees are known for their skilled nest construction. They look for existing holes in wood, then carry mud to the site to craft their nests. If you've got some exposed soil in your yard, keep it moist for these native bees. You can also provide a shallow dish of mud to encourage mason bees to make their home in your yard.

11. Leave some weeds for the bees, and limit your herbicide use.

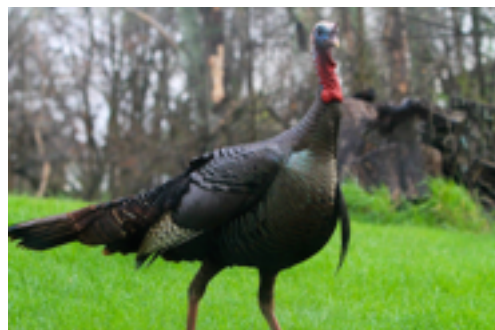
Pollen bees don't discriminate between your prized perennials and the weeds in your lawn. Weeds are wildflowers! Bumblebees love clover, so don't be so quick to break out the weed killer when clover invades your lawn. The greater the diversity of flowering plants in your yard, the more native bees you'll attract to pollinate your plants.

12. Install some artificial nests for mason and leafcutter bees.

Both mason bees and leafcutter bees make tube-shaped burrows, in which they lay their eggs. These bees don't usually excavate their own burrows, preferring to find existing cavities and build within them. Fill a coffee can with a bundle of drinking straws, mount it to a fence post in a protected area, and you've got yourself an artificial nest for these efficient pollinators. If you're handy, drill some holes in a block of pine or fir wood instead.



Local Photos



Maybe you've seen this guy around the subdivision; here he's visiting with the Ferrier's. Jim Ferrier was able to get a couple good photos and shared with us.

