

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Third Annual DIG Symposium Returns with Expert-Led Gardening Education for All Skill Levels

*Half-day event on Saturday, March 7, 2026, brings research-based gardening education from Polk County Master Gardeners, Iowa State University and local industry experts.*

[Link to logo assets here](#)

DES MOINES, Iowa, Jan. 5, 2026 — [The Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden](#), [Zanfel](#), [Polk County Master Gardeners](#) and [Iowa State University \(ISU\) Extension and Outreach in Polk County](#) are thrilled to announce the return of the [Dig Into Gardening \(DIG\) Symposium](#) on Saturday, March 7, 2026, from 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Now in its third year, the half-day symposium offers gardeners of all experience levels research-based education, practical insight and seasonal inspiration through a keynote presentation, multiple breakout sessions and a live Q&A panel with trusted experts.

The DIG Symposium is a public event designed to connect attendees with Polk County Master Gardener volunteers, ISU specialists and educators, and local industry professionals. Participants will leave with actionable knowledge they can apply to home gardens, community spaces or professional landscapes.

This year's keynote speaker is Aaron Harpold, Director of Horticulture at the Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden. Breakout sessions will cover a wide range of timely gardening topics, including backyard mushroom cultivation, greenhouse planning, flower farming, poison ivy identification and treatment, seed starting, rainscaping, edible container gardening, orchid care, and fruit tree pruning and training.

The symposium will conclude with a live Q&A panel featuring Harpold alongside Aaron Steil (ISU Extension Commercial Horticulture Field Specialist), Cynthia Haynes (ISU Professor, Department of Horticulture) and Patrick O'Malley (ISU Extension Commercial Horticulture Field Specialist).

In addition to the DIG Symposium, the Botanical Garden will launch its winter education series, [Learn on Saturdays](#), beginning Saturday, Jan. 10. Winter is an ideal time for gardeners to plan and expand their knowledge, and this eight-week series will feature expert-led sessions across eight Saturday mornings, culminating with the DIG Symposium on March 7.

The speaker lineup, presented by [Krause Group](#), includes nationally recognized gardening expert Melinda Myers on waterwise gardening, Joyce Ludlow on no-till transformations, Stephanie Shepard on bees in the city and more. [Flora Café](#) will be open at 9 a.m. during Learn on Saturdays sessions, offering coffee and pastries for purchase.

“By bringing together experts, volunteers and gardeners of all experience levels, the DIG Symposium and our Learn on Saturdays series help people grow their skills, deepen their confidence and build lasting connections through a shared love of plants and nature,” said Kim Perez, President and CEO of the Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden. “We’re proud to partner with Polk County Master Gardeners, Zanfel, and Iowa State University Extension and Outreach of Polk County to expand access to this knowledge and inspire thriving gardens across central Iowa.”

The DIG Symposium also serves as a fundraiser for the Polk County Master Gardeners, helping offset the cost of educational programming and garden upkeep throughout Polk County.

To purchase in-person and virtual tickets, view schedules, and learn more about the DIG Symposium and Learn on Saturdays series, visit [www.dmbotanicalgarden.com/learn-on-saturdays](http://www.dmbotanicalgarden.com/learn-on-saturdays).

*All in-person tickets include admission to the Botanical Garden, assorted snacks and beverages, and access to recorded session viewing.*

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### **About the Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden**

The Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden is more than a dome—it’s a connection point between plants, people and the natural world. It’s a place where anyone can explore, create, connect and find their true nature. Located in downtown Des Moines, this 12-acre urban oasis features thousands of native and exotic plants, one of the nation’s most extensive bonsai collections, a stunning orchid display, seasonal blooms and 18 outdoor gardens. Open year-round, the Botanical Garden has welcomed visitors since 1979 and is supported by members, volunteers and the broader community.

### **About Polk County Master Gardeners**

The Master Gardener Program is a volunteer service program where adults are given advanced training in horticulture in exchange for volunteer service to the community. The mission of the Master Gardener Program is to provide current, research-based, home horticulture information and education to the citizens of Iowa through ISU Extension programs and projects. Through their participation in educational activities, Master Gardeners also increase their own personal knowledge in horticulture.

### **About ISU Extension and Outreach, Polk County**

Since 1916, ISU Extension and Outreach, Polk County has served its residents by connecting them to research and resources developed by Iowa State University. Knowledge and programs offered through the ISU Extension and Outreach Polk County office have been specifically tailored to represent,

enhance, and meet the needs of Polk County residents and community. For 2026 ISU Extension and Outreach Polk County will focus on local issues including: K-12 youth outreach, well-being, nutrition, and community development. ISU Extension and Outreach, Polk County is a part of a 99-county campus backed by research to serve all Iowans to create a strong Iowa.