

August 2020

CENTRAL  
GARDENS  
of NORTH IOWA

# What's Growing On!

at Central Gardens of North Iowa

## TWENTY YEARS STRONG

The grounds upon which Central Gardens is built had been home to four Clear Lake Schools over a 100-year span, from 1888 to 1988. In 2000, when the last building, Central School, was to be razed, and with significant input from the community, the City of Clear Lake became the owner of the property and determined that the south 2.75-acre section would be green space.

A steering committee was formed, led by Julie Wright, to plan and design the space that became Central Gardens of North Iowa. Wright, together with Dee Bloom, Marcia Bunn, Donna Dull, Ben Furleigh, Sue Keefe, Fred Lewis, Pamela Carlson Little, Jane Lobdell, Barb Nicholas, Diane Thompson, Kay and Tim Turek, and Dwight Williamson saw the potential that a public garden with a primary purpose of intergenerational education could offer north Iowans. Many of those individuals continue to generously support Central Gardens and have witnessed interest in the Gardens extend far beyond north Iowa, as persons from all over the world are welcomed each year to take in its beauty and to learn about horticulture and the environment.

Central Gardens continues to provide opportunities for people of all ages to learn and grow, to nurture and to be nourished by the goodness found here in over twenty-two themed gardens, stunning water features, and on the meandering brick paths with all their roadside surprises. Even with the pandemic this year, the Gardens buzz with children, parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents taking in the Story Walk or testing their skills with the Family Garden Challenge. Come and see the growth of the Gardens and experience the joy of learning all over again!

*Vision is the art of seeing what is invisible to others. – Jonathan Swift*

## PICNICS AND PERFORMANCES KICK OFF

The fifth season of Picnics and Performances is underway thanks to a generous grant from the Bertha Stebens Charitable Foundation. The eight-week series that began July 26 and ends September 13, is held each Sunday afternoon from 5 PM to 6 PM on the south end of the grounds around the gazebo.

Juni West, pictured here with Iowa Rock and Roll Hall of Fame guitarist Brent Estlund, kicked off the season with a western outlaw vibe. The rest of the season is packed with music from a variety of genres including opera, R & B, country, 70s, 80s, and 90s. So pack a picnic, bring a lawn chair or a blanket, a bottle of wine, and enjoy the show!

## THE BEAUTY OF BORAGE

Many visitors at Central Gardens ask for the name of this unique plant with the beautiful little sky-blue flowers. It's borage! Borage (*Borago officinalis*), also known as a Starflower, bee bush, bee bread, or bugloss is a medicinal herb with edible leaves and flowers. Bees love this plant and it has a strong presence in the BEE Happy Garden for just this reason. It is a great companion plant as it invites pollinators into the garden which helps increase

pollination and fruit production. Borage may also help repel pests such as hornworms and increase resistance to pests and disease. This is such a great plant to add to your vegetable garden and as it reseeds heavily, you will only have to plant it once!



The plant and flowers are also used in cooking, beverages, and is an herbal medicine.



It is the mission of Central Gardens of North Iowa, Inc. to provide a public, intergenerational garden environment that is welcoming, beautiful, calm, educational, recreational, and fun.

*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.*  
– Margaret Mead



## AUGUST FEATURED VOLUNTEER: DONNA DULL

Donna Dull, pictured here in her grandmothers gardening hat, has been passionate about education, volunteerism, and gardening her entire life. It's fair to say that her father, a firefighter and



her mother, a children's librarian, along with her grandparents instilled and nurtured that passion with their big gardens, dedication to service, and their love of learning as she grew up in Forest City.

When she retired from Lincoln Elementary in Clear Lake, after having taught kindergarten for 41 years, Donna devoted herself to volunteering for numerous causes in the community. Among them were programs she developed for Fire Prevention Week and an Adopt an Officer program in Clear Lake. She helped start the Community Kitchen in Clear Lake and served on the advisory board of the Mason City Community Kitchen. The Fire Museum of Clear Lake, Friends of the Library, Wright on the Park, Music Man Square, the Iowa State Historical Society, Clear lake Arts Council, Habitat for Humanity, and the Iowa National Heritage Foundation have also benefited from Donna's time and talents. Her involvement with Earth Day activities earned her the nickname 'Mother Earth' and she was named Grand Marshal of Clear Lake's Fourth of July parade in 2012 to honor her many contributions to north Iowa. She is a life member of Heritage Park in Forest City

and Kinney Pioneer Museum in Mason City as well as the National Education Association and the Iowa State Education Association.

Donna had travelled to various cities in Europe and noticed the best of them had dedicated green space for public use. So, when talk of turning the Central Schools site into green space started, she knew it was a good idea. She joined the Central Gardens steering committee and worked diligently to plan for and to launch a space for gardening and education. Over the years Donna has generously donated her time and talents to the Gardens, volunteering thousands of hours hosting tours, scheduling volunteers, writing newsletters, managing the office, and doing whatever needed to be done to help the Gardens grow and to foster learning.

Donna donated the bronze sculpture of the barefoot boy reading, shown earlier, to remind people that this site is devoted to learning and to honor her father, who loved to read and who read the comics to her every single Sunday morning. It's just one of the many ways in which her legacy is evident and secure at Central Gardens of North Iowa. For just as Central Gardens is clearly a source of tremendous pride and joy for Donna, so too Donna brings joy to the Gardens.



*Donna Dull sported the hat she wore as Grand Marshal in Clear Lake's 2012 Fourth of July Parade again this year in the Boat Parade. Shown here with Joni Frederick, who was recently promoted to Development Coordinator, Donna rallied a small group to participate in the Boat Parade on behalf of Central Gardens. Thank you, Donna! It was a fun day!*

## SUMMER GARDEN PARTY UPDATE

Like many organizations navigating a new normal, Central Gardens has had to get a lot more creative about the ways in which we engage and connect with members, volunteers, sponsors, donors, and the thousands of guests that visit each year. For the first time, the Summer Garden Party, Central Gardens' principal annual fundraising event, supporting programs and operations, went online for a week-long event that ended on the Fourth of July and the response was quite positive.

Thank you to all the people and organizations that made Central Gardens' 2020 Virtual Summer Garden Party successful! For the many volunteers that devoted time and talents to make it work, community sponsors Bonnie Hall, CL Tel, Farmers State Bank, Hearing Associates, PC, Images Photography, J.J. Wise Auctioneering, North Iowa Community Credit Union, and the Sail Inn, and in-kind donors Donna Dull, Troyce Fisher, Images Photography, John Larsen, Minnesota Twins, Minnesota Wild, and Chris White we are grateful for your generosity poured out for the good of the Gardens.

Follow us on Facebook and check the website at [www.centralgardensnorthiowa.com](http://www.centralgardensnorthiowa.com) for updates and information about other events at Central Gardens and be sure to mark your calendar for the 2021 Summer Garden Party on Saturday, June 27, 2021!





## TEAM HARVEST-UNITE-GATHER-SHARE (HUGS)

The small group of 6th to 9th grade youth that comprise Team HUGS gather together each Friday morning from 9 to 11 in the BEE Happy Garden to learn about organic gardening and to share what they learn and harvest with others. Elisabeth Nicholson describes her experience in the program as follows:

Gardening is an opportunity to watch the lifecycle of a plant, and that's one of the things that intrigues me most about gardening. It teaches you a lot of things to watch for in nurture as a plant grows, produces its fruit, and withers away. No matter how many times I watch a plant's lifecycle, I will always keep learning from it, and I could see myself continuing to garden for as long as I am able. I have enjoyed being in the program; I have learned a lot about plants but also acquired a good deal of useful life skills, including leadership, entrepreneurship, and teamwork. I would encourage anyone to garden. It is a worthwhile hobby to watch your plants produce fruit or smell the pretty flowers blooming, and to observe how the plant grows and adapts. Friday mornings are always one of the highlights of my week!

It is as rewarding for the volunteers who mentor these youth to see their interest in pollinators, plants and healthy food develop as it is for the youth. Team HUGS sells their fresh vegetables every week during Fresh on Friday from 9 AM to 11 AM. Come and support these youth and your own quest for knowledge about gardening!



## TIPS FROM THE GARDENS

Enjoy the beauty of knock out roses throughout the season by deadheading. Deadheading is the process of removing finished blooms while their petals still cling, before they've begun to produce seed hips. Deadheading spent blooms on knock out roses will keep the plant looking neat and force the plant to bloom more frequently. The blooms will be bigger when the plant is properly deadheaded. To deadhead these roses, make a clean cut at a 45-degree angle about 1/4 inch above the five-leaflet that faces out from the plant's center. Enjoy!

*Have a gardening tip you'd like to share? Write to us at [info@centralgardensnorthiowa.com](mailto:info@centralgardensnorthiowa.com) subject line Tips from the Gardens.*



## 2020 MEMBERSHIPS ARE STILL AVAILABLE!

We are grateful for the many individuals and companies who have joined Central Gardens or have renewed their memberships so far this year including Bonnie Hall Associates, CL Tel, Don's Body Shop, Ellen Montgomery PA-C, Farmers State Bank, Hearing Associates, PC, Hosmer's Toyota, Images Photography, Iowa Farm Girl Enterprises, Larson's Mercantile, North Iowa Credit Union, North Iowa Orthodontics, Sail Inn, Spenser Rahm with Edward Jones Investments, and Schupick & Associates, PC.

It's not too late to benefit from a 2020 membership to Central Gardens of North Iowa! While the gates are open May through October, the work being done at Central Gardens is year-round. Memberships are important to sustain programs and operations throughout the year. For more information and to secure your individual or corporate membership, please visit our membership page at <https://centralgardensnorthiowa.com/member.../become-a-member/>.

## FREE FOOD PRESERVATION CLASS OFFERED

Love that fresh garden produce but have more than you can eat? Preserve it! It's not difficult, but you do need to know how to ensure food is safely handled. Join Iowa State Extension for this online opportunity to learn how to can, freeze, and dry foods safely at home. The Food Preservation 101 workshop is available at no cost on Thursday, August 20th at either 10 AM or 8 PM, or on Thursday, September 10th at 7 PM at <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/humansciences/preservation-101>.





Central Gardens of North Iowa  
P.O. Box 735  
Clear Lake, IA 50428

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A vertical strip of a photograph showing several pink coneflowers with dark brown centers, set against a background of green leaves and other flowers.

## ONGOING AND UPCOMING EVENTS

**FRIDAYS, JUNE 5 – AUGUST 28, 9 AM – 11 AM** *Fresh on Fridays Bouquets*

**SUNDAYS, JULY 26 – SEPTEMBER 13, 5 PM – 6 PM** *Picnics and Performances*

**SATURDAY, AUGUST 1, 8:30 AM – 9:30 AM** *Qi-Gong with Debbie Mitchell*

**SUNDAY, AUGUST 2, 5 PM – 6 PM** *Picnics and Performances – Karen Barraza & Mack Whitney*

**FRIDAYS, AUGUST 7 – AUGUST 28, 9 AM – 11 AM** *Fresh on Fridays bouquet sales*

**FRIDAYS, AUGUST 7 – AUGUST 28, 9 AM – 11 AM** *Harvest-Unite-Gather-Share vegetable sales*

**SUNDAY, AUGUST 9, 5 PM – 6 PM** *Picnics and Performances – Gary Johnson*

**SUNDAY, AUGUST 16, 5 PM – 6 PM** *Picnics and Performances – Spenser Rahm*

**THURSDAY, AUGUST 20 10 AM AND 8 PM** *Food Preservation 101 (ISU online)*

**SUNDAY, AUGUST 23, 5 PM – 6 PM** *Picnics and Performances – Levi Smith*

**SUNDAY, AUGUST 30, 5 PM – 6 PM** *Picnics and Performances – Even the Odd*

**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 5 PM – 6 PM** *Picnics and Performances – Ruthless Ruth*

**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 7 PM** *Food Preservation 101 (ISU online)*

**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 5 PM – 6 PM** *Picnics and Performances – Planet Passengers*

**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20** *Preservation Celebration (Details coming soon)*