

Conservation Corner

By Corinne Peterson
Pocahontas County Naturalist



April 6, 2016

I hope everyone enjoyed our recent side trip to several national parks in Colorado and Arizona. Back in Iowa, I hope we've enjoyed the last of winter. Time for spring! A good way to prepare for the upcoming growing season is to attend garden shows including the 10th Annual Garden Extravaganza sponsored by the Pocahontas County Master Gardeners and ISU Extension and Outreach. We hope many of you will join us this coming Saturday, April 9, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Expo Center in Pocahontas. I think you'll enjoy taking home some new knowledge, new ideas, new garden plants, maybe even a new door prize.

Once again Conservation will be hosting a make and take workshop. This year's project is a wind chime to hang on your porch, patio, or in your garden. Perhaps you collect wind chimes or simply enjoy the music from a neighbor's collection. Wind chimes have been used as percussion instruments for thousands of years. Ancient Romans hung bronze wind chimes to ward off evil spirits. In India and China, pagodas still feature wind bells at each corner to frighten off birds and evil spirits.

While many wind chimes are constructed of metal or wood tubes and rods, chimes may also be created from glass, bamboo, shells, and stone as well as recycled materials such as old silverware or cookie cookies. For our Garden Show workshop, we will be creating three different chimes using clay flower pots, seashells, or colored glass and beads. We hope many of you will stop by and make some garden music with us!

Recently several of our staff have attended classes and workshops on tree planting, selection, and pruning. Last week Jesse Randall, ISU Extension Forester, a/k/a bearer of bad news, was in town. The bad news, of course, is the Emerald Ash Borer but also the Asian Longhorned Beetle, two invasive and destructive insects that are headed our way. One of the many questions he fielded involved the techniques and timing of fruit tree pruning.

As Dr. Randall explained the rather detailed pruning steps involved with each type of fruit tree – apple, pear, peach, or plum – I was reminded of a passage that recently caught my eye in *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teaching of Plants* by Robin Wall Kimmerer. "The exchange between plants and people has shaped the evolutionary history of both. Farms, orchards, and vineyards are stocked with species we have domesticated. Our appetite for their fruits leads us to prune, irrigate, fertilize and weed on their behalf. Perhaps they have domesticated us."

A mix of science and reflection, *Braiding Sweetgrass* is a perfect book to enjoy after a day of planting, weeding, and pruning. Despite the physical demands of gardening, I believe it's a fair exchange for the gift of fragrant apple blossoms, juicy strawberries and peaches, sun-ripened tomatoes, fresh sweet corn, or new potatoes. What's your favorite garden or orchard treat? See you Saturday!

