

HOME, LAWN & Garden

Building a home can be stressful but what's it like working with family?

The Uithoven family (below) has worked together on projects before but now with two professionals in the family they are building a house. Cover story.

Businesses are on the move

Bomgaars is moving into Shopko, Big Top Tent Rental is moving into Bomgaars, and John Bowron bought the Big Top building.

See stories inside

Need garden ideas or inspiration?

The Town and Country Garden Club is a low key organization and welcomes members ranging from those who want to keep plants alive to those with well-kept landscapes.

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Making connections

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Coming home

It's a family affair when it comes to building a house for the Uithoven family

Farm and home improvements are nothing for Greg and Marilyn Uithoven of rural Magnolia, but now they're building an all-new home — this time with mostly family expertise.

The couple's granddaughter, Mira Uithoven, is a senior interior design student at South Dakota State University. She has been working with the overall design plan and finishes for the modern farmhouse-style home.

Their son, Adam, is co-owner with Derek Sandbulte of Cleveringa Construction of Luverne. He is charged with building the 1,800-square-foot home for his parents.

"It is interesting to see a house being built," Marilyn said. "We've done some remodeling in the past."

The most recent remodeling and building projects took place at the Klay family farm, located west of Magnolia, where Marilyn grew up and where she and Greg moved in 2004.

Greg said each of their four children and 15 grandchildren has helped with various home projects through the years.

"If there was something to handle, we did it," he said.

Projects over the years included an addition to the ranch-style home, a new lambing shed, hoop barn, commodity shed and, most recently, a swine-finishing barn constructed in 2018.

The addition of the swine barn



Photos and text by Mavis Fodness

Two years ago, Marilyn and Greg Uithoven (center, holding hands) began planning for their farm's succession and last fall broke ground on a new home in Magnolia Township. With the help of their homebuilder son, Adam (far left,) and their interior design granddaughter, Mira, their modern ranch house is quickly becoming a family project.

prompted Marilyn and Greg to think about the succession of their farm to the third generation.

Son Aric chores the swine barn with Greg, but Greg's back surgery in late 2018 forced Aric to drive to the farm from Luverne twice a day during Greg's recovery.

"It's an awful lot of driving," Greg said.

That's when the elder Uithovens decided it was time to consider different home options.

"It's better to have a young family on the farm," Marilyn said. "Deep

in our hearts we knew it would be good to have them on the farm."

From the ground up

They, of course, turned to family for help.

As a starting point Adam directed them to a floor plan design website to examine different layouts and determine the square footage within their home-build budget.

Location was a much discussed family topic.

Marilyn said they considered building in the city of Luverne's newly

annexed Uithoven Addition on the west side of town. Greg's parents used to own the land on which the addition is now being developed.

But they couldn't give up country living. "It's who we are — we are country people — we are not fancy people," Marilyn said.

The Uithovens didn't stray far from their existing farm with their new home north and east of the farm, situated for the best view.

"A bright and sunny southern exposure was necessary — overlooking the farm," Marilyn said.

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Uithovens build farm home with view of the farm



“My biggest push in school — we call it ‘aging in place’ — where door frames are wider, showers have a ramp that can be added later and door latches are not knobs but latches so they can be pushed down and pulled open.”

— Mira Uithoven, interior designer

'Aging in place' design
She helped her grandparents decide on design elements, focusing on their future in the home.
“My biggest push in school — we call it ‘aging in place’ — where door frames are wider, showers have a ramp that can be added later and door latches are not knobs but latches so they can be pushed down and pulled open,” Mira said.
Each design choice went

The view from Greg and Marilyn Uithovens’ new dining room overlooks the existing family farm in Magnolia Township. They considered building in Luverne’s Uithoven Addition named for Greg’s parents who used to own the land. But they couldn’t give up country living. “It’s who we are — we are country people — we are not fancy people,” Marilyn said.

Uihoven home/see page 4

They broke ground Oct. 4 and the house is now fully enclosed and nearly half completed.

Bless this house
Marilyn blessed the house by penciling in various Bible verses and sayings on the floor and wall trusses.
In the bathrooms she wrote, “Wash your hands and say your prayers, Jesus and germs are everywhere.”
In bedrooms, “Peace to all

who enter here, rest in my everlasting peace.” Over the doorframes, “Bless all the hands that come and go to make this house a home.”
Mira frequently took in these messages while coming and going from the house and gained the nickname of “Interior Director” in the family.
“Teachers call interior designers ‘mini architects’ because they need to understand plumbing, electrical and building in order to design,” Mira said.

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Uithoven home construction is family affair/continued from page 4

through the litmus test on how easily the element could be used decades from now.

“While my grandmother appreciated it, she kept asking, ‘Why do you think I am so old?’” Mira said.

The family worked on a floor plan and design elements for about a year before the completed design emerged.

Greg emphasized that the home had to be handicap-accessible.

“It’s sad when you have to build a home and then add a ramp later,” he said.

Greg also considered visits by his parents, Vi and Mike, when looking at floor plans. Mike uses a walker and occasionally a wheelchair. In the old house, Mike has to be lifted into the house or assisted to walk up stairs.

The new 1,800-square-foot ranch-style home has living quarters, two bedrooms and two bathrooms all on one level.

The full basement has two more bedrooms and a bathroom with modern living spaces.

The floor plan features an open kitchen, dining and living room areas, main floor laundry and an oversized attached two-stall garage.

Adam estimates he completes about



Above, an open floor plan allows family to freely move through the kitchen, dining and living room. Below, the new Uithoven home also includes a two-sided front porch (below) — all lending to a modern farmhouse design.



six homes a year that have special meaning to him as a builder, but his parents’ new home is a little more special.

“It’s nice to build this — to leave your trademark that will hopefully last for the next 100 years,” he said. “It’s something you can drive by and show your kids that is something you built.”

Family helpers, custom farm-style appeal

Family members have jumped into painting, put up walls and assisted in little areas of the new home.

Customizing is something Adam finds satisfying as a builder.

“I like the challenge,” said Adam, who already solved a pantry door challenge.

Taking the distressed cottage ivory and rustic alder wood used throughout the new home as materials, he crafted a custom sliding barn door.

Most of the rooms in the new house have access to natural light.

An open stairwell was added (instead of a wall) to allow sunlight to penetrate into the basement, and the basement was reconfig-

Uithoven home/continued on page 22

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Mavis Fodness photos/0326 Home 2020 Bomgaars

The former Shopko Hometown sign will soon be replaced with Bomgaars as the building is readied for opening.

Bomgaars plans move into larger Luverne facility

By Mavis Fodness

Luverne’s largest farm and ranch supply store is expanding into the large space south of I-90 recently vacated by Shopko.

The location nearly doubles the square footage of Bomgaars’ location on Hatting Street.

Employees have spent weeks preparing for the move and were cleaning and moving equipment in the new building earlier in March.

“Everybody can’t wait until we are out here and moved in,” said store manager Darrel Nielsen. “The community has been super supportive.”

The move was planned for March 27, but the corona virus

pandemic has postponed those plans for now.

Bomgaars, headquartered in Sioux City, Iowa, currently has 95 store locations, many of which have moved or will be moving into existing, larger buildings.

Financial struggles prompted Sun Capital Partners to close all of its retail Shopko stores in 2019. Bomgaars negotiated the purchase of the Shopko Hometown stores in Luverne and Pipestone.

“Shopko’s misfortune is a benefit to Bomgaars,” Nielsen said. “We talked about adding on (to the existing Luverne building) but then Shopko became available.”

Nielsen, who has worked for Bomgaars for 10 years (six years in Luverne), estimates he has helped move and set up 20 stores in new locations.

A system using existing employees can relocate store merchandise in three days.

In the Luverne store move, as many as 100 Bomgaars employees from other store locations converge on a location to relocate existing merchandise and ready the new store for business.

The new Bomgaars location is a 36,000-square-foot facility, larger than the previous store’s 20,000 square feet.

“We outgrew that store a long time ago,” Nielsen said.

With more room, merchandise selection will expand to match that of larger Bomgaars locations.

•Bomgaars will expand existing clothing selection in the



The new power tool display is now in place.

- A larger display area has been mapped out for livestock feeds and pet foods.
 - A separate department will be developed at the new store for small appliances.
- same area the former Shopko store carried its men’s, women’s and children’s selections.
- More selections will be added to the existing shoe and boot departments.



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Luverne Bomgaars employees Jenna Leslie (left) and Adayla Rouser clean the entryway earlier this month in preparation for the Bomgaars’ move to the former Shopko Hometown store.

Darrel Nielsen (right) works with another Bomgaars employee from Fairmont earlier this month to move shelving into place in the new Bomgaars location on South Highway 75 in Luverne. The move, to be completed by March 27, doubles the square footage of the existing store on Hatting Street. **Right:** Bomgaars’ future move to the former Shopko Hometown location gains the farm and ranch retailer a loading dock and a larger merchandise holding area.



•Power tools will have their own separate area with more room for displays.
In addition to more room for inside merchandise, Bomgaars will also have a larger parking lot as well as more room for outside home and ranch items.
Nielsen said a larger greenhouse will be set up this spring to handle the anticipated demand for plants and trees

due to Shopko’s closing.
To staff the larger store, the Luverne location added two full-time employees to its existing eight, and added six new part-time employees to the store’s existing 12 to 15 part-time workers.
Once the move is complete, store hours will also expand to Mondays through Saturdays 7:30 a.m. to 8 p.m., and Sundays from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.



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Accessorize garden spaces with window boxes, arbors, fences and more

By George Bonnema
Luverne horticulturalist

Accessories are a great way to add special interest to our landscape and gardens.

For example, a window box can add a splash of color in an area of the landscape where existing plants give interest but maybe only seasonal color. A good feature of a window box is that you can enjoy the color from inside your home as well as adding a splash of color on the outside.

Additionally, that same window box can be filled with evergreen branches, pine cones, berries, etc. to give color for those long winter months when summer color is only a memory.

If you are inspired to build a window box, do not attach it directly to the house. Build a bracket of some sort to set the box on. My window boxes are made out of cedar lumber and they have lasted for years.

An important consideration is to make the planter large enough to hold a reason-



I also have large planter boxes that run the length of my porch. They sit on metal brackets and were made with 2-inch lumber. They elevate the blooming plants above the landscape shrubs.

able amount of growers mix to give the plant roots adequate growing space and to retain adequate moisture.

Proportion is another factor to consider — the container should balance with the size of the window it is embellishing. For the boxes I’ve built, I used 1-by-8-inch lumber resulting

in a container 8 inches deep, 8 inches wide, and whatever length is needed to match the width of the window.

I also have large planter boxes that run the length of my porch. They sit on metal brackets and were made with 2-inch lumber. They elevate the blooming plants above the landscape shrubs planted in the ground below, and again I get to enjoy the color when looking out of my windows.

Containers of blooming annual flowers can be used in areas of the landscape where you want to add a splash of color. Most often, a pot with a single color theme is most effective.

You could use several different plants to give varied textures and form, but keep it to the chosen color. That is not to say that mixed color pots won’t work. Go with your preference. If you don’t like how it turned out this year, try



You can add an obelisk to a pot to give height and train a vine to grow on it or just use it as an added interest feature.

something different next year. Again, use a pot with at least a 12-inch diameter so it will retain moisture and proportion with the space.

Obelisks are another fun accessory for our gardens. You can add an obelisk to a pot to give height and train a vine to grow on it or just use it as an added interest feature.

Be sure the pot is large enough to proportion with the

obelisk and heavy enough so the wind will not blow it over. I have a couple of obelisks made of metal that are tall and very sturdy.

I also have an obelisk that is 8 feet tall as a feature in one of my flower beds. It is made of white vinyl so there is no maintenance.

Training an annual vine to grow on it gives me color for the season and adds narrow height without crowding the plants growing around it.

Obelisks can also be made out of tree branches. Using birch will give the interest of white bark and the small twigs of the birch stems give the plants something to hang onto as they climb.

Keep in mind that this will be a temporary structure. It will likely have to be replaced every 4 to 5 years.

A birdhouse on a post is another fun accessory. You can find some really unique and beautiful pre-made houses if you are not into building one of your own.

The post gives another opportunity to add a vine that will give more summer interest and color to your garden. Proportion should determine the height of the post.

I have a couple of multi-level houses on poles that get them 8 feet above the ground.

And then picket fence,

Bonnema/continued on page 9



A window box can add a splash of color in an area of the landscape where existing plants give interest but maybe only seasonal color. A good feature of a window box is that you can enjoy the color from inside your home as well as adding a splash of color on the outside.



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An arbor gives the feeling of reaching your destination and becomes the anchor for the garden space.

You can get a beautiful vinyl fence that is maintenance free, or use cedar and let it weather to a natural gray. Be it just a corner or the whole length of the garden, picket fence gives a background that is always inviting.



Bonnema offers tips for garden accessories/continued from page 8

one of the most nostalgic features you can add to a garden. Some people appreciate the “distressed” look, but if that look makes you feel like you need to fix it, you can get beautiful vinyl which is maintenance free, or use cedar and let it weather to a natural gray.

Be it just a corner or the whole length of the garden, picket fence gives a background that is always inviting.

Arbors are another accessory that adds charm and structure to either the flower garden or the vegetable garden.

An arbor gives the feeling of reaching your destination and becomes the anchor for the garden space.

Again, lots of options

available — rustic to classic themes.

Water features are fun accessories, but they are high maintenance. Bird baths work well for large or small spaces.

Birds prefer them to be relatively close to trees so they can escape if threatened, and they prefer that you keep them cleaned and refilled.

Water fountains are a neat feature but also need some consideration: we have wind and wind will blow the water spray out, so be sure there is a reasonable water reservoir.

Also consider if the water spattering out would discolor the surface the fountain it is sitting on.

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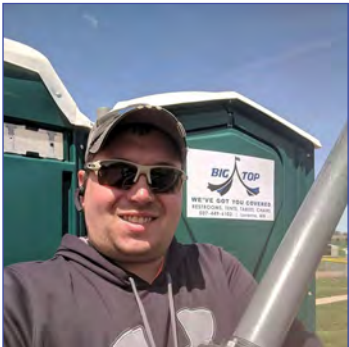
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BIG TOP prepares for BIG MOVE



In recent a game of 'musical buildings' in Luverne, Big Top Tent Rentals is moving into the Bomgaars building. Bomgaars is moving to the vacated Shopko building, and John Bowron purchased the East Lincoln Street Big Top warehouse for a storage rental business.

At left, Andrew Hamann heads up the portable toilet division of Big Top Tent Rental. Above is the whole crew, (from left) owners Jordan and Stacey Smidt, Jeris Neimeyer, Kaden Ericson, Makayla Sterrett and Andrew Hamann. At right, Neimeyer sands pallet boards that will be used to cover a wall in the soon-to-be former Bomgaars building.

Big Top Tent Rental buys Bomgaars property; move will more than double operating space

By Lori Sorenson

The Big Top Tent Rental crew is about to tackle its biggest assignment of the rental season: moving to the former Bomgaars property in Luverne.

Big Top owners Jordan and Stacey Smidt jumped at the chance to buy the building as soon as they heard Bomgaars was moving to the former Shopko building.

“Expanding was part of our 10-year plan,” Stacey said. “But the day we heard that, we knew we needed to do something.”

The move will more than double the square footage of their current building on East Lincoln Street where they’ve operated since buying Big Top from Mike Jarchow in 2015.

And more space — especially the outdoor lot space — is exactly what the Smidts needed for their rapidly expanding business.

“We’ve grown every year since we bought it,” Jordan said. “The biggest thing was we needed more property.”

In addition to an inventory of dozens of tents, large and small, the business offers picnic tables, regular tables and chairs, linens, and more, in addition to trailers to haul the rentals and more.

“The picnic tables and all of our trailers are stored at McClure Plumbing at their lot by The Bean,” Jordan said.

Most of the tents are stored in the basement of their current building, which has an old freight elevator and at one time served as a bomb shelter, Jordan said.

Big Top also handles greenhouses for nine Lewis stores in South Dakota and also for local businesses. The Lewis stores own the equipment, and Big Top stores them (on an acreage near Luverne) and handles set-up, take-down and storage.

“So we really needed more real estate,” Jordan said. “We don’t have any lot space here.”

The Bomgaars property comprises nearly 2 acres, with plenty of lot space for equipment storage.

“Now everything will be where we can see it,” Stacey said.

Big Top/continued on page 11



Big Top Tent Rental travels all over to accommodate weddings and events, from Chamberlain and Pierre to Huron and Brookings in South Dakota, to Sioux City in Iowa, and the Twin Cities in Minnesota.

At left, Big Top offers a “rustic” portable bar for rent. It comes with two galvanized tubs for iced beverages.



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Big Top Tent Rental to expand into Bomgaars property/continued from page 10

Space for creativity

The extra space will also allow for added creativity that's become a hallmark of the business under the Smidts' ownership.

For example, they built a "rustic" portable bar out of white-washed pallet wood and a finished barn wood top. It comes with two galvanized tubs for iced beverages.

They're also building barn wood tables that will match "shabby chic" themed events.

"With this new building there are a whole bunch of new and exciting ideas that will be there in the future," Stacey said.

The couple admits their team is good at narrowing in on rental items that will be popular.

"We're always open to new ideas, and if there's something that there's a decent demand for, I'm not afraid to try it," Jordan said.

"If you build it, they come," Stacey said. "Essentially, if you build it, we hope they will rent it."

In the past five years Big Top has expanded rental options to include a mobile bar and social games (like life-size Jenga) and more.

Portable toilets join the lineup

And the Smidts also purchased Randy Smook's portable toilet business.

"We were always at the same stuff," Jordan said. "I told him a long time ago, when you're ready to sell, you call me."

Smook, who still operates his septic pumping business, sold his portable toilets to the Smidts early in 2019. Longtime Big Top employee Andrew Hamann manages that part of the rental operation for the business.

Hamann is part of a core group of full-time staff, which grows in the summer months to include five more, and on week-ends there can be as many as 15 to 20.



Above, Big Top Owner Jordan Smidt (right) talks with worker Kaden Ericson in a main-floor area where smaller tents are stored. At right, the crew works to repair a torn tent during the off season.

"We all get along great," said Jordan, who led a large team of workers for a larger rental company in Sioux Falls for 12 years. "I've seen what works and what doesn't work. ... We've got a good crew."

Working smarter, doing more

This trust in their team, and subsequent employee loyalty has been an important part of Big Top's success.

"When you have a good team



Big Top Tents/continued on page 12



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Big Top Tent Rental to expand into Bomgaars property/continued from page 11

when they know their responsibilities and they know what their job is, you can put up a really large tent in a small amount of time,” Stacey said.

“It’s all in who you find. ... Our team is very clever. They’ve built things to make their lives easier.”

Big Top recently purchased equipment to automate some of the tent setup business.

“We’re way more efficient taking down and setting up, people-wise and equipment-wise,” Jordan said.

“Equipment used to be big and heavy, now everything’s gotten better and smaller.

Putting in a tent stake used to be a two-person job, because the jackhammer weighed 100 pounds, or you used a sledge hammer. Now we use a new driver that weighs only 30 pounds, so Stacey can put tent stakes in.”

Jarchow had operated the rental business for 15 years in Luverne before selling to the Smidts in 2015.

Since then, the former Larchwood, Iowa, couple moved their family to Luverne where their two children, Belle, 14, and Baylee, 10, attend school.

When asked if buying Big Top was a good move in hindsight, Jordan said, “I wished we’d done it sooner.”

They were hoping to start moving at the end of March, but coronavirus concerns required Bomgaars to accommodate social distancing for its employees.

The move is now tentatively scheduled for May 1 when the Smidts’ current building will officially be turned over to John Bowron, who plans to use it for a storage space and heated shop to work on his vintage automobiles.

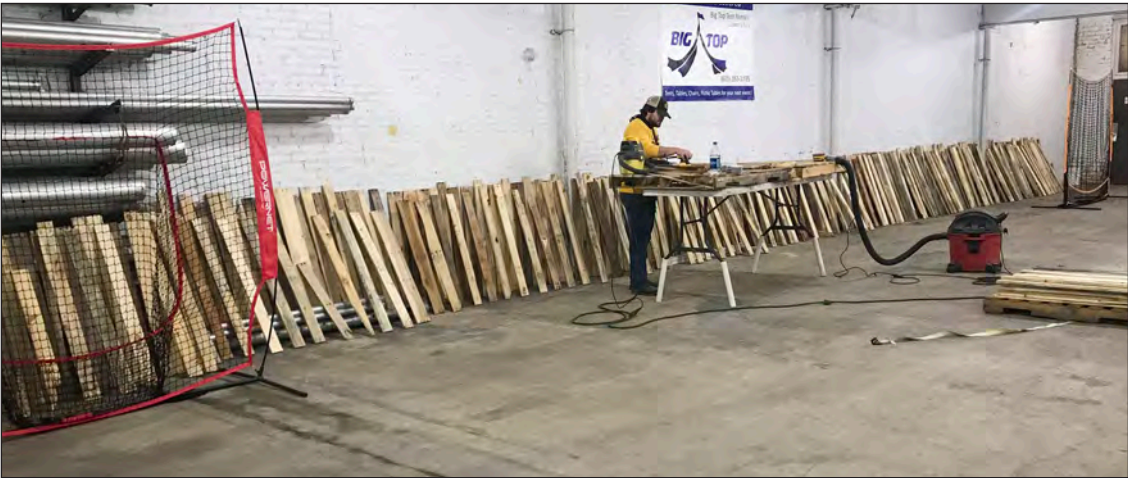
Big Top Tent Rental will remain available for business during the move, and clients can book reservations and make rental inquiries through Big Top’s social media pages and emailing through the website, bigtontentrentalsmn.com.



Above is a Facebook image of Big Top Tent Rental's barnwood tables, a new addition to the rental line-up.

At left, Makayla Sterrett sands one of hundreds of boards used in the construction of rental tables.

Below, Jeris Neimeyer sands pallet wood.



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Want a great-looking lawn this year? Follow these tips

By Nate Golla, Luverne Farm Store

We are excited for the lawn care season to begin. Each year we look forward to caring for our customers' lawns from Luverne to Adrian, Sioux Falls to Hills, Ellsworth to Edgerton, and everywhere in between.

Over the past several years we have consistently received the same questions from curious homeowners regarding problems with their lawn.

Questions like: How do I get rid of earthworms? When should I thatch my yard? Why is my lawn looking so thin? How do I get grass to grow under my trees?

I want to try and answer those questions here for you lucky readers.

Earthworms can be too much of a good thing

Although earthworms are beneficial to your lawn, sometimes their populations can get out of control. You will then see mounds in your lawn where they enter and exit the ground.

Earthworms can be controlled by use of carbamate compounds. Sevin, Turcam and Baygon are a



Mow your lawn to a height of at least 2.75 to 3.25 inches. Longer grass blades will shade the soil below, keeping the lawn cooler and helping to prevent weeds from germinating. You will also have a greener, healthier lawn that requires less water and has fewer weeds. Sharpen your mower blades at least two to three times per season.

few insecticides that contain carbamate compounds. To keep the population down, you'll have to apply the insecticide two to four times per year, but not more often than once every seven days. Purchase a pesticide that has carbaryl as an active ingredient; carbaryl is very toxic to earthworms. Apply the pesticide at the recommended rate for grubs, which is also



suitable for earthworms. This will not eradicate the worms, but will drive them deeper into the soil where they will be less noticeable. You can run a heavy lawn roller across your lawn in different directions if earthworms have created a bumpy surface, and then aerate the lawn later. Compacting and aerating your lawn will correct the unevenness created by the earthworms with their burrows.

There's a time and a place for thatch

Thatch is a loose, intermingled organic layer of dead and living shoots, stems, and roots that develops between the zone of green vegetation and the soil surface.

Grass leaf clippings don't contribute to thatch build-up because soil microorganisms easily break them down. Thatch has a beneficial effect on turf. For example, a normal layer of thatch in lawns (one-half inch or less) provides insulation against temperature extremes and fluctuations in

soil moisture. However, if your lawn has more than a half inch of thatch, turf problems will likely begin to occur.

Core aeration is an important preventative maintenance practice for thatch control. Regular core aeration alleviates compaction and improves air movement into soils, thereby increasing microbial activity and breakdown of thatch. This practice also physically removes thatch. Aeration should be done every 3-4 years to help insure a healthy lawn.

If you need to remove a larger amount of the thatch layer, you may consider using a power rake or de-thatcher occasionally, for emergency removal of large amounts of thatch. Do not make this a yearly lawn treatment; if you're not careful, you'll remove more thatch than desired and severely thin your grass stand.

Remove thatch from cool-season turf grass stands during late summer/early fall. Temperatures are usually cooler at this time, reducing the chances of serious turf injury.

You can perform late sum-

mer/early fall thatch removal in conjunction with renovation practices such as aeration, fertilization and overseeding. Also, weed encroachment is not as likely to occur with late summer/fall thatch removal.

Proper mowing requires sharp blades and sharp practices

Mow your lawn to a height of at least 2.75 to 3.25 inches. Longer grass blades will shade the soil below, keeping the lawn cooler and helping to prevent weeds from germinating. You will also have a greener, healthier lawn that requires less water and has fewer weeds.

Mow at least once per week and never remove more than one-third of the grass blade at a time. Consistently mowing too short, or "scalping," your lawn, removes the green, food-producing cells. This makes the plants weaker and causes the lawn to become thin over time.

Sharpen your mower blades at least two to three times per season. Dull mower blades can cause a lawn to have a brown, hazy appearance and allow dis-

Lawn tips/continued on p. 21

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Need ideas and inspiration?

By Linda Bakken,
Town and Country Garden Club

The Town and Country Garden Club was founded in 2002 when Carol Zwaan sought help from Lynette Jauert, a Rock County Master Gardener.

She believed such a club would be a good fit for those interested in gardening in Rock County and needed something positive, having recently suffered a heart attack.

The club exists today with some of the original members still gathering to bring ideas to share with each other. Membership is unstructured, no dues are collected and members take turns coordinating information.

Any gardener is welcome; gardening skills are not a requirement for membership. Some members have beautiful, well-kept landscapes, and others just want to keep what they have alive.

If weeds have overtaken your garden, there is still a place for you to come and be inspired to go back to your garden and get some exercise.

I always come home from an event inspired to get back at it, even though the weeds and grass in the wrong place force me to accept less than perfection.

The club gives me an opportunity to learn something and enjoy the company of a group of people in our community that make my world a little bigger.

Many of us didn't know each other well before joining together with the common interest of gardening. We all have ties to our schools, community and churches, and this brings us together with the common interest of gardening.

Programs for 2020 include:

- sharing ideas by bringing catalogs and magazines and discussing planning for the season ahead.
- house plants.
- flower arranging.
- visits to a garden and orchard.
- forcing bulbs.
- garden art.

In the past, we learned about:

- dietary value of what can be grown in the garden.
- creating wreaths and dried arrangements.
- growing herbs.
- selecting trees best for this area.
- supporting bees, birds and butterflies.
- carving pumpkins.
- visits to wineries and gardens in Sioux Falls, Worthington and Alvord.

Monthly meetings

The club meets once a month from February through November on the fourth Tuesday, and we take turns being in charge of the time, place and topic each month.

One of the fall meetings is dedicated to a potluck supper to plan the next year's programming — what we'd like to do, see or learn about. Guest authorities are frequently called on to entertain and inform, and we go on field trips to interesting and beautiful gardens or green houses in local and distant places.

And we have fun.
We still laugh about the time “we went junking for garden art.”

Many treasures were found among the “stuff” on the curbs of Luverne during citywide cleanup, some of it winding up in county fair floral entries and some in a personal garden. The “garden art hunters” certainly had fun, according to the stories told.

The club tries to participate in community service projects, such as assisting with the Rock County Fair displays, planting and watering at the nursing homes, and helping with the spring plant sale.

Email is a major help in connecting the members, and a regular notice in the Star Herald will invite those interested in coming to monthly meetings.

Call me at 507-597-6378 if you are a gardener who needs some gardening inspiration, information and fun.



Town and Country Garden Club exists for this purpose

"If weeds have overtaken your garden, there is still a place for you to come and be inspired to go back to your garden and get some exercise. ... I always come home from an event inspired to get back at it, even though the weeds and grass in the wrong place force me to accept less than perfection."

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call it what you want, food forest, forest garden, edible landscape, permaculture ...

We call it ‘Prairie Ally’

.. ally of the prairie that provides food and preserves nature

By Kim Rockman, Prairie Ally coordinator

Perhaps you haven’t heard of the interchangeable terms like food forest, forest garden, edible landscape, or permaculture, but most of you have one or many memories of apple picking, asparagus foraging, raspberry hunting and the like.

All of those plants are incorporated into the food forest at Prairie Ally Outdoor Center at 308 N. Blue Mound Avenue in Luverne.

Plus, there are pear, apple, cherry and plum trees and a whole host of lesser known fruit and nut species that are gaining popularity again for their hardiness and health benefits.

These include service-berry, elderberry, aronia berry, honeyberry, hazelnut, and paw paw.

We’ve topped it off with grapes, currants, strawberries, gooseberries and even annual vegetables. More perennial plants and wildflowers will also be added this year for the beauty, medicine and pollinator habitat they provide.



Kim Rockman, above and at right, is spearheading the Prairie Ally project in Luverne.

What’s in a name?

With a total of one acre of land dedicated to perennial edible plants and walking paths, surrounded by four acres dedicated to prairie restoration, Prairie Ally commits to being an ally with the prairie at a time when prairie land has dwindled and ecosystems are fragile.

The site provides experiential learning, recreation, food and habitat.

Our mission is to foster connections between people

Prairie Ally/see page 18



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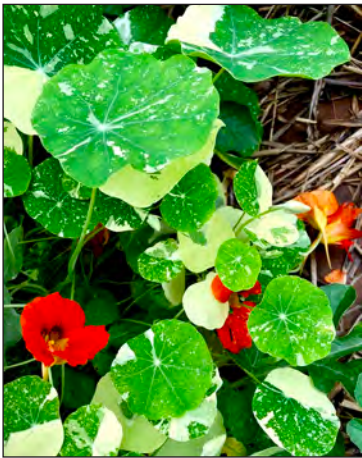
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Research continues to show the benefits of time spent outdoors and eating fresh, locally grown foods. The benefits span across mind, body, and spirit.

Prairie Ally provides food, preserves nature/from 17

and the planet in an inspiring setting; showcasing and exploring various methods of living in harmony with the natural world.

We humans get to enjoy it, and we leave space for the rest of nature to thrive there, too.

Ways to enjoy the food forest include watching, wondering, planting, pruning, weeding, picking, dreaming and doing.

It's a place to nurture and

be nurtured in all of these ways.

Research continues to show the benefits of time spent outdoors and eating fresh, locally grown foods. The benefits span across mind, body, and spirit.

What's special about Prairie Ally is its ability for both individual and collective experiences. Let it be what you need it to be for you. We hope that you come back again and again.

How have we come this far? It's all about partners

Prairie Ally aims to be community driven and collaborative.

Ongoing partnerships with Project Food Forest, University of Minnesota Extension Regional Sustainable Development Partnership, A Healthier Southwest, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Rock County Soil and Water Conservation District, and Blue Cross Blue



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Prairie Ally provides food, preserves nature/continued from page 18

Shield Center for Prevention, along with many other generous organizations and individuals who have given time and financial resources allow for continued improvements.

You can lend a hand by joining us for spring planting and mulching. Volunteer work begins on Friday, May 15, from noon until 8 p.m. and continues the next day, Saturday, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Come for an hour or stay all day.

We are also in need of a group of dedicated volunteers for the 2020 season. We ask for a seasonal commitment, 1-2 hours per week. We equally welcome donations to help with maintenance costs and new projects through donor-box.org/support-pff.

Prairie Ally is free and open to the public daily, dawn to dusk.

I'll be on site myself June through September on Wednesdays from 11 a.m. to

1:30 p.m. and Fridays from 6 to 8:30 p.m. to give tours, share conversations and get my hands dirty. Come curious. Come often. Prairie Ally is here to welcome you.

Does Prairie Ally inspire you?

You could win 1 of 25 edible landscaping consultations for ideas on edible landscape design on your own property. The entry deadline is May 18, 2020. Entrants must be private or public Rock County, Minnesota, landowners. This may be business or residential property.

Consultation includes site visit by a permaculture designer, customized list of plant recommendations, care and usage. Enter at projectfoodforest.org/rock. Project Food Forest provides edible landscaping consultations throughout the tri-state area as well.

An "Edible Weeds and Foraging" workshop will be at

Prairie Ally on Friday, June 26, from 6 to 8 p.m. and a workshop on "Diverse Gardening for the Local Ecology" will be Friday, July 17, from 6 to 8 p.m. The workshops are free, but please RSVP.

Both of these opportunities are being made possible by generous support from Blue Cross Blue Shield Center for Prevention.

To RSVP for events, ask questions, or provide input, reach out at prairieallymn@gmail.com, facebook.com/prairieally, Instagram @prairieallymn or 605-951-0227.



Prairie Ally has a whole host of lesser known fruit and nut species that are gaining popularity for their hardiness and health benefits.

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So you think you want to plant a garden

U of M Extension advises checking soil quality first for better chance at success

Do not prepare your soil for planting when it is too wet or too dry.

If soil sticks to your shoes or shovel, it is too wet.

Press a small amount of soil in your hand. When the moisture is right, the soil crumbles and breaks into small clumps.

If it is too wet, it stays molded in a ball.

Rake the planting area after tilling or spading. A firm, fine seedbed is best, especially for small-seeded crops.

Packing the soil too much could promote crusting of the soil surface and damage emerging seedlings.

Tilling the soil in late fall allows for earlier spring planting.

Soil testing and fertility

Have your soil tested to find out the right amount of fertilizer or manure to apply before planting.

A soil test will tell you if you need to add any lime, nitrogen, phosphorous or potassium to your soil.

Planning your vegetable garden

Timing is everything in the vegetable garden. Planting seeds at the right time ensures a bountiful harvest. Each crop has its own needs, including tolerance of cold temperatures.

Check the USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map to see which zone you live in. The Midwestern Regional Climate Center has produced an up-to-date interactive map of first fall and last spring freeze dates.



A soil test like these corings will tell you if you need to add any lime, nitrogen, phosphorous or potassium to your soil.

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Golla tips for healthy lawn/continued from page 14

ease pathogens to attack your lawn.

Mowing in the same direction can cause the grass to bend in the direction you mow. Always alternating your mowing direction will keep this problem from happening.

A word (or two) about trees

Growing grass takes sunlight, water, suitable soil and proper care. Growing grass under softwood trees like maples can be very difficult. Maples that are more than 20-30 feet tall can block a lot of sunlight.

But it's not just sunlight.

Maples are PIGS at the dinner table. Softwood trees have very shallow root systems, especially the hair-like feeder roots. They are found right at the top of the soil, and they suck up all the water and any nutrients that might be found there, outcompeting the grass for just about everything — including space to grow in the soil.

Grass will likely never grow well under the drip line of any maple, but there are some steps you can take to improve the stand of grass under

softwood trees.

•Select suitable grass seeds or sod for shade when there is currently little or no grass under the maple. A grass seed mix (fescues) or sod blend designated for shaded areas typically offers multiple species of grass to ensure dense, healthy turf with year-round appeal.

Cultivate the soil shallowly when the grass has not already been planted. Break up the top two inches of soil and remove rocks and weeds from the area.

Avoid damaging shallow tree roots by working around them. Leave about 2 feet of space around the tree uncultivated to encourage tree health and reduce the likelihood of mechanical injury when mowing. Do not cover tree roots with more than 1 1/2 inches of soil.

Use a rake to level the ground and broadcast seeds or lay down the sod. Rake the seeds into the soil lightly. Water the seeds in lightly one to three times daily for about a week, then reduce irrigation

frequency while increasing the amount of water per session once grass sprouts.

•Irrigate the shaded grass deeply and infrequently.

Most shaded turf requires only one-half to 1 inch of water weekly. Water in the morning to avoid prolonged leaf wetness overnight. Deep, occasional watering encourages the tree to grow deeper feeder roots, and allows the grass to compete more effectively with the tree for water.

•Mow the grass in the shade so the mowing height is around 3 inches. A higher mowing height maintains a larger leaf surface, which helps to absorb more sunlight and encourages deeper rooting.

•Prune out branches of the softwood trees like a maple and any other nearby vegetation selectively. Thinning out branches increases the amount of sunlight available to the turf and improves circulation.

Make sure the canopy of your

tree is high enough off the ground. A healthy tree should be two-thirds canopy and one-third plain trunk. That means if you have a 30-foot tall tree, the canopy should be 10 feet off the ground.

Raising the canopy of your tree correctly will allow light, water, and air to move more freely under the tree, and this will make a more positive growing environment for the grass under it.

If all else fails, call the professionals

Our lawn care team at the Luverne Farm Store knows what it takes to grow a great-looking lawn, and we know the satisfaction of working hard for a successful end result.

We wish you success with these tips, but don't be afraid to call the professionals if you need a little help. We can be reached at 507-283-9555 or lfs@luvernefarmstore.com. Check out our website www.luvernefarmstore.com and like us on Facebook.

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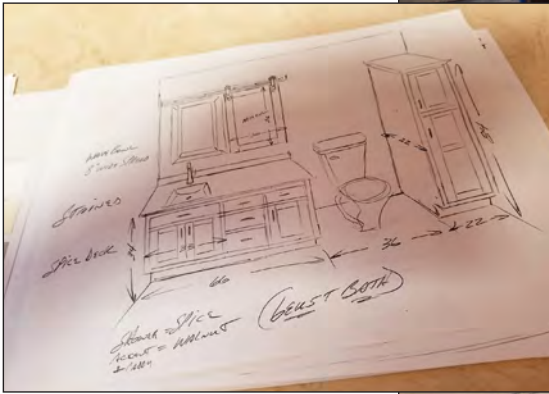
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The closets feature built-in shelves and drawers.



The shower in the master bathroom features a near zero entrance and a built-in seat for an “aging in place” home design.



Submitted photo



A hand sketched design by Country Cupboards, Luverne, of the main floor guest bathroom features a mini barn door mirror that can be slid over the window.

Cooking and baking are frequent activities in the Uithoven home and the pantry includes a small preparation area and open shelving. Adam Uithoven custom-built the sliding barn door made from the distressed cottage ivory and rustic alder wood finishes featured throughout the house.

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The Uithovens changed their floor plan early in the planning stages to include a window in the basement family room.

Uithoven/continued from page 4

ured so a large window could be included in the family room.

In the upstairs bathroom, a wall in the second bedroom was moved in order for the window to be added over the sink. A mirror will be designed like a small barn door to slide in front of the window for privacy.

The garage has back stairs leading to the basement where an additional laundry room will handle chore clothes.

A farmhouse-style kitchen has a large island plus a dining room table

with enough seating for 10 people.

While hardwood floors are prevalent throughout the house, carpet is planned for the living room in order for grandchildren to gather comfortably on the floor.

To complete the farmhouse look, the living room ceiling fan will look like a windmill, and barn wood from the family farm will surround the fireplace.

All the final farmhouse details lead to a final goal.

“I just wanted a little house in the country,” Marilyn said.



Greg Uithoven cleans the floor in one of the basement bedrooms. The new home will have four bedrooms and three bathrooms.



Adam Uithoven installs the stair spindles to allow more natural light to reach into the basement stairs and family room. (Submitted photo)

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