

The Team



Emily Swihart - Chris Enroth - Ken Johnson

Illinois Extension Horticulture Educators Chris Enroth, Ken Johnson, and Emily Swihart collaborate to produce weekly content that is seasonally relevant, and research-based. Chris Enroth's expertise is in landscape design, installation, and maintenance. Ken Johnson specializes in fruit and vegetable production, pest management, and beneficial insects. Emily Swihart's specialty is in community forestry, native ecosystems, and home gardening.

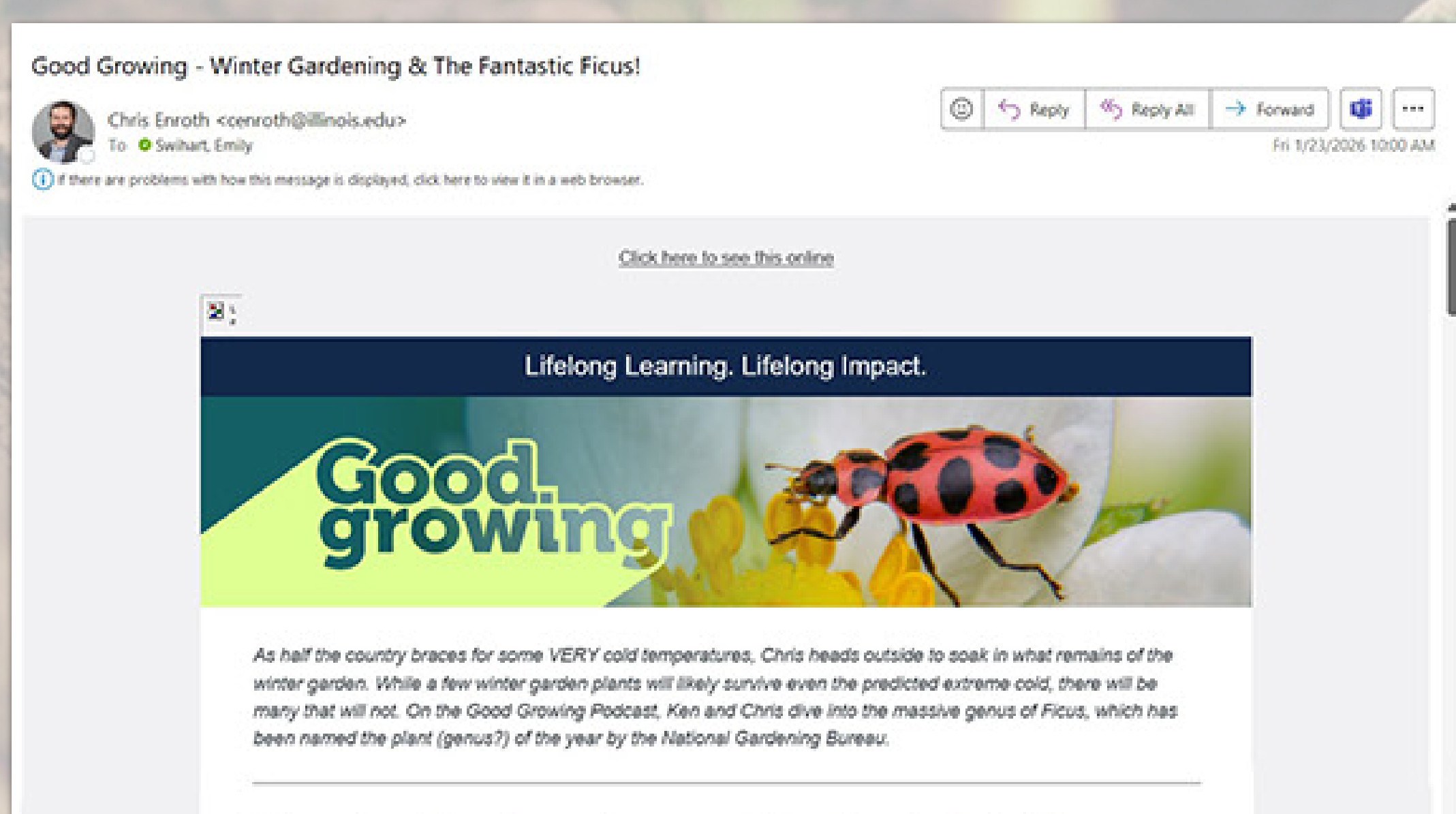
Background

Good Growing is a multi-faceted educational outreach collaboration that strives to inform, inspire, and empower Illinois residents by offering gardening expertise and timely seasonal guidance. The suite of programs includes a blog, podcast, webinars, and videos covering a wide range of horticultural topics.

These formats offer flexibility for diverse lifestyles and learning styles, whether followers prefer listening during a commute, watching short educational segments, or reading timely horticulture updates from their inbox. Together, they strengthen engagement, promote practical, research-based knowledge, and foster meaningful connections with new and long-standing audiences. As digital consumption habits continue shifting, Good Growing's multi-modal approach ensures Extension remains accessible, relevant, and responsive to the needs of today's communities.

A weekly newsletter was created to help disseminate this information to interested individuals (subscribers) around the state of Illinois and the country. The email includes descriptions, previews, and links to the weekly blog post and podcast. It also includes a section, "From the Archives", directing readers to previously published content that is relevant at the time.

Subscribe to the email: go.illinois.edu/GoodGrowingSubscribe



Blog/Article

The Good Growing Blog is most widely viewed Illinois Extension blog, with over 1.9 million views since 2020. In 2025, 52 new articles were published and the site recorded over 289,000 total page views. In addition to being shared as a blog posting, shortened versions of each week's article is shared with 106 press entities throughout 18 western Illinois counties.

Blog readers are given an opportunity to provide feedback each week. Readers submit questions, feedback, and encouragement. Samples from this past year follow.

- "The article was great, unfortunately it confirmed a diagnosis for my own maple dilemmas. Nevertheless, excellent read."
- "I really enjoy the posts and podcasts. Keep 'em coming. Thank you."
- "Very good read first thing in the morning before I go outside to my "wilding" yard!"

Connect with us: go.illinois.edu/GoodGrowing

Latest Posts

Spring lawn care: What should you really be doing?
March 5, 2026
It's March in Illinois, and this is when everyone starts thinking about lawn care. The grass is greening up, and plants are beginning to grow again, signaling that garden work has begun. You may be looking at your lawn and wondering where to start. Maybe you notice some bare patches, or the entire...
[Finish this story](#)

Tree topping is never a good option
February 27, 2026
As spring approaches, many of us will reach for the pruners or contact a tree care company to have our shade trees pruned. Pruning can improve tree health, safety, and longevity by removing dead, diseased, or weak branches, preventing storm damage, and promoting a strong structure. Unfortunately...
[Finish this story](#)

Beat the winter blues by growing some leafy greens
February 20, 2026
I think a winter diet of heavy, carb-laden foods is starting to weigh me down, literally and emotionally. I'm craving fresh produce, but forget the tomatoes and cucumbers; all I want is something green. Despite the looming threat of winter weather, spring is on the horizon, and I don't know if I...
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Grow Along

The Good Growing Grow Along launched in 2023 as a way to directly engage the Good Growing community. Currently in its third year, the Good Growing Grow Along invites readers, viewers, and listeners to join the Good Growing Extension professionals in growing 'unique or new to us'. Each winter, Chris, Ken, and Emily select unique species or cultivars of annual garden plants to grow in their gardens. Choices are announced on the podcast and listeners are invited to register to 'Grow Along' with the team.

Registered participants are able to choose the species they wish to grow. The team mails a sample of seeds and descriptions of species to participants in advance of the growing season. Registration has reached capacity each year.

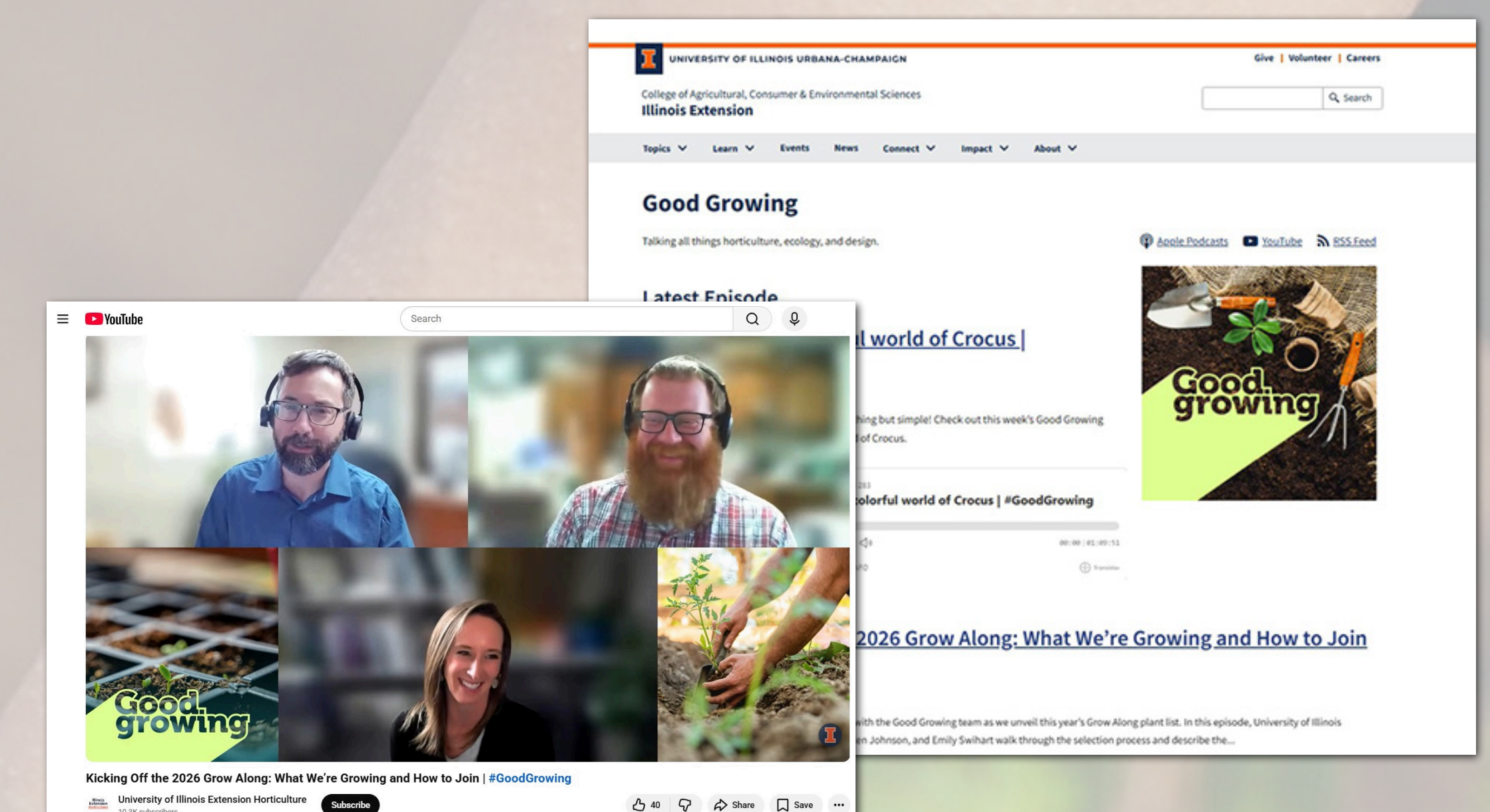
Monthly bonus podcasts update listeners on Chris, Ken, and Emily's gardens. Monthly surveys provide a way for participants to provide feedback.

Podcast/Videocast

The Good Growing Podcast is a weekly podcast produced by University of Illinois Horticulture Educators Chris Enroth and Ken Johnson. The podcast covers a wide range of horticultural topics, from fruits and vegetables to flowers, invasive species, pollinators, pest management, and more. In addition to the audio version, a video version is also produced to allow for the use of visuals.

In 2025, 51 new podcasts and videocasts were produced resulting in over 56,000 collective total plays.

Connect with us: go.illinois.edu/GoodGrowingPodcast



Evaluation

In 2020 and 2023, a Qualtrics survey was created and distributed to subscribers, listeners, and readers to evaluate Good Growing's impact.

All respondents indicated they had used information from the Good Growing Blog and Podcast in some way.

Added to their knowledge (89% blog, 81% podcast)

- "Thank you for providing this information in a fun and practical way. I enjoy learning about new things each week and have slowly increased my knowledge to make my own garden better and share what I have learned with others."

Managed landscape more successfully (65% blog, 61% podcast)

- "I have developed my garden and know why to plant where and how to care for them better."

Addressed a problem (48% blog, 39% podcast)

- "Better managed pests. Started a new garden."

Saved resources (29% blog, 30% podcast)

All individuals affiliated with Extension as volunteers or employees (72) indicated they would/have used this information in their work

- "I find Good Growing to be so delightful because even though I feel like I have quite a bit of knowledge and experience behind me there's always something to be learned and the staff always presents that information in a fun and non-judgmental way. I feel like it's accessible to everyone!"

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