

The Grapevine

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Kristin Overbey

Summer is a wonderful time to get out and explore the many gardens across Lake County. From the inspiring spaces featured in our recent Garden Walk, to the beautiful plantings cared for by local garden clubs, to our own Demonstration Garden at the Purdue Extension Lake County office, there is always something in bloom and something new to discover.

The recent Garden Walk once again highlighted the creativity and dedication of local gardeners. Each garden offered something unique — personal design choices, thoughtful plant combinations and spaces shaped by years of care and passion. It is always inspiring to see how these private gardens reflect the people behind them and the love they have for gardening.

That same sense of creativity and pride can be seen throughout Lake County in the work of local garden clubs. These groups continue to enhance shared and public spaces, bringing color and life to neighborhood entrances, parks and community areas. Their efforts add beauty across the county and create welcoming spaces for everyone to enjoy.

Our Demonstration Garden at the Extension office continues to be a living example of gardening in progress. Under the care of our Master Gardeners, it is steadily evolving as new plantings are added and established plantings fill in. Each visit offers something different to see, as the garden changes and grows week by week throughout the season.

Whether you had the opportunity to tour the Garden Walk, enjoy gardens maintained by local clubs or stop by the Demonstration Garden, I encourage you to take time this summer to appreciate the many beautiful spaces being created and cared for across Lake County.

If you have photos you would like to share from gardens, garden club projects, or Master Gardener work, please reach out — we would love to highlight and celebrate the wonderful work being done throughout our community!

Happy gardening!



Covered bridge garden at the Lake County Fairgrounds by Crown Point Garden Club.



Garden at the Old Lake Court House in Crown Point by Crown Point Garden Club.



Yellow cornflower as seen in the Demonstration Garden at Purdue Extension Lake County.

Join fellow MGs for tri-county gathering



LCMGA is teaming up with Porter and LaPorte County Master Gardeners for “Cultivating Connections: A Tri-County Master Gardener Gathering” on Oct. 24, from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at the Hobart Community Center, 111 E. Old Ridge Road. This event is for master gardeners only.

This first-of-its-kind gathering is designed to bring our three associations together to share ideas, make new connections and celebrate our common love of gardening. The day will include:

- “Landscape Design 101: ‘Wow’ Is Closer Than You Think!” with guest speaker John Algozzini, landscape designer and longtime gardening enthusiast
- A seasonal container planting demonstration
- Lunch and time to visit with members from all three counties
- Raffles and prizes

More details and registration information will be announced in the coming months and will be available at lakecountymastergardeners.org.

Field trips are for Master Gardeners only



SAVE *the* DATES

LAKE COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS EDUCATION EVENTS

Learn  Connect  Grow

 AUGUST 31 2026 The Gardens at Ball & Cantigny Gardens FIELD TRIP Explore the renowned display gardens at Ball Horticultural Company, followed by a visit to beautiful Cantigny Gardens in Wheaton, Illinois.	 OCTOBER 1 2026 Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park FIELD TRIP Experience one of the nation's premier horticultural destinations, featuring stunning gardens, seasonal displays, sculptures, and inspiring landscape design.	 OCTOBER 24 2026 Cultivating Connections Tri-County Master Gardener Gathering Join Master Gardeners from Lake, Porter, and LaPorte Counties for a day of learning, networking, gardening demonstrations, lunch, raffles, and fellowship.
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Cultivating knowledge. Building friendships. Growing communities.

www.lakecountymastergardeners.org
for registration details and updates.

LAKE COUNTY
MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION

2026 EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Learn  Connect  Grow



JULY
14
2026

Beneficial Insects

Time: 6:00 PM

Location: Zoom - Virtual Program

Presenter: Amy Powers



JULY
29
2026

Shade Gardens

Time: 6:00 PM

Location: Purdue Extension - Crown Point

Presenter: Peter Sheardy



AUG
16
2026

Heirloom Tomato Tasting & Seed Saving

Time: 2:00 PM

Location: Purdue Extension - Crown Point

Presenter: Bob Zeni ("The Tomato Man")



SEPT
17
2026

Native Trees Outdoor Program

Time: 5:30 PM

Location: Robinson Lake - Hobart

Presenter: Rebecca Koetz



OCT
5
2026

Fall Gardening

Time: 6:00 PM

Location: Purdue Extension - Crown Point

Presenter: Wayne Gruber



NOV
5
2026

Orchids 101

Time: 6:00 PM

Location: Zoom - Virtual Program

Presenter: Dr. Scott Stewart

Join us for inspiring programs,
expert speakers, and practical gardening knowledge!

Visit www.lakecountymastergardeners.org
for registration details and updates.



MASTER GARDENERS
"Helping Others Grow"

Lake County Fair

Flower & vegetable contests



Aug. 7-16

Rules and categories at lakecounty-faircp.com

Deadlines: Flower Show July 24 | Agriculture July 31

\$20 Entry - Ribbons & Cash Prizes!

Stop by LCMGA booth for activities during the fair.



Annual garden walk features Pollinating Pathways

The Lake County Master Gardeners Association highlighted seven gardens in St. John, Munster and Schererville at its annual garden walk on June 28. This year's theme is "Pollinating Pathways."

Highlights of this year's walk included raffle prizes at every garden, a demonstration container garden and giveaways. There was even a popcorn machine offering visitors a snack along the way.

MGs greeted visitors at every garden and answered questions about various plants and landscaping techniques.

We look forward to seeing you next year!



Thank you to our Garden Walk sponsors!



"Helping Others Grow"



LCMGA MGs pose for a photo before the 25th annual plant sale opens on May 9 in the Lake County Fairgrounds Industrial Building.

Many hands made 25th plant sale a success

Veronica Williams and Pam Metzger

Plant sale committee co-chairs

The 25th annual LCMGA Plant Sale on May 9 at the Lake County Fairgrounds Industrial Building was a great success thanks to the support and volunteer time and dedication of a wonderful committee.

The committee was always there to make suggestions and step up to volunteer extra time to make our plant sale one of the best and one of the most successful events.

We send a great big thanks to this wonderful group of MGs and a great big thanks to all the MGs who volunteered to assist shoppers. Success comes easy when you have the dedication of so many MGs.

Also, we owe a great deal of thanks to the Lake County Fairgrounds for allowing us to relocate to the Industrial Building, which gave us much more usable space. We had an increased amount of plants that included heirloom vegetables, hanging baskets, planters with a variety of lettuce, strawberry baskets, shrubs, trees, a variety of house plants, herbs and beautiful perennials.

Our moon garden demo was a big hit with many shoppers interested in planting a moon garden.

We also wish to thank the Town of Merrillville for their generous donation of 100 Cannas and the Luers family for donating two beautiful Norway Spruce trees.

The larger area in the Industrial Building also allowed for a better space to display our "Trash to Treasures," which was a big contributor to our successful event.

The feedback from the customers was very positive. Everyone who came in the door was pleased with our selections and the MGs who volunteered to help them make educated decisions about what to purchase and plant. This made for happy shoppers.

This plant sale was definitely a community event this year and Pam and I are so proud and pleased to have been the co-chairs. We will be back to do it again in 2027. See you next year.



✉ Feedback appreciated

Do you have an idea for a topic to feature in this newsletter? We welcome your feedback. Please email lakecountymastergardeners@gmail.com.



LCMGA grant helps to build indigenous garden

By Janice Wilma

Master Gardener

Note: MG Janice Wilma is helping to lead Cedar Lake's indigenous garden project, which received a grant from LCMGA in 2026. She wrote the following about the project, which used grant funds for soil and plants.

The Cedar Lake Historical Association at The Museum at Lassen's Resort has recently partnered with the Pokagon Band of the Potawatomi tribe to bring the history of the land that the museum is on to the public. A part of this partnership involves the creation of an indigenous garden.

Their goal is to introduce the public to the ways Native Americans used the land to survive while respecting the land and its resources. An indigenous container garden will be used to show one of the planting techniques they used — Three Sisters — and show examples of plants used for ceremonial and medicinal purposes.

The native plants that were here before Europeans arrived were important and most were very useful. For example, they used Dandelion Root to make a tonic to treat stomach problems and Joe Pye leaves were used to make poultices for burns.



MG Janice Wilma, right, shovels dirt into one of the raised garden beds at the Cedar Lake indigenous garden. With her are MGs Kathy Plant and Cindy Smit.

A group of Master Gardeners is working to make the garden a thriving display. We planted the Three Sisters Garden in the biggest container, which includes corn, pole beans and squash. The corn provides a trellis for the pole beans and the squash provides a natural weed barrier and helps to retain moisture.

The other containers have plants used for medicinal and ceremonial purposes such as Milkweed, Joe Pye Weed, Yarrow, Black Eyed Susans and St. John's Wort.

Other LCMGA MGs involved in the project are Kathy Plant, Cindy Smit, Ronda Hillegonds and Jean Dohmeier.



Earn MG hours for reading this newsletter

Did you know you can earn MG hours by reading this newsletter?

- Record .5 education hours for reading the newsletter
- Record volunteer hours for contributing to the newsletter



Jackie Larson share tips, tricks of making jams

By Joyce Duriga

Grapevine Editor

Master Gardener Jackie Larson has a reputation in MG circles for creating tasty jams and jellies. Her expertise was born out of a longtime habit of canning the fresh fruit and vegetables from her garden (and her friends' gardens) so she can enjoy her garden's bounty all year long.

We spoke with Jackie about the tips and tricks to canning and jam making:

Grapevine: How did you get started canning vegetables and making jams and jellies?

Jackie Larson: I've probably been canning tomatoes and other things for 30 years. My mom was a canner. She always canned tomatoes. She did other canning, but primarily her thing was tomatoes. She would can a bushel.

I did not know until I was in college that you could buy canned tomatoes in the store. If I ran out, I would get tomatoes from my mom's house. We always had fresh canned tomatoes.

Last year, I canned 35 quarts of tomatoes. I go through them and I give them away.

Then I started adding beets to my repertoire, so I pickled some beets. I also do pickled green tomatoes.

I grow a lot of jalapenos in my garden, and I grow a lot of tomatoes. Those are the primary thing that I can.

The Grapevine: What's your preferred canning method?

Jackie: I do the old-fashioned water bath. I still have my mom's canning kettle and mom's been gone 25 years. She probably had that for 40 years, so it's probably 75 years old. It's still in good condition.



Pickled and canned green tomatoes and beets.

The Grapevine: What do you grow in your garden for canning?

Jackie: I probably have 10 different kinds of tomato plants, and sometimes I get enough to do maybe 20 quarts or more. Then I have friends who give me tomatoes out of their garden. I just don't have a big enough space to do 20 or 30 plants.

I just wait until I have enough and I will can in small increments. It takes a long time to do, but I want them to be fresh when I can them otherwise, you're just wasting them. So, I'll do a small batch of four or five jars, and then in a few days do another four or five jars.

The Grapevine: You've become well known among MGs for your jams and jellies.

Jackie: I've been doing the jellies probably 20 years. I just experimented and everybody just absolutely loved them. Then I found a recipe for jalapeno strawberry and people just love that flavor. So, I've done jalapeno and blueberry. I've done cranberries. I've done strawberries. I did peaches one time.

continued on next page

Basically, what I do is, like right now I have a freezer full of frozen jalapenos. I'll put them in the food processor, grind them up so they're literally pulverized. Then whatever fruit I'm using, I do the same thing.

I freeze the fruit and vegetables because it's easier to process if it's frozen. Then you put them together with your sugar and your pectin and put them in jars. Next, you put them in the hot bath and process them so the jars seal.

You wait to hear the satisfying pop of the lids sealing. I literally stand there and listen for each of those jars to pop because it's so satisfying to hear and know that you're successful and it's sealed correctly.

Then you're done. That's a long process, too. Jams and jellies are more scientific. The thing about canning is you have to be really conscious of keeping the jars clean and keeping the pots clean. You have to make sure that cleanliness is your top priority because you could really make somebody sick.

Everything gets run through the dishwasher and when I get ready to use it, it gets put in boiling water.



Jackie's peach and jalapeno jelly on display in her kitchen.

The Grapevine: Do you have any tips for canning?

Jackie: Make sure that whatever you're using that they're fresh. The fruit and vegetables can have some small defects in them, but you don't want soft spots or moldy spots or anything like that.

It's just really paying attention and making sure things are clean. The jars must be chip-free. The rings can't have rust on them. You have to use fresh lids.

The Grapevine: Why do you keep doing it?

Jackie: The taste of fresh tomatoes — even the ones that have been in the cabinet and were processed last year — it's just such a different flavor because it's just tomatoes and a little salt. Nothing else. It's not in a metal can. It's in a jar.

The flavor is just so much different. When you make chili or spaghetti or a sauce of some sort, you can really taste the difference.

There's also something about when it's your own garden. You went to the garden store. You picked out the plants. You planted the plants. You watered the plants. You nurtured them for 65, 70 days. Then, in February when it's dark and snowy, you get a little bit of your garden and that sunshine.



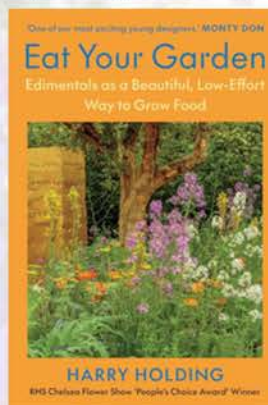
Jackie Larson

Inspiration and resources for the journey

As Master Gardeners we are always expanding our knowledge and feeding our desire to learn more. The following is a selection of resources for your consideration:

"Eat Your Garden: Edimentals as a Beautiful, Low-Effort Way to Grow Food"

By Harry Holding



"Eat Your Garden" shows you how to incorporate edimentals (edible ornamental plants) into your garden in a way that is lower in effort, greater in beauty and less demanding of space than the traditional kitchen garden or vegetable plot.

This is a grow-your-own book with a difference. Some edimentals offer bountiful harvests and great flavors, others are more unusual, and then there are plants that earn their place in the garden because they are so joyful.

Holding is an English landscape designer who has designed major installations for the Chelsea Garden Show, including in 2026.

America Grows: 250 Years of Garden Stories at Chicago Botanic Gardens, now through Sept. 27, chicagobotanic.org/america-grows

July 4, 2026, marks the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the Chicago Botanic Gardens is celebrating by showcasing the history it knows best: gardens.

Flip through the first known American cookbook. Visit outdoor garden displays and



explore your cultural connections to different plants. Discover how gardens reflect the resilience of the American people, and celebrate the ways they create

and sustain community. Free with admission.



Craig LeHoullier, craiglehoullier.com

Craig LeHoullier is author of "Epic Tomatoes: How to Select and Grow the Best Varieties of All Time" and "Growing Vegetables in Straw Bales," co-founder of the Dwarf Tomato Project, tomato adviser to Seed Savers Exchange and cofounder of the online course "[Growing Epic Tomatoes](https://craiglehoullier.com/growing-epic-tomatoes)." He is also the person who named the popular Cherokee Purple tomato.

Craig posts all his latest adventures in the garden on his website along with his advice and resources.

If you have a suggestion for book, website, social media account, app, tool, etc. you would like to share with your fellow MGs, email your suggestion to Joyce Duriga at jmduriga@gmail.com.



A glimpse into home gardening 250 years ago

This year, many in the horticulture community across the United States — such as the American Horticulture Society, the U.S. Botanic Garden and the American Public Garden Association — have joined in marking the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence with special events and features looking back at our nation's garden history.

In that spirit, we collected the following facts about gardens in America around 250 years ago:

- The average Colonial American family had “kitchen gardens” that they depended on for survival not recreation. Growing vegetables and fruit was difficult so meat and corn were the foundational food sources.
- Many people had physic gardens, where they grew healing plants like mint, chamomile, sage and lavender because doctors and pharmacies were scarce.
- Gardening like we know today was reserved for the wealthy landowners who employed gardeners and would experiment with various exotic vegetables like asparagus and artichokes.
- Colonists often planted flowers alongside vegetables because they knew some flowers helped protect crops from pests.
- George Washington was an avid gardener and experimented with new planting methods at Mount Vernon.
- Thomas Jefferson grew hundreds of plant varieties at Monticello.
- Corn, beans and squash were commonly grown together using Indigenous farming techniques called the “Three Sisters” method.
- Seeds were highly sought and newspapers would carry advertisements on popular and productive seeds.
- Apples were one of the most important crops, mainly for making hard cider since clean drinking water was not always reliable.
- Wealthier families copied fashionable European garden styles with straight paths, trimmed hedges and symmetrical layouts.
- Gardening tools were handmade and simple — wooden hoes, iron spades and hand-forged rakes were common.
- Colonists did not waste their scraps. Instead they turned manure, fireplace ashes and sea shells into fertilizer.

— Joyce Duriga



Roots of Extension's master gardener program

As Lake County Master Gardeners, we are part of a nationwide network of Extension Master Gardener Volunteers that traces its roots to the early 1970s as a practical solution to a growing public need for gardening information in rapidly urbanizing areas of the United States.

The program originated at Washington State University in 1972

with Extension agents David Gibby and Bill Scheer who were overwhelmed by questions from home gardeners about plant diseases, pests and landscape problems. Rather than trying to answer every question themselves, they developed a

system to train volunteers in horticulture so those volunteers could help educate the public.

The first experimental "plant clinic," which has evolved into the master gardener training we know today, was held in Tacoma, Washington. About 600 people expressed interest in taking part in the clinic and 200 were accepted. The clinic was so successful and public interest was so great that it led to the formal establishment of the Master Gardener Program in 1973.

For their part, volunteers agreed to donate service hours back to the community in the form of educational outreach in return for receiving university-based instruction in subjects such as soil science, pest management and plant pathology.

When thinking about what to call these volunteers, Gibby and Scheer turned to their experiences living and working in Germany where titles carried great importance. In Germany, a person who had mastered horticultural study was called "Gartenmeister" so the pair translated it into the title of "master gardener."

The idea of training volunteers to aid in

horticulture education spread quickly among the Cooperative Extension systems because it solved a nationwide problem: increasing public demand for gardening education with limited university staff.

By the late 1970s and early

1980s, many land-grant universities had adopted the model through their Cooperative Extension systems.

Purdue University was one of the first land-grant schools to follow Washington State's lead and established its program in 1978. Purdue Extension initially launched its master gardener program in four counties: Allen, Lake, Marion and Vanderburgh County. By 2025, Extension's program had grown to over 50 counties with 2,500 active MGs.

Extension Master Gardener Programs now exist in all 50 states and several Canadian provinces.

– Joyce Duriga



LCMGA is proud to sponsor scholarships for students in the upcoming Purdue Extension Master Gardener Training Class. See flier on next page for class information.



Master Gardener Basic Training 2026

Combine your love of plants, people and the environment to help your community solve problems and make sustainable gardening decisions. Master Gardener volunteers receive 40 hours of horticulture instruction and give back that time in the benefit of the community. Become a Purdue Master Gardener to help your community, meet like minded people and have fun gardening!

Wednesday Evenings

5:00 - 8:30 PM CST

8/12/2026 - 12/16/2026

Class Topics:

Plant Science
Soils & Plant Nutrition
Invasive Species Control
Plant Disease Diagnostics
Weed ID & Control
Animal Pests
Insect ID
Herbaceous Ornamentals
Pesticide Safety & Alts
Woody Ornamentals
Fruit Gardening
Lawn Care
Vegetable Gardening



In Person Format: Lake County Extension Office,
2291 Main Street, Crown Point, IN

Registration/Payment Deadline: Aug. 5, 2026

Cost: \$250 (payable online)

Questions? Contact: Dolly Foster, 219-755-3240

Application Process:

1. To apply for the training and learn more information on the program contact the extension office. Speak to Rena Wielgus: rmwielgu@purdue.edu, 219-755-3240
2. Registration and Fees: once the Extension Educator approves your application you will register and pay the fees online. This covers your MG Manual. A digital copy of the manual will be available to purchase for \$25.

More information about the program:

[Purdue University Extension Master Gardener Program](#)

SPONSORED BY:

Lake County Master Gardeners Association

Lake County Farm Bureau

Scholarship Forms available upon request



MASTER GARDENERS
"Helping Others Grow"



**Lake County
Farm Bureau**

Purdue University prohibits discrimination against any member of the University community on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin or ancestry, genetic information, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disability, or status as a veteran.

If you are in need of accommodations to attend events, please contact the Extension office at 219-755-3240 at least 2 weeks prior to the event. If you need an interpreter or translator, please contact the Extension office at 219-755-3240 at least 2 weeks prior to the event.

Donate surplus garden harvest to local pantries

Have you ever found yourself with so many tomatoes, zucchini or other produce from your garden that you can't even get friends or family to take it? Have you ever thrown away or let extra produce from your garden rot because you can't use it?

You don't have to do that this year because local food pantries are eager to receive fresh food from home gardens in good condition for their clients in need. The national non-profit AmpleHarvest.org can match LCMGA MGs and others with area pantries where you can donate your extra produce here in Lake County through their locator map.

Food insecurity is a daily reality for many of our neighbors in Lake County. You can help ease their burden by sharing your harvest.

The Grapevine reached out to AmpleHarvest.org to reprint the following advice for donating:

You may have heard "jars, cans, boxes, but no fresh food" at food drives and thought you could not donate your surplus garden harvests. Not true.

Since 2009, a nationwide nonprofit called AmpleHarvest.org has been enabling America's 62 million gardeners to donate fresh food to more than 8,500 food pantries in 5,600 communities across all 50 states, including Native American reservations.

Before harvesting, visit [AmpleHarvest.org](https://www.ampleharvest.org) to find a food pantry near you that is eager for your garden surplus. Check whether the pantry has listed a preferred delivery day and time. If it has, please follow that schedule.

Food pantries are often run by small staffs or volunteers, and arriving when they are prepared to receive produce makes the donation much easier for them to use. If no delivery day or time is listed, call or email the pantry before you harvest to ask when they would like you to bring the produce.

On the day you plan to donate, harvest in the early morning, while the produce is still carrying some of the coolness of the night air. If the produce is damp from dew, gently wipe it dry with a clean paper towel before packing it.

Please inspect everything before donating. Produce should be fresh, ripe and something you would be comfortable serving to your own family.



Do not donate produce that is overripe, moldy, mushy, badly bruised, seriously blemished (although "ugly" food is perfectly fine!) or heavily damaged by insects. Produce that is no longer suitable for donation can often still be used at home in soups, stews, sauces or composted.

If you used any pesticide, herbicide, fungicide, or other garden treatment, follow the product label carefully, including any required waiting period before harvest, and clean the produce as directed before donating it.

Unless the pantry gives you different instructions, pack the produce in clean paper grocery bags, boxes or other clean containers that are easy for the pantry to handle. Then deliver it at the requested time.

continued on next page

Donate continued

No donation is too small. A few tomatoes, a handful of peppers, a bag of cucumbers or some fresh herbs may not seem like much from one garden, but to a family that rarely receives fresh produce, it can matter.

If the pantry is convenient for you, you may continue sharing your surplus harvests with that pantry throughout the growing season. You may also visit AmpleHarvest.org and choose another nearby pantry, allowing your garden to help more than one food pantry in your community.

Finally, please tell your neighboring gardeners that they too can donate their surplus harvests. And if you have room to expand your garden this year or next, consider growing a little more specifically to share.

When you donate fresh food from your garden, you are doing more than feeding your community. You are nourishing it, helping to create a healthier community and, in turn, a healthier country.



Using thrillers, fillers and spillers to attract bees

On April 26, our Master Gardeners took part in a fun and educational event with Dolly Swibes Foster making planters with flowers that attract bees and butterflies.

Dolly shared valuable knowledge about the plants and how to care for them. MGs used the “thrillers, fillers and spillers” method to arrange the plants in their planters.

Quick takeaway — deadhead and fertilize to keep your flowers healthy and blooming!

Thanks to our Education Committee for hosting the event for our Master Gardeners!



Left, MG Angie Rupp smiles in front of her creation. Above, MGs Joyce Higgins and Jean Dohmeier choose plants for their pots.

Check out the latest news and board activities on [LCMGA Members Only](https://lakecountymastergardeners.org) at lakecountymastergardeners.org

Lake County Master Gardeners do not need to create an account to login. Contact us to access the login credentials.

Not a member yet? Learn how to join the Lake County Master Gardeners and be part of our growing community! Visit our website for details.



MASTER GARDENERS
“Helping Others Grow”