

The Grapevine

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE By Jackie Larson

Farewell to summer! Hello to fall!

As we look back on summer, we reflect on another season of learning, sharing and cultivating beauty in our gardens and communities. Master Gardeners across Lake County have contributed countless hours nurturing plants, supporting local projects and expanding their horticultural knowledge. Thank you for your dedication and enthusiasm!

Lake County Master Gardeners were extremely busy this year with many opportunities for education and gardening enrichment, our plant sale, garden walk, our booth at the Lake County Fair and "Bloom & Thrive: A Native Fest" were fun and successful events. The hard work of our volunteers enabled us to provide grants and scholarships to our community. There are educational events still to enjoy. Don't forget to join us for our Annual Fall Banquet at Little Italy on Oct. 16. Let's toast to a fruitful year and look ahead to new growth!



Summer may be over, but there are still gardening tasks to be completed.

Looking Ahead: Fall Tasks and Opportunities

As we transition into autumn, now is the time to plan for fall planting, bulb selection and garden cleanup. Consider the following:

- Plant cool-season crops such as kale, spinach and broccoli.
- Divide and transplant perennials to refresh garden beds.
- Mulch and compost fallen leaves for soil enrichment.
- Prepare beds for spring bulbs – daffodils, tulips and hyacinths.

Upcoming Events

- Nov. 1. An Introduction to Houseplants – Led by horticulturist, Peter Sheardy – our focus turns inside as we learn about plants that thrive indoors.
- Jan. 10. Winter Seed Sowing with Dolly Foster.

Resources and Reminders

- Visit lakecountymastergardeners.org for garden guides, event updates and educational materials.
- Remember to log your volunteer hours online.

Wishing you a fruitful and inspiring autumn in your gardens! Thank you for your continued commitment to horticultural excellence and community service.



Thyme-Sensitive Updates

Members' meetings and volunteer opportunities

- Check Grapes for the November Board of directors meeting via Zoom; Anyone who contributes to the discussion earns volunteer hours. Members who only view/listen in earn education hours
- Demonstration Garden maintenance days: Oct. 23 bulb planting

Education opportunities

- Nov. 1, 10 a.m., "Introduction to House Plants," with Peter Sheardy, Leo's Pet, Garden, Home, 13406 Wicker Ave., Cedar Lake.

For more information on meetings and education opportunities, see Grapes, Constant Contact emails and lakecountymastergardeners.org.

Check out the latest news and board activities on MG Only at lakecountymastergardeners.org

Lake County Master Gardeners do not need to create an account to log in to MG Only. To access the login credentials, please contact us.



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.

✉ Feedback appreciated

Do you have an idea for a topic to feature in this newsletter? Is there a master gardener who you think we should feature? Is there a certain gardening-related topic (eg. native plants, tree diseases, how to create a cottage garden) you would like to see addressed here? Please let us know.

We welcome your feedback. Please email lakecountymastergardeners@gmail.com.

🕒 Earn MG hours by 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



Thyme-Sensitive Updates



 **MASTER GARDENERS**
"Helping Others Grow"

SAVE THE DATE
LCMGA HOLIDAY
program
December 7, 2025
2pm-4pm

**Please send photos of your flowers
and garden for the slideshow!**

Submissions accepted until Nov 15th

Please send to Kristin Overbey
koverbey5515@gmail.com

Delicious
treats &
joyful
drinks



Dress
festive to
win a door
prize!



Thyme-Sensitive Updates

MILKWEED Seed Pod Collection Drive

We are in need of milkweed seeds to distribute to the public. If you have extra milkweed on your property and more seed pods that you can use, please consider donating to the extension and master gardeners.



Too Soon, Not Ready



Just Right



- To collect common milkweed seed pods, it is best to pick them when they are dry, and grey or brown in color. If the center seam pops open with a little gentle pressure, they are ready to be collected. If you have pods that are not ready to collect in the first round of collection, you can secure them with a blossom bag or simply a rubber band around them.
- Do not pick pods when they are bright green, they are not yet ripened. They will not germinate if collected too early. Don't pick all of the pods on your property, leave some to renew your population of milkweed plants.
- Collect pods into a paper bag and only fill that bag halfway. No plastic bags- the pods will immediately mold and spoil the harvest of seeds.
- Label the bag with the name of the plant, the date and the city it was collected in (address is not necessary).
- Store pods in a cool dry spot until you drop them off. Don't leave them in a hot car, they can mold.
- Cleaned seed would be greatly appreciated. They can be stored in a jar or plastic bag.

Drop your paper bag of seed pods off between 8:30-4:30 Monday-Friday

**Purdue Extension Lake County
2291 Main Street,
Crown Point**

After hours drop off- leave your bags on the bench by the front door.

**Any questions? Contact
Dolly Foster
Horticulture Program Assistant
Purdue Extension Lake County**

**219755-3240
Dolly@purdue.edu**



For more information on seed collecting watch this class online: Youtube: Indiana Native Plant Society: Collecting and Cleaning Seeds From the Garden

Photo Credit: Dolly Foster



MASTER GARDENERS
"Helping Others Grow"

October 2025

Congratulations

Achievements recognized by Purdue University during banquet

Each year during our annual fall banquet, Purdue Extension Educator Rebecca Koetz presents awards to Master Gardeners who have earned certifications for their work with the program. During this year's banquet on Oct. 16 at Little Italy Restaurant in Dyer, the following people were honored:

Advanced Gold

- Lynda Boyd-Barton
- Petra Julian

Advanced Bronze

- Catherine Cheatle
- Barbara Popiela
- Marlene Sledz
- Lisa Stelter

Advanced Black

- Krystan Bacevich
- Lynda Bodie
- Joyce Duriga
- Jane Elder
- Debbie Herndon
- Nancy Payonk
- Kim Varga

Certified

- Susan Benton
- Vicki Bush
- Rebecca Crum
- Jackie Grutzius
- Pam Metzger
- Paul Piper
- Anne Scheffer
- Beth Shelhart
- John Vacendak
- Sharon Vacendak
- Kim Varga
- Therese Williams

Alumni

- Fran Holtz
- Sheree Japchinski

Welcome to the newest Purdue Master Gardener interns

The following people completed the Purdue Extension's Master Gardener course in the spring.

- Kerry Connor, Munster
- Dorothy Fine, Gary
- Angela Guadiana, Hammond
- Joelle M. Jacques, Gary
- Jalisa Mauldin, Gary
- Valerie Pradhan, St. John
- Kiley Rodgers, Dyer
- Julie Salmen, St. John
- Kim Varga, Orland Park

Dear Friends of Lake County Master Gardeners Association,

We are incredibly grateful for your approval of our grant application and for the \$100 contribution received on March 15, 2025, in support of the Community Health Network. Your generous support helps ensure that we can continue providing essential programs to food-insecure children and their families.

Currently, we are serving approximately 850 students through our Buddy Bag Program, Household Pantry, Community Garden, Summer Food Program and the Ladle of Love free luncheon.

We truly appreciate your support and consider you a valued partner in our mission.

Sincerely,
Bonnie J. Meyer
Executive director



The Dirt on Latest Events



Linda Curley demonstrates how to preserve herbs.

Spotlight on Lake County Fair

By Kristin Overbey

Chair, Lake County Fair Committee

Each year, the Lake County Master Gardeners host a booth at the Lake County Fair held this year from Aug. 1-10 at the Lake County Fairgrounds.

One of the highlights at the booth this year was Linda Curley's engaging demonstration on preserving herbs. Fairgoers learned simple, practical ways to extend the life of their garden harvests and enjoy fresh flavors all year long.

Along with answering questions, sharing resources and offering plants for donation, our volunteers loved every minute of connecting with the community.

Thank you to Linda and to everyone who visited our booth. We can't wait to see you next year!

Demonstration Garden is taking root at Extension

By Kristin Overbey

Co-chair, Demonstration Garden Committee

The Demonstration Garden at the Extension office is taking root and growing into something truly special. We're excited to be transforming this existing garden space into a vibrant, welcoming area for the community.

Beth Caruana and I are honored to co-chair this project, and it's been inspiring to see how much progress we've already made alongside our team of volunteers.

As many of you know, LCMGA's goal is to refresh and expand the entrance pollinator garden, which will serve as the welcoming gateway to the site. This space is designed to highlight the importance of pollinators, showcase a variety of native plants and cultivars and provide four seasons of interest so there is always something beautiful to see.

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Master Gardener Darcy Winston smiles as she works in the Demonstration Garden in August.

The Dirt on Latest Events



MG Susan Benton weeds in the Demonstration Garden in August.

We've been hard at work on several improvements, including getting quotes to extend the paver pathway to make the garden even more inviting.

Even though the space is still growing, it's already drawing attention from both people and wildlife. Butterflies have been spotted fluttering among the blooms and we even had a special visit from a mother duck and her babies who wandered through the site.

This project is truly a team effort, and it has been wonderful to watch the garden come alive through the hard work and dedication of our volunteers. Every plant in the ground and every weed pulled is helping to create a lasting resource that will both inspire and educate our community for years to come.

We are very excited to continue sharing the progress with you as the garden grows and flourishes!



LCMGA thanks Strack & Van Til for donating a \$100 gift card to purchase snacks and drinks for volunteers during a planting day in July.

Sustainability focus of Bloom & Thrive: A Native Fest

By Jackie Larson

Chair, Symposium Committee

On Oct. 13, the Lake County Master Gardeners Association hosted an inspiring all-day event "Bloom & Thrive: A Native Fest" at the Griffith Izaak Walton. The event brought together nature enthusiasts, gardening experts and community members to celebrate the beauty and importance of native plants.

The day was filled with insightful talks from renowned horticulturalists. Heather Prince shared her expertise in "Woody Plants for Butterflies, and More," highlighting how native woody species support pollinators.

Dr. Scott Stewart captivated attendees with "Incorporating Native Plants into Your Landscaping," offering practical tips for creating pollinator-friendly gardens. Additional presentations by Dolly Foster and Reid Swanson enriched the day with their unique perspectives and knowledge.

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Dr. Scott Stewart takes questions from participants during Bloom & Thrive.



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October 2025

The Dirt and a Scholarship

There were also opportunities for hands-on learning and community engagement after lunch. Lisa Stelter from CISMA led engaging tours on the grounds focused on invasive species and helping participants identify and understand the threats these plants pose to local ecosystems.

Kim Grodetz, president of the Griffith Izaak Walton Chapter, delivered a compelling presentation on Save Our Streams, addressing the challenges facing our water sources and the importance of conservation.

The event featured a variety of vendors offering eco-friendly products, native plants and educational resources. Attendees also enjoyed a delicious homemade lunch.

Dr. Stewart shared his gratitude following the event saying in an email, "Thank you both for the opportunity to be part of the Bloom & Thrive event last Saturday and for all the on-site logistical help. I thought the entire event was terrific — good diversity of speaker topics, engaged attendees, interesting and engaging vendors, and an overall upbeat tone for the entire day."

Meet our 2024–2025 LCMGA Scholarship Recipient

Julia Betts is from Crown Point, and a senior in Purdue University's College of Agriculture. She is pursuing a degree in horticulture with a concentration in production and marketing, and plans to graduate in Spring 2026.

"I am deeply honored and incredibly grateful to have been selected as a recipient of this scholarship," Betts said.

"Growing up, I always dreamed of attending college, and Purdue University has helped me achieve this dream. Your generosity is enabling me to make the most of this incredible opportunity."

Over the past few summers, Julia worked for Kalamazoo Garden Solutions as a product merchandiser, where she gained valuable hands-on experience managing plants in Walmart Garden Centers. At Purdue, she's also a member of both the English and Western equestrian teams, balancing academics with her passion for horses.

"Receiving this scholarship allows me to focus more on my studies while gaining experiences that will help prepare me for a future in greenhouse production. I truly cannot thank you enough for your generous support."



Julia Betts

Once again, the Lake County Master Gardeners Association, in collaboration with Purdue University's Horticulture and Landscape Architecture Department, is offering its scholarship program for students in horticulture, agriculture and related fields. Students can apply at ag.purdue.edu/departments/hla/academics/scholarships.html. Applicants must be full-time undergraduate students in the College of Agriculture at Purdue University. To date, LCMGA has awarded over \$76,000 in scholarships.

Touring With a Master Gardener

Lots to see and explore at Halifax Public Gardens

By Susan Kimmet

Class of 2022

On a recent trip to northeastern Canada, I took a guided tour of the Halifax Public Gardens, located in Halifax, Nova Scotia, on the peninsula.

The Halifax Public Gardens are the only surviving authentic Victorian gardens in North America. Established in 1874, the gardens are funded and maintained by the municipality. The gardens are free and open to the public.

During my visit, I entered through the iron gates of the garden and immediately found a carpet bed planted with a variety of compact, slow growing plants, carefully trimmed. This bed was created to commemorate the American Rhododendron Society, which held its annual convention in Nova Scotia this past June. The gardens also have a large collection of Iron Clad Rhododendrons.

Ties to England are noticeable throughout the gardens, such as the Diamond Jubilee Fountain, which was installed in 1897 to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. Intricate, balanced scrolls and serpentine beds surround the fountain. There is also an oak tree dedicated and planted by King George VI and his wife, Queen Elizabeth (later the Queen Mother) in 1939.

These gardens are not only a historical landmark but also a vibrant display of nature's beauty. Spanning 16 acres, the gardens feature a diverse array of flora, including elegant roses, colorful dahlias, resilient succulents and fruiting trees and shrubs.



Susan Kimmet takes a selfie near the Diamond Jubilee Garden.



Carpet bed commemorating the American Rhododendron Society.

This lush landscape offers visitors a tranquil retreat from the bustling city, providing a perfect setting for relaxation, photography and leisurely strolls. The carefully curated plantings and well-maintained pathways create an inviting atmosphere that highlights the natural beauty and horticultural excellence of the gardens.

For those interested in exploring further, visit halifax.ca/publicgardens.



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October 2025

Meet a Master Gardener

Petra's Prairie: Reclaiming land for native plants, trees

By Joyce Duriga

Editor, The Grapevine

On any given morning, no matter the season or temperature, Master Gardener Petra Julian grabs her coffee, jumps into her family's Kubota all-terrain vehicle and drives through several acres of prairie to a clearing on Lake George in Hobart to what she calls "my peace place."

That place of refuge is just a small piece of the nine acres she and her husband own that butts up against the Indiana Dunes National Park that they have turned back to a native prairie. Those acres have become a vocation of sorts, where she and her husband Doug – both retired teachers – are committed to bringing it back to its native habitat.

Utilizing native plants in home gardens, parks or landscapes is a hot topic today, but Petra and her husband started doing it long before it was trendy, and before Petra was a Master Gardener.

Petra's husband grew up on the land, which was used for grazing by mostly cattle, but they had other animals like pigs and goats. The animals were butchered and sold in their family grocery store in Lake Station.

The grazing animals kept the invasive plants at bay, but after



The view of Lake George from Petra Julian's property.

Doug's father passed away and they sold the animals the situation quickly changed.

"Then the invasives came, and came, and came and came. They took over," Petra said.

In 2016, their neighbor Sandy O'Brien approached them about applying for a grant from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Department of Natural Resources to bring in heavy equipment to clear some of the aggressive hawthorn trees and invasives that had overtaken the land. O'Brien has dedicated her life to returning local land to native prairies and leads controlled burns on their property. She also has helped Petra and Doug with chemical mitigation of invasives.

The job proved larger than expected so Petra and Doug applied for another grant to finish removing the trees.

There are always some invasive trees, shrubs or plants to remove such as phragmites, oriental bittersweet and buckthorn.

The work isn't for the fainthearted and there have been injuries along the way.

When the need calls for it, they rent large equipment to remove the invasives or a tree that comes down in a storm.

Doug also mows some of the flatlands to keep them in check. Because the land was used for grazing, seeds of native plants exist in the soil and many have come back on their own.

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Meet a Master Gardener

Over the years, Petra has become creative in finding native plants and seeds for the prairie. Master Gardeners share plants they are thinning out from their own gardens and she collects free seeds too.

But she and Doug also purchase their own seeds and plugs and plant them by hand and water them.

"When you put in a thousand plants that's a lot of work," she said.

Once planted, the natives don't need much help.

"They survive. This is how they're meant to live," she added.

Since they began working on the area in 2017, they have seen a definite change in the environment. There is now a cornucopia of native plants, trees, bushes and wildlife thriving in the prairie.

They have seen an increase in wildlife like bluebirds, indigo buntings, goldfinches, red-headed woodpeckers, Cooper's hawk and American bald eagles, heron, egret, swans and white Pelicans, turkeys, bobwhites, bees, dragonflies, all kinds of butterflies, deer and turtles. In recent years, Trumpeter Swans overwinter on the spot.

A false sunflower or *Heliopsis Helianthoides*, as seen on Petra Julian's prairie.



Trumpeter swans, the largest existing waterfowl, and both the heaviest and longest native bird of North America, overwinter on Lake George near Petra Julian's refuge.

"There was nothing. At least I didn't see it. If you come here at 5 p.m. in the fall you'll get groups of hundreds at a time of Canadian geese. Then you'll get the group of the swans," Petra said. "One time I was back here there were 70-some Trumpeter Swans and maybe 500 or 600 Canadian geese."

As for vegetation, there are bur oak, tall coreopsis, rattlesnake master, coneflowers, Blue aster, Pennsylvania sedge, cardinal plants, serviceberry trees, field goldenrod, milkweed and Indian grass, to name a few.

When her neighbor Sandy O'Brien first approached her about doing a burn to remove some of the invasive plants it seemed like a natural thing to do, Petra said.

"I strongly believe in it. I know when we started farms and subdivisions we lost all of this and if there are little pieces of land like this and you can support it, you gotta do it," Petra said on a recent morning out in the prairie. "You can bring it back a yard at a time. Well, I got more than a yard, and I thought, let's do it."



Did You Know?

Earn recognition for your garden

Local and national organizations dedicated to improving the environment and the plants and wildlife that live here offer certification programs to recognize gardens that do the same. Here are just a few you can check out and see if you qualify.



Shirley Heinze Land Trust "Bringing Nature Home" award **heinzetrust.org/bringingnaturehome**

For gardens or landscaping that feature native plants. Planting criteria:

- Plantings should be primarily at least in the second growing season
- Home to native plants grown in this region before European settlement
- Landscaping generally free, or in the process of being free of invasive plants.
- Entrants must be located in Lake, Porter, LaPorte, St. Joseph, Marshall or Starke Counties in Indiana



National Wildlife Federation Certified Wildlife Habitat **nwf.org/garden**

General garden criteria:

- A habitat garden space with about 70% native plants
- A minimum of three natural food sources for wildlife
- At least one source of clean water
- Two places for wildlife to find shelter from weather and predators



Monarch Watch Monarch Waystations **monarchwatch.org/waystations**

Monarch Waystations are places that provide resources necessary for monarchs to produce successive generations and sustain their migration. Without milkweeds throughout their spring and summer breeding areas in North America, monarchs would not be able to produce the successive generations that culminate in the migration each fall.



North American Butterfly Association Certified Butterfly Garden **naba.org/butterfly-gardens/certification-program**

General garden criteria:

- At least three different caterpillar food plants must be grown
- At least three different butterfly nectar sources must be grown
- Insecticides and pesticides should not be used in your butterfly gardens, including organic pesticides



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October 2025