

The Grapevine

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE By Jackie Larson

Welcome to the New Year and the First LCMGA Newsletter!

As we step into 2025, we reflect on the exciting and fulfilling year we had in 2024 with the Lake County Master Gardeners Association. The past year was filled with opportunities for volunteering, learning and growing together as a community, and we're eager to continue that momentum in 2025.

In 2024, we saw great success with our annual plant sale and garden walk, which were both well-attended and enjoyable. Our presence at events like Lowell Naturefest, Buckley Fall Festival and the Lake County Fair provided ample opportunities to promote the association, engage with the public and answer questions about gardening.



Throughout the year, we also offered numerous educational opportunities for our members. Presentations like "Put a Little Prairie in Your Garden," "All About Bats," a field trip to Hamsta's garden and many others, were both fun and informative, helping our members expand their gardening knowledge.

Our fundraisers, including the plant sale and garden walk, were not only successful but also enabled us to fund scholarships and grants that support local garden-related projects in our community. These initiatives help organizations fund new or ongoing gardening efforts.

Looking ahead to 2025, we're excited to offer even more opportunities for learning and growth. We're thrilled to announce a presentation by Douglas Tallamy, author of "The Nature of Oaks" and "Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard." Additional upcoming events include winter sowing with Dolly Foster, veggie growing in small spaces with C.L. Fornari, and more exciting events to be announced. We're also happy to share that the symposium will return after a few years' hiatus!

Volunteers remain at the heart of our success, and we want to thank everyone who has dedicated their time and energy to our events. We couldn't have had so many successes without you. In 2025, look forward to even more social events where we can connect, share and build friendships with fellow garden enthusiasts.

Here's to another wonderful year of growth, learning and community!



Thyme-Sensitive Updates

Join us

- Jan. 16: 7 p.m., Board of Directors meeting via Zoom
<https://zoom.us/j/96621994285?pwd=EyPAT9F8bPIUCcWs54conQowqOILn.1>
- 4/8, 5/13, 6/10, 7/8 and 7/29: Lake County Fair and Demonstration Garden Committee meetings at Crown Point Community Library. More info will be sent soon via constant contact.
- Feb. 6: 10 a.m., Demonstration Garden Committee Winter Sowing at Purdue Extension Office

More info will be sent soon via constant contact for both of these.

Education opportunities

- Jan. 26: 1 p.m., "Winter Sowing" at Niemeyer's Landscape Supply New Greenhouse, 810 N. Indiana Ave., Crown Point, IN 46307
- Feb. 24: 6 p.m. "Next Steps for Nature: 500 Questions (and Answers) for How to Save Nature in Our Yards" by Doug Tallamay via Zoom
- March 19: "The Art of Growing Food" by Ellen Ecker Ogden via Zoom
- April 15: 6 p.m., Growing Vegetables in Small Spaces by C.L. Fornari via Zoom

See Constant Contact emails for more information and to register.

Members recognized for milestones at annual banquet



On Oct. 17, our members gathered for our annual Fall banquet at Little Italy Restaurant in Dyer.

Congratulations to our Lake County Master Gardeners that earned a new Purdue EMG name badge:

- **CERTIFIED:** Krystan Bacevich, Kelsey Duncan, Joyce Duriga, Carla Kenney, Lori Lane, Patty Ornelas, Nancy Payonk
- **ADVANCED:** Catherine Cheatle, Elaine Dainton, Marcia Davidson, Pam Howard, Berni Largura, Teresa Procter, Lisa Stelter
- **BRONZE:** Beth Caruana, Shirley Haney, Joyce Higgins, Diane Kitchell, Kristin Overbey, Angela Rupp, Robert Thebault, Linda Vivirito
- **SILVER:** James Boscia, Carolyn Hartley, Monica Hoffman, Susan Kimmet
- **GOLD 1,000:** Lynn Barbee, Jackie Larson
- **GOLD 2,000:** Judy Kopchik

Thyme-Sensitive Updates

MG Susan Radovich helps us create porch pots

Just in time for Thanksgiving, Master Gardener Susan Radovich gave a presentation at the Purdue Extension Office Nov. 23 on best methods for creating beautiful porch pots for the holiday and winter seasons. Members brought their own pots and filled them with various greenery and accents.



Celebrating our 'Favorite Things'

Master gardeners, interns and new MG students gathered on Dec. 8 for some hot chocolate, cookies and a chance to win garden-related prizes with our first "Favorite Things" event. Kristin Overbey put together a presentation that shared what our fellow members can't live without in their gardens like their favorite compost bin or trusty set of garden shears. Visit MG Only on our website to view the full presentation.

Scan the QR code to link
to our website →



To sign in to MG Only page:

Email:

lakecountymastergardeners@gmail.com

Password:

Luv2Garden

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

Newsletter Submission Info

Do you have an idea for a topic to feature in this newsletter? Is there a master gardener that 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.



MASTER GARDENERS
"Helping Others Grow"

Vol .01 Newsletter

Meet a master gardener

Dahlias, dahlias and more dahlias

Note: We would like to regularly feature master gardeners in this newsletter and share with you their expertise, unique adventures or xxx. Here is our first feature:

Master Gardener Barbara Popeila (MG class of 2020) is well-known for her large collection of dahlias in her home garden. What started out as a few dahlias has turned into a garden filled with over 200 dahlias at their peak in the growing season.

We asked Barbara why she loves these flowers so much and what is the best way to care for them.

How did you become interested in dahlias?

So you're going to laugh at me for this one, but I found dahlias after failing with roses.

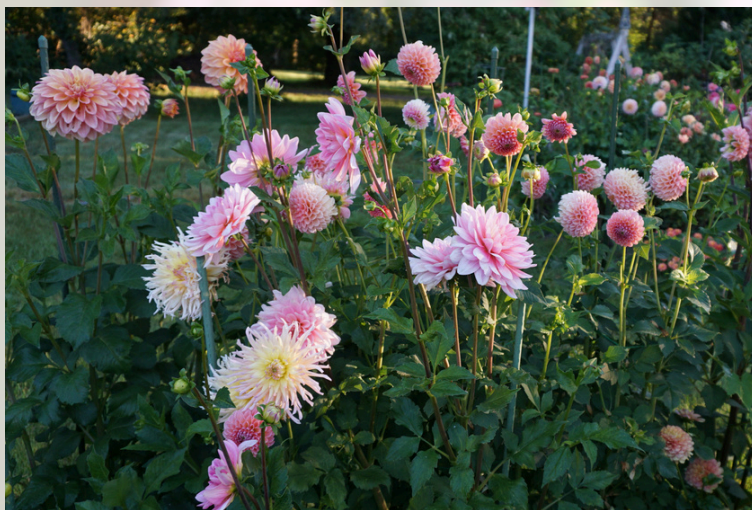
Personally, I love cottage gardens as well as formal gardens and now that the kids are older, I have begun turning my attention back to my home and yard.

I first tried to create more of a perennial garden with larger plants like rose bushes, phlox, iris, bee's balm, daisies and such. But I soon found out that the dream of having beautiful roses was not worth battling the deer and the bug pressure – this was before I had taken the master gardeners classes. I then tried large zinnia varieties and dahlias, which the deer pretty much leave alone, and it was love at first sight.

I'm not going to say they've been the easiest for me to grow either, but I'm learning as I go and love just walking out in the yard after work to see the beautiful blooms. They make wonderful cut flowers that go well with the zinnias and are worth the effort to me.

Which dahlias are your favorites?

My original favorite dahlias were the waterlily and formal decorative varieties. Then I fell for the ball varieties. Last year, I tried adding some dinner plates and semi-cactus varieties. Tony has been very supportive with my addiction and does seem to enjoy sharing blooms with his co-workers.



Dahlia's from Barbara's garden

What advice do you have for people who want to add dahlias to their garden?

I would certainly encourage anyone who wants to add dahlias to their garden to go for it! Generally, for the larger varieties I grow, they can be 4 to 6 feet tall and maybe 2 feet wide so they do need some space. For me they grow well in the ground but not so much in pots.

They like full sun, well-draining soil, consistent moisture (or at least a good watering 2-3 times a week).

The larger varieties need to be staked up as the rain or high winds can break the long stems. I put a metal garden stake into the ground at the time of planting, then tie them with twine to the stake as they grow larger. I know others who use a tomato cage for support.



Meet a master gardener



Honeymoon Dahlia

Things to keep in mind about growing dahlias: They are not native to this area so they would be considered annuals here (but can be lifted in the fall). They grow from tubers similar to a potato which can be planted in the ground when the ground temperature is at least 55F or warmer. I generally start Memorial Day weekend.

If the tubers freeze or they are too damp – like sitting in wet clay soil too early in the spring – they can rot and turn to mush, so it's safer to plant them later than to chance planting too early. If you plant the tuber in the ground, you generally do not need to water much at all until the sprout comes up and starts producing leaves. It could be up to a month from planting before you see a sprout.

The plant will have mostly leaves until late summer when they begin blooming until frost. To keep the blooms coming, deadhead old blooms.

Dahlias are heavy feeders, I give them bone meal at the time of planting then bloom food once a month when they start blooming.

When the first hard frost comes in the fall the plants will turn brown. This is usually when I dig the tuber clump up and attempt to divide them and store them over the winter.

Generally, they should be stored around 50F in but kept in a very slightly damp medium. I'd suggest reviewing Swan Island Dahlia or the American Dahlia

Society websites for storage information as everyone's situation is different and you may need to try different



Tony and Barbara Popieia

techniques to see what works best for you. I personally am still trying to figure out the best storage technique for myself as my basement where I store mine is too warm and they start to shrivel up so I've been trying the plastic wrap method, but have had more rot issues with this method.

The struggle is real, I lose about 30% over the winter, but as they multiply every year I still have plenty to share.



Miss Amara Dahlia



Board and Committee updates

2025 Executive Board of Directors

President – Jackie Larson

Vice President – Leslie Wychocki

Treasurer – Angela Rupp

Secretary – Linda Vivirito

Board members: Petra Julian, Susan Kimmet,
Kristin Overbey, Susan Standley,

New board members: Cathy Cheatle, Joyce Duriga,
Loretta Sullivan

Committees

We're always looking for master gardeners to help with any of our committees. If you're interested, please contact the chair.

- Cards & Flowers: Leslie Wychocki
- Donor Campaign: Jackie Larson and Petra Julian
- Education: Jeanne Luers
- Election: Kristin Overbey
- Garden Walk: Catherine Cheatle and Marcia Davidson
- Grants: Leslie Wychocki
- Lake County Fair Booth: Kristin Overbey and Pam Schopp-Young
- Lake County Fair Flower Arranging Coordinator: Beth Caruana
- Plant Sale: Veronica Williams and Dolly Foster
- Demonstration Garden: Kristin Overbey (Interim)
- Scholarships: Jeanne Luers
- Symposium: TBD
- Constant Contact: Jeanne Luers and Kristin Overbey
- Advertising: Teresa Procter
- Facebook: Dolly Foster
- Newsletter: Joyce Duriga
- Website: Petra Julian
- Buckley Fall Fest: Catherine Cheatle
- Lowell Nature Fest: Linda Vivirito
- Porter County Garden Show: Susan Kimmet
- Lake County Fairground Gardens: Susan Stanley



2024 Grant recipients

Last year, Lake County Master Gardeners Association awarded \$5,292.52 to community gardening projects. Grants are offered between from \$200 to \$600 to businesses, churches, schools and other organizations located in Lake County, Indiana, to support new or existing gardening projects.

We are now accepting applications for 2025. Visit lakecountymastergardners.org and select "grants/scholarships" for more information.

The 2024 grantees and their projects are:

Chasing Dreams Learning Center, Hobart: \$500

To build a handicapped accessible community garden in new learning center to teach participants how to grow their own food and eat healthier; to provide free programs to individuals with disabilities and their families.

Crown Point Garden Club of Indiana, Crown Point: \$300

Continuing 1-year-old pollinator garden at Fine Arts Building in the Lake County Fair Grounds and planting 100 Snowdrop and 200 Crocus bulbs for a food source for early pollinators food source. Educational aspect: Invite area school children to learn about early pollinators and invite them to plant bulbs.

Dyer in Bloom, Dyer: \$350

Purchasing of ground cover, perennials and mulch for around Elmer Miller Park sign at the park, adjacent to the Plum Creek Center; area around a concrete stump would be bricked up and turned into a planter.

Elliott Elementary School, Munster: \$300

The Elliott Educational Garden was certified last year as an official Schoolyard Habitat with the National Wildlife Federation. Ongoing project is to add three to four conifer varieties to the west side of the garden to support wildlife with additional coverage and create habitats.

Griffith Tri Kappa, Griffith: \$600

To start a pollinator garden, specifically a Monarch Waystation, for endangered Monarch butterflies located to the south of the Griffith Historical Park and Train Museum. This garden will be used for educational purposes for local school children. Also, to renovate the sign area facing Broad Street with native and non-native plants.

Haven House, Hammond: \$600

To provide fresh vegetables and fruits for residents and allow them the opportunity to understand the importance of sustainable food systems and nutrition.

Living Green Garden, Gary: \$600

To expand the Nicholas Park Community Garden with two 3' x 12' garden beds with two benches for growing vegetable plants for free distribution to the community. They will also be purchasing peat pellets and grow lights.

Munster Historical Society, Munster: \$300

To install custom weatherproof educational signage that will provide information about the pollinator garden along with historical information about the Native American trail.

St. Matthias Gardening Angels, Crown Point: \$400

Tree assessment and replacement program for the church grounds removing invasive species, etc.



Grants and

Grants continued...

St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry, Crown Point: \$342.52

To create a 3-tier raised vegetable garden for those in need from the Food Pantry.

TradeWinds Services, Inc., Merrillville: \$600

To purchase and install a raised bed Children's Garden that will include vertical growing space, rain barrel water conservation and plants to attract butterflies. The new area will include garden space, areas to eat and work on picnic tables, fencing, irrigation, etc. Children from 6 to 18 will help build the garden area at the front section of the building, which will be a learning experience for all involved.

Warren-Vigo Block Club, Miller Beach: \$400

To continue removing invasive species and expanding with additional native trees, shrubs and plants in newly cleared areas along the Bootleg Trail Project.



Purdue Extension update

By Rebecca Koetz

Lake County Purdue Extension Master Gardener Coordinator, busser@purdue.edu

Hello Lake County Purdue Extension Master Gardeners! Thank you for your service! We at Purdue Extension greatly appreciate your help getting science-based horticulture information out to our community. I'd like to share some updates and reminders going into the New Year.

- Reminder that when entering hours, you can enter hours in bulk (i.e. if you spend 2 hours a week doing administrative duties on a committee, you can enter 8 hours for that month).
- Please prioritize volunteering for fundraisers like the plant sale, garden walk and county fair to raise money for grants and scholarships.
- Starting in 2025, all master gardeners will be required to volunteer at least one hour per year in the Extension demonstration garden. We hope you'll be hooked and want to spend more!
- The Extension office demonstration garden promises to be a great opportunity to showcase plantings, diagnostics, growing techniques and more. So far we have a high tunnel and three-stage compost system, electric out to the high tunnel, and a concrete pathway. The high tunnel walls open automatically based on temperature. We also have dripline irrigation equipment in the high tunnel and a tool shed to be built in the near future. We plan to use this high tunnel to grow plants for the plant sale among other things.
- There is a new survey category in MG Manager that you can enter your hours for completing surveys. There are also new categories for CISM and Shirley Heinze volunteer opportunities.
- No need to enter drive time separately in MG Manager. Add the drive time into your total hours for the volunteer opportunity. No drive time will be awarded for education hours.
- Please enter contact #'s-these help with statewide reporting and future funding.
- If you attend a board meeting and present or share information/input, you can count the meeting for volunteer hours. If you only attend to watch, you can count it for education hours.
- Please round up volunteer hours to whole, quarter or half hours.
- We can count the pre-garden walk tour for volunteer hours.
- We cannot count other organization's plant sales for volunteer hours unless you have an information table where you teach about horticulture information and represent as a master gardener (wear your badge, talk about the Master Gardener program, etc.).
- Only use the Growing Together hour category when working with a designated Growing Together grant-awarded garden. These are only a few specific gardens, no active grants currently. Check with me if you are unsure.
- Purdue has come down hard on copyright infringement regulation. Please only use images that are public domain, that you took yourself, that belong to Purdue University or are free to use from a purchased image software account (e.g. a Canva account, etc.). This applies to all newsletters, flyers and presentations.

