

The Grapevine

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE By Jackie Larson

Welcome to the second edition of The Grapevine newsletter.

I'd like to thank Joyce Duriga for all the hard work she puts into making the newsletter special, and I look forward to many editions.

Spring is upon us, well almost, as I look at the snow on the ground as I write this message. Spring is a time for a new start and fresh beginnings. We are all looking at the seed and plant catalogs dreaming of the day we can get our hands in the dirt and work toward our summer gardens.

The education committee has many seminars and workshops planned to help you get ready for your beautiful gardens. Look for these upcoming education opportunities; "What's New for 2025: The Journey from Selection to Your Garden," and for the veggie growers C.L. Fornari will present "Growing Vegetables in Small Spaces." Each month we'll have an opportunity for education and to make new gardening friends.

The plant sale on May 10 will give you an opportunity to buy plants and get a start on your gardens.

For great garden ideas add June 29 on your calendar for the wonderful garden walk. These two fundraising events help the Lake County Master Gardeners Association give grants and scholarships to people in our community.

Thank you to everyone who supported our donor campaign. Your support enables us to pay for educational speakers as well as offset the costs of our fall banquet, annual meeting and T-shirts with our new logo. We would like to continue to provide quality speakers, and your support will help us to do so.

I look forward to seeing everyone in the upcoming months to celebrate our gardens.

Master Gardeners Only -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 for more information. 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.



Thyme-Sensitive Updates

Members meetings

- April 16: 6 p.m., Plant Sale Meeting, Crown Point Community Library
- April 17: 7 p.m., Board of Directors meeting via Zoom
- 5/13, 6/10, 7/8 and 7/29: Lake County Fair and Demonstration Garden Committee meetings, Crown Point Community Library.
- May 9: noon-3 p.m. set up for Plant Sale, Fine Arts Building, Lake County Fairgrounds, Crown Point

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

Education opportunities

April 15: 6 p.m. "Growing Vegetables in Small Spaces" with C.L. Fornari, via Zoom

April 24: 6 p.m. "What's New for 2025: The Journey from Selection to Your Garden," via Zoom

May 8: 6:30 p.m. "Moon Gardens and Nocturnal Pollinators" with Susan Radovich at Lake County Purdue Extension Office

May 15: 10:30 a.m. Outing for Master Gardeners only "Spring Meadows and Walters Gardens"

June 12: 6 p.m. "Disease Prevention and Diagnosis" with Nikki Witkowski at Lake County Purdue Extension Office

Master Gardeners Only - Come chat with us

You're invited to kick off the gardening season at our first Garden Chat of the year on April 22 at Casa Balbina in Crown Point. (See graphic)

Join your fellow Master Gardeners for an evening of inspiration, camaraderie, and fun. Let's share what we're planting this season, exchange seeds, explore garden catalogs, and enjoy a delicious dinner together.

It's a wonderful opportunity to socialize and strengthen our connections in the Master Gardening community.



Thyme-Sensitive Updates

Join us for the 24th Annual Plant Sale on May 10

By Dolly Foster and Veronica Williams
Plant Sale co-chairs

The 24th LCMGA Annual Plant Sale will take place on May 10 from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m. at the Lake County Fairgrounds Fine Arts building.

The sale also features Trash to Treasures where donated, gently used gardening items and tools are sold. Veronica Williams will lead a potato planting demo at 11 a.m.

The plant sale is a fundraiser for LCMGA's scholarship and grant programs.

We will have for sale many different types of tomatoes, peppers and herb plants as well as perennials, shrubs and trees (limited numbers) and house plant starts. There will also be a small variety of native plants that are popular with pollinators.

Many of our plants come from the gardens of master gardeners as donations. We encourage donations as it is a way for us to thin our gardens out and share plants that we know will grow in our region.

However, we don't accept plants that are recognized as invasive. These include vinca vine, English ivy, pachysandra, Wintercreeper, clustered bell flower, chameleon plant and flowering pear tree. Basically, if a plant is growing out of control in your garden, please do not bring it to the sale to pass on to others.

You can bring your potted plants and vegetables to the set up day on May 9 between noon and 3 p.m. Better yet, bring your donations and stay to help.



Plants must be potted and labeled before dropping them off on Friday.

You can also get your plants ready ahead of time and drop them off at one of our drop-off sites. These are committee members who take in plants and hold them until set up day.

Drop off May 1-9 at:

- Petra Julian: 5545 S. Liverpool Road, Hobart
- Shirley Haney: 774 W. North Street, Crown Point
- Loretta Sullivan: 1026 170th Place, Hammond
- Debbie Herndon: 2531 W 136th Court, Crown Point, 46307
- Barb & Tony Popiela: 8936 W 89th Ave, St John, 46373

MGs can also volunteer to work at the sale or help with clean up. Sign up is on MG Manager.

For the day of the sale, we would like to borrow a few wagons to help patrons get their plants out to their cars.

Thyme-Sensitive Updates

This year's Garden Walk set for June 29

Come and explore eight gardens in Lowell, Crown Point and Cedar Lake on June 29 for this year's "June in Bloom" Garden Walk from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. You can sign up to volunteer or grab some family and friends and support LCGMA's scholarship and grant program by purchasing a ticket for \$15 and touring the gardens.

Take a peek into gardens of local people to see how they have added life and joy into their space through trees, perennials, vegetables and more.

As unique features on this year's tour, participants can visit a working farm and the home of an experienced bee keeper.

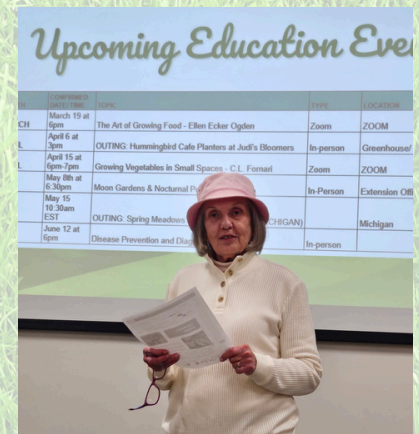
Over 50 master gardeners turned out for our annual meeting

The 2025 Lake County Master Gardeners Annual Meeting was an enjoyable evening filled with food, games and connection.

After kicking things off with partner activities like "Springtime Flower Match" and "Find Someone Who...", members worked in teams to unscramble spring-themed words.

A dinner of pizza, salad and desserts followed, with garden-themed prizes handed out during table games and rounds of Gardening Bingo.

It was a fun, casual night to meet new members, reconnect with old friends, and gear up for a busy season ahead — including the Plant Sale on May 10 and Garden Walk on June 29.



The Dirt on Latest Events

MG Dolly Foster teaches how to sow seeds in winter

Seeds, soil, and snow? Yes! Gardeners gathered in the new greenhouse at Niemeyer's Landscape Supply to learn how to start seeds outdoors in winter using the "milk jug method."

Dolly Foster, one of our own Lake County Master Gardeners, led the workshop with hands-on tips for starting perennials, annuals, herbs, and native plants without the hassle of grow lights or indoor mess. Attendees brought jugs, shared seeds, and left with their own mini greenhouses ready to weather the rest of winter. Nearly 40 people attended this free public event —kicking off the growing season a little early!



Dolly's presentation was featured on an episode of "Wednesdays with Wayne." Check it out at shorturl.at/C0YmH.

Doug Tallamy shares about Restoring Nature at Home



Renowned entomologist and author Doug Tallamy inspired gardeners and nature lovers alike with a powerful message: We can all help heal the planet starting in our own yards.

Speaking via Zoom, Tallamy shared how native plants support insects, birds, and the entire food web — and how simple changes in our landscapes can restore vital ecological connections. His presentation sparked thoughtful questions and lots of motivation to take action.

Nearly 300 people registered for the talk, and the YouTube recording has already reached over 220 views. If you missed it, you can still catch the recording at shorturl.at/PuinL.

Ellen Ecker Ogden showed how growing food can be art

Ellen Ecker Ogden's presentation, "The Art of Growing Food," was both inspiring and practical. She shared tips for designing kitchen gardens with beauty and purpose — everything from paths and beds to plant choices and personal touches. Her passion for heirloom varieties and thoughtful garden planning came through in every slide. If you missed it, the full talk is available on the LCMGA YouTube channel at shorturl.at/SZlsg.



Meet a Master Gardener

The art of raising hydrangeas

Master Gardener Lynn Barbee (Class of 1991) is golden – or rather she reached gold status for logging 1,000 volunteer and 100 education hours as a Lake County Master Gardener. Needless to say she has a lot of experience in the gardening arena and she often shares it with the customers at Home Depot, where she has worked for 25 years.

You're a longtime volunteer with the Purdue Extension Master Gardener Speakers Bureau. Why do you do it?

For me the presentations are a creative outlet. Apparently, I'm far more extroverted than I ever dreamed I was growing up.

I do about eight different presentations a year and a lot of repeat presentations. People seem to enjoy it. I do joke around. When I was growing up I wanted to be Carol Burnett.

One of the talks you give is "Questions from the Garden Center." What questions are you asked most often?

I would say the one that I get most often is about pruning things, especially hydrangeas. And the answer for everything is, "It depends."

Stan Sims who was our Extension educator a long time ago said that was the answer to everything. And it sure is. There are so many things to take into consideration.

Another question I get is about weeds and the four-step lawn care program. What time do you put it down? Which step do you put down when? And just when do you kill things in general.

People don't understand sometimes about how broadleaf weeds and grassy weeds work. They don't understand that crab grass has to be treated differently and all of that.

You give another talk on hydrangeas. Are those your favorite? What advice can you give to someone who wants to grow them?

I don't know why I love hydrangeas so much. I think it's because they are a little complicated. There are so many different kinds out there right now and they are becoming more and



A William Bafin rose thriving in Lynn's garden

more popular and they come in so many different sizes.

As far as advice I would say do your research first and know whether you have acidic soil or not. Not all of them will turn blue. Proven Winners has a wonderful resource called "Hydrangeas Demystified" and it talks about the different types of hydrangeas, when they have to be pruned, for example. There are some hydrangeas that do not do as well in our area and the plant will look great but because they bloom on last year's wood and winter



Meet a Master Gardener

"Tuff Stuff Top Fun" H. serrata Lynn has been overwintering in her garage for the last two years that is currently her favorite hydrangea.



kills that wood off sometimes they don't bloom the following Spring.

What is your favorite hydrangea?

If you count that I've been overwintering a "Tuff Stuff Top Fun" H. serrata in my garage for the last two years, that one is currently my favorite. Mountain hydrangeas can handle cold weather, but they bloom on old wood and new wood, so even if there's some winter dieback, it should be okay.

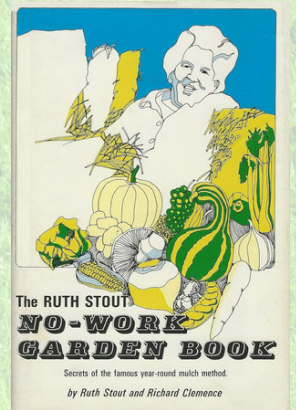
What about favorite plants?

Viburnums are a favorite genus (see Lynn posing with one at right) because there are so many kinds, and they don't get talked about as much as some other shrubs. I like ornamental shrubs to fill space, and some have great fall color.



Do you have any favorite books or podcasts related to gardening?

The book I can think of is "The Ruth Stout No-Work Garden Book: Secrets of the Famous Year-Round Mulch Method." It's ancient (1971), but as an early gardener I liked her ways of doing things the way nature does.



I take branches and twigs and toss them under and behind shrubs, and I don't rake leaves. I let them land where they want. A neighbor mows with a mulching blade so leaves on the lawn stay right where they are. I'm a lazy gardener.

I like Proven Winners' "Gardening Simplified" podcast, including the short series Every Plant Deserves a Podcast, and PW's Garden Answer YouTube channel.

We would like to hear from you

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.

Earn MG hours by reading this newsletter

You can record .5 education hours for reading the newsletter.

You can record volunteer hours for contributing to the newsletter.



MASTER GARDENERS
"Helping Others Grow"

April 2025

Committee Updates

Results of annual education survey

Each year, the Education Committee surveys members about offerings throughout the year. Here are the results of the latest survey:

Most Popular Presentation Topics

The survey revealed strong interest in practical and design-related gardening topics:

- Native plants and pollinators (74 responses, 64.9%)
- Garden design (53 responses, 46.5%)
- Garden pests and diseases (51 responses, 44.7%)
- Vegetable gardening (49 responses, 43%)
- Seasonal gardening tips (43 responses, 37.7%)

Moderately Popular Topics

- Sustainable gardening practices and wildlife in the garden (40 responses, 35.1% each)
- Ornamental gardening and composting/soil health (34-38 responses, ~30-33%)
- Container gardening and houseplants (31-34 responses, ~27-30%)

Least Popular Topics

- Cottage gardens (16.7%)
- Japanese gardens (8.8%)
- High tunnel gardening (7%)
- Rock gardens (2.6%)

Requested Topics & Challenges (84 Responses)

Respondents highlighted interest in:

- Practical skills: Composting, pruning (roses, hydrangeas, fruit trees), vegetable gardening (pest control, tomato production, winter sowing)
- Design and landscaping: Small gardens, curb appeal, converting hardscapes to native landscapes
- Specialty gardening: Hydroponics, shade gardening, water gardening, bonsai, permaculture
- Challenges: Gardening in wet shady areas, soil repair, weeding strategies
- Accessibility: Interest in afternoon sessions for visually impaired individuals

Recommended Presenters (38 Responses)

While many respondents were unsure of specific presenters, notable recommendations included:

- Doug Tallamy, Tony Avent, Jim Putnam, Dolly Foster
- Experts from Morton Arboretum
- Interest in both local and nationally recognized experts

Master Gardener Affiliations

- The majority of respondents are affiliated with Lake County Master Gardeners.
- A few belong to Porter, Tippecanoe, Noble, Cook, Laporte, and Jasper County.



Committee Updates

Annual survey continued

Additional Feedback and Suggestions

- Positive feedback: Praise for the committee, monthly presentations, garden walks and Zoom programs.
- Scheduling suggestions: More weekday afternoon or weekend sessions, hybrid (Zoom in winter, in-person in fair weather).
- Expanded seed swapping: Some would pay for additional seed availability.
- Community involvement: Interest in collaboration with local gardening groups.

Conclusion

The survey highlights strong interest in native plants, garden design and practical gardening skills, with an openness to both local and national experts. Respondents appreciate the current programs but suggest improved scheduling, hybrid formats and expanded community engagement.

2025 Grant Recipients

This year, Lake County Master Gardeners Association awarded grants ranging from \$300 to \$600 to the following organizations:

Community Help Network, Crown Point

Vegetable garden to aid the CHN and lunches for Ladle of Love; Providing vegetables for Household Pantry and Buddy Bags program.

Warren-Vigo Block Club, Gary

Following a design plan inspired by Prairie Up to help eliminate invasive species and introducing native carex and native bunch grass. Project in the works is the Bootleg Trail.

Dyer in Bloom, Dyer

Refresh landscaping around Plum Creek Center which is used by surrounding community for a variety of functions and by a variety of groups.

Hobart First UMC, Hobart

Update landscaping around church with natives and pollinators. Incorporate the planting and care of the plants with their youth to encourage "playing in the dirt."



Griffith Tri Cappa, Griffith

Continued work on their butterfly and pollinator garden located in the heart of the community – Griffith Historical Society/Park and Depot Museum. It's a gathering area where people come, eat and enjoy.

Tradewinds Services Inc., Merrillville.

Continued work on and planting of existing raised beds by both children and adults. Seeds, vegetable and herb plants. All part of "Gardening and Healthy Eating."



Grants continued

Cedar Lake Parks Foundation Inc., Cedar Lake

Beautify lakefront Potawatomi Park using primarily native plants and grasses.

Crown Point Garden Club, Crown Point

Expand the planting near and around the covered bridge at the Lake County Fair Grounds as well as putting plants in the four concrete urns, which draw attention near and around the bridge and planting areas. Plans include new bulbs for fall planting.

Green East Chicago, East Chicago

The Garden Club will be working with volunteers and a faculty member of East Chicago Central High School to expand the existing garden on school grounds. They will incorporate fruits and vegetables with their pollinator plants with the harvest benefiting students and their families. Excess harvest will go to the local community.

Northwest Indiana Special Education Cooperative, Crown Point

Learning opportunities for students and young adults at Eagle Park Community School. "Blast" program will provide hands-on learning about growing vegetables, life cycle of plants, maintenance and harvesting vegetables. Plans are to include a pollinator garden.

Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Northwest Indiana, Cedar Lake

Rebuild raised beds and offer a Healthy Habits Educational Program. Youth will learn how to plant, grow and care for plants.

Munster Community Garden, Munster

Purchase and maintain vegetables and plants for raised beds in their community garden. Hoping to purchase panels and posts for plant support as well as other maintenance materials.

Friends of the Lowell Public Library, Lowell

Establish a native pollinator garden to coincide with educational and recreational services the library currently provides.

James B. Eads Elementary School, Munster

Refresh outdoor classroom's raised beds including planting and education for students to strengthen their connection to the natural world.

St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry, Crown Point

Local community members will receive 3-gallon grow bags with soil and a tomato plant. Distribution will be on a first come first serve basis. Many of the community neighbors need a self-contained means of growing vegetables and enjoy the experience of gardening. Grow bags will be reused next year.

Lake County Juvenile Center, Crown Point

Participation in the Flower Farm by youth as part of an outreach program. This project has become a vital part of the probation department teaching youth new skills such as gardening.



Purdue Extension Update

By **Rebecca Koetz**

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

As we approach Earth day, April 22, consider planting a native tree. There are a few places you can obtain them locally, including the Ecobazaar at Joybomb Social Center in Lake Station, on April 12 from noon-4 p.m. central.

Suggested donation is \$10 for a young tree. There will be informational vendor tables, including our own LCMGA board. And programs throughout the afternoon, including by me.

There are many native trees with beautiful flowers in the spring, colorful fall foliage, and fruit and nuts for humans and wildlife to enjoy.

Native trees are naturally acclimated to our area and thrive when planted in the right conditions - e.g. the right soil moisture and sunlight. Consider how large the tree will grow and therefore how close it can be to your home, safely. Also consider how large a root system they will have, so how much space they need.

Proper tree planting is essential. You can plant in the spring as soon as the soil is workable. And water a new tree each week using the 5x5 rule - 5 gallons per tree plus 5 additional gallons for each inch diameter of tree. Make sure to mulch around the tree to retain moisture and prevent injury from mowers, but do not volcano mulch the tree.

Consider wrapping the trunk of your baby tree over the winter with a light breathable fabric and removing the fabric in the spring. You may also consider a fence around the tree to prevent animals damage.

For guidance on proper tree planting, visit extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/fnr/fnr-433-w.pdf

For more information on common Indiana trees, visit ag.purdue.edu/departments/fnr/fifty-tree-library/

Trees available on April 12:

- Pawpaw. Small Tree. Fruit. Buy more than one for pollination. Partial shade.
- Hazelnut. Shrub. Full sun. Buy more than one for pollination.
- Chokeberry. Shrub. Full sun.
- Persimmon. Tall tree. Full sun. Buy more than one for pollination.
- Elderberry. Shrub. Prefers edge habitat with moist well drained soil. Some shade.
- American plum. Small Tree. Buy more than one for pollination.
- Pecan (1 year) large tree. Buy more than one for pollination.
- Silky dogwood. Shrub. Prefers moist well drained soil. Partial to full sun.
- Burr oak. Tall tree.
- black cherry. Tall tree.
- Redbud. Small Tree. Edible purple flowers. Among the first to bloom in spring.
- Buttonbush. Shrub. Prefers moist soils.
- Black walnut. Tall tree. Grow away from the vegetable garden to avoid juglone allelopathy reducing plant growth. Edible nuts.
- Tulip tree. Tall tree. Indiana's State tree. Flowers for pollinators.
- Choke cherry Small Tree. Partial shade or full sun.