

The Latest Dirt

La Porte County Master Gardener Newsletter



MARCH 2019

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2019 MEETING SCHEDULE

Meetings will be held at 6:00 p.m. on
Thursdays at the
Purdue Extension Office (O)
unless otherwise noted

March 7	Business Meeting
April 4	Awards Banquet Red Mill Park
May 2	Business Meeting
June 6	Workshop
July 2	Business Meeting
August 1	Joint Picnic/Workshop Red Mill Park
September 5	Business Meeting
October 3	Workshop
November 7	Business Meeting Annual Elections
December	Holiday Dinner

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monthly. The next deadline is:
March 20, 2019



www.facebook.com/MasterGardenersOfLaPorteCountyIndiana

www.lpmastergardener.com



Please Don't Top Your Trees

By: Rosie Lerner,
Extension Consumer Horticulturist, Purdue University

Topping a tree is an all-too-common practice among homeowners, particularly when their trees become too tall and pose a possible threat to the house or overhead power lines. Some have the trees topped because they believe, or are led to believe, that topping is a good pruning practice.



Some situations obviously require the removal of large limbs for the sake of safety. But topping is a drastic step that ultimately endangers the tree's life. Removing such a great quantity of growth in one shot throws off the roots-to-shoots balance that the tree has gradually developed all those years. The much-reduced leaf surface will not be able to manufacture sufficient food reserves to feed the large root system. As roots starve, the rest of the tree will suffer from insufficient moisture and nutrients.

Another drawback to topping for many tree species is the stimulation of numerous, upright branches that grow straight up. These shoots are typically very soft, weak growth that breaks easily and is more susceptible to attack by diseases and insects. These shoots are rapid growers, so the tree will soon be back to and exceed its original height.

Stubs left by the topping are usually too large for the tree's defense process of callusing to seal the wound. Thus, stubs also become easy prey for insects, diseases and decay, and large stubs drastically disfigure the tree's natural beauty.

There are alternatives to topping when size reduction is required. Thinning out the canopy by removing selected branches completely back to their point of origin will reduce the tree's size while maintaining more of its natural shape. Cuts will be less conspicuous and should heal more rapidly. Thinning is a more time-consuming process that requires a more skilled hand, which usually translates to higher expense. In many cases, you'll need to hire a professional arborist to safely and correctly complete the job.

If the tree isn't worth the investment to do the job correctly, it's probably better to remove the tree entirely rather than top repeatedly. In the case of overhead power lines, it really is best to remove the tree and start over with a more appropriately sized plant. But if the tree is worth saving, make the right investment in a healthy future.

ASSOCIATION NEWS

Spring Garden Show Update

By: Ann Klosinski

Plans for the Garden Show are moving right along. There are a lot of last minute details the committee is working on.

Karen Sarver and Linda Strain are putting together some exciting programming for the kids. This year they have added a scavenger hunt and a walk up table for them to work on small crafts.

There is a full day of seminars for the adults. Check out our web site for more information.

<http://www.lpmastergardener.com/>

Our food vendor will be Country Caterers and the coffee vendor uses the proceeds of her sales to help support kids with cancer.

We have around 40 vendors including Meijer. This year they are donating succulents that we will use for a hands-on planting project plus there will be the flowering plants like last year.

There will be another nice door prize and a surprise raffle prize donated by Chesterton Feed. Wendy Shafer may still need some help with donated items to add to the baskets for the basket raffles. She can be contacted at **winterone@ameritech.net** if you can help.

MOST IMPORTANT is making sure that we have enough volunteers. Tina DeWitt will be e-mailing the volunteer sign-up sheets. WE NEED YOU! There are plenty of opportunities to help out. Take advantage of the "perks" by signing up for 4 or more hours....earn volunteer time and admission to the show.

Most of all, join in the fun with your fellow Master Gardeners!



Strides in Social Media

By: Ann Klosinski and Amanda DePoy

Some time ago we decided to move into the "modern age" and start a web site for the La Porte County Master Gardener Association. At that time we set up **lpmastergardener.com**. We were already using Facebook. In order to maximize our exposure in both places, to reach more home gardeners and promote our Association we now have established a Social Media Committee. The members are: Karren Coplen and Ann Klosinski – Facebook, Russ Klosinski and Geri Lamb – Website and George Sarver & Amanda DePoy - Coordinators. We welcome any input of information from the membership that we can publish....it can be fed to the committee through George by emailing **sarver@csinet.net**. Recently Sharon Cholewa has been writing some great articles for Facebook that have gotten a lot of attention. In order to keep in the forefront we need to post at least weekly.

We're excited to have Amanda on board. She has provided a little background information on herself and has given some insight and her own thoughts about the value of social media.

Hello, I am Amanda DePoy one of our newest Master Gardener Interns. Having been born and raised in La Porte County I am very excited to start to get more involved in our community and our organization. With my background in consumer research and holding a Bachelor's Degree in Business Management and Marketing, I have evolved into an interesting area of Social Media Marketing. I have worked on projects with other businesses, to drive more traffic to their businesses via way of Social Media. Utilizing a social media tool can make our area come to life in the community and in the world.

(Continued on page 3)

Social Media platforms (i.e.: Facebook, Instagram, etc.) will help our organization connect to the community, connect to those who care about gardening and are interested in learning more thru education. Social Media will increase awareness about La Porte County Master Gardeners and boost about events, projects and other areas. With billions of people around the world the traffic on social media has increased day by day. Social Media platforms are a very cost effective way to reach out and become noticed.

La Porte County Master Gardeners will soon become known to more people and be provided a bigger opportunity to grow relationships with our target audiences.

IN MEMORIAM

Carol Dorothea Lerner

July 6, 1927 – January 28, 2019



Carol Lerner was an advanced Master Gardener (Silver level) who was one of the pioneers of the La Porte County Master Gardener Association. When she applied to take the class in 1996, Carol reported that she had about 20 years of experience with vegetable gardening, 3 years with flower gardening and only recent experience with greenhouse growing. She said she wanted to become a Master Gardener “to improve my skills and deepen my understanding of plant culture.”

Being one of the Association’s charter members, Carol was a loyal volunteer who participated in a wide variety of projects. She regularly attended Association meetings and workshops with her husband Ralph, she wrote articles for the newsletter, worked at Friendship Botanic Gardens and staffed the Garden Hotline regularly. She assisted with the Pioneer Garden and was instrumental with a prairie restoration at a nearby nature preserve (she knew what garlic mustard was back in 2002!). This is just a sampling of her volunteer activities.

Carol gave numerous presentations on spring wildflowers and other native plants, sharing her extensive knowledge in a caring way. She was a speaker for Symposia, Garden Show and Brown Bag Gardening sessions. But her real passion was writing. Carol was the author/illustrator of eighteen books for children on natural history, plants, insects, and gardening. Most of these were singled out by the American Library Association as "Notable Children's Books" and by the National Science Teachers Association as "Outstanding Science Trade Books for Children." In addition, Carol illustrated seven books by others.



Carol Lerner died peacefully in her Chicago home on January 28, 2019. In lieu of flowers, donations in her memory may be made to the Shirley Heinze Land Trust "sustainable operating fund." Their address is:

Meadowbrook Conservation Center and Preserve, 109 West 700 North, Valparaiso, IN 46385

MARCH MEETING

Thursday, March 7 – 6:00 p.m. CST Social Time; 6:30 p.m. CST Meeting begins

By: Wendy Shafer

The March business meeting will take place at the Purdue Extension Office. Estelle Pawloski will discuss the role that Meijer is playing in our upcoming Annual Spring Garden Show. She will talk about the different tables that will be set up, how they will be organized and what we as volunteers can do to support this part of the Garden Show.

Wendy Shafer will lead us in a brainstorming session entitled "Fulfilling the Mission" in which we will look at annual objectives, 3 year goals and a vision set 5 years out. This takes everyone's input to make a good plan, so we hope you will come and participate.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**Michigan City Farmers' Market Coordinator**

By: Wendy Shafer



Master Gardener's, we need a coordinator for the Michigan City Farmers' Market. We have a table every other weekend where we are available to answer any gardening questions. There is a tent to sit under, so there is no sitting out in the sun. It's a great way to get to know people in the neighborhood, enjoy some fresh produce shopping, and show off your garden knowledge. Dennis Brittain will be happy to help get you going. Please contact me if you would like to volunteer for this project.

EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES**Botanical Gardens and Master Gardener Seminar Information**

Fernwood Botanical Gardens	www.fernwoodbotanical.org LPCMGA is a member of Fernwood Botanical Gardens. Membership card can be signed out at the Extension Office.
Gabis Arboretum at Purdue NW	https://www.pnw.edu/gabis-arboretum
Friendship Botanic Gardens	www.friendshipgardens.org

Advanced Master Gardener Training**Master Gardener Seminars**

Click on this link for more information on these events. <https://www.purdue.edu/hla/sites/master-gardener/events/>

Date	Event/Time/Fee	Description	Location / Contact
Saturday, March 9	<i>Master Gardeners Symposium</i> 8:30 am to 3:30 pm EST	Noble Co. MGs are hosting their 3 rd symposium featuring a full day of educational topics	West Noble Middle School, Charger Hall 5194 US 33, Ligonier, IN. More info at: https://www.facebook.com/ncmg.in/
Tuesdays, March 12 to April 9	<i>Backyard Fruit Production</i> 5:30 to 8 pm CST/CDT \$40 for all 5 sessions	Purdue Ext webinar series covering tree & small fruit basics including site, varieties, rootstocks, insects, diseases, harvesting, new fruits to grow	Pinney Purdue Ag Center, Wanatah Contact: Nikky Witkowski 219-465-3555 Purdue NW-Westville in Dworkin Center Contact: Gene Matzat 219-324-9407 Register: https://tinyurl.com/PurdueFruit2019
Saturday, March 16	<i>Advanced MG Training</i> 8 am to 3:30 pm CDT Reg Fee: \$35 due by 3/8 6 Education Hours	Training covers spring wildflowers, knowing/growing herbs, tree & shrub pruning, gardening & aging, and helpful hints for hydrangeas.	Madison Co. 4-H Fairgrounds, 512 E 4 th St. Alexandria, IN Look on Master Gardener Seminars website above.
Saturday, March 23	<i>Gardenfest & Pansy Sale</i> 9 am to 3 pm EDT FREE (except for buying meals, garden supplies from vendors)	Morgan Co. MGs host this special event featuring educational sessions on invasive plants, green (organic) gardening, and woody ornamentals; children's activities; tree/seed prizes.	Hoosier Harvest Church, 4085 Leonard Road Martinsville, IN Contact info: mcgardenfest@gmail.com



2019 Brown Bag Gardening Series

Session #3 – Gardening Through Handicaps

March 6, Noon – 1:00 p.m. CST

Michigan City Senior Center, Washington Park. Michigan City, IN.

Whether you have arthritis, or other limitations on your abilities, or just lack the space to garden, Dennis Brittain and Karren Coplen will share ways to grow delicious edibles that anyone can do. There are as many ways to garden as there are gardeners, whether you have acreage, or just a bucket on the porch, you can satisfy that urge to grow something to enrich your life. We'll show you how.

Many people enjoy gardening as a hobby, or even as a profession. When most people think of gardening, they usually think of someone down on their hands and knees on the ground. This doesn't have to be the case, though. People who lack space to plant, have a disability, or even a slight limitation because of age or stiff joints can enjoy gardening just as much as everyone else. We just need to find a way to make the plantings accessible to the limited reach.

Even people in high-rise apartments in Chicago find a way to grow salads on their balconies or fire escapes, and people with no land at all find surprising ways to grow salads, herbs and other goodies near at hand. The Smart Home display at the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry has a big garden project in grow boxes on a set of marble stairs, providing all kinds of delicious vegetables and herbs, all in containers, and lots more plants that serve as edible edging in their landscaping.

There are many ways to grow as there are gardeners, and this Brown Bag Session, taught by two Purdue trained, experienced Master Gardeners, will show you many of them.

Dennis Brittain has been polishing his gardening skills and innovative techniques for many years, enjoying fresh tastes and delicious veggies, even though he has limited spaces to grow in. He'll share his tips with you.

For those with a small yard space, Karren Coplen has a presentation using a small, well planned raised bed with added soaker hose, timer and mulch to make it as easy as possible to maintain and give the people who can't have a big garden, a small growing spot that would produce a surprising amount of goodies. Placed right outside the kitchen door, it's a traditional Potager Garden, just right for an evening salad, herbs for the main course, and a delicious ripe tomato or cucumber, all grown with very little work.

Be aware that the bridge that is the usual access to Washington Park is out of operation now, damaged by the extreme cold weather we've been having. The best way to the Senior Center is to go East on Highway 12, over the bridge toward the Blue Chip, and immediately at the foot of the bridge, turn left to go toward the lake on 2nd Street, which changes to Center Street. When you get to the stop sign at Lake Shore Drive, turn left, you'll see the Senior Center on the right. It seems confusing, but it's really not. Hope to see you there.

GARDEN ARTICLES

A-Maize-ing

By: Sharon Cholewa



Today, corn is the second most plentiful grain in the world behind rice and ahead of wheat. It is the only plant, which cannot reproduce itself without the help of man who must plant each kernel. Maize was invented. Without human intervention, it would not be what it is today, and would not continue to survive.

Corn (*Zea mays*) was domesticated nearly 9,000 years ago by the Mayan peoples. It is descended from wild grasses from Mexico called teosinte. Only 5 genes keep teosinte and corn from being genetically identical, but you would never recognize it as the closest relative of today's corn. Teosinte has a branching growth habit and tiny ears of up to 12 kernels, each enclosed in a very hard, tooth-breaking seed coat. The seed heads shatter and fall to the ground, making seed gathering nearly impossible. It is hard to understand why this almost inedible plant was chosen to be cultivated as food.

However, teosintes must have possessed a degree of genetic variability and a tendency to mutate. Through selective breeding and natural hybridization the indigenous people bred a vast genetic diversity into maize that most crops never undergo. At some point those armored seeds morphed into huge cobs, covered with hundreds of naked seeds. Those ancient farmers were brilliant geneticists! But unlike its wild ancestors, it was unable to disperse its seed. Maize became reliant on humans to distribute its genes.

From about 2500 BCE maize began to spread from Mexico to as far north as Canada and as far south as Chile. In Peru, cold tolerant strains were selected in the Andes and heat tolerant strains in the tropical lowlands. Drought tolerant strains were selected by the Pueblo peoples of the desert states. Maize was the basis of the great indigenous peoples.

It was a staple for the Moche, Inca and Maya. It ranked almost as high as royalty, and rituals, dances and festivals celebrated its planting and harvesting. Maize was depicted in hieroglyphics and artwork. The grand Aztec empire was dependent on it, along with beans. Their maize god, Centeotl, was one of the most revered and much of their religious year revolved around the cultivation and harvest of corn.

Those ancient farmers noticed that teosinte grew with squash and beans in the wild, so they imitated that growing pattern in their *milpas* (crop-growing systems), and added other native crops, such as peppers, tomatoes, avocados, jicama and amaranth. The plants benefited from the biological diversity, and the crops were nutritionally complementary, providing fat, protein, carbohydrates, and vitamins. Milpas migrated north into the future United States. Dozens of landraces were created as farmers adapted maize to their unique growing environments. In the north where conditions were colder maize was being grown with squash and beans, known collectively as the Three Sisters. Because it is adaptable, nutritious, and easy to dry and store for lean times, maize was credited for the rise of civilization. As a reliable crop for people and livestock maize had become a staple throughout the Americas. Humans were now dependent on corn for their survival.

The Spanish encountered maize around 1500 in the Caribbean and took it back to Europe, calling it by its native name, *mahiz*, therefore ‘maize’. It spread as far into northern Europe as it could, From Spain and Portugal it travelled to the colonies in African and Asia, where it was eagerly adopted for both humans and livestock.

When the British landed in North America, they found maize fields that stretched for miles. They called it “corne”, which was a broad English term for grain. The British had brought their staples of wheat, barley, oats, and rye, but these crops did poorly in their new environment. Some settlements were almost wiped out by starvation. The survivors realized they needed to grow what had proven to sustain an entire continent – maize.

The native people taught the Europeans how to grow and cook maize. Their farms soon provided enough to eat fresh, store for winter, trade for other goods, and ship back to Europe, where farmers adapted the crop to local growing conditions.

Being adaptable, corn grew where wheat and rice couldn’t and provided high energy and calories with its carbohydrates, fat and sugar. Again, maize was responsible for rapidly growing populations wherever it was introduced.

Simon Rickard, *Heirloom Vegetables Guide to Their History and Varieties*
Nan Fischer, *A-Maize-ing Maize: The History of Corn*
<https://www.onions-usa.org>

March Garden Calendar

By: B. Rosie Lerner,

Extension Consumer Horticulturist, Purdue University

HOME (Indoor plants and activities)

- Begin fertilizing houseplants as new growth appears. Remove spent leaves and flowers to improve appearance and encourage more blooms.
- Start garden seeds indoors for transplanting outdoors later in spring.
- Check stored bulbs and produce for decay; discard damaged items.
- Prune, repot, and clean houseplants as needed.

(Garden Calendar continues on page 8)

2019 EXECUTIVE BOARD

PRESIDENT	WENDY SHAFER
VICE PRESIDENT	CHRIS SVOBODA
SECRETARY	LINDA HOUGH
TREASURER	SUSAN KIEFFER
ED. COMMITTEE/ SPEAKERS BUREAU	CHRIS SVOBODA PAULA NEVERS ESTELLE PAWLOSKI GEORGE SARVER MIKE ALTMAN
PAST PRESIDENT	ANN KLOSINSKI

2019 PROJECT COORDINATORS

AG Days

Lisa Gerardi _____ 219-262-5146
_____ kaliherbs2011@gmail.com

Brown Bag Gardening Series

Karren Coplen _____ 219-390-4118
_____ karrenc@comcast.net

Farmers’ Market – La Porte

Chris Svoboda _____ 614-377-6409
_____ svoboda.christina@att.net

Farmers’ Market - Michigan City

TBA _____

Habitat for Humanity

Donna Allen _____ 219-873-1007
_____ dallen0226@hotmail.com

Niemann School/Head Start

Beverly Johnson _____ 219-873-7907
_____ bev3111@aol.com

Pioneer Heritage Days

Lisa Gerardi _____ 219-262-5146
_____ kaliherbs2011@gmail.com

Pioneer Heritage Garden

Connie Shei _____ 219-362-4866
_____ jshei@comcast.net

Social Media

George Sarver _____ 219-733-9983
_____ sarver@csinet.net

Sunflower Fair

Megan Countryman _____ 574-532-8480
_____ mcountry46552@gmail.com

Symposium/Garden Show

Ann Klosinski _____ 219-872-8367
_____ annak47@comcast.net
Eunice Conway _____ 219-778-2400
_____ tconway5971@comcast.net

Wabash Street Rain Gardens

Laura Henderson _____ 219-871-9896
_____ lhendeliz@yahoo.com

NEXT BOARD MEETING

March 11th - Extension Office – 4:30 p.m.

YARD (Lawns, woody ornamentals and fruits)

- Prune trees and shrubs (except those that bloom early in spring) while plants are still dormant. If you are concerned about winter injury, delay pruning until after dieback; you can assess desiccation injury as plants come out of dormancy.
- Plant new trees and shrubs as soon as the soil dries enough to be worked. Plant bare-root plants before they leaf out. Soils may be exceptionally wet as winter snows thaw.
- Fertilize woody plants if needed before new growth begins but after soil temperatures reach 40°F.
- Remove winter coverings from roses as soon as new growth begins. Prune out dead canes and fertilize as needed. Delay pruning into live canes until after you can assess winter injury.
- Apply superior oil spray to control scale insects and mites when the tips of leaves start to protrude from buds.

GARDEN (Flowers, vegetables and small fruits)

- Plant cool-season vegetables and flowers as soon as the ground has dried enough to work. Do not work the soil while it is wet; wait until it crumbles in your hand. If the soil forms a solid ball when you squeeze it, it's still too wet.
- Gradually harden-off transplants by setting them outdoors during the daytime for about a week before planting.
- Follow last fall's soil test recommendations for fertilizer and pH adjustment. It's not too late to test soil if you missed last year.
- Start the seeds of warm-season vegetables and flowers indoors. In northern and central Indiana, wait until the end of March or early April. Transplant seedlings to the garden after the danger of frost has passed. To find the average date of a frost in your area, consult maps provided by the [Indiana State Climate Office](#).
- Remove old foliage from ornamental grasses and perennial flowers.
- Watch for blooms of early spring bulbs, such as daffodils, squill, crocus, dwarf iris, and snowdrops.
- Remove old asparagus and rhubarb tops, and side-dress the plants with nitrogen or manure. Plant or transplant asparagus, rhubarb, and small-fruit plants.
- Remove winter mulch from strawberry beds as soon as new growth begins but keep the mulch nearby to protect against frost and freezes.
- Remove weak, diseased, or damaged canes from raspberry plants before new growth begins. Remove old fruiting canes if you did not remove them last year, and shorten remaining canes if necessary.
- Prune grapevines after you can assess winter injury.

Standing Committee Coordinators

History Book _____ Wendy Shafer
 Hospitality _____ Eunice Conway
 Librarian _____ Karren Coplen
 Newsletter _____ Donna Pouzar
 Speakers Bureau _____ See Executive Board
 Sunshine _____ Bev Johnson
 Website _____ Russ Klosinski/Geri Lamb

Purdue Extension Office _____ 324-9407
 Gene Matzat _____ ematzat@purdue.edu
 Tina DeWitt _____ dewitt8@purdue.edu

The Latest Dirt is published monthly. The deadline for submission is the 20th of each month. Our mission is to publish articles and events of interest to other Master Gardeners and the community. Articles about personal experiences, suggestions on gardening books, catalogs, helpful websites, tips and tricks, book reviews, seminars you've attended are welcomed.

Submission requirements: Articles should be no longer than a page and can include photos. References must be included. Latin names of plants should be italicized. We do not accept articles pertaining to medicinal information. Master Gardeners will get volunteer hours for time spent working on an article.

**Buy, Sell, Trade at the
Trading Shed****Have a garden item for sale or trade?**

Place your free ad in *The Latest Dirt*.

What better place to reach gardeners than this? Tools, tillers, mowers, plants, or anything garden related. Keep ads brief and don't forget your phone number and/or e-mail address. Ads will be limited to space available.

Send ads, photos, events or articles by the 20th of the month to either:

DONNAPOUZAR@COMCAST.NET
EMATZAT@PURDUE.EDU

PURDUE UNIVERSITY, INDIANA COUNTIES
 AND U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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