

The Latest Dirt

La Porte County Master Gardener Newsletter



OCTOBER 2020

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2020 MEETING SCHEDULE

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

October 1	Workshop Queen of All Saints Church Michigan City, IN Movie "The Biggest Little Farm".
November 5	Business Meeting Election of Officers
December 3	Holiday Dinner

"THE LATEST DIRT" is published monthly.

The next deadline is:

October 20, 2020



www.facebook.com/MasterGardenersOfLaPorteCountyIndiana
www.lpmastergardener.com



Cut Back Perennials Now or Later?

By: Rosie Lerner

Extension Consumer Horticulturist, Purdue University

Gardeners often ask, "When is the best time to cut back the dead tops of herbaceous perennials (stems die back to the ground each year)?" "Should we cut them in fall as the tops fade?" "Or wait until spring just before new growth begins?" The answers depend, in part, on the specific plant and whether disease or insect pests are a factor.

For most healthy plants, leaving plant tops over winter is fine and, in many respects, preferable. Many species retain dried seed heads and foliage that may have aesthetic value. Ornamental grasses are at their best in fall and winter.

And, if you don't cut back the tops, your native wildlife will thank you! Seed heads, fruits, stems and foliage provide food and shelter. Although late-season bloomers, such as brown-eyed Susans and coneflowers, may have turned brown, birds still feed on the seed. Many butterflies overwinter on plant debris.

Allowing plant tops to remain over winter can also help collect leaves and snow for insulation and moisture. For some marginally hardy perennials, like garden mums, waiting until early spring to cut back the dead tops can actually improve a plant's chances of survival.

And, of course, leaving the tops in place will remind you where the plants are, in case you're thinking of adding more plants or rearranging the elements of the garden before spring growth begins.

On the other hand, plants with disease or insect pest troubles should be pruned back in fall to reduce the chances of carryover to the following season. Sanitation is one of the best investments gardeners can make in reducing problems for next season. Peonies and Rudbeckia with blackened foliage should definitely be cut back in fall. The same is true for bee balm and phlox, which are routinely plagued by powdery mildew. Removing iris and asparagus foliage in the fall reduces overwintering sites for the iris borer and asparagus beetles, respectively.

Badly damaged or infested foliage can and should be removed as soon as possible. Otherwise, wait until after several hard frosts have killed back the tops. Cut back the tops to about two inches above the soil. Hand pruners and hedge clippers work fine, if you have just a few plants to cut back. But for larger plantings and large clumps of ornamental grasses, a power hedge trimmer works well.

EXTENSION OFFICE NEWS

Suspension of Minimum Volunteer Hours Requirement for the Remainder of 2020

Due to cancellations and restrictions associated with Covid-19, the Purdue Extension Master Gardener (EMG) minimum volunteer hours requirement is suspended for the remainder of 2020. This means that Purdue Extension Master Gardeners will be able to report less than 12 volunteer hours and still maintain active status. Purdue EMG volunteers should not jeopardize their health or safety through their participation in the program. If Purdue Extension Master Gardeners are able to safely volunteer, they should continue to report these hours in MG Manager. Information reported in MG Manager is extremely important for communicating the impacts of the program to funding agencies and stakeholders. There are many opportunities for education hours – EMG volunteers should continue to report these as well. If EMG volunteers are unable to find sufficient educational opportunities, they should contact their EMG county coordinator.

For volunteer activity and continued training ideas for Purdue EMG's while at home, visit the web pages below:

<https://www.purdue.edu/hla/sites/master-gardener/volunteerideas-at-home/>

<https://www.purdue.edu/hla/sites/master-gardener/continuedhours/>

ASSOCIATION NEWS

September Association News

By: Wendy Shafer

It has been a long and difficult year and it is coming to a close soon. It is time for each of the Project Coordinators to submit year end reports and budgets for next year at the October meeting. Each board member will be required to submit a report on the year's activities in November.

We are trying our first in person meeting since March for our October Workshop meeting. We will be watching a film titled, "The Biggest Little Farm". This is really a great movie, on growing and farming in a sustainable manner. Lots to learn, great story line, good for young and old. I first saw it on a cruise through the Panama Canal. If you aren't able to join us in person, I highly recommend that you rent it. I know Amazon Prime has it for rent.

The board has discussed what to do for our Christmas get together. We've decided that it's not feasible to do a dinner in a large group, so we will try to plan something good to make up for it.

Three people have stepped forward for the nominating committee. They are Maureen Sherrick, who will serve as the Chair, Randa Magill, and Lorraine Wedow. We have 3 places to fill on the board; I will be stepping down as my term is over, Paula Nevers is stepping down and Susan Kieffer's term is over as well.

Please consider serving on the board. It is a great way to help steer the organization, to get to know people, to learn and to earn volunteer hours. You may be hearing from one of these 3 women shortly, so I hope you will give it some careful consideration.

I want to thank all of you for your support during this strange and difficult year. I hope to see many of you at Queen of All Saints in Michigan City, on October 1st. Don't forget to call in your reservation, as we need to maintain social distancing and to have a record of attendees.

Be careful, be safe.

2020 & 2021 Master Gardener Spring Garden Shows

By: Ann Klosinski

It is hard to fathom all the ways the Covid 19 Pandemic has affected everyone, including the La Porte County Master Gardener Association. Shortly before the March 21, 2020 show, things escalated and we were forced to cancel the event. How disappointing that was not only for the planning committee and others who put so much time into the preparations, but also for the speakers, vendors and attendees who were looking forward to coming. Our budget took a hit with all the advertising costs and most of the printing costs for a total of approximately \$1,296.24 being lost. We also lost the net income which would have been around \$5,000. \$437.00 was spent on supplies that can be used for future events: tablecloths, new heavier stands for the yard signs, wristbands and magnets. The safety factor was most important though, and Purdue's guidelines were followed.

Because we buckle down and begin planning for the next year's show, we would need to start for 2021 right now. With the uncertain environment we currently have, the committee was hesitant. A discussion ensued and the input was varied. One member said "I don't think we should even consider a garden show for March. There are too many uncertainties and I believe we would be reckless to bring a large group of people together putting everyone's health at risk. The responsible thing to do is plan for another year and possibly focus on a garden walk in the summer. It would be outside and involve a smaller group of people." Some agreed with this line of thinking, but also suggested moving the date out to late Spring/May or June or having it outdoors. Besides having to find a different venue and being at the mercy of the weather, we would be incurring additional costs. We were also concerned about how many people would feel safe and want to attend and how many of our Master Gardeners would feel comfortable volunteering. We all need something to look forward to, but it seemed that the more we looked, the more obstacles there were. The Board weighed all the options at our September meeting and unanimously voted to wait until 2022 for more certain times.

September Business Meeting Minutes September 3, 2020 – Virtual Meeting on ZOOM

By: Joe Szyal, Secretary

Call to Order: 6:01 by Wendy Shafer

- **Treasurer's Report:** Susan Kieffer- The MG gaming account incurred a fee due to lack of activity. A minimum of \$1.00 must be made during the year to keep it fee free. Susan made note that the transaction and the fee was refunded. Susan will need to make sure whoever takes over as treasurer knows about this. The savings account needs a transaction at least once every 3 years. This report differed slightly from the one presented to the board because there was an error. Two refunds were received due to a cancelled conference and a printer refund.

- **Secretary's Report:** Joe Szynal's report was in the Latest Dirt- No questions or comments
- **Nominating Committee** – needs 3 people. Currently one volunteer, Randa Magill. Questions...can a board member be on the nominating committee? Can an email be sent to all members requesting help to fill remaining 2 positions?
- **Executive Board:** There are 4 people leaving the board.
 - **Susan Kieffer:** (Debbie Moore has volunteered to be on ballot to take over as treasurer)
 - **Wendy Shafer**
 - **Paula Nevers:** (health issues)
 - **Joe Szynal:** not sure if he is stepping down from the board or his role as secretary
 - **Lisa Gerardi:** became a board member to complete Estelle Pawloski's term which is complete this year. She either needs to be voted in or could complete Joe's term if he is stepping down.
- **Project/Coordinator Updates**
 - Pioneer Gardens- Connie Shei –The garden is winding down. They just dug the carrots and donated them to the Worthy Women's Shelter. They donated about 80 pounds of produce this year! There are still seeds leftover. Malibar Spinach seeds were sent to Togo, Africa since the growing conditions are perfect there. They requested more as they loved it! They received compliments from those who visited the garden this year and did have additional volunteers beyond the 3 main caretakers...Connie, Mary, and Debbie. These 3 will continue to maintain the garden.
 - Heritage Days: Lisa G. will continue to lead this project
 - Friendship Gardens: Lisa G. will continue to lead this project
 - Wabash Gardens: no report
 - La Porte Farmers' Market: Chris S. will continue leading

Standing Committee Coordinators

Communication _____	Chair: Wendy Shafer
_____	Co-chair: Vacant
Development/Planning _____	Chair: Wendy Shafer
_____	Co-chair: Paula Nevers
Education: _____	Chair: Paula Nevers
_____	Co-chair: Vacant
Event _____	Chair: Vacant
_____	Co-chair: Vacant
Hospitality _____	Chair: Eunice Conway
_____	Co-chair: Linda Hough
Project: _____	Chair: Karen Sarver
_____	Co-chair: George Sarver

2020 PROJECT COORDINATORS

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

Habitat for Humanity

Randa Magill _____ 219-851-8618
 _____ rmagill4013@msn.com

Friendship Botanic Gardens

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

Pioneer Heritage Days

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

Pioneer Heritage Garden

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

Sunflower Fair

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

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
 October 20, 2020 – 4:30 p.m.
 Zoom meeting

- Sunflower: Megan will continue leading
- Brown Bag Series: Karren Coplen will continue leading. This year had fair attendance and was considered successful
- Habitat for Humanity: Randa Magill will continue leading with help from Bev Johnson.
- Seed Savers: Mary will continue leading
- Garden Walk: Maureen Sherrick is project leader. She needs help! Need to put together a project committee. Karen Sarver offered to help.
- Garden Show: Julie, Ann, Karen are project leaders. They need more help! They will schedule a meeting to discuss. Briefly discussed whether the school will be available to rent in March with the COVID-19 situation. Discussed that maybe something different should be considered in light of the changes in the world today. Karen said email any ideas their way.

Budgets Due by October meeting!

Project coordinators please bring your budget requests to the next meeting!

Next Meeting: October 1, 2020 at Queen of All Saints Church

- Facility can accommodate 60 people with all COVID-19 requirements met
- This meeting is "Movie Night"! We will watch Biggest Little Farm.

Walt's Words:

- Master Gardener Virtual Classes started and a local group meets on Monday nights. You can watch videos of the class for educational credits.
- If you are intending to use a cover crop for your garden, now is the time!
- It has been very dry lately. Water your trees and shrubs (1 inch per week). If they go into winter dry, they will be stressed and may suffer damage. Also, be cautious about fertilizing the lawn now...it's too dry.
- Hornets nests are plentiful this year. Hornets are social, but if they aren't near busy places or children, you can let them be. If you need to treat them, commercially available products are effective.

Adjourn: 6:50 p.m.

October Workshop Meeting

Thursday, October 1st, 6:00 pm CST

Queen of All Saints Church, 606 S Woodland Ave., Michigan City

The LPCMGA Board is pleased to announce: the LPCMGA October Workshop will be held at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, October 1st, at Queen of All Saints Church in Michigan City. (Please park on the Ester St. parking lot. It will be in the 3 rooms upstairs.)

We will be showing the movie "The Biggest Little Farm". It's a great movie for young and old alike.

Due to social distancing requirements, we will only be able to accommodate 60 people, all wearing masks. Also, due to Purdue Covid-19 guidelines, we will not be serving refreshments, but please feel free to bring your own "movie snack".

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
Oct. 2 & 3	Indiana Tree Steward Workshop 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. \$35.00-A box lunch is included.	This two-day workshop provided by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources covers a number of topics on the planting and maintenance of trees. Forestry specialists lead both classroom and outdoor activities	Gabis Arboretum at Purdue NW 450 West 100 North Valparaiso, IN 46385 Phone: (219) 462-0025 <u>Register Here</u>
Oct . 10	Wetlands: The Ordinary & the Extraordinary 2:00-3:00 p.m. FREE	What is a wetland really? Just a slough? Or a scary swamp? Or some waterlogged land that should be filled in? Let’s do a bit of investigating, dispel the myths and figure out exactly what an ordinary wetland is. Join Master Gardener, Victoria Jostes, on October 10 at 2:00 p.m. to learn about the wonders of the wetlands. The Zoom meeting link will be sent via email after registration.	Gabis Arboretum at Purdue NW 450 West 100 North Valparaiso, IN 46385 Phone: (219) 462-0025 Register using the link below: https://www.pnw.edu/event/wetlands-the-ordinary-the-extraordinary/

For volunteer activity and continued training ideas for Purdue EMG’s while at home, visit the web pages below:
<https://www.purdue.edu/hla/sites/master-gardener/volunteerideas-at-home/>
<https://www.purdue.edu/hla/sites/master-gardener/continuedhours/>

GARDENING ARTICLES

“If you would be happy for a lifetime, grow Chrysanthemums” – Confucius
 By: Sharon Cholewa

Chrysanthemums can be seen adorning doorways and front steps across America during late summer and fall season. These hardy and easy to care for plants have become the go-to flower and make beautiful fall displays. Since its introduction to the US during colonial times the mum reigns as one of America’s favorite flowers. A sentimental favorite, mums are associated with corsages for homecoming football games and dances. Mums are highly favored by floral arrangers for their long lasting blooms. Their ease of cultivation, ability to bloom on schedule, variety of colors and forms, and holding quality of the flowers make mums the largest commercially grown flower in the US.



Incurved type



nemone type

The chrysanthemum was first cultivated in China primarily as a flowering herb as early as 15th c BC. Useful in making salads, teas and pain relievers, the flower was believed to have the power of life. Mentioned in the writings of Confucius, and poets writing in praise, early depictions on 15th c pottery show them in their original wild form as small, yellow, daisy-like flowers. Respect for the flower ran so deep, a city was named after it: Chu-Hsien, or Chrysanthemum City. The Chinese were very reluctant to let the chrysanthemum leave their country.

When the chrysanthemum made its way to Japan around the 8th c AD, it was cherished much like it was in China. The flower was so prized by the Japanese that it came to adorn the emperor's imperial crest and the family seals for prominent families often contain a chrysanthemum. The Imperial Order of the Chrysanthemum is the highest order of chivalry. National Chrysanthemum Day, a sacred holiday celebrated in Japan since 910 AD, is called the Festival of Happiness. In a relatively short time, the Japanese, with their love of floriculture realized the potential of chrysanthemums. In the 9th c the Imperial Gardens were founded where various types of this versatile flower were continually being developed.



Spider type

It wasn't until much later in the late 17th c that the flower was introduced to the western world. Some European countries gave the flower a distinctly different meaning. Chrysanthemums were placed on gravestones and became associated with death. It was another 100 years before successful cultivation took place in Europe. This sparked interest in the flower and importing new cultivars from the East. In the 1800s, seeds were successfully produced in Europe which brought continued interest in chrysanthemums and developing new varieties.

The word for chrysanthemum in Chinese and Japanese is equivalent to gold flower. In 1753 Carl Linnaeus, renowned Swedish botanist who created the scientific binomial system of naming all living organisms, or taxonomy, combined the Greek words chryso (gold) and anthemion (flower) to give us the English bit of a tongue twister chrysanthemum.

A member of the Asteraceae or daisy family, chrysanthemum is related to aster, coneflower, sunflower, zinnia, and features a complex flower structure. Although a chrysanthemum appears to be one large bloom, its head is actually composed of numerous small florets. The mum's combination of disk and ray flowers has allowed plant breeders to create a variety of showy and sophisticated forms. Modern classification of the species includes incurved, reflex, pompon, anemone, spoon, quill, and spider types. Gardeners can choose from numerous mum colors beyond the traditional yellow. Bronze, pink, magenta, lavender, orange, and white, as well as, bi-colored are also available.



Quill Type



Spoon type



Until relatively recently, mums were thought of only as a seasonal flower. During the 1930s and 1940s, breeders discovered that the plant was photoperiodic. Using artificial lighting to simulate the shorter days of autumn, florists found they could force bloom throughout the year.



References:

National Chrysanthemum Society, USA www.mums.org/history-of-the-chrsanthemum/libguides.nybg.org/chrysanthemumform
Gwen Bruno, *A Short History of the Chrysanthemum*

October Garden Calendar

By: B. Rosie Lerner,
Extension Consumer Horticulturist, Purdue University

HOME (Indoor plants and activities)

- Keep poinsettia in complete darkness for 15 hours each day — for example, between 5 p.m. and 8 a.m. — for eight to 10 weeks until red bracts begin to show.
- Pot spring-flowering bulbs to force into bloom indoors. Moisten soil and refrigerate 10 to 13 weeks. Transfer to a cool, sunny location, and allow an additional three to four weeks for blooming.
- Houseplants, especially those grown outdoors during the summer, commonly drop some or many of their leaves in response to the lower natural light intensity in the autumn and reduced light intensity indoors.
- Water indoor plants less frequently and discontinue fertilizer as plants slow down or stop growing for the winter season.

YARD (Lawns, woody ornamentals and fruits)

- Keep plants, especially newly planted stock, well-watered until ground freezes.
- Have soil ready to mound roses for winter protection. Do not mound or cover roses until after leaves drop and soil is near freezing, usually late November or early December.
- Strawberry plants need protection from winter's extremes, but applying winter mulch too early may cause crowns to rot. Apply winter protection when plants are dormant but before temperatures drop below 20F, usually late November or early December.
- Rake or shred large, fallen tree leaves, such as maple, to prevent them from matting down and smothering grass. Raking smaller leaves, such as honey locust, is optional.
- Continue mowing lawn as needed.

GARDEN (Flowers, vegetables and small fruits)

- Harvest root crops and store in a cold (32 F), humid location. Storing produce in perforated plastic bags is a convenient, easy way to increase humidity.
- Harvest Brussels sprouts as they develop in the axils of the leaves from the bottom of the stem. Brussels sprouts will continue to develop up the stem.
- Harvest pumpkins and winter squash before frost, but when rind is hard and fully colored. Store in a cool location until ready to use.

2020 EXECUTIVE BOARD

PRESIDENT	WENDY SHAFER
VICE PRESIDENT	PAULA NEVERS
SECRETARY	JOE SZYNAL
TREASURER	SUSAN KIEFFER
ED. COMMITTEE/	PAULA NEVERS
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	MAUREEN SHERRICK
	LISA GERARDI
	GEORGE SARVER
PAST PRESIDENT	ANN KLOSINSKI

Purdue Extension Office __ 324-9407

Walt Sell _____ wsell@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.

Have a garden item for sale or trade?

Buy, Sell, Trade at the
Trading Shed

Place your free ad in *The Latest Dirt*.

Tools, tillers, mowers, plants, or anything garden related. Keep ads brief and provide 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

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ACTION INSTITUTION

- Harvest gourds when stems begin to brown and dry. Cure at 70-80 F for two to four weeks.
- Harvest mature, green tomatoes before frost and ripen indoors in the dark. Warmer temperatures lead to faster ripening.
- Asparagus top growth should not be removed until foliage yellows. Let foliage stand over winter to collect snow for insulation and moisture.
- Remove plant debris from the garden to protect next year's plantings from insect and disease buildup. Compost plant refuse by alternating layers of soil, plant material, and manure or commercial fertilizer.
- Have garden soil tested for fertilizer needs every three to five years.
- Plowing and incorporating organic matter in fall avoids the rush of garden activities and waterlogged soil in spring. Soils prepared in the fall tend to warm faster and allow earlier planting in spring.
- Carve a Halloween jack-o'-lantern.
- Dig tender garden flower bulbs for winter storage. Gladiolus corms should be dug when leaves begin turning yellow. Caladiums, geraniums and tuberous begonias should be lifted before killing frost. Dig canna and dahlia roots after a heavy frost. Allow to air dry, then pack in dry peat moss or vermiculite, and store in a cool location.
- Complete planting of spring-flowering bulbs.

Garden Hotline Ends Soon
By: Tina DeWitt



The Master Gardener Hotline will come to an end next week. It was definitely not the same this year because of Covid-19. The Purdue Extension Office sure missed seeing all of your smiling faces come in every Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

As the calls came into the office, we sent them to you through email and you were very good at getting your recommendations back to us for recording. We also took questions here at the office, when visitors came, we talked with them outside to get as much information as we could to forward to you. We had 14 MG volunteers, 78 calls/visits and a total of 252 hours volunteered during the hotline.

I'm sure it was challenging at times to take care of the questions from home rather than here in the office but you all did an awesome job. I want to thank ALL of you for taking care of all the questions that came in.

The Garden Hotline is a valuable service that you, the La Porte County Master Gardeners, provide to our community. Giving research-based answers and information to consumer horticulture questions provides an important resource to the community.

