

The Latest Dirt

La Porte County Master Gardener Newsletter



AUGUST 2025

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

ASSOCIATION NEWS	3
FROM THE PRESIDENT	3
JULY BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES	3
HEAD START UPDATE	4
GETTING TO KNOW OUR MEMBERS	5
EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES	7
JESI'S CORNER	10
AUGUST GARDEN CALENDAR	11

2025 MEETING SCHEDULE

Meetings will be held at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday at the La Porte Main Library Meeting Room B, unless otherwise noted

August 7	Annual Picnic Red Mill Park
September 4	Business Meeting
October 2	Social Meeting
November 6	Business Meeting Elections
December 4	Holiday Dinner Party

NEXT BOARD MEETING

August 11th - 6:00 p.m.
Extension Office

"THE LATEST DIRT" is published monthly.
The next deadline is August 20, 2025

www.lpmastergardener.org

<https://www.facebook.com/MasterGardenersLaPorteCounty>



PURDUE EXTENSION
MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM

I Like Weeds

By: Steve Zolvinski

Call me what you will, but I don't mind weeds. In fact, I actually like weeds. Weeds are my friends. Weeds are my exercise buddies. Weeds are my spiritual mentors.



Coming back from a two-week trip abroad, I find my raised beds are overcrowded with colossal bouquets of plants that are not supposed to be there. I don't groan, moan, complain, or cuss about it. I just get to work, knowing that pulling weeds builds the body and strengthens the mind and soul. It substitutes for an afternoon at the gym. And it's a spiritual experience like doing yoga, going to church or doing a deep meditation.

Firstly, the bodily experience: Harvard Medical School refers to gardening and yard work as exercise "with a purpose." Weeding, in addition to cultivating and hoeing, are ranked as a moderate-to-vigorous effort, earning 5.0 metabolic equivalents (METs), a standard scale used to assess oxygen per minute used in particular physical effort. A MET of one (1.0) is assigned to sitting quietly, maybe while reading a book. Only mowing a lawn with a push (!) mower ranks higher at 6.0 METs. Who has a push mower to shove around anymore? Better stick to moderate-to-vigorous weeding. See Harvard's scale reproduced on the following page.



Just as importantly, though, weeding smooths out the craggy crevices of the mind. After manually pulling a forest-full of weeds from raised beds, I get joyful feelings inexpressible by any other experience. There lies before me a bed clean for growing nutrient-rich vegetables. I feel a mind cleansed of the bad stuff and am ready to start life fresh anew. This is the way you feel after spilling your problems to a good friend or therapist. Or the way a Catholic feels after unloading sins in Confession, or how Jews feel after declaring Vidui at Yom Kippur.

Plus, there is research to back up the fuzzy-feely mentality coming from gardening activity. A 2017-2019 joint University of Colorado at Boulder-Michigan State University community gardening study in Denver confirmed the exercise benefits, but

also found gardening a general stress- and anxiety-reliever. Greatest benefit was for participants reporting high levels of stress and anxiety prior to the study. The researchers also noted that stress and anxiety reduction can aid in cancer and chronic disease prevention.

And the CU-MSU study cited the nutritional benefits that participants got from eating freshly produced fruits and vegetables. Participants' dietary fiber intake increased compared to the average US adult daily consumption. However, the gardeners' fiber intakes were still lower than the recommended daily allowance.

If you want to dig even more into the science, the first so-proclaimed study from The Netherlands in 2011 found decreases in gardeners' stress-related hormone, cortisol, after working outdoors. The decreases were more significant than for bookworms cozying up to a warm read in a comfortable chair.

So, weeds? Are they bad? Not really, if you manually remove them. My clarion call is: let them come! The more is better for mental and physical health! Of course, good Master Gardeners don't need scientific studies to know this from our experiences. It's right there in the soil of our souls.



Activity	METs	Level of Effort
Walking, standing while picking flowers or vegetables	3.0	Light to moderate
Digging, spading, filling garden, composting	3.5	
Raking lawn, leaves	4.0	Moderate
Planting seedlings, shrubs, including stooping	4.3	Moderate
Pushing wheelbarrow or large garden cart	4.8	Moderate
Cutting lawn with power mower	5.0	Moderate-to-vigorous
Weeding, cultivating garden, hoeing	5.0	Moderate -to-vigorous
Cutting lawn with push (!) mower	6.0	Vigorous

Sources:

CORLISS, Jeanine. "Gardening and Yard Work: Exercise with a Purpose." Reviewed by C. P. Cannon, MD. *Harvard Health Publishing*. October 1, 2024. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/exercise-and-fitness>

LITT, Jill S., Katherine Alaimo, Kylie K. Harrall, Richard F. Hamman, James Hebert, Thomas G. Hurley, Jenn A. Leiferman, Kaigang Li, Angel Villalobos, Eva Coringratro, Jimikaye Beck Courtney, Maya Payton, Deborah H. Glueck. "Effects of a Community Gardening Intervention on Diet, Physical Activity, and Anthropometry Outcomes in the USA (CAPS): An Observer-Blind, Randomised Controlled Trial." *The Lancet Planetary Health* 7, no. 1 (2023): e63–e74.

VAN DEN BERG, Agnes E., and Mariëtte H. G. Custers. "Gardening Promotes Neuroendocrine and Affective Restoration from Stress." *Journal of Health Psychology* 16, no. 1 (January 2011): 3–11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhepsych.2010.12.001>

ASSOCIATION NEWS

Letter from the President

Vicki Znavor

It's been quite a warm summer this year and I hope you've all enjoyed being out and about. I enjoyed seeing many of you at the business meeting, the minutes of which are in this newsletter. Please read the minutes and consider whether you would like us to have a garden show in addition to the Doug Tallamy presentation in 2026. It's a lot to take on and requires leadership from our members.

It's really exciting to see all the things that are happening. Of course, we are all excited about the possibility of hosting an event with Doug Tallamy. I've been watching some of his videos and his work is so incredibly inspirational. Thanks to Carol Nolan for leading this effort.

I'm also excited about seeing you at the summer picnic. I really hope that you will make every effort to attend. At the awards ceremony a while back, I enjoyed seeing all of you relishing the conversations at your tables and it was nice meeting your guests. Special thanks to the picnic committee, which is working hard to plan a lovely evening, including an educational video with Doug Tallamy so you can see what's so great about his philosophy if you haven't seen him speak previously. Karen Sarver will present the Golden Trowel award, which should be fun. And I personally am looking forward to seeing who might win the most unusual vegetable award.

I know you're all working hard in your own gardens as well as supporting the work of this association and other local gardens

and organizations. Thank you so much for all you do; you're making such a positive difference. See you soon!

La Porte Master Gardener Association Business Meeting Minutes

July 10, 2025

La Porte County Public Library Main Branch – Room B

Welcome new members: Kim Varga and Metta Barbour

A reminder regarding the required hours to maintain proper standing as a Master Gardener is 12 hours volunteer and 6 hours education per calendar year. Members will be receiving emails, in October, from Jesi Davenport, ANR, with their volunteer hours and/or educational hours if they are below the requirements.

Karen Sarver prepared the voting ballots for the Golden Trowel Award and explained the process. All members present voted for one nominee. The nominees were Karren Coplen, Mary Davis, Kathleen Fox, Carol Nolan, Donna Pouzar, and Vicki Znavor.

The Golden Trowel Awardee will be presented at the August 7th picnic social meeting at Red Mill County Park. Karen Sarver will also make and bring the Golden Trowel Trophy. Members voted and all ballots were collected. August picnic. A form was left for members to sign up for the picnic and also to write what food items they would like to bring.

Vicki asked the members about the food for the picnic that the LPCMGA would provide. A Taco Bar or perhaps beef sandwiches were the suggestions. There were no other suggestions or oppositions. The picnic committee will choose.

Vicki also asked about whether the members wanted to keep the auction, no one seemed to voice a strong opinion. A decision was made for members to bring produce to share with

other members. Members can also bring any quirky-shaped vegetables to participate in a most peculiar vegetable contest. No auction will be held this year.

Carol presented information about the Doug Tallamy Event at the La Porte Civic Auditorium, capacity 1500-2000, on March 28, 2026. It will be free to the public with registration required. There will be environmental / nature/ gardening educational booths on the lower level with the balcony for all the attendees. The presentation will begin at 10:30 am for an hour. A half hour will be set up for questions. The next committee meeting will be on August 15, 2025.

The grant awardees will present their projects during our October meeting. A shout out was given to the members responsible for maintaining the Pioneer Garden.

Tom asked the members to consider joining the board to fill in for Joan's position on the Speaker's Committee. The position could be held until Dec 2025 or Dec 2026. Tom also asked for other members to attend the Speakers' Committee meeting to help with ideas for education and possible audiences. Tom shared an education opportunity that aligns with the Speakers' Bureau goals. "Growing your presentation Skills"
https://purdue.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eRI70bS96889PMN Fred Whitford, Director Purdue Pesticide Programs. They meet LPCMGA education hours. A plan is in progress to arrange for a field trip in April, to Brincka-Cross Gardens, for the Daffodil Blooming.

Karen talked about having a Holiday Greens event in November, perhaps at Fernwood Gardens. Members expressed an interest in the workshop and Donna Pouzar, having experience, provided some suggestions. It was agreed that additional work will be done to learn what's possible.

Vicki asked the members to think about whether or not we want to have a Garden Show in 2026. Ideas and a discussion will be during the September meeting.

Head Start Project

By: Tom Boesen

Our Project at Head Start Paladin in Michigan City has continued with success despite the hot dry weather. Master Gardener members have continued to tend the gardens and Paladin staff have diligently kept up with watering.

We have learned steps that will make future propagation projects easier and more "fruitful." These steps will be reviewed by the participants and shared with the membership.

Thanks to all participants. Enjoy the latest pics.



Getting To Know Our Members - The "Latest Dirt On....."

Carol Nolan

Tell us something about yourself.

I was born and raised in La Porte and left in the early 80's. After moving to Illinois and pursuing a career in material management and procurement, I met the man who would become my husband of 33 years, John. After purchasing our first house, he realized I was outside more than I was inside. I think I realized the same thing as well. I moved back to La Porte after his death in 2020.

How long have you been a member of the LPCMGA?

I was in the 2021 class, the first class after the pandemic. I completed my intern status in 2023.

What inspired you to join?

John and I watched a lot of DIY shows, and first heard of the Master Gardener program on THIS OLD HOUSE. Then, Paul Green, had a show on HGTV and he was a Master Gardener in Tulsa Oklahoma. I had to find out about this program and signed up in 2007 in Du Page County Illinois and was a Master Gardener there for 2 years.

When did you start gardening and what's a favorite garden memory or experience you can share?

I was very young and began my gardening journey working with Dad in his garden. Both my parents grew up on farms, and while they had no desire to be farmers, the land was in their blood. Dad grew vegetables and Mom grew flowers. My favorite memory of gardening centers around being with Dad in the garden, but one thing I clearly remember is the time he called all us kids to the garden to teach us about Mother Nature. He had found a snake feasting on a mouse and thought we should watch. Watching a snake devour something is a most interesting way to spend a few minutes, and not much more.

What have you learned from gardening that can be applied in all areas of life?

Expect the unexpected. Gardening is an ongoing experiment to learn from, and what you expect may not be what you get.

Do you have a favorite local garden that you enjoy visiting?

I have a memory of visiting INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP GARDENS but did not realize it was so close to home. The favorite garden I have visited is The BETTY FORD MEMORIAL GARDENS in Vail, Colorado. The walk to the gardens is relaxing and beautiful. I have never seen so many hummingbirds in one place. It is breathtaking

What advice would you have for a new gardener?

Do not try to be perfect and take your time. Garden for yourself, not other people, and certainly not for your neighbors. Let your garden be an extension of you.

Getting To Know Our Members - The “Latest Dirt On.....”

Vicki Znavor

Tell us something about yourself

I'm a wife, a mom of three, a grandma of four and a person who adores animals. I worked in corporate roles in Chicago for over forty years. I started out in administrative roles but went to night school for more years than I can say and ultimately had senior roles at Sara Lee Corporation and then most recently I was the head of HR at a bank in Chicago. I retired five years ago and upon doing so wrote the book “Authenticity Reawakened” – a book about the importance of being your true self in work and in life. I coach executives now and sit on a few boards which enables me to work, but not at the intensity I worked for so many years. I love spending time with my family, cooking, decorating, needlecrafts and, of course, gardening.

How long have you been a member of the LPCMGA? This is my second year.

What inspired you to join?

I wanted to learn from all of you and to help the community in any way I could, so it seemed like a great fit. I'm really honored to know all of you and to be a part of what you've all worked so hard to create. Thank you so much for sharing your knowledge with me; I look forward to continuing to learn.

When did you start gardening and what's a favorite garden memory or experience you can share?

I started gardening as soon as I had my first house in 1985. I had a colleague who loved to share her gardening stories, and she'd often bring me plants and always shared her knowledge. I've had many favorite garden memories over the years, but I suppose one was when I lived in Frankfort, IL. I planted countless plants, and I was so proud of our yard, but apparently someone else noticed and our home was selected for the town's beautification award. I had just arrived home from work and there was a sign in the yard notifying us of the award. I think what made it special was that I wasn't really a great gardener, but I had a lot of enthusiasm.

What have you learned from gardening that can be applied in all areas of life?

There are so many lessons to be learned in a garden. I suppose the following are the most important to me:

- No matter how hard you try, sometimes things don't work out as you'd hope they would.
- All life is fragile and each of us has a responsibility to help others in whatever way we can.
- Whatever you focus on will become bigger so try to focus on the things that matter most.
- The things in life that matter to you will always need your attention and care.

Do you have a favorite local garden that you enjoy visiting?

I spend a lot of time at Friendship Botanic Gardens in Michigan City. It's over 100 acres and it's always so peaceful. Sometimes when I'm there early in the morning, I'm just overwhelmed with the beautiful surroundings.

What advice would you have for a new gardener?

Pick the right plant for the right place; that's really half the battle. You can't force a plant to grow somewhere it's not intended to be. I think that's also a life lesson now that I think about it.

EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

Weed Wrangle

with Izaak Walton's Porter County Chapter

We want to field-train
volunteers like you!

Learn to identify and eradicate
invasive plant species.

Friday, August 1, 2025
9:00 am - 1pm

*wear sturdy shoes, long sleeves/pants,
gloves, dress for any weather,
bring a water bottle for refills,
tools and lunch supplied*



Frame Family Little Calumet Conservation Area

by IWLA-Porter County Chapter

1286 N. Countyline Road, Michigan City (Porter Co. side)

Borders to the south of East Arm of the Little Calumet River



*a jolly opportunity to volunteer and
support Indiana's environment*

NWIconservation.org



Extension

PURDUE EXTENSION

RAINSCAPING EDUCATION PROGRAM

RAINSCAPING WORKSHOP

Landscapes with rainscaping practices capture stormwater, which reduces polluted runoff from homes and communities. Using rainscaping practices in the landscape helps increase infiltration of water from storms, to reduce pollution flowing into streams, rivers, and lakes.

**COST:** \$15/Person**TO REGISTER:**

<https://cvent.me/5vqxML> OR call the extension office at 574-223-3397

WHERE: FULTON COUNTY FAIR GROUNDS 1009 W 3RD ST ROCHESTER IN 46975

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN:

- Increase rainscaping in residential and small-scale public spaces
- Rain garden planning, installation, and maintenance

SCAN TO REGISTER

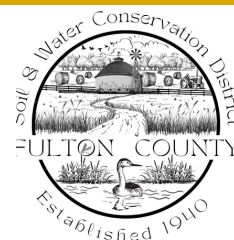


REGISTRATION DEADLINE IS: AUGUST 15TH VISIT THE EXTENSION OFFICE OR THE SWCD FOR A PAPER REGISTRATION!

AUGUST 23, 2025 9AM – 5PM



Extension - Fulton County



Purdue University is an Equal Opportunity/ Equal Access University. If you are in need of an interpreter to attend these programs, please contact Abby Anspach prior to the meeting at 574-223-3397 or newman0@purdue.edu by Aug 1st.

ASK THE EXPERTS

NATIVE PLANT TRIVIA & PANEL

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2025 ✦ 6:00P - 8:00P CST

RED MILL COUNTY PARK, 0185 S HOLMESVILLE RD, LA PORTE, IN 46350

Curious about native plants or how to tackle invasive species? Join us for a fun and informative evening where you can test your knowledge, ask questions, and discover ways to get involved!

What to Expect:

- ✦ Native Plant Trivia – No experience needed—just a fun way to learn and connect.
- ✦ Expert Q&A Panel – Whether you're wondering what to plant in your yard, how to get rid of that pesky burning bush, or how invasive species affect local ecosystems, our panel of local experts is here to help!
- ✦ Get Involved – Find out how you can make a difference right here in Porter and LaPorte counties.
- ✦ Free & Open to All – Come learn something new, meet like-minded people, and find out how to get involved with PLANT.

Get Connected With PLANT

Join PLANT and be part of a passionate group dedicated to protecting our local ecosystems! Together, we promote the use of native species and combat the spread of invasive plants in Porter and LaPorte counties through outreach, education, and technical assistance. Whether you're a seasoned plant enthusiast or just getting started, there's a place for you in PLANT!

For more info:



<https://tinyurl.com/PLANTfacebook>



Join our email list!

Multiflora Rose Webinar

Below is a link to the recording of the "Multiflora Rose: Briars in the Woods" webinar hosted by Bob Bruner, Exotic Forest Pest Educator, Dept. of Entomology at Purdue University on July 15, 2025.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s5VqPazwXpM>

EXTENSION OFFICE JES'S CORNER

I hope you're all staying cool and hydrated as we push through this intense heat wave. I want to start off by taking a moment to extend a heartfelt **thank you** to everyone who volunteered their time and energy in the Pioneerland Gardens during the La Porte County Fair.

From the behind-the-scenes prep to the hands-on education during the fair, your efforts did not go unnoticed. The gardens looked absolutely phenomenal thanks to your hard work, and your dedication to sharing the history of gardening "back then" brought real value to our community.

Whether you were pulling weeds in the heat, answering questions from curious fairgoers, or simply helping the gardens shine, you made a difference. Thank you for being such an important part of what we do.

I'm sure by now, everyone's gardens are starting to feel more like a test of endurance than a peaceful retreat. The sun hangs high and heavy, the soil dries out faster than you can water it, and just stepping outside feels like walking into a sauna.

This time of year, gardening becomes less about planting and more about tending. Checking on droopy tomatoes, battling thirsty weeds, and keeping an eye out for pests that thrive in the heat. Watering turns into a ritual, early in the morning or late in the evening, when the sun isn't quite so punishing. It's not just about keeping the plants live, it's about giving them a chance to thrive despite the heat.

2025 EXECUTIVE BOARD

PRESIDENT	VICKI ZNAVOR
VICE PRESIDENT	TOM BOESEN
CORRESPONDING SECRETARY	MARIA MAULE
RECORDING SECRETARY	THERESA DZOGA-BORG*
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SPEAKERS BUREAU	OPEN
	KAREN SARVER

PAST PRESIDENT CAROL NOLAN

*INDICATES MEMBER IS FILLING ANOTHER PERSON'S TERM, OR EXTENDED THEIR TERM WITH THE APPROVAL OF THE BOARD

2025 PROJECT COORDINATORS

Friendship Botanic Gardens

Rima Binder _____ 219-878-8128
_____ rimabinder@comcast.net

Garden Hotline

Extension Office _____ 219-324-9407

Garden Show

Theresa Dzoba-Borg _____ 773-960-5848
_____ dzozo@yahoo.com

Ann Klosinski _____ 219-872-8367
_____ annak47@comcast.net

Carol Nolan _____ 331-903-0091
_____ cnolan41@yahoo.com

Karen Sarver _____ 219-921-9704
_____ ksarver@csinet.net

La Porte Builders Assn. Home Expo

Donna Pouzar _____ 219-363-2960
_____ pouzdlp@icloud.com

Pioneer Land School Tours

Linda Hough _____ 219-324-0424
_____ ljhough614@gmail.com

Pioneer Heritage Garden

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

Sunflower Fair

Linda Hough _____ 219-324-0424
_____ ljhough614@gmail.com

STANDING COMMITTEE COORDINATORS

History Book _____ Donna Pouzar
 Hospitality _____ Eunice Conway
 Librarian _____ Linda Hough
 Newsletter _____ Donna Pouzar
 Speakers Bureau See Executive Board

Purdue Extension Office __ 324-9407

Jesi Davenport _ jfurness@purdue.edu
 Sue Salisbury _ salisbk@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

Place your free ad in "The Latest Dirt"

Tools, tillers, mowers, plants - anything garden related. Keep ads brief. Provide your phone number and/or e-mail address. Ads will be limited to space available.

Information must be submitted by the 20th of the month to:

pouzdlp@icloud.com

PURDUE UNIVERSITY IS AN EQUAL
 OPPORTUNITY/EQUAL ACCESS/AFFIRMATIVE
 ACTION INSTITUTION

But even in the swelter, there are rewards. The burst of color from a new zinnia bloom. That first perfectly ripe cucumber. The scent of basil when you brush past it with the hose. Small moments, but deeply satisfying.

So yes, summer gardening takes grit. But it also reminds us why we started in the first place-to stay connected, to work with our hands, and to find joy in the slow and steady rhythm of the seasons.

Stay cool, and happy gardening!

AUGUST GARDEN CALENDAR

HOME (Indoor plants and activities)

- Take cuttings from annual garden plants such as impatiens, coleus, geraniums and wax begonias to overwinter indoors. Root the cuttings in media such as moist vermiculite, perlite, peat moss or potting soil, rather than water.
- Order spring-flowering bulbs for fall planting.
- Cut flowers from the garden to bring a little color indoors, or dry for everlasting arrangements.

GARDEN (Flowers, vegetables and small fruits)

- Keep the garden well-watered during dry weather and free of weeds, insects and disease.
- Complete fall garden planting by direct-seeding carrots, beets, kohlrabi, kale and snap beans early this month. Lettuce, spinach, radishes and green onions can be planted later in August and early September. Don't forget to thin seedlings to appropriate spacing as needed.
- Harvest onions after the tops yellow and fall, then cure them in a warm, dry, well-ventilated area. The necks should be free of moisture when fully cured in about a week's time.
- Harvest potatoes after the tops yellow and die. Potatoes also need to be cured before storage.
- Pick beans, tomatoes, peppers and squash often to encourage further production.
- Harvest watermelon when several factors indicate ripeness: the underside ground spot turns from whitish to creamy yellow; the tendril closest to the melon turns brown and shrivels; the rind loses its gloss and appears dull; and the melon produces a dull thud, rather than a ringing sound when thumped.

- Harvest sweet corn when kernels are plump and ooze a milky juice when punctured with your fingernail. If the liquid is watery, you're too early; if the kernels are doughy, you're too late.
- Keep faded flowers pinched off bedding plants to promote further flowering and improve plant appearance.

YARD (Lawns, woody ornamentals, and fruits)

- Check trees and shrubs that have been planted in recent years for girdling damage by guy wires, burlap or twine.
- Don't fertilize woody plants now. It stimulates late growth that will not have time to harden off properly before winter.
- Hand-prune and destroy bagworms, fall webworms and tent caterpillars.
- Pears are best ripened off the tree, so do not wait for the fruit to turn yellowish on the tree. Harvest pears when color of fruit changes — usually from a dark green to a lighter green — and when the fruit is easily twisted and removed from the spur.
- Prune out and destroy the raspberry and blackberry canes that bore fruits this year. They will not produce fruit again next year, but they may harbor insect and disease organisms.
- If the weather turns dry, keep newly established plants well-watered. New plants should receive 1-1.5 inches of water every 7 to 10 days.
- Begin seeding new lawns or bare spots in established lawns from mid-August through mid-September.