

The Latest Dirt

La Porte County Master Gardener Newsletter



NOVEMBER 2025

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

ASSOCIATION NEWS	4
LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT	4
GRANT RECIPIENTS	5
GETTING TO KNOW OUR MEMBERS	6
HOLIDAY GREENS WORKSHOP	7
GARDENING ARTICLE	7
EDUCATION	9
JESI'S CORNER	11
OCTOBER GARDEN CALENDAR	12

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

November 6	Business Meeting Elections
December 4	Holiday Dinner Party

NEXT BOARD MEETING

November 10th - 6:00 p.m.
Extension Office

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

www.lpmastergardener.org

[https://www.facebook.com/MasterGardeners
LaPorteCounty](https://www.facebook.com/MasterGardenersLaPorteCounty)



PURDUE EXTENSION
MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM

Leave the Leaves!

By: Justin Wheeler, Scott Hoffman Black, Deborah Seiler on
Xerces Society

Leaves are habitat, not trash

One of the most valuable things you can do to support pollinators and other invertebrates is to provide them with the shelter they need to survive the winter. Thankfully, that's pretty easy; all you need to do is do less yard work.

Leaves, brush piles, fallen logs, plant stems, and flower heads might not be growing anymore, but they aren't trash — they are natural homes for wildlife! A layer of leaves is vital insulation from the cold for the many animals that hide within (or in the soil beneath), like quite a few butterflies. Others, like many native bees, nest within stems, flower heads, or pieces of wood. Throwing out all of your leaves and other plant material isn't just taking away options for shelter; there's a good chance you're tossing out many animals that have already settled in!

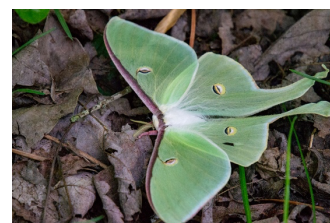
That's why this year and every year, we are making the case for leaving the leaves. That's not to say you can't do any tidying up. We have tips for thoughtful autumn cleanup that still leaves space for nature. You'll also meet just a few of the many animals you'll be saving. Read on!

Five easy ways to protect wildlife this fall

Here are some simple ways you can help the fascinating invertebrates who may call your yard or garden home!

Leave the leaves, or move them just a bit

Leaving the leaves and other plant debris doesn't have to mean sacrificing your yard to the wilderness. A thin layer of leaves is actually healthy for grass, but the leaves also don't need to be left exactly where they fall. You can rake them into garden beds, around tree bases, or into other designated areas. Leaves are great for soil quality: they can suppress weeds, retain moisture, and boost nutrition. And perennial plants appreciate the extra insulation through the winter, too!



The vast majority of butterflies and moths don't migrate! Instead, they overwinter in the landscape as an egg, caterpillar, chrysalis, or adult, and use leaf litter for winter cover. For example, luna moths and swallowtail butterflies disguise their cocoons and chrysalises as dried leaves, blending in with the "real" leaves. (Photo: Sebastian Alejandro Echeverri)

Avoid shredding leaves; let the bugs do that for you!

Shredded leaves will not provide the same cover as leaving them whole, and you may be destroying eggs, caterpillars, and cocoons along with the leaves. Instead of a mower, use a rake or blower to keep leaves intact. If you use leaves for compost, consider creating a leaf pile and allowing it to break down naturally if space allows. Millipedes, roly-polys, and other leaf-eating bugs will help and enjoy the meal! You can also add the leaves gradually to your existing compost pile.



Most millipedes, like this colorful black-and-gold flat millipede (*Apheloria virginiensis*), feed primarily on decaying leaves, helping to recycle the nutrients into the soil. (Photo: [D.J. Weyer CC-BY-NC](#))

Turn those fallen branches and logs into a brush pile habitat



Instead of trashing pieces of wood, stack them up! Plenty of insects seek out fallen pieces of wood to hibernate in. Piles can be as big or small as you have space for, and you can hide the pile behind a hedge or wildflowers to keep the yard looking clean. Logs and stumps can also be used as borders around a native planting area to add definition to the space.

Mourning cloak butterflies (*Nymphalis antiopa*) seek out gaps within brush piles to survive the winter. Since they overwinter as adults, they emerge quite early in spring. Adding a brush pile to your yard could mean seeing butterflies much sooner the next year! (Photo: Julie Michaelson).

Leave the soil (and sleeping bees) undisturbed

Approximately 70 percent of all bee species nest in the ground, frequently in yards and garden beds. If you're planning on planting a cool season cover, a winter crop, or just moving perennials around, try to keep any disturbances as limited and shallow as possible to avoid destroying native bee nests. If that's not possible, try to keep an eye out for groups of nests, and place markers so that you can avoid them while working in your garden. Polyester bees (*Colletes* spp.) are pollinators of red maple, willow, and apple trees, and dig their nests into the soil. They get their common name from the cellophane-like lining (made of polyester) that they add to the inner chambers where they lay their eggs. (Photo: Heather Holm).



Wait until spring is underway to trim stems and clean up



Instead of cutting back everything at the end of summer, leave the stems of perennial plants. The seed heads will feed goldfinches and other birds, and the stems will provide shelter for many insects that nest in them.

While the idea is to “leave the leaves” permanently—for all of the benefits mentioned above—if you do decide you need to remove the leaves next season, make sure you wait to clean up the garden until late in the spring so as not to destroy all the life you’ve worked to protect.

Small carpenter bees (*Ceratina* spp.) frequently carve out their nests in dead raspberry (*Rubus* spp.) canes or wildflower stems. (Photo: Sara Morris CC-BY-NC)

Leave the leaves and spread the word

Your garden’s wild residents benefit immensely when you practice good neighbor relations, leaving things a little messy and wild. After all, when you think of what these animals need, it is best to visualize the natural areas where they have evolved. Natural areas are not manicured, sticks and leaves are not “cleaned up” and removed, grasses grow long, seed heads are left for songbirds to feed on, and seeds can fall where they might germinate.

Of course, this can be a hard pill to swallow! It may be habitual, a matter of social conditioning, or a holdover of outdated gardening practices from yesteryear—but for whatever reason, we just can’t seem to stop ourselves from wanting to tidy up the garden at the end of the season. Changing that starts with knowledge.

So let your friends, neighbors, and social media circle know that they can also just #LeaveTheLeaves! Your yard is playing an important role in the ecosystem all year round, and it's easy to find a compromise between a functional space for you and one that provides for wildlife. By simply doing fewer chores in the fall (and say, enjoying a steaming cup of spiced cider instead, courtesy of pollinators), your garden will reap the rewards of abundant pollination, natural pest control, and food for visiting birds and wildlife next spring.

A leaf-covered corner of your yard over the winter make all the difference for your local wildlife come spring! (Photo: Xerces Society)

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ASSOCIATION NEWS

Letter from the President

Vicki Znavor

Hello everyone! I hope that this note finds you well. As we head into November, I am reminded of all that I am grateful for and that certainly includes the work that we are so blessed to do together.

I really enjoyed the presentations by our grant recipients at the October meeting because it was apparent that our mission comes to life by helping those in our community. Please take some time to read the minutes of the meeting to hear about each recipient and how they used their grants.

We are also excited about the special program in March with Dr. Doug Tallamy. Please hold March 28, 2026 on your calendars. We will have informational booths beginning at 9:00 a.m. CDT and Dr. Tallamy will give his talk "Saving Nature in Your Yard" at 10:30 a.m. Here are a few things that you can do to help: Follow us on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/MasterGardenersLaPorteCounty/>), and our website <https://lpmastergardener.org>. Share the posts and ask your friends and family to follow us and share as well. More information is coming about registration, but the event is free to the public. Thanks to Carol Nolan for leading this effort.

At the November meeting (November 6th) we will have officer ballots available. As of this writing, we are excited to have the following people stepping up to serve as board members: Metta Barbour, Amy Cooper, Kitty Knoll, and Kim Varga. I also want to thank the officers who are stepping down after serving their terms: Theresa Dzoga-Borg, Susie Kieffer, and Karen Sarver. I have enjoyed working with these ladies and I think we owe them all a heartfelt thank you for their hard work.

I am looking forward to the Holiday Greens event. The details are being fine-tuned but hopefully by the time this newsletter is published you will have heard more about the specifics. Thanks so much to the Speakers' Bureau for leading the effort.

Our holiday gathering will be on December 4th at Cristo's Family Dining in La Porte at 5:00 pm. We will share more information at the November meeting.

I want to reiterate how very proud I am to be a member of this organization. We are small, but we get things done. If you have not had a chance to volunteer in recent months or attend meetings, I would once again invite you to do so. There really is no shortage of things to do or things to learn about others.

I hope that you all have a blessed Thanksgiving. Please know that you've truly made a difference in the lives of others by sharing your expertise with others. I can think of no more important legacy. Be well and I hope to see you soon.

La Porte Master Gardener Association Grant Recipients

The La Porte County Master Gardeners Association awards community grants to encourage gardening and education with the aim of “Helping Others Grow.” Five grants were awarded for 2025

The 2025 Grant recipients presented their projects at our October meeting:

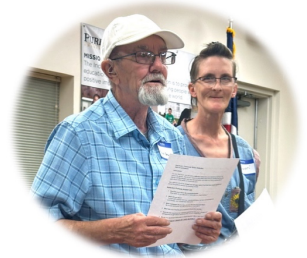
La Porte County Historical Society: LPC Museum Prairie Restoration, presented by Tom Konieczny. The LPCMGA grant money was used for an Oak Savanna restoration. This restoration is environmentally beneficial as well as an educational site. The Oak Savanna features La Porte Natural Wonders. The interpretive signs were made to identify the Oak Savanna flora and the benefits to the ecology of the area. Trails through the Oak Savannah is an additional way to teach about and enjoy the ecosystem. The restored Oak Savanna will be an additional part of the History Museum and be open to school groups and the public.



Eastport Neighborhood Association: Walker Street Community Garden, presented by Dr. Dominique Edwards. Eastport is a grass-roots organization that was launched in 2017. They continue to source from local farmers, especially Mark's Garden and Farm. Eastport has an annual planting day on their property of a half-acre with 32 raised beds. The LPCMGA grant money was used to support Eastport's free market days for the community where over 1000 pounds of produce has been distributed. In addition, the cooking demos and evening classes led by community chefs were very well attended. Attendees learn cooking and knife skills,

while also receiving kitchen tools. Eastport held their Harvest Day on October 11th.

United Methodist Church: Community Garden, presented by Sherri Eberhardt and Frank Bagwell. The United Methodist Church garden, started by Sherri and Frank two years ago, is adjacent to the church. The LPGMCA grant money was used to build a fence and trellises for the vegetable garden. The fence helped to protect the plants. The garden provided a plethora of varieties of vegetables, such as carrots, zucchini, potatoes, tomatoes, brussel sprouts and peppers to name a few. Six students from the Westville HS Future Farmers of America (FFA) program volunteered and worked with Sherri and Frank to plant the vegetables. This garden holds a Farmers Market every Monday from 5pm- 6pm during the season to provide free vegetables to local Westville residents. In addition, during the peak of the harvest season, produce is available every day.



Kingsford Heights Elementary PTA: Taming Our School Grounds, presented by Angie McKeehan. The goal of the project is to beautify the school grounds. Student participation was integral as they researched native plants and plant choices. Students are also responsible for watering, weeding and overall care. Many parents and teachers, including the principal, were involved with the planting of the garden. The garden includes daisies, echinacea and shrubs. The school's atrium was chosen for the garden location since it would have the most access for the students, especially since all the classrooms have a windowed view to the atrium.

Family Advocates: Butterfly Garden, presented by Jackie Dermody. Jackie and her team planted a pollinator garden at the Family Advocates grounds. The LPCMGA grant money was used to purchase the native seedlings. The purpose was to create a safe space for families in order to have a peaceful and private meeting during the court-ordered visitations. Jackie chose a pollinator garden setting to also increase native gardens in La Porte.

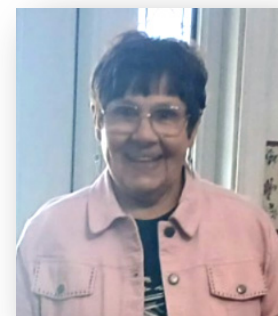


Getting To Know Our Members - The "Latest Dirt On....."

Kathleen Fox

Tell us something about yourself

My husband and I have 14 grandchildren and 7 great grandchildren. I'm a high energy individual who is deeply committed to the church where I lead the youth group on Wednesday and teach junior high/high school girls on Sunday. I'm very involved politically and currently hold a public office. After God and family, my third real love is playing in the soil/sun tirelessly. It's funny because I really don't know what I'm doing, but I enjoy it just the same.



How long have you been a member of the LPCMGA?

I graduated from the 2018 class and joined the LPCMGA shortly afterwards.

What inspired you to join?

On the last night of class, current members of the group had somewhat of a reception for us. I also attended a meeting. Meeting these gardeners was love at first sight.

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

I didn't grow up gardening as we lived in a forest, but I've always enjoyed outdoors, bugs, birds, and my hands in the soil. Believe it or not, I ENJOY pulling weeds, even as a child.

I don't consider myself a gardener even though I spend hours a day on my hands and knees. I spend a lot of time talking to my Creator and thanking Him for the awesome world around me.

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

I maintain the landscape at my church and some of my favorite memories are of my grandchildren when they were young. They would assist me at the church, and our discussions would get quite interesting. We would compare how some weeds had hidden roots that grew long, tortuous, and hard to annihilate, with hidden sin in our lives.

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

I'm still discovering garden centers. Most recently, I thought Blooms might be my favorite, but if I'm looking for natives, not so much.

What advice would you have for a new gardener?

Get down and dirty. Surround yourself with knowledgeable people who are willing to share. Keep learning and planting, especially natives for our pollinators. DON'T STOP.

DIY Holiday Greens Workshop

Get into the festive spirit and create your own beautiful, custom holiday decoration! Our fellow Master Gardener, Kim Varga, will lead 12 of us through this hands-on workshop. She will guide you through all the steps of crafting a unique holiday decoration for your front door or mantel.

We will have a signup sheet at the November 6th meeting. The first 12 members that signup will have the opportunity to make a **wreath**. The next 5 members that sign up will be given a **basket** with materials to make a nice table or hearth arrangement.

Sunday, November 30, 2025

1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

La Porte County Fairgrounds

\$25 per person

What you'll learn

You will master techniques for:

- Assembling the wreath on a sturdy wire frame.
- Layering different types of greenery to create a balanced look.
- Adding decorative accents like pinecones, berries, and bows.
- Preserving your fresh greenery so your wreath stays vibrant throughout the holiday



GARDENING ARTICLES

Indiana's tallest tree used to be in Hamilton County. Now it's here, but you can't see it

By John Tufts, Indianapolis Star Newspaper

Now that it's October, Indiana is only a few weeks away from peak **fall colors**, treating Hoosiers to autumn leaves in brilliant colors of red, orange and gold. While many will flock to **Brown County State Park** in Nashville to do their annual leaf peeping, there are dozens of forested locations around Indiana offering similar impressive views, some of which include the largest trees in the state. For years, the tallest tree on record in Indiana could be found in Hamilton County, according to the Big Tree Registry, which is managed by the **Indiana Department of Natural Resources**.

NEW FIRST PLACE TREE

This summer, however, Hamilton County's first place spot got uprooted by a Cherrybark Oak in Vanderburgh County. Here's what we know about Indiana's biggest trees and where to find them.

The Big Tree Registry, according to DNR, is a list of Indiana's largest known specimens of each native tree species in the Hoosier State. The list is produced and updated by the DNR Division of Forestry. Hoosiers can nominate trees for the registry, but if they grow on private property, their location will be

shared with the public only with the owner's consent. It's possible some trees growing on private property might be even taller than what's currently on the registry.

The tallest tree in Indiana used to be in Hamilton County, a **Bitternut Hickory** standing at an impressive 152 feet. The tree's height was quoted by a DNR representative **speaking to Purdue University** for an October 2023 blog post, in which they urged people to find more of Indiana's tallest trees. And find them they did.

This year, a Cherrybark Oak has been crowned "Indiana's tallest." Officials in Vanderburgh County measured it at 204 feet, along with a circumference of nearly 199 inches, according to DNR's tree registry. "This tree was added to the list over the summer. It is located at **Wesselman Woods Nature Preserve** in Evansville," DNR spokesperson Marty Benson told IndyStar. While it might be Indiana's tallest tree, according to DNR's tree registry, Hoosiers aren't likely to see it up close. Benson said the Cherrybark Oak is not accessible from the trail system at Wesselman Woods, and visitors aren't allowed wander off by themselves to go looking for it.

LARGEST OAK TREE IN NATION

Other trees around Indiana in recent weeks also have garnered attention for their size. A species of oak stretching across Richard and Kris Schepman's property in Jennings County might be the largest of its kind anywhere in the nation. In September, officials with the **National Champion Tree program** recognized the Shepman's swamp chestnut oak as the "largest of its species" in the United States. The program is managed at the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture's **School of Natural Resources**. It started originally in American Forests Magazine as a "nation-wide laboratory for the study of forestry and trees," according to officials.

The Shepman's swamp chestnut oak stands at 95 feet in height with a 318-inch circumference and a canopy spread of 118 feet. Gov. Mike Braun and DNR officials drove to the Shepman's home outside of Crothersville and presented them with a certificate of achievement on Sept. 9. "The Schepman family and private landowners across the state deserve high praise for their commitment to growing healthy trees like this giant in Jennings County, which I hope continues to stand tall for generations of future Hoosiers to enjoy," Braun said. The public, however, won't be able to view the record-breaking behemoth up close, at least not without a personal invitation. The tree is on the Shepman's private property.

WIDEST TREE TRUNK

The widest tree in Indiana, according to the registry, is a Silver Maple in Lawrence County with a circumference of 361 inches and a height of 103 feet. **TO NOMINATE A TREE** Have you spotted a tall tree in Indiana you believe belongs on the big tree registry? The DNR has an **online nomination form** you can use to suggest a candidate. **FIND LARGE TREES YOU CAN VISIT** To find the locations of large trees across Indiana you might be able to see up close and personal, the DNR has an **online interactive tree map** of its current tree champions. Visit **on.IN.gov/big**.

EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

1 hour of education credit is being offered for anyone attending the popcorn presentation.

FROM COB TO POP

Harvesting a Healthy Snack

NOVEMBER 4, 2025

PURDUE EXTENSION - LAPORTE COUNTY

2857 W. STATE ROAD 2, LAPORTE, IN

5:00 - 6:00 PM CST

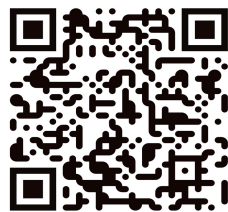
This engaging session will take participants through every stage of popcorn production—from seed to snack. Topics include:

- Planting Popcorn: Learn what it takes to grow this fun and flavorful crop.
- Harvest Timing: Discover how to get moisture levels just right for the perfect pop.
- The Healthy Side of Popcorn: Explore the nutritional benefits that make popcorn a smart snack choice.
- Popping Techniques: Experiment with different ways to pop and enjoy your harvest.

Workshop/Supply Fee: \$5, payable via cash or check to your local Purdue Extension Office.

*Checks made out to: Trustees of Purdue University

This program is intended for those over the age of 18. If you are in need of accommodations to attend this program, please contact the Extension Office prior to the meeting at 219-324-9407 or laporteces@purdue.edu by October 27th.



<https://forms.gle/Qfjhpwj9uRE9KtUYA>



1 hour of education credit is being offered for anyone attending this event.



The poster is framed by a decorative border of autumn leaves in shades of orange, red, and brown. At the top center, the logo for the Laporte County Soil & Water Conservation District is displayed, featuring a circular emblem with a sun, water, and land. To its right is the logo for LUBEZNIK Center for the Arts, with the name in a bold, sans-serif font. The main title, "Coffee, Create, Conserve", is written in a large, elegant, dark brown script font. Below the title is a central illustration of a bright orange coffee cup with a yellow leaf design on its side, sitting on a yellow saucer. The text "Enjoy a cup of coffee, create a project with great company, and learn about the importance of leaves in our ecosystem!" is centered below the cup. Further down, the event details are listed: "Wednesday, November 12, 2025", "9-11 am", "2857 W State Road 2, La Porte, IN 46350", and "Email dharrison@laporteco.in.gov for questions!".

LAPORTE COUNTY SOIL & WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

LUBEZNIK
Center for the Arts

Coffee, Create, Conserve



Enjoy a cup of coffee, create a project with
great company, and learn about the
importance of leaves in our ecosystem!

Wednesday, November 12, 2025
9-11 am
2857 W State Road 2, La Porte, IN 46350
Email dharrison@laporteco.in.gov for questions!

EXTENSION OFFICE

JESI'S CORNER

Fall is in full swing, and with that comes the question of the season: What's your favorite fall drink, pumpkin spice or apple cider? It just so happens to be two of Indiana's most iconic crops: **pumpkins and apples**. Whether you're visiting a local orchard, decorating your porch, or baking a seasonal treat, these fruits of fall showcase the beauty and bounty of our local agriculture.

Pumpkins aren't just for carving anymore! Indiana ranks among the top pumpkin-producing states, with many local farms growing varieties for decoration, baking, and even seed roasting. When selecting pumpkins for cooking, look for smaller "pie" or "sugar" pumpkins — they have sweeter, smoother flesh perfect for pies, soups, or roasting. Gardeners interested in growing pumpkins should plan ahead for next year: pumpkins require a long growing season (typically 90–120 days) and plenty of space for sprawling vines. They thrive in well-drained soil and full sun. Remember to rotate crops and manage pests like squash bugs and cucumber beetles, which can cause damage and spread disease.

Apples, on the other hand, bring both nostalgia and nutrition to the season. From crisp Honeycrisps to tart Granny Smiths, Indiana growers are busy harvesting a wide variety of apples right now. Apple trees do best in well-drained soil with good air circulation and benefit from proper pruning each winter to encourage strong fruit production. Fall is also a great time to plan for planting apple trees next spring. One fun fact I learned this fall is that McDonald's favors the Empire apple for their Happy Meals as this variety tends to take longer to brown more than any other variety!

So, as you sip that apple cider or pumpkin spice, take a moment to appreciate the growers who make these fall favorites possible.

Happy fall gardening!

2025 EXECUTIVE BOARD

PRESIDENT	VICKI ZNAVOR
VICE PRESIDENT	TOM BOESEN
CORRESPONDING SECRETARY	MARIA MAULE
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TREASURER	SUSAN KIEFFER*
EDUCATION COMMITTEE/ SPEAKERS BUREAU	JANET DAVIS* 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

NOVEMBER GARDEN CALENDAR

HOME (Indoor plants and activities)

- If plants are dropping many leaves, move them closer to sunny exposures, such as west- and south-facing windows. Artificial lights may be needed to supplement particularly dark rooms.
- Pot spring-flowering bulbs with tips exposed 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.
- Continue dark treatment for poinsettias by keeping them in complete darkness from 5 p.m. to 8 a.m. daily until early December or until red bracts begin to show.

GARDEN (Flowers, vegetables and small fruits)

- If frost hasn't taken your garden yet, continue harvesting.
- Harvest mature green tomatoes before frost, and ripen indoors in the dark. Store at 55-70 degrees F. The warmer the temperature, the faster they ripen.
- Harvest root crops and store in a cold (32 degrees F), humid location. Use perforated plastic bags as an easy way to increase humidity.
- Remove crop and weed plant debris from the garden and add to the compost pile. This will help reduce the carryover of diseases, insects and weeds to next year's garden.
- Fall tilling, except in erosion-prone areas, helps improve soil structure and usually leads to soils warming and drying faster in the spring. This allows crops to be planted earlier.
- Apply mulch to strawberries to prevent winter injury or death to their crowns. Wait until temperatures have hit 20 degrees F to be sure plants are dormant. If mulch is applied too soon the plant's crown can rot.
- Dig and store tender flowering bulbs, and keep in a protected location.
- Complete planting of spring-flowering bulbs.

YARD (Lawns, woody ornamentals, and fruits)

- Prevent rabbit and rodent feeding damage by erecting physical barriers, such as metal mesh (one-fourth inch) hardware cloth. Pull mulch a few inches away from the trunk, as the mulch provides a warm winter home for rodents. Chemical repellents also are available, but their effectiveness is temporary and not foolproof.
- Prevent frost cracking (or sunscald) by wrapping trunks with commercial tree wrap or painting the south- and southwest-facing sides of the trunk with white latex outdoor paint. Young, thin-barked trees such as maples and many fruit trees are especially susceptible. Be sure to remove the tree wrap by early spring to prevent overheating of the bark.
- Remove dead, diseased or damaged branches.
- Protect the graft union on rose bushes by mounding soil around the plants and adding mulch on top. Wait until several killing frosts have occurred so plants will be dormant when covered. Plants covered too early may be smothered.
- If you are planning to order a "live" Christmas tree, prepare its planting hole before the soil freezes. Mulch the area heavily to prevent freezing, or dig the hole and put fill in a protected, nonfreezing area such as a garage or basement.
- Clean up and discard fallen leaves and fruits around fruit plants to reduce disease carryover.
- Continue mowing lawn as needed. As tree leaves fall, run them through your mower (remove bagger), allowing the shredded leaves to remain on the lawn. Be sure to mow only when grass and leaves are dry.
- A November application of fertilizer can help keep lawns green into winter and boost early spring recovery. Apply one-half to 1 pound actual nitrogen, per 1,000 square feet of lawn. See [**"Turfgrass Management: Fertilizing Established Cool-Season Lawns"**](#) for more information on lawn fertilization.

