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GARDEN THYME



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PURDUE EXTENSION PORTER COUNTY 155 INDIANA AVENUE, SUITE 301 VALPARAISO, IN 46383

— *In this Issue*

Table of Contents

In this Issue	01
Bicycling With Butterflies	02
Meet a Master Gardener: David Parry	04
Recibeers:	
Strawberry Freezer Jam	05
Local Native Plant Sales	06
My Plant; My Project:	
Making the Cut	07
Getting to Know Invasives	09
What's in the Tool Shed?:	
Water Works	11
Garden Walk 2024 Preview	12

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The Porter County Master Gardeners Association (PCMGGA) is a not-for-profit corporation that promotes the education and pleasure of gardening in cooperation with Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service in Porter County, Indiana.



Bicycling With Butterflies

BY MARGARET MUDD, PCMG CLASS OF 2019

The Eastern Monarch Migration is one of the most beautiful sights of the natural world, and yet, its survival is threatened. At last count, the World Wildlife Fund indicates that the species saw a reduction of 59% of its population in the overwintering areas when compared to the previous year.

Monarchs traveling the Eastern Migration leave their overwintering grounds each spring from sanctuaries in the Mexican oyamel fir forests. They travel northward, on different routes east of the Rocky Mountains, in search of nectar sources and their host plants. It is a painstaking journey fraught with both natural and man-made obstacles.

Sufficient sources of milkweed are necessary because it is the only plant on which monarchs will lay their eggs and the only leaves that the newly hatched caterpillars will eat. One migration will see four generations of monarchs; the last one tasked solely to build up energy stores, then travel thousands of miles to a home never seen before. At every step of the way, abundant nectar sources are needed to sustain them.



(continued on page 03)

A lesser-known story is that of Sara Dykman, an extraordinary woman, educator and activist. In 2017, she became the first person to bicycle alongside the monarchs during their annual migration, traveling over 10,000 miles from Mexico, through the United States, to Canada and back again. Through grit, determination, and resourcefulness, she was able to accomplish her goal while educating and raising awareness all along the way. Her story is one of discovery, of harsh realities, but also of hope because of the people who she met along the way that share her passion and dedication.

How can we help as gardeners? We can plant milkweed and provide additional nectar sources that bloom each season. We can also educate others about the impact of mowing roadsides, using herbicides and pesticides, and climate change. In doing so, we become stewards of plants and monarchs alike.



— *Meet a Master Gardener*

David Parry, Member at Large



My wife Carol and I moved to the Valparaiso area about 30 years ago. We have enjoyed living here and are fortunate that our children/family remain nearby.

I recently retired from a firm that specialized in healthcare information technology. My work required a lot of time and traveling; and I am now enjoying the opportunities to be with family/friends and do things that were previously not possible-- such as gardening and related activities.

I knew that I enjoyed planting and caring for flowers, shrubs, and trees, but I also knew that there was a lot to learn about them. I completed a course to become a Master Naturalist, and then took the Master Gardener course and joined the PCMGA in 2023. These courses, along with the PCMGA, provide the foundations and continuing education that help me every day in my yard and volunteer work at local arboretums and nature preserves.

Photograph provided by David Parry,
pictured left to right, Carol Parry & David Parry at Meijer Garden.

— *Recibees*

Strawberry Freezer Jam

BY SUZANNA TUDOR, PCMG CLASS OF 2002

This is an easy homemade jam that doesn't have to be cooked nor sealed and tastes heavenly fresh.

STRAWBERRY FREEZER JAM

BY SUZANNA TUDOR, PCMG CLASS OF 2003

INGREDIENTS

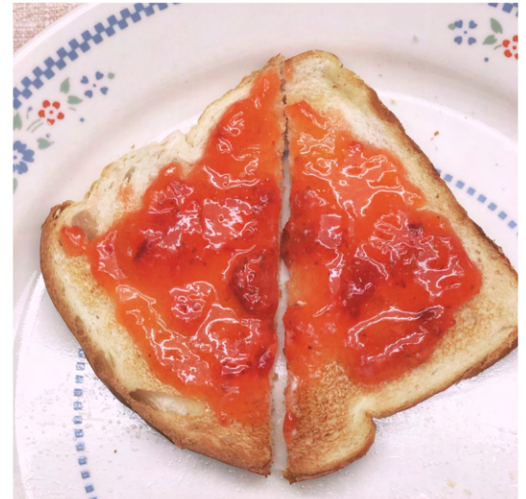
4 CUPS FRESH STRAWBERRIES
4 CUPS SUGAR
1 BOX SURE-JELL
 $\frac{3}{4}$ CUP WATER

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Remove and discard strawberry stems. Crush strawberries. 4 cups of fresh strawberries should yield roughly 2 cups of crushed strawberries. Use ONLY 2 cups of freshly-crushed strawberries in the recipe.

INSTRUCTIONS, CONTINUED:

- Add 4 cups of sugar to the crushed strawberries. Do not reduce the amount of sugar or use sugar substitutes; it will result in setting failures.
- Stir 1 package of Sure-Jell Premium Fruit Pectin and $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of water in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil on high heat, stirring constantly. Boil for 1 minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat.
- Add pectin mixture to fruit and sugar mixture. Stir for 3 minutes or until sugar has completely dissolved.
- Pour freezer jam mixture into canning jars, leaving $\frac{1}{2}$ inch spaces at the top for expansion during freezing. Cover tightly with a lid.
- Allow the freezer jam to stand at room temperature for 24 hours (or until fully set). Refrigerate for immediate use; freeze for future use.



Everyone raves about it. My nephew is already on his second jar and asking for more. I give it away, as I can't eat that much—nor should I, nor is this for those who have to watch their sugar. But a teaspoon or two won't hurt though, would it? (There are sugarless recipes available but I haven't tried those.)

California fruit works just fine, but oh those local strawberries when they start coming into season in June... they are the best.

Try some, you'll like it.



Photography credit: Suzanna Tudor

Local Native Plant Sales:

GIBSON WOODS WILD ONES: SAT. MAY 4, 2024

FROM 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

HELD AT LAKE ETTA COUNTY PARK
4801 W 29TH AVENUE, GARY

FRIENDS OF INDIANA DUNES: SAT. MAY 11

FROM 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM

HELD AT THE FRIENDS OF INDIANA DUNES' OFFICE
1000 W. OAK HILL ROAD, PORTER

MILLER GARDEN CLUB: SAT. MAY 11

FROM 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM

HELD AT THE MARQUETTE PARK AQUARIUM
6918 OAK AVENUE, GARY

DUNES-CALUMET AUDUBON:

MAY 16 - 18, 11:00 AM - 4:00 PM

MAY 19, 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM

HELD DURING THE INDIANA DUNES BIRDING FESTIVAL
AT THE IN DUNES VISITOR'S CENTER
1215 N STATE RD 49, PORTER

— *My Plant;
My Project*



Making the Cut

BY WILMA WILLARD, PCMG CLASS OF 2011

Remember trying out for a sports team, auditioning for a play or interviewing for a job? What qualifications made you a good candidate? As you consider creating your first cutting garden, or just expanding your choices for bouquet-worthy blooms, what plants will “make the cut”?

(continued on page 08)

Pictured: Wilma Willard at Field to Vase U-Pick Flowers, 55923 Tulip Rd, New Carlisle, IN. Photo provided by Wilma Willard.



Most florists and bouquet sellers will tell you the best candidates for a cut flower arrangement are ones with long and sturdy stems. They want flowers that are popular with the public. Fragrance is a bonus! Florists want flowers that span the seasons. Bouquets need flowers of various sizes which fulfill various functions – flowers to wow, flowers to fill in, and plant material to provide structure. The longer the vase life the better.

Growers for commercial use or personal enjoyment look for plants that will produce abundantly and rebound with more blooms after the plant has been cut. Some call this “cut and come again”. Ease of care and disease resistance are also important to the grower. Some growers want to directly sow their cutting gardens while others are willing to start seeds indoors, spending extra time and additional cost to the project.

Listed are some recommended common choices for cutting gardens. What flowers would you add?

ANNUALS/ BIENNIALS

BACHELOR'S
BUTTON
BELLS OF IRELAND
CALENDULA
COLUMBINE
COSMOS
DIANTHUS
FOXGLOVE
GLADIOLUS
LARKSPUR
NIGELLA
SUNFLOWERS
SWEET PEA
SWEET WILLIAM
ZINNIA

PERENNIALS

CARNATION
DAISY
GARDEN PHLOX
PEONY
RUDBECKIA
SALVIA
VERONICA
YARROW

BULBS

ALLIUM
CALLA LILY
DAFFODIL
DAHLIA
HYACINTH
RANUNCULUS
TULIPS

SHRUBS/ TREES

HYDRANGEA
LILAC
VIBURNUM

Which flowers “make the cut” for your garden will depend on your purpose and your goals. Enjoy the beauty of cut flowers and the smell of the season!



Let's educate ourselves and help spread the word about invasives. For further information, visit [Purdue Extension Invasive Species in Indiana Resources](#).

Poison Hemlock (*Conium maculatum*)

Getting to Know Invasives

BY SUZANNA TUDOR, PCMG CLASS OF 2002

Several years ago, we ran "Just Name It" articles to help Master Gardeners identify plants. We have decided to revisit that series to both refresh our memories and educate new members. Our focus now will be invasive plants. For those unfamiliar with the term, according to the Indiana Invasive Species Council, "Exotic invasive species are non-native plants, animals or microbes that spread aggressively, replacing native organisms and posing serious threats to human health and well-being, the environment, or our economy."

Poison Hemlock (*Conium maculatum*) is a plant that resembles Queen Anne's Lace (aka wild carrot, *Daucus carota* L.) however it is very dangerous if ingested by man or beast, as one article implied by the creative title, "A Killer Masquerading as a Queen."



(continued on page 11)

There are helpful differences that distinguish the two: Queen Anne's leaves have a more rounded lobe; whereas the leaves of Poison Hemlock are pointed and triangular. Queen Anne's stems are green and hairy vs. purple-spotted and smooth on Poison Hemlock stems. A third difference is the flowers. Both have umbrella-shaped flowers, but Queen Anne's are flat with a single, reddish-purple flower in the center. According to a Purdue Extension's Weed Science article, the flower stalks can grow from 3 to 8 feet tall, and all parts of this biennial plant are toxic, especially the new leaves in spring and fruit in the fall.

Phragmites australis

You may have seen this reed with fluffy heads in late summer growing along roadways, in ditches and in wetland areas. And don't make the mistake a friend of mine did. With its tall and purplish, feathery top, it looked like a desirable exotic ornamental grass. Beautiful! So she dug some up and planted it on the edge of her yard. Big mistake—it took over!

Invasive phragmites (*Phragmites australis* subsp. *australis*) or common reed is a tall, perennial grass that aggressively colonizes and forms dense stands, preferring freshwater wetlands according to Wisconsin Horticulture Extension. However, it can grow just about anywhere, especially in disturbed ground as evidenced along many of our highways and new construction areas. Here are some details to help you identify this invasive:

- Reaches a height of 15 feet or higher.
- Leaves are smooth, stiff and wide with coarse hollow stems, grayish-green color; at base of each leaf blade, a fringe of hairy *ligules* is present with no auricle clasping the stalk.
- Plume-like flower heads 5-16 inches long are grayish-purple when in fruit, dark brown when mature.
- Reproduces mainly by underground *rhizomes* (can reach six-feet deep in soil) and *stolons* (above-ground runners) can spread up to 60 feet.
- Chemical eradication is necessary for this invasive, as dredging/cutting may spread phragmites.



— *What's in the Tool Shed?*

Water Works

BY WILMA WILLARD, PCMG CLASS OF 2011

The struggle is real--tugging at hoses, stretching to reach the hanging baskets, getting your feet wet while moistening your direct-sown seeds. Does this have to be a part of a gardener's life? Yes, the chore of watering is necessary, but it can be done easier and dryer with the right tools in the toolshed.

Watering wands are just the best tool to reach everywhere. Whether you are filling a bucket, blasting a dirt mess off your sidewalk, misting baby plants, or soaking shrubs, watering wands have pre-set patterns on the head to meet your needs.



My favorite watering wand is 34" long with a thumb lever to control volume, an adjustable head to point any direction and a swivel

connection to the hose, so it spins freely. I now pass up any wand without these features.

Garden hoses come in light, medium, heavy, commercial duty and contractor grade with lengths from 25 feet to 150 feet. Some buzz words on advertising include Kink Stop Technology, Guard-N-Grip, Soft&Supple, Microbial Resistant, 4-ply construction, leak-free O-ring connection, crush proof couplings, and metal spring protective collar. Your choice will depend on your needs and the size of your wallet!

My favorite is an expandable hose. Mine features a swivel connection to the spigot. Besides its practical minimalism, it just makes me smile to see it expand and shrink! Hidden in a pot on the edge of the landscape, the hose color blends right in with my pot, house and plants.

(continued on page 12)

Garden Walk 2024, Sneak Peek

BY MARTHA SEROCZYNSKI, PCMG CLASS OF 2000

Saturday, June 29, 9 a.m - 3 p.m.

Six gardens highlight the 2024 Garden Walk, all in Chesterton with three in the downtown area.

- The first garden is a work-in-progress, always changing with new creations and additions. Fruit trees and grapes dot the landscape. Numerous perennials flower throughout, along with a koi pond and many hypertufa creations. Numerous vines twist around arbors and showy ornamental grasses border the yard.
- The second and third sites showcase the passion for growing native plants which brought two neighbors together to share with Walk participants. Their adjoining yards have native plants for sun and shade, as well as, growing vegetables.
- The fourth site boasts large areas of 500 hostas along a beautiful and meticulously groomed, meandering path.
- The fifth site contains a large piece of property surrounded by garden beds and a vegetable garden. Vining vegetables climb several arbors.
- The sixth site, a large piece of property with attention-grabbing plantings of trees and colorful flower beds. The homeowner's metal sculptor integrated throughout enhances this garden scene.



To make your watering chores complete, how do you store the hose? Curl it on the ground, use a hose reel cart, or crank it onto a mountable hose reel. After an exhausting watering session, an effortless method of storing your hose is paramount to walking away with a smile on your face and that feeling of satisfaction from a job well done.



My favorite is a mounted hose reel with a shelf above. It will rotate then lock in three directions which really makes sense as it is located on the corner of our home. Although somewhat costly and requiring installation, this has been a great fit for our sizable gardens on a 1-acre lot, plus a very good investment and a real back saver!

Photography credit: Wilma Willard



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