



# GARDEN THYME



## — *In this Issue*

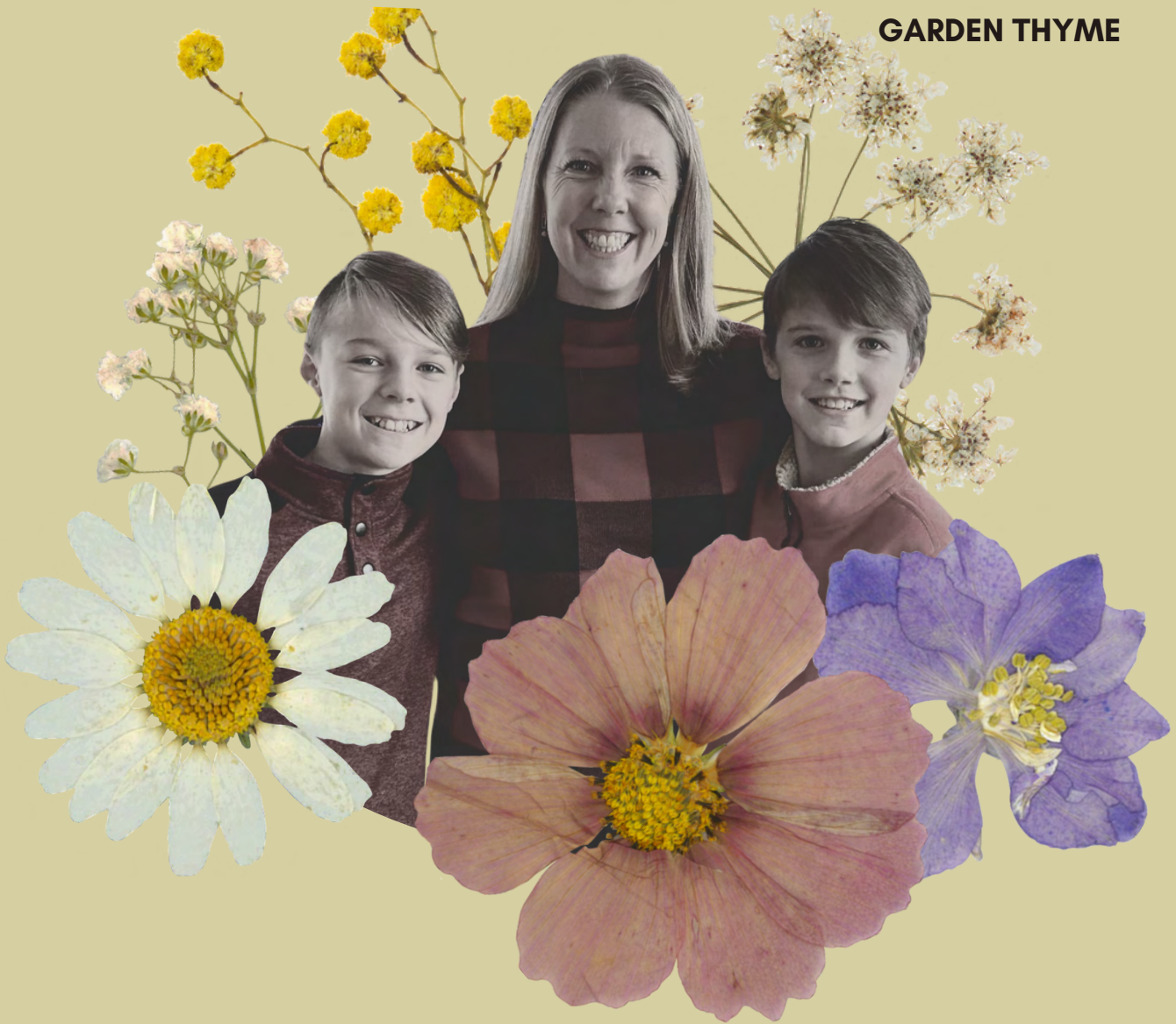
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The Porter County Master Gardeners Association (PCMGGA) is a not-for-profit corporation that promotes the education and pleasure of gardening in cooperation with Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service in Porter County, Indiana.





# 10 Years Later...

BY LYNSAY PLOEHN, FORMER PORTER COUNTY PURDUE EXTENSION EDUCATOR

Wow! The Garden Thyme newsletter has reached a milestone--10 years in print. In 2014 when I was tasked with the duty of writing an Extension newsletter every month, I wasn't sure how I would fill an entire newsletter with information gathered and written entirely by myself. Over the years of teaching the Master Gardener class I met some incredible people with backgrounds in all kinds of professions that were now

retired and wanting to get more involved with horticulture and volunteer service. This opened an opportunity to create a team of writers, graphic designers, artists, travelers, teachers, etc. to get together each month and write articles, conduct interviews, and get news to our Master Gardeners in Northwest Indiana.

*(continued on page 03)*

In our first year of publication, we were awarded the Communications Award for best newsletter in Indiana and nationally among Extension Educators. Our newsletter changed the way other counties decided to write, and more collaborations and teams started popping up to create a way to spread the news and help Master Gardeners earn volunteer hours. Selfishly, I believe our newsletter will always be the most beautifully designed and well written. The articles cover timely gardening news, hot topics in horticulture, help us get to know the individuals that serve within our county, and offer a way to stay connected. Although the times have changed, and the way people read newsletters is now mostly online, I believe the information they get to the people is still fun, interesting and educational.

I had the chance to catch up with a handful of Master Gardeners this year at the Annual Gardening Show, but for those of you I haven't gotten to chat with and are wondering what I have been up to since I left Extension, here's the short version. I am still homeschooling my two boys who are now 12 and 10 years old. We live in Valparaiso for eight months out of the year and spend four months in Frankfort, Indiana during the summer months. My family has a u-pick cut flower farm, Anderson Flower Farm, in Frankfort that I helped manage for the past four years.

However, my short term rental business, Divided Sky Travels, is my main source of

income, and it has now grown to a size that I have had to step away from the flower farm. I manage 10 properties all over the US and Costa Rica, and I'm continually adding new properties that I co-host or manage for other owners.

But I can't quite give up my horticulture roots, so I still do landscape design on the side. It helps me stay connected and fresh on my Latin nomenclature, and what's new in the plant production world. One of my designs was recently on the Garden Walk at Kathy Sipple's home.

If you see me out and about, don't be a stranger. Come up and chat, and remind me of your name, because I am poor at remembering everyone. But I enjoy seeing and hearing about all the great work you are doing in and around our community. The newsletter is a legacy I'm grateful has reached 10 years, and also the Gardening Show that is still going strong!



— *Meet a Master Gardener*

# Meet Your MG Membership Team

I have lived in Valparaiso for 40 years with my husband Rob.

We have two married daughters, two grandsons, and a grand-dog.

I am a Registered Dietitian and work at Northwest Health, Porter hospital as a Clinical Dietitian.

In 2011, I took the MG course; it was a "gift of time" to myself after my daughters went to college. I have always loved having

plants and gardening, so it just seemed like a natural thing to do. I learned of the

Master Gardening program when I attended a

gardening program that was sponsored by PCMGA and taught by Zann Wilson. I was hooked after that! I grow everything including herbs, fruits, vegetables and flowers and maintain two beehives in our garden. My latest gardening interest is in growing and using herbs for health. I'm excited to be a part of the PCMGA Executive Board as a Membership Co-Chair with Margaret Mudd, and as a member of the Education Committee.



*Jill Kilhefner,  
Membership Co-Chair*

Photograph provided by Jill Kilhefner

I was born and raised in Chicago and have been married to my college sweetheart for almost 45 years. We are the proud parents of four adult children, and their families live near us. This year we became adoring grandparents to our first grandchild, a little girl. My husband's work opportunity brought us to Northwest Indiana 15 years ago.

My love of gardening came from my mother who had a beautiful rose garden. I have been a home gardener for years and expanded that passion when I began leading the volunteer effort at my children's grade school garden in Orlando. It was there that my passion took off, but I was also busy raising our children while working as a nurse in a dermatology practice. Now that I am retired, I am grateful to be able to devote a little more time to this part of my life.

I hope to inspire others to appreciate the gift of nature and rewards of gardening as I do. I was motivated to take the course to grow my knowledge and skills in gardening. During the course, I discovered a new community of people who share my passion and ways to support others who are interested in learning about gardening and the natural world. I requested to help with membership because I believed it was important to build cohesion in our association as it would benefit us all. We all have unique experiences and gifts that make us an important resource, for each other—and others.

*Margaret Mudd,  
Membership Co-Chair*



Thanks so much to our wonderful volunteers who came out to help at our 18th Annual Gardening Show on 1/20/24. From our committee members who worked for months making the show a success, to our members and master gardeners from other counties that came out to volunteer at the show: thank you for your help collecting and packaging seeds, retrieving bulbs and storing them, setting up, tearing down, hauling tables back and forth, etc. We could not do it without our wonderful group of volunteers! It is only because of our amazing group of volunteers that our show has been, and continues to be, a success.

The 18th Annual Gardening Show Stats

- 1,280 paid admissions
- 1,606 people in the building (which includes vendors, volunteers, children, etc.)

Here's to our next show—our 19th Annual Gardening Show—scheduled for the last Saturday in January, 1/25/2025. Once again, a big THANKS to all our volunteers; we can't make this show a success without you!

- Ann Cierniak, Gardening Show Chair,  
PCMGM Class of 2003



Photography credit: Robert Evans.  
Pictured: Joanne Adank, left, and Ann Cierniak.



# Gardening Show Wrap-Up

Photography credit, top right: Nancy Rosene. Pictured left to right: Sheri Gow, Chris Schrey, Mary Brown, Laura Hrusovsky, Sherrie Dobrowski. Photography credit, lower right: Robert Evans. Pictured, Amy Carmody.

— *Volunteer Plug*

# What Makes Volunteers Tick?

BY MAUREEN PHILLIPS, PCMG CLASS OF 2003

I wanted to learn more about who we are, what we value, and why we volunteer. Interviewing volunteers at the Gardening Show seemed to be the ideal opportunity. *(continued on page 08)*



Photographs provided by volunteers. Top row, left to right: Robert Bartlett PCMG 2023, Jennifer Wheeler PCMG 2023, Lynne Sundwall PCMG 2016. Bottom row: Tina Ryczek PCMG 2009, Art Cobbs PCMG 2017, Sue Arnold PCMG 2000 (and family).



Thanks to each of you who was kind enough to talk with me. Twenty two of you did--about 20% of our current members. I asked everyone the same set of questions, beginning with their class year; those ranged from 2000 to 2023. Most of you seemed happy someone was interested in listening and cared about what you thought. Here is a sampling of what you told me:

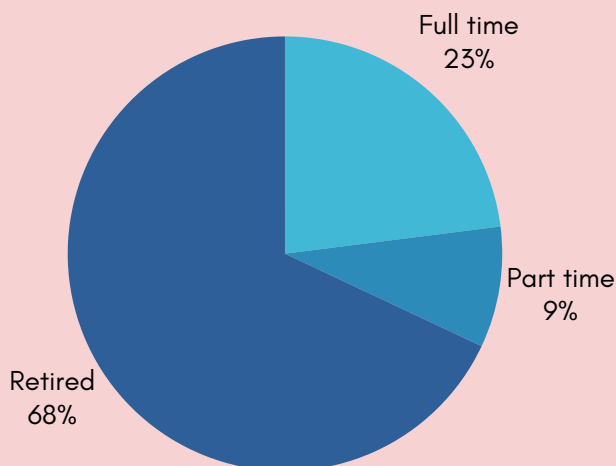
**WHY DID YOU TAKE THE MASTER GARDENER CLASS?**

- I enjoy gardening and (finally) had the time to take the course.
- I always loved to garden and was hungry to know more.
- I wanted to get rid of bad habits and learn the proper way to garden.
- I moved here from the desert and needed to learn to garden in this climate.
- I was new to the area and wanted to meet people with similar interests.
- I needed information for a specific project.
- I came with, or because of, a friend.

**WHAT DO YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT BEING A MASTER GARDENER?**

- The people, the people, the people! I like being around people with similar interests and learning from other MGs who share information and ideas. "I never met a mean gardener."
- Participating in our events and projects like Hospice.
- Inspiring others and helping them learn and grow.
- Breadth of knowledge, Extension Office training and support, continuing education, especially about natives.
- The satisfaction that comes from volunteering and donating my time.

**DO YOU WORK FULL TIME?**



**WHAT WORK DO/  
DID YOU (IF RETIRED) DO?**

- |                        |                               |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • CARPENTRY            | • POLICE DETECTIVE            |
| • CONSTRUCTION SUPPORT | • NURSE                       |
| • HVAC                 | • SOCIAL WORKER               |
| • FINANCIAL INVESTMENT | • IT SPECIALIST               |
| • TAX PREPARATION      | • ORGANIST                    |
| • BREEDING MEALWORMS   | • MUSIC DIRECTOR              |
|                        | • CRAFT BREWER                |
|                        | • POLITICAL SCIENCE PROFESSOR |

We are a group of truly interesting and diverse people!



We are also generous with our time: the majority of us volunteer with additional organizations, especially our churches. Nearly 40% of us volunteer exclusively as Master Gardeners.

**Volunteer time is limited to evenings and weekends for those who work full time.**

**Others' time is limited by caring for grandchildren, travel and other activities.**

**WHAT ACCOMPLISHMENT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?**

- raising your children or grandchildren
- finishing a degree while raising four children
- earning an MBA
- starting or building a business
- securing a \$5,000 grant for an outdoor educational area
- raising \$8,000 for a church project
- using data to achieve an 80% improvement in product quality and reliability

**RANK WHAT BEST DESCRIBES HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT PCMGA:**

"I can make a contribution."

"These are my people."

"I can make a difference."

**AND WE DO!**

**LA PORTE COUNTY EXTENSION  
MASTER GARDENERS**  
invite you to their  
6th Annual Garden Show!  
**\$10 AT THE DOOR | KIDS FREE**



**MARCH 16, 2024**  
**8:00 A.M. - 4:00 P.M. CDT**  
**MICHIGAN CITY HIGH SCHOOL**  
8466 W. Pahs Road  
Michigan City, IN 46360

— *What's in the  
Tool Shed?*

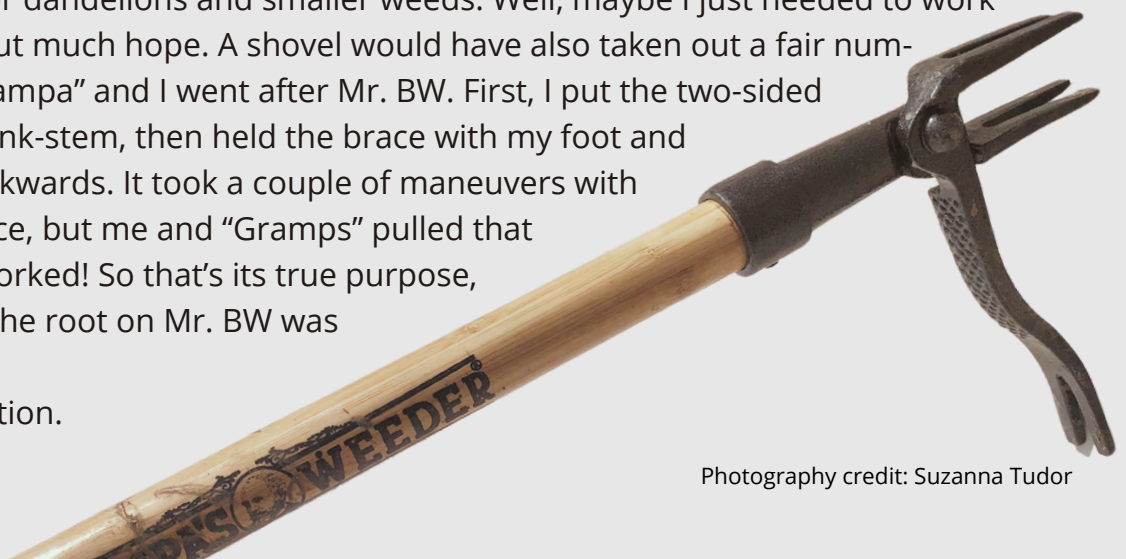
# Grampa's Weeder

BY SUZANNA TUDOR, PCMG CLASS OF 2002



During garden clean up last fall, I noticed a black walnut (*Juglans nigra* L.) tree sprout making its way up through a group of my red echinacea. I get these everywhere in my flower garden from those pesky tree-planting squirrels. It was towering over my red coneflowers. Oh man, I've got to get that out of there I told myself, and for a couple of reasons. One was the obvious fact that it will be soon crowding out the flowers and taking needed nutrients from them. Secondly, as you may know, black walnut trees exude a chemical called juglone that is toxic to several types of plants that exhibit juglone sensitivity. It had to go.

I thought about the new tool purchased earlier last year, Grampa's Weeder. That wimpy thing proved to have lackluster results for dandelions and smaller weeds. Well, maybe I just needed to work with it more. I didn't hold out much hope. A shovel would have also taken out a fair number of coneflowers. So, "Grampa" and I went after Mr. BW. First, I put the two-sided prong around the tree's trunk-stem, then held the brace with my foot and levered the tool handle backwards. It took a couple of maneuvers with the ground providing a brace, but me and "Gramps" pulled that tree out of the ground. It worked! So that's its true purpose, uprooting small trees! FYI, the root on Mr. BW was over 21 inches long... and now for squirrel relocation.

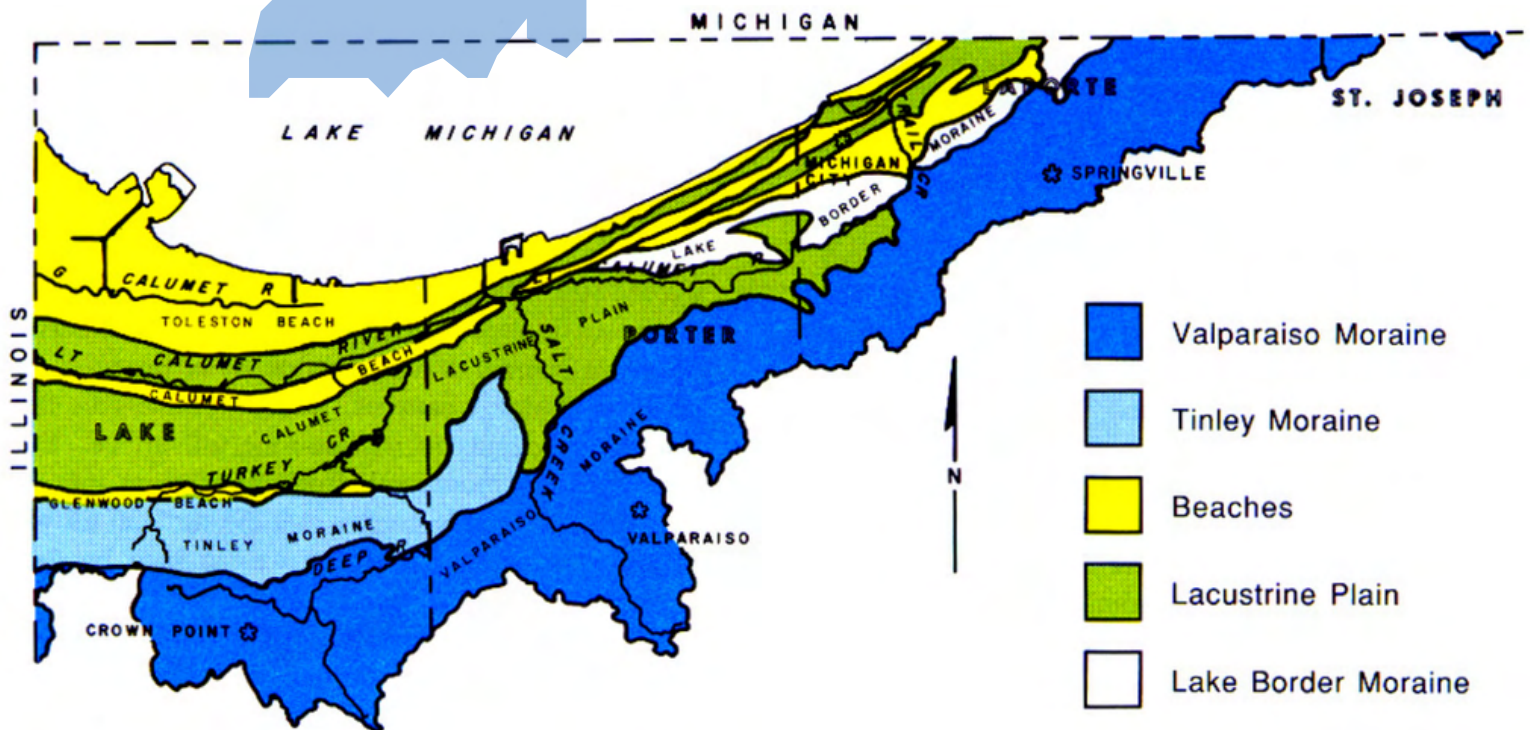


Photography credit: Suzanna Tudor

— *Nature Watch*

# Moraine Nature Preserve

BY WILMA WILLARD, PCMG CLASS OF 2011



Take a trail among rolling hills, steep ridges, deep-wooded gorges, muck pockets, potholes, and a natural kettle pond. Where? Look no further than Porter County at The Moraine Nature Preserve. Few people know of the 814 acres of unfragmented blocks of forest that offers a valuable habitat to various plant and animal species. But it has been here for a long, long, long time!

Old-growth remnants of oak-hickory forest, and mesic beech-maple forest are extremely valuable to nesting forest interior birds as well as migrating species. The forest floor is rich with wildflowers, particularly in the spring.

*(continued on page 12)*



Ponds and wetlands are used by many species of both rare and common wildlife. During our hike in December, my husband and I viewed a beaver lodge and shared pictures and information on beaver life with a group of 4-9 year old boys during a club meeting. They loved it!

I always wondered how the moraine came to be. When hiking at Sunset Hill Farm County Park in January, I found the best explanation on a plaque in the prairie there. I will share my summary here:

Picture a bulldozer that is a mile high and wider than Lake Michigan. That's about the size of the Michigan Lobe of the Late Wisconsin Glacier, which scoured this landscape during the last ice age.

As the climate began to warm, the glacier slowly melted northward. Rather than one long steady movement, its retreat involved plenty of stops and starts and direction changes as the climate

fluctuated. The Michigan Lobe paused with its southernmost tip here in northern Porter County and meltwater streamed out of the glacier, carrying sand, silt, clay, and gravel that built up at the glacier's southern edge. Over time, these deposits piled as much as 300 feet thick and 17 miles wide. They formed the Valparaiso Moraine, which wraps like a smile around the south end of Lake Michigan. Moraine Nature Preserve and Sunset Hill Farm Prairie lie on the northern edge of this moraine.

Today, deep, rich soils and dense vegetation cover the once-barren glacial till. Gradually, organisms grew on the bare ground - first lichens and bacteria, later plants. As each organism grew and died, it broke down the minerals in the till and added organic material to the soil.

The easy-to-moderate terrain makes for a pleasant hike through history!



## — A Note from Nikky

# Nikky Witkowski

*Extension Educator, Agriculture & Natural Resources Purdue Extension Porter County*



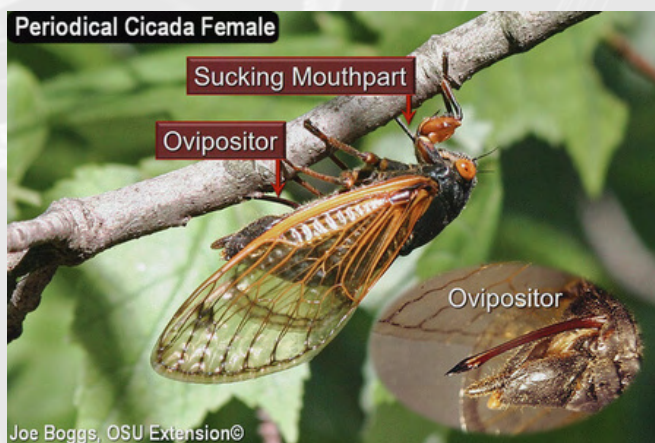
Spring will be coming soon, and with it, the start of the garden season! Be aware that this year Northern Indiana will play host to the periodical cicada. Young trees or some shrubs could be in danger of damage from the females, as they lay their eggs in branches between 3/16" and 7/16".

Insecticide sprays are not going to be a successful preventive measure, as the cicadas are not actually eating trees. The damage is caused when females lay eggs with their sharp *ovipositors* (sharp appendages for the purpose of egg laying). The best protection will be in the form of

netting or other covering that will prevent cicadas from getting to the tree itself. The covering or mesh should have holes 3/8" or smaller and needs to be timed during their emergence in late May thru June.

In response to the cicada emergence, be aware that Cicada Killer Wasps will probably have a hay-day attacking them. They are a large, solitary wasp that grabs the cicada, paralyzes it, and then puts it in a tunnel enclosure underground for its young to feed on. They are typically not aggressive, unless they are protecting their young. Watch for their tunnels near edges of sidewalks. Control is controversial since they will be helping to lower the periodical cicada populations.

I am also so thrilled that word seems to be getting out about a "Re-Entry" option for Purdue Extension Master Gardeners that have been out of touch for a while. I have had a few requests come in and most of them are working through the extension's guidelines and procedures. Please keep spreading the word! The policy is in the updated [Purdue Extension Policy Guide](#).



Slits are cut into branches for depositing eggs, and become weakened by these holes.



# GARDEN THYME

IS A PUBLICATION OF THE PORTER COUNTY  
MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION [WWW.PCGARDEN.INFO](http://WWW.PCGARDEN.INFO)

- EARN 0.5 HOURS OF EDUCATION CREDIT FOR READING THE NEWSLETTER
- EARN VOLUNTEER CREDIT FOR CONTRIBUTING TO THE NEWSLETTER
- WEB-BASED EDUCATION HOURS
- PURDUE CONSUMER HORTICULTURE
- PURDUE EXTENSION MASTER GARDENER EVENTS CALENDAR

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