

The Latest Dirt

La Porte County Master Gardener Newsletter



OCTOBER 2022

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2022 MEETING SCHEDULE

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

October 6	Workshop Extension Office
November 3	Business Annual Meeting Elections
December	Holiday Dinner

NEXT BOARD MEETING

October 12th 6:00 p.m.
La Porte Library

“THE LATEST DIRT” is published monthly.
The next deadline is:
October 20, 2022



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



PURDUE EXTENSION
MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM

Cut Back Perennials Now or Later?

By: Rosie Lerner

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

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

Your native wildlife will thank you if you allow the tops to remain! Seed heads, fruits, stems and foliage provide food and shelter. Although late-season bloomers such as rudbeckia and coneflowers may have turned brown, birds still feed on the seed. Many butterflies overwinter on plant debris.

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

Another bonus: Leaving the tops in place will remind you where the plants are in case you’re thinking of adding more plants or rearranging the elements of the garden before spring growth begins.

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

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

ASSOCIATION NEWS

October Workshop

The October Workshop will be an open discussion on our plans for next year. Have you ever thought about a field trip to a garden? What would you like the Association to focus on next year? Bring your concerns, ideas, suggestions about how we can continue to help not only ourselves, but others in our community. The Workshop will meet at the Extension Office at 6:00 p.m. Look forward to seeing you all there.

Association Update

By: Randy Russell

Good news Master Gardeners, two items of interest. The Board met with Azad Chahal, ANR Educator at our monthly Board Meeting on Wednesday, September 14, 2022. He informed us we could once again begin to hold our monthly meeting at the Extension Office meeting room. We just need to have a member at the office there before the office closes to get a door key and stay there until the meeting is over, room is cleaned, and lights are all turned off. Eunice Conway graciously took on that responsibility.

The second item of interest is the next Master Gardener class. Azad is working on a spring program starting in February of 2023 which will be here soon. He indicated that most classes will be held in person, but there may be a time(s) a Zoom meeting maybe warranted, and a minimum of 15 people will need to sign up for the class. Thanks to Azad for getting us back to our meeting location and getting the Master Gardner classes scheduled once again.

“That’s What We Do”

By: Jackie Carroll

Last month, a La Porte woman stopped at the Extension Office for Hot Line assistance with a landscaping problem. Her recently purchased home included a small front yard and a large back yard. The problem was that the entire landscaping and lawn had been unattended for a long time. Trying to get started on the overhaul, she sought assistance to identify the different trees, bushes, plants and weeds and to create an action plan as she begins the transition. She asked for our help.

At the September member meeting, I mentioned the request and Donna Pouzar volunteered. Donna contacted her and set a date, which was a few days ago. Wanting to take advantage of the opportunity to learn through Donna, I went also. We spent a little over an hour walking around. Amidst the weeds, invasives and hostas, there was a gorgeous arborvitae, a beautiful spruce, several chamaecyparis (conifer) and in front, a weeping male White Mulberry tree that is just waiting for a little table and chair underneath. She has a lot of work ahead of her, but now feels more confident about what is needed now to prepare for next spring. She has also begun internet research on her trees and future plantings.

I thanked Donna for sharing her time, knowledge, and kindness. She turned to me and said: “That’s what we do.” A great reminder to us of our mission. Thank you, Donna.

**Association Meeting Minutes
September 1, 2022**

In person meeting with 19 members
By: Karren Coplen and Jackie Carroll

Call to order: 6:30 p.m. Chaired by Jackie Carroll

Treasurer's Report: Debbie Moore. Reports for June and July handed out and reviewed. Debbie reminded us that we have a membership to Fernwood Gardens that will admit a member and 3 guests. Just request it and pick it up at the office.

Secretary's Report: Karren Coplen. The July meeting was a picnic and auction. No minutes taken.

Pending Business

Picnic wrap up: August 4th. at the Red Mill Park. Attendance was light, but good times and the auction went well. Mike Altman served as auctioneer and did a great job. Lots of great donations to sell from members. We may choose different entrees for next year. We made \$281 in auction proceeds. We met inside-no wasp attacks this year.

Upcoming elections-Jackie-Linda Hough will chair nominating committee and needs two more members to serve on the committee. We will need to replace 4 members of the board who have completed their 2 year terms: Randa McGill, Debbie Moore, Karren Coplen, Mary Davis and Deborah Sarver, currently serving as: President, Treasurer, Secretary and 2 Speakers Bureau positions. At the end of the year, we will need to confirm or replace Randy Russell who was appointed to fill the vacated Vice President position. Election will be held at the November meeting.

Status of Master Gardener education program-Jackie-Per Azad, there will be no fall class this year, but a virtual class in February is planned.

New Business:

Member Survey Results-Jackie- Thanks to everyone who participated. It provided good guidance for future actions. Much discussion: one person reported they could not open their survey forms to fill them out, and another didn't recall seeing the survey. Overall ratings for Purdue Extension Support were negative ("does not meet), particularly with lack of Master Gardener program; improvement needed for Board ("meets-"); "meets" for membership; "meets" for Classes/Webinars; and Sharing Horticultural Info was spread eventually between all three categories. Jackie highlighted various comments and will summarize and send to the membership. We have work to do!

2022 EXECUTIVE BOARD

PRESIDENT	RANDA MAGILL
VICE PRESIDENT	RANDY RUSSELL
CO-SECRETARIES	KARREN COPLIN JACKIE CARROLL
TREASURER	DEBBIE MOORE
ED. COMMITTEE/ SPEAKERS BUREAU	EUNICE CONWAY DEBORAH SARVER MARY DAVIS
PAST PRESIDENT	ANN KLOSINSKI

2022 PROJECT COORDINATORS

Brown Bag Gardening Series

Karren Coplen _____ 219-390-4118
_____ karrenc@comcast.net

Farmers' Market – La Porte

Chris Svoboda _____ 614-377-6409
_____ svoboda.christina@att.net

Garden Hotline

Extension Office _____ 219-324-9407

Habitat for Humanity

_____ OPEN

Friendship Botanic Gardens

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

Pioneer Land School Tours

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

Pioneer Heritage Garden

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

Seed Savers

Mary Davis _____ 219-877-5339
_____ mdavis9757@gmail.com

Sunflower Fair

_____ OPEN

Garden Show

_____ OPEN

Various thoughts were: disappointment with lack of support from Purdue. We don't need any new projects until we fully staff the ones we have. Some wanted more zoom meetings, especially with winter coming. Others wanted more in-person, especially with interesting programming. Lots of reasons for not attending or volunteering time: too busy, working, family responsibilities and more. The Board has work to do and is counting on the membership as well to participate and assist. Lack of volunteers to step up was a frequent comment.

Letter to John Orick-Jackie-A letter was sent recently by the board to John Orick, asking for more support to make our program stronger. The response was that we need to meet in person with Azad, our educator, and hopefully resolve issues.

Coordinator Updates:

Brown Bag Series-Karren Coplen-two brown bag meetings are planned for this fall: hydroponics (October) will be presented by Karren. November will be about Winter Sowing. Having problems getting response to set locations and times up. More information will be announced as it becomes available. Karren talked about the benefits to members who make presentations-hours, knowledge, the good results of sharing what you know. Hopefully more people will volunteer to share what they know with members and out in the community.

Newsletter needs-Jackie and Donna-we still need to do a better job of submitting news. Donna assembles the newsletter, but can't do all the writing too. All coordinators need to submit news on each event we participate in. News must be garden related and meet Purdue standards.

Sunflower Fair-Linda Hough-September 17th. Fun event, we are judging the sunflower contest again this year, so we get a free booth. We still need volunteers to staff the booth. Jackie will send out an email blast.

Friendship Gardens-no report

Garden Hotline-Jackie-Jackie is working in the office on Fridays and getting some interesting calls. She had a woman bring in a box of tomatoes recently to ask if they were good to eat. A woman bought a fixer-upper and wants someone willing to walk the property with her to let her know what she should do to clean and fix up. Wanting this person not to do the work, just let her know what needs to be done. Donna Pouzar volunteered to assist. Thanks, Donna.

Habitat for Humanity-no report

Pioneer Garden-Connie Shei-We still have fall school tours September 21-23, so keeping the garden in good shape is important. There is a crew coming out to work on Mondays, so it will look good for visitors. It's a good group of volunteers. There is a draft horse event coming up, so there will be lots of people around.

Seed Savers-Mary Davis- We have been collecting seeds from Pioneer Garden as they dry. We will have a seed cleaning event the end of October. Mary will put out an announcement.

More Comments:

Greg Kellpsh-talking about the Sponge (Gypsy) moth. Laying eggs and webs in trees now.

Karen Sarver found a great new app for identifying plants and insects. Works fast and provides identification. It's by INaturalist and called SEEK.

We need to work up an information sheet to hand out at our events about the February MG Class. Also, a sign-up sheet to start collecting names. A number of individuals signed the interest sheets for the Master Gardener program at the Farmer's Market and Soil & Conservation booth. We will consolidate the lists and provide to Purdue/Azad. Perhaps Azad can help with organizing those who want to take the spring class.

Meeting adjourned at 7:23 Donna Pouzar made a motion to adjourn, Randy Russell seconded it.

Next meeting will be October 6

Greg Kellpsh Wins the Tomato Contest!

By: Karren Coplen

The competition was tough, but several members brought in samples of their home-grown tomatoes to find the best tomato at the September first meeting held at the Bethany Lutheran Church, and Greg's Brandywine was the winner.

Each contender brought in two tomatoes, one to admire and the other to taste and compare. The table showed an array of the incredible variety of tomatoes, from the pale gold Lemon Boy, to the dark and eerie Black Krim, with green shoulders and deep, dark purple flesh. Each tomato was cut up into many pieces and displayed on a plate with an uncut version to admire and toothpicks to pick up tasting samples. Mary Davis, organizer of the contest, brought in more samples to round out the display, including the heart shaped Bull's Head, and the multicolored cherry tomatoes, from pale gold to deep dark red, each with their own unique flavor characteristics



Each judge was allowed to taste them all, then vote for their three favorites. Once the votes were tallied, the results were clear. Greg's Brandywine was the clear winner. Linda Hough won second place with her bright gold, Yellow Valencia. Karen Sarver won third with her cluster of slightly smaller Sweet Clusters, still on the vine.

Each of the winners received a certificate, (suitable for framing) and the first place won a beautiful, engraved crystal trophy with a bright red plastic tomato and blue ribbon. Third place trophy was a small saltshaker trophy with a strawberry sized plastic tomato perched on top. The winners also have earned bragging rights for the next year.

What a marvelous variety of tomatoes our Master Gardeners grew, and it was fun to see and taste the differences of what we each choose to grow. The leftover tomatoes, that weren't cut up for tasting, went home with Karren Coplen and became 6 quarts of tomatoes, all ready for delicious soups this winter.

Well done, Master Gardeners. What a fun event to share our gardening ability and have fun too. I wonder how many of us will grow something we've never grown before on the basis of what we tasted at this contest. It will be interesting to see what members bring in next year if we repeat this contest. Now, what can we taste and compare next???



From left: Karen Sarver, 3rd Place; Greg Kellpsh, 1st Place and anonymous stand-in for Linda Hough who left early and won 2nd Place.

THE LATEST DIRT ON ... MARY DAVIS



Master Gardener Status: Silver Master Gardener

When did you take the MG Class? I was in the 2013 class.

Where do you live? I live on the south side of Michigan City on 100 North.

Are you originally from LaPorte? If not, where did you live before you moved here? I grew up near where I live now. After I was married, we moved near Bloomington Indiana, then Indianapolis then to Crystal Lake Illinois.

What's your family background? Husband? Kids? Pets? I have a husband Bill, three daughters and now three grandchildren.

Do you work and, if so, what do you do? I am retired, I was trained and registered in Radiologic Technology, Ultrasonography and CAT SCAN.

How long have you been gardening? My whole life, I was taught at a young age growing up although I didn't appreciate it then.

Do you have a favorite flower? Vegetable? I would have to say tomatoes, they are so varied and challenging.

What type of gardening do you enjoy the most? When someone else does the weeding! I would have to say vegetable gardening because you get to eat everything.

Other than gardening, what other interests/hobbies do you have? I manage my churches resale store, I enjoy yoga and just recently learning quilting

ANNOUNCEMENT

ATTENTION

Revising Volunteer and/or Education Hours

By: Azad Chahal, ANR Educator

If you receive a message about revising volunteer and/or education entries that you made in MG Manager, please make sure you complete this revision process by the 10th of the month so those entries can be approved.

Looking for someone who can till our garden!

By: Karren Coplen

Our garden is 60' by 22', with a walkway in the center and a fence around it. We are getting rid of all the containers and raised beds and would like to find someone who could till it up so we can refresh and start over. We got one estimate that's way over our budget and would love to find someone we can hire to really chew it up so we can reorganize and replant.

We're in the Hesston area, near the Michigan state line. If you have the time, strength and equipment to help us out, please email karrenc@comcast.net. Would love to have it done by mid-October so we can still plant our garlic for next year.

Thanks, Karren Coplen

EDUCATION

Hydroponic Growing is the first Brown Bag Session this year

By: Karren Coplen

Growing plants hydroponically has become so common that the units are now for sale in WalMart, and high rise buildings hold whole gardens of produce, all over the world. With the price of transport rising and cities growing larger, the roof, or your own kitchen, is the most convenient and economical place to farm for fresh produce.

Our first Brown Bag session of the year will focus on how easy and delicious that system can be in your own home.

Two dates are set for this year. There will be no admission charge to attend and all events will be in the evening. October 13, 6:30 p.m. at the Michigan City Public Library, 100 E. 4th St, Michigan City, IN 46360 will be Hydroponics, presented by Karren Coplen.

November 22, 6:30 p.m. will be Winter Sowing by Dolly Foster at The Exchange, 807 Indiana Ave, La Porte, IN 46350.



Fall Nature Festival

Bob Bruner
Purdue Extension Educator
Agriculture & Natural Resources
Clay and Owen Counties

October 1st at McCormick's Creek state park. Purdue Extension will be holding a Fall Nature Festival at the park, with information, activities, and even a hike talking about the natural world, invasive species, and more!

You can sign up using the QR code in this flier or go to:

<https://tinyurl.com/ycks4zd2>

If you have any questions or for more information call: 812-829-5020.

PURDUE
UNIVERSITY

Extension
OWEN COUNTY



SATURDAY, OCTOBER 1ST
9AM TO 1PM
REGISTER:
[HTTPS://TINYURL.COM/YCKS4ZD2](https://tinyurl.com/ycks4zd2)

Contact:
Owen County Extension
812-829-5020
rbruner@purdue.edu



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GARDEN CALENDAR

October Garden Calendar

By: Rosie Lerner

HOME (Indoor plants and activities)

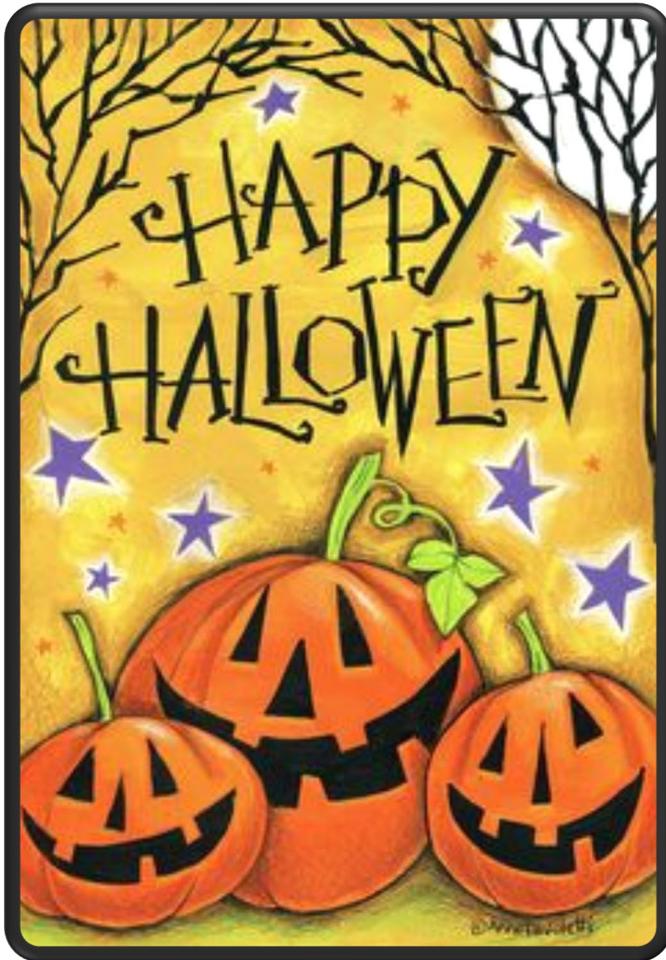
- Keep poinsettia in complete darkness for 15 hours each day — for example, between 5 p.m. and 8 a.m. — for eight to 10 weeks until red bracts begin to show.
- Pot spring-flowering bulbs to force into bloom indoors. Moisten soil and refrigerate 10 to 13 weeks. Transfer to a cool, sunny location, and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

GARDEN (Flowers, vegetables, and small fruits)

- Harvest root crops and store in a cold (32 F), humid location. Storing produce in perforated plastic bags is a convenient, easy way to increase humidity.
- Harvest brussels sprouts as they develop in the axils of the leaves from the bottom of the stem. Brussels sprouts will continue to develop up the stem.
- Harvest pumpkins and winter squash before frost, but when rind is hard and fully colored. Store in a cool location until ready to use.
- Harvest gourds when stems begin to brown and dry. Cure at 70-80 F for two to four weeks.
- Harvest mature, green tomatoes before frost and ripen indoors in the dark. Warmer temperatures lead to faster ripening.
- Asparagus top growth should not be removed until foliage yellows. Let foliage stand over winter to collect snow for insulation and moisture.
- Remove plant debris from the garden to protect next year's plantings from insect and disease buildup. Compost plant refuse by alternating layers of soil, plant material, and manure or commercial fertilizer.
- Have garden soil tested for fertilizer needs every three to five years.
- Incorporate organic matter in fall to avoid the rush of garden activities and waterlogged soil in spring. Soils prepared in the fall tend to warm faster and allow earlier planting in spring.
- Dig tender garden flower bulbs for winter storage. Gladiolus corms should be dug when leaves begin turning yellow. Caladiums, geraniums and tuberous begonias should be lifted before killing frost. Dig canna and dahlia roots after a heavy frost. Allow to air dry, then pack in dry peat moss or vermiculite, and store in a cool location.
- Complete planting of spring-flowering bulbs.

YARD (Lawns, woody ornamentals, and fruits)

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

**STANDING COMMITTEE****COORDINATORS**

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

Purdue Extension Office __ 324-9407

Azad Chahal ___ aschahal@purdue.edu

The Latest Dirt is published monthly. The deadline for submission is the 20th of each month. Our mission is to publish articles and events of interest to other Master Gardeners and the community. Articles about personal experiences, suggestions on gardening books, catalogs, helpful websites, tips and tricks, book reviews, seminars you've attended are welcomed.

Submission requirements: Articles should be no longer than a page and can include photos. References must be included. Latin names of plants should be italicized. We do not accept articles pertaining to medicinal information. Master Gardeners will get volunteer hours for time spent working on an article.

Have a garden item for sale or trade?

Buy, Sell, Trade at the
Trading Shed

Place your free ad in *The Latest Dirt*.

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

Send ads, photos, events or articles by the 20th of the month to either:

pouzdlp@icloud.com

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