

# Garden Thyme

May 2023

<https://extension.purdue.edu/porter>

Volume 9, Issue 3



## Frank Lisak, PCMGA President

"It is the knowledge we have learned through our experiences, and the education and scientific research through Purdue University that collectively our group continues to grow, and in that, we can live up to our motto of *Helping Others Grow.*"

### HOTLINE HOTLINE HOTLINE

Have a gardening dilemma? Help is available at the Master Gardener Hotline from spring through autumn! Call 219-465-3555, or send an email to [mastergardenerhotline@gmail.com](mailto:mastergardenerhotline@gmail.com). Feel free to include photos of your problem in your email.

## PCMGA GARDEN WALK 2023

SATURDAY, JUNE 24

### Seven Beautiful Gardens to Discover

What Makes Our Walk Special? Northwest Indiana's premier garden walk is sponsored annually by the Porter County Master Gardeners Association and Purdue Extension Porter County. Not only is our Walk pretty, it's also smart. We're all about education and sharing. Our homeowners love to share their knowledge, and Master Gardeners are in the gardens to help answer your questions. Not only does your guide include a description of each garden, it features our 1-2-3 Education Points! Each point in the garden description matches a numbered stake in the garden that highlights a special attraction in each landscape.

Your opportunity to volunteer is coming soon!

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*Above: Meadow voles are one of the most common and prolific small mammals in North America with dense, soft fur that is chestnut-brown above and gray or grayish buff on the underside.*

*Left above: Vole trails in turf.*

*Left: Vole holes seen in Ron's yard in winter.*

*Below: A trap that Ron has used to control voles.*

## Vole War

By Ron Hermance  
PCMG Class of 2019

After losing fruit trees to an infestation of meadow voles, it has been war. They look cute and cuddly, but these stocky little rodents can do significant gnawing damage.

Not to be confused with moles, which are 4-7 inches long with paddle-shaped feet, moles are insectivores, eating grubs and worms. They push dirt out of the holes they dig and create covered mounds in the turf.

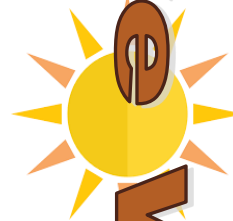
In contrast, meadow voles are smaller, 3 1/2-5 inches including tail, and are herbivores, eating nuts, seeds, bulbs, roots and bark. They create open runs in turf and happily scamper through snow tunnels, not hibernating. If you do not control them, they will colonize and destroy your property vegetation and fruit trees. They will gnaw the bark and effectively girdle it.

To discourage voles, aka meadow mice, here are a few remedies:

- Keep vegetation short
- Wrap fence wire around trees
- Keep earth bare around fruit trees. Garwood Orchards and Purdue suggested 1-ft. coarse gravel around tree base.
- Use dog and children-friendly covered poison traps, i.e., lockable boxes with poison bait pellets with key access
- Sprinkle pellets on the ground made of castor oil to cause gastric distress
- Employ rat, snap traps with peanut butter and oatmeal or apple baits
- Check out the numerous poison baits available at retailers

Just helping others grow with being forewarned is to be forearmed concerning these creatures.

More about meadow voles from Purdue: <https://extension.purdue.edu/news/county/whitley/2022/03/voles.html>

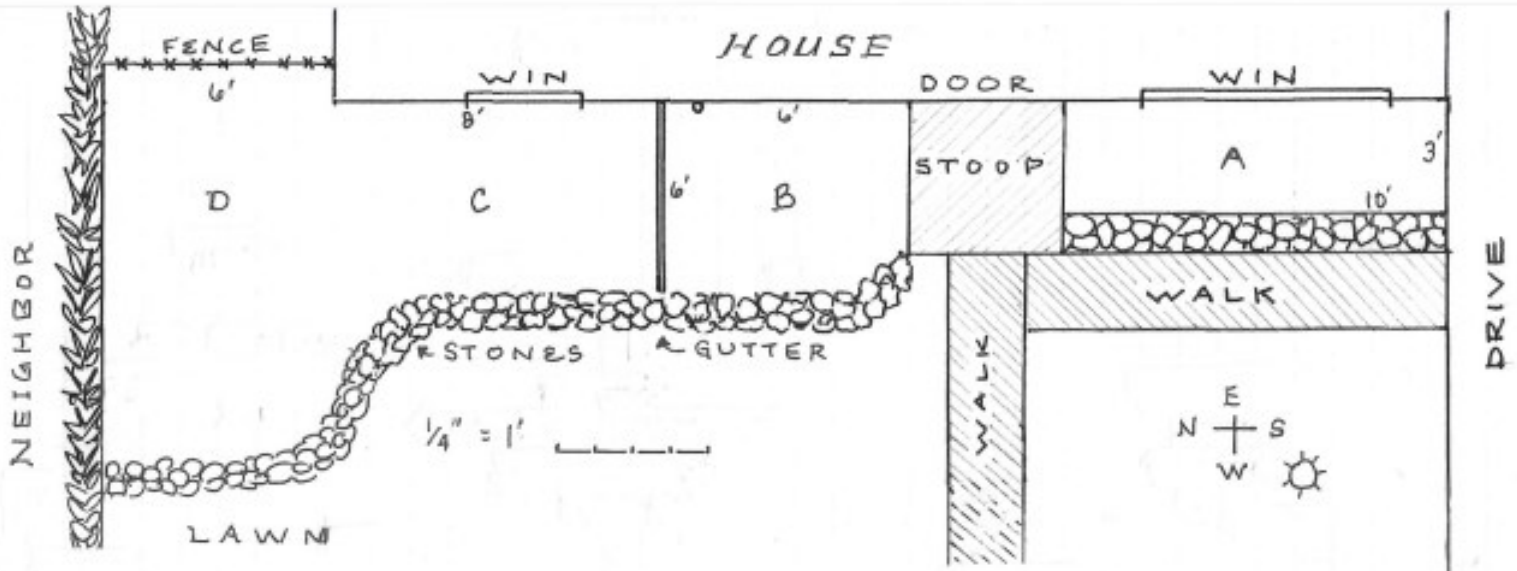


Nature Watch



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## What Would YOU DO?

By Wilma Willard, PCMG Class of 2011

Your challenge—to give curb appeal to a small one story yellow house with loamy, well-draining soil, and no current vegetation. You divide the planting area into four beds, namely A, B, C, and D. You have friends with various giveaway perennials, a gift certificate at a local garden center, and a modest budget.

What would you do?

Landscape design is a process of developing practical and pleasing outdoor living space. Depending on what expert source you ask, there are three to ten basic elements of design to consider. For the purpose of this challenge, let's focus on Color, Form, Scale, and Unity.

Regarding **COLOR**, will you select

- Cool colors (blues to pinks).
- Warm colors (yellows to reds).
- Different colors in different beds.
- A mix of your favorites.

Tip: When choosing plant color, consider the house color, surrounding structures, and your own favorites.

Regarding **FORM**, will you select

- Plants that form mounds.
- Plants that creep and spread.
- Plants that are upright.
- A combination of the above.

Tip: Form refers to the qualities of a three-dimensional object. A variety of forms that compliment each other and the house structure is pleasing to the eye.

Regarding **SCALE**, will you select

- Short plants.
- Medium height plants.
- Tall plants.
- A variety of short and medium.

Tip: Scale refers to the size of landscape elements in relation to their surroundings. There are several factors to consider – the size of your house, existing trees, and the

neighborhood surroundings.

Regarding **UNITY**, will you select

- Plantings of odd numbers.
- Repeat the same plant.
- Use the same ground covering material on all the gardens.
- All of the above.

Tip: Repetition creates unity and flow from one area of your garden to another. You can repeat a plant, a color, a texture, a shape or even a material (like stone or mulch).

And as a bonus challenge, what kind of **FOCAL POINT** might you add and where would you place it?

- Figurine.
- Trellis.
- Ornamental tree or shrub.
- Gazing ball.

Tip: A focal point is a highlighted, outstanding feature that draws the eye and provides great curb appeal!

Considering elements of design before you choose plants can reap great rewards. Then the fun begins. Choose your plants according to sun exposure and size, then plant and enjoy!

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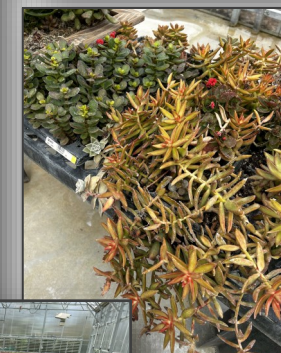


## Horticulture Center Tour 4.20.23

*Left: Superintendent Steve Martinson and April Anderson provide a wonderful tour of the Horticulture Center and explain how five full time staff and 2 to 4 part-time seasonal staff beautify our Valpo Parks, streets, and wildlife habitats.*



Steve Martinson, Horticulture Superintendent of Valpo Parks, asks his staff in August, "What do you want to grow next year?" He then orders plants, plugs and seeds in September from a variety of sources all over the USA. Seeds are selected that will produce plants ready for the gardens in May—less than 10 weeks. Fresh designs and new plants are added each year. Many plants are propagated by staff.



*Below: Assistant Superintendent Paul Chen stands with Master Gardener Linda Mapes, who set up the tour.*

Ornamental plants and flowers are selected to be non-invasive as well as to demonstrate a wider variety of plants than are typically seen in local landscapes. Plants requiring pesticides are avoided.

*Above: The main greenhouse is as full as it will get in a season. Plants cover the tables and floor. This greenhouse has fully automated ventilation, humidity and heat. Irrigation is only for help.*



*The property on Campbell Street was acquired in 2016 and operational in 2018. The cell tower "tree" stands behind the materials.*

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## GARDEN GAMES

By Wilma Willard  
PCMGA Class of 2011

You **WORK** in your yard to bring beauty, but do you remember to **PLAY** in your yard to bring pure enjoyment!

Although very sporadic, the weather *is* warming up and outdoor activities will soon be an opportunity to entertain family and friends again in your amazing space.

When the sun is setting try this simple game that will entice all ages and ability levels. Glow in the Dark Ring Toss!

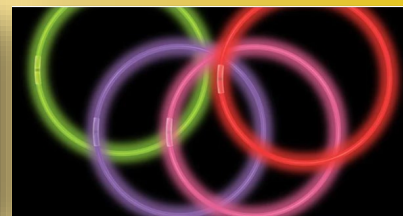
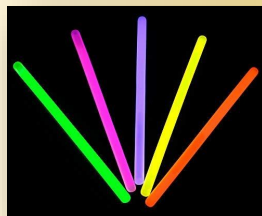


**BONUS:** Ring Toss helps children (adults too) develop and improve coordination skills. This popular tossing game is challenging both physically and mentally as it requires concentration and body control to assess the distance and throw the rings with precision. Ring toss encourages gross motor skills, hand-eye coordination, focus, and cooperative play.



For more glowing ideas go to

<https://www.thespruce.com/glow-stick-party-games-2104656>



## GLOW-IN-THE-DARK RING TOSS!

### SUPPLIES:

- large 12" glow stick (found at dollar stores)
- 4-pack glow stick necklaces (1 pack per player, a different color for each player, found at dollar stores)
- masking tape

### SET UP:

1. Dig a small hole in the ground and stick in the 12-inch glow stick vertically. (Wet the ground first to make this easier.)
2. Assemble the glow stick necklaces. For each one, wrap a piece of masking tape around the connection point, and then wrap another piece on the opposite site of the "ring" to evenly distribute the weight.
3. Determine the distance you'd like your players to toss from, depending on their ages and abilities, and make a masking-tape line on the grass at that distance.

### HOW TO PLAY! (Here is but one way to play)

1. Activate the glow stick and rings by simply cracking and shaking them.
1. Give each player a set of four rings.
2. Starting with the youngest, have each player take turns standing behind the line and tossing one ring at a time onto the vertical 12-inch glow stick. The player to get the most rings around the glow stick wins!

Thank you homefrontmag.com for clear instructions.

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*Bernie and Szu-Ping Chang Wong*

## **Meet a Master Gardener**

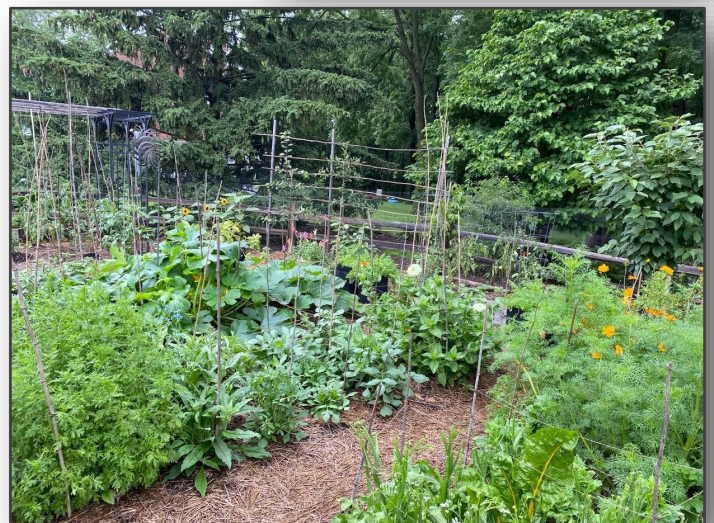
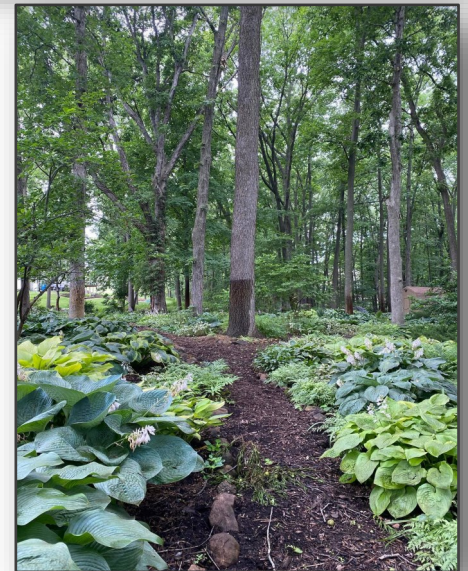
Szu-Ping Chang Wong  
PCMG Class of 2021

I took the MG course to learn more about growing plants and to meet others who like to garden. Taking the course was so helpful and opened up more possibilities of growing things. I like volunteering. I also helped start our Trinity Giving Garden at my church in 2021. All of the produce from the garden goes to the Valparaiso food pantry.

I started “trying” to grow vegetables when my daughters were little in 2014 in whiskey barrel containers. Vegetables and cut-flower gardens are favorites. Most everything is grown from seeds. It is so rewarding for me to go through the process. It’s funny, but I didn’t even know how a tomato plant looked before 2014.

I grew up in Taiwan and met my husband, Bernie, who was from Hong Kong, here in Valparaiso. I’m the Minister of Music and Organist at Trinity Lutheran Church in Valparaiso, IN. Music is my profession. I received my music degrees in Organ Performance from VU and from Northwestern University, IL.

My husband and I have two daughters, Katie and Laura. Katie is a third-year medical school student in Indy, and Laura will graduate this spring from Purdue with a biology degree.



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## GARDEN WANDERER

By Wilma Willard, PCMG class of 2011

### Desert Beauty

On a cloudy winter day, who wouldn't love the opportunity to exchange 20 degree temperatures for 75 degree temperatures? So, when we got an invitation from a friend to visit Arizona in January, we didn't hesitate long to grab plane tickets!

It was a lovely day when we drove north of Phoenix to Cave Creek Regional Park. With a light jacket, sturdy shoes, sunscreen, snacks, and plenty of water we drove into the 2752 acre park unknowing what our experience would really be. We explored this unfamiliar desert landscape all afternoon. Our sunset view was spectacular!

There are at least 63 plant species in the park. But the saguaro (*Carnegiea gigantea*) is king. Its scientific name is given in honor of Andrew Carnegie. The saguaro is a tree-like cactus species that can grow up to 40 feet tall. It is native to the Sonoran Desert in Arizona. The saguaro blossom is the state wildflower of Arizona—a great choice for this amazing state!

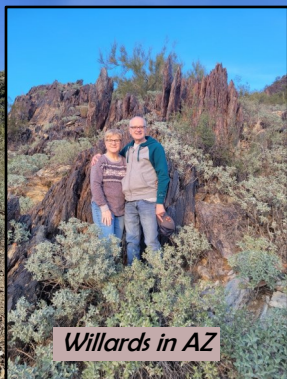


*Overlooking Phoenix at sunset. Can you see the five hot air balloons?*

*"Be wary of rattlesnakes, particularly at night and when it is relatively cool." Just noticed this warning on website!*



*My brother with giant saguaros*



*Willards in AZ*

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## Asian Jumping Worm

From Bob Bruner, the Exotic Forest Pest Educator at the Dept. of Entomology at Purdue University:

Information on this invader is still developing, so we will be revisiting this topic. One link below leads to the Purdue Landscape Report, and I want you all to consider subscribing (at no cost) to this report to get newsletters and other updates on various pests and invaders throughout the Hoosier state. You can also subscribe to our YouTube channel to get updates whenever we post something new.

Recording link:

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

Publications:

<https://www.purduelandscape.org/article/asian-jumping-worms-id-impact-and-prevention/>

<https://lancaster.unl.edu/pest/resources/asianworms.shtml>

<https://extension.psu.edu/look-out-for-jumping-earthworms>

Contact information for Bob Bruner:

Phone: (765) 494-0822

Email: [rfbruner@purdue.edu](mailto:rfbruner@purdue.edu)

Check us out at [Report!Nvasive!](#)

An aggressive, introduced earthworm is negatively impacting our gardens and ecosystem. Find out how to recognize this invasive species and help limit its spread.



When you scratch the top layer of soil, you will see the worms thrashing about with an erratic, snakelike movement. These worms, which can reach 6 inches in length, are much more active than European nightcrawlers.

If you examine a worm close-up, you will notice the prominent band around the body of the worm called the clitellum, where cocoons are produced. On a jumping worm, the band completely encircles the body, is milky white to light gray, and is flush with the body. On European nightcrawlers, the clitellum is raised and reddish-brown in color and does not wrap entirely around the body.

Thank you PenState Extension website

See educational videos of former **PCMGA Gardening Show** seminars found at [pcgarden.info](http://pcgarden.info) on the Member Pages.

The **Purdue** website has added a link to numerous on-line education opportunities:

<https://www.purdue.edu/hla/sites/master-gardener/education-hours-opportunities/>

<https://www.purdue.edu/hla/sites/master-gardener/events/>

<https://www.purdue.edu/hla/sites/yardandgarden/>

<https://www.purdue.edu/hla/sites/master-gardener/continuedhours/>

## Garden Thyme

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