

# The Latest Dirt

La Porte County Master Gardener Newsletter



JANUARY 2024

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## 2024 MEETING SCHEDULE

Meetings will be held at 6:00 p.m. (DST) on  
Thursday at Bethany Lutheran Church  
102 G Street, La Porte, IN

January 4	Business Meeting
February 1	Workshop
March 7	Business Meeting
April 4	Annual Awards Dinner
May 2	Business Meeting
June 6	Workshop
July 11	Business Meeting
August 1	Annual Picnic
September 5	Business Meeting
October 3	Workshop
November 7	Business Meeting Elections
December 5	Holiday Party

## NEXT BOARD MEETING

January 16th - 6:30 p.m.  
Classroom at the Library Exchange

"THE LATEST DIRT" is published monthly.  
The next deadline is January 20, 2024



[www.lpmastergardener.org](http://www.lpmastergardener.org)



PURDUE EXTENSION  
MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM

## La Porte Master Gardener 2024 Interns

By: Carol Nolan

There is a surge of energy soon to be felt within our ranks of Master Gardener Association. December 6, 2023, was the final class of the 2023 Master Gardener Training held at Purdue Northwest in Westville.

We will welcome approximately fifteen (15) interns into our group. This group has already shown their dedication to the principles of Master Gardeners. Many of the interns already work in lawncare, landscaping, even big box store garden centers. Others work full time in manufacturing, sales, and other fields. All share the same love of gardening and the desire to continue to learn.

There was a lot of interest in the invasive species class. A desire to continue to learn was evident by questions asked about how to obtain education hours. They also showed much interest in volunteer opportunities.

Below is a list of the interns expected to join our ranks in La Porte County. Names and email addresses are provided. Please reach out to them and welcome them. Perhaps share a memory of something that has made a difference in your gardening experience. Ask them to join you at your favorite volunteer opportunity. Each of us is now marketing our brand – please make them welcome.

Amy Brill Cooper  
Janet Davis  
Theresa Dzoga-Borg  
Maria Frau  
Jodi Gray  
Beverly Griffith  
Lisa Anne Johnson  
Nicole Kriwko  
Kate Mulcahy  
Sue Mundinger  
Kelly Newcomb  
Pamela Underwood  
Vicki Lynn Znavor

# ASSOCIATION NEWS

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## January 4, 2024 Business Meeting

By: Carol Nolan

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The Thursday, January 4th, 2024 business meeting of the La Porte County Master Gardeners will be held at Bethany Lutheran Church, 102 G Street, La Porte, Indiana, in the upstairs library. The Pax Center will give a brief presentation at 6:30 p.m.

Please turn in your 2024 membership form (which was also emailed to members on December 28<sup>th</sup>) by January 31, either at the meeting or it can be mailed or dropped off to the Extension Office: The address is:

Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service  
2857 W. State Road 2, Suite A  
La Porte, Indiana 46350

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## A NEW OPPORTUNITY

By: Carol Nolan, President

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The Pax Center of La Porte has reached out to the La Porte County Master Gardener Association with an opportunity to help educate future gardeners of La Porte. Jamie Buchanan and Don Dotson will be at our January meeting to discuss this opportunity.

We are being asked to help at two (2) community gardens with firsthand experience in vegetable gardening and also to provide educational opportunities during the growing season. The gardens are located on Brighton Street and at the corner of Jackson and Jefferson. The community gardens allow those with little to no garden space at their homes to garden and enjoy fresh produce. There is also a sharing table where excess produce is placed and members of the La Porte community can help themselves to fresher produce than may otherwise be available to them.

To learn more about this exciting opportunity, please plan to attend the January 4, 2024, General Business Meeting. The Pax Center will give a short presentation at 6:30 p.m. and our meeting will follow immediately after.

Hope to see you all there. Thank you.

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## NEED A RIDE?

### Contact a board member

By: Carol Nolan

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- Sue Kieffer – 219-362-4498 - Please leave a message. (La Porte area)
- Joan Kintzele – 901-853-5818 - Please note Joan will not be available during the months of January/February - Please leave message (Fish Lake area)
- Ann Klosinski – 219-872-8367 - Please leave a message (Michigan City/La Porte)
- Carol Nolan – 331-903-0091 – Please leave a message (La Porte and surrounding areas)

Please note: If a call to any of these drivers is not picked up, please leave a message. The driver will reach out to you.

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**Musings from Carol**By: Carol Nolan, President

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Welcome to 2024 everyone. May this year be the year that the most you hope for is the least you receive. A new year can mean so many things to us. For me, this year, I am full of optimism for my personal growth and hope that as a group, we return to what we should be: community focused with a desire to improve life for others through gardening.

With interns joining us in January, we have an opportunity to welcome them with open arms and excitement to share what we know with each of them. It also gives us time to learn from them as well. We also have a responsibility to bring this group back to what it should be, not what it has become.

The following are my thoughts and concerns for La Porte County Master Gardeners going forward. This past year the board has tried to reinvigorate general business meetings by having time at the end of the meetings for open discussion. We instituted a “What is it” part of the meetings. We had the grant recipients come in and report how the funds were used. This is something that should be done each year and was not always followed through. All these opportunities seemed to have been received well and generated some buzz. However, to have these continue, we need membership to step up and bring things to share. This happened only a few times. Are our gardens so boring we can find nothing to talk about? Or do we just not want to take the time?

The mission of Master Gardeners, country wide, is Helping Others Grow. We need to step outside ourselves and look at our community. Where can we give back, how can we give back, when can we start? How did we lose focus?

While we have programs to give back, the issue I see is the lack of desire to volunteer. Hopefully with fourteen new gardener interns, we will absorb some of their enthusiasm and once again enjoy what we do. We give a minimum of 12 hours of volunteer work each year. That is about the same as a full day’s work for someone with a full-time job these days; twelve-hour days are not unheard of.

Our association is a group of 52 (66 as soon as all interns join the association) yet the same twenty-two people continue to come to all the meetings and do all the heavy lifting. When we ask for volunteers, no one steps forward. Restructuring the board is hard as people are resistant to joining. What you end up with is a board filled with people that may not genuinely want to be there and heads of committees that volunteer only because no one else did. Those volunteers that do not step forward are not beneficial to anyone.

We need to put ourselves out into the community again. Let the people of La Porte County know we are here.

There may be new opportunities for 2024. Working with the Pax Center in La Porte at their two (2) community garden is one. They are looking for master gardeners to provide education and direction to novice gardeners. They have a children’s garden where children are allowed to plant and watch their seedlings grow into food. It has been shown that kids who garden eat more vegetables than those who do not. How wonderful it is to work with children and encourage them to learn gardening. This is a fantastic opportunity for our La Porte County Master Gardener Association to give back to our community. We will have more about this opportunity at the January meeting.

Please take time, as we enter 2024, to reflect on what you have learned in your time as a master gardener and ask yourself the following:

1. What was the most rewarding aspect of my time with this group?
2. What can I do to help improve this wonderful group of like-minded friends and continue our mission of Helping Others Grow?
3. How can I step outside my perceived limitations, and spread my wings and grow? Every one of you know more than you think you do and can do more than you think you can.
4. How can I work to improve this industrious group of individuals and lighten the load by encouraging those that do not fully participate in the meetings?

If all fifty-two members of our association do not participate fully, we are not reaping the benefits, we are not making new friends, we are failing ourselves and not fully living up to the definition and potential of a master gardener.

This group is as strong as the weakest link, and unfortunately it feels as though we have more weak links than strong ones. Too many weak links, and we will break apart. I hope that is not what is in our future for 2024. We have so much to offer ourselves and our community.

We have it within ourselves to improve the world of others. Let us get back to Helping Others Grow in 2024.

Happy New Year

### **2024 EXECUTIVE BOARD**

CAROL NOLAN  
KATHLEEN FOX  
ANN KLOSINSKI  
KAREN SARVER  
SUSAN KIEFFER  
SUE COOK  
JOAN KINTZELE  
GEORGETTE BEHENNA

### **2024 PROJECT COORDINATORS**

#### **Brown Bag Gardening Series OPEN \_\_\_\_\_**

#### **Farmers' Market – La Porte**

Carol Nolan \_\_\_\_\_ 331-903-0091  
\_\_\_\_\_ **cnolan41@yahoo.com**

#### **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**

Linda Hough \_\_\_\_\_ 219-324-0424  
\_\_\_\_\_ **ljhough614@gmail.com**

#### **Garden Show**

Carol Nolan \_\_\_\_\_ (331) 903-0091  
\_\_\_\_\_ **cnolan41@yahoo.com**

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## 2024 PERENNIAL PLANT OF THE YEAR

### *Phlox paniculate* 'Jeana'

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Photography Credit: Chanticleer Garden,

The **Perennial Plant Association** (PPA) announced the 2024 Perennial Plant of the Year - *Phlox paniculate* 'Jeana', during its National Symposium this week in Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada.

'Jeana' is an exceptional garden phlox renowned for its impressive flower show, tall sturdy habit, and pollinator-friendliness. Dense, domed trusses crown stiff stems from midsummer to early fall. Individually, the fragrant lavender-pink flowers are significantly smaller than typical garden phlox — only about half an inch wide — but the show at peak is eye-popping, nonetheless. This is a case where bigger is not better, from a pollinator's perspective anyhow. In trials at Mt. Cuba Center in Delaware, the nectar-rich flowers of 'Jeana' attracted more butterflies — Eastern Tiger Swallowtails were especially plentiful — than any other garden phlox in their study. Hummingbirds and other pollinators are fans too.

Topped with flowers, 'Jeana' can reach five feet tall and four feet wide, although size will vary geographically. Its bright green leaves are highly resistant to powdery mildew, so 'Jeana' has a striking summer look with

or without flowers. 'Jeana' performs best when regularly deadheaded as it promotes blooming. Deadheading also prevents self-seeding, avoiding inferior seedling production.

Tall garden phlox provide structure and color in summer gardens and are good bridging plants between early and later flowering perennials. 'Jeana' is at home in traditional borders and meadows and is a natural in pollinator gardens. Mix 'Jeana' with other tall perennials such as bluestars (*Amsonia*), Shasta daisies (*Leucanthemum* × *superbum*), and switch grasses (*Panicum virgatum*). Or let its handsome foliage be the backdrop for shorter companions such as coneflowers (*Echinacea*), alliums (*Allium*), and woodland sages (*Salvia nemorosa*).

#### PLANT DATA

##### Hardiness

USDA Zones 3 to 8

##### Light

Full sun; afternoon shade in hot climates

##### Size

36-60 inches tall

36-48 inches wide

##### Soil

Moist, fertile, well-drained soils. Avoid dry conditions.

##### Maintenance

Divide clumps every 3-5 years in spring. Powdery mildew and spider mites may be foliar problems in hot or dry conditions. Thinning out stems to improve air circulation may guard against mildew. Deer and rabbits can be pests.

Source: [www.perennialplant.org](http://www.perennialplant.org)



## JANUARY GARDEN

### HOME (Indoor plants and activities)

- Keep holiday poinsettias and other plants near a bright window. Water as top of soil becomes dry.
- Increase humidity around houseplants by grouping plants together, placing them on a pebble-water tray or running a humidifier.
- Check stored produce and tender flower bulbs and roots for rot, shriveling or excess moisture. Remove and discard damaged material.
- Repot houseplants as they outgrow current pots.

### GARDEN (Flowers, vegetables, and small fruits)

- Send for seed catalogs for the garden.
- Sketch your garden plans on paper, including what to grow, spacing, arrangement and number of plants needed.
- Order seeds and plants as early as possible for best selection.
- Wood ashes from the fireplace can be spread in the garden, but don't overdo it. Wood ashes increase soil pH, and excess application can make some nutrients unavailable for plant uptake. Have soil tested to be certain of the pH before adding wood ash.

### YARD (Lawns, woody ornamentals, and fruits)

- Check young trees for rodent injury on lower trunks. Prevent injury with hardware cloth or protective collars.
- Keep road and sidewalk salt away from plants. Construct a screen of burlap, if necessary, to keep salt spray off plants.
- "Leaf" through nursery catalogs or visit websites and make plans for landscape and home orchard additions. Order plants early for best selection.
- Early spring-flowering trees and shrubs such as forsythia, crabapple, flowering quince, and flowering dogwood can be forced for early indoor blooms by placing cut branches in water in a warm location.

#### Haiku for Gardeners

Marcy Dailey  
2008

Garden under snow  
Gardeners under covers  
Spring is but a dream



#### STANDING COMMITTEE

##### COORDINATORS

History Book \_\_\_\_\_ Donna Pouzar  
Hospitality \_\_\_\_\_ Eunice Conway  
Librarian \_\_\_\_\_ Linda Hough  
Newsletter \_\_\_\_\_ Donna Pouzar  
Speakers Bureau \_ See Executive Board  
Sunshine \_\_\_\_\_ Julie Goetz

**Purdue Extension Office** \_\_ 324-9407

Sue Salisbury \_\_ [salisbk@purdue.edu](mailto:salisbk@purdue.edu)  
Secretary, ANR & HHS

Interim ANR-Porter County  
Nikky Witkowski \_\_\_\_\_ 219-465-3555  
[nikky@purdue.edu](mailto:nikky@purdue.edu)

Interim ANR-La Porte County  
Mary Komenas \_\_\_\_\_ 219-324-9407  
[mfoell@purdue.edu](mailto:mfoell@purdue.edu)

*The Latest Dirt* is published monthly. The deadline for submission is the 20<sup>th</sup> 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 - 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 20<sup>th</sup> of the month to:

[pouzdlp@icloud.com](mailto:pouzdlp@icloud.com)

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