

# The Latest Dirt

La Porte Countg Master Gardener Newsletter



MAR.CH 2025

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## 2025 MEETING SCHEDULE

Meetings will be held at 6:00 p.m. on  
Thursday at the La Porte Main Library  
Meeting Room B, unless otherwise noted

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

## NEXT BOARD MEETING

March 10th - 6:00 p.m.  
Classroom at the Library Exchange

"THE LATEST DIRT" is published monthly.  
The next deadline is March 20, 2025

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

[https://www.facebook.com/MasterGardeners  
LaPorteCounty](https://www.facebook.com/MasterGardenersLaPorteCounty)

i;--} **PURDUE** Extension  
UNIVERSITY

PURDUE EXTENSION  
MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM

## Spongy Moth Update

By: Philip T Marshall

Forest Health Specialist Indiana Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Forestry Vallonia State Nursery

Last spring, many of us in Northern La Porte County had aerial treatments for the spongy moth infestation experienced on our properties. Below is the response from the Indiana DNR Forest Health Specialist to Nick Grott, Patriot Aerial Specialist upon his inquiry as to a need for additional spraying this spring:



"Spongy moth populations in La Porte and Porter Counties collapsed in 2024. Spongy moth population also collapsed in Michigan in 2024. I recorded fewer areas of noticeable defoliation in La Porte and Porter Counties in 2024. Of those areas the size of the defoliated area was smaller and the intensity of defoliation in each was less.

Thus, I do not expect to see noticeable defoliation during an aerial survey in 2025. And if any is observed, I expect it to be less than 2024. And I don't expect to see a lot from the ground. But homeowners may have some feeding of the foliage and if it occurs it should not be like the 2021 to 2023 defoliation and nuisance level.

Spongy moth epidemic is cyclic. They stay up at noticeable levels for 3-4 years and then "go away" and return in 5-7 years. The La Porte epidemic started in 2020 or 2021 with 2022 and 2023 experiencing the highest level of defoliation. Thus, 2024 is the downside of the epidemic cycle and spongy moth is moving to the 5-7 year interval of none to light defoliation if any occurs.

To determine that treatment is needed, you need to find egg masses on your trees and see how many are present. When you find 250 egg masses per acre, expect to have a defoliation that is 50-100% of the tree foliage removed. If you walk a 1-acre property and count egg masses, you can



Purdue Landscape Report

determine if treatment may be needed. When viewing egg masses, you will find old egg mass amongst new egg mass. Old egg masses don't have viable eggs; New egg masses have viable eggs that are the caterpillars of 2025. So, you need to count new egg masses.



The size and shape of the egg mass is also a factor as to how much defoliation will occur. Small and poorly formed egg masses indicate a declining population. Old egg masses have a dull tan weathered appearance. New egg masses have "brighter" tan color and are not weathered in appearance.

The agronomist statement to Nick is not correct. You will not get rid of spongy moth once and for all. It will be there but not at a damaging and nuisance level. Spongy has been in La Porte County for 40 years. It has taken time to develop to epidemic levels and start its cyclic habit.

You only need to treat when populations start to build and defoliate. Your treatment (Nick's treatment) in 2024 helped landowners but mother nature was collapsing the population.

If people are planning a big family event under their heavily wooded home and property from early May to mid-late June, they should consider treatment if they do not want any caterpillars, leaf parts and frass dropping down on the event. If they had some defoliation in 2024, there could be some defoliation, but less, in 2025. Survey for egg masses as a guide to determine if you want to treat.

If spring weather is cool and wet, this will stimulate the fungus and virus that kills caterpillars. If spring weather is hot and dry, the fungus and virus will not impact any caterpillars and populations can build, but it will take several dry springs to build the populations.

Spongy moth should not be back in brute force in one or two years. It will likely start to build in 2028 to 2029".

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Source: Philip T Marshall Forest Health Specialist Indiana Department of Natural Resources Division of Forestry Vallonia State Nursery 2782 W Co Rd 540 S. Vallonia IN 47281

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## ASSOCIATION NEWS

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### Letter from the President Vicki Znavor

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The year is well underway and my goodness we've been busy. I've been inspired by working alongside many of you as you do incredible work in furtherance of our purpose to share our knowledge. I've loved watching so many of you work on the garden show and the care you've shown in every little detail so that the attendees have a wonderful experience. Thanks so much to the volunteers who have worked so hard.

Our social meeting on February 6<sup>th</sup> was both fun and informative. Melinda Bush from Head Start in Michigan City talked about an opportunity to work with the kids to help them plant a garden. I'm really excited about working with them because, as many of you know firsthand, the love of nature and gardening often starts at an early age. The project received strong support from the members, and we will begin

working on a detailed project plan. If you 'Wish to help and weren't in attendance, please send me a note and we 'Will add you to the list. Anyone working 'With the children must take two online courses - Program Staff Training and Program Director Training. We 'Will ensure that training links are sent to the volunteers. These courses have been revamped so you must take them again.

Jesi Davenport from the Pur<hie Extension office shm·ed more about her role and the role of the extension office. We really appreciate the support given to us by Sue Salisbury and Jesi; they've been incredibly helpful.

Last, our own Tom Boesen shared a wonderful presentation on Invasives in the Backyard, shaiing his own personal challenges with them. I loved that he shared his personal list of his "Terrible Ten" and rm including a photo here for you. Tom has extensive knowledge of invasives and native plants. His presentation was both infotmative and entertaining.



It was also fun to hear our members' dreams for ow·gai·dens this yeai·. Some shm·ed that they hope to have an abundance of wildflowers while others talked about gro'Wing pumpkins, avoiding deer damage or simply being able to manage it all. One of our sweet members said she hopes that she lives long enough to make all her dreains come true. I feel the same; while we can't know how long we have on Earth, those of us who garden know that miraculous things happen in nature and to be a tiny part of that is such a blessing. F.instein once said, "Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better." I completely agree.

Marcy Dailey closed out the meeting 'With a wonderful poem on "Interns."

I really hope to see you at our next meeting and at the garden show; we have some remarkable things happening and I'm honored to share it 'With you.

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## Getting To Know Our Members

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### Kathleen Staninger

#### Tell us something about yourself:

I lived the first half of my life in Merrillville. Now I live seven miles outside of the La Porte city limits. I'm a retired medical record coder. I was intrigued by learning anatomy, physiology, and diseases to qualify for the job. Besides gardening, I make quilts, do counted cross stitch pictures and I like baking. For exercise, I like walking and bowling.



#### How long have you been a member of the LPCMGA?

I took the Master Gardener class in 2007 and am the only student still involved in the program from my class.

#### What inspired you to join?

I joined the Master Gardener Association because I love learning and working outdoors. I am also a master naturalist and a member of the Terra Verde Garden club. I have met many lovely people by participating in these activities.

#### When did you start gardening and what's a favorite garden memory or experience you can share?

I visited Mount Vernon when I was ten years old and that is what clicked the gardening switch on for me. When I saw those beautiful, organized gardens I was awe struck. When I was in my early teens, I decided to surprise my dad by organizing his garden. He didn't appreciate my effort to clean out the mess, although I thought it looked better.

I used to have a vegetable garden, but where I live now the sunlight isn't right, so I just have flowers now. I have peonies that are over seventy years old that I have brought along with me wherever I've moved. I also have over thirty houseplants, many are decades old.

#### What have you learned from gardening that can be applied in all areas of life?

Gardening applies to all areas of life because it requires determination, adaptability, hard work, and patience.

#### Do you have a favorite local garden that you enjoy visiting?

I really enjoy visiting Ogden Gardens in Valparaiso on Harrison Street, Friendship Gardens in Michigan City and Wellfield Gardens in Elkhart; they are always improving.

#### What advice would you have for a new gardener?

I would suggest concentrating on a small area. Look around for ideas on styles that appeal to you. Plant what you like and have fun!

### Amy Cooper

#### Tell us something about yourself:

I've spent a night in every state except for Alaska and Hawaii! I like to travel and have been able to do so most of my life.



#### How long have you been a member of the LPCMGA?

I've been a member for a year.

#### What inspired you to join?

I am new to La Porte and wanted to meet people with a similar interest. I also wanted to complete my Master Gardener training.

#### When did you start gardening and what's a favorite garden memory or experience you can share?

I started gardening as a child. One of my neighbors, Helen Hazelton, was an avid gardener. Mrs. Hazelton was generous with her time and shared her books and knowledge with me. Each year we would plant marigolds and zinnias together.

#### What have you learned from gardening that can be applied in all areas of life?

In order to successfully grow plants, gardeners have to ensure plants have what they need e.g. soil, water, light, etc. They also have to consider where each specific plant prefers to grow well e.g. wet feet, clay soil, etc.

Managing people is much the same. In order to make them thrive, a good manager needs to understand both what people NEED as well as what they PREFER in order to help people grow.

#### Do you have a favorite local garden that you enjoy visiting?

Not really

#### What advice would you have for a new gardener?

Try a variety of plants - start with understanding your soil. Then understand your light - I suggest taking a picture of the garden each hour for a day. Then you will know how much sunlight there is across your garden.



## EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

Howard County Master Gardeners

### A Kaleidoscope of Gardening

Join us to learn more about the wonderful world of gardening!

**March 15, 2025**

Howard County Fairgrounds,  
Greentown

8:45 am - 3:30 pm

Adults only, \$35 per person

**Ecology of Gardening - Steve Sass  
and Amanda Smith**

**Bees - Cinda Gustafson**

**Birds - Whitney Yoerger**

**Butterflies & Moths - S. Sass & A. Smith**

**Native Plants - Karin Anderson**

Registration form and payment due by March 3.

Contact the Howard County Extension Office  
at 765-456-2313 for more information!

Master Gardeners will be eligible for 5 hours  
of education time!

If you need reasonable accommodations to attend, please  
contact Mathias Ingle at 765-456-2313 or [rmingle@purdue.edu](mailto:rmingle@purdue.edu).

Purdue University is an equal opportunity/equal access/affirmative action institution.

**River Valley Garden Club presents**

**"Landscaping with Natives"**

Laura Kalk, Beachside Gardens

**Tuesday, March 18, 2025**

1:00 - 3:00 p.m. EST

Harbert Community Church 6444 Harbert Rd. Sawyer, MI

Beachside Gardens is celebrating over 40 years of service for the Northwest Indiana and SW Michigan area. The Gardens specialize in the natural Dunes Landscape.

Beachside produces many of their own bedding plants, hanging baskets, containers, and one of the largest selection of perennials in the area. If you're looking for water garden supplies, Beachside has a selection of pumps, fountains, and assorted water garden plants as well as pond treatment products. They offer only the hardiest Michigan Grown Rhododendrons and Azaleas.

**National Garden Clubs Gardening School**

**Gardening School Course #1 (This is a 2 Day Event)**

Friday, March 28 & Saturday, March 29, 2025

Friday 8:45 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. EST

Saturday, 8:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. EST

Hosted By: River Valley Garden Club  
6444 Harbert Road, Sawyer, Michigan 49125

**Course #1 - Basic Botany, Soils, Techniques for Growing Outdoor Flowers, Propagation and Composting - instructed by educators from MSU Extension and Andrews University.**

**Registration is online only beginning in January 2025 on the MGC website - <https://migardenclubs.org> - Click 'Read More' on Gardening School Course 1. On the next page click on "Brochure" to view the entire program.**

Cost: \$60 for MGC members and \$75 for all others.  
This cost is for Course #1 only. All courses are individually priced.

*This cost includes a light breakfast, lunch and beverages each day.*

**2025 EXECUTIVE BOARD**

PRESIDENT	VICKI. ZNAVOR
VICE PRESIDENT	TOM BOESEN
CORRESPONDING SECRETARY	MARIA MAULE
RECORDING SECRETARY	THERESA DZOGA-BORG*
TREASURER	SUSAN KIEFFER*
EDUCATION COMMITTEE/	JANET DAVIS*
SPEAKERS BUREAU	JOAN KINTZELE
	KAREN SARVER

PAST PRESIDENT CAROL NOLAN

\*INDICATES MEMBER IS FILLING ANOTHER PERSON'S TERM, OR EXTENDED THEIR TERM WITH THE APPROVAL OF THE BOARD

**2025 PROJECT COORDINATORS**

**Friendship Botanic Gardens**

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

**Garden Hotline**

Extension Office ----- 219-324-9407

**Garden Show**

Theresa Dzoba-Borg .....773-960-5848  
.....dzozo@yahoo.com

Ann Klosinski----- 219-872-8367  
-----annak47@comcast.net  
Carol Nolan.....331-903-0091  
.....cnolan41@yahoo.com

Karen Sarver ----- 219-921-9704  
.....ksancer@csinet.net

**La Porte Builders Assn. Home Expo**

Donna Pouzar ..... 219-363-2960  
.....pouzdlp@icloud.com

**Pioneer Land School Tours**

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

**Pioneer Heritage Garden**

Connie Shei ..... 219-362-4866  
.....shei@comcast.net

**Sunflower Fair**

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

## National Garden Clubs Gardening School (continued)

### \*\* Tentative dates for future courses are:

- **Course #2 - September 12 - 13, 2025** Diseases and Pests, Irrigation and Water, Lawn and Alternatives, Fruits and Vegetables
- **Course #3 - April 17 - 18, 2026** Plant Growth, New Plant Development, Containers, Houseplants, Native Trees and Shrubs, Teaching Tour
- **Course #4 - September 18 - 19, 2026** Classification, Garden Styles, Plant Identification, Pruning, Woody Ornamentals

You can take any or all of the four courses. If you wish to attain status as a *"Gardening Consultant,"* you must take all four courses and pass an online exam after each course. (Additional fee applies)

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## EXTENSION NeWS

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### JESI'S CORNER

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#### What Counts?

I hope everyone is managing to stay warm during this cold snap we're experiencing. In this month's update, I'd like to recap what we discussed at our last meeting regarding approved hours.

Please remember that hour approvals can be handled on a case-by-case basis if there are specific circumstances to consider. If you have any questions about hour approval, don't hesitate to come by or send me an email. I'm here to help!

- Volunteer hours MUST:
  - Be approved by the County Educator with a New Project form no later than 2 weeks before start date. If the project involved minors the form is due 4 weeks before the start date to allow for additional training
    - Travel time can be claimed for approved volunteer project within reason
    - I volunteer hour total may be claimed for each month's association meeting
  - Have an educational purpose
    - This means educating those in the community on home horticulture
      - By presenting at monthly meetings on a topic
      - Presenting to local clubs/organizations (with approval)
      - Acting as a docent at a nature/garden center as long as representing Master Gardeners by wearing your name badge
  - Be in the state of Indiana
    - A majority of volunteer hours should be claimed in your primary county
  - Not provide free labor
  - Not be related to Master Gardener's employment
  - Not have compensation
  - Must represent Purdue Master Gardener Program and not another organization

**LP COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS**

# VOLUNTEER/EDUCATIONAL HOURS

**WHAT COUNTS?**

**OUT OF STATE**  
 Volunteer hours may not be claimed for out of state activities unless a clear partnership has been established with Purdue Extension. A majority of hours should also be claimed within your host county.

**PRESENTATIONS**  
 Preparing a presentation for a monthly meeting or to local clubs/organizations may count as volunteer hours (with approval). Free lance writing or acting as a docent at nature/garden centers also count as long as representing Master Gardeners by wearing name badge.

**MONTHLY MEETINGS**  
 You may claim 1 hour of volunteer time for business meetings (odd # months) and 1 hour of educational time for workshop meetings (even # months) IF someone is presenting.  
 \*travel time should not be claimed for monthly meetings

**TRAVEL TIME**  
 Travel time can be claimed for approved volunteer activities. It can NOT be claimed for time spent traveling to an educational event

**PARTICIPATION**  
 Serving on the board, as an officer, or as a Committee chair could be included in

**EDUCATION**  
 Volunteer hours should be for the education of the public. Hours may only be submitted for above & beyond routine maintenance of one's own garden IF it is an approved project and it provides others an educational opportunity.

**IF YOU HAVE ANY IDEA OR QUESTION, PLEASE JUST ASK**

- Educational hours **MUST:**
  - Useful/Relevant Indiana Residents
  - Be approved by the County Educator
  - Possible Formats:
    - In-person seminars, garden tours, or other home garden events
    - Recorded trainings
    - Reading gardening books or articles approved by the County Educator such as
      - Part of training
      - Un-biased, research based related to home horticulture
  - Hours submitted cannot exceed 2 for the above formats

## VOUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

### Native Garden Tea Party

A speaking opportunity is available at La Porte County Library - Union Mills branch on June 28.

The library has a Native plants garden and would like someone to speak about Natives.

This would be in the garden (weather permitting), otherwise in their conference room. About 45 minutes. Many of you know a lot about Natives and this would be a great time to share that knowledge.

If you would like more information or want to volunteer, please contact Karen Sarver at [ksarver@csinet.net](mailto:ksarver@csinet.net).



**STANDING COMMITTEE COORDINATORS**

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

**Purdue Extension Office** 324-9407

Jesi Davenport \_ [jfurness@purdue.edu](mailto:jfurness@purdue.edu)  
 Sue Salisbury \_ [salisbk@purdue.edu](mailto:salisbk@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.

**Buy, Sell, Trade at the  
Trading Sited**

**Place your free ad in "The Latest Dirt"**

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

Information must be submitted by the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month to:

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

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 ACTION INSTITUTION

## MARCH GARDEN CALENDAR

### HOME (Indoor plants and activities)

- Begin fertilizing houseplants as new growth appears. Remove spent leaves and flowers to improve appearance and encourage more blooms.
- Start garden seeds indoors for transplanting outdoors later in spring.
- Check stored bulbs and produce for decay; discard damaged items.
- Prune, repot, and clean houseplants as needed.

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

- Plant cool-season vegetables and flowers as soon as the ground has dried enough to work. Do not work the soil while it is wet; wait until it crumbles in your hand. If the soil forms a solid ball when you squeeze it, it's still too wet.
- Gradually harden-off transplants by setting them outdoors during the daytime for about a week before planting.
- Follow last fall's soil test recommendations for fertilizer and pH adjustment. It's not too late to test soil if you missed last year.
- Start the seeds of warm-season vegetables and flowers indoors. In northern and central Indiana, wait until the end of March or early April. Transplant seedlings to the garden after the danger of frost has passed. To find the average date of a frost in your area, consult maps provided by the [Indiana State Climate Office](https://climate.Indiana.gov/).
- Remove old foliage from ornamental grasses and perennial flowers.
- Watch for blooms of early spring bulbs, such as daffodils, squill, crocus, dwarf iris, and snowdrops.
- Remove old asparagus and rhubarb tops, and side-dress the plants with nitrogen or manure. Plant or transplant asparagus, rhubarb, and small-fruit plants.

- Remove winter mulch from strawberry beds as soon as new growth begins but keep the mulch nearby to protect against frost and freezes.
- Remove weak, diseased, or damaged canes from raspberry plants before new growth begins. Remove old fruiting canes if you did not remove them last year, and shorten remaining canes if necessary.
- Prune grapevines after you can assess winter injury.

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

- Prune trees and shrubs (except those that bloom early in spring) while plants are still dormant. If you are concerned about winter injury, delay pruning until after dieback; you can assess desiccation injury as plants come out of dormancy.
- Plant new trees and shrubs as soon as the soil dries enough to be worked. Plant bare-root plants before they leaf out. Soils may be exceptionally wet as winter snows thaw.
- Fertilize woody plants if needed before new growth begins but after soil temperatures reach 40°F.
- Remove winter coverings from roses as soon as new growth begins. Prune out dead canes and fertilize as needed. Delay pruning into live canes until after you can assess winter injury.
- Apply superior oil spray to control scale insects and mites when the tips of leaves start to protrude from buds.

