

The Latest Dirt

La Porte County Master Gardener Newsletter



DECEMBER 2024

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2024 MEETING SCHEDULE

Meetings will be held at 6:00 p.m. (DST) on
Thursday at La Porte Main Library
Meeting Room B

December 5 Holiday Dinner Party
 Monroe's Crossing

NEXT BOARD MEETING
December 9th - 6:30 p.m.
Classroom at the Library Exchange

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

www.lpmastergardener.org



PURDUE EXTENSION
MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM



Blooming out of sequence is cool!

By: Rosie Lerner

What is that crabapple doing reblooming in October and November? Actually, it might be more correct to think of it as jumping the gun on next spring rather than reblooming.



Flowering crabapple blooming in fall. Photo credit: Melissa Widhalm, Purdue Climate Change Resource Center

Although it happens to some extent many years, there seem to be more reports than usual of landscape plants blooming out of sequence this fall. Rhododendrons, crabapples, and saucer magnolias are the most commonly reported species blooming this fall.



Reblooming PJM
Rhododendron
October 2024

Spring-blooming woody plants initiate flower buds on previous year's wood and rely on chilling to stimulate the buds to mature. In other words, the flower buds require a certain amount of chilling before they break out of dormancy to open their flowers. Cool nights – like we've enjoyed recently – can provide enough chilling to cause plants to bloom out of their "normal" sequence. And in some cases, stressful conditions (such as summer drought) can substitute for some of the required chilling.

Different species and even cultivars within a species vary in their requirement for chilling units. In general, the earlier the plant flowers in spring, the fewer chilling units it requires to bloom. Plants such as magnolia and some rhododendron commonly rebloom sporadically in summer and into the fall. There are some cultivars of rhododendron and other species that have been cultivated specifically for their ability to rebloom like this. Similarly, some herbaceous perennials (such as iris and daylily) may also rebloom outside their expected sequence.



Reblooming iris in November.
Photo: Rosie Lerner

Another factor for some plants is that the flower buds they initiate in late summer do not develop the proper plant growth inhibitor hormones that normally keep the buds dormant. In such cases, autumn warm spells can induce these flower buds to open.

Although blooming out of sequence may reduce the total amount of bloom for the following spring, it is not harmful. Usually, there are still plenty of buds left to provide a spring show.

ASSOCIATION NEWS

As Time Moves On

By: Carol Nolan, President

As we enter the holiday season, it is difficult to believe my two-year term as Association President comes to an end in January 2025. While I remain on the board as the Immediate Past President, the existing board is prepared to continue growing and improving our organization.

The 2025 Garden Show is in full planning mode. Vendors are quickly sending in their reservations for floor space, speakers are lined up, and we seem to be in pretty solid shape at this time.

Volunteers will continue to be needed as we review our current projects and look for new ones. Please keep in mind, this is a volunteer organization and help is needed in several places. Please look deeply into yourselves this coming year and find a way to help with projects you may not have been involved in previously. Pioneer Gardens will need more volunteers. The Farmer's Market is up in the air as we do not even know if we will be able to participate in it.

We have accomplished quite a bit in the last two years. Attendance at monthly meetings has slightly increased. We have tried to make the meetings more friendly to members by opening up time at the end of each business meeting for open discussion and questions.

We now have an ANR at the extension office and Jesi will be working with Nicki Witkowski at the next Master Gardener Class so she will understand how to have her own class later in 2025 or early 2026.

Change is good for us all. It is good for us as an individual and as an organization. Change helps us grow in so many ways and we should all embrace it. Most importantly, change challenges. It challenges our perceived norms and challenges us to do better and sometimes to think outside the box. Explore and find new things.

For 2025 I am challenging each of our members to step outside their comfort zone, volunteer for more than the minimum twelve hours, and help us find new projects. This is our organization, and it is up to us to improve and grow ourselves, not just others.

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL

New Board Members

By: Carol Nolan, President

New board members for 2025 through 2026 were nominated and voted for at our last business meeting. Our new members are: Tom Boesen, Maria Frau, and Vicki Znavor. Please join me in wishing them success during their term.

DECEMBER GARDEN CALENDAR

HOME (Indoor plants and activities)

- Check houseplant leaves for brown, dry edges, which indicates too little relative humidity in the house. Increase humidity by running a humidifier, grouping plants or using pebble trays.
- Extend the lives of holiday plants such as poinsettias and Christmas cactus by placing them in a cool, brightly lit area that is free from warm or cold drafts.
- Houseplants may not receive adequate light because days are short and gloomy. Move plants closer to windows, but avoid placing foliage against cold glass panes. Artificial lighting may be helpful.
- Because growth slows or stops in winter months, most plants will require less water and little, if any, fertilizer.
- If you are forcing bulbs for the holidays, bring them into warmer temperatures after they have been sufficiently precooled. Bulbs require a chilling period of about 10 to 12 weeks at 40 degrees F to initiate flower buds and establish root growth. Precooled bulbs are available from many garden suppliers, if you did not get yours cooled in time. Then provide two to four weeks of warm temperature (60 F), bright light and moderately moist soil to bring on flowers.
- When shopping for a Christmas tree, check for green, flexible, firmly held needles and a sticky trunk base – both indicators of freshness. Make a fresh cut, and keep the cut end under water at all times.

2024 EXECUTIVE BOARD

| | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| PRESIDENT | CAROL NOLAN |
| VICE PRESIDENT | KATHLEEN FOX |
| CORRESPONDING SECRETARY | ANN KLOSINSKI |
| RECORDING SECRETARY | THERESA DEZOBO-BORG |
| TREASURER | SUSAN KIEFFER |
| EDUCATION COMMITTEE | JOAN KINTZELE |
| | JANET DAVIS |
| | KAREN SARVER |

2024 PROJECT COORDINATORS

Farmers' Market-Michigan City

Kitty Knoll _____ 219-575-1731
 _____ rknollandson@comcast.net

Friendship Botanic Gardens

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

Garden Hotline

Extension Office _____ 219-324-9407

Garden Show

Ann Klosinski _____ 219-872-8367
 _____ annak47@comcast.net

La Porte Builders Assn. Home Expo

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

Pax Center

Carol Nolan _____ 331-903-0091
 _____ cnolan41@yahoo.com
 Karren Coplen _____ 219-390-4118
 _____ karenc@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

Sunflower Fair

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

- Evergreens, except pines and spruce, can be trimmed now for a fresh supply of holiday greenery.

GARDEN (Flowers, vegetables, and small fruits)

- To protect newly planted or tender perennials and bulbs, mulch with straw, chopped leaves or other organic material after plants become dormant.
- Store leftover garden chemicals where they will stay dry, unfrozen and out of the reach of children, pets and unsuspecting adults.
- Once the plants are completely dormant and temperatures are consistently below freezing, apply winter mulch to protect strawberries and other tender perennials. In most cases, 2 to 4 inches of organic material such as straw, pine needles, hay or bark chips will provide adequate protection.
- Check produce and tender bulbs in storage, and discard any that show signs of decay, such as mold or softening. Shriveling indicates insufficient relative humidity.
- Clean up dead plant materials, synthetic mulch and other debris in the vegetable garden, as well as in the flowerbeds, rose beds and orchards.
- Make notes for next year's garden.

YARD (Lawns, woody ornamentals, and fruits)

- Prevent bark splitting of young and thin-barked trees, such as fruit and maple trees. Wrap trunks with tree wrap, or paint them with white latex (not oil-based) paint, particularly on the south- and southwest-facing sides.
- Protect shrubs such as junipers and arborvitae from extensive snow loads by tying their stems together with twine. Carefully remove heavy snow loads with a broom to prevent limb breakage.
- Protect broadleaves, evergreens or other tender landscape plants from excessive drying (desiccation) by winter sun and wind. Canvas, burlap or polyethylene plastic screens to the south and west protect the plants. Similarly, shield plants from salt spray on the street side.
- Provide winter protection for roses by mounding soil approximately 12 inches high to insulate the graft union after plants are dormant and temperatures are cold. Additional organic mulch such as straw compost or chopped leaves can be placed on top.

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

Jesi Davenport_ jfurness@purdue.edu
 Sue Salisbury_ salisbk@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.

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. Provide your phone number and/or e-mail address. Ads will be limited to space available.

Information must be submitted by the 20th of the month to:

pouzdlp@icloud.com

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