

The Latest Dirt

La Porte County Master Gardener Newsletter



NOVEMBER 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

November 7	Business Meeting Elections
December 5	Holiday Dinner Party Monroe's Crossing

NEXT BOARD MEETING

November 12th - 6:30 p.m.
Classroom at the Library Exchange

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

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

THINGS TO KNOW

By: Carol Nolan, President

1. Nominations for four (4) new board members will take place on November 7, 2024, at the November meeting. Nominees are Tom Boesen, Maria Frau, Joan Kintzele, and Vicki Znavor. Thank you to these association members for stepping up and filling vacancies effective January 1, 2025.
2. Christmas Dinner reservations and dinner choices are due to Carol Nolan no later than November 15, 2024. Invites were sent out via email in September as well as the menu from Monroe's Crossing. Please remember to give meal choices when responding to **cnolan1420@gmail.com**.
3. The 2025 Garden Show planning committee will have their next meeting on November 7, 2024, at the La Porte County Extension Office at 1:00 p.m. All are invited to share your thoughts and ideas.
4. It has been requested that a SUGGESTION BOX be placed at our meetings, so people are able to share suggestions and ideas. The box is green and will be on the table with the sign in sheet. There will be index cards to write your thoughts on.
5. T-shirts: Those who have already advised sizes and have not received their T-shirts yet, can pick them up at the November and December meetings. Those who have not shared sizes yet, please advise Carol Nolan of size and your shirt will be made available at the November and December meetings as well. After December, you will have to reach out to Carol and a shirt will be available at the extension office. Available sizes are S M L XL XXL XXXL XXXXL.
6. Georgette Behenna has resigned from the board and her slot has been filled by Janet Davis and her term will run through 2025.



MEET THE NOMINEES

Vicki Znavor

After retiring as Chief HR Officer at a bank in Chicago, Vicki decided to pursue some of her other passions. She wrote a book in 2021, started an executive coaching business, and pursued the training to become a master gardener. There are many lessons in a garden and working alongside other gardeners has been a joyful experience. She's excited to contribute to the LPCMGA to continue the great work of prior leaders and members.

Maria Frau

I come to you as a novice home gardener who has found her love with all things gardening about 5 years ago. Though I haven't gardened for many years, I have always loved being in nature for as long as I can remember.

Once I finally moved into a house with land, I started gardening initially in a standing garden box. Eventually I got the courage to plan our first home vegetable garden. The amount of joy, peace, excitement, and (at times) frustration that I got from our first garden is something I will never forget. From that point on, I only dug deeper and deeper (pun intended) into learning about what I grew, as well as how to properly maintain trees, shrubs, etc. around the yard. I always loved having conversations with more experienced gardeners and put that knowledge to use the following garden season.

Fast forward a few years and I find myself a newly graduated La Porte County Master Gardener Intern. I love this program because it provides the opportunity to give service to the community while teaching/learning about my favorite topic. It seems like the best way to spend my extra time. However, I will admit that I have been a bit unsure on exactly where to jump in and get to work since finishing the class. So, when I learned of the opportunity to serve on the board, I was just thrilled. I feel this would be a great way to get involved in the community and get to know fellow Master Gardeners. I love to work with others as a team and be more in the driver seat than in the passenger seat. I look forward to getting to know the board members and the ins and outs of how the La Porte County Master Gardeners work. Thank you for your time.

Joan Kintzele

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

Autumn Concludes 2024 Hotline Season

By: Stephen Zolvinski

Brisk autumn gusts signaled the conclusion of another hotline season conducted by Master Gardener volunteers. As the phone went hush in the MG office on September 27, a total of eight hotline volunteers had fielded 45 calls since mid-April.



Majority of the calls were from June through August. Tree issues topped the list with more than a quarter of the categories that tested volunteers for research-based information to assist troubled homeowners. Curling, discolored leaves, leaf drop, and fungal growth were all problems reported to the hotline. One particular concern was the invasive spongy moth (*Lymantria dispar dispar*), which has been raiding Indiana from northeastern states in recent decades. The report was useful for alerting state officials about its presence in LaPorte County. In another case, a Master Gardener confirmed a caller's suspicion that Japanese beetles were riveting her Lindenwood (*Tillia*) leaves.

In addition to phone calls, the hotline e-mail account was a useful conveyance for receiving images of people's plant problems, reducing the diagnostic guesswork. As usual, some clients chose to bring in physical samples of insects, grasses and discolored leaves for a direct diagnosis. Volunteers diagnosed most issues with research-based information from Purdue researchers. In other cases, clients were asked to contact the Purdue Plant & Pest Diagnostic Lab for a confirmed diagnosis. In the case of trees, a list of certified arborists was recommended, while a bee nest problem required a state listing of state-confirmed beekeepers.

Carol Nolan kept a hectic growing season compounding her presidential duties in answering 26 calls, or 59 percent of the total. She manned the phones every Monday in an effort to mentor newcomers to the project. Second was Lisa Johnson, answering six calls (13 percent), followed by Steve Zolvinski, four (9 percent), Jackie Carroll, three (6 percent); Tom Boesen, two (4 percent) and Jennifer Yagac, Cindy Pagels and Stacy McGinnis, one each (2 percent).

As volunteers merit a respite during the cold-weather months, the hotline will buzz alive with more questions in mid-April. And Master Gardeners will be tuned in to do proud the motto "Helping Others Grow."



NOVEMBER GARDEN CALENDAR

HOME (Indoor plants and activities)

- As houseplant growth slows, apply less fertilizer and water.
- If plants are dropping many leaves, move them closer to sunny exposures, such as west- and south-facing windows. Artificial lights may be needed to supplement particularly dark rooms.
- Pot spring-flowering bulbs with tips exposed 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.
- Continue dark treatment for poinsettias by keeping them in complete darkness from 5 p.m. to 8 a.m. daily until early December or until red bracts begin to show.

GARDEN (Flowers, vegetables, and small fruits)

- If frost hasn't taken your garden yet, continue harvesting.
- Harvest mature green tomatoes before frost, and ripen indoors in the dark. Store at 55-70 degrees F. The warmer the temperature, the faster they ripen.
- Harvest root crops and store in a cold (32 degrees F), humid location. Use perforated plastic bags as an easy way to increase humidity.
- Remove crop and weed plant debris from the garden and add to the compost pile. This will help reduce the carryover of diseases, insects and weeds to next year's garden.
- Fall tilling, except in erosion-prone areas, helps improve soil structure and usually leads to soils warming and drying faster in the spring. This allows crops to be planted earlier.
- Apply mulch to strawberries to prevent winter injury or death to their crowns. Wait until temperatures have hit 20 degrees F to be sure plants are dormant. If mulch is applied too soon the plant's crown can rot.
- Dig and store tender flowering bulbs, and keep in a protected location.
- Complete planting of spring-flowering bulbs.

YARD (Lawns, woody ornamentals, and fruits)

- Prevent rabbit and rodent feeding damage by erecting physical barriers, such as metal mesh (one-fourth inch) hardware cloth. Pull mulch a few inches away from the trunk, as the mulch provides a warm winter home for rodents. Chemical repellents also are available, but their effectiveness is temporary and not foolproof.
- Prevent frost cracking (or sunscald) by wrapping trunks with commercial tree wrap or painting the south- and southwest-facing sides of the trunk with white latex outdoor paint. Young, thin-barked trees such as maples and many fruit trees are especially susceptible. Be sure to remove the tree wrap by early spring to prevent overheating of the bark.
- Remove dead, diseased or damaged branches.
- Protect the graft union on rose bushes by mounding soil around the plants and adding mulch on top. Wait until several killing frosts have occurred so plants will be dormant when covered. Plants covered too early may be smothered.
- If you are planning to order a "live" Christmas tree, prepare its planting hole before the soil freezes. Mulch the area heavily to prevent freezing, or dig the hole and put fill in a protected, nonfreezing area such as a garage or basement.

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.

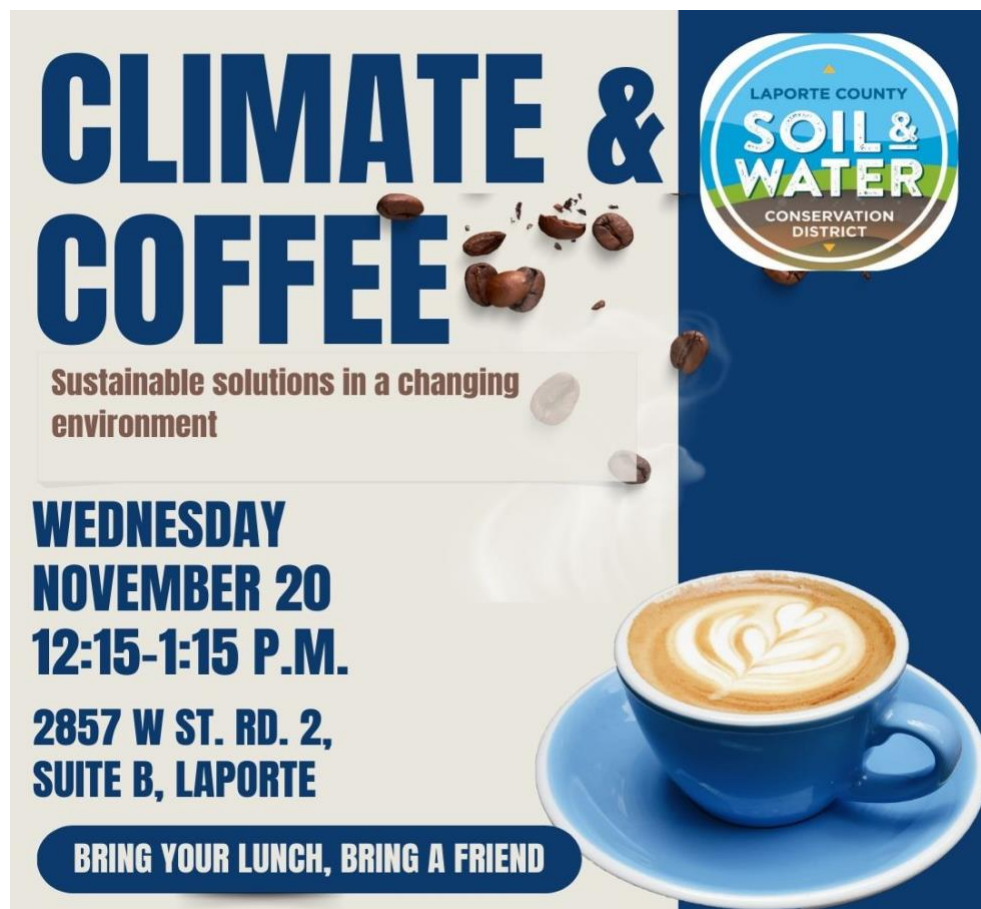
Ads will be limited to space available.

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

pouzdlp@icloud.com

PURDUE UNIVERSITY IS AN EQUAL
 OPPORTUNITY/EQUAL ACCESS/AFFIRMATIVE
 ACTION INSTITUTION

- Clean up and discard fallen leaves and fruits around fruit plants to reduce disease carryover.
- Continue mowing lawn as needed. As tree leaves fall, run them through your mower (remove bagger), allowing the shredded leaves to remain on the lawn. Be sure to mow only when grass and leaves are dry.
- A November application of fertilizer can help keep lawns green into winter and boost early spring recovery. Apply one-half to 1 pound actual nitrogen, per 1,000 square feet of lawn. See [“Turfgrass Management: Fertilizing Established Cool-Season Lawns”](#) for more information on lawn fertilization.

A poster for a 'Climate & Coffee' event. The title 'CLIMATE & COFFEE' is in large, bold, blue letters. Below it, the text 'Sustainable solutions in a changing environment' is in a smaller, brown font. The date and time 'WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 20 12:15-1:15 P.M.' are in bold blue letters. The address '2857 W ST. RD. 2, SUITE B, LAPORTE' is also in bold blue letters. At the bottom, a blue button with white text says 'BRING YOUR LUNCH, BRING A FRIEND'. On the right side, there is a circular logo for 'LAPORTE COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT' and a photograph of a blue cup of coffee with latte art on a matching saucer. Coffee beans are scattered around the cup and the text.

CLIMATE & COFFEE

Sustainable solutions in a changing environment

**WEDNESDAY
NOVEMBER 20
12:15-1:15 P.M.**

**2857 W ST. RD. 2,
SUITE B, LAPORTE**

BRING YOUR LUNCH, BRING A FRIEND

LAPORTE COUNTY
SOIL & WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

*Happy
Thanksgiving*