



# Digging It!



All the Dirt from the Allen County Master Gardeners

SEPTEMBER 2022

## News from Clint

I've really struggled with how to deliver the following message, so I guess I will just get right to the point. I have accepted a new job within OSU Extension as the leader of the Farm Business Analysis program and will be leaving my role as the Ag and Natural Resources Educator in Allen County. I had hoped to deliver this news in person at one of the meetings, but unfortunately the timing did not work out. While this is a better opportunity for me, the decision was difficult to make because of how much the different groups I have worked with have made me part of their communities. I have always found it ironic that I was supposed to be "educating" the master gardeners. I know that over the last few years I've learned way more from this group than what I have contributed. You all are extremely knowledgeable, and I would encourage you to continue sharing your skills with anyone who is interested in learning. I cannot express enough gratitude for the work you did to maintain the program during the 10 year absence of the Ag and Natural Resources program in Allen County. I am hopeful that my replacement will provide new ideas and vision that will lead to continued success for the Master Gardener Volunteers going forward.



## Notes from Joanne

Wow, it's September already! As you saw in my email earlier this week, we have had to cancel the Butterfly Release. The Monarch Butterfly was recently placed on the endangered species list, and I am sure that everyone has noticed the reduced numbers in your own gardens. We are hopeful that the suppliers have better luck next year and we can continue our event.

Please remember the Christmas Tree Festival if you are out and about at garage sales, thrift stores, or just cleaning your closets. We will be needing small pots for house plants, small baskets, mugs, ribbon, Christmas picks and other decorations. Any donations will be greatly appreciated. Gretchen and I had a meeting this week with the Christmas Tree Festival committee. Here is a list of things that we accomplished.

1. Workdays for the festival will be the week of the festival at the museum. This will help with us hauling and packing things from location to location while we work on items. We will set up times closer to December, but they will allow us to work in our space Monday to Thursday to create arrangements.
2. We need home bakers. They do not have to be licensed. We have the space to have two booths for the bakers as long as they do not copy each other. These are the items that sell good: plates of cookies, brownies, cake pops, and cupcakes (about 5-6 on a plate), small pies, fry pies, small plates of candy and fudge, homemade

noodles, chocolate covered pretzels, hot chocolate bombs, small loaves of bread. In the past it was the smaller plates that have sold well. They may sell a couple of pies or loaves of bread, but the bulk of their sales were smaller plates. The items must be packaged. There is no eating in the museum. The fee to set up is 20% of your sales as a donation to the Christmas Tree Festival. We are looking at having 1-2 bakers for Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. We anticipate different bakers each day. If you know of anyone, please let Gretchen or me know.

3. We are pricing out cameras and printers for the photos with Santa. We are trying to decide on instant cameras or using a printer. The festival will be paying for the purchase of the equipment, ink, film, or photo paper. We will need about 3 people to man this booth during the festival.

I will keep you informed about the festival as we continue to have meeting and finalize things. Keep your calendars marked for December 2<sup>nd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup>. We will be needing lots of help for our fundraiser. We will be making shifts and having sign ups a little closer to time when all the details are worked out.

## Joanne Rex



### Fellow MGV's,

Once again, we'll be supporting the Johnny Appleseed Apple Festival. We'll be there on Sunday, September 18th from 11am until 6pm. The event runs from Noon until 6pm. The location has been moved to the Lauer Farm - 800 Roush Rd., Lima Ohio 45801

We traditionally have 3 tables, which we load with items that were traditionally grown in the garden or on the farm. This includes everything from fresh veggies, dried beans/corn/wheat, herbs (fresh & dried) for eating/healing/and dyeing, canned or dried items, root cellar items, and more. This is a great opportunity to talk to the public about gardening and to earn volunteer time.

If you're interested in participating in this event, please contact Victoria Goddard (937-538-6064 or [v.zeits@yahoo.com](mailto:v.zeits@yahoo.com)). She co-ordinates all the items that are brought in, so we don't end up with lots of 1 item, and none of something else. Participants will need to be able to take turns talking with the public, and need to bring their own chair, along with any display items.

For planning purposes, the deadline to contact Victoria is Sunday Sept 11th.

**Thanks All ~ Victoria Goddard**



## Tidbits from Teresa

August finishes up our Brown Bags series so I would like to thank our awesome group of presenters: Vicki Jacobs, Tim & Gretchen Staley, Chris Fetzer, Evelyn Smith, Ali Doerter, Sandy Kennedy, Clint Schroeder, Marge LaFollette, Mary Payne, Sandy Bindel, Amy Amspoker, Tom Scrianka and Suzy Daley. We had a faithful following and we all learned together. Keep the BB in mind for new topics to present next year.

## Harvest Cues to watch for:

- Asparagus: spears thicker than a pencil, snap off at 6-8"
- Beets: leaves 4-6" tall, roots between a golf ball and a tennis ball
- Broccoli: buds are firm & tight but before yellow starts to show
- Cabbage: heads are firm, discard outer leaves
- Celery: has a long season, use short tiles to bleach out and harvest whole stalk when 6-8" tall
- Corn: ears are completely filled and kernel is milky
- Eggplant: 4-5" long skin should be shiny, dull skin = overripe, leave 1" of stem
- Lettuce: heading types, if you cut before they reach full size heads will reform, harvest in AM
- Melons: ripen on the vine, will develop a crack between stem and vine when ready.
- Watermelon: underside turns yellow, tendrils turn brown and dry and skin is dull and hard.
- Okra: pods 2-3" long, pick every day to encourage production
- Winter onions: when most tops have fallen over and the top developed a papery skin. Leave in ground a few more days, pull and let dry in a warm airy place out of sun or rain for a week or so, store in a cool dry place.
- Peppers: use as needed, the color change indicates more vitamin C and sweeter taste generally, not so with hot peppers. Keep picked for more fruit. Peppers have the highest vitamin C per pound of any common food including citrus.
- Potatoes: after vines have died and tubers have tough outer skins but before frost.
- Pumpkin: when the vine dies, unless frost is indicated and take care not to break off stem.
- Rhubarb: wait a year after planting to harvest any stalks 12-18" long. After 3 years harvest season should last 8-10weeks, leave at least 1/3 of stalks on the plant after harvest. (leaves poisonous) Cut off any blooms they develop, they sap strength from plant.
- Squash: summer squash, 6-8" long and 2" in diameter. Winter squash harvest before frost, leave 2" of stem attached and cure for 1-2 weeks. Wash with weak bleach solution, take care not to break off stem – rind will be tan in color and hard to pierce with thumbnail.
- Tomatoes: ripened in direct sun indoors may get too much heat and produce poorer flavor.

## Extra tidbits "stolen" from Tom Sciranka's BB handouts:

- ✓ 50 degree nights or less will slow tomatoes growth & hot summer days of 95+ will cause flowers to drop.
- ✓ Zucchini need bees for pollination, in areas of high pesticide use you will experience fruit abortion, and fruit begins to grow then dries or rots. Not enough pollen to pollinate completely.
- ✓ Zucchinis have both male and female flowers. Female flowers are at the end of the baby zucchini and male grows directly on the stem in the leaf axils. Both are edible; just remove the pistils & stamens. Once picked zucchinis are prone to chilling damage so store in cool (not cold) dry area. If you want less zucchinis, pick off some of the female flowers!

Teresa Diehl

September 2022



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## September Notes from Sandy B –

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### SEPTEMBER MEETING ACMGV

I'll get right to it. My original meeting plans for this month fell through last week. I tried to move up my October meeting plan, but was not able to accomplish that. Gretchen and I discussed what we might be able to do and were very much on the same page. Therefore; Our September meeting will be held at the Children's Garden. We will brainstorm and discuss a game plan for our role in the Christmas Tree Festival. We will be more involved this year. It was great fun for all who participated last year! We learned a lot about how to conduct our booth and what sells. Since we are in the backyard of the museum, this project is a great opportunity for us! And, personally, I feel we will help "cement" together the corridor involving the hospital, library and the museum. All assets to a beautiful and viable near-downtown area!

The meeting is Tuesday, September 20th at 6:30. As usual, bring a chair.

I cannot close this message without commenting on what a WONDERFUL meeting we had last month with Marge's Amish friends! They were MOST gracious, welcoming and generous! It was a treat to see the cultural practices Michael used with his apple trees. I'd never seen or heard of the way he plants and prunes his trees before. As was evidenced, nothing succeeds like success...it was right in front of us for all to see his bumper crop! The prairie was beautiful, as were the flower gardens. The raised beds were spectacular, as well as the other parts of the garden. I've never seen nor tasted larger, more flavorful blackberries. Michael said they had gotten 25 GALLONS already! Then, after we toured the grounds, the families surprised us with homemade apple and caramel cream pies, complete with homemade ice cream! The evening finalized with s'mores and a concert by the ten family members present. No musical accompaniment, just beautiful voices truly loving each other and us! Marge, I can't thank you enough for arranging this! I was a magical evening!

Sandy Bindel



### *Greetings from Gretchen*

#### ~~ENDANGERED MONARCHS IS NO JOKE

As discussed at the August meeting, most of us have seen very few Monarchs this season and as evidenced by the butterfly breeders, from within 100 miles from here and as far away as Florida and Georgia, this is an extremely challenging year for our Monarch friends.

While there has been extreme change this year for the butterfly breeders who told me how they are struggling to get enough eggs to successfully breed, the struggle has been increasing for some time.



Like you, I am extremely disappointed that we cannot make the Butterfly Migration Celebration happen this year, we'll continue to plant milkweed and educate our friends and neighbors!

Thanks for your understanding!

### **~~33% OF THE GARDENING SEASON LEFT**

With the kids back in school, Brown Bag wrapped up for the season and the temperatures cooling it is easy to convince ourselves that the gardening season is wrapping up too. Oh, contraire!!

There's still 8 weeks left until we are ready to pack up the shed and put the Children's Garden to bed and PLENTY of projects left to accomplish! If you can continue to attend Tuesday work mornings at the garden, terrific! If that doesn't work for your schedule, please keep an eye out for emails for Tuesday work nights and a couple Saturday mornings to be scheduled still. This time of year is a great time to work on the extra projects like painting and staining, power washing, etc. that the spring is too hectic to get accomplished! Thanks in advance for all your help!

### **~~REMINDER ABOUT BAGGING CHILDREN'S GARDEN CLIPPINGS**

Tim and I have taken the bagged clippings to be composted for the last 14 years. Every so often I need to remind you that: 1) I am not super human. If the bag is too heavy for you, it's too heavy for me to heave into the truck bed. Be considerate. 2) NO TRASH of any kind can go in the compost facility. NONE. No gum wrappers, cigarette butts, small pieces of trash. Standing in the smelly compost facility in 90 degree weather picking garbage out of our bags does NOT bring out the kind, Christian in me. Please make a point to keep litter separate and put it in the tan trash container in the shed. 3) No need to tie the bags shut. Again, just leaves me muttering and frustrated after a long days work! THANKS FOR ALL YOU DO – and thanks for helping us compost properly!!

### **~~TERRIFIC MEETING**

Thanks so much to Sandy Bindel and Marge Lafollate for arranging the wonderful opportunity for us to tour the extensive and incredibly impressive gardens of the Michael Schlabach family for our August meeting. Those of us who were able to attend were so incredibly impressed not only by Michael and his family's gardening skills and knowledge but also by their kindness and hospitality! What a joyful and inspiring evening!

Our monthly meetings are such a wonderful way to learn, share and grow as a Master Gardener Volunteer! Thanks so much to Sandy and all who help provide us with these opportunities!

### **~~PLANNING AHEAD FOR THE CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL**

In preparation for the Gifts of the Earth booth for the Christmas Tree Festival, please keep your eyes open for items from your own homes as well as thrift stores and garage sales that you can donate to use for small vases and baskets. Holiday coffee cups, small holiday tins, etc. all make nice items to create arrangements in.

**As you** collect these items and natural dried items from your garden, please store them in your own home for the time being. We will need to pack the shed full at the end of the gardening season and don't want to move items around or have to try to keep items from being broken during the big shed packing. We will discuss arranging dropping items at the shed once the garden is closed, but hope ultimately that we can all store items at home until the festival in order to eliminate the need to transport items multiple times. More information to come at this month's meeting! Thanks in advance!

*Gretchen Staley, President*



## *Happenings from Kay*

### **MONARCH BUTTERFLIES**

I attended a fantastic talk, [Building a Better Monarch Garden](#), by Dr. Dan Potter, professor of Urban Landscape Entomology; Insect-Plant Relationships at the University of Kentucky. A replay of his presentation hosted by the Horticulture Research Institute is [viewable here](#):

<https://www.hrresearch.org/thrive-web-series> until Sept 7 (scroll down the page a bit to find the embedded video). Some of the recommendations Dr. Potter made include:

- Plant milkweed near the outside (rather than in the center) of beds and structured gardens, and separate/set off plants with mulch to make them more accessible and visible to monarchs. His research found that gardens with perimeter milkweeds had 2.5 to 4 times more caterpillar eggs and larvae than gardens with milkweed grouped in the center or mixed in with other plants.
- Plant a mixture of Milkweed species to support not only Monarchs, but also other pollinators. His research found:
  - Common, Showy & Swamp Milkweed attract more monarch caterpillars than other species
  - Butterfly Weed and Whorled Milkweed were the best species for attracting a wide variety of native bees
  - Milkweed “Nativars” (cultivars of native species) recruited and supported as many monarchs as wild-type straight species of milkweed.

Swamp, Butterfly, Whorled & Green Milkweed are best for small gardens, as they aren't as aggressive as the Common, Showy or Narrowleaf Milkweeds.

Don't use butterfly boxes or “houses” These are “ecological traps” that are often colonized by invasive paper wasps which prey on monarch larvae.

Consider cutting back or mowing milkweeds in July to provide new growth, which the monarchs prefer. This aligns with observations I have made on my farm, as most of the caterpillars I've found have been in areas of the field where I have mowed. I don't usually find eggs or larvae on older common milkweed with large leaves.

My 9-year old grandson has been tending a small “pollinator patch” in his yard. He and my daughter have had to forage for milkweed plants to feed these very hungry caterpillars, as they ate every last milkweed leaf in their garden. I recently had the opportunity to be with him to witness a monarch emerge from a chrysalis. Watching his excited reaction and eagerness to take photos of this process was absolutely priceless.





