

The Tollgate Farm News

VOLUME 32

ISSUE 8

AUGUST 2026

MSU Tollgate Garden Volunteers GENERAL MEETING

Thursday, AUGUST 20, 2026

6:00PM – 8:00PM

(On the Grounds of Tollgate)

42 Muskrat Eat My Fadder

Join Tollgate Garden volunteers and friends on August 20 in the conference center for an engaging natural-history program with Gerry Wykes, interpreter, author, illustrator, and storyteller. He combines science, regional history, humor, and memorable props in lively presentations about wildlife.

Gerry returns to talk about muskrats, busy, semi-aquatic mammals often noticed in ponds, marshes, lakes, and slow-moving streams. Muskrats feed on cattails, reeds, and other aquatic plants. These animals can create openings in dense wetland vegetation to benefit ducks, geese, turtles, frogs, shorebirds, and other wildlife. Muskrats are important prey for foxes, eagles, and other predators.

Retired curator and supervising interpreter of the Lake Erie Marshlands Museum and Nature Center, Gerry Wykes is the National Association for Interpretation's Distinguished Professional Interpreter of the Year for 1989, author and illustrator of *A Beaver Tale: The Castors of Conners Creek* ([A Beaver Tale](#)), and author of award-winning article, "A Weed Goes to War," in *Michigan History Magazine* ([Michigan milkweed played a key role in WWII](#))

TOLLGATE GARDEN VOLUNTEER IMPORTANT DATES AND EVENTS 2026

AUG	MEETINGS		SEPT	MEETINGS	
4	TGAC Meeting – Zoom	7:00 pm	1	TGAC Meeting – Zoom	7:00 pm
20	TGV General Meeting	7:00 pm	17	TGV General Meeting	7:00 pm
AUG	WORKDAY ACTIVITIES		SEPT	WORKDAY ACTIVITIES	
1	Entrance/Rain	9:00 am	5	Labor Day Weekend General garden workday	9:00 am
8	Pond/12 Mile	9:00 am	12	Xeriscape/Children's	9:00 am
15	Heritage/Office	9:00 am	19	Nursery Fall Plant Sale	9:00 am – 12:00 pm
22	Nursery/plant division	9:00 am	26	Farmhouse/Rose	9:00 am
29	Rockledge/Demo/plant division	9:00 am			9:00 am

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FARM UPDATE FROM THE RESIDENT FARMER - *Destiny Pearson*



The past few weeks have brought plenty of heat and smoky skies, but farm life and summer camp carried on with a few adjustments. To keep everyone safe and comfortable, camp activities were moved indoors. Our staff got creative with games, lessons, crafts, and animal activities, and the campers adapted with no problem. One unexpected favorite was drawing time with the quail, giving campers a chance to slow down, observe, and capture the personalities of these tiny birds on paper.

While the weather has been challenging, we're grateful that camp continued safely and that our campers never lost their enthusiasm. Sometimes the best memories come from making the most of unexpected situations.

Around the Farmhouse, another project is beginning to take shape. Shawn has started repairs on the front stairway, and the improvements are already noticeable.

What seemed like a straightforward repair has become a bit more involved due to settling and uneven areas leading up to the steps. Over the next several weeks, he'll be working to level the problem areas and create a safer, more durable entrance.

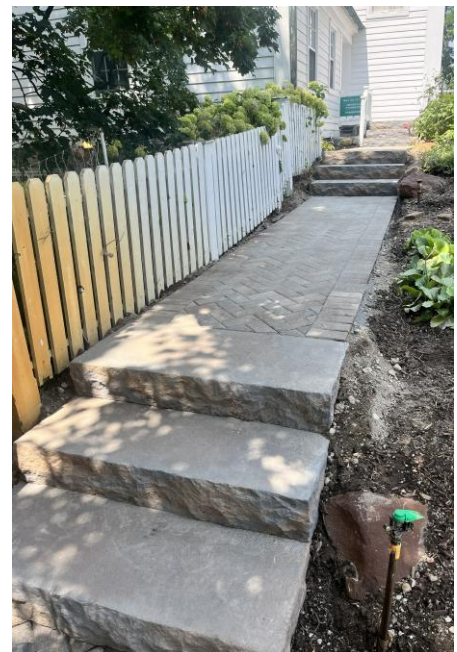
The goal is to not only replace an aging set of stairs but also improve the walkway and access to the Farmhouse while respecting the character of the historic building. We appreciate everyone's patience as this project progresses and look forward to sharing the finished results.

Destiny Pearson
Livestock Coordinator/Assistant Farm Manager



During photo by
Destiny Pearson

After photo by
Linda Piasecki



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NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT - *Renee Cottrell*

“When the roots are deep, there is no need to fear the wind.” -African proverb

We were all disheartened to have to cancel the July Garden Open House. The safety of visitors, volunteers setting up and attending the event is always a priority and weather conditions were not cooperating. We will continue to attempt this event in the month of July since the gardens are their best show at that time. Some changes to the timing of the event may be considered, we will keep you posted.

As always, we are looking to create or add to existing garden teams! If you are a newer active member and would like to work in a chosen specific area, all of which are highlighted on the web site

<https://www.canr.msu.edu/tollgate/gardens/> ,contact me for details rmcottrell4@att.net .

A reminder: **PLEASE** record your volunteer time on the Tollgate Volunteer Log in. We have made the QR code available in multiple locations on the farm and in this newsletter to make this more convenient. Timely recording assists in providing more accurate monthly reports used by MSU Extension Administration to demonstrate the value of our contributions in attempts to secure support for our programs here at Tollgate. The QR code and link are in this newsletter.

The Nursery will be **OPEN** for donations of plants from August 15th through October 10th. We appreciate all donations with some exceptions-See Nursery Notes in this edition. Save the date of Sept.19th from 9am-noon for our Fall Plant Sale.

We are hoping to offer a dedicated Facebook page for Tollgate Garden Volunteers in the near future. You will be able to post your garden successes, share information and connect with other TGV members. More to come! Thank you for being Tollgate Garden Volunteers.

Renee

Photo by Renee Cottrell

NURSERY NOTES

The Nursery Team is preparing to open the Nursery for all fall donations August 15th-Oct 10th and soon will be working hard potting up plant donations on division days each Saturday until plant sale. The Nursery is accepting **all** plant donations with the usual exceptions: NO hosta, NO shrubs, including roses, NO annuals or house plants, and NO plants listed as invasive or have known aggressive growth tendencies. Some others are listed as excluded for the fall donation only due to poor overwintering survival and will be accepted again in the spring. Please check your donations against this list. **Save the date for the Sept 19th Plant Sale.** This is a

smaller event than our Spring sale with focus on late summer/fall bloomers.

NOW is the time to donate your Michigan hardy perennials, especially some of your more unique specimens to spice up our sale selections! Specific instructions for donations are in the link below. Please be sure to follow the instructions for labeling your donations and place them behind the yellow gate in the Nursery.

Thank you in advance for your plant donations and time commitments for Tollgate Gardens.

Renee

[PLANT DONATION GUIDELINES](#)



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Master NOT ACCEPTING Plant List 2026

Botanical Name	Common Name	Varieties
Acanthus Mollis	Bear Breeches	All varieties
Aegopodium podagraria	Goutweed	All varieties
Allium triquetrum	Balloon Bouquet	All varieties
Anemone hupehensis japon	Japanese Anemone	Pink Flowers
Anemone hupehensis japon	Japanese Anemone	White Flowers
Asclepias syriaca	Common Milkweed	All varieties
Asclepias tuberosa	Butterfly Weed	All varieties
Celidonium majus		
Convallaria	Lily of the Valley	All varieties
Delosperma	Ice Plant	All varieties
Dianthus	Pinks	All varieties
Darmera peltata	Indian Rhubarb	
Eruca sativa	Italian Arugula	All varieties
Euphorbia cyparississ	Spurge	All varieties
Heuchera	Coral Bells	All varieties
Iris cristata	Dwarf Crested Iris	Dwarf NON-Blue/Purple Blooms
Iris germanica	German Iris	All varieties
Iris palida	Variegated Iris	Variegated Leaf Varieties
Lavandula	Lavender	All varieties
Leucanthemum vulgare	Oxeye daisy	All varieties
Lobelia cardinalis	Cardinal Flower	All varieties
Lysimachia cletheroides	Gooseneck Loosestrife	All varieties
Lysimachia vulgaris	Yellow Loosestrife	All varieties
Malva parviflora	Cheeseweed	All varieties
Mentha	Mint	All varieties
Muscari	Grape Hyacinth	All varieties
Petasites japonica	Butter Burr	All varieties
Solidago ohioensis	Ohio Golden Rod	All varieties
Tanacetum vulgare	Tansy	
Vinca	Myrtle	All varieties
Valeriana officinalis	Valerian	All varieties

PAR Report - Kathryn Fitzpatrick



We have donated a whopping 693 lbs. to Forgotten Harvest, Northville Civic Concerns, and PB&J so far, with kohlrabi and collard greens leading the charge. There has been a nice variety of fresh produce including green onions, summer squash, hot peppers, kale, cucumbers, radishes, tomatillos, and green beans, as well as fresh herbs from the CSA team.

The garlic has been harvested and is hanging in the shed to dry – half will be donated, and half will be kept for planting in the fall. In its place, we have planted turnips using seed tape, which helps us manage the spacing and minimizes the thinning. A second crop of radishes is almost ready to harvest, and the carrots are very close.



We have been battling purslane and thistle, as well as a variety of grasses, which are thriving even better than the crops. The MSU Alumni volunteers showed up in force and performed a miracle in short order – removing all the weeds, which had taken over the PAR Garden and were covering the beds – a huge thank you!

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So far, the furry and feathered pests have been our biggest challenge with geese and ground hogs enjoying our cabbage, kale, kohlrabi, and squash. We have added sticky tape markers in our beds to get an idea of the insects that are present – both beneficial and not. Fortunately, the latter has not posed a big problem so far with the crops. However, ticks and yellow jackets have been a challenge for the volunteers.

Happy Harvesting,
Kathryn Fitzpatrick

Photos by Kathryn Fitzpatrick

AGL Information – *Marilyn Alimpich*

Hello Area Garden Leaders,

By now, most of you have submitted receipts for your garden purchases. If you have not, and wish to be reimbursed, remember to submit your receipts and/or credit card statements (credit card statement showing purchase required for On-Line purchases only) to Destiny within 90 days from the date of the receipt. MSU will not honor receipts dated over 90 days from day of purchase. You can email, text or mail a copy of your receipts and/or statements to Destiny.

Some of you may have donated plants or items for your gardens. If so, please let me know the dollar value of your donation so I can pass it along to our treasurer, Karen Harris. We want our records to reflect the actual amounts spent to maintain our beautiful gardens.

Now is also the time to collect plant tag information for any new shrubs, trees and perennials for which you need a plant label. I'll ask for that information later this year and into January for the winter label-making project.

If you have any questions, please contact me at: masoleil@sbcglobal.net, or call or text 734-730-6565. See you in the gardens,

Marilyn Alimpich
masoleil@sbcglobal.net

[What is an AGL?](#)
[Gardens in need of an AGL](#)

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Michigan State University Tollgate Garden Volunteers

Fall Plant Sale

**Saturday September 19th, 2026
9 a.m. to 12 p.m.**

**Reasonably priced, Michigan hardy perennials for sun and shade,
including Michigan natives that attract hummingbirds, butterflies and pollinators.**

Featuring late summer and fall blooming varieties

Payment with Cash, Check, Mastercard or Visa will be accepted

MSU Master Gardeners will be there to answer questions and assist in your selections



**Michigan State University
Tollgate Farm and Education Center**
28115 Meadowbrook Roads
Novi, MI 48377
248 347-3860 ext. 251
www.tollgate.msu.edu

Please-No Pets allowed

Accommodations for persons with disabilities may be requested by contacting the event coordinator two weeks prior to the start of the event. Requests received after this date will be honored whenever possible.

MSU Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, or veteran status.

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DID YOU KNOW?



PLANT OF THE MONTH

Monarda

Monarda, more commonly known as Bergamot or Bee Balm. While both are *Monarda*, they are different cultivars. Bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*) and Bee Balm (*Monarda didyma*) are considered wildflowers; both can be found as a cultivated variety in your local nursery. Bergamot is generally light purple, and Bee Balm is red. Both plants thrive in medium to wet soils, though can tolerate droughts. They prefer sun to part shade and bloom July to September. They can grow 2-4 feet tall depending on soil conditions. Clumps can be divided every 3-4 years to prevent overcrowding from spreading rhizomes.



The flowers and leaves are very fragrant and attract bees, butterflies and hummingbirds. This characteristic makes them a great addition to any pollinator garden. Another characteristic about *Monarda* is that the plant has a square stem. Plants which have a square stem are in the mint family (Lamiaceae) of plants. This includes catnip (*Nepeta*), oregano, and spearmint. *Monarda* can be found at Tollgate Farm in the Rain, Children's and in the Constructed Wetlands Gardens.

Missouri Botanical Gardens
Peterson Field Guide to Wildflowers

12 Mile Road Construction

ROAD COMMISSION
for OAKLAND COUNTY

RESURFACING PROJECT ON 12 MILE RD. TO START JULY 13 BETWEEN NOVI ROAD AND FARMINGTON ROAD

The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC), in partnership with the cities of Novi and Farmington Hills, will begin construction on 12 Mile Road between Novi Road and Farmington Road in the two cities, on July 13. The project will take place over the course of two construction seasons, 2026 and 2027.

Throughout the project, one lane of traffic in each direction on 12 Mile Road will remain open to traffic. Access to all homes and business will be maintained.

PROJECT DETAILS

The project involves two phases, with one in 2026 and one in 2027. The project was broken into two phases so the work did not conflict with the City of Farmington Hills' 2026 project on Halstead Road (shown on map).

Phase 1 (2026): Phase one includes the sections of 12 Mile Road from Novi Road to Haggerty Road and from just east of Halstead Road to Farmington Road.

Phase 2 (2027): Phase two includes the section of 12 Mile from Haggerty Road to just east of Halstead Road.

The project includes:

- Patching concrete sections of 12 Mile Road from Novi Road to just west of M-5.
- Milling (grinding off existing pavement) and repaving 12 Mile with asphalt from west of M-5 east to Farmington Road.
- Repairing curbs and gutters where needed.
- Installing Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant crosswalks and pedestrian crosswalk signals with pushbuttons at signalized intersections.
- Upgrading SMART bus stops.
- Installing High-Intensity Activated Crosswalk (HAWK) pedestrian-crossing beacons at the White Plains Drive pedestrian crossing of 12 Mile.

For general information:
Call RCOC's Department of Customer Services at (877) 858-4804 or send us an email at dcsmail@rcoc.org or via the RCOC Website, www.rcocweb.org



June 2026

SCHEDULE

- The Phase 1 work will start July 13 and be completed in the fall of 2026.
- The Phase 2 work will start in the spring of 2027 and be completed in the summer of 2027.

PROJECT COST AND FUNDING

The project will cost approximately \$12.2 million and will be paid for with federal funds and contributions from RCOC, Novi, Farmington Hills and Oakland County general government (through the Tri-Party Program).

CONTRACTOR

The contractor for the project is Cadillac Asphalt of Farmington Hills.

Note: A second project on 12 Mile Road, from east of Orchard Lake Road to Autumn Ridge in Farmington Hills is also currently underway (as noted on the above map). That project involves major resurfacing of that section of 12 Mile Road, and one lane of traffic in each direction will remain open in that section.

A two year renovation of 12 mile will start Monday July 13. One lane of traffic will remain open but we can expect delays during high traffic periods. Thank you to Gary, one of our garden volunteers, for forwarding the pdf summary of the project which can be viewed by clicking on the link below:

[Oakland County Road Commission
Flyer on 12 Mile Construction](#)

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Eagle Scout Service Project Can and Bottle Drive

My name is Eddie Logsdon and I am a Boy Scout working on my Eagle Scout Project. I am installing vinyl flooring in the Tollgate farm stand. I need your help with my fundraiser

Please return your **used cans and bottles** to Tollgate Farms by **Aug 25**.

I am also accepting cash and venmo donations.

Thank you in advance!



venmo
@jandalogsdon

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Membership Update July 2026

To all of you who donated to help the Tollgate Garden Volunteers make Tollgate a more beautiful place, THANK YOU! Your support of time talents, and donations will grow and maintain the beauty of the Tollgate gardens.

Our newest members are:

Rafah Kharbotli

Karen Weiss

Emily Wietecha

Please take time **NOW** to renew your 2026 membership. New and renewed membership form for the Tollgate Volunteers is available online at the link below. Don't miss out on the Tollgate Garden Volunteer Newsletter! If you have any questions, please contact Renee at rmcottrell4@att.net Thanks!

[Tollgate Membership Form 2026](#)

[2026 Tollgate Members Levels](#)

[TGV Recruitment Flyer](#)

MSU Tollgate Volunteer Sign-In:



[MSU Tollgate Volunteer Sign-in](#)

Links to Forms & Other Info

[Garden Orientation PDF](#)

[Tollgate Garden Web Page](#)

[Tollgate Garden Volunteer Info](#)

[TGV Activity Calendar](#)

[Tollgate Garden Map](#)

NOTE: If you are unable to access or print any necessary forms from the links, please notify Renee, who will arrange to provide copies. Copies will also be available at all in-person TGV meetings.

Take a Tollgate Picture

Send photo files in separate emails, if necessary, to Judy Warren, Tollgate Calendar Editor, at TGFarmPhotos@gmail.com
Photos are also appreciated for the monthly Farm News. Photo files can be sent to:
Ductapegirl212@gmail.com



Photo by Linda Piasecki

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MSU ALUMINI AND THE PAR GARDEN



Photos by Kathryn Fitzpatrick

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TOLLGATE BEAUTY



Photos by Tom Culkin

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Activity Days: January - October

- Activity Day hours are 9:00 am – Noon, unless otherwise noted on the Activities section of the first page of the newsletter and the full year calendar (see Links page).
- Volunteer Activity Day and Meeting Information will be communicated by email.
- Active members will continue to get email reminders of these activities.
- Lunch will be provided on scheduled workdays.
- We strongly recommend you bring your own tools for your garden activities. All tools borrowed from the Tool Shed should be cleaned and sanitized with the wipes provided, prior to returning the items to the Tool Shed after use.

Tollgate Garden Advisory Committee (TGAC)

Volunteer Liaison – Destiny Pearson

248-347-3860 Ext.251 pears278@msu.edu

PresidentRenee Cottrell

Vice PresidentMarilyn Alimpich

Secretary.....Theresa Bridenbaugh

TreasurerKaren Harris

Membership

CommunicationsKathy Johnson

ProgramsJackie Stengel

Farm News Editor.....Linda Piasecki

Event Coordinator..... Lori Heiden

- The TGAC meets monthly virtually **on Zoom on the first Tuesday of the month at 7:00 PM**. All Tollgate Garden Volunteer members are welcome to attend and should contact Destiny Pearson for meeting link.
- Contact information for individual TGAC members and Area Garden Leaders (AGL) are available by contacting Renee Cottrell at rmcottrell4@att.net to have message or contact forwarded for response. Contact info can also be found in the Garden Binders in the Volunteer Communication Center.
- Tollgate Volunteer Membership is renewed annually. The 2026 Tollgate Garden Volunteer membership is valid from **January 1, 2026 to December 31, 2026**.

- For membership questions or to update your current membership information, email Renee Cottrell at rmcottrell4@att.net
- For general Tollgate information and questions, contact Destiny Pearson or see Website: <http://tollgate.msu.edu/volunteering/>
- TIP: If you aren't getting The Tollgate Farm News email, check your SPAM folder


MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension
MSU Tollgate Farm and Education Center
28115 Meadowbrook Rd., Novi, MI 48377
tollgate.msu.edu
Volunteer Coordinator - Janice Recinos : recinos1@msu.edu
Farm Contact - Destiny Pearson : pears278@msu.edu