

Down to Earth

Michigan State University Extension Master Gardener Program—Genesee County

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Letter from the Program Coordinator

Barslund Judd (juddbars@msu.edu)

Summer has come and gone. My basil has succumbed to the early frost and it's time to start thinking about bringing in my hardy bananas (*Musa basjoo*) which are less hardy than I'd like. I hope you were all able to get out and enjoy nature a bit this season! I am still working from home and interviewing Extension Master Gardeners, for VSP, as I am able. While I am hoping to do many of the interviews myself, I will be pulling in help from across Extension. For this reason it may be someone else that contacts you about your interview. I will continue emailing signups for interview times. Be on the lookout for them.

I was recently able to visit the Frederik Meijer gardens and Dow Gardens. I you haven't done so, you should sometime! I discovered two new to me grasses that I'm head over heels for. I'm not 100% certain but I believe that the grass at Meijer gardens was Big Bluestem 'Blackhawks'. It had some of the deepest colors I have ever seen in a grass. The other is a cultivar of a grass I've always loved, *Chasmanthium latifolium* 'River Mist'. Northern Sea Oats have always been one of my favorites but I had no clue that a variegated cultivar existed.



Andropogon gerardii (Big Bluestem)



Chasmanthium latifolium 'River Mist'

I hope you also found some wonderful new plants to enjoy this summer!

Barslund

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Newsletter Committee

- Sue Crisp (**Project Report**)
- Mary Yelland (**Article Liaison**)
- LaDonna Gamble (**Hotline Articles**)
- Joanne Gensel (**Association Page**)
- Michelle Chockley (**VMS Corner**)
- Carol Pittard (**Editor**)
- Cheryl Borkowski (**Format Editor**)

If you are interested in writing an article for the DTE newsletter, please feel free to reach out to us! We love having new input and hearing new perspectives. We ask that articles have an educational component that is research based and utilizes solid sources.

Featured Article

The Ditch Lily aka Tiger Daylily, Outhouse Lily, Railroad Daylily Officially the Tawny Daylily

By Michelle Chockley

I have been working on the perennial bed at The Farm, the *edible flint* project on Beach Street. Ladonna Gamble and I were talking about the Ditch Lily and we both had some questions, so I thought I would do some research. I am moving the Ditch Lily out of the perennial bed to an area by the signage for The Farm. Right plant – right place! It isn't that I don't like the Ditch Lily as I have admired its flush of beauty along roadsides, I just don't want this plant in the perennial bed. So where did they come from and what are some other facts about the Tawny Daylily?



The common or orange daylily was introduced into the United States in the late 18th century as an ornamental. The first recorded planting of the Tawny Daylily in the United States was in 1793. It became the ultimate pass-along plant and by the early 20th century was commonly found in wild places.

The Ditch Lily is one of the parents of the modern daylily, *Hemerocallis fulva*. The large, showy orange flowers appear on a 3-4 foot tall stem far above the foliage in June and July. The flowers are in clusters of 5-9 at the tip of stalk, opening one at a time, each for one day only. The blooms open midmorning and wither by the end of the day. Buds and flowers are edible, having a sweet-spicy flavor.

The Ditch Lily spreads rapidly by rhizomes into woods and fields and along roadsides by growth from thick, tuberous roots from which new plants are produced. Once established, and it's not fussy about soil, this plant multiplies and spreads, crowding out our native plants. The thick tubers make it a challenge to control. The Ditch Lily was often assumed to be native, but it is not. Surprisingly, the plant is sterile and almost never sets seed pods so its widespread distribution is the handiwork of gardeners. Hey neighbor – want some of these lovely plants?



On the flip side, some daylily specialists consider the lowly Ditch Lily a worthy addition to their collection as it may have a place as a groundcover plant in difficult locations where plants must fend for themselves. In waste places afflicted by inner-city blight this aggressiveness makes it desirable where it can even outwit weeds. For gardeners interested in growing heirloom plants, it is a natural because it hasn't changed in the past 400 years.

<https://www.friendsofthewildflowergarden.org/pages/plants/orangedaylily.html>

<https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/hemerocallis-fulva/>

<https://www.invasiveplantatlas.org/subject.html?sub=3407>

<https://www.uaex.edu/yard-garden/resource-library/plant-week/ditch-lily-7-10-09.aspx>

Growing Sweet Potatoes in Michigan

By Mary Yelland

Yuck! That brown goo with marshmallows on top called “yams” is what often comes to mind when sweet potatoes are mentioned. Sorry, if you like that mush, but it is a waste of good food. Even though sweet potatoes (*Ipomea batatas*) are often called yams in the United States, a yam (*Dioscorea alata*) is a completely different food native to the tropics and often grown in Africa. Sweet potatoes are in the morning glory family and produce a delicious, versatile and nutritious vegetable that can be grown in Michigan.

[A sweet potato is a root unlike a white potato which is an underground stem.](#) Sweet potatoes are higher in fiber than white potatoes. Cleveland Clinic lists them as one of the best foods for diabetics. They are very high in vitamin A and high in antioxidants. They are delicious baked just like a white potato, or roasted, mashed, used in salad....

White potatoes and even blue potatoes have grown in my garden, but I have never grown sweet potatoes. This spring, during the pandemic, seed potatoes were difficult to find. This encouraged me to look into growing sweet potatoes. They are one of my favorite vegetables and I don't know why I haven't tried growing them before. They are just getting ready to harvest now and I consider this gardening venture a success.

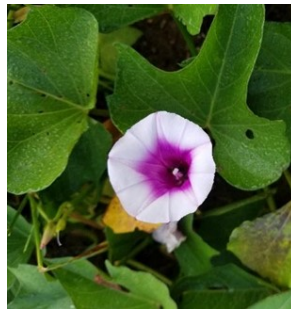
Sweet potatoes are not grown from seeds, or even tiny potatoes but from “slips,” young plants. The slips can be purchased from seed catalogs or garden centers. However, with the cost on the conservative side at around \$1 a slip, I decided to try growing my own. It was really quite easy and interesting. In late March I had sweet potatoes for supper. A couple of the roots I used had skinny ends that looked to have some spots that might grow. I cut the skinny ends off and ate the rest of the vegetable. I had done some research and found 2 recommendations for starting slips. One was to use toothpicks inserted into cut sweet potatoes to suspend them in water. The other was to just put the cut end into some very wet potting soil. I started with the toothpick method, but found they broke and it was hard to suspend them in water. I moved them to wet soil and in a few days I saw sprouts starting to grow. When the sprouts were around 3 inches and had a few leaves, I carefully broke each sprout free from the sweet potato ends and placed them in their own individual cup of potting mix. I then took care of them as I did the tomato plants I started this spring. They grew their own roots and were ready to plant in the garden the first of June. From 3 pieces of sweet potato I ended up with over 15 slips.

The sweet potatoes grew quite well, and vines spread out and filled in looking like the ornamental sweet potato vines often used in pots. Mine even blossomed although I understand that is not necessarily typical. While much of my garden this year had disease, I did not notice any problem with the sweet potatoes. From my reading of extension articles, I understand Michigan does not have many sweet potato diseases or insects because we are out of the typical growing area; sweet potatoes are a native tropical vine.

To harvest the sweet potatoes, they need to be dug much like a white potato. They should be harvested in late September, but before a killing freeze as it can change the flavor of the roots. I admit I got a little anxious and did dig up one hill early. I found close to a dozen sweet potatoes. After digging, the sweet potatoes should be cured by laying them out in a warm humid environment for 5-10 days. This will allow them to be stored for months. Growing slips from a store-bought sweet potato, I was taking a chance on what variety I was growing. I researched some varieties early on and found the most grown commercial variety is ‘Beauregard.’ This variety grows well in Michigan. I believe, with the appearance of the roots and blossoms, that ‘Beauregard’ is the variety I have. I am looking forward to enjoying the sweet potato harvest and sharing the bounty from my 3 little tips that I cut off in March.



The fourth thing is an avocado pit I was trying to sprout. (It didn't make it.)



Pretty and unexpected blossoms.



The first hill of sweet potatoes.

Outreach News, Puzzle

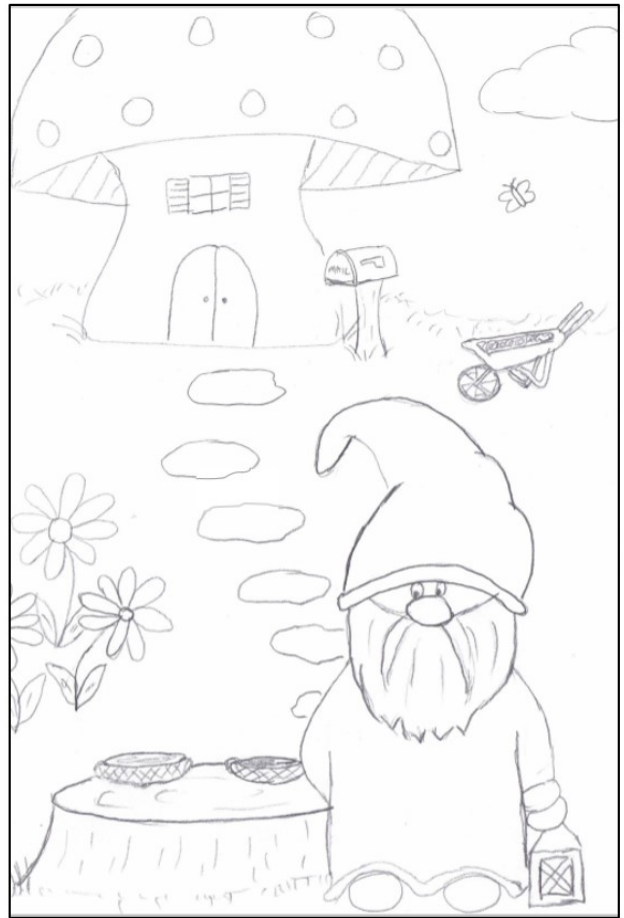
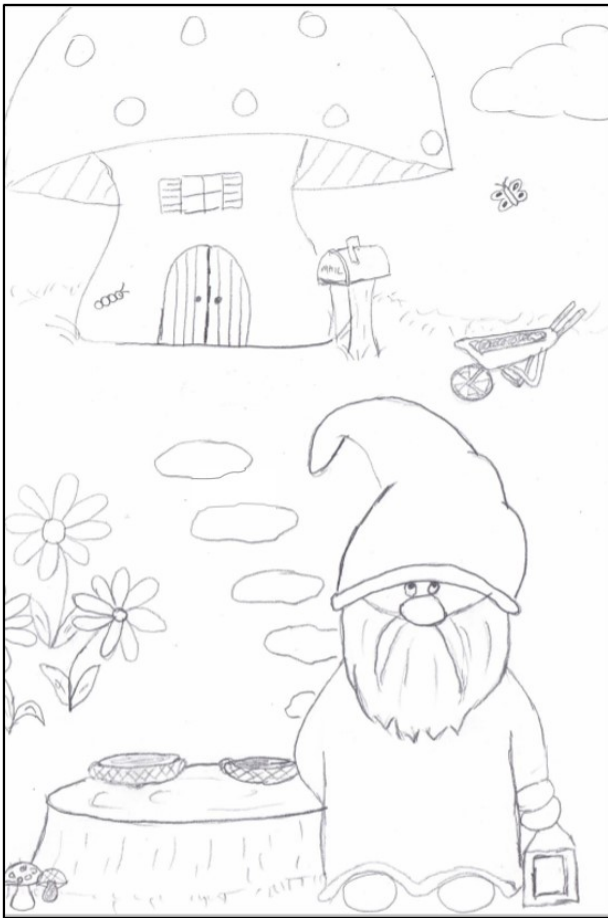
Outreach News

By Kay McCullough

At this time, there are no upcoming events that need EMG volunteers. Stay tuned!

Gardener's Logic Puzzle

Find 10 differences in the two pictures.



1. Spots on the butterfly.
2. Flag on the mailbox.
3. 2 dots on the house.
4. Leaf on daisy is drooping.
5. Lantern is different.
6. Steppingstone missing.
7. Mushroom missing.
8. Gnome is looking different direction.
9. Boards on house door.
10. Caterpillar on the house.

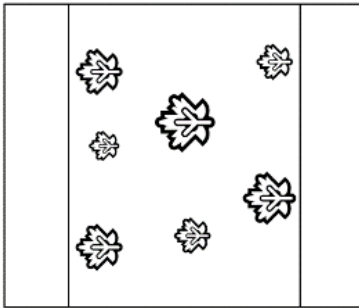
Gardening with Kids

Gardening with Kids... Make a Leaf Lantern

By Mary Yelland

Items needed:

- Some leaves
- Waxed paper
- Poster board or other thin cardboard (cereal box?)
- Craft supplies: glue, glue stick, tape, stapler, hole punch, string
- Battery operated tea light



3. Cut 2 strips of poster board about an inch and a half wide and as long as the width of your waxed paper. Glue them to the ends of your dry leaf paper.

4. Carefully bend the poster board strips into a circle and connect the two ends on the top and bottom. Tape or a stapler will work best.



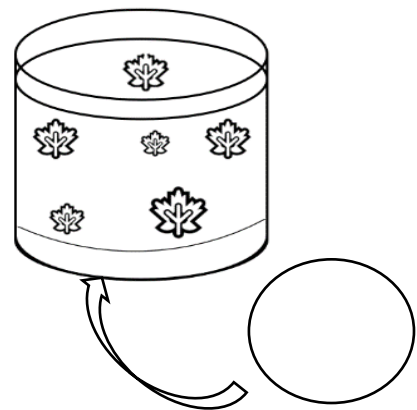
1. Go outside and gather some leaves. You may want to design a lantern with all maple leaves or all oak leaves. You may want to find pretty fall leaves. You may want several small leaves or just a few big ones.

2. Cut two pieces of waxed paper about 8 to 12 inches long. Glue your leaves onto the first one and glue the second one on top. Let them dry. Pressing them down with some heavy books while they dry is a good idea as well.

3. Cut 2 strips of poster board about an inch and a half wide and as long as the width of your waxed paper. Glue them to the ends of your dry leaf paper.

4. Carefully bend the poster board strips into a circle and connect the two ends on the top and bottom. Tape or a stapler will work best.

5. Cut a bottom for your lantern. Set the tube on your poster board and trace a circle to fit. Cut it out and attach it to the bottom with tape.



6. Using a hole punch, punch a hole in each side of the top of the lantern. Tie a string through the holes. Without a hole punch you could attach the string with a stapler.

7. Place a battery-operated tea light inside your lantern.

Time to Harvest Sweet Potatoes

by Mary Yelland

See the article on growing sweet potatoes. Then try some in one of these recipes.

Rosemary Garlic Sweet Potato Oven Fries

- 3 large sweet potatoes, (about 2¼ pounds)
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh rosemary or 1 teaspoon of dried rosemary
- 1 garlic clove, minced or ¼ tsp garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon cornstarch
- salt and pepper to taste



Preheat the oven to 425°F. Peel sweet potatoes and cut into ¼ inch julienned strips (French fry shape). These can also be cut into chunks and are equally delicious.

In a large resealable plastic bag, combine the remaining ingredients. Add sweet potatoes; shake to coat. Arrange in a single layer on two 15x10x1-in. baking sheets coated with cooking spray. Bake 30-35 minutes or until tender and lightly browned, turning occasionally.

Sweet Potato Salad



- 5 cups sweet potato chunks
- 2 tablespoons olive oil; divided
- 2 cups spinach chopped
- ¼ cup chopped onion
- ¼ cup dried cranberries
- 2 tablespoons pepita seeds
- 1 small avocado chopped into chunks
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
or other preferred vinegar
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon honey

Preheat oven to 400° F. Peel and cut sweet potatoes into bite sized chunks. Toss with 1 tablespoon of the olive oil. Spread out in a single layer onto baking sheet. Bake for about 30 minutes until cooked through stirring about half way through cooking time. Remove from oven and let cool. This can be done ahead of time and cooked potatoes can be kept in the refrigerator.

For dressing, combine remaining tablespoon of olive oil with the vinegar, lemon juice, and honey. Combine remaining salad ingredients with cooled roasted sweet potatoes. Toss with dressing.

Sweet Potato Biscuits

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- ⅓ cup yellow cornmeal
- 2½ teaspoons baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ⅓ cup cold butter, cubed
- 1 cup mashed sweet potato*
- ½ cup milk
- 2 tablespoons honey

In a large bowl, combine the flour, cornmeal, baking powder and salt. Cut in butter until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Stir in the sweet potato, milk and honey just until moistened. Turn onto a lightly floured surface; knead 5-8 times. Pat out to ½ in. thickness; cut with a floured 2-in. biscuit cutter. Place 2 in. apart on an ungreased baking sheet. Bake at 400°F for 14-18 minutes or until lightly browned.

*To mash sweet potatoes, peel, boil until soft, and mash. They do not need milk or butter.



VMS Corner

Michelle Chockley—Lead VMS Ambassador (Cell: 810-210-6685)

VMS Log in: <https://michigan.volunteersystem.org/UniversalLogin.cfm>

Garden Watch 2020 Reminder: Email Mary Yelland photos of your personal home gardens to post in the VMS photo album (dmyelland@juno.com). We had **71** the last time I looked!

Now is the time to work on Education Hours

EMG 2020 required hours = 10 education (The 20 volunteer hour requirement has been waived for 2020.)

It would be totally awesome if everyone can get their education hours logged. In checking VMS today, we have about 26 EMG's who have logged 10 or more education hours. A big thank you for logging hours as you go. I am sure there are many who have not taken the time to log, so please do so.

Genesee has a total of 151 EMG's on our roster, which includes Emeritus, Trainees, EMG's and Advanced EMG's. Emeritus and Trainees are not required to complete education, leaving about 103 required to enter education.

If you need help entering education or finding education hours, please let me know at chockleym@gmail.com

(This is a repeat of last month's DTE) I have covered pretty much every topic on VMS over the last year giving you useful tips and where to find information. If you would like any specific topic covered, please send me an email with your suggestions. Usually if you have a question, other folks do too. You can find the last 12 months of issues of the DTE on this link if you would like to go back and revisit any issues: https://www.canr.msu.edu/genesee/master_gardener/

We have numerous projects that some of our EMG's are working on after getting site approval and sending the Covid Project Safety Guidelines with a typed signature to Barslund. Volunteer hours are not required to keep EMG certification this year, but many EMG's are out there maintaining their projects, including our trainees. We know how quickly a garden can go downhill when left unattended. And sometimes, we've just got to garden! We miss our garden plants and friends. A big THANK YOU to all of our EMG's and trainees during this time.

A question asked this last month by a trainee: Does travel time count as volunteer time?

Answer: No

There is a field to log miles traveled when entering hours for education or volunteering if you need to track for yourself on VMS. There is an ongoing tracking counter on the home screen of VMS.

The screenshot shows the VMS user interface for Michelle Chockley. The page header includes the Michigan State University Extension logo and navigation links for Home, Logout, MSU Master Gardener, and Help. The user's name, Michelle Chockley, is displayed. The main content area is divided into several sections:

- Your Information:** Edit Your Profile, Add New Hours, View Your Hours.
- Administration:** Manage VMS, Manage Roster, Add Calendar Event, Manage Projects, Newsletters/Documents, Hour Reports, Contact Reports, Photo Albums.
- Genesee MSU Extension Master Gardener News:** A central section with a sunflower image and a welcome message. It includes a note about VSP instructions added under state links and contact information for Barslund Judd.
- Your Hours / Miles:** A table showing: Volunteer Hours (3,660), Continuing Education Hours (330), and Volunteer Miles (11,378).
- State Links:** A list of links for COVID-19 safety guidelines, MSUE team coverage, and other resources.

The bottom of the screenshot shows a Windows taskbar with the time 9:06 PM on 9/14/2020.

Master Gardener Association Genesee County

The Master Gardener Association of Genesee County Michigan (MGAGCM) is an association of Extension Master Gardeners (EMGs). Membership is optional for certified Extension Master Gardeners. The MGAGCM provides support to local EMGs through project funding, plant signage, and extra educational opportunities.

Note from MGAGCM President—Joanne Gensel

Happy Autumn, Gardeners!

It's nearly time to put the gardens to bed for the winter and think about next year's projects.

Soon we'll have **MGAGCM elections for board of directors positions. *[Our association by-laws stipulate that in order to run for these positions and to vote in our election, individuals must be members of *MMGA] Mel has confirmed a list of folks who paid the association dues in 2020 to *MMGA. He will be making one more attempt to confirm the list. Those folks will be getting an email to vote. If you would like to run for a board position, PLEASE contact any one of the current board members. We will help you get aboard!*

Going forward the board will vote on implementing a system of maintaining association membership. Any certified Extension Master Gardener who would like to be part of our local association will fill out an application form and then **MGAGCM will pay the \$5.00 membership fee in MMGA, Inc. The applicants will be put into a local association directory to be shared with other MGAGCM members. This allows us a way to contact each other and provides an accurate list of members for voting purposes.

Please contact me if you have any suggestions that will help make us more efficient as an association.

This has been a challenging year for many reasons and some of our wonderful fellow Extension Master Gardeners have dropped their Extension Master Gardener Certification. Gloria Roudebush is one of those special people that will be greatly missed. Gloria served in the role of hospitality and sent cards to members that could use support during personal hard times. We are looking for someone to take over that role. MGAGCM will provide cards and postage. Please let me know if you are willing to take on this task.

Keep Growing—literally and figuratively,

Joanne

MGAGCM Board of Directors Election (* indicates that this position is being voted upon in Nov. 2020 for 2 Years)

**MGAGCM = Master Gardener Association Genesee County Michigan (our local level association)
(MGAGCM is one of affiliate chapters that make up MMGA, Inc. Membership is NOT required to be an Extension Master Gardener. Membership is for fundraising and social purposes.)

*MMGA = Michigan Master Gardeners Association, Inc. (our state level association)

MGAGCM Board of Directors

*President	Joanne Gensel	jhgensel@gmail.com	(810) 339-0764
*1st Vice President	Sabrina VanDyke	brie0212@gmail.com	(810) 407-0808
*2nd Vice President	Loretta Ellwood	ldellwood@aol.com	(810) 344-7383
Secretary	Margaret Sowle	leemar4321@frontier.com	(989) 723-6074
Treasurer	Michelle Wareham	m.wareham@yahoo.com	(810) 919-2945
Outreach Director	Kay McCullough	birdieball@aol.com	(810) 635-9341
*Communication Director	Mel Kennedy	mkennedy60@charter.net	(810) 275-8822

Master Gardener Association Genesee County

Websites:

MGAGCM Website—www.geneseecountymg.org

MGAGCM Facebook Page — www.facebook.com/groups/216904628327310/

MMGA Inc Website—www.michiganmastergardener.org

MMGA Inc. Facebook Page—www.facebook.com/MichiganMG/

Upcoming Events:

MGAGCM Events:

Jan. 16: **Seed Starting 101** – Deirdre Hope
Project ID: Food: General Gardens

Feb. 20: **Cactuses and Succulents That Will Prickle Your Fancy** – Barslund Judd
Project ID: Community: Beautification - Public Areas

Mar. 19: ~~**Michigan Invasives: A Look At The Past, Present and Future**~~—with Brian Van Patten
Project ID: Environmental Stewardship: Invasive Pests and Plants **Cancelled due to COVID-19**

Apr. 16: ~~**Extension Master Gardener Banquet**~~ [~~Potluck—MGAGCM provides chicken and beverage—watch for link to sign up!~~] **Postponed**

May 16: ~~**MGAGCM Native Plant Sale**~~ at Davison Farmers Market (*Saturday, starting at 9:00 a.m.*) **Postponed until September 12th.**

May 21: ~~**Flowering Plants for the Cutting Garden**~~—Jane Giblin **Cancelled and presentation changed to **Yellow Stripey Things: Bees, Hornets and Wasps**** – Abi Saeed / *Project ID: Environmental Stewardship: IPM - General*

June 18: ~~**Meeting at Wojo's**~~ (*Wojo's Speaker...TBA*) **Cancelled**

June 28: ~~**Genesee County Extension Master Gardener Tour 2020**~~ (*Sunday, from 10 a.m.—5 p.m.*) **Postponed** *Project ID: Community: Beautification—Public Areas (If you visit all the sites, you'll get 3.5 Ed. Hrs.)*

July TBD: ~~**MGAGCM July Picnic**~~ (*at Crossroads Village*) **Cancelled**

Aug. 20: ~~**The Year in Blooms: Pollinators and their Relationship with Native Plants**~~—Vince Ste. Marie
Project ID: Environmental Stewardship: IPM—Pollinators **Food Safety in the Home Garden** – Micah Hutchinson - *Project ID: Food: General Gardens*

Sept. 12: ~~**MGAGCM Native Plant Sale**~~ at the Davison Farmers Market (rescheduled from May 16th) [~~The link has an order form, plant list, and plant information.~~] **Postponed to 2021**

Sept. 17: **Hops in the Home Garden** – Barslund Judd
Project ID: Food: General Garden

Oct. 10: ~~**Fall Into Spring**~~ **Cancelled**

Oct. 15: **Native Michigan Wildflowers and Why You Want Them in Your Landscape** – Sara Thomas
Project ID: Environmental Stewardship: Native Plants

Nov. 19: **Holiday Party**

2020 MGAGCM meetings and or presentations are held on the third Thursday of each month in the GCCARD Building, 601 N. Saginaw Street, Flint, MI 48502-2009 (*except December & unless otherwise noted*).