# Down to Earth

Michigan State University Extension Master Gardener Program—Genesee County

October 2019 Volume 17, Issue 10



## **Letter from the Program Coordinator**

**Barslund Judd** 

Summer has come and gone. We've had some great activities and outreach events in our region. I'm proud of the work that our EMGs have accomplished. I'd especially like to recognize Sasi Vemuri and her team which have been awarded twice by the Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association for the work they have been doing in the community. Sasi is an outstanding leader and we are lucky to have her. Sasi also makes delicious rice with chili's for her volunteers when they work. If you need motivation to visit one of her projects for a work day, there it is!

On a more personal note, my husband and I have moved into our new home in Flint Township. We are finally homeowners again and looking forward to having gardens and endless things to fix. We are hoping to have a brief informal open house this fall. I can't promise a fancy spread but I can promise a house tour with included commentary on all of the things that need to be fixed! Last month Colleen Putinsky's name was drawn after she found the butterfly in the September issue of the DTE and completed the form with her name and email address. She won the reference book Michigan Butterflies and Skippers: A Field Guide and Reference by Mogens C. Nielsen and published by the Michigan State University Extension. It's a great source for identifying butterflies found in the area. Be sure to look for the butterfly again this month and fill out the form. There will be a different prize for the lucky winner!

Barslund Judd juddbars@msu.edu

## Extension Master Gardener Class Genesee County – Jan. 25, 2020 (Postponed from fall 2019)

We need your help in sharing this information with your friends and groups who may be interested. If anyone has questions, please contact Barslund Judd, juddbars@msu.edu

Link to sign up: January 2020 Master Gardener Class Sign up Link

Location: GCCARD Building

605 N. Saginaw St., Suite 1A

Flint, MI 48502

When: Saturdays, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Jan. 25, 2020 - May 9, 2020

(including makeup date, no class April 11)

Deadline: August 15, 2019

Fee: \$325.00

\$ 25.00 for Volunteer Selection Process which includes the background check. \$300.00 for training course, including 1,000-page training manual. There are no other out-of-pocket costs.

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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)
- Vicki Perkins (Jr. MGs)

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 MSUE Project**

## **Clio Bridge Park Butterfly Garden**

Lori Fournier - Project Lead Susan Crisp

Cheri Johnson had a vision for a Monarch Butterfly Waystation Garden in 2013 as a member of the Vienna Township Business Development Authority in Clio when they began developing this site for a park. Her research found that the monarchs were about to be placed on the endangered species list and she joined the nationwide program, Monarch Watch, based at the University of Kansas. Cheri was a great advocate for preserving the natural habitat for butterflies, bees, and our woodland creatures. Cheri is now a retired Genesee County Extension Master Gardener. Lori



Fournier became the Project Lead for this large hillside garden a year ago with the help of Amanda Hatchel, Co-Lead and EMGs Randee Pieper and Joanne Belill.

There is handicap accessible parking at the top of the hillside. Near that area, which overlooks the hidden garden, there is a patio area with picnic tables and grills. Under the ten-foot-high Butterfly Sculpture lays this unique garden cascading over the slope bordered by a split rail fence with signage that reads not to enter and wake the sleeping butterflies. Large hydrangeas grow along the upper border. Other nectar sources for butterflies and bees are foxglove, asters, delphinium, lupine, black eyed Susan, sedum, butterfly bush (Buddleja) to name a few that provides color from spring through fall. Expansion of the garden was made to accommodate the great growth of common, butterfly, and sandhill/pinewoods milkweeds are so important for the Monarchs.

A winding trail leads you down the hill to the base of the butterfly garden and beyond through a wooded area. Along this journey are magical fairy houses and numerous educational signs about butterflies and bees for all ages. Lori has brought some new innovative educational ideas for the community: Brownie Troop Flower Badge, Children's Story Time, and the Enchanted Fairytale Trail Children's Event that involves the whole community in August. This community sponsored park offers something for everyone from a Little Free Library for book sharing to the tranquil creek running through it with benches to sit and relax.



# Bridge Park Monarch Waystation Clio

Located on the Southwest corner of M-57 and Linden Road with the entrance off Linden Road just north of Murphy's gas station near Walmart.

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Lori Fournier (rlfournier@juno.com)

## **Featured Article**

## **Michigan Chestnuts**

Mary Yelland

"Chestnuts roasting on an open fire," the opening phrase of the iconic "The Christmas Song" is where most people's familiarity with chestnuts ends. Michigan, however, is the number one producing state of chestnuts with Michigan State University and MSU extension instrumental in helping the blossoming industry. Often, when chestnuts are mentioned, the first thought is toward a horse chestnut,...sometimes called a buckeye. These trees of the genus Aesculus grow similar looking nuts but are toxic and bitter to eat. The true edible chestnut is of the genus Castanea which includes the American, Chinese, Japanese, and European chestnut. People are also familiar with the water chestnut a tuber of a totally unrelated aquatic plant in the sedge family.

Chestnuts are one of the most popular nuts worldwide, however production in the United States accounts for less than one percent of global production. One of the contributing factors to the relative scarcity in our country is the fungus Cryphonectria parasitica or chestnut blight that was accidentally imported into the US in 1904. Within about 30 years after its introduction, the American chestnut population was destroyed, killing 25% of the forests in some of the eastern states. These trees were some of the largest and most valuable trees in the country, growing to heights over 100 feet and greater than 5 feet in diameter. Today the true American chestnut tree is rare and is often a carrier of the blight that can affect orchard chestnut trees.







Pete Ivory, a farmer near Hadley, Michigan, owns a 25-acre chestnut orchard, Ivory Farms. He is the sixth generation farming the over 150-year-old family farm. Trying to save the land from development he was researching options and thinking about planting walnuts when he came across the idea of chestnuts. He made the investment in 2005 and started the chestnut orchard. As of last year, his over 1500 trees paid off. The farm produces about 7 to 10 thousand pound of chestnuts in a year mostly harvested in October. His orchard does not have the blight bearing American chestnut but grafted and seedling varieties of Chinese and European x Japanese hybrid trees. A tree will take about 4 years to start producing. The trees blossom with thin strong-smelling spikes in summer. Two varieties are needed to cross pollinate with some hybrids being sterile of pollen. The trees are wind pollinated and the nuts develop in a spiny cactus like bur. When the kernels become, ripe the bur splits open to allow the ripe chestnuts to fall to the ground. Harvested from the ground within a few days, the nuts are immediately refrigerated. These nuts are a smooth shiny brown with a tassel or point on the top. If the nut does not have this point, it is not from the edible genus. For best flavor, chestnuts should be stored in the refrigerator for a week or two and then cooked. To cook, first cut through the outer brown shell and the inner pellicle that surround the nut, so they don't burst upon cooking. Cooking can be done by roasting on a fire or grill, baking in a hot oven, or even boiling. The sweet yellowish kernel can then be removed. Unlike other nuts, chestnuts are sweet and low in fat. They are also high in vitamins and are gluten free. The chestnut harvest lasts only a few weeks in October and the nuts may keep in the refrigerator until the end of the year.

## **MSU EMG Outreach Report**

## **Outreach News**

Joanne Gensel

The Mott Fall Harvest Festival marked is the last of the 2019 Outreach events for our Extension Master Gardeners.

We had a drizzling overcast wet morning but all of the volunteers showed up ready to go! The team consisted of Tina Imeson, Deb McKerracher, Linda Jaworski, Darlene Sweazey, Christine Parkerson and Chris Bradshaw. What a great group! The weather did not deter them from their duty!! The crowd improved with the weather and we had contact with approximately 60 people. The event was wonderful as it is every year. I saw various Master Gardeners working the event for MOTT or just enjoying the venue. I personally tasted the apples, doughnuts and cider. Very Good!

THANK YOU to all the volunteers for the outreach events this season. You make a great impact on our community and in our organization. I look forward to seeing all of you at meetings, events, parties and next year at outreaches.

Joanne









## **Gardening With Kids**

#### **Michigan Chestnuts Continued**

Ivory Farms belongs to Chestnut Growers Inc., a chestnut grower's co-op that markets chestnuts in Michigan. Ivory Farms sells most of its nuts to the co-op, but last year started selling them directly on the farm as part of the agritourism business. Saturdays in October you could visit a you-pick chestnut farm and try the treat for yourself or look for Michigan chestnuts in the refrigerator section of your grocery store or specialty shop. Your chestnuts could be used in a full menu of options from chestnut hummus, chestnut soup, and even chestnut brownies.

#### For reference and further information:

https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/chestnuts\_growing\_a\_food\_crop\_and\_an\_industry\_in\_michigan https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/michigan\_produces\_a\_bumper\_chestnut\_crop https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/whats\_the\_difference\_between\_horse\_chestnuts\_and\_sweet\_chestnuts\_

## **Gardening With Kids—Plant Maze**

Plants are phototropic, meaning they will grow toward light. Using this property, you can get a plant to grow through a maze.

You will need:

**A box.** A shoe box standing on end or something similar so that the side can be removed.

**Some cardboard or heavy dark paper.** This will be used for making the maze.

**A cup with soil.** Use a cup or plant pot with potting soil. Make sure there are drain holes in the bottom. **Some seeds.** Climbing beans will work best as they grow quickly and have a climbing stem. However, you can try some other seeds to see if they will work.

- 1. Plant a few seeds in the cup of soil. Give it some water and set in a sunny place until you have a sprouted plant. If several plants sprout, pull any extras out until you have only 1 or 2 plants. Once your plant is growing its first leaves, you can get started with the maze.
- 2. Turn your shoe box on end so it is taller than it is wide. Cut a hole in what is now the top of the box for your plant to exit the maze. Remove the cover so you can place some dividers in the box. Use tape or hot glue to attach some cardboard pieces inside your shoe box leaving a space for the plant to grow through. See the illustration.
- 3. Replace the cover on the box (it is now the side) and put the box in a sunny place or under a bright light.
- 4. Take the side off when you need to check on your plant or water it. Don't water it every day, only when it is getting dry. Too much water will kill it. As the plant grows it will grow toward the light and around the dividers you have put in place that block the light. It can find its way through the maze using phototropism!



### Hotline

#### The Buzzz!

LaDonna Gamble

We get kind of lazy this time of year, don't we? We don't pull weeds as much, we don't water our plants/vegetables as much and we don't harvest with the gusto of the previous two months (or maybe it's just me!). Regardless of our energy this time of year, I think we all experienced some level of satisfaction as the season winds down. I'll tell you one thing (as a fairly new person to the gardening world) - I have learned that I use every ounce of energy I have when cleaning, clearing



and prepping my beds in the fall so that there will be less to worry about in the spring. Here is an excellent link about putting your planting areas down before old man winter gets here: <a href="https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/preparing-your-garden-this-fall-for-next-years-bounty">https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/preparing-your-garden-this-fall-for-next-years-bounty</a>

We will revisit this later in the fall because there is still at least a month of harvesting remaining (depending on what you are growing).

#### A caller said she was afraid to use Sevin on her tomatoes. Are there alternatives?

First of all, "Sevin" is a brand name for an insecticide used to control garden insects in ornamentals, crops and vegetables. The active chemical is carbaryl. This chemical is most easily applied by dusting. Depending on the amount used, carbaryl can be toxic to humans and animals. I am being trained the organic way at the Edible Flint Educational Farm (Putting in a plug here—we are awesome!) and we spray neem oil. It less likely to harm beneficial insects like praying mantis or ladybugs. (I personally do not care for insects that have necks, can turn their heads or can follow you with their eyes, so yes, I have been seen screaming and running like a bat out of h%&\* to get away from them.) Don't even get me started on that, besides, it doesn't keep me from coming back! Here's more on safer insect control:

https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/how-to-control-invasive-pests-while-protecting-pollinators-and-other-beneficial-insects

#### I think I have corn leaf miner on my corn. HELP!

First of all, this type of call would likely generate a request for more information from the hotline volunteer. When did you first notice it? Can you send a picture to our email address? Are you only noticing it on the corn? Are you able to bring in a sample (insect and leaf)? Etc. etc. We often do not just assume the caller has correctly identified a pest or disease because if they are wrong, then we have given them the wrong information for a solution. The corn blotch leaf miner is actually an immature stage of a fly and the larva tunnels inside the corn leaves. Literature does not suggest control with insecticides because they do not harm to the corn. Read on

http://extension.cropsciences.illinois.edu/fieldcrops/insects/corn blotch leaf miner/

# A caller got his soil test back and it suggested a deficiency that could be remedied with about a quarter inch of compost. The problem was that he has ¾ acre that needs the treatment and couldn't find anyone who could do the job for him.

We do not recommend specific businesses to callers. Be careful to do a little research (or get recommendations) and find out what businesses have the best compost; all are not good mixes! If he has the dimensions of the plot and knows how deep he wants it, they should be able to help him figure out how much he needs. If not, calculators like the one linked below are available online. Next he can probably find a lawn care company that would have the proper equipment to spread the soil for him and would appreciate the business. At the Educational Farm (oops another plug!) we put on our overalls, get our corn cob pipes and straw hats and use wheel barrels, shovels and rakes to spread the compost. My secret to getting through this is to keep repeating a mantra to myself, "I'm working my core!" and "I'm working my abs!" That doesn't help much... Basic calculator <a href="http://www-users.math.umn.edu/~white004/personal/compost.html">http://www-users.math.umn.edu/~white004/personal/compost.html</a>

#### Time to Harvest!

## **Apples**

Mary Yelland

What is that iconic fruit that keeps the doctor away, is a gift for your teacher, and is made into the all-American pie? Of course, the Apple! August to November is apple harvest in Michigan. Our state has over 9 million commercial apple trees covering 36,500 acres. Apples are grown in all 50 states, but all those apples make Michigan 3rd in the country in apple production (we follow Washington and New York). Apples have variety galore. Sweet or sour, large or small, fresh or cooked, there are 2,500 varieties grown in the US coming in all shades of yellow, green, and red. Applesauce, vinegar, cider, apple butter, cosmetics, crafts, pie, caramel apples, potpourri, the uses seem endless. So, this month there are two recipes; candy apple salad, and apple chicken.

#### **Candy Bar Apple Salad**

1 cup milk

1 package (3.4 oz) instant vanilla pudding mix

18 oz, frozen whipped topping, thawed

4 large apples, chopped (about 6 cups)

4 full sized chocolate caramel candy bars cut into 1/2-inch cubes (snickers, milky way, rollos, twix) or 8oz of unwrapped candy bites



**Instructions:** Whisk together the milk and pudding mix until blended. Let set for 2-3 minutes. Fold in whipped topping. Fold in apples and candy. Refrigerate until serving. Garnish with caramel sauce before serving, if desired.

#### **Apple Chicken**

1 teaspoon olive oil

1 pound boneless skinless chicken breast cut into pieces

¼ teaspoon garlic powder

1 small green pepper cleaned and sliced

1 medium apple peeled and diced ½ medium onion sliced (optional)

12 oz of baby carrots

2 tablespoons soy sauce

2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar

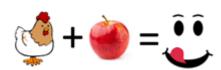
½ cup water

1 tablespoon cornstarch dissolved in just enough cold water to be able to mix it

#### Instructions:

Layer the ingredients in the order given in the pan of an electric pressure cooker.\* Set according to manufacturer's directions for poultry setting or 20 minutes. Chicken should be over 165°F and carrots soft. Remove from cooker and drain the juice from the chicken and vegetables reserving 3/4 cup. Add cornstarch dissolved in cold water to reserved juice. Return to cooker and bring to a boil following manufacturer's directions until thickened. Serve chicken and sauce over rice if desired.

\*Recipe can also be cooked in a slow cooker for 6-8 hours until the chicken is at least 165°F.



- · Apples ripen six to ten times faster at room temperature than if they were refrigerated.
- · A bushel of apples weighs about 42 pounds and will yield 20-24 quarts of applesauce.
- · It takes the energy from 50 leaves to produce one apple.
- · Apples are fat, sodium, and cholesterol free and a medium apple is only about 80 calories.
- · For maximum quality, store apples in a cool place, between 32 and 40 °F.
- · The top variety produced and sold in the US is Gala.



#### VMS Corner

## How to Edit Your Profile Information in VMS

Michelle Chockley-Lead VMS Ambassador

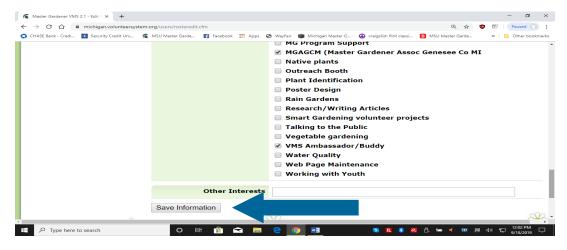
VMS Log in: https://michigan.volunteersystem.org/UniversalLogin.cfm

Forgot your password?: Contact Michelle Chockley for a quick reset or request via the VMS login page. Your profile page is your personal information page. It is important to update your profile page whenever you have a change in a phone number or email address. You can also update privacy settings, change your password and update your interests. You should mark all interests that apply to you. If you wish to receive emails from the association, please mark the MGAGCM box. For all changes or updates made on this page, always remember to go to the bottom and SAVE.

#### Click on "Edit Your Profile" to start!



Make all changes/updates and go to the bottom and SAVE.



Reminder: The 2019 annual required hours for Extension Master Gardeners and Advanced Master Gardeners is 10 education and 20 volunteer hours which are to be completed and reported in the VMS no later than December 31, 2019.

## **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.

## **Greetings from Alan Grove, MGAGCM Interim Board President**

Our next monthly membership meeting will be Thursday, October 17th with social time starting at 5:30 p.m. Loretta Elwood will provide a fabulous presentation showing us many flowers/gardens from New Zealand and Australia. You don't want to miss this! Our business meeting will follow and remember all nominations for the Board must be in by meeting's end.

Delicious/yummy snacks will be provided along with the 50/50 raffle at the end of the meeting. Hope to see you there!

Alan President

#### Please join us for a brief celebration of Jim Harrow's life.

There will be a Memorial Stone Ceremony honoring Jim Harrow on Friday, October 4, 2019, at the Genesee District Library Headquarters at 5:00 p.m. The garden at this location was designed by Jim with the class of 2010. Sasi Vermuri was the student EMG who had a vision for gardens at libraries. This was an adventure which could not have happened without Jim's design eye and inspiration. A *Hydrangea paniculata* 'Limelight' tree has been planted in his memory and the stone will be placed at this site.





## **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:**

Memorial Stone Ceremony honoring Jim Harrow (5:00 p.m., Fri., Oct 4, 2019) Genesee District Library Headquarters at 4195 W Pasadena Ave., Flint, MI 48504

Fall Into Spring (Sat., Oct. 5, 2019) at Mott Community College <u>Link to webpage & brochure</u> Early registration has passed.

#### Tricks For Treats at Key-Lore Woof Woods Dog Park (Sat., Oct. 12, 2019)

sponsored by The Humane Society of Genesee County & held at 7185 Gillette Road, Flushing, MI https://geneseehumane.org/events/events.html/event/2019/10/12/tricks-for-treats-at-key-lore

#### MGAGCM Membership Meeting (Oct. 17, 2019)

Flower Gardens of New Zealand and Australia with Loretta Ellwood, MGAGCM Master Gardener

#### 2019 Fall Bulb Event-All About Bulbs (Oct. 26, 2019)

Learn about and purchase bulbs at Tollgate Farm and Education Center. https://events.anr.msu.edu/Bulb19SEMich/

MGAGCM Holiday Party (Nov. 21, 2019) This will be the usual potluck and will be the last chance to vote!

Extension Master Gardener Hour-Entry Deadline (Dec. 31, 2019)

Capital Area MG Symposium, It's All About...The Ins and Outs of Gardening (Sat., Jan. 25, 2020) The location will be Lansing Community College—West. See the Save the date flyer.

Master Gardener College, Gardening Visions for 2020 and Beyond, on the campus of Michigan State University (June 12 & 13, 2020)

https://www.canr.msu.edu/master gardener volunteer program/master gardener college/

#### Fall Into Spring - 2019 MGAGCM Conference Information

Sat. Oct. 5th, 2019

Mott Community College 1401 E. Court Street Flint, MI 48503

#### Schedule, Speakers, Topics, etc.:

8:00 a.m. Registration opens; Continental Breakfast, visit vendors

8:30 a.m. Angela Nelson (Native Plants in the Landscape)

10:05 a.m. Cheryl English (Gardening for Native Birds)

11:20 a.m. Lunch (with ham, turkey and veggie wraps, potato soup, garden salad, and beverages & desserts)

**12:20 p.m.** Bob Tritten (Growing and Caring for Fruit Trees in the Landscape)

1:55 p.m. George Papadelis (New Plants for 2020)

Creative Catering will be our caterer and there will be various vendors available during lunch and breaks. Extension Master Gardeners, friends, and the general public are invited to attend. Extension Master Gardeners attending have been approved to receive 5 education credit hours. Early Registration closes on September 27th. More information regarding registration can be found on our website <a href="http://fallintospring.weebly.com">http://fallintospring.weebly.com</a>. Registration is available by check, in person, and also online via PayPal.

Our speakers will provide tremendous educational value. Get a head start to promote more pollinators, birds, and insects as you diversify your garden landscape. Looking forward to seeing you October 5!