



Article and photo by: Louise Sloan

Whether you call it a sword lily or prefer the Latin *Gladiolus*, the spiky foliage that bears a stem of brightly colored blooms brightens mixed borders or shines in vases. Native to tropical Africa and parts of the Mediterranean, gladiolas have been right at home in the United States since the 1890s and are now classified as the August birth month flower. Victorians felt that these sword lilies could pierce your heart, so they used them to convey love and infatuation—and if you’ve ever swooned over the trumpet-shaped blooms, that infatuation might encourage you to plant these in your garden. Gladiolus corms are planted after the first frost when the soil has warmed. Succession planting over the course of a few weeks will lead to a longer show in late summer. In zones 7-10, glads can be treated as perennials, but here in Michigan, it is recommended to dig up corms after a light frost has killed the leaves. Dig up the corms, shake off the dirt, and store them in a dry place until the following planting season. You’ll be glad you did!

The Oakland Gardener

August 2025

Monthly Plant Feature

Michigan Melons: A Sweet August Harvest

Article by Pat G. Wilson; Pictures by Melanie Fuhrmann

August in Michigan brings the long-awaited reward for **melon** lovers. After months of nurturing vines and tracking weather patterns, gardeners across the state are finally harvesting watermelons and cantaloupes—and the flavor is absolutely worth the wait.



These heat-loving fruits—watermelons (*Citrullus Lanatus*) and cantaloupes (*Cucumis melo*)—thrive in summer sun and hit peak ripeness in Michigan’s late-summer warmth. As members of the sprawling Cucurbitaceae family, they need space to spread, nutrient-rich soil, and a hefty dose of patience. But once August arrives, these sweet gems take center stage in the garden.

Watermelons are believed to have originated in the Kalahari Desert region of Africa. The earliest evidence of watermelon cultivation dates back to ancient Egypt, around 5,000 years ago. **Cantaloupe**, on the other hand, most likely originated in a region from South Asia to Africa. Both fruits were introduced to Europe through trade routes and later brought to North America by European colonists and enslaved Africans in the 1600s. As agriculture expanded westward, these melons were embraced by American farmers for their adaptability and flavor. By the mid-1800s they had found a reliable home in Michigan gardens, where rich soils, and warm summers created ideal growing conditions. Sugar production in any plant is driven by photosynthesis, and that’s directly affected by the amount of sunlight available. The more sunlight the garden receives, the more sugars accumulate in the melons.

Gardeners know to look for ripeness clues. A watermelon is ready when the underside sports a creamy yellow spot, and the nearby tendril dries and curls. Some swear by the classic “thump test”—listening for a deep, hollow sound when tapped. On the other hand, cantaloupes signal ripeness with a musky fragrance and easily separate from the vine at “full slip”.

Michigan’s growing conditions—sunny days and cooler nights—intensify flavor and firm up texture. Consistent watering is essential early on, but scaling back in the final weeks prevents splitting and concentrates sweetness.

Simple suggestions to Enjoy Your Garden Melons:

1. **Keep it classic:** Sit back in a comfy chair on a sunny afternoon with a cold slice of juicy melon. No recipe needed—just pure summer joy.
2. **Watermelon-Mint Salad** (Food Sharing Vegan)



3. **Cantaloupe Skewers with Mozzarella** (Food & Wine)
4. **Agua Fresca** (Downshiftology)

Nutritional Bonus

Beyond their sun-ripened flavor, these fruits are nutrient-rich. Watermelons boast over 90% water content and are packed with lycopene, a powerful antioxidant. Cantaloupes deliver generous doses of vitamin A, beta-carotene, and potassium.

From backyard plots to raised beds and community gardens, Michigan growers find inventive ways to grow melons. Some use vertical trellising with slings for support, while others mulch to retain moisture and block weeds.

Whether sliced, skewered, blended, or simply devoured cold from the fridge, homegrown melons offer something store-bought ones rarely do: satisfaction!

They're more than a snack—they're summer's sweet reward.

Extension Master Gardener News



Meadow Brook: a Historic Place to Volunteer

Article and photos by: Jamiel Dado

Looking for an exciting place to share your gardening talents? Want to volunteer on the grounds of a National Historic Landmark? Then the **Meadow Brook Hall Garden Club** is exactly what you've been waiting for.

Whether you are a beginner or need hours for your Extension Master Gardener Volunteer certification, Meadow Brook Hall Garden Club can accommodate your particular needs. The volunteers meet on Tuesdays from 8:30 am to Noon, from April through October. The Garden Club tends to the grounds around the historic Meadow Brook Hall, the Great Estate built between 1926 and 1929 in the Tudor Revival style by John Dodge's (of the Dodge brothers) widow, Matilda, and her second husband, Alfred Wilson. The Estate is a wonder to behold and a joy to garden around. In addition to the main house, there are three elaborate "playhouses" built for the children, located a short walk through the woods away, each with its own landscaping to maintain.



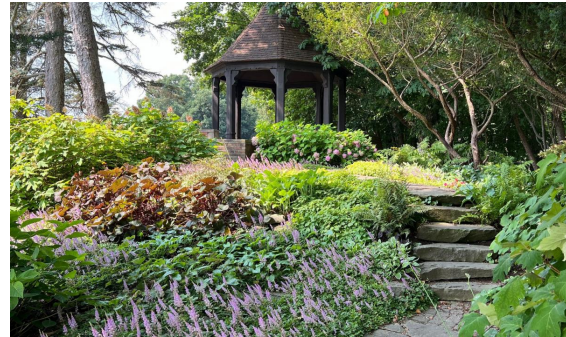
The **Gardens** were originally designed by



Matilda, with the help of landscape architect Arthur Davidson, to include a lake with two private islands in addition to various themed gardens throughout. Due to the Stock Market Crash of 1929, only the Rock Garden, English Walled Garden, gazebo, bridge, and courtyard were installed. It took until the 1940s for the Rose Garden and Pegasus Fountain Garden to be constructed. Sadly, the lake, with its

proposed private islands never came to fruition.

In addition to getting to help with the gardens, members benefit from free tours of the house and other discounts. Also, there are special programs that take place on Friday mornings once a month that feature engaging lectures on various botanical subjects. The next of which takes place on September 26th and features Don LaFond of the North American Rock Garden Society.



Membership is \$35 a year for an individual, or \$50 per couple.

Gardening Tips and Tricks



Keeping the Flowers Blooming all Season ...

Article and photos by: Jamiel Dado

Of all the joys that a summer garden brings, which are numerous, flowers undoubtedly win out. Beautiful blooms filling our senses with wondrous scents and lush colors that keep us enthralled with our own personal

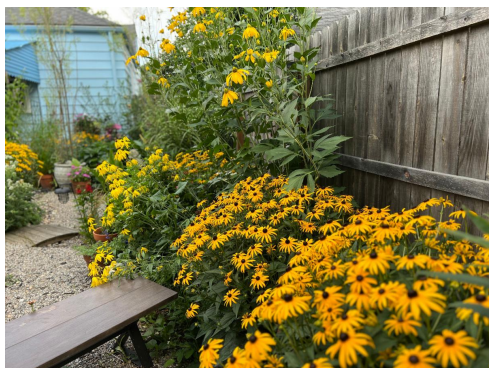
Eden. Naturally then, the goal is to keep this gorgeous show going as long as possible and getting the most out of our labor. To accomplish this, all one needs to do is something called deadheading.

At its most basic level, deadheading is simply removing the flower heads as they are fading, before they start to produce seeds. There are several **reasons** for doing this. Some are scientific, while others are aesthetic. Annuals, for example, have a sole purpose for the season, which is to produce seeds. After a bloom fades, it puts all of its energy into producing seeds, which speeds up its decline. When we cut the blooms off of the plant before seeds are formed, we trick it into producing more flowers, giving us a longer season and a healthier plant. In addition to extending the blooming season, removing the spent flowers just makes your garden look more beautiful.

Depending on your preference, you might choose to simply pinch off faded flowers with your fingers or use pruners. If using the latter, make sure that you sanitize your equipment between plants. There are many **ways** to accomplish this, but I find wiping down or spraying the blades with rubbing alcohol is an easy way to go.



While most deadheading is straightforward, when it comes **toroses**, there are a few things to keep in mind. First, it is important to make your cut at a 45-degree angle. This allows for water to run off the cut quickly and lessens the chances for fungus or bacterial growth. Next, make your cut right above a set of five leaves as opposed to a set of three leaves. This will ensure that the cane will be strong enough to support the new growth. It is also important not to prune after **Labor Day**, because the new growth will be vulnerable to the first frost.



Although many **plants** benefit from this practice, there are a few that are better left untouched. Coneflowers and Rudbeckias are an important food source for birds and are best left through the winter. In addition to feeding local wildlife, you might be inclined to collect seeds so you can grow your own plants for next year. If that's the case, then by all means let nature take its course. You can always deadhead early in the season and

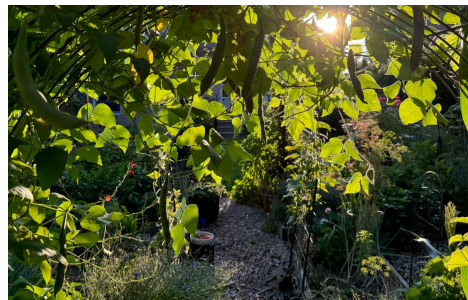
then let later blooms go to seed.

Gardening Deep Dive

Practices for Crop Care, Preservation, and Fall Planning

Article and photos by: John and Adriana Shpati

As summer reaches its peak in Oakland County, successful gardeners shift to maintaining healthy existing crops, making the most of abundant harvests, and planning for fall's final growing window.



Maintenance Mode:

- Plant disease and pest management
- Remove diseased foliage immediately; early detection and removal can help delay the spread of disease.
- Never compost diseased materials as pathogens can overwinter or spread into your garden. ([MSU Extension](#))
- Continue regular scouting for insects, and remember that stressed plants are more susceptible to insects and disease.
- Unsure how to detect or diagnose plant diseases? No sweat, [Ask Extension](#) by filling out the form and attaching photos of your plant!

- Watering and weeding
- Continue providing at least 1 inch of water every week for developing vegetables.
- Water deeply but less frequently to encourage strong root systems.
- Continue regular weeding to reduce competition for water and nutrients.
- Support systems
- Continue supporting vegetables needing support like tomatoes, peppers, peas, cucumbers, and climbing beans.
- Inspect your stakes, cages, and trellises - it's easier to train plants when they're smaller.



Abundant Harvests:

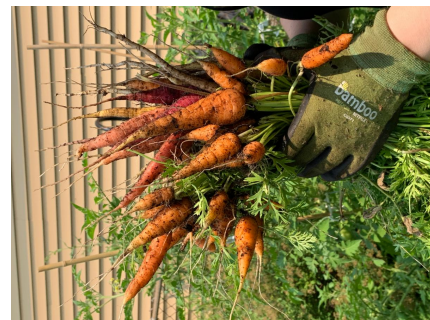
- Preserving
- Freezing: Blanch vegetables like beans, broccoli, and corn before freezing.
- Dehydrating: Excellent for tomatoes, peppers, herbs, and summer squash.
- Pickling: Perfect for cucumbers, beans and beets.
- Canning: Canning can be a great way to preserve your harvest but you'll need to follow

safe canning practices. Take a look at the [MSU Extension Home Food Preservation](#) site.

- Creative uses for excess produce
- Experiment with new recipes incorporating your abundant veggies.
- Share extra veggies with neighbors, food banks, or community gardens.
- Preserve herbs in oil, vinegar, or by drying.
- Consider sauces, salsas, or pestos.
- Harvest timing
- Pick vegetables at peak ripeness for best flavor and preservation quality.
- Looking for tips on harvesting your vegetables? Take a look at at this MSU Extension article - [When to harvest your garden](#).
- Regular harvesting encourages continued production in many crops.

Fall Growing Season:

- Fall timeline
- The average first frost in Oakland County occurs in mid-October, be sure to check your specific location for a more specific date!
- Starting August 1st provides approximately 75 days until average frost
- Build in a 2-week buffer for safety, targeting crops that mature in 60 days or less
- Be sure to check your seed packet information on specific maturation dates.
- Ideal late summer vegetables
- Quick maturing (30-45 days): Radishes, lettuce, spinach, arugula, and bush beans.
- Medium maturing (45-60 days): Beets, carrots, turnips, kale, collards, Swiss chard, and summer squash.
- Longer maturing (60-75 days): Cabbage, Brussels sprouts, and cauliflower.
- Special considerations
- Summer heat and dryness require more frequent watering than spring plantings.
- Refresh garden beds with compost and make sure you have good drainage.



- Plant multiple small plantings 2 weeks apart for continuous harvesting, if time allows.
- Cold-hardy vegetables
- Kale and collards improve in flavor after a light frost.
- Root crops like carrots, beets, turnips, and radishes are protected by soil and can be harvested until the ground freezes.

Plan next year's garden based on this season's successes and challenges. Thinking about fall garden cleanup and soil improvement, and if you haven't already taken a soil test, or it's been a few years, you can take an [MSU Soil Test](#).

Gardening for Health and Wellness



How to Beat the Heat While Gardening

Article and photo by: Annie Fairfax
Bottom photo by Josh Withers on Unsplash

Summer's relentless heat has yet to release Oakland County from its clutches. While the plants in our garden require ample sun and warmth to grow big and strong, too much of a good thing, particularly for us gardeners, can be bad for our health. So how should we protect ourselves from heat stroke, heat exhaustion, sunburns, and other heat-related issues? Here are our best tips for gardening beneath that beloved summer sun.

Get a Head Start

The earlier in the day you can begin gardening, the more you can take advantage of cooler temperatures. Avoid gardening during the hottest part of the day, which is generally between noon and 3 pm when the sun is highest in the sky. Gardening in the evening as the sun begins to set can also help you avoid midday sun and the increased risk of heat-related issues that accompany it.

Prioritize Garden Space Based on Shade Levels

If you're working early in the morning before the sun has fully risen, working in exposed beds is less taxing than it can be during the middle of the day. As the temperature rises, move to shadier areas. Distributing your time this way can be an excellent way to manage multiple regions of your garden while avoiding being in the sun for too long.

Wear Sun Protective Gear

Wearing long sleeves, pants tucked into tall socks, a hat, gardening gloves, and a generous amount of sunscreen will protect you from the sun. Choosing clothing made of breathable, natural fibers like cotton or linen will help naturally wick sweat, while fabrics like polyester or spandex may cause increased sweating and a higher body temperature. Experiment to find what feels right for you. Oh, and don't forget sunglasses!

Cooling Tech

Misters, clip-on fans, cooling vests, and hats with built-in solar-powered fans have revolutionized a gardener's ability to stay cool while gardening in the sun. Find tech that suits your needs and stay comfortable as you work. These also make great gift ideas for fellow gardeners and outdoor enthusiasts.

Keep an Eye on the Temperature

It's essential to monitor not only the ambient temperature, but the "real feel" as well. Real feel takes into consideration humidity, cloud cover, UV intensity, and temperature to give a more accurate representation of current conditions.

Speak with your doctor about what a safe temperature range is for your age, health, and fitness levels. Certain medications may make individuals more sensitive to heat, and individual differences can account for stamina variations.

Take Frequent Breaks

Getting too hot? Take frequent breaks to rest, recharge, and cool down. If you can go back inside for a few moments to sit in front of a fan or air conditioning, that can help you cool off, too. Breaks are the perfect time to do a tick check, drink water and electrolyte-rich beverages like sports drinks and juice, eat a healthy snack like fruit or veggies, and stretch.

Seek Shade

Don't remain under the sun too long. Sit beneath a tree, set up a tent or canopy cover over you and your garden as you work, or consider using a beach umbrella to give you some shade. Even an old bedsheet tied between trees can create pleasant shade while you garden. This will reduce your chances of developing a sunburn and protect your skin from the sun.

Stay Hydrated

OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) recommends **drinking one cup of water every twenty minutes** or so to remain hydrated in hot weather. Speak to your doctor to discuss how much water you should drink when working outside in the heat. Switch between water, electrolyte-rich drinks, and healthy snacks that contain vitamins and minerals, such as fruits, nuts, granola, and vegetables.

Please don't rely on feeling thirsty to tell you when you need to drink water, as this can be an unreliable indicator. Set a reminder on your phone if you tend to lose track of time. Even a few sips are better than nothing.

Learn the Signs of Heat Stroke and Heat Exhaustion

It's vital to learn the signs of heat stroke and heat exhaustion so you can identify them in yourself or others. **This infographic** from NOAA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, has an excellent chart to help you learn the symptoms and learn what to do about them should they arise. We recommend saving the image to your phone so you have it on hand.



No Shade? Plant Some!

If your yard lacks shade trees, it's never too late to plant some. Make your space

greener and more comfortable by exploring **Michigan State University's guidelines** for choosing the correct location for trees in your yard and ensuring they thrive. Though they take a few years to reach maturity, plan for the future by planting a tree (or ten) today!o consider inserting phrases like "for a limited time only" or "only 7 remaining!"



Smart Gardening is MSU Extension's campaign using earth-friendly messages to help gardeners make smart choices in their own backyards. The goal is to equip gardeners with a "tool kit" of research-based knowledge to use immediately at home. Whether choosing plants, using garden chemicals, fertilizer or applying water, gardeners need to understand the long-term impacts on their communities. For more Smart Gardening information click [here](#).



[Ask Extension](#)

Call the MSU Extension Lawn and Garden Hotline at 1-888-678-3464 (Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9am to noon)

Upcoming Events

SIX LEARNING COHORTS:
ALPENA, NEWAYGO, OAKLAND,
OCEANA, ST. CLAIR &
WASHTENAW COUNTIES



PHOTO BY JOHN BEHNKE



PHOTO BY IAN ABLESON

HYBRID CLASS

Michigan Conservation Stewards Program

SEPTEMBER-NOVEMBER
2025

Learn the foundations of Michigan
conservation and how you can
apply your knowledge in your
community.

CANR.MSU.EDU/CSP

Registration

MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

Extension





Foundations of GARDENING



Fall class meets
Tuesdays 6-8:30 pm

Learn more:



[https://www.canr.msu.edu/
foundations-of-
gardening/course-info](https://www.canr.msu.edu/foundations-of-gardening/course-info)

- 10-weeks
- Flexible, online format
- Live weekly webinars
- Cost: \$350

Registration:
July 2-August 27,
2025



Watering strategies to keep a garden productive

Barbara Gregerson, Brenden Kelley and David Lowenstein, Michigan State University Extension - June 26, 2025

As a state that shares a border with four Great Lakes, Michigan's access to water creates excellent growing conditions for many crops. Between precipitation and irrigation from groundwater or municipal water sources, many Michigan gardeners often have no difficulty getting the necessary supply of freshwater. Getting water into the garden efficiently can conserve water, provide plants with the correct amount of irrigation, and save money for gardeners who pay water bills.

**Read
More**



Michigan Cottage Food Law - August 14, 2025

August 14, 2025 10:00AM - 12:00PM
Zoom Webinar

Contact: **Karen Fifield** , **Kellie Jordan**

Learn how to prepare and sell foods to the public under Michigan's Cottage Food Law. This two-hour workshop combines education about the Michigan Cottage Food Law and the food safety aspects of preparing and selling cottage foods safely and successfully.

Michigan Cottage Food Law allows residents to manufacture foods in home kitchens and storing those products at home. Topics include preparing, packaging, labeling, storing, and transporting cottage foods.

Register



How to choose and when to apply grub control products for your lawn

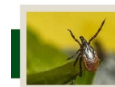
Updated from an original article written by David Smitley, Terry Davis and Erica Hotchkiss, Michigan State University, Department of Entomology.

Be sure the problem is grubs. Before doing anything, it is important to make sure the problem is grubs. In the last 10 years, the amount of European chafer damage to home lawns in southern Michigan has steadily decreased to the point where it is unusual now to find populations high enough to damage turf.

Learn how to mow your lawn, how to fertilize and how much to water your lawn to control grubs.

[Read More](#)

[Watch YouTube Video](#)



What You Need to Know About Michigan's Ticks

By Paige S. Alexander, Jean I. Tsao and Deborah G. McCullough

Overview: What are Ticks?

Learn what to expect when entering a forest, methods of tick identification, ways to avoid tick bites, as well as information on Lyme Disease.

Imagine the most dangerous things in the forest. Initially, you may think of big predators such as bears or perhaps a pack of wolves. These fears are certainly valid; however, focusing on these predators may cause you to ignore a more inconspicuous danger: Ticks! Some ticks are the size of a sesame seed and thus are easily overlooked. Despite their small size, they can be one of the most dangerous creatures to encounter in the forest. Tick bites can lead to a multitude of diseases, such as Lyme disease, anaplasmosis, babesiosis, ehrlichiosis and Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever. These typically cause fever, headache, chills and muscle aches or worse. Tick ranges continue to expand in the United States, now is the time to educate yourself about these detrimental pests.

Ticks

Contrary to popular belief, ticks are not insects. These tiny menaces are actually arachnids. Key differences include the number of legs and lack of wings. Insects have six legs and most have wings as adults, while nymphal and adult ticks have eight legs, no wings and are more closely related to spiders. Ticks are blood-feeding arthropods with around 900 described species representing 17 genera and three families, with a worldwide distribution. Ticks are obligate hematophagous ectoparasites, meaning they remain on the outside of the host's body and feed on the blood of the host (e.g., mammals, birds or reptiles).

Hard (Ixodid) Tick versus Soft (Argasid) Tick

Ticks can be broadly separated into two groups: the Ixodid ticks, known as hard ticks and the Argasid ticks, known as soft ticks. As the names imply, the key difference between the two groups is presence of the hard plate, called a scutum, on the dorsal side (back) of the hard ticks. Soft ticks lack this plate. Soft ticks resemble small, wrinkled raindrops and the mouth parts of soft ticks are not visible

from above. Hard ticks are normally more mobile (aside from those that have a one-host life cycle) and engage in hunting and/or ambush behaviors while soft body ticks tend to stay close to the area they stay in the nests or burrows where they had hatched. Although both types of ticks are disease vectors, because they generally have a greater chance of contacting people, hard ticks are often considered of greater global medical importance.



Figure 1. Basic hard tick morphology (dorsal view). Identified by variations in the mouthparts-A, scutum (dark shield) B, and festoons-C.

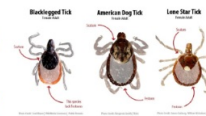


Figure 2. Differences among hard ticks and important morphological markers on the body of the tick (scutum and festoons).

What You Need to Know About Michigan's Ticks

July 25, 2025 - Paige Alexander, [Jean Tsao](#) and [Deborah McCullough](#), [Michigan State University Extension](#)

Ticks! Some ticks are the size of a sesame seed and thus are easily overlooked. Despite their small size, they can be one of the most dangerous creatures to encounter in the forest.

Learn what to expect when entering a forest, methods of tick identification, ways to avoid tick bites, as well as information on Lyme Disease.

[Download](#)

[MSU Tollgate](#)

[Bowers Farm](#)

[Gardening in Michigan](#)

[MSU Extension](#)

MSU Extension programs and material are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin,



MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight,
disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital
status, family status, or veteran status.

**Email
Us**

248-858-0881



MSUE - Oakland County | 1200 North Telegraph Bldg 34E | Pontiac, MI 48341 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!