

See what's happening at Tollgate this month!



MSU Tollgate Farm April 2020



Visit Our Website or Follow us on  

Save the Date! Upcoming Events



Tollgate programming and events during Coronavirus COVID-19

Michigan State University has made the decision to cancel or postpone all in person activities until September 1st. There is nothing we love more than sharing the farm with each one of you. However, providing a safe place for social, emotional, and physical growth is paramount for all our programming. The MSU Tollgate team is in full support of the decision to keep our communities safe.

This news means the farm will be closed to the public until September 1st and we will be cancelling all our summer activities including Summer Camps, Starry Night on the Farm, Story Hour, Night Hikes, and Stewards Teen Leadership programs. Program Coordinators will be in touch with each program registrant to provide details on how and when refunds will be issued. The MSU Tollgate team is working with

MSU Extension leadership to find out what this means on many fronts. Please be patient as we navigate this ongoing situation. We will provide updates on adult programming, volunteering, and 4-H Club livestock projects as we have them.

Our team will be pivoting work to support schools and virtual learning. In the true spirit of 4-H, we will be resilient and search for opportunities to make a difference in our community. We encourage each of you to consider how you are applying your head, heart, hands, and health to support those in need.

We recognize that many children will be missing out on their normal school studies. The MSU Tollgate team has shared online video content on Facebook and will continue to share more resources on our social media pages. There are also many free resources available from Michigan State University Extension.

MSU Tollgate Special Projects Committee

The MSU Tollgate team is searching for individuals, with a passion for making a difference, to join our new Special Projects Committee. This committee will work together to identify and execute projects that will make a difference in the lives of everyone that loves MSU Tollgate Farm. The committee is open to anyone interested in supporting the farm whether they are an adult, youth, existing volunteer, MSU Alumni, or program attendee.



What will the Special Projects Committee do?

- Identify emerging needs and planned improvements for Tollgate in cooperation with the Tollgate Director and Tollgate strategic plan.
- Lead fundraising and communications efforts to address emerging needs.
- Support camaraderie and communication between all MSU Tollgate users.

- Support Volunteer Appreciation Picnic & Annual Meeting event.

What will be expected of me if I participate?

- The committee will determine the scope and intensity of the projects that they pursue. There will be opportunities for individuals with all levels of time availability to participate.
- A donation is not required to participate.
- A willingness to cooperate, lead, and think big.
- Support for achieving the committee's goals through your own personal strengths and interests.
- Successful completion of the Michigan State University Volunteer Selection Process.

What will I get out of being a part of the committee?

- A sense of personal fulfillment for giving back to a worthy cause.
- An opportunity to make a positive impact on my community.
- Connection to a network of amazing people.
- Experience and knowledge related to agriculture, horticulture, and non-profit leadership.
- Recognition as being a leader for the MSU Tollgate community.

How do I get involved?

- Email Mike Mathis, MSU Tollgate Director, with your name, phone number, and email address to express your interest.
- Attend an initial information meeting to learn more. Date is to be determined.



Michigan State University Extension to host listening sessions for children and youth programming

Michigan's children, youth, families and communities are facing unprecedented challenges as a result of COVID-19 pandemic. These challenges vary widely and are influenced greatly by geography, economic status, race, ethnicity,

gender, sexual orientation, and many other factors. In order to best understand these challenges and how we can effectively support them, Michigan State University Extension is launching a series of listening sessions. Michigan children, youth and those who support them, including parents and caregivers, as well as agencies and other organizations, are encouraged to join these sessions and share their thoughts. Information collected will be used to adapt existing programming, or develop new educational programming, to address the critical needs of our communities.

Please register here for one or more of our listening sessions.

Most of the sessions will have an area of focus in an effort to solicit feedback from specific targeted groups for MSU Extension programming. Though we hope to hear from youth and individuals who support those areas and demographics, **all are welcome to attend any session.**

Remote Teaching and Learning: A Survey for Formal and Non Formal Educators

Michigan State University Extension helps people improve their lives by bringing knowledge and resources of MSU directly to the community. One way that MSU Extension fulfills this mission is through Tollgate Farm's learning experiences for teachers and students. The farm offers the unique opportunity to explore agriculture and natural resources with an inquiry learning and place-based education focus. As a means to better serve teachers, students, and school districts during this time of remote learning, Tollgate seeks your input on the types of student and teacher learning opportunities that would be most helpful.



[Tollgate 2020 Teacher Needs Survey Here](#)



Virtual Mornings on the Farm

Mornings on the Farm with sustainable agriculture educator Will Jaquinde will continue to be virtual for

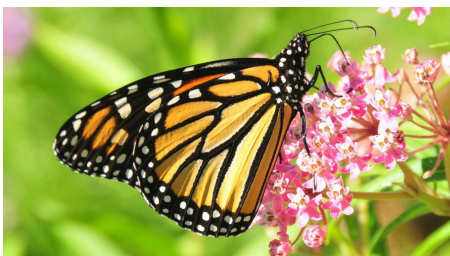
the rest of the spring and summer with a \$15 cost for attendees. The next workshop on May 31st focuses on tips and tricks for low energy garden maintenance. Will is in his 5th season managing the vegetable production at MSU Tollgate, which grows more than 150 varieties across 50 crops and three acres using organic growing practices for a community supported agriculture (CSA) program. In this series, Will shares his decades of plant experience to help you grow a low maintenance, productive vegetable garden!

Can't make the May 31st workshop? Sign up for July 12th, and August 16th. If you have any questions about the series, please email Will Jaquinde.

For more information or to register, visit the event page.

Coming soon: School Garden Virtual Learning Series

Prepare for next year's school garden with virtual learning opportunities about school garden basics, cool plants for every garden, planting a pollinator garden, and fall cover crops. Stay tuned for more details and registration information. To be added to the mailing list, email Kristine Hahn.



Coming Soon: The Pollinator Project

What are pollinators, and why are they important to us? How can we help pollinators?

Teachers, students, and families can explore and investigate pollinators and pollination with MSU Tollgate Farm educational leaders, MSU experts, and community partners. Become a citizen scientist and learn more about how you can help pollinators with the Pollinator Project. Designed to coordinate with studies about plants and their partners, this project kicks off in mid-May. For more information, email Ellen Koehler.

Easy At-Home Activities for Youth

Check out our Experience Tollgate Blog for some simple at-home activities that inspire creativity, exploration, and science. We will continue to update this page with more activities weekly!



Maintaining connection through virtual summer camp!

We are excited to share that the staff at MSU Tollgate Farm are in the process of creating a virtual summer camp platform filled with youth activities, videos, recipes, a blog, and so much more! It won't be able to replace our traditional summer camp that we dearly miss this year, however, we will try our best to create a sense of

community as we bring some of our favorite farm and outdoor experiences to the comfort of your home. Be on the lookout for a survey and more updates soon!

Looking Forward: Developing Resilience as Stewards and Stewards-in-Training

MSU Tollgate Farm wants to thank each of our stewards and stewards-in-training who give so much of themselves to help make our summer camps the best they can be. They are a large and important part of our farm camp community. To stay connected with our amazing stewards and SITs, youth voice is needed to gather ideas for summer sessions so that we are able to continue to meet, learn, and grow as a community. Please take a moment to fill out our Looking Forward: MSU Tollgate Farm Steward/SIT Summer Sessions Planning Survey. Also, check out our youtube video here. Questions? Email Ellen Koehler.



Rescheduled: Starry Night on the Farm now September 19-20th, 2020

Starry Night on the Farm combines adventure and learning for a fun family overnight. What better way to celebrate fall's arrival than to join us at MSU Tollgate Farm and Education Center for an exciting outdoor overnight learning experience? This family-oriented visit will give you a rare glimpse into what goes on after sundown on the farm. Come explore the night sky and the importance of agriculture and the sun in our daily lives.

Arrive Friday evening after dinner to enjoy an evening wagon ride, investigate the

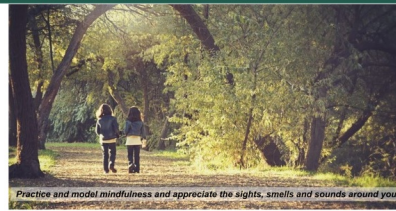
nighttime woods, and visit our animal friends. Explore the science of the summer solstice and the night sky with the Oakland Astronomy Club. Enjoy astronomy investigations, solar system games on the hill, and s'mores around the campfire before settling down for the night. Depending on weather, we'll camp outdoors or in the historic 1850s barn

before waking to a farm fresh breakfast and morning animal chores. Leave with warm memories and new friends. For more information or to register, please visit the event page.

This Month's 4-H Newsletter is Here!

Oakland County 4-H Connections is a monthly newsletter for 4-H members, families, and the general community with news and information about 4-H youth development activities in Oakland County.

April Newsletter



Practice and model mindfulness and appreciate the sights, smells and sounds around you.

How Can You Teach Your Young Child About Being Thankful?

Teaching school-age children about thankfulness helps them appreciate what they have. Focus on the feelings of others and how they can help people. Teaching children to be thankful or grateful also comes with some health benefits. Research shows that grateful people report higher levels of happiness and optimism as well as being less stressed and having a higher sense of self-worth.

How can you teach your school-age children about thankfulness? Michigan State University Extension recommends these easy tips to try with your child:

- Model thankfulness and being thankful. Use words such as grateful and gratitude in everyday conversations and talk about what you are thankful for each day.
- Model manners and expect your children do

the same.

- Include children in age-appropriate chores, like cleaning their room, so they understand they are part of the family.
- Practice and model mindfulness and appreciate the sights, smells and sounds around you. Take time each day to choose happiness in how you think about the world and situation.
- Create thank-you notes when they receive gifts or are involved in special events such as birthday parties or other events.
- Leave sticky notes for family members to thank them for something you appreciate about them.
- Take care packages such as cookies or other snacks to local fire or police departments to say thank you.
- Write down what you are grateful for and put them in a jar. Then read them aloud during dinner or family time. You can write things like, "I'm grateful for time with Grandma" or "I'm thankful we went out to dinner."

Tollgate News & Announcements



Missing Tollgate Farm?

Our essential employees are still busy taking care of the livestock and crops at Tollgate and wanted to share some photos of

the farm for everyone missing our animal and plants. Make sure to check out our Facebook page for more photos and videos.

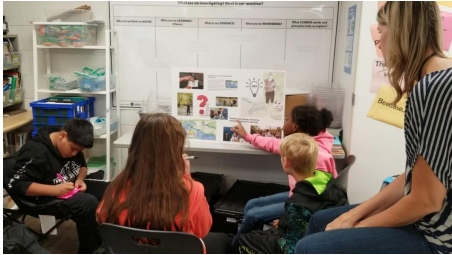
Another Great Maple Sugaring Season

Even though the Governor's Stay Home, Stay Safe order brought a premature end to the maple syrup season, the maple crew still did a great job. The

Tollgate maple volunteers made just a bit over 100 gallons of syrup this year. They also demonstrated the fine art of maple



making to visitors at our annual Maple Feast event and to several groups that were able to come to the farm before the season ended. Congratulations and thank you to all the volunteers who made 2020 a successful year in the woods in spite of the early end to the season!



New! A Newsletter for the Tollgate Learning Community

Our new quarterly newsletter for educators is a place where formal and non formal educators

can share ideas and best practices for teaching science outdoors and for connecting classroom learning to the place we know as Tollgate Farm.

Tollgate Newsletter for Formal and Non Formal Educators

Volunteer Opportunities for Pumpkinfest 2020

As we plan our annual 2020 MSU Tollgate Farm

Pumpkinfest, we would love your help. Because of the help

of our many volunteers, Tollgate is able to positively impact adults and children in our community in life-changing ways.

Tollgate's Pumpkinfest, sponsored by Vibe Credit Union and Barton Malow, is a family-oriented event open to the public 11:00 am to 5:00 pm on Saturday, October 3rd, and Sunday, October 4th. [Click here for more information or sign up to volunteer.](#)



School-to-Farm Visits 2020/2021 School Year

Reservations for school-to-farm visits are being accepted at this time with payment postponed until 20/21 school year comes

into focus. Using research-based curriculum and methods, school and community groups explore the farm and the natural world through inquiry learning and place-based education.

Tollgate strives to provide opportunities for youth and adults of all income levels and welcomes a broad cross-section of participants to experience farm-based experiential learning. The goal of the financial aid process at Tollgate is to provide as many youth and adults as possible with the opportunity to enrich learning and broaden their experiences. Funding is limited and applications are reviewed based on the needs of the participants, potential impact on their learning, cost of the program, and potential for meaningful collaboration.

Reserve School-to-Farm Visit for 2020/2021 School Year
[Here](#)

Coming Soon! Volunteer Central for MSU Extension Volunteers

We are grateful and appreciate our volunteers at MSUTollgate Farm. Coming soon is a new volunteer selection process called Volunteer Central which all volunteers with MSU Extension will be asked to complete. Watch for word from Tollgate staff or, if you are an Extension Master Gardener, from your County Master Gardener Coordinator.



Tollgate Opportunities



Rent the Tollgate Conference Center Starting September 1st, 2020

The MSU Tollgate Conference Center, historic barn, and Americana boardroom are available for

your next business meeting, bridal or baby shower, private luncheon, or special event. Our catering staff are available to meet your needs for your event!

To learn more about hosting your event at Tollgate, visit the **Conference Center Website**.

MSU Tollgate Farm and Education Center offers programs throughout the year designed to allow adults and children to experience learning hands-on, explore the joys of gardening and the natural world, appreciate and promote locally grown food, and build community.

MICHIGAN STATE | **Extension**
U N I V E R S I T Y

MSU Tollgate Farm and Education Center
28115 Meadowbrook Rd.
Novi, MI 48377
248-347-0269
tollgateprograms@msu.edu
<http://tollgate.msu.edu/>

MSU is an affirmative-action, equal-opportunity employer. Michigan State University Programs and materials are open to all, without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital, family or veteran status.

STAY CONNECTED with TOLLGATE:

