



MSU Tollgate Gardens

East Xeriscape Garden

This Garden was developed to minimize the use of water. Grouping plants with similar water requirements allowed us to take advantage of roof water run-off, the location of water supply sources, and the intensity of the sun in the chosen location.



Although summers in Michigan can be hot and dry, plant selection also had to consider our sub-zero winter temperatures and often wet and humid climate. When planning this garden, plants were chosen to provide color throughout the seasons.

Late Spring

The hardy forsythia bush (*Forsythia x intermedia*), an established garden favorite,



provides our first burst of color in early to late spring with bright yellow flowers. In winter, you can

force blooms indoors. They will brighten any room, even on the greyest and snowiest of days.

Late Spring to Early Fall

Whirling Butterflies (*Guara lindheimeri*) aptly describes the countless delicate pinkish white flowers that seem to flutter on the long flower stems.



This plant thrives in fertile well-drained, soil and will bloom all summer into early fall. Deadheading will prolong the bloom.

Early Summer



As early summer arrives, the Beauty Bush (*Kolkwitzia amabilis*) provides a show of pale pink blossoms along with bearded Iris, a perennial favorite.

Early Summer

Three varieties of Peony (*Paeonia*) blossom in early June. These beauties require fertile humus soil as well as caging to keep them healthy and upright.



After blooming, they should be deadheaded with the green leafed stems left to provide a background to nearby plants.

Early Summer



Salt Cedar (*Tamarix ramosissima*) is a drought tolerant, deciduous, arching shrub with feathery green foliage and



small, pink flowers. It grows to a height of 10 - 15 feet. It does not grow naturally in Michigan and is considered invasive in warmer climates.

Mid-Summer

Hollyhocks (*Alcea rosea*) have been known as “alley plants” and thrive in hot sunny locations. They are a short lived perennial which tends to reseed. To control height and a tendency to break, they should be

pinched back when about one foot tall for a bushier, shorter plant.

Mid-Summer to Early Fall

Purple coneflowers (*Echinacea purpurea*) and Black-eyed Susan’s (*Rudbeckia*) are perennial favorites that thrive with little care except deadheading. They provide a colorful foreground for the striking Purple Smoke Tree (*Cotinus coggygria*). Its leaves provide color that ranges from burgundy to green and have small yellow-orange flowers in summer. It has been a challenge to control the size of this bush in its current location.



After being secured to the trellises at both the north and south entrances to the garden, it has begun to ascend. To provide a colorful accent

Late Summer

A new addition in the garden is the honeysuckle vine “Major Wheeler”.

that blooms repeatedly with little added water, annuals, such as Profusion Zinnia and Victoria Blue Salvia might be planted.

Late Summer



Several Butterfly Bushes (*Buddleia davidii*) are found in the garden. Their late summer purple blossoms are frequented by butterflies and bees that visit Tollgate Farms. Buddleia bushes are pruned back in early spring to control their size. They do best in full sun and well-drained enriched soil.

MSU Tollgate Farm and Education Center



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In an age when man has forgotten his origins and is blind even to his most essential needs for survival, water along with other resources has become the victim of his indifference. -Rachel Carson