Greetings Tollgate Garden Volunteers!

We are off to a hot start to June with the temps jumping up and the curve flattening. Keep up the good work! Your efforts are helping us progress towards our goal of returning to a more open state and normal level of activities. Be diligent as we move forward, be kind to one another. You have my continued wishes for your good health.

As of this writing we have received the release to resume volunteer individual activities at Tollgate under the specific guidelines provided by the MSU Extension office. These include spacing/limits of volunteers, use of personal protection and hand/tool sanitation. The written permission to be on site and Tollgate as an approved project has already been sent to Oakland and Wayne county extension offices. Master Gardeners have received these guidelines via e-mail on 6/8/2020 and are required to read, sign and return this document to their respective county extension in order to get credit for extension hours. A copy has been provided in this issue for ALL member review and understanding/compliance even if you are not a Master Gardener volunteer. AGL’s must use these guidelines if they are organizing their teams.

All MSUE Master Gardener volunteer hour requirements have been waved for 2020 so there is NO pressure or obligation to return if you have any hesitation.

We will be sending out information as we formulate a plan for assessing volunteer interest, scheduling and communicating work tasks. We will communicate via e-mail so look for future instructions.

Our current garden game plan is for restoration of the areas over-run by weeds, to resumed PAR garden to assist with community food security and Nursery activity to build towards future plant sale fund raiser. We are currently holding on the budget allocations for annual plantings since the site is not hosting any public functions until after consideration on Sept. 1st. This will allow some conservation of our monetary resources.

We are thankful to those of you who have already stated your interest and are going forward with the required MSUE Volunteer Selection Process as returning volunteers. All of the Tollgate Garden Volunteer efforts have been appreciated in the past and have been essential to the growth and development of the gardens and programs at Tollgate. We regret, but understand that some of you have made personal decisions not to complete VSP and hence, will not be returning. We will miss you and remain forever grateful for all that you have contributed. We look forward to continued success.

As always, thank you for being a Tollgate Garden Volunteer.

Renee Cottrell, President
Tollgate Garden Volunteers

“A garden is always a series of losses set against a few triumphs, like life itself.”
–May Sarton
Greetings all,

We live in a truly remarkable and unprecedented time. MSU Tollgate has been closed to the public for nearly three months. It has been quiet. No visitors, no volunteers, and only a few essential staff taking care of basic operations. Certainly Covid-19 has affected us all. Although being able to garden and tend the Tollgate horticultural areas is less important to the basic health and welfare of us all, being able to work on a common project and maintain some sense of community is something that many miss, I know that I do.

MSU Extension and the Extension Master Gardener program have created a way for those who wish to return to the Tollgate to volunteer on the farm can do so. This opportunity is being offered at a time when many of Tollgate’s staff continue to be directed to work from home. I appreciate your patience with the process. I trust that you appreciate that the steps and conditions are designed to demonstrate that MSU is serious about ensuring the health of all who work, volunteer, and visit any of its properties, while still allowing those of us who enjoy working the soil, nurturing plants, and creating natural beauty.

As outlined in the recent email that you received, the steps required to work on the farm while it is closed to the public and many Tollgate staff are:

- Complete the first part of the VSP process. This can be found at: https://msu.samaritan.com/custom/502/#/volunteer_home
- On the VSP web page, you will need to select a volunteer track. If you are an active Extension Master Gardener, choose the Extension Master Gardener track. If you are not an active EMG, choose the Agriculture and Agribusiness track
- Sign and return agreement forms. Forms should be returned to your county Extension Master Gardener Coordinator if you are an active master gardener and to Tollgate if you are not an active master gardener. This form can be signed, scanned, and emailed.
- You will receive a letter/email authorizing you to be on the site.

Summer is beautiful on the farm. Without the usual activity of summer camp and other events, it is also pretty quiet and very peaceful. For those who are uncomfortable being out and about, I certainly encourage you to remain wherever you feel safe. If you would like to come to the farm and if we all observe the CDC guidelines for social distancing, I feel that the outdoor spaces at Tollgate can be a safe place to be. Before coming to the farm, make sure that you initiate the VSP process and sign and return the safety agreement form. I look forward to seeing many of you in the gardens this summer.

Roy

Roy Prentice

Pictures by Roy Prentice
Finally, we can return to the Nursery! It was a joyful day for all on the Nursery team when we received word from MSU Extension that work would be allowed on Non-Food Master Gardener Projects! We are currently working to understand the safety rules and modify our operations accordingly. Due to a significant limitation on the number of workers present in the Nursery at one time, our team will be focused on a few scheduled small group sessions (max 3 present) and much individual work, using phone, email and documents in our nursery tub to communicate. If you have been saving plants to donate to the nursery, please hold on to them for just a little while longer – we need to get things a bit more organized and then will communicate instructions via email on how to drop off your much needed and appreciated donations.

Thankfully, Tollgate North has continued to operate through the pandemic! Deb Kearney has been very busy doing the work of many volunteers. The seedlings from the basement greenhouse were brought upstairs and outside to harden off and have now been potted in 1-gallon pots (see pictures nearby), along with some divisions from Deb’s gardens. The announcement that we can now return to the Nursery is particularly welcome, as these pots really need to go somewhere!

Summer 2019 included an experiment to plant Asclepias tuberosa (Butterfly Weed) seeds in the nursery. Butterfly weed is one of the important natives that we have struggled to stock in the nursery. This plant emerges somewhat late in the spring, is difficult to transplant due to a deep taproot and is famously difficult to overwinter in a pot for the same reason. We’ve relied on seed propagation to stock the nursery, but these seedlings are still tiny at spring plant sale time and sell better as 2-year-old plants. Since we are limited by space in the basement greenhouse, we struggle to go into winter with a large enough overstock to allow for the heavy losses.

Last year’s experiment was to plant Butterfly Weed seeds in a nursery row in spring and pot the seedlings up over the summer (see picture nearby of the first batch planted in late June 2019). This experiment was quite successful in generating almost 300 pots to overwinter - but the survival rate for winter 2019/2020 was dismal. Of the plants that we thought were viable in the fall, about 10% survived. However, only 1 of the almost 200 pots that had no foliage visible in the pot survived (an aphid attack destroyed foliage, but we thought the roots were healthy)!

Pictures by Peg Palmer
NURSERY NOTES, cont.
We still think this method may have value, but the seedlings need to be potted up earlier in the summer to lessen the chance of damaging the taproot during the potting process and have more foliage in fall to withstand these challenges of nature. The picture nearby of the 12 surviving Butterfly weed plants alongside 290 dead pots provides a memorable example of the challenge to overwinter this hardy native in a pot!

Ending on a more positive note- enjoy this beautiful collage of spring bloomers from Deb’s backyard at Tollgate North! As you enjoy your gardens at home, think about what you can save to donate to the Tollgate Nursery this fall or next Spring, and please stay safe this summer.

Questions about the Nursery??
Contact Peg Palmer - pegpalmer@mi.rr.com
Photos by Roy Prentice
Pictures provided by:
Top Left: Kathy Johnson
Top Right: Kathy Johnson
Middle Left: Renee Cottrell
Middle Right: Marilyn Alimpich
Bottom Left: Jennifer Roberts
**Please Renew Your Membership for 2020**

Summer solstice is June 20\textsuperscript{th}.
Wishing you a wonderful summer outside & in your garden!

Click on this link to the form on the MSU Extension Tollgate Farm and Education Center website: [MSU Tollgate Garden Volunteers Membership Form](#). Forms will also be available at the next Tollgate Volunteer General meeting and attached to this newsletter.

Thank-you!

Angie Carter

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**Take a Tollgate Picture**

Now that we have permission to resume volunteer activities at Tollgate, consider taking some pictures for the Tollgate calendar. The preferred format is jpeg, landscape files.

Send photo files at full or actual size in separate emails if necessary. Please email your files to Larry Bolam at TollgateCalPics@Gmail.com.

Summer is a beautiful time at Tollgate, think about capturing that beauty in a photo for the Tollgate calendar.

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Pictures Provided by: Top left: Renee Cottrell, Top Right: Roy Prentice, Bottom Right: Roy Prentice, Bottom Left: Roy Prentice
Activity day hours are 9:00 AM to noon unless otherwise noted on the Tollgate Garden Volunteer Important Dates and Events listed on the first page of the Tollgate Farm News or by the Area Garden Leader (AGL). Lunch will be provided on scheduled workdays. Veggie alternatives are available upon request.

This schedule does not exclude you from working independently on the site. However, on non-scheduled days, your efforts will need to be self-directed with guidance from the garden area binders located in the Volunteer Communication Center.

Garden Tools Available for Use at Tollgate
- Spades
- Garden Rakes
- Brooms
- Wheelbarrows
- Weed Buckets
- Leaf Rakes
- Garden Hoe
- Long Handled Garden Forks

List of Suggested Gardening Implements to Bring from Home as Needed
- Trowel
- Pruners
- Loppers
- Garden Scissors
- Your Favorite Weeding Implement
- Hand Saw
- Plant Division Forks
- Shrub Rake
- Sun Screen
- Garden Gloves
- Knee Pads
- Insect Repellant

Tollgate Garden Advisory Council

Farm Manager
Roy Prentice - 248 347-3860 ext. 251
e-mail - prentic1@msu.edu

President ......................... Renee Cottrell
Vice President...................... Marilyn Alimpich
Secretary.......................... Dave Komraus
Treasurer ........................ Sue Janczarek
Membership...................... Angie Carter
PR................................. TBD
Programs ........................ Jackie Stengel
Hospitality ......................... Teresa LaRosa
Farm News Editor .............. Jennifer Roberts

For membership questions or to update your current membership information send email to: tollgatemembers@gmail.com

MSU Tollgate Gardens Volunteers
For general information and questions Contact Roy Prentice or See Website:
http://tollgate.msu.edu/volunteering/

If you aren’t getting The Tollgate Farm News email, Check your SPAM folder

Volunteer Activity Day and Meetings Information
248-347-3860 ext. 400

The next Tollgate Gardens Advisory Council meeting will be held on Tuesday, July 7th at 7:00 PM. All Tollgate Gardens Volunteer members are welcome to attend.

Listings to contact individual Council Members and Area Garden Leaders are available at all general meetings and in the Volunteer Communication Center.

Tollgate Volunteer Membership is renewed annually. The 2019 Tollgate Garden Volunteers membership is from January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020.

MSU Tollgate Farm and Education Center
28115 Meadowbrook
Novi, MI, 48377-3128
tollgate.msu.edu
Contact Roy Prentice:
248-347-3860 ext. 251
MSU Tollgate Garden Volunteers
Membership Form

Please print all entries. Thank you.

Name ____________________________________________

Address ____________________________________________

City ____________________________ MI

Zip__________ - _______

Name you would like on badge

Date Submitted _______________________

Telephone Number

Day _____ - _______________________

Evening _____ - _____________________

Email _______________________________

Were you a Tollgate volunteer member last year?   Yes ()   No ()

Are you interested in serving on a committee or garden project?    Yes ()   No ()

If yes, please note below if you have a particular area of interest.

________________________________________________________________

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A donation in support of the Tollgate Volunteer organization would be greatly appreciated ($20 suggested). If you would like the newsletter mailed to you rather than emailed, please include an additional $10 to cover postage.

Check here to have the newsletter mailed to you. ___

Make checks payable to: Michigan State University

Return to: Tollgate Gardens Volunteer Office
28115 Meadowbrook
Novi, MI 48377-3128

Questions: Phone: 248-347-3860 Ext. 251

2020 Membership is from January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020

Please read this Privacy Policy:

By filling out and submitting this form you authorize the Tollgate Garden Volunteers (TGV) and MSU to use your contact information to communicate with you via email, newsletters and other formats. If you wish your email and other identification information to not be used by the TGV and MSU, please check this box ( ). (By checking this box you will not receive email notification of workdays, or other volunteer activities.)

In the event of an emergency please notify:

Name ____________________________ Phone ____________________________