



MICHIGAN STATE  
UNIVERSITY | Extension

# MSU Tollgate Farm February 2022

## Upcoming Events

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- [MSU Tollgate Farm HomeGrown Vegetable Gardening Series 2022](#): Next Session March 12th at 10 AM EST
- [Hybrid Evenings in the Garden Returns Spring 2022](#): Starting March 26th, 1-3 PM
- [MSU Tollgate Farm New Volunteer Interest and Orientation Meeting](#): April 12: 7-8 PM EST
- [Starry Night on the Farm Family Overnight](#): June 10-11th
- [Educational Programs for School and Community Groups 2022](#): Reserve your Visit Today!
- [Virtual Educational Programs for School and Community Groups 2022](#): Sign up Today!
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## Tollgate's new MSU Place-Based Extension Educator and Education Manager: Ellen Koehler

At Tollgate, you'll often hear the question posed, "Do you know where your food comes from?" Utilizing the farm as the 'place' of place-based education, Tollgate programs promote understanding of the importance of agriculture in our daily lives as they increase learning outcomes, community connections, and appreciation of the natural world. With the farm as a living laboratory, Tollgate meets its mission through experiential place-based education about sustainable agriculture, community food systems, and natural resources.

But what exactly does the term place-based education mean? David Sobel, author of *Place- and Community-based Education* describes place-based education as "an approach to teaching and learning that starts with the local and addresses two critical gaps in the experience of many children now growing up in the United States: contact with the natural world and contact with the community. It offers a way to extend young people's attention beyond the classroom to the world as it actually is, and to engage them

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in the process of devising solutions to the social and environmental problems they will confront as adults.”

Ellen Koehler, Tollgate Education Coordinator since 2016, is passionate about deepening the learning that takes place at Tollgate through place-based agriculture and environmental education. Collaborating with staff, schools, and partner organizations, Ellen works to create positive change in our local communities and meet the needs of learners through research-based content and methods. When learners visit the farm, they not only explore science phenomena; they begin to investigate how they can make a positive difference in the world around them.

As part of a strong Tollgate team, Ellen designs, develops, and delivers meaningful educational programs for adults and youth; plans educational community-building events; and furthers diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts at the farm. In addition to spearheading the financial aid process at the farm, Ellen leads programs for school and community groups, leadership development and specialty camps for teens, an environmental leadership youth council, a series for home vegetable gardeners, and a professional development series for educators about culturally responsive place-based education.

Ellen has continued her educational leadership studies through a mix of coursework and field-based practicums at the University of Michigan and Antioch University of New England. She has had the opportunity to collaborate widely with educators across the globe who inspire learners through place-based education. Ellen serves on the Trainer Bureau for the North American Association of Environmental Education and is a Certified Environmental Educator. In 2021, Ellen earned her Master of Education with concentrations in place-based education, sustainability, and equity.

At Tollgate, we help youth and adults understand where their food comes from and so much more. As Tollgate’s new MSU Place-Based Extension Educator and in her new role as Education Manager, Ellen plans to continue to collaborate with colleagues, schools, community partners, and learners themselves to build healthier communities through authentic meaningful place-based teaching and learning. ‘Our true destiny... is a world built from the bottom up by competent citizens living in solid communities, engaged in and by their places.’ David W. Orr

## Upcoming Events





## Maplefest March 5th-6th, 2022: Register Now!

How does sap become maple syrup? What temperatures are needed to make the sap flow? How do you tap a tree? Join us on March 5th and 6th for an exploration of Michigan's sweetest winter crop, maple syrup! What can you expect at Maplefest?

- Enjoy a wagon ride out the Sugar Bush
- Take a tour of the Sugar Shack
- Learn how to identify and tap a sugar maple tree
- Munch on freshly made donuts and other maple themed treats
- Watch wood become art with a chainsaw
- Warm up by our bonfires and hear about the process of turning sap to syrup
- And so much more!

**REGISTER HERE**

## Sign Up Now S.T.E.A.M. Break Camps are Now Open!

This spring explore the Tollgate barn, forest, pastures, and fields as we observe and study the change of the season. Everyday at MSU Tollgate STEAM Break Camp is an exciting adventure as we move through new daily themes to care for new baby lambs, hatch chicks, help with morning animal chores, take afternoon hikes in the woods, harvest early season produce for nutritious garden kitchen snacks, engage in a week long STEAM project, and experience lots of real science, hands-on FUN! [Financial aid available.](#)

**S.T.E.A.M. Break Camp:** March 28-April 1, 2022



**REGISTER HERE**



## Summer Camp Registration is Now Open: With Financial Aid Process Available

Our farm and nature-based camps provide your camper with a unique summer experience with opportunities for hands-on animal experience, cooking, and gardening. With eight weeks and fifteen themes to choose from, there is a camp suited for everyone. Learn something new; develop your horsemanship skills; be a citizen scientist; study water quality; milk a goat; catch a fish; paddle a canoe, and so much

more.

**Looking for a financial aid for your camper?**  
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. Learn more about our financial aid process and how to apply on [our financial aid website](#).

**REGISTER HERE**

## MSU Tollgate Farm Summer Specialty Camps: Register Now!

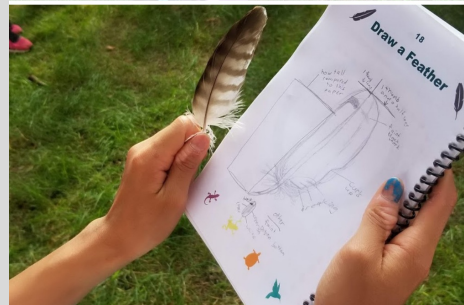
Sign up now for our specialty camps for the slightly older campers ready to take on new challenges! [Financial aid process available](#). Questions? Email Ellen Koehler at [koehle43@msu.edu](mailto:koehle43@msu.edu).

### Winged Wonders Camp: July 11-14: Ages 10-13

For the first time since 2019, Tollgate will take summer camp on the road to Kellogg Biological Station in Hickory Corners, MI. Through interactive hands-on learning, become an ornithologist and explore wild and domestic birds and their amazing feats as we hike fields and forests at Tollgate and the Kellogg Bird Sanctuary. Gather Monday and Friday at Tollgate for farm-based birding adventures. As field scientists, travel by bus to camp out under the stars at KBS Tuesday-Thursday where you'll meet raptors up close and personal, make new friends, and have lots more fun! For ages 10-13. For a recap of our 2019 Winged Wonders Traveling Camp, check out our [blog](#).

Also still available this summer, Vet Science Camp:  
August 1-5: Ages 12-14 and Outdoor Adventure Camp:  
August 15-19: Ages 12-14

**REGISTER HERE**



## Spaces are Filling for Teens Ages 13-19 to Serve as Stewards and Stewards-in-Training at MSU Tollgate Farm Camp This Summer!

To be a steward means to take care of something or someone. Tollgate Farm stewards care for campers, the farm, the earth, and each other. The stewards program for ages 13-19 builds teens up as they develop resiliency and gain life and leadership skills. Farm stewards form relationships, overcome challenges, and have fun while serving as mentors to campers and assistants to camp staff. What better way to spend





part of the summer?

"I most look forward to spending time with the kids and making sure they have an enjoyable camp experience because I remember how much I loved Tollgate when I was a camper!" - Tollgate steward

[REGISTER HERE](#)

## Starry Night on the Farm is Back!

Did you know that each plant has a preferred growing season, either cool or warm, and a typical growing time from planting to harvest? Your location on planet Earth determines which plants will thrive and which plants will not thrive! Since the time of the earliest farmers, thousands of years ago, before paper calendars and iPhones were invented, the sun, the moon, and the stars were used to determine the best time to plant and to harvest. Explore the advent of summer with MSU Tollgate and the Oakland Astronomy Club for a fun and educational overnight campout on the farm. Get a glimpse of the farm after sundown and explore the importance of the sun and night sky in agriculture. Engage in astronomy games and activities, roast s'mores at the campfire, wake to a farm fresh breakfast, and help with animal chores. For kids and their parents or caregivers, Starry Night is an adventure like no other. June 10-11, 6pm Friday to noon Saturday. Spaces fill quickly.

[REGISTER HERE](#)



**2022 Hybrid HomeGrown Gardening Series**  
**Composting for the Smart Vegetable Garden**  
**Virtual Session March 12: 10 AM EST**

Healthy soils grow better vegetables, so improve your soil through composting. Whether you're a beginner or experienced vegetable gardener, we'll provide the

'compost recipe' with all of the necessary ingredients, supplies, and steps needed to help you compost successfully. Join MSU Extension Consumer Horticulture Educator Rebecca Krans and MSU Extension Master Gardener State Coordinator Sarah Rautio March 12th at 10 AM EST. All sessions are virtual. Select sessions including July, August, and September are hybrid sessions where participant can come to the farm or choose to zoom in from home. Recorded sessions are provided to registrants. Sign up for individual sessions or the full series.

#### Upcoming Sessions:

**April 9 - Sustainable Methods for Veggie Gardeners Backyard Basics** with MSU Extension Community Food Systems Educator Kristine Hahn

**May 14 - Bring Eden to Our Communities with Edible Forests (Hybrid)** Naim Edwards, Director of Detroit-MSU Partnership for Food, Land, and Innovation, MSU Extension Specialist

**June 11 - Phenomenal Phenology: Seasonal Changes, Plant Biology and Observation in the Garden** MSU Extension Consumer Horticulture Educator Isabel Branstrom

[REGISTER HERE](#)

## Hybrid Evenings in the Garden Returns Spring 2022

Evenings in the Garden is a hybrid lecture series on gardening and environmental topics hosted by regional experts.

**Saturday, March 26, 1:00pm- 3:00pm ET:** *Janet Macunovich* \*In-person only \$25  
Dividing Perennials

**Thursday, March 31 6:30pm- 8:30pm ET:** *Dr. Nate Walton* \*Virtual only \$15  
Smart Gardening to Keep Pests Manageable

**Thursday, April 14 6:30pm- 8:30pm ET:** *Alexander Ball*  
\*Virtual only \$15  
Planning Your Garden for Year-Round Harvest

**Thursday, May 12 6:30pm- 8:30pm ET:** *Beth Clawson*  
\*In-person only \$25  
Attracting Wildlife with Backyard Water Features



[LEARN MORE](#)



Michigan State University Extension  
Tollgate Farm and Education Center

**Perspectives:  
Culturally  
Responsive  
Place-Based  
Education  
Series**



## Perspectives: Culturally Responsive Place-based Education Series: Next Session on March 3rd from 6:30 - 8:30 PM EST

Formal and non-formal educators are invited to join us for this virtual panel discussion series to explore ways to better incorporate the perspectives of the many communities we serve. Educators will have a chance to deepen their teaching practice in an online space for open conversation and community.

**March 3: 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. ET**

*Engaging with LGBTQIA+ Communities in  
Formal and Non-Formal Settings*

How can formal and non formal educators better incorporate LGBTQIA+ perspectives and voices into our place-based teaching and learning? Join us for a panel discussion moderated by Tonya Pell, 4-H Program Coordinator and a member of the MSU Extension Children and Youth Institute LGBTQIA+ Committee, with panelists Scott Ellis, Executive Director of Great Lakes Bay Pride in Midland, MI, and Owen Bondono, 9th grade ELA teacher in Oak Parks Schools and Michigan Teacher of the Year 2021.

Register for one or more sessions. Recorded sessions are available to registrants. SCECHS are available for teachers. Fees help cover costs and provide stipends for panelists. Group discounts are available for 10 or more.

**REGISTER HERE**

## MSU Tollgate Farm Visits 2022: Educational Programs for School and Community Groups

This spring, join us at MSU Tollgate Farm for the unique opportunity to experience agriculture hands-on in an urban environment. Whether your 4 years old or 80 years old we have an educational program to you! MSU Tollgate Farm are interactive, educational, and fun and allow visitors to get to know life on the farm up close and personal. This spring, join us for the History and Science of Maple Sugaring, Spring into Farming, Embryology, and Plants and their Partners. [Financial aid process available](#). To learn more about MSU Tollgate Farm visits or schedule an in-person farm visit for your class or group, click the button below or email Ellen Koehler at [koehle43@msu.edu](mailto:koehle43@msu.edu).



## REQUEST A FARM VISIT

Interested in one of our virtual Learning Fresh from the Farm series for your class? Select program series are available in weeklong or weekly virtual formats.

## REQUEST A VIRTUAL PROGRAM



## Looking for a Volunteering Opportunity? Join the MSU Tollgate Farm New Volunteer Interest and Orientation Meeting: April 12th 7-8 PM

Interested in volunteering at MSU Tollgate Farm but don't know where to start? Join the MSU Tollgate Farm staff and current volunteers on April 12th from 7-8 PM EST to learn more about the many volunteer opportunities available at the farm.

During this Zoom meeting, participants will learn about what volunteer projects are available and how to complete the process for becoming a volunteer. This meeting is open to the public and we encourage individuals of all ages, physical abilities, interest level, and skill level to attend. There is something for everyone at MSU Tollgate Farm. MSU Tollgate Farm is a welcoming and inclusive place for people to be a part of something bigger than themselves.

[REGISTER HERE](#)

**Registration is Open for the 2022 Summer CSA!**



What does it mean to be a member of Tollgate's CSA? Twenty weeks of fresh produce grown right at Tollgate! From May 25th until October 5th, CSA members receive a share each week that includes a variety of vegetables that reflect the seasonal abundance of the farm. CSA's are a great way to have access to local vegetables and an opportunity to get to know your farmer and see where your food is grown!

[LEARN MORE](#)



## MSU Dairy Store Cheese Still Available!

Looking for something delicious to get you through the cold January days? Buy a box of MSU Dairy Store Cheese from the MSU Tollgate Farm Store. The 2021 MSU Dairy cheese gift box features three classic favorites. Each box contains a ½ lb block of MSU made cheddar, sharp cheddar and grass-fed white cheddar (1 ½ lb total). All proceeds will support the replanting of the MSU Tollgate Farm Rose Garden.

[VISIT THE FARM STORE](#)

## Have you Herd? Goat Shout-Outs are the Perfect Way to Send A Special Message

Looking for a unique way to send a message to a friend or family member? Let the the MSU Tollgate goat herd help you out. Write a brief custom message and a staff member will craft a 30 second private video link from our goats to your recipient. Messages like, "Happy Birthday Jack. You are no longer a kid!" or "Congrats on your promotion, you are the GOAT!" are a perfect way to share some love. Requests will be fulfilled within 7 business days and will be sent by email. All proceeds from the \$20 fee go to supporting the care of livestock at the farm.



[SIGN UP HERE](#)

**News and Announcements**



## The New Prentice Family Agriculture Education Award

The Prentice Family Agriculture Education Award is a new award to recognize the outstanding efforts of a volunteer committed to agriculture education and/or farm operations. Nominated volunteers should have a clear commitment to the farm's mission, "MSU Tollgate Farm strives to cultivate life-long learners and leaders with the skills and knowledge to create a sustainable world" as embodied in one or more of five focus areas. These focus areas include teaching, diversity, equity, and inclusion, industry promotion, capacity building, or operations.

Any MSU Tollgate volunteer, staff member, or program participant may nominate an individual for the award. This award will be presented on a yearly basis when qualified nominees are put forward. The review period will be from July 1st to June 30th with the award presented at the August 20th Volunteer Appreciation Picnic. Thank you to the Americana Foundation for their support and suggestion for naming this award. Both the Americana Foundation and the Prentice Family have shown uncommon commitment to the mission of MSU Tollgate Farm and advocacy for agricultural education. To learn more about this award or nominate a volunteer, click the button below.

[LEARN MORE](#)

## Tollgate Farm 4-H Club: Seed Sharing Update

On January 29th, we invited community gardens to select the seeds that they need for the upcoming growing season from our seed storage bins.

In our first sharing event of 2022, we gave away 923 packets of seeds. Based on data received from participating gardens, our seed sharing service project served 8,405 youth and 1,370 adults for a total reach of 9,775 people!

We are not yet done - our next sharing event is planned in a few weeks. The club is grateful for the support of our seed packet donors!

- Baker Creek Seeds
- Bentley Seeds





- Burpee Gardening
- High Mowing Organic Seeds
- Nature and Nurture Seeds
- Renee's Garden Seeds
- Seed Savers Exchange
- Southern Exposure Seed Exchange
- Tomato Fest Heirloom Tomato Seeds
- True Leaf Market

Interested in joining the Tollgate 4-H Club?  
Find more information on their website below.

**LEARN MORE**



## Renovating the MSU Tollgate Farm Rose Garden

The Tollgate Rose Garden is one of the oldest established and most beloved gardens on the property. This garden has produced abundant blooms for decades and was a favorite of visitors and volunteers alike. Unfortunately, Rose Rosette Disease (RRD) infected roses were identified on the Tollgate property in 2016 leading to the total loss of the Rose Garden as well as singular specimens in other gardens on the site. Now, the plan is to restore Tollgate's Rose Garden and recreate the spectacular centerpiece garden with roses as the stars of the show!

**READ MORE**

## Seeking Sponsors for Steward Sustainability Leadership Institute

SSLI, or the Stewards Sustainability Leadership Institute, is a leadership experience for teens ages 13-19 who love adventure and who want to make a positive difference in their environment. SSLI provides meaningful, life changing learning that includes research, community engagement, action, and fun as teen stewards make important connections between agriculture, the environment, and their daily lives. Interested in learning how you can support their efforts? Email Ellen Koehler at [koehle43@msu.edu](mailto:koehle43@msu.edu).



## 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



Oakland County  
Youth & Families  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY Extension February 2022

**The Mindful Father - male caregivers, and mindfulness**  
**By Ryan Jaramila and Jan Kuczek**

Mindfulness is a popular buzzword. It takes little effort to find individuals promoting the benefits of mindfulness and self-awareness. Local organizations, including [Oakland County Community Services](#), offer mindfulness classes that are open to the public and in some cases, are offered for free.

In 1979, Jon Kabat-Zinn at the University of Massachusetts Medical School created the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction series in response to patients reporting physical health symptoms that could not be identified by standard medical testing. [Kabat-Zinn's series](#) was a boon to the chronically stressed and positive outcomes that were reported by most graduates of the series. Although that class is still offered worldwide, many may not have the resources to afford such a series, or the time to commit to an 8-week series that demands a minimum 45 minutes of practice daily. However, the mindfulness training and education offered by many local health organizations are rooted in Kabat-Zinn's work that began over 40 years ago.

[According to Kabat-Zinn](#), the blending of Eastern techniques with Western medicine, "mindfulness is awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally, and then sometimes add, in the service of self-understanding and wisdom." Men, fathers, and male caregivers often exist in a state of auto-pilot many times being distracted by thoughts of things that have taken place already or focusing

on things that have yet to take place. By constantly being distracted and unable to be focused on the present, they tend to miss out on the enjoyment or full experience of moments that take place every day.

Although men are very capable of moment-to-moment focus on what they are doing at any given time (and in some instances have been trained to focus very well), it is easy to slip back into auto-pilot mode. Men tend to struggle with connecting to their feelings and emotions as well, which can lead to an increase of internal stress. According to the [American Heart Association](#), when unchecked, increased stress levels can lead to several issues for men, their children, their families, and other people with whom they associate, including worsened sleep, increased blood pressure and cholesterol, increased blood sugar levels, reduced memory and concentration, and an increase in mood swings which could be seen as being out-of-character.

Being a mindful father means sharpening abilities to pay attention to the body, stress triggers, and learning to center oneself in times of crisis, at the very least. Practitioners, through practicing mindfulness, fathers have the chance to improve their abilities to observe, to act with awareness, to describe situations, to react with situations in a non-judgmental fashion, and to respond to stimuli with less reactivity. In essence, these are things that can help spare their abilities to "cultivate habits of practicing self-care" and improve wellbeing.

As fathers engage with mindfulness, they may begin to learn about ways in which their own thoughts, feelings and emotions affect their behaviors and relationships with others. In general, all caregivers can learn to understand how they are feeling in

about 4-H youth development activities in Oakland County.

READ MORE

## Opportunities and Spotlights

### Japanese Outreach Initiative: Host Families Needed for MSU Tollgate Farm Japanese Coordinator



**JOI PROGRAM**  
JAPAN OUTREACH INITIATIVE

MSU Tollgate Farm is excited to announce we are being considered to host a Japanese Coordinator from the Japan Outreach Initiative. The Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership (CGP) and Laurasian Institution designed the Japan Outreach Initiative (JOI) as a grassroots opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of Japan by sending Japanese Coordinators to conduct community outreach activities about Japan in the Midwest and Southern regions of the U.S.

Now MSU Tollgate needs your help to find a host family for an adult Japanese Coordinator. Host families would provide housing and assist the individual in transitioning to life in U.S. A \$500 stipend is available to defray utilities and housing costs. The JOI program covers the cost of a car, insurance, and living expenses for the coordinator. Japanese language proficiency is not required. Commitment length is flexible, but preferably 6-months or 1 year. Multiple host families will be needed for the coordinator during their 2 years at Tollgate. Become a host family and create a bond that spans continents!

Interested? Learn more about the JOI program below or contact MSU Tollgate Farm Director, [Mike Mathis](#).

LEARN MORE

Join our Team for an Unforgettable Summer!



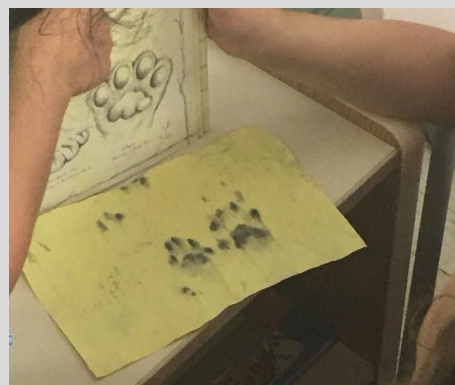
Come join our amazing summer camp team and positively impact the lives of the youth that we serve, as you spend your summer teaching, playing, and learning in the great outdoors. Summer Camp is currently looking for experienced candidates for our Summer Camp Educational Leader, Garden Kitchen Leader, Communications Leader, Horse Camp Educational Leader, and Horse Camp Coordinator Positions.

Interested in an interview? Join us on **March 9th from 6-9:30 PM** in the MSU Tollgate Farm Conference Center for open interviews for these positions.

[LEARN MORE](#)

## MSU Tollgate Kid's Corner: Track Traps Activity

Looking for a fun and educational activity to do with your kids? We've got you covered with our seasonal activity in MSU Tollgate's Kid's Corner. Set up a track trap in your yard and see if you can capture some animal tracks. Investigate what kinds of animals might make those tracks and learn more about the animals in your local community.



[GET THE ACTIVITY](#)



## Rent MSU Tollgate Farm for your Next Event

The MSU Tollgate Conference Center and historic barn are available for your next business meeting, bridal or baby shower, private luncheon, or wedding. Our event catering staff are available to meet all of your needs. If you are looking for a unique venue, Tollgate is the perfect choice for your special event or business meeting! Interested? Give us a call at 248-347-3860 ext 235.

[LEARN MORE](#)

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