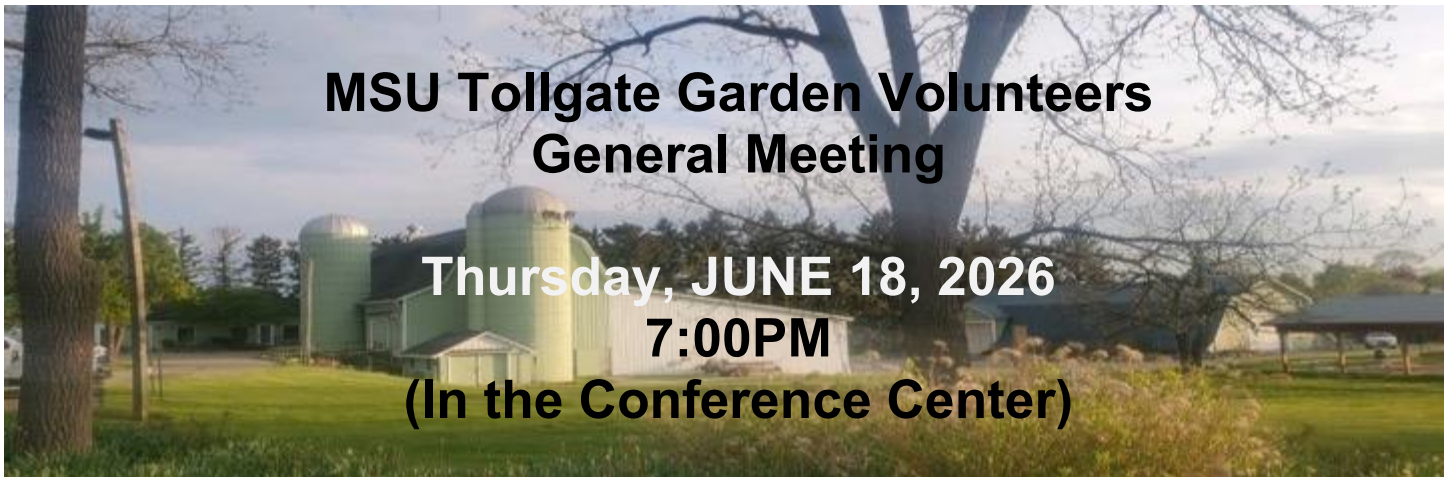


# The Tollgate Farm News

VOLUME 32

ISSUE 6

JUNE 2026



## AN EXCITING SUMMER OF SPEAKERS COMING SOON TO TOLLGATE

June and August speakers are pending.

The Tollgate Garden Open House replaces the July meeting.

In September, Mary Spencer will return with a **cooking demonstration** including recipes and samples. Late summer is perfect for cooking with fresh produce. Mary loves to answer specific or general questions about cooking, ingredients, kitchen tools or appliances. Her goal is to make people better cooks. Her business, *Taste: A Cook's Place*, [www.tasteacooksplace.net](http://www.tasteacooksplace.net), teaches cooking classes at PARC in downtown Plymouth. Mary has been teaching cooking for over 25 years. She has conducted food tours, done menu planning and researched heirloom recipes.

In October, John Blair will return to talk about **butterfly gardens**. Open to something interesting to do with his time in retirement, John attended a presentation in 2012 by butterfly expert Brenda Dziedzic, who talked about making a butterfly garden with native plants as the focal point. John got busy creating his own butterfly garden at his Westland home. Over the next seven summers, the garden grew to over 5000 square feet with 130 species of native plants and 38 different species of butterfly visitors. In 2019, having filled all his available gardening space, John and his wife moved to a new home in rural Brooklyn, Michigan, with 9 acres of land to make more butterfly and pollinator habitat.

TOLLGATE GARDEN VOLUNTEER IMPORTANT DATES AND EVENTS 2026							
JUNE		MEETINGS		JULY		MEETINGS	
2	TGAC Meeting – Zoom	7:00 pm		7	TGAC Meeting – Zoom	7:00 pm	
18	TGV General Meeting – <b>IN PERSON</b>	7:00 pm		16	<b>TGV OPEN HOUSE</b> 17 <sup>th</sup> Rain date (No regular meeting)	6:00 pm - 8:00 pm	
JUNE		WORKDAY ACTIVITIES		JULY		WORKDAY ACTIVITIES	
6	<b>SPRING PLANT SALE</b>	9:00 am – 2:00pm		4	<b>July 4 Weekend – No planned garden workday</b>		
13	Rose/Entrance	9:00 am		11	Children's/Xeriscape	9:00 am	
20	Office/Heritage/Rain	9:00 am		18	Hosta/Demo	9:00 am	
27	Pond/12 Mile	9:00 am		25	Farmhouse/PAR	9:00 am	

# The Tollgate Farm News

## FARM UPDATE FROM THE RESIDENT FARMER - *Destiny Pearson*

The rain held off and we were lucky to have beautiful weather for this year's Tollgate Volunteer Plant Sale! It made for a smooth, enjoyable event and a great turnout overall.

A huge thank you to our nursery volunteers who put in so much time and care getting the plants ready. Your hard work truly showed. We also want to recognize the volunteers who handled all the behind-the-scenes administrative work that made the sale run so seamlessly. And of course, thank you to



everyone who helped set up, run the event, and break everything down afterward. It takes a team effort, and we're so grateful. Thanks to all of you, we had a fantastic sale and a really successful day at the farm.

If you attended the plant sale, you probably noticed one of our newest farm additions, a little Holstein calf named Duke. He was quite the star of the day! We saw lots of folks stopping by to visit him, and he even showed off a few zoomies out in the field with all the excitement. Duke is a senior 4-H market project and will be calling Tollgate home for the

next couple of summers. Be sure to stop by and say hello next time you're at the farm!"

Destiny Pearson  
Livestock Coordinator/Assistant Farm Manager

Photo by Linda Piasecki

## NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT - *Renee Cottrell*

**"A garden is a grand teacher. It teaches patience and careful watchfulness, it teaches industry and thrift; above all it teaches entire trust."—Gertrude Jekyll 1843-1932, British Horticulturist, garden designer.**

Thank you all for your time and talents that made the Spring Plant Sale event a success! This is a major fund-raising event that requires many hours of planning, potting, and recruiting leading up to the Spring Sale. Our dedicated, high-energy volunteers and staff came through again! See Nursery notes as well.



Looking ahead we will have our Tollgate Garden Volunteer Garden Open House event on July 16, 2026 at 6pm. (July 17<sup>th</sup> rain date) This will be a weekday evening event, replacing our July membership meeting, with tours, talks, snacks and a chance to get together and enjoy the gardens. Keep a look out for the upcoming email requests to sign up to help with this event. See the flyer in this issue. Invite your friends and family!

# The Tollgate Farm News

All TGV members are invited to bring a guest to any of the in-person member meetings on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month. You may have friends or family interested in garden-related topics or in becoming club members. This would be a great opportunity for a fun and educational night out. Come early and walk through the gardens!



This is not an ordinary information placement I typically include in our newsletter, however, to honor our former member Barb Greenberg I will deviate this once. Barb was instrumental in the establishment of our rain garden here at Tollgate and an accomplished plantswoman. Barb's husband Alan is looking for any interested EMG looking for a part time, paid position to manage the home perennial gardens established by his wife to continue to honor her. I have all the details if you wish to pass on or learn more about this Novi based opportunity.

Renee Cottrell, President  
Tollgate Garden Volunteers  
248-251-4505  
[rmcottrell4@att.net](mailto:rmcottrell4@att.net)

Photo provided by the Greenberg family

[TOLLGATE GARDEN  
OPEN HOUSE  
FLYER](#)

[What is an AGL?](#)  
[Gardens in need of an AGL](#)

## NURSERY NOTES



Our June Spring Plant Sale was a solid success! Our collective prayers for good weather, high energy volunteers and healthy plants in the inventory all contributed to a successful plant sale. **Total sales prior to taxes and credit card fees were \$9367!** A very generous donation of annuals from George at Telly's Greenhouse added color, interest and additional sales. We are grateful for his continued support of the Tollgate Gardens. The Nursery team should be congratulated on their tireless efforts to divide pot and present healthy plant material, as well as efficiency in the sale set up and excellent customer service on sales day. I have enjoyed and learned a lot from this group this year. My thanks to all the volunteers that assisted

with the sale and worked to make this major fundraising event a success.

The Nursery will rest, condensing pots for irrigation efficiency and routine weed management. It will open for fall plant donations and divisions on August 15<sup>th</sup>.

Renee

Photo by Renee Cottrell

# The Tollgate Farm News

## PAR Report - Kathryn Fitzpatrick



The busy planting season has begun in earnest, as well as the eternal battle with the ever-pernicious weeds. After planting the squash and bunching onions, we had an irrigation issue that resulted in many lost squash plants, but enough hardy plants have made a comeback, and we can always direct seed as needed. The collard greens were planted next and are thriving – some even ready to harvest!

The carrot beds have been planted with carrot seed tape, and a few are sprouting already. We were fortunate to have help making the 450 feet of tape – a huge thank you to the CSA team. They also planted our onions in the CSA field, so the partnership is off to a very beneficial start. One small bed of radishes has also been started in front of the PAR shed.



Each week requires a lot of planting, so the two types of kale and our tomatillos were planted in the CSA field, and the PAR Garden team also helped plant the CSA kale. We cut up and prepped the seed potatoes, and those will be planted along with the cabbage, followed by the kohlrabi, pole beans, and hot pepper plants. Whew!

The weeds met their match with a wonderful team of volunteers from the DeMaria Construction– who made short order (well several hours) of the thistle, bindweed, sticky weed, and grasses that have overtaken the unplanted beds and pathways. Thank you!

Happy planting,  
Kathryn Fitzpatrick

Photos by Kathryn Fitzpatrick

## AGL Information – Marilyn Alimpich

Hello AGLs,

The Spring and Summer planting season has finally arrived. If you purchase plants or materials for your Tollgate garden, this is a reminder to submit your receipts for reimbursement to Destiny as quickly as possible. Reimbursement requests must be received by MSU Accounts Payable **within 90 days of purchase** in order for you to be reimbursed. Bring your receipts to her in person or scan and send them to her via email at: [pears278@msu.edu](mailto:pears278@msu.edu).

If your purchase was online, you must also submit your credit card statement showing the purchase (please black out card numbers and purchases other than the one you're submitting for reimbursement. If you decide to donate any purchase, please let me know ([masoleil@sbcglobal.net](mailto:masoleil@sbcglobal.net)) so that our garden "expense spreadsheet" reflects your donation.

# The Tollgate Farm News

Happy planting! (and weeding).

If you have any questions, please contact me at: [masoleil@sbcglobal.net](mailto:masoleil@sbcglobal.net), or call or text 734-730-6565.

See you in the gardens,

Marilyn Alimpich  
[masoleil@sbcglobal.net](mailto:masoleil@sbcglobal.net)

[2026 Garden Planner Budget](#)  
[Tollgate Label Template Excel Version](#)  
[Tollgate Label Template Word Version](#)

**\*\*Please note\*\*** - Click on the link to download the file for your use following your computer's download protocol.

Template Example (Word Version)

Common Name	Genus	Species	Cultivar	Garden	Trademark#	Tags
Example						
Eastern Redbud	Cercis	canadensis	'Northern Herald'	Farmhouse		1

Verify spelling and correct names using plant tags or site such as Missouri Botanical Gardens

## DID YOU KNOW?

## Where Would You Like To Grow?

A GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR NEW AND ESTABLISHED ACTIVE MEMBERS!



There are numerous gardens that require assistance in the maintenance of the plantings that allow you opportunities to learn and grow. Volunteers are encouraged to explore these opportunities. Donating your time and talents in your area of interest is often more rewarding. What plants do you enjoy? What garden environment meets your physical needs or availability? Read some of these descriptions on this link and let me know if you like further information.

Thanks!  
Renee  
[rncottrell4@att.net](mailto:rncottrell4@att.net)

Looking for Team members: Children's Garden, multiple sites, Office and Heritage Garden, Rock ledge Garden, Founders Garden (Rose garden), PAR (vegetable) Garden

<https://www.canr.msu.edu/tollgate/gardens/>

# The Tollgate Farm News

## PLANT OF THE MONTH

### *Iris x germanica* - Bearded Iris or German Iris



One showy flower you may be seeing in the gardens at this time of the year is the Bearded iris. *Iris x germanica* comes in all the colors of the rainbow and has varieties that grow from a diminutive 8 inches to a towering 38 inches tall. The most common Bearded iris varieties are the Dwarf Iris and the Bearded Iris. Iris generally blooms from late April to late June. It prefers well drained soil and full sun but can tolerate moist soil to partial shade. Iris is also known to be drought tolerant and deer resistant.

*The leaves of Iris x germanica* are sword shaped with as many as 6 blooms appearing on a single stalk. Blooms can last up to 3 weeks. Iris has no bulb. Rather it spreads by

creeping rhizomes which become thicker and form large clumps. The rhizomes should be divided every 3-4 years to prevent overcrowding.

*Iris x germanica* is a naturally occurring cross of two European iris species. Over the years, many cultivars have been developed from this wild hybrid. The iris was named for the Greek goddess of the rainbow. You will find many different iris throughout the gardens of Tollgate Farm.

[Missouri Botanical Garden](#)

Artwork by David Komraus



Photo by Linda Piasecki

# The Tollgate Farm News

MSU Tollgate Garden Volunteers  
Present

## 2026 Summer Garden Walk Open House

**Thursday July 16, 2026 6-8:00pm**

**Rain Date Friday July 17**

**FREE ADMISSION**

Enjoy a summer evening as you stroll and get to know the MSU Tollgate Gardens

\*\*\*GARDEN TOURS\*\*\*HAYRIDES\*\*\*

\*\*\*BEAUTIFUL PHOTOGENIC GARDENS\*\*\*

Complementary cold beverages and dessert snacks available.

**Tollgate Volunteer Docents Available To Answer Your Question**

Michigan State University  
Tollgate Farm and Education Center  
28115 Meadowbrook Roads  
Novi, MI 48377  
248 347-3860 ext. 251

[www.tollgate.msu.edu](http://www.tollgate.msu.edu)

**Please-No Pets allowed**



Accommodations for persons with disabilities may be requested by contacting the event coordinator two weeks prior to the start of the event. Requests received after this date will be honored whenever possible.

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

# The Tollgate Farm News

## Membership Update June 2026

To all of you who donated to help the Tollgate Garden Volunteers make Tollgate a more beautiful place, THANK YOU! Your support of time talents, and donations will grow and maintain the beauty of the Tollgate gardens.

Our newest members are:

Belco, Michael  
Brose, Paula  
Kramer, Mary Kay  
Lamb, Christine

Please take time **NOW** to renew your 2026 membership. **Non-renewed members from 2025 will not receive communications until they renew their membership.** Don't miss out on the Tollgate Garden Volunteer Newsletter!  
Thanks!

### MSU Tollgate Volunteer Sign-In:



Or

[MSU Tollgate Volunteer Sign-in](#)

[2026 Tollgate Members Levels](#)

[Tollgate Membership Form 2026](#)

[TGV Recruitment Flyer](#)

## Links to Forms & Other Info

[Garden Orientation PDF](#)

[Tollgate Garden Web Page](#)

[Tollgate Garden Volunteer Info](#)

[TGV Activity Calendar](#)

[Tollgate Garden Map](#)

**NOTE:** If you are unable to access or print any necessary forms from the links, please notify Renee, who will arrange to provide copies. Copies will also be available at all in-person TGV meetings.

### **Take a Tollgate Picture**

Send photo files in separate emails, if necessary, to Judy Warren, Tollgate Calendar Editor, at [TGFarmPhotos@gmail.com](mailto:TGFarmPhotos@gmail.com)  
Photos are also appreciated for the monthly Farm News. Photo files can be sent to:  
[Ductapegirl212@gmail.com](mailto:Ductapegirl212@gmail.com)



Photos by Renee Cottrell

# The Tollgate Farm News

## 2026 SPRING PLANT SALE



Top 4 photos by Renee Cottrell  
Bottom 2 photos by Linda Piasecki



# The Tollgate Farm News

## 2026 SPRING PLANT SALE



Top left photo by Renee Cottrell

All other photos by Linda Piasecki

# The Tollgate Farm News

## ALL AROUND THE FARM GARDENS



Photos by Linda Piasecki



# The Tollgate Farm News

## Activity Days: January - October

- Activity Day hours are 9:00 am – Noon, unless otherwise noted on the Activities section of the first page of the newsletter and the full year calendar (see Links page).
- Volunteer Activity Day and Meeting Information will be communicated by email.
- Active members will continue to get email reminders of these activities.
- Lunch will be provided on scheduled workdays.
- We strongly recommend you bring your own tools for your garden activities. All tools borrowed from the Tool Shed should be cleaned and sanitized with the wipes provided, prior to returning the items to the Tool Shed after use.

## Tollgate Garden Advisory Committee (TGAC)

### Volunteer Liaison – Destiny Pearson

248-347-3860 Ext.251 [pears278@msu.edu](mailto:pears278@msu.edu)

**President** .....Renee Cottrell

**Vice President** .....Marilyn Alimpich

**Secretary**.....Theresa Bridenbaugh

**Treasurer** .....Karen Harris

**Membership** .....

**Communications** .....Kathy Johnson

**Programs** .....Jackie Stengel

**Farm News Editor**.....Linda Piasecki

**Event Coordinator**..... Lori Heiden

- The TGAC meets monthly virtually **on Zoom on the first Tuesday of the month at 7:00 PM**. All Tollgate Garden Volunteer members are welcome to attend and should contact Destiny Pearson for meeting link.
- Contact information for individual TGAC members and Area Garden Leaders (AGL) are available by contacting Renee Cottrell at [rmcottrell4@att.net](mailto:rmcottrell4@att.net) to have message or contact forwarded for response. Contact info can also be found in the Garden Binders in the Volunteer Communication Center.
- Tollgate Volunteer Membership is renewed annually. The 2026 Tollgate Garden Volunteer membership is valid from **January 1, 2026 to December 31, 2026**.

- For membership questions or to update your current membership information, email Renee Cottrell at [rmcottrell4@att.net](mailto:rmcottrell4@att.net)
- For general Tollgate information and questions, contact Destiny Pearson or see Website: <http://tollgate.msu.edu/volunteering/>
- TIP: If you aren't getting The Tollgate Farm News email, check your SPAM folder



MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension  
**MSU Tollgate Farm and Education Center**  
28115 Meadowbrook Rd., Novi, MI 48377  
[tollgate.msu.edu](http://tollgate.msu.edu)  
Volunteer Coordinator - Janice Recinos : [recinos1@msu.edu](mailto:recinos1@msu.edu)  
Farm Contact - Destiny Pearson : [pears278@msu.edu](mailto:pears278@msu.edu)