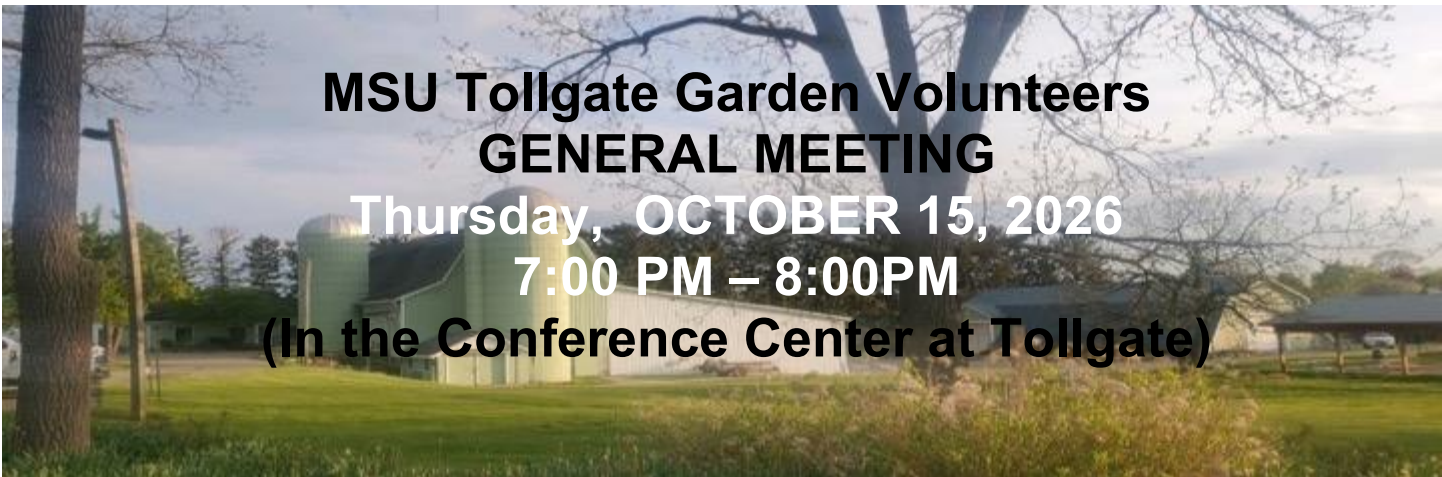


The Tollgate Farm News

VOLUME 32

ISSUE 10

OCTOBER 2026



MSU Tollgate Garden Volunteers GENERAL MEETING Thursday, OCTOBER 15, 2026 7:00 PM – 8:00PM (In the Conference Center at Tollgate)

BUTTERFLY GARDENS

Join Tollgate Garden volunteers and supporters for the last in-person meeting and educational presentation of 2026. **John Blair** will return to talk about butterfly gardens.

When John retired from automotive engineering, he needed something interesting to do with his time. He attended a presentation in 2012 by butterfly expert Brenda Dziedzic on making a butterfly garden with native plants. John got busy that spring 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 available gardening space, John and his wife Sheri moved to a new home in rural Brooklyn, Michigan, with 9 acres of land where he created more butterfly gardens and restored large tracts of land to original prairie with native plants, creating a gigantic butterfly and pollinator habitat!

Link to view LOTS of pictures of John's restored prairie and pollinator habitat: [Prairie 2024 | Flickr](#)

TOLLGATE GARDEN VOLUNTEER IMPORTANT DATES AND EVENTS 2026						
OCT	MEETINGS			NOV	MEETINGS	
6	TGAC Meeting – Zoom	7:00 pm		3	TGAC Meeting – Zoom	7:00 pm
15	TGV General Meeting	7:00 pm		7	TGV Recognition Dinner	4:00 pm
OCT	WORKDAY ACTIVITIES			NOV	WORKDAY ACTIVITIES	
3-4	PUMPKINFEST NO WORKDAY	10:00 am – 4:00 pm				
10	Nursery Clean up	9:00 am		14	Rose winterizing	10:00 am
17	Pond Clean up	9:00 am				
24	Fall Clean up	9:00 am		26	Thanksgiving	
31	Fall Clean up	9:00 am				

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FARM UPDATE FROM THE RESIDENT FARMER - *Destiny Pearson*

One of my favorite things about fall at the farm is watching the colors change. The trees leading up to the Maple Shack are always my favorite. There's just something about that stretch of road covered in reds, oranges, and yellows that makes it feel like fall has officially arrived.

While the trees are putting on a show, the goats are getting ready for breeding season. Around the animal barn, Romeo is feeling pretty proud of himself and he's doing everything he can to impress the ladies. If you're visiting the barn, you may want to keep your distance when the wind changes direction. Romeo's idea of romance is memorable, and not necessarily in a good way. One deep whiff and you may never get his "love smell" out of your nose.



This past weekend's Pumpkinfest was a huge success. The beautiful weather brought out great crowds, and it was fun seeing families enjoy some of our newer activities, including canoeing and the scarecrow scavenger hunt. My personal favorite addition was the food trucks. Nothing beats grabbing a good meal and spending a fall day outdoors at the farm.

And if you haven't heard the exciting news, Monique and her husband Nick welcomed their new little one the day before Pumpkinfest. Baby

Maya arrived at 9 pounds, 3 ounces, and both mom and baby are doing well. We're so excited to welcome Maya to the Tollgate family and can't wait for her to grow up surrounded by the farm community.

As we head deeper into autumn, we're looking forward to more colorful days and busy seasons in the barns and gardens. Fall is definitely one of the best times of the year at Tollgate.



Destiny Pearson
Livestock Coordinator/Assistant Farm Manager

Pumpkins photo by Destiny Pearson
Baby Maya photo by her parents

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT - *Renee Cottrell*

"The way I see it, if you want the rainbow, you gotta put up with the rain."

Dolly Parton, American singer-songwriter and actress 1946-2026

Vote Now- October is the month to vote on all elected positions for your Tollgate Garden Advisory Committee-TGAC. Though the field of nominees is very limited we ask that you participate in the voting process, write in

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votes for willing members are welcome! Please submit your ballot for the elected officer positions by email or US mail by the membership meeting on Oct. 15th.

[Tollgate Advisory Committee Ballot 2026](#)

[Ginger Meyer Award Nomination Form](#)

Membership Renewal- Membership is renewed every year for the most accurate record keeping of Active and Supporting members. The form for 2027 will again be an online document with a reminder going out in January. If you are making a membership donation you are encouraged to do so at the same time you renew via the link that is available.

Please complete your RSVP form sent out in a Sept. 21st email for the Nov. 7, 2026, Recognition dinner! Due date is October 23rd. It is a wonderful night to celebrate the season and our volunteer accomplishments. Hope to see you there!

Tool and garden decoration donations: All donations must be pre-approved by the TGAC. We appreciate you considering our gardens for your donations but there are requirements: Send an email and picture of your item to Renee. It will be presented and discussed at TGAC on the first Tuesday of the month. Donation proposal requirements include: usage and working order, assessment of appropriateness and need in the gardens. If a decoration: approval of the AGL for the proposed garden. We do **not** have room to store unapproved items, and they will be disposed of.

Thank you for being a Tollgate Garden Volunteer!
Renee Cottrell, President

rncottrell4@att.net

Tollgate Volunteer Members –

Please remember to log your volunteer hours using the QR code.



For all Master Gardeners –

Don't forget to log your volunteer hours through the MSU Volunteer Portal at

www.msu.samaritan.com/custom/502/volunteer_login

NURSERY NOTES



For the first time in my memory, we had significant rain on our fall plant sale date that abbreviated the event. Despite the ongoing rain and closing an hour early, we had a respectable guest turnout and sales day grossing \$2261 for our Tollgate Garden Fund. The AMAZING Nursery Team has done a great job in getting plants looking healthy for the sale. They showed up and stuck out the morning along with some determined Garden Volunteers. Our guest shoppers seemed happy with several large plant purchases and smiles through the raindrops.

My sincere gratitude to all who contributed to this successful though abbreviated event. Perhaps you donated plants, helped to pot those donations, gave of your time to staff the event, or just came to make a purchase. You are why we are successful!

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The Nursery team has one more scheduled workday Oct. 10th for putting the Nursery to bed for the winter months and mulching paths. Please join us and get to know this great team of volunteers.

Thank you,
Renee

Photos by Renee Cottrell

PAR Report - Kathryn Fitzpatrick



We have donated 2363 lbs. to those in need locally, with 306 lbs. donated by the CSA team – thank you! We have already exceeded our yield from last year, with a couple more weeks of harvest to go, plus any pumpkins that might be surplus after Pumpkinfest.

We have completed the harvest of potatoes, onions, cabbage, green beans, carrots, kohlrabi, garlic, and cucumbers. Still going strong are the collards, hot peppers, tomatillos, and turnips. There are a few more summer squash getting ready, and lots of beautiful flowers! Hopefully, the weather will remain relatively mild to allow the fruit to grow.

The seed tape for both the carrots and turnips was a labor of love and worked beautifully. It required little to no thinning needed and produced beautiful, hardy plants. Perhaps we will have a late fall or early spring session to make seed tape for the coming year.



This month we will start planning types of crops, crop rotation, IPM, and changes needed for 2027 based on challenges and successes this year. We will also draft the SignUpGenious plan for our greenhouse starts. If all goes well, we will either be engaged in the Eagle Scout project to renovate our beds by installing raised beds, or a concerted effort to renovate without creating raised beds. These projects may be completed in the Fall, weather and resources permitting, or spill into Spring.

Also fun in October is the planting of garlic, so it is ready to emerge as the first crop up in Spring.

Happy Autumn,
Kathryn Fitzpatrick

Photos by Kathryn Fitzpatrick



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AGL Information – Marilyn Alimpich

Hello Area Garden Leaders,

It's October and time to wrap up all the gardens for winter. Spring and summer go by way too fast, in my opinion. Some reminders as you get ready to put away your tools.

- ✓ Please pull out annuals by the end of October.
- ✓ Coil and label hoses to be stored for the season. Tags and zip strips will be made available.
- ✓ If new perennials were added to your garden, keep the information available in order for new garden labels to be created.
- ✓ Storage space for garden items is limited. They must fit on shed shelves or in tubs and labeled by garden- no broken or unsafe items should be kept.
- ✓ Reminder - Include garden art items on your annual garden plan/budget as it is also subject for approval.

See you in the gardens,

Marilyn Alimpich
masoleil@sbcglobal.net

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

A reminder to get any last minute receipts for garden expenses to Destiny ASAP. She must submit them to MSU within 90 days from the date the expense was incurred.

DID YOU KNOW?

PLANT OF THE MONTH

Caryopteris x clandonensis



Tumbling over the rock wall in front of the Tollgate Farmhouse is a low growing hedge of *Caryopteris x clandonensis* commonly known as Bluebeard. One of the few fall blooms, these bright blue fragrant flowers are a magnet for bees and butterflies and as a bonus, the flowers can also be cut for fall arrangements. Plantings can also be found in the Demo and Xeriscape Gardens.

Caryopteris' average size is 2 to 3 feet. Its flowers are grown on new wood, so early spring pruning is recommended. Its roots are hardy to zone 5, however some stems may die back in harsh winters. Dead stems can easily be removed during early spring

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pruning. New growth is rapid in the spring, and the shrub fills in nicely as you can see looking at our hedge. It prefers well drained loamy soil in full sun. It is pest resistant and seldom browsed by deer.



Article and photos by
Kathy Johnson



Tollgate Garden Volunteers now has a Facebook page! Please consider friending our page at <https://www.facebook.com/share/g/1J7MLbjFd6/>

12 Mile Road Construction

ROAD COMMISSION
for OAKLAND COUNTY

June 2026

RESURFACING PROJECT ON 12 MILE RD. TO START JULY 13 BETWEEN NOVI ROAD AND FARMINGTON ROAD

The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC), in partnership with the cities of Novi and Farmington Hills, will begin construction on 12 Mile Road between Novi Road and Farmington Road in the two cities, on July 13. The project will take place over the course of two construction seasons, 2026 and 2027.

Throughout the project, one lane of traffic in each direction on 12 Mile Road will remain open to traffic. Access to all homes and business will be maintained.

PROJECT DETAILS

The project involves two phases, with one in 2026 and one in 2027. The project was broken into two phases so the work did not conflict with the City of Farmington Hills' 2026 project on Halsted Road (shown on map).

Phase 1 (2026): Phase one includes the sections of 12 Mile Road from Novi Road to Haggerty Road and from just east of Halsted Road to Farmington Road.

Phase 2 (2027): Phase two includes the section of 12 Mile from Haggerty Road to just east of Halsted Road.

The project includes:

- Patching concrete sections of 12 Mile Road from Novi Road to just west of M-5.
- Milling (grinding off existing pavement) and repaving 12 Mile with asphalt from west of M-5 east to Farmington Road.
- Repairing curbs and gutters where needed.
- Installing Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant crosswalks and pedestrian crosswalk signals with pushbuttons at signalized intersections.
- Upgrading SMART bus stops.
- Installing High-Intensity Activated Crosswalk (HAWK) pedestrian crossing beacons at the White Plains Drive pedestrian crossing of 12 Mile.

For general information:
Call RCOC's Department of Customer Services at (877) 858-4804 or send us an email at dcsmail@rcoc.org or via the RCOC Website, www.rcocweb.org

SCHEDULE

- The Phase 1 work will start July 13 and be completed in the fall of 2026.
- The Phase 2 work will start in the spring of 2027 and be completed in the summer of 2027.

PROJECT COST AND FUNDING

The project will cost approximately \$12.2 million and will be paid for with federal funds and contributions from RCOC, Novi, Farmington Hills and Oakland County general government (through the Tri-Party Program).

CONTRACTOR

The contractor for the project is Cadillac Asphalt of Farmington Hills.

Note: A second project on 12 Mile Road, from east of Orchard Lake Road to Autumn Ridge in Farmington Hills is also currently underway (as noted on the above map). That project involves major resurfacing of that section of 12 Mile Road, and one lane of traffic in each direction will remain open in that section.

A two year renovation of 12 mile will start Monday July 13. One lane of traffic will remain open but we can expect delays during high traffic periods. Thank you to Gary, one of our garden volunteers, for forwarding the pdf summary of the project which can be viewed by clicking on the link below

[Oakland County Road Commission
Flyer on 12 Mile Construction](#)

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Membership Update July 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 new members for this are:

Andrew Berry
Sudha Rani
Amy Vaclacik

Please look forward to renewing your membership for the year 2027. New and renewed membership form for the Tollgate Volunteers is available online soon. Don't miss out on the Tollgate Garden Volunteer Newsletter! If you have any questions, please contact Lee Kindermann at leek.emg@gmail.com Thanks!

[TGV Recruitment Flyer](#)

MSU Tollgate Volunteer Sign-In:



[MSU Tollgate Volunteer Sign-in](#)

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
Photos are also appreciated for the monthly Farm News. Photo files can be sent to:
Ductapegirl212@gmail.com



Photo by Linda Piasecki

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TOLLGATE FALL PLANT SALE 2026



Photos by Linda Piasecki



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GOOD TIMES AT TOLLGATE!!



Photos by Linda Piasecki

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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

PresidentRenee Cottrell

Vice PresidentMarilyn Alimpich

Secretary.....Theresa Bridenbaugh

TreasurerKaren Harris

Membership Lee Kindermann

CommunicationsKathy Johnson

ProgramsJackie 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 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
- 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
Volunteer Coordinator - Janice Recinos : recinos1@msu.edu
Farm Contact - Destiny Pearson : pears278@msu.edu