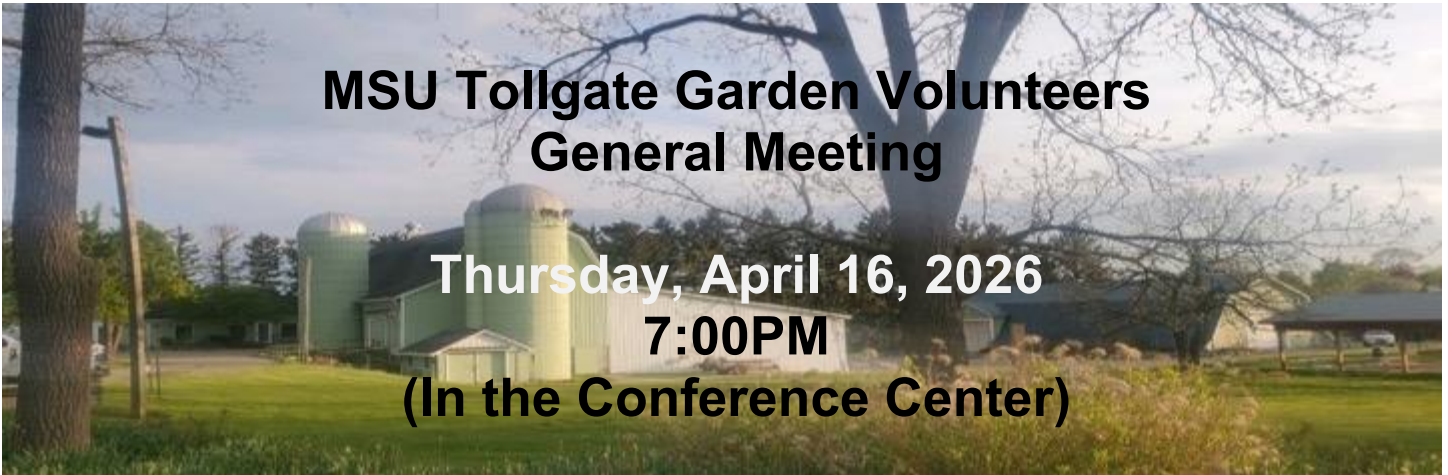


The Tollgate Farm News

VOLUME 32

ISSUE 4

APRIL 2026



BURSTING INTO SPRING

Reminder: Tollgate gardeners and supporters meet in-person in April.

Spring is an exciting time of the year. For a gardener, it can be a time of uncertainty. Wondering which plants survived the winter can make a gardener anxious. **Sue Grubba** will share insights on spring and how to maximize the potential of your gardens.

Professional gardener and owner of [Creative Scapes](#) since 1991, Sue Grubba specializes in landscape design, garden maintenance, and night lighting. She is the president of the [Association of Professional Gardeners](#) (APG).

Sue Grubba has a BS from CMU, a certificate in Landscape Technology from OCC, and certificates in Gardening Fine Arts and Landscape and Garden Design from the Michigan School of Gardening. A landscape designer since 1985, she has taught at Schoolcraft College, Chicago Botanic Gardens and Morton Arboretum. She assisted in the development of the curriculum and worked as a senior instructor at the Michigan School of Gardening.

TOLLGATE GARDEN VOLUNTEER IMPORTANT DATES AND EVENTS 2026						
APRIL	MEETINGS			MAY	MEETINGS	
7	TGAC Meeting – Zoom	7:00 pm		5	TGAC Meeting – Zoom	7:00 pm
16	TGV General Meeting – IN PERSON	7:00 pm		21	TGV General Meeting – in person	7:00 pm
APRIL	WORKDAY ACTIVITIES			MAY	WORKDAY ACTIVITIES	
4	Easter Weekend – General garden day	9:00 am		2	Entrance/Nursery-plant division	9:00 am
11	Rose/Pond	9:00 am		9	Farmhouse/Demo	9:00 am
18	Office/Heritage/Rain	9:00 am		16	Shade/Hosta	9:00 am
25	Children’s/Xeriscape New volunteer orientation pancake breakfast	9:00 am		23	MEMORIAL WEEKEND General garden workday	9:00 am –
				30	Rockledge/planting/12 Mile	9:00 am

The Tollgate Farm News

FARM UPDATE FROM THE RESIDENT FARMER - *Destiny Pearson*

It's been a busy couple of weeks between garden workdays and baby goats! Kidding season is officially behind us, and we're excited to share that we wrapped up the season with 12 healthy kids. This year marked the second annual kidding party, and it was wonderful to see the event grow compared to its first year.



Thanks to a generous donor, we were able to have Dr. Melissa Holahan onsite with us during delivery day. Having a veterinarian lead the delivery and work hands-on with the kids elevated the experience into a meaningful educational event. Guests participated in learning activities, observed the delivery process, and gained insight into newborn care, all while enjoying plenty of snacks, laughter, and time spent celebrating new life on the farm. The growth of the party this year made it even more exciting and reaffirmed how much our community enjoys learning alongside us.

At the same time, garden workdays are underway, and the farm is starting to feel refreshed as spring cleanup continues. We are incredibly grateful to everyone who has been patient and supportive as we continue our search for a new Operations Assistant Manager. Thanks to dedicated volunteers and staff, important work is still getting done and the farm is shaping up for the season ahead.

Thank you to everyone who has shown up, lent a hand, and helped make these busy weeks such a success!

Destiny Pearson
Livestock Coordinator/Assistant Farm Manager
MSUE Tollgate Farm and Education Center
28115 Meadowbrook Road Novi, MI 48377
O: 248-347-0269 ext.251
C: 248-931-7173



Photos by Linda Piasecki

The Tollgate Farm News

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT - Renee Cottrell

**“There is no glory in star or blossom till looked upon by a loving eye; there is no fragrance in April breezes till breathed with joy as they wander by.”
William Cullen Bryant, American poet and journalist 1794-1878**

Greeting Tollgate Garden Volunteers! April is our jumpstart month for clean-up activities in the gardens if the weather will cooperate. April is the last month that members from 2025, who have not yet renewed for 2026, will receive email notifications. Once you have renewed for 2026 membership you will be re-added to the communications list for email notifications. The link for online membership is in this issue. If you need help with membership renewal, please contact Renee.

Dates to remember for April:

****Nursery opens for plant donations April 11th, see Nursery notes this issue.**

****New member orientation April 25th at 9 a.m.** in the Conference Center. Any interested active member welcome.

****Pancake Breakfast follows the April 25th workday at 12 pm ALL active and support members are welcome to celebrate Spring and the Maple syrup season.**

This event will be held even if the workday is rained out. This is a great opportunity to socialize with your fellow volunteers. Just a reminder to all active volunteers: Please use the QR code-in this issue- to record your Tollgate hours for our on-site data collection of volunteer hours for our 2026 season. This data assists in program planning and development. This is **NOT** where Gardeners would record Extension Master Gardener hours for (re-) certification.

Spring is the time of renewal and new life on the farm. A visit to the site this month to catch all the spring blooms and emerging plants or a walk in the woods before the mosquitoes emerge is highly recommended.

[What is an AGL?](#)

[Gardens in need of an AGL](#)

Thank you for being a Tollgate Garden Volunteer.

Renee Cottrell, President
Tollgate Garden Volunteers
248-251-4505
rmcottrell4@att.net



The things we find in the mulch!

Photo by Linda Piasecki

The Tollgate Farm News

NURSERY NOTES

April Nursery Notes



Ready, set, go in the Tollgate Nursery! The temperatures are predicted to start to climb, and the Nursery is scheduled to OPEN for plant donations **Saturday April 11 through Saturday May 23rd**. The Team will be accepting donations of your home divisions of Michigan-hardy perennials per the plants wanted list recently emailed. We are not accepting shrubs, hostas, annuals or any perennials listed as invasive for our area. We are interested in some of your more unique Michigan hardy perennials as well so keep Tollgate in mind as you begin your

spring divisions. We would also appreciate donations of one-gallon pots (ONLY this size please) as you clean out your sheds and garages.

[PLANTS WANTED LIST 2026](#)

COMPLETE DONATION DIRECTIONS ARE POSTED IN THE NURSERY

[PLANT DONATION GUIDLINES](#)

1. **IDENTIFY** your donations with botanical name, common name and bloom color. Plant ID markers are available in a container on the table in Nursery, **please re-close the container lid when done**.
2. **WATER** your donation if needed
3. **LEAVE** your donation behind the **YELLOW** gate of the holding area- do not place donations directly in the nursery rows
4. **PLEASE BE SURE YELLOW GATE IS CLOSED WHEN YOU ARE DONE**

Save the date of Saturday, June 6, 2026, for our Spring Plant Sale - 9am to 2 pm!

Thank you for your plant donation.



Photos by Linda Piasecki

[2026 PLANT SALE FLYER](#)

The Tollgate Farm News

PAR Report - Kathryn Fitzpatrick

April showers bring May flowers, but also the first vegetable sprouts of the season - garlic!



Our yellow onion and bunching onion transplants have been started in the greenhouse. We will be starting our hot peppers, tomatillos, kale, collards, and summer squash this month as well. It is wonderful to step into the greenhouse and see all the beautiful sprouts.

We were fortunate to have a group of Saturday volunteers join us in the PAR Garden to re-cover the garden beds with black plastic to discourage weeds, as well as complete the arduous task of mulching all the pathways – thank you, it is greatly appreciated. Next, we will add a compost/soil mix to the beds and assess and fix any issues with the irrigation. This will get us ready for the planting season.

If you are interested and available, please check out the 2026 MSU Tollgate Farm PAR

Garden & CSA Greenhouse Schedule SignUpGenius at the following link: [PAR Garden & CSA Greenhouse Schedule](#). Mainly, we need help with watering the transplants on the weekends and holidays. There will be instructions and assistance for these activities, so please join us, even if you aren't familiar with these tasks.

Hope to see you in the garden this year or perhaps in the greenhouse in the spring,

Kathryn Fitzpatrick



Photos by Linda Piasecki

AGL Information – Marilyn Alimpich

Welcome Spring AGLs,

Most budget requests have been approved. If you have not yet submitted a request, and anticipate needing garden help or funding assistance, the next TGAC meeting to approve your budget is May 5. I will be away beginning April 23rd, so please get your requests to me before April 23 for consideration at the TGAC meeting on May 5th. Act soon if you want an approved budget before buying new plants. If you need help with budgeting, or completing the form, please contact me.

Garden Reimbursement: Remember, you can get reimbursed for purchases made for Tollgate. MSU requires submittal of receipts to Destiny within 90 days of purchase. You can submit an original receipt or scan or take a photo of your receipt and email it to Destiny. If you purchase an item online, you also need to submit a copy of your credit card statement indicating the purchase. Thank you for supporting the gardens!

The Tollgate Farm News

Plant Labels: If you still need plant labels, Linda Piasecki and I will try to schedule another day to make them. We have engraved all those submitted to date.

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

See you in the gardens,

Marilyn Alimpich
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						

Additional Garden Information

PLANT OF THE MONTH

Gold Coin Scotch Pine



Summer Foliage
 (American Confer Society)

Pinus sylvestris 'Gold Coin' is a popular evergreen conifer prized for its dramatic, intense gold-yellow needles during winter, which fade to a light, pale green in summer. This upright, pyramidal tree grows 8–12 inches annually, reaching 10–20 feet tall and 8–15 feet wide, making it a vibrant, deer-resistant specimen (Conifer Trees Database, American Conifer Society).



Photo by Linda Piasecki

This tree is in the Demo garden, new Dwarf Conifer Collection that volunteers Roy Prentiss and Lee Kindermann planted last April along the north fence around the parking lot.

This tree was chosen for the vibrant color that stands out in the garden. Each of the conifers in the collection were chosen by searching for "Oddities of Nature" according to Roy Prentiss. These conifers can withstand the deer pressure, are low maintenance and fit into small yards. Each dwarf conifer is unique and was purchased at Blue Horizon Nursery in Grand Junction, Michigan.

The Tollgate Farm News

Our Membership is now Digital!

Our Tollgate Garden Volunteer Membership has gone digital in 2026. All new and renewal memberships will use this form.

To get started, use the link provided or scan the QR code to access the digital form.

Important Instructions:

- Please fill out every line of the form unless the question specifically says otherwise.
- When you're finished, make sure to hit "Submit" to complete your registration.
- The submission conformation page will contain instructions on how to make your donation.
- Be sure to print the final page for your records and to keep the donation directions handy.
- If you have any questions, please email Destiny Pearson at pears278@msu.edu



Thank you for being part of our growing farm community!"

[Tollgate Membership Form 2026](#)

[TGV Recruitment Flyer](#)

Thank you to the following who have already signed up for membership

Coppersmith, Pat	Josaitis, Nora	Reincke, Nicole
Fulton, Tracey	Konjarevich, Laurey	Roehl, Jackie
Galante, Linda	Light, Kathleen	Rowland, Wendy
Haaseth, Shelly	McKay, Janine	Rusin, Pamela
Hitchcock, Mindy	McNulty, Janice	Truxton, Chloe
Humphries, Laura	Petrie, Jennifer	Whalen, Wanda
Johnston, Maureen	Pevzner, Martin	

The Tollgate Farm News

Michigan State University Tollgate Garden Volunteers Spring Plant Sale



Saturday June 6, 2026

9 a.m. to 2 p.m.



This major fund raising event helps support the development and maintenance of the educational gardens on the site for Extension programs and visitors. This event is held rain or shine. Experienced Tollgate Garden Volunteers will be assisting with questions and selections for a great shopping experience. The Tollgate Nursery specializes in providing a variety of hardy perennials popular to SE Michigan gardens. Our plants are divisions or seed grown perennials found in our beautiful Tollgate gardens, or are donations from the home gardens of our volunteers, friends of the farm or local supporting nurseries. Reasonably priced sun and shade perennials are available in 1-gallon pots. Look for deals on overstock or specialty plants with premium pricing as noted with signage posted at the sale.

Payment with Cash, Check, Mastercard or Visa will be accepted



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

MSU is an affirmative-action, equal-opportunity employer. Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or veteran status.

The Tollgate Farm News

Membership Update April 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.

THANK YOU!

Please take time **NOW** to renew your 2026 membership. **Non-renewed members from 2025 will not receive communications after the April 30th deadline 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](#)

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

The Tollgate Farm News

GOATS 2026!



Photos by Linda Piasecki



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SPRING CLEAN-UP WORKKAYS



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.

Volunteer Liaison – Destiny Pearson

248-347-3860 Ext.251 pears278@msu.edu

PresidentRenee Cottrell

Vice PresidentMarilyn Alimpich

Secretary.....Theresa Bridenbaugh

TreasurerKaren Harris

Membership

CommunicationsKathy Johnson

ProgramsJackie Stengel

- 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 rmcottrell@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.

Tollgate Garden Advisory Committee (TGAC)

- 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

