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Planning Full Day Events:
Strategies for Success

Melanie Fuhrmann, Consumer Horticulture - Oakland County

Lindsey Kerr, Consumer Horticulture – Wayne County

Planning Full Day Events: Strategies for Success

Lindsey Kerr, Melanie Fuhrmann

Are you considering hosting a full-day educational event, but not sure where to start? Join Consumer Horticulture Educators Lindsey Kerr and Melanie Fuhrmann as they share practical strategies, lessons learned, and their experiences from organizing successful full-day conferences. Topics include developing planning timelines, recruiting and scheduling speakers, sponsorships, marketing and promotion, managing registration and participant communications, coordinating volunteers, handling day-of logistics, and evaluating the participant experience. Learn how to navigate challenges of event planning and how to create a positive experience for participants and presenters alike.

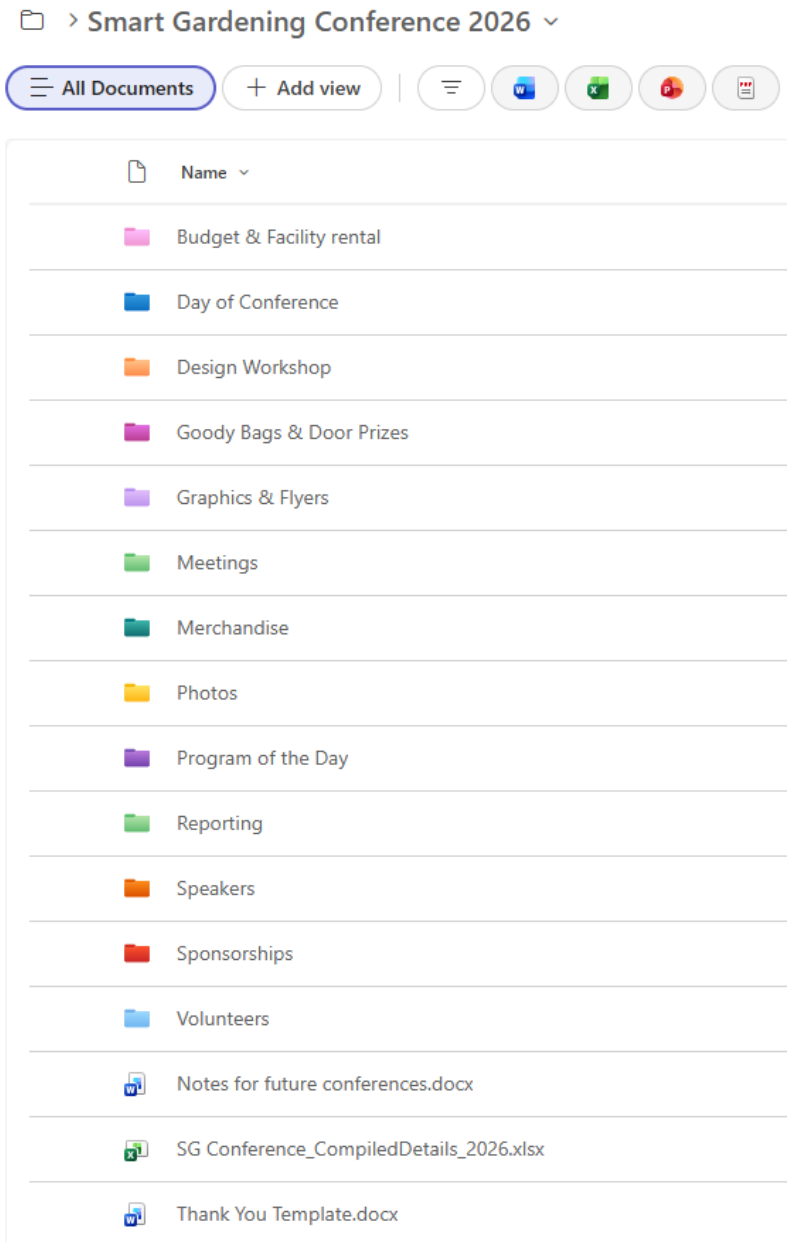
Overview

- Developing planning timelines
- Recruiting and scheduling speakers
- Sponsorships
- Marketing & Promotion
- Pre-Event Logistics
- Managing Registration and Participant Communication
- Coordinating volunteers
- Handling day-of logistics
- Evaluating the participant experience

Developing Planning Timelines

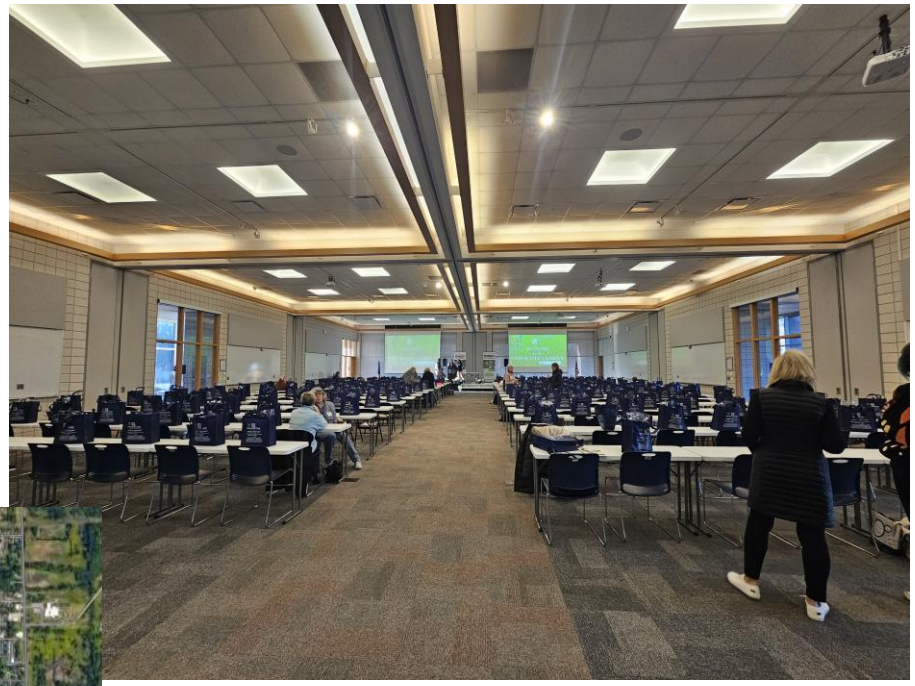
Developing Planning Timelines

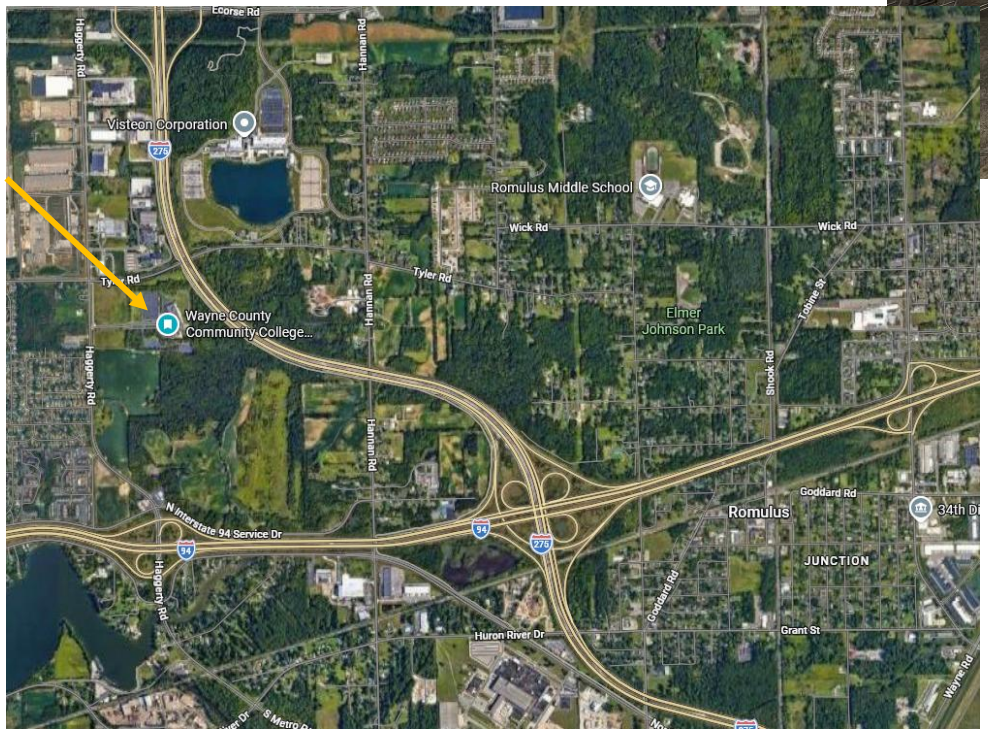
- Contact Events
- Work backwards from day of event
- Choose a date at least 6 months out
- Plan for flex time



Location

- Accessibility
- Parking
- Site fees
- Security
- Availability
- Tech/IT
- Lighting
- Seating
- Catering
- Staff





Committee Communication

- Consistent regular meetings
  - Start meetings 1 year – 8 months out
  - Bi-weekly meetings until 5 months out, then weekly
- Ongoing Planning Notes – all conversations in one location
- Spreadsheets with tasks and important details
- Breaking down tasks & assigning sections to certain people

Category	Person Responsible	Responsibility	Details
Sponsorships	Lindsey	Secure $3000+ in sponsorships to offset vendor loss	Duluth (Deanna), Spring Meadow?, Wojo, Bordine, English Gardens, Telly's
Food	Barbara	Coordinate all food and beverage needs	Lunch, snacks, drinks, breakfast for volunteers, 2 bags Costco coffee, tea, cookies Lindsey has cups/napkins/sugar
Budget	Barbara	Manage conference budget	Create & Submit budget for approval
Events Registration Page	Barbara	Set up and manage registration page	Include volunteers in attendee registration. Merch purchasing through events as well.
Marketing	Lindsey	Promote conference	Facebook ads, EMG promos, etc.
Speakers	Lindsey	Handle speaker logistics	Solicit, contracts, travel, confirmation email week before, provide phone #
Committee Chair/Organizer	Lindsey	Oversee entire conference planning	Schedule/run meetings, contract with WCCCD, printing programs, evaluation
Volunteer Coordination	Melanie	Recruit/train/manage volunteers	Solicit SG volunteers, training, signup genius, email instructions, setup/breakdown, day of problem solving
Goodie Bags	Barbara & Melanie	Assemble attendee/volunteer/speaker bags	Label buckets, see goodie bag page for included items
Door Prizes		Collect 5-10 door prizes	Plants, bee ID, books, gift cards
Merchandise	Cathy @ Lindsey's office	Order and distribute merch	Order to Dave@Proforma by Feb, pickup only, t-shirts (2 colors, M/W), fleece jacket, tumblers, staff w/VEND for $$
Stage Manager	Barslund/Staff/EMG volunteer	Manage stage & presentations	Laptop help, clicker, AV support, cue speakers
Signage/Programs	Melanie	Design & print signage/programs/social media posts	Programs, speaker handouts, Justice for All poster, SG signs, daily schedule, Volunteer schedule, PPT
Supply Run (Sams/Costco)	Melanie	Purchase supplies	Plates, Napkins, Creamer (Sams), Cups, Cookies (Biscoff) , Chocolate, Coffee, Tea, Breakfast foods (for volunteers only)



Recruiting and Scheduling Speakers

Recruiting and Scheduling Speakers

- What is the goal of the conference?
- Is there a theme?
- Types of speakers:
  - Inspirational
  - How-to
  - Photo essays
  - Hands-on? Workshops?
- Breakout sessions



Speaker Logistics

- Booking speakers
- Travel
- Paying speakers

- Pro tip: *MSU speakers are a lot easier to coordinate and less expensive!*



Potential Speaker Name	Credentials	Subject Area	Presentation Title(s)	Rate	Confirmed?	Traveling from:	Hotel needed?	Notes
Ronnie Miller	MSU PhD	Bees						
Kelly Konieczki		Native plants, lepidoptera hosts, how to apply it to your home garden			Yes	Grosse Pointe		
Kevin Williams	MS, Horticulturist at Denver BG	Design with native plants and others?			YES!	Denver	yes	
Hannah Burrack	MSU, head of entomology							
Susan Bryan	Master Rain Garden Cordinator, Washtenaw County Conservation District							
Bridget O'Brien	Director of Garden Juju Collective & Gateway Farm	Regeneration through Permaculture, Rewilding & Community Engagement						
Theresa M. Crimmins		Author of Phenology						
Claudia West		Landscape designer, author						
Thomas Rainer		Landscape architect, author						
Maggie Murawski	landscape designer, BA lansdcape architecture, EMG	design						
Dr. Bob Schutzki – schutzki@msu.edu	recommended by MNLA.	Did a similar course with MNLA						
Matthew Ross – matthew@thebotanicgarde	recommended by MNLA.	Did a similar course with MNLA			YES!	Interlochen	yes	
Olivia Onago	https://livsnativenursery.com/services	native plants, owns a native plant nursery,						
Carolyn Miller	Beal Arboreum and Invasive species coordinator	invasives, pollinators, forestery, arboretum			YES!	East Lansing		
		Yoga/stretching for gardeners?						
		Design charrette?						
		Rain gardens?						
		Citizen science (iNaturalist, eBird)						

Speaker Name	Honorarium	Flight	Ground transportation	Hotel	Meals	Total
Carolyn Miller	200	0	116	0	0	316
Ronnie Miller	200	0	116	150	0	466
Kelly Konieczki	200	0	62	0	0	262
Matthew Ross	1000	0	350	150	100	1600
Kevin Phillip Williams	1500	550	40	300	100	2490
	3100	550	684	600	200	5134

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Sponsorships

Sponsorships

- Strategy
- Sponsorship levels
- Donations
  - Money
  - Goods
- Recognition
- Website?



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Subject line: *Partner with MSU Extension: Become a Sponsor of the Smart Gardening Conference*

Dear [Sponsor Name],

We're thrilled to invite you to join us as a sponsor of the **2026 Smart Gardening Conference** on **March 28, 2026**, at the WCCCD Ted Scott Campus in Belleville.

The **2026 Smart Gardening Conference** offers a unique opportunity to spotlight your brand and connect directly with passionate, community-minded gardeners. Our attendees are deeply engaged in their local communities and recognized as trusted sources of horticultural knowledge. Their recommendations influence neighbors, friends, and the broader public.

This conference is packed with energy as **250 excited gardeners** from across Michigan gather to learn together. Participants will enjoy dynamic speakers selected to inform and inspire. Our speaker lineup includes:

- **Kevin Philip Williams**, author and horticultural manager at Denver Botanic Gardens, will discuss what it means to design gardens that move beyond human-centered thinking and introduce an approach in which wild systems, climate realities, and materials shape the garden's form and function.
- **Kelly Konieczki**, an outdoor educator extraordinaire from Grosse Pointe, will use her home garden, designed specifically for butterfly habitat, to inspire us to do more.
- **Carolyn Miller**, of MSU's Beal Botanical Garden, will talk about harmful species "lurking" in landscapes and offer ideas for replacements.
- **Sharron 'Ronnie' Miller**, PhD candidate in entomology, will present her research on native bee communities in natural, urban, and agricultural landscapes in Michigan.
- **Matthew Ross,** Executive Director of The Botanical Garden at Historic Barnes Park, in Traverse City, will lead an interactive design workshop focusing on native plants.

By partnering with us, you'll gain visibility with an audience that values sustainability, trusts credible resources, and actively influences environmental choices across Michigan communities.

Your support of the 2026 Smart Gardening Conference is an investment that can truly inspire behavior change and brand loyalty.

Thank you for considering this opportunity to grow with us.

Warm regards,
Melanie Fuhrmann, Barbara Gregerson, and Lindsey Kerr
MSU Extension Consumer Horticulture Educators

Sponsorship Opportunities

$1,000+ Platinum Sponsor

- Logo in the program of the day
- Recognition on opening, lunch, and closing slides
- Opportunity to display a company banner in the conference space or lobby
- Verbal mention before sponsored speaker and slide
- Two complimentary tickets, including lunch (a $250 value)
- Businesses or individuals may choose to donate towards a specific aspect of the event (e.g. speaker, coffee service, goody bags)

$500 Diamond Sponsor

- Logo in the program of the day
- Recognition on opening, lunch, and closing slides
- Opportunity to display a company banner in the conference space or lobby
- Verbal mention before sponsored speaker or coffee/tea break
- Single ticket, including lunch (a $125 value)

$300 Gold Sponsor

- Logo in the program of the day
- Recognition on opening, lunch, and closing slides
- Opportunity to display a company banner in the conference space or lobby

$100 Silver Sponsor

- Logo in the program of the day
- Recognition on opening, lunch, and closing slides

In-kind and sponsorships of lunch, coffee breaks, speakers, etc., are also available.

For more information and to discuss supporting the Smart Gardening Conference 2026, please contact:

Lindsey Kerr
Consumer Horticulture Educator, Wayne County
Kerrlind@msu.edu
734-419-9123

Sponsorship Excel Tracker

Contact Note	Company Mgr/Owner	Business Name	E-mail	Primary registrant name	Second registrant name	Balance Due	Paid	Description of Donated Items and Estimation of their Monetary Value	Notes
	Mildred (Mll) Hurley	A Southern Gardener	mil@asoutherngardener.com			$100	Yes		
		Amy's Everlasting							
		Banotai Greenhouses				$100	Yes	Also donating pens and paper	Caitlin was in contact
12/2/2025	Debbie Barson	Barson's Greenhouse						sponsorship or coupon	
12/2/2025	Micheal Palmer	Bass Root Farm	bassrootfarm@gmail.com						
12/2/2025	Alex Winans	Bede's Bloom + Co	alex@bedesblooms.com						
12/2/2025	Rebecca, Owen	Bee Present Honey	rebecca@beepresenthoney.com						
		Bogie Lake Greenhouse	blgreenhou@aol.com						
11/18/2025	Sara Qualls	Bordine's	sara@bordines.com						
12/2/2025	Jeromy Lee	Branch Tree Service Inc	CustomerCare@BranchTree.com						
12/2/2025	Shannon Brines	Brines Farm	brinesfarm@gmail.com						
11/18/2025		Carhartt							Competitor with Duluth
11/18/2025		Coast of Maine	cameronb@coastofmaine.com					Donated 200 bags of soil ($2200 value)	Lindsey met rep at Barson's
12/2/2025	Dan	D&B Landscaping	dbinfo@db-landscaping.com						
12/2/2025	Justin Irelan	Davey Tree	Justin.irelan@davey.com						
12/2/2025	Derrick Jackson	Davey Tree	derrick.jackson@davey.com						
12/2/2025	Amanda Herr	Detroit Tree Artisans	Amandaemayes@Hotmail.com						
12/2/2025	Mitchell Swindell	Detroit Wildflower Nursery	DetroitWildflowerNursery@gmail.com						
11/18/2025	Pat	Drew's Garden	pat.drewsgarden@gmail.com						
LK & DH asked 11/11	Nicole	Duluth Trading Company	nhatzimichailidis@duluthtrading.com						
12/2/2025	Angela	East Michigan Native Plants, LLC	info@EastMichNatives.com						
11/18/2025 and 12/1/25	Olivia Zarndt	English Gardens	Olivia Zarndt <ozarndt@englishgardens.com>			$100	Yes	$100 and including a coupon	Lindsey emailed Olivia re. doing a radio show for W and English Gardens
11/18/2025		Fairlane Gardens	sales@flgardens.com						

Thank you to our Platinum Conference Sponsors!

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FOUR STAR

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Carol Graham

Banotai GREENHOUSE

Thank you to our Silver Conference Sponsors!

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MILAN, MI

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English Gardens

New Leaf Natives

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NURTURE WITH NATURE

FAIR LANE
HOME OF CLARA & HENRY FORD
EST. 1915

a southern gardener

Vandenberg Hort
Wholesale Bulbs ❧ Perennials ❧ Plants ❧ Soils ❧ Supplies



Marketing and Promotion

Marketing and Promotion

- Email signature
- Save-the-date
- DotCMS
- MSUE news articles
- Registration announcements
- County Extension newsletters
- Promotional PowerPoint slides
- Ads
- **Creating anticipation on social media



SMART GARDENING CONFERENCE
March 28, 2026 • MSU Extension

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension

2026 SMART GARDENING CONFERENCE



Saturday, March 28, 2026

Wayne County Community College District, (WCCCD)
Ted Scott Campus
9555 Haggerty Rd., Belleville, MI 48111
Check-in opens: 8 a.m. | Conference begins: 9 a.m.

- **Kevin Williams** – Designing the Big Picture: Gardening for the Future
- **Kelly Konieczki** – Growing Hope in the Garden
- **Ronnie Miller** – Bees & Pollinators
- **Carolyn Miller** – Invasive Species & Native Plants
- **Matthew Ross** – Intentional Garden Design Workshop

Pre-registration required
Scan QR code or visit:

https://events.anr.msu.edu/2026SESGConference/

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.

2026 SMART GARDENING CONFERENCE

March 28th
WCCCD Ted Scott Campus
Belleville, MI

9AM - 4 PM
Check-in opens at 8 AM

Cost: $120

Join Michigan State University Extension for a full day of engaging, research-based gardening education. This conference features expert speakers covering sustainable gardening, pollinators, invasive species, and intentional garden design. Perfect for home gardeners, Extension Master Gardeners, and plant enthusiasts of all levels.

- **Kevin Williams** – Designing the Big Picture: Gardening for the Future
- **Kelly Konieczki** – Growing Hope in the Garden
- **Ronnie Miller** – Bees & Pollinators
- **Carolyn Miller** – Invasive Species & Native Plants
- **Matthew Ross** – Intentional Garden Design Workshop

Registration

Pre-registration required
Scan QR code or visit:

What's Included?

- Full day of educational sessions
- Boxed Lunch
- Continuing Education Hours for Extension Master Gardeners
- Access to Expert Gardeners

https://events.anr.msu.edu/2026SESGConference/

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2026 SMART GARDENING CONFERENCE

March 28, 2026

9:00 AM - 4:00 PM
WCCCD Ted Scott Campus
Belleville, MI

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MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension

SMART GARDENING CONFERENCE

MARCH 28, 2026

- **Kevin Williams** – Designing the Big Picture: Gardening for the Future
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REGISTER NOW!

https://events.anr.msu.edu/2026SESGConference/

2026

SMART GARDENING CONFERENCE



MARCH 28, 2026
9 AM - 4 PM

WCCCD TED SCOTT CAMPUS
BELLEVILLE, MI

SMART GARDENING CONFERENCE

MARCH 28, 2026

WCCCD TED SCOTT CAMPUS
BELLEVILLE, MI



REGISTER NOW!

https://events.anr.msu.edu/2026SESGConference/



SMART GARDENING CONFERENCE

Join Michigan State University Extension for a day of expert-led learning on climate-adapted plants, butterfly habitat gardening, invasive species awareness, native bee ecology, and native-plant design. It's a full day of learning designed to help you grow with confidence and make sustainable choices in your landscape.

March 28, 2026
9 AM - 4 PM

WCCCD Ted Scott Campus
Belleville, MI

REGISTER NOW!
https://events.anr.msu.edu/2026SESGConference/

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2026

SMART GARDENING CONFERENCE



MARCH 28, 2026

WCCCD TED SCOTT CAMPUS
BELLEVILLE, MI

REGISTER NOW!

https://events.anr.msu.edu/2026SESGConference/



Promoting Speakers













Pre-Event Logistics

Keeping Track of Expenses

2026 SGC Purchases

Items	Inventory	Cost	Vendor	Who Purchased:	Notes:	
Name Tag labels - Avery 74459		$ -			Lindsey provided	
Sanders Candy for speakers	20	$ 27.80	Busch's	Barbara	Purchased too many, but added to volunteer snack bowl	$219.82
Dried cherries for speakers	20	$ 102.17	Cherry Republic	Barbara	Purchased at Cherry Republic store	
Pretzels for speakers and vols	60	$ 14.98	Sams	Melanie	Only needed about 20 but it was a case of 60.	
Fruit Crisps for speakers and vols	18	$ 11.48	Sams	Melanie	Worked as as good replacement for trail mix (no nuts), maybe the fruit twists instead.	
Twine for volunteers & speakers	20	$ 63.39	Tractor supply	Barbara	Purchased at Tractor Supply online	
Tea and breakfast bars	10	$ 35.86	Walmart	Barbara	Purchased 7 boxes of tea, some variety packs, green, black, and 3 boxes of nutri-grain cereal bars	$548.53
Gluten Free Granola Bars	36	$ 11.98	Sams	Melanie		$ 89.80
Granola Bars (Belvita)	270	$ 93.51	Costco	Lindsey	9 boxes of 30.	
Chocolate	4	$ 99.96	Costco	Lindsey	4 5lb bags. Used all but 1/2 of a bag.	
Sugar packets		$ -		Barbara	Barbara provided	
Hot cups		$ -	Costco	Lindsey	Lindsey provided	
Creamer	360	$ 25.16	Sams	Melanie	Bought 4 cases of 180, didn't open 2 - returned them.	
Coffee	3	$ 37.98	Costco	Lindsey	Bought 3 bags, only needed 1.	
Stir sticks		$ -		Barbara	Barbara provided	
Napkins		$ -			Lindsey provided	
Cookies	600	$ 73.10	Amazon	Lindsey		
Plates		$ -			Lindsey provided	
Sparkling Water	216	$ 106.92	Sams	Melanie	Sams (9 cases of 24) $9.48/case + 2.40/case bottle deposit	
Sparkling Water	201	$ 87.43	Costco	Lindsey	3 KS cases of 35 (11.99/case + 3.5 deposit), 4 LaCroix cases of 24 (7.59/case +2.4 deposit)	
Mandarin Bag & oat/coconut creamers		$ 12.96	Trader Joes	Melanie	3 oat milk/coconut creamer small cartons for Vegan individuals	
Ice	3	$ 10.98	Meijer	Lindsey	3 bags of ice for drinks	
Chips for volunteeers	30	$ 13.49	Costco	Lindsey		
Bags for plants	1000	$ 32.65	Amazon	Lindsey		
Facebook ads	2	$ 119.35	Meta	Lindsey		
Bagels/cream cheese for volunteers	18/2	$ 29.00	Detroit Bagel Factory	Cathy	18 bagels, 2 cream cheese	
		$1,010.15				

2026 SGC Large Purchases

Items	Inventory	Cost	Vendor	Who Purchased:	Notes:
Programs	280	$ 430.78	Advance Print & Graphics	Melanie	Melanie printed all the other sheets at work.
Lunches		$4,702.14	2 unique catering	Barbara	See debrief info
Merchandise		$1,937.00	Performa		Items looked nice, A little expensive. Had 4 shirts with red ink on them, had to get them replaced. Sent shirts back, had to pay for that shipping and we were never issued an apology or awknowledgement of the issue.
WCCCD Fee		$ 850.00			
		$7,919.92			
Not paid for yet.	FINAL TOTAL	$8,930.07			

Income and Expense Detail Worksheet

Program Name: 2026 SMART GARDENING CONFERENCE SOUTHEAST
Program Date: March 28, 2026
Account Number: DN100031 Sub. Acct. 18772 Taxable

Program Income:

	Description	#	$	Projected Budget	Actual Amount	Variance
Registration Fees	Participants	266	$ 120.00	$31,920.00	$31,920.00	$0.00
Other Income	Registrant Scholarships	5	$ (60.00)	-$300.00	-$300.00	$0.00
Other Income	Staff & Volunteers & Speakers	25	$ (120.00)	-$3,000.00	-$3,000.00	$0.00
Other Income	Sponsors			$1,700.00	$1,700.00	$0.00
Other Income	Merchandise			$2,005.00	$2,005.00	$0.00
Other Income	Refunds			-$60.00	-$60.00	$0.00
Other Income						$0.00
Total Income				$32,265.00	$32,265.00	$0.00
Sales Tax		6%	$5,560.29	$333.62	$333.62	$0.00
Total Income Less Sales Tax				$31,931.38	$31,931.38	$0.00
5% Administrative Fee				$1,613.25	$1,613.25	$0.00
Total Income Less Administrative Fee				$30,318.13	$30,318.13	$0.00

Program Expenses:

	Description	hrs.	rate	Projected Budget	Actual Amount	Variance
Salary	DB		20			$0.00
Fringes	FICA & Medicare					$0.00
Refreshments and supplies	$7 x 300 Registrants/Staff/Volunteer			$548.53	$548.53	$0.00
Lunches	$18.5 x 25/Speakers/Staff/Volunteers			$441.93	$441.93	$0.00
Lunches	$18.5 x 250 Registrants			$4,260.21	$4,260.21	$0.00
Thank you gifts-volunteers, speakers	Gift - sales tax paid at time of purchase			$219.82	$219.82	$0.00
Breakfast for volunteers at set-up	$10 x 20 volunteers/staff			$89.80	$89.80	$0.00
Advertising/Promotions:				$119.35	$119.35	$0.00
	Facebook ads - Wash, Osk, Liv, Wayne		$ 119.35	$119.35	$119.35	
Supplies/Materials:				$32.65	$32.65	$0.00
Details:	Bags for plants		$ 32.65	$32.65	$32.65	
Printing				$430.78	$430.78	$0.00
Details:	Handouts printing (in 2024 $360)		$ -	$430.78	$430.78	
	Programs instead of handouts ($527.84-646.76)		$ 430.78			
Merchandise				$1,937.00	$1,937.00	$0.00
Details:				$1,937.00	$1,937.00	
						$0.00
						$0.00
Audio/Visual Equipment						$0.00
Facility Fee	WCCCD			$850.00	$850.00	$0.00
Non-Extension Speaker Fees				$5,248.53	$5,248.53	$0.00
Details:	Speaker & travel - Ronnie Miller		$ 200.00		$200.00	
	Speaker & travel - Carolyn Miller		$ 200.00		$200.00	
	Speaker & travel - Kelly Konieczki		$ 300.00		$300.00	
	Speaker & travel - Matthew Ross		$ 1,688.00		$1,688.00	
	Speaker & travel - Kevin Phillip Williams		$ 2,660.53		$2,660.53	
	Barslund Judd - A/V		$ 200.00		$200.00	
Contractual Services				$0.00	$0.00	$0.00
Details:						
						$0.00
Other: (specify)	Transfer to salaries - DN100033 Fuhrm			$5,379.84	$5,379.84	$0.00
	Transfer to salaries - DN100033 KERR			$5,379.85	$5,379.85	$0.00
	Transfer to salaries - DN100033 GREGE			$5,379.84	$5,379.84	$0.00
Total Expenses				$30,318.13	$30,318.13	$0.00

Summary:

Total Income Less Sales Tax & Administrative Fee	$30,318.13	$30,318.13	$0.00
Total Expenses	$30,318.13	$30,318.13	$0.00
Net Income	$0.00	$0.00	

10/7/2026

Pre-Event Logistics

- Building Layout
- Contact Person
- Technology Needs & Confirmation
- Schedule
- Accommodation Needs
- Early Setup
- Designate the “Behind the Scenes” Educator

Conference Schedule

8:00 AM	Registration Opens *Clothing Pick-Up Available*
9:00 AM	Welcome!
9:15 AM	Keynote Speaker - Kevin Philip Williams Designing Post-Human Gardens
10:15 AM	Break
10:25 AM	Kelly Konieczki Growing Hope in the Garden
11:25 AM	Ronnie Miller Connecting Pollinators, Place and People
12:25 PM	Lunch *Clothing Pick-Up Available* *Door Prizes will be Awarded*
1:30 PM	Carolyn Miller Out with the Bad, In with the Good: Invasive Species
2:30 PM	Break
2:40 PM	Matthew Ross Intentional Garden Design Workshop
4:00 PM	Final Comments Thank you for coming!

If you purchased Merchandise, please pick it up prior to leaving the conference!

Food

- Make sure your caterer can accommodate all of the requested dietary restrictions
- Boxed Lunch or Buffet?
- Dietary Restrictions
  - Label Names
  - Anyone with a Dietary Restriction should get food first!
- Coffee/Tea & Snacks





Goody Bags

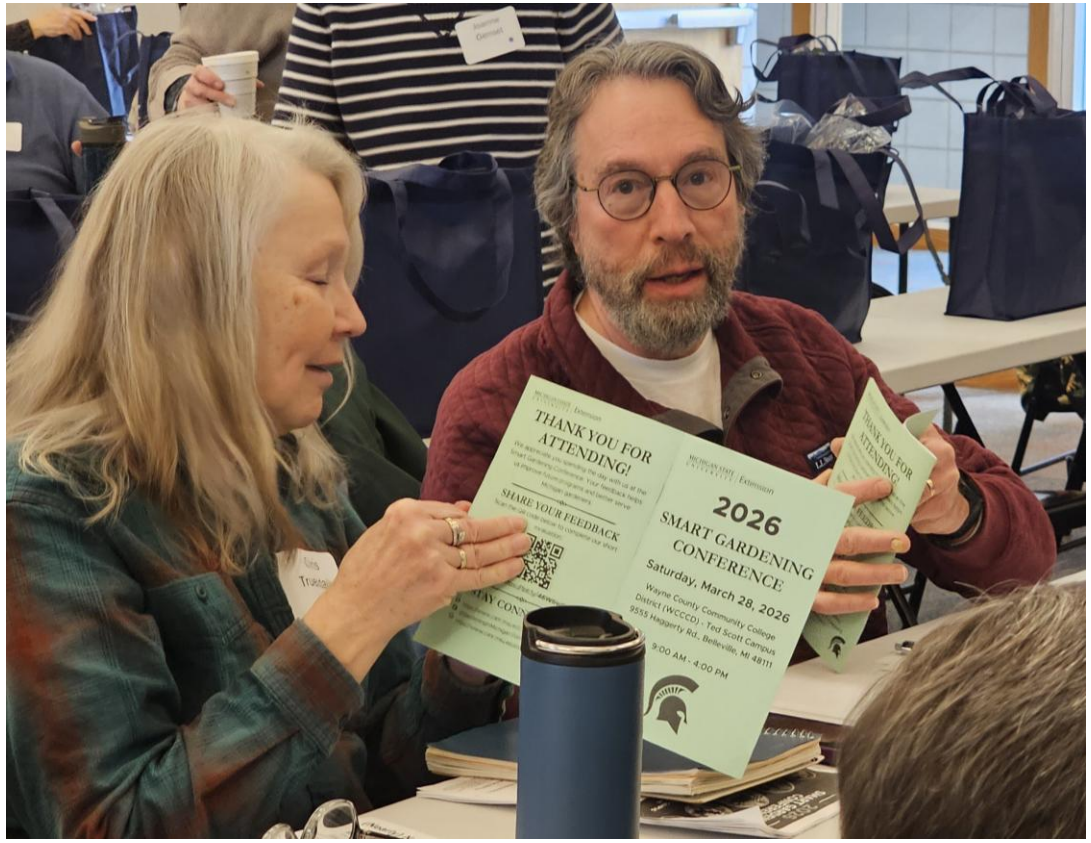
- Handouts
- Evaluation
- Snacks
- Promotional Items
- Event Program
- Evaluation Sheet
- Sponsored Items





Event Program

- Program Title
- Welcome
- Schedule
- Speaker Biographies
- Presentation Titles & Descriptions
- Sponsors
- Note page(s)
- Thank you
- Evaluation Information & Social Media Links



MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension

2026

SMART GARDENING CONFERENCE

Saturday, March 28, 2026

Wayne County Community College District (WCCCD) - Ted Scott Campus
9555 Haggerty Rd., Belleville, MI 48111

9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Welcome!

Welcome to the 2026 Smart Gardening Conference!

We are thrilled to have you join us for a full day of learning, inspiration, and connection. Today's sessions feature expert speakers who will share research-based practices, creative ideas, and practical strategies you can use in your own garden.

Whether you are a seasoned gardener or just getting started, we hope you leave feeling empowered and excited to grow smarter.

Thank you for being part of this community!

Sincerely,
Melanie Fuhrmann, Barbara Gregerson, and Lindsey Kerr
MSU Extension Consumer Horticulture Educators

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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.

Conference Schedule

8:00 AM	Registration Opens *Clothing Pick-Up Available*
9:00 AM	Welcome!
9:15 AM	**Keynote Speaker - Kevin Philip Williams** Designing Post-Human Gardens
10:15 AM	Break
10:25 AM	**Kelly Konieczki** Growing Hope in the Garden
11:25 AM	**Ronnie Miller** Connecting Pollinators, Place and People
12:25 PM	Lunch *Clothing Pick-Up Available* *Door Prizes will be Awarded*
1:30 PM	**Carolyn Miller** Out with the Bad, In with the Good: Invasive Species
2:30 PM	Break
2:40 PM	**Matthew Ross** Intentional Garden Design Workshop
4:00 PM	Final Comments Thank you for coming!

If you purchased Merchandise, please pick it up prior to leaving the conference!

Speaker Biographies

Kevin Philip Williams
Denver Botanic Gardens
Kevin is an award-winning designer and educator whose work focuses on climate-adaptive landscapes and ecological design. His keynote will explore the future of gardening and our evolving role as stewards of the land.

Kelly Konieczki
Detroit Butterfly Nursery
Kelly is passionate about pollinator conservation and community gardening. She brings hands-on experience creating habitats that support biodiversity.

Ronnie Miller
PhD Candidate, MSU Entomology
Ronnie's research centers on bees and pollinator health. She connects science with real-world gardening practices.

Carolyn Miller
Beal Botanical Garden & Campus Arboretum
Carolyn specializes in invasive species management and native plant restoration.

Matthew Ross
The Botanic Garden at Historic Barns Park
Matthew is a landscape designer who teaches gardeners how to plan cohesive, intentional outdoor spaces.

Featured Presentations

Designing Post-Human Gardens: Wild Systems, Material Agency, and the Gardener's New Role – Kevin Philip Williams
Explore how gardens can be shaped by climate, wild systems, and the agency of plants and materials—not just human intention. Kevin Williams shares examples from Denver projects, offering ways to design adaptable, ecologically grounded landscapes that tell meaningful stories.

Growing Hope in the Garden – Kelly Konieczki
Outdoor educator "Momcat" Kelly Konieczki discusses how habitat gardening, curiosity, and community science inspire healthier, more pollinator-friendly landscapes. Learn how observation and engagement can spark joy and motivate environmental action.

Connecting Pollinators, Place, and People – Ronnie Miller
PhD candidate Ronnie Miller explores relationships between bumble bees, landscapes, and human communities. Learn how pollinator health and community engagement are interconnected—and what we can do to support both.

Out with the Bad, In with the Good: Removing Invasive Species and Replanting with Native Plants – Carolyn Miller
Discover how to identify invasive plants in your yard, why they're harmful, and effective methods for removal. Carolyn Miller provides practical guidance on replacing problem species with beneficial native plants.

Intentional Garden Design Workshop – Matthew Ross
Avoid impulse planting by developing a clear design strategy. Matthew Ross demonstrates how to create cohesive residential gardens featuring native and ecologically sensitive plants, using audience input in a live design session.

Thank You to Our Sponsors!

We appreciate the generous support of our community partners who make this event possible.

GOLD SPONSORS:

Classy Glass Carol Graham

Banotai Greenhouse

SILVER SPONSORS:

Vandenberg Hort Co
Wholesale Bulbs • Perennials • Plants • Soils • Supplies

Purple Love Gardening

English Gardens

New Leaf Natives
Restoring ecological balance to the Eastern and Midwestern regions of North America.

Liv's Native Nursery
EST. 2022
MILAN, MI

Fair Lane
Home of Clara & Henry Ford
EST. 1915

Carlsons' Greenhouse

a southern gardener

Thank You to Our Sponsors!

We appreciate the generous support of our community partners who make this event possible.

PLATINUM SPONSOR:

Coast of Maine

DIAMOND SPONSORS:

PW Proven Winners
The Brand Gardeners Trust

SavaTree
We Care For What You Love

Metropolitan Detroit Flower Growers Association

Grass Groundcovers Carex Perennials
Twixwood Nursery

PW Proven Winners

Four Star

Notes

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THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING!

We appreciate you spending the day with us at the Smart Gardening Conference. Your feedback helps us improve future programs and better serve Michigan gardeners.

SHARE YOUR FEEDBACK

Scan the QR code below to complete our short evaluation.

Or visit: https://bit.ly/46W6wQC

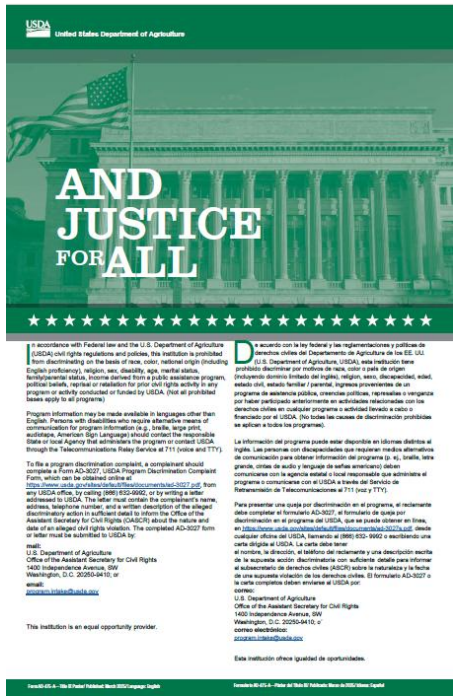
STAY CONNECTED

https://www.canr.msu.edu/home_gardening/
@GardeningInMichigan (Facebook & Instagram)
https://www.canr.msu.edu/outreach/

Signage

- Justice for All
- MSU Extension Branding
- Directional Signage









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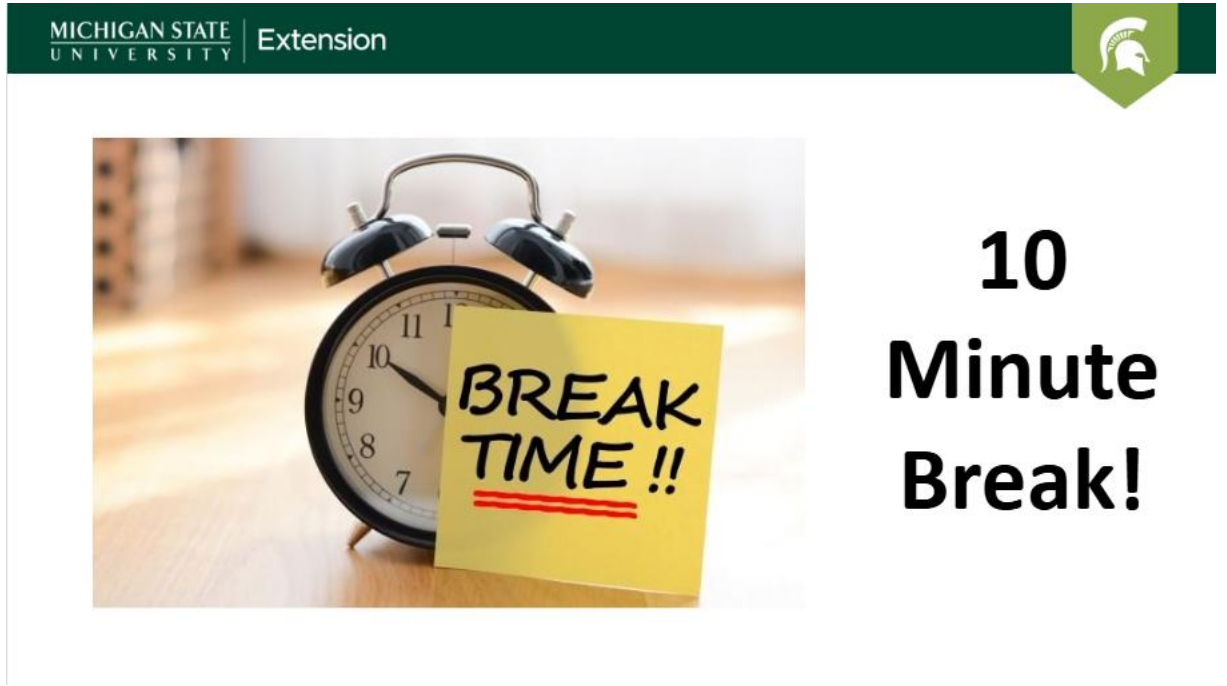
Managing Registration and Participant Communication

Managing Registration

- Set registration limits per building/room guidelines
  - Registration cap needs to include volunteers, staff, speakers.
- Lunch information connected to Registration
- **Weekly** checks for unpaid registrations
- Accommodation Needs
- Media Release

Participant Communication

- Registration E-receipt
- Reminder Email via Events Management System
- Clear communication & Reminders throughout the event



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Coordinating Volunteers

Coordinating Volunteers

- Assign specific tasks/roles
- Volunteer Meeting Pre-Event
- Thank them!





2026 SG Conference volunteers — **Zoom meeting on** — **TBD - in person goody bag stuffing needs to be sometime between xxx**

First	Last	Email	Phone	Task	Prep Day	Saturday	Register	Notes
Michael	Bak	michaelbak89@yahoo.com				X	X	
Monica	Chrzaszcz	mchrzaszcz@gmail.com			X	X	Paid	requested refund of $120 on 3.2.26
Renae	Daniels	rlwillia1024@gmail.com			X	X	X	
Barb	Johnson	bj@johnsoncreations.com			X	X	X	
Patrick	Johnson	gageman@johnsoncreations.com			X	X	X	
Shannon	Kubanez	shannonwestphal@hotmail.com				X	X	
Katherine (Katie)	Nicholas	katie.nicholas77@gmail.com				X	Paid	requested refund
Greg	Nowak	letsgoblue@comcast.net				X	Paid	requested refund

Assignments:

Registration Table	Deanna (Captain)	Pat & Barb Johnson
Merchandise	Cathy Noble	Monica Chrzaszcz
Coffee, Tea & Lunch Monitors	Michael Bak (Lead)	Renae Daniels & Sheila Konen
Speaker-Stage Manager	Barslund (AV Tech)	Shannon Kubanez
General Runners/Support	Katie Nicholas (photography)	Greg Nowak
Smart Gardening	Mary Yelland	Sherry Riedel

Staff Coming:

Deanna Hedlund
Barslund Judd
Sherry Riedel
Cathy Noble
Sheila Konen
Caitlin Splawski (special guest)
Mary Yelland

Staff running event:

Lindsey Kerr
Melanie Fuhrmann
Barbara Gregerson

Post signage, mark reserved seating, AV prep, door prize assembly, hand out bags and name tags



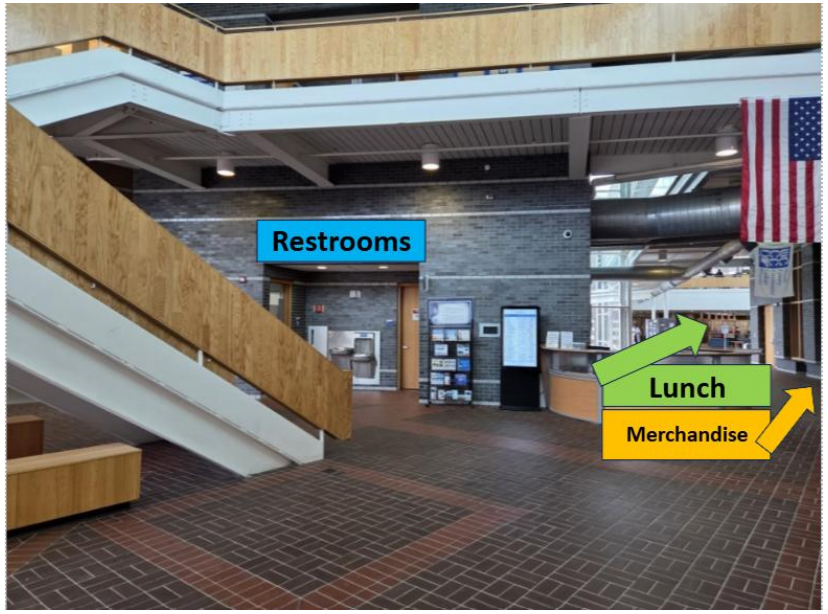
SGC 2026 Volunteer Orientation

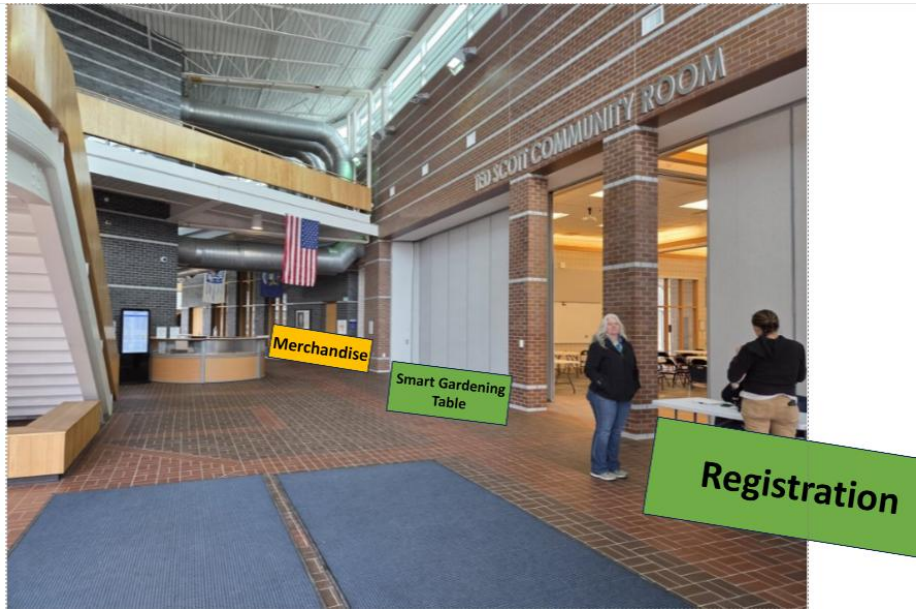
3/23/2026

Check-in/Registration table

- Captain – Deanna Hedlund (Staff)
- Volunteers – Pat and Barb Johnson
- Set up is 7-8am. Actual registration 8-9 am.
- We need to get 260 people registered in an hour!
- At table:
  - Registration lists of names to check off
  - Name tags
  - bags of soil
- Registration will be split into 3 lines/sections based on the last name of the registrants
- Let them know where to go if they purchased Merchandise during their registration.
- Late registrants- **We are not allowing anyone to register day of**
- Bathrooms in hallway across from registration
- 2 people will have reserved seating in the middle of the room due to hearing assistance. We will have a note with the names at registration.







Smart Gardening Conference Instructions

Registration Table

Captain – Deanna Hedlund (Staff)

Volunteers – Pat and Barb Johnson

Set up is 7-8am. **Actual registration 8am - 9 am. No registration prior to 8am**.

We need to get 260 people registered in an hour!

At table:

- Registration lists of names to check off
- Name tags
  - Blue dot = No picture taken
  - Lavender dot = Dietary Restriction Lunch
- Bags of soil (first 150 people to check-in receive a bag)

Registration will be split into 3 lines/sections based on the last name of the registrants, there will be signs to let them know which line to go to.

Let them know where to go if they purchased Merchandise during their registration!! (Down the hallway)

Late registrants- We are not allowing anyone to register day of

A few of our **MSU Supervisors** will be in attendance. Some have registered and some will be popping in.

- Ron Bates
- Richard Wooten
- Mary Bohling

Bathrooms are in the hallway across from registration

2 people will have reserved seating in the middle of the room due to hearing assistance. The seats are marked "reserved"

- Lisa Perschke
- Katie Weller

Smart Gardening Conference Instructions

Coffee, Tea, Lunch

Michael Bak - Captain

Renae Daniels & Sheila Konen

Two breaks, 10:15 AM and 2:30 PM

Coffee & Tea will be in the hallway to the left of the conference room

Lunch

12:25pm – 1:25pm

Cater will be delivering between **11-11:30 am.** They may need help putting them on the correct tables or unloading in general.

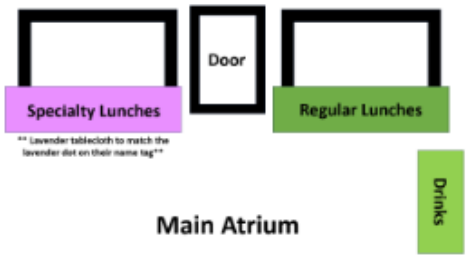
Specifications:

- Lavender Tables = Dietary Restrictions
- Green tables = Regular lunches
- The boxes will have the name of sandwich type and dietary restrictions on them.
- There will also be signs with the dietary restrictions to be placed in front of the boxes.
- The driver will separate all the boxed lunches by type of sandwich and dietary restriction, so it will be easy for your team members to select the correct lunch option.

Everyone will have a lunch box

Need to make sure that people with dietary restriction get their designated lunches. We will provide a list of names.

Name tags will be flagged with a lavender dot if they have any dietary restrictions



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Handling Day-Of Logistics

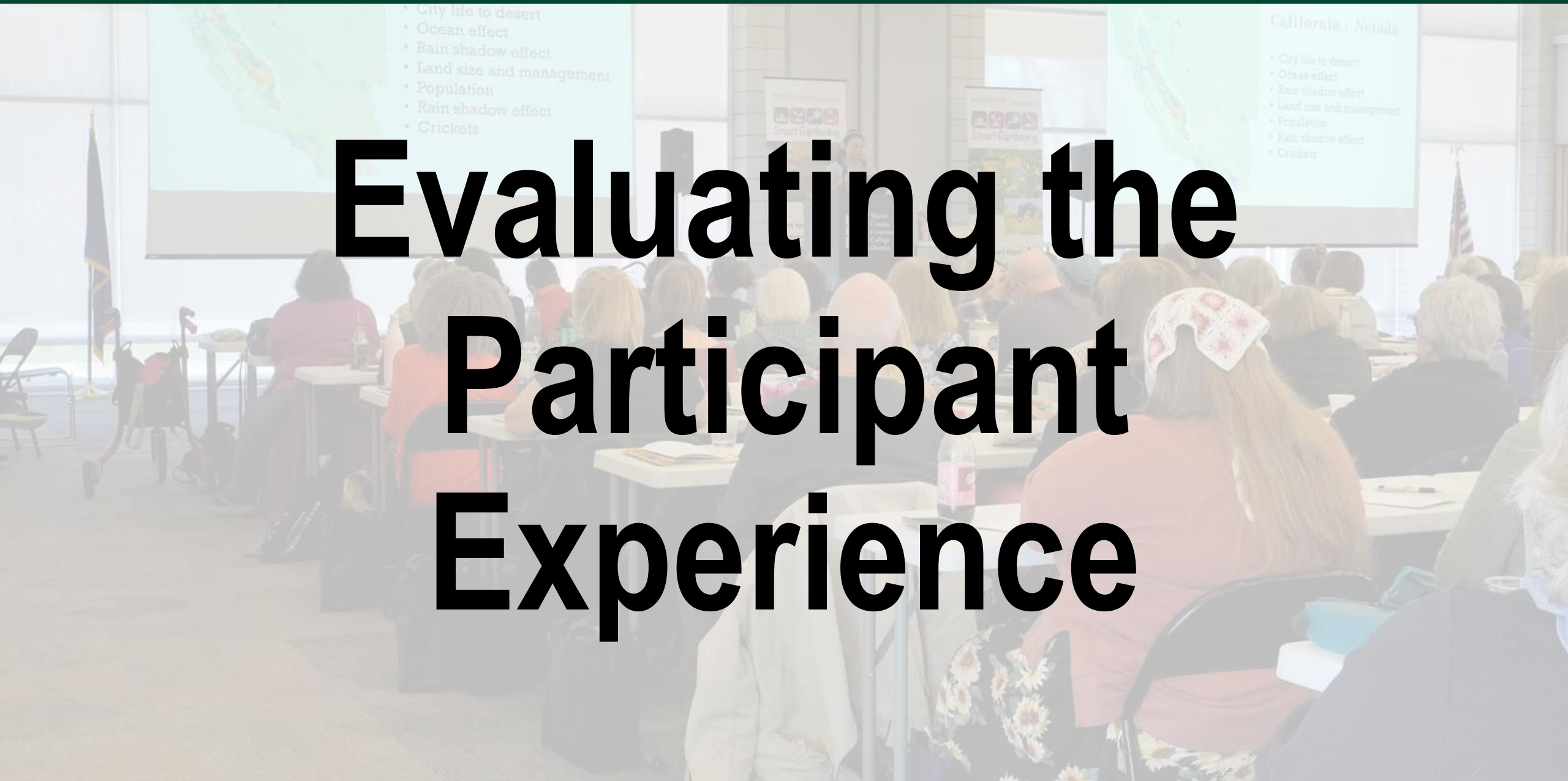
Handling Day-of Logistics

- Assigning Tasks to Individuals
- Gate Crashers
- Create a Program Script
- Keep to the timeline!
- Photographer

5

Minutes

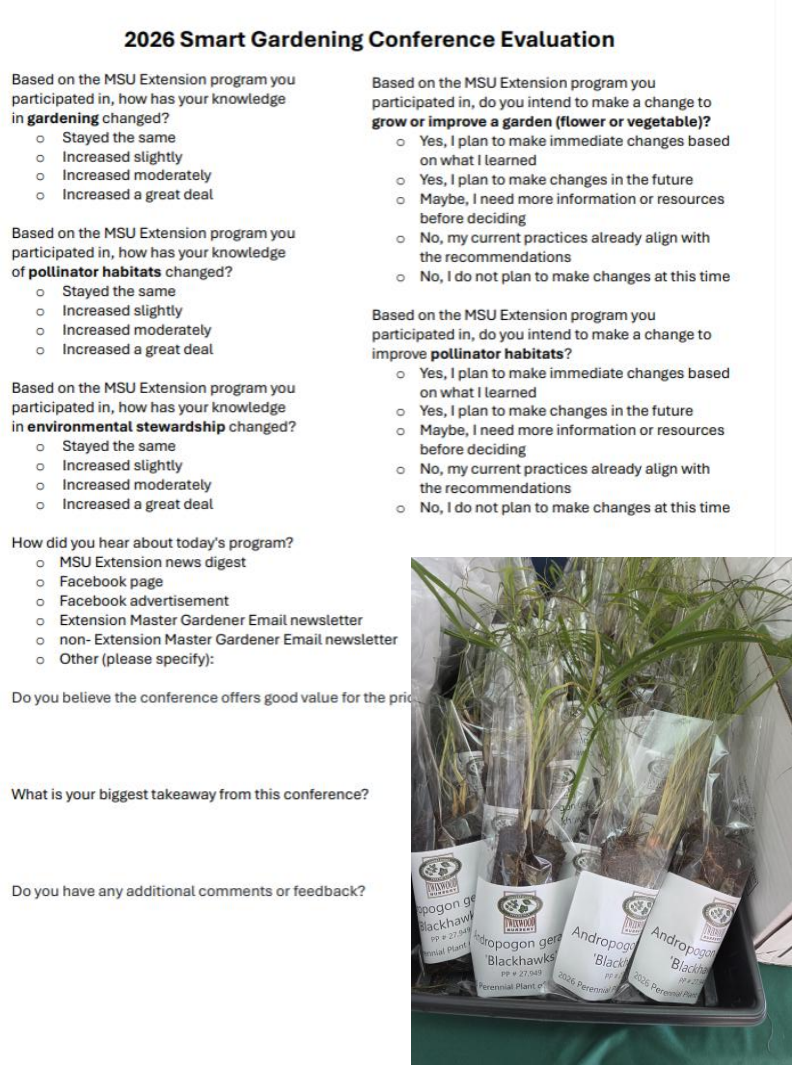




Evaluating the Participant Experience

Evaluating the Participant Experience

- How are you going to use the information from the evaluation?
  - Why are you doing an evaluation?
- Paper evaluation within goody bag
  - Turn your evaluation in to receive a free plant!



2026 Smart Gardening Conference Evaluation

Based on the MSU Extension program you participated in, how has your knowledge in **gardening** changed?
- Stayed the same
- Increased slightly
- Increased moderately
- Increased a great deal

Based on the MSU Extension program you participated in, how has your knowledge of **pollinator habitats** changed?
- Stayed the same
- Increased slightly
- Increased moderately
- Increased a great deal

Based on the MSU Extension program you participated in, how has your knowledge in **environmental stewardship** changed?
- Stayed the same
- Increased slightly
- Increased moderately
- Increased a great deal

How did you hear about today's program?
- MSU Extension news digest
- Facebook page
- Facebook advertisement
- Extension Master Gardener Email newsletter
- non- Extension Master Gardener Email newsletter
- Other (please specify):

Do you believe the conference offers good value for the pric

What is your biggest takeaway from this conference?

Do you have any additional comments or feedback?

Based on the MSU Extension program you participated in, do you intend to make a change to **grow or improve a garden (flower or vegetable)?**
- Yes, I plan to make immediate changes based on what I learned
- Yes, I plan to make changes in the future
- Maybe, I need more information or resources before deciding
- No, my current practices already align with the recommendations
- No, I do not plan to make changes at this time

Based on the MSU Extension program you participated in, do you intend to make a change to improve **pollinator habitats**?
- Yes, I plan to make immediate changes based on what I learned
- Yes, I plan to make changes in the future
- Maybe, I need more information or resources before deciding
- No, my current practices already align with the recommendations
- No, I do not plan to make changes at this time

Post – Evaluation (4.5 Months Later)

Smart Gardening Conference Follow-Up Survey

Thank you for attending the 2026 Smart Gardening Conference. We are interested in learning how the conference has influenced your gardening practices, landscape decisions, and environmental stewardship efforts over the past few months.

1. Since attending the Smart Gardening Conference, have you made any changes to your gardening practices?

- Yes
- No
- Not yet, but I plan to

2. Which of the following changes have you made as a result of attending the conference? (Select all that apply.)

- Added native plants
- Removed invasive plants
- Added plants for pollinators
- Created or improved pollinator habitat
- Changed how I design or plan garden spaces
- Modified gardening practices to be more environmentally friendly
- Shared information with others
- Other: _____
- No changes made

3. Since attending the conference, how much of the information have you applied in your garden or landscape?

- None
- A little
- Some
- Quite a bit
- A great deal

4. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement:
The conference changed the way I think about gardening and my landscape's role in supporting pollinators, wildlife, and the environment.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

5. Which conference topic has had the greatest influence on you?

- Native plants
- Pollinators
- Invasive species management
- Environmental stewardship
- Garden design
- Community science
- Other: _____

6. Have you shared information or ideas from the conference with others?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please describe:
Open-ended response

7. Looking back, how valuable has the Smart Gardening Conference been in influencing your gardening practices?

- Not valuable
- Slightly valuable
- Moderately valuable
- Very valuable
- Extremely valuable

8. The conference concluded with the Intentional Garden Design Workshop. Since attending, has that session influenced how you plan, design, or evaluate your garden?

- Yes, significantly
- Yes, somewhat
- Very little
- Not at all
- I did not attend the session

9. What is one action you have taken, or plan to take, as a result of attending the conference?
Open-ended response

10. Please share a specific example of how the conference influenced your garden, landscape, or gardening decisions.
Open-ended response

Notes for Future Conferences

- What went well?
- What can be improved?
- Keep it all in Teams



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AJFA Poster Updated: 03/2025
MSU Extension Statements Updated: 10/2026

