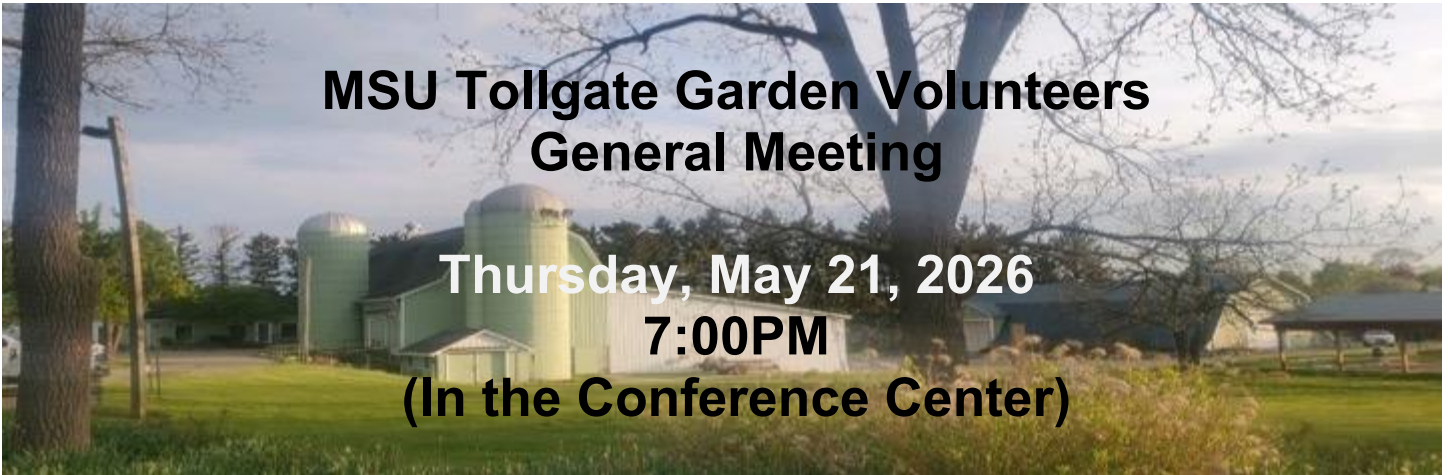


The Tollgate Farm News

VOLUME 32

ISSUE 5

MAY 2026



Indigenous Advisory Board • Restoring Native Voice: Two Gardens at UM-D

Join Tollgate gardeners and supporters in the conference center at 7 PM on Thursday, May 21, when History Professor Martin Hershock, Ph.D., will talk about two new gardens—medicinal and Three Sisters—on The University of Michigan-Dearborn campus.

Dr. Hershock will explain how the U of M Dearborn team began restoring the Native voice at UM-Dearborn and the Environmental Interpretive Center by collaborating with local Indigenous communities. This work honors Native contributions and uplifts Indigenous perspectives in environmental stewardship. The presentation will focus on the Three Sisters and Medicinal plant gardens.

For more information and credit to specific contributors, please check the following links:

[From Acorn to Oak: The Indigenous Advisor Board for restoring Native Voices](#)

[Connecting yesterday, today, and tomorrow with sweetgrass](#)

[Dr Martin Hershock biography](#)

TOLLGATE GARDEN VOLUNTEER IMPORTANT DATES AND EVENTS 2026					
MAY	MEETINGS		JUNE	MEETINGS	
5	TGAC Meeting – Zoom	7:00 pm	2	TGAC Meeting – Zoom	7:00 pm
21	TGV General Meeting – IN PERSON	7:00 pm	18	TGV General Meeting – in person	7:00 pm
MAY	WORKDAY ACTIVITIES		JUNE	WORKDAY ACTIVITIES	
2	Entrance/Nursery-plant division	9:00 am	6	SPRING PLANT SALE	9:00 am – 2:00pm
9	Farmhouse/Demo	9:00 am	13	Rose/Entrance	9:00 am
16	Shade/Hosta	9:00 am	20	Office/Heritage/Rain	9:00 am
23	MEMORIAL WEEKEND General garden workday	9:00 am	27	Pond/12 Mile	9:00 am
30	Rockledge/planting/12 Mile	9:00 am			

The Tollgate Farm News

FARM UPDATE FROM THE RESIDENT FARMER - *Destiny Pearson*

The past month on the farm has been busy and exciting, and April ended with a record-breaking



Hanami attendance! Even with the cold weather, we had a huge turnout, with cars lined up and parking stretching all the way down the lane toward the animal barn. It was great to see so many people willing to bundle up and come out to enjoy the farm and celebrate spring!

We also welcomed back Rolls Royce Aviation for their second-year volunteering on site, and once again, they did an amazing job. Their team jumped right in and helped with mulching throughout the property, making a big impact in the rose garden, the demonstration garden, and around the hostas. Be sure to share with anyone you know that we are an awesome site for corporate work groups if they are

searching for a volunteer site!

Looking ahead, we're excited to have new interns joining us for the summer. One of our interns will also be helping out on some Saturdays during workdays, which will be a big help to relieve Monique and I a bit until we have a new operations manager.

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 Destiny Pearson

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT - *Renee Cottrell*

**“The most lasting and pure gladness comes to me from my garden”-
Lillie Langtry, British Socialite, actress, producer 1853-1929**

Thank you to the Maple Syrup Team, staff and volunteers for making the Pancake Brunch event special! This annual celebration of a successful maple syrup harvest and the beginning of the gardening season is a volunteer favorite. What a great way to meet and greet some of our newest volunteers.

The Tollgate Farm News

As the more consistent temperatures of May develop the gardens are greening up and showing off their early blooms! Garden Leaders and active volunteers are working hard to keep up with the needs this spring with wet weather delaying some activities so as not to create adverse soil conditions of compaction.

[What to do about compacted soil](#)

If you cannot make the usual Saturday group session, feel free to contact me for weekday individual assignments. Our focus this month is on the preparations for the Spring Plant Sale, our main fundraising event for the gardens. Please see Nursery notes on the plant donations wanted and the sign-up link to assist with the sale.

Healthy and unique plant additions as well as many helping hands-on sale day make for a successful sale event. **SAVE THE DATE: Saturday, June 6th Spring Plant Sale from 9 am to 2 pm.**



Photo by Renee Cottrell

Thank you all for the support you give for the gardens here at Tollgate. You make this a special place.

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

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



Photo by Linda Piasecki

The Tollgate Farm News

NURSERY NOTES



A Happy May! We are still looking for those warming temps and rainy days to even out a bit for the upcoming month. As soon as the well pumps are turned on there will be convenient irrigation for all the divisions potted thus far. The Nursery Team is working hard potting up plant donations with a successful division day earlier this month. The Nursery is accepting donations up until Saturday May 23rd after which the Nursery will be closed for further donations in order to get a final inventory and perform other preparations for the June 6th Plant Sale. NOW is the time to donate your Michigan hardy perennials, especially some of your more unique specimens to spice up our sale selections!

The sign up to help work the plant sale was recently sent out via email and link repeated below, so please consider signing up for a slot to help make this Spring Plant Sale event successful. This is our primary fund-raising event for the gardens, and many volunteers are needed in various duties. Thank you in advance for your plant donations and time commitments for Tollgate Gardens.

Renee

[VOLUNTEER PLANT SALE SIGN UP](#)

[2026 PLANT SALE FLYER](#)

[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.



Photo by Linda Piasecki

The Tollgate Farm News

PAR Report - Kathryn Fitzpatrick



Hot peppers, tomatillos, onions, kale, collards, and summer squash, oh my! It is wonderful to step into the greenhouse and see all the beautiful sprouts. We have also planted cabbage and kohlrabi, with only cucumbers left to start. One fun but arduous task we started is making carrot seed tape. This will allow us to “plant” the tape and minimize any thinning that is usually necessary.

This month, we will be planting the squash transplants around the trellis – we are trying a new process of trellising the squash with a couple of smaller varieties – Safari and Eight Ball. The bunching onions will be companion planted at the base of the squash plants. In addition, we will be planting the carrot beds in the PAR Garden, and the yellow onions and beans in the CSA field.

It is tick season and they are present at the farm, so it is important to follow the guidelines for prevention and addressing any bites, should they occur. The following link helps with key points: [Preventing Tick Bites | Ticks | CDC](#)

If you are interested and available, please check out the 2026 MSU Tollgate Farm [PAR Garden & CSA Greenhouse Schedule SignUpGenius](#). 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,

Kathryn Fitzpatrick

Photo by Linda Piasecki

AGL Information – Marilyn Alimpich

Hello AGLs,

I just returned from Paris and Normandy, France, where I was soaking up the beauty of spring! There were tall, full-bloomed roses, lots of familiar perennials in full bloom, and, of course, those pesky weeds trying to take over the public garden beds. What really caught my eye is how early these gardens are blooming, even above the 45th parallel (like Traverse City and Alpena). The Atlantic Ocean winds really make a difference in their climate.

The Tollgate Farm News

As for Tollgate, spring is also waking up our plants. The new plant labels are all set to be put together with supplies at the Volunteer Center. Once we get a team working on them (maybe after lunch on Saturday, soon), they'll be ready for your gardens.

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

BERGENIA

Bergenia cordifolia is a low maintenance, herbaceous perennial, sometimes called by the common name of "pig squeak". This adaptable zone 3-8 plant prefers moist, well-drained soils and part shade though does tolerate some drought and full shade. It has large evergreen leaves which are slow spreading and form clumps of foliage up to 12 inches tall and often turn burgundy in the fall/winter that extends its seasonal interest. Winter damaged leaves should be removed in early spring. The pink flowers form on panicles atop stiff leafless stalks approximately 18 inches tall and bloom between March to early May. The spent flowers and stalks should be removed when done blooming. An added benefit is Bergenia can be considered deer resistant as deer do not like their leathery leaves.



Bergenia can be found throughout Tollgate in the farmhouse, heritage, office gardens and in the constructed wetland. Since it is easily propagated by division, it can be found in the nursery during the Spring Plant Sale.

[Missouri Botanical Garden](#)

Photo by Linda Piasecki

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

Balluff, Brandon

Burgess, Nicole

Cho, Mi

Durigon, Teresa

Frentress, Taylor

Fricks, Sarah Rose

Gullen, Gayle

Humphrey, John

Koenigbauer, Emily

Lange, Francine

Palmer, Peg

Schultz, Christine

Tripp, Molly

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.



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](#)

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



Photos by Linda Piasecki

The Tollgate Farm News

APRIL SHOWERS - MAY FLOWERS



Above 3 photos by Julie Semroc

Above 3 photos by Linda Piasecki

The Tollgate Farm News

SPRING WORKAYS



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

PresidentRenee Cottrell

Vice PresidentMarilyn Alimpich

Secretary.....Theresa Bridenbaugh

TreasurerKaren Harris

Membership

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