



GARDEN THYME

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LYNDSAY'S VINE

By Lyndsay Ploehn, Agriculture & Natural Resource Extension Educator

BRRR! Winter is here. It's time to hang up our tools for the season, grab a cup of coffee, and enjoy our landscape from behind the frosty glass of our kitchen window. As we gaze outside at our snow covered gardens, we daydream about what plant we need to fill that bare spot, or what tool to buy before spring planting. Catalogs and magazines fill our mailbox with delightful color pictures of flowers and vegetables. Are you

getting excited and antsy to get back outside, take a drive to some great garden shows and symposiums around the state and surrounding cities?

Winter is the best time to educate yourself about new gardening practices, new plant varieties, book tours etc. If you haven't attended many garden shows or conferences in the past, this may be your year! Even though most of you are not commercial growers, I always find commercial events to be very educational. January is the conference month for commercial growers, starting with the Illiana Vegetable Grower's Symposium on the 6th in Schererville at Tiebel's Restaurant. One of my favorites is the Ohio CENTS Marketplace & University, Jan. 7-9, in Columbus, Ohio. It is a trade show and 3-day educational event that will inspire you for 2015. The Indiana Horticulture Congress is in Indianapolis, Jan. 20-22, and the Indiana Green Expo is also in Indianapolis, Jan. 21-23. In March is the Indiana Flower & Patio Show at the Indianapolis State Fairgrounds.

However, if you don't want to travel far for some quality programming and volunteer hours, you can stay right here in Porter County for the annual [Porter County Master Gardeners Gardening Show](#) on **January 24th** at the [Porter County Expo Center](#). So, plan a trip with your fellow Master Gardeners. Drive carefully on those winter highways and come back and share some of your great educational experiences.



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GARDENER'S GROUND

Creating Winter Interest in Your Garden

By Kristine Sandrick

Snowflakes gently swirl outside my window—a reminder of the season to come. Yet in spite of too much snow and cold, gardens can be interesting during the winter. It just takes some planning, imagination and careful pruning.



look around your garden for areas to enliven next winter.

Look: Is there a sunny spot that might use some tall grass? So many grasses turn lovely shades of yellow, gold, red and brown in winter. Most tend to stand tall even in the coldest temperatures, and their brown, seedy tops soften the blue-gray winter snow.

Plan: I would love to have hellebores, aka—Lenten rose (*Helleborus orientalis*)—but I haven't been quick enough to buy them in time. These shade plants have so much to offer, including late winter blooming, deer resistance, and drought tolerance. I'm making a note now to buy some as soon as I can in 2015 and maybe a red twig dogwood (*Cornus alba 'Elegantissima'*). Also, I'd like more snowdrops (*Galanthus nivalis*). What a treat to see these little white cuties pop out of the snow on a late winter day.

Don't Prune: Leave the hydrangea, sedum and thistle and any other

plants with remaining flowers or leaves. The shapely floral heads make a strong statement against a snowy white backdrop.

Take pictures of areas you think might benefit from winter shapes, colors and textures. Then make yourself a cup of tea, pull out your gardening books and start dreaming of a winter white garden decorated with the natural ornaments you'll plant next spring.



As I write this in mid-November, the spirea, hydrangea and Japanese maple in my small garden display an artist's palette of deep red, golden yellow and orange. In another month I'll cut back the sedum and spirea according to their respective "care tags." And as you read this, remember, it's not too late to plant spring-blooming bulbs if the ground is workable. Beyond that, the best thing to do is take a good

JUST NAME IT

Can You Identify This Indiana Native?

By Marcia Carson



This bush has edible berries that attract songbirds and butterflies. After the first frost, the berries are even more scrumptious for small mammals.

[Can you identify this Indiana native?](#)

Click on the link above or this picture to find out.





VOLUNTEER SPOT

12th Annual Gardening Show

By Suzanna Tudor



Mary Simon (L) and LuAnn Troxel (R) converse at the volunteer table during the 4th Annual Gardening Show held at Washington Twp. School in 2007.

LuAnn Troxel has enjoyed coordinating volunteers for the Annual Gardening Show over the years. She became a Master Gardener in 2003 and recalls on a Wednesday evening in February, 2004, attending her first Show, a Seed & Bulb Exchange.

Now it takes over one hundred volunteers requiring an organized system. LuAnn is amazed at how much can be accomplished with the all-volunteer event and the camaraderie and teamwork of master gardeners from Porter, Lake, and LaPorte counties.

“I really love seeing the big smiles on our volunteers’ faces as they assist vendors and attendees. And even though we are usually exhausted when the show is over, we really feel like it’s worth the effort. I have no doubt that the same will happen again on January 24, 2015, and thanks to great attitudes and folks who really love gardening, we’ll have another successful show coming up!”

This is the second year that we are using an online volunteer system. If you want to volunteer for this year’s show, click this link, <http://vols.pt/45pYt8>, and it will take you to our spot. LuAnn will also gladly assign you if you prefer. Email her at luann@pcgarden.info. There are still a bunch of spots to fill at this time.

FROM MY GARDEN

A Perfect Plant for the Season

By Shelli Henry

Gardening in the Midwest is both rewarding and challenging. Finding variety in form, flower, color and texture is relatively easy in spring and summer months, a bit more difficult in the fall, and utterly impossible in the winter. Imagine a barren winter landscape with snowdrifts and gray skies brought to life by shrubs covered with small flowers that look like miniature fireworks or tiny party streamers. That’s witch hazel (*Hamamelis spp.*), a large shrub that offers yellow and red fragrant flowers blooming at unconventional times.



The two species native to North America are common witch hazel (*H. virginiana*) which blooms in late fall (October) and vernal witch hazel (*H. vernalis*) which blooms in February or March. There is also Chinese witch hazel (*H. mollis*), Japanese witch hazel (*H. japonica*), one hybrid (*H. x intermedia*) and almost 100 cultivars. While native

species can grow as large as 25 feet, cultivars can be found that are more compact (8-15 feet).

Witch hazels are quite effective as hedges and screens or as specimen plants in more open areas. Their upright-spreading shape encourages the under planting of ground covers or early spring bulbs.



(Continued on Page 4)





ReCiBEES
From Our
Gardeners



Sausage & Apple-Stuffed Squash

Recipe and photo contributed by Marcia Carson

Originally from a 1980's edition of *Better Homes and Gardens*, this delicious but simple recipe has been one of master gardener Marcia Carson's family favorites for many years!

Serves 4

Ingredients

- 2 acorn or buttercup squash, halved and seeds removed
- ¾ lb. bulk pork sausage
- ¾ cup chopped celery
- 3 tablespoons chopped onion
- 1 large cooking apple, peeled, cored and chopped (1 cup)
- 1 beaten egg
- ½ cup sour cream
- ¾ cup shredded cheese (cheddar, Gouda)



Directions

Place squash halved, cut side down, in a shallow baking pan. Bake, uncovered, in 350 degree oven about 45 minutes (until tender). Turn cut side up; sprinkle with salt. Meanwhile, in skillet cook sausage, celery and onion until meat is browned and onion is tender. Stir in chopped apple; cook 3 minutes more. Drain off fat. Combine egg and sour cream; stir into sausage mixture.

Fill squash halves with sausage mixture. Bake, uncovered, for 20 minutes. Sprinkle with shredded cheese, bake about 5 minutes more, until cheese is melted.



◀ FROM MY GARDEN (Continued From Page 3)



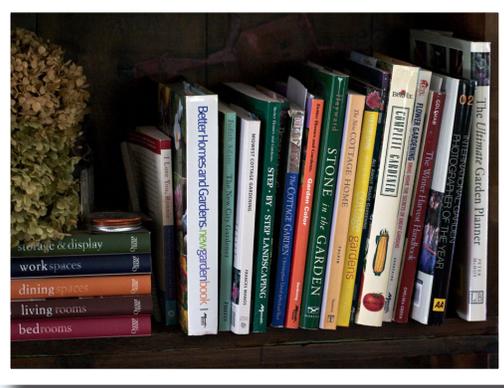
Foliage is not as showy during the summer months, but as fall approaches, the dark green leaves turn yellow with hints of purple and red. Native witch hazels grow in shade but tolerate some sun. Although they can be grown in all types of soils, they prefer moist, well-drained conditions. Little pruning is required except to tidy their shape.



THE TOOL SHED

Your Winter Garden Tool Set

By Lyndsay Ploehn



During the winter months of December and January, I use a different set of tools for my garden. Outside the garden is resting, but inside I am planning ahead

for the coming spring. Seed catalogs are arriving in the mail and are filled with delicious color photographs of an array of vegetables and herbs. I have a wonderful library of vegetable gardening books in my office that you are welcome to check out.

However, one of my new favorite tools is an online program called the [GRIT Food Garden Planner](#), which you can use free for one month. I discovered this program a few years ago, and it is now my go-to garden planner.

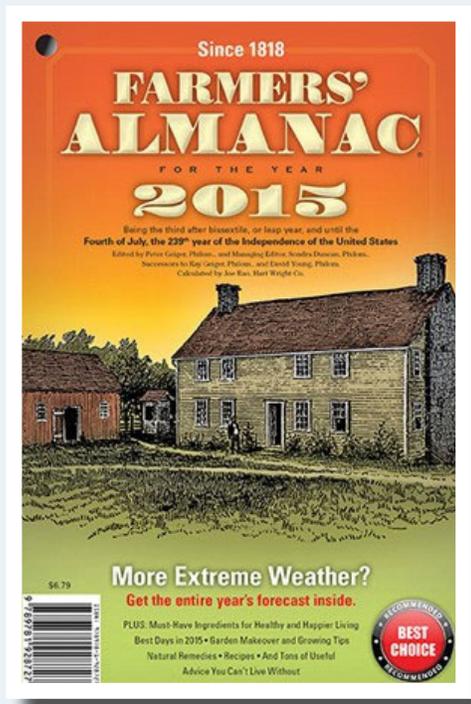


No more graph paper, rulers, templates, erasing, and re-drawing. This tool is easy to use, is full of great information, and it stores my plans year after year.

Another tried-and-true garden tool is the [Farmer's Almanac](#). This little book is full of tips that will help you have the best garden.

The Farmer's Almanac follows the moon calendar to give recommended days for planting or harvesting and not recommended days. "Because the gardening calendar is based on the phase and position of the Moon, it is consistent across all growing zones."

A tool that everyone can use is communication. Talk with your fellow Master Gardeners, your Extension Educator and our Purdue Vegetable Extension Specialist, Dr. Liz Maynard.



Searching the Internet and reading books are great sources of information, but I tend to get the best, most useful information from local sources. Share gardening tips, keep records, attend local classes.

A lot of people raise vegetables and if they raise vegetables, they experience good harvests and poor harvests, diseases, weather issues, etc. Vegetable questions are our #1 topic of concern during the county fair at the Ask a Master Gardener booth, so it is best to educate yourself on this topic and plan ahead as much as you can.



MEET A MASTER GARDENER

Master Gardener - Wilma Willard

By Beverly Thevenin

Some children who help out with the family garden never catch the gardening bug, but others do, and it grows into a lifelong passion. Wilma Willard falls into the second group. As a child growing up in Illinois, she helped grow many vegetables for their family of nine.

When Wilma married Ken, she didn't think she had married a future gardening buddy. However, when they purchased an empty lot and built a home, Ken found that, according to Wilma, "Turning thistles and weeds into vegetable gardens and grass was a fun challenge. He got the bug, when we got the land." And they have been gardening together ever since. Anniversary weekends are planned around botanical gardens and have included the Missouri Botanical Garden, Frederik Meijer Gardens in Grand Rapids and the Chicago Botanical Garden.



They have continued the gardening tradition with their two daughters. Each year one daughter would have the nine square foot vegetable garden and one would be responsible for a round flower garden adorned with a teepee. The girls would design the garden, choose

plants, maintain, harvest and then switch the gardens the next year.



Four years ago, Wilma was hired to direct a horticultural and landscape design vocational program at Westville Correctional Facility. The students grew a wide array of vegetables and flowers. Wilma said her goal there was for the students, "...to have learned the skills and work ethic to proceed in an entry level position in the field." For Wilma, graduation is the highlight of the program, where this year 55 students received a vocational certificate. Parents, spouses, children and friends attend and cheer the graduates on as they walk across the stage. Wilma has encouraged the offenders to pass on the knowledge and "take what they've learned in the class to share it with their children and to landscape for their aunts."

After working there for several months, Wilma decided she wanted to network with local gardeners and thought the Master Gardener program would be a great way to connect. She is a 2011 graduate.

One month ago she changed jobs and is now teaching health to grades five through twelve. When talking about health, horticulture can't be far behind. Wilma is incorporating plants into her curriculum. Kids are learning that plants are therapeutic, healthful, and can purify the air. And future gardeners are being encouraged to get their hands dirty by growing lettuce in the classroom. As Wilma said, "If you're a gardener, you just want to share with whatever audience you have." Now that's putting your MG education to good use!



GARDEN WANDERER

Naples Botanical Garden

By Lyndsay Ploehn,
Agriculture & Natural Resource Extension Educator

Since we have a lot of “snowbirds” in our Master Gardener group, I thought it would be appropriate to tell you about a tropical garden I’ve visited in Naples, Florida. The [Naples Botanical Garden](#) is a 170-acre garden paradise that features six habitats with plants and cultures of the tropics and subtropics between the latitudes of 26 degrees north and 26 degrees south including Brazil, the Caribbean, Southeast Asia and Florida. A hands-on interactive Children’s Garden along with 90 acres of beautifully restored natural habitats, 2.5 miles of walking trails and a Butterfly Garden offer educational entertainment and enjoyment for people of all ages.



Photo by Karl Gercens



Photo by Karl Gercens

The Garden celebrated its 20th Anniversary this year with a grand re-opening on October 23. After an extensive expansion, the final phase is complete with a new welcome center. The Eleanor and Nicholas Chabraja Visitor Center will engage visitors and serve as an educational tool for green building practices. This state of the art building has a plethora of features to inspire visitors to become better stewards of our environment, including a rainwater collection tank that holds 18,000 gallons of water used to irrigate the gardens.

Throughout the month of December the annual Night Lights event will celebrate the holiday season, including Winter Solstice on Dec. 22nd. Live music, activities, marshmallows and decorative lights will illuminate the garden to make your experience magical. To find out more about the garden and what’s happening the rest of the winter season check out their [Naples Botanical Garden magazine](#).

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Photo by Karl Gercens



OPPORTUNITIES

Volunteer / Educational

If you have a volunteer or educational opportunity to share with your fellow Master Gardeners, please contact nrosene@icloud.com

12TH ANNUAL GARDENING SHOW

- Donate Used Garden Tools
Contact: Terry Luchene, 219-508-6535
- Volunteer for Show Setup (01.23.2015)
Contact: luann@pcgarden.info
or Signup: tinyurl.com/PCMGAvolunteerspot
- Volunteer for Various Open Positions on Day of Show (01.24.2015)
Contact: luann@pcgarden.info
or Signup: tinyurl.com/PCMGAvolunteerspot



EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

ILLIANA VEGETABLE GROWER'S SYMPOSIUM
Tiebel's Restaurant, Schererville, IN
Jan. 6, 2015 8:00-4:00 pm CST
<https://ag.purdue.edu/hla/fruitveg/Pages/default.aspx>

CENTS MARKETPLACE & UNIVERSITY
Columbus, Ohio
Jan. 7-9, 2015
<http://www.centsmarketplace.com>

INDIANA HORTICULTURE CONGRESS
Indianapolis, IN
Jan. 20-22, 2015
<http://www.inhortcongress.org>

INDIANA GREEN EXPO
Indianapolis, IN
Jan. 21-23, 2015
<http://www.indianagreenexpo.com/>

INDIANA FLOWER & PATIO SHOW
Indiana State Fairgrounds, Indianapolis
March 14-22, 2015
<http://hsishows.com/wp/indianaflowerandpatioshow/>

2015 PURDUE MASTER GARDENER STATE CONFERENCE
June 4-6, 2015
For information / mailing list,
email: mgconf2015@twc.com



URBAN FORESTRY RELATED WEBINARS
Use this link to see a complete listing of urban forestry related webinars:
[View as a Web Page](#)



SPRING 2015 MASTER GARDENER TRAINING PROGRAM
PNC - Valparaiso Campus
Graduate Building, Room 034
5:30-8:30p CDT
February 2 - May 11, 2015
Contact: [Lyndsay Ploehn](mailto:Lyndsay.Ploehn)



THE PORTER COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

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