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LYNDSAY'S VINE

By Lyndsay Ploehn, Agriculture & Natural Resource Extension Educator



As we begin a new year, some of us may set some resolutions or goals for our lives and our gardens. I have a few that I would like to share. On February 2, we have a new Intern Training Program starting, and one of the changes that I have made this year is to offer 15 weeks of instruction instead of 13 weeks so we can include all of the topics in the Master Gardener manual. At the end of the class I am planning to host a volunteer fair, open

to all, to showcase volunteer and educational opportunities in our county. If you have an activity or event that you would like to showcase, please contact Greg Rater, grater@arbormetricssolutions.com. I will have more information on that event as we get closer to May.

Another new item we are rolling out this year is the Master Gardener Policy Guide. You should all have received a letter of agreement with information about this guide. With this new guide I am working with Angel, Extension Program Manager, to go through our active list of Master Gardeners in order to provide you the most up-to-date records on your reporting.

Finally, I plan to complete my Master's degree from Purdue University this summer. I appreciate all the support and patience you have given me during this busy time in my life. This spring semester I will have classes on Wednesdays at the West Lafayette Purdue campus. Kathy Van Arsdel will fill in for me at the PCMGA Executive Board meetings and Membership meetings. If you need anything please email, call or stop by my office to chat. I look forward to completing this chapter in my life so that I can better serve all of you. To assist me during this busy time I have created a Master Gardener Advisory Committee and the Master Gardener Newsletter Committee. If you have an issue that needs to be addressed, a topic you like to teach, a talent you have to offer, please contact me so we can find a space for you to help.

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GARDENER'S GROUND

Try Wintersowing For January Gardener's Malaise

By Beverly Thevenin

Are you itching to get your hands in soil, but prefer it not be below 60 degrees? Would you like to grow more perennials, herbs, vegetables and flowers from seeds, but don't have the room, money, or patience to start seeds indoors this winter? Then you might want to try a method called Wintersow (WS).

My yard was a blank slate nine years ago when we built our home. I brought 80 perennials from my previous garden, but those plants barely made a dent in the garden I envisioned. In my mind's eye, I saw hundreds of plants in my future cottage garden. Roses, daylilies, lupines and myriad other flowers filled every space and overflowed pots, climbed up trellises and reached for the sky. But how to achieve this economically was the dilemma. That's when I stumbled upon Wintersowing on the Internet.



This method sounded almost too good to be true. Garden during a January blizzard in my toasty warm kitchen? Use free household items I had been throwing into the recycle bin? Put the potted seeds out into the snow and forget about them? (Well, almost.) Grow hundreds of seeds for mere pennies? Since 2007, each year I have been growing new flowers and vegetables for my garden with this method.

The USDA describes WS as, "A propagation method used throughout the winter where temperate climate seeds are sown into protective vented containers and placed outdoors to foster a naturally timed, high percentage germination of climate tolerant seedlings."

After reading about it at Wintersown.org and listening to other people's experience at GardenWeb, I started gathering up milk cartons, 2 liter soda bottles, cardboard orange juice containers, whipped topping tubs and anything else I thought I could turn into a mini-greenhouse. The preparation of the container depends on the type used. For milk cartons, cut drainage slits in the bottom and cut the container in half 5" up from the bottom, but leave a hinge at the handle corner and remove the top cap. Fill with 3" of potting soil and water. Sprinkle the seeds, pat down and either

cover with soil or leave exposed, depending on the seed requirements. Tape the top half to the bottom along the line you cut. Duct tape works well and lasts through the winter. Set the container into the garden and let nature do her work. If the weather is dry, supplemental water may be



necessary. At the appropriate time, plant your seedlings into the ground. No need to harden off (other than venting the lid more) and there is no killing damp off. Of course, it may prove helpful later to have labeled your containers, but I won't get into the minutiae of the method here.

The timeline for wintersowing can be a bit ambiguous, because there is a lot of wiggle room, unlike indoor seed propagation. To get a basic sense of the schedule, January and February are the perfect months to sow the seeds that need stratification. Perennials that don't need the freezing and thawing cycles can still be sown



← GARDENER'S GROUND (Continued from Page 2)

at any time, even into summer. Hardy annuals (those that reseed easily in the garden) can also be sown any time after January, but I like to start hardy annuals in March. I don't want them to get too big before I am ready to plant out. Cold hardy vegetables like lettuce can be started in February and March and summer vegetables March through April. Tomatoes are one of my favorite veggies to WS. For a list of plants, including trees and shrubs, that can be WS in our zones, visit [Zones 5, 6, 7](#).

This is a basic description of the process. (To make it even more cost affordable, I exchange seeds online, but that would be another article.)

The [WinterSow](#) homepage and the forum at [GardenWeb](#) are excellent resources.

Do I have the picture-perfect cottage garden I dreamed of? Not yet and I probably never will, but Wintersowing has enabled me to grow and experiment with many varieties I would have been hesitant to try. My wintersown *Passiflora incarnate* climbs on the trellis (although it has yet to flower); *Malva sylvestris mauritiana*, *Digitalis grandiflora*, and *Thalictrum rochebrunianum* reach for the sky; hosta help fill the empty spaces; and poppies, *Impatiens balfourii* and *Lychnis coronaria* reseed with wild abandonment.



JUST NAME IT

Can You Identify This Indiana "Thug"?

By Kristine Sandrick



You might be able to name it but you sure don't want it. It was brought to this country in the late 1700s for decorative purposes but has overstayed its welcome.

Yes, it's pretty and makes lovely fall wreaths, but this garden thug twines upward, suffocating or overshadowing trees and shrubs in its path. An invasive species, this is not to be confused with its American cousin, which only has berries on the ends of the twigs. Can you name it?



Click [here](#) for the answer.

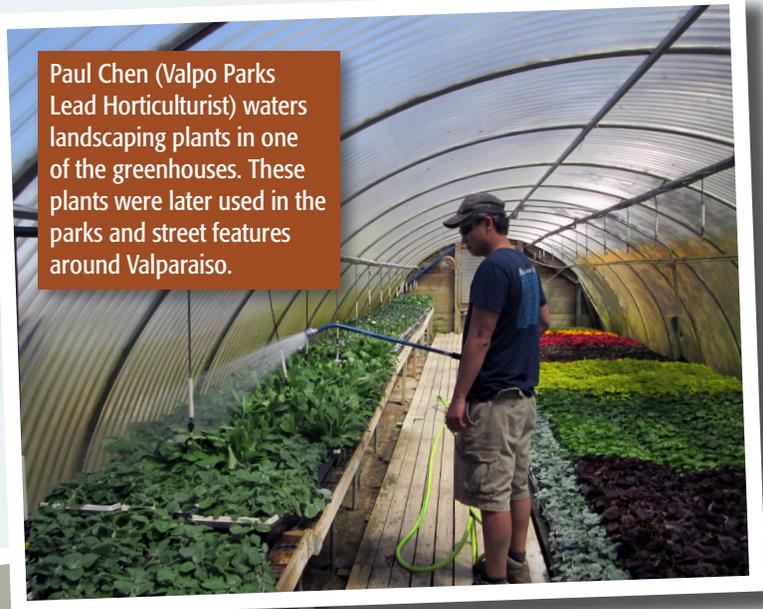


VOLUNTEER SPOT

Valpo Parks Department Transplanting

By Shelli Henry

PCMGA members help transplant seedlings to flats while assisting the Valparaiso Parks Department last year. Do you recognize some familiar faces in these photos?



Paul Chen (Valpo Parks Lead Horticulturist) waters landscaping plants in one of the greenhouses. These plants were later used in the parks and street features around Valparaiso.

Are you itching to get your hands dirty? Why not consider helping the Valparaiso Park's department this year at their greenhouses located at 1250 Harrison Boulevard.

"It has become a tradition for the master gardeners and others from the community to gather at our greenhouses for transplanting seedlings into flats," says Stephen Martinson, the horticultural superintendent.

Transplanting will begin this year on April 2 and continue Monday, April 6 for several days. Typically, the start time is at 8 a.m. ending at 3 p.m. with a break for lunch. Martinson indicates that any amount of time is appreciated and even a few hours are helpful.



This is an opportunity to see what flowers will be growing around the city this year and to meet like minded people from the community. The park's department greenhouses typically produce 1,000 flats of flowers each year that are used in all the parks and street features around Valparaiso.

The transplanting is done in the work room attached to the greenhouses. It is well heated and out of the weather. "There have been years where folks have had their hands in the soil inside while it has been snowing outside," stated Martinson.

There is room for six volunteers at any given time. Please call the horticulture office at (219) 531-4678 in advance to schedule your volunteer slot as transplanting may be completed early.



FROM MY GARDEN

One Of The Top 75 For The Garden*

By Marcia Carson

My assignment for the February issue forced me to take a look at my “winter garden.” It took two minutes to realize (as many of you might) I had nothing that added winter interest: time to do some

research and find some great stuff!

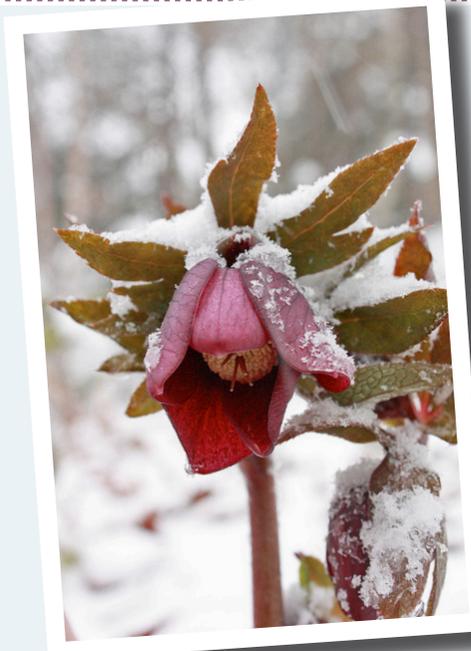
What I found that could quickly add a little pizzazz was hellebores. The most common



are the Lenten Rose (*Helleborus orientalis*), shown above, and the Christmas Rose (*Helleborus niger*) shown

right. The common names lead us to believe they will bloom at Christmas and Easter, but with our climate, they will probably be a little late for those holidays!

Hellebores are a European native, evergreen flowering plant that perform best in shade to part shade with rich, well-drained soil, and are quite drought tolerant. Applying 10-10-10 fertilizer in spring will provide glorious blooms.



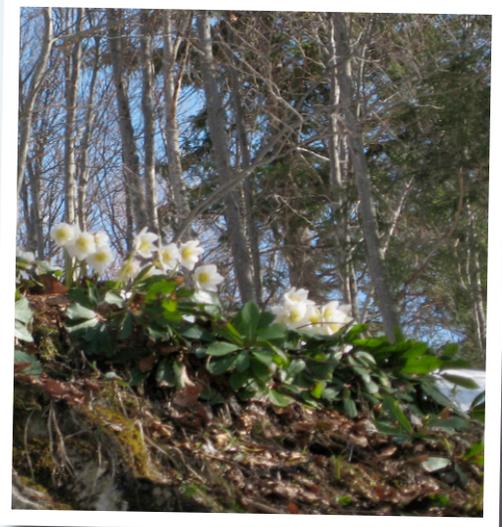
There are many hybrids available in a variety of colors, including single, double, even bi-color blooms. Bloom time ranges from December (good luck with that the last couple years!) through April, and the flowers hang on for several weeks. In our area, foliage usually

suffers from snow and ice,

but damaged leaves can be cut back to the ground as new leaves begin to emerge.

Hellebores grow in clumps approximately 18” high and 18” wide. Plant thoughtfully, as the blooms face downward, so planting on a hill or raised bed provides better viewing. They will grow from seed, but will take 2-4 years before flowering. Companion plants include ferns, crocus, snowdrops, primroses, barrenwort and lungwort. They are also deer and rabbit resistant!

You may not see these “In My Garden” this year, but come back next year to see what changes I’ve made!



*As ranked by The American Horticulture Society



ReciBEEs

From Our
Gardeners

Cake

- 1 cup shortening
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 oz. red food coloring mixed with 1 oz. water
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 tablespoons cocoa
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 1/2 cups flour
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 tablespoon white vinegar

Cream shortening, sugar, and eggs until fluffy. Combine coloring, water, vanilla, and cocoa. Add to creamed mixture. Add salt to flour and add alternately with buttermilk to the mixture. Mix baking soda and vinegar. Add to mixture and blend well. Put in three, 8-inch layer pans. Bake at 350 degrees for 25-30 minutes.

Frosting

- 3 tablespoons flour
- 1 cup milk
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup margarine
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

Combine flour and milk in top of double-boiler, cook until thick. Chill mixture in refrigerator until cool, then blend in sugar, butter, and vanilla. Beat until fluffy as whipped cream (about 10-15 minutes).

Aunt Bonnie's Red Velvet Cake

Traditions and recipe by Suzanna Tudor

It's February, and love is in the air. And along with it is the love affair our taste buds have for Red Velvet Cake—and memories that go back to the 1960s for two of us master gardeners.

I remember the first time I came across this delectable delight. It was way back in the 1960s when scouring for a recipe to serve at a February sorority meeting. The big gun set of cookbooks was consulted: *Favorite Recipes of America—DESSERTS*. And there it was, nestled in between the chocolate cakes: Red Velvet Cake. Sounded like just the ticket for around Valentine's Day. Needless to say, the cake was a big hit with requests for the recipe. And after my husband had a sample, he had to have some for his birthday in March—and every birthday thereafter, with our younger son following suit since their birthdays are only a day apart.

Others have embraced that tradition too, such as fellow master gardener Shelli Henry, whose family recipe is featured this month.

"I first had this cake as a little girl in the late 1960's," Shelli shared. "We went to visit my Aunt Bonnie in Kentucky. She is a fantastic baker and made us this very unique dessert. It was love at first bite. My favorite part is the frosting and, of course, the beautiful color. My birthday is in January. Every year my mom would ask each of us kids what kind of cake we wanted for our birthday. I always chose Aunt Bonnie's Red Velvet Cake. To this day, this treat reminds me of my special day, good memories, and my loving family."

Perhaps some of you will begin the Red Velvet tradition as well!





THE TOOL SHED

Vac and Mulch = Garden Gold

By Kristine Sandrick

A sunny Saturday in December seemed the perfect day to rake the leftover leaves from our second-story patio. While I enjoy the task, it's a bit arduous. I have to rake, gather leaves in a 10-foot tarp and haul them down to the street. Rake, gather, haul. Repeat. Fortunately, finally I remembered a tool my husband said didn't work very well—a vac 'n' mulch.

I also recalled a class in which an instructor from the Chicago Botanic Garden called mulched leaves "garden gold." She was referring to making "leaf mold," which adds nutrients and structure to your soil.



I decided to try and it worked just fine for me. Besides, returning leaves to the earth is Mother Nature's idea of recycling at it's best.

Our machine is easy to use: hook the vacuum nozzle to the motor/chopper, attach the collection bag, plug into an outdoor extension cord, hoist the strap over my shoulder and turn that puppy on full. It was rewarding watching oak and maples leaves disappear into the nozzle, thinking of the money I'd save on mulch!



Full bags were dumped and re-mulched to speed up decomposition, then dumped again onto the leaf-colored bark mulch in my garden. It looked beautiful!

This spring I'll vac and mulch the late falling leaves and keep that aside, mix the fall decomposing leaves and mulch into the soil and top with a fresh layer of chopped leaves.

We have a Toro, which you can buy for under \$80; the price has come down from around \$100. Do your homework and buy one that works for you. Next to a weeder, it's one of my favorite tools.

LYNDSAY'S VINE (Continued From Page 1)

Here are some ideas for you; Join the Porter County Master Gardener Association and really get to know your fellow Master Gardeners. Commit to staying active by volunteering 12 hours and attending 6 hours of educational training each year. Contact our newsletter team to share what volunteering means to you and how it has impacted your community. Share your story with us.



MEET A MASTER GARDENER

The Bill Storey Story

By Suzanna Tudor

Please meet Bill Storey, class of 2014 Master Gardener. A new retiree from Inland Steel after 41 years, he can now work on volunteer hours and pursue his other interests of cars, antiques, fishing, photography, camping, and cooking. Bill has always loved gardening and tended a garden for most of his life.

“As a boy, I grew the usual staples,” Bill said. “I can also remember digging up trees and wildflowers and bringing them home to plant—much to my parents’ bewilderment,” he added.

During his junior and senior high school years, he worked at Schoon’s Farm Market in Merrillville, planting, cultivating, and harvesting produce.



In 1980, he and his wife, Brenda, an RN at Porter Regional Hospital, moved to a home in Valparaiso.

Apple, pear, persimmon, hazelnut, and chestnut trees, ornamentals, blueberry bushes, and wildflowers were planted and, of course, a vegetable garden.

“We tried everything at least once and gradually narrowed it down,” Bill shared. “We still can beans and tomatoes every year.”

Bill also has a penchant for cacti and succulents and has an outdoor cold hardy cactus garden, plus numerous houseplants.

“I learned a lot from my mother-in-law who always had a beautiful weed free garden, and my grandmother who also loved to garden,” said Bill. “I still have several plants and bulbs I dug from her yard in Tennessee when she passed away in 1994.”

The Storeys have three sons, three grandsons, and two granddaughters. And the Storey gardening legacy continues. Their youngest son and his family recently moved to John’s Island, South Carolina, where he is starting his own farm-to-table farm.

Bill advises that “if you want to grow something, no matter how unusual or difficult it may seem—just try it.”





GARDEN WANDERER Garfield Park Conservatory

By Lyndsay Ploehn,
Agriculture & Natural Resource Extension Educator



Photo Credit: ©Karl Gercens

I am a gardener who enjoys the winter landscape. Winter is a beautiful, serene season that we are blessed with experiencing here in the North. Snow-covered shrubs, berries on branches, and birds looking for morsels of seed, are just a few of my favorite things. But, when the weather outside is extremely cold and blustery, I like to escape to the warm indoors. If the roads are clear, you can venture down to Indianapolis to Garfield Park Conservatory & Sunken Garden.

The conservatory at [Garfield Park](#) was originally designed and constructed in 1914 by a German landscape architect, George Edward Kessler. In 1997, the entire garden underwent renovations, and the 10,000 square-foot conservatory was transformed into a tropical rainforest. Today, you can take in the pleasing aromas and feast your eyes on a variety of plants including palms, orchids, ferns, cacao (chocolate), chicle (chewing gum), papaya,

vanilla, banana, coffee, and citrus. As you wind through the tropical pathways it feels as though you have stepped into a tropical paradise. Take the time to read the labels, learn about new plants, and identify your houseplants on a larger scale.

If you want to plan a visit around an event happening at the garden, check out the Events page on their website. The garden is open from 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. EST daily until mid-April. Open until mid-February is the Dancing Waters exhibit. Enjoy unique pieces of art made of repurposed items and constructed by Dennis and Daniel Baar of Two of a Kind Studio. In the summer, when the garden extends their hours from 10 a.m. - 9 p.m. EST, you can go back to see the outdoor gardens and enjoy a tour of the Conservatory by a local Master Gardener.

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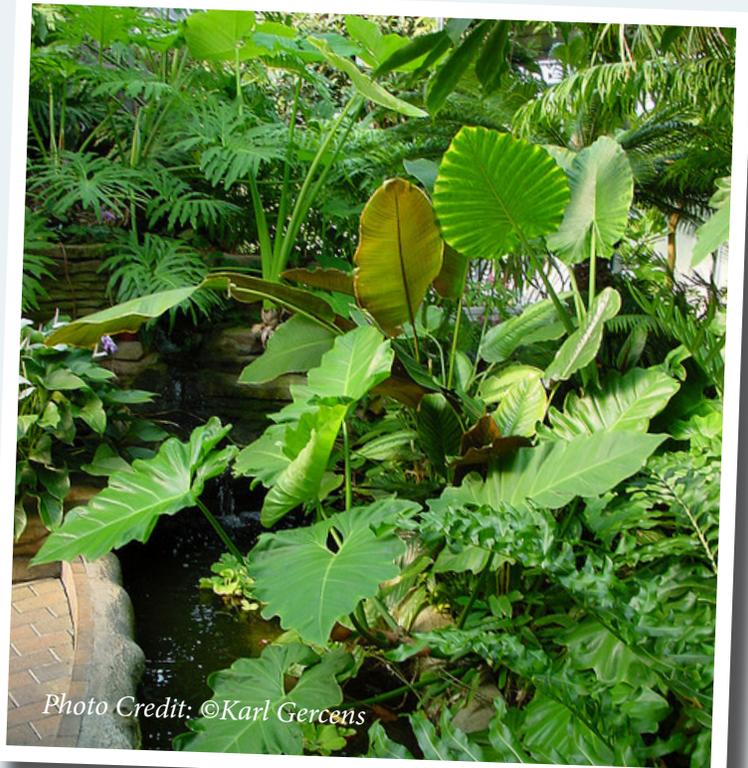


Photo Credit: ©Karl Gercens



OPPORTUNITIES

Volunteer / Educational

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

THE PUBLICITY AND PROMOTION COMMITTEE OF THE PORTER COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION is seeking two talented candidates to fill important volunteer positions within the committee. Donna Brown, who coordinates the Ask A Master Gardener Booth, will leave her post at the end of the year, and Web Master Jennifer Kaiser will be moving from NW Indiana within the month.

The Association cannot thank these two dedicated members enough for being so generous with their expertise and creativity, so thorough and thoughtful in every way. Donna made working in the booth worry-free, and Jennifer gave us our dynamic new web site. Their efforts have put a smart and welcoming face on our community outreach!

Please contact Committee Chair Kathy Van Arsdel at vanjulo@aol.com or 548-1876 if you are interested:

- **Coordinator - Ask A Master Gardener Booth**
Responsibilities include serving as a member of the Publicity and Promotion Committee, coordinating event registration, staffing, setup, and tear-down of the Ask A Master Gardener Booth for at least five major events per year. Position requires knowledge on a variety of horticultural subjects and how to research these subjects to help others grow. Good leadership and organizational skills essential. Candidate will shadow current coordinator during 2015, accepting the post in 2016.
- **Web Master**
Responsibilities include serving as a member of the Publicity and Promotion Committee, maintenance of the Porter County Master Gardeners Association web site on a regular basis, new content development when necessary, plus monitoring site performance. Time commitment for maintenance should be minimal, increasing to moderate during December, January, May and June. Web and basic graphic design experience required. WordPress knowledge preferred, but not required. This post is open immediately.

SPRING 2015 MASTER GARDENER TRAINING PROGRAM

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

FIRST ANNUAL PCMG VOLUNTEER FAIR

Contact Greg Rater, grater@arbormetricssolutions.com, if you have an event or activity you'd like to showcase at the fair.

INDIANA FLOWER & PATIO SHOW

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

VALPARAISO PARKS DEPARTMENT TRANSPLANTING

Valparaiso Parks Department Greenhouses
1250 Harrison Boulevard
April 2, April 6 - ?, 2015
8 a.m. - 3 p.m. CDT
Contact: Horticulture office at (219) 531-4678

2015 PURDUE MASTER GARDENER STATE CONFERENCE

June 4 - 6, 2015
For information / mailing list,
email: mgconf2015@twc.com

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