

# GARDEN 11 YEARS THYMAN THY





## — In this Issue

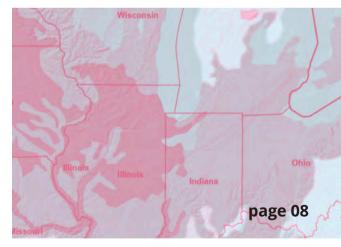
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The Porter County Master Gardeners Association (PCMGA) is a not-for-profit corporation that promotes the education and pleasure of gardening in cooperation with Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service in Porter County, Indiana.







## — Nature Watch

## Worth the Drive:

See Rare Spring Ephemerals in Door County

#### BY KRIS SANDRICK, PCMG CLASS OF 2014

If you haven't visited The Ridges Sanctuary in Bailey's Harbor, WI, consider treating yourself this spring. It's worth the time for a guided hike in this biologically diverse area to see a delightful array of spring flowers.



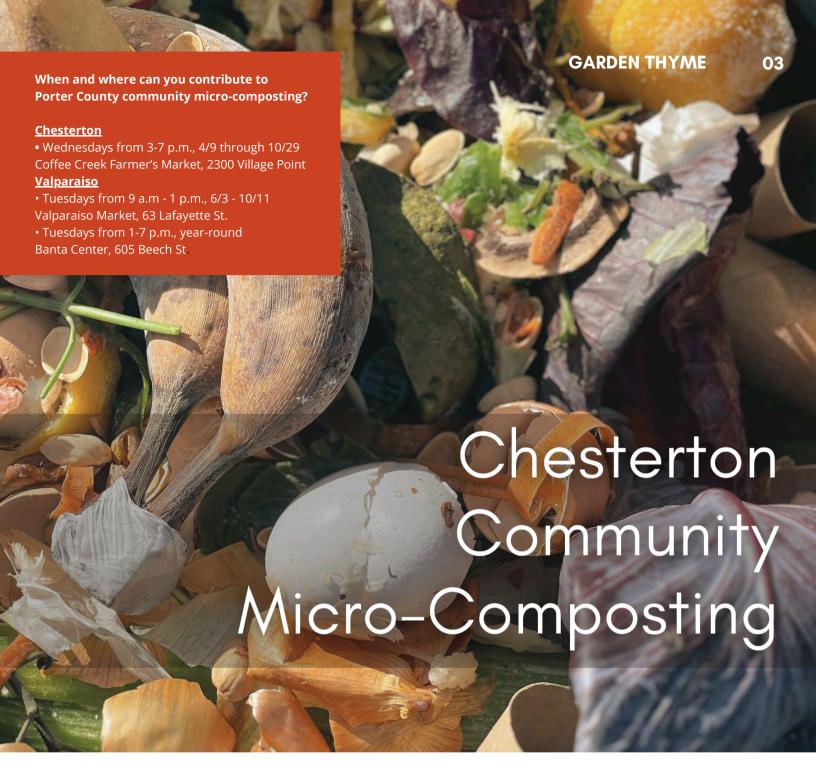
<u>The Ridges</u> is a 1,700-acre boreal forest of ridges and swales on Lake Michigan. Guests and researchers from all over the world visit to study rare and endangered orchids.

I first walked The Ridges in the '80s and have returned several times. Finally, last spring my husband and I had the opportunity to volunteer as Range Light docents and to spend a week in our off hours exploring the grounds.

I especially enjoyed seeing the rare Dwarf Lake Iris (*Iris lacustris*), a tiny beauty endemic to the shores of Lakes Michigan and Huron. It's just a couple of inches in diameter but even more beautiful when found spreading in the wetlands surrounding the boardwalks. Unfortunately, the Dwarf Lake Iris is considered "threatened" due to shoreline development, salting and chemical spraying.

Along with this tiny iris, we spotted Grass of Parnassus (*Parnassia palustrus*) aka Bog Stars and Rams Head Lady's Slipper (*Cypripedium arietinum*). We also had the good fortune of walking with the orchid specialist who showed us a variety of small and rare species. There are so many orchids growing in the boreal forest that Danish researchers spend some summer weeks here learning how to grow orchids on their own shores.

True, we have an incredibly biodiverse "garden" here in our own National and State Parks. But also true is that Door County is teeming with unique wildflowers in spring. Hope you get to go!



BY EMILY BRETL, ED.D., GUEST WRITER
FOUNDER & DIRECTOR, MARRAM COLLABORATIVE,
& HILLARY MILES, PCMG CLASS OF 2023

How do you start your day? If you're anything like us, your day begins with a delicious cup of something warm and freshly brewed. Whether it's strong black coffee or herbal tea, the morning routine of hot drinks is one to savor. Your morning "cuppa" is also the perfect place to start the conversation around food waste composting! So, here's our next question: after you finish your coffee or drain your mug of tea, what do you do with the coffee grounds and tea leaves?

(continued on page 04)

If you answered, "I put them in the trash," you're not alone. Seventy-two percent of Americans don't compost at home, meaning any food waste, like vegetable scraps, bread crumbs, and, yes, your coffee grounds and tea bags, end up in landfills. Unfortunately, food waste in landfills mainly decomposes very slowly and anaerobically, or without oxygen. The lack of oxygen during decomposition leads to the production and release of methane, one of the most potent greenhouse gases and a significant contributor to climate change. The EPA estimates that 1 pound of food waste generates 3.8 pounds of methane, which is not good for our planet or local communities.

However, here's the interesting thing: in one survey of 2,000 adults, 67 percent said that if food waste composting were easier, they would be willing to try it out. Fortunately, we have been working on a solution to do just this! We have recently launched a new micro-compost site in Chesterton, Indiana, and we are accepting food waste donations every Wednesday at the Coffee Creek Farmers Market.

### Here's how it works:

- 1. Collect your food scraps in a container throughout the week. We recommend yogurt containers, ice cream buckets, or even a good ol' plastic bag whatever works for you!
- 2. Bring your bucket-o-scraps to the Chesterton Drop Site at Coffee Creek Farmers Market on Wednesdays between 3 and 7 p.m.
- 3. Weigh your scraps, record your results, and dispose of them in the community compost bin. We'll be there to walk you through it!
- 4. Take your container home with you, give it a rinse, and repeat the process the following week.

Food waste collected at the Coffee Creek Farmers Market is then taken to the Duneland Family YMCA on Roosevelt Street for processing. Over the course of a couple of months, we'll transform your food trash into real garden treasure: the black gold we know more commonly as compost.

The Chesterton Site is part of a larger Food Waste Composting project spread across the county. Porter County Recycling and Waste Reduction District (RWRD) has begun implementing small-scale food waste compost pilot programs across the county. These pilots, like the Chesterton micro-site, help the RWRD and partners determine feasibility, identify challenges, and assess the potential impact of expanding composting efforts on a larger scale.

We look forward to seeing you at the Market soon, with your food scraps in hand! Until then, have a scrappy day!



Mary LaRocque, Garden Walk Chairperson, shares these highlights of the six garden sites which are all in the Valparaiso area.

At one garden you will enjoy a serene water feature that welcomes visitors to the front of the house. The back has a tree house and wonderful plantings surrounding a beautiful patio area. Another garden was on the Garden Walk in 2013, with many new improvements! A hedge surrounding the yard makes a wonderful backdrop for mass plantings of flowers and shrubs. Other highlights are a welcoming arbor and delightful gazebo.

- Saturday, June 28, 2025 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m!
- Tickets are \$10 and can be purchased prior to the walk, online, or on the day of the walk beginning at 8 a.m. at Ben Franklin Middle School at 605 North Campbell Street, Valparaiso.

Yet another invites you in with a lovely rose arbor. The backyard has a wide variety of trees and plants with a meandering water feature. A children's play area is incorporated at the rear of the garden. Boasting a very large area with numerous raised garden beds is a treat in yet another garden. You will find a wide variety of pretty flowers and healthy vegetables growing.

And neighbors enjoy a connection in these two gardens. In one you'll find extensive perennial beds. Unique to this garden is a welcoming path and arbor leading to the adjacent neighbor who is also on the walk. The neighbor showcases perennials that work their way around to the back. The flowers and shrubs were planned for a daughter's wedding held in the past.

There will be a fabulous door prize at every garden for one lucky winner!

Information will be forthcoming on the <u>PCMGA website</u> and on the Facebook page <u>Porter County Master Gardeners</u>. Feel free to like and share and invite many others to "Grow with Us" as they stroll these creative and inspiring gardens.





## — Garden Wanderer

## Fernwood Botanical Garden

BY SHARON STUCKY, PCMG CLASS OF 2017

Fernwood Botanical Garden is an ideal opportunity for education in a beautiful setting. Located in Niles, MI, this serene and well-kept garden is just an hour drive from Valparaiso. I personally cannot imagine a more tranquil place to acquire educational hours.

Classes are offered all year long. A detailed description of all classes is posted on their website, along with a fast and easy way to register. A variety of topics are covered from edible horticulture to gardening, and

even a "What's in Bloom Walk". The classes range from 1-4 hours; some are free, or the cost is very reasonable.

After class, you can enjoy the 105 acres of ten eco systems and nature areas with miles of walking or hiking. There are picturesque gardens to explore which include Japanese, herb, and rain gardens, to mention just a few. My favorite is the Railway and Nature Adventure Garden.

The garden has a variety of year-round events--a special place to visit for all seasons. The hours are 10 a.m.-5:00 p.m. (EST), Tuesday thru Sunday. While you are there, you can enjoy lunch at the cafe and then do some shopping at the gift shop. The gift shop offers nature and garden-theme products and so much more.

Plan a day to get some educational hours, explore nature at its best, enjoy a delicious lunch and most importantly, support an enchanting and educational environment. Visit the <u>website</u> for more details.



## BY SUZANNA TUDOR PCMG CLASS OF 2002

The memory of seeing a twolayer cake adorned with brightly-colored pansies created by my Great Aunt Jan absolutely fascinated me as a child. I love flowers, but it never even dawned on me to EAT or decorate food with them!

So, one year with an abundance of climbing, orange nasturtiums, I decided to try my hand at this novel idea. An Orange Dreamsicle cake would be my first "victim" for our 2015 PCMGA fall picnic. Much to my amazement, it turned out pretty good.

Fast forward to 2025 and a presentation on "Edible Flowers" piqued my interest at the recent LaPorte County Master Garden Show.

Debbie Rea, The Gardener Wife, shared these Ten Rules of Edible Flowers:

- 1. Eat flowers only when you are positive they are edible.
- 2. Just because it is served with food does not mean a flower is edible (see Rule 1)
- 3. Eat only flowers that have been grown organically.
- 4. Do not eat flowers from florists, nurseries or garden centers (see Rule 3).
- 5. If you have hay fever, asthma or allergies, do not eat flowers.
- 6. Do not eat flowers picked from the side of the road. They are contaminated from car emissions (see Rule 3).
- 7. Remove pistils and stamens from flowers before eating. Eat only the petals (especially rose, calendula, tulip, chrysanthemum, yucca, and lavender).
- 8. Not all flowers are edible. Some are poisonous.
- 9. There are many varieties of any one flower. Flowers taste different when grown in different locations.
- 10. Introduce flowers to your diet the way you would new foods to a baby—one at a time in small quantities.

The best source: *Edible Flowers:* From Garden to Palate by Cathy Wilkinson Barash, and a wealth of info is also available online.

Rea's "Fab Five" edible flowers for the easiest to grow and most frequently used are:

- Chives
- Bachelor's Buttons
- Borage
- Rose
- Lemon Rose Geranium (Only scented geranium flowers, Pelargonium graveoens, are edible.)

Others she likes to grow are calendula, daylilies, lavender, marigolds, nasturtiums, pansies and all herbs.

How about it—are you game? Maybe we'll see one of your creations at our next picnic or potluck?



## Our Geology: Past, Present and Powerful

Clayey till, often referred to as clayey glacial till, is a type of glacial sediment characterized by a high proportion of clay particles. It is found in many areas, including parts of Wisconsin, and is the result of glaciers grinding and depositing sediment, including clay, as they move and melt.

Part 4 of 4



#### BY GERRY LEHMANN, PCMG CLASS OF 2009

We garden today in modern soils as we use the top six to 12 inches of the possible hundreds of feet of glacial till deposits. Except for the shifting sands near Lake Michigan, these soils benefit from the decay from thousands of years of plant material that grew here. The latest organics are at the surface.

For most of the last <u>541 million</u> years, Midwest and Eastern Canada was a shallow sea. Over those millions of years, surface rock in the presence of water can chemically 'erode' into clay, that sticky, impermeable third corner of our soil type triangle. This ancient clay is a substantial glacial deposit in our county. It is present in all areas of the county mixed with the till, or where in higher concentration found

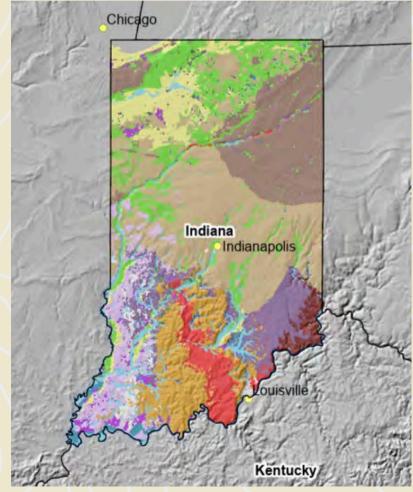
In lens-shaped pockets, either at the surface or below grade. In geology, a clay lens is a sedimentary deposit, typically of clay or silt, that forms a lens-shaped body within other sediment. These lenses are thicker in the middle and thinner towards the edges, resembling a convex lens. They are often found within coarser sediments like gravel or sand, where they fill local depressions or channels. Clay is the predominant soil type in the Kankakee, out-wash area south of the moraine.

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In 1916 the surface soils in Porter County were surveyed jointly by the US. Department of Agriculture and the Indiana Department of Geology. It has now been <u>reproduced</u> by Ball State and is quite an extensive showing of over 30 distinct soil types in the county. There is a global digital soil map <u>here</u> that you can bring up to show the State of Indiana and search on your own street address. It is called "Soil Explorer." Check it out.

We have transitioned away from the 1916 rural farm county to a more residential suburb county today. If you live in an old farmstead, your garden soil is akin to that on the map. But in a subdivision the developer might have pushed around several feet of topsoil to grade the land to his plans, or dug a retention pond and spread that around, or he might have even dug out the top soil to be sold. Soils around development are likely compacted by heavy equipment used to 'modernize' the county. Also, soils today are far dryer than in the past, as development once thought the best way to deal with rain water was to move it away as fast as possible. It is always wise to do a <u>soil test</u> on your garden or even send out a sample for a lab analysis.

In closing, I offer a <u>document</u> developed specifically for Lake and Porter Counties which covers the topics presented in these four articles in much further detail, at least the abstract. If you like slideshows, the Indiana Geological and Water Survey at Indiana University developed this <u>presentation</u> covering the same topic for the entire state. Enjoy as you wish. Thank you for reading.





# Welcome to My GardenPorterweedProblem



#### BY MARLENE VANDERLIN, PCMG CLASS OF 2018

When you're gone from your place or just ignore the landscape for a while, you expect some weeds and grass to overgrow the area. But--a giant weed?! This is what happened in my landscape in Florida.

I identified this as a Porterweed. (It makes me wonder why we don't see this in Porter County.) My research revealed that there is more than one kind of Porterweed.

I was able to meet with people from FNPS (Florida Native Plant Society) who were having a plant sale at a local farm. They confirmed that the plant in my landscape was native to Asia and an invasive plant, *Stachytarpheta urticifolia*. It grows to 5-6 feet on a wooden stem as pictured in two of my photos. In contrast, the Florida native typically grows one-inch tall. It is a short and sprawling genus, *Stachytarpheta Jamaicensis*. Both are still considered to attract butterflies and other pollinators.

I was advised to remove the *Stachytarpheta urticifolia* since it was choking out what I wanted in that garden bed. <u>More info on this plant.</u>



## GARDEN THYME

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