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GARDEN THYME



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PURDUE EXTENSION PORTER COUNTY 155 INDIANA AVENUE, SUITE 301 VALPARAISO, IN 46383

— *In this Issue*

Table of Contents

In this Issue	01
A Note from Nikky	02
Meet a Master Gardener:	
Albert & Hanekah Hulitt	03
My Plant; My Project:	
You Win Some; You Lose Some	05
Garden Wanderer:	
A Rainforest in the Northwest	
Highlands of Scotland?	07
Welcome to My Garden:	
A Successful First PCMGA	
Garden Skip	09
Our Geology: Past, Present &	
Powerful, Pt. II of III	11

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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.



page 09



page 07



page 03

— *A Note from Nikky*

Nikky Witkowski

*Extension Educator, Agriculture & Natural
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The holidays are right around the corner! Find time to enjoy the festivities and people as much as we enjoy our landscapes and gardens during the summer. I would encourage finding the beauty in winter gardens as much as summer. You can create winter interest now by leaving some plants above the snow line and not cutting everything down. The way the snow covers the foliage or the ice hangs on the branches can just be a whole new level of beauty.

With “level” in mind, know that we sent Purdue Extension Master Gardener status update letters to the membership. These letters indicate what your status will be as of January 1, 2025. If you need to record your volunteer or education hours yet, please do so before that day so that your status will remain active with your fellow EMG volunteers. Master Gardeners should use the [Purdue Master Gardener Manager](#) online volunteer management system to report volunteer activity and educational training hours. Feel free to call or email me with any questions.

Now comes a time for indoor gardening. Remember that indoor humidity may be low and can cause your plants to suffer, as well as, using city water. Your indoor plants may have been fine outside all summer long due to whatever rain they received. However, city water contains chlorine/fluoride that can become toxic to plants over time. When this is their only water source, it's more likely to have effects of toxicity. Leaving a water jug out and full of water between watering will assist in this problem.



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— Meet a Master Gardener



Albert & Hakenah Hulitt

BY ALBERT HULITT, PCMG CLASS OF 2023

Greetings fellow Master Gardeners and garden enthusiasts! My name is Al Hulitt. I participated in the in-person spring class of 2023, and my wife Hakenah participated with Zoom in the spring class of 2024. Our love of gardening and community came from the values instilled in us by our grandparents. Our Master Gardener class bolstered our knowledge and fueled the existing passion within us.

We started our farming journey as a vision many years ago. In 2021 we purchased our five-acre property in Portage. Although not finished, we have the vision for our landscaping around our home to be self-sustainable and practical. We do have a thriving vegetable garden that over this last season yielded 150 pounds of tomatoes, a bountiful amount of cucumbers and a variety of sweet and

(continued on page 04)

hot peppers. We surrounded our produce garden area with three foot tall fencing that extends two-feet underground in an effort to keep the rabbits and voles out. We planted herbs and wildflowers along the fence line to attract pollinators and quickly learned why you shouldn't plant mint in the ground!

We enjoy hosting farmers markets along the front portion of our property. With a busy intersection, department stores on Route 6, as well as, newly developed subdivisions nearby (eating up tilled fields), our road, 500 W, is increasingly well traveled. Typically, on farmers market days, we, along with other vendors, sell our produce to passers by with the help of our two sons.

We recently completed construction of a 30'x72' high-tunnel greenhouse that was awarded to us through an Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) grant from Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). I really want to spread the information about the program in our community because it's a huge benefit for us growers! Utilizing Nifty Hoops and their two highly-trained contractors, the high tunnel was constructed with the help of many friends (Community Build) who took time out of their lives and work week to help us make strides toward our farm goals. We could not have done it without them. We anticipate the high tunnel will provide many opportunities to

grow more produce with longer seasons in the future.

Hakenah is an environmental waste chemist by day and has several visions for the property. One is to create a special section for calming relaxation and exercise. She would like to share this area with the community to encourage healthy lifestyle practices. Hakenah has recently partnered with NWI Food Council to participate in their FarmHER Program which provides fresh produce and products to first-time moms in need.

As for myself, I am not a full time farmer. My "real job" is Detective with the Hammond Police Department. My gardens, chickens and family "ground me" when not on duty! Being connected to my farm helps me quiet the noise that police officers go through on a daily basis.

Regarding our Garden Skip, I couldn't wait to show what we've grown and plan to grow; it went very well. We had about 12 MGs come out, including Margaret Mudd! We served fresh brewed sun tea using our garden herbs. I even gave a little history lesson of the property. The chickens were entertained. All in all it was a success!

You can hear more about our progress, plans and vision at Hulitthomestead.com or follow us on Facebook and Instagram: Hulitt Homestead.



— *My Plant; My Project*

You Win Some; You Lose Some

SUZANNA TUDOR, PCMG CLASS OF 2002

I received a gift card to Four Seasons and picked out a shrub rose ('Color Cocktail') that caught my attention. This showstopper sported clusters of yellow, peach and pink blooms. Of course I had to get it. The first bloom in the cluster glows with a vibrant yellow, then as it ages turns to shades of pink and peach. I don't know if you have to do this, but I snipped off spent buds. Had to, they were ugly. Whatever, this beauty kept blooming all season--still blooming in November. You can't help but enjoy its fragrance as you walk by, an added bonus.



JILL KILHEFNER, PCMG CLASS OF 2011

The year 2024 will go down as one of the least successful garden seasons I've had. We had a lot of "critter pressure," including moles, deer and rabbits, and the drought contributed to poor plant performance. We've never had a mole problem, but we (and our neighbors) had tunnels everywhere. I speculate that it was related to the cicada grub emergence? They tunneled under the annual flower seedlings that I grew and disrupted the root systems or knocked the plants down all together. I grew three flats of zinnias, including the pricey Floret varieties that were released for 2024. Out of 72 plants, six survived and bloomed. I need to plan for better protection next year.

(continued on page 06)



**MARGARET MUDD, PCMG CLASS OF 2019**

Shortly into the garden season, I discovered a striking variety of salvia called 'Black and Blue', at a local nursery. I was confident that it was good for pollinators but I was also hopeful that its anise scent would deter the chipmunks wreaking havoc in the containers in my front entryway. On both counts, I struck gold and with the extra bonus of regular visitors, a pair of ruby-throated hummingbirds.

MARLENE VANDERLIN, PCMG CLASS OF 2018

I love dahlias in my garden and in bouquets! Note to self: dig up and store these in the fall along with my cannas and gladiolus.

**GREG CARTER, PCMG CLASS OF 2011**

My elephant ears were gorgeous in the summer of 2023. Wintering them over in a cool, dry location didn't seem too difficult to accomplish; however, the bulbs were all mush when retrieved this spring—a total loss. This spring while sifting through internet websites for bulbs worthy of submission at the Porter County Fair, I found this one: Mojito, a smaller, brightly colored variety. Now to figure out how to keep them through the winter for a return engagement in July, 2025.

ARTHUR COBBS, PCMG CLASS OF 2017

Deer have been destroying my garden for several years. I have tried many things to stop them without success. I was ready to abandon my garden but decided to try one more time. I erected a six-foot fence around a 32x16 plot. Although deer can jump over a six-foot fence, Nikki advised that they probably would not jump into a narrow enclosure. I added a six-foot fence down the middle of half of the plot for plants to climb and to make the plot appear even narrower. The deer did not touch my garden this year.

**WILMA WILLARD, PCMG CLASS OF 2011**

This season I made bouquets to sell. It was a fun hobby, and I really enjoyed sharing them. With fresh cuts, fresh water, fresh vases, and rearranging, I made good on the ones that did not sell by delivering them to local nursing homes to bring joy to residents—and it did!



Garden Wanderer A Rainforest in the Northwest Highlands of Scotland?

BY SUE SPELDE, PCMG CLASS OF 2004



Yes—with the help of the Gulf Stream and over 100 acres of carefully selected trees! The guidebook of Inverewe Gardens (pronounced inver-you) calls it the Impossible Garden. The land was barren heathland and bog situated on Loch Ewe (a sea inlet) on the rugged coast of NW Scotland. It has the same latitude as St. Petersburg, Russia and Labrador, Canada and was exposed to constant and severe gales. However, this corner of Scotland has the advantage of the Gulf Stream which provides relatively warm moist air and a milder climate than would be expected at this latitude.

In the early 1860's, Osgood Mackenzie, the original owner and creator of Inverewe, had a vision of what this land could be. At age 20, he began creating his 12,000 acre estate. He started with his walled garden, which was to provide food, and built a series of complex walls and imported many tons of soil. He also planted Scots pine, Oaks, Beech, Alder and Birch as a barrier shelter to protect the gardens from the Atlantic storms that are still the greatest threat to these gardens. By the time of Mackenzie's death in 1922, Inverewe Gardens had become known internationally for its collection of native and exotic species. It grows plants and trees from India, Sri Lanka, New Zealand, Australia, Brazil, South Africa, Mexico, the Canary Islands, North America and many others.

After Mackenzie died, his daughter, Mairi, took over the management of the gardens. In 1952, she turned it over to the National Trust of Scotland (NTS). Much land has been sold off to generate funds for an endow-

(continued on page 08)

ment, so currently Inverewe Gardens is approximately 2000 acres including moors, coastline and woodlands.

The gardens are truly spectacular, and many of the original plants planted over a century ago are still thriving. This includes many from the Rhododendron collection. Some of the largest are Himalayan and have spectacular bark. These plants thrive despite growing in very shallow soil.

A favorite of mine is the *Quercus cerris*, Turkey Oak 'Variegata'. It was planted in 1937 and is now considered a champion. It is remarkable not only for its variegated leaves but also for the lichen that drape throughout its canopy, as seen in the photo. Periodically someone must climb to the top of the tree and prune out any non-variegated suckers to prevent the tree from reverting back to its natural state.

The *Eucalyptus coccoifera*, or Tasmanian snow gum, is a good example of how hardy plants have to be to survive this environment. This tree has been blown out of the ground twice (1953 and 2005) and is still thriving. Note the beautiful bark and how the tree is growing along the ground. The photo of the roots gives you an idea of the challenging growing conditions.

Because this corner of Scotland has a hyper-oceanic climate, it creates a very rare and unique habitat for ancient and native woodland of not only rare plants but also insects such as moths and butterflies. It has been given high conservation status and a special name, "Scotland's rainforest".

Unfortunately, Inverewe is not immune to invasives such as *R. ponticum* and Japanese knotweed among others that thrive in these unique growing conditions and are threatening to displace many of the rare species. Inverewe is meeting this challenge by converting the removed *R. ponticum* into biochar and returning it to the soil. This has the potential of restoring the balance of the soil life - which is a critical step in the process of regeneration of the forest ecosystem. If you would like to learn more about how Inverewe and others are creating and using biochar, [here is a link to a great article](#) on the NTS website. Inverewe is truly an unforgettable garden and will become a highlight of your trip to Scotland.



Successful First PCMGA Garden Skip

**BY WILMA WILLARD, PCMG CLASS OF 2011
AND 2024 GARDEN SKIP COORDINATOR**

PCMGA members were invited to attend open-house style events called 'Garden Skips' this September. Our three Garden Skip hosts and their guests were excited to exchange successes, challenges, projects and share our mutual passion for gardening as they explored these home gardens. Bonus—it was fun!

On Saturday, September 14, Hosts Albert and Hakenah Hulitt welcomed MGs to their five-acre country lot near Portage. Their ever-expanding vegetable garden, creative chicken coop, and brand new greenhouse were of particular interest. That day the Hulitts also received advice regarding their newest ambition, a wildflower prairie. Please check out page 3-4 of this issue and meet these new PCMGA members!

On Wednesday, September 18, Host Jill Kilhefner offered her one-acre corner lot in a subdivision of Valparaiso for a Garden Skip. She walked her guests around the yard, sharing information and taking questions about her honeybees, vegetables, herbs, fruits, annual flowers, perennial flowers and seed-sowing endeavors. Needing advice on a design for her front foundation bed, she

was thrilled to discuss, then receive a sketch for a potential solution!

On Thursday, September 26, Host Greg Carter entertained guests on his city lot in a cul-de-sac of Valparaiso. His garden design, perennials, mini-orchard and variety of ornamental grasses brought interest to the Garden Skip guests. Greg was excited to share his adventures in hosta hybridizing, complete with failures and successes, evidenced by a wide array of hostas and exciting new varieties he is attempting to create around his well-maintained yard.

Approximately 35 guests attended the three events given by our generous and

(continued on page 10)



Jill Kilhefner, back left, guides her guests past raised garden beds. Photo credit Wilma Willard.

gracious hosts. Participants were able to count visit time for EMG education hours and the hosts were able to count time as EMG volunteer hours. Our interaction at the Garden Skip events did help each other grow!



We are considering our first-ever PCMGA Garden Skip a success because...

- two-way learning happened,
- personal connections of PCMGA members were strengthened and
- perhaps it paved the way for a PCMGA member to advance from participation in the "Garden Skip" to the "Garden Walk" as a committee member or even a host. Consider this great opportunity!



Our Geology: Past, Present and Powerful

Part 2 of 3

BY GERRY LEHMANN, PCMG CLASS OF 2009

*What did the glacier leave for us?
The first of three Landforms!*

Next time you drive from Valparaiso to Chesterton, use the northbound IN-49 entrance ramp from Route 6. While on the ramp, briefly look past the new hospital to the northwest and the horizon. You will see the highest steel mill buildings along Lake Michigan. You just passed one of the highest elevations in Porter County.

The Beverly Hill area is just to the east on Route 6, aptly known as Ridge Road; it is the highest elevation in Porter County at 860 feet above sea level. This is 260 feet above the shoreline of the current lake at roughly 600 feet above sea level. Lake Michigan water level is currently about 580 feet. All of this rise is a broad, miles wide deposit of glacial till left there by the last recession of the glacier during the Wisconsin Glacial Phase. This

deposit of various rocky solids was dropped some time after its 20,000 years ago southernmost expansion when temperatures rose, and the glacier began to melt. This 'glacial till' is all the material a glacier scours out of the earth as it grows and can include boulders, gravel, sand and silt. The geologic feature of these deposits is called a moraine, in our case the Valparaiso Moraine. This specific moraine stretched in a horseshoe shape from Grand Rapids, MI, to west of the city of LaPorte and Valparaiso, Indiana to Glenwood, Palos, and LaGrange, IL and north.

Envision a mile high glacier melting as the climate warmed. Glacial 'meltwater' is flowing wherever it can find a lower elevation. Water comes out of tunnels under the ice and from streams above. But the glacier is still huge, and along its southern face, it's calving huge chunks of ice

(continued on page 12)



which become stationary. And these ice chunks formed the numerous 'kettle' lakes on the north side of Valparaiso. Kettle lakes, or pot-hole lakes, can take any shape, are typically very deep and have steep underwater sides until they are filled in by eons of vegetation.

Eventually the glacier shrinks enough that the Valparaiso Moraine becomes its southern shoreline. While 400 miles north, at what is now the Straits of Mackinac, the ice is still frozen and this new shoreline is the glacier's only 'meltwater' outlet. So, Glacial Lake Chicago is formed 14,000 years ago, and the runoff water creates the now Des Plaines River Valley.

The Valparaiso Moraine landform was only the last in centuries long advances and retreats of multiple glaciers from their maximums. Each leaves their mark on the landscape, not only with multiple moraines but also glacial plain lakes. Porter County is not unique here, and neither is the State of Indiana; all of the Great Lakes themselves and the surrounding state's geologies are the result of glacial action.

What happens now with our Glacial Lake Chicago will be addressed in the next chapter of this history.



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