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GARDEN THYME



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

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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.



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— *A Note from Our President*

Kristine Sandrick

PCMGA CLASS OF 2014



My favorite PCMGA volunteer gig was helping a Girl Scout troop plan a garden. Marcia Carson and I volunteered. The scout leader invited us to discuss, then demonstrate amending soil and planting seeds in soil pods. We also worked outside, measuring the weedy patch they planned to turn into a flower garden. The girls were sponges. I loved it.

Purdue Master Gardeners share a common mission, "Helping Others Grow". We took classes, quizzes and tests to learn, then volunteered to earn hours and credentials. Yes, enlivening our own gardens was a goal, but growing beyond ourselves is the greater mission. Through our Gardening Show, Garden Walk, educational programs, Ask a Master Gardener booth and philanthropy, among other programs, we teach folks how to grow food, replace invasive with native and beautify and inspire their neighborhoods. And that's just scratching the topsoil.

I hope this year you will be inspired by our volunteers, our programs and our mission to find your favorite "volunteer gig" in Porter County and help others grow. If you have a passion for growing apples, dahlias, caryopteris or ... insert your favorite here ... ask a member about opportunities to share your passion with others. Come to monthly meetings and ask questions. We are all here to help you and help each other.

Trying to "learn" how to be your PCMGA president this year, I've been reading meeting minutes from the past 11-12 years (woohoo, right?). What is most remarkable is we accomplish so much by working together. PCMGA is fortunate to have 118 amazing volunteers. Thank you, each of you, for the positive role you play in our organization and throughout our county. I look forward to getting to know you. Happy New Gardening Year!



Volunteer of the Year: *Margaret Mudd*

BY FRANK LISAK, PCMG CLASS OF 2021

One of the hardest tasks I have during the year is finding one person for Volunteer of the Year. Although we are all volunteers, and we all put in a lot of time making sure the programs of the Porter County Master Gardener's Association are carried through, finding that one person who goes above and beyond that of a volunteer is a tough choice.

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Photography credit: Nancy Rosene.

Throughout the year, I pay attention to those who have participated in our events, who attend meetings, provide input to advance our mission and more importantly, who, behind the scenes, is making sure things are getting accomplished for the benefit of making our programs stand out.

This past year, I found that person, Margaret Mudd. Looking back, Margaret approached me after a membership meeting near the end of 2023, to inform me that she was interested in one of the positions on the Membership committee, as the former committee Co-Chairs, Gloria Notaro and Liz Nobles were stepping down in 2024.

Over the past year, not only has Margaret worked with Jill Kilhefner, with whom she co-chairs the membership committee, but has jumped in with both feet into that new role. She and Jill worked to get the membership records updated, taking the Association to a more digital profile of record keeping and is outstanding in getting correspondence out to the membership. She went above and beyond, spending her own money

and resources to bring the things we do to the next level. The Ask a Master Gardener booth brought in more public contacts by including children to get them interested and asking questions about horticulture. Margaret brought in hands-on displays of insects, worms, and with the help of other members, demonstrations on vermiculture. This, in turn, got the parents engaged, increasing our reach and mission objective of "Helping Others Grow."

Margaret was also involved in many of our projects throughout the year. The Gardening Show, Earth Day, Garden Walk and was always available when you needed volunteers. It is for these reasons that Margaret was chosen as Master Gardener Volunteer of the Year.

Congratulations Margaret, it is a pleasure working with you.



MEET YOUR 2024 PCMGA OFFICERS

President: Kris Sandrick
 Vice Pres: Terri Zimmer
 Secretary : Ronald Hermance
 Treasurer: Debbie McCormick

Extension Advisor: Nikky Witkowski

Education.....Kathy Ruble, Marty Seroczynski
 Gardening Show Chair.....Ann Cierniak
 Garden Walk.....Mary LaRocque
 Membership.....Jill Kilhefner & Margaret Mudd
 Publicity/Promotion.....LuAnn Troxel
 Philanthropy.....Marty Seroczynski

Past President: Frank Lizak

Members at Large: Sue Arnold
 Toni Bianchi
 David Parry

Graphic Design, Printing.....Nancy Rosene
 AAMG booth.....Jim Albers
 Webmaster, Messaging.....Marueen Phillips
 Computer, Photography.....Dan Ruggaber
 Garden Thyme Newsletter: Hillary Miles
 Suzanna Tudor
 Wilma Willard

2024 Master Gardener Awards



Certified Extension Master Gardener:

Robert Bartlett, Toni Bianchi, Elaine Caporale, Robert Haas, Albert Hulitt, Kelly Kwilosz, Mary LaRocque, Debbie Marshall, Hillary Miles, Kirsten Reed

Advanced Extension Master Gardener:

Tina Daugherty, Gordana Gerbick, Melissa Mills, JoEllen Raby, Kathy Sipple

Bronze: Jill Green, Ronald Hermance, Laura Hrusovsky, Bruce Lusin, Margaret Mudd, David Parry, Carol Redlin-Cooper, Tina Ryczek, Susan Silverstein, John Steffen, Lynne Sundwall

Silver: Frank Lizak

Gold 1,000 hours: James Albers

Jim Albers receives his Gold Award for 1,000 volunteer hours. Photography credit: Nancy Rosene.

19th Annual Gardening Show

REPORT FROM ANN CIERNIAK, CHAIRMAN OF THE 2025 PCMGA GARDENING SHOW

What a wonderful show we had this year! We had 2,100 paid guests, and with volunteers and vendors, we had about 2,600 people filling the Expo. On show day, January 25th, the weather cooperated and attendees were happy to get out of the house and think of spring. I spoke to quite a few newbies that had not been to our show before and they were impressed.

Thanks to all of our volunteers. You showed up for set-up, volunteered the day of the show and worked in the background prior to the show to make our show such a success. I heard nothing but good things from the vendors and attendees about how nice our volunteers are, so kudos to all of you who showed up with your smiling faces and helpful attitudes! I have to say I had a feeling of pride in our organization at the end of the show. All of your hard work paid off!

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We were able to provide education to a total of 1,305 attendees with our speakers, Janet Macunovich, Jack Pizzo, Richard Hawke and Jennifer Brennan in the Seminar room as well as Damien Appel, Doreen King and Sam Irwin in the Demonstration room. Members, don't forget you will be able to view the recordings of the speakers for education hours in the Seminar room in the near future by accessing the Member Pages of pcgarden.info.



We gave away 6,800 commercial seed packets and over 5,700 seed packets packaged by Master Gardeners. That's a total of 12,500+ seed packets distributed to our guests! We also gave away a lot of bulbs. All our bulbs were taken by the afternoon, and all our seeds were given away by 2:30. We were cleaned out!



Thanks to the Art Barn, we had the supplies and talent for crafting in the Children's Corner; I saw a young lady carrying her pipe cleaner bouquet through the Expo and I had to stop her and take her picture. The bouquet was so cute that I wanted to find the time to make one for myself, but unfortunately I just ran out of time.

So we can all pat ourselves on the back for another successful show. As they say, team work makes the dream work!

Save the Date for the 20th Annual Gardening Show:
January 31, 2026.

— *Crafty Creations**Love is for
The Birds*

BY WILMA WILLARD, PCMG CLASS OF 2011



Materials: orange peel, hole punch, twine, peanut butter, birdseed, scissors and whatever items you desire to personalize.

What better way to care for our feathered friends and bring children into their world than to make a craft that feeds the birds?

According to the US Fish and Wildlife Service, some 59 million Americans feed wild birds for the thrill of seeing cardinals, woodpeckers and nuthatches up close, right outside their windows. Feeding wild birds has been an American tradition for more than 100 years. In fact, in 2020, during the first months of the Covid pandemic, participation soared with people largely stuck at home. Bird seed and feeders flew off shelves.

But, why not use what you already have and make a simple feeder?

01

First eat an orange or grapefruit! Cut it in half, make holes, string it up with twine, and add a perch.

02

Slather with peanut butter and your choice of wild bird feed.

03

Let a child decorate it to make it personal.

04

Hang your bird feeder in a location where you all can enjoy the view. The birds will love you for it! Happy Valentine's Day!



Our Geology: Past, Present and Powerful

Part 3 of 4

Editor's Note: A fascinating and ancient glacial dive into the formation of our precious treasure, Lake Michigan and lands beyond. You won't want to skip viewing linked info and videos for further understanding of our miraculous topography.



31,000 years ago



29,000 years ago



18,000 years ago



13,250 years ago

BY GERRY LEHMANN, PCMG CLASS OF 2009



Today, the Valparaiso Moraine is the dividing line of the Great Lakes Watershed to the north and the Kankakee Watershed to the south. In the time of the melting glaciers, it was the sand, gravel and bolder crest that defined the southern boundary of the glacial meltwater.

The recessing glacier provided torrents of meltwater surging against and finally through the moraine in the Chicago area, scattering the moraine's glacial till deep into Illinois. About 14,500 years ago a Glacial Lake Chicago stabilized at roughly 60 feet above the current level of Lake Michigan with a shore line called the Glenwood beach. The lake level dropped two other times in the past with named beaches, today known as the Calumet and the Tolleston ridges.

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The lake side of the moraine, called the Calumet Region, is characterized as a 'dune and swale' complex. [This video](#) produced by Indiana Dunes Tourism on this complex is worth viewing. And [Gibson Woods](#), over in Hammond, was once a beach, yet has remained natural since about 1850.

Lake Michigan today serves up the fine sand which the glacier eons-ago scoured from the bedrock in its creation in the depths of Lake Michigan. The clockwise littoral current of the lake washes this sand onto the beach with each wave. Once on the beach the sand can dry and be wind blown further up on the beach and out of the reach of the waves. There it can either add to the dunes beyond, or an ill-timed, winter storm can return it to the lake.

The south side of the moraine needs a mention. This area was essentially a glacial plain lake with an elevation of roughly 100 feet above current level of Lake Michigan. This area was never dry as glacial meltwater from the Saginaw Lobe in eastern Michigan found an outlet south via this flat plain. When European settlers arrived in the 1830s it was named the [Grand Kankakee Marsh](#) with a slow flowing, meandering river all the way to the Illinois River. In 1837 the banks of this river would become the southern border of Porter County.

Both the Calumet Region to the north and the Grand Kankakee Marsh to the south no longer survive in their original post glacier form. Extensive efforts to reshape Porter County to serve 'modern' values of progress left only small parcels of the original Calumet Region surviving today. And little of the marsh survives a 75 year effort to convert it to farmland. In the final episode of this story we will explore what all this means to the soils we garden in today.





Perennial Plant of the Year

Meet *Pycnanthemum muticum*, Clustered mountainmint

For more than one reason, clustered mountainmint (also known as blunt mountainmint or short-toothed mountainmint) is a perennial you may not think would win an award! But, as a tough and adaptable perennial native to meadows and open woodlands across much of the eastern United States, it has been named by The Perennial Plant Association as Perennial of the Year!

Mountainmint is “just” a native and has no showstopper blooms nor colorful fall foliage. Its tiny white to light pink blooms are barely noticeable. So, what is visually attractive about this plant? The mountainmint’s silver bracts give a brightness to the meadow and landscape, almost appearing to be frost. Persisting for months, the plant brings a silvery sheen that contrasts wonderfully with surrounding plants, especially those with dark foliage and colorful blooms.

What else makes clustered mountainmint award-worthy? A great addition to a pollinator garden, mountainmint draws butterflies, wasps, and bees from July to September. Its minty scented leaves deter deer and rabbits. It has no serious disease issues and is not invasive to the degree of “true mints”. Branched, vertical stems grow two to three feet tall and form a dense, weed-suppressing clump that naturalizes freely and mingles among other plants. Clustered mountainmint grows in USDA Zones 4-8.

The Perennial Plant Association is a trade association composed of growers, retailers, landscape designers and contractors, educators, and others that are professionally involved in the herbaceous perennial industry. The association has been promoting perennials for 40 years, and has selected a Perennial of the Year since 1990.



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- PURDUE EXTENSION MASTER GARDENER EVENTS CALENDAR

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