

The Tollgate Farm News

VOLUME 32

ISSUE 9

SEPTEMBER 2026

MSU Tollgate Garden Volunteers GENERAL MEETING Thursday, SEPTEMBER 17, 2026 7:00 PM – 8:00PM (In the Picnic Pavilion at Tollgate)

Recipes with Apples Cooking Demo with Mary Spencer

Join garden volunteers and supporters in the **picnic pavilion** on Thursday evening, September 17th, for a cooking demonstration of two recipes to enjoy this autumn. Tollgate members enjoy Mary Spencer's annual cooking demonstrations, especially the recipes and samples! Mary will also answer your general or specific questions about cooking, ingredients, kitchen tools or appliances.

Mary Spencer's goal is to make people better cooks. She has been teaching cooking classes for over 30 years. Mary emphasizes fresh ingredients and seasonal cuisine. Her business, *Taste: A Cook's Place*, www.tasteacooksplace.net, has classes at PARC in downtown Plymouth. Mary does many cooking demos at local libraries or on Zoom from her home kitchen for libraries across the state. She teaches a variety of classes at The Old World Olive Company in Plymouth.

For many years, Mary conducted cooking demos at ABC Warehouse locations in Livonia, Troy, Lakeside and Novi. She has conducted food tours, done menu planning, and researched heirloom recipes. Mary has more than 5,500 cookbooks.

TOLLGATE GARDEN VOLUNTEER IMPORTANT DATES AND EVENTS 2026

SEPT	MEETINGS			OCT	MEETINGS	
1	TGAC Meeting – Zoom	7:00 pm		6	TGAC Meeting – Zoom	7:00 pm
17	TGV General Meeting	7:00 pm		15	TGV General Meeting	7:00 pm
SEPT	WORKDAY ACTIVITIES			OCT	WORKDAY ACTIVITIES	
5	Labor Day Weekend General garden workday	9:00 am		3-4	PUMPKINFEST NO WORKDAY	10:00 am – 4:00 pm
12	Xeriscape/Children's	9:00 am		10	Nursery Clean up	9:00 am
19	Nursery Fall Plant Sale	9:00 am – 12:00 pm		17	Pond Clean up	9:00 am
26	Farmhouse/Rose	9:00 am		24	Fall Clean up	9:00 am
		9:00 am		31	Fall Clean up	9:00 am

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FARM UPDATE FROM THE RESIDENT FARMER - *Destiny Pearson*

As summer begins to wind down, so does another busy camp season at Tollgate. After weeks of excited campers, bustling schedules, and endless activities, camp has officially come to an end. While we always enjoy so many young learners to the farm, we can probably admit that we're all feeling just a little relieved to catch our breath.

Of course, at Tollgate, there is never much time to rest before the next adventure begins. With camp behind us, our attention quickly turns to Pumpkinfest. Planning is already underway, and staff are hard at work planning, and we're looking forward to welcoming visitors back to the farm for a day full of fall fun.



Before we could fully switch into Pumpkinfest mode, however, the sheep barn had other plans. On Labor Day, all three of our ewes surprised us by giving birth five days ahead of schedule. By the end of the day, we welcomed six healthy, happy lambs to the Tollgate family. We're still finalizing names for the newest additions, but this year's theme for the sheep is Michigan history. The first lamb discovered that afternoon was found by one of our dedicated volunteers, who had the honor of kicking off the naming tradition with Mackinaw. We can't wait to see what other Michigan inspired names make the list as the lambs continue to grow.



If you'd like to meet our newest arrivals, you'll have your chance soon. The lambs are expected to make their public debut at Pumpkinfest, where visitors can get a first look at these playful new members of the flock.

As one season ends and another begins, we're grateful for the campers, volunteers, staff, and supporters who keep the farm buzzing with activity all year long. We're looking forward to a wonderful fall and hope to see you at Pumpkinfest!

Destiny Pearson
Livestock Coordinator/Assistant Farm Manager

Photos by Linda Piasecki

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NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT - *Renee Cottrell*

"No occupation is so delightful to me as the culture of the earth, and no culture comparable to that of the garden." -Thomas Jefferson, 3rd US President

September Notes:

--Please make nominations of yourself or another TGV member for any of the TGAC board positions that we vote on every year, President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. I would be happy to send the job descriptions to any interested individual.

--Nominations are also being accepted for The Ginger Meyer Award. Please nominate one of your TGV peers for this recognition of commitment to Tollgate, gardening knowledge and willingness to share that knowledge with others. [Ginger Meyer Award Nomination Form](#)

These nominations can be emailed to me or submitted in person at our membership meeting in September.

--Please take time to log your Tollgate volunteer hours on the Tollgate Volunteer sign in located in this issue. This is NOT linked to Extension MG, you need to continue to submit those through the Extension portal.

This data is used to show the volunteer support of our programs and is used by Tollgate Administration to gain further support of all our activities on site. New members of TGV are eligible for the Golden Shovel Award based on these entries.

--Planning is in process for The TGV Recognition Dinner set for Saturday November 7th all TGV are invited. Look for the upcoming email and complete the RSVP by the October 23rd deadline.

Thank you for being a Tollgate Garden Volunteer!

Renee Cottrell, President

rmcottrell4@att.net

NURSERY NOTES

The Nursery Team will continue to accept your fall plant division donations this month up until the September 19th Fall Plant Sale. This Event is from 9 am to 12 noon and highlights some of our fall blooming hardy perennials. As we slide into October the team will prepare the remaining plants for the winter once frost sets in. Please join us at this event!



The Tollgate Garden Volunteers held a recognition luncheon to honor Peg Palmer, former Area Garden Leader who retired from that role this season. Both Peg and her co-AGL, Deb Kearney will have the Nursery dedicated in their honor:

"The MSU Tollgate Nursery is dedicated in honor of Volunteers, Peg Palmer and Debra Kearney, for their many years of dedication, education and leadership of the Nursery and its Team members. Their tireless efforts, along with the efforts of many talented Tollgate Garden Volunteers, have been instrumental in MSU Tollgate's ability to continue in its purpose, mission and goals."

Renee

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Master NOT ACCEPTING Plant List 2026

Botanical Name	Common Name	Varieties
Acanthus Mollis	Bear Breeches	All varieties
Aegopodium podagraria	Goutweed	All varieties
Allium triquetrum	Balloon Bouquet	All varieties
Anemone hupehensis japon	Japanese Anemone	Pink Flowers
Anemone hupehensis japon	Japanese Anemone	White Flowers
Asclepias syriaca	Common Milkweed	All varieties
Asclepias tuberosa	Butterfly Weed	All varieties
Celidonium majus		
Convallaria	Lily of the Valley	All varieties
Delosperma	Ice Plant	All varieties
Dianthus	Pinks	All varieties
Darmera peltata	Indian Rhubarb	
Eruca sativa	Italian Arugula	All varieties
Euphorbia cyparississ	Spurge	All varieties
Heuchera	Coral Bells	All varieties
Iris cristata	Dwarf Crested Iris	Dwarf NON-Blue/Purple Blooms
Iris germanica	German Iris	All varieties
Iris palida	Variegated Iris	Variegated Leaf Varieties
Lavandula	Lavender	All varieties
Leucanthemum vulgare	Oxeye daisy	All varieties
Lobelia cardinalis	Cardinal Flower	All varieties
Lysimachia cletheroides	Gooseneck Loosestrife	All varieties
Lysimachia vulgaris	Yellow Loosestrife	All varieties
Malva parviflora	Cheeseweed	All varieties
Mentha	Mint	All varieties
Muscari	Grape Hyacinth	All varieties
Petasites japonica	Butter Burr	All varieties
Solidago ohioensis	Ohio Golden Rod	All varieties
Tanacetum vulgare	Tansy	
Vinca	Myrtle	All varieties
Valeriana officinalis	Valerian	All varieties

PLANT DONATION GUIDELINES



TOLLGATE FALL PLANT SALE FLYER

PAR Report - Kathryn Fitzpatrick



We have donated **1585 lbs.** to those in need locally. Potatoes, onions, carrots, garlic, tomatillos, and cabbage have been added to the bounty. There seems to be an even greater demand this year for food rescue and donations, especially fresh produce, and this amazing team is glad to be able to support this worthy effort.

All the potatoes were harvested, with a significant deficit from our yield last year. Unfortunately, this year's unseasonable heat, drought, and a new pest contributed to the decline. Fortunately, the kohlrabi and carrot crops are making up for the shortage. The onions were harvested and laid out to dry, with half already cleaned up for donation. The turnips look great and should be ready for harvest this month. Our hot peppers and tomatillos are producing

prodigiously. The jalapeno and serrano peppers are ahead of the poblanos, but the poblanos will be contributing this month.

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Once again, we had a large group of MSU Alumni volunteers on a Saturday workday, and they were able to not only harvest all the crops that were ready but additionally weed some of our overgrown pathways – THANK YOU! Our focus and time this month will be harvesting and continuing to battle the weeds.

Photos by Kathryn Fitzpatrick

Happy Harvesting,
Kathryn Fitzpatrick

AGL Information – *Marilyn Alimpich*

Hello Area Garden Leaders,



It's time to collect plant tag information for any new shrubs, trees and perennials needing a plant label. Label printing will begin during late January, so it's not too early to gather the information before we head into busy holiday seasons. A link to the preferred format is below.

If you have any questions, please contact me at: masoleil@sbcglobal.net, or call or text 734-730-6565.

See you in the gardens,

Marilyn Alimpich
masoleil@sbcglobal.net

[What is an AGL?](#)
[Gardens in need of an AGL](#)

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Michigan State University Tollgate Garden Volunteers

Fall Plant Sale

**Saturday September 19th, 2026
9 a.m. to 12 p.m.**

**Reasonably priced, Michigan hardy perennials for sun and shade,
including Michigan natives that attract hummingbirds, butterflies and pollinators.**

Featuring late summer and fall blooming varieties

Payment with Cash, Check, Mastercard or Visa will be accepted

MSU Master Gardeners will be there to answer questions and assist in your selections



**Michigan State University
Tollgate Farm and Education Center**
28115 Meadowbrook Roads
Novi, MI 48377
248 347-3860 ext. 251
www.tollgate.msu.edu

Please-No Pets allowed

Accommodations for persons with disabilities may be requested by contacting the event coordinator two weeks prior to the start of the event. Requests received after this date will be honored whenever possible.

MSU Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, or veteran status.

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DID YOU KNOW?

PLANT OF THE MONTH

Photos by Tom Culkin

Canna Lilies at the Pond (Constructed Wet Land) by Dave Komraus

Visitors to the pond gardens often stop in their tracks when they see the towering plants with broad, tropical leaves and brilliant red flowers. These striking giants are Canna Lilies, and although today they seem abundant enough to form a small jungle, their presence at Tollgate began with just a few donated rhizomes and a willingness to experiment.



When David Komraus first tried to grow Cannas, he had no experience with and only a handful of rhizomes to experiment with. We'll call them bulbs like most folks do. The real surprise came that first autumn. When he dug up the plants, he discovered that each single bulb had multiplied underground into a cluster of rhizomes—much like potatoes. The soil practically lifted with them — a whole clump where just one had been. Those bulbs stored well through the winter, multiplied again, and soon there were enough to begin what has become a favorite tradition: the Volunteer Dinner Canna Giveaway.

The project continued to grow, quite literally. This year, David and the pond team expanded their efforts by raising both cannas and elephant ears in large pots inside the hoop house. Their lush foliage and dramatic size made them one of the standout attractions at the Spring Plant Sale.

Canna lilies themselves are tropical perennials that thrive in heat, humidity, full sun, and rich, moist soil. They come in a wide range of cultivars, from compact varieties suited for containers to towering giants that can reach six to eight feet tall. Some are grown for their vivid flowers in shades of red, orange, yellow, and pink, while others are prized for their dramatic foliage, which can be deep green, burgundy, or boldly variegated. Humming birds love them.

At the pond gardens, two giant red flowering cultivars dominate the landscape. The tallest, Musifolia, features impressive burgundy, green leaves that give the plants a bold, architectural presence. Slightly shorter but equally striking is the Robert Kemp variety, with bright green foliage that contrasts beautifully with its red blooms. Together, they create the lush, tropical atmosphere that has become a signature feature of the pond.



Over the years, the pond team has learned a great deal about planting, growing, harvesting, and storing cannas—mostly through hands-on trial and error. They quickly learned that cannas are remarkably easy to grow. Planting a bulb about six inches deep with the eyes facing upward is usually all it takes. Bulbs planted in early May reliably reach the same impressive size as those started earlier in the greenhouse.

Although the ideal time to harvest is after frost has killed the foliage, the team often digs the bulbs in late October to prepare for the Volunteer Dinner. Once lifted, the bulbs are cleaned and divided before being stored for winter. Cannas overwinter best in a cool, dry, dark place—around 40 to 50 degrees. The team uses large, covered bins with air holes and keeps them in the furnace room, though many gardeners simply store them in a basement in a paper bag, sometimes with a bit of peat moss to prevent drying.

What began as a small experiment has grown into one of the most recognizable and admired plantings at Tollgate. From a few donated bulbs to a flourishing display enjoyed by volunteers and visitors alike, the canna project is a testament to curiosity, teamwork, and the joy of watching something beautiful take root and thrive.

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VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Pumpkinfest is quickly approaching! Volunteers will be needed! Please look for an email concerning volunteer positions for the event. We hope to see you there!

MSU Tollgate Farm & Education Center

PUMPKINFEST 2026

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 03 & SUNDAY, OCTOBER 04,

10 AM - 4 PM

Celebrate with a Day Full of Farm Fun

Take a wagon ride & head to the pumpkin patch to find the perfect pumpkin. Enjoy delicious food, farm animal encounters, hands-on activities, and games for all ages while exploring the beauty of our historic 160-acre farm.

BUY YOUR TICKETS NOW & SAVE!

ADVANCED	WALK-IN
ADULTS: \$15	ADULTS: \$15
YOUTH: \$10	YOUTH: \$15
2 AND UNDER FREE	

ADMISSION INCLUDES

WAGON RIDES

LIVE MUSIC

PUMPKIN DECORATING

CLIMBING WALL

FACE PAINTING

FARM ANIMAL INTERACTIONS

PUMPKIN PLAY AREA

PUMPKIN MIDWAY GAMES

FARM IMPLEMENT DISPLAYS

New this year!

FOOD TRUCKS

SQUARE DANCING (SATURDAY, 1-3 PM ONLY)

PUMPKIN ARTIST (SUNDAY ONLY)

LOCATION

28115 Meadowbrook Rd,
Novi, MI 48377

Scan to Register

Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or veteran status.



12 Mile Road Construction

ROAD COMMISSION for OAKLAND COUNTY

RESURFACING PROJECT ON 12 MILE RD. TO START JULY 13 BETWEEN NOVI ROAD AND FARMINGTON ROAD

The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) in partnership with the cities of Novi and Farmington Hills, will begin construction on 12 Mile Road between Novi Road and Farmington Road in the two cities, on July 13. The project will take place over the course of two construction seasons, 2026 and 2027.

Throughout the project, one lane of traffic in each direction on 12 Mile Road will remain open to traffic. Access to all homes and business will be maintained.

PROJECT DETAILS

The project involves two phases, with one in 2026 and one in 2027. The project was broken into two phases so the work did not conflict with the City of Farmington Hills' 2026 project on Halsted Road (shown on map).

Phase 1 (2026): Phase one includes the sections of 12 Mile Road from Novi Road to Haggerty Road and from just east of Halsted Road to Farmington Road.

Phase 2 (2027): Phase two includes the section of 12 Mile from Haggerty Road to just east of Halsted Road.

The project includes:

- Patching concrete sections of 12 Mile Road from Novi Road to just west of M-5.
- Killing (grinding off existing pavement) and repaving 12 Mile with asphalt from west of M-5 east to Farmington Road.
- Repairing curbs and gutters where needed.
- Installing Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant crosswalks and pedestrian crosswalk signals with pushbuttons at signalized intersections.
- Upgrading SMART bus stops.
- Installing High-Intensity Activated Crosswalk (HAWK) pedestrian-crossing beacons at the White Plains Drive pedestrian crossing of 12 Mile.

SCHEDULE

- The Phase 1 work will start July 13 and be completed in the fall of 2026.
- The Phase 2 work will start in the spring of 2027 and be completed in the summer of 2027.

PROJECT COST AND FUNDING

The project will cost approximately \$12.2 million and will be paid for with federal funds and contributions from RCOC, Novi, Farmington Hills and Oakland County general government (through the Tri-Party Program).

CONTRACTOR

The contractor for the project is Cadillac Asphalt of Farmington Hills.

Note: A second project on 12 Mile Road, from east of Orchard Lake Road to Autumn Ridge in Farmington Hills is also currently underway (as noted on the above map). That project involves major resurfacing of that section of 12 Mile Road, and one lane of traffic in each direction will remain open in that section.

For general information:
Call RCOC's Department of Customer Services at (877) 858-4804 or send us an email at dcsmail@rcoc.org or via the RCOC Website, www.rcocweb.org

A two year renovation of 12 mile will start Monday July 13. One lane of traffic will remain open but we can expect delays during high traffic periods. Thank you to Gary, one of our garden volunteers, for forwarding the pdf summary of the project which can be viewed by clicking on the link below

[Oakland County Road Commission
Flyer on 12 Mile Construction](#)

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Membership Update July 2026

To all of you who donated to help the Tollgate Garden Volunteers make Tollgate a more beautiful place, **THANK YOU!** Your support of time talents, and donations will grow and maintain the beauty of the Tollgate gardens.

*Please welcome
Lee Kindermann,
our new Tollgate Volunteer
Membership Liaison. Thank you for
joining the committee!*

Please look forward to renewing your membership for the year 2027. New and renewed membership form for the Tollgate Volunteers is available online soon. Don't miss out on the Tollgate Garden Volunteer Newsletter! If you have any questions, please contact Lee Kindermann at leek.emg@gmail.com Thanks!

[TGV Recruitment Flyer](#)

MSU Tollgate Volunteer Sign-In:



[MSU Tollgate Volunteer Sign-in](#)

Links to Forms & Other Info

[Garden Orientation PDF](#)

[Tollgate Garden Web Page](#)

[Tollgate Garden Volunteer Info](#)

[TGV Activity Calendar](#)

[Tollgate Garden Map](#)

NOTE: If you are unable to access or print any necessary forms from the links, please notify Renee, who will arrange to provide copies. Copies will also be available at all in-person TGV meetings.

Take a Tollgate Picture

Send photo files in separate emails, if necessary, to Judy Warren, Tollgate Calendar Editor, at TGFarmPhotos@gmail.com Photos are also appreciated for the monthly Farm News. Photo files can be sent to: Ductapegirl212@gmail.com



Photo by Linda Piasecki

The Tollgate Farm News

TOLLGATE BEAUTY

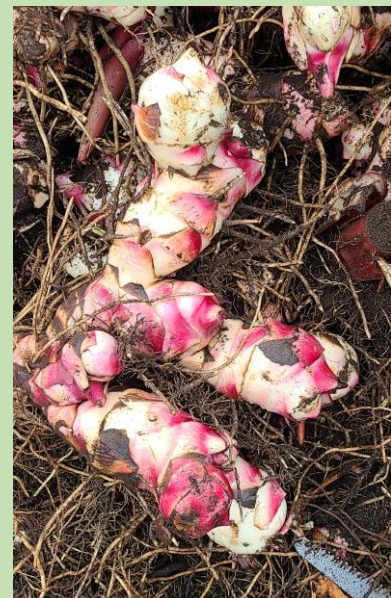
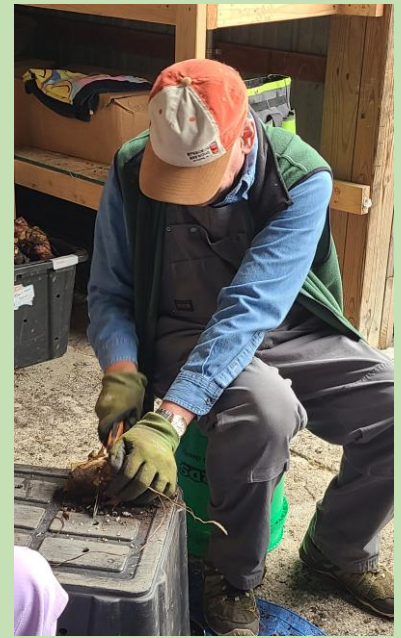


Top photo by Dave Komraus
Bottom 2 photos by Remee Cottrell

Above 3 photos by
Melanie Fuhrmann

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TOLLGATE CANNAS



Photos by Linda Piasecki

The Tollgate Farm News

Activity Days: January - October

- Activity Day hours are 9:00 am – Noon, unless otherwise noted on the Activities section of the first page of the newsletter and the full year calendar (see Links page).
- Volunteer Activity Day and Meeting Information will be communicated by email.
- Active members will continue to get email reminders of these activities.
- Lunch will be provided on scheduled workdays.
- We strongly recommend you bring your own tools for your garden activities. All tools borrowed from the Tool Shed should be cleaned and sanitized with the wipes provided, prior to returning the items to the Tool Shed after use.

Tollgate Garden Advisory Committee (TGAC)

Volunteer Liaison – Destiny Pearson

248-347-3860 Ext.251 pears278@msu.edu

PresidentRenee Cottrell

Vice PresidentMarilyn Alimpich

Secretary.....Theresa Bridenbaugh

TreasurerKaren Harris

Membership Lee Kindermann

CommunicationsKathy Johnson

ProgramsJackie Stengel

Farm News Editor.....Linda Piasecki

Event Coordinator..... Lori Heiden

- The TGAC meets monthly virtually **on Zoom on the first Tuesday of the month at 7:00 PM**. All Tollgate Garden Volunteer members are welcome to attend and should contact Destiny Pearson for meeting link.
- Contact information for individual TGAC members and Area Garden Leaders (AGL) are available by contacting Renee Cottrell at rmcottrell4@att.net to have message or contact forwarded for response. Contact info can also be found in the Garden Binders in the Volunteer Communication Center.
- Tollgate Volunteer Membership is renewed annually. The 2026 Tollgate Garden Volunteer membership is valid from **January 1, 2026 to December 31, 2026**.

- For membership questions or to update your current membership information, email Renee Cottrell at rmcottrell4@att.net
- For general Tollgate information and questions, contact Destiny Pearson or see Website: <http://tollgate.msu.edu/volunteering/>
- TIP: If you aren't getting The Tollgate Farm News email, check your SPAM folder


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Farm Contact - Destiny Pearson : pears278@msu.edu