

The Tollgate Farm News

VOLUME 32

ISSUE 7

JULY 2026

MSU Tollgate Garden Volunteers OPEN HOUSE

Thursday, JULY 16, 2026

6:00PM – 8:00PM

(On the Grounds of Tollgate)



Please join us for the MSU Tollgate Summer Garden Walk Open House on Thursday, July 16 from 6:00 to 8:00 PM. This FREE event will feature tours of the grounds, garden docents, hayrides, a scavenger hunt, and refreshments. Please see the flyer on page 7. See you there!

TOLLGATE GARDEN VOLUNTEER IMPORTANT DATES AND EVENTS 2026

JULY	MEETINGS		AUG	MEETINGS	
7	TGAC Meeting – Zoom	7:00 pm	4	TGAC Meeting – Zoom	7:00 pm
16	TGV OPEN HOUSE 17 th Rain date (No regular meeting)	6:00 pm To 8:00 pm	20	TGV General Meeting	7:00 pm
JULY	WORKDAY ACTIVITIES		AUG	WORKDAY ACTIVITIES	
4	July 4 Weekend – No planned garden workday		1	Entrance/Rain	9:00 am
11	Children's/Xeriscape	9:00 am	8	Pond/12 Mile	9:00 am
18	Hosta/Demo	9:00 am	15	Heritage/Office	9:00 am
25	Farmhouse/PAR	9:00 am	22	Nursery/plant division	9:00 am
			29	Rockledge/plant division	9:00 am

The Tollgate Farm News

FARM UPDATE FROM THE RESIDENT FARMER - *Destiny Pearson*



I hope everyone had a wonderful Fourth of July and was able to spend some time relaxing with family and friends. While summer has brought its share of heat and rain, the gardens look fantastic! We're excited for the upcoming Garden Open House and can't wait to share the gardens with visitors. This is one of the best times of year, when all of the hard work put in by volunteers and community members really begins to shine. If you haven't taken a walk through the gardens lately, you're in for a treat.

While the gardens are thriving, our 4-H youth are also hard at work preparing for the Oakland County Fair. The fair is right around the corner, and the barns have been busy with kids getting their animals ready for the show ring. Despite the summer heat, they've been spending hours washing, clipping, shaving, and shearing animals, as well as practicing their showmanship skills.



It's always impressive to see the dedication these young exhibitors put into their projects. The long days and hard work they're putting in now will soon pay off when they have the opportunity to showcase their animals and everything they've learned throughout the year.

We hope to see many of you at the Garden Open House, and we wish all our fair participants the best of luck as they make their final preparations. It's a busy and exciting time here at Tollgate!

Photo by Destiny Pearson

Destiny Pearson
Livestock Coordinator/Assistant Farm Manager

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT - *Renee Cottrell*

“Like a welcome summer rain, humor may suddenly cleanse and cool the earth, the air and you.” *Langston Hughes, American poet, novelist, playwright (1901-1967)*

Notes from the President.....

The Tollgate Garden Open House is a **FREE** event to educate and entertain as well as introduce more people in the community to the gardens and activities at Tollgate! Instead of our monthly July meeting the TGVs will host the public for an evening in the gardens 6-8pm on Thursday July 16th (weather date July 17th). We have planned self-guided and volunteer guided garden walks, hayrides and dessert snacks for this evening in the gardens. Active volunteers are invited

[TOLLGATE GARDEN
OPEN HOUSE
FLYER](#)

The Tollgate Farm News

to participate as hosts for short shifts and enjoy the event with friends and family before or after your shifts. All members are welcome to attend and enjoy in person interaction with other Tollgate Garden members!



A special thanks for the hard work of the active volunteers, staff and local volunteer groups to maintain the gardens during the recent/ongoing heat wave. Please take care by staying hydrated, starting in cooler morning hours and taking frequent breaks. Whenever possible work in pairs/groups to monitor for heat illness symptoms. (See summary below) Keep your phone handy in case you need emergency medical help.

Welcome and thanks to the recent new members who have assisted in the gardens for the past several weeks. Your interest and contributions are much appreciated. Please feel free to contact me if you need any guidance in the gardens, non-Saturday work assignments or have an interest in a specific garden team.

Renee Cottrell, President
Tollgate Garden Volunteers
rmcottrell4@att.net

Photo by Linda Piasecki

Recognizing Heat Illness

Heat illness symptoms can range from mild to severe and include heavy sweating, muscle cramps, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, and fainting. More severe cases, like heat stroke, can cause confusion, seizures, and a very high body temperature.

Here's a more detailed breakdown:

Mild Symptoms (Heat Exhaustion):

- Heavy sweating: The body attempts to cool itself down through perspiration.
- Muscle cramps: Painful spasms, often in the legs, arms, or abdomen.
- Fatigue and weakness: Feeling unusually tired or weak.
- Dizziness and headache: Lightheadedness and head pain.
- Nausea and vomiting: Feeling sick to your stomach and possibly throwing up.
- Fast, weak pulse: The heart beats rapidly but weakly.
- Cool, clammy skin: Skin may feel cool and moist to the touch.
- Fainting: Loss of consciousness.

Severe Symptoms (Heat Stroke):

- High body temperature: Core body temperature above 104°F (40°C).
- Hot, dry skin: Skin may be red, hot, and dry to the touch.
- Confusion and disorientation: Difficulty thinking clearly, acting confused, or having trouble speaking.
- Seizures: Involuntary muscle spasms.
- Loss of consciousness: Passing out.
- Rapid, shallow breathing: Breathing may be fast and shallow.

The Tollgate Farm News

NURSERY NOTES

The Nursery will rest for most of July with condensing pots for irrigation efficiency and routine weed management by the team members. We will be gearing up again in August for fall plant donations and divisions beginning on August 15th and a Tollgate gardens site division day on Saturday August 22nd.



Please consider making donations from your gardens of your unique and favorite plants to contribute to the success of the sale! The Fall Plant sale is a smaller event than the spring, hoping to showcase more of the fall blooming plants. **Saturday September 19th is the date to save 9am to noon.** More information will follow as we get closer to these key dates.

This would be a good opportunity for new members who would like to explore being Nursery team members or just to take advantage of the learning experience with plants and public outreach. Feel free to reach out to me for further information.

I extend my continued gratitude to the Nursery Team and Tollgate staff and volunteers who have made our fundraising efforts a success.

Renee

Photo by Renee Cottrell

PAR Report - *Kathryn Fitzpatrick*



We have started harvesting – almost 4 weeks earlier than last year, to the tune of 178 lbs. so far consisting of lots of beautiful collard greens (both PAR and CSA donations), garlic scapes, green onions, radishes, and herbs supplied by the CSA team! The Eight Ball squash has bounced back beautifully, and we planted a few extra plants with the bedraggled Safari squash plants. The carrots are coming up nicely; however, they are competing with thistle, grass, and a few potato plants from last year's planting.

The Tollgate Farm News

The main PAR garden planting is completed, except for succession planting of radishes and turnips that will replace the garlic once it is harvested. The garlic is showing signs of being ready to harvest and cure within a couple of weeks. Kennebec and Red Port potatoes were planted in the CSA fields and have already popped up nicely – the Kennebec more vigorous than the Red Port so far. Our cucumber plants were planted in the crimped rye in the CSA fields, which should help with weed control. Also in the fields are our onions, cabbage, kale, hot peppers, and tomatillos. We helped trellis all the pole green beans for both the CSA and PAR in the CSA hoops.



Kohlrabi was planted in the PAR Garden for both PAR and CSA, and it is magnificent already. We also planted another bed of hot peppers with the peppers left over from the CSA field planting, and a succession crop of radishes. Now, we begin to focus mostly on weeding and pest control, with sporadic harvesting until peak harvest season.

Happy planting,

Kathryn Fitzpatrick

Photos by Kathryn Fitzpatrick

AGL Information – Marilyn Alimpich

Hello AGLs,

Summer is upon us and the removal of sticky weed and thistle is ever present. To help prevent the growth of these and other weeds, mulch can be spread in your area. Should you need mulch in your garden, please email your request to Destiny by Thursday so it can be delivered on Saturday. Don't forget to mention how much (full load or half load of the tractor bucket) and the kind of mulch (rough or fine mulch). You can send your request at: pears278@msu.edu.

Don't forget to sign up to help with the Open House on Thursday, July 16th. If you haven't signed up yet and want to help, please contact Lori Heiden at lori@heiden.org.

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](#)

The Tollgate Farm News

DID YOU KNOW?

PLANT OF THE MONTH

Rattlesnake Master – *Eryngium yuccifolium*

Plant family (Apiaceae) – Queen Anne's Lace, carrots, parsley and dill.

On Michigan's threatened species list.

Where does the name come from? The US Forest Service attributes its name to Native Americans who used this plant in their ceremonial rattlesnake dance and used the roots to treat rattlesnake bites. No evidence exists that using the plant will be effective in preventing or treating any medical condition. Native Americans also used the fibrous leaves to weave baskets and sandals.



Rattlesnake Master stands 3 – 5 feet tall. Leaves are blue-green, long and narrow, with pointed teeth resembling a Yucca plant although it is not in the Yucca family. It is a perennial requiring full sun and grows in sand, gravel, or well-drained average to rich soil but requires dry conditions to thrive. It has a deep tap root, making it potentially difficult to divide and transplant.

It blooms in summer with ball-like flowers atop a broom-like cluster at the top of the plant. The balls are comprised of numerous tiny 5-petal white flowers. Leaving the dried

brown flower heads on the stems over the winter provides new seeds that may readily germinate depending on the planting conditions.



Numerous types of bees, flies, butterflies, and wasps, are attracted to the flowers. It is considered deer and rabbit resistant. Combine Rattlesnake Master with native coneflowers, black-eyed Susan, asters and blazing star plants to make a beautiful prairie garden.

Rattlesnake Master can be found in the Children's Garden Native Prairie Garden. In the Children's Garden, the seeds have germinated and provided smaller plants to be sold at the Spring and Fall Plant Sales.

References:

Landscaping with Native Plants of Michigan by Lynn M. Steiner

Prairie Up – An Introduction to Natural Garden Design by Benjamin Vogt

Tallgrass Prairie Wildflowers by Doug Ladd and Frank Oberle

The Gardener's Guide to Prairie Plants by Neil Diboll and Hilary Cox

[How to Plant, Grow, and Care for Rattlesnake Master](#)

[Rattlesnake Master: A Beginner's Guide to Growing + Finding](#)

Photos by Karen Harris

The Tollgate Farm News

TOLLGATE BEES – PART 1 THE HISTORY OF BEES AT TOLLGATE

Bees. Some say that you can't live with them, you can't live without them. At MSU Tollgate Farm, we choose to have them because we can live with them and we can't live without them!



Bee hives have been on the farm for about 30 years. Hives were brought to the farm originally by Farm Manager, Roy Prentice. Roy placed the hives behind the Activity Center. Although he enjoyed the pursuit, Roy quickly realized that beekeeping required more attention than he had time for. Long-time Tollgate volunteer, Clay Ottoni, was working on the high-density apple orchard located next to the Children's Garden. Clay took over beekeeping at Tollgate. After several years, it became apparent that the high-density orchard located near the Activity Center was too close to major activity areas on the farm. A new orchard was established in the CSA growing area. Many Tollgate hives were

moved to the new high-density orchard area and have been there ever since. Clay has been taking care of the hives near the orchards for many years. At the end of each July, Clay extracts honey from the frames in the hive by placing the frames in a spinner. The extracted honey is then packaged and sold at events at Tollgate.



If you walk the farm, you may notice another beehive location. These are hives managed by SEMBA (Southeast Michigan Beekeepers Association). For the first 15 years, the SEMBA teaching hives were located south of the PAR Garden. Several years ago, the SEMBA hives were moved to their present location north of the big parking lot to improve access for beekeeping students. The SEMBA hives are used to teach classes for those interested in starting and managing their own hives.

Photos by Linda Piasecki

The Tollgate Farm News

MSU Tollgate Garden Volunteers
Present

2026 Summer Garden Walk Open House

Thursday July 16, 2026 6-8:00pm

Rain Date Friday July 17

FREE ADMISSION

Enjoy a summer evening as you stroll and get to know the MSU Tollgate Gardens

GARDEN TOURSHAYRIDES***

BEAUTIFUL PHOTOGENIC GARDENS

Complementary cold beverages and dessert snacks available.

Tollgate Volunteer Docents Available To Answer Your Question

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.

religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, or veteran status.

The Tollgate Farm News

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.

Our newest members are:

Judy Allen
Jennifer Goewey
Sue Jergens
JoAnne Segal
Katie Zasuwa

Please take time **NOW** to renew your 2026 membership. **Non-renewed members from 2025 will not receive communications until they renew their membership.** Don't miss out on the Tollgate Garden Volunteer Newsletter!
Thanks!

[Tollgate Membership Form 2026](#)

[2026 Tollgate Members Levels](#)

[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 Dave Komraus

The Tollgate Farm News

THE COLOR OF ROSES



Photos by
Linda
Piasecki

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JUNE WORK DAYS



Photos
by Linda
Piasecki

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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

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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Volunteer Coordinator - Janice Recinos : recinos1@msu.edu
Farm Contact - Destiny Pearson : pears278@msu.edu