

The Tollgate Farm News

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NOVEMBER 2025

MSU Tollgate Garden Volunteers Recognition Dinner Supported by The Americana Foundation Saturday, November 8, 2025

The Tollgate Garden Volunteers (TGVs) gathered for the annual Recognition Dinner Saturday, November 8, to celebrate the accomplishments of the past year. Tollgate Assistant Farm Manager, Destiny Pearson, presented Tollgate's journey with a wonderful look back in pictures. As part of the presentation, the two 2025 TGV awards were announced. The Ginger Meyer Award is given annually to the TGV who shares the treasured qualities of Ginger Meyer. Ginger was an active and passionate gardener. The Americana Foundation that Ginger and her husband established donated Tollgate to MSU in 1987. The Golden Shovel Award is presented to the first year Tollgate Garden Volunteer who registers the most volunteer hours. The award is a golden shovel pin provided by the Americana Foundation.

Ginger Meyer Award – Anne Bolz (PAR Garden Member)



Anne Bolz has devoted many years volunteering in the Tollgate gardens, most notably the PAR garden. She is an experienced gardener, sharing plant knowledge with fellow PAR members for best growing and harvest results, and organizing and problem solving to streamline her team's efforts. "She will take on any task as needed no matter how dirty or challenging."

Golden Shovel Award – Roy Prentice (Special Projects Garden Leader)



Roy Prentice is an MSU graduate and has recently retired as the Farm Manager for Tollgate Farm. With his vast knowledge of the farm, he has decided to volunteer his time and effort with the many special projects on the farm this year. These projects include planting conifers in the Demo Garden, repairing the irrigation system in the Enabling Garden, and repairing the steps around the farmhouse. Roy's time and effort with these and the many other projects around the farm are truly appreciated.

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TOLLGATE GARDEN VOLUNTEER IMPORTANT DATES AND EVENTS 2025

NOV	MEETINGS		DEC	MEETINGS	
7	TGAC Meeting – Zoom	7:00 pm	3	TGAC Meeting – Zoom	7:00 pm
8	Recognition Dinner	4:00 pm			
NOV	WORKDAY ACTIVITIES		DEC	WORKDAY ACTIVITIES	
15	Rose winterizing	10:00 am	15	Hanukkah	
27	Thanksgiving		25	Christmas	
			26	Kwanza	

FARM UPDATE FROM THE RESIDENT FARMER - *Destiny Pearson*

Big news, we've officially moved to the farm! You'll now see Frankie and the dogs regularly out investigating the farm!



We're also celebrating a new addition to the Tollgate family: Jason and his wife Chelesa, welcomed baby Otto David on October 6th, weighing in at a healthy 9 lbs! Otto is doing great, though it sounds like he wants to party all night. Word is, Margo their dog, is the only one managing to get any sleep! As the seasons shift, our garden beds are being tucked in for the winter. The farm is entering its quiet, hibernation mode, a time for rest, reflection, and planning for the vibrant spring ahead. Behind the scenes, I've been working hard on organizing our Volunteer Recognition Dinner. By the time you read this, we'll have already shared a fantastic evening together, celebrating all the hard work and heart you've poured into Tollgate this year.

Thank you for being part of this amazing community. Stay warm, and we'll see you next year!"

Destiny Pearson
Livestock Coordinator

Photo by Destiny Pearson

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT - *Renee Cottrell*

**"You must give to get, you must sow the seed, before you can reap the harvest."
Scott Reed, Author, comic book writer and artist.**

As we wrap up our 2025 garden season...

The generosity of TGV contributions, time, talents and friendship has made 2025 another successful season in the Tollgate Gardens. My appreciation goes out to those members who take on the additional responsibilities such as: Area Garden Leaders, Tollgate Calendar Editor, MSU staff and members providing Saturday garden workday assistance. Your knowledge, participation and

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leadership are essential to our success. Every year, we end another season enjoying each other's company at our Recognition Dinner! Thank you, Americana Foundation, for your continued generosity with this event and ongoing support. Congrats to our award winners recognized by their peers for their contributions to Tollgate. I have enjoyed the company of my fellow gardeners and the productive efforts of all who have worked to make Tollgate a better place. I hope all TGV members have found personal reward in the support, time and services you provided and the success this season towards our continued organizational mission.

Thank you to TGV member Jim Nelson as the videographer for the Recognition Dinner Presentation. If you were unable to attend, that presentation will be available for all to view at a later date. Look for the link info in upcoming email and newsletter announcements."

LOOKING FORWARD TO 2026

- Online membership renewal will begin for 2026. We hope this online version will streamline and improve efficiency of the yearly Tollgate Garden Membership renewal process. Look for info in this edition!
- AGL and Garden Teams Meeting at 10 am in the conference center Saturday, January 17 th 2026. Look for contact emails from Marilyn. All Active status members are welcome to come to learn about the teams, gardens, and role of the AGLs. Look for an email reminder and RSVP to follow when closer to the date.
- Our general membership meetings will be via Zoom; January through March and change to in-person as the weather improves in April. Set yourselves a reminder for the 3rd Thursday of the month so you don't miss out on these educational opportunities.

Be thankful and joyful this Holiday season. Thank you for being a Tollgate Garden Volunteer,

Renee Cottrell, President
Tollgate Garden Volunteers
248-251-4505
rmcottrell4@att.net

An added note about our President.



At the Recognition Dinner, certificates are given to the Volunteers of Tollgate Farm and Education Center. The certificates are signed by the Assistant Farm Manager and the President. Since Renee really cannot sign her own certificate, a different signature is needed. This year's signature belonged to Darren McCarty, of the Detroit Red Wings. Thanks Renee, for all you do for Tollgate Farm! Your time and effort are truly appreciated!

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PAR Report - Kathryn Fitzpatrick



Our final yield was 2662 lbs. of vegetables, including a generous donation of 509 lbs. of pumpkins left over from the Pumpkinfest. Both edible and gourd pumpkins were provided to Forgotten Harvest, Northville Civic Concerns, and PB&J. One final task in October, was planting the garlic saved from our harvest for this purpose, as well as a new cultivar from Johnny's Seeds, German Extra Hardy. We will compare the yield and quality of each to see if we need to invest in new seed garlic for 2027.

The garden was winterized with all beds weeded and covered with black plastic, thanks to the wonderful PAR Garden team, as well as CSA volunteers and staff – thank you!

We now turn our attention to planning for 2026; based on our successes and challenges in 2025. Each crop will be reviewed, and new cultivars or different crops will be considered. The garden layout will include crop rotation. A list of seeds and equipment needed will be developed and a budget established. And finally, a 2026 season plan will be drafted, including the late winter / early spring work in the greenhouse to start our transplants.



Wishing All Happy Holidays,
Kathryn Fitzpatrick

Photo by Lynette Leroux

NURSERY NOTES - Peg Palmer

The Nursery is CLOSED until next Spring! After the last bustle of activity to cut back and place mulch in all the pots, the Nursery Team gets to take a break, but there is still planning and prep work during the winter months.

All our Nursery plants are "Michigan Hardy," but some varieties struggle in a pot during a Michigan winter. We try to provide more insulation by grouping pots closely together and surrounding them with mulch. This helps to insulate pots somewhat to the constant cycle of warmer days, often with rain, followed by much colder, snowy days... it is a challenging environment for plant roots trapped in a plastic pot! We always plan for more plant donations in the Spring, since some winter losses are inevitable. During these dull winter days, think about the plants you may have to donate to the Nursery in next Spring!

Peg Palmer
Nursery AGL

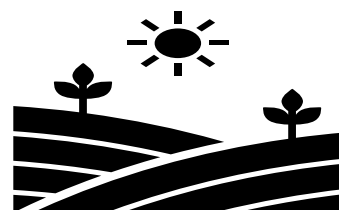
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MSU Tollgate Farm PAR Garden 2025 Yield

Beans	91.5
Cabbage	215.8
Carrots	68.7
Garlic	4.5
Onion	75.4
Potatoes	373.3
Collard Greens	133.6
Kale	81.3
Summer Squash	456.3
Turnips	31.6
Kohlrabi	182.3
Cucumbers	25.4
Hot Peppers	87.1
Leeks	17.1
Tomatillos	122.8
Green Onions	34.0
Tomatoes	148.5
Parsley	3.8
Pumpkins	509.0



Many generous donations contributed to our bounty this year – pumpkins from Pumpkinfest, surplus harvest from CSA, and personal garden contributions. Many thanks!



Grand Total

2662 lbs.

PAR GARDEN TOTALS 2025

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AGL Information – Marilyn Alimpich

Hello Area Garden Leaders,

SAVE THE DATE: Saturday, January 17, 2026, for the AGL Planning Meeting

Look in your inbox for my email asking if you plan to continue in your role as an Area Garden Leader. Please respond by December 10th so plans can be made for the upcoming AGL Planning Meeting. I look forward to seeing you in January and working with you during the 2026 garden season.

Garden Plant Labels Needed?

If new, or replacement, labels for your garden's plants are needed, now is the time to take inventory while your garden is "fresh" in your mind. Linda Piasecki and I will continue to lead the project but we would welcome your help. You can earn Master Gardener work hours for this project.

Please compile a list of labels needed for your garden. Your list should include the botanical, species and common name and Trademark (TM or R) of your plants, if available to you. A link is provided for the label template.

Respond by email, before January 17, 2026 to Marilyn Alimpich at: masoleil@sbcglobal.net

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

[2025 Garden Budget Planner](#)
[Tollgate Label Template Excel Version](#)
[Tollgate Label Template Word Version](#)

Additional Garden Information

SPOTTED LATERNFLY

Derek Plotkowski, MSU Fruit Extension Educator, was recently on Channel 4 talking about the spotted lanternfly. This invasive insect was found in Oakland County this summer. Click on the link to view his interview. Derek has spoken to the Tollgate Volunteers and had booths at Tollgate's Maplefest and Pumpkinfest this

[SPOTTED LANTERNFLY VIDEO](#)

A REMINDER!

There are NO Tollgate Garden Volunteer Meetings in November and December.

The Farm Newsletter is not published in December.

year.

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Our Membership is Going Digital!

We're excited to announce that our membership form is now available online! To get started, use the link provided or scan the QR code to access the digital form. Important Instructions:

- Please fill out every line of the form unless the question specifically says otherwise.
- When you're finished, make sure to hit "Submit" to complete your registration.
- The submission conformation page will contain instructions on how to make your donation.
- Be sure to print the final page for your records and to keep the donation directions handy.

Thank you for being part of our growing farm community!"

[Tollgate Membership Form 2026](#)



Monkshood: Last plant blooming!



Aconitum napellus, Monkshood, is a beautiful late season bloomer that is one of the last blooms seen in the Tollgate Demonstration garden for the season. This 3-foot tall perennial with deep purple blooms is showy but it has a dark side worthy of notation. All parts of the plant, especially the roots and seeds, are extremely poisonous to humans and animals if ingested. Gardeners should take care to avoid skin or oral contact with plant juices, as well as using gloves when handling the plant. It is advisable to be particularly careful to cover up any open cuts or skin abrasions prior to entering garden areas where *Aconitum* has been planted. *Aconitum* (Aconite, Blue rocket, Devil's helmet, Helmet Flower, Leopard's bane, Monkshood, Queen of poisons, Wolfsbane, Woman's bane).

North Carolina Extension Gardener Plant Toolbox

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Membership Update September 2025

To all of you who donated to help the Tollgate Garden Volunteers make Tollgate a more beautiful place. Your donation is greatly appreciated! The support that you have provided will continue to help our program prosper and grow.

Sandra Dickson

Ruthann Jirasek

Nora Josaitis

Lynette LeRoux

Francine Lange

Jackie Roehl

Joanne Sangal

Please take a moment to renew your 2025 membership and receive your new identification button for the season!



The new 2025 membership buttons are in the Volunteer building for all active members who have renewed their membership as of 07/29/25. The buttons have both pin and magnet attachments. Please pick up your new button after 08/02/25. If there are corrections needed, please email me at tlrrehab@gmail.com. New buttons will be made over the coming month as necessary.
Thanks!
Teresa LaRosa

[2025 TGV Membership Form](#)
[2025 Member Levels Reminder](#)

Links to Forms & Other Info

[Tollgate 2025 Activity Calendar](#)

[Garden Orientation PDF](#)

[Tollgate Garden Web Pages](#)

[Other Tollgate Garden Volunteer Info](#)

MSU Tollgate Volunteer Sign-In:



Or

[MSU Tollgate Volunteer Sign-in](#)

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

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FALL CLEAN UP AROUND THE FARM



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CLEARING CANNAS FOR WINTER



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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

& Hospitality.....Teresa LaRosa

CommunicationsKathy Johnson

ProgramsJackie Stengel

Farm News Editor.....Linda Piasecki

Event CoordinatorLori 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 rmcottrell@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 2025 Tollgate Garden Volunteer membership is valid from **January 1, 2025 to December 31, 2025**.

- For membership questions or to update your current membership information, email Teresa LaRosa at tlrrehab@gmail.com
- 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


MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension
MSU Tollgate Farm and Education Center
28115 Meadowbrook Rd., Novi, MI 48377
tollgate.msu.edu
Volunteer Coordinator - Janice Recinos : recinos1@msu.edu
Farm Contact - Destiny Pearson : pears278@msu.edu