



March, the month of St. Patrick's Day, is the perfect time to highlight *Oxalis triangularis*, or the Purple Shamrock. This stunning plant has leaves ranging in color from bright green to deep maroon, with delicate white or pale pink flowers. It makes an excellent houseplant, thriving in direct sunlight to partial shade and preferring well-drained soil with moderate temperatures. One of its most delightful features is its lively personality. The clover-shaped leaves open joyfully in the morning and close peacefully at night, making it a fun and interactive plant to care for. Plus, it grows from corms, surprising many gardeners.

Photo by: Leah Blinstrub

The Oakland Gardener

March 2025

Monthly Plant Feature

Daffodils: The Spring Bulb That Keeps on Giving

Articles and Photos by: Liz Will

Few things announce the arrival of spring like daffodils. After months of bare trees and gray skies, their bright, cheerful blooms are a welcome sight. They're like little drops of sunshine popping up in the garden! But beyond their beauty, daffodils (*Narcissus*) are one of the easiest, most reliable spring bulbs you can grow.

If you love low-maintenance plants that come



back year after year with little effort, daffodils are for you.

Why Daffodils Deserve a Spot in Your Garden

Daffodils are one of the most foolproof bulbs out there. Once planted, they require almost no care. Just let them do their thing, and they'll return every spring, multiplying over time. Unlike tulips, which tend to dwindle after a few years, daffodils actually increase in number, creating bigger, more impressive displays each season. And if deer, rabbits, or squirrels frequent your yard, good news...daffodils are completely unappetizing to them. Their bulbs contain toxic compounds that critters avoid, so you won't have to worry about waking up to

half-eaten flowers.

How (and When) to Plant for the Best Blooms

Daffodils may bloom in spring, but their success starts in fall. The best time to plant them is six weeks before the ground freezes—usually between September and November, depending on your climate.

For the best results:

- Choose a sunny spot with well-draining soil.
- Plant bulbs two to three times as deep as the bulb's height (usually 6 inches deep).
- Place bulbs pointy side up—this is where the stem will emerge.
- For a natural look, plant in clusters or drifts, rather than straight rows.

A little effort in fall leads to big rewards in spring!

Daffodils Come in More Than Just Yellow

Most people picture classic yellow daffodils, but there are actually thousands of varieties in different shapes, colors, and sizes. Some favorites include:

- 'Tête-à-Tête' – A miniature variety that's perfect for pots and borders.
- 'Thalia' – Elegant, all-white blooms with multiple flowers per stem.
- 'Pink Charm' – A soft yellow daffodil with a delicate pink cup.
- 'Poeticus' (Pheasant's Eye) – A late-blooming variety with white petals and a small, red-rimmed cup. With so many options, you can plant a mix of varieties for a longer bloom season and more color diversity in your garden.

Caring for Daffodils After Blooming

Once daffodils finish blooming, don't rush to cut back the leaves. The foliage needs to stay up for at least six weeks so the plant can store energy for next year's blooms. If you don't love the look of fading leaves, plant daffodils among perennials like daylilies or hostas to help disguise them. If your daffodils seem to bloom less over time, they may be overcrowded. Dig up and divide the large clumps in late summer, then replant the extra bulbs in a new spot.

A Timeless Favorite For Any Garden

With just a little care, daffodils will reward you with a beautiful show year after year. Their resilience, adaptability, and cheerfulness make them a must have in any garden. Whether you're planting them for their easy care, bright spring color, or deeper meaning, daffodils are the gift that keeps on giving!

Extension Master Gardener News

A Generational Journey Through: **The Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory**

Article and Photos by: Pat Wilson

Stepping through the familiar entrance of the **Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory** located at **Belle Isle State Park**, I am filled with a sense of nostalgia, remembering the many visits I made here as a child with my family. The memories flood back—walking with my parents and siblings, mesmerized by the towering palms, the warmth of the glass dome, and the lush, vibrant plants surrounding us. The Conservatory was always a special place, a peaceful escape where we could connect with nature, no matter the season.



Years later, I brought my own children here, sharing the same sense of wonder with them that I had experienced as a child. Watching their eyes light up as they took in the beauty of the glass dome, the tropical plants, and the soothing green spaces, I was reminded of the timeless fascination of this place. It was a joy to pass down a piece of my childhood, introducing them to the Conservatory's unique charm.

But returning today, I am struck by just how much has changed—and yet, how much has remained the same. The recent renovations, completed in 2024, have breathed new life into this beloved institution, transforming it while preserving the essence that makes it so special. As someone who has walked these paths for generations, I can truly appreciate the thoughtful updates that enhance the experience without diminishing its history.



The restoration of the iconic glass dome is the first change that catches my eye. The original glass, which had grown cloudy with age, has been replaced with sleek, laminated panes, allowing for a brighter, more inviting space. Natural light now pours into every corner, casting a warm glow on the plants below and creating an even more enchanting atmosphere. The dome, which once felt like a relic of the past, now feels timeless, linking the past

to the present in a beautiful way.

Inside, the updates are equally impressive. The main hall, with its smooth, modern floors and updated planter walls, feels more open and accessible. The tropical plants in the Palm House

seem even more vibrant, their colors popping against the backdrop of the newly restored space. The Fernery, always a favorite of mine, now feels more serene and welcoming, with subtle changes that make the space feel even more like an indoor garden.

I can see how much care has been taken with every detail—the meticulous restoration of the steel framework, the careful repairs to the structural elements, and the new catwalks that offer a fresh perspective of the plants from above. These updates not only improve the conservatory's long-term health but also allow visitors, like myself, to see the space in new and exciting ways.



For my family, the renovations have made the Conservatory even more inviting. The restored gardens outside, though dormant in winter, provide an ideal place to pause and reflect, with new walkways making it easier to explore and admire the space. Even in the chill of winter, there's a sense of renewal as I take in the beauty of the surrounding landscape, which has been thoughtfully integrated with the conservatory's design.

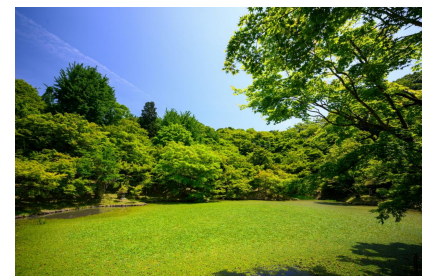
Returning to the Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory, I am reminded that its beauty endures across generations. The renovations have made this treasured space even more vibrant, accessible, and welcoming—allowing visitors of all ages to connect with nature in ways both old and new. It's a place where memories are made, passed down, and cherished for years to come.

Gardening Tips and Tricks

Tired of Mowing? Beautiful, Low-Maintenance Alternatives to a Traditional Lawn

Article by: Liz Will

Photo by: Kouji Tsuru on Unsplash



For years, a perfectly manicured lawn has been the gold standard for yards everywhere. But keeping up with mowing, watering, and fertilizing takes time, effort, and money. Those limited resources could be put to use in more practical, enjoyable ways.

If you're ready to trade in the upkeep for something just as beautiful (and far more functional), here are a few great alternatives to consider.

Why Skip the Lawn?

Reducing your lawn has several benefits:

- **Less work, more enjoyment** – No more weekly mowing, endless watering, or treating bare patches and weeds.
- **Supports pollinators and wildlife** – A garden with flowers, shrubs, and native plants provides food and shelter for bees, butterflies, and birds.
- **Saves water** – Lawns require a lot of watering, while drought-tolerant plants and ground covers reduce water use.
- **Grows something useful** – A vegetable or herb garden produces fresh food instead of just grass.

Great Lawn Alternatives

Pollinator Garden

Replace some (or all) of your lawn with native wildflowers, perennials, and flowering shrubs. These plants require less water and maintenance while attracting bees, butterflies, and other beneficial insects.

Edible Landscaping

Fruit trees, berry bushes, and raised beds full of vegetables and herbs turn your yard into a productive space. Instead of spending time mowing, you could be harvesting fresh, healthy food for your family and reducing your grocery costs.

Ground Covers

Low growing alternatives like clover, creeping thyme, or sedum create a green lawn-like look without the upkeep. Many are drought-resistant, require little to no mowing, and improve soil health.

Ornamental Grasses and Perennials

Plant a mix of ornamental grasses and perennials for a more natural, meadow-like feel. They provide year-round interest, movement, and color while requiring far less maintenance than grass.

Hardscaping & Mulched Areas

Patios, gravel paths, or mulched beds help break up your yard, reduce maintenance, and create defined spaces for relaxing or entertaining. Mulch also helps suppress weeds and retain soil moisture.

Start Small & See What Works

You don't have to remove your entire lawn overnight. Start by replacing a small section with a flower bed, vegetable patch, or pollinator-friendly plants. Over time, you might find you don't miss mowing at all!

Gardening Deep Dive

A Garden That Makes the Cut

Articles and Photos by: Jamiel Dado

When I first started getting serious about having a garden, I imagined that I would

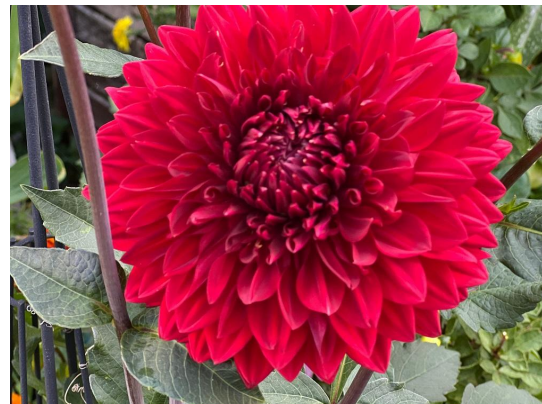


have all the fresh produce I could handle. I placed several raised beds around my backyard and started loads of different vegetable seeds in preparation for my future bounty. I did not expect, however, to quickly realize that I did not personally enjoy having my limited growing space taken up by what I considered to be less than ideally attractive plants. I concluded that what I truly enjoyed were flowers. At first, I intermingled them amongst their

more productive brethren, what the French call a **Potager**, but eventually I found that I wanted more and more colorful blooms, so I stopped growing vegetables altogether. However, Having a flower garden does not mean you can't partake in a satisfying harvest. That's what cutting gardens are made for.

At first glance, it seems that having a designated space in your garden specifically for cutting flowers seems unnecessary. Of course, one can simply walk around their space and cut whatever flowers they like, but there are some advantages to having an area that is destined for the chopping block. Personally, I enjoy the look of an overgrown garden, chock-full of colors, making me often reluctant to want to take away any blooms from the overall ethereal chaos that I have created. By having a separate cutting garden, I get the best of both worlds.

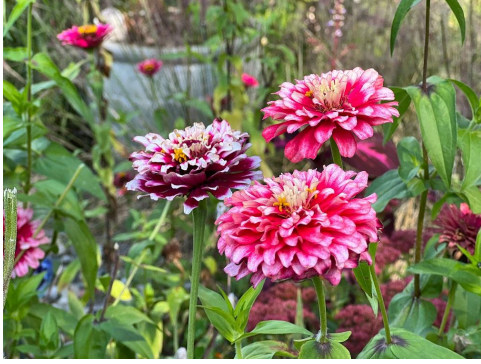
When considering what flowers to grow for cutting, it all depends on what your plan for the flowers is. If the bouquets will be purely for your own house, then it's obviously up to your own preferences, but if you are looking to be able to spread the joy around a bit, then maybe choosing some universally beloved flowers would be appropriate. Zinnias, Marigolds, and Cosmos are all amongst the most **popular** flowers for cutting and they look beautiful



together. They also grow easily from seeds that are sown directly after the threat of frost is over, making them an ideal choice. Dahlias are also a **favorite**, but they require a bit more work. They are grown mostly from overwintered tubers that benefit from an **early start inside** to help ensure a longer blooming season.

Like any other garden, location is paramount. Always be aware of your particular plant's need for sunlight. Also, if growing perennials, make sure that you are in the plant's preferred **grow zone**. Proper spacing is also important so as to avoid issues such as **powdery mildew**, which can easily affect flowers like Zinnias. A good layer of mulch at the base of your plants will also assist in keeping powdery mildew at bay.

When the time comes to enjoying the fruits of your labor, make sure to do it **correctly**! As always, whatever you are using to cut with should be sharp and clean, you don't want to end up hurting the plant that could be giving you several bouquets worth of blooms throughout the season. Also, it's important to make sure that you cut the flower at the right



time. Depending on the **variety**, you will want to harvest when still in bud form, while for others, it is best to wait until the flower is fully open. While arranging is a personal artistic expression that is entirely up to the individual, a little **guidance** is always worth looking towards. Remember, the **rule of three** works well and the **color wheel** is your friend. Whether you keep growing vegetables or not, Cutting gardens can be a wonderful

edition to your botanical space. What could be better than to show up to a Summertime gathering with a beautiful bouquet that you had the pleasure of growing yourself.

Tending to Your Health

Tapping Into Nature

Article and Photos by: Louise Sloan

Our family has taken to tapping our maple tree (*Acer saccharum*) after multiple requests from our youngest who wanted to see if he could make maple syrup like my Uncle Jack. Uncle Jack's production was far more prodigious than ours; he tapped multiple trees in the woods that surround his home. For years, he'd drive his lawn mower to the sites to collect the sap. It was quite the feat because even then Uncle Jack was old and his eyes had fallen prey to macular degeneration. Still, he'd collect the maples' gift, often with family help, and sit patiently in a homemade sugar shack to create the amber colored syrup that was shared with all of us.



Tapping maple trees is a tradition that far extends beyond our family to the earliest Native American peoples. Many tribes attribute the Creator for using the maple tree to help her people survive when game is scarce and the lakes are frozen over. The early sap gatherers' system is much like my own front yard set up. They would use sticks bored into a tree as a spile and collected the sap in birch containers hung on the stick. Rather than boil all of the sap into syrup, though, the Native Americans would allow the sap to freeze. Because of the sap's high water content—it takes 40 gallons of sap to produce 1 gallon of syrup—only the water in the sap will freeze. They Native Americans could take the ice off the top and have a head start in reducing the sap into syrup.

Maple syrup was a sweet treat even then as it is now. As a natural sweetener, it does not produce the sugar high and crash of refined sweeteners. Maple syrup contains **the minerals phosphorous, magnesium, potassium, iron, and calcium** which can help to reduce overall body inflammation. While we no longer use maple syrup to cure meat, it is still produced for trade and is an important commercial product of Canada, Vermont, and New York.

Back home in Michigan, you can experience the wonder of watching spiles funnel clear, sweet liquid into bucket at various nature centers. Larger operations actually use plastic tubing that drains to a central collection point to reduce the labor required to transport the sap to the sugar houses. The water is boiled off over high heat, producing sweet, sticky steam. What's left over is the syrup we can enjoy on pancakes, oatmeal, or right off of a spoon.



Getting started in tapping your own sugar maple tree is relatively easy and inexpensive. Many home kits are available on the internet and our **MSU Extension has great information** on the specifics needed to safely produce your own maple syrup. While that quart of syrup we make at home does take a lot of time and some effort, the act of creating maple syrup puts us in touch with nature. We become part of what Robin Wall Kimmerer (author of *Braiding Sweetgrass* and *The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World*) calls the gift economy. She describes the “abundance of gifts from the Earth, which are owned by no one and therefore shared.” Tapping trees not only produces a rich gift, but it also ties us to the recent and distant past. This, in many ways, makes tapping maple trees the sweetest act of the spring.



Smart Gardening is MSU Extension's campaign using earth-friendly messages to help gardeners make smart choices in their own backyards. The goal is to equip gardeners with a “tool kit” of research-based knowledge to use immediately at home. Whether choosing plants, using garden chemicals, fertilizer or applying water, gardeners need to understand the long-term impacts on their communities. For more Smart Gardening information click [here](#).



Ask Extension

Call the MSU Extension Lawn and Garden Hotline at 1-888-678-3464 (Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9am to noon)

Upcoming Events



Michigan State University Extension
Tollgate Farm and Education Center



MARCH
8 & 9

Festival Gold Sponsor



- Maple-themed activities
- Wagon rides to the sugarbush
- Tour the sugar shack
- Tap a maple tree
- Taste maple sap
- Enjoy an 'all-you-can-eat' pancake celebration
- MSU Dairy Store ice cream

Register Today!
Hourly Limited Timeslots
from 8:30 am – 1 pm
\$18 per person
2 year and under free



SCAN ME

MSU Tollgate Farm and Education Center - 28115 Meadowbrook Road Novi, MI 48377. 248-347-3860

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**Visit our
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Introductory Backyard Fruit Online Course

Visit our website for
more information and to
register:

[https://www.canr.msu.edu/
courses/backyard-fruit-101](https://www.canr.msu.edu/courses/backyard-fruit-101)



Backyard Fruit 101

MSU Extension now has a completely online, self-paced, introductory course on **Backyard Fruit 101**. Learn how you can contribute to the Smart Gardening principles of creating healthy soils and plants, while enjoying the health benefits of growing and eating fresh fruit.

In this course, Consumer Horticulture Educators, Brent Crain, Rebecca Krans, David Lowenstein, and Nate Walton cover all the basics of growing backyard fruit.

It consists of six different units focusing on the following:

- Introduction to growing fruit
- Apples & pome fruits
- Strawberries and blueberries
- Brambles
- Grapes
- Unusual fruit

All aspects of fruit growing, such as getting started, soil preparation, planning, variety selection, pruning, pest management and various maintenance activities are discussed. Over 6 hours of video instruction, activities, and additional resources are available. Qualifies for 6 educational credit hours for Extension Master Gardeners.



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Bowers Farm Upcoming Garden Workshop Series

GARDENING WORKSHOPS

Join Kate to learn about regenerative gardening practices and how to implement them in your own vegetable garden. Each class will cover a different topic and incorporate some hands-on learning. These workshops are designed for adults. New and experienced gardeners will enjoy expanding their knowledge and getting their hands dirty.

🕒 SATURDAYS 10:00 - 11:30 AM @ BOWERS SCHOOL FARM

MARCH 8

Growing Raspberries

MARCH 22

Seed Starting

APRIL 5

Intro to Gardening

MAY 10

Building Healthy Soil

JUNE 7

Pruning & Trellising

JUNE 28

Organic Pest Management

JULY 19

Vegetable Harvesting Tips & Tricks

AUGUST 16

Garlic Braiding

SEPTEMBER 6

Harvesting and Designing Bouquets

OCTOBER 25

Planting & Growing Garlic



Taught by Kate Debs, Agriculture Production Coordinator
kdebs@bloomfield.org



The Meadow Brook Garden Club Monthly Meeting

March 28, 2025

Meadow Brook Hall, 350 Estate Dr.
Rochester MI 48309-1904

Coffee and refreshments will be served at 9:15 a.m. with a program to follow at 10:00 a.m. featuring guest speaker and Meadow Brook volunteer, Colleen Peters, who will present "Matilda, the Gardener and Her Garden." Matilda Dodge Wilson was many things in her lifetime. One of her greatest joys was gardening. This program will celebrate her journey as a gardener and the achievements she accomplished through study, collaboration, and sharing. In 1915-

1916 the Green House at Meadow Brook Farms became a part of Matilda's plant world. She used this facility to produce entries for the Detroit Flower and Garden Show. Her creation was "Novelty Anemone Chrysanthemum" by Mrs. Alfred G. Wilson. Colleen, with the help of research by Kim Zelinski and interviews with others at Meadow Brook Hall, will provide a private glance into the plant and gardening world of a woman we have come to admire.

Guests are welcome and reservations are not required. There is a \$5 non-member fee. For more information, call 248-364-6210, email MBGCmembers@gmail.com

Visit our
Website

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2025 Online PRUNING WORKSHOPS



**Four FRIDAY dates in 2025
from which to choose:**

January 17

January 24

March 7

March 14

**All workshops will be held
from 1 – 5:00 p.m. ET**

MSU Extension Senior Horticulture Educator (retired), Rebecca Finneran will lead the interactive online Zoom workshops that are designed to help participants learn best practices for pruning and the proper equipment it takes for each job. You will be able to ask questions and interact with the instructor. And, prior to the workshop you have selected, you will have the option to submit photos for discussion and analysis, as time allows.

Following the January and March online webinars, Hands-on Outdoor Pruning Workshops will be organized in various Michigan locations. You will be notified about the dates, times and locations and can then register to select the workshop that works best for you, if applicable. There will be a separate fee for the Outdoor Pruning Workshop.

Fee: \$40.00

Partial scholarships may be
available

Register via the link below
and select the workshop
date that works best for you.

<https://events.anr.msu.edu/2025onlinePruningWorkshops>

Questions?

Contact Diane Brady at
bradydi1@msu.edu



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Michigan State University is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services and activities. Accommodations for persons with disabilities may be requested by contacting the event contact [insert name] two weeks before the start of the event [insert deadline date] at [insert phone number and email]. Requests received after this date will be honored whenever possible.

Visit our Website and
Registration

Michigan State University
Student Horticulture Association
presents

THE 37TH ANNUAL SPRING SHOW
&
PLANT SALE
IN

THE EMERALD GARDEN OF OZ

SATURDAY, APRIL 12, 2025

9:00AM - 6:00PM

SUNDAY, APRIL 13, 2025

10:00AM - 4:00PM



FB: Michigan State
Student Horticulture
Association
IG: @msuhortclub

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Building
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Save the Dates!
April 18-19 2026
April 24-25 2027

Save The Date!

MGSOC 11th Annual Educational Gardening Conference
Gardening and All That Jazz – Garden Potpourri

Keynote speakers:

Bob Iames • Charlie Nardozi • Stacey Hirvela • Susan Martin

Saturday, April 26, 2025 from 7:30 a.m.-5 p.m.

The Oakland Center, Oakland University, 312 Meadow Brook Rd., Rochester, MI 48309

NEW LOCATION! Four great speakers – four outstanding presentations!

Come to our 11th Annual Educational Conference for new and experienced gardeners – you need not be a Master Gardener to attend! Register on Eventbrite here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/gardening-and-all-that-jazz-garden-potpourri-tickets-1135574757669>
For complete information, and to download an application and pay by check, visit our website at <https://mgsoc.org/educational-conference/>
Sponsored by Piechnik's Garden Gate, Proven Winners® and the Greater Detroit Jazz Society.



**Master Gardener Society
of Oakland County, Inc.**

AFFILIATED WITH MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

Our conference includes continental breakfast, lunch and beverages, shopping our unique vendors, and the *Scott Gwinnett Trio* performing during lunch. Registration is limited to 300 so don't delay, deadline to purchase tickets is **Monday, April 14, 2025.**

Visit our
Website

**MICHIGAN NATIVE PLANT
SALE**

Bowers School Farm

Online Pre-Sales begin in early March.



Help us support our local ecosystems with native plants in your garden this year! Join Bowers School Farm and East Michigan Native Plants for our 2025 Michigan Native Plant Sale. We have a wide variety of grasses and wildflowers for purchase.

Pick-up is on Sunday, May 17, 2025, from 10 am - 2 pm during Open Barn.

All proceeds from the Michigan Native Plant Sale will support the Master Gardeners of Oakland County who volunteer to provide our horticultural gardens.

News You Can Use



Spotted lanternfly resources from MSU Extension

Rufus Isaacs, Michigan State University Department of Entomology, and **Erin Lizotte**, **Michigan State University Extension** - January 14, 2025

Established infestations of this pest have now been identified in Macomb, Lenawee, Monroe, Oakland and Wayne counties, with small and isolated populations detected feeding on trees. Everyone can assist with monitoring for this invasive pest by reporting any suspected detections via the [Eyes in The Field](#) website.

Michigan State University Extension (MSU Extension) has developed information and guides to help people identify this pest and prepare for its arrival.



How do I know if a pesticide is safe for bees? Five steps to protect bees from pesticides

Ana Heck, **Michigan State University Extension** and Andony Melathopoulos, Oregon State University - February 07, 2025

The effects of pesticides on bees can vary widely depending on the pesticide and how it is applied. Some pesticide applications can kill bees outright, some can cause sublethal harm such as impaired memory or reduced lifespan and some have no noticeable effect. Pesticide effects on bees can be complex, and some long-term or chronic effects on bees may be understudied or unknown, so we can't guarantee with certainty that a pesticide is "bee safe."

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Learn Backyard Fruit Basics with Michigan State University Extension's online course

Rebecca Krans, Michigan State University Extension - February 12, 2025

Would you like to learn more about what it takes to successfully grow fruit in your yard? Are you considering adding some strawberries or brambles to your garden? If you're wondering how to properly prune your apple trees, then Michigan State University Extension's **Backyard Fruit 101 online course** is for you.

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Making It In Michigan Conference and Trade Show returns to Lansing in May 2025

Ryan Newcomb, **Michigan State University Extension** - February 13, 2025

Registration is **now open** for the 16th annual **Making It In Michigan (MIIM) Conference and Trade Show** on May 7, 2025, hosted by the **Michigan State University Product Center** at the Lansing Center. The Trade Show, powered by a partnership with the Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development (MDARD), will feature 155 vendors focused on quality Michigan-made food, beverage, and agricultural products.

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