

The Tollgate Farm News

VOLUME 31

ISSUE 4

APRIL 2025

MSU Tollgate Garden Volunteers General Meeting

Thursday, April 17, 2025
7:00 PM
(In the Conference Center)

My Prairie Restoration Journey

Return to the conference center to experience a journey to restore a native prairie on rural property in Brooklyn, 70 miles southwest of Tollgate. **John Blair** will cover the restoration of his wooded savanna and how he is bringing three natural ponds back to life after being buried by farmers decades ago. Through John's beautiful photos, you will get to see this wonderful transformation from hayfields to lush native prairie habitat.

When John retired from automotive engineering, he knew he would need something interesting to do with his time. He found it when he attended a presentation in the winter of 2012 by butterfly expert Brenda Dziedzic on making a butterfly garden with native plants as the focal point. John got busy that spring creating his own butterfly garden at his Westland home. Over the next seven summers, the garden grew to over 5000 square feet with 130 species of native plants and 38 different species of butterfly visitors.

In 2019, having filled all his available gardening space, John and his wife Sheri moved to a new home in rural Brooklyn, Michigan, with 9 acres of land that he is using to make more butterfly and pollinator habitat by restoring large tracts of land to original prairie with native plants, creating a gigantic butterfly and pollinator habitat!

Pictures of John's Prairie Garden - [Prairie 2024 - Flickr](#)

TOLLGATE GARDEN VOLUNTEER IMPORTANT DATES AND EVENTS 2025

APR	MEETINGS		MAY	MEETINGS	
1	TGAC Meeting – Zoom	7:00 pm	6	TGAC Meeting – Zoom	7:00 pm
17	TGV General Meeting - Onsite	7:00 pm	15	TGV General Meeting - Onsite	7:00 pm
APR	WORKDAY ACTIVITIES		MAY	WORKDAY ACTIVITIES	
5	Rose/Pond (Cancelled - weather)		3	Entrance/Nursery (plant div).	9:00 am
12	Demo	9:00 am	10	Farmhouse	9:00 am
19	Easter Weekend - Office/Heritage/Rain	9:00 am	17	Shade/Hosta	9:00 am
26	Children's/Xeriscape	9:00 am	24	Memorial Day Weekend	
26	New Volunteer Orientation TGV Pancake Brunch	9:00 am Noon	31	Rockledge/planting	9:00 am

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FARM UPDATE FROM THE RESIDENT FARMER - *Destiny Pearson*

Our 2025 kidding season has officially come to a close, and we're excited to share that we welcomed 14 healthy baby goats to the Tollgate family — a perfect split of 7 boys and 7 girls! While the season brought its fair share of wet and rainy days, it didn't dampen the excitement in the barn. In fact, we even kidded through a thunderstorm with 80 mph winds — a true testament to how tough our mamas (and our staff and 4-H volunteers!) are. Despite the weather, every birth went smoothly, and we're incredibly grateful for healthy babies and strong moms. Our dedicated 4-H showmen had the unique opportunity to witness goat births firsthand. Each showman was able to assist in the delivery of a baby, creating unforgettable memories and hands-on learning experiences.



Throughout the season, we've been lucky to have so many wonderful volunteers stop by to meet the new kids and help with feeding. Watching the baby goats grow and play has brought smiles to everyone who visits, and we're so grateful for the helping hands and loving hearts that have supported us.



With all the excitement and interest around the new arrivals, we're happy to share that there's an opportunity for more families to join in the fun. Our **Milk & Meet** and **Meet & Greet** programs are starting soon, and registration officially went live on April 9th! Click the link to register: https://commerce.cashnet.com/msu_3568?&cname=GOAT

Thank you for being a part of this special season with us. We can't wait to see what adventures these little ones bring next!

Photos provided by Destiny Pearson

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT - *Renee Cottrell*

"Sweet April Showers Do Spring May Flowers" - Thomas Tusser, English poet and farmer 1524-1580

Greeting Tollgate Garden Volunteers! April is our jumpstart month for clean-up activities in the gardens if the weather will cooperate! The weeds sprang out ahead of us with the warmer days last month, but unfortunately the rains have kept us out of the gardens on our Saturday work days in our attempt to preserve soil integrity. Bittercress, bedstraw, henbit and dandelions are already in the gardens. See this reference for Identification information throughout the season: <https://www.canr.msu.edu/pestid/resources/plant-and-weed-identification/index>

Dates to remember for April:

- **New Member Orientation April 26th at 9 am** in the Conference Center. Any active member welcome.
- **Pancake Breakfast follows the April 26th work day at 12 pm.** **ALL** active and support members are welcome to come celebrate Spring and the Maple syrup season. This event will be held even if the work day is rained out. This is a great opportunity to socialize with your fellow volunteers.
- **Nursery opens for plant donations April 12th** - see Nursery Notes in this issue
- Those members from 2024 who have **not** renewed 2025 membership by the **end of the month** will be purged from the 2025 contact list until a renewal is received. Please don't wait, renew now! See Membership Notes in this issue.

Just a reminder to the active gardeners: Please use the QR code to record your Tollgate hours for our **on-site data collection** of volunteer hours for our 2025 season. This data assists in program planning and development. This is **NOT** where you would record your Extension Master Gardener hours for (re-) certification.

I invite you to visit the site and catch all the spring blooms and emerging plants. The hellebores, pulmonaria, spring bulbs and budding spring growth are all over the property to enjoy.

Thank you for being a Tollgate Garden Volunteer,
Renee Cottrell, President TGV, rmcottrell4@att.net

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PAR Report - *Kathryn Fitzpatrick*

“March comes in like a lion, out like a lamb”, doesn’t seem to be holding exactly true, as April has come in like a lion as well. But “April showers bring May flowers” – well, the chives are certainly prospering.



Also, the first vegetable of the season – garlic – is sprouting from our fall planting. The strong winds blew off the black plastic weed barriers from our beds, so we spent a windy day re-covering the beds and putting down more garden staples and bricks. As we follow our planting plan, we will uncover each bed to be planted. This should help us manage the weeds.



We have cleaned out the shed and organized all our tools – everyone is excited about trying the new adaptive tools. The PAR team is looking forward to renovating our new beds. First, the irrigation needs to be pulled out of the beds and redesigned for four potato beds. Then, we will mark off each 4-foot bed and rake the mulch into the 2-foot paths between the beds. Lastly, we will gently till and rake the beds, add compost if necessary, and cover with black plastic until we are ready to plant potatoes in late May / early June.

This month, we will continue to plant seeds in the greenhouse for cabbage, kohlrabi, hot peppers, cucumbers, and a variety of herbs. The alliums (yellow onions, leeks, shallots, and green bunching onions) started last month are coming up nicely.

Happy Spring, Kathryn Fitzpatrick

Photos provided by Kathryn Fitzpatrick

NURSERY NOTES - *Peg Palmer*

The Nursery Team is getting busy planning for our big Spring Plant Sale. This year, the sale will be held on **Saturday, June 7**. The Spring Sale is not only a great way to share healthy plants with the public, it’s a really important event for the gardens! The proceeds from the spring sale support all the beautiful Tollgate Gardens!

We need your help to get ready! **The Nursery will be open for your plant donations from Saturday April 12 through Saturday May 18**. As you clean up your home gardens this spring, check the [PLANTS WANTED LIST](#) to see what you might have in your home gardens to share with the Nursery. The Tollgate Nursery accepts only **Michigan-hardy perennials**. We do not accept woody plants, annuals, or any perennial plant listed as an invasive species in this area.



COMPLETE DONATION DIRECTIONS ARE POSTED IN THE NURSERY ([DONATION DIRECTIONS LINK](#))

1. **IDENTIFY** your donations (common, botanical name & bloom color).
2. **WATER**, if needed.
3. **LEAVE** your donation behind the **YELLOW GATE**.
4. **RECLOSE THE LID** to the pencil/plant stick holder!
5. **CLOSE THE YELLOW GATE!!**

THANK YOU for your plant donations!

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AGL Information

Thank you to all the AGLs who have already sent in budget requests. You will get email confirmations once TGAC reviews the budgets. Our next TGAC meeting to approve your budget is May 6. Act soon if you want an approved budget before buying new plants. If you need help with budgeting, or completing the form, please contact me.

The plant label project is almost complete for this year. Linda Piasecki and I finished engraving the labels last Saturday. Bonus...we got to feed the kids in between engraving! At a future time, we'll need others to help with beveling and assembling the labels.

Please use the links below if you still need a form or assistance.

Marilyn Alimpich, masoleil@sbcglobal.net

[2025 Garden Budget Planner](#)

[Tollgate Label Template Excel Version](#)

[Tollgate Label Template Word Version](#)

Why You Should STOMP Every Spotted Lanternfly



[YouTube Video - Stomp Spotted Lanternfly](#)

Photo from MSU Extension website

Deer Deterrent Effort in Heritage Garden



[MSU Extension Resources/Smart Gardening to Deter Deer](#)

Photo provided by Renee Cottrell

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Tollgate Garden Tools

As many volunteers know, tools for volunteer use are kept in the small tool shed at the base of the silo. The Tollgate Garden team works to maintain quality tools for the use of garden volunteers. Donations of garden tools are appreciated. However, sometimes donated tools have not been in good shape or may not be usable in the gardens. We ask that any tool donation be submitted for review by TGAC and be new or gently used. As active garden members, we invite you to share your ideas of what tools would be good additions to Tollgate by submitting a request to Renee for consideration at the monthly TGAC meeting.

If you use tools from the farm's collection, please return them clean to their respective tool sheds/areas. To ensure tools and equipment are returned to correct storage area, farm staff have now marked items for their designated areas:

Silo Tool Shed = Pink

PAR = Yellow

Nursery = Pink and Yellow

CSA/SAG = Blue

Animal = Green

Maple = Red

No marking = general Tollgate supplies

(Items from Maple, Animals, or CSA/SAG have not been painted yet, but those will be the dedicated colors moving forward.)

Your cooperation and assistance will help have tools readily available for everyone working in the gardens.

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Hanami Festival

MSU Tollgate Farm's annual Hanami Picnic will take place on **Sunday, May 4th from 11:00 am – 3:00 pm** to celebrate spring blooms in our beautiful **Sakura Garden**. Bring a chair or blanket for an afternoon of Japanese music, tea sampling, culture, and crafts. Gift items will be available from community partners: Schuler Books, Kimono Kitsune, Pottery by Aya Kang, Tollgate Honey, and 4-H Club hand crafted soaps and other items.

We are excited to welcome the Ann Arbor Bonsai Society, Hinoki Foundation, Japanese Society of Detroit Women's Club, Japan Center for Michigan Universities, Novi Public Library, and the Consulate General of Japan for Detroit as participants. A traditional tea ceremony will kick off the festivities followed by song, dance and instrumentals by the Sakura Performance Group, and Great Lakes Taiko Center. Please help us thank our generous sponsors: *The Residences of Sakura-Nov*i and *ITC - a Fortis Company*.

Tickets purchased in advance are \$10 per person or \$12 at the door. Children 4 and under are free. All tickets are non-refundable and help support MSU Tollgate Farm's education programs. Purchase tickets online at <https://www.canr.msu.edu/tollgate/Program-Event-Calendar/hanami-spring-picnic>



Photo provided by Lisa Bahm

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Membership Update April 2025

*Thanks to everyone who renewed
their membership this month!*

Garry Campbell
Kathryn Currier
Laura Humphries
Jamie Murphy
Cynthia Newman-Edwards
Peg Palmer
Dory Schmidt
Lisa Turkawski

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



Thanks! Teresa LaRosa
tlrrehab@gmail.com

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

Member Spotlight

Will return with 2025 Activity Days

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 provided by Renee Cottrell

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SATURDAY WORKDAYS RETURN



Photos provided by Renee Cottrell

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SATURDAY WORKDAYS RETURN



Photos provided by Nancy Powell

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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

President..... Renee Cottrell

Vice President Marilyn Alimpich

Secretary..... Theresa Bridenbaugh

Treasurer..... Karen Harris

Membership

& Hospitality..... Teresa LaRosa

Communications Kathy Johnson

Programs..... Jackie 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 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

MSU Tollgate Farm and Education Center

