

The Tollgate Farm News

VOLUME 31

ISSUE 1

JANUARY 2025



Learning from the Past

Reminder: Tollgate gardeners and supporters meet on Zoom in January, February and March.

Professional gardener Gail Morrell will return with observations, ideas and lessons learned from years of gardening. A lifelong learner, she enjoys finding out new things about plants, pests, and tools. Building on her extensive knowledge of gardening, Gail looks forward to sharing insights on problems to avoid, things to try and successes to build on. She provides practical tips and suggestions for best results in the garden.

Enthusiastic about garden maintenance, Gail became a Master Gardener in 1991 and then established her own garden maintenance company. After many years managing the grounds of a gated community, Gail returned to her roots and continues to work as the head gardener on several estates in Bloomfield Hills. She was an instructor and Practical Gardening Trainer at the Michigan School of Gardening and a past president of the Troy Garden Club and Association of Professional Gardeners. Gail loves her time in the garden and sharing experiences with plants and nature.

TOLLGATE GARDEN VOLUNTEER IMPORTANT DATES AND EVENTS 2025					
JAN	MEETINGS		FEB	MEETINGS	
7	TGAC Meeting – Zoom	7:00 pm	4	TGAC Meeting – Zoom	7:00 pm
16	TGV General Meeting - Zoom	7:00 pm	20	TGV General Meeting - Zoom	7:00 pm
18	AGL Planning Meeting In-person – Tollgate Conf. Ctr	10:00 am			
JAN	WORKDAY ACTIVITIES		FEB	WORKDAY ACTIVITIES	
	No workdays in January			No workdays in February	

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FROM THE RESIDENT FARMER *Destiny Pearson*

Hello everyone! I wanted to take an opportunity with the first newsletter of the year to introduce myself. My name is Destiny Pearson and I have been acting as the Livestock Coordinator here at Tollgate for over a year.

Now in 2025, I will be taking the plunge as the new on-site resident! I'm super excited to be working with the garden volunteers and expanding my plant knowledge while also living at the farm!

I am a Michigan native and grew up in Clarkston. I left Michigan after high school, did some traveling and ranching, eventually landing in Montana. I lived in Bozeman for 5 years and finished my degree in Animal Science at Montana State University. In 2020 I moved back to Michigan, due to the pandemic, and found a job at a dairy goat farm in Northport, MI. This is where I found my love and passion for small ruminants. I lived up there for about a year until I met Collin and took a risk to move back home to pursue the relationship.

I am beyond grateful for that leap I took back in 2021. Collin and I got married and then welcomed our little girl into the world in December 2022. The following year I found my place here at Tollgate. I have fallen in love with the farm and the community that surrounds it. To think that my family and I will be able to make memories here with wonderful, dedicated volunteers, staff, and visitors, makes me excited for the future.

Collin and I are outdoors(wo)man, so you'll usually find Collin out fishing or hunting and me horseback riding. We love to hike and spend our yearly vacation in places where we can hike for a breath-taking view. Last year we spent a week between Acadia, the Adirondacks, and Niagara. If we're not traveling out of Michigan, we try to sneak a weekend here or there for some camping. Frankie has also found her love for the outdoors, and you'll usually catch her digging in the dirt somewhere. Our family also includes two border collies, Bain and Bobbie Jo, who you will see around and one horse, Lottie, who lives at a barn in Commerce.

If you see us out on the farm, please don't hesitate to say hello!



Notes from the President *Renee Cottrell*

*"Winter is a season of recovery and preparation."
- Paul Theroux, American novelist and travel writer*

New Year greetings to all! We are already working on our 2025 Tollgate Garden season planning. Your Tollgate Garden Advisory Committee (TGAC) is working on finalizing the activities schedule and garden teams are planning for the new season. Destiny Pearson is working with the group as the contact for assistance with workdays and all things MSU Tollgate Farm-related.

The usual January reminders:

- Memberships are renewed **every** year, please fill out a 2025 TGV membership form, see link in this issue
- Our January through March meetings will be via Zoom, April through October will be in person
- All Active status volunteers are invited to the Garden Team meeting **Saturday January 18th at 10:00 am in the Conference Center**. See emails, calendar in this issue
- If you need to make contact with any TGAC or Area Garden Leader please call or e-mail Renee and we can forward these contact requests to the correct recipients
- NEW garden members will receive a welcome email contact from Teresa Larosa with a summary of important information to know. See links in this issue.

A finalized Activity Calendar should be ready to be posted on the website by the end of January and will be included in the February newsletter. You may want to save these dates!

- **Saturday, April 26** - New volunteer orientation and Pancake Breakfast for all TGV members
- **Saturday, June 7** - Spring Plant Sale
- **Thursday, July 17** - TGV Garden Open House (rain date Friday July 18)
- **Saturday, September 20** - Fall Plant Sale

See you soon on Zoom! Stay safe and warm, and have fun with the garden catalogs and your friends and family.

Thank you for being a Tollgate Garden Volunteer!

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

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PAR Report *Kathryn Fitzpatrick*

Happy 2025! I would like to send a special thank you to all past and present volunteers who have provided the labor of love and care to this special garden, and to encourage any new volunteers to check us out. The new year's resolutions for the garden are to improve our tools and beds with a focus on adaptability and accessibility, and to expand the diversity and quality of our yield to better support the community, our wonderful volunteers, and those in need.

Our review of 2024 led us to add more herbs as well as tomatillos, and to winterize the beds individually, so we can minimize weeds by selectively working with each bed. Seeds and seed potatoes have been ordered, and the necessary materials for starting alliums, cabbage, kohlrabi, peppers, herbs, tomatillos, and cucumbers will be ready for March/April, when we begin the season in the greenhouse.



The start of the season in the garden is usually wet, dirty, and often cold, so we will need hearty individuals to help eradicate the weeds that may have survived, add compost/soil to the beds as needed, maintain the irrigation lines and parts, and lay mulch in the pathways. Any beds that were not covered or lost their covers over the winter will need to be weeded, cultivated, and leveled for planting.

We are counting on all the gardeners who are anxious to get back into the garden – the PAR garden will be calling!

We are looking forward to another great season in 2025, as well as to welcoming new volunteers who are interested in joining our fantastic team and providing such a valuable service to the community. We have an enthusiastic, fun, hard-working team, and plenty of rewarding opportunities to help those in need.

Hope to see you in the garden this year or perhaps in the greenhouse in the spring,
Kathryn Fitzpatrick

AGL Information

Winter has really arrived this week. Plant catalogs are arriving in our inboxes and mailboxes heralding the time to begin planning for our 2025 gardens. Many of you have already responded to the invitation to our January 18th Area Garden Leader planning session. Thank you. I anticipate seeing you as we plan for warm weather activities in the Tollgate Gardens.

Linda Piasecki and I hope to schedule time before March to make labels for your gardens. Please email me with your **label needs**. You will also need to send me your **2025 Garden Budget**. Forms were recently emailed to AGLs or the links below can be used to download the files to your own computer.

Marilyn Alimpich
masoleil@sbcglobal.net

[2025 Garden Budget Planner](#)

[Tollgate Label Template Excel Version](#)

[Tollgate Label Template Word Version](#)

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Where Would You Like to Grow?

There are numerous Tollgate gardens that require assistance for ongoing care and development throughout the season. Active status garden volunteers are encouraged to explore these opportunities to learn and grow in your confidence and knowledge. ARE YOU READY? Mentoring and orientation to the gardens is available to help you get started on a team or an individual assignment.

Consider:

- What plants do you enjoy?
 - Veggies, Roses, pollinators, annuals, and more are here to enjoy at Tollgate.
- What amount of time can you spend each month?
 - Areas can be sized to be managed in your time frame.
- What type of gardening activities do you like best?
 - Weeding, pruning, designing, renovating and planting opportunities are available.
- Do you have adaptive gardening requirements?
 - Limited bending, kneeling or lifting tasks can also be assigned.

Contact Renee for further exploration of where YOU want to grow! rmcottrell4@att.net

Check out the garden overview included in the new volunteer orientation to see which garden fits you. [Tollgate Garden Overview](#)

MSU Tollgate Volunteer Sign-In

Tollgate has many wonderful volunteers giving their time and talents to the gardens, maple syrup making and support for educational programming. Reporting your hours helps us tell Tollgate's story to the MSU community. We appreciate the extra effort it takes for you to record these hours and provide us accurate information to use to benefit Tollgate and want to make it easy and convenient:

- For those proficient with a smart phone camera, the QR code below can be scanned to reach the link:



- For those who prefer to report hours on a computer or tablet, you may use the link provided and save it/bookmark it for future use: [Tollgate Volunteer Sign In 2025](#)
- You can keep track of **all** your hours and report in **one or more bulk entries**, as convenient, by the end of the year **OR** record at the time of each visit
- Assistance is available if you need help with the links and logging your hours
- These entries **are not/cannot** link to MSU Extension. Master Gardeners need to report those hours separately. See instructions on your MSU Extension Volunteer Central dashboard.

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Membership Update January 2025

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

Marilyn Alimpich
Phyllis Antosz
Andrew Berry
Jayne Berry
Linda Bodzin
Bolterstein
Suzanne Bolton
Ann Bolz
Susan Bremer
Theresa Bridenbaugh
Paula Brose
Heidi Bulich
Doris Daniel
Amy Deeds
Leslie DeWitt
Kathryn Fitzpatrick
Linda Galante
Carmen Hamilton
Karen Harris
Vickie Krause
David Harencher
Lori Heiden
Kathy Johnson
Mark Klepinger

Teresa LaRosa
Kathy C. Light
Beverly McCarter
Donald Millington
Susan Millington
Therese Nagi
Jim Nelson
Martin Pevzner
Linda Piasecki
Judy Poole
Nancy Powell
Norm Powell
Roy Prentice
Mary Sheipline
Stephen Smith
Julie Ann Stahl
Judie Tomaszewski
Nancy Turner
Judy Warren
Lenora Woloszyn

**Welcome New
Member:**
Edward Essayan

*If you are not sure if you have
renewed, please feel free to contact
me at my email, below.*

Teresa LaRosa
tlrrehab@gmail.com

Membership Form Link –
[2025 TGV Membership Form](#)

[2025 Member Levels Reminder](#)

Links to Forms & Other Info

**2025 Tollgate Garden Volunteer Activity
Calendar – available by the end of January**

[Garden Orientation PDF](#)

[Tollgate Garden Web Pages](#)

[Other Tollgate Garden Volunteer Info](#)

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: Napowell77@gmail.com

Member Spotlight

Will return with 2025 Activity Days

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Join us for Maple Fest 2025 (March 8th and 9th), an exciting celebration of Michigan's sweetest winter crop—maple syrup! Discover the fascinating journey of how sap transforms into syrup as we guide you through the tapping process. First, identify a healthy sugar maple tree, typically with a trunk diameter of at least 10 inches, and with the right temperatures—days above freezing and nights below—sap begins to flow.

Experience the traditional method of tapping by drilling a small hole and inserting a spike, allowing the sweet sap to drip into buckets. Afterward, take a tour of our historic sugar shack to see the boiling process and the tools used in the age-old craft. Enjoy hands-on activities like wagon rides and sampling fresh maple sap, syrup, and sugar.

Come hungry for our 'all-you-can-eat' pancake celebration in the beautiful 19th-century barn, where you can indulge in pancakes, sausage, and of course, pure maple syrup! Embrace the spirit of spring and the rich flavors of maple at this delightful festivity!

Get Tickets Today!
<https://www.canr.msu.edu/events/maplefest-2025>



There will also be volunteer opportunities at Maple Fest. Watch for more information via email near the end of January.

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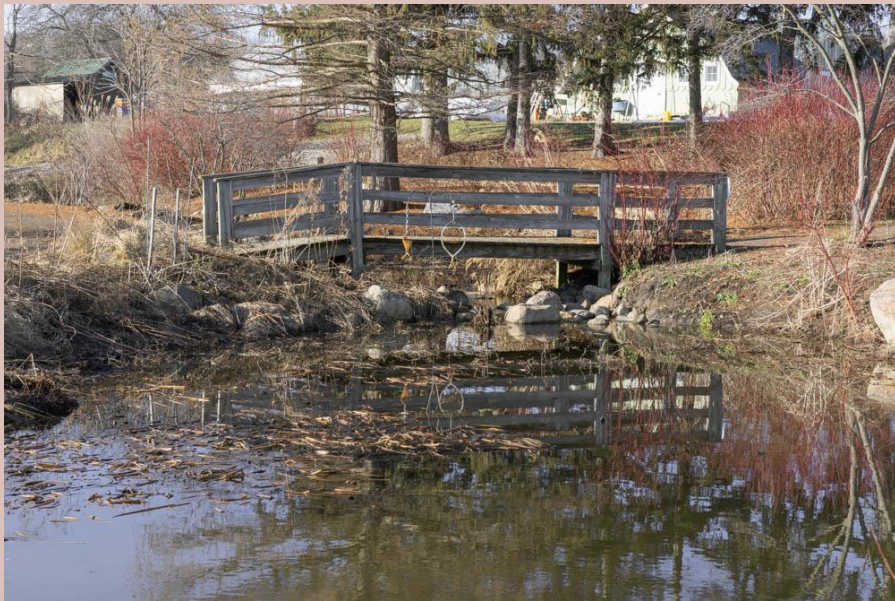
ROSE GARDEN WORKDAY



Photos provided by Kathy Johnson

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AT THE POND



Top photo provided by David Komraus
Bottom photo by Norm 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 Nancy Powell

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 tirrehab@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

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