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GARDEN THYME

10 YEARS

PCMGA Porter County Master Gardeners Association

PCGARDEN.INFO | 219-465-3555
PURDUE EXTENSION PORTER COUNTY 155 INDIANA AVENUE, SUITE 301 VALPARAISO, IN 46383

— *In this Issue*

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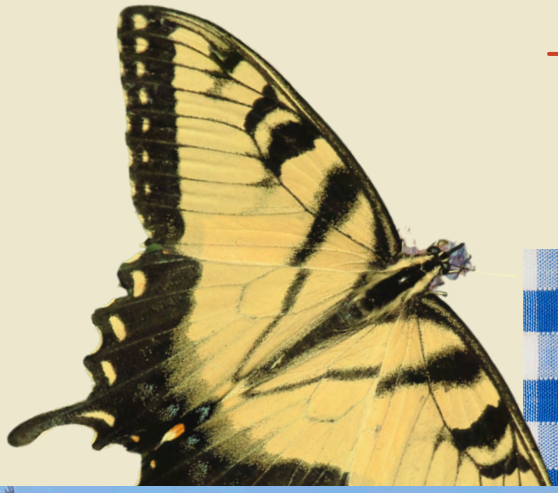
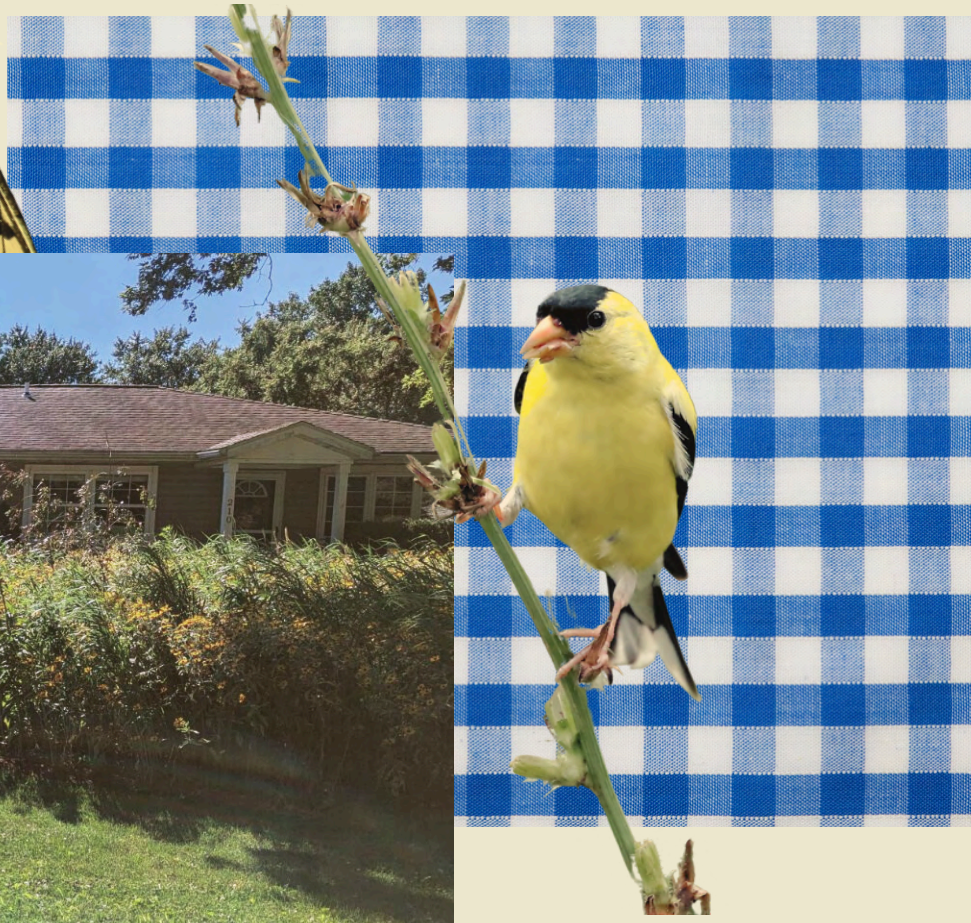
The Porter County Master Gardeners Association (PCMGA) is a not-for-profit corporation that promotes the education and pleasure of gardening in cooperation with Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service in Porter County, Indiana.

Photo credits, top to bottom: Emily Bretl, Ron Hermance, Hillary Miles.

— *My Plant; My Project*





Protecting Pollinators

With a Prairie Garden – in the Front Yard!

BY MARLENE VANDERLIN, PCMG CLASS OF 2018

Photography credit: Joe Eberts

My son-in-law and daughter, Joe and Ruth Eberts, created a prairie in their front yard. Maybe it was because I encouraged them with the information I had been gaining through Master Gardeners. However, they do live in a subdivision on a one-acre lot with plenty of space and are trained in landscape architecture. They likely knew the benefits of a prairie garden before I spoke.

First, Joe spent time on research to get the project right. He rented a sod cutter to remove all the turf. Thanks to a neighbor, the turf was hauled away for their yard. Joe then tilled and broadcasted the seed. The locally-sourced, native plant seed mix selected was a “low-grow prairie,” so the plants would not obscure the house. The mix included a cover crop of annual ryegrass, which protected the native plant seeds from birds and erosion while they were establishing.

"We enjoyed a beautiful and colorful spring and summer display of black-eyed susan, purple coneflower, purple monarda, yellow evening primrose, yellow butter weed, light purple penstemon, white Queen Anne’s lace, and orange butterfly weed. Now with the heat and lack of rain, the prairie has become a little messier looking,” Joe explained. “What it lacks in color, it makes up for in environmental benefits. The increase of butterflies, finches, and other wildlife and pollinators has been great to experience.”

Regarding maintenance, the Eberts have far less mowing and watering to do. They simply mow around the prairie to keep it contained and remove ryegrass seed heads and giant ragweed. Raked leaves can be tossed into the prairie in the fall. They plan on mowing next spring. So far, the front yard prairie has garnered no complaints from neighbors, but this type of landscaping might not be allowed in all neighborhoods.

So, why the front yard? My grandson needs the backyard for play!

Prairies are great for our environment because they are great for pollinators! For more information from Purdue University on protecting pollinators click here.

Photography credit: Joe Eberts.

— *Garden Wanderer*

Fabyan Forest Preserve

BY SHARI STUCKY
PCMG CLASS OF 2017

Find beauty and peace in one lovely place.

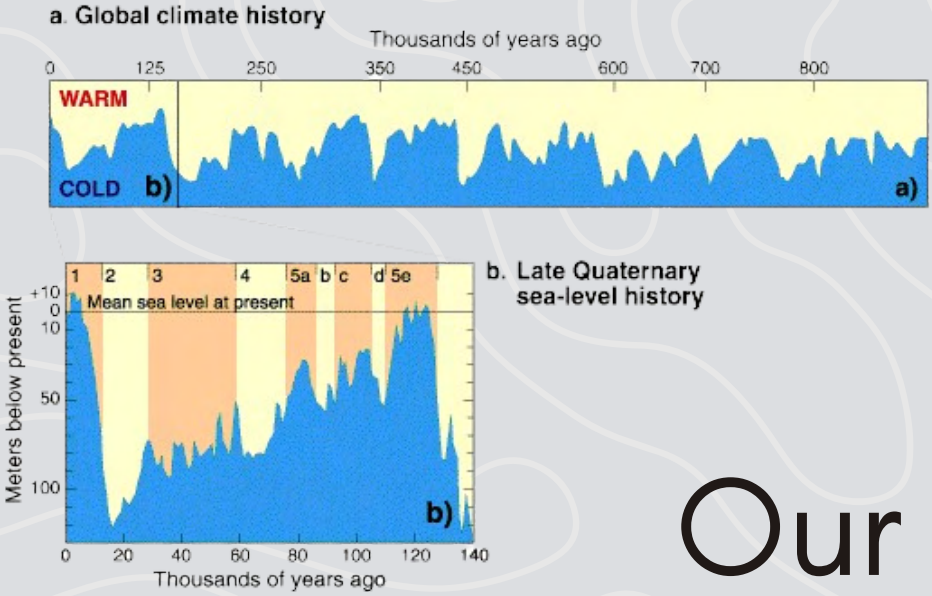
Nestled inside the Fabyan Forest Preserve on the west side of the Fox River in Geneva, Illinois, you will find the stunning Japanese Tea Garden. It was originally designed in 1910 by a Japanese landscape architect Taro Otsuka as a private garden for Colonel George and Nelle Fabyan.

Explore an acre oasis filled with a variety of plants and trees, as well as, historic and Japanese cultural structures. There are bridges to climb if you feel inclined to do so. Brochures are available for self-guided tours. A naturalist is available on Sundays to answer any questions you may have. Admission is free and Geneva is just 45 minutes west of Chicago.

Also located on the property is the former home of Colonel Fabyan and his wife which was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1907. Tours are available at the museum from May 1st thru September 29th. Visit the website for more details.

In addition, Downtown Geneva has a variety of adorable boutiques and a wide variety of restaurants for your added enjoyment. Make a day of it. You'll be thrilled that you did.

Photo courtesy Kane County Forest Preserve



Our Geology: Past, Present and Powerful

Part 1 of 3

BY GERRY LEHMANN, PCMG CLASS OF 2009

Was NWI Formed by a Glacier? Well the short answer is: yes, and the glacier was likely a mile high here at one time. There are three unique bands of NWI landscape as a result of numerous glaciers. This article will explore how all this happened while future articles in my series will drill down on the resultant landscape of Porter County itself.

Our planet Earth has experienced at least five major ice ages, each millions upon millions of years long. The last ice age, called the Quarternary, or commonly, The Last Ice Age, began 2.5 million years ago. Each ice age includes multiple cold (glacial) periods where ice sheets advance south, followed by warming (inter-glacial) periods, where the ice sheet recedes. The most recent glacial period is called the Wisconsin Glaciation which began about 100,000 years ago.

During the Quarternary ice age the Northern Hemisphere ice sheets covered all of northern Europe, northern Russia, Greenland, Canada and northern USA. At its peak about 26,000 to 20,000 years ago, this ice sheet extended from Greenland, down thru New England, south toward the Ohio River and up the Missouri east of the Rockies into Northern Canada. In North America this ice sheet was called the

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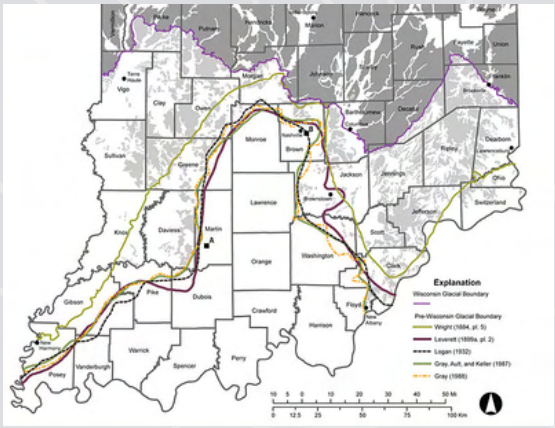
Laurentide Ice Sheet and was thought to be 2.5 miles high in the Hudson Bay area in Canada; it was quite possibly a mile high here in Northwest Indiana.

There was so much ice in both hemispheres during the peak of the Quarternary ice age that global temperatures were 11 F degrees below those of today. With all this water tied up in massive ice sheets, the oceans were 400 feet below present levels. The Last Glacial Maximum (LGM), was a period of time during the last ice age when glaciers covered the largest portion of the Earth's surface, and the climate was extremely dry. It occurred between 26.5 and 19,000 years ago, with its coldest period around 21,000 years ago. The LGM was caused by variations in the Earth's orbit around the sun. The most recent inter-glacial warming period began about 11,000 years ago. We are still in this current inter-glacial warm period called the Holocene epoch.

The Laurentide Ice Sheet advanced and receded many times over its thousands of years existence. The Indiana Geological Survey has studied the many advances of the glacier in our state. The map on the front page of this study shows that most all of the surface landscape of Indiana was formed by numerous glacial advances.



Today the sheet has receded to nothing in North America and Canada; it is only found in Greenland. More info on the Laurentide Ice Sheet and the rise in sea levels in the Holocene epoch can be found on this website.

The last recession of the Laurentide Ice Sheet began at the end of the LGM, which occurred about 21,000 years ago and is the beginning of our local story. I will end my article at this beginning. Future articles will address the three unique bands of surface landscape these many glaciers left behind in Porter County.

Graphic courtesy of Indiana University, *Indiana Geological Survey*

Porter County Fair Open Class Flower Show Results

BY SUZANNA TUDOR, PCMG CLASS OF 2002

Thursday, July 18, 2024

BEST OF SECTION

Buzz Fifield -Creative Design

Suzanna Tudor-Design Using Flowers of One color

BEST OF SHOW

Marlene Vanderlin -A Design Using Only Foliage

Monday, July 22, 2024

BEST OF SECTION

Lois Peterman-Paniculata Hydrangea

Deb Gruszka- Perovskia

BEST OF SHOW

Suzanna Tudor-H. moscheutos Hibiscus

Thursday, July 25, 2024

BEST OF SECTION

Beth Gemeinhart -Bouquet of Herbs

Anna DeRoo-Yellow Helianthus

BEST OF SHOW

Pam Tincher-Bouquet of Annuals

Photo provided by Wilma Willard,
Pictured: Wilma Willard & Best of Section - Anna DeRoo.

Pictured right, top to bottom: Best of Section - Deb Gruszka, Best of Section - Suzanna Tudor, Best of Show - Pam Tincher, Best of Show - Marlene Vanderlin. Photography credits: Deb Gruszka, Marlene Vanderlin, Suzanna Tudor.

Septic Challenge:

From Destruction to Delightful Design

BY WILMA WILLARD, PCMG CLASS OF 2011

After a year of prevention strategies, then borings by a soil scientist, a topographical survey and septic design by an engineer, hiring of a septic installer, and ultimately a permit by the Porter County Health Department, the inevitable came to be. The destruction of our beloved acre of landscaped heaven on earth occurred August of 2022.

Why? Our seeping septic tank and lack of percolation in our yard required the replacement of our 35 year old lateral field septic system with a new raised mound system. Our aged system had become overwhelmed considering our heavy clay soil and drainage issues.

This drastic destruction left us mourning. Our families' blood, sweat, and tears (literally) had gone into our landscape since we bought the empty lot in 1986. It included stories of success and failures, memories of teachable moments with our children and grandchildren, and heirloom plants from loved ones who have passed.

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Photo credit: Marvel Construction.

How could we redesign our landscape to accommodate a concrete 1,250 gallon septic tank and a concrete 1,000 gallon pumping chamber, both just inches below ground level. How could we minimize the intrusion of a 92’ long x 27’ wide and 3‘ tall elevated Presby septic mound including a surrounding perimeter drain? How could we hide an electrical box on a 2’ post as well as a 10’ high vent and a 2’ low vent on each end of the mound? So many pieces to the puzzle of a redesigned landscape! So many challenges that would make or break the beauty of our acre, plus the health of our lawn and landscape plants.




Now two years later, we have pieced the puzzle together through much thought, much labor, and much love. The mourning has turned to morning. New perks? Now I’m able to share my abundance of cut flowers with the public and our new campfire area with family and friends.

Come visit anytime, especially if you find yourself navigating a septic challenge. Maybe we can help you get from destruction to delightful design!

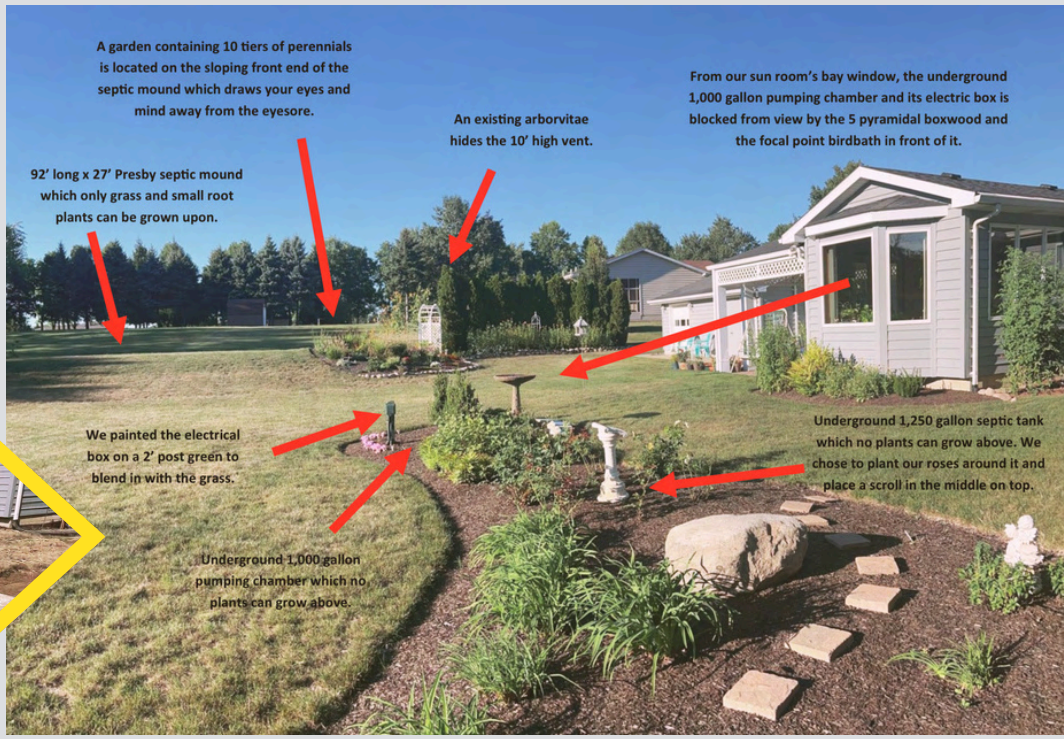

Photo credits: Wilma Willard., Marvel Construction.

Ecotypical is the word used to describe a group of organisms within a species that is adapted to particular environmental conditions.

Seed Saving

EMILY BRETL, ED.D., GUEST WRITER
FOUNDER & DIRECTOR, MARRAM COLLABORATIVE

You can feel a change coming in the late August air. For some, this transition from summer to fall brings delight in the abundance of fresh produce and the singing of dog-day cicadas. For others, it's time to celebrate cooler nightly temperatures with a bonfire and sweater. For seed savers like myself, late August ushers in hope and possibility: it's seed harvesting season!

Seed saving is an ancient, sacred, and practical practice. At least 30,000 years ago, humans began saving grains such as wild wheat and rice from places like China, Iraq, and Turkey. Teosinte, corn's wild ancestor, was domesticated by Indigenous seed keepers in Mexico at least 10,000 years ago, about the same time they were domesticating tomatoes (tomatl in Aztec Nahuatl) and peppers (chile is also a Nahuatl word). Potatoes were domesticated by the Incas at least 10,000 years ago. Can you name a favorite meal made without grains, corn, tomatoes, peppers or potatoes? Seed saving made humans into who we are today.

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Seed saving also supports socio-ecological resilience, allowing us to provide critical nutrition, stability, and beauty for our communities in times of change and crisis. This is because locally adapted (aka “eco typical”) plants and their genes have been shaped over time by environmental interactions (including humans, pollinators and climate). Ecotypical seeds grow into ecotypical plants that are even better suited to life here than plants from elsewhere. In turn, these plants better support the birds, butterflies, and large and small critters that depend on them (once again, humans included). What are a few weeks of spring drought to the little bluestem whose ancestors have been thriving here for centuries? And what of that 100-year storm to the rose milkweed growing here for 500 years? A blip on the radar. Locally adapted plants thrive despite hardship.

The same is true for our annual vegetables and herbs. You know that plant-it-and-forget-it tomato you’ve been looking for? It’s waiting for you in the seeds of this year’s tomatoes! You may not know how they survived your weeks-long vacation without watering, but they did, and they are delicious. Save those seeds! Grow them next year! Forget to water them again! Collect seeds from the most delicious! Repeat, repeat, repeat! Within a few years on this journey, you’ll have created your own “ecotypical-no-irrigation-needed-summer-vacation-ready” tomato variety.

And chances are good you may enjoy yourself along the way.

Here are a few simple rules to keep in mind when seed collecting (especially in the “wild”):

- Leave the first and last seeds for others to enjoy.
- Let the rare species be.
- Take no more than 5% of the seeds from a single plant or population.
- Always get permission from the landholder.
- Give thanks to the plant before and after harvest.

Japanese Honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*)

Getting to Know Invasives

BY SUZANNA TUDOR, PCMG CLASS OF 2002

Since beginning this "invasives quest", I was in a bit of a stalemate as to which problem plant or animal to feature for September. My history of writing about these intruders goes back to 2018 Garden Thyme. There's a lot of them! The DNR and Invasive Indiana Plants organization list Purple loosestrife, Japanese honeysuckle, Autumn olive, Glossy buckthorn, and Garlic mustard as their top five. After much thought and consideration, I decided to simply look around and see what's popping up.

I didn't have to go far. In my own backyard, proudly blooming on a trellis (put up by this master gardener I'm hesitant to admit) is Japanese honeysuckle (Lonicera japonica)! Similarly, we all may be guilty of harboring fugitives and not even knowing it—or maybe we do. In fact, this culprit was given to me years ago by my sister-in-law. She had it in her yard, passed along to her by her mother-in-law. We all loved its white/yellow blossoms' enticing, sweet fragrance. This perennial woody vine spreads by seeds, underground rhizomes and runners. Pictures are worth a thousand words, so I will not go into a lengthy description. Instead, take a look and read all about it on this Purdue Invasive Plant Species Fact Sheet.

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Photo: Japanese honeysuckle blooms and leaves. Credit: Suzanna Tudor.

Japanese Knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*)

In addition, just a couple blocks away, I spotted Japanese Knotweed (Polygonum cuspidatum) taking over a neighbor's yard. Traveling along nearly every roadway, I've seen it in large thickets. Currently, it is in bloom with its small, greenish-white flowers. This rhizomatous perennial can reach 10-feet tall, causing serious damage to building foundations. Perhaps you have noticed these dense growths along highways you've traveled. Now you know what they are. My sister-in-law had huge thickets behind her condo here in Valparaiso, encroaching on several backyards there. They seem to be everywhere. One Monroe County MG, Eryn Cusack, called it a "Sinister Invader."

To educate yourself further on identifying invasives, steps you can take to help with this "growing" problem, upcoming events, and lists of organizations also involved in this worthy endeavor, check out Purdue's Indiana Invasive Species pamphlet.

Indiana's DNR's extensive list is also very informative.

Peruse this Purdue Weed Science brochure to become more acquainted with Japanese Knotweed.

Photo: Stand of Japanese Knotweed flowering along roadway. Credit: Suzanna Tudor.

SAVE THE DATES!
Saturday, September 14
Wednesday, September 18
Thursday, September 26th

You are invited to meet our Garden Skip hosts in their yard for a time of education, connection and enjoyment!

You'll experience vegetable gardens, perennial beds in sun and shade, seed-saving endeavors, hybridizing projects, beekeeping, and a greenhouse as three fellow master gardeners host you in open-house style events on their property. Lend your expertise in hosta propagation, wildflower prairies, landscape design and more.

For more details, see your September 3rd email from Margaret Mudd!

Newsletter Team
Hillary Miles, Suzanna Tudor, Wilma Willard

GARDEN THYME

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VOLUME 10
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