

# The Grapevine



Bulletin of the Saginaw Valley Master Gardener Association      October 2007    Volume 11, Issue 10

## Plant quirks are one propagator's hobby

By day, nursery manager Joel Miller spends his time procuring plants, providing plant and pest identification and answering tons of consumer questions at Goldner Walsh Nursery in Oakland County.

He's been interviewed on television several times — "Rebecca's Garden" and HGTV, for both his knowledge of plants and the nursery industry.

But the Clio native remains as fascinated by propagation as he was as a youth working on the family farm near Marlette.

His personal focus these days is on the unusual — and how that leads to the plant varieties that are available today.

As SVMGA's guest speaker this month, he'll delve into "Freaks, Witches Brooms and Chimeras in Michigan's Landscape."

Program director Mary Andrews is asking members to wear orange and black to add to the Halloween-themed fun.

"Moving from agriculture to becoming

a Michigan certified nurseryman was a practical decision, governed by finances," Miller says.

"But the joy of propagation was what led me into the field in the first place and still plays a major role in what I do today."

Miller constantly finds himself on the

lookout for variations in plants, shrubs and trees, whether he's on his way to work or out for a pleasure drive.

"I'm not the safest guy on the road," he says with a chuckle.

"This talk is one of my favorites — and the most popular."

It's one he gives more than a dozen times a year, mostly in the off-season.

"Every variety of plant has come about from some sort of abnormality, be it leaf variegation, flower color, dwarf varieties, whatever.

"People don't realize this is how we get the varieties we have today."

Along with his talk, he has a slide show that encompasses different forms



The October meeting has a Halloween theme.

### Next meeting

- 7 p.m. — 9 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 24, at the Andersen Enrichment Center, Ezra Rust and Fordney
- 7 p.m. — 7:30 p.m., business meeting
- 7:30 p.m. — 8 p.m., refreshments
- 8 p.m. — 9 p.m., Joel Miller of Goldner Walsh Nursery discusses "Freaks, Witches Brooms and Chimeras in Michigan's Landscape"
- **Please wear your badge — and orange and/or black.**

he's discovered all across the state.

"It's really turned into a hobby. I'm perpetually looking because these are far and few in between for propagation."

Naturally, his own garden is the last one to get worked on with such a hectic work schedule. So he has made it as small scale and low maintenance as possible.

"I'm a fan of dwarf conifers and native carnivores, which is another small talk I give during the year."

Goldner Walsh Nursery, located at 559 Orchard Lake Road, off Woodward,

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## 'Difference Day' needs help, plants

Six Master Gardeners already have signed up to help "Make a Difference" on Thursday, Oct. 25.

That's the annual event that pairs up high school students from around the county, members of the Saginaw Valley Master Gardener Association and other volunteers, affiliated with such groups as United Way, Youth FORCE and the Saginaw Community Foundation, and sends them out on a mission.

Their one-day job?

To spruce up yards and homes, plant flowers and complete other fall clean-up

for ailing senior citizens and disabled residents who need a helping hand.

This year's project will find 10 teams headed to homes in Freeland, Saginaw, Carrollton, Bridgeport and Buena Vista from 8 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. from the Andersen Enrichment Center.

For Master Gardeners that adds up to more than 5 hours of volunteer credit.

Some of the gardening-related projects this year are simple; one is massive; a couple call for fun creativity, like one at a group home for 10 women.

*(Continues on Page 3)*

## Freaks fascinate...

offers a variety of  
(Continues from Page 1)

education programs.

The nine-acre nursery sells specimen trees and shrubs; perennials, roses and house plants, landscape design and installation, and home and garden décor.

Today's consumer, Miller says, is looking for low-maintenance gardening.

"That's where native plants can come into play, but people don't take advantage of them the way they could."

Another major consumer concern are ways to screen the neighbors without resorting to the typical shrubs.

"People are sick of arborvitae so we try to find some different things that will work for them," Miller explains.

With the off season approaching, he will travel to Ohio for a plant show.

Miller plans to allow time after his talk to SVMGA members for questions.

To learn more about Goldner Walsh Nursery, visit [www.goldnerwash.com](http://www.goldnerwash.com) or call (248) 332-6430.

### Officers for 2007-08

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## New reference book outlines landscaping with native plants

**"Landscaping with Native Plants of Michigan"** by Lynn Steiner, Voyageur Press, 2006, color plates, 192 pages.

While checking a stack of books from our local library, the librarian held this book in her hands and said, "This is a good book," and then added, "I really used it."

Author Lynn Steiner uses the book to 1) identify Michigan's native plants and 2) to inform and demonstrate how to use native plants effectively.

Not all of Michigan's native plants are shown, simply because there are too many.

However, Steiner selected plants that adapt well to cultivation, are suited to various landscape situations and are commercially available, either at nurseries or by mail order.

Her selection includes both sun and shade plants, that are native to the state's major biomes.

Native plants are plants that were here prior to European settlement.

And Steiner lists the "bad guys," invasives such as rhamnus cathartica or buckthorn; vinca minor or common periwinkle; and 36 others, in addition to benefits and misconceptions.

Plants are featured by the Latin name, followed by their common name. In the index, you can find the plant under either name.

An emphasis is made to the reader to only purchase nursery-propagated plants,

to stress the need for conservation.

Steiner answers the question, "Where do they go?" from sun, shade, rock garden, water garden, to which plants to attract hummingbirds and butterflies, mixed borders, and front yards.

Some two-thirds of the book deals with plant profiles, more than 380 species.

The sections are color-coded for flowers and ground covers, grasses and sedges, ferns, evergreen conifers, deciduous trees, and vines.

Color photographs show each plant. Some plants take a full page, but most are half a page.

Each plant profile includes native habitat, height, description, landscape use, site and culture.

The layout, concise lists, descriptions and photographs make this book great for plant identification. It also answers questions about placement to make the best use of the plant.

If you would like to keep a good reference book handy, that is easy to use, this may be the one for you.

"Landscaping with Native Plants of Michigan" also is available through the Midland and Saginaw Public libraries.

*Book report by Jed Fulkerson  
Advanced Master Gardener*

## Don't dismiss the value of mulching plants, trees

Your garden will reward you when you lay a blanket of organic mulch, like wood chips, around your trees and shrubs.

Why? Mulch re-creates the forest's environment for healthier, faster growing plants. It provides a habitat for rove beetles, ground beetles, firefly larvae, centipedes and other predators of insect pests.

And mulching increases activity of na-

tive mycorrhizal fungi, which helps plants take up nutrients and may protect plants from stress and plant pathogens.

To download a PDF brochure with the results of Ohio State University's mulch research, go to <http://ohioline.osu.edu/b894>.

*From Midwest Living magazine,  
October 2007*

### Saginaw Valley Master Gardener Association mission statement

"Joining together as Master Gardeners, our mission is to promote our enthusiasm and knowledge of gardening by a wide variety of educational and volunteer activities in a spirit of fun and friendship."

# Letter from the president

Hello everyone!

Although the temperatures have been summer like, fall is definitely in the air.

I have trees turning color, leaves falling and plants ready to be pruned for winter.

I hope that all of you who attended SVMGA's fall conference enjoyed yourselves. There was a lot of information available and we had a really nice crowd.

**KUDDOS!** to Judy Henning and Aileen Cowan and the rest of the great committee for a job well done.

For those of you who were there, please let them know you appreciate the great job they always do!

I did get feedback from some of you about the last meeting. I recognize that many of you really wanted the education credits that are usually available at the September meeting.

I apologize if this inconvenienced you. That certainly was not the intention.

We usually have a fall plant exchange on a date other than our meeting and I thought it might be nice to see if you liked having it at the September meeting.

We had lots of good discussion at the meeting on the various issues mentioned in last month's newsletter.

A vote was taken on being able to invite a guest to the Christmas potluck. It

was approved so feel free to bring someone with you.

As was done at the summer picnic, your guest will have a name tag showing the member who brought him or her, so it is easy to connect people.



Here are the obviously non-binding results of the survey I distributed at last month's meeting.

Keep in mind that this survey was to give the board feedback.

You will be voting at the October meeting on these issues.

- On raising our dues, of the 48 people who responded: 43 yes and 5 no.
- Summer picnic next year: 32 yes, 17 no
- Spring bulb sale: 47 yes, 1 no
- Spring bulb money to go to Saginaw County Master Gardener Program: 41 yes, 7 no
- Having our own web site linked to MSU: 32 yes, 16 no
- Continue fund-raisers to benefit SVMGA: 37 yes, 11 no

I counted as no, any questions that were not marked.

Thank you for all the many comments. The comments on the web page in particular were excellent.

Your concerns were for the person who would have to update the page — should we pay them something, level of skill and training required; would we start gung ho and then the enthusiasm diminish; not everyone would want to have to check it for information; a question and answer portion to share the vast knowledge of our group and felt it was a way to continue to make our group stand out.

Some of you wanted to up dues to \$30 and some \$25. This will be decided at the meeting.

The Saginaw County Master Gardener Program is short on money and most of you felt we should use the spring bulb money for them.

Another suggestion was to use what other fund-raisers we have to sell to the public, such as at Garden Day at the Andersen Enrichment Center.

What a good way to keep our group in the public eye!

Again, let me thank you for taking the time to fill out the surveys.

The comments were great! As always you exceed my expectations!

Toodles,  
Susan

## Donate plants for 'Make a Difference'

(Continues from Page 1)

As always, the participating Master Gardeners may just supervise the students, or they can wade in knee-deep and work right alongside the students.

Advanced Master Gardener Janet I. Martineau is overseeing the Saginaw Valley Master Gardener Association participation.

Anyone still wishing to volunteer should call her at 751-3868 (cell) or e-mail her at [jmartineau@thesaginawnews.com](mailto:jmartineau@thesaginawnews.com) as soon as possible.

Those who volunteer may obtain the address of their assignment in advance.

This way they can view the site and make plans for the gardening efforts that

need to be done.

In addition, Martineau also is looking for donations of plants.

These include:

- LARGE and medium-sized hostas
- Purple cone flowers,
- Black-eyed Susans,
- Lilies,
- A miniature rose bush or two
- and mums

We will divvy these plants up among the seniors' homes.

Call or e-mail her no later than noon Saturday, Oct. 20, if you have plant material to donate.

After that Martineau says she goes shopping!!!!

Next board meeting:  
**5:30 p.m. Wednesday,  
Nov. 7, at MSU Extension**

Newsletter deadline:  
**Monday, Nov. 12,**  
Send submissions to  
**Darlene Damp, editor,**  
**shrew@att.net**

View the newsletter at:  
**web1.msue.msu.edu/  
mastergardener/saginaw/**

View the SVMGA web page at:  
**web1.msue.msu.edu/  
mastergardener/saginaw/  
association/**

## Odds and ends...

### Sign up for Christmas party

Ruth Sny will have a Christmas party sign-up sheet at the October and November meetings.

Members may each bring one adult guest to the annual potluck, which features food, entertainment and prizes.



It is at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 4, at the First Presbyterian Church Fellowship Hall, 121 S. Harrison, off Court Street.

Sny also is asking members who sign up for the party to indicate what dish they will bring — main dish, vegetable, salad, dessert, bread or help with the punch.

Dress is Christmas casual.

Reservations are required. Those who can't attend the meetings, may call Sny at 928-7315.

### Plant & Pest Hotline has new e-mail address

If your neighbors, friends or relatives have gardening questions or concerns, give them the new Plant and Pest Hotline email address.

It is: callmg73@msu.edu.

With the end of the growing season approaching, volunteers are now working the hotline from 9 a.m. to noon Mondays and Thursdays.

However, volunteers stop in the office frequently and the email will be checked for questions.

"We will strive to respond to all questions quickly, but when you tell a friend about the email address, advise them that it may take up to a week for a response," explains Nancy Burd, Master Gardener coordinator.

"If they have a digital camera, suggest they take a photo of the insect or pest they're concerned about, then attach the picture to the e-mail and someone here will take a look at it."

### More members re-certify

Five more men and women have earned basic Master Gardener certification for 2007.

They are Beverly J. Daubert, William

C. Johnson, Xenolyn G. Johnson, Sheila E. Slezak and Christopher T. Thompson.

In addition, five SVMGA members have re-certified for 2007.

They are Sherry L. Burkhart, Jane Chard, Raeann Krauss, Karen Tilden and Rosemary Tinney.

Those who have not turned in their hours have until Dec. 31 to re-certify. (See story, Page 5.)

### Bulbs, books from seminar go on sale at next meeting

Grey Gitzen and his committee will have a limited number of bulbs and books for sale from SVMGA's fall seminar.

They will set up in the back room of Andersen Enrichment Center prior to the October meeting and during the break for those interested in making a purchase.

The remaining bulbs include:

**Colchicum:** Violet

**Allium:** Globemaster

**Fritillaria:** Michaiklovskyi, Pallidiflora and Meleagris

**Calchortus:** Symphony and Venustus

**Daffodil:** Beersheba, Pineapple Prince, Extravaganza, Katie Heath and Pipit

**Eremurus:** White Beauty

**Tulip:** Happy Family, New Design, Blushing Girl, China Town, Humulis Odalisque, Humulis Alba and Peppermint Stick

**Ipheon:** Wisley Blue and Charlotte Bishop

**Iris:** Reticulata Harmony, Danfordiae and Bakerana

There also are autographed copies of David S. MacKenzie's "The Timber Pocket Press Guide to Ground Covers."

Prices vary. Cash and checks accepted.

### Plant sale earns funds

The fall plant sale at the Saginaw Farmer's Market earned \$263 for the Saginaw Valley Master Gardener Association.

Members are expected to look at other potential fund-raisers for 2008 at the October meeting.

Fund-raisers could help increase the amount of money available for local proj-

jects. This year, SVMGA reduced the number of \$200 grants, due to a shortage of funds.

### Another successful seminar

Our fourth annual "An Autumn Affair for Gardeners" seminar is over.

Our count was lower than last year, but we were not surprised by this, due to the economy and the cost of gas. But it was a success.

We utilized Michigan speakers and changed our venue within Curtiss Hall at SVSU. The evaluations that were turned in mentioned both of these changes with positive remarks. We are always trying to improve the seminar.

We wish to thank all of the members who attended the seminar and we hope you enjoyed your day.

We also want to thank all those who volunteered their time and effort to make the 2007 event a success: Anne Birkam, Tom Brubaker, Judy Ross, Darlene Damp, Marilyn Karpicke, Grey and June Gitzen, Nancy Kleekamp, Brian Ott, Ruth Gardstrom, Ellie Robertson, Patti Collier, Mary Anne Malek, Laura Keeven, Cora Schaeff, Crystal Kauer, Tom Cowan and Richard Henning.

If we have forgotten anyone, we apologize and hope you will bring it to our attention. We could not have done it without all of you!

We are open for suggestions for speakers and any other thoughts you may have on the seminar.

Thanks again for all that you do to make the SVMGA the great organization that it is.

*Aileen Cowan and Judy A. Henning,  
Fall seminar co-chairs*

### Lapeer Master Gardeners have fall seminar

ATTICA —Heather DeRuiter from Bordine Nursery gives a preview of new plants for 2008 as the keynote speaker Saturday, Oct. 20, at the sixth annual Garden Education Seminar.

It is sponsored by the Lapeer County Master Gardeners from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Lapeer County Education/Technology Center, 690 Lake Pleasant Road, Attica.

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## Re-certify for 2007 by registering hours now

Start compiling your hours now for re-certification as Master Gardeners for 2007.

Master Gardeners need to complete a minimum of 15 hours of volunteer work and 5 education hours by Monday, Dec. 31.

Education credit is earned by attending SVMGA meetings with a speaker (see accompanying list) or other classes approved by the state or local Master Gardener coordinator for this calendar year.

Volunteer hours are earned by working on projects approved by the Master Gardener Coordinator for this calendar year.

You may either enter your hours on-line at [web1.msue.msu.edu/mastergardener/](http://web1.msue.msu.edu/mastergardener/) — or fill out a form, available at the MSUE office, 1 Tuscola.

Those using the on-line system must have their individual password and log-on.

Passwords and log-ons are available from Grey Gitzen for those with last

names beginning with A to G; from Darlene Damp for last names from H to M; and Judy Henning for N to Z.

Contact Gitzen at 792-0615 or [jgreygn@aol.com](mailto:jgreygn@aol.com); Damp at 746-9113 or [shrew@att.net](mailto:shrew@att.net); and Henning at 799-4136 or [judrich@sbcglobal.net](mailto:judrich@sbcglobal.net)

Once you are on the site, click on the volunteer reporting box. This brings up your personal MG page where you can select education and volunteer hour reporting and navigate between the two.

Education hours must be entered individually and fully, listing the date, class, instructor and hours for each meeting or class.

Volunteer hours are recorded by the start date, the project, type of work performed and TOTAL number of hours completed. Example: 5/5/07, Saginaw Children's Zoo, hands-on work, 50 hours.

Here is the list of education hours available from SVMGA meetings or events this year:

**1/24/07** — "What's New for 2007?" Matt Bouvy, 1 hour.

**2/28/07** — "Hosta Culture," Mark Hanner, 1 hour.

**3/28/07** — "Master Gardener Program Update," Mary McClellan, 1 hour.

**4/25/07** — "How Deep Is the Water?" Mike O'Sullivan, 1 hour.

**5/6/07 and 5/11/07** — Tour of botanist Fred Case's garden, 1 hour.

**10/6/07** — SVMGA's An Autumn Affair for Gardeners, Monica Milla, David MacKenzie, Susan Scott and Ruth Blumenstein, 5 hours.

**10/24/07** — "Freaks, Witches Brooms and Chimeras in Michigan's Landscape," 1 hour.

**11/28/07** — "Glorious Ferns," Ned Bromley, 1 hour.

Master Gardeners earn service award pins for all the hours they work and are approved.

Please record all of your hours to put toward the total, not just the minimum.

## It's time for fall clean-up at SVMGA project sites

### Clean-up at I-75 rest area...

Gloria Schuler has set Saturday, Oct. 13, for fall clean-up and bulb planting.

Schuler says there are several thousand bulbs to plant.

Those interested in helping may call 797-0100 or email [globobaram@excite.com](mailto:globobaram@excite.com).

### Children's Zoo...

Patti Decker plans a fall-clean-up at the Children's Zoo at Celebration Square on Saturday, Oct. 20.

It is from 9 a.m. to noon.

Volunteers will meet again at 9 a.m. Saturday, Nov. 3, to finish the clean-up.

To volunteer, call Decker at 792-6633 or e-mail [rizzofrank@aol.com](mailto:rizzofrank@aol.com).

### Japanese Garden...

Thank you all for all your hard work this season, says Holly Furlo, project chair.

She needs help Friday, Oct. 26, when

arbor expert Ray Jennings will help prune trees in the garden.

She also needs volunteers for the clean-up detail.

If you still need hours and would like to work on Fridays, please contact Dan Veresh at [veresh@dowgardens.org](mailto:veresh@dowgardens.org)

He has indicated he would help out on Fridays.

Fall garden clean-up is from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 23 and 30.

Contact [hfurlo@svsu.edu](mailto:hfurlo@svsu.edu) or call 793-3860.

### Andersen Rose Garden...

Volunteers plan to winterize the Andersen Enrichment Center roses on Saturday, Nov. 17.

Work begins at 9 a.m. and continues until complete. Please bring tools and gloves.

There will be a sign-up sheet at the October meeting.

### Saginaw Art Museum...

Please help with the fall clean-up of the museum's historic Ring Garden.

It is from 9 a.m. to noon Saturday, Oct. 20. Call Shelley Whitehead at 892-0719.

### Christmas party...

Sign-up to help with the annual Christmas potluck set for Tuesday, Dec. 4, at the First Presbyterian Church fellowship hall. Call Ruth Sny at 928-7315.

### Web page designer...

President Susan Scott is seeking a member willing to redesign the SVMGA Web site and manage updates.

View the SVMGA web page, and other association web sites at: [web1.msue.msu.edu/mastergardener/saginaw/association/](http://web1.msue.msu.edu/mastergardener/saginaw/association/)

Contact Scott at [SuHunSco@aol.com](mailto:SuHunSco@aol.com) or call 791-9270.

# Minutes of Sept. 26, 2007 meeting

The Fall plant exchange was held prior to the beginning of the meeting.

President Susan Scott welcomed 109 members to the Anderson Enrichment Center.

Waunita Pettiford moved that the minutes of the August 2007 meeting be approved as published; Crystal Kauer seconded the motion. The motion was carried.

Crystal Kauer read the treasurer's report.

## Lapeer seminar...

*(Continues from Page 4)*

The topics include "Rain Gardens" with Lillian Dean and Barbara Bini, from the Southeastern Oakland County Water Authority based in Royal Oak; "Insect and Disease Control for Roses" with rose grower Nancy Lindley; and "Pesto-making and Other Herbal Delights" with Cassie Meislik, owner of Hilltop Barn, an herb and antique shop in Columbiaville.

Janet Macunovich from the Michigan School of Gardening discusses "Saving Time on Yard Work," while Master Gardener Jenny Burrows looks at "Forcing Bulbs for Winter Color."

Bob Kuzmaul, an ornamental propagator, will talk about "Conifers in Our Landscape" and Iris Underwood, who owns a lavender farm in Addison Township, examines "Gardens in Literature."

There's also Donna Hoff-Grambau, an Advanced Master Gardener, who shows how to take ordinary garden plants and turn them into unique stationary.

Participants choose three classes from among eight offered. Sessions meet at 10:15 a.m., 1:15 p.m. and 3 p.m.

Master Gardeners earn 5.5 hours for attending the entire day.

Registration deadline is Monday, Oct. 15. Cost is \$55 for the public, \$50 for Master Gardeners and Junior Master Gardeners. There are no refunds.

For information, please call Lapeer County MSU Extension at (810) 667-0344.

A brochure and registration form are available on the Lapeer County MSUE web site.

Scott informed SVMGA members of sign-up sheets for those interested in working on the Christmas potluck committee and for the monthly meeting refreshments.

She also said back and current issues of the Michigan Gardener magazine were available for pick-up.

Scott pointed out display boards in the lobby, mentioning one contained information regarding winners of the Garden Contest at the Children's Zoo.

The other displayed a version of a potential new SVMGA web site.

Shirley McNier displayed the latest logo wear available for purchase.

Janet Martineau asked for volunteers for "Make a Difference Day" to be held Thursday, October 25. (See related story, Page 3.)

Grey Gitzen showed members some of the spring-flowering bulbs that will be sold at the Fall Seminar Oct. 6.

Vice president Karen Tilden asked for progress reports from project leaders. She indicated they need to submit their purchase receipts by Sept. 30.

Patti Decker mentioned the Children's Zoo clean-up dates are Saturday, Oct. 20 and Nov. 3. Decker said she had a sign-up sheet available in the back room.

Shelly Whitehead said the fall garden clean-up day for the Saginaw Art Museum also is scheduled for Oct. 20.

Judy Henning informed association members that this year there would be no additional charge for signing up after the deadline for the fall seminar.

Anyone who may have already been charged the additional \$5 would be reimbursed.

Gloria Schuler informed members the I-75 Rest Stop clean-up and bulb planting day will be Saturday, Oct. 13.

Scott began discussions regarding the Christmas potluck, based on the change of location to a larger facility at First Presbyterian Church at South Harrison and Court. Members voted to allow each member to bring one adult guest.

Scott next opened the discussion for having another August picnic for members and guests at a public or member's garden.

Scott discussed the survey she had distributed prior to the meeting. She asked members to complete it so she and the other officers will have the results for the next regular meeting. (See the President's Letter, Page 3.)

Anyone who wants to can communicate comments to her by phone or e-mail if they were unable to attend the meeting.

Next Scott brought up the issue regarding an increase in Association member dues.

Membership dues have been \$20 since the organization's inception, more than 10 years ago.

Members discussed a raise, bringing dues to \$25 or to \$30. The additional funds would cover increases in SVMGA's costs, including printing, mailing and the meeting room at Anderson Enrichment Center.

Scott plans to take a vote on this issue at the October meeting.

Next, discussion revolved around whether to sponsor another spring bulb sale and if so, what type of bulbs would be of interest, and where proceeds should go.

This year, the hastily arranged sale benefited the local Master Gardener Program.

Scott indicated there is a need to form a spring bulb sale committee of volunteers from our association.

Next Scott discussed the possibility of SVMGA creating its own web site, that is linked to the state site.

This, she said, would allow the organization more flexibility in changing information on the site, rather than relying on a web master in Jackson County.

It also could be easier to find and look more attractive than the current site.

Crystal Kauer made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 p.m.

Mary Andrews seconded the motion.

*Submitted by Melva Bond,  
secretary*

## Prepare garden now for earlier spring planting

EAST LANSING — Wet weather and wet soils can delay tillage and planting of your garden in the spring.

A thorough garden cleanup followed by tillage can prevent or reduce the carryover of this year's disease and insect problems into next year's garden.

And it may enable you to get an earlier start next spring.

Didn't have a garden this year but want to start one?

Fall is a great time to choose and prepare a new site, too.

Mary McLellan, Extension Master Gardener program coordinator at Michigan State University, explains that removing this year's plant debris also removes disease organisms and winter shelter for insect pests.

"Tilling the garden spot in the fall means you can skip this step in the spring, when soils may be wet and slow to warm up," she points out.

"This may enable you to plant cool-weather crops earlier than you could if you had to wait for the soil to get dry enough to work in the spring."



If you're thinking to start a new garden or enlarge an old one, the first step is to pick a location with well-drained, fertile soil and plenty of direct sun, McLellan advises.

"Though a few vegetables and some flowers will do well in light shade, many crops — such as tomatoes, peppers, snap beans, squash and cucumbers, and the cole crops — need full sun," McClellan says.

"Well-drained soil is essential — almost anything you might want to grow will do much better in soil that doesn't stay waterlogged for long periods.

"Extremely sandy soil also can be a problem — water runs right through it, taking fertilizer nutrients with it.

"The ideal soil contains a mixture of clay, sand and organic matter and holds water and nutrients for plants' use."

The next step is to eliminate grass and perennial weeds by using a broad-spectrum herbicide such as glyphosate (Roundup, Kleenup), or covering the sod with canvas, black plastic or some other material.

"Though you can just till the grass un-

der, it will keep trying to make a comeback," she notes.

"It's much simpler and easier to kill it when it's not mixed in with your garden plants."

Once the grass and perennial weeds are dead, you can till the soil, incorporating organic matter.

Fall provides a generous supply in the form of fallen leaves.

If you have a source of compost, that's good, also, McLellan adds.

As long as you're working the soil, you might as well collect a sample for soil testing, she suggests.

"Your county Extension office has sample containers and directions for taking and submitting your sample, and assistance in interpreting the results and carrying out the recommendations, she adds.

"Amendments to adjust the acidity of the soil — soil pH — can be done in the fall.

"It's best to hold off on fertilizer until crops are present to use the nutrients for growth."

*From Michigan State University*

## Proper storage can prolong winter squash harvest

EAST LANSING — If you have the proper storage conditions, you can store winter squash and pumpkins for several months.

The key is to harvest only fully mature fruits and store only those free of bruises, nicks or other damage.

A hard frost can damage the outer layers, says Mary McLellan, Extension Master Gardener program coordinator at Michigan State University.

Exposure to freezing temperatures, like bruises or cuts, opens the door for spoilage organisms such as molds and bacteria, which quickly causes stored produce to deteriorate.

Harvest carefully and leave stems on, she advises. Removing the stem creates a wounded area where spoilage organisms can get established.

How do you know when squash and

pumpkins are mature and ready for harvest?

They should have their characteristic color, of course, and the outer surface should be hard. The final indicator is the color of the ground spot, where the fruit rested on the ground.

This area should be orange rather than pale yellow or green.

"Immature fruits won't keep, though they may be fine for eating right away," McLellan notes.

The best storage area for pumpkins and squash has temperatures between 50 and 58 degrees F, low humidity and good air circulation. Ideally, fruits should be stored on open shelves where they don't touch one another and air can



circulate freely around them.

If shelf space is limited, they can be loosely stacked no more than two layers deep. Check them regularly and discard any showing signs of deterioration.

Mature, blemish-free pumpkins should keep for 2 to 3 months under these conditions. Winter squash will store for up to 6 months, depending on the variety. Hubbard and spaghetti squash will keep for up to 6 months; butternut and butternut, 2 to 3 months; and acorn, up to 2 months.

"Flavor tends to decline over time, so stored squash may not taste as good at the end of the expected storage period as they do earlier," McLellan notes.

"The texture may also change over time, becoming somewhat dry and stringy."

*From Michigan State University*

## Upcoming SVMGA programs

**10/24 — Joel Miller, Goldner Walsh Nursery, “Freaks, Witches Brooms and Chimeras in Michigan’s Landscape”**

**11/28 — Ned Bromley, Riverby Gardens, “Glorious Ferns”**

**12/4 — Annual Christmas potluck, First Presbyterian Church fellowship hall**

## Moles wreak havoc in lawns with tunnels, mounds

Six species of moles live in North America, and three may reside in your yard — Eastern Mole, Hairy-tailed Mole, and Star-nosed Mole.

About the size of chipmunks, (6 to 8 inches long, moles can weigh 3 to 6 ounces.

Each year a mole can have one litter of two to six young. Gestation lasts five to six weeks, with litters born anywhere from mid-April through May.

Believe it or not, young moles have less than a 50% chance of surviving long enough to reproduce.

Moles eat insects and they may control some insect outbreaks.

However, mole activity can cause considerable lawn damage, usually through unsightly tunnels and/or mounds that disturb root systems, and provide cover or travel lanes for other small mammals.

There is much conflicting "advice" on mole control. Some homeowners try to control lawn grubs and insects to reduce mole activity. However, this is often unsuccessful because the mole's primary food source is earthworms.

In fact, many chemicals and home remedies (including castor oil derivatives and grub controls) are not only ineffective, they allow the animals time to establish and become real problems.

Moles quickly colonize and spread through adjacent residential properties if not handled properly. Because they need a well-established tunnel network to survive, control is more difficult the longer they are allowed to tunnel and become habituated.

On large properties mole activity may move from one part of the lawn to another. Movement is affected by climate and ground moisture. Moles respond to changes in food supply as different insects become available in different places

All things considered, moles are fascinating animals.

- A 5-ounce mole consumes 45-50 pounds of worms and insects each year.
- Moles can dig surface tunnels at about 18 feet per hour.
- Moles travel through existing tunnels at about 80 feet per minute.
- Moles contain twice as much blood and twice as much hemoglobin as other mammals of similar size. This allows moles to breathe easily in underground environments with low oxygen.

and at different times throughout the year.

If disturbed, moles may leave an area but usually return. Even without disturbance, mole activity may last only a week or two in a particular area.

This here-today, gone-tomorrow behavior is why some home remedies and pesticides appear credible.

### Habitat modification

Over-watering your lawn can bring soil invertebrates and moles closer to the ground surface, making tunnels more visible. Reducing the amount or frequency of watering may help temporarily. Reducing the amount of turfgrass on your property also will reduce visible signs of damage.

### Scare tactics and repellents

Numerous home remedies have been used, but results are generally ineffective. Remedies such as pickle juice, broken glass, red pepper, razor blades, bleach, moth balls, rose branches, human hair balls, vibrators, ultrasonic devices, castor bean derivatives and explosives may relieve your frustrations, but they do little to control moles.

### Trapping

Trapping is the most effective and practical method of mole control, especially in the spring and fall, after rain.

In summer and winter, moles are active in deep soil and more difficult to locate.

Three types of mole traps are especially effective: harpoon, scissor-jaw, and choker loop. To ensure safe and humane deployment, be sure to follow printed instructions. Note: Instructions included with harpoon style traps will not provide for consistent results! The run must be collapsed and the trigger pan securely pressed into the run creating a blockage so the mole triggers the trap when attempting to reopen the tunnel. Traps must be set in active surface burrows.

Locate active runs by stepping down the run, marking the location, and checking to see if the tunnel is reopened within 24 to 48 hours. Permanent or deeper tunnels are the most productive trap locations because these tunnels may be used several times daily.

To identify main runways, look for constantly reopened tunnels that follow a generally straight line, or that appear to connect two mounds or two feeding areas (branching tunnels).

Main runways often follow fences, walkways, foundations, or other manmade borders. Occasionally, main runways occur along woody perimeters of a field or lawn.

Meandering tunnels in the lawn are "probes" quickly constructed by moles and may not be reused.

*Gary L. Comer Jr., Ohio State University Extension agent  
Amanda D. Rodewald, OSU assistant professor of wildlife ecology*