



**It's a beautiful fall day they
said..**

**go outside, sleep under the
tree they said..**

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AUTUMN 2023 NEWSLETTER

The next newsletter deadline is January 1, 2024. If you have a special gardening project, interest, upcoming event/flyer or learned a new skill — please share it with us. Submit your article (and photos if you have them) *in Word format* to roush4Jesus@gmail.com.

Fall into autumn! Theresa



Today the Soil Squad was really ambitious. They did an education project of "What's in Our Soil" with over 100-3rd grade students at Southeastway Regional Park. Present were Lynn Meier, Vicki Snarr, Peggy Robertson, Connie Dickinson, Mary

Beth Sears, Rosemary Hill and Loretta Mitchell. All were needed. It was an exhilarating and fun afternoon.

The school buses were many as they drove up and dropped off the kids for lots of educational activities throughout the park.

Our project consisted of many piles of soil on the picnic tables with magnifying glasses. As the students dug through the soil they were to yell off to Lynn what they found and she wrote their finds on the easel tablet. The cutest one was "fuzz on a rock."

Mary Beth brought her "worm farm" which the kids could not get enough of. She did an excellent job of explaining what she does with the worm poop and how much and what she feeds the worms. She turned the soil over in the container to show them part of the 500 worms that were in the large tub and what they were eating.

The kids were amazing, well behaved and the event was a success! Lynn Meier

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I have received feedback from Miranda Sears, Assistant Park Manager, that our education station was a hit! We made top 3 of the 7 stations! FYI they didn't rank the stations so we were probably number 1 if they had, LOL.

I want to thank you for all the great ideas, Lynn gave us the project of "Unlocking Secrets in the Soil" and Marybeth displayed her vermicomposting bin. Connie, Peggy, Rosemary, and Loretta helped the kids one on one and kept them in line. No mean feat! Lynn was our scribe and I did my best to emcee and keep us moving. This event is something we can replicate for future community outreach events!

I forgot to add that we had a blast! Vicki Snarr



# VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY!

HCMGA Members and Interns,

If you are interested in joining Soil Squad, please join us for our next meeting on Monday October 16 at 2:30. You can attend in person at the Extension or via Zoom (email Vicki for Zoom details: snarrv@comcast.net)

Vicki  
Captain of Soil Squad :)



Join us for a Weed Wrangle at Vernon Township Community Gardens at the Vernon Township Office, 602 Vitality Drive, Fortville, IN 46040, on Saturday, October 28th, 10 am - 12 pm.

We will focus on the invasive pear trees in the wet area and honeysuckle behind the building.

Bring gloves, wear waterproof shoes since it may be wet, and dress for the weather. Bring loppers, eye protection (if you have them, and we will bring some if you don't), and a small hatchet if you have one.

## *Purdue Hydroponics Workshop Announcement*

### Crop Production in Organic Hydroponic Systems

October 25, 2023

Time: 8 am-noon

Location: Daniel Turf Center, 1340 Cherry Ln, West Lafayette, IN 47907

*Hydroponically-grown crops can receive USDA organic label if standard guidelines for organic production are followed. Organic label may fetch premium price for crops grown in hydroponic systems. The topics for workshop include fertilizer recipes, consumer preferences, managing diseases, and food safety standards in organic hydroponic systems*

Registration fee is \$20 per person (No fees required for Purdue students. Contact Lori JollyBrown)

**Register here:**

<https://cvent.me/4K1AxK>

**Contacts for additional information**

Lori JollyBrown (765-494-1296;

[ljollybr@purdue.edu](mailto:ljollybr@purdue.edu))

Dr. Krishna Nemali ([knemali@purdue.edu](mailto:knemali@purdue.edu))

Purdue Controlled Environment Agriculture Research & E





## Favorites from My Summer Garden

Submitted by Alicia S. Añino

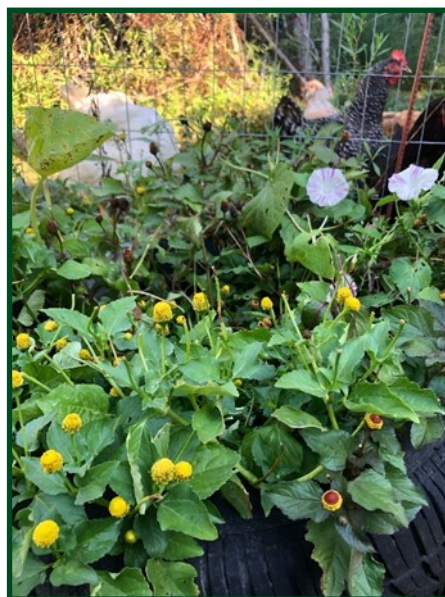
Every year I plant a few new items in my garden, and this season my two favorites were the toothache plant, *Spilanthes acmella*, and the ground cherry, *Physalis pruinosa*.

The toothache plant does exactly what it advertises – it numbs your mouth and is known to have antifungal properties...for when you have a toothache! This daisy relative has yellow or yellow with a brown center cone-shaped flower. The flowers are the most potent but the leaves have the same effect, just milder.

Although I personally enjoyed the taste and experience, no one else that I peer-pressured to try one liked it. Initially it tastes like you are chewing on grass and then all of sudden there is a metallic flavor and general numbing in your mouth that lasts for about a minute.

I experienced no pests on this plant, and it was one of very few plants that my chipmunk didn't gobble up. In the pictures below, the stems without flowers are the ones that I had harvested. I harvested them every couple of weeks and dried them in the dehydrator for my apothecary.

You can buy at Baker Creek at <https://www.rareseeds.com/store/vegetables/toothache-plant>. It was easy to grow in full sun, grew horizontally instead of vertically, and was a low maintenance plant.





### **Favorites from My Summer Garden, con't.**

My other favorite, ground cherries, are a relative of tomatillos, and have a tropical taste in my opinion. They were easy to grow, and were protected from pests by that tomatillo-like husk, although my chipmunk also took a liking to them. They fall off the branch when they are ready to harvest, and I loved the flavor, like a tomato-banana mix. They were a great addition to my kid's lunches too.

They did sprawl a bit in my garden, taking up a lot of space, but many other plants were able to continue thriving under their branches – basil, watermelon vines, and other tomatoes (Jersey Devil tomatoes were my favorite this year).

I also bought my ground cherry seeds from Baker Creek at <https://www.rareseeds.com/ground-cherry-aunt-molly-s>.



We mostly ate them raw, but I did make a ground cherry jam that was wonderful on English muffins.





# MONARCH 911 PROJECT

<https://hancockmga.com/monarch911>



Our Monarch Waystation was started one year ago with the addition of Swamp Milkweed along with more monarch friendly perennials. We added 20+ milkweed plants, Sullivan, Swamp and Butterfly this spring by Winter Sowing. We planted Royal Catchfly, Missouri Ironweed, Lanceleaf Coriopsis, more Liatris and annuals Profusion and Cut and Come Again Zinnias to increase our nectar plants. There were a few Monarch caterpillars on our milkweed that were supplemented by caterpillars Bruce transplanted from the Vernon Township Garden. The Swamp Milkweed seeds are being harvested for use in Monarch 911 giveaways and more Winter Sowing this winter.

# Ask a Master Gardener



Diane asks: Does the use of pine cones as a mulch change the ph of soil and are they good for tomatoes, onions, peppers or any other vegetable? I live in Southwest Pennsylvania.

Diane,

Thank you for this interesting question. I should be better versed in the subject as I have six 30 foot Eastern White Pines in my backyard, but I had to do a little research to answer your questions. I must say there isn't a lot of specific information so I apologize for that in advance.

To answer the first question as to pine cones (or even pine needles) changing the Soil pH, in a word, the answer is no. Pines tend to like slightly acidic soils but do not cause pH balanced soil to become acidic by dropping needles or cones. This information came from the University of New Hampshire Extension, one of the few reliable sources I could find on this subject.

As to the second question about using pine mulch around vegetables, I could not find a lot of actual scientific information, studies, etc. Apparently, it is a safe mulch to use around vegetables and flowering plants. There was a consensus that it was very slow to break down in comparison to hardwood and other mulches. An advantage is that it is resistant to the growth of fungi unlike many other types of mulch. You can speed up the rate of decomposition by running the cones through a wood chipper or run over them with a mulching mower. Also, you can crush them with the back of a spade or shovel. Anecdotally, pine mulch is supposed to keep away slugs and neighbor's cats. There was one caution about pine tree sprouts appearing the following Spring, which I suppose could happen if the cones are not sufficiently dry and the seeds have not already fallen out. In that case, you can pull out the sprouts while they are small and easy to pull.

I hope this information will be helpful to you in your gardening. Thank you so much for visiting our website.

Elaine Whitfield  
Hancock County Master Gardner Association



Hi Purdue EMG Coordinators and Volunteers!

I'm pleased to invite you to register for the **Fall 2023 Virtual EMG Advanced Training Series!**

Please follow the appropriate link for each session to register for each training. Connection information will be sent by email to registrants prior to each training.

Recordings for all sessions will be posted here: <https://www.purdue.edu/hla/sites/master-gardener/continuedhours/>

♣ **October 19, 10 – 11 a.m. (ET)** - “Species Selection – Opting for Native Trees and Shrubs”

Carrie Tauscher, Arboretum Director, Crown Hill Arboretum, Indianapolis, IN

Register for this session at: [https://purdue.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_4YGYlwefmjrlz8y](https://purdue.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_4YGYlwefmjrlz8y)

♣ **November 2, 10 – 11 a.m. (ET)** – “Tree and Shrub Disease Problems”

John Bonkowski, Diagnostician, Purdue Plant and Pest Diagnostic Lab

Register for this session at: [https://purdue.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_1zxerZAEvoa7TtY](https://purdue.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1zxerZAEvoa7TtY)

♣ **November 30, 10-11 a.m. (ET)** – “Best Practices for Planting and Pruning Trees and Shrubs”

John Woodmansee, Purdue Extension Educator, Whitley County

Register for this session at: [https://purdue.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_50E4z0yNo1YTDSK](https://purdue.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_50E4z0yNo1YTDSK)

♣ **December 7, 10-11 a.m. (ET)** – “Tree and Shrub Insect Problems”

Bob Bruner, Purdue Exotic Forest Pest Educator

Register for this session at: [https://purdue.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_7PuJ6kPKaCL572C](https://purdue.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_7PuJ6kPKaCL572C)

Thank you!

**John Orick**

*Purdue Extension Master Gardener State Coordinator*  
Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture



Pretty sure my neighbor is a genius...



## HANCOCK COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS

### FACEBOOK

<https://www.facebook.com/hancockmga>

### WEBSITE

<https://hancockmga.com/>

### MONTHLY MEETING

4th Thursday of the month in-person at 792 E. Park Ave, Greenfield, IN and

Zoom (To register: [meier\\_lynn@yahoo.com](mailto:meier_lynn@yahoo.com)).