HANCOCK COUNTY PURDUE Master Gardener PROGRAM

SPRING 2022 NEWSLETTER

Spring is upon us! Time for garden planning, seed sowing, soil preparation, tulips & daffodils, and more. Whether you are a beginner gardener or have been gardening for many years, you will find something here to encourage you on your gardening path.

Thank you to this quarter's contributors! If you have a special gardening project or interest and are willing to share your experience, please submit your article (and photos if you have them) for the Summer Newsletter by July 1 to Theresa Roush.

IS IT TIME TO START SEEDLINGS?

By Jeannette Wickard

Yes it is. Of course, I always start my seeds too early, but that's just me. Most people start in April. On March 3, 2022 I started some pepper seeds for my son. I thought I have some pepper seeds of my own I'll just start also. I had been given a package of Super Steak tomato seeds, so of course, I'm going to start them, even if it's early. I also had some Big Jim peppers from New Mexico and Jalapeno seeds that was over 10 years old. What the heck, lets see if they'll grow. Oh yes they did. I'm a happy camper now. Living in New Mexico for 3 1/2 years while Dee was in the Air Force, we came to love Mexican food and of course, the peppers. We put peppers on everything. It's like bacon, everything is better with bacon. And that's how we feel about Big Jim peppers. The seeds have went wild, growing very fast and now it's time to replant into bigger containers. I won't put them in the garden until June, but I'm going to have a great start on their growth. Hope you can find some of these seeds and start your own. Starting seeds just brings the farmer out in me, like it was when I was growing up. It all gives me joy. It's something I can do when it's yukky outside. I did put the trays on a warming pad made for starting seeds and placed them in a south window, but I didn't use grow lights. The natural sun did it.
Thank God for that. Hope you try this and get growing you seeds NOW.

Viola sp.
Common Name: Violet/Pansy
2022 Herb of the Year

Hancock County Master Gardeners & Hancock County Herb Society

Verbena
Common: Verbena, Vervain
NGB 2022 Annual of the Year

2022 Annual Plant Sale

Friday May 6 8am – 6pm
Saturday May 7 8am – 3pm
at the
Hancock Co. Fairgrounds
4-H Show Arena
620 N. Apple Street
Greenfield, IN 46140

Find us on Facebook

We Accept All Major Credit Cards

- Large variety of herbs, annuals and perennials. Vegetables and hanging baskets for Mom's Day also available.
- **Master Gardeners & Herb Society** members available to answer questions.
- You may also order ahead online April 26-May 3 at *hancockmga.com* and pick-up during the Plant Sale.

INTO THE WOODS ADDENDUM

By Elaine Whitfield

In my presentation “Into the Woods" to the Hancock County Master Gardner Association for the March meeting, I had to limit the number of Spring wildflowers to around twenty or we would have been there all night. So for this newsletter, I’m adding a few more favorites. Actually, I have scores of favorites but due to limited space, will save those for other occasions.

In no particular order, I will start with Wild Geranium (Geranium maculatum) because I have to start somewhere. It grows approximately 1 to 1 ½ feet tall, has 5-parted hairy leaves and 5 petals. The color can range from white to magenta. Dark purple translucent lines on the petals are nectar guides for insects. Butterflies take the nectar but larger bees are the primary pollinators. It blooms April to June in Indiana and it occurs in nearly every county. After pollination, the beak-like pistil of the flower lengthens to an inch or more. It resembles a cranes bill, hence the other common name given this plant. Five seed containers are attached to this structure and as the seeds ripen the sidebands on the structure become taut. They will suddenly spring loose and fling seeds out. It also produces a plant from winter buds that grow on the thick underground rhizomes. This is a plant we having growing in the Nature Area of our Demonstration Gardens at the Extension office grounds. It is easy to transplant to areas of light shade. It plays wells with others and contrasts nicely when planted near my next favorite, Wood Poppy.

Wood Poppy AKA Celandine Poppy (Stylophorum diphyllum) ranges from 8 to 15 inches tall, has deeply lobed 6 inch long leaves and a flower with 4 petals. The fruit is a bristle-covered capsule approximately 1 inch long (can be seen in above picture). The plant likes rich, moist forest within ravine settings but adapts well to our home landscapes in dappled shade. It is pollinated by bees and, as with many of our spring woodland plants, the seed is distributed by ants who take them to their nests. The seeds of many woodland species produce a “food body" on the exterior of the seed. The ants nourish their colonies with this food body and, at a later time, the seed germinates. So the lowly ant is actually a keystone species in the life of a forest. Without ants, our forests would not look so lovely during the Spring. Just a couple notes about the Wood Poppy: it’s leaves produce tiny drops of yellow sap when broken and they do bloom throughout the summer, although not as profusely as in the Spring.

Virginia Bluebells (Mertensia virginica) is a member of the Borage family. It grows 1 to 2 feet tall and has 2 to 6 inch spoon-shaped leaves. It is ephemeral so you will not see those leaves in the landscape deep in the summer. The buds of the flowers are pink but open to a bright blue trumpet-like flower. Bloom time is from March to May in Indiana. It likes part sun/part shade and moderately moist soil. Virginia Bluebells grow well in our semi-shady home landscapes. It forms colonies slowly but where you find large colonies, it is a sight to behold. Sadly, this plant is threatened in some parts of the Midwest. They attract butterflies, skippers, hummingbird moths as well as hummingbirds but the primary pollinator is a long-tongue bee. Last but not least is one of the few red flowered native woodland plants.

Fire Pink (Silene virginica) measures approximately 1 to 1 ½ feet tall and has a tubular shaped flower with 5 petals that are notched at the tip. The term “pink", in this case, refers to the notches, not color. (For those who sew, you know what fabric looks like after pinking shears have cut it.) It blooms from May to July. This plant prefers well-drained rich soils in mesic upland forests. While not abundant, most forested sites will have a few Fire Pink. Like Virginia Bluebells, this plant is also threatened in parts of the Midwest. It would be presumed that destruction of habitat is the likely cause. It requires part sun and part shade. Bees and large butterflies are attracted to Fire Pink and it is a magnet for hummingbirds. It self seeds but does not transplant well. Joe and I would love to include this in our backyard shade garden. However, native nurseries usually do not offer this plant as it seldom survives transplanting. In fact, while traveling in Tennessee a few years ago, we stopped at a native nursery whose surrounding wild landscape had blooming Fire Pink. We felt sure this place would have Fire Pink plants for sale. Unfortunately, the owner said they didn't due to the plant's inability to successfully transplant. Apparently, starting it from seed in the spot you want it permanently is the best method. Fire Pink does have a native family member, Royal Catchfly (Silene regia) that we have raised in the past. It is also bright red but does not sport the pinked petal edges. That species bloom in July and August.

These species will be blooming in the next month or two in our woodlands. Get out into the woods!

HCMGA Members, Interns and Friends,

You have a unique opportunity for education hours and good fun on Wednesday, April 27. There are three parts:

- **Part 1 - There will be a site visit conducted by Urban Soil Specialist, Casey Kennett, at the home of Steve and Teresa Bowlby, 6598 E 200 N, Greenfield. All of you that can participate, please put on your boots and meet at their house at 4:00 PM.** We will learn about how to conduct a site visit to help home owners determine the health of their soil and how to improve it. Thanks in advance to Casey!

- **Part 2 – We will reconvene back at the Extension office for a pizza party and site visit debrief at 5:30 PM.** We will discuss the feasibility of making soil site visits an on-going project while enjoying delicious pizza and Darlene's famous brownies. We also could perhaps persuade Bob Matsey to give us his presentation on the Junior Master Gardeners if we are really nice to him. Sorry Bob

- **Part 3 – Janet Ridenour will educate us at 6:30 PM with "Gardening is for the Birds"** explaining what to plant and where to help encourage birds to be regular visitors to our landscape. As usual this scheduled education hour will be available via Zoom.

You have an opportunity to learn and receive up to 3 ½ Education hours! I hope you are as excited about this as I am. Well you're probably not, but I hope you are a little excited at least about the pizza and will participate

It would be nice to get an approximate head count to make sure we get enough pizza so please let Lynn know if you'll be participating. Sorry Lynn

Regards,
Vicki
Education Chairperson
HCMGA

HYDROPONICS

Hydroponic Research Project

Jerry LeCount

Late last fall, I was fortunate enough to be one of 6 Indiana Master Gardeners chosen to participate in a research project conducted by a Horticultural grad student at Purdue. He had contacted John Orrick who then reached out to the extension offices.

The overall project revolved around teaching methodologies used with a test group having some subject matter knowledge. The project would consist of the participants conducting a hydroponics experiment testing a hypothesis determined by the individual.

The process started with the Student conducting an individual virtual interview regarding prior experience, what we hoped to learn, etc. to determine the background of the participants. The second phase was a series of 4-20-minute lessons via webinar covering some history, types of systems, basic hydroponics practices and data collection. After each lesson we were asked to complete a "notecard" based on our take aways from the lesson IE: what we liked/disliked additional questions, etc.

At the conclusion of the lessons we were each given 2 tabletop hydroponic kits and a packet of lettuce seeds and asked to conduct an 8-week experiment testing our chosen hypothesis using the methods taught. My hypothesis was that in soil grown plants the amount of available nutrients is based on soil type/quality and that if this would apply to the water used in hydroponics. I chose mineral water for one bed, distilled for the other using identical nutrient solutions to grow the lettuce seeds. The planted seeds began showing germination within 3 days. The nutrient solution circulated 30 minutes/hour and each bed received 16 hours of supplied grow lighting. Nutrient solutions were refilled as needed using the same identical solution.

WEEK 4

WEEK 8

After beginning our experiments, a group interview was held for the participants to "compare notes" Discuss any initial challenges, questions or observations. The second part of the meeting had a professor from Purdue answering the questions we had from the classroom training.

I measured growth progress on a weekly basis using leaf size as a comparison recorded them as well as any other visuals noted. There was a difference in germination of seeds between the beds. For no known reason, one bed had a lower percentage of germination rate and time to germinate. We did not know the origin or age of the seed.

I did observe that for the first half of the experiment, the "A" kit that experienced better germination and grew significantly faster than the "B" kit. During the final 4 weeks the growth rate of "B" caught up. At the conclusion of the 8 weeks, I harvested both beds. I determined that the best way to measure performance was to weigh the harvest from each bed and divide by the number of plants harvested from each bed. The resulting harvest yielded only a 3% difference average per plant. In this case the conditions used in this experiment, the type of water used had no impact on the plant growth. If I were to repeat this experiment, I would test water from the public water supply against bottled water to determine if there is a difference in growth rates.

From a master gardener's perspective, I see myself more knowledgeable in how to conduct a truly unbiased test of different growing conditions thus getting more accurate data than I may have previously.

All,

Please start compiling a list of the plants that you plan to donate to the Spring Plant Sale from your own yard/garden. The Plant Sale Committee needs to know the **name** and **quantity** of each. A **brief description** would also be extremely helpful - something to help sell the plant! A **picture** would be even better as it will help us determine the appropriate price. We need a list of the plants we'll have available at the online sale by April 19th.

Contact your friends and neighbors to see if they have plants – even houseplants - to donate. We'll have several aloe plants in this sale, so a variety of houseplants would be nice! Since we are a non-profit organization, receipts for donations are available upon request.

If you need pots, they are behind the barn behind the extension office. There are labels in the Rubbermaid shed, or you can contact me. *There are some people who would like help digging plants, so if you're able to help, please let me know*. If you need help potting plants, there will be several potting parties scheduled. Look for dates from Elaine and Janet.

As a reminder, we are planning to sell gardening supplies, etc. during the sale, and would love to include any gently used items you may be interested in donating. If you'd like to forward a list of items to me, you may, but it's not necessary. Just bring them to the Show Arena.

Please deliver your donations to the Show Arena on May 4th or 5th.

Again, please send the bolded information to Teresa Bowlby by April 19th.

Thank you so much!!

Plant Sale Committee Members

weed wrangle® Indiana

Join the Master Gardeners of Hancock County

Thornwood Preserve

1597 S. Morristown Pike

Saturday, May 14, 2022

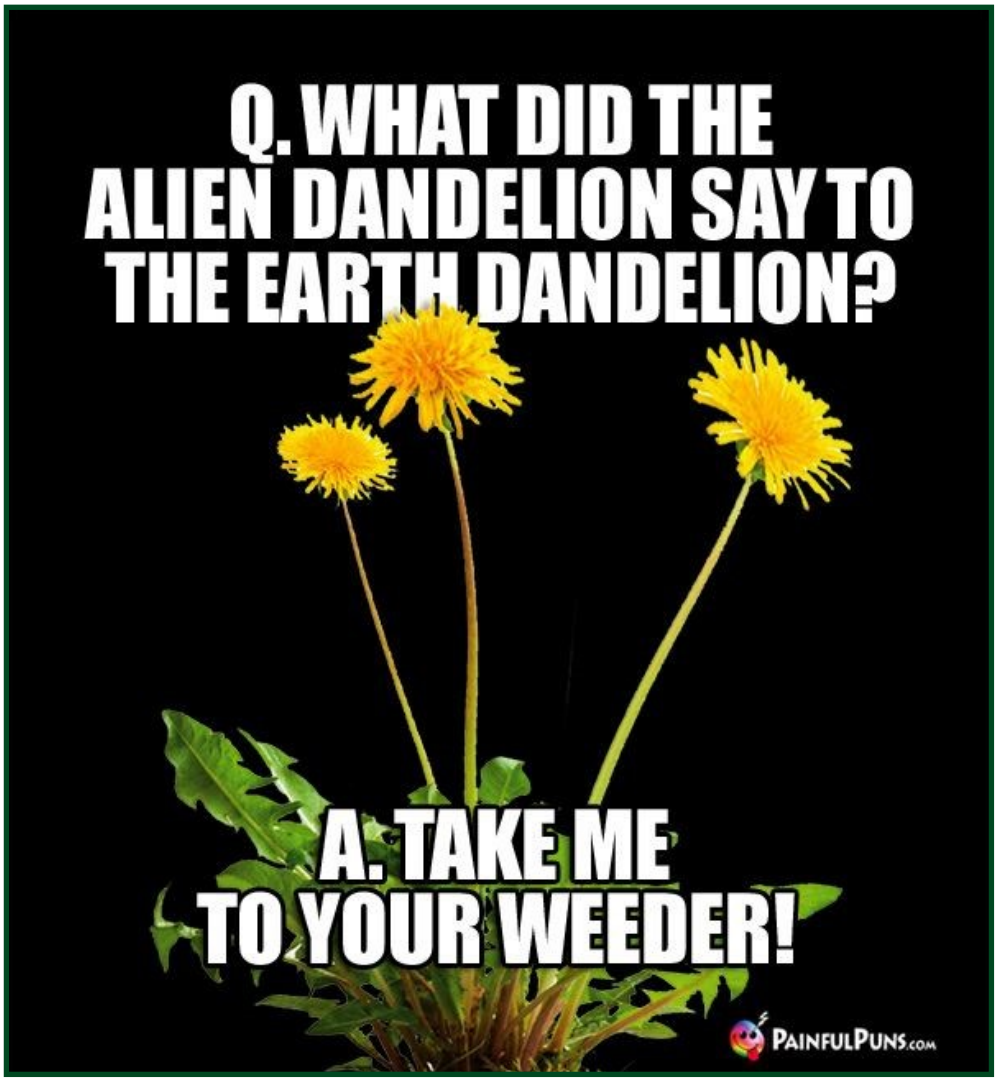
9 – 11 am

To Irradicate

Garlic Mustard, an Invasive Weed

Eliminating this invasive weed can help allow a wider diversity of **Spring Flowers** to prosper at **Brandywine Park**.

Contact Pat McCartney at pat@locustfarms.com, or 317-366-6333 for further information. Wearing gloves, long pants and long sleeve shirts are advised.



HANCOCK COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS

FACEBOOK

https://www.facebook.com/hancockmga

WEBSITE

https://hancockmga.com/

MONTHLY MEETING

4th Wednesday of the month in-person (at 792 E. Park Ave, Greenfield, IN) or Zoom (email to register: meier_lynn@yahoo.com).

MASTER GARDENER TRAINING

https://hancockmga.com/become-a-master-gardener/