



“Every gardener knows that under the cloak of winter lies a miracle.”

Luther Burbank

WINTER 2023 NEWSLETTER

This quarter’s newsletter is jam-packed with useful and interesting information about dragonflies, growing sweet potatoes, Monarch 911, and more. Enjoy!

Thank you to this quarter’s contributors! 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* for the Winter Newsletter by April 1, 2023 to Theresa Roush at roush4Jesus@gmail.com.

**Excuse me, is Spring
coming soon?**



As spring approaches, it’s a good time to be thinking about pesticide purchases and how to choose wisely. Check out this article from Purdue: <https://ppp.purdue.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/PPP-146.pdf>

Dragonflies

Submitted by Jackie Reeves

There's something magical about seeing a jewel-colored dragonfly darting about and landing close by checking out the territory. Did you know that the dragonfly is one of the oldest of the insect species?

Dragonflies being among the most ancient insects were some of the first winged insects to evolve, about 300 million years ago. While modern dragonflies have wingspans of about two to five inches, fossil dragonflies have been found with wingspans of up to two feet.



A dragonfly is a flying insect belonging to the order Odonata, infraorder Anisoptera. There are about 3,000 known surviving species of true dragonfly widely spread throughout the world and can be found on every continent except Antarctica. Most are tropical, with fewer species in temperate regions. They prefer freshwater wetland habitats such as ponds, lakes, rivers, bogs, and marshes. Dragonflies are very

beneficial to ecosystems as a great food source for many other critters, such as fish, frogs, spiders, and birds.

Dragonfly adults are often brightly colored and have long, slender abdomens, large, multi-faceted compound eyes, two pairs of long, slender transparent wings with net-like veins and an elongated body. Both pairs of wings usually have a colored patch near the middle of the leading edge. The wings do not fold and are held outstretched when at rest. An adult dragonfly's compound eye is made up of many individual units (hexagonal in shape called ommatidia) packed together to form the surface of the eye. An adult dragonfly's compound eyes have nearly 24,000 ommatidia each.

The immature stages of dragonflies are aquatic. Eggs are laid in or near bodies of water and spend most of their lives in their larval stage. During its time the dragonfly catches and eats live prey at every opportunity, molting 5-14 times until it is fully-grown. Larval development typically takes one or two years, but ranges from 2-3 months



(emerald damselflies) to more than five years (Golden-ringed Dragonfly). At the right temperature and with the perfect weather, the nymphs crawl out of the water, usually onto a plant stem or leaf. Then, they shed their skin and emerge into a young adult. Once they have transformed into the winged adult stage, they stop growing.

Dragonflies need sunny warm weather to fly, usually the temperature must be over 65°C. If it is too cold or wet, they hide in

vegetation. They protect themselves from the sun by pointing the tip of their abdomen directly at the sun (an obelisk position) on hot days. In this position, a dragonfly can minimize the amount of sun hitting its body and help keep itself a little cooler.

And for sure they are amazing flyers. Their muscles are attached directly to their wings which allows them to fly faster than other insects. This also helps them be one of the most accurate hunters as they can fly forward, backward, and upside-down. They can also hover and pivot in place. Because they are fast fliers, they tend to hunt in

open areas, not in thick trees or other vegetation.

As adults, these insects capture up to 95 percent of the prey they hunt. The adults will chase down their prey and ambush it from behind. This is thanks to their large eyes that let them see almost 360 degrees around them.

They are ravenous predators of flies and mosquitos, as well as any other insect they can catch.

Adult male dragonflies often establish



territories along the edges of ponds or streams to defend the territory against other males of their species. Some large dragonfly species migrate south to warmer climates at the end of the summer. Their offspring may then migrate north the

following year.

In some cultures, dragonflies represent good luck or prosperity because fishermen used them as an indicator of good fishing grounds. Plenty of dragonflies meant there were plenty of fish around. Despite old stories and superstitions, dragonflies will not sew your lips shut if you tell a lie! They do not sting, and they cannot hurt you.



**JANUARY
25**

THE NATURE OF OAKS

HANCOCK COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS

Join the Hancock County Master Gardeners as we watch an in-depth interview with the author of *The Nature of Oaks*!

This is a great opportunity to get to know new people, ask questions, and learn alongside other local gardeners.

Our mission is to "help others grow," and we can't wait to meet you!



DETAILS:

JANUARY 25, 2023 AT 6:00 PM

**PURDUE EXTENSION HANCOCK COUNTY
972 E PARK AVE, GREENFIELD, IN 46140**

SWEET POTATOES

Submitted by Theresa Roush

Sweet potatoes are one of the best sources of nutrition and, as I learned this past summer, very easy to grow. They are a good source of vitamins A & C, have a bit of protein and fiber, and contain a variety of other nutrients. They have no fat... well as long as you don't load them up with tons of butter! Sweet potatoes (SP) can be fried, baked, stir-fried, dehydrated, and canned and, they can be used in desserts – think sweet potato pie. One of my favorite ways to eat them is to bake a SP, scramble a couple of eggs which I put on top of the SP along with a bit of salsa – yummy!



In past years, I have grown SP in the ground. If you have any experience with this you know that as they grow, they travel LOTS! And, if you have a primarily clay soil combined with a lack of rain, when it comes time to harvest ... well let's

just say you better have some arm muscles.

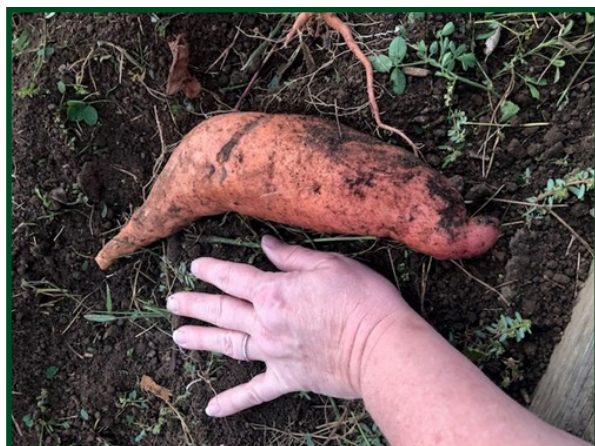
In 2022, I grew Beauregard Sweet Potatoes in totes. Yes, totes. We had some laying around that weren't bad enough to throw away but were not good enough to use for storage. I really wanted to grow SP again but didn't want to have to deal with digging them out of the ground. So, the idea to grow them in totes was born. After some holes were drilled in the bottoms for drainage, they were filled with our compost from our chicken & rabbit waste. I planted 4 slips in each tote, watered well and waited.



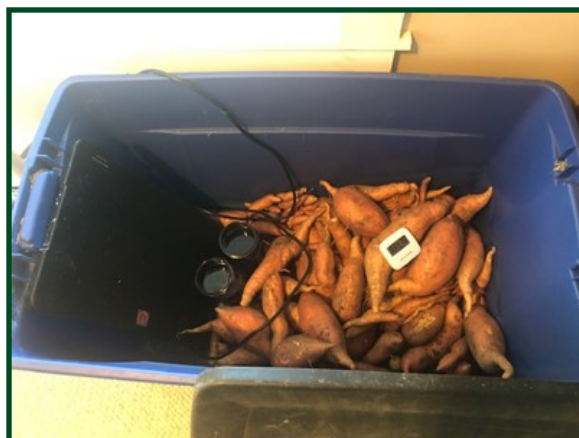
This picture was taken at harvest time in October. You can see the leaves are dying back; this is the plant's way to let you know the potatoes are ready to be dug up.

In the past, I have put the SP in my cellar and expected to have wonderful eating well into the winter. But, they never made it past a few months before they would shrivel up and be worthless. Again, another learning curve; time to do some

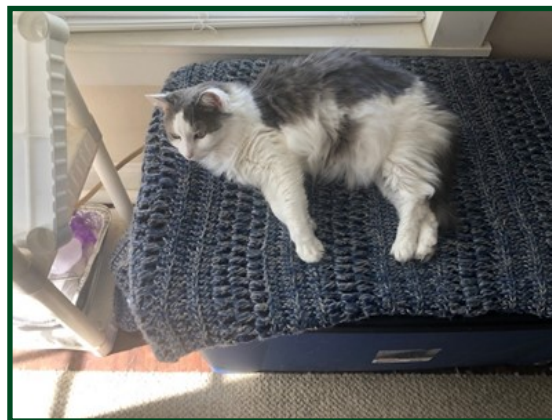
research ...



While trying to figure out how to prolong their storage, I watched a video about the difference between storing white potatoes and sweet potatoes. I thought to myself, “There’s a difference in how you store the two?!” More research needed. I learned that after a few days of curing in a shady area the SP needed a time of heat and humidity to enhance their storage life and to improve their flavor. How was I going to provide them with 90* and high humidity in October? Back to totes, actually one tote. I placed all of the SP to one side in a tote. Stood a chicken brooder at the other end of the tote and placed 2 quart jars of water near the brooder. After the lid was on the tote, I covered the whole thing with a blanket.



monitored the temperature with a remote thermometer and the fact that there was condensation on the lid of the tote told me that humidity was happening. I did peek a couple of times – it smelled amazing – and after 10 days, out came the warm potatoes which are now safely stored in my cellar. Almost 4 months later, I still have fresh looking & tasting sweet potatoes and the excitement to do this again in 2023. And, my cat Lizzy is missing her heated tote-bed!



SPRING GARDEN CLINIC

Saturday, January 28, 2023

9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m

at

**St. Luke's United Methodist Church
100 W. 86th Street, Indianapolis, IN 46260**

Conducted in collaboration between:

**Marion County Master Gardeners
& Purdue Extension - Marion County**



**Garfield Park
Master Gardener
Association**

This annual event is designed for beginners and experts alike.
It provides a wide array of gardening information and a chance to network with other gardeners.

It is the policy of the Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service that all persons have equal opportunity access to its educational programs, services, activities, and facilities without regard to race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin or ancestry, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, disability or status as a veteran.
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Extension

**PURDUE EXTENSION
MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM**

MONARCH 911

Submitted by Elaine Whitfield

We all know to dial 911 on our phones whenever we encounter emergent situations in order to get help as fast as possible. If human lives are at stake, the sooner help arrives the better the chances of a positive outcome. What do we do when we recognize that a non-human species is in peril in Nature? Just ask our long time member, Bruce Matter, what he did a few months ago when he recognized that our Monarch butterfly (and other pollinators) were in trouble. He created the HCMGA Monarch 911 project to promote awareness of habitat loss and encourage members of the public to plant Milkweed in their gardens to replace the Monarch caterpillar's only source of sustenance. I recently asked him what prompted him to start this project and his answer was compelling. He said he occasionally drives

through the Mt. Comfort area of Hancock County and he noticed all the development going on, especially the mammoth warehouses. More and more land has been cleared to put up all these buildings and instead of farm fields, woods, pastures and pollinator habitats, it is turning into a concrete jungle. That's when it occurred to him that something needed to be done to save our pollinators. He said that the Monarch seems to be the

"poster child" that encompasses all insects and pollinators. Bruce then went to talk with Lais to see if she had any

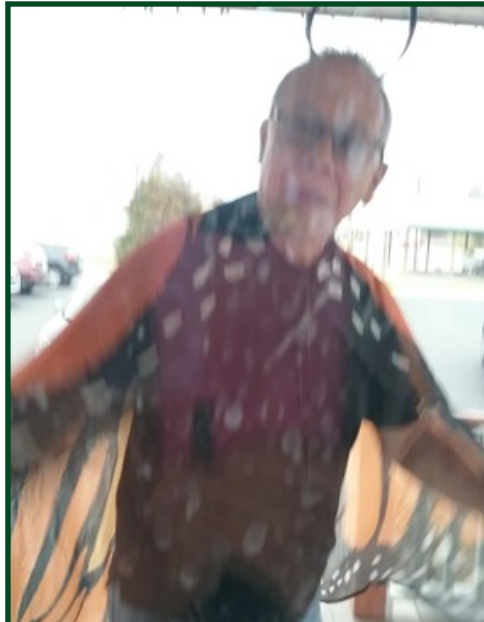


Pictures from the new Monarch Waystation



recommendations and, of course, she did. She mentioned the Monarch Waystation project and Bruce did his research. He then asked Janet and I if there was a place at the Extension Demonstration Gardens where a waystation could be developed.

Bruce's timing was impeccable. He quickly formed a committee. Vicki was looking for a theme for the Fall Green Thumb program at the Hancock County Public Library. Larry Robertson quickly designed and built a display "table" for educational material and milkweed seeds; Lynn Meier painted a beautiful Monarch butterfly on it. Darlene was able to procure several Swamp Milkweed plants from her employer, Salsbery Garden Center in McCordsville, free of charge for the



Mr. Monarch hovering outside the Octagon House

waystation. As for the waystation, Janet and I chose a location front and center in the Foundation Garden so the waystation would be visible to anyone coming to the front door of the Extension office. Many nectar plants already existed in that garden but we had a large swath of blue iris that needed thinned anyway. We took those out at a workday and bagged the tubers to sell at the Fall Plant sale. That made

room to add Butterfly weed, Blazing Star and several other plants that Bruce contributed. I am still amazed at how everything fell into place. It was a project just begging to be done. The Monarch 911 theme even gave the Octagon House committee the idea to decorate the HCMGA sponsored Christmas tree with Monarch Butterflies this year (Amazon sells everything!). The Monarch display table is currently at the Octagon House to provide visitors with information and milkweed seeds to take home and plant. It will return to the lobby of the Extension office after the Christmas season so that anyone can come in and pick up seeds and get information about the Monarch 911 project.

As Master Gardeners we need to be activists and advocates for the environment we occupy. Thanks to Bruce for filling both of those roles.



One of several Monarch caterpillars we found on the Swamp Milkweed

From the desk of

the President



Dear Members and Interns,

I am very excited to be stepping into...Okay; I had this really fancy, formal letter all ready to detail how excited I am to be leading our group and all the great things we'll accomplish in 2023, but that's not really me.

So, I'll just take a moment to thank our members and interns for their continued participation and enthusiasm in our mission of Helping Others Grow, and I look forward to a great year!

Teresa

**Save
the
Date**



HCMGA,

Please mark your calendars and plan to participate in our next Green Thumb event on **April 15, 2023**. Lais will be speaking on "Indiana's Keystone Plants." come prepared to learn all about this vital topic. More information on Green Thumb will becoming soon.

Vicki

PLANTING FULL PLANTERS

Submitted by Paul Norton

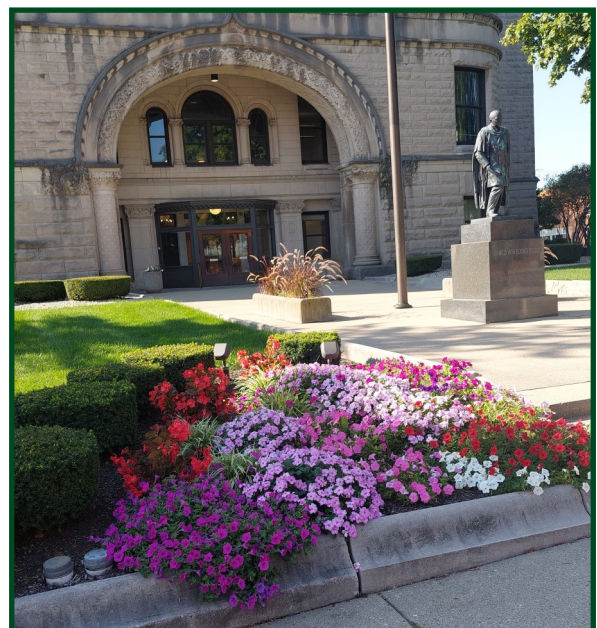
This is an example of a 'full' concrete planter. I filled the two planters outside the Prosecutor's Building with lots of flowers on purpose in order that the planter would literally be overflowing with small flowers and have a radiant, full look that is very eye-pleasing. Don't be afraid to put 'a little too many plants' in the planter. If you have good quality potting soil, water regularly, and fertilize with a water soluble blooming fertilizer about every 10 days, your medium to large planters will have a full look and should last through the early fall.



This next planter is in one of the most visible places at the county seat, at the entrance to the Courthouse Annex in Greenfield.



The teaching point here is that lawn gardens (whether on a landscape associated with a public landmark, or in your own front yard) can be planted very full and with colors that are complimentary to each other, thus 'posing' a striking view for passerby. This garden bed was planted by me on the North lawn of the Hancock County Courthouse near the sidewalk.



TRINIDAD SCORPION

Submitted by Alicia Añino

Last spring, I discovered a Trinidad Scorpion pepper plant at Wells Nursery. I grow different hot peppers each year, but had not even heard of this one; I had to have it. It proliferated extraordinarily in my in-ground garden without any pests. The few I tasted when they first started to grow were not very hot so I thought I had been duped by a fancy name. The first time I tried a mature one it was so hot that my chest hurt and my heart started racing!



I harvested the majority of these peppers while still green although they were still incredibly hot. I canned and dehydrated them because they were too hot to put in any dishes that my family would eat. Chopping them after dehydration process

was the hardest because I had to take non-stop cough breaks even though my face was covered. I have yet to use those dried pepper flakes in my cooking, they have been relegated to a party trick – whenever I want to see how tough someone is I'll ask them to smell my special jar.

Despite all this, I decided to try overwintering four of these pepper plants to reintroduce them next spring. This was the first time I have attempted this, inspired by Epic Gardening. I cut all leaves from the plant, cut all the branches except for the lower-most V section, dug it up, potted it, watered it, and stored it in my unheated back patio that has moderate light. We won't know if it's been successful until next summer.





Space is limited, so register soon!

The Conference will feature educational tracks in Vegetables, Small Fruits, Tree Fruits, Business and Marketing, Food Safety, Farming Basics, and Apple Production for Beginners. Additional events will include a Networking Dinner, Sweet Cider Contest, Silent Auction, and Poster Session. Lunch will be provided both days and is included with registration.

When: January 23 & 24, 2023

Where: The [Beck Agricultural Center](#) in West Lafayette, IN.

Registration is \$50 for a single day or \$90 for both days.

Register here: <https://www.indianahortconference.org/>

Thank you to all past attendees, vendors, and sponsors for your support!

We look forward to seeing you **IN PERSON** this year in West Lafayette, Indiana.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or the IHC Chair, Stephen Meyers, slmeyers@purdue.edu.

Lori Jolly-Brown

Purdue University
Horticulture & Landscape Architecture
Extension Events & Communications Coordinator
[625 Agriculture Mall Drive](#)

[West Lafayette, IN 47907](#)

Telephone: 765-494-1296



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 (to register: meier_lynn@yahoo.com).

MASTER GARDENER TRAINING

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