GARDEN 11 THYME





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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.









"My current favorite annual is the **Castor Bean** because it has large showy leaves and very red seed pods," says Zann Wilson.

Our Favs: Annuals Edition

BY GREG CARTER, PCMG CLASS OF 2011

Winter hardiness determines which flower species will be perennials lasting through the cold months. Here in Porter County we're Zone 5b with a microclimate of 6a by Lake Michigan. While perennials will show off their colors during their short blooming season, annuals can color up your landscape throughout the summer and into fall. Don't let the cold stop you from adding annuals to our flower bed mix for beautiful season-long color.

What are some of Porter County Extension Master Gardener's favorite annuals? Our recent survey revealed a wide variety that may be new to you. Try them - they are highly recommended by your peers!

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"Vinca are easy to grow and will keep flowering right up to a hard October frost. They come in a wide variety of colors including Titan Cranberry and Titan Polka Dot pictured here," says Greg Carter.



"Purple Hull Peas are so interesting to look at," says Mary Baird. The name comes from the purple tint of the mature pods, while the peas themselves have a purplishpink "eye".



Gordana Gerbick recommends **Scarlet Salvia**. "This annual blooms all summer, hummingbirds like it and best part they seed themselves. I don't have to replant!"



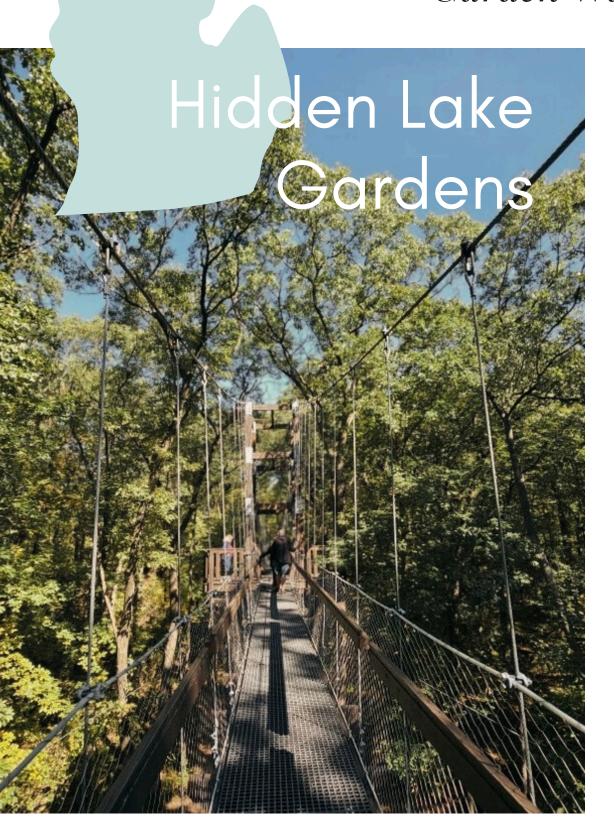
"Elephant Ears are great plants to make concrete leaves for bird bath tops," says Lois Peterman. Pictured here is a top she made!

Our favorite annuals:

Jack Steffen says his current favorite is **impatiens** because of their bright colors and they last through the summer if well watered. Susan Spelde likes **coleus** because of their colorful foliage. They are easy to grow and propagate and a bonus they make good houseplants. Strawflower is Wilma Willard's favorite because the bloom is stiff. thus hard to damage the petals, plus they dry well. The blooms look like a star and then fan out to a daisy look. Laura Hrusovsky likes begonias because of their profuse blossoms all summer and they do well in her shady backyard. **Marigolds** are easy to grow and drought tolerant and this is why Melinda Bateman likes them so much. Marlene Vanderlin says **zinnias** come in many colors, are easy to grow and last a long time in the garden or in a bouquet. Bonus: it's easy to collect your seeds for next year's garden!



— Garden Wanderer



BY KATHY RUBLE, PCMG CLASS OF 2007

Recently, my daughter moved to southern Michigan, and I began looking for interesting things to do in the area. We came across Hidden Lake Gardens in Tipton. This 755-acre property was donated to MSU in 1945. There are six miles of paved scenic drives, hiking trails and gardens.

Hosta Hillside, located on the east side of Hidden Lake, was once a challenging rock garden. It was transformed by MSU landscape architects and the Michigan Hosta Society into a beautiful display garden.

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The Gazebo Garden, originally established as an All-American Demonstration Garden, changes its beds annually. The Conservatory has three distinct biomes: Tropical, arid and temperate. You can view numerous plants from around the world. In March it showcases spring blooming bulbs to help gardeners get out of the winter funk. The Bonsai Courtyard has stunning specimens. On select Thursdays, visitors can interact with staff and volunteers as they maintain the collection. They have a Bonsai festival in July with vendors, demonstrations and workshops. This plant show attracts enthusiasts from around the country.

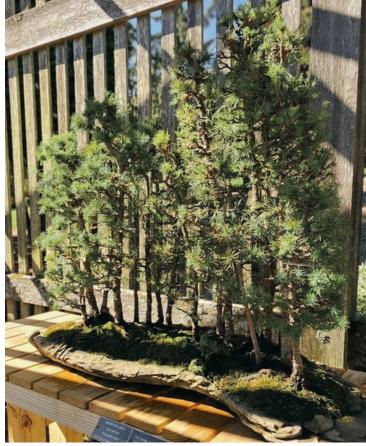
The Harper Rare and Dwarf Conifer collection is considered an American Conifer Society Reference Garden. Jason "Chub" Harper, a grounds crew supervisor from Moline, IL, was an avid plant collector. When he ran out of space on his property, he leased land next door. (Doesn't that make you feel better about buying "just one more" of your favorite plant!). Eventually he donated 300 specimens to MSU. There are now close to 500 specimens in the collection.

The Sky Walk is a 1400-foot elevated walkway. At its highest, it stands 65 feet above a glacier kettle hole. As someone who is terrified of getting on a six-foot ladder, I loved this! The views across the terrain through the treetops were fantastic. I just could not look down.

The newest addition is Story Walk. This 0.4-mile hike over a twisty, hilly trail has pages of a children's book scattered along the route. The book highlights aspects of natural surroundings.

Located three hours from Valpo, this is a great place to stop if you are heading through the area or are looking for a different day trip. It is open all year, Tuesday through Sunday from 9-5. Sky Canopy and Bonsai Courtyard are seasonal.



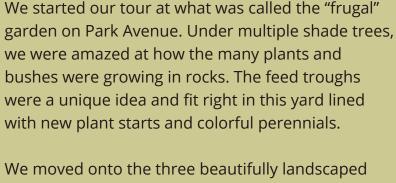


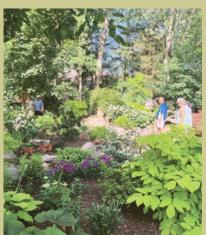
2025 Garden Walk

BY BETTY VILLAREAL, GUEST CONTRIBUTOR



Attending many years of Porter County Garden Walks, this year, my husband, George and I felt this was the most outstanding.





We moved onto the three beautifully landscaped historical homes on Washington Street. Entering the backyards of these treasured houses, we stepped back in time. One home featured a 165-year old spruce tree. We admired the massive hostas, which were the size of small cars, and variegated ground cover climbing everywhere. We were intrigued by the Crimson King columnar trees, which we had never seen before, and the enormous magnolia bushes. It was evident that the immense gardens required a lot of hard work and a creative eye.



The "petite" garden on Haas Street was a favorite. This cozy backyard held a doll house that I could see converted into a "she-shed" someday. The star in this backyard was the Korean tree-form lilac. The shady west side was also impressive with a magnolia tree bordering the large porch and waterfall highlighting the path.

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Then onto the garden on the corner of Indiana Avenue, which was groomed for privacy. We were surrounded by lilies, bushes, hedges, and ornamental trees. We wished we could have viewed this garden in full bloom.

To end our tour was the walk through the luxurious garden on Manchester Drive. It was breathtaking.

We were in awe of the waterfall streaming downhill to the koi pond, the gazebo, and the woodsy-looking tables and chairs tucked into this plant fest of a backyard. What a nice touch with the mossy, massive boulders used for seating, where we sat for a while admiring this woodland paradise.

As an artist, and not so much a master at gardening, I enjoyed the artsy features in all the gardens, from the chimes, colorful birdhouses, fountains, sculptures, and quirky planters.

This garden walk will be hard to beat.



08860 2025 Porter County Fair Flower Show

2025 PORTER COUNTY FAIR FLOWER SHOW SUPERINTENDENT

I want to thank the Porter County Fair and PCMGA for all their help and hard work. I could not have done it without them. I feel my first year as superintendent went well. Janet Magnusen, our former Flower Show Superintendent, was deeply missed and will always be remembered and never forgotten during the show. My goals for next year are to increase the number of exhibitors, promote the flower show throughout the year and encourage monetary prizes for our top awards, Best of Section and Best of Show.

We had an average of 22 people participate on each of the three-day entries. All exhibitors' prize winnings totaled \$2,937 this year.

Top PCMGA winners were:

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Wilma Willard with two Best of Sections, 29 firsts, 31 seconds, and 11 thirds totaling \$515. Diana Popa with one Best of Section, 10 firsts, 7 seconds,

Judy Engle with one Best of Section which was Best of

Show, 7 firsts, 9 seconds, and 4 thirds totally \$143.

Gloria Potter With 4 firsts, 7 seconds,

and 4 thirds totaling \$117.

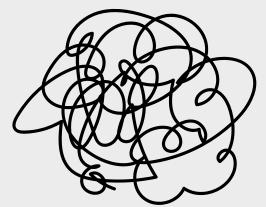
Mother-Daughter Wilma Willard and Anna DeRoo show top awards for Day 1 Wilma (right) holds her Best of Section Design and points to her Best of Section

Hosta grouping. Anna (left) holds her gladiola earning Best of Show. Top award for Day 2 was Judy Engle with her American Hornbeam tree branch earning her Best of Show. Top award for Day 3 was Alice Harrington with her Bouquet of 5 Herbs winning the Best of Show. Congrats to our Best of Show winners pictured here and more Best of Section winners including Monica Kerr, Diane Popa, Cheryl Holmgren, Nancy Cole, and John Holmgren.



Pictured, (top to bottom): Anna DeRoo & Wilma Willard, Judy Engle, Alice Harrington. Photography credits: Wilma Willard, Alice Harrington

Welcome to My Garden



The Dog Ate My Garden:

Right plant, right place saved me.

BY KRIS SANDRICK, PCMG CLASS OF 2014



At first, I thought it was cute, watching our puppy, tearing through my garden. He ran with abandon, ripping through hostas. "Not the Maidenhair fern!" He was nine-weeks old and in a new environment. Then he started digging, eating late-blooming tulips.

Annual blooms were chomped. I smashed my knee tripping over a puppy gate and couldn't kneel – a weeder's nightmare. That didn't matter because it got too hot and humid to weed. I just about gave up.

Fortunately, Mother Nature came through. Planting "right plant in the right place" years ago paid off in hydrangeas, hollyhocks, blue plumbago and milkweed. Zinnias popped up from sown seeds. We have more Monarch butterflies than ever. Swallowtails grace us with their yellows, blues and blacks.

I almost gave up on the garden this year, but the garden didn't give up on me. Thank goodness. I can love my garden-at least most of the time-but it always finds a way to love me back.

Helping Others Grow -

PCMGA 2025 Philanthropy Grants

BY THE PHILANTHROPY COMMITTEE

The 2025 PCMGA philanthropy grants approved in April and awarded in May were awarded \$400 each. The May awards totaled \$4,800, and recipients were:

Liberty Bible Church, Chesterton – Wilma Willard – Volunteers grow flowers in the church landscape and create 'Bouquets of Blessing" delivered to the sick, shut-ins, nursing home residents, and bring encouragement to those in support groups for cancer, grief, addictions, disabilities and counseling.

Brookdale Assisted Living, Valpo – Creating raised bed vegetable garden for residents.

Vale of Paradise Garden Club – Valpo Library Garden adds annuals & Sunset Hill adds a native garden.

Habitat for Humanity, South Haven – Provides access to home ownership for low income people. The grant provided funding for lawn installation.

Shirley Heinze Land Trust – Expands their program on soil and water conservation and use of cover crops. We funded three additional raised beds with the produce grown going to the food pantry.

Bonner Senior Center, Portage – Developing a vegetable garden and memorial pollinator garden with food going to the food pantry.



YMCA, Valpo – Creat a new children's garden by the pavilion which will teach children where food comes from. Food is given to the children & their families with the remainder going to the food pantry.

Carolina House, Valpo – This low income women's shelter will add plants to make the site look more welcoming.

St. John's United Church, Chesterton – Funds for growing food with the assistance of Montessori students across the street. The food goes to various local churches that offer free meals and to food the pantry.

TradeWinds, South Haven – This group home for men with special needs will create raised beds to encourage healthy eating, including a new grill for men to learn to grill veggies.

VNA Hospice Center, Valpo – Funds for maintenance on the tranquility gardens.

Portage Christian School – Items for the instructional garden and framing for the greenhouse constructed out of recycled plastic bottles.

Philanthropy grants approved and awarded in August were \$400 each, except Trinity Lutheran received \$150. The August awards totaled \$2,150, and recipients were:

Duneland Garden Club, Chesterton – Addition of rhododendrons and azaleas for Thomas Park in downtown Chesterton.

Friends of the IN Dunes - Planting of native plants to stabilize the erosion area near the entrance to the Nature Center.

St. Agnes Adult Day Care, Valpo - Items to maintain the garden at this adult day care.

Opportunity Enterprise, Valpo - Funds for electric fencing at Lakeside Center and planters at Main location.

Hilltop House, Valpo - Will repair fencing and raised beds in the children's garden.

Trinity Lutheran, Valpo - \$150 to repair the existing raised beds.

Total philanthropy grants for 2025 was \$6,950.



BY MARGARET MUDD, PCMG CLASS OF 2019

It's often said that April showers bring May flowers and we found that to be true in our membership's travels to Lurie Garden and Chalet Nursery on May 21. Around 30 PCMGA members and several guests enjoyed the day.

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For those of us who have never been to <u>Lurie Garden</u>, we discovered a hidden gem in the southeast corner of Millenium Park in downtown Chicago. For an hour, we strolled along with our tour guides through light intermittent rain which did not prohibit the enjoyment of our experience.

A place to escape and find refreshment and renewal, Lurie was created with light and dark plates, areas that contain sun and shade loving plants respectively. Approximately 60% of the plants are native to Illinois. So many of us were in awe of standing in the dark plate as narrow shafts of light filtered down through it.

Interestingly, a slight miscommunication and misunderstanding between the driver and I was made evident when the bus driver bypassed the route to Lurie Garden and was heading up to Chalet first. We had to tell him to turn around and head to Lurie. Traffic was congested and though we arrived fashionably late, it didn't affect the quality of our visit.

After Lurie Gardens, our bus took us to enjoy an hour and a half at <u>Chalet Nursery</u> which is a third generation family-owned gardening and landscaping business that has grown to become one of Chicagoland's largest and busiest nurseries. Jennifer Brennan presented Spring and Summer Blooming Trees that delightfully captured our interest. And then we got to shop! A highlight of the day was to witness the beauty and diversity of what we saw and learned about. Two education hours were awarded for this bus trip. And, of course, another highlight was the ability to bring home some plants from Chalet!



BY SUZANNA TUDOR, PCMG CLASS OF 2002

It's amazing the growing number of farm, baked goods, honey, flower and craft stands popping up in the area. Many of these entrepreneurs have Facebook pages and post their latest additions. If you desire fresh goodness and local small-scale enterprises, you may want to check out and support these hometown markets. Hours vary and payment is often on the honor system by cash, Zelle or Venmo.

Stop by Bouquets at **Sander's Dairy**

Affordable bouquets and fall decor, milk, eggs, honey, cheese, jams, ice cream, frozen pies, organic meats 3 E. 900 North, Chesterton

Madison Street Farm and Flower

1011 Madison Street, Valparaiso Thurs–Fri 11–8 | Sat–Sun 9–8

Bloomstead Bakery & Farmstand

1866 Tower Street, right off 1050 Chesterton

Sunday Farm Stand

at The Edge of Liberty 606 N. Calumet Avenue, Valparaiso May 11 – Nov 2, 10a to 3p



Refreshing Farms

Baked goods, homegrown produce: Green beans, zucchini, cucumbers, Patty pan squash, yellow squash, eggs, and fresh, whole chickens 670 N 700 W, Hobart

The Haman Family Farm

"fresh-cut flowers, sour dough or regular bread, baked goods, firewood, fun seasonal stuff" 219 E 900 S, Kouts

Farm Stand

Eggs, sweet corn, jelly, tomatoes, cucs, blackberry jam 492 N 400 E-Washington Twp. Valparaiso

Sugar Shed Roadside Market

709 N 200 W, Valparaiso 7am to 8pm 7 days a week.

Dune Trail Honey Co.

Pure Prairie Honey 6331 Peachtree Circle, Portage



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