The Tollgate Farm News

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The Tollgate Garden Volunteers (TGVs) gathered for the annual Recognition Dinner Saturday, November 7, to celebrate the accomplishments of the past year. Tollgate Assistant Farm Manager, Destiny Pearson, presented Tollgate's journey with a wonderful look back in pictures. As part of the presentation, the two 2026 TGV awards were announced. The Ginger Meyer Award is given annually to the TGV who shares the treasured qualities of Ginger Meyer. Ginger was an active and passionate gardener. The Americana Foundation that Ginger and her husband established donated Tollgate to MSU in 1987. The Golden Shovel Award is presented to the first year Tollgate Garden Volunteer who registers the most volunteer hours. The award is a golden shovel pin provided by the Americana Foundation.

Ginger Meyer Award – Lori Heiden

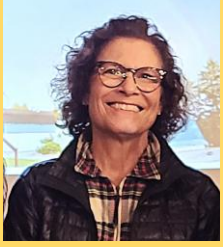
(Hosta Garden AGL)



Lori Heiden has devoted many years volunteering in the Tollgate gardens, most notably the Hosta garden. She is an experienced gardener, sharing plant knowledge with fellow garden members for best growing results. Lori is in charge of the Special Events for the Garden Volunteers, specifically the Spring and Fall Plant Sales. She also has taken on many tasks on the farm; helping to tend to the goats and sheep, along with volunteering for special events.

Golden Shovel Award – Mary Kay Kramer

(First year gardener with the most hours)



Mary Kay Kramer is an avid gardener and has recently joined the Tollgate Garden Volunteers. This season, she has been found helping in many of the gardens, including the 12 Mile, Demo, and Office Gardens. Her enthusiasm for gardening has shown through in the many Saturdays she has given of her time and effort. Welcome to Tollgate, Mary Kay!

The Tollgate Farm News

TOLLGATE GARDEN VOLUNTEER IMPORTANT DATES AND EVENTS 2026						
NOV	**MEETINGS**			**DEC**	**MEETINGS**	
3	TGAC Meeting – Zoom	7:00 pm		1	TGAC Meeting – Zoom	7:00 pm
7	**Recognition Dinner**	**4:00 pm**				
NOV	**WORKDAY ACTIVITIES**			**DEC**	**WORKDAY ACTIVITIES**	
14	Rose winterizing	10:00 am		12	Hanukkah	
				25	Christmas	
26	Thanksgiving			26	Kwanzaa	

FARM UPDATE FROM THE RESIDENT FARMER - *Destiny Pearson*



The gardens are starting to look a little different these days. The beds are winding down, plants are being cut back, and tools are slowly finding their way into storage as we get ready for winter. After a busy season filled with planting, weeding, and learning, it's time to let the gardens rest until spring.

One of the highlights of the month was our Volunteer Recognition Dinner. It was a fantastic evening spent celebrating the people who make so much of what we do possible. The food was delicious, the conversations were even better, and it was wonderful to spend time together reflecting on another successful year.

I'm also happy to report that the forks survived the evening. No snaps throughout the dinner.
As we close up the gardens and prepare the farm for the colder months ahead, we're reminded how much was accomplished this year because of the support of our volunteers, visitors, and community. Thank you for being part of it. We look forward to what next season will bring, but for now, we're ready to let the gardens take their winter nap.



Destiny Pearson
Livestock Coordinator/Assistant Farm Manager

The Tollgate Farm News

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT - *Renee Cottrell*

"The way I see it, if you want the rainbow, you gotta put up with the rain."
"Autumn is a second spring when every leaf is a flower"
Albert Camus-French philosopher, writer 1957 Nobel Prize recipient in literature.

Our season of thanks…
The generosity of TGV contributions, time, talents and shared friendships marks another successful season in the Tollgate Gardens. My appreciation goes out to those members who take on the additional responsibilities of Board and chairperson positions, Area Garden Leaders, Tollgate Calendar Editor, MSU staff and members providing Saturday garden workday assistance. A special thanks to Destiny Pearson as she guides us through another season of challenges. Your knowledge, participation and leadership are essential to our success.
For those who had an opportunity to attend our Recognition Dinner, I hope you enjoyed the event and the time with your fellow gardeners. Thank you, Americana Foundation, for your continued generosity with this event and ongoing support of Tollgate and the gardens. Thank you to TGV member Jim Nelson as the videographer for the Recognition Dinner Presentation. If you were unable to attend the dinner in person, an on-line presentation will be available for all to view at a later date. Start looking for the link info in upcoming email and newsletter announcements.

LOOKING FORWARD TO 2027

- Online membership renewal will continue for 2027. There have been some updates to the sign-up process that should help prevent duplicate sign-ups and guide you towards the Membership donation page. Click on the link to the right!

Tollgate Garden Volunteer Membership Form 2027

- **AGL and Garden Teams Meeting in the Tollgate Conference Center at 10 am, Saturday, January 16th, 2027**. Look for contact emails from Marilyn. All Active status members are welcome to come to learn about the teams, gardens, and role of the AGLs. Look for an email reminder and RSVP to follow closer to the date.
- Our general membership meetings will be conducted via Zoom January through March and will change to in-person in April. Set yourselves a reminder for the 3rd Thursday of the month at 7pm so you don't miss out on these educational opportunities.

Be thankful and joyful this Holiday season.

Thank you for being a Tollgate Garden Volunteer!
Renee Cottrell, President
rmcottrell4@att.net

Tollgate Volunteer Members –
Please remember to log your volunteer hours using the QR code.



For all Master Gardeners –
Don't forget to log your volunteer hours through the MSU Volunteer Portal at
www.msu.samaritan.com/custom/502/volunteer_login

All hours must be entered by November 30, 2026

The Tollgate Farm News

NURSERY NOTES



November Nursery Notes

With the season over in the Nursery, we start to look forward to 2027. The Nursery Team has done a wonderful job with tending, dividing, labeling plants throughout the season. They pull together to help each other out when needed, show up for the plant sales events and work hard to get healthy, identified plants for our fundraising sales. Thank you, Team members, for all you do as row leads and at-large members. I have enjoyed learning from you this season and look forward to hearing any ideas and tweaks that will make 2027 even better. I encourage any Active TGV members interested in the learning opportunities available in the Nursery to contact me for further information.

Take care in the off season and enjoy your families over the Holidays!

Renee
248-251-4505

PAR Report - *Kathryn Fitzpatrick*





Our final total donated to those in need locally in 2026 is **3342 lbs**., with a generous donation by the CSA team of 712 lbs. and several large pumpkins from Pumpkinfest – thank you!

Final harvests included green beans, tomatillos, hot peppers, turnips, collard greens, and cabbage, as well as a surplus of beets, onions, garlic, turnips, radishes, and hot peppers from the CSA team. The hot pepper plants were still flowering and producing fruit due to our warm weather.

We concluded the year with the welcome support of the DeMaria Construction volunteers with a mostly weed-free garden ready for the Eagle Scout garden renovation project. We planted garlic in two framed beds – one constructed by the PAR volunteers, and one constructed by the Eagle Scout and his father as a prototype for the 28 beds yet to be completed.

The PAR team stuck with the tedious but rewarding task of making seed tape for carrots, turnips, and radishes for next year – 330 feet of tape that will save us the labor of thinning. Now we turn to planning for 2027.

Happy Holidays,
Kathryn Fitzpatrick

Photos by Kathryn Fitzpatrick

The Tollgate Farm News

AGL Information – *Marilyn Alimpich*

Hello Area Garden Leaders,

SAVE THE DATE: Saturday, January 16, 2027, for the AGL Planning Meeting

Please check your inbox in the next week or two for my email about your role as an Area Garden Leader. Let me know by December 15th so we can prepare for the AGL Planning Meeting. I look forward to collaborating with you in January and during the 2027 garden season!

Garden Plant Labels Needed?



If you need new or replacement labels for your garden plants, now's the time to inventory them while they're fresh in your mind. Linda Piasecki and I will lead the project, but we'd love your help. You can earn Master Gardener work hours.

Please compile a list of needed labels, including the botanical, species, common name, and Trademark (TM or R) of your plants if available. A label template is provided.

Respond by email to Marilyn Alimpich at masoleil@sbcglobal.net by January 16, 2026.

See you in the gardens,

Marilyn Alimpich
masoleil@sbcglobal.net

A reminder to get any last-minute receipts for garden expenses to Destiny ASAP. She must submit them to MSU within 90 days from the date the expense was incurred.

What is an AGL?
Gardens in need of an AGL



The Tollgate Farm News

DID YOU KNOW?

PLANT OF THE MONTH
Witch Hazel



Witch hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*) is a large multi-stemmed deciduous shrub native to eastern North America. Unlike many plants, witch hazel's fragrant yellow flowers bloom in late fall, rather than spring or summer. Its bark and leaves contain natural compounds called tannins, which have astringent and anti-inflammatory properties. In addition to flowering in the fall, witch hazel is also valued for its attractive fall foliage and wildlife benefits. Witch hazel is tolerant of a wide variety of planting environments including full sun to partial shade, somewhat dry to fairly wet soils and winter temperatures to zone 4. Tollgate's witch hazel is located at the west side of the big parking lot. It was still flowering at the beginning of November!

Article by Roy Prentice
Photos by
Linda Piasecki

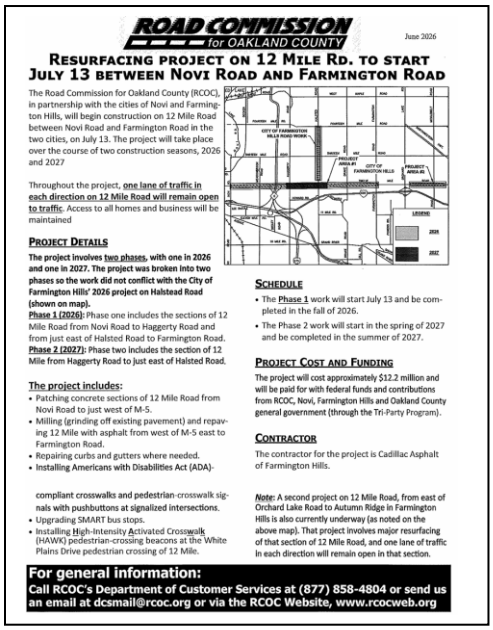




Tollgate Garden Volunteers now has a Facebook page! Please consider friending our page at https://www.facebook.com/share/g/1J7MLbjFd6/

The Tollgate Farm News

12 Mile Road Construction



ROAD COMMISSION for OAKLAND COUNTY

June 2026

RESURFACING PROJECT ON 12 MILE RD. TO START JULY 13 BETWEEN NOVI ROAD AND FARMINGTON ROAD

The Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC), in partnership with the cities of Novi and Farmington Hills, will begin construction on 12 Mile Road between Novi Road and Farmington Road in the two cities, on July 13. The project will take place over the course of two construction seasons, 2026 and 2027

Throughout the project, **one lane of traffic in each direction on 12 Mile Road will remain open to traffic**. Access to all homes and business will be maintained

PROJECT DETAILS

The project involves two phases, with one in 2026 and one in 2027. The project was broken into two phases so the work did not conflict with the City of Farmington Hills' 2026 project on Halstead Road (shown on map).

Phase 1 (2026): Phase one includes the sections of 12 Mile Road from Novi Road to Haggerty Road and from just east of Halsted Road to Farmington Road.

Phase 2 (2027): Phase two includes the section of 12 Mile from Haggerty Road to just east of Halsted Road.

The project includes:

- Patching concrete sections of 12 Mile Road from Novi Road to just west of M-5.
- Milling (grinding off existing pavement) and repaving 12 Mile with asphalt from west of M-5 east to Farmington Road.
- Repairing curbs and gutters where needed.
- Installing Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant crosswalks and pedestrian-crosswalk signals with pushbuttons at signalized intersections.
- Upgrading SMART bus stops.
- Installing High-Intensity Activated Crosswalk (HAWK) pedestrian-crossing beacons at the White Plains Drive pedestrian crossing of 12 Mile.

SCHEDULE

- The Phase 1 work will start July 13 and be completed in the fall of 2026.
- The Phase 2 work will start in the spring of 2027 and be completed in the summer of 2027.

PROJECT COST AND FUNDING

The project will cost approximately $12.2 million and will be paid for with federal funds and contributions from RCOC, Novi, Farmington Hills and Oakland County general government (through the Tri-Party Program).

CONTRACTOR

The contractor for the project is Cadillac Asphalt of Farmington Hills.

Note: A second project on 12 Mile Road, from east of Orchard Lake Road to Autumn Ridge in Farmington Hills is also currently underway (as noted on the above map). That project involves major resurfacing of that section of 12 Mile Road, and one lane of traffic in each direction will remain open in that section.

For general information:
Call RCOC's Department of Customer Services at (877) 858-4804 or send us an email at dcsmail@rcoc.org or via the RCOC Website, www.rcocweb.org

A two year renovation of 12 mile will start Monday July 13. One lane of traffic will remain open but we can expect delays during high traffic periods. Thank you to Gary, one of our garden volunteers, for forwarding the pdf summary of the project which can be viewed by clicking on the link below

Oakland County Road Commission Flyer on 12 Mile Construction

NEW TOLLGATE VOLUNTEER MEMBERSHIP FORM 2027

There is a new Tollgate Volunteer Membership Form for 2027. This new form is more streamline and is easier to follow. Click on the link below to renew your Tollgate Membership for 2027.

Tollgate Volunteer Membership Form 2027



Tollgate Garden Volunteer Membership Form 2027

All questions on this form are required in order to complete your submission. The information you provide helps us maintain clear and effective communication with our Tollgate Garden Volunteers and supports our ability to share the meaningful impact Tollgate has on the community. Your responses play an important role in helping us grow and serve more effectively. All data is treated confidentially. Please submit one form per person.

Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, or veteran status.

When you submit this form, it will not automatically collect your details like name and email address unless you provide it yourself.

Welcome to the 2027 Garden Volunteer Membership Form!

Before continuing, note that filling out the form and making your donation will take about 10 minutes.
After each section you will select **NEXT** to continue filling out the form, you can also select **BACK** if you need to make changes. When the form is complete select **SUBMIT**. A page will appear with donation instructions. **Please have your credit card ready if making an online donation.**

The Tollgate Farm News

Michigan State University Extension
Tollgate Farm and Education Center

Holiday at the Farm

ANNUAL FUNDRAISER

Sunday, December 6, 2026
10am-4pm

Join us at MSU Tollgate Farm and Education Center
for our third annual Holiday at the Farm fundraiser.
Festive fun awaits the whole family!

- Wagon Rides
- Adorable Farm Animals
- Visit with Santa
- Cookie Decorating
- Holiday Activities
- Photo Opportunities
- Hot Cocoa Bar
- Holiday Shopping



[Click here to register for Holiday at the Farm]

Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or veteran status.

The Tollgate Farm News

Membership Update November 2026

To all of you who donated to help the Tollgate Garden Volunteers make Tollgate a more beautiful place, **THANK YOU!** Your support of time talents, and donations will grow and maintain the beauty of the Tollgate gardens.

Our new members for this are:

Andrew Berry
Melissa Cummings

Please look forward to renewing your membership for the year 2027. New and renewed membership form for the Tollgate Volunteers will be available online soon. Don't miss out on the Tollgate Garden Volunteer Newsletter! If you have any questions, please contact Lee Kindermann at leek.emg@gmail.com Thanks!

TGV Recruitment Flyer

MSU Tollgate Volunteer Sign-In:



MSU Tollgate Volunteer Sign-in

Links to Forms & Other Info

Garden Orientation PDF

Tollgate Garden Web Page

Tollgate Garden Volunteer Info

TGV Activity Calendar

Tollgate Garden Map

NOTE: If you are unable to access or print any necessary forms from the links, please notify Renee, who will arrange to provide copies. Copies will also be available at all in-person TGV meetings.

Take a Tollgate Picture

Send photo files in separate emails, if necessary, to Judy Warren, Tollgate Calendar Editor, at TGFarmPhotos@gmail.com
Photos are also appreciated for the monthly Farm News. Photo files can be sent to: Ductapegirl212@gmail.com



Photo by Linda Piasecki

RECOGNITION DINNER 2026











Photos by Linda Piasecki





FALL CLEAN UP AT TOLLGATE !!













Photos by Linda Piasecki

The Tollgate Farm News

Activity Days: January - October

- Activity Day hours are 9:00 am – Noon, unless otherwise noted on the Activities section of the first page of the newsletter and the full year calendar (see Links page).
- Volunteer Activity Day and Meeting Information will be communicated by email.
- Active members will continue to get email reminders of these activities.
- Lunch will be provided on scheduled workdays.
- We strongly recommend you bring your own tools for your garden activities. All tools borrowed from the Tool Shed should be cleaned and sanitized with the wipes provided, prior to returning the items to the Tool Shed after use.

Tollgate Garden Advisory Committee (TGAC)

Volunteer Liaison – Destiny Pearson
248-347-3860 Ext.251 pears278@msu.edu
President ..... Renee Cottrell
Vice President ..... Marilyn Alimpich
Secretary..... Theresa Bridenbaugh
Treasurer ..... Karen Harris
Membership ..... Lee Kindermann
Communications ..... Kathy Johnson
Programs ..... Jackie Stengel
Farm News Editor..... Linda Piasecki
Event Coordinator..... Lori Heiden

- The TGAC meets monthly virtually **on Zoom on the first Tuesday of the month at 7:00 PM**. All Tollgate Garden Volunteer members are welcome to attend and should contact Destiny Pearson for meeting link.
- Contact information for individual TGAC members and Area Garden Leaders (AGL) are available by contacting Renee Cottrell at rmcottrell@att.net to have message or contact forwarded for response. Contact info can also be found in the Garden Binders in the Volunteer Communication Center.
- Tollgate Volunteer Membership is renewed annually. The 2026 Tollgate Garden Volunteer membership is valid from **January 1, 2026 to December 31, 2026.**

- For membership questions or to update your current membership information, email Renee Cottrell at rmcottrell4@att.net
- For general Tollgate information and questions, contact Destiny Pearson or see Website: http://tollgate.msu.edu/volunteering/
- TIP: If you aren't getting The Tollgate Farm News email, check your SPAM folder

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension
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tollgate.msu.edu
Volunteer Coordinator - Janice Recinos : recinos1@msu.edu
Farm Contact - Destiny Pearson : pears278@msu.edu