

Shelby County Master Gardener

OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION



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President's comments

By Jim McCracken



This year's spring weather for Shelby County has been very unusual. I recently learned of a new type of precipitation called graupel. It's snow that looks like dip and dots or artificial snow. Our weather has been cooler and wetter than normal pushing back planting dates. Information that can be very discouraging to any local gardener. My advice to everyone is, "don't rush Mother Nature." Watch weather trends to see when planting opportunities do exist for your flowers or vegetables.

The onion crop is in, some 2,500 Ailsa Craig live onion were planted on March 29-30. I had placed a



large black plastic tarp over the planting area to guarantee dry enough conditions to till and plant. The tarp also allowed soil temperatures to rise. A timely rain fell soon after completing the planting process, providing much

needed moisture to onion plants that had been harvested in Texas 10-12 days earlier. Onions are a crop that are ready every year around July first no matter when a gardener plants them. So if you wish to grow large onions get them in the ground ASAP and fertilize them with nitrogen. The longer a gardener waits to plant onions now the smaller each onion will be.



The next direct planting I do will be three varieties of potatoes. The planting date is Good Friday, but this year will be later due to the recent wet conditions we have experienced. I did place large traps over the sections I will use to plant cool weather crops such as lettuce, spinach, beets, peas, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower and Brussel sprouts.

Various transplants have been started indoors, growing almost entirely under grow lights. Recently, with warming temperatures the flats have



made it to my greenhouse on a few sunny warmer days. MG members don't forget to gradually transition your transplants to Ohio's outside

weather conditions slowly even when temperatures become warm enough to plant. Make sure daytime high reaches around 70 degrees and all chances of frost are completely gone. The F word, Frost can kill those sensitive plants losing all the time, effort, and money you have invested. As always "Happy Gardening!"



**April Meeting will be
Wednesday, April 20, 2022 @ 2p
Both at Extension and on Zoom**

Volunteer Coordinator's comments

By Doug Benson

I am anticipating a very colorful landscape in May, if the old saying "April showers bring May flowers" has any validity. It's hard to find a day absent the forecast for rain. Just so we don't get any serious storms! I've already mowed my lawn twice; that's what I get for applying fertilizer in November. I have started a few tomatoes and green peppers in my makeshift greenhouse.



At my age, I'm not about to make a major investment in space and equipment. It worked last year (over 20 pints of salsa, spaghetti sauce, and tomato sauce) plus several heads of cabbage.


SCMGs have several activities coming up soon. The seminar planning committee has established a schedule of four seminars to be held at the Amos Library this spring and summer. I suspect that our leader, Ann Heeley, will be writing more about the program, but just in case she doesn't, here is the schedule: April 21, Doug Benson – "Ready, Set, Grow!" May 19, Matt Schmerge – "To Spray or Not to Spray," June 16, Janet Nelson – "It's About Thyme," and August 18, Steve Stone – "Divide and Conquer." All sessions are on the third Thursday (the night after our membership meetings) from 6:30 – 7:45. Thanks to Ann Heeley, Teresa Friesthler, Julie Gilardi, and Russ Stewart for their planning work.

We are again taking part in the Let's Grow Ohio Victory Garden seed distribution program, which is sponsored by the OSUE Master Gardeners and the Ohio Department of Agriculture. The program is intended to help people try their hand at gardening. I have prepared a separate article with more details.

Another activity will be the resumption of the Hotline starting Monday, May 2. Once again, we will try to have volunteers in the office on Mondays and Thursdays, 10:00 – 1:00 from May through September to answer questions from the public. I would like to have one or two volunteers join me each of those days, especially on Thursdays, as I have to leave for an exercise class at about 11:20. If this year is like past years, there will be some days

when we have two or three cases and other days when we just sit and visit. It's a great opportunity to practice your diagnostic skills and learn about various subjects. I will be passing around a sign-up sheet during our meeting. At this time, Hands on Connect doesn't provide the sign-up feature that VMS had (or if it does, I haven't figured it out). You can also just email me your availability. Please do consider helping with this.

Matt and I have decided to try using the online Master Gardener training program for new volunteers. One advantage for trainees is that the program is self-paced and can be done from home. Also, one will be able to start at any time rather than have to wait for a "class" to be scheduled. A potential challenge will be that we will need to provide opportunities for personal interaction among trainees and with our active volunteers. This means we will need some of you to be willing to act as mentors/resource persons for trainees. I've previewed the online training program. It includes the text of the written manual you used along with videos of various Extension specialists illustrating various subjects. Each module ends with a self-check quiz, the results of which are retained within the program. The quizzes can be retaken if the trainee wants to review the information and try to improve his/her score. As it was for you, the process will include completion of an application with references, an interview, an online background check, and payment of a fee that is yet to be determined. We will keep you informed. Please help us recruit.


Our April meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 20, at 2:00 at the Extension office. One of the topics we will discuss is whether to continue the afternoon meetings or return to evening meetings. I hope you will be able to attend and offer your input. If you can't attend in person, we will make the meeting available on Zoom. Have an enjoyable Easter, and we will see you Wednesday. 



Ohio Victory Gardens

By Doug Benson

We are again taking part in the Let's Grow Ohio Victory Garden seed distribution program, which is sponsored jointly by the OSUE Master Gardeners and the Ohio Department of Agriculture. We will be joining 44 other counties in this effort to encourage Ohioans to try their hand at gardening. We will have 500 seed kits to distribute throughout Shelby, Auglaize, and Mercer counties. Each kit will contain starter packets of lettuce, carrot, cucumber, and sunflower seeds. I don't know if we will be getting the little yard signs again this year, but we will provide some planting instructions as well as information about the Master Gardener program. The website for the program is <https://u.osu.edu/ohiovictorygardens/>.

- **Our primary date for distribution will be Saturday, May 14.**
- **On that date, MGVs will be handing out kits at public libraries in Sidney, Anna, Botkins, Ft. Loramie, Russia, Celina, Chickasaw, and St. Marys, as well as the People's Garden in Sidney.**
- **Other locations will be Jackson Center library on May 16, and Wapakoneta library on May 16 and 17.**
- **Thanks to all who have volunteered to help with the distribution.**
- **The kits are to be delivered by April 27, so we will need some help sorting them out for each of the distribution sites.**
- **I'd like to do that sorting on either Friday, April 29, or Wednesday, May 4. Please let me know if you can help either of those days, and I will pick the one with the most helpers.** 



A First

By Ann Heeley

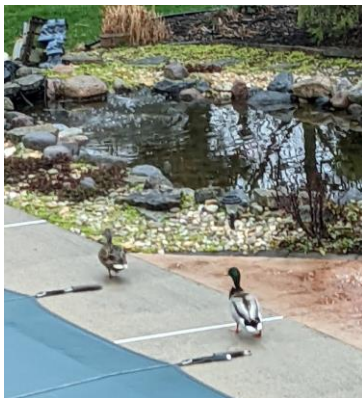
Between bursts of rain on April 6, we happened to glance out our living room window, which overlooks the back yard. The swimming pool still has its winter cover, and the nearby, small garden pond has bubblers to keep the water moving. The bubblers also oxygenate the pond when the surface is frozen. The goldfish are beginning to wake up, although we won't feed them until the water is at least 50°. The pond is rather small, maybe 7' x 15', and has been home to several generations of goldfish over the past 20 years.

In the past, we've had a blue heron wipe out every single goldfish. We've had raccoons choose the biggest ones for dinner. (We learned long ago not to try koi.) We always see tiny toad tadpoles in the spring, and we welcome those that survive. Every summer, at least one giant bullfrog lets us know he/she has found a home. The grandkids like to catch crawdads at Tawawa and let them loose in the pond. And once every few years, a young black water snake finds its way to our pond and stays for a day or two. There's no other water source nearby, so we have no idea where he originates or where he goes from here.

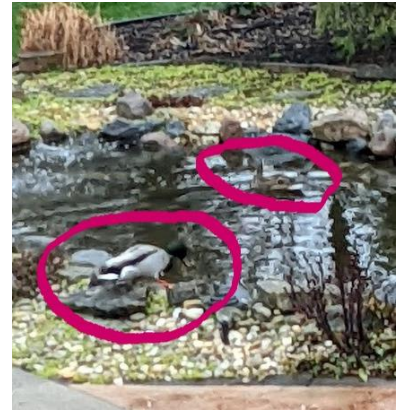


This year, however, was a first: a pair of Mallard ducks! We saw them in the middle of the patio, and watched as they waddled down the sidewalk to the pond.

I grabbed my phone and took photos, but from a distance of 50 feet and through a not-very-clean picture window, the photos don't do justice to what we saw.



The female hopped into the water first, and a few seconds later, her mate joined her.



As the female dunked her head in and out of the water, the male floated placidly.



Soon the female walked up the stones, out of the water, and under a nearby false cypress shrub. The

male stood atop a large stone at the edge of the pond for the longest time, facing her and looking like a statue.

We waited and waited, but the male didn't move, and the female didn't come out from under the shrub. So we walked away, and when we came back later for another look, there was no sign of either one. We know mallards aren't rare, and we see them all the time at Tawawa Park and Dorothy Love, but to see them in our own back yard was such a treat. Tomorrow, we plan to check under the shrub to see if there's a nest. Unless, of course, our dog finds it first.



The People's Garden April 2022

By Conelia Dixon



This is our ninth season of raising fresh vegetables at The People's Garden. The food pantry is now open again so the shoppers can choose what foods they need to take home, including herbs and vegetables from the garden. All winter, due to the Covid 19 restrictions, workers have had to choose and load the groceries for the shoppers who pulled up in their vehicles in front of the Agape pantry building. Now shoppers can walk through the pantry and not have to take home food that they really don't need. They are grateful for the fresh garden vegetables that are not usually provided by the Agape pantry. They are surprised at what is available and like to pick out herbs and vegetables that they know are fresh.

Things like okra, green onions, green tomatoes, hot peppers, and turnip greens are some of the things that shoppers appreciate. I am truly thankful for Agape Distribution's support, and I am truly thankful for the donations and volunteer work that so many people and organizations provide to the garden. You and all community members are welcome to come and check out the equipment we have because of generous people. Come and visit, look around, spread the word about how beautiful it is and how volunteering is available. Garden beds are still renting for only \$10 for the season for anyone, just enough to make it theirs. We have 7 beds rented or promised already this season.

In the past few months, the garden has increasingly gotten more notice and has received comments, so that we know we are engaging with the community even more by giving talks to groups and organizations in and out of our area, and because of our monthly newspaper articles. Cub scouts at The Learning Center, a Methodist Circle group in a private home, a Connection Point Church woman's health day, and a Versailles library adult class to begin their community garden, and a planned engagement for children in Versailles in July to teach them about gardening are some of the recent talks. This is such a pleasure to educate and inform more people about the benefits of gardening, not only at The People's Garden but also at their own homes. We are seeing more interest in the way of questions and comments like, "I didn't know that!"

when we engage with community members. I am looking forward to the Victory Garden project. This is another opportunity to engage with the community and encourage more activity in home gardens. I am also looking forward to the library presentations.

We have all the materials to build a ramp to the porch of The Learning Center, and now we have a commitment by someone to build it. This will happen this spring. This will allow people in wheelchairs and others who need a little help maneuvering up to the porch to enter the building.



A First—Update from page 4, Mallards

By Ann Heeley

Ann checked under the false Cyprus bush—no nest.

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