

Shelby County Master Gardener

OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION



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Happy
Valentines
Day

President's comments— **Welcome to 2023**

By Jim McCracken

Welcome to the 2023 Shelby County Master Gardener year. We are all looking forward to the upcoming growing season. Plans for the garden have been made, seeds ordered, and new plants have been added to each of our wish lists. We do this to strengthen vegetable production or to improve the appearance of that paradise we call "Garden".

Here is a quick update for the MG club.

- The Library Committee has been hard at work during the winter months. They have completed plans for the 2023 library series. Excellent work Ann, Theresa, and Russ!

The schedule will be discussed at our February 15th meeting.

- The MG interns have been working several months now to complete their online portion of the hybrid training class. The MG organization is excited to welcome each and every intern into full membership during this year.
- Doug Benson, MG coordinator, had his knee replaced on January 23rd. He is recovering well as he does physical therapy 3 times weekly. Doug does so much for our club year after year. We hope for a speedy recovery and to see a healthy Doug at our March MG meeting.

In closing, good luck making your personal garden the best ever. Rekindle the passion of why you started gardening in the first place. Enjoy the thrill of watching new plant growth and nurturing your garden into a success story. 🌱

February Membership Meeting
Wednesday, February 15, 2023 @ 10 a.m.
Extension Office

Volunteer Coordinator's comments

By Doug Benson

I sit here at my sister's house in Tiffin just two weeks removed from my knee replacement surgery. This morning the surgeon took x-rays, removed the bandage, and pronounced the procedure a success to this point. I'm still dealing with some swelling and lots of discomfort, especially as I sit here at the computer table. I go to PT

three days a week, and that is definitely helping; however, the therapist said yesterday that I'm not ready to switch from the walker to a cane. As many of you who have had a similar experience have shared, it will take a while to get the flexibility and muscle tone back to an acceptable range. I don't go back to the doctor for four weeks now, but hopefully by then, I will have a lot more freedom.

In the meantime, Shelby County Master Gardener activities continue with Matt taking the lead. Our trainees continue to progress through their training manual pretty much at their own pace. A week ago, we had a group viewing of Pam Bennett's Horticulture Happy Hour webinar about houseplants followed by a brief discussion led by Ann Heeley. I understand the 19 trainees and active members were in attendance, and the session went well. Thanks, Jim and Ann for helping. I watched the webinar from my bed and was very impressed by Pam's presentation. I hope both the trainees and our actives had an opportunity to visit with each other.

The trainees will have another in-person training Saturday, February 25, 9:00 – 12:00, at the Extension office. Alex Uhlenhake, a certified arborist from Coldwater, will do some classroom training followed by hands-on practice in pruning trees and shrubs. Current MGVs are again invited to join, but you must email me by Wednesday, the 22nd. You should bring gloves and your own pruners/loppers. The program will be held unless the weather is so bad that travel is impossible.

As I mentioned in an earlier email, the planning committee for our programs at the Amos Library has been busy for the past month. Ann Heeley, Teresa Freisthler, Julie Gilardi, and Russ Stewart have selected a set of five topics and secured speakers including several from within our group. This year the "Garden Series" will be on the second Thursdays, again from 6:30 to 7:45. Here is the line-up (see the attached flyer at end of newsletter for more details): March 9 – Nancy Russell on raised bed gardening, April 13 – Jim McCracken and Russ Stewart on Zone 6 vegetables, May 11 – Doug Benson on nuisance insect pests, June 8 – Barbara Ray (Dublin, Ohio's Nature Educator) on good and bad wildlife, and August 10 – Nick Baughman (Kah Nursery) on flowering shrubs. Ann will have some flyers at the meeting for you to distribute.

Once again Ohio Master Gardeners will be working with the Ohio Department of Agriculture to distribute seeds through the Victory Garden project. We will have 300

(Coordinator's comments continued from page 1)

packets for Shelby and Auglaize Counties and Mercer County will also be getting 300 packets. The seeds will be delivered in late March, and we will start handing them out in April. If you know of some gardening-related activities planned for April that might be a good opportunity, let me know as soon as possible so ODA can include it in their publicity. We will be finalizing a distribution schedule later this month and in early March.

Thank you to all who completed the recertification process. We were among the first counties to have everyone recertified. Also, thanks for recording all your hours. Our totals for 2022 were 441 continuing education hours and 1856 volunteer hours. Those are some impressive totals for only 23 members. Please continue using CONTINUING EDUCATION 2022 to enter your new continuing education hours for 2023. The state has already collected our hours for 2022. If you have questions about which opportunity/project to use for an activity, email or call me.

I'm going to bring this to a close – my knee tells me I need to quit sitting at computer. Continue to enjoy whatever you are doing as you wait until it's time to get back in the garden. It won't be too long! 🌱

Give Air Layering a Try

By Jim McCracken

Air layering is a method of propagation that doesn't require lots of money, talent, or a horticultural degree. The simplest method of propagation is by seed. But that may take months or even years to reproduce a similar plant species. Air layering will produce a genetically new plant that has all of the characteristics of the mother (parent) plant.

Air layering propagation happens in nature all the time. A great example is when a lower branch or stem touches the ground and takes root to form a new plant. The parent plant is unaffected until roots are established and the branch is removed.

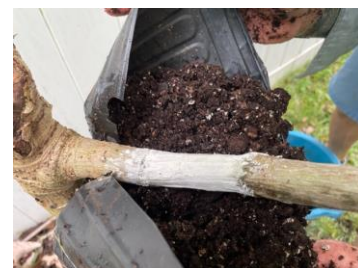
Woody outdoor ornamentals such as azaleas, magnolias, or rhododendrons make good candidates for this type of propagation technique. Nut and fruit trees may also be used, as well as roses, boxwoods, or forsythias.

Steps used by our son, Dan who lives in Orlando, Florida. He used a Gummy Worm Tree (*Cercropia*) to demonstrate the Air Layering technique to form a new plant.

- Score a small section of a stem that is 1-2 years old. The area worked with should be at least 1-3 feet from the tip of the branch.
- Next, carefully peel only the outer bark from the branch.
- Use a hormone rooting compound on the area.

- Cover the area with moist peat moss or sphagnum moss. Wrap with plastic wrap and tie with string to keep root ball intact. Add water if needed during the propagation process.

It generally takes 8-10 weeks for root formation to develop. Spring is the best season to attempt Air Layering especially with an Ohio climate. This process has a 90% success rate. Remember the main reason Air Layering is done is to establish a genetically similar plant to the parent plant at practically no cost. 🌱



Winter Sowing

By Carol Braun

I was not familiar with the term “winter sowing” or “winter gardening” but I am experimenting with it this winter. I heard about this at a fall garden retreat and decided I wanted to try it.

You take a gallon plastic jug and cut the jug about 4 inches from the bottom but leave it hinged at the handle. Put 4-5 holes in the bottom, I used a drill for this along with putting 3-4 small holes at the top. Fill it with soil, dampen the soil and place your seeds in each jug and seal with duct tape and place it outside preferably on the south side of your house. Leave the caps off when setting them outside.

I got my jugs ready last fall and decided to sow them this week. The garden retreat instructor suggested trying this method the end of January or first of February. I used 5 jugs, jug 1 is planted with Foxglove, 2 with Lupine (I have tried to grow Lupines for years, who knows, I may finally get some), 3 with Delphinium, 4 with Mesclun classic mix, and 5 with Spinach. I used left over seed from last spring so I guess I am out only my time if nothing grows.

I do know that Lupines and Foxglove seeds need to be subjected to a freeze before they germinate but the other three are just ones that I usually sow in my garden as early as I can. I feel like the spinach may be ok but uncertain about the lettuce and Delphinium. At present they are in my south flower bed surrounded in snow. The instructor also mentioned trying even tomatoes in late February or March. Will keep you posted in the next newsletter if I see anything growing in any of the jugs. 🌱

Here are a few YouTube video links on this topic:

1. [Speaking of...Winter Sowing - YouTube](#)
2. [How to Winter Sow Seeds - A Complete Tutorial Guide - YouTube](#)
3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dHbtjlJzJQ8&t=2703s>
4. Or just do a search on the topic of winter sowing or winter seed sowing



Try Something New

By Nancy Russell

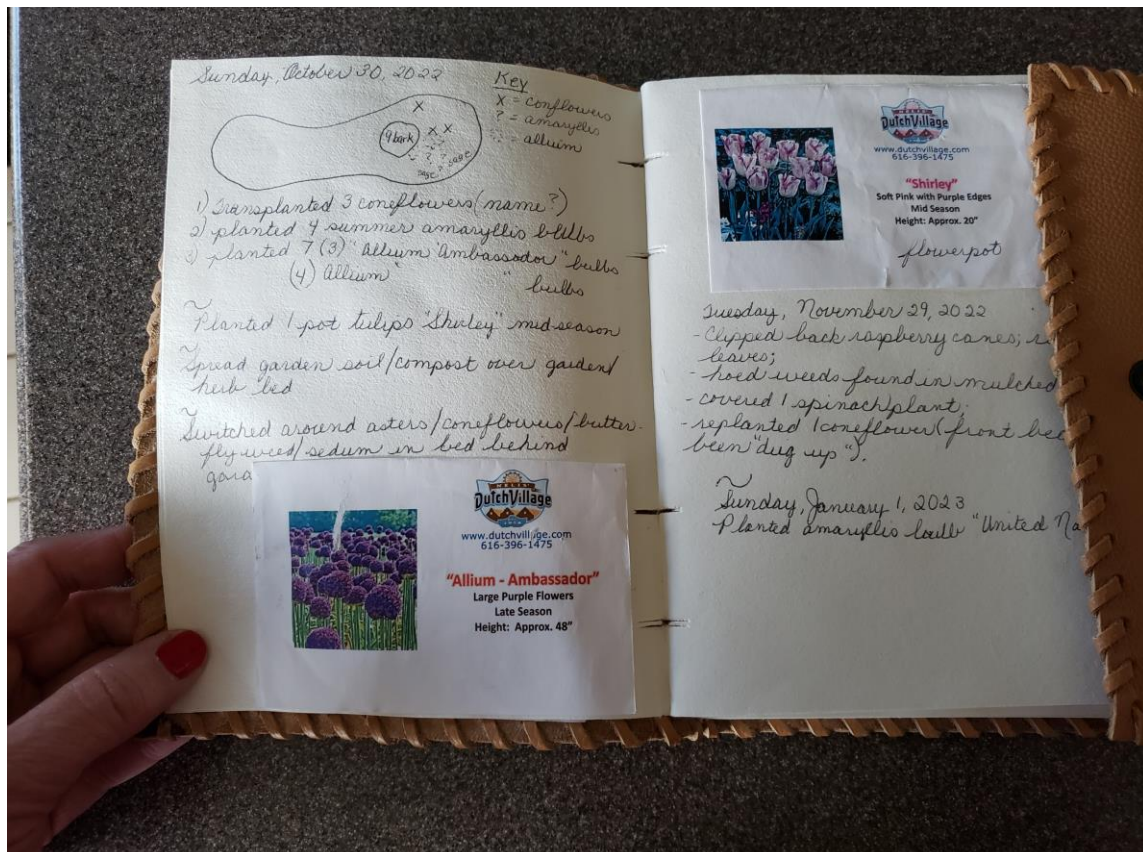
Last October was our annual Master Gardener Volunteer Banquet. As is our tradition after dinner, all MGV's stood up and shared personal highlights, experiences, and activities from our year in the organization. There was definitely more to share because slowly OSU lifted Covid restrictions and we were able to do more with the public.

One fellow MGV, Alan Pratt, shared a unique perspective when it was time for him to share. Because of shoulder and knee surgery, Alan told us there were limitations on what he was able to accomplish as a home gardener or do an active MGV. Instead, Alan offered up a challenge to everyone there: **Try Something New**. Try a new tool, technique, activity, anything, just try something new in 2023.

I did **Try Something New**. A garden journal. A garden journal that had no dividers, no special sections, no filing compartments, just blank pages. It wasn't the first time I had tried keeping a garden journal, but this time I had a different plan to make it work. The plan was quite simple: I would use drawings, maps, and plant information labels glued onto the pages and entries would be dated. I may add other ways to add information, but this was a start.

It has only been a few months since starting this **Try Something New** garden journal, but it came in pretty handy recently. Here is what happened. The recent nice weather coupled with the dark mulch absorbing heat, daffodils were starting to appear in the front flower bed. On closer inspection I noted new shoots appearing that I knew no daffodils were planted there. I don't know what made me look in my journal, but there was the recorded information. These were the allium bulbs I had ordered last spring while enjoying the Tulip Festival in Holland, Michigan. They had arrived at the end of October when I started the journal. I had planted them in the front flower bed, drawn a map of their location, along with the number planted and dated the entry. The bulb label from the shipping bag was right there, too, on the page so I had the bulb's variety name, general physical description, and when it bloomed. I have included a picture of the entry just described along with other dated and recorded tasks.

So take the challenge and **Try Something New**. Whether a new plant, a tool, technique or as I did, a journal, just give it a shot. Thanks, Alan!! 🌱



HOUSEPLANTS 101

By Ann Heeley

Master Gardener Volunteers and trainees met at the Extension Office for the February 1 Houseplants webinar with Pam Bennett. With her usual good humor and expertise, Pam covered the basics of selection and care as she displayed houseplants from her own home. Two items that she stressed: 1) Anyone can kill houseplants; and 2) Fertilizer is not plant food...plants make their own food from available light, water, air, and soil nutrients. One important factor to note: Pam moves her houseplants outdoors during warm weather, and brings them in for overwintering. Her personal focus is on caring for houseplants during the cold months until they're ready to move outdoors again. But even if you usually keep your houseplants indoors throughout the year, the information Pam presented is still valid. Listed below are notes I took during Pam's presentation and during the discussion afterwards.

Watering:

- Key to thriving houseplants
- Avoid watering on a schedule (weekly, daily, bi-weekly, etc.); let each plant tell you when it needs water
- Water less often, but thoroughly
- Don't let plants sit in water for more than a day or two; roots need oxygen
- Water from the top (avoiding leaves) until water runs through the drainage hole -or- fill up the sink and let plants absorb water from the bottom up; the bottom-up method is especially good for plants with fuzzy leaves or when the soil is extremely dry.
- Watch for high salt content, usually from city water; if crusty, white residue is visible, douse the plants in the shower to flush the salts from the container and soil
- Water according to the season and location
- Wilting, slow growth, and brown tips on leaves can be signs of over- or under-watering
- Moisture meters are good; fingers are better



Light:

- Majority of houseplants are tropical, either from desert areas or rainforests
- Any rapid environmental change (such as from greenhouse to residential house) can cause leaf drop, withering, color change; acclimate plants gradually to their new locations (1-3 weeks, depending on plant)
- Fiddle-leaf figs are especially finicky about change of location
- If a plant is putting on new growth, they're happy with the light exposure
- Leaf drop does not necessarily mean a need for water
- Use grow lights indoors if light is inadequate

Humidity:

- Much lower in typical home than outdoors, especially in winter; bathroom may be exception
- Using a tray with water and pebbles under the container to increase humidity is not supported by research
- Be careful with spraying or misting plants; it can sometimes lead to disease
- Don't grow ferns indoors and expect them to look good; same with Norfolk pine; both need high humidity that is not realistic in a home
- You can bring ferns indoors, whack them back to soil level, and put them back outside when the weather warms up

Fertilizer:

- Again, fertilizer is NOT plant food
- Clay holds nutrients, but is not practical or advisable indoors
- Potting mix (regular, cactus, orchid, etc.) is best for houseplants
- Fertilizer (N-P-K) is essential because there are no nutrients in potting mix
- During winter, slow down watering and fertilizer (1/2 strength) unless plants are "growing like crazy"
- Jobe spikes are easy, but don't reach the roots; instead, break them up and poke them deep inside and all around the container

Pests:

- Most common are scale, mealybug, mites, fungus gnats, aphids
- Soak houseplants in systemic control before bringing them indoors; don't use systemics indoors
- Always use a labeled product
- Treat bug infestation before it gets really bad; insecticidal soap can be used indoors sparingly; do not use on succulents, ivy, palms, or plants with waxy leaves; Neem oil spray can also be used on most plants



- There is no one spray for all diseases; avoid spraying anything indoors for diseases
- Wipe stems and leaves with diluted rubbing alcohol to control mites, aphids, scale, fungus gnats; be sure to wipe the undersides of leaves, too
- Abiotic disease (too much salt residue) can cause damage

Some recommended low-light plants...low light doesn't mean no light: (generally varieties with darker green leaves do the best):

- Sansevieria—many types
- Monstera deliciosa (I beg to differ)
- Cast Iron Plant (*Aspidistra elatior*)
- Philodendron—many types
- Pothos—many types
- Peperomia - don't overwater
- Chinese Evergreen (*Aglaonema*) – newer, variegated cultivars are more difficult to grow
- Spider Plant (*Chlorophytum comosum*) – remove leaves with brown tips; replant “pups”
- Dracaena – prefers medium light, but does OK in low light



- Jade (*Crassula ovata*) – does better in medium to high-indirect light
- Z-Z (*Zamioculcas zamifolia*) – don't overwater
- Peace Lily (*Spathiphyllum*) – does not bloom as well in low light; requires more moisture than most houseplants
- African Violet (*Saintpaulia ionantha*) – prefers eastern or northern exposure; bottom watering
- Some orchids

Difficult to grow successfully indoors:



- Alocasia
- Prayer Plant (*Maranta leuconeura*) – may be spider mite magnet
- Plants with colorful leaves, flowers, or variegation
- Any fern
- Norfolk pine
- Fiddle Leaf Fig

Herbs:

- All need lots of light and benefit from grow lights
- May need more fertilizer and water when grown indoors

Propagating, 3 types:

- Leaf cutting
- Stem cutting
- Air layering

Pruning:

- Remove dead leaves and leaves that have brown edges
- Get rid of stems that are over-populated with bugs
- Destroy entire plant if “it's a mess”
- In some cases when roots are still alive, plant can be saved by cutting it down to soil level and waiting for it to grow back

Pam recommended “Growing Indoor Plants with Success” from the University of Georgia.

<https://extension.uga.edu/publications/detail.html?number=B1318>

Discussion Questions and Comments:

- What is horticultural soil and when should it be used? Answer: It's a specialized type of soil with more air space, usually reserved for terrariums.
- How can I lower the pH in my soil? Answer: First do a soil test to see if it's a problem. If so, use elemental sulfur to lower pH.

--Should I use rooting hormone when propagating my plants? Answer: Rooting hormone is generally advisable.

--How far back should I cut back my prayer plant if it's droopy? Answer: Cut it back to soil level or throw it away.

--Are tea and coffee grounds useful when growing houseplants? Answer: They're more useful to improve soil structure outdoors. Indoors, stick with potting mix for most plants.

--When do I transplant into a larger container? Answer: The best time is when the plant begins to actively grow again, around April or May. Be sure to transplant into a container no larger than 2 inches bigger than the current container.

--How do I get my amaryllis to bloom again? Answer: Cut the old, faded flowers and their stems back to soil level, but don't cut the leaves. Place the plant in bright light, and fertilize and water it until it's warm enough to put the plant outside. Remember to acclimate it gradually to outdoor light and eventually to 6 hours of sun per day. Fertilize it monthly and give it access to rain/water. In August, cut all the leaves off, don't water it, and put it in a completely dark room or closet. Bring it back out 8-10 weeks before you'd like it to bloom. Water, fertilize, and place in medium to bright light.

--What's the difference between pothos and philodendron? Answer: Pothos has more pronounced veining, thicker leaves, and an indented midrib. Pothos leaves can be more asymmetrical than philodendron leaves. New leaves on a philodendron extend from a cataphyll, a waxy sheath that dries up and falls off. Aerial roots on a pothos look like short stubs. Aerial roots on a philodendron look like tiny fingers. See further explanation and photos on <https://www.stamenandstemblog.com/blog/pothos-vs-philodendron>

--How do you care for a nerve plant (*Fittonia albivenis*)? Answer: It needs high, indirect sunlight and very high humidity, so daily misting or a terrarium may be best. Soil needs to be constantly moist, but not water-logged. Fertilize weekly with a balanced, liquid fertilizer. Watch for aphids, fungus gnats, and mealybugs. Treat quickly. (According to the EPA, Neem oil is safe to use indoors as either a spray or soil drench, but should not be sprayed on herbs.)

--If my plant has lost most of its lower leaves, can I repot the entire plant more deeply? Answer: No. But you can try cutting the plant back to soil level, depending on the type of plant, and see if new growth occurs. If the roots are still alive, this may work. You could also try air layering.

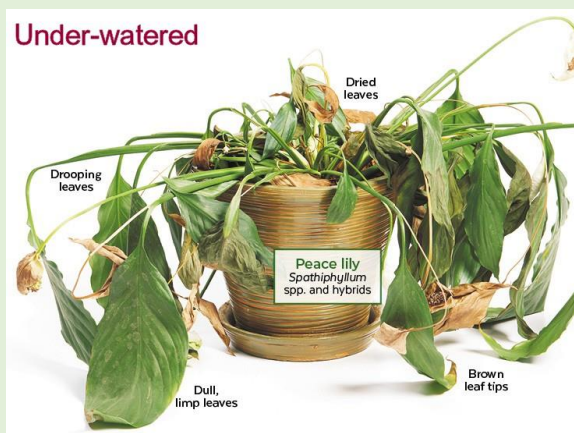
--Sprinkle cinnamon on soil or use yellow sticky traps to control adult fungus gnats. To control fungus gnat larvae, mix hydrogen peroxide and water (1:4) or diluted Neem oil, and drench the soil. The larvae are the ones doing the damage, but the adults are responsible for the eggs that hatch into larvae.



--When watering houseplants, use Dechlor, a water conditioner for aquariums and ponds (to remove heavy metals and chlorine) and room temperature (or slightly warm) water -or- let water stand overnight to dissipate chlorine. Dechlor is available at pet stores, Walmart, and, of course, Amazon.

--In 1989, NASA research concluded that houseplants can clean indoor air. Current research debunked that theory. Unless walls and ceilings are covered with houseplants, their ability to filter harmful particles is micro-minimal. So choose plants that are pleasing to you and adaptable to your surroundings. Then purchase an air purifier if air quality is a concern.

I think it would be interesting if MGVs would send photos of their houseplants along with ID to Carol for inclusion in the next newsletter. Let's see the variety of plants—both healthy and not so much—grown by our members. 🌿





By Carol Strayer

2023 Hosta College
March 17 & 18, 2023
Upper Valley Career Center
Piqua, Ohio

Registration Open for All

February 11, 6 am! So set up your new account today. Hosta club members started registering for classes on February 4th, but none are filled as of today, 2/10. Set up account today, get up early on Saturday and pick your classes.

****** Everyone will need new login information for 2023. Follow the Club Member Registration Button**

They will be re-starting an in-person event this year after two years of Covid free online classes. Cost is a general registration of \$58 plus fees if a particular class has one. You may have to join a local hosta society too; Dayton one is called the Miami Valley Hosta Society (they will have a club fee and are separately registered). I just checked today, 2/10, and you do not have to belong to a hosta society so you can register as a non-member. You will get a free hosta plant and will be entered in door prize drawings at the event.

Event includes a good hot lunch on Saturday and snacks on Friday evening and Saturday. Banquet held at the end of event has an extra fee. Most do not attend the final banquet, but may appeal to those attending from any of the 6 states in the Great Lakes Region. This event is in our backyard and is not advertised at all. You get to attend 5 different classes on general gardening topics (see class list on website). Be early in registering for classes as they have a size limit and some may fill up fast. Also, do the preregistration and get your account all set up before class registration begins.

Check website out and see if something appeals to you. Registration is coming up fast, actually begins on Saturday, 2/11, starting at either 6 am even though website says 8am. You will be able to register for classes later but many may be closed out. I've attended many times in the past and believe it is a quality event and worth the cost. Bonus, you can use the class times/topics for Master Gardener continuing education credit. I'm always amazed at how so many people (my estimation at 100 to 150 people) with many from so far away and who come to attend this event held in Piqua at the UVCC and who also stay at local hotels and I just drive 10 miles to get there.

2023 Schedule

Friday, March 17, 2023

6:00 – 9:00 PM Admissions (get lanyard name badge & free hosta the night before instead of Saturday morning)
6:00 – 9:00 PM Vending—Vending is open to the public on Friday Night (plants, trees and some hard scape items for sale)
6:00 – 9:30 PM Park-a-Plant (place to leave purchases while attending classes if you don't want to walk out to car)
6:00 – 8:00 PM Hosta College Bookstore
6:00 – 9:00 PM Hospitality (means snacks and drinks)
7:00 – 9:00 PM Auction of Rare and Unusual Hostas – Auction is open to the public

Saturday, March 18, 2023

You may not attend a class that is not on your schedule! You will be given a lanyard name badge with classes listed on the back.

7:30 – 8:30 AM Admissions (sign in get your free hosta and pick up coffee and snack included in registration fee)
7:30 – 8:30 AM The Bookstore & Vending Open
7:30 – 5:00 PM Park-a-Plant Open
8:40 – 9:40 AM Session 1
9:55 -10:55 AM Session 2
11:00 – 1:15 PM The Bookstore & Vending Open
11:10 -12:10 PM Session 3 or Lunch (As assigned) Park-a-Plant Open
12:25 – 1:25 PM Session 4 or Lunch (As assigned) Park-a-Plant Open
1:40 – 2:40 PM Session 5
The Bookstore closes at 3:00
2:55 – 3:55 PM Session 6
4:00 – 5:00 PM Vending Open
5:00 PM Park-A-Plant closes and all items must be picked up.

6:30 – 8:00 PM Banquet

Link to the Hosta College website: [Great Lakes Region Hosta College](#)