

Shelby County Master Gardener

OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION



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President's comments

By Dave Slagle

Mother Nature is reminding us that fall has arrived.

Most gardeners have their plots cleaned up and ready for winter, although a few are still tending late-season vegetables. Jim kindly shared some leftover cabbage plants with me, and they're looking great so far. We haven't had a killing frost yet, so as always, we'll take whatever Mother Nature gives us.

We'd like to extend a big thank-you to all our teammates for a job well done throughout the year. Our office staff has been wonderful—always ready to help whenever needed.

Special thanks go to our Coordinator, Doug, for keeping everything organized and making sure we're all informed. Doug and our ANR Educator, Rylee Kay, work very well together and keep things running smoothly.

We're also fortunate to have a strong group of officers lined up for next year. Please continue to share your ideas and suggestions as we move forward into the New Year.

Finally, we're grateful that our talented newsletter editor has agreed to continue in her role next year—so keep those articles and ideas coming!

Thanks again to everyone for your hard work and dedication this past year. 🌱

COORDINATOR COMMENTS

By Doug Benson

Finally, my last comments for 2025! This is my second attempt to start this article. The first draft was a narrative about all the aches and pains I've had this past year, but I don't think you want to read that. Suffice it to say, it's been a challenging year, but one saving grace is that I still have the Master Gardener program to keep me busy. It gives me something to do; I just can't do as much or do it as fast as I would like. Thank you for your patience and help. But enough about me; let's move on to the Master Gardener program.

For those of you who attended the banquet, much of this will be familiar. We've had a very successful year. Our series of library talks was well attended. Thanks to the committee and all the presenters. I plan to nominate the series for a state award next spring. We also had a successful program for our own and other Master Gardeners. Thanks to Rylee Kay and the committee who put together the cut-flower workshop. We overcame a few challenges, and in the end those who attended seemed quite pleased with the program; and Marily did an especially good job with her presentation. Several members made individual presentations to various outside groups; and of course, we can't forget all the activities with kids. There was Conservation Day Camp, "Hoof-It" at the Mercer County Fair, Forestry Field Day, and I believe some of our members helped Amanda Hurley with some of her Soil and Water Conservation programs.

We provided other services to the public as well. We served approximately 50 clients through the hotline. The subjects of most interest were insects, weeds, and trees. We made at least fifteen field visits to identify problems that couldn't easily be brought in. We also provided information through our displays at the county fairs and at Forestry Field Day. There's a great deal of interest in the spotted lanternfly and now the box tree moth. I've also tried to provide information about two dangerous weeds — wild parsnip and poison hemlock. Both are growing out of control in our area, and many people are not aware of the dangers that those two plants pose. I encourage you to keep up to date on these problems and be ready to share your knowledge with your friends and neighbors and others who may not be aware of what they are.

MG Officers & Leadership for 2026

President	Nancy Russell
Vice President	Karen Seger
Secretary	Becky Francis
Treasurer	Missy Francis
Volunteer Coordinator	Doug Benson
Extension ANR Educator	Rylee Kay Puthoff

(Coordinator comments continued from page 1)

Now in its 25th year, our Memorial Garden continues to evolve and draws many positive comments from the public and the people who work on the other side of the building. Thank you, Ann, for leading the efforts to improve the garden, and thanks to Teresa and her husband for turning the ugly stump into the gnome home. Maintenance of the garden has always been an issue, but our decision to have individuals take responsibility for an entire week seems to have really helped. Thank you to those of you who accepted that responsibility. Thanks as well to Cheryl for her work in maintaining the small flowerbed at the fairgrounds. We need to make a greater effort to help Cheryl with this work.

FLASH! We had the fall clean up this afternoon. To provide winter shelter and food for some insects and protection for some plants roots, we did not cut back all the plants or rake the leaves. That will mean a major workday in late February or early March.

Much of our success this past year can be attributed to the good leadership that we had. Thanks to Dave for serving two years as president. He had previously been president in 2014-2015. When Dave was absent for travel or medical reasons, Janet, our vice president, stepped in to ably conduct our meetings and even wrote some of the president's newsletter articles. Russ has done an outstanding job of recording the minutes clearly and succinctly, and Missy has done an admirable job of navigating the sometimes-challenging OSU financial policies. It should be noted that Janet, Russ, and Missy all volunteered for their positions. And while not an elected position, the newsletter editor plays an extremely important role. Thank you, Carol, for another outstanding year.

Looking ahead, I expect that we'll get the same high-quality leadership for the next two years. For the first time that I can remember, we actually had a volunteer to be president. Thank you, Nancy! I'm sure she will be ably supported by Karen as vice president and Becky as secretary. Our one returning officer will be Missy, our treasurer, who will continue to clarify the changing role of that position.

Their success and the success of Shelby County Master Gardeners actually depend on what we, the members, do to help meet the expectations of the MGV program.

Looking ahead to next year, I have several things that I hope we can do. We need to grow our group, and the only way to do that is to have a new training class. Be on the lookout for potential members, especially those that might be able to provide some youthful strength and fresh ideas. The cut-flower workshop was a success; let's build on it by having another workshop targeting

Master Gardeners. Be thinking about possible topics that would be of interest to you as well as to others. And, of course, we need to continue our library seminars. We know that socialization is one of the beneficial aspects of being in the Master Gardener program. Let's find a way to combine socialization with learning by taking one or more field trips. Be on the lookout for possible destinations. Even though they extended the meetings, the flash talks were a welcome addition. I hope that we can continue to have those flash talks, so be thinking about a possible topic that you could present. Finally, whether we like it or not, we're all getting older and gardening becomes more physically challenging. I would also like us to explore the possibility of working with some youth groups such as Scouts, FFA, 4-H clubs, or church youth groups for example. We could help them learn about horticulture or meet some volunteer requirement they have, and they can help us with some labor. Do you have an "in" with such a group through a grandchild, a neighbor, or someone in your church?

Thanks for a great 2025! Have an enjoyable holiday season and winter and get ready for an even better 2026! 🍀



Photo Provided by Doug Benson: Dave Slagle and Doug Benson presenting the Outstanding Shelby Co. Master Gardener 2025 plaque to Janet Nelson.



Northern Leopard Frog

By Jill Dickman

Janet's article in the October Newsletter prompted me to write this article about the Northern Leopard Frog.



A pair of these native frogs were apparently living in my compost during the hot and dry summer we experienced this year. I watered the compost regularly, and they apparently

found the moisture to their liking. I 'found' the frogs when they leaped trying to avoid my garden fork as I turned the compost one day. I was careful not to turn my compost as aggressively after finding them.

According to the iNaturalist and US Department of Natural Resources websites, the Northern Leopard Frog (*Lithobates pipiens*) is native to the United States and parts of Canada. Its range is now fragmented and declining in many areas to our west, and a significant population decline was noted in the early 1970's with continuing habitat loss, pollution, and the introduction of invasive species. It is the state amphibian of both Minnesota and Vermont. (On a side note, the state amphibian of Ohio is the Spotted Salamander).

The Northern Leopard Frog is a common, medium-sized (2 to 3.5 inches) amphibian with green or brown skin with dark, rounded spots with light borders and a cream-colored underbelly. The frog is found in wetlands and grasslands across North America and is known for its loud, broken snore-like sound, which is sometimes described as 'like dragging a finger over a balloon'. It is also known for its role as an indicator species for wetland health. They often forage away from water in fields and prairies and mostly feed on insects and other invertebrates.

Northern Leopard Frogs breed in water, with females laying thousands of black eggs attached to aquatic plants. Tadpoles hatch in about 7 days and develop into frogs over several months. Adults reach sexual maturity at 2 or 3 years (with a lifespan of 5 to 8 years) and spend their time in both water and on land. 🐸

Unusual Fall Phenomenon: A Few Extra Blooms

By Rylee Kay Puthoff
Extension ANR Educator

Maybe you have noticed something amiss this fall, something that is out of place among the pumpkins, chrysanthemums, and falling leaves. On my way to work a few weeks ago, I noticed a lovely little crabapple tree that had begun to bloom! The closer you look; a few odd varieties of plants have begun to develop flowers. Many homeowners and gardeners are concerned about this sudden flush of springtime flowers, but fear not! There is an explanation, and frustratingly, most of this is out of our control. As many of you remember, we had a hot, dry summer. Some areas received rain, but most of the area was and is still lacking precipitation.

This lack of rain causes stress in the plants. The plants know that they are not getting the water and nutrients they need, so when the temperature starts to drop, the plants confuse the weather with springtime and start the reproductive process. All plants aim to reproduce and pass on their genetic material. When the plant believes its life is in danger, it may flush a large number of flowers in the fall as a way of producing seeds. This is not only caused by drought, but also by excessive pruning, disease, and pests.

While most of the blooms on my local apple tree were damaged by the recent frost, there is still hope for spring. Plants that accidentally bloom in the fall may still produce flowers for the spring, but the overall numbers will be less than in years past. The plant should be able to survive the winter, as long as there are enough nutrients stored in the roots, and damage by pests and disease is minimal.

While it may be concerning to see spring blooms during autumn, just know that the plant is a little stressed and confused about what is going on. There are some plants that double bloom in the fall, but these are varieties bred with this genetic trait. This is an intentional breeding choice and is advertised when the plants are sold. All this being said, don't stress this season if you see a few extra blooms in your garden! 🍏

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WEEDS! WEEDS!

By Karen Seger

Fall in the garden can feel calmer than the hustle and bustle of spring. Nevertheless, there is still plenty to do to pull the weeds before the first frost and set yourself up for the next growing season. Weeding is one of the most important tasks. Do we really need to put your garden to bed before first frost? Two garden experts shared their perspective along with other must-do garden tasks to take care of before winter.



Removing any remaining weeds from your garden beds in the fall is an important task that you will not want to skip says Kelly Funk, president of the online nursery Jackson Perkins. "Many weeds produce seeds that overwinter in the soil. If left unchecked, those seeds will be ready to sprout once spring arrives, creating even more work come spring."



"It is absolutely helpful to pull as many weeds as possible before the end of the season," says Amanda Staples, owner and farmer at Germantown Kitchen Garden an urban farm in Philadelphia. "Pull them early, pull them often, pull them late, pull them after the frost, pull them whenever you can!"

The sooner you can remove weeds, the better, regardless of the time of year. The longer weedy plants stay in your garden, the more seeds they will drop into your soil. By removing weeds and tidying your garden, you're not only protecting your plants but also giving yourself a fresh, healthy canvas to work with when the weather warms up. Weeds need to be removed before adding mulch or compost.

Fall may be calmer, but a little effort now means a lot less work — and fewer weeds — next spring. 🌱

THE BIG NUT

By Jill Dickman

Last spring, I found a large old hickory nut (I cracked it open and it had turned to dust) in the woods and was amazed at its size — much larger than any other hickory nut I had ever found. My husband and I returned to that tree this fall, and so far, we have collected approximately a 5-gallon bucket full of these nuts, most still in their hulls. We walked the rest of the woods, but this was the only hickory tree that produced these large nuts. We will be returning to this tree again this year and in future years to gather these nuts!

I identified the specific species of this tree as a *Shellbark Hickory* (one of six different types of hickory trees). The Shellbark is the only hickory that produces large nuts and is also known as the King Nut Hickory. The Shellbark Hickory is native to the Midwestern United States and is known for its large 'sweet' nuts and shaggy bark. Hickories are members of the Walnut family and are common in the Midwest.



The above photo includes (left to right): shellbark hickory nut still in the husk, shellbark hickory, quarter (for size), and a regular hickory nut.

Sources: Purdue Extension and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. 🌱

Among Giants: Discovering the Banana Slug in Redwood National Park

By Missy Francis

A Journey Through the Northwest

Rick and I recently took a trip to the northwest United States. One of our stops was at the Redwood National Park, which is home to the world's tallest trees — some reaching over 370 feet tall and living for more than 2,000 years. The park includes 37 miles of the Pacific coastline.

The Life-Giving Fog

The redwoods depend on fog for life-giving water. The fog condenses on the needles and is either absorbed or dropped to the forest floor. Fog provides the redwoods with almost 40 percent of their annual moisture intake. Redwoods are so immense that they have their own ecosystems living on their branches. Foliage shed by the trees settles on the branches and decomposes into soil that becomes home to worms, spiders, amphibians, beetles, and crickets.

Enter the Banana Slug

When speaking of the "redwood ecosystems," one cannot fail to mention the beloved banana slug, which was crowned California's state slug and plays a vital role in the redwood ecosystems.

The banana slug turns organic matter into nutrient-dense fertilizer, protects redwood saplings by chomping through competing plants, and disperses seeds on its slow journeys across the forest floor.

Learning About a Forest Hero

I didn't know about the banana slug prior to arriving at the Redwood National Park, and learned of its importance from the informational film at the visitor center. I was intrigued by this creature and decided that I would be on the lookout for one of these fascinating workers within the park.

Slow and Steady

A banana slug cannot move backward; and it actually, moves from the tail end and in ripples toward the head, propelling itself forward on its single foot. At the same time, its pedal gland produces slime it "surfs" on in order to move along. They are so slow, that a tortoise would seem speedy in comparison.

Nature's Composing Machine

Banana slugs are composting machines. They will chew on pretty much anything they find on the forest floor — from leaves and mushroom spores to animal droppings and carcasses. They then turn this waste into nutrient-rich fertilizer that helps the forest thrive. Despite their wide-ranging palate, they never feast on redwoods. Instead, they act like nurturing gardeners, eating competing plants enabling redwood seedlings to reach their full potential. In return, mature redwoods help create the damp, shady microclimate the slugs need to survive.

A Quiet Encounter

I was lucky enough to find this creature and see it in action. I must say, after watching the slug for 15-20 minutes, I didn't see anything going on — but maybe it was napping, or just moving so slowly that movement can't be seen by the naked eye. Anyway, I was glad to have seen one of these slimy yet essential residents of the redwood forest. 🐌



TURMERIC FOR GOOD HEALTH

By Ann Heeley

According to the Mayo Clinic (January 2023) adding turmeric to your spice rack or pillbox can improve your health and alleviate pain. Turmeric is a relative of ginger and has been used in food coloring (like mustard), in Asian cooking, in fabric dyes, and in cosmetics. It exudes a bright yellow color and a slightly lemony flavor.



Turmeric is available in several different forms: powdered, capsules, extracts, tablets, and teas. It can also be mixed with water to make a paste. However, its main component, and the one most responsible for its benefits, is curcumin. Curcumin is what gives turmeric its bright, yellow color and its ability to decrease inflammation, counteract pain, and reduce asthmatic symptoms. Other studies show that it may be used to lower cholesterol, treat depression, and reduce joint pain from arthritis.

Results from studies at the Cleveland Clinic (2018) also showed promising results using turmeric to improve memory in adults, and another study in 2019 showed that turmeric reduced cancerous cell growth and the spread of cancer cells in the digestive system.

“There are various studies looking at the benefits of turmeric, including several that showed turmeric to be just as effective as ibuprofen for reducing inflammation, swelling and pain. However, more research is necessary to confirm these effects.”

Eight grams or 1.5 teaspoons of powdered turmeric is considered a safe daily dose. Other studies are underway to find out more about how this amazing plant can help improve our overall health. The only caveat so far is for those on blood thinners or anti-clotting medication. Turmeric can negatively interact with those medications.

If the idea of trying turmeric appeals to you, discuss it with your health care provider first. Since it's a supplement and not a regulated drug, you'll want to be fully informed. 🌱

WHICH PLANTS ATTRACT THE MOST POLLINATORS?

By Ann Heeley

I know it's the end of the planting season, but before you



know it, those garden catalogues will be on their way to a mailbox near you. And if you're the type to like to plan ahead, a study from the University of Copenhagen offered a list of plants that

attract the greatest number of pollinators.

Several of them should not be planted in our Zone 6 gardens. They seem to be on the wild/invasive side. A few are worthwhile additions. The researchers in this study evaluated more than 400 native and non-native plants for their ability to attract bees and hover flies. Here is their top-10 list (my commentary next to each):

- Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) – the newer varieties are shorter, more colorful, and less weedy
- Corn chamomile (*Anthemis arvensis*) – weedy and invasive perennial
- Cornflower (*Centaurea cyanus*) – another name for Bachelor Buttons
- Purple viper's bugloss (*Echium plantagineum*) – invasive and weedy perennial
- Corn marigold (*Glebionis segetum*) – Zones 6-9, but may be invasive
- Common poppy (*Papaver rhoeas*) – an annual that may reseed, but easy to pluck out
- Field mustard (*Sinapis arvensis*) – noxious weed; poisonous to livestock
- Scentless chamomile (*Tripleurospermum inodorum*) – noxious weed
- Garden cosmos (*Cosmos bipinnatus*) – colorful and long lasting annual; reseeds freely, but easy to pluck out
- Moroccan toadflax (*Linaria maroccana*) – an annual that may reseed, but easy to pluck out
- Common phacelia (*Phacelia tanacetifolia*) – another name for tansy; invasive and aggressive, but suppresses weeds 🌱



OSU Extension state support fees

By Doug Benson

Each year the State Master Gardener office collects a fee from each active volunteer to support activities of the organization. In most counties, the fee is paid directly by the individual members, but in Shelby County, we have been fortunate over the years to have our office cover that expense for us. If you remember, a couple of years ago when Matt took over as the ANR educator, there were insufficient funds in his account to cover the \$10 support fee. Thus, it became necessary for us to cover our own fee, so we voted to raise our dues from \$10 to \$20 with the additional \$10 dedicated to the support fee. The following year Matt was able to cover the cost of the fees, but the membership voted to just keep the dues at \$20.

This past year the fee was raised to \$15, and Rylee Kay was able to cover that increase. I was negligent in not checking with her before our last meeting to see if she could continue to cover the fee. When I brought up the topic last week, she didn't think her budget could cover the whole amount. After some discussion, we agreed that the office will pay \$10, and we will pay \$5. I think this is a reasonable accommodation when you consider that most MGVs around the state pay the entire \$15. Based on this past year's deadline, we should be able to discuss how we deal with our share at the February meeting.

You might be wondering what our state office does with the fees that are collected. Much of it comes back to local groups for programming such as the \$500 grant we received for our cut-flower workshop. We have received print reference materials and tools like our USB microscope. The "Grow Ohio" banner hanging the office and the large 10-foot black table cover we used at the fair came from the fees. The support fees cover the cost of the awards for outstanding projects and volunteers presented at the state conference. Much of the cost to digitize the MGV training manual was covered by the fees, as are materials and supplies for training classes. As you can see, the fees really do support the MGV program. 🍂

2025 BY-THE-NUMBERS
(as of November 4)

Membership
Active – 30
Inactive – 6
Emeritus – 2

Service
Volunteer hours – 1759
Value – \$57,027
Public programs – 12
Youth activities – 8

Continuing Education
474 hours

Grow Ohio Donations
3125 pounds



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