

# Shelby County Master Gardener

OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION



Volume 31, Issue 1—February 2026



## President's comments

By Nancy Russell

Thinking about what to write in my first President's Letter actually occurred to me on the day of the Winter Solstice, December 21. Winter. I will write about winter. That Winter Solstice day was beautiful with its clear blue skies, chilly not cold temperatures, with no wind. As I watched the sun set, not leaving my spot at the kitchen window until the last spot of red had gone, I tried to think of ways that I look forward to about winter. What came to mind was a recent article I had read about celebrating winter. "Winter" it said, "was a time for comfort, for good food and warmth. A sacred time of reflection, release, restoration, and renewal."

I always felt a renewed sense of optimism when it came to this most unwelcome of all the seasons. Thinking back to my teaching years, every December my classroom door was adorned with a poem, "December," that contained one line that always stood out, "We are closer to spring now than we were back in September." That one line always had me thinking about a new calendar, longer days, and warmer temperatures. That one line invited me to dream, plan ahead, and look forward to all that time outdoors just waiting beyond winter's end.

When the first seed catalog arrived just days before Christmas, 2025, I wasn't quite ready to browse its many pages of tried and true favorites as well as many I have never tried to grow. Instead, I brought up my favorite website on my iPad and began to look at the many offerings ready to go in 2026. The website beckoned me to order now to "get the best selection" as well as take advantage of the "30% off using code WINTER30." The empty cart was soon filling up with my beloved broccoli seeds, lettuce, strawberry blonde marigolds, and others too numerous to name. I didn't order right away, but every time I checked back, the cart was still full. So I ordered, avoiding the threat of low stock and no 30% off. The small brown package arrived New Year's Eve with a coupon for more savings on a future order.

So as we get ready for a new year as Master Gardeners, I wish for each of you the time you did not spend in the soil, this past winter, to have had time for "comfort, good food, warmth. A sacred time of reflection, release, restoration, and renewal." Welcome back, everyone!! 🌱

## Coordinator comments

By Doug Benson

By now I suspect that all, or just about all, of us are ready for the snow to go away and gardening season to begin. Of course, the exception to this will be our fellow Master Gardeners who are enjoying the warmth of the south. Please bring spring with you when you come back home. Despite the weather, I hope everyone has had a refreshing and relaxing winter and is ready to get back to gardening.

Some quick notes about 2025: The \$500 grant from the state to support our cut-flower program finally was deposited at the end of December. In the Grow Ohio Food Challenge, our final total donations were 3840 pounds, which put us in 5th place across the state; the only counties donating more were Franklin, Hamilton, Clark, and Union. Our total hours for the year included 573 continuing education hours and 1989.6 volunteer hours. That is double the minimum requirement of continuing education hours per person and more than triple the required minimum of volunteer hours - great work everyone! Can we do better in 2026?

We're already off to a great start for 2026. The committee to plan the library lecture series has met and has a tentative schedule programs set. You'll get more details in another article in the newsletter. Thanks to the committee, chaired by Ann Heeley, for coming up with a good plan. Several of you got a head start on your continuing education hours by attending Rylee Kay's program called "Tick Talk" at the library last month. Remember that a number of Lunch and Learn webinars will be available again, you can find the listing on the state Master Gardener home page (<https://mastergardener.osu.edu/>). We are also beginning to receive numerous announcements about continuing education programs around the state, and I will be forwarding those that as they arrive. (Continued to pg. 2.)

### 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)**

Continuing to look ahead to 2026, there are several things that we really need to do. We need to increase our membership. Rylee Kay and I have talked about getting the training class going again this year, but as usual, the challenge is getting volunteers who have the time and the interest to take the training. We've talked about doing a hybrid program combining both in-class and online training as we did the last time, but having more structure and more in-person training. This was one of the recommendations that we received from those of you who took part last time. All of you told us that it would have been better had we had more in-person sessions where we could meet and talk with each other face to face. We're looking at beginning the training sometime this spring, and we need your help in finding potential trainees who would be interested in becoming Master Gardener Volunteers. If you know someone that might be interested, please contact him or her and then let us know who they are.

Our executive committee met this afternoon to preview the coming year. We have several activities and plans to discuss at the meeting next week. Rylee Kay will be reviewing the procedure for making purchases for the organization. We need to decide about the 4th of July float for the 250th commemoration. The state Master Gardener office is providing each county organization with \$250 to purchase and plant an oak tree to celebrate the 250th commemoration. We will talk about a potential group field trip later this spring. We will also review plans for the March meeting, which is going to be held at the Celina Extension office. In addition, we will no doubt take up some of the usual topics such as garden maintenance, hotline scheduling, and meeting locations and hosting.

Over the weekend, I will be sending out an agenda and a copy of the September minutes for your review. This will be the first meeting for most of our new officers, so please come prepared to offer your support to help Nancy, Karen, and Becky get off to a good start. I will also be sending out a link for those of you who want to join the meeting by Zoom.

**Please note: Due to a conflict in scheduling, we will have to meet in the backroom at the Extension office. Parking may also be at a premium so you may want to consider carpooling if possible. Some of us may have to park at the fairgrounds and use the back door if it's not too muddy. Check for an e-mail update Wednesday morning about that.** 🍀



*I thought my grill could serve as a supplementary freezer. It seemed like a good idea.  
10:20 AM, Sunday, January 25.*



## Is There Any Good To All Of This Snow?

By Rylee Kay Puthoff, ANR Educator

Hello everyone! For those of you braving the Ohio winter this year, you may have noticed our higher-than-normal snowfall this year. Some may enjoy this weather (I know that I have!), but many struggle with the cold air and staying inside. I always try to find the good in these types of scenarios, so I am answering the question: Is there any good to all of this snow?

The short answer is yes! But I will not stop there. I have a few reasons why this much snow is a good thing. First, many parts of northwestern Ohio are still in a drought. The map I included is from February 3<sup>rd</sup>, and all of Shelby, Auglaize, and Mercer counties are either abnormally dry or moderate to extreme drought. Snowfall-to-rain ratios typically sit around 10 inches of snow to every one inch of rain. I looked up some numbers for the city of Sidney, and the yearly average to date is 3.5 inches. Currently, we have only 1.5 inches so far. So, as much as a nuisance the snow is, we need the melting water it will provide.

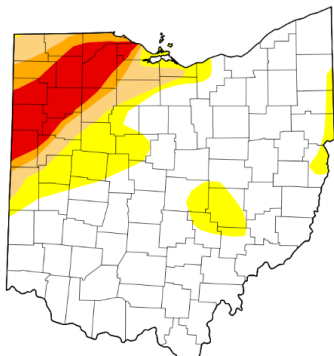


Photo Credit courtesy of the US Drought Monitor

The other benefit to all of this snow is that it acts as an insulator to the ground during the very cold temperatures. When the snow reaches several inches deep, it protects the ground from temperatures below zero. In our area, the ground was already frozen before the heavy snowfall several weeks ago. I doubt that the ground has thawed under the snow, but it could lead to the ground staying frozen while the snow melts. The longer freeze is beneficial for killing insect larvae, as well as seeds that require vernalization.

The only thing for sure is that when all of this snow melts, the whole area will be a muddy mess. 🌱

Rylee Kay Puthoff

Extension Educator, Agriculture & Natural Resources

Ohio State University Extension - Shelby County

810 Fair Rd., Sidney, OH 45365 (937) 419-7126 Office

[puthoff.84@osu.edu](mailto:puthoff.84@osu.edu) <https://shelby.osu.edu/> [Join the Newsletter](#)

## Monarch Butterfly Migration

By Karen Seger

For the first time ever, scientists and citizens are charting the precise flight paths of Monarch Butterflies tagged



with feather-light sensors. This breakthrough overcomes a longstanding challenge, as the Butterflies weigh only about 0.50 grams, making previous trackers too heavy.

The early results are rewriting the map of Monarch migration:

- One butterfly, tagged in Virginia (JMU004), was successfully detected 47 days later in the overwintering colony in Mexico.
- Another Monarch (AN003) flew along the East Coast, traveling from Pennsylvania all the way down to the Florida Keys.

The new initiative, a citizen science effort dubbed "Project Monarch" by the Cape May Point Arts and Science Center, Attached trackers to over 400 monarchs this past fall. The Butterflies are tracked using a simple cellphone app that anyone can download, enabling all of us to participate in this groundbreaking research.

While this exciting new technology helps us to follow the monarchs, their survival still depends on habitats they find along the way. Monarch Butterflies need reliable sources of fuel and a place to lay the next generation of eggs. You can help by:

- Planting Native Milkweed: The only host plant for Monarch caterpillars, essential for their life cycle.
- Planting Native Nectar Sources: Late-blooming energy for the final leg of their journey south.

By restoring habitat in your own yard, you are creating a vital pit stop on the Monarch superhighway.

You can join the citizen science effort! Download the Project Monarch tracking app (available on Apple and Android devices) to view the latest migration data and register to become a volunteer tracker. Then plant food sources and help the Monarch population reach new heights in 2026.

The eastern migratory population is estimated to have declined by approximately 80%. The western population has declined by more than 95% since the 1980's, putting the western populations at greater than 99% chance of extinction by 2080. This information is from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 🌱

## Save Your Leaves in the Fall--They Will Be Black Gold

By Jim McCracken

I look forward to the fall every year, that's when I gather masses of fallen leaves for next year's garden. A mower at my son's house has chopped the majority of the bagged leaves. He lives in a woods so the quantity of leaves is usually staggering. The leaves I gather from trees from my property are partially chopped as I use a wind rowing technique with my mower. I attempt to collect as many leaves as possible every year. The leaf drop this past fall was a couple of weeks later than normal. My son is putting of an addition to the house along with an in-ground pool so his backyard was tore up and unable to collect leaves as normal in that portion of the yard. Add a few untimely rain showers and the bottom line I collected fewer bags of leaves this past autumn.

I use the largest (55 gallon), construction bags (heavy duty) that I can buy, This type of bag allows me to pack more leaves per bag and less likely to break down in the winter/spring sunlight. My goal in gardening is to mulch as much as possible. After planting, I always allow the soil to warm up before any type of mulch is applied. Literally every square inch of my garden is mulched except for the following vegetables: green beans (beans become moldy), sweet potatoes (voles hid in mulch and eat tubers more often).

By mulching during the growing season, soil temperatures are reduced, weeds are slower to develop, and the need to irrigate plants is greatly reduced. Besides leaves, I also use sheets of cardboard in the larger areas such as red raspberries, tomato, peppers, basil, and potatoes. I usually leave most of the garden covered over winter with leaf residue or a thin layer of manure. When the mulch is tilled in the spring, that is when the magic happens, leaves turn into "Black Gold." This fall save your leaves for better soil, less work, and a larger harvest! 🌱



## Spam emails—use caution

By Carol Strayer

There could be some emails that you could receive representing as coming from me or other fellow Master Gardeners, but are from a spammer. The "from name" may be my name or another Master Gardener. If you put your mouse over the "from name" and click on it, you will see who the true emailer's address is. A lot of time the subject may be about photos to see. Don't click on the link.

My email is [carolstrayer@yahoo.com](mailto:carolstrayer@yahoo.com), if you see something else, block that email address and it will go in the spam folder. That should stop the nefarious emailer from going into your inbox. I still receive emails like this in the name of other Master Gardeners but because I have block that bad address, they go directly to the spam folder.

So be cautious in opening email from what appears to be familiar. If it doesn't seem right, question it. Put your mouse over the "from person" and click on it to see true emailer's address.

There is one thing that we can all do. Doug has suggested it before and uses most of the time. And that is to put the subject of the email as "SCMGV—and put your subject title next." We all will recognize it as being authentic to our group. Spammers, I think wouldn't be able to duplicate our code.

If others have some other ideas, please share at the next membership meeting. 🌱

# Art Nouveau and The Garden

By Ann Heeley

Gardening in Ohio in the winter leaves a lot to be desired. Fortunately, when I combine a love of plants with a love of art, a visit to the Dayton Art Institute (DAI) gives me an excuse to ignore daily chores, depressing news on TV, and anything else I can procrastinate. And when a traveling Art Nouveau exhibit, *The Triumph of Nature*, was featured during the holidays, I couldn't think of a better way to spend the day with phone/camera in hand.

Art Nouveau is a period between 1890 and World War I in which artists, furniture makers, architects, glass makers, and others crafters were inspired by nature in their creations. Organic, flowing lines of flowers, plants, insects, and birds dominated much of what was produced during this era. The Art Nouveau movement attempted to blend "high art" (paintings) with decorative art (furniture and jewelry), and functional items (architecture, silverware, vases, for example). This emphasis on nature was manifested not only in the U.S. and Europe, but all over the world.

Alfonse Mucha was a Czech painter who used both canvas and cement plaques to create fashionable women with flowing hair surrounded by flowers and vines. (Photos 1 and 2)

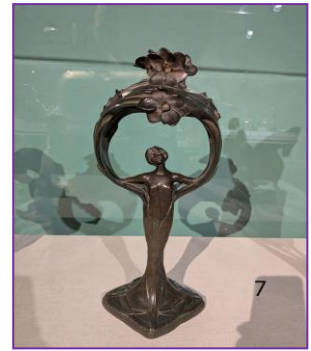
Jean Daum and Sons owned a glass factory in Nancy, France. They created a variety of acid-etched and enameled vases, bowls, and other utilitarian items. Daum Nancy art glass is very collectible with simple bowls starting at \$300 and rarer pieces exceeding \$80,000. After their father died, the brothers (Daum Frères) continued to manufacture glass items until around 1920. Notice the waterlilies and herons on the vase (photo 3) and the grapes and vines on (Photo 4).

François-Théodore Legras was a master glass maker whose enameled and cameo glass items were very popular among wealthy families, museums, and art collectors...and that continues to the present day. This Legras Iris vase combines glass with an ornate 14K gold base. (Photo 5)

Czech glass maker, Ludwig Moser, began making lead-free crystal and engraved glass in 1857. His creations eventually became more and more ornate with enameled leaves, insects, and flowers, each handmade. Moser's sons continued in this tradition winning international awards and supplying their intricately designed glassware to royalty. Moser factories are still producing glass within the Czech Republic and Dubai as well as retail outlets all over the world. (Photo 6)



Alf Wallander, a Swedish metal, ceramic, and porcelain designer, was most famous for his bronze table lamps. He was particularly noted for his table lamps featuring maiden figures with vines and flowers. (Photo 7)



Italian artist, Manual Orazi, a commercial artist who lived in France, adopted a Japanese style in his paintings and lithographs to produce advertising posters. He also designed film sets and costumes for plays. (Photo 8)



Possibly the most famous name of the Art Nouveau period is Tiffany. With some financial help from his father, Charles Lewis Tiffany began selling "stationery and [fancy goods](#)" in 1837 in lower Manhattan with a business partner. By 1853, Charles bought out his partner's share and focused on jewelry. After his death in 1902, Charles' son, Louis Comfort Tiffany, an expert in the making of stained-glass items, took over the design department and expanded production to include lamps, vases, decorative items, iridescent glass, and jewelry. The DAI exhibited one of the *Pond Lily* lamps (Photo 9) that was popular at the turn of the century. But it was Claire Driscoll, a stained-glass designer at the factory, who was responsible for the famous *Dragonfly* lamps. The lamp pictured here (Photo 10) sold for \$545,000 in 2022.



Émile Gallé was a French artist and designer who worked in both glass and furniture. The nesting tables (Photo 11) feature marquetry, a process by which a thin layer of wood is carved out in shapes of various plants and inlaid with a contrasting type of wood. All this was done without the use of lasers! Parquetry, a similar technique, was done in the later Art Deco period using geometric designs.



Edgar Bense designed this "Plique-a-Jour" dragonfly brooch for Boucheron. The enameled wings are edged by rose-cut diamonds. Diamonds form the body, and the dragonfly's eyes are cabochon rubies and emeralds. (Photo 12)



(There is no Photo 13.)

(Photos 14 and 15) are examples of the furniture created by the outstanding designer, Louis Majorelle. Floral and leaf marquetry as well as floral metal overlays are hallmarks of his designs.



This remarkable “Vitrine aux Ombellifères” wood and glass display by Gallé showcases his talents in marquetry. (Translation: Glass with Giant Hogweed!) (Photo 16)



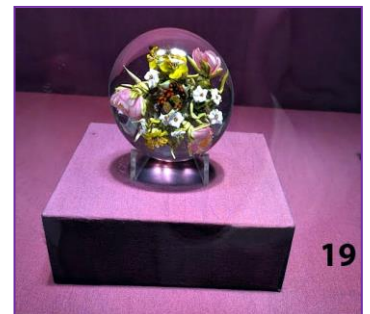
The 1898 Louis Lessieux watercolor, “Rose et Chardon”, shows a medieval lady surrounded by roses and a medieval knight with thistles. (Photo 17)



Charles Robert Ashbee designed this silver and gold peacock necklace (Photo 18) with pearls and diamonds in 1901.



Paul Stankard is still alive and still designs exquisite paperweights, all of which are in the Art Deco style. You can visit <https://www.pbs.org/video/paul-j-stankard-flower-and-flame-0ghfal/> to see how he creates the intricacy inside a glass orb. (Photo 19)



Last, but not least, is Carnival Glass (Photo 20). Mass-produced between 1890-1915 by several different manufacturers, it was originally called “Poor Man’s Tiffany” and was sold in department stores. 95% of the patterns feature flowers, trees, vines, birds, fish, or fruit. This “Peacock at the Fountain” bowl is an example of the iridized glass that was popular and affordable during the Art Nouveau period. After World War I, its popularity waned, and it was often given away as prizes at carnivals. Since it’s now officially “antique,” it has quite a following among collectors. 🍷



---

The Ohio State University Extension embraces human diversity and is committed to ensuring that all research and related educational programs are available to clientele on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, or veteran status. This statement is in accordance with United States Civil Rights Laws and the USDA. Associate Vice President for Agricultural Administration; Associate Dean, College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences; Director, Ohio State University Extension and Gist Chair in Extension Education and Leadership. TDD No. 800-589-8292 (Ohio only)  
Newsletter Editor: Carol Strayer, email: [carolstrayer@yahoo.com](mailto:carolstrayer@yahoo.com)

# **Master Gardeners of Shelby County**

## **2026 Gardening Series**

**Fourth Thursdays—March, Apr., May, June, Aug., & September (no July)**

**6:30-7:45 p.m.**

**Amos Memorial Public Library**

**230 E. North Street**

**Sidney, OH 45365**

The planning committee for our 2026 library talk series has met and come up with a schedule of six programs. One major change in scheduling is this year we will be meeting on the 4th Thursday of the month. This will help with some of the scheduling of the big meeting room at the library. Program starting time will be the same as usual 6:30 pm - 7:30 pm. The April program will be in the basement meeting room; all others will be in the 1st floor meeting room.

Here is the schedule of programs. We will be asking all of you to find places to distribute posters, hang signs, and make contacts so we can have good attendance.

- |                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| <b>March 26</b>     | <b>“Let’s Go Native” – Amanda Hurley</b><br>Growing native plants to attract pollinators                  |
| <b>April 23</b>     | <b>“Let’s Get Potted” – Conelia Dixon and Ann Heeley</b><br>Growing vegetables and flowers in containers  |
| <b>May 28</b>       | <b>“The Bug Stops Here” – Rylee Kay Puthoff</b><br>Pros and cons of chemicals used in the garden          |
| <b>June 25</b>      | <b>“Hacking’ Away in the Garden” – Judy Westerheide</b><br>Ideas for saving time and effort in the garden |
| <b>August 27</b>    | <b>“Trees, Trees, Trees” – Doug Benson</b><br>Choosing, planting, and growing the right tree              |
| <b>September 24</b> | <b>“Seedy Business” – Missy Francis</b><br>Collecting and storing seeds for next year                     |

Committee members are: Ann Heeley-chair, Conelia Dixon, Judy Westerheide, Carol Braun, Missy Francis, Teresa Freisthler, Rylee Kay Puthoff, and Doug Benson.