

over the picket fence



Spring 2026
March, April, May
The Mason County Garden Club
Quarterly Newsletter
(Since 1926-our 100th year)

www.masoncountygardenclub.org

Member: Michigan Garden Clubs, Inc
Central Region and National Garden Clubs, Inc
Club No. 140 – District 5





Thoughts From Our President:

Welcome back to Garden Club 2026. I'm so excited for the many programs we are offering this year for our 100 th Anniversary. We are planning to have an entry in the Fourth of July parade and march right along. Our dinner celebration will be in August at the Country Club. The country is celebrating 250 years and the Ludington Historical Society is celebrating 50 years. It is going to be a lot of red, white and blue all around. I am so excited that winter is ending and Springtime and flowers will soon be here. We have such a short growing season in Michigan that I am going to try a new gardening hack this year. I've been reading about it for a few years but finally want to give it a try. It is called Winter gardening and you can easily find articles on how to do it through Google.

There are many advantages to winter sowing:

- ☑ Money saving – recycled materials, saved or sale-priced seeds
- ☑ Space saving – no need to find a spot indoors
- ☑ No special set up like grow lights or heat mats.
- ☑ Early jump on starting seeds
- ☑ No seed sowing schedule – the seeds will germinate when the conditions are right for them. Nature knows!
- ☑ No need to harden off your plants before moving them to the garden
- ☑ An awesome additional gardening activity for you to enjoy

Save gallon water or milk jugs. Poke some holes in the bottom for drainage. Cut the jug above the ½ way point so the handle can act as a hinge. This will create a mini greenhouse. Use a good quality soil mix with fertilizer in it (not seed starter). Wet the soil and fill the bottom of the jug. Plant your seeds and put tape around the outside of the cut. Set the jugs out in your garden and wait for them to start growing. The top cap can go on and off depending on the weather. Write the type of seed and date planted on the outside. At the appropriate time, the plants can be transplanted outside.

I'll let you know how it goes.



March

- 2 Maureen McGowan
- 3 Judy Olson
- 10 Julie Tews
- 19 Jeanette Marossy
- 30 Jackie Lan

April

- 3 Melanie Bettinger
- 3 Carol Christofferson
- 3 Dianne Miller
- 3 Betty Orton-Cochran
- 8 Mary Ann Ferguson
- 10 Gail Burkhart
- 19 Maureen Myers
- 29 Gloria Merchant

May

- 9 Deb Gundersen
- 10 Gale Martin
- 17 Jeanne Dean



Upcoming Mason County Garden Club Events:

March:

Thursday, March 26...1:00 p.m. ,,,United Methodist Church..**Social, Potluck**..Welcome back to all our Garden Club Members and a special welcome to the newest members of the club.

April:

Thursday, April 23...1:00 p.m.United Methodist Church...Meeting and Program: **Ludington State Park**...Activities and Volunteer Opportunities: Gary Hearing and Brandon Griffith.

May:

Saturday, May 16...8:00 a.m....**Petunia Parade Planting Day**. The 400 block in front of the Cartier Mansion is our assigned Block.

Thursday, May 28...1:00 p.m. ...United Methodist Church...Meeting, Program and May Baskets...**Dividing Perennials – A Happy Garden**...Julie Tews, Master Gardener and MCGC Member.

Upcoming National and State Events and Schools:

April:

Monday, Tuesday...April 6-7...Environmental School Course 3...Kellogg Biological Station, Hickory Corners.

Friday, Saturday...April 17-18...Gardening School Course 3, Hosted by River Valley Garden Club.

Thursday, Friday...April 23, 24...Landscape Design School Course 1...Traverse City

May:

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday...May 4-6...National Garden Club Annual Convention...St. Louis, MO.

Upcoming Local Events:

March:

March 1 through March 15: AFFEW Native Plant Sale. For more information visit affew.org.

March 13 – 17: St Patrick's Day in downtown Ludington.

April:

Saturday, April 18 – 11:00 a.m.: Ludington Lake Jump.

Friday, April 24 – Saturday, April 25: Annual Spring Tree Sale Pickup. Friday: 2-6 pm—Saturday: 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. –Mason County Fairground Community Building.

Saturday, April 25 – AFFEW Earth Day..United Methodist Church

May:

Monday, May 4 – 1:00 p.m. Big Sable Lighthouse opens for the season.

Tuesday, May 5 – 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. (Tuesday thru Saturday – May thru October) White Pine Village season opens.

Friday, May 15 – S.S. Badger season opens.

Friday, May 22 – Friday, Sept. 25 : Farmer's Market – 2:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. – Legacy Plaza Pavilion.

Saturday, May 23 – Sunday, May 24 – 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.: West Shore Family Support Craft Fair – Rotary Park.

Mason County Garden Club

100

And Still Growing

When the sun set on 2025 and rose on 2026, it began a celebration of 100 years of Mason County Garden Club. A century is no easy achievement, but our local Garden Club has done exactly that, or it will have in July of 2026. From its beginning, it was always open to men and women, currently 56 members. During these years, we have contributed to multiple community garden related projects, conservation organizations, both locally and statewide, maintaining local public gardens and planting trees, sponsoring a scholarship to a local student interested in horticulture and been the recipient of many awards from the State and National garden organizations.

The members of the Mason County Garden Club would like to extend an invitation to our community to help us celebrate this year. The community is always cordially invited to join us for our interesting programs (we meet at the United Methodist Church the 4th Thursday of the month at 1:00 p.m.). We will be entering a float in the 4th of July parade, as well as sponsoring a Garden Walk. Check us out at www.masoncountygardenclub.org. Please join us as we celebrate “100 YEARS AND STILL GROWING”.

(Submitted by Gig Rose—Publicity Chairma)





Julie's Tips and Tricks:

Be Creative with your Containers

A garden in a pot is an easy way to spruce up a patio, porch or entranceway. Colorful annuals are mainstays of containers gardens, but other plant varieties, including perennials, small trees, shrubs and even houseplants, all work well to create beautiful arrangements. It's important to remember, however, that most plants, even if they're hardy in the ground, will not survive a Michigan winter above ground. Make plans to plant them in the ground come fall, or use them as a one-season plant.

Selecting plants:

Select a variety of plants using the Thriller-Spiller-Filler concept. The thriller is the focal point; spiller cascade over the pot edges; and fillers complete the look. Odd numbers work best and provide a pleasing arrangement. Light: Most plants require at least 8 hours of sunlight each day to thrive. If pots are located in a shady area, select varieties such as coleus, begonias, coral bell's, cladium and sedge grass. Growth habit: consider each plant's height in which category it fits into; thriller, spiller or filler Plant textures; Select a variety of different leaf and flower shapes and sizes to add interest. Color: Design with monochromac or complimentary hues. If you're looking to take your containers to the new level, consider that the thriller could be something other than a plant. A garden statue, glazing globe, or a cluster of branches, such as red twig dogwood or pussy willows will provide height and interest. Or use an unexpected plant, such as a gardenia topiary or ivy trained on a trellis or obelisk. House plants such as dracaena, palms or even a small size ornamental grass are great as a containers focal point.

Planting the container:

Select a container with drainage holes. The larger the container, the less it will need to be watered. Use a quality planting mix, specially formulated for potting purposes. Many formulas contain fertilizer and moisture retaining agents to reduce water and fertilizer. Don't use garden soil or topsoil, they are too heavy for containers. Fill the container with potting soil 6 to 8 inches from the top. Gently loosen the thriller plant's root system. Place it in the center of the container. Place the spiller plants near the containers edges. Nestle the filler plants between the thrillers and spillers. Loosely add potting soil around the plants to secure them in place. Leave about 2 inches from the top of the container so water doesn't spill over the edges. Water thoroughly with a water-soluble fertilizer.

Container plant care:

Check your pots daily for watering. Touch the soil about an inch down to see if it's dry. The larger the container, the less frequently it will need to be watered. During hot, dry weather, the container may need water daily. If weather is cool and damp, watering as often is not necessary. Water thoroughly until the water drips from the bottom of the pot. Let the soil dry slightly between watering. Fertilize containers every ten days with a water soluble plant fertilizer with high phosphorous to encourage blooming. **Now you are ready to plant your pots in any area this year.**



Plant a Patch for Pollinators

Native plants provide natural habitat for native pollinators. They have evolved together in intricate, co-dependent relationships over eons of time. If you plant natives, a tree, two large shrubs, a flowering vine and three flowers or grasses, in a space the size of a small living room, you'll make a home for a myriad of birds, colorful butterflies, bees, beneficial bugs and other pollinators. Think of your yard as a patchwork quilt. Plant one patch now, and later add others to create biodiverse areas of native plants for sun and shade in dry and wet places. Each patch would include plants that thrive naturally together under existing conditions. By doing this, you will inspire others in the community to follow suit. Imagine lawns gone and in their place thousands of native plant patches for pollinators filled with bird songs and fluttering wings.

Best Native Plants for our Area For Supporting Butterflies and Moths

Trees:

Oak <i>Quercas spp.</i>	Host plant for 452 species of butterflies and moths. It's a pollen source for Ruby-throated hummingbirds. Acorns are eaten by numerous bird species.
Willow <i>Salix Salicales</i>	Host plant for 427 species
Cherry <i>Prunus Rosoles</i>	Host plant for 418 species
Poplar <i>Populus Solicales</i>	Host plant for 367 species
Pine <i>Pinals spp.</i>	Host plant for 247 species

Flowers:

Goldenrod <i>Solidago Asperales</i>	Supports 135 species
Strawberry <i>Fragaria Rosales</i>	Supports 82 species
Sunflower <i>Helianthus Asterales</i>	Supports 77 species
Joe Pye weed <i>Eupatorium Asterales</i>	Supports 32 species
Violet <i>Violales</i>	Supports 31 species
Geranium <i>Geraniales</i>	Supports 26 species
Brown and black-eyed Susan <i>Rudbeckia Asterales</i>	Supports 20 species

Shrubs:

Cranberry, Blueberry <i>Vaccenium Ericales</i>	Supports 283 species
Blackbeny, Rasperry, Dewberry <i>Rubus Rosales</i>	Supports 156 species
Dogwood, Bunchberry <i>Cornus Cornales</i>	Supports 121 species
Serviceberry, Juneberry <i>Amelanchier Rosales</i>	Supports 115 species
Arrowood, Viburnum <i>Viburnum Dipsacales</i>	Supports 102 Species

These species and more can be found at <http://www.nwf.org/Native Plant Finder>
They can be found by putting in your zip code.

Plants for birds can be found at <http://www.audubon.ore/native-plants>

Invasive plants of Michigan <Http://mnfi.anr.msu.edr:/invasiveplantsfieldguide.pdf>

Steps to Planting a Patch for Pollinators:

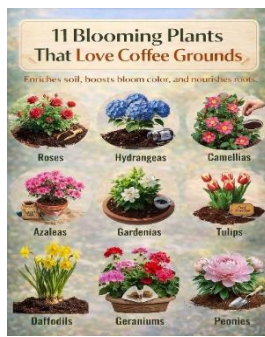
Choose a spot about 15 x 20 feet to provide ample space for growth. Plant the tree about 15 feet from hard surfaces and yard boundaries so it has ample space for its roots in all directions. Place the shrubs six feet from the tree and each other. Native flowers or native grasses can be planted near the edge and they will spread over time. Kill sod, weeds and other non-native plants in the patch by covering the area with 6 to 8 layers of wet newspaper, cardboard, black plastic or unopened bags of mulch. All plants should be dead before removing the coverings. The paper and cardboard could be left in place and just digging through it to plant. This usually takes about 6 weeks. Or you can dig out sod and non-natives by hand or use a sod cutter. See the list of plants that attract pollinators in your area. Buy straight pollinator plants, not cultivars or hybrids. Changing the color of the flowers or leaves might not be recognized by pollinators. Also double flower heads might be difficult for pollinators to get to the pollen and/or nectar. Dig hole slightly wider than the plant but no deeper. It's beneficial to mix existing sandy soil with a bit of compost as you fill the holes. Mulch minimizes weeds, cools the roots of the plant and retains moisture. Cover the entire area with 3 to 4 inches of mulched leaves, pine needles or commercial mulch. Keep the mulch about 8 inches away from the base of the plants. Water plants in deeply to saturate their roots and then every day or every other day for a few weeks if there is no rain. This will wean plants from nursery conditions. Plants are established when they respond to local conditions - rainfall, temperature, sunlight and soil conditions. Never use pesticides. Enjoy watching plants and pollinators thrive in each planted patch.

Recommended books: "Nature's Best Hope" by Douglas W. Tallamy and "Bringing Nature Home" also by Douglas W. Tallamy
"Silent Spring" by Rachel Carson and "A Sand County Almanac" by Aldo Leopold stand alone as the 2 most venerated and significant environmental books of the 20th century.

Presented by Sharon Morman, Mason County Garden Club

Looking for plants that gently fill your garden without taking over?
These perennials spread gradually and are easy to control, making them perfect for low-maintenance garden beds.

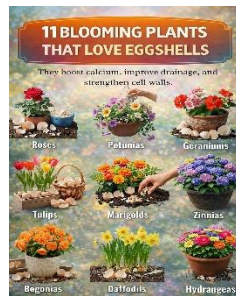




THESE 11 BLOOMING PLANTS LOVE COFFEE GROUNDS

Don't throw away your used coffee! These flowers thrive on it. It enriches the soil, enhances bloom color, and naturally nourishes the roots.

1. Roses – Boosts nitrogen for strong leaves and buds.
2. Hydrangeas – More acidic soil = deeper blue blooms.
3. Camellias – Flourish in acidic soil with regular coffee mulch.
4. Azaleas – Naturally grow better in lower pH soil.
5. Gardenias – Coffee grounds enhance fragrance and bloom production.
6. Tulips – Enjoy rich organic matter for spring growth.
7. Daffodils – Benefit from compost mixed with used coffee grounds.
8. Geraniums – Grow stronger and resist pests.
9. Peonies – Thrive with nitrogen-rich additions like coffee.
10. Zinnias – Bloom longer with slow-releasing nutrients.
11. Begonias – Respond well to gentle acidity and composted coffee grounds.



11 Blooming Plants That Benefit from Eggshells

Crushed eggshells are a simple, natural fertilizer that adds calcium, improves soil structure, and helps plants grow stronger blooms.

****Flowers That Love Eggshells****

1. ****Roses**** – Calcium helps produce stronger stems and fuller blooms.
2. ****Petunias**** – Supports continuous flowering and healthy growth.
3. ****Geraniums**** – Encourages stronger roots and better plant structure.
4. ****Tulips**** – Helps bulbs develop properly for vibrant spring flowers.
5. ****Marigolds**** – Improves soil texture and can help plants resist pests.
6. ****Zinnias**** – Promotes sturdy growth and longer-lasting blooms.
7. ****Begonias**** – Calcium supports dense and colorful flowering.
8. ****Daffodils**** – Strengthens bulbs for healthier seasonal blooms.
9. ****Hydrangeas**** – Helps maintain strong stems and stable flower color.
10. ****Lilies**** – Improves stem strength and overall plant health.
11. ****Chrysanthemums**** – Encourages longer flowering periods and sturdy growth.

****How to Use Eggshells in the Garden****

- Rinse and dry the shells first
- Crush them into small pieces or powder
- Mix into soil or sprinkle around the plant base
- Add to compost for faster breakdown

Look What We Did!

In January and February, those of use who stuck around to brave the worst Winter we have had in a long time ventured out in the snow and cold to enjoy lunch at Jamesport Brewery and Stix Restaurant.





Recipes Submitted by Members

Pistachio Dessert:

Crust:

1 c. flour

1 stick oleo

2 T. sugar

¼ c. finely chopped nuts

Mix and press into a 9x13 pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 15 min. (cool completely)

Layer One:

Mix together: 8 oz. cream cheese

2/3 cup powdered sugar

Add ½ of a large container of cool whip

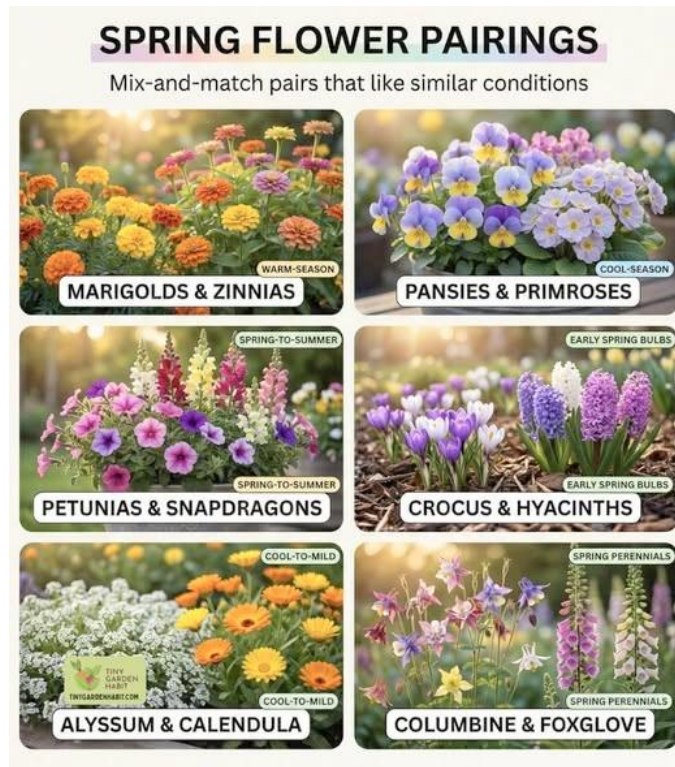
Beat with fork and spread over crust.

Layer Two:

Mix 2 pkgs. of pistachio pudding with 2 1/2 cups of milk. Pour over first layer. Top with rest of cool whip.

Chill at least 4 hours before serving.

Submitted by Deb Gundersen...is a recipe that Betty Orton-Cochran gave to her years ago





I hope you have enjoyed this Spring edition of “over the picket fence.” Thank you to those of you who contributed articles for the newsletter. Please continue to help me with future newsletters by submitting ideas, articles, recipes and suggestions. I want to be able to continue with the newsletter, as I feel it is important to be able to communicate in this way and you can be a big part in helping me do so. **Yours In Gardening....Diane D.**

For More Information, Check Out:

MCGC: www.masoncountygardenclub.org

NGC: www.gardenclub.org

MGC: www.migardenclubs.org

Also check us out on our Facebook Page at Mason County Garden Club

Club Collect

Keep us, O God, ever mindful of nature’s generous bounty. May we always bear in mind it is ours to trust, to protect, to nurture and to enjoy.

Mrs. C.C. Caswell