



Genesee County Master Gardener Newsletter

DOWN TO EARTH



2016

VOLUME 14

11



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FEATURE ARTICLE

Rest Area Partnership between MDOT and the MSUE Master Gardeners

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) Bay Region invited me to speak at the National Safety Rest Area Conference (NSRAC) held from October 3rd through 6th 2016 in Traverse City, Michigan. The NSRAC is the premier event for rest area planners, designers, program managers, facility asset managers, contractors, vendors and transportation officials from around the nation to meet and share best practices. Fifty attendees from across the nation and Canada attended the conference.

The topic of the presentation was the Innovative Rest Area Management Partnership between MDOT and Michigan State University Extension Master Gardeners. It was a great honor to be invited by MDOT to showcase the Innovative Rest Area Partnership as a best practice. Lynn Lynwood, MDOT Roadside Development Manager, wanted to highlight our positive partnership that continues to benefit MDOT, the public, and Extension Master Gardeners. The partnership rest areas are developed and maintained at a much higher level than MDOT could do with constrained budgets. The presentation covered how this relationship evolved is sustained and why Extension Master Gardener’s do this. It also provided us with a wonderful opportunity to share our accomplishments, our future goals and lessons learned. Amanda Novak, MDOT Bay Region Resource Analyst, and Jocelyn Hall MDOT Communications assisted with the presentation.

During the presentation, participants learned about the MSUE Master Gardener Program, EMG training, and the 5,292,130 hours

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valued at \$123.5 million dollars that EMG's add to the economy nationwide. The attendees were told about how this partnership started and about Mary Wilson's reaction when she heard about the number of annual visitors at the I-75 northbound rest area in Clio. "Wow! What a huge potential to provide greater visibility and the potential to fulfill the EMG program's mission of educating others in a way that hadn't been done before." The participants also gained an understanding of the goals, key team members and their roles and responsibilities and a high level overview of the process from garden design through clean up. The Rest Areas that are included in the 15 year partnership include: Bay, Clare Welcome Center, Fenton, Northbound Clio, and Swartz Creek.

Five million visitors visit the partnership sites annually and Extension Master Gardeners contribute 2100 volunteer hours and answer questions for over 3000 rest area visitors. The EMG's receive many compliments as do the building maintenance teams. This positive feedback from visitors creates a sense of pride in the rest area that is shared by everyone. I was told that visitors show more respect for the rest areas supported by Master Gardeners. While we enjoyed compliments, we also faced challenges. In 2011 MSUE experienced budget cuts which resulted in the loss of 70 MSUE educators and Extension Master Gardener classes were indefinitely postponed. The first new class of Extension Master Gardeners graduated from the Genesee County program in 2016. With no new EMG's entering the program, existing projects experienced difficulties when membership decreased. To meet this challenge, Ponce Esparza, MDOT Transportation Maintenance Coordinator, provided us with access to additional resources for the heavy and hard jobs. Sheriff Pickell's work detail moved and spread mulch and raked up plant debris during fall cleanup. MDOT's Youth Development and Mentoring Program team planted and transplanted plants. These teams filled the gap created by MSUE's funding problems

These rest areas were selected for various honors: Genesee County Garden Tour sites Fenton 2008 and Swartz Creek 2012, Governor's tour 2015 Swartz Creek, Gardener's bus tour annual stop Swartz Creek, Bay rest area was featured in Tri City Monthly "Glorious Gardens". Bay rest area was selected by MDOT Chief Operations Officer, Larry Tibbets, to be renamed in his honor. The Clare Welcome Center won third place in the Michigan Extraordinary Master Gardener project for 2015. Bay rest area, Clio, Fenton, and Swartz Creek received honorable mention. The rest area partnership was selected by MDOT Bay Region as a best practice and shared nationally.

Our future goals generated much excitement and discussion. Improve visual welcome at 60 additional rest areas. Master Gardeners will reach 50 million visitors annually to educate visitors on plants that are proven, new, or underutilized performers in the Michigan landscape and provide Michigan State University Extension with greater visibility. Achieve Monarch Waystation Status for rest areas and provide habitat and food sources for pollinators. MDOT and Extension Master Gardeners will contribute to the National goal to increase the population of Monarch butterflies to 225 million by 2020 and to restore or enhance 7 million acres of land for pollinators over the next 5 years. Another goal is to avoid certain pesticides. The EPA is studying the use of pesticides and insecticides on the health of pollinators and will soon take action to protect pollinators. The Claire Welcome center has earned the Monarch Waystation

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HOME GROWN 888

What is going on in my yard? We recently got a bunch of rain and mushrooms have sprouted up everywhere. Some are the umbrella kind, some look like whitish or pinkish fat pencil points sticking up out of the dirt and there is some stuff that looks like yellow foam insulation from a can in blobs in a flower bed. I have not done anything to make this happen. But my neighbor has a new lawn company. Did they do this?

There's got to be somebody to blame. Sorry, the lawn company was not appointed Emperor of Mushrooms. Leave them out of this. Your question started so hopefully; there appeared to be a glimmer of understanding. And then it made a hard right into the ditch. The mushrooms are there because of the rain, warm soil and air temperatures. These were sad, lonely little spores waiting for the chance to grow. What is needed for most mushrooms is dead wood in some form, warmth and moisture. We have had all the parts except damp soil. The dead wood could be mulch, dead tree roots, a stump or a tree with dead wood in some areas on the trunk or buried wood scraps. It all needs to be in a state of decomposing. There are mycelial threads which are the true fungi in the soil. The mushrooms could be considered like flowers; these are the parts involved in reproduction. For mushrooms, these are spores instead of seeds. The mycelium wait patiently for good growing conditions and in a matter of hours, the mushroom appears. There are dozens and dozens kinds of mushrooms that resemble umbrellas and gills are on the underside of the cap. These produce spores after the mushroom matures. The white or pink fat pencil guys are called dog horns or stinking dog horns because of their resemblance to certain doggy naughty-parts and many are slimy and smell bad. Flies are the transporters for the spores that are in the slimy material. The yellow foamy stuff is called Fuligo. It is a slime mold. They are often found on mulch or on a chunk of dead wood. If the mushrooms offend you, kick them or hit them with a shovel. But just don't ask about eating them. The MSU Extension policy is to not identify mushrooms for people who want to eat them. One mistake could mean big trouble for someone, probably you.

Everywhere I look, I see these filmy bags over the ends of branches on trees. They are just on the ends and it seems to happen at the end of summer. Some are big and some are little. Is this that gypsy moth that I heard about? If they show up on my trees, how do I kill them?

This is not an evil invader from another land; this is an all-American insect. The fine webbing that encloses the ends of some tree branches is the work of our native Fall Webworm. But consider this webbing as all show and no go. The larvae web over the ends of the branches in late summer or early fall. The cute little guys then consume all the leaves in their tent. But here's the important part: they do not eat next year's buds. This is a slam-bam that only is noticeable until the leaves fall. And next year, leaves grow again and there is no lasting damage. This is also an insect that has a number of critters and diseases that prevent it from becoming a real pest. The leaves at the end of summer are not very nutritious and their loss now will not affect the health of the tree. This is one of those delightful times where you can view their handiwork and go back indoors and have a nice, cold adult beverage. Sadly, many people go after this pest with very visible webs with an insane vengeance. They hack off branches, throw various petroleum products into the tree or try to burn them out. All their nuttiness has done hundreds of times more damage than the Fall Webworm. Spraying webs is useless because the materials do not penetrate the webbing. Gypsy moth larvae are only around munching on leaves in May and June and do not build webs. Now that you have a crash course in Fall Webworm, it may be wise to find some nice beverage and refrigerate it in anticipation.



COOKS CORNER

Broccoli Cheddar Chicken (Cracker Barrel Copycat)

Ingredients

4 boneless, skinless chicken breast
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon pepper
1 cup milk
1 can cheddar cheese soup
½ teaspoon paprika
6 ounces cheddar cheese, shredded
8 ounces frozen chopped broccoli,
defrosted
1½ cups crushed Ritz crackers



Instructions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees and lightly greased casserole dish, season chicken with salt and pepper and place in prepared dish.

In a medium bowl, mix together milk, soup, paprika, and cheddar cheese.

Pour half of cheese mixture over chicken.

Scatter broccoli pieces over cheese mixture.

Top with Ritz cracker pieces and remaining cheese mixture.

Place in oven and bake for 45 minutes. (I look for small chicken breasts for this recipe. Larger ones I cut in half horizontally. You will need to increase cooking time by at least 10 minutes if your chicken breasts are larger and you do not cut them into 2 thinner pieces.)

Christin Mahrling



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Status and two other rest areas will earn this status after spring planting.

During the 15 years of this partnership, we learned valuable lessons that we shared with the attendees. Commitment is key, jointly we can solve problems, we must obtain the plants and supplies needed to keep our commitments, communication, flexibility, understanding and dealing with challenges, impact of our work and appreciation from, visitors and MDOT.

Since the presentation contained goals, roles and responsibilities and an overview of the process and benefits, it provided attendees with the basic knowledge for creating partnerships within their communities. They were also given the list of Extension Master Gardeners and their contact information for each state. During the question and answer session, we shared pictures of the rest area gardens.

One of the questions that were asked centered on selecting a suitable site for this type of partnership. What do we consider when choosing a site? A first criterion would be the number of visitors. Are Master Gardeners insured? Yes we are insured. There was mention of volunteer retention, and the challenges of maintaining an effective work force. Other questions centered on the funding of the Monarch Waystation signage. Suggestions were made that this same type of partnership should be looked at for roadside parks and scenic outlooks as well as rest areas. The presentation was met with an enthusiastic response, and I have been asked to share it with additional audiences.

In conclusion, the presentation detailed how the MDOT Extension Master Gardener relationship evolved, continues and the role volunteers that make it such a successful project. It also shared our accomplishments, our future goals and lessons learned. The audience enjoyed the pictures of the gardens and some openly expressed the desire to form partnerships with Extension Master Gardeners in their state.

Some words from Lynn Lynwood “Thank you again for your wonderful presentation – it was very well received by our conference participants and I think your report captures everything beautifully! I would love to see MSUE promote partnership opportunities in other areas of the state. Just think what an active west side program could do with springtime bulb displays at rest areas near Grand Rapids and Holland! The creativity and commitment of the Michigan State University Extension Master Gardeners, especially your Genesee County Program, affords travelers with gorgeous floral displays and helps MDOT deliver outstanding customer experience at these rest areas. Thank you!”

I want to congratulate all of the committed and dedicated master gardeners and MDOT team members who made the MDOT and Extension Master Gardener partnership at the rest areas a Michigan best practice example for other states.

This will take you directly to the rest area projects: <http://www.geneseecountymg.org/rest-area-projects.html>.

Then click on the green button labeled Master Gardener/MDOT Partnership powerpoint.

Brenda Monty

See page 11 for a couple of photos of the rest areas.

MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

MEETING OCTOBER 20, 2016

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by President Vicki Laurin at 8:08 pm after a presentation by Mary Wilson of 'Gold' badges to MGAGCM Master Gardeners who had volunteered over 1000 hours of service.

Review of Minutes: Motion and 2nd by Helen Mitts & Nettie Sparks to accept the September 15, 2016 meeting minutes as presented. Passed.

Treasurer's Report: Michelle Chockley reviewed the Treasurer's report for September 2016. The beginning balance was \$29,946.66, income was \$4,464.02, expenses were \$1,317.98 and the ending balance was \$33,102.70. Michelle will email the proposed 2017 budget to MGAGCM members before the November meeting.

Kay McCullough - Projects Reports:

Projects Chairperson

Crossroads Village (Monarch Way Station) Joanie Snyder- still working on gardens every Tuesday.

Grow Lab Dave Groat- need 2 shepherds

Farmers Market – Davison Alan Grove- done, back next May. Thanks to all who worked this year.

Richfield PSA Vegetable Garden Diane Callison- 1st & 2nd grade kids. Successful! May expand next year.

Flushing River Trail Sylvia Hansen- working Oct 26th and Nov 2nd

Flushing City Hall Sylvia Hansen- planting bulbs on Oct 31.

Flushing Butterfly Garden Mary Beth Seaward- wrapping things up

GCCARD Gardens Alan Grove/Gwen Barney- 2 more Tuesday to do cleanup

Humane Society Maggie Gregg- done for the year

Keller Park Bioswale Rain Garden Lorna Woods-Johns- a new project to manage water draining into Swartz Creek.

Keller Park Woody Ornamental Garden Lorna Woods-Johns- a new project just N. of I69 at Hammerberg exit

Park Place Community Garden Susan Biron- a new project: vegetable garden for a senior community in Clio, may add flowers next year. Could use some live traps.

Library Gardens Baker Park (Burton) Diana Callison- final cleaning Saturday 22OC16.

Rest Stop Projects

US-23 Loretta Elwood- cleanup on 24OC16.

Alan Grove - Standing Committee Reports:

Banquet (Spring/Awards) Loretta Ellwood- April 20, 2017 is the date!

Bulb Sale Randy Tatro- The bulb sale has gone well. Tonight is the final sale opportunity.

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Clothing Vicki Laurin / tbd- Our next order deadline is Friday after Thanksgiving (25NO16).
Fall Into Spring Loretta Ellwood- A very successful event, report will be complete by 17NO16.

Holiday Party (Open) the plans are coming together! Sign up tonight or on-line.

Hospitality Gloria Roudebush- Cards to: Gwen Barney, Karen Schilling and Joy Hershberger.

Tool and Garden Supplies Dick Moldenhauer – the order is in! Next order at the end of Nov for Christmas, if needed.

VMS Ambassadors Ruth Simon / Jim Harrow- Start putting your hours in if you haven't yet!

Old Business:

1. Project Chairs: we need each chairperson that hasn't sent in a complete plant list for their project's plant ID stakes to please do so. There is a form you can use to define your plant ID sign needs.

New Business:

1. The Holiday Party Committee is asking the membership for \$100.00 to cover extra meat and additional new members for our Holiday party. This money would only be used if necessary. Moved and 2nd by Maggie Gregg and Cheryl Borkowski to approve the additional \$100.00 for meat for the Holiday Party. Passed.

2. Nomination and Election Committee – Nominations for open offices are: a) President-Vicki Laurin, b) 1st Vice President-Mel Kennedy, c) 2nd Vice President-Alan Grove and d) Director-Member Retention-Sylvia Hansen. The floor was opened for nominations but none were forth coming. Nominations are now closed.

Ballots to be made available online to vote as well as at the November meeting.

3. Carol Pittard presented info on the CAMG annual symposium "It's All About Seasons" in E. Lansing on 28JA17.

4. Ladies Night Out at Crossroads is Monday 14NO16. Lots of fun things!

5. There is a Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day this Saturday 22OC16. More info on the MG website.

Close of Meeting: Moved and 2nd by Alicia Ellis and Helen Mitts to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 pm. Passed.

Respectfully submitted: Dick Moldenhauer, MGAGCM secretary

Thanks to Christy Jones, Alan Grove, Loretta Elwood and Vicki Laurin for providing snacks.

Master Gardener Association Genesee County Michigan 2016 Election Ballot

Vote for not more than one per office

**BALLOTS THROUGH EMAIL OR U.S. POSTAL SERVICE MUST BE RECEIVED
BY MGAGCM BY MIDNIGHT NOVEMBER 10, 2016**

President
Vicki Laurin _____ (write in candidate)
First Vice President
Mel Kennedy _____ (write in candidate)
Second Vice President
Alan Grove _____ (write in candidate)
Director
Sylvia Hansen _____ (write in candidate)

The ballot should be mailed to PO Box 34 Flushing Mi. 48433

MGAMCM Member _____

PLANTING, GROWING AND HARVESTING PUMPKINS

Note that pumpkins do require a lot of food and a **long** growing season (generally from 75 to 100 frost-free days) so you need to plant them by late May in northern locations to early July in extremely southern states.

Do not plant this tender vegetable until all danger of frost has passed and the soil is warmed, as the seedlings will be injured or rot. (See the Almanac.com/Gardening page for frost dates.)

That said, pumpkins are easy to maintain if you have the space.

SELECTING A SITE

Pick a site with full sun (to light shade) and lots of space for sprawling vines. Vine varieties need 50 to 100 square feet per hill.

However, if your garden space is limited, no worries! Plant pumpkins at the edge of the garden and direct vine growth across the lawn or sidewalk. The vines will only be bothersome for a few weeks. You can also grow pumpkins in big 5 to 10 gallon buckets! Or, try miniature varieties.

Pumpkins are big greedy feeders. They prefer very rich soil that is well-drained and not too soggy. Mix lots of compost and aged manure into the planting site before you sow seeds or transplant.

PLANTING BY SEED

Pumpkins do best when the seeds are directly planted in the ground.

If your growing season is very short, seed indoors in peat pots about 2 to 4 weeks before last spring frost. Be sure to harden off before transplanting.

Wait until the plant soil is 70°F or more before sowing seeds. Optimum soil temperature is 95°F. Pumpkins are very sensitive to the cold.

Plant seeds in rows or “pumpkin hills” which are the size of small pitcher mounds. With hills, the soil will warm more quickly and the seeds will germinate faster. This also helps with drainage and pest control.

Prepare the hills in advance with an abundance of old manure dug deep into the ground (12 to 15 inches). If you don't have manure, loosen the soil and mix in a 2- to 4-inch layer of compost

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Plant the seeds 1 inch deep into the hills (4 to 5 seeds per hill). Space hills 4 to 8 feet apart.

Your plants should germinate in less than a week with the right soil temperature (70 degrees F) and emerge in 5 to 10 days.

When the plants are 2 to 3 inches tall, thin to 2 to 3 plants per hill by snipping off unwanted plants without disturbing the roots of the remaining ones.



In rows, sow seeds 6 to 12 inches apart in rows 6 to 10 feet apart. Snip off plants to thin to one plant every 18 to 36 inches.

CARE

Use row covers to protect plants early in the season and to prevent insect problems. However, remember to remove covers before flowering to allow pollination by insects!

Pumpkins are very thirsty plants and need lots of water. Water one inch per week. Water deeply, especially during fruit set.

When watering: Try to keep foliage and fruit dry unless it's a sunny day. Dampness will make rot more likely.

Add mulch around your pumpkins to keep in moisture, suppress weeds, and discourage pests.

Remember that pumpkins are tender from planting to harvest. Control weeds with mulch. Do not over cultivate, or their very shallow roots may be damaged.

Most small vine varieties can be trained up a trellis.

Larger varieties can be trained upward on a trellis, too—though it is an engineering challenge to support the fruit—usually with netting or old stockings.

CONTINUED IN THE DECEMBER ISSUE

CAPITOL AREA MASTER GARDENER ANNUAL WINTER SYMPOSIUM

The Capital Area Master Gardeners invite you to join them at their Annual Winter Symposium – *It's All About...Seasons*.

The four topics with the speakers are:

A Change in Thought – Jan Bills, Owner of Two Women and a Hoe

Berries, Bugs and Snags – Rosann Kovalcik, Michigan Audubon Society Board Member and owner of Wild Birds Unlimited in Grosse Pointe Woods.

The Late Show – Cheryl English, Wildflower Association of Michigan Board Member and Advanced Master Gardener.

The Science and Art of Pruning – Chuck Martin, Senior Horticulturist at Dow Gardens

Who: Capital Area Master Gardeners

What: *It's All About...Seasons–A Winter Symposium*

Where: Plant and Soil Sciences Building on MSU's Campus in East Lansing in MPS 1200 which is the new auditorium/tiered classroom

When: Saturday, January 28, 2017

Earn: 5 Master Gardener education hours

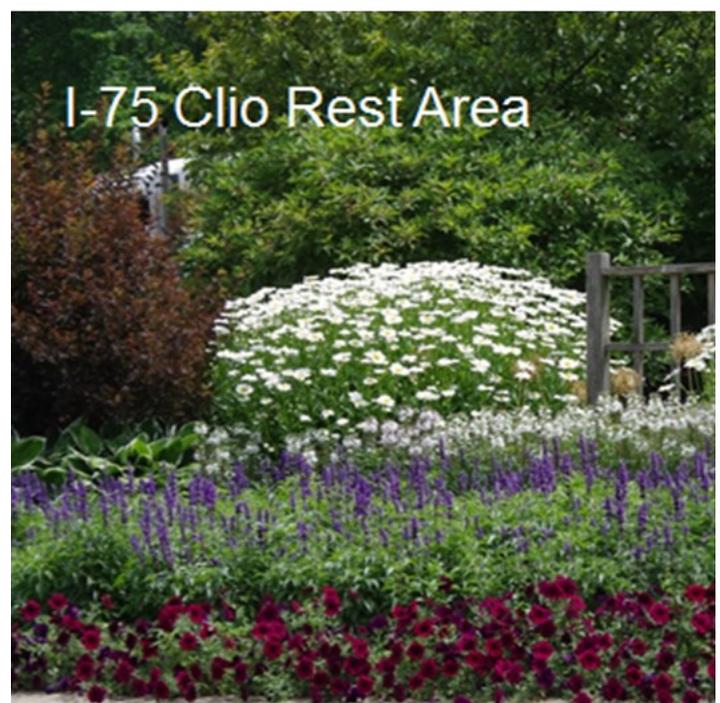
Cost: \$40.00 for CAMG members / \$50.00 for non-member Active, Certified EMGs / \$55.00 all others

A link to the association web site can be found at:

<http://mgacac.wordpress.com>

There you can find a link to the brochure, information about hotel rooms, vendors who will be at the conference (as they become available), a link to directions, etc.

If you have questions, you can email: mga.cac@gmail.com.



CLOTHING ORDERS

Our winter clothing order will continue until November, 25, 2016. This order will be back in time for Christmas, so this is a good time to buy yourself that MG shirt that you have wanted. Payments need to reach PO Box 34, Flushing, Mi. 48433 by the deadline. We are in the process of adding new items that have been requested, so please let us know if there is something you would like to order that isn't available at this time.

We still have two denim shirts that are available for immediate purchase. If interested please contact Vicki Laurin, 810-744-0725 or Kay McCullough, 810-635-0545

DON'T FORGET TO VOTE

There is a ballot enclosed in this newsletter that you may mail into PO Box 34, Flushing, Mi. 48433 or you may vote online at our website, Genesee County MG.org. or you may vote at our November 17th Holiday Party.

WINTER HOTLINE HOURS

Winter Hotline hours are now in effect and will be open on FRIDAYS only from 8:30 AM to 1:00 PM. Please call ahead to make sure someone is at the office if you need something on any other day of the week.

DATES TO REMEMBER

HOLIDAY PARTY AND ELECTIONS MEETING

We will be celebrating our Holiday Party on November 17, 2016, at the GCCARD building, as well as electing our four new board members. Festivities will begin at 5:30 and final voting opportunities will begin at 6:00 pm until the end of the business meeting. We will have a short business meeting with the opportunity to vote on the 2017 budget meeting. We will begin the Holiday Party with Alan Grove asking the blessing. We will be providing chicken and meatballs as well as punch and coffee. Remember to please bring a dish to pass. You can also bring holiday donations to Crossover Ministries. They are in need of infant clothes 0-18 months, coloring books and adult toiletries. Money donations will be accepted as well. There will be door prizes and give-a-ways and is sure to be a fun evening with good friends and a great way to bring in the holiday season. The election results will be given at the end of the evening.



MGAGCM OFFICERS (2016)

President	Vicki Laurin
810-744-0725	laurinvicki@gmail.com
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2nd Vice President	Alan Grove
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Treasurer	Michelle Chockley
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**CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITES**

MMGA Inc Website at:

www.michiganmastergardener.org

MMGA Inc Facebook Page at:

www.facebook.com/MichiganMG

**MGAGCM Website at: Genesee
County MG.org**

MGAGCM Facebook Page at:

**[http://facebook.com/groups/2169046
232310/](http://facebook.com/groups/2169046232310/)**

Link to VMS: [https://](https://michigan.volunteersystem.org)

michigan.volunteersystem.org

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Consumer Horticulture Program Instructor

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geneseeplantpest@anr.msu.edu

Public Office Hours:

8 am - 1 pm Monday through Friday.

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