

OVER THE GARDEN FENCE

February 2024

Events

- February 26—Master Gardener monthly meeting—GAP Training

Lunch and Learn and Happy Hour series (weblink) <https://mastergardener.osu.edu/HHHLNL23-24>

- Feb. 15—Plant Propagation Basics
- Feb. 21—Boxwood Moth Update: Ohio's Newest Invasive insect
- Feb. 29 Landscape Design: Getting Started
- Mar. 6—Common and Emerging Soil Contaminants
- March 20. Spotted Lantern-fly Update

USDA Change in Plant Hardiness Zone Map –

Marcia Burchby

Gardeners and farmers have long used their experience and local knowledge to ascertain which plants will thrive in their location. A useful tool for determining which plants can survive winter in a particular area is the United States Department of Agriculture Plant Hardiness Zone Map. This map divides the country into 13 distinct zones, based on the average minimum winter temperature; each zone varies by 10 degrees F and they are further divided into sub-zones of 5 degrees F.

The modern USDA plant hardiness map began at the US National Arboretum and was first issued in 1960. It has been revised and refined 4-5 times since then, using more accurate and extensive data with each revision. In November 2023, the 2012 map was updated once again, incorporating data from many more weather stations around the country--13, 412 as compared to 7, 983 in 2012.

2023 was about 2.5 degrees F warmer than the 2012 map across the contiguous US, making it the hottest meteorological summer on record for the northern hemisphere. With the new data, the 2023 map reflects that about ½ of the country has shifted into a new, warmer half zone. Athens County, which was Zone 6a (average lowest temperature -10 to -5 F) is now Zone 6b (-5 to 0 degrees F). There are no longer any areas in Ohio rated as Zone 5b (-15 to -10 F).

Mike Hogan, Extension Educator and Associate Professor with OSU Extension, writes in *The Columbus Dispatch*: "The documented long-term climate changes occurring in Ohio include a longer growing season, warmer temperatures (especially in winter and overnight), higher humidity, more rainfall and more intense rainfall in the autumn months. Long-term models indicate that, with the current trajectory of these changes in climate, by 2030 the weather during Ohio summers may be similar to current summer conditions in southwestern Kentucky; winter weather conditions are projected to be similar to current winter weather in southern Virginia. The same models indicate that by 2095, summer weather in Ohio will be similar to current summer weather conditions experienced in Arkansas, with winter weather similar to southern North Carolina."

This new information will bring adjustments in what and how we garden and is also a powerful reminder of the need for changes in behavior that contributes to global warming.



February: National Bird Feeding Month—

Marcia Burchby

National Bird Feeding Month was created in 1994 by an act of Congress. Its goal is to educate the public on the seasonal journeys of birds and to encourage us to provide some aid to them at the height of winter, when it is needed most. Offering appropriate food, water and shelter is not necessary for wild birds to survive, but it can be helpful when they need the most energy, such as during temperature extremes, migrations and in late winter or early spring, when their natural food sources are depleted. To prevent the spread of disease, clean your feeders with a bleach/water mixture every two weeks, clean spillage, and periodically move the feeders to reduce spillage buildup. Offer a clean water source, especially during times of deep freeze.

In addition to purchasing seed, grains, peanuts and suet for birds *this* winter, consider what you might add to your garden this coming year to nourish the birds naturally. By making a 'habitat garden', you will offer nutrition for the birds and also for the insects that make up a crucial part of their diets. The following is a non-exhaustive list of plants that are excellent for bird habitat in Ohio. When sourcing these, search for native species.

First, the flowers, which will provide nectar, seeds and shelter in the fall and early winter if the stems, leaves and seed heads are not 'cleaned up.'

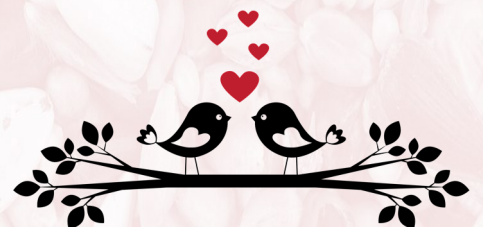
Anise hyssop, evening primrose, echinacea, gaillardia, rudbeckia, liatris, monarda, Joe Pye weed, golden-rods, asters, sunflowers (helianthus), false sunflowers (heliopsis), native thistles (wavy leaf, swamp, pasture and cobweb), native grasses (little bluestem, prairie dropseed, prairie smoke), partridge pea (a legume) and Virginia creeper.

As winter progresses and the seeds of flowers are depleted, the berries of shrubs are vital for the birds. Many of these have a high fat content and are rich in antioxidants. They are also caterpillar host plants and provide dense coverage for shelter and nesting.

Holly (winterberry, inkberry), viburnums (arrowwood, blackhaw, highbush cranberry), Northern bayberry, wax myrtle, Eastern red cedar, dogwood shrubs (red osier, gray and silky), elderberry, Northern spicebush, American burning bush 'wahoo', red or black chokeberry, snowberry, beautyberry, serviceberry. Honeysuckle and sumac are also good food sources but may not be appropriate for every garden. Be aware that several of these plants are dioecious, so both male and female plants are needed to produce fruit.



Ohio's top 10 native birds that are often attracted to feeders or natural habitats in the winter are the mourning dove, downy and red-bellied woodpecker, blue jay, black capped chickadee, tufted titmouse, white breasted nuthatch, northern cardinal, house finch and American goldfinch. HAPPY BIRD WATCHING!





Gardening

LET YOUR GARDEN SLEEP IN

Wait to tidy up your garden for spring until we have a week of temps in the 50s or above. This year's pollinators are still sleeping in your plant stems and leaves until then.



Digging Deeper – Kathy McCorkle

On a beautiful January evening the Master Gardener members were greeted by a "Spring Day." The tables were lighted and spring flowers were everywhere. Each member received a flower seed packet to take home. It was like walking into a local farmers market on a cool January evening. The whole evening was dedicated in memory of Helen Slater. The Hawaiian music was dedicated again to Mary Culp.

Many Master Gardeners were honored for Lifetime Service Hours:

Over 500 Hours: Ann Brown, Ceil Weldon, Cinda Morosko, Kathy McCorkle, Joke Harnish, Nancy Walker, Terrie Perez

Over 1000 Hours: Zella Nisley

Over 1500 Hours: Roxanne Male-Brune, Lee Gregg

New this year were name badges for Years of Service. Those receiving a badge were:

5-9 Years: Ceil Weldon, Char Rae, Elizabeth Flum, Kathy McCorkle, Laura Caple, Linda Parsons, Marcia Burchby, Nancy Walker, Terrie Perez, Zella Nisley

10-14 Years: Ann Brown, Cinda Morosko, Kathy Berry, Pattie O'Brien

15-19 Years: Roxanne Male-Brune

20-24 Years: Joke Harish, Lee Gregg

Emeritus: Jeanne Haseley.

The Celebration was completed with a powerpoint presentation of our year in pictures. Each month included our programs and Master Gardener field trips and activities.



Giant Yellow Swallowtail
Seen August 9, 2023

26th Master Gardener Celebration!!! For the Year 2023

Hawaiian Music Dedicated to
Mary Culp
"Kahealani" by Jeff Patterson