

OVER THE GARDEN FENCE

November 2023

Events

- November 27—Master Gardener monthly meeting

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

- Dec. 6— Noon “Why Raised Bed Gardening”
- Dec. 14—4 PM “Top 10 Ways to Improve Your Garden
- Dec. 20—Noon “Insect Responses to Climate Change”
- Jan. 4—4 PM “What it Means to be Social in the Insect World”
- Feb. 7—Noon “Native vs. Non-native Landscape Plants”



Buckwheat used as an insectary crop for beneficials

Putting Your Garden to Bed? –

Marcia Burchby

As you put your garden to bed this fall, this is the perfect time to make plans to improve the garden *next* year. Sara Lennert, owner of **Wild Like a Flower Gardening**, a company that specializes in incorporating native plants into an existing garden, shared some advice at a recent presentation at The Plains Public Library.

--Don't feel compelled to eliminate every non-native plant in your yard, but do strive to make any additions to your garden *native* varieties.

--Do remove unwanted and invasive plants.

--Provide nesting areas such as logs, bare ground and leaf litter.

--Leave stems and seed heads to overwinter as they feed songbirds and provide habitat for stem nesting bees. If cutting back is necessary, leave 8-12" and bundle the stems to keep on the property until stem nesters emerge in the spring. Remember that planting for native species, then removing the parts of the plant that they feed on or are harbored in, defeats the purpose of planting natives in the first place!

--Research what local pollinators and wildlife you want to attract and specifically which host plants they require. Use that shopping list when you shop or order online.

--Know the scientific name of plants when you are shopping for new plants. *Cultivars* are likely to be less valuable to wildlife than the native variety, so be sure of what you are looking for.

--Beware that many plant labels can be misleading with 'greenwashed' claims such as 'pollinator friendly' or 'butterfly garden', even though that variety may provide no benefit to the pollinators or butterflies that you are wanting to host.



Your Garden to Bed – *Cont.*

--Plan for a variety of species that will bloom in spring, summer and fall.

--Eliminate the use of chemical pesticides. They will affect the desirable pollinators and wildlife along with the detrimental ones.

For more inspiration, check out Sara's website: <https://www.wildlikeaflowergardening.com> and <https://wildones.org>

Heather Holm's Pollinators of Native Plants is a valuable resource for specific plants required for specific pollinators.

"You can make a difference, one yard and garden at a time."



New Fruits on the Eastside

— Molly Gassaway

The Eastside Community Garden, a partnership between the City of Athens and Community Food Initiatives (CFI), is growing and expanding! Last weekend the garden hosted a "fruit tree planting workshop" where community members were invited to learn all about proper ways to plant fruit trees and also had the opportunity to actually help do so. Several native fruit trees were planted and mulched, creating a community orchard that someday will grow fruits to benefit those in need. Additionally, spots for new strips of pollinator plants were laid out, as well as some new spaces to offer more community garden plots as interest in gardening at the Eastside Community Garden is steadily increasing. What a lovely space it is...if you haven't checked it out please do so, it is tucked in next to the new solar array along the bike path, off East State St behind the Holiday Inn. There will be lots of upcoming opportunities to volunteer at this space come next spring so reach out to Molly if you are interested

Visit to the OU Student Farm—

Molly Gassaway

On an unseasonably warm day in early October, several Master Gardener Volunteers assisted with local elementary school field trips. Through Community Food Initiatives Sprouts School Garden Program, first grade students from Amesville Elementary, East Elementary, and Morrison Gordon Elementary visited the Ohio University Student Farm off West State Street for a morning full of engaging, hands-on learning. They rotated through 4 stations: investigating compost, digging up potatoes, sensory garden 'scratch n sniff', and harvesting carrots. Master Gardener Volunteers enjoyed watching the kiddos excitement as they explored the farm and all it had to offer. One student even exclaimed, "this is the best day of my life!" as they harvested several huge potatoes buried down deep in the soil. Three cheers for exposing kiddos to real-life farming as well as to Master Gardener Volunteers for their help making these field trips possible!





Gardening

- Compost some leaves
- Compost dead plants
- Dispose of diseased plants
- Open new garden beds for next year
- Take soil samples
- Apply lime or sulfur

November



CFAES

Digging Deeper – Zella Nisley and Char Rae

On a warm October evening, Master Gardeners and members of the public gathered at the Athens Public Library for the October MG meeting program to hear Dr. Jared DeForest speak on gardening in a time of climate change. Our thanks to Char Rae for having the idea, recruiting Dr. DeForest, and organizing this presentation, and Laura Caple for working on publicity that helped to bring out many community members.

To some people soil is just a 4-letter word to be equated with something that needs cleaned off your shoes. However, to Dr. DeForest, soil is the KEY element to successful gardening here in SE Ohio, as we face an even more wetter and warmer climate. He presented reasons why great soil is as good as gold and is very much ALIVE! He maintained the importance of conditioning our soil to make it more resilient to these weather effects. Increasing organic soil matter and encouraging microbial decomposition benefits the soil mycorrhizal network. Scientists are just beginning to understand the complexity of this network and its significance to the survival of plants. DeForest recommended managing the soil to keep it cooler in the summer, or warmer/drier in the fall or winter and also resistant to erosion.

How do we do this? DeForest recommended MULCH as the main component to manage the soil and facilitate this network. Leaf litter, preferably Oak tree (because of its waxy cuticle) is the top of the list for the type of mulch. As the leaf mulch decomposes it increases the soil organic content that in turn protects soil from higher temperatures. So the more organic matter, percentage in the soil, the cooler it will be. So, it turns out that leaves really are our friends!! The leaf litter works better when chopped/shredded in smaller or finer pieces. Before winter a blanket of mulch, including a top layer of straw, protects the microbial elements encouraging them to continue their magic in the winter.

But wait! Your work is not done!! In the spring, for vegetable gardens, remove the mulch. Do not work it into the soil, but keep it for the summer re-application to help with maintaining soil moisture levels. Yes, more work because with summer it means putting that saved mulch back on your garden. This will also help with weed control. Now, we are back to winter again with adding another lovely blanket of mulch! One additional bonus to more organic matter within soil is it becomes spongier and resists compaction. Compaction is not a gardener's friend and is a deterrent to growing absolutely anything!

Since leaves are such an important factor, another interesting point DeForest made was that most trees do best in a diverse forest, so it's important to have a variety of trees. Pines are the exception as they can do well in plantations.

