

# The Latest Dirt

La Porte County Master Gardener Newsletter



MAY 2009

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## 2009 Meeting Schedule

All meetings are held on Thursdays at  
6:00 p.m. (unless noted otherwise) at  
The Presbyterian Church  
307 Kingsbury Ave, La Porte

May 7	General Meeting
June 4	Workshop
July 9	General Meeting
August 6	Workshop
September 3	General Meeting
October 1	Workshop
November 5	General Meeting Election of Officers

## NEXT BOARD MEETING

MONDAY, JUNE 15 - 5:00 P.M.  
PURDUE EXTENSION  
OFFICE



## NEW 2009 VEGETABLE VARIETIES

By: **B. Rosie Lerner**

Purdue Extension Consumer Horticulturist

What better way to chase away the winter blues than a stroll through garden catalogs with all their promise of gardening adventures for the coming season! Here's a look at just a few of the new seed company offerings for 2009.

Basil "Cardinal" is a strikingly handsome addition to the herb garden, with spicy, fragrant foliage crested by tightly packed clusters of deep cardinal-red flowers, resembling Celosia. Plants reach up to 2.5 feet in height.

Beet "Chioggia Guardsmark" has striking, alternating spiral stripes of bright magenta and white, forming a bull's-eye when cut in cross section. It promises sweet, mild flavor and hybrid vigor and has large, 3 to 5-inch globular roots in 60 days.

Cabbage "Caraflex" is a unique, pointy-headed compact early selection.

Cucumber "Iznik" is a new hybrid, 'lunch-box'-sized cucumber, reaching just 3-4 inches long. Plants are compact vines with small leaves, perfect for container and raised-bed gardening.

Eggplant "Gretel" as a follow-up to the 2008 award-winning "Hansel". "Gretel" is the earliest of the white eggplant, bearing clusters of glossy mini-fruit. "Gretel" plants are relatively small, about 3 feet wide and tall, making them well adapted to container gardening. 55 days.

Watermelon "Snack Pack" is a personal-sized watermelon of 3-4 pounds, about the size of a large muskmelon. A dark green outer rind surrounds a bright red, crisp and juicy, seedless flesh. 75 days.

Melon "Lambkin" was selected for its early production of outstandingly sweet, aromatic, white, juicy Christmas-type melons. Each oval-shaped fruit weighs between 2-4 pounds with a thin yellow skin with green mottling. Ready for harvest up to a month before other Christmas-type melons. 65-75 days.

Melon "Twice As Nice" is a new sort of dual-purpose melon. You can harvest a bit early when the rind turns a distinct dark yellow and enjoy the crisp, sweet white flesh; or, allow the fruit to stay on the vine another week or two and enjoy a softer-texture, juicier melon. 78 days.

Onion "Deep Purple" is a dark red bunching (scallion) type onion that colors up early and holds its color into warmer weather. 60 days.

Onion "Red Candy Apple" is said to be sweet enough to eat like an apple! The 4-inch diameter bulbs are wrapped in deep magenta-purple wrappers around alternating maroon and white rings of crisp flesh. This intermediate day-length variety should perform well in the Midwest. Sold as plants. 95 days.

## 2009 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## EXECUTIVE BOARD

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## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MARCY DAILEY
JAN KOSS
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LAURELLE MISKOWICZ
ADI VEENENDAAL
PAST PRESIDENT

## 2009 PROJECT COORDINATORS

## First Yard Class

Jan Koss \_\_\_\_\_ 785-4342  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Habitat for Humanity

Barb Merten \_\_\_\_\_ 219-878-1337  
\_\_\_\_\_ [barbmerten@cs.com](mailto:barbmerten@cs.com)

## Luhr Park Field Days

Jayne Sandy \_\_\_\_\_ 362-9792  
\_\_\_\_\_ [Jayne51@yahoo.com](mailto:Jayne51@yahoo.com)

## Pioneer Heritage Garden

## Garden Coordinator:

Sharon Cholewa: \_\_\_\_\_ 324-3637  
\_\_\_\_\_ [stevshar@netnitco.net](mailto:stevshar@netnitco.net)

## Vegetable Beds:

Pat Bogue \_\_\_\_\_ 609-859-9614  
\_\_\_\_\_ [madgardenerpat@gmail.com](mailto:madgardenerpat@gmail.com)

Sharon Cholewa \_\_\_\_\_ 324-3637  
\_\_\_\_\_ [stevshar@netnitco.com](mailto:stevshar@netnitco.com)

## Herb Beds:

Sacha Burns \_\_\_\_\_ 219-785-2127  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Flower Beds:

Laurelle Miskowicz \_\_\_\_\_ 325-7377  
\_\_\_\_\_ [miskowicz@comcast.net](mailto:miskowicz@comcast.net)

## 2009 Symposium

Nora Akins \_\_\_\_\_ 219-873-1735  
\_\_\_\_\_ [tarq@comcast.net](mailto:tarq@comcast.net)

Sunflower Fair \_\_\_\_\_ 326-7377

Laurelle Miskowicz \_\_\_\_\_ [miskowicz@comcast.net](mailto:miskowicz@comcast.net)

Purdue Extension Office \_\_\_\_\_ 324-9407

Gene Matzat \_\_\_\_\_ [ematzat@purdue.edu](mailto:ematzat@purdue.edu)

Marcia Wolff \_\_\_\_\_ [mwoff@purdue.edu](mailto:mwoff@purdue.edu)

Squash "Bush Baby" is a mini zucchini-type summer squash, ready to pick when 4-6 inches long. Skin is glossy green with pale green strips. 49 days.

Squash "Buckingham" is a bright golden zucchini-type summer squash, best picked when small, 6-7 inches. Plants are compact, bush types, perfect for container and small space gardens. 70 days

Squash "Honey Bear" is an acorn-type winter squash, so named for its sweet-as-honey flavor when cooked. The compact, bush-type plants reach only 2-3 feet tall and have 4-5 feet in spread. They yield loads of fruit. Plants have good tolerance to powdery mildew. 100 days.

Sweet Corn "Revelation" is an early, bi-color that promises good germination in cool spring soils, allowing for earlier planting. Since it matures quickly, you can plant a second crop for later harvest as well. Ears are 7 inches long and offer some resistance to corn smut. It must be isolated from other sweet corn types. 60 days.

Sweet Pepper "Merlot" yields large, thick-walled bells on compact disease-resistant plants. The fruits begin green in color, changing to white and finally smoky purple. 65-70 days.

Sweet Pepper "Pinot Noir" boasts large, blocky sweet bell peppers in a range of colors, beginning as light green and morphing to shades of yellow, red and purple as they ripen. "Pinot Noir" is said to have good ability to set in both cool and hot, muggy weather. 70 days.

Tomato "Chocolate Cherry" is an indeterminate plant bearing one-inch cherry-type globes ripening to a dark burgundy red. 70 days.

Tomato "Sweet Seedless"—You've heard of seedless watermelon and grapes, but new this year is the first seedless tomato. Burpee says that these fruits are extra sweet, because all of the carbohydrates made by the plant go into flavor rather than seed production. "Sweet Seedless" produces medium-sized 8-10 ounce fruits on indeterminate plants, so they should continue producing until frost. 68 days.

Tomato "Black Truffle" is a hybrid "upgrade" from the heirloom "Black Peter" with deep burgundy-colored flesh and rich flavor high in both sugars and acid. The medium-sized fruit (6-8 ounces) can be sliced for sandwiches and salads. 75 days.

## MAY GENERAL MEETING

Thursday, May 7

The Presbyterian Church  
307 Kingsbury Ave, La Porte

6:00 p.m. Refreshments

6:30 p.m. Meeting

### Guest Speaker:

Sacha Burns  
Master Gardener

Topic:

*"Methods of controlling insects and weeds in an organic garden"*

### Refreshments provided by:

Kathleen Staninger  
Laurelle Miskowicz

## Happy Birthday!

### MAY BIRTHDAYS!

2	Barbara Coates Ralph Lerner
17	Melinda Nagle
19	Barbara Werner
23	Suzanne Burns
27	Marina Studt



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### *What's New La Porte Website Articles*

The new online newspaper, "What's New La Porte," ([www.whatsnewlaporte.com](http://www.whatsnewlaporte.com)) has asked the MGA to submit gardening articles to their new website. Master Gardeners will now be able to publish their writing skills and gardening knowledge online.

Barbara Dean volunteered to coordinate this project and has committed to submitting 3 articles for the first few months. Master Gardeners are asked to write timely articles. Some suggestions for topics include: What you should be doing in the garden each month?, current trends, or your own gardening experiences. Pictures of the author, project, garden or process are encouraged.

A signup sheet will be available at the General Meeting on May 7th for interested members. Articles must contain 500 to 1000 words and are due by the **15th of the month** to be published the following month. Of course, each article must be approved by Gene Matzat, Master Gardener Program Coordinator, prior to submission to the website. Don't wait! Start writing today. Please submit your articles to Barbara at [westclocko@aol.com](mailto:westclocko@aol.com).

### Fernwood Plant Sale

May 8-10, 2009

Special plants featured in the 2009 spring plant sale include:

*Acanthus spinosus* - Bear's Breeches  
*Aruncus aethusifolius* - Miniature Goat's Beard  
*Musa basjoo* - Hardy Banana  
*Morus alba* 'Nana' - Dwarf Mulberry - 15' height!  
*Ficus carica* 'Hardy Chicago' - Hardy Chicago Fig  
*Primula kisoana* - Japanese Woodland Primrose  
*Thermopsis chinensis* 'Sophia' - False Lupine  
*Hakonechloa macra* 'Beni-kaze' - Red Japanese Forest Grass  
*Antirrhinum hispanicum* 'Roseum' - Perennial Snapdragon  
*Spigelia marilandica* - Indian Pink  
*Rodgersia henrici* - Rodger's Flower

Seasonal plants are offered for sale in the Garden Shop at the Visitors Center. For more information visit their website at:

[www.fernwoodbotanical.org/](http://www.fernwoodbotanical.org/).

## Southwestern Indiana Master Gardener Association Plant Sale

Evansville, Indiana

Saturday, May 2, - 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. EDT

Sunday, May 3 - 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. EDT

What: 12,000 plants, 40 varieties of tomatoes, as well as a large selection of annuals and perennials for both sun and shade raised locally by Master Gardeners.

Where: Vanderburgh County 4-H Center, Boonville-New Harmony Road, Evansville, IN

## Plant Sale to Benefit Local Food Pantry

Friday, May 8<sup>th</sup>

9:00 AM - 3:00 PM EASTERN TIME

Don't miss the opportunity to beautify your yard and help the community!

JFNew Native Plant Nursery will be opening its doors to the public on May 8<sup>th</sup> to raise funds for the Walkerton Food Pantry. JFNew will offer special pricing for this event with no order minimums, 25% of the proceeds from this sale will go to the local food pantry. In addition, anyone who donates a non-perishable food item will receive a free plant!

Items for sale:

- Wide selection of native plants
- Aquatic root stock
- Wildflower seed
- Bird boxes and feeders
- Tree and shrub seedlings

JFNew Native Plant Nursery

128 Sunset Drive • Walkerton, IN 46574

574-586-2412 • nurserysales@jfnew.com

## INPAWS Native Plant Sale and Auction

Sponsored by the Indiana Native Plant and Wildflower Society (INPAWS), a plant and book sale will be held on Saturday, May 9 from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. EDT with the auction beginning at 11:15 a.m. EDT.

This event will be held at Trinity/St. Richard's Church & School in Indianapolis. Proceeds from the sale support the INPAWS mission of preserving Indiana's rich botanical heritage and educating the public about native plants.

New this year, special incentives will be offered to people driving into Indianapolis from the counties from beyond those contiguous to Marion County, and to people who carpool to the event. Contact Wendy Ford at 317-334-1932 or [wwford@comcast.net](mailto:wwford@comcast.net) with any questions. For more information, visit [www.inpaws.org](http://www.inpaws.org).

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

### Garden Hot Line Schedule

9:00 a.m. - 12:00 Noon CDT



### MAY

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
				1 John Connors Roberta Janssen
4 Eunice Conway Phyllis Colborne	5	6 John Connors Nancy Jahnel-Barnes	7	8 OPEN
11 Eunice Conway Phyllis Colborne	12	13 Nancy Daube Carole Werner	14	15 Barb Werner OPEN
18 Barb Merten Donna Allen	19	20 Nancy Jahnel-Barnes Nancy Daube	21	22 John Connors Melinda Nagle
25 OFFICE CLOSED	26	27 OPEN	28	29 John Connors Phyllis Colborne

### Standing Committee Coordinators

History Book Articles and Photos	Barb Werner
Hospitality Refreshments	Eunice Conway
Librarian	Carolyn Gardner
Newsletter	Donna Pouzar
Speakers Bureau	Rosie Flitter
Sunshine Bereavement/ Get well wishes	Sue Salach

### "The Latest Dirt" Contributing Editors

<i>Herbal Column</i>	Marina Studt
<i>Gardening Articles</i>	Nancy Daube
<i>Extension News</i>	Gene Matzat
Phone:	219-324-9407
E-mail:	<a href="mailto:ematzat@purdue.edu">ematzat@purdue.edu</a>

#### Newsletter Staff Volunteers:

Jessica Craig-Wissig

Donna Allen

IF YOU HAVE AN ARTICLE YOU WOULD  
LIKE TO SUBMIT TO THE NEWSLETTER,  
PLEASE EMAIL TO:

[DONNAPOUZAR@COMCAST.NET](mailto:DONNAPOUZAR@COMCAST.NET)  
[EMATZAT@PURDUE.EDU](mailto:EMATZAT@PURDUE.EDU)

IF YOU DO NOT HAVE E-MAIL,  
PLEASE MAIL ARTICLES TO:

LA PORTE COUNTY  
EXTENSION OFFICE  
MG NEWSLETTER  
2358 N. U.S. 35  
LA PORTE, IN 46350

"THE LATEST DIRT"  
IS PUBLISHED MONTHLY.  
THE NEXT DEADLINE IS:  
MAY 20, 2009

## HABITAT FOR HUMANITY PLANTING PROJECT

By: Barb Merten, Project Coordinator

Habitat for Humanity will begin building two homes on Willard Avenue in Michigan City in May. There is a two-day **WOMEN ONLY** build on May 8th and May 9th from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. CDT. You don't have to have prior building experience...just a spirit to work with others to accomplish as much as we can in two days! Bring a hammer and gloves and a sunbonnet, rain gear, sun lotion or a jacket. Good idea to tape your name on your hammer. You can go to the habitat website to sign up for that Friday or Saturday or both: [www.laportecountyhabitat.org](http://www.laportecountyhabitat.org).

Any MG men who would like to give building a try can use the same website and sign up for build days other than May 8th or 9th!

I am already gathering plants for the two houses in Michigan City and the La Porte house on Ridge Street. The plants will go into our MG Holding Garden on Pine Lake Avenue until the Michigan City Plant Days, which are scheduled for June 26 and 27 at this time. Hopefully, we can sow grass seed on the same days.

I don't have a date for planting in La Porte yet, but that one may be more toward August or September. I will try to bring a drawing of the house orientations to the May MG meeting and a sign up sheet for plant donations. Also, if you have too many rakes or shovels or hoses or sprinklers etc., those are welcomed donations. Thanks for all you do to make this project possible! If you have questions, please contact me by phone (219-878-1337) or e-mail ([barbmerten@cs.com](mailto:barbmerten@cs.com)).



### Job Opportunity

Reed's Nursery in Valparaiso is offering part-time sales positions to anyone who has a working knowledge of plants.

The position starts at a pay rate of \$9.00 per hour. Retail hours are 7:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Monday thru Friday; 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Saturday; 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. on Sunday. If interested, call Leslie at 219-462-7179.

## EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

Botanical Gardens and Master Gardener Conference Information					
Fernwood Botanical Gardens		LPCMGA is a member of Fernwood Botanical Gardens. Membership card can be signed out at the Extension Office.			
Class Schedule		<a href="http://www.fernwoodbotanical.org/webdata/Calendar/Calendar.htm#may">www.fernwoodbotanical.org/webdata/Calendar/Calendar.htm#may</a>			
		<a href="http://www.fernwoodbotanical.org/webdata/education/EducatPrograms.html">www.fernwoodbotanical.org/webdata/education/EducatPrograms.html</a>			
Master Gardener Seminars		<a href="http://www.hort.purdue.edu/mg/events.html">www.hort.purdue.edu/mg/events.html</a>			
Taltree Arboretum		<a href="http://www.taltree.org/getaway/events/">www.taltree.org/getaway/events/</a>			
Taltree Classes					
Date	Event/Time	Description/Fee		Location	Contact
Sun, May 3	Spring Wildflower Identification Trip 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. (EDT)	Learn how to identify the spring ephemerals in this class taught by Dr. Dennis W. Woodland, Professor of Botany at Andrews University. Members: \$12 Public: \$15		Fernwood Botanical Gardens	269-695-6491
Sun, May 17	Spring Wildflower Identification Field Trip 12 Noon – 5:00 p.m. (EDT)	Continue the lesson on spring ephemerals with Dr. Dennis W. Woodland during this field trip to the protected property of the Edward Lowe Foundation in Cass County. Cost: Members \$12, Public \$15		Fernwood Botanical Gardens	269-695-6491
Do-It-Right Series					
Tues, May 5	What's Bugging The Vegetable Garden	11:00 a.m.- 12:00 noon	Rick Foster, Purdue Extension Entomologist	La Porte County Extension Office meeting room	219-324-9407

## Education Opportunities around Indiana

### Garden Celebration – May 2

Johnson County Master Gardeners are hosting their 5<sup>th</sup> annual Garden Celebration on Saturday, May 2, 2009, from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. EDT in Scott Hall on the Johnson County Fairgrounds in Franklin, IN.

Seminars include *Orchid Growing Basics* with Larry Hill; *Water Quality in Backyard Ponds* with Bob Kirkwood; *Inexpensive but Elegant Arrangements* with Carolyn Clark Kurek; *Rain Gardens* by Todd Stevenson; and *Planning Your*

*Garden for Food Production* by Kimberly Moore.

Tree seedlings will be given away free while supplies last.

Admission is a non-perishable food or toiletry item for the Inter-Church Food Pantry or \$2 per person. For an event flyer, look on the Master Gardener section of Purdue Extension-La Porte County website ([www.extension.purdue.edu/laporte](http://www.extension.purdue.edu/laporte)). For directions to the Johnson County Fairgrounds visit: [www.johnsoncountyfair.com](http://www.johnsoncountyfair.com).

## Gardens and Nurseries in Nappanee and Goshen, Indiana

Wednesday, May 27

Join Fernwood for the day on Wednesday, May 27, as they visit some exceptional nurseries and special gardens in Nappanee and Goshen (Elkhart County).

The first stop is the garden and nursery of Esther Benedict and her family. Esther created the green roof birdhouses you may have seen at Fernwood last year. Her extensive garden contains a rock garden, bog garden, conifers, and many other interesting plants. If you find something you want to purchase, there is no problem as a trailer will be used to haul plant material back to Fernwood.

After a hearty lunch, participants will head to an interesting "Calendar Garden," quite possibly the first of its kind in our area, visit a "traffic-stopping" private perennial garden, and stop off at another nursery specializing in herbs and heirloom plants. You'll be talking about this day long after the blooming season, so call today to get on board!

Trip fee includes bus transportation, transportation of plants back to Fernwood, and a hearty lunch. Advance registration is required by 5:00 pm EDT on Friday, May 22.

Cost: Members \$45; Public \$55

## Back in Thyme Garden Tour - May 30

To benefit the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra Learning Communities  
Reaching over 80,000 students in Indiana schools

Date: Saturday, May 30  
Time: 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. EDT  
Tickets: Call 317-784-5671  
Price: \$10/presale; \$12/gate

Please join Karen Cochran and Vic Hasler as they open their ornate 3-acre gardens for a leisurely garden tour. All proceeds benefit the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra's Learning Communities. **No rain date.**

Historic 1868 Heck-Hasler Home and Gardens is located at 6612 North 575 East, Franklin, IN in, northeast Johnson County, just south of Indianapolis. The house is listed on the U.S. National Register of Historic Places.

## New Non-Credit Course Sick Plants in a Hungry World

By: Rosie Lerner

I am pleased to share a new opportunity for additional education for Master Gardeners, from The Ohio State University. It's a terrific advanced training opportunity for existing Master Gardeners and quite a bargain at just \$35!

This non-credit course is completely online and has 10 modules with topics ranging from basic concepts in plant disease to prehistoric man and plant diseases, and from the Irish Potato Famine to bioterrorism. The course is completely self-paced, so you can take it anytime anywhere. The course is specifically designed for Master Gardener volunteers, however, anyone interested in plants, history, and contemporary global issues will find it exciting and intriguing.

The course will be online for 10 weeks once you begin the program. Assignments consist of supplied module readings and self-tests. You will receive a certificate from the Ohio State University Office of Continuing Educational upon completion.

To learn more about the class, go to:

<http://plantpath.osu.edu/extension/outreach/online/index.html>

To register for the class, visit:

<http://osucedreg.com/profile/form/index.cfm?PKformID=0x15405241>

## HERBAL

### Lavender

By: Jessica Wissig

Why grow Lavender? There are several reasons that come to mind, including that they are a very potent attraction for birds, bees and butterflies - some of my favorite guests. Lavender also smells great, makes a wonderful companion plant, repels some pests, is edible, can be used in dried arrangements, and produces one of my favorite essential oils. That's a lot of potential from one plant!

#### Growing Lavender

There are a few bits of information to help you successfully grow Lavender in our area. First, Lavender is a native of the Mediterranean so it, of course, loves dry, sunny, and rocky conditions. Lucky for us it can tolerate many growing conditions. There are a few varieties that are more hardy and do much better in our zone 5 climate including 'Hidcote' and 'Munstead.' Seed germination rate is generally less than 50% so your chances are better with plants or cuttings. When deciding where to put your new plants, keep in mind that Lavender makes an excellent companion plant, especially to roses. Also, deer tend to avoid these plants so using them for an outline to your hosta or lily beds is a great idea. A slightly acidic pH of 6.1 is preferred but lavender will grow in anything from pH 6.1 to 8.5. The more alkaline soils will give your plants a stronger scent. Start your new plants with a handful of compost in the hole and water regularly the first season. If you have a brick or stone wall available, plant close to it and that will help protect your plants during the winter. Plant your Lavender 18 to 24 inches apart and in areas of high humidity allow extra space to promote good

airflow. Dampness is more likely to kill your plants than cold, as lavender is susceptible to root rot. Lean soil also encourages a higher concentration of oil. Lavender is fairly disease resistant, but it does have a few problems with mealy bugs, whitefly, spider mites, and scale. Mulch your plants at the end of the season to help with winter protection. In the spring, start new plants from cuttings off 1-year old "wood". Most varieties will only stay healthy for about 10 years so you will need to fill in rough spots with new plants. Harvest the flowers as buds begin to open and hang upside down in small bunches to dry. The flowers are edible and very good in salads, cookies, and teas.

#### Pruning

Regular pruning takes place if you harvest flowers each year. To help your plants keep a good shape and to encourage new growth prune tall varieties back as much as 1/3 of its starting height, and take the shorter varieties back just a couple of inches. If your plants have suffered some winter dieback, don't prune them until you can see new growth.

#### Growing in Containers

If you have trouble keeping your plants healthy in our harsh winters, you do have the option to grow lavender in containers and bring them in. Lavender prefers a tight growing area, so choose a pot that holds the root ball with only a few inches to spare. Keep in mind that Lavender is prone to root rot so be sure your pot will allow for good drainage. Your plants will do well in a soil-less mix, or mixed with perlite, vermiculite, coco peat, or oasis foam.

### Lavender Shortbread Cookies

1-1/4 cups all-purpose flour

3 tablespoons sugar

1/2 cup butter

2 teaspoons dried lavender

Sifted powdered sugar

1. Preheat oven to 325 degree F. In a medium mixing bowl stir together flour and sugar. Using a pastry blender, cut in butter until mixture resembles fine crumbs and starts to cling. Stir in lavender. Form mixture into a ball and knead until smooth.

2. Roll or pat dough on an ungreased cookie sheet into an 8x5-inch rectangle. Cut into 1-inch squares or diamonds. Separate the cookies on the cookie sheet.

3. Bake for 18 to 20 minutes or until the bottoms just start to brown. Transfer to wire racks covered with waxed paper to cool. Dust with powdered sugar. Store in a tightly covered container at room temperature for up to 3 days or in the freezer for up to 3 months

Sources:

[www.bhg.com](http://www.bhg.com)

[www.herbgardening.com](http://www.herbgardening.com)

[www.about.com](http://www.about.com)

### Gardeners Can Test at Home to Determine Type of Soil

Recipes for improving your garden soil usually assume that you know something about the soil type you're dealing with—whether it's sandy (think “beach”), clay (slow to dry when it's wet, slow to take up water when it's dry and easily compacted) or something else.

Likewise, advice on choosing a planting site might say, “The best soil for gardening is a good loam.”

Which may leave you wondering what exactly is a loam and whether the soil where you are is a loam.

“All soils are made up of the same components in various proportions,” says Darryl Warncke, Extension soils specialist at Michigan State University. Inorganic materials—sand, silt and clay—are weathered from rocks. Organic matter is primarily decomposed plant material.

“The nature of a soil is determined by the amounts of sand, silt and clay in it,” he said. “Sands or loamy sands contain more than 70 percent sand; sandy clay or clay soils contain more than 40 percent clay as the dominant material. A loam soil generally contains between 30 and 50 percent silt, and between 10 and 15 percent clay. For example, 40 percent sand, 40 percent silt and 20 percent clay.”

“Silt soils,” he notes, “contain more than 90 percent silt and are very rare.”

Sandy soils drain extremely well but have a low capacity to hold nutrients. Clay soils hold nutrients well, but water moves through the clay slowly, either leaving or entering. Clay soils also may become compacted—the particles get pushed together by foot or vehicle traffic until the spaces are usually filled with water or air close up.

The elusive ideal loam? It's a mixture of about 40 percent sand, 40 percent silt and 20 percent clay and a small percentage of organic matter. The result is a soil that drains well, yet has enough clay and organic matter to hold moisture and plant nutrients.

To get an idea of the proportions of sand, silt, clay and organic matter in your soil, fill a quart jar one-third full of topsoil and add water to almost fill it. Then screw on the lid and shake the mixture vigorously until all soil clumps have dissolved. Then set the jar down where you can observe it.

"The larger sand particles will settle out first," Warncke says, "followed in a few hours by the silt and, eventually, the clay. The last layer to settle out will be the organic matter."

The relative thicknesses of the layers indicate the proportions of each component in your soil.

Once you know that, then what?

Knowing that your soil has a high percentage of clay tells you to be especially careful to avoid working the soil or even walking on it when it's wet because of the risk of compaction, which will make it essentially impervious to water and plant roots.

"It's important not to overwork any soil but particularly a clay soil," Warncke says. "Excessive rototilling, especially destroys the structure of any soil, making it more susceptible to compaction."

If your soil is highly sandy, water will drain through it quickly, taking with it any fertilizer and pesticides you may have applied. Therefore, rather than apply enough fertilizer to meet your garden's needs for the whole growing season, you'll want to make several small applications when plants are actively growing so plant roots can take up nutrients before they can leach away to pollute groundwater.

"Making large-scale changes in your soil's basic makeup—by adding sand and organic matter to clay soils to improve drainage, for example—would be a laborious and expensive undertaking," Warncke notes. Instead, he advises repeatedly incorporating organic matter—from green manure crops, crop residue, compost and/or organic mulches.

"Adding organic matter is a good way to improve almost any soil," Warncke suggests. "It improves the water-holding capacity of sandy or silt soils, and improves the ability of water and plant roots to move through clay soils."

It may take several years of organic matter additions to work their magic on poorly drained clay soils, he observes. In the meantime, using alternative approaches such as building raised beds and gardening in containers can help overcome the difficulties that come with clay soils.

Source: Darryl Warncke, Extension soils specialist at Michigan State University.

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### Field bindweed// *Convolvulus arvensis*

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Don't let this morning glory look-alike fool you — it will take over your garden if you let it.

**IDENTIFICATION** — Native to Europe and Asia, field bindweed is a perennial with arrowhead-shaped dark-green leaves along a vine 1 to 4 ft. long. White, pink, or pink and white, 1-in. trumpet-shaped flowers bloom in spring in the South and by midsummer in Northern gardens. Twining up through other plants or along the ground, field bindweed creates large islands as more stems sprout along the fibrous, horizontal root system. In addition, roots can reach 10 to 20 ft. below the surface. As if the deep roots weren't enough, bindweed reproduces by seed, too.

**FAVORITE CONDITIONS** — Field bindweed grows throughout most of the United States and Canada, except for the southernmost parts of the Southeast, southern Texas, New Mexico and southern Arizona. This weed isn't picky about soil and grows in anything from loam to heavy clay. You'll see it in gardens, ditches, along roadsides or any open area in full sun.

**CONTROL** — The key to beating this pest is to

deprive the roots of nourishment as much as possible. It's not easy, but persistence pays off. Apply a glyphosate herbicide, such as Roundup®, to mature plants before they set seed. Unfortunately, repeat applications are usually necessary. Be careful using this systemic herbicide around the garden plants you want to keep — it'll kill them, too.

You can also try digging the roots out. Dig down at least 6 in. and 3 or 4 in. out from the main rhizome. Use a digging fork rather than a spade to avoid breaking up the roots. Dispose of the plants in the garbage. Then cover the area with landscape fabric or a 3- to 4-in.-thick layer of mulch to discourage resprouting. No matter what method you choose, keep the flowers clipped to prevent seeds from forming. One plant may produce up to 550 seeds, which can remain viable in the soil for 50 years.

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## THE LATEST DIRT ON....

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**Name:** Ann Klosinski

**Master Gardener Status:** Advanced Master Gardener

**When did you take the MG Class?** 2006

**Where do you live?**

La Porte (in Vintage Hills, which is a subdivision in the county between LP and MC)

**Are you originally from LaPorte? If not, where did you live before you moved here?**

I grew up in Michigan City on South Ohio Street near Marquette Mall. Our family home was on 3 acres

and back then it was not incorporated into Michigan City-It was all farmland including the property where the Mall now sits. After that I lived in Trail Creek for 20 years and that is where my children grew up until their teen years. When Russ and I married we built the home we live in now and all 6 of our teenage children lived with us! We're now "Empty Nesters."

**What's your family background? Husband? Kids? Pets?**

Husband of 17 years Russ and I have a blended family of 6 children ranging in age from 30 to 37 (4 are from my first marriage-3 daughters and one son-Kim, Kerry, Kristina and Kevin. 2 are from Russ' first marriage-one son, Todd and one daughter, Karen). We have 9 grandchildren and are expecting 2 more later this year. We have 3 cats, 1 pure-bred Maine Coon (Lucie)-she was a gift from my daughter on my 50th birthday, a black and gray tabby named Cindy, a stray that followed us around a nursery as we were shopping for plants and we ended up taking her home, and Rudy a gold and white cat from the Humane Society that I surprised Russ with on our anniversary.

**Do you work and, if so, what do you do?**

I am a Customer Service Rep in the inside Sales Department at Filter Specialists in Michigan City. I have been there for 18 years and plan on retiring by the end of the year. It amazes me how many different uses filters have-got a call from someone who was making compost "tea" to fertilize their garden and needed to filter it. I also hold a Real Estate License, but am not currently active.

**How long have you been gardening?**

Was never really as serious a gardener as some of the members of our Association but I plan on being out in our 1 1/2 acre yard more after I retire. Gardening was a part of our chores when I was growing up-we got paid one penny for every dandelion we pulled from the lawn and had to keep the large raspberry patch and the vegetable and flower beds weeded. Just helping my Dad and Mom maintain those 3 acres taught me most

of what I know about gardening. It was a good life even though we didn't think those chores were so much fun at the time.

**Do you have a favorite flower? Vegetable?**

My favorite flower is the Daisy and my favorite vegetable is sugar snap peas.

**What type of gardening do you enjoy the most?**

Probably flowers at this time. I have all kinds of great ideas about plantings in different areas of our property-it just takes time, hard work and money. And then if the deer would just quit using the garden for grazing we'd be in good shape!

**Other than gardening, what other interests/hobbies do you have?**

Mostly spending time with my children, going on vacations with Russ (some of the trips are to Disney World with the grandchildren-not all of them go at the same time!) Some of our vacations have been on Russ' Honda Goldwing-the longest trip was to California and back. I also enjoy "domestic" interests, especially cooking.

**THE LATEST DIRT ON...**



**Name:** Barbara Dean

**Master Gardener Status:** Master Gardener

**When did you take the MG Class?** 2007

**Where do you live?**

Rolling Prairie

**Are you originally from LaPorte? If not, where did you live before you moved here?**

Originally lived in South Bend, moved to La Porte County 40 years ago.

**What's your family background? Husband? Kids? Pets?**

I have a husband now retired. I had 2 children, lost my daughter to cancer in 2005. 8 grandchildren. Pets include a black lab, parakeet, and several barn cats.

**Do you work and, if so, what do you do?**

Retired from County of La Porte as County Recorder.

**How long have you been gardening?**

My grandmother taught me to garden when I was 4. I helped plant onions. Every year when I plant a garden I always remember that. She also taught me the names of a lot of flowers.

**Do you have a favorite flower? Vegetable?**

I enjoy variety. I always plant the traditional vegetable garden intermixing flowers for bouquets. However, I try to plant something new or different every year just for fun.

**What type of gardening do you enjoy the most?**

Traditional gardening is the most fun.

**Other than gardening, what other interests/hobbies do you have?**

I have many hobbies. I enjoy doing crafts, crocheting, knitting, baking, sewing and needle work. I still can (preserve) many of our fruits and vegetables and make jelly. I like music and am trying to learn to play the violin. I would like to take a painting class in the near future.



[www.hort.purdue.edu/mg/](http://www.hort.purdue.edu/mg/)