

# The Latest Dirt

La Porte County Master Gardener Newsletter



SEPTEMBER 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

September 3 General Meeting  
La Porte County Fair Grounds  
Sheriff's Training Room  
Small Projects Building

October 1 Workshop  
November 5 General Meeting  
Election of Officers

## NEXT BOARD MEETING

Monday, October 12, 5:00 p.m.  
Purdue Extension -  
La Porte County Office



## Rose-of-Sharon Can Grow Up to 12 Feet!

By: B. Rosie Lerner

Purdue University Extension Consumer Horticulturist

If you live in the Midwest, you are likely familiar with the summer-blooming shrub commonly called rose-of-Sharon, but you may not know it by its other common name—shrub althea. You may not be aware that it is a hibiscus, that its scientific name is *Hibiscus syriacus* or that it belongs to the Mallow family, Malvaceae.



Rose-of-Sharon is a large shrub, reaching up to 12 feet in height and nearly that in spread. The plant adapts well to most soil conditions, except extremely wet or dry, and is generally hardy throughout Indiana. It will perform best in moist but well-drained soil in full sun. The foliage is late to leaf out in spring, remains green through late autumn and has little, if any, display of fall color.

The primary attraction is its large flowers of white, red, purple or blue, beginning in late June to early July and often continuing through August and perhaps September. When all goes well, the plants are loaded with blooms, virtually covering the entire shrub.

However, failure to bloom and bud drop seem to be common problems with rose-of-Sharon, and, yet, we don't know exactly why. It flowers on the new growth each year, so even if the plant experiences winter injury, it is still able to produce flower buds. But many are frustrated when the plant puts on lots of buds that fail to open. Sometimes the plant may start out blooming normally but, as summer wears on, the buds start to drop prematurely.

Individual flowers of the plant are not particularly long lasting, so it is difficult to say what is premature blossom drop. Hot temperatures, heavy rains, wind, etc. will hasten drop of mature blooms. But, if buds and immature blossoms are falling, it may be caused by plant stress, such as too little or too much moisture and/or fertilizer.

There is a fungal disease called botrytis that infects flower buds and causes them to turn brown and drop, often before or just after they open. Thrips are an insect pest that feed on flower buds and can cause the buds to drop. It is possible that a combination of these factors is to blame.

But I do wonder whether some bud drop is just "normal" for this species. After all, the shrub does tend to produce huge numbers of flower buds, so maybe this is nature's way of thinning out the load so the plant's resources are not over-whelmed.

Since it flowers on new growth, you can prune rose-of-Sharon in late winter or early spring. It can be pruned back hard to keep the plant more compact. If fewer, but larger, blooms are desired, you can trim back again in late spring to reduce the number of flower buds per stem. Some authors recommend pruning back to two or three flower buds per stem. I wonder if this would reduce the blossom drop as well?

This article was printed in *The Farmer's Exchange* of July 24, 2009.

## 2009 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## EXECUTIVE BOARD

PRESIDENT	RUSS KLOSINSKI
VICE PRES.	BARBARA DEAN
SECRETARY	ANN KLOSINSKI
TREASURER	SHARON CHOLEWA

## BOARD MEMBERS

MARCY DAILEY  
 JAN KOSS  
 KATHY LEWIS  
 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 \_\_\_\_\_ [mwolff@purdue.edu](mailto:mwolff@purdue.edu)

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Auction Update

I would like to thank everyone who donated items and bid so enthusiastically which made our August meeting a lot of fun.

The auction raised over \$160 for our organization. This far exceeded our expectations.

Volunteer Hours

Interns, please check your hours. The year is rapidly going along and you may need to take advantage of the Garden Hotline or Farmers' Market Q & A Table to add the necessary hours to complete your internship.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

## ATTENTION PROJECT COORDINATORS

As you may know, the 2010 budget will be presented to the membership at the Nov. 2009 meeting. The budget committee needs to have an estimate figure for your project for 2010. These figures are very important and helpful to the budget committee. Please turn this amount in to the treasurer at the September meeting or email Sharon Cholewa at:

[stevshar@netnitco.net](mailto:stevshar@netnitco.net).

We want to give each project the consideration it deserves.

## First Yard Class Reminder

By: Jan Koss, Project Coordinator

The fall First Yard Class is scheduled for Saturday, September 19<sup>th</sup> in the meeting room at the Michigan City Library on 4<sup>th</sup> Street. The class runs from 10:00 a.m. to Noon CDT. Pre-registration is required by September 16<sup>th</sup> at a cost of \$5, otherwise \$7 at the door. If you know someone who is interested, please pass the word.

## SEPTEMBER GENERAL MEETING

Thursday, September 3

La Porte County Fairgrounds  
Sheriff's Training Room in the  
Small Projects Building  
(across from the Community Building)

6:00 p.m. Refreshments

6:30 p.m. Meeting

### Guest Speaker:

Keith O'Herrin

Urban Forester for the City of La Porte  
*"What Urban Foresters Do"*

### Plant Swap

Please bring in your extra potted plants, bulbs or bare root plants. Label them and pot them. You will be given a letter when you sign in. The Letters spell: **La Porte County Master Gardeners**. This will be the sequence called to come take a few plants.

*Refreshments provided by:*

*Barbara Coates*

# Happy Birthday!

## SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS!

9 Myrna Harder

13 Dennis Amm

## PROJECT UPDATES

### Pioneer Garden

By: Sharon Cholewa, Project Coordinator

Wow! What a beautiful week for the fair. And apparently everyone else thought so too. Record crowds, at least in the garden. 18 Master Gardeners volunteered to work 21 shifts. The garden was staffed by 2 Master gardeners on each shift every day from 12 noon until 9:00 pm. Volunteers had little time to sit down. All in all, Master Gardeners had time to record 1,138 contacts during the fair (compared to 736 contacts in 2008). Volunteers said they did not have time to record or remember how many people they actually talked to. The actual number of contacts is probably more around 1,200. There were 24 people who signed up for the Master Gardener class in September.

Because of a wet and cold spring and a very cool summer, the garden was at least 3 weeks behind, but visitors were still impressed and gave many nice compliments. They were genuinely interested in the garden and had a lot of intelligent questions. This may show a renewed interest in people getting back to vegetable gardening.

Volunteers included Pat Bogue, Sacha Burns, Sharon Cholewa, John Connors, Barbara Coates, Nancy Daube, Carolyn Gardner, Maryanne Garon, JoEllen Jongkind, Marian Massengill, Barb Merten, Laurelle Miskowicz, Mary J. Nichols, Loretta Pressel, Marina Studt, Lois Thomas, Frank Zolvinski, and Sue Zolvinski.

Thanks to all Master Gardeners who had a hand in planning, planting, and maintaining the garden and those who volunteered their time during the fair. A job well done!

### Pioneer Garden Featured on Row Crop Ag Tour

The 2009 Row Crop Ag Tour & Barbecue was held on August 4 at the La Porte County Fairgrounds. Part of the ag tour prior to the delicious meal featured the Pioneer Garden.

Sharon Cholewa greeted over 200 guests of Row Crop, who learned about the importance of gardens in the early agriculture of La Porte County. Other stops included the new Artisan Barn, the 4-H Draft Horse project, the 4-H ATV project and the future plans of the La Porte County Fairgrounds.

Started in 1845 as an agricultural association to promote good crop and animal production practices, La Porte County Fair is the oldest county fair in the state.

# NEW PURDUE GEAR

By: Rose Lerner



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*Bulk orders for county Master Gardener groups can be arranged; email [purduemg@purdue.edu](mailto:purduemg@purdue.edu) to inquire.*



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Here's a sampling of what's available at our new Purdue Master Gardener Merchandise Webstore.

Purdue Master Gardener Gear is operated by Freckles Graphics, Inc. of Lafayette, IN, who will process and ship all orders directly to you. You can order online or you can finalize your order over the phone.

A portion of each purchase will come back to Purdue University and the Purdue Master Gardener Program. Bulk orders for county Master Gardener groups can be arranged. E-mail: [purduemg@purdue.edu](mailto:purduemg@purdue.edu) to inquire.

Start shopping now at:

[www.frecklesgraphics.com/Master\\_Gardener](http://www.frecklesgraphics.com/Master_Gardener)

You'll also find a link to the new merchandise store on our Purdue Master Gardener website.

Let us know if you have any questions or suggestions for items to add in the future.



5" by 5" Window Decal  
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\$17.98  
*Available in several colors*

**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”  
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*Gardening Articles* Nancy Daube  
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**Newsletter Staff Volunteers:**

Jessica Craig-Wissig  
 Donna Allen

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

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[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:  
 SEPTEMBER 20, 2009

**VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

**Garden Hot Line Schedule**

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 Noon



**SEPTEMBER**

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	1	2 Donna Allen	3	4
7 OFFICE CLOSED LABOR DAY	8	9	10	11
14	15	16 Sue Burns	17	18
21 JoEllen Jongkind Carolyn Gardner	22	23 Sue Burns	24	25
28	29	30		

**Calling all Mentors! Calling all Mentors!**

Late last year several of Master Gardeners volunteered to serve as mentors to our present class of interns. We have been having a difficult time this year filling spots at the Garden Hotline and Farmers Market Q&A Table. These are two areas where interns usually log many volunteer hours. Please contact your assigned intern to see how they stand with their hours. We are over halfway through the year and, hopefully, they are half way towards getting their volunteer hours. If you hear of any particular problem please forward that to me.

Thanks,  
 Russ Klosinski, LPCMGA President

**Note:** MG interns were asked to staff at least one Garden Hotline session or Q&A Table after completing the MG training in order to become certified as a Master Gardener ~ MG Program Coordinator

## 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#jan">www.fernwoodbotanical.org/webdata/Calendar/Calendar.htm#jan</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/default.asp?cat=all">www.taltree.org/getaway/events/default.asp?cat=all</a>	
ADVANCED MASTER GARDENER TRAINING			
Date	Event/Time/Fee	Description/Fee	Location/Contact
Sat. Sept. 12	<i>Prairie Development Class</i> 9:00 a.m. – Noon \$12 –Members \$15- Non-members  <b>CLASS SIZE IS LIMITED REGISTER EARLY</b>	Learn how to create a prairie in your own yard from Mark and Pat Scales, who will share their experience with converting a local agricultural field into a native grass prairie. Included in the presentation are tax advantages, planning, planting, preserving and selecting seed sources for your own prairie.	Taltree Arboretum and Gardens Taltree's classroom, 71 North 500 West., Valparaiso, IN. (219) 462-0025, e-mail <a href="mailto:info@taltree.org">info@taltree.org</a> or visit the Taltree Arboretum & Gardens Web site: <a href="http://www.taltree.org/">http://www.taltree.org/</a>
Sat. Oct. 24	<i>Creating a Spring Wildflower Garden</i> 10:00 a.m. - Noon	Lake County Master Gardener Diane Fruth will guide you through the selection and planting of trillium, bloodroot, anemone, hepatica and other spring flowers native to Northwest Indiana. Learn how to incorporate these heralds of spring into your home garden.	Same as above.

### “Adventures in Gardening”

A garden seminar presented by the Hendricks County Master Gardeners Inc.

**October 3, 2009 - 8:30-3:30pm**

Hendricks County 4-H Fairgrounds, Danville, IN

“Gardening by Design & by Accident” - Keynote Speaker Gene Bush

While some gardeners design in advance of shopping for perennials, most of us purchase on impulse, bring the plant home and then try to work it in among all our other impulses. Learn how to incorporate your buys in your garden!

“Indiana’s Native Orchids” - Botanist Michael Homoya. Michael has had a lifelong interest in orchids. He has written a book and has firsthand knowledge of each kind of orchid known in Indiana.

“Great Landscaping Ideas 101 ways to add piazza and fun to your outdoor space.” - Master Gardener Colletta Kosiba. See 101 terrific slides of other gardens to give you new ideas to use at home. Fences, Rocks, Water, Creatures, Arbors.

“The Greatest Most Fantastical New Plants Ever” - IMA Horticulture Display Coordinator Irvin Etienne. Many new annuals and perennials come on the market every year. We will take a look at some of the latest and some that are soon to arrive.

All day seminar includes a luscious continental breakfast and lunch - for only \$30.  
Registration deadline is Sept. 25; online info and registration form at [www.hendricksgardeners.com](http://www.hendricksgardeners.com).  
For more information call: 317-745-9260

## GARDENING

### Gardening Can Be Hail

By B. Rosie Lerner, Extension Consumer Horticulturist Purdue University

Many gardeners, myself included, have had their lovely flowers flattened by hail in recent weeks. Trees and shrubs have had many leaves ripped from the stem, leaving a carpet of drying foliage on the yard and in the house gutters. And it seems that we're not out of the woods yet, as more storms are predicted in coming days.

So what can you do to help plants recover from such damage? The answer depends on the specifics: which plants are affected, the stage of plant development, and as always, what other environmental stressors are at work.

The good news is that for woody trees and shrubs and perennial flowers, there is plenty of growing season left to make a decent recovery. While blooms are likely to be sacrificed, the plants will live on.

Both woody and herbaceous perennials will likely grow new foliage to replace the damaged leaves. The plants may look a bit ragged in the meantime. Trim back broken perennials to help stimulate re-growth. Check woody plants for broken and badly bruised limbs, pruning the damaged portions as needed. Make a clean cut back to healthy tissue, and avoid leaving stubs of partial branches.

For annual flowers and vegetables, some plants will be able to re-grow while others may need to be replaced. The relatively prolonged, cool spring has resulted in a rather slow gardening season this year, so plants may already have been behind in their development. The hail damage will be another setback.

Bedding flowers that are normally pinched during the growing season, such as petunias, impatiens, zinnias, and marigolds, are quite likely to come out of the damage fairly quickly. Leafy greens may recover, but if stems of fruiting plants, such as tomatoes, peppers and squash are broken, it is better to replant.

Give the plants a week or so to assess the amount of recovery. If plants appear to be re-growing, clean up the broken, dead foliage as best you can.

If you haven't already fertilized, a light application may help speed along recovery. Even plants that were fertilized earlier this spring might need a booster application to replace that lost during frequent heavy rains.

### Shrubs May Aid in Energy Conservation

By: Susan Grupp, University of Illinois Extension Environmental Science Educator

"Careful placement of trees, shrubs, vines and groundcover not only adds to the beauty of the landscape, reduce pollution and erosion, and provide wildlife habitat, it can help reduce energy use," said a University of Illinois Extension environmental science educator.

"Although you can't get outside and plant right now, this is a good time to evaluate your landscape," said Susan Grupp. "Cold wind can steal up to one-third of your home's heat, while summer sunshine entering through windows can increase unwanted heat.

"Following a few tips can help reduce energy use."

Foundation plantings, especially along a whole wall and even around the corners, can create a space of dead air—helping to insulate the home and reduce heat loss.

"Locate shrubs and vines so they are at least one foot away from the home's wall when they are fully grown and developed." She said. "Evergreens are the best choice, but do not plant a solid row of one kind, such as all yews or junipers. This is visually boring.

"Be sure to choose a variety of plants so their heights, leaf colors, and textures create an attractive appearance. Adding groups of deciduous shrubs, too, placed in front of the evergreens creates contrast and landscape interest."

Windbreaks are also important.

"Carefully placed rows of trees and shrubs can be very good at deflecting wind away from the home at ground level," she said. "A full-fledged windbreak requires space. For example, to achieve maximum protection, a windbreak should be placed away from your home a distance of two to five times the height of the fully-grown trees.

"In areas with small lot sizes this can be difficult to achieve, but you can still help block the wind by adding a few trees and shrubs to existing trees, walls, fences, and berms."

Windbreaks should be located on the north or northwest corner of your home. Dense, low-branching trees, especially evergreens, are the best at blocking the wind close to the ground.

Deciduous trees can be helpful in reducing cooling costs.

(continued on page 8)

“Carefully locate deciduous trees so that your home gets the most benefit from their shade.” Said Grupp. “In summer, a mature deciduous tree can block about 60 to 90 percent of the sun. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, properly placed trees can help save up to 25 percent of household energy used for cooling.”

To reduce any danger of trees falling on your home, concentrate on shading walls and windows. Choose low-growing trees that will be at least 10 feet taller than the window, and ones that will fit when planted within 20 feet of the window without touching the home. Plant trees due west for west-facing windows, the most important ones to shade. For east-facing windows, plant trees due east.

“Contrary to what you might think, planting trees on your home’s south side is not recommended for saving energy because the summer sun is high in the sky and the shade is cast downward at midday—and not on the walls or windows,” said Grupp.

“In the winter, when the sun is lower in the sky, the shade—even from bare branches and trunks—is cast on your windows for most of the day, reducing the solar benefit.”

Grupp also recommended placing trees so they cast shade on your air conditioner, which lowers air temperatures and helps it run more efficiently. Be careful not to block air circulation.

“Plant trees, shrubs and groundcovers to shade the ground around your home, patio, and walk,” she said. “Shade your driveway, too, so less air conditioning is used to cool your car in the summer.”

Choosing the right plant is critical for success. For information on tree selection, Grupp recommended a web site [www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/treeselector/](http://www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/treeselector/).

For shrub selection, visit another web site [www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/shrubselector/](http://www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/shrubselector/).

Printed in *The Farmer’s Exchange* of Jan. 9, 2009.

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### Floriculture Meeting to Feature Panel

By: Liz Maynard, Purdue Extension Hort Specialist  
Commercial Vegetable & Floriculture Crops

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The next Northwest Indiana Floriculture Association (NWIFA) meeting will be held at Bultema’s Farm and Greenhouse in Beecher, IL, on Thursday, September 10, 2009 from 6:00 to 8:30 p.m. CDT.

The meeting will feature a panel discussion with customers discussing what worked and what didn’t this season, and what they’d like to see next year.

More information about the meeting is posted at <http://faculty.pnc.edu/emaynard/nwifa/nwifa.html>.

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### Tomato Plot Open House at Pinney PAC

By: Liz Maynard, Purdue Extension Hort Specialist  
Commercial Vegetable & Floriculture Crops

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All are invited to attend an open house at Pinney Purdue Ag Center, Wanatah, on Thursday, September 3, 2009, from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. CDT. Participants will enjoy a wagon tour of tomato trials with time to take a closer look at production methods and varieties.

Research trials include tomato cropping systems using organic and non-organic methods; plastic mulch, straw mulch, and strip-tilled clover as a “living mulch.” Also featured will be ten heirloom tomato varieties.

Pinney Purdue Ag Center is located at 11402 S. County Line Road, Wanatah (about a mile west of Wanatah on US 30, then north ½ mile on County Line Road.

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### Pumpkin Twilight Meeting at Pinney PAC

By: Liz Maynard, Purdue Extension Hort Specialist  
Commercial Vegetable & Floriculture Crops

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Folks interested in raising pumpkins are invited to attend a pumpkin twilight meeting at Pinney Purdue Ag Center, Wanatah, on Thursday, September 17, 2009, from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. CDT. Participants will enjoy a wagon and walking tour of pumpkin plots to compare variety performance with and without treatment for powdery mildew.

Purdue Extension Specialists Dan Egel and Liz Maynard will discuss disease management, variety highlights, and production methods used in the plots.

Pinney Purdue Ag Center is located at 11402 S. County Line Road, Wanatah (about a mile west of Wanatah on US 30, then north ½ mile on County Line Road.



THE LATEST DIRT ON ...

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We’d love to hear more about our members. Call the Extension office for a questionnaire. Please fill it out and send it in by Sept. 20<sup>th</sup> for the October issue!