The Garfield Gardener

THE NEWSLETTER OF GARFIELD PARK MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

October 2026
Next Meeting

October 14
Topic: *Creatures and Critters: No One Gardens Alone*
Speaker: Carol J. Michel, Author and Gardenangelist

Programs are being planned on a month-to-month basis according to Purdue University Extension Office Guidelines.

2026 Meeting Dates

November 11
December 9

Purdue University is an equal opportunity / equal access / affirmative action university.

If you require an accommodation or special assistance to attend these programs due to a disability, please contact Carey Grable at 317.275.9279. Some accommodations may require 2 weeks notice.

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Learn more at:
www.IndyGPMGA.com
www.IndyMG.org
www.IndyHorticulture.org

President's Message: Fall, Skeletons and Cucurbits Are Here

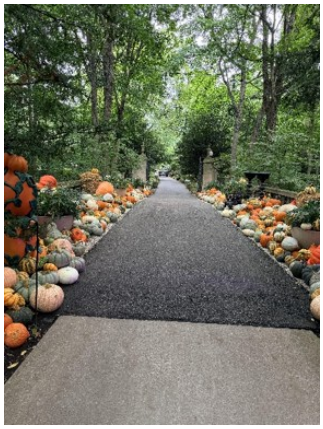
Greetings!

October has been glorious here in Indianapolis, with warm days and cool nights—I haven't needed the heat or air conditioning for days.

One thing that truly signals the fall season (besides all the skeletons) is the variety of pumpkins, squash and gourds. All belonging to the genus *Cucurbita*, these plants originated in Asia and Mexico around 11,000 years ago. Since then, they have been bred to feature a wide range of softer skins, colors, shapes, textures and flavors. As someone who loves eating pumpkin and squash, this time of year is a real culinary delight.

If you would like to see an impressive collection of different cucurbits, I highly recommend visiting Newfields to view their garden displays. They even have labeled varieties on pedestals in the museum's main hall.

Here is a small sample to whet your visual appetite:



IMPORTANT: Leadership Openings for Next Year

Please review the following open board and leadership roles for next year. If you are interested or have any questions, please reach out to me or the current member holding the position:

- Treasurer: This is a vital position that should have prior financial experience or a similar role with other organizations.
- Hospitality Co-Chair: We are looking for a co-chair to assist Amanda with hospitality duties.

Events and Garden Happenings

See the Garfield Park Conservatory website for details on upcoming events: Garfield Park Conservatory - Indianapolis

—Kay Martin-Pence, GPMGA President

Conservatory Tours

October 10 (11:00 a.m.)
Adam Musgrove

October 24 (11:00 a.m.)
Arlene Bow
Oren Cooley

At the Conservatory

October 29 & 30 (5:30-9:00 p.m.)
Haunted Conservatory
Garfield Park Conservatory

5:30 - 7:00 p.m. Less Haunted Conservatory. Bring the little ones in their costumes for Halloween fun during the conservatory's less scary daylight hours. There will be no "scarers"—just tropical plants all decked out for Halloween. (Recommended for ages 2+)

7:00 - 9:00 p.m. Get Spooked as you walk through the Haunted Conservatory, complete with scary music, decorations and ghouls! The event includes the use of strobe lights and artificial fog. (Recommended for ages 8+)

No pre-registration; admission is paid at the door. The cost is $6 per person.

For more information, visit www.garfieldgardensconservatory.org.

GPMGA's Next Meeting: October 14

Our next meeting, Wednesday, October 14, at 6:30 p.m. at the Garfield Park Conservatory, features Carol J. Michel discussing everything from raccoons and possums to dinosaurs. Nope. Not a typo; she will connect them!

From the seen to the unseen to the mythical, you are never alone in your garden. You may be surprised to find a toad sitting beside a rabbit who just talked to a dinosaur. Through this light-hearted presentation—titled *Creatures and Critters: No One Gardens Alone*—find out who's helping, who's hindering and who's just hanging around in your garden.

Carol J. Michel is the award-winning author of five books of humorous and helpful gardening essays and two children's books. Her books include: *Potted & Pruned: Living a Gardening Life* (2017), which won a 2018 Gold Award for Best Overall Book from GardenComm: Garden Communicators International; *Homegrown and Handpicked: A Year in a Gardening Life* (2018), which received a second-place award for non-fiction humor books in 2019 from the Woman's Press Club of Indiana; *Seeded and Sodded: Thoughts from a Gardening Life* (2019), which received a first-place award from the National Federation of Press Woman in 2020 for non-fiction humor books; and *Creatures and Critters: Who's in Your Garden* (2020), which received a second-place award for non-fiction humor books in 2021 from the Woman's Press Club of Indiana. The fifth book, *Digging and Delighted: Live Your Best Gardening Life* (2021), received a third-place award from the Woman's Press Club of Indiana.

With degrees in horticulture and computer technology, she spent over three decades making a living in healthcare IT while making a life in her garden.

In between tending her own garden, writing, and reading, she records a weekly podcast, *The Gardenangelists*, with Dee Nash, and publishes a weekly gardening diary and a biweekly article titled *Lost Ladies of Garden Writing*, both on Substack.

2026 GPMGA Officers/Committee Chairs

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Please contact the officers and chairs of the Garfield Park Master Gardener Association if you have any questions or suggestions.

GPMGA Minutes: September 9

The GPMGA met at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, September 9, at the Garfield Park Conservatory.

Kay Martin-Pence (President): Meeting minutes are approved.

Danielle Randles (Vice-President): Not present; Nothing to report.

Cindy Maude (Treasurer): The balance of the account as of August 31 was $12,172.63. There are still some outstanding grants to fulfill; We also have a new member.

Program: *Invasive Species* by Lynn Lautzenhiser and Josephine Lock, Boone County Invasive Cooperative

JoAnn Klooz (Programs): October program will be presented by Carol Michel about fall garden tasks; November program will be presented by Brooke Alford with the Indiana Native Plant Society. Please save gallon semi-translucent jugs to bring to this meeting (if you use them).

Committee Reports:

- Amanda Anez (Hospitality-Snack Coordinator): Thank you for bringing all the snacks.
- Carrie Alumbaugh (Plant Sale Chair): Not present; Nothing to report.
- Victoria Metheaux (Conservatory Tour Coordinator): Tours are covered.
- Oren Cooley (Newsletter/Publicity Director): Thank you for the ideas. If you have any suggestions, please send them in.
- Will Gerlib (Website Coordinator): Not present.
- Teresa McCurry (Garfield Park Volunteer Coordinator): Still volunteering at the conservatory; Will likely still be doing work through October. Mostly work through the Sunken Gardens but also in the conservatory. If interested, please let Teresa know.
  - *Bought equipment for the conservatory staff: Bypass pruners; electric pole saw with extension pole; Totaling $434.
  - *Also purchased bulbs for the conservatory as funding was cut and they were unable to purchase bulbs; 2,000 assorted bulbs for $1,100;
  - *Memorial tree for late member Michael Doran has been approved by the Park; Will likely be a native redbud to be purchased through Digs Garden Center for around $150-$200; Will also get a memorial plaque for the tree.

—Respectfully submitted,
Adam Musgrove

Herb Society's Soap Making Workshops

The Herb Society of Central Indiana will offer two workshops this month on how to make soap using chamomile-infused oil.

The Herb Society's Sharon Patterson has been making soap for about 20 years. She will show participants both the cold process and hot process of making soap.

The workshop includes handouts, resources and samples. Participants will leave with a sample of the soap she demonstrates and instructions.

The workshops will occur on the following dates:

October 13 (6:00 - 8:00 p.m.)
Holliday Park, 6363 Spring Mill Road, Indianapolis
Register at 317-327-7180

October 17 (10:00 - 11:30 a.m.)
Garfield Park, 2505 Conservatory Drive, Indianapolis
Register at 317-327-7183

Garfield Park Master Gardener Association

Garfield Park Master Gardener Association
Helping Others Grow
www.indygpmga.com

in association with

Purdue Extension - Marion County
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Indiana State Fairgrounds
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If you require an accommodation or special assistance to attend programs due to a disability, please contact Carey Grable at 317-275-9290 or Barb Rusin at 317-275-9279. Some accommodations may require 2 weeks notice.

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Questions: Contact Carey Grable at cagrable@purdue.edu or at 317-275-9290.

Helping Others Grow
Sharing Knowledge
Volunteer Commitment

From the Bookshelf . . .

The Goth Garden: The Mystery, Beauty and Lore of Dark Gardening
by Felicia Feaster

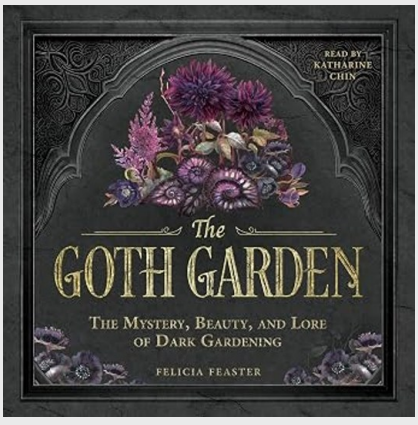
Explore the mysterious beauty of gothic gardening with this illustrated plant encyclopedia, featuring the history, myths and lore behind 50 “dark” and unique plants perfect for creating a very spooky garden.

From the Mangave Black Widow to the humble mint plant, discover the hidden stories behind plants that bring a moody vibe to any garden. Learn what makes a garden truly gothic while uncovering the fascinating histories and legends of these plants.

Among the varieties, this volume explores the “Queen of the Night” tulip, a famous, single, late-flowering cultivar prized for its deep, velvety maroon-purple petals that appear almost jet-black. Or, learn about the “Black Magic” petunia which features velvety, deep, near-black trumpet-shaped flowers as well.

Unearth the secrets of plants like “Black Lace” Elderberry, with its dark foliage and connections to Freya, the Norse goddess of love and death, or the deep red basil that adds both flavor and gothic flair to any garden.

Whether a seasoned gardener or just beginning a botanical journey, *The Goth Garden* will inspire gardeners to transform their space into an enchanting, gothic retreat filled with mystery and life.



Halloween Decorating with Plants

By mixing seasonal fall blooms with decorative pumpkins and other accents, you can create the ultimate porch display to celebrate the season.

It is not simply about growing the best fall flowers for pots. It is also about choosing planting arrangements that complement and enhance the Halloween decor. There are several decorating ideas below one can use to reflect the season.

Celebrate Harvest Season

Halloween lands right in the midst of harvest season. To give the porch a spooky, witchy twist, gather unusual vegetables with intriguing colors and shapes. For example, ornamental cabbage, with its bright purple center, bring color and unique texture to any fall container. Their soft yet sturdy, waxy leaves and rounded growth make them unlike any other fall annual.

Plant Colorful Foliage

Just like unique-toned vegetables, there are plenty of plants perfect for Halloween because of their striking foliage, such as coleus. Just keep in mind they will not survive beyond the first frost.

Heuchera, also, comes in many moody colors—like smokey purples and some varieties that are almost black—perfect for any Halloween porch scene.

To extend fall color beyond the porch, use these plants to edge the path leading up to the porch. A simple terracotta planter allows for the colorful foliage to have its own moment.

Add Black Mondo Grass

Ornamental grasses bring movement and texture to Halloween porch planting ideas.

A stand-out choice is black mondo grass. As its name suggests, it is a grass purple-black in color and even develops dark, shiny blue-black berries after summer. Its dark color is the perfect, striking contrast to orange pumpkins. It can be grown in containers or lining pathways up to the porch.

The best part is that black mondo grass will continue wowing after Halloween as one of the best ornamental grasses for winter interest.

Use Corn Stalks for Height

There is no doubt that dried corn stalks offer a styled approach to spooky decor. The best part is, if one grows corn, one will have dried stalks to put on display by the end of October.

The more corn stalks, the more drama. Thus, try tying them together with twine. Pair them with other architectural plants, such as the best plants for seedheads and the plants one typically does not deadhead.

As well as embracing the fall season through these plants, the fact that they are fading and dying leans into the Halloween theme while looking beautiful in their own right.

(continued on Page 5)

Newfields' 2026 Harvest Nights

Journey through fog-filled forests along The Pumpkin Path of Peril and take in tens of thousands of gourdgeous pumpkins and jack-o-lanterns during Harvest Nights in The Garden at Newfields from now until November 1.

Visitors will discover that something delightfully twisted has taken root in The Garden at Newfields as they experience this spooky, but not scary, spectacle. Harvest Nights is presented by Everwise Credit Union.

Wander through Fungi Forest featuring 50 larger-than-life, handmade mushrooms by Kara Kent and local partner, Expo Arts, LLC. Then, as one traverses The Pumpkin Path of Peril enroute to Mischief Manner, one will feel the Ghost Train rumble beneath one's feet.

Brand new this year, chase away the ghosts of Mischief Manor with Boo Shoo, a new interactive element by Lightborne. Explore new tricks and treats in Mischief Manor presented by Tiffany Skilling Interiors, including thirty hand crafted jack-o-lantern sculptures by local artist, Katie Lloyd-Jones and a new zoetrope shadow show by Lightborne.

Grown up ghouls 21 and older can head upstairs to the Harvest Nights Lounge presented by Cutwater to sip and savor the experience. Plus, do not miss the wicked state-of-the-art projection mapping show by Lightborne.

Garden Monsters presented by Corteva Agriscience are back and bolder than ever. Inspired by the book, *The Goth Garden: The Mystery, Beauty and Lore of Dark Gardening* by Felicia Feaster, local artists have summoned a hauntingly whimsical collection of Garden Monsters to emerge throughout The Garden this spooky season.

Wander winding paths lined with pumpkins, twisting vines and brilliant autumn color as mysterious creatures appear among the foliage and hidden corners of The Garden. Equal parts eerie and enchanting, each monster celebrates nature's darker side. Discover where beauty grows wild, the unexpected takes root, and every turn reveals a little seasonal magic.

For more information and tickets, visit: https://discovernewfields.org/events-exhibitions/harvest-nights.

Halloween Decorating (*continued from Page 4*)

Fill Gaps with Violas

The spooky season does not have to be creepy. There are lots of Halloween colors that can be found in stunning fall flowers. Violas, for example, come in many colors including purple, yellow, burgundy, white and even black.

Violas tend to be dainty and smaller than winter pansies, offering the perfect filler for bare spots in front yard borders or porch containers. Violas are extremely cold-tolerant, sometimes lasting until the following spring. They will add a vibrant pop. Clump them together in groups to really make an impact.

Crown Hill Cemetery: October Tree Tours

Discover, explore and experience historic Crown Hill Cemetery and Arboretum on one of their award-winning tours!

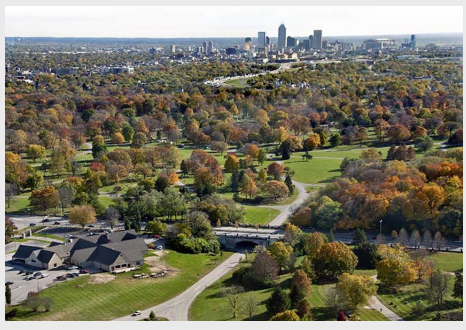
Led by knowledgeable guides, the tours allow participants to enjoy Crown Hill and experience nature while learning about the history and heritage of the country's third largest cemetery.

Among the programs this month:

October 10 (1:00—3:00 p.m.)
Tree Tales: Discover the Hidden Superpowers of Trees!
Join Crown Hill for a relaxed walk through Crown Hill's beautiful arboretum and uncover surprising stories, remarkable adaptations and the amazing "superpowers" that make trees nature's greatest heroes.

October 24 (10:00—11:00 a.m.)
Fall Trees Tour
Experience fall color compliments of the trees at Crown Hill! On this tour, led by the staff arborist, participants will take a closer look at some of the remarkable trees in the cemetery—giving attendees a chance to appreciate the views and learn a little more about the physiology behind "the season of letting go".

Advance ticket sales required. Details and tickets at: https://crownhillhf.org/tours-events/publictours/



Calendar/Events

Saturday, October 10 (9:00 a.m.)
Indiana Audubon — October Big Day
Betley Woods at Glacier's End, Trafalgar
Sponsored by Indiana Audubon and Indiana Land Protection Alliance
One big day, countless birds! For the fifth year in a row, land trusts across the state are offering Big Day outings. Indiana Audubon's birding guides will once again lead hikes at nature preserves statewide. Locally, participants will return to Betley Woods at Glacier's End where expert birder Mike Clay will serve as guide.
Register: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2026-october-big-day-hikes-with-ilpa-tickets-1993606052369?aff=oddtdtcreator

Thursday, October 29 (6:00 to 7:30 p.m.)
Carmel Green Initiative: Speaking of Data Centers
Carmel Clay Public Library, 425 East Main Street, Carmel
How will data centers impact electric bills and climate pollution? How are data centers being subsidized? How do data centers affect water consumption? Data center developers need to prove the benefits outweigh the costs for local communities, and that energy costs are not shifted to ratepayers. Carmel Green Initiative is hosting Citizens Action Coalition (CAC), a non-profit consumer and environmental organization that advocates for affordable utility bills and a cleaner environment in Indiana. Speaker Ben Inskeep, CAC Program Director, has extensively researched and analyzed AI data center proposals in Indiana and testified in related cases before the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission (IURC).
Register: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RSVPforSLS

Wednesday, November 18 (3:00 to 4:15 p.m.)
Lawn to Meadow: A Light and Gradual Transition
Webinar presented by Larry Weaner, FAPLD, & Sara Weaner Cooper
New Directions in the American Landscape (NDAL)
By gradually applying a series of light-touch actions, you can achieve the lawn-to-meadow transition organically without breaking your back, sparking ecological angst or infuriating your neighbors. These actions can include strategic plant selection, timed mowing, selective height cutting, pH manipulation, organic herbicide application and a phased planting approach. Larry will illustrate case studies that exemplify the technical underpinnings behind this approach from a landscape designer's perspective. Sara will discuss her lawn-to-meadow conversion from a homeowner's perspective.
Register: https://www.ndal.org/upcoming-events/lawn-to-meadow-fall-2026

Sedges

November 12 (6:00 p.m.)
Sedges Have More Than Edges: The Incredible Life of These Grass-like Plants
Crown Hill's Gothic Chapel
3402 Boulevard Place
(Enter the 34th Street Gate)

Sedges belong to a plant family distinct from grasses, and a key identifying feature is their triangular stems, often remembered by the phrase "sedges have edges".

Botanist and ecologist Nathanael Pilla will demonstrate how they are more than just their edges. For this presentation, children must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

Purchase tickets in advance online ($10 per person) at: https://crownhillhf.org/tours-events/speaker-series/. No tickets sold at the gate.

GPMGA Membership – 2026

Become a member of the Garfield Park Master Gardener Association. Dues are $15.00 per year and help pay for special activities, speakers, the newsletter and donations to community projects.

Monthly meetings occur on the second Wednesday of the month and begin at 6:30 p.m. Unless otherwise noted at the prior meeting or in the newsletter, meetings are held at the Garfield Park Conservatory, 2505 Conservatory Drive, Indianapolis.

Date _____ Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ E-mail _____

Completion date of Master Gardener Training Class _____/_____/_____

Are you volunteering anywhere? _____

_____ I wish to be included in the 2026 GPMGA Member Directory.
_____ I wish to receive future newsletters by e-mail only.

Submit this form and your $15.00 annual membership fee to:

Cindy Maude 7416 Rooses Drive Indianapolis, IN 46217

To pay using Zelle, use GPMG for recipient; cmaude@sbcglobal.net for e-mail