

THE HERALD-TIMES | FRIDAY, APRIL 12, 2024 | C1

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**National licorice Day**

## Garden Fair helps gardeners prepare for spring

By Jackie Finch  
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Ask Pam Roberts what she enjoys most about gardening and she readily shares a favorite quote from the book "Beatrix Potter's Gardening Life."

"The author says, 'That gardens don't last may be one of their perverse charms.' I love that," Pam says. "I feel like I have a new palette every year and it changes as the seasons change."

Preparing for spring, Pam says she is looking forward to the annual Garden Fair sponsored by the Monroe County Master Gardeners Association, Inc. Held Friday, April 13, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., the event will be at Switchyard Park Pavilion, 1601 South Rogers Street in Bloomington.

An estimated 35 exhibitors including several non-profit agencies will be at the fair. Co-chairs of the fair are Ed Kitchen and Dorothea Cole-Kiser. Admission is free and free parking is available.

"The Garden Show is a blast," Pam says. "The vendors have wonderful items. I often get plants at the show along with garden supplies. The Activity Booth is great for old and young alike and you can have your garden questions answered at the Plant Doctor and at the MCMGA booths. You can also get a slice of homemade pie at the show."



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**Pam Roberts takes photos in her Bloomington garden.** PAM ROBERTS / COURTESY PHOTO

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Landscaping created by Pam Roberts at her Bloomington home. PAM ROBERTS / COURTESY PHOTO



Cicada hatch on foxglove flowers in Pam Roberts' garden in 2021. PAM ROBERTS / COURTESY PHOTO

## Garden Fair

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A member of Monroe County Master Gardeners Association since 2018, Pam is now president of the group. Her reasons for joining, Pam says, are "I wanted to learn more about plants, 'right plant – right place,' garden design and how to thwart the deer predation problem."

The first 400 Garden Fair visitors will receive a free Buttonbush seedling along with planting suggestions. Native to Indiana, Buttonbush has glossy green leaves and fragrant, round flower clusters during mid-summer. Buttonbush attracts more than 24 species of birds, as well as numerous species of butterflies.

Since 2018, Garden Fair has been a non-invasive species event, as it will

### Free Buttonbush Seedlings

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Pam Roberts' backyard. PAM ROBERTS / COURTESY PHOTO



**At the 2023 Garden Fair, Edward Oehlman explains how to plant and care for one of the free seedlings.**  
 JACKIE FINCH / COURTESY PHOTO



**Pam Roberts' backyard and pond.** PAM ROBERTS / COURTESY PHOTO

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be this year. Invasive species are dangerous to native plants and pollinators and can threaten habitat and feeding opportunities for wildlife, as well as being a threat to human health.

Some of the most dangerous of the local invasive plants include Burning Bush, Asian Bush Honeysuckle, Callery Pear, Russian Olive, Purple Wintercreeper and Tree of Heaven. But people are becoming more aware of invasives and the reasons to not plant them, Pam says.

"I think people are getting more involved with gardening and are seeking for ways to reconnect with the planet," Pam says. "We are learning so much about native plants, pollinators and are starting the journey away from invasive species."

Purdue Extension educator Edward Oehlman will be at the Gardening Everything booth at the fair to answer wide-ranging garden questions such as "What bug is causing problems in my garden?" and "How can I prevent deer from eating everything in my garden?"

The Garden Fair's popular Garden Thyme Café will be featuring homemade pies and other sweets for hungry visitors as well as sandwiches, fruit, vegetables and more. Located at the back of the Pavilion, the café area offers comfy seating.

**Creating a beautiful home landscape**

When Pam bought her Bloomington home 24 years ago, the property had a central flower bed in the front yard. "But that was it," she says. "I put that backyard in with the pond approximately 12 years ago. I also created beds



**Arts and crafts are for sale at the Garden Fair.** JACKIE FINCH / COURTESY PHOTO

for the front yard along the perimeter and sides."

Most of her plants are perennials, Pam says, but an annual named Angelonia is planted each year for color along the side of her home. The snapdragon

look-alike flower blooms nonstop from late spring through fall.

The Angelonia produces vertical flower spikes up to 8 inches long that have dozens of flowers on a single stem in colors of purple, blue, pink, red,

lavender, coral, white and bicolors.

"Moya Andrews and Hilltop Gardens introduced me to the plant," Pam says. "I love it as it is drought tolerant, the blooms last forever and the deer don't eat it."

Other favorites in her home landscaping, Pam says, are the Weeping Cherry tree in her backyard as well as her blooming flowers. "The peonies have a special place because they remind me of my grandmother and the foxgloves remind me of England."

One of Pam's goals this spring is to redo the bed around a Rising Sun Redbud tree in the backyard. "As the tree has grown, I need to switch more to shade-loving plants."

**Joining Master Gardeners Association**

Since joining Monroe County Master Gardeners Association six years ago,

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Gourd crafts are sold at the 2023 Garden Fair. JACKIE FINCH / COURTESY PHOTO



Making a pine cone bird feeder was a popular spot at the 2023 Garden Fair. JACKIE FINCH / COURTESY PHOTO



A local vendor features a wooden soap dish to make soap last longer. JACKIE FINCH / COURTESY PHOTO

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Pam says she has seen the benefits of membership and recommends it to others.

"You learn so much from the class from soil health to diseases in plants to what to plant where and more," she says. "You also have a fellowship with other members and learn tons from them. They share great tips on what works and what doesn't in a garden."

The Master Gardener program began in Washington State in the 1970s and Purdue University sponsored the first Indiana program in 1978. Master Gardener in Monroe County was

chartered and the first meeting was held in 1989. The local group is connected to the state-wide organization which includes training and education.

The Monroe County Master Gardener Association now has about 85 active members and held its first Garden Fair in April 2010. Information about joining the association will be available at the Garden Fair.

Proceeds from the Garden Fair fund the association's grant program which has provided funding to local non-profit gardening projects for more than 10 years. Past recipients include St. Charles School



Owner of Small World Pruning, Heather Jones gives a Free IQ Test to 2023 showgoers. JACKIE FINCH / COURTESY PHOTO

which was awarded \$450 to expand an existing small pollinator garden to support an ongoing science project. Students

collected monarch butterfly eggs and reared them in science class for release into the garden. Mother Hubbard's

Cupboard also received a \$350 grant to enhance the Community Garden by supporting weekly garden hours for families, providing information on gardening and harvesting and reconstructing existing raised garden beds.

Something new the local Master Gardeners recently started for members has been a book club which has proven quite successful, Pam says. "That has been great fun. We've read books that weren't on my radar that

ended up being on my Best of the Year list."

**If you go:**

**What:** Monroe County Master Gardener Association Garden Fair

**When:** Saturday, April 13, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**Where:** The Pavilion at Switchyard Park, 1601 S. Rogers St. in Bloomington

**Admission:** Free. Complimentary parking.

**Website:** mcmga.net