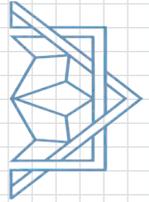




Planting Roots in Community Garden Club Makes a Difference for Nature in McHenry County



"To plant a garden is to dream of tomorrow." — Audrey Hepburn

When members of the Bull Valley Garden Club were introduced to TLC's Thompson Road Preserve in 2024, they wanted to become involved.

After the group's visit to the site, Claudia Edwards of the Bull Valley Garden Club felt inspired, saying, "I was so impressed with the foresight and determination of a group of people to protect this property. It's a project that will develop over time and has the potential to attract and involve the community in its development and enjoyment."

She adds, "There are many uses for the property, and the possibilities for education are limitless. It can be a place to walk, a place to contemplate, a place to detox, a place to run, ride a horse, see a bird species and learn about a restored area of native plants. It is absolutely imperative that space be preserved for respite from our frenetic society."

Claudia and fellow club member Maggie Bailey applied for and received a Plant America grant from Garden Clubs of America to create a native pollinator garden at the entrance to the preserve. They were one of 20 awardees in the country, and the grant will cover the cost of the plant materials. The project they named "A Prairie Promise" will beautify the entrance, encourage pollinators and enhance the visitor experience at the site.

They worked with TLC to order plants appropriate for the site (and to combine purchasing power with Spring Native Plant Sale orders).

Claudia adds that the project has the potential to attract volunteers from all areas of the community, "We hope scout groups, members of the Audubon Society, horseback riding groups, bird watchers, insect collectors, other garden clubs, walkers, runners and educators will register to come and be a part of a team to plant. Any person or group that plans to enjoy this natural area can be utilized in this project."

The Bull Valley Garden Club is also providing materials for Woodstock North High School students to build three wooden benches to be placed on the trails on the property, providing special places to rest during a casual hike or a walk to see the flora and fauna.

The club has also been gathering cardboard to cover the 4,360 sq ft garden (about 1/10 acre), which will help with weed control and water retention.

(A special thank-you to Harvard Eggs and Feed, and Blain's Farm and Fleet for donating cardboard!) They have asked other members of the community such as the City of Woodstock to share its created mulch for the project. They also are seeking loaned wheelbarrows and volunteers to spread the mulch for the completed project.

Future plans include a kiosk with information about the site, along with directional signage and plant identification.

The club says the project would make a wonderful school or class videography project, and they are seeking someone who would like to take video or photos of the process to help tell the story of the project.

They figure that over 100 volunteers will have been involved in the project from beginning to end. And this could be the beginning of many projects at Thompson Road Preserve.

Says Claudia, "When we come together, anything is possible, especially in a place that will serve and provide enjoyment to so many people."



Volunteers Needed!

On May 30 and 31, the Bull Valley Garden Club and members of the community will install the pollinator garden at the Thompson Road Preserve. Teams of volunteers are needed to plant, water and mulch the garden. Please bring gardening tools and gloves if you have them. Three-hour shifts are requested; however, times are flexible.

If you would like to help out, or if you would like to recommend groups that might wish to participate, please email Judy Reilly at jreilly038@gmail.com.

Dates/Times: Friday, May 30, 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. and 1–4:00 p.m.
Saturday, May 31, 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. and 1–4:00 p.m.

Location: Thompson Road Preserve, 9505 Thompson Rd. Bull Valley



The Bull Valley Garden Club is looking for volunteers to assist with a large pollinator garden planting at Thompson Road Preserve May 30 and 31.



News and Notes

from our Executive Director, *Lisa Haderlein*

"Hope is NOT the conviction that something will turn out well, but rather the certainty that something is worth doing regardless of how it turns out." —Vaclav Havel

No matter how crazy things get, or how overwhelming the world can feel sometimes, just remember that the best antidote is to keep doing the things that you know are worth doing - planting native plants, volunteering to cut buckthorn, hiking at any local conservation area, even taking the "Learn to Burn" class!

The world needs every one of you doing the good things you do. It does matter, and it does make a difference.

Thank you for being who you are and doing what you do.

Together, Preserving Land for Life,



The Land Conservancy of McHenry County

P.O. Box 352, Woodstock, IL 60098
815-337-9502

ConserveMC.org

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A quick, easy tip to make your home more Earth friendly

—Karen Lavin, TLC Board Member - lawdog57@hotmail.com

Thank you, Gretchen and Carol, for reading my last column on reusable silicone covers, and for sharing the information about using beeswax paper for storing food. I've found it is more versatile than the silicone covers I recommended. The beeswax paper comes in a variety of sizes and can be wrapped around bowls and plates snugly enough like a plastic wrap, and it keeps the food fresher than wax paper would.

So far, the only place I have found beeswax paper locally is the FoodShed Co-Op in Woodstock. You can also order it online, but supporting a local business is better!

~~~~~ My topic today is plastic water bottles. ~~~~~

I detest the disposable plastic water bottles that are so widely used, and I refuse to use them except in cases of dire emergency.

It takes 450 years for a plastic water bottle to break down in the landfill. Very few of them make it to recycling plants and are actually recycled. They are not reusable, as bacteria grows in them with repeated use. When they do start to break down, the result is a microplastic, which as I said in the last issue, is found on every continent and ocean on the face of the Earth. We still don't know what kind of health impact that's going to have for humans and everything else in the future.

Disposable plastic water bottles are also a problem because they draw on the manufacturer's local water source. Producing one liter of bottled water requires three liters of water - a significant waste of natural resources and a contributor to climate change. Luckily, there are options. If you use disposable water bottles because you don't trust the water in your home, you can install filters or use

portable water filters. If it's more for convenience, you can buy safe, reusable water bottles everywhere. Some are better than others - I prefer the metal insulated ones because they keep water cold for eight hours, even in summer heat. I do find that they retain the flavor of coffee, so I have a separate one of each, both insulated metal. They are very durable and hold up indefinitely, especially if you don't put them on the top of your car and then forget and pull out of the driveway! In the U.S. alone, we use about 50 billion disposable water bottles every year. So, give it a try! Let's get away from this addiction to plastic and stop using disposable water bottles that are so detrimental to Planet Earth.



## Welcome New Members!

Sharron Andresen | Barrington  
Nancy Bland | Crystal Lake  
Jennifer Dose | Marengo  
Karen Hirschey | McHenry  
Pam Moorhouse | Woodstock  
Sally Mydill | Crystal Lake

Fred O'Connor | Evanston  
Robert Pfeil | Libertyville  
Lesley Roll | Crystal Lake  
Sally Townsend | La Grange  
Linda Rickerson | McHenry

## TLC Earns Re-Accreditation

Nestled on the back page of this newsletter is a green "Accreditation" seal at the bottom of the page. It is a small seal with great importance.



In December, TLC earned accreditation renewal through the Land Trust Alliance (LTA) Accreditation Commission. The LTA is a national organization that advocates for over 900 land trusts. They offer support and training, and also work to improve the quality of land trusts throughout the country. TLC was originally accredited in 2019, and is required to seek re-accreditation every five years.

Accreditation is a big task and is awarded to land trusts meeting the highest national standards for excellence and conservation permanence. TLC completed a rigorous review process and is part of a network of organizations united by strong ethical practices.

Accreditation demonstrates that TLC is responsible and professional



in its mission of preserving natural, scenic and agricultural land in McHenry County while also living up to the highest standards of land conservation. We hope that you will join us in supporting TLC for another five years of land preservation.

# TLC's 34th Annual Celebration

Celebrate the people and places that make TLC the vital organization it is, and enjoy an afternoon "high tea" catered by Hazel's, which includes sandwiches, salad, desserts, coffee, tea and a cash bar.

**Date/Time:** Sunday, April 6, 2-5:00 p.m.

**Location:** Smith's Central Events, 3315 Pearl St., McHenry

**Tickets:** \$55 TLC member, \$65 after March 6  
\$65 Nonmember, \$75 after March 6  
Purchase tickets at [ConserveMC.org](http://ConserveMC.org).  
You can also mail a check with  
'TLC Annual Celebration' in the memo,  
or call 815-337-9502 to order tickets.



GUEST SPEAKER

Mark Shepard



## Our guest speaker is Mark Shepard

Award-winning author of the book *Restoration Agriculture*. Mark and his wife Jen founded New Forest Farm in southwestern WI in 1994. It's now one of the most developed and productive perennial farms in North America—trees, shrubs, vines, canes, perennial plants, and fungi are planted in association to produce food (for humans and animals), fuel, medicines and beauty. Cattle, pigs, lambs, turkeys and chickens also roam on the farm's restored savannas. This model of farming demonstrates how integrating trees and shrubs into farms can improve soil health and water quality.



## Recognition and Silent Auction

At the celebration, we will recognize volunteers, easement donors and local Conservation Champions. You will also have the opportunity to bid on exciting silent auction items, and of course take the time to connect with friends old and new. Invite a friend – this is a great opportunity to learn more about how TLC preserves land for life in McHenry County!

## Become a Sponsor of TLC's 2025 Annual Celebration!

**Table for 10 w/Wine Sponsor** ♦ *This Option Only Available through March 6, 2025!*

\$750 – Includes premium table location and tickets for 10 guests, two bottles of wine (one red, one white), recognition at the event, in the event program, and on the event webpage.

### Hazelnut Sponsor

\$250 – Includes two tickets to the event, recognition at the event, name on event webpage and recognition in the event program.

### Hackberry Sponsor

\$500 – Includes two tickets to the event, recognition at the event, logo on event webpage and silent auction platform, and a half page ad in the event program.

### Hickory Sponsor

\$1,000 – Includes premium table for 10, recognition at the event, name on event web page and silent auction platform, full page ad in the event program.

### Bur Oak Sponsor

\$1,500 – Includes premium table for 10, recognition at the event, logo on event web page and silent auction platform, "Sponsor Spotlight" post on Facebook, and a full page ad in the event program.

# A Fruitful Season for Women's Learning Circles



TLC hosted another three Learning Circles for Women Farmers and Farmland Owners last summer. It was a fruitful season, with over 70 participants across the three events. We were graciously hosted by three farm(h)ers: Betsy Zarko of Arrowleaf Prairie Farm (Wonder Lake); Anna Guziak-Prochnicka of Gold Fern Farm (Dundee); and Colleen Biver of Terra Vitae Farms (Woodstock). The group also welcomed resource professionals from Climate Land Leaders,

IL FarmLink, our very own Sarah Michehl, and Marisa Maggio of Starry Nights Farm (Burlington, WI), a farm certified in Holistic Management.

The group's roots grow deeper as more people regularly attend, and we're able to discuss challenging topics like how to balance home and business lives, as well as profit & loss statements; how to attract customers and diversify income streams; how to scale farms appropriately; how to grow food and flowers without the use of chemicals; how to lean into strengths and cut out what's not working; and how to do this all while building healthy soils, selves, and communities. Betsy Zarko's "Farm Rules" and mantras resonated with many, including "good enough is perfect" and "loam was not built in a day." Personal resilience and regenerative agriculture go hand-in-hand. And, it's amazing how much these women can carry!

We're looking forward to the Learning Circles (LC) in the new year. TLC is partnering with

American Farmland Trust for two LCs early this Spring: March 11 and April 3, which will focus on soil health and farmland succession, respectively (more details on page 5). Then, TLC will host another three this growing season.

Stay tuned for more details on our website: <https://conservemc.org/womenslearningcircle/>. Or reach out to Claire Hodge, our coordinator, for more info: [chodge@conservemc.org](mailto:chodge@conservemc.org).



## Getting to Know Your Local Farmers

TLC along with partnering organization, the Center for Agrarian Learning (CAL) at McHenry County College, co-hosted our first ever Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Fair in early February. CSA is a model for farms to sell their produce (or meat or flowers or mushrooms, etc.) at the beginning of the season. The customer pays up front and then receives their goodies throughout the season on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. This early season income is HUGE for farmers, when the expenses are highest. It's also a season-long connection with guaranteed sales. For the customer, this season is spent getting to know their farmer, learning about the farm they're supporting, and enjoying the freshest products available anywhere!

The CSA Fair is a model that has been helpful to farms looking to reach new customers, and we were excited to bring this to McHenry County. Eight farms that serve our area attended or provided materials including: Adama Farm, Broadview Farm and Gardens, Middlebury Farms, Piskasaw Gardens, Prairie's Edge Garden, Trogg's Hollow, Tsedah Farms, Wild Trillium Farm, and Wonder Farm Earth; find out more about them at <https://conservemc.org/getting-to-know-your-local-farmers/>



This CSA Fair was also paired with our annual film screening partnership with CAL. We screened a series



of short films, including *Into the Soil: The Wisdom of Regenerative Farming*, *The Land for Our Food*, and *Soul of a Farmer*. These films illustrated the human and land connection necessary for growing food regionally and regeneratively. The free popcorn was a nice bonus!

**Thanks to all who attended. Also, consider signing up for a CSA, it's not too late!**





*Compost is an important tool in successful gardening. Learn more about it in this webinar.*

## Making & Using Compost in Northern Illinois—Webinar

Join TLC and compost experts to celebrate Illinois' most precious natural resource, virtually. The Illinois Food Scrap & Composting Coalition (IFSCC) will provide an overview of why sustainable communities begin with compost, how to get started with DIY food-scrap composting, the importance of compost quality and more. Midwest Organics Recycling will share how to use compost, as well as where to get beautiful, high-quality, finished compost for your projects.

**Date/Time:** Monday, March 3, 6:30-7:30 p.m.

**Location:** Webinar

**Fee:** Free, please register at [ConserveMC.org](http://ConserveMC.org)



*Women are invited to two Learning Circles this spring.*

## Learning Circles for Women Farmland Owners

TLC and American Farmland Trust are hosting two women's Learning Circles this spring. These discussions will focus on soil health and farmland succession planning for women farmers and landowners in McHenry County. Topic experts and local resource professionals will be join the conversation to share resources on conservation practices and farmland protection tools.

Lunch and an optional farm tour will be provided after both Learning Circles.

**Dates/Times:** Tuesday, March 11, 9-11:00 a.m. Topic: Farmland Succession Planning  
Thursday, April 3, 9-11:00 a.m. Topic: Soil Health Session

**Location:** Main Stay Therapeutic Farm, 6919 Keystone Rd. Richmond, IL

**Fee:** Free, learn more and register at [ConserveMC.org](http://ConserveMC.org)

◆ Please reach out to Claire Hodge at [chodge@conservemc.org](mailto:chodge@conservemc.org) with any questions or comments.



*Select the right native trees and shrubs for your home in this free webinar.*

## Gardening with Native Trees and Shrubs—Webinar

Native trees and shrubs provide year-round beauty as well as food and nesting habitat for birds and pollinators. Join TLC's Sarah Michehl to learn about some favorite native trees and shrubs appropriate for the home landscape. The webinar will cover foundation plantings, privacy hedgerows and species to feature. A recording of the webinar will be emailed to registered participants after the program.

**Date/Time:** Wednesday, March 12, 12-1:30 p.m.

**Location:** Webinar hosted by TLC

**Fee:** Free, please register at [ConserveMC.org](http://ConserveMC.org)



*Learn how to conduct a safe prescribed burn in this class.*

## Learn to Burn

Prescribed burns are an important tool in the management of invasive species and encourage healthy, new growth. Learn how to use fire to manage prairies, wetlands and woodlands safely. The class will be inside and outside so dress appropriately. Safety equipment will be provided. Please bring lunch and water.

This program is limited to 10 participants, so please register early!

**Date/Time:** Saturday, March 22, 9:00 a.m-3:00 p.m.

**Location:** Hennen Conservation Area, 4622 Dean St, Woodstock

**Fee:** \$35/TLC member, \$50/nonmember, please register at [ConserveMC.org](http://ConserveMC.org)



*Get the details on how to preserve your land as farmland forever on May 1.*

## Preserving the Family Farm Seminar

Do you think about the future of your farm and what will happen to it after you no longer own it? This free seminar is for farmland owners who would like to know more about how they can preserve their land as farmland forever.

Learn how an agricultural conservation easement is the only way you can ensure that your farm will never be developed, and:

- *Hear landowner stories about preserving their farms*
- *Ask questions and learn from legal and financial experts*
- *Stay for lunch and time to talk with our guest speakers*

**Date/Time:** Thursday, May 1, 10:00 a.m. – noon (lunch included)

**Location:** 1102 McConnell Rd, Woodstock, IL (McHenry County Farm Bureau)

**Fee:** Free, please register at [ConserveMC.org](http://ConserveMC.org)

## Spring Native Plant Sale



TLC will have its largest selection of native plants ever at the Native Plant Sale, May 16 and 17.

### TLC's Spring Native Plant Sale opens for online orders April 2.

Pre-order your plants, trees and shrubs April 2-23 and pick up your plants May 16 & 17 at the McHenry County Fairgrounds.

**OR...** Come shop the thousands of native plants, trees and shrubs available. We will have the largest-ever selection of products to buy in-person!

**Dates/Time:** In-person shopping and plant pickup:

Friday, May 16 & Saturday, May 17, 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Shop online starting April 2 at [Store.ConserveMC.org](http://Store.ConserveMC.org)

**Location:** McHenry County Fairgrounds, 11900 Country Club Rd., Woodstock.

## Vernal Pool Hike



See the variety of life that exists in the vernal pools of McHenry County.

Vernal pools are a little-known but extremely important feature that occurs in our McHenry County oak woods. Come learn why these pools are essential for amphibians and other creatures like fairy shrimp! Dress to get muddy and dirty. Signs will be posted for parking.

**Date/Time:** Saturday, April 26, 10:00-11:30 a.m. (Rain date May 3)

**Location:** Harvard (address will be emailed to registered participants)

**Fee:** \$5 members / \$10 nonmembers, please register at [ConserveMC.org](http://ConserveMC.org)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

*Event dates and times are subject to change.* If you are new to TLC workdays or it's been a while, please be sure to fill out a volunteer form online at [www.conservemc.org/volunteer](http://www.conservemc.org/volunteer) before you attend so you can receive updates or cancellations.

**Mar. 1:** Irish Oaks Nature Preserve restoration workday.  
Nearest address: 19017 Lincoln Rd., Harvard.  
10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

**Mar. 2:** Donato Woods restoration workday.  
Nearest address: 700 Ridgeland Ave., Woodstock.  
9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

**Mar. 3:** *Making & Using Compost in Northern Illinois Webinar.* Free, please register online at [ConserveMC.org](http://ConserveMC.org) 6:30-7:30 p.m.

**Mar. 3:** Thompson Road Preserve restoration workday.  
Nearest address: 9505 Thompson Rd., Bull Valley.  
10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

**Mar. 5:** Crowley Oaks restoration workday.  
Nearest address: 18725 Crowley Rd., Harvard.  
10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

**Mar. 8:** Boloria Meadows restoration workday.  
Nearest address: 7219 Millburne Ct., Bull Valley.  
10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

**Mar. 11:** *Learning Circle for Women Farmland Owners — Succession Planning*  
Main Stay Therapeutic Farm, 6919 Keystone Rd., Richmond.  
Free, please register online at [ConserveMC.org](http://ConserveMC.org)  
9-11:00 a.m.

**Mar. 12:** Crowley Oaks restoration workday.  
Nearest address: 18725 Crowley Rd., Harvard.  
10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

**Mar. 12:** *Gardening with Native Trees & Shrubs Webinar.* Free, please register online at [ConserveMC.org](http://ConserveMC.org) 12-1:30 p.m.

**Mar. 15:** Yonder Prairie restoration workday.  
1150 S. Rosefarm Rd., Woodstock.  
10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

**Mar. 17:** Thompson Road Preserve restoration workday.  
Nearest address: 9505 Thompson Rd., Bull Valley.  
10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

**Mar. 19:** Crowley Oaks restoration workday.  
Nearest address: 18725 Crowley Rd., Harvard.  
10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

**Mar. 22:** *Learn to Burn.*  
Hennen Conservation Area, 4622 Dean St., Woodstock.  
\$35/TLC member; \$50/nonmember,  
Please register online at [ConserveMC.org](http://ConserveMC.org) by March 18.  
9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

**Mar. 26:** Crowley Oaks restoration workday.  
Nearest address: 18725 Crowley Rd., Harvard.  
10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

**April 2:** Crowley Oaks restoration workday.  
Nearest address: 18725 Crowley Rd., Harvard.  
10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

**April 3:** *Learning Circle for Women Farmland Owners — Soil Health*  
Main Stay Therapeutic Farm, 6919 Keystone Rd., Richmond.  
Free, please register online at [ConserveMC.org](http://ConserveMC.org)  
9-11:00 a.m.

**April 5:** Irish Oaks Nature Preserve restoration workday.  
Nearest address: 19017 Lincoln Rd., Harvard.  
10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

**April 6:** *TLC's Annual Celebration*  
Smith's Central Events, 3315 Pearl St., McHenry, IL.  
\$55-\$75, please register online at [ConserveMC.org](http://ConserveMC.org)  
2-5:00 p.m.

**April 7:** Thompson Road Preserve restoration workday.  
Nearest address: 9505 Thompson Rd., Bull Valley.  
10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

**April 9:** Crowley Oaks restoration workday.  
Nearest address: 18725 Crowley Rd., Harvard.  
10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

**April 12:** Boloria Meadows restoration workday.  
Nearest address: 7219 Millburne Ct., Bull Valley.  
10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

**April 16:** Crowley Oaks restoration workday.  
Nearest address: 18725 Crowley Rd., Harvard.  
10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

**April 21:** Thompson Road Preserve restoration workday.  
Nearest address: 9505 Thompson Rd., Bull Valley.  
10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

**April 26:** *Vernal Pool Hike, Harvard*  
Please register online at [ConserveMC.org](http://ConserveMC.org), address will be emailed to registered participants,  
\$5 TLC member, \$10 nonmember,  
10-11:30 a.m.

**May 1:** *Preserving the Family Farm*  
1102 McConnell Rd, Woodstock, IL  
Free, please register online at [ConserveMC.org](http://ConserveMC.org)  
10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

815•337•9502 The Land Conservancy of McHenry County [ConserveMC.org](http://ConserveMC.org)