

THE PURDUE LANDSCAPE REPORT

In This Issue

- [Beauty and Bounty: The Perennial Edible Landscape](#)
- [Top 10 Spring Flowering Shrubs](#)
- [Wet Pattern to Return](#)
- [Women of the Green Industry Nursery Tour to Be Held at Schneider Nursery](#)
- [Purdue Turfgrass Disease Report: Muddy Waters](#)

Beauty and Bounty: The Perennial Edible Landscape

(Karen Mitchell, mitcheka@purdue.edu)

A perennial edible garden offers an opportunity to integrate beauty and utility. By incorporating fruit trees, berry bushes, and other long-lived edible plants, the home landscape can be both aesthetically pleasing and agriculturally productive. A perennial edible garden not only provides seasonal harvests but also supports local biodiversity.

Plan(t) for Success

Careful planning and site selection are essential when designing a successful perennial garden, whether edible or ornamental. Because many perennial plants live for a decade or more, evaluating soil conditions and choosing the right location before planting is critical. Most fruiting plants thrive in well-drained soil and require 6 to 8 hours of full sun each day. While a soil pH of 6.0 to 6.5 suits most fruit trees and perennial vegetables, many berries perform best in slightly more acidic conditions, around pH 5.5. Since adjusting soil pH is much easier before planting, early testing and amendment can prevent future challenges. When choosing plant varieties, prioritize those that are cold hardy and offer resistance to common Indiana pests and diseases.

Fruit Trees as Structural Elements

Fruit trees not only yield delicious harvests but also serve as focal points in the landscape. In Indiana, apples, pears, plums, and cherries are popular choices for the landscape, and dwarf varieties can be incorporated into ornamental beds or trained along walls and fences (Fig. 1). While fruit trees are a valuable addition to the edible garden, it's a common misconception that they require little to no maintenance. In reality, even young trees demand attention. Depending on the age of the planting stock, it may take two to four years before fruit production begins. During

that time, annual pruning, structural training (Fig. 2), irrigation, and pest management (Fig. 3) are essential to establish healthy, productive trees. Additionally, many fruit trees, especially apples and pears, require cross-pollination and planting two or more compatible varieties is essential for fruit production.



Figure 1. An apple tree trained against a south-facing wall maximizes fruit production in a small space. This technique of training trees to grow flat against a structure or fence is called espalier.



Figure 2. For a pear tree to remain short with an open center, careful trellising and training should be started at planting.



Figure 3. Apple trees without pest management are susceptible to numerous insects and diseases such as sooty blotch, fly speck, apple scab, and leafroller caterpillars.

Berries for Texture and Layers

Berries can create a lush, productive layer along borders or near trees. Depending on the variety, blueberries can range from 2 to 9 feet tall and can serve as a low hedge, an attractive border, or even a striking backdrop within the landscape. Blueberries thrive in acidic soil while Indiana soil is commonly alkaline. Don't guess, soil test (before planting). Raspberries and blackberries grow well throughout the state and benefit from sturdy trellising to keep canes manageable. Strawberries can be used as a groundcover or along edges (Fig. 4). When planned thoughtfully, berries provide sweet treats along with seasonal color and layers in the home landscape.



Figure 4. This strawberry bed serves as a living boundary separating a greenspace between a garden and open turf.

More Than Just Fruit

Think beyond fruit; several perennial vegetables and herbs can be integrated into the landscape. Asparagus and rhubarb are classic Indiana favorites and offer early spring harvests with minimal maintenance once established. Horseradish typically grows very well in Indiana and should be planted where its vigorous root system and large leaves won't outcompete neighboring plants. Hardy perennial herbs such as chives, oregano, and thyme can be tucked into garden beds or borders for their culinary use, visual appeal, and fragrant aroma.

Commonly Uncommon Fruit

While apples, pears, and berries are familiar sights in Indiana gardens, there are a few fruit trees native to Indiana that add unique flavors to the landscape.

- Pawpaw, or the "Indiana banana," thrives in partial to full sun and the fruit has a creamy texture and tropical flavor.
- American persimmon trees are drought tolerant and produce a sweet, orange fruit in fall.
- Serviceberry is a small tree or large shrub with beautiful blooms and blueberry-like fruit that are highly attractive to pollinators and birds.

Ongoing Care for Long-Term Success

Although perennial edible gardens may eliminate the annual chore of planting, they still require routine care. Annual maintenance needs vary by plant type, but they all benefit from close attention during the first few years during establishment to ensure long-term productivity.

- Mulch to conserve moisture and suppress weeds.
- Prune to improve plant structure and productivity.
- Irrigate deeply and infrequently to encourage a deep root system.
- Fertilize as needed according to soil analysis results and plant needs.
- Monitor and manage pests using an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach.

Additional Resources:

Collecting Soil Samples for Testing (HO-71-W), Purdue Extension: <https://www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/HO/HO-71-W.pdf>

Managing Pests in Home Fruit Plantings (ID-146-W), Purdue Extension: <https://www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/id/id-146-w.pdf>

Purdue Consumer Horticulture – Gardening Bulletins website: <https://www.purdue.edu/hla/sites/yardandgarden/gardening-bulletins/>

Top 10 Spring Flowering Shrubs

(Amanda Bailey Mosiman, bailey1@purdue.edu)

Spring is finally here! Everywhere you look, one can find some

spring color around. Some of the first plants to peek out of the ground are spring-flowering bulbs like crocus, daffodil, and tulip. But there are some beautiful spring time shrubs you can add to your yard to be the first in the neighborhood with spring interest. Below, you'll find a top 10 list of spring-flowering shrubs (in order of flower appearance).

Witch-hazel (*Hamamelis x intermedia*) Perhaps even earlier-flowering than Forsythia, is 'Arnold Promise' witch-hazel. This shrub can flower starting in late winter (unless we have unusually cold winter weather like polar vortices) and keep going all the way into spring. Bright flowers are yellow with red tinges, though there are red-flowering cultivars available. Witch-hazel can be grown as a shrub or a small tree and offers some yellow/orange/red fall color. It's native!



Figure 1. Witch-hazel is one of the first shrubs to bloom in the spring. Though similar to forsythia, it typically flowers a couple of weeks earlier.

Forsythia (*Forsythia x intermedia*) Forsythia is the traditional first-flowering plant in the spring. Hardy plants, their bright yellow blooms can catch your eye anywhere. There are new cultivars out.

Quince (*Chaenomeles speciosa*) In mid spring, you'll find these shrubs covered with flowers. There are several cultivars and you may see white-flowering plants ('Jet Trails'), red-flowering plants ('Texas Scarlet') or even large, double, fluffy, peach-pink flowers ('Cameo'). After the show, this plant tends to fade into the background, but it's a great native addition.

Koreanspice Viburnum (*Viburnum carlesii*) Koreanspice viburnum blooms in late April with blooms that are pink/red while they are still in buds, opening to white flowers that are each a half inch wide. The flowers are presented on dense 2-3 inch groupings called cymes (semi-snowball) and very pleasantly fragrant. And luck of all luck, they have nice, clean leaves in the summer and great fall color. Can't beat that in a multi-season shrub.

Flowering Almond (*Prunus glandulosa*) Here's a small plant that grows well in full sun and its lovely. Flowering almond,

particularly the cultivar 'Rosea Plena' has tons of pink flowers (double—lots of petals). Some cultivars have white flowers, and all present in mid to late spring.

Shadblow Serviceberry (*Amelanchier canadensis*) A multi-season-interest plant, serviceberry offers white flowers on 2-3 inch long inflorescences in April, which leads to sweet, juicy black fruit in the summer. Some plants can also have decent fall color (yellow with hints of orange and red). Serviceberry grows by suckering so it's perhaps not a great choice for a small yard.

Lilac (*Syringa vulgaris*). The beautiful purple flowers (many, many colors are available, but purple is most common) are wonderfully fragrant in most of spring. They may only bloom for 2 weeks, but man those 2 weeks are worth having a lilac in your garden! Takes me straight back to my childhood.

Black Chokeberry (*Aronia melanocarpa*) An adaptable species, this plant is known for long-lasting black fruit in the fall and wine-red fall color. Spring flowers are white, presented in groups of 9-20 resulting in 1 to 1.5 inch groupings covering the plant in May. This species can spread and colonize large areas, which makes for a striking mass effect in the spring. Small plant (under 5 feet) thrives in part shade to full sun.

Mockorange (*Philadelphus coronarius*) Fans of mockorange are serious about their use in the landscape. These plants can take care of themselves and they'll reward you every May/June with white, fragrant flowers that are 1 to 1.5 inches wide.

Siberian Peashrub (*Caragana arborescens*) Granted, this is a great shrub for harsh sites (poor soils, drought, alkaline soil, cold, wind), but it's unusual and doesn't take much care. Leaves are pea-green and emerge with the yellow flowers in May. Later in the summer the fruit of the flowers, a narrow pod, makes a popping sound when it opens.

Remember, plants with more than one season of interest are like hitting the landscape jackpot. So, if you've chosen one of these plants because you love the flowers in the spring, just be aware that it may need to fade into the background for the rest of the year. Having said that, plants that usher in the new season are anticipated, loved and enjoyed. Make sure you've got some of these in your neighborhood for a dose of early spring joy.

- Adapted from Horticulture Newsletter - Cheryl Boyer - Kansas Extension

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Wet Pattern to Return

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Despite the wet start to the month, the entire state saw less than 50 percent of normal rainfall from April 10 to 16, and in some cases, less than 10 percent of normal rainfall (Figure 1). This was helpful, especially as some locations still deal with river flood warnings and ponded and saturated fields. This has severely limited most field activity this month.

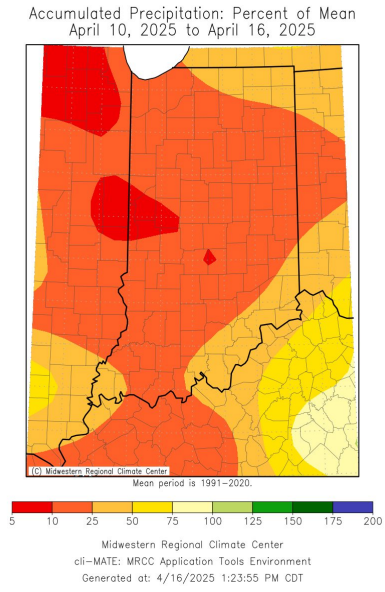


Figure 1: April 10-16, 2025, accumulated precipitation represented as the percent of the 1991-2020 climatological normal.

Overnight temperatures have been cold enough for the National Weather Service (NWS) to issue freeze warnings and frost advisories because vegetation is actively growing and vulnerable to freeze damage. As a reminder, we won't escape the risk of frost until mid-May, so you may need to keep covering your perennials. Pay attention to the latest alerts from your [local NWS office](#).

As of April 16, the seven-day average 2-inch soil temperatures under sod have risen above 50°F in southern Indiana over the past week. Posey County has the warmest 2-inch soil temperature at 54.1°F, while LaPorte County has the coolest at 45.8°F (Figure 2), which is on track for the climatologically expected dates for this to occur. March temperatures were 5.7°F above normal, making it the 11th warmest March on record, which helped soil temperatures warm. However, temperatures have averaged 1-3°F below normal for the first 15 days of April, slowing the progress of soil temperature warming. The same can be said for the impact on modified growing degree days (50F, 86F) as accumulations are more than 25 units below normal for the entire state (Figure 3).

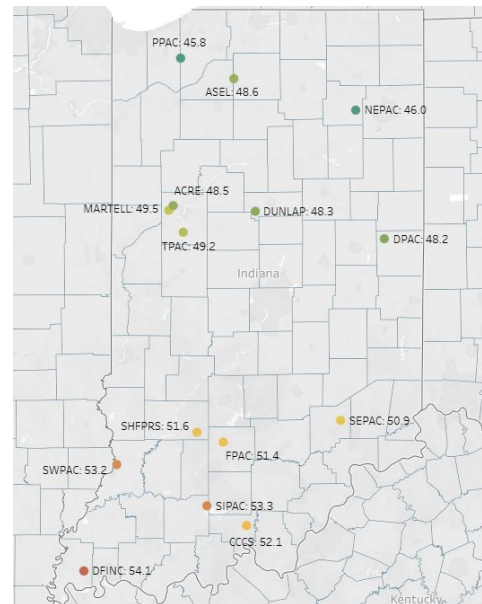


Figure 2: April 16, 2025, 7-day average 2-inch soil temperature under sod.

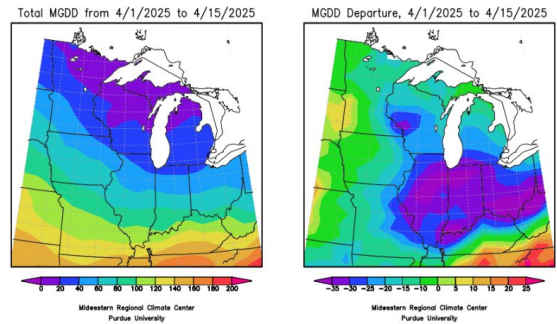


Figure 3: Left - Accumulated modified growing degree days from April 1-15, 2025. Right - Accumulated modified growing degree days from April 1-15, 2025, represented as the departure from the 1991-2020 climatological normal.

Shifting to the outlook, temperatures are expected to bounce back, and so will precipitation. Over the next seven days, warmer temperatures will remove the threat of a hard freeze, with highs in the 60s and 70s across the state. Forecast precipitation totals from April 17-24 look to be heaviest in west-central Indiana, with totals ranging from 1 to 4 inches (Figure 4). This will fall on saturated topsoil and thus create a continued concern for flooding and delayed field progress. Hopefully, we can kick the current abnormally dry conditions across north-central Indiana to the curb. The Climate Prediction Center is confident that above-normal temperatures and above-normal precipitation will continue until the month's end, so fieldwork windows will be short and minimal (Figure 5).



Figure 4: The Weather Prediction Center's 7-day quantitative precipitation forecast from April 17-24, 2025.

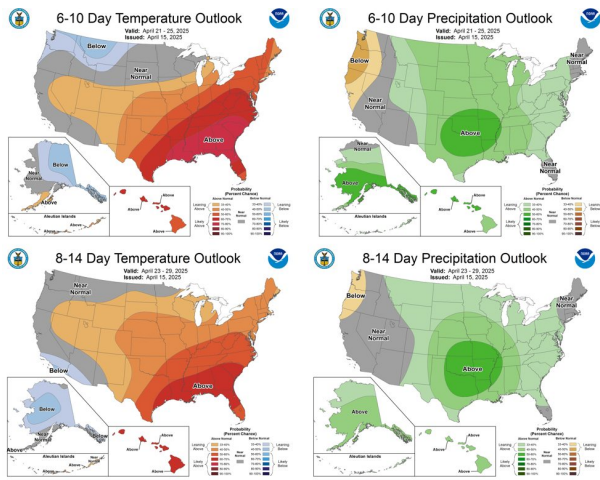


Figure 5: The Climate Prediction Center's 6-10 and 8-14 temperature and precipitation outlooks released on April 15, 2025.

Women of the Green Industry Nursery Tour to Be Held at Schneider Nursery

(Kyle Daniel, daniel38@purdue.edu)

Schneider Nursery is hosting the "Women of the Green Industry" on Thursday, June 19th from 12pm-3 pm.

Join the Schneider family and staff for a light lunch, tour of the greenhouse and retail center, and a tour of the growing fields. Hear a brief history of Schneider Nursery from family members while enjoying time with your colleagues, family and/or friends. Wear your walking shoes and bring a water bottle, as we will be exploring the fields on foot! All ages are welcome to attend and enjoy an afternoon of plants and people!

[Click here to register for the FREE tour!](#)



Figure 1. Don't miss a tour of Schneider Nursery with the Women of the Green Industry on June 19th.

All activities will take place at 3066 East Highway 50, Seymour, Indiana 47274

12pm-1pm- Arrival and light lunch

1pm- Schneider Nursery history by Margie Strange - 39 years in Green Industry

1:30pm - Walking Field Tour by Jill Glover- 10 years in Green Industry

2:30 pm- Tour of Garden Center and Greenhouses

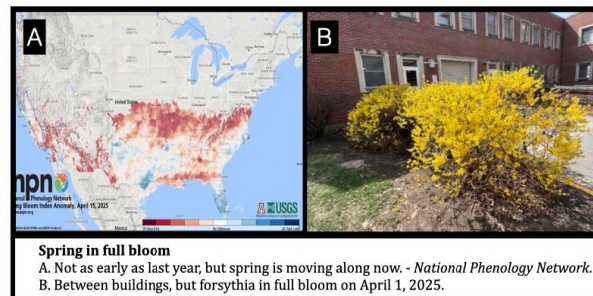
Please register at the [link to reserve your spot](#); we are looking forward to seeing you all!

Questions- reach out to jill@schneidernursery.com.

Purdue Turfgrass Disease Report: Muddy Waters

(Lee Miller, turfpath@purdue.edu)

Excessive and in some cases, abusive rainfall amounts; keys to soggy turfgrass management; winter injury potential causes and recovery, red thread, spring golf disease prevention Weather Spring, which officially started on March 20, is rolling along, and into mid-April temperatures in the region are ahead of statistical normal, but lagging somewhat behind last year. I appreciate and highly recommend the Growing Degree Day Tracker hosted by Michigan State University as a barometer for the progress of spring, and importantly the status of growing degree accumulation vs. the previous year. Flowering in the Lafayette area of the early bloomers has occurred, with forsythia leading the way and now dandelion flowers popping in yards throughout the area.



The winter of 2024-25 had near normal regional temperatures in the north and slightly below normal temperatures in the south. December was above normal, but with the new year came a marked shift in below normal temperatures in January and February. Importantly for us turfgrass managers, these frigid Arctic blasts were not accompanied by precipitation and snow cover. As noted below, we are getting reports and a few samples of winter injury on home lawns in northern IN as a result of this unprotected blast of cold air.

[Click here to continue reading the Turfgrass Disease Report.](#)

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