

CUYAHOGA COUNTY MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER FALL SEMINAR 2026

REGISTRATION AND BREAKFAST (8:15 AM-9:00 AM)

KEYNOTE SPEAKER (9:00-10:00 AM)

Why Do Forest Pathogens and Insects Invaders Kill Our Trees and What Can Be Done?

ENRICO BONELLO, PhD, Professor of Plant Pathology, OSU, who studies interactions among trees, fungal pathogens and insect pests.

Even though it may appear that trees are helpless against the constant onslaught of organisms that try to kill them, that is far from the truth. In fact, trees have sophisticated defense mechanisms that most of the time keep enemies at bay, allowing them to survive for decades, centuries, and, in some cases, millennia. This presentation will provide a primer on tree defense and why it matters.

Morning Session (10:30-11:30)

Option A

Showstoppers with Minimal Maintenance: These Are Not Your Grandma's Annuals

PAM BENNETT, OSU Professor and State Master Gardener Volunteer Program Director

Pam takes you through this fast-paced presentation of the top performing, low maintenance annuals. Maximize your color and minimize your effort! Also, learn about her Annual Cultivar Trials at OSU and the showstopping plants that you can use to impress.

Option B

Herbicides for Invasive Species Management

DAVID GARDINER, PhD, Professor of turfgrass science at Ohio State University

Many of our most popular landscape plant species widely planted between 1980 and 2010 are now appearing on various state's invasive species lists. Glyphosate usage is controversial due to the possibility that it may be carcinogenic when users are exposed to very high rates over a long period of time. However, glyphosate is one of the more useful herbicides in our endeavor to eradicate invasive species. This presentation will discuss the controversy of glyphosate usage, and the other herbicide options that may be available given the site and the species being controlled.

Option C

Cacti and Succulents, Let's Dig a Little Deeper

TIM MALINICH, Retired professor of horticulture and green industry consultant

Big plant, small pot, and a well-drained soil mix, that's the secret to growing succulents. But, to grow exceptional plants and a fine collection of succulents you need to understand why things work the way they do. We'll dig into the details of soil, fertilizer, botany, accessioning and even taxonomy to deepen your appreciation of cacti and other succulents.

First Afternoon Session (12:15-1:15)

Option D

Continual Color without Continual Hassle

LAURA DEETER, PhD, Professor of Practice – Horticulture and Crop Science and Endowed Director, Chadwick Arboretum and Learning Gardens

Hot colors. Cool colors. Monochromatic, Analogous, Complementary. So many terms! How is the gardener to know what to plant next to each other? Learn how to combine different colors to create pleasing combinations in different seasons.

Option E

Ticks-Don't Make Light of Them

PAM BENNET, OSU Professor and State Master Gardener Volunteers Program Director

You have likely heard that ticks are prevalent in Ohio and that everyone MUST be tick-aware. Pam shares the species, the concerns and how to mitigate the situation in this "Tick Talk."

Option F

Hiding in Plain Sight: Amazing Camouflage & Mimicry in Nature

JUDY SEMROC, owner, Nature Spark, author, Petroleum Geologist and 20-year Conservation Specialist at Cleveland Museum of Natural History

This program will present and discuss examples of how animals, insects and plants mislead and deceive to survive in nature. Revealing patterns, coloration, behavior, and much more will attest to the astounding world of Nature. Be prepared to test your observational skills!

Second Afternoon Session (1:45-2:45)

Option G

Medicine Cabinet above the Mulch: The Who, What, Where and Why of Botanical Medicine

ERICK CARLSON, PhD, Science Educator, Wilderness Expert and Botanical Fanatic

Dr. Carlson, a plant ecologist and former botany professor, will tell us how plants that resist insects and bacteria become successful anti-cancer, antimicrobial and antifungal medicines. He'll profile some international and regional plant-based medicines and some that can grow right here in Cuyahoga County. Even with such serious content, he'll make this a fun topic, and show how some basic home remedies are prepared, including tincture, salves and more.

Option H

Birds, Bugs & Botany: Connections in the Natural Realm

JUDY SEMROC, owner, Nature Spark, author, former Petroleum Geologist and 20-year Conservation Specialist at Cleveland Museum of Natural History

This program illustrates the amazing connections between birds, insects and plants. Each of these groups uses the others in the history of their behavior, food gathering, protection and life cycles. Learn how these important connections can influence human lives, illustrate the critical importance of insects, and create the natural beauty around us.

Option I

Raptors: Hunters in the Sky

MATT VALENCIC, Nature in My Backyard and Education Chair for Audubon Society of Cleveland

Raptors are birds that get their food by hunting other birds or mammals. We know them as Eagles, Hawks, Falcons and Owls. Some live here year-round while others visit only during the winter. Enjoy pictures and natural history of the 19 species typically found in NE Ohio throughout the year.