



Michigan Organic Connections

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A Message from the Chair

Welcome readers to our autumn newsletter and the dark side of the equinox. The selection at the farmers markets has changed, the hours of daylight have shortened, and many are preparing for winter in the midwest, or at least thinking about it. With that preparation we hope you all have had a chance to preserve some of the wonderful organic harvest available in Michigan, either outside your own door if you have a garden or farm, or at a local market. Many of my mornings for the last month have started with checking jar lids to see if they have well and truly sealed overnight. Not only canning but freezing, dehydrating, or finding a cool dark kitchen cupboard for potatoes are other ways you can preserve the harvest for yourself and extend the season of fresh nutritious food for just a bit longer.

As we face the beginnings of October the end of this year's growing season is in sight. A very wet and cool spring in this area of the country made the season feel short. As we look forward to the rest and healing that winter will bring after the experiences of another demanding year, who isn't already thinking about the next growing season? Is your kitchen window sill full of tomato seeds that you are saving for next summer? Not only is winter a time to



and “brown” together. This class was especially valuable in clearly delving into some of the science behind compost. And further, how the microbiology of a plant is at its roots and how organic soil makes a healthier plant. The class taught us how to make the organic soil for our plants and how the compost we make becomes the fertilizer for the plants, moving us beyond having to purchase fertilizers from off-site.

Since retiring from my job in the automotive industry at the beginning of the year, I was wanting to get more involved in helping with Barb’s garden. She’s been pretty much doing it all while I was working



outside the home. I really wanted to pay more attention to our compost piles and try to make them go faster. The class has taught me how to properly mix the materials for compost, the correct proportions of green to brown, what the

temperature needs to be for killing weed seeds and/or seeds from food scraps, tools to use, how to

judge proper moisture content using a squeeze test, knowing when it’s finished and ready to use, and finally how to use it when filling containers and raised beds.

Our compost piles do go slowly and become home to many earthworms, the big juicy nightcrawlers. Seeing the worm compost being made was a bonus for us.

We both want to continue to learn to grow a better garden each year. We’re proud of the of the urban garden we’ve made. Stretching it to the front yard has attracted many comments and conversations with neighbors wanting to know more about it. We want to promote making more of these kinds of gardens in the city because we believe that a healthier city contributes to a healthier planet, and we appreciate the work done by MOFFA to reach into the urban centers.

Brian Schandavel is a retired automotive engineer from Detroit, who with his wife Barb, enjoy the many benefits of maintaining an organic fruit and vegetable garden at their home in Royal Oak, Michigan.

Local Line is Worth a Look

There are a lot of websites online vying for your attention and offering to help you be better at what you do. Local Line, an e-commerce platform for farmers and other food suppliers, looks like it has plenty to offer if you are interested in expanding your online presence. In addition to creating a website for your farm quickly and for free, it offers tools such as a minimum order calculator, product profitability calculator, and delivery cost calculator to help you to determine where you should be spending your time (also at no cost). If you are further interested in

online selling and ready to pay for assistance, Local Line also offers various programs to help you track inventory, schedule deliveries, organize orders, collect payments, and much more. For more information, see what they have to say on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Linked In](#), [Instagram](#), or visit their [main page](#).



Michigan Agricultural Mediation Program Has Expanded Its Offerings



Michigan farmers can now mediate a wide range of disputes at no cost through the Michigan Agricultural Mediation Program (MAMP) thanks to the 2018 Farm Bill. The bill enables the MAMP to mediate

agricultural issues involving leases, farm transitions, organic certification, next-door neighbors, and more. To request free mediation or for more information, call (800) 616-7863 or go online at <http://www.agmediation.org>. All calls are confidential.