

AgrAbility regional event July 16-18, Ann Arbor, MI

Join AgrAbility July 16-18 at Weber's Boutique Hotel in Ann Arbor, Michigan, for a workshop focused on assistive technology (AT) and worksite assessments. This event is provided in conjunction with Michigan AgrAbility and will also help participants prepare for the RESNA Assistive Technology Professional exam. (RESNA is the Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America. See www.resna.org.)

Session topics include disability etiquette, understanding progressive and non-progressive medical conditions, models for conducting assessments, writing AT recommendation reports, and an overview of agricultural assistive technology.



The group will then participate in an assessment at a local farm to apply lessons learned in the training.

The registration fee is \$175. All attendees will receive a one-year RESNA membership (\$185 value) and may be eligible for up to 10 RESNA-certified CEUs after successful completion of the training.

In addition to AgrAbility staff members, other professionals who could find the workshop helpful include vocational rehabilitation counselors, occupational and physical therapists, OT/PT students and teachers, and agricultural professionals from organizations like Extension, Farm Bureau, FFA, and others.

Registration is open but is limited to 50 participants. Visit agrability.info/regional for details about the workshop, including hotel information and the registration link.



Indiana **AgrAbility** news note

Summer 2024



A newsletter dedicated to friends of the Indiana AgrAbility Project/Breaking New Ground Outreach Program

How does your (accessible) garden grow?

The right tools and techniques can make gardening a great option for just about anyone

The popularity of gardening in the U.S. is indisputable. Some sources indicate that more than 185 million Americans garden in some manner. (See tinyurl.com/garden-access) In addition to being an enjoyable pastime, gardening can be an important source of food production and can provide health benefits, both physical and mental.

Impairments don't have to derail gardening activities. Indeed, gardening can be made accessible for people with even significant disabilities.

The "working smarter, not harder" principle applies in gardening, as it does in many

areas of life. Pre-planning can achieve results that sheer effort can't. For example, what type of garden bed best suits your abilities? There are many options for raised beds and container gardens for those who have difficulty working at ground level. Additionally, what types of plants would work best? Perennials – including some fruits and vegetables – don't have to be planted every year, though some might require pruning or other attention.

Preparing your body for gardening can also minimize discomfort and maximize productivity. Consider things like effective apparel for sun protection, well-fitting gloves, and proper footwear for good traction. Choosing the best time of day to avoid excessive heat can be important, and be sure to stay hydrated. Warming up and stretching can also help reduce the chances of injury, as can focusing on proper ergonomics and lifting techniques.



Raised beds can be helpful to gardeners with impairments, and they can be built or purchased in many forms

The availability of adaptive and ergonomically friendly gardening tools continues to expand. AgrAbility's online resource The Toolbox Assistive Technology Database at www.agrability.org/toolbox has a wealth of information about helpful gardening and lawn care tools. The Toolbox currently lists more than 1,900 solutions with around 165 relating specifically to gardening.

Some of the of the categories include:

- Cultivation/Weed Control
- Ergonomic Hand Tools
- Low-Vision Gardening
- Planting Aids
- Raised Soil Beds
- Seats and Kneeling Pads

(Cont. on p.2)



Gripping aids like those by Active Hands can help people with hand impairments

Out & About with AgrAbility

EDUCATION & AWARENESS PAST & FUTURE



The annual AgrAbility National Training Workshop (NTW) is one of the program’s most important events. The 2024 NTW was recently held in Atlanta, GA, and Indiana AgrAbility was well-represented. Program Manager Chuck Baldwin took a moment to pose with the Atlanta NTW mascot, T-Bone.

Some upcoming events for Indiana AgrAbility include:

- Indiana Rural Health Association Annual Conference, French Lick, IN, June 11 – 12
- Indiana FFA Convention, West Lafayette, IN, June 17 – 20
- Fellowship of Christian Farmers International Annual Conference, Fair Oaks, IN, July 24
- Indiana State Fair, Indianapolis, IN, August 2-18

Indiana AgrAbility staff members honored

Two Indiana AgrAbility staff members were recently given special recognition for their efforts and abilities.

Steve Swain, rural rehabilitation specialist, received the Breaking New Ground Achievement Award during the 2024 AgrAbility National Training Workshop (NTW) in Atlanta, GA. This recognition is given to individuals who have shown outstanding commitment to serving farmers, ranchers, and other agricultural workers with disabilities. Some criteria for the award include longevity of service, passion for the mission, and special achievements.

Steve has worked with AgrAbility since 2000 and became a certified Assistive Technology Professional in 2005. Though he officially “retired” in 2021, Steve still works part-time with AgrAbility, specializing in farm assessments and cases involving Indiana Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

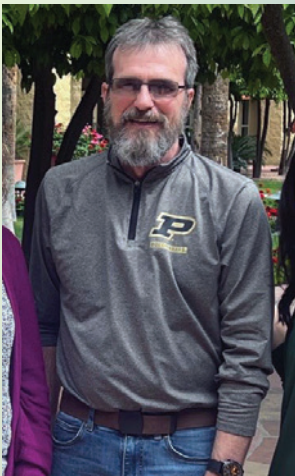
Ed Sheldon, Extension outreach specialist, was accepted into the 2024 National Extension Leadership (NELD) cohort. According to its website, “NELD’s mission is to build leaders throughout Extension at all levels and provide them with the vision, courage, and tools to lead in a changing world.”

Participants engage in virtual and in-person sessions that facilitate leadership development through such mechanisms as small group discussions, personal assessments of strengths, and skills practice in such areas as goal setting and decision making.

Ed’s first in-person NELD event took him to Tempe, Arizona, where he participated in several days of networking, relationship building, and educational sessions.



Swain at the NTW



Sheldon in Tempe

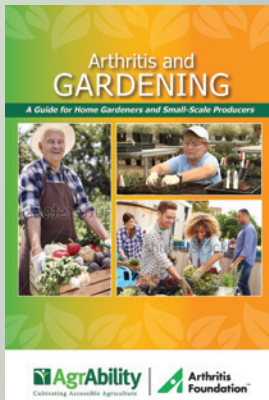
Accessible gardening (cont.)

More gardening sections of The Toolbox...

- Shovel Adapters
- Sprayers
- Tool Storage and Transport
- Watering
- Yard Carts and Wheelbarrows

Another excellent resource on adaptive gardening is the 24-page booklet *Arthritis and Gardening*, available in PDF at www.agrability.org/arthritis. It elaborates on many of the topics discussed in this article.

For those wanting more extensive training and resources, Extension programs, like Purdue’s, offer Master Gardener programming. See mastergardener.extension.org.



Brain injury is challenging, but assistance is available

One of the body’s most vital organs can be damaged in many ways: traumatic brain injury, stroke, tumors, neurodegenerative diseases, and other means. Farmers are at risk of brain injury through on-farm incidents, such as by contact with livestock or falls, or by off-farm mishaps like motor vehicle collisions.

The effects and severities of brain injury are widely varying and complex. Impairments can be lifelong and change over time. Recovery from brain injury takes time, and progress can be inconsistent. Some areas of life that can be affected include

- Physical abilities, including mobility
- Cognitive abilities: memory, attention, speech, and more
- Emotions and behavior

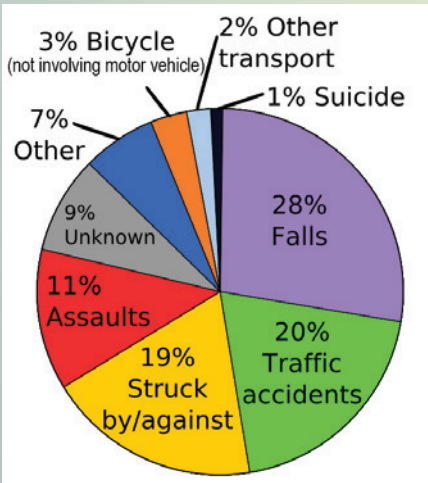
Annually, an estimated 2.8 million Americans sustain a traumatic brain injury, and more than 5 million people are living with a permanent brain injury-related disability. Every brain injury is unique as there are no two alike. Brain injury is now being recognized as a chronic condition as it may persist and progress over a person’s lifetime. Therefore, brain injury should be managed and treated as other chronic conditions.



Organizations like the Brain Injury Association of Indiana (BIAI) provide information, resources, support, advocacy, and education for people with brain injuries, family members, and the public. The Brain Injury Association of Indiana also supports many county-based support groups plus a virtual support group for caregivers only. Their website, www.biaindiana.org, lists not only those groups but also an extensive collection of helpful links, checklists, and other resources. Professionals, people with brain injury, and caregivers can access training modules, some that offer CEUs. BIAI can also connect individuals with research opportunities.

There are also many types of assistive technologies that can assist people with brain injury. A quick internet search can yield many options for tools to assist with daily activities such as mobility, speech, memory, computer access, and hearing. Visit tinyurl.com/AT4brain for a start.

Early identification, intervention, and management of brain injury are key in helping those impacted by brain injury to live their best lives. AgrAbility is available to assist people in agriculture with brain injury. Email agrability@agrability.org or call 800-825-4264.



Traumatic brain injury causes tinyurl.com/tbi-causes

TOOLBOX Spotlight

TOOLS TO MAKE LIFE EASIER



RotoShovel Cordless Handheld Shovel-Auger

The RotoShovel can be used for different gardening and landscaping tasks, including planting vegetable crops, bulbs, annual flowers, and even small trees and shrubs, digging post holes for fencing/mailboxes/signs, etc. With a press of the thumb trigger, its 12-volt battery-powered auger reportedly digs holes up to 3 inches in diameter and 10 inches deep. The removable auger shield can help to scoop out the soil as the holes are dug.

For more information on this and more helpful tools, visit **THE TOOLBOX** Assistive Technology Database www.agrability.org/toolbox