

We Go Gardening

Newsletter of the West Chicago Garden Club

Volume 22 Issue 2 February 2018



Meeting Date: February 22

Meeting Location:

**Faith Community Church
910 Main Street, West Chicago**

Meeting Time:

**6:45PM Refreshments
7:00PM Business Meeting
7:15PM Program**

REMINDER: Membership dues should be paid by February 22nd

A Native Garden for Four Seasons

Our February speaker is Cindy Anderson. Cindy is a Master Gardener and volunteer at plant information at the Chicago Botanic Garden. She has earned a master's degree in landscape architecture and is working on a PhD in Architecture. She also teaches architecture and design courses at UW-Milwaukee.

Cindy describes this program as:

Native gardens are of increasing interest to home gardener, but often they have a reputation of being messy or weedy. However, with a little bit of self-reflection about what is important to the gardener in their garden, a natives planting can be beautiful (in the eye of the gardener) and provide a benefit for ecosystem biodiversity. In this talk, I guide participants through choosing plants for a four-season garden, some tips on sources and a primer on design principles. This presentation discusses how to think about what "native" means to the individual

gardener, why using natives is important and some examples of gardens that feature native plants. The talk concludes with a collection of native plants suitable for gardens here in northern Illinois.



Coming in March: Wally Schmidtke will tell us "How To Wake Up Your Garden". Come join us on March 22nd as we all start looking forward to spring.

Mosaic Art Class Reminder

Saturday, February 24 & March 3,
9am - noon

At Gallery 200, 103 W. Washington St,
West Chicago

Watch for an email to those signed up for
more information

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Club Information

Website: www.westchicagogardenclub.org
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Membership Information

Dues for 2018: Individual: \$15 Family: \$25

Board Meetings

2nd Thursday each month at 7 p.m.

Regular Meeting Location

Faith Community Church
910 Main Street, West Chicago

2017 WCGC BOARD:

President: Barb Bizzarri
Vice President: Keith Letsche
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Contact Barb Bizzarri if you are interested

Program Director: Barb Melville
Plant Sale Chair: Dan Beebe
Newsletter: Pamela Darrah

To Contact any Board Member, please send email to WestChicagoGardenClub@gmail.com

You're invited to come explore, get inspired, learn and add some beauty to your garden at

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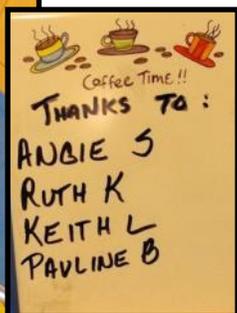
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Growing, learning and educating since 1979...

January's Meeting

Our speaker, Laura Christensen, demonstrated how she turned her home and property in Wheaton into a beautiful landscape design: her program was motivating and inspired many of us to update our yards with color and four season eye



Plant Sale 2018

The club's annual Plant Sale has long been a great opportunity for the club to be involved in the community, generate interest in gardening, recruit new members and raise money to fund the club's activities. An overwhelming number of members voted in November to continue having the Plant Sale at Blooming Fest 2018 on Saturday, May 19th.

As most of you know, a successful Plant Sale requires a lot of volunteer hours from our members and their families. This year will be no different. We will, however, be looking for opportunities to scale back some of the more labor intensive activities while still putting on a great sale worthy of the club's hard won (and well deserved) reputation.

I am hopeful that many of you who have played key roles before and during the sale in the past few years, will continue to participate and bring forward ideas that will help the club's plant sale continue running smoothly and efficiently. I need a bit of a refresher on how things have been done over the past few years and plan on contacting as many of you as possible over the next couple of weeks to discuss past sales and possible future improvements.

Over the next two months, there will be sign-up sheets at our monthly meetings for open Plant Sale Committee positions and Potting Parties. All members are encouraged to participate in any way they feel comfortable and new ideas are welcome from all members.

If you have any questions, concerns or comments, feel free to e-mail me at dbeebe@yahoo.com.

Dan Beebe, your new (recycled?) Plant Sale Committee Chairman



Notes from Barbara Bizzarri

As you look outside and see all the snow, don't dismay. Spring really is right around the corner! Here are some 'March Tips' from Chicagoland Gardening Magazine

- Have a soil test done. For a list of labs, visit extension.illinois.edu/soiltest.
- Cut back ornamental grasses to about 6" before new growth starts.
- Cut back all dead material from perennials.
- Complete your spring cleanup before bulbs and perennials emerge.
- Transplant trees and shrubs before bud break.
- Sow peas, lettuce, mustard, turnips, radishes and onion sets directly into the soil (as soon as workable).
- Don't work the soil if it is too wet or frozen.
- Try Something Different: At the beginning of the month, start a new flowerbed using the lasagna gardening or sheet composting method. In the location of the new bed, lay down cardboard or five sheets of black and white newspaper. Add a layer of shredded leaves, grass clippings, or shredded dried garden debris. Then add a thick layer of compost or topsoil. Allow this pile to "mellow" until it is time to plant — about mid to late May. Plant new plants directly into the pile.

Call To Action...

Please check with your friends and neighbors to see if they would be willing to donate plants for our upcoming Blooming Fest Garden sale. After speaking to them and they agree, please send me their name and contact information and we'll take it from there. Thanks for your assistance with this very important matter. Barb.bizzarri@gmail.com

Cantigny Park Events

March 6: Greenhouse Tour: Cantigny Greenhouse, 11 am. Take a behind-the-scenes look at the park's spring bedding plants and the beginning stages of its summer plant series on this guided tour. The greenhouse is normally closed to the public. Free with paid parking (\$5). Register at Cantigny.org or call 630.260.8162. Park at the Visitors Center then walk to the greenhouse or ride the tram

March 18: Workshop: Introduction to Grafting Fruit Trees: Cantigny Greenhouse, 1 to 2:30 pm. The Midwest Fruit Explorers, a garden club for backyard fruit growers, offers this free session for beginners. The workshop is free but advance registration is required. Register at Cantigny.org or call 630.260.8162. Parking (\$5) is at the Visitors Center with free tram service available to the greenhouse.



Do you know ??..

Your garden club donates the following magazine subscriptions to the West Chicago Library:

- American Gardener
- Chicagoland Gardening
- English Garden
- Garden Gate
- Horticulture
- Northern Gardener
- Fine Gardening

At your next visit to the Library, Check them out!

News from Kruse

Keith Letsche

Gardening with Presidents

With Valentine's Day and the birthdays of Washington and Lincoln, February is the month of Love and Presidents. We always hear about gardens and love, but not much about gardens and presidents. So while the Kruse House garden is closed for renovation and remodeling by Mother Nature, Inc., this month, let's take a look at presidential gardening.

Between this month's presidential birthday boys, it seems that George Washington, first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen, might also be first in presidential gardening. Although he never gardened at the White House (it wasn't finished until after his death), Mt. Vernon was celebrated in his times for its plantings. In particular, there were so many rose bushes that it took twelve days to harvest the petals which Martha made into rosewater.



White House circa 1904

Lincoln, it appears, didn't go much in for gardening while president, probably because he was way too preoccupied by the Civil War, and which, growing up as the son of a hardscrabble frontier farmer, wouldn't have had much appeal for him anyway. But Mary Todd took a great interest in gardening—or let's say the money she got from it. It seems that "Mrs. President" (as she liked to be called) had the White House gardener pad his bills for manure and other gardening supplies, and then turn the excess over to her so she could buy more "flubdubs" (her husband's term for them) to decorate the White House with.

Among other presidents, Jefferson, renowned horticulturalist though he was in addition to his other accomplishments, didn't do much for gardening at the White House, and may have even set it back when he had seventy acres that were originally part of its grounds detached to create a public common. However, his successor, James Madison, made up for it by planting the first documented White House garden—not an ornamental garden, but one in which he grew varieties of cabbages, radishes, carrots, parsnips and other vegetables. It wasn't so much that Madison missed the fields of his Montpelier plantation as he needed what he grew for the lavish dinners Dolley and he gave, since presidents at the time didn't receive a budget for state entertaining. John Quincy Adams might have been called "Johnny Appleseed," or more precisely "Johnny Chestnut" or "Johnny Acorn," because of all the trees he had planted at the White House.

Later presidents tended to be experimenters in their gardening. Woodrow Wilson used sheep to trim the White House lawn and free up its gardeners for service in World War I. Barack Obama introduced beehives on the White House grounds, which produced 140 pounds of honey their first year. But perhaps the most novel of the White House gardens was the idea not of a president but his wife, the beloved Rose Garden with its whimsical Alice in Wonderland characters, which Jackie Kennedy had installed as part of her undertaking as First Lady to brighten up the "dreary Maison Blanche."

These and many other stories about presidential gardens can be found in Marta McDowell's book, *All the Presidents' Gardens*.

Terrariums

The Growing Place

It's February and we're itching to get in the garden. But, while we patiently wait for spring to get outside, we can get our fix with terrariums and dish gardens. They give us the chance to bring nature indoors on a small scale.

Choosing your container

You can create gardens in almost any kind of container. For enclosed terrariums, we recommend using a glass vessel that does not have drainage. It can be anything from a standard enclosed terrarium, a lantern or even a mason jar for an extra small terrarium. Be creative! Almost any glass vessel can become a terrarium as long as it is big enough to support the plants.

For open containers such as dishes or pots, it is easier if it does have a drainage hole. If it doesn't, you will have to be very careful not to over-water it. A glass cloche can be placed over an open container to create a terrarium look.

Choosing your plants

When considering plants for terrariums and dish gardens make sure you select the right plants. For the humid environment of a terrarium ferns and miniature house plants are appropriate because they don't need a lot of light and can tolerate the humidity of closed containers.

Ideal plants for dish gardens are succulents and cactus in all shapes and sizes because they thrive in the open drier semi-arid climate.

Soil

For enclosed containers, you must create drainage so plants do not drown. Layer the bottom of the vessel with about one inch of pebbles or gravel. Add a layer of activated charcoal to keep the soil healthy and minimize bacteria. Rinse your charcoal and pebbles before placement to remove dust and other debris. Lastly, add potting soil for your plants. We recommend using a potting soil without added fertilizer because the goal is to keep your plants small.

For open containers, regular potting soil is perfect. You can vary the depth of your potting soil in the container to create hills and valleys. The soil depth must match the depth of the soil the plants are currently planted in.

Planting

With terrarium and dish gardening, plants may need to be trimmed to fit in the containers. You may need to trim roots lightly or shake soil off them so that they can be tucked in a small space. You may also need to prune some foliage to keep a plant small for an enclosed terrarium or cloche.

Accents

Add stones, miniature accents, ceramic mushrooms, twigs, shells, fairies, gnomes, feathers, bark, and more to give your garden unique personality.

Watering your terrarium or dish garden

Enclosed containers need far less watering than open containers. Water well when you first install your plants. Check the container frequently to assess the soil moisture. Tropical terrariums should be consistently moist. Do lift the lid or the cloche once in a while to allow fresh air in.

Open containers should be checked for moisture regularly. They will need to be watered more often, especially when you run your furnace or air conditioner. Depending on your plant choices, you may need to water every couple of days or perhaps once a week. Succulents prefer a dry environment, but should be watered about every two weeks.

