

We Go Gardening

Newsletter of the West Chicago Garden Club



January 22nd Meeting

St. Andrew Lutheran Church

6:45PM Arrive & Mingle
7:00PM Business Meeting
7:15PM Program

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Identifying Trees in Wintertime

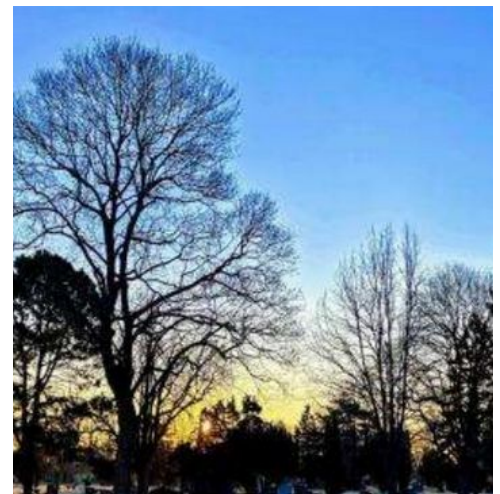
Ruth Kyme

Mel Zaloudek will be our January speaker. Mel graduated from Eastern Illinois University with a bachelor's degree in Taxonomic Botany. He served on the horticulture faculty of Triton College in River Grove for 20 years and is currently working as an independent landscaping consultant. He has been presenting programs regularly to groups large and small across the greater Chicago metropolitan area for many years.



Many gardeners (and even some industry professionals) have trouble recognizing trees during their six months of dormancy, but it's easier than you think. During Mel's program, Identifying Trees in Wintertime, we will focus on

honing that skill. We'll look at photos, as well as actual twigs, for simple and reliable clues to identification. Naming tree species in the off season is a valuable and enjoyable skill. Bring a small magnifying glass and leave with a big new understanding of our wondrous, woody friends throughout the four seasons.



Mel last spoke to us about "The Shaded Garden" in August of 2012.



Our New Look

Pamela Darrah

Last fall I let you know that due to Microsoft ending their Publisher software, we were going to need to make changes to our newsletter. This new newsletter has been created using new software named Affinity.

Since the entire newsletter needed to be recreated in the new software, it has also received a redesign. Please let me know if you like the new format or if you have constructive criticism and ideas for how to improve it.

I believe that all the information that was in the previous version of our newsletter is still included - it just may be in a new location! If you can't find something that you expect to be here, please let me know.



About our Club

The purpose of the West Chicago Garden Club shall be to increase interest in gardening through sharing our ideas and knowledge, promoting and participating in community beautification, and protecting and promoting a clean, sustainable environment in which to live.

Meetings & Dues

We meet on the 4th Thursday from January to October, the 3rd Thursday of November and do not meet in December.

Most meetings are at St. Andrew Lutheran Church in West Chicago (155 N Prince Crossing Rd) at 7:00pm. Occasional meetings may be held elsewhere and that information can be found in our newsletter or website.

The Board meets on the 2nd Thursday at St. Andrew Lutheran Church at 7:00pm.

Dues for 2026: Individual \$20
Family \$30

Contact Us

Website:
WestChicagoGardenClub.org

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WestChicagoGardenClub@gmail.com

Facebook:
facebook.com/westchicagogardenclub

Instagram:
[westchicagogardenclub](https://www.instagram.com/westchicagogardenclub)

Board Members

President: Dan Beebe
Vice President: Janet Frogner
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Information Director:
Pamela Darrah
Member Services Director:
Lisa Marie Vogt
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Mary Schramer & Dan Beebe
Kruse Garden Chair: Open

Membership Renewal



Thank you to the club members who have already paid their 2026 Membership Dues.

If you haven't renewed, a [Membership Application](#) can be found on our website. Please bring

the form and your renewal to the January meeting or mail it to the PO Box shown on the form.

We can also accept credit cards using our online "store" where you can pay your dues. If you choose this option please write a note that this is a renewal in the spot for a comment. We would also appreciate you filling out a [Membership Application](#) so we are certain we have your current information.

The online store is at : <https://west-chicago-garden-club.square.site/>

We Need Your Help!

Lisa Marie Vogt

You may have received an email from Sign Up Genius with a link to the sign up page. We have a few volunteers, but would like to get members signed up to help with at least the first few meetings of the year.

- Tables and chairs need to be set up and put away after each meeting
- Refreshment host and volunteers are needed for each meeting.

[Click Here to sign up using Sign Up Genius](#) If you need assistance to sign up, please email westchicagogardenclub@gmail.com or call/text Lisa Marie at 630.291.1954

Thank you to everyone who helped with tables & chairs and refreshments last year. We appreciate you!



2026 Club Events

Pamela Darrah

It's early in the year, but to help you plan there are some dates you might want to get into your calendars. On page 5 there is information about this year's Plant Sale. We will also be enjoying our Twilight Tuesdays again this summer. Those will begin right after the Plant Sale and there will be 10 dates

available. Sign ups will be available soon. Our Kruse Gardeners will host their 2nd Saturday work days at the garden. The first will be in April for Spring cleanup and there will be 4 more from June to September.



Getting to Know

Janet Frogner

Member Debra Dobler

Resident of: West Chicago, 4 months

WCGC Member: 4 months

How did you become a member: Friends with Marcy Kowlowski

What is your current profession: Currently Chef/ GM at private university in Chicago

What are you most proud of in your garden: All of my varieties of tomatoes surprised and surpassed my expectations. First time I have had a garden in 5 years.

A garden mistake you made: Cheap tomato cages; no way could they support my bountiful plants.

What do you love most about gardening: Watching

Mother Nature work her magic.

What tip or words of wisdom can you share: Still learning something new every day.

What is your favorite houseplant: Reina de la Noche (Queen of the Night)

Favorite garden tool: Pruners



November's Potluck & Raffle Meeting

Janet Frogner

Thank you to everyone who helped at our November Potluck/Raffle event. It was a huge success because of YOU! I hope you enjoyed good food and spending time with your garden friends.

Thank you again for your hard work. -Janet Frogner



Plant Sale News

Mary Schramer

Blooming Fest is May 16th this year!

We are already preparing for this year's sale. We'll have more information about volunteer opportunities next month. For now, you can add the following dates to your calendar:

Perennial Potting Parties

April 4 (Saturday) from 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM

April 12 (Sunday) from 1 PM to 4 PM

April 18 (Saturday) from 1PM to 4PM

April 26 (Sunday) from 1PM to 4PM

Other Important Dates

Label Plants for Plant Sale: May 9, 9 AM to 12 PM

Members Only Plant Sale: May 14

Set up Plant Sale and move plants to tent: May 15

Blooming Fest Plant Sale: May 16

Pop up potting parties for annuals will begin in March. We often don't know until the last minute when we will be getting plants or how many. Typically, we pot these plugs on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon and there are usually 4 or 5 times when we

get plants between March 1 and the end of April. If you want to be involved in this process, please visit the garden club Sign Up Genius page and add your name to the list to be notified ([Annual Potting Volunteers](#)). Click on the link or scan the barcode. We are also looking for people who are willing to help with small, one time only, jobs related to managing the plug donations from Cantigny. Add your name to that list if you think you may be available and you will receive an email when we have an opportunity. Both opportunities are available on the same Sign Up Genius page.



There is also a sign up for **odd jobs** associated with managing the plant sale preparations and the day of the plant sale. These odd jobs may take a few hours or may be more involved. Some can be done from home and some cannot. If you would like to be on a list to receive an email or call when these jobs pop-up, [sign-up for Plant Sale Odd Jobs notification](#) on Sign Up Genius by clicking the link or scanning the QR code.



Care to Share

Pamela Darrah

Do you have something you would like to share with the club? A photo of a favorite plant, an upcoming gardening event, a recipe, or something else? Send your items to the club at WestChicagoGardenClub@gmail.com.

From Mary Smedegard: [20th Annual PCMGA Gardening Show](#) "Tad far but I've attended and price is very very reasonable, great speakers and you get free seed packs! If weather is good, I hope to go."



News from Kruse

Kerry Perry

The garden was put to bed in late fall. Not much was cut back as we wanted to protect the habitat for overwintering bees and other insects. There was a beautiful blanket of snow a few weeks ago and I only wish it had stayed longer. The recent warm weather brought immediate melting and now the yard is brown and somewhat dull. But, ahhh...the

anticipation of spring! We'll be ready and waiting for new growth.

"The tiny seed knew that in order to grow, it needed to be dropped in dirt, covered in darkness, and struggle to reach the light." – Sandra Kring



One of my favorite photos is of the bench by the garden shed and the old maple in the background. It looks so peaceful, tranquil and pure.



Join the Kruse Crew Wednesday mornings, generally April through October. It's a fun learning experience and you have the opportunity to get your hands dirty.



Several Snowdrops *Galanthus woronowii* bulbs were planted in the far NE section of the garden. They will be among the first flowers peeking their heads out of the snow in early spring.



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Nature Notes: Geeky Science

Kerry Perry

In mathematics, the **Fibonacci sequence** (1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13 ...) is a sequence in which each element is the sum of the two elements that precede it. The formula for the n th Fibonacci number is $F_n = F_{n-1} + F_{n-2}$. **Yikes!** This is so deep. No wonder I changed my college major from math to accounting. I literally got lost in the n th dimension.

The numbers of the sequence occur throughout nature, such as in the spirals of sunflower heads, peacock feathers, pine cones and snail shells. From the smallest succulents to the largest storms, this numerical pattern shapes our world in ways both subtle and spectacular.



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Growing Native—New Year, New Yew?!

Ruth Gauss

Hi, gardening friends! I will admit that the title really isn't directly related to the content of my article this month, but as a gardener (and former "tree and shrub expert" at The Planter's Palette) I couldn't resist it for January! What I wanted to share about this month is something that came up in [Doug Tallamy's Wild Ones Q & A session](#) from October of last year. I hope that if you haven't watched the recording that you will because there were a lot of good questions and Doug Tallamy is very knowledgeable and usually fairly kind in his responses! Simply click on the blue link above or search for Wild Ones on YouTube + Doug Tallamy.

There were a lot of good questions, but the one that really caught my attention was whether straight species is necessary if our goal is to support the ecosystem or if cultivars are okay.



Sanguinaria canadensis Multiplex
(photo from Doug Tallamy)

This is a good news, bad news situation. We'll start with the bad news. With perennial plants, structurally changing flowers (such as a double) makes it more challenging for native insects that have evolved with those original traits to access the resources they are there for. I would assume that flower color would also be something to be wary about as well which we learned about in [June 2024](#) in my very first Growing Native article where I shared what I found regarding flower color and what critters are attracted to specific colors. The bottom line: think and act carefully so that you're not wasting your energy, money, space, or time on plants that won't actually help the ecosystem if that is your goal.

In the good news category for perennials, as Doug put it "more flowers helps more pollinators" in the case of

Phlox paniculata 'Jeana' which the [Mt Cuba Center](#) evaluated as being an excellent (and heavily flowering) choice! It's also more powdery mildew resistant than the species which is a huge plus.



Phlox paniculata 'Jeana'
(photo from Mt Cuba Center)

Moving on to woody plants, Doug shared that the news is pretty much all positive. Out of the 5 possible attributes that tend to be chosen in a cultivar, only one was problematic—leaf color being red or purple because the anthocyanins are not tasty for bugs that eat leaves (check out my [September 2025](#) article if you are unhappy about insects eating the leaves of your plants). That news was so good to hear, because it can be difficult to find straight cultivars of trees and shrubs in many nurseries. Now we know that as long as leaf color stays green, the plant should be a resource for local leaf munchers as well as other wildlife!

Okay, so plant those green-leaved trees and shrubs with single flowers that are cultivars of natives if you'd like and stick with straight species when a structural or color change has been made to the flower of a perennial.

I hope this was helpful! Happy (native) gardening and happy 2026!



Local Events for gardeners

Patti Pirrie

January 25. 11am-2pm. Free Seed Swap.
Oak Park Conservatory (Oak Park, IL).

<https://fopcon.org/event/seed-swap/>

Browse a selection of herbs, vegetables, floral, perennial, and native seeds. We will have expert gardeners on hand to guide you in getting your garden off to a good start! Please label your seed donations with the variety, source, and year when possible. Note the first hour is open to FOPCON Members only.



Saturday January 31. Noon-3:00 pm (2 sessions). Seed Swap.

The Morton Arboretum. (Lisle, IL). Price included with Arboretum admission.

<https://mortonarb.org/explore/activities/adult-programs/seed-swap/>

Join a community of growers at a free seed swap event. Browse a selection of vegetable, herb, native, and ornamental seeds, and take home a variety to plant this spring. Bring leftover seed packets or self-saved seeds to share. If you don't have seeds to offer, come anyway! This event is free for Arboretum members and is included with general admission to the Arboretum. Advance registration is required.



Saturday January 31. 9-11am. Starting Vegetables From Seeds.

The Morton Arboretum. (Lisle, IL). Cost: \$39, Member cost: \$32.

<https://mortonarb.org/explore/activities/adult-programs/starting-vegetables-from-seed/>

Learn how to start vegetables from seed in this hands-on workshop at The Morton Arboretum.

Discover techniques and benefits of growing vegetables from seeds.

Guided by a gardening expert, participants explore the impacts of lighting, soil types, containers, sowing schedules, and plant selection. Learn to avoid common mistakes and make your seed starting a success.



Thursday, February 5. 7-8:30pm. Winter Sowing.
DuPage Organic Garden Club. Carol Stream Public Library. Registration is required for this event.

<https://www.cslibrary.org/event/dupage-garden-club-person-59282>

Master Gardener Cynthia Ciekiewicz from the University of Illinois Extension will show an easy method of seed starting. Seeds are planted in mini greenhouses during the cold winter months, germinate outside and are ready to transplant once the ground thaws.



Thursday, February 5. 12-1pm. Free webinar: Native Woody Plants for Urban Spaces.

The Conservation Foundation. Registration is required. <https://theconservationfoundation.org/event/woody-plants-webinar/>

In this webinar, Kelsey Shaw (owner and Botanist at Possibility Place Nursery) will highlight native trees and shrubs perfect for small-scale urban spaces. Native plants are often treated as an all-or-

nothing option or confined to a narrow list of "acceptable" species. But the world of natives — especially woody plants — is far more versatile and exciting than traditional plant lists suggest.



Upcoming Programs & Events for 2026

These are the currently scheduled programs. If there are any changes we will update this in future newsletters. The last column will show who has signed up to bring treats.

[Click Here](#) to download a poster with our 2026 Schedule.

Date	Speaker	Topic	Treat Volunteers
January 22	Mel Zalousek	Identifying Trees in Wintertime	Patricia P, Janette G, Roxanne W, Dotty F
February 26	Amy Powers	Pruning: Don't Be Scared	Janette G, Claudia F
March 26	Dolly Foster	Plant Propagation From Stem Cuttings, Layering, and Divisions	
April 23	Nina Koziol	To be announced	Shirley S
May 16		PLANT SALE	
May 28	Ann Baker	The Blended Family: Integrating Natives into Traditional Gardens	Marion M
June 25	Diane Smith	How to Breathe Life into Your Landscaping	Lisa H
July 23		President's Picnic	
August 27	Nicole Jagielski	Grow Your Vegetable Garden Year Round- Even in Chicago	
September 24	DuPage County Forest Preserve	Civic Outreach: The Urban Coyote	
October 22		Bulb Bingo	
November 19		Member Appreciation Dinner	

Garden Bucks

West Chicago Garden Club distributes Garden Bucks (real fake money) to our members. You earn Garden Bucks by participating in club activities, volunteering at events, and donating items!

We have a Tally Sheet that you can use to help you keep track of your own Garden Bucks. We work on an honor system and you need to add up your total before the November meeting.

There will be copies available at our meetings or you can download by [Clicking Here](#).

At the November meeting you will be able to use your

Bucks to enter raffles for donated items and gift cards.

Come out and volunteer. Your participation keeps our club going strong.