

We Go Gardening

Newsletter of the West Chicago Garden Club



May 28th Meeting

St. Andrew Lutheran Church

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

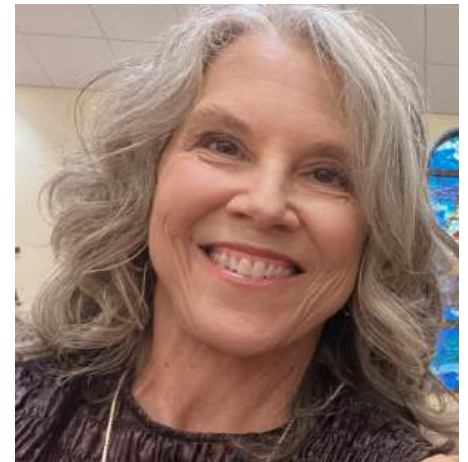
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Integrating Natives into Traditional Gardens

Ruth Kyme

Our May speaker is Ann Baker. Ann is a certified Environmental Consultant and landscape Design Consultant. During Ann's presentation; "The Blended Family: Integrating Natives into Traditional Gardens," we will discover how to incorporate native plants into our gardens without sacrificing our beloved flowers and favorites. Learn how native species can add beauty while supporting pollinators, improving soil and water health, and creating a healthier ecosystem right in your own landscape. We'll also explore



keystone plants and practical ways to choose natives that work well in everyday home gardens.

Flower Display for Club Meeting

Christina Covarrubias

We may not be in London for the Chelsea Flower Show this month but our garden club can participate in our own flower show -albeit on a very tiny scale.

(Photo from the Chelsea Flower Show when I was there!!)

Bring your blooming Iris blossom or clematis flower to display at our next club meeting Thursday, May 28 before 7pm. We'll have bud vases ready to feature our area's irises and clematis.



A Note from the President

Dan Beebe

I would like to give a big THANK YOU to everyone who volunteered their valuable time to help make this year's Plant Sale at Blooming Fest a HUGE success. Whether you donated, picked up, divided, potted, watered, labeled, priced, moved, arranged, or stocked plants, created labels, put labels on sticks, moved supplies to or from the storage barn, moved plants into the sale tent, moved plants out of the sale tent, manned the tally, checkout, or membership tables, mingled with or answered questions for customers, put out a yard sign, created, liked or shared a social media post, helped spread the word about the sale, or helped with any other task I might have missed, you made this event shine! I heard so many kind words, kudos, and accolades during and after the sale, and all



of you should be proud of our collective accomplishments as a club. I know I am.

You guys are AWESOME!

- Dan

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

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westchicagogardenclub

Board Members

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Vice President: Janet Frogner
Treasurer: Karen Sherman
Publicity Director: Ruth Gauss
Program Director: Ruth Kyme
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Director at Large: Kurt Schramer
Information Director:
Pamela Darrah
Member Services Director:
Lisa Marie Vogt
Plant Sale Chair:
Mary Schramer & Dan Beebe
Kruse Garden Chair: Open

Volunteer Appreciation

Mary Schramer

Mary Schramer is our Plant Sale Co-chair and Volunteer Coordinator

A huge thank you to the 77 club members who volunteered for one or more (and there were many who were there for more than one) activity with the plant sale. Thank you to Billie and her crew who selected plugs for us at Cantigny. Thank you to everyone who donated plants from their garden (or a friend's garden), grew plants from seeds, propagated houseplants or donated canna bulbs and dahlias. Although we didn't have as many perennials as last year, the plants we had looked great with few exceptions thanks to the skillful attention of our potters and our watering crew who looked after them in the field.

Be sure and thank Dan Beebe for all the time and energy he put into making this a success. He was at almost every plant sale activity and put in many hours looking after the annuals and vegetables, meeting

with planners/officials of Blooming Fest, completing the necessary paperwork, putting up tents for potting (in not so nice weather sometimes) and countless other hours. He couldn't have done that without the support of Pamela Darrah who puts in a lot of time behind the scenes managing the labeling process and updating signs and still gets out newsletters and reminders to keep us all on track.



Thank you to everyone who came to a potting party, donated plants, helped set up/clean-up for all the events, donated boxes, worked at the sale or helped in any way. And especially those who stayed the whole day with

Dan and I. It was a long, hot yet fun day! I don't have the final numbers as I write this article, but preliminary numbers suggest once all the expenses are in and checks and credit card purchases have been processed, we will meet or possibly exceed our goal to fund next year's budget once all expenses are in. We couldn't have done it without you!

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? We can also include questions you have that other members may be able to answer. Send your items to the club at WestChicagoGardenClub@gmail.com.

A Question from Kathleen Hankins: *I have been looking everywhere, almost, for creeping thyme, the beautiful pink and purple groundcovers I see around town. Does anyone know where I can find flats, if possible, or plugs?* - If you have a suggestions, email the club and we will pass it on to Kathleen.

A Successful Adopt-A-Highway Pickup

Pamela Darrah

We had a good turnout for the Spring Adopt-A-Highway and the job was completed quickly. Our president, Dan Beebe (not pictured), organizes two pickups per year - one in the Spring and one in the Fall.

Our adopted section is about 1 mile of Hawthorne Lane in front of the Park District facility where we hold our potting parties.

Many thanks to the volunteers who came out to help!



Barn Clean Up & Pot Drop Off

Mary Schramer

What should I do with all the pots and flats I have been collecting since last fall, you ask? Watch for an invitation to bring them to the barn clean up.



The West Chicago Park District has generously allowed us to store equipment in the barn located at Kress Creek Farm Park located on Joliet Street. After the plant sale, several members helped return items to the barn but we didn't have time to sort them (at least I didn't have the energy or the time) so everything was just moved into the barn. We will need to sort and stack the pots, plastic flats, and trays sometime in June so they will be ready for next year.

You can bring your empty pots, flats, trays or miniblind donations to the barn that day. **DO NOT** bring these items to meetings or other garden club events as I do not have room to store them at my place (and neither does Dan). Keep in mind that we do not need any broken pots, decorative pots, ceramic or terracotta pots.

We can use one-gallon, true gallon, two-gallon, and 3-gallon pots for perennials, trees, and shrubs. We have a supply of larger pots. We can use 3- to 4-inch pots for annuals along with trays they fit in. Hanging baskets are welcome (about 80 were used this year for the sale). The 4- and 6-pack cells tend to be too flimsy and tear easily which makes them less useful. Please empty all pots of any soil or other debris and remove labels and tags prior to bringing them to the barn if you can.



Twilight Tuesday

Pamela Darrah

Sadly, our first Twilight Tuesday for 2026 was canceled since we did not have a garden to visit. We are still looking for a garden for our 2nd date which is on June 9th.

This is an opportunity for garden club members to share their garden with other members from the club. They are casual, beginning at 6:30 PM. We are looking for members to volunteer their gardens. They don't have to be large, professionally designed, established, new, perfect, or finished and they don't have to be in West Chicago (we have members from all over DuPage and Kane counties).

It provides an opportunity to get to know other club members, discuss plants with other people who 'get it' and sometimes get advice from fellow gardeners about how to solve challenges. You can serve treats and beverages if you like but it is not required. You can give away plants and seeds if you have some to share but not required. You can [sign up on Signup Genius now \(click here\)](#). There are six Tuesdays still available.



Kruse Garden 2nd Saturday

Christina Covarrubias

You're cordially invited on Saturday, June 13th from 9- 11:30 AM (AKA the SECOND Saturday) to spend a little time in the Kruse Garden. This is a great way to perhaps meet some fellow members, familiarize yourself with some new plants that grow well in our area and keep our club-maintained garden thriving. There are gardening tasks for any skill or knowledge level and a regular Kruse "crew" gardener will be there to guide you. If you would like, bring your favorite weeding tool, pruners and kneeling pad – don't forget to mark them as your own. Looking forward to gardening with many of you at Kruse House 527 Main Street West Chicago, IL 60185

We'll have a break halfway through which historically includes some refreshment. If you can't stay the whole 2 hours come for the 1st hour and the 10am break. Any amount of help is valued and greatly appreciated!

If you can, [please sign up to help](#) or if you find yourself available, just show up.



Field Trip Update

Pamela Darrah

Due to several last minute registrations, we now have over 30 people signed up for the June 2nd Field Trip to the Anderson Japanese Garden in Rockford.

We still have more space on the bus, so we can still accept more sign-ups. However, we did need to give the garden our "final count" for the guided tour. If more of you sign up we will, of course, talk to the coordinator at the garden and see if we can add more. If we cannot add more, then late signups would be able to spend that time touring the garden

independently.

If you are interested or would like more information, please [visit our Square "store" at https://square.link/u/5hJbFrWh](https://square.link/u/5hJbFrWh).

The trip is open to any members or non-members at this point (with the warning that the guided tour at the garden may not be available. The bus holds just over 50, so there is still plenty of room.

Getting to Know: Diann

Janet Frogner



Member Diann Bilderback

Resident of: Winfield for 30 years. You should know...I'd been living in a condo for many years and I couldn't wait to put in a garden. I was so naive—I didn't know anything about

gardening except that I wanted a big one! I immediately hired Planter's Palette to design a perennial garden taking up 2/3 of my suburban lot. Little did I know how much work that was going to be for me. I had to hire a gardener to help me keep up and to teach me! It's been a work in progress for the last 3 decades, as all gardens are.

WCGC Member: Aug/Sep of 2024

How did you become a member: My garden was featured on the Conservation Foundation Garden Tour in 2024, and to my surprise, some of my tennis friends showed up. Candy Theobald and Mary Passini encouraged me to join the WCGC and I did shortly thereafter. It's been a great way to learn and to connect with other gardeners. Everyone is so welcoming and friendly. I love it!

What is your current/past profession: I am retired from a career as a Chief Marketing Officer in the high technology sector. I can't believe I spent decades indoors at my laptop when I could have been outside gardening!

What are you most proud of in your garden: I love that it has lots of four-season interest. It is loveliest in spring and especially summer, but I've intentionally chosen plants that offer fall and winter interest as well. I like that it attracts lots of pollinating insects, birds, and other critters, even rabbits.

A garden mistake you made: Planting Siberian Squill because I liked its pretty spring flowers. It decimated other spring ephemerals I had and overran even some perennials. It's been a nightmare trying to eradicate it. It even pops up in the grass.



What do you love most about gardening: I like pulling weeds. It really helps me get out my aggressions and frustrations. I like it when everything looks tidy, which is almost never, but I keep trying.

What tip or words of wisdom can you share: Go native whenever you can. Natives are less fussy and sustain the critters who live here. When we create habitat for them in our gardens, we're establishing a lifeline in a world where habitat is vanishing every single day.

What is your favorite houseplant: That has to be a spider plant I've had for 55 years and almost killed multiple times by frying it in the sun (outdoor on the deck; bad idea), forgetting to water it, letting it get ridiculously root bound, allowing cats to torment it, and other neglect. It just keeps on keeping on. My garden plants are much better off than the handful of indoor plants that manage to survive in my house.

Favorite garden tool: My Hori-Hori knife. So good for digging weeds and cutting stems in a pinch.

Favorite flower and what do you love to grow: I love peonies. They are so luscious, fragrant, and temporal like life itself.

Favorite garden related place/garden you love to visit: It's a drive but Woldhuis Sunrise Greenhouse, Grant Park, IL is over the top in terms of plant quality, good prices, and amazing diversity and breadth of selection. For a gardener, it's a huge rush, endorphins firing, a happy place!

News from Kruse

Amanda Skinner

Signs of Spring in the Garden

Some of my favorite spots in the Kruse gardens are the ones that others may not always notice. At this time of year, each corner offers its own quiet beauty, bringing back memories and reminding me how quickly the garden changes from day to day.

The northeast corner is a beautiful shady spot that reminds me of nature walks as a child in Indiana. Hosta, Jacob's Ladder, white bleeding heart, trillium, and mayapples grow there, creating a woodland feel.

Mayapples prefer the same soil conditions as morel mushrooms and seeing them always reminds me that it is the start of morel hunting season.



The east side of the garden feels like a fairytale cottage garden. Lined with lilacs and bridal wreath spirea, it seems to block out the happenings beyond the yard. Naturalized perennial cornflower, allium, hosta, iris, and snow on the mountain add to the charm, making this area feel especially peaceful and serene.



At the entrance of Kruse House, the bridal wreath spirea is in full bloom. The bushes are perfectly placed, highlighting both their beauty and the stairs of the house. I have also noticed the



sprouts from the winter sowing projects beginning to emerge, and I've been watching

them closely as I make my visits to feed our Kruse House cat.

Milkweed is coming along nicely amidst the native bluestar blooms. Soon, monarchs will have plenty of plants as they make their way to our area. Pollinators of all kinds will also find many choices, with blooms opening on perennial cornflower, violets, lilies, roses, wild geranium, and peonies—the state flower of Indiana. Just as in our own yards, it seems a new flower opens each day, offering another sign that spring is fully underway.



As always you are welcome to walk around the garden any day of the week. There is parking behind the garage.

You are also welcome to help garden with our wonderful Kruse crew on Wednesdays from 9 to 11:30am. You do not need to commit to coming every week - just stop by and join the fun.

Nature Notes: Muskrats

Kerry Perry

Recently looking out my kitchen window at the pond, I noticed the cattails were sprouting. And, there was a critter swimming. Was it an otter, a beaver, the Loch Ness Monster? Nah. It was a muskrat chomping on the cattails. Hurrah!



According to the IL Dept. of Natural Resources, muskrats are prevalent in northern Illinois. Here are some interesting facts:

Muskrats are semi-aquatic rodents commonly found in wetlands and along rivers

Muskrats play a crucial role in wetland ecosystems by

helping to maintain plant diversity

They have distinctive thin, nearly hairless tails and webbed hind feet for swimming

Their diet consists of aquatic plants, roots and small fish

Muskrats build lodges for shelter and breeding

It was fun watching the critter swimming. Hopefully he will eat lots of cattails.

Photos courtesy of IDNR



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Growing Native-Happy Bee-lated Endangered Species Day!

Ruth Gauss

Hi, gardening friends! There is so much to celebrate in May! Beyond all of the school milestones, birthdays, Mother's Day, Memorial Day, our own fabulous garden club plant sale, there was Endangered Species Day (May 15) and World Bee Day (May 20). I'm sure you won't be surprised that I am going to combine the last two to spotlight how our native plants and natural gardening practices can support the Federally Endangered Rusty Patched Bumble Bee (as well as other native critters). As we learn more about our impacts on our native wildlife we can do more to help them!

This bumble bee was doing very well for a while, but it is [endangered](#) likely because of its sensitivity to things we have talked about before (pesticides and habitat loss) and also disease. Let's continue to make good choices for the environment and wildlife in our yards and if you'd like to plant some Rusty Patched Bumble Bee favorites you would be doing even more to support them! Let's start with summer blooming varieties, to keep things more focused on the coming months.

First let's look at [Anise Hyssop](#) ([Agastache foeniculum](#)), which is a wonderful source of pollen and nectar for bees, butterflies, and



RPBB visiting Anise Hyssop hummingbirds. It can grow to 2 1/2 - 3' tall and about the same in width. It's purple flower spikes begin blooming in June and can continue for up to 2 months. It is very tolerant of hot, dry conditions and is easy to grow.

[Spotted Joe-Pye Weed](#) ([Eutrochium maculatum](#)) is up next, beginning to flower in July and continuing on to September, and is perfect if you have a very wet spot in your yard. It will be okay other places, but does

want to be at least moist and in full or partial sun. It can grow up to 3-5' tall. It is noted for its fragrance.



RPBB visiting Spotted Joe-Pye Weed

To finish out the year [Showy Goldenrod](#) ([Solidago speciosa](#)) will begin blooming in September and is a critical food source as the RPBB has its own version of fat bear week getting enough nutrition to allow it so overwinter and emerge as a queen in spring to start making a nest for the next generation. The bright yellow flowers are a delightful addition to the fall garden, thriving in full to part sun and slightly moist to slightly dry conditions, with too rich of soil and too much moisture making this plant less happy. It can grow up to 4' tall.



PRBB visiting Showy Goldenrod

([All photos are by Judy Cardin](#))

I hope you found this helpful. Bee happy, happy native plant gardening!

Local Events for gardeners

Patti Pirrie

Wednesday Wilderness Walk. DuPage Forest Preserve. Wednesday, May 27, 8-10am. Lincoln Marsh. Cost: \$5 per person. ([Click Here](#))

Take a guided nature hike, observing the flora and fauna in the greatly diverse Lincoln Marsh. Join us for a cup of coffee or tea as we discuss some of nature's wonders before we start. Ages 18 and up.



Climate Conversations: Combating Climate Change with Native Plants. DuPage Forest Preserve. The Preserve at Oak Meadows (Addison, IL). Thursday, May 28, 6:30-8:30 pm. Ages 21 and up. \$40/ person. ([Click Here](#))

Learn about native wildflowers, how to identify them, and how to grow them at home. Sip a signature cocktail made with native plant ingredients while you pot up your own container of native flowers, grasses, and sedges for home. Supplies and plants provided.



Secrets of Gardens That Work. Morton Arboretum (Lisle, IL) Saturday, May 30. 10:00 a.m. to noon. Cost: \$39; Member cost: \$32 ([Click Here](#))

Discover practices for garden design, establishment, and maintenance that lead to beautiful, sustainable gardens. Learn the important traits that help a garden truly thrive in a way that is both ecologically and psychologically sustainable. Dive deep into the principles and practices that lead to flourishing, sustainable gardens.



Stop the Flop: Keeping Tall Plants Upright and Intentional. Morton Arboretum (Lisle, IL). Saturday, June 13. 10:00 a.m.-noon. Cost: \$39; Member: \$32. ([Click Here](#))

In this practical, hands-on workshop, participants will learn how to help tall, floppy plants stay upright without bulky cages and constant staking. We'll cover smart plant pairings that provide natural support, simple pruning techniques to control height and shape, and how to use the Chelsea Chop to encourage sturdier, bushier growth.



Native Bulbs and Their Allies. Online Course. Chicago Botanic Garden. Saturday, June 13. 1:30-3:30 pm. \$52 members / \$65 non-members. ([Click Here](#))

Native North American bulbs can make great additions to your spring and summer gardens. Learn how to plant and care for Canada lilies, eastern camas, violet wood sorrel, and allied species such as Jack-in-the-pulpit, bloodroot, and dwarf crested iris. Leave with a list of bulbs and allies suitable for many garden settings.



PlantCon Chicago. Donald E. Stephens Convention Center. (Rosemont, IL). June 20-21. 10am - 6pm. 2-Day Pass: \$49 + tax. ([Click Here](#))

PlantCon is an immersive weekend experience that allows plant lovers from all over to meet and get to know one another while enjoying workshops, presentations, and parties! It features a 200 booth plant market with sellers from around the globe, seminars and workshops from field experts, and exhibitions from the plant world's leading brands.



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, Patricia P, Claudia F, Keith L
March 26	Dolly Foster	Plant Propagation From Stem Cuttings, Layering, and Divisions	Jean M, Margie V, Laura B, Patti P, Claudia F.
April 23	Nina Koziol	Painting Your Garden with Plants: Shade	Shirley S, Judy K, Ruth K, Barbara D, Patti P, Mary S.
May 16		PLANT SALE	
May 28	Ann Baker	The Blended Family: Integrating Natives into Traditional Gardens	Marion M, Mary S, Linda H, Vicki B, Patti P
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: Blanding's Turtle	
October 22		Bulb Bingo	Barb B, Barb M
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.