



WE GO GARDENING

Newsletter of the West Chicago Garden Club

Volume 10 Issue 3 March 2007

Inside this issue

Events Outside the Club	2
Calendar of Events 2007	3
News and Announcements	4
Potting Party	5
Mello Yellow Recipe	5
Planting Seeds	6
Plant Sale Digging Squad (and more)	7
Reflections from a Tennessee Garden	8

Oohs, Aahs and Wows!

By Sandy Saad

Kitty Finn was outstanding as usual—Do you remember the very informative talk she gave us in March 2005 on Vertical Gardening? Yes, VINES, the Clingers, the Grabbers, the Twiners and the Sprawlers!! I was a pretty new member then and was in awe of her knowledge and grateful for the opportunity to see these beautiful climbers. All of my Oohs, Aahs and Wows must have been quiet enough since I don't remember any dirty looks.

Well, if you were at our February meeting, you probably didn't hear any noises from me since I was too busy taking notes. The Growing Place is darn lucky to have Kitty Finn working for them as a buyer who also is so completely knowledgeable and comfortable with, well (everything)

that grows. This time she showed us (mostly from her own garden) all of these "must-have" native plants, both woodland and sun types. Moving from slide to slide, at an easy pace, she noted for us the special features and needs of each one. Maiden Hair ferns were one of her favorite woodland plants as it isn't a spreader, loves humusy soil and is happy in part to full shade. It's on my list.

Next, Kitty moved on to the sun natives—a list of about thirty. Two of my favorites are Joe Pye Weed and Queen of the Prairie. In full or part sun, I just love the way they look—sort of tall, proud and wild.

Kitty passed around coupons to be used at (TGP) The Growing Place. Check out their programs on page 2 (Events outside the club).

Next Meeting: Thursday, March 22

Spring Ephemerals Speaker: Ed Max

Besides being a member of our garden club, Ed Max runs his own custom landscape design company - Max's Greener Places. He's also one of our advertisers (see page 5).

Come early to enjoy a cup of tea or coffee and some dessert—mingle—sign up for the raffle prize—check out the sharing table—grab a chair and settle in—JOE SABLE from CANTIGNY will be visiting us also. We have a great meeting in store. See you there!!!!

Join us at the Faith Community Church at 910 Main Street in West Chicago

6:45 - sharing time, conversation and refreshments

7:15 - brief business meeting

7:30 - speaker



Upcoming events (outside the club)

“SPRING HAS SPRUNG” and look at all the programs that are being offered—“right down our alley”—so to speak.

Cantigny: Check out their web site at cantignypark.com or call at (630) 260-8176. Besides their concerts, they have great programs:

Crafting Tinted Stepping Stones

Thursday, March 29, 6:30 pm Greenhouse - Garden Arts

Create and Take. Can your garden use a few decorative stepping stones? With Cantigny staff assistance you will mix cement, and add a colorant if you choose, to create a 15” cement stepping stone. A variety of designs will be available. The durable plastic mold will be yours to keep including instructions on curing your stepping stone and creating additional stones at home. Limited seating. Reservations are suggested at (630) 668-5161. Class is \$40.00.

University of Illinois Extension Office: (630) 653-4114--a telenet class: Diseases of Herbaceous Perennials on Tuesday, April 17, 12:45pm-2:30pm. Pre-registration is required and the fee is \$10.00.

Morton Arboretum: Always something special going on there. For times and information call (630)968-0074 or visit www.mortonarb.org. Wednesdays admission is \$4 adults and senior adults \$3. Arbor Day Weekend Celebration is April 27-29. Included will be a plant sale, lots to do for kids, live music and the ceremonial tree planting.

Heinz Brothers Greenhouse and Garden Center in St. Charles: April 14 and 15 is their big Spring Garden Gala. Mark your calendars so that you don't miss it. Call (630) 584-0473 for more information.

The Growing Place: When spring fever hits homeowners wait for workable soil before stepping into the yard. Working in wet soil can compact it, making it less desirable for plant growth. It has to crumble in your fingers before it is safe to dig.

This is a good time of year to ask gardening questions and find out what's new with plants and their care. How can I get a good start and how can gardening be done more efficiently with less strains, aches and pains?

The Growing Place anticipates these questions and is ready with answers, while showcasing new plants at its Spring Festival, Four Season Gardens on Sat. and Sun. April 14 and 15 at 2000 Montgomery Road, Aurora. Classes address gardening issues and designers are available to plan areas with design appointments

For more information call (630) 355-4000 or (630) 820-8088 beginning March 31.



Design Workshops this March!
Saturdays, 3/10, 17, 24 & 31... Fox Valley
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Spring Festival... April 14 & 15
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Club information

West Chicago Garden Club
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www.bwdarra.com/wcgarden

Membership information

Dues for 2007:
 Individual: \$15
 Family: \$25

2007 board

President:
 Mark Luther (630) 876-1296
 mark@markluther.com

Vice President:
 Mike Saad (630) 653-1350
 mwsaad@comcast.net

Treasurer:
 John Warbiany (630) 293-5795
 Fax: (630) 293-5794
 Cell: (630) 464-5710
 jjbwarbil@juno.com

Secretary:
 Aimee Townsend (630) 876-8588
 aleaa5@sbcglobal.net

Publicity Director
 Pamela Darrah (630) 293-4130
 pdarrah@sprynet.com

Information Director:
 Sandy Saad (630) 653-1350
 mwsaad@comcast.net

Plant Sale Chair:
 Dick Darrah (630) 584-1900
 info@bwdarra.com

Regular meeting location

Faith Community Church
 910 Main Street
 West Chicago

Calendar of events - 2007

Date	Speaker	Topic
March 22	Ed Max	Spring Ephemerals in the garden
April 21	Field Trip—10 a.m.	Member's tour of greenhouse facilities at Cantigny
April 26	Jim Schuster (U. of I. Educator)	What you need to know about the Ash Borer and Cicadas
May 19	PLANT SALE!	Bloomin' Fest 2007
May 24	Ken Benson	House plant clinic—members are invited to bring sick house plants. Member plant exchange prior to the meeting. 6PM
June 28	Jan Calhoun	What's new from Ball Seed
July 26		Picnic and potluck and socializing
August 2	Field Trip	Ball Seed Gardens
August 23	Mark Luther	Pond construction: step-by-step
September 27	Lynn Bement	Healthy gardens by "The Compost Queen"
October 25	Bill Scheffler	Organic lawn, tree and shrub care
November 15	Elections, Potluck and Nora Liu	Ornamental vines

Reminders

Babysitting—The Club provides babysitting during its regular monthly meetings when held at Faith Community Church. There is no fee to us for the service, but if you plan to use it, please **call Linda Harlson** at 377-5750, so we can plan for the right number of children .

Guests and Visitors are always welcome. Members are encouraged to bring a friend or neighbor.

Rides— Need a ride to the meeting? Call **Billie Childress** at 231-1791 by the Wednesday before the meeting.



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News and Announcements

Membership dues: Just a reminder for those who haven't gotten around to it yet — your 2007 dues are now due.

Plant Sale Potting Party—see story on page 5

Sharing Table: This is a very important place for all members to bring a treasure to show, a poem, the name of a great new gardening book you've just discovered—any gardening magazines that you'd like to pass on to anyone interested. Maybe you have some seeds that you aren't going to use? It's your sharing table—be creative and enjoy it.

New Members: New members so far this year are: Lance and Joan Conkright, Thomas Fessler, Marion Martin and Susan Terronez. Seek out these new members and introduce yourself—welcome them—let them know you're glad to have them with us. Perhaps they might like to ride with you to the potting party.

New Sign: Our treasurer, John Warbiany, tells us that the new garden club sign (3' X 5') will be set out by Faith Community Church on the Sunday or Monday before each month's meeting. Thanks John!

Notice: Please, you need to read page 7—all new—DIGGING SQUAD.

Articles on Digging and Dividing Perennials: For the Sharing Table, Billie Childress will have copies of two articles she found on this subject for anyone interested—one from Dec. '04 Garden Gate and one from Fine Gardening.

Pansies and Violas (Johnny Jump-Ups): Did you have a chance to purchase some from Carole Bates? Well, what was left was potted up last Thursday by Billie Childress and Carole Bates for the Plant Sale.

Club Members/Crafters: While we need most members to be helping with the plant sale, any member who would like to have a space to sell their garden type treasures, call Dick Darrah at 584-1900.



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Big News:

OUR FIRST POTTING PARTY WILL TAKE PLACE ON MARCH 31 AT: BERNICE MCFARLAND'S HOME 555 E. NATIONAL STREET WEST CHICAGO.

We start about 9:00 am and end when we're finished. This is a really helpful effort towards the success of our annual PLANT SALE—and it's fun too.



Meeting notes from February 22:

Raffle prizes: Carole Bates won the Hyacinth bulb and Jeff Handel won the garden shears.

Two Ball Seed employees stopped by to talk about this 102 yr. old company on 7 1/2 acres in West Chicago. Their logo "Simply Beautiful" is visible in garden centers everywhere. They came seeking volunteers to work in their gardens this summer. A sheet was passed for signups. Carole Bates will be our contact.

Donation: Our club gave a \$25 gift certificate to be used at the plant sale—donated to benefit the Community High School After Prom Event.

RECIPE: "MELLO YELLOW" Linda Harlson made this for the transition meeting this past January.

First layer: 1 cup flour
1/2 cup chopped nuts
1 stick margarine
Mix together. Press into 9x9 pan. Bake at 375 degrees for 12-15 min. Cool.

Second layer: 1 8 oz. pkg. cream cheese
1 cup powdered sugar
1 cup Cool Whip
Beat cream cheese and powdered sugar. Fold in Cool Whip and spread over crust.

Third layer: 2 small boxes instant lemon (or butterscotch or...) pudding
3 cups cold milk
Beat together and spread over the second layer. Top with the remaining 8 oz. container of Cool Whip. Chill.

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Planting Seeds—Re-printed from “Ask the Gardener”, January, 2005

Q I want to start peppers and herbs for the plant sale, when should I plant them?

A (from Dick Darrah) I like to start my seeds about 8 weeks before planting outside. As May 15 is when I usually plan to put plants out this mean I like to get my seeds started in mid-March. This gives the seeds time to germinate and grow strong enough to be “hardened “ before planting outside.

I tend to plant my seeds directly into 4 or 6 packs, putting at least two seeds in every section so that I don’t get perfect germination, I will have at least one plant per section. After the seeds germinate, I select the strongest looking plant in a section and clip off the others. This results in full packs of strong plants.

After the seeds have germinated and the second set of leafs have developed you need to keep rotating the packs if you are using window light. This will keep the plants from becoming stringy. I tend to rotate 90 degrees every day which keeps the plants straight and not too tall.

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Plant Sale Diggers—by Dick Darrah

For any club members who have plants they would donate to the Plant Sale from their garden, but are physically unable to dig and separate them, we have a solution.

Several members have volunteered to make arrangements with the member to come to their gardens to dig, separate and pot the plants. The potted plants would then be left with the member to tend until time to deliver them for the Plant Sale.

Billie is coordinating this new club endeavor and we hope that this will result in more member plants for the Plant Sale. If you have any questions about this or would like to make arrangements to donate some of your garden plants, please contact Billie Childress at 231-1791.

Splitting or Dividing Plants by Dick Darrah (Re-printed from September, 2005 Newsletter)

Division entails splitting plants apart into smaller plants. Perennials such as iris or daylily will have fewer blooms over the years if they are not divided. In general, dividing should be done every two to four years.

It is normally best to dig the plant up in order to divide it, although it is possible to use a spade to divide the plant without removing it from the ground. Some plants like ornamental grasses or irises may require knives, machetes, or even hatchets to get the job done.

Some things to keep in mind, the more plants you make, the less show next year. If you divide and have six irises from that one in the ground the divided plants will be so small it'll be two years before you see a flower again. Splitting in half gives you two decent plants, but they may need dividing next year! Figure out how often you want to do this job and find your happy medium.

Plants should generally be divided in the fall, although fall-blooming flowers should be divided in the early spring. With some basic upkeep and care, your perennials will produce beautiful blooms and keep your garden looking beautiful over many seasons and many years.

Dividing fleshy rooted plants (such as Delphiniums, Lupins, Astilbe and Hosta) Dig up the plant and with a sharp knife separate the woody crowns. Make sure that each new piece has strong roots and several bud growths. If it's an old big clump that's been in the ground for several years or more, then throw away the center part.

Fibrous rooted plants (such as Artemisia, Asters, Bee Balm, Coneflower, Golden Rod, Herbaceous Campanulas, Herbaceous Geraniums, Loosestrife, Masterwort, Meadowsweet, Pearl Everlasting, Perennial Spiraea, Perennial Sunflowers, Shasta daisy, Sneezewort, Tickseed and Yarrow.) Dig the plant out of the ground and place two garden forks or hand forks back to back and then lever their handles together. This pulls the plant apart and untangles the roots. You will need to repeat this technique several times to end up with small divisions of the main clump. A golden rule is usually to throw away the center part of the main clump and keep and replant the outer parts of the plant. The centre of the clump is the older part and becomes woody.

Dividing rhizomes (such as Flag Iris, Lily of the valley and Orris Root). Dig up and select young outer pieces. Use a sharp knife to separate the rhizomes. Select pieces that have at least one or two fans of leaves from the outside of the clump and discard the center rhizomes. Get rid of any rhizomes that show damage from Iris Borer.

What can you do with the extra plants you are saving for our Plant Sale? I've been successful over the years potting the divided plants up and burying the pots in a part of my garden I won't need until I dig them up in the Spring. This is normally part of my vegetable garden. In the Spring I dig them up, hose off the pots and they are ready for labeling. Sometimes I need to put some identifying label in them in the Fall as my memory isn't quite what it should be.

Some of our other members, Dan Bebee and Billie & Sam, have had luck with putting all the pots together in a group and covering them with mulch and/or leaves to protect them over the Winter.

However you do it, splitting and dividing your plants will improve your garden and help your club.



Edie Streams, a past member and editor of the Newsletter, sends her best and a “warm hello” to all. She also sent the following notes about gardening in Tennessee. You can contact Edie via e-mail at: westreams@hotmail.com

Notes from a Tennessee Garden

Tennessee gardening is going to take some getting used to! We have been here just over six months now... and I wanted to share a few observations with my friends in the West Chicago Garden Club.

Crepe myrtles are wonderful. They come in a wide range of colors from white and pinks to purples and they bloom for close to two months. My new yard has eight crepe myrtles in seven different colors.

You can plant pansies in October and they are still blooming in March. Oh, they may look a little droopy after a streak of subfreezing weather, but as soon as it warms up again they are back looking great. I thought it was odd that pansies were been sold next to chrysanthemums last fall. Next year I will be sure to buy some.

There is some creeping Charlie type weed that germinates everywhere (in the lawn, in the new garden beds, in parks) with the fall rains and spends the winter taking hold. By March it is firmly established ... did I mention it is everywhere!

The sun shines a lot in Tennessee. Winter precipitation is most often rain, not snow, and there are cloudy days, but there are also lots of sunny days. The sun often brings warmth to the extent you have a couple weekend days in any month (January included) when you can do outdoor chores without a heavy coat or gloves.

If you wait until late January to start tomato and pepper seeds, you probably are a couple weeks behind. My plants, started in January, have been spending time outside in the 70s that we have had in early March. The frost free date isn't until mid-April, so they should be well established by the time they can move outdoors permanently. I do wish I was closer, since there will be lots of spare plants and I would love to add them to the Plant Sale offerings.

Hostas absolutely have to be planted in the shade. This insight came from the hosta growers at the Nashville Lawn and Garden Show. Fortunately, I have some good, shady locations for the new treasures I bought.

Thanks to a nursery at the Lawn and Garden show, I learned that the two large, cylindrical trees in my backyard are dawn redwoods (identified based on the spectacular orange fall foliage which distinguishes them from the bald cypress). As a bonus these trees supposedly grow 3 to 7 feet a year, so they should be even more gorgeous color next year.

Early daffodils start blooming in late February.

It is enough warmer in Tennessee that you really can do some sort of outdoor gardening twelve months of the year.

Our first six months as Tennessee gardeners have been interesting. I can't wait to find out what the warmer months will bring... and what other plants may appear with the spring and summer.