



NAPERVILLE COMMUNITY GARDENERS

March 2014

Purpose: To nurture the gardening interests of its members and the community through educational programs and community projects

If winter comes,



can spring be far behind?



PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Happy February, fellow believers that spring will arrive sometime. As a gardener remarked, usually there's one warm day in winter by now to get outside and do a little pruning. However, according to the Chicago Tribune on February 18th, "By 6 p.m. Monday, Chicago had recorded 4.7 inches of snowfall, bringing the season to a total of 66.8 inches and surpassing the full-season total for 1951-52 of 66.4 inches. Since snow records began in the winter of 1884-1885, snowfall in Chicago has topped 70 inches only three time."

We won't be lacking for moisture in the soil this year. Maybe it's time to buy those rubber gardening boots this season—there won't be a better time to use them. Anyone want to guess when the last "snow cone" in Naperville will melt this year?

I am hoping this week to get up the gumption to start some seeds for the plant sale and for my yard. I have the supplies. Ten visitors saw how Jan Gricus does it, including me. Nurturing seedlings may carry some of us into spring. For others, may I suggest a visit to the Garfield Park Conservatory, Chicago? Or perhaps the Orchid Show through March 16th at the Chicago Botanic Garden, Glencoe? (12,000 of them.)

I look forward to seeing you at the March 3rd meeting. May it be "in like a lamb" for a change of pace.

Mark Mayszak

NEXT MEETING

MONDAY, March 3

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

7 P.M.

SPEAKER: Carol Cichorski

TOPIC:

Creativity in the Garden



HELP NEEDED AT THE REFRESHMENT TABLE

Our dear friend Cricket Cressman missed last month's meeting because she had surgery and was in the hospital. She is now recuperating at home and hopes to make our March meeting but is under strict doctor's orders and cannot lift anything heavier than a pound or two. The coffee urns are heavy to fill and to clean out. Will someone please volunteer to help out? If you can, please come around 6:40 p.m. on March 3rd. Thank you.

IN THIS ISSUE:

Don't miss important updates about the plant sale, to be held as always on the day before Mother's Day, May 10. We want to be ready to make this year's sale the best ever. See pages 3 and 4.

If you have thought about starting seeds at home but have hesitated because you are not sure about how to get started, you will find the article by Jan Gricus very helpful. See pages 4 and 5.





MINUTES FOR FEBRUARY 3, 2014

The February meeting of the Naperville Community Gardeners was opened by Mark Mayszak at 7:05 p.m.

Old Business

Mark asked if there were any changes to the January minutes. Eleanor Holt moved that the minutes be approved, which was seconded by Linda Thompson. The motion was carried.

New Business

Treasurer's Report. Jan announced that dues were due, and then presented the budget for the 2014 year. Funds for the Harvest Banquet were increased to \$500 and \$2,000 was again committed to the scholarship fund. She increased the revenues from the Plant Sale to cover these expenses, and hopes seed starters produce more plants to yield the increase. Carolyn Finzer asked to be reimbursed for scrapbook supplies, and Jan answered that \$15 was in the budget for that. Linda Thompson, in charge of speakers, said that she was told her budget was \$1,350 and had already committed that amount. There is currently about \$5,000 in checking and \$9,000 in savings. Ron Ory suggested that the additional \$350 for speakers be drawn from the savings account. Betty Ference so moved, Carolyn Finzer seconded, and the motion was approved.

Seed Starters. Jan Gricus announced that squash, cucumbers, celery, and some other vegetables be started for the garden plot gardeners. She said a six-week start was what the gardeners were looking for. She will have her seed set-up available for review on Saturday, February 15, at 10 a.m. or on Monday and Tuesday evening following. She also mentioned that some plants needed to be transferred to larger pots, and several people volunteered the pots. Jan currently uses boot trays she found at Bed, Bath, and Beyond, and puts the pots under shop lights, which are more economical.

Announcements

Ron Ory announced that Master Gardeners will be holding classes for beginning gardeners on March 12 and 26 at 7 p.m.

Betty Ference conducted the prize drawing, which went to Harold Effinger. Mary Carter showed a cyclamen in the mini show that has been blooming for over a year.

Linda Thompson moved that the meeting be adjourned and Judy Kanarek seconded.

Following refreshments, Michelle Hickey from the Resiliency Institute presented a program entitled "From Lawns to Edible Forest Gardens."

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemary Holdredge, Secretary

2014 NCGC Plant Sale Information

When: Saturday, May 10, 7:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Friday, May 9, Noon—5 p.m. (Set-up)

Location: Naperville Community Garden Plots

Flowers: -Schaefer's—Proven Winners, flats, vegetables, hanging plants

-Plant member yard perennials and seed plants

-Will review plant sale list at March meeting

Member Orders: New for 2014

Pre-ordering of flats—if planning to order one or more flats, we would like to know by April 1 so that we can adjust the order. By doing so you will get \$1.00 off each flat and be able to pick up on Friday.

Special Order something on the plant list that we don't include on our sale order.

Volunteering:

Key to our success !!!.. Please be sure to keep the date open. A volunteer list will be started at the April meeting.

What to Do:

-Put on your calendar

-Remind your friends and family.

Questions:

Don't hesitate to contact us.

Bob Elvert and Logan Wasson

Getting Ready for the Plant Sale, Members' Plants

It certainly hasn't seemed like spring is on the way, but just a few warm days get me thinking about the garden and the list I made in the fall to remind me of gardening tasks for spring. When the soil is dried to the point of being workable and plants have made an appearance, you can begin to divide perennials for the plant sale. If you have plants that have overgrown their space or if you are moving plants around and need room for new plants, please keep the plant sale in mind.

In April I will provide a sheet for tabulating the number of plants, variety, color, bloom time, sun/shade/water requirements, etc., or you can use your own form. Once complete, the form is then sent by email or given to Linda Allison. A plant label will be ready and waiting for you when you deliver your plants to the sale on Friday May 9 or early on sale day, Saturday, May 10.

We will again set up a table for Collectors' or Specialty Plants. This will give a display area for those hard-to-find or unique varieties. Please indicate on the form if you think that your donated plant(s) fits this category.

Sign Up

Bob Elvert and I will have sign-up sheets for helping before and during the sale at the April meeting for both the members' plant sale and the nursery plants sale. We really need you to make the sale a success!

Need a Specific Plant?

If you are looking for a specific plant(s) for your garden, please let Linda know so that your request can be included in the next two newsletters. Members who have the plant(s) to share can bring them to the sale for you to purchase. We can designate a specific area for requested items.

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Pots?

Need pots? Do you have extra pots? Please let Linda Allison know . I will include pot requests and the names of those who have pots in the next two newsletters; I may also send out an email blast, as I did last year, for quantity and size of pot needed by a member. We can then have you leave pots on your drive for members to pick up.

Linda Allison, Chairman, Members' Plants

SEEDS, SEEDS, SEEDS, Part 2

For those who could not attend the meetings held on seeds, here are some things we talked about -

We are planning to use the date of our Plant Sale – MAY 10– as the average last day of frost and count backwards from there in order to know which seeds to plant when. There still is a chance of frost after that date, but we are hoping to nurture our plants to be a nice “sell-able” size on May 10th.

Seed packets have lots of information on them, included when to start seeds indoors. Dates range from 2 to 3 all the way to 10 to 12 weeks prior to last frost.

The following is a just a sampling of plants if you want to try some seeds at home -

Week starting February 23 – Brussels sprouts, lettuce, eggplant, kale, parsley, broccoli, cabbage.

Week starting March 9 – Peppers, sage, savory, thyme, rosemary, snapdragons

Week starting March 16 – Cauliflower, cabbage, tomato

Week starting March 23 – Cucumbers, okra, marigolds, nicotiana, stock, cleome

Week starting March 30 – Spinach

Week starting April 6 – Squash, melon, zinnia, sunflower

Week starting April 13, Dill

Using seed starting mix and clean pots/trays, fill pots so mix is level with the top of the pot/tray. Water from the bottom with warm water and wait until all mix is moist. Plant seeds to depth instructed on packet. Tap down gently to make sure there is good seed-to-soil contact. Try to plant as deep as necessary while still maintaining potting mix at an even level with top of pot/tray. This will prevent any ruts that could hold too much moisture and cause seedlings to rot. Make sure to keep potting mix moist but not wet. You can use a fine mist sprayer but don't disturb seeds. A dry seed is a dead seed, but too much water can breed fungal disease. What...you thought about going on vacation now ??? You'll have to arrange for a plant sitter!

Try not to put too many seeds in one pot, but if you need to thin out later on, cut off the extras at the soil line using small scissors so you don't disturb the roots of the remaining plants. (A Master Gardener I know calls this 'Vegicide'.)

Cover the tray with a purchased clear plastic dome or use plastic wrap to keep in the humidity. Remove once your seeds have germinated. The seed packet will tell you about how many days before you start to see your precious little green seedlings. Now you can do a little happy dance. Oh, go ahead....no one is looking.

Some seeds benefit from a heat source which could be the top of your fridge or a purchased heat mat.

Artificial light is a good idea since seedlings could use about 16 hours of light each day. I have regular shop lights and use one 'cool' and one 'warm' bulb to achieve a full-spectrum source of light.

The first two 'leaves' that you will see are not leaves at all, but kidney-shaped cotyledons, or, what I like to call the plant's two little lunch boxes. These cotyledons contain everything the plant needs to grow to the next step which is the first true set of leaves. The cotyledons will shrivel and fall off the plant when their job is complete. At this point, you should add fertilizer at a quarter to half-strength added to the warm water you are using and continue to water from the bottom. Add the low-dose fertilizer each time you water. Do not over fertilize as this will burn tender roots and promote weak, spindly growth. Do not let trays sit in water for more than an hour. Drain the excess.

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When your seedlings get a couple of inches tall, using a fan on them is a good idea. This mimics the wind they would experience if outside and the resistance toughens up their stems. The fan also helps to keep the top of the potting mix a bit dry to avoid damping off, a fatal condition when the seedlings just fall over and die.

Rotate your trays every couple of days so your seedlings can grow straight.

My last bit of advice this month probably should have been the first. Mark your pots/trays with the seed you planted and the date you planted them. It's ever so easy to forget or turn the tray and then not remember what you planted where. One method is to write on masking tape and then put the tape around the sides of your pots/trays. Keep your seed packets for helpful information as the season progresses.

More next month, but let me know if you have any questions.

Jan Gricus

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE LEADERS

Executive Board—2014

President.....Mark Mayszak
 Vice-President.....Linda Thompson
 Secretary.....Rosemary Holdredge
 Treasurer.....Janice Gricus
 Past President.....Janice Gricus

Committee Chairs - 2014

CorrespondenceCarolyn Finzer
 Email List Moderator.....Eleanor Holt
 Facebook PageOPEN
 Flower and Garden Show.....Vicky Polito
 Flower and Garden Show Guide.....Vicky Polito
 Harvest BanquetMary Smedegard
 HistorianCarolyn Finzer
 Membership.....JoAnn Monge
 Meeting Refreshments.....Cricket Cressman
 Mini-Show.....Angel Whitt
 Naper Settlement Gardens.....Pat Thompson
 Newsletter.....Eleanor Holt
 Newsletter Distribution.....Mary Wright
 Photography.....Ron Ory
 Picnic/Garden Walk.....Betty Ference
 Plant Sale.....Bob Elvert
 Plant Sale-Members' Plants.....Linda Allison
 Ogden Ave. Post Office Gardens.....Carolyn Finzer
 Publicity.....Vicky Polito
 River Walk Clean Up/Gardens.....Bob Elvert
 T-shirt SalesVicky Polito
 Website.....Peter Klassen

Wannemaker's Spring Garden Show Saturday and Sunday, March 8 & 9

If you can't make it to Navy Pier this year, perhaps you can visit Wannemaker's. The garden show features free seminars, grilling demonstrations, product experts and great in-store deals.

Our Continuing Discussion:

Books of Interest to Gardeners

***Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life* by
 Barbara Kingsolver**

Barbara Kingsolver and her family spend a year eating just foods grown near her Appalachian farm. She might sound a bit preachy at times, but I enjoyed reading about how they managed. While we might not want/be able to make this sort of commitment to eating locally, I think that she does get you thinking, and that makes for a good read.

Let me know what you think.

Linda Thompson

Join the discussion. Have you read a book about gardening, conservation, the earth—anything that you might share with your fellow gardeners? We would love to hear from you.

At the last meeting, one of our members pointed out that gardeners don't always have time to read as much as they would like but that they often find gardening how-to books really useful. Is there such a book that you would recommend?

Eleanor Holt

Stay in Touch

Visit our website: napervillecommunitygardeners.org.

Peter Klassen does a great job of keeping things up to date.

Send us mail (dues?)

Naperville Community Gardeners
 P.O. Box 9555
 Naperville, IL 60567

Submit your ideas for the newsletter (photos??)

to Eleanor Holt. (Thanks in advance!)