



The Spade & The Hoe

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April Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on April 14th at 7:30 P.M. at the Park Center, in room 102. The program will be given by Carol Freeman and is titled *Zen and the Art of Nature Photography*. She will address observing and recording our gardens with a camera. She will bring some of her matted prints, post-card books and greeting cards for sale. The profit from these sales goes toward an Endangered Species Fund. Plan to attend this interesting program.

Statistics

In the month of February, 271 people accessed our website. In the busiest week, 63 people viewed our pages. Most were from .nets and .coms, and 7.5% came from the United Kingdom and 6% came from Canada.



The March meeting was a digital slide show of flowering trees and tree diseases. The speaker was from Autumn Tree Care. He showed close-ups of the flowers and then far shots of the trees, so we could get a really good idea of the benefits of each of the trees. Thanks go to Jane Prentis for bringing cookies and fruit drinks.

*See! The winter is past;
the rains are over and gone.
Flowers appear on the earth;
the season of singing has come,
the cooing of doves is heard
in our land...*

- *The Song of Solomon*

Garden Walk News

So far we have Nancy Spears' and Brigitte Steinforth's gardens to visit. And Jackie and Shelly Kimmel will be hosts at one of the gardens. I will host another if someone will volunteer their garden. How about one of the newer members? Please contact Holly Jansen and let her know you would be delighted to do so! Remember, a beginning garden is as interesting as one that is years old. And, also, gardens change over the years and are never really finished.

Through the Garden Gate

Nancy Spears and I went to see the Chicagoland Flower Show at Navy Pier. We delighted in viewing the Botanic Garden's train exhibit, and the Chicago Park District's colorful tulip exhibit coupled with recycling. We had fun talking with some Red Hat ladies from Lemont and a family of Amish from Napanee, Indiana.

Naturally, I had to purchase two plants. One of them was a houseplant which immediately was potted up as soon as I arrived home. The other will replace cannas that died. It was a lovely day for our outing.

The daffodils are budding out in my garden. I have such great plans for spring, that I just hope I have the stamina to put them all into practice! One of the major things I plan to do is to replace the old arbor. Dan and I went to the Garfield Park Conservatory to view their beautiful plants. That is one of the largest conservatories in the nation, covering 4.5 acres inside and out, and they have several different 'rooms', such as, rain forest, fern room, spring blooms room, and a desert room.

Amazing Facts About Our Hummingbirds...

A ruby-throated hummer weighs 3 grams, or 1/10th the weight of a 1st class letter;
their hearts are 2.4% of their weight;
her egg is less than 1/2" long, 1/2 the size of a jelly bean;
they eat 1/2 their weight in sugar each day, eating 5-8 times each hour;
his wings beat 78 tps during regular flight and up to 200 tps during a display dive;
their hearts beat 1,260 times per minute;
at rest, they breathe 250 times a minute;
their pectoral (or flight) muscles account for 1/4 of their total weight;
they bathe by flying through sprinklers, also by fluttering in wet foliage or dipping in a shallow puddle;
they fly 500 miles across the Gulf of Mexico on their migration; before starting they increase their weight by 50%, storing energy as fat to burn while crossing;
they do not have a sense of smell but locate food by eyesight, finding small insects in the air or off leaves and checking out colorful blossoms for nectar;
they are fiercely aggressive and will attack jays, crows, and hawks;
they can live up to 12 years although many live only 3-5 years.

Guest Columnist—Holly Jansen

Let me start by saying that I've never written an article before, so when it's your turn, let this give you the confidence you may need. The subject I chose is Microclimates. I have one that was unintentionally created when my friend and I built the flagstone path between the front and back yards, and it has become my favorite garden area. Situated between the brick garage wall and the flagstone path, it holds the heat of the afternoon sun, plus the large (ugly) shrub acts as a windbreak so my pansies stay green and I have had a 100% success rate of overwintering the moveables against that wall. There are also 'mini' microclimates scattered about the backyard that were created by my penchant for rocks in the garden. I discovered that plants that grow around these rocks stick around longer in the fall and are the first to awaken in the spring. Since this discovery, I have used rocks to protect newly planted perennials from winter's harsh elements. I have also built mini rock walls to place seedlings against while hardening them off and to protect a new planting during that first week or so while it becomes acclimated to its new home. To me, microclimates are one of the most fascinating aspects of gardening. Other gardeners I've spoken to have put them to good use. By learning where the warm spots are through observation, you could have earlier tomatoes. You could also find the cooler spots and use them to plant cabbage, etc.

If seeds in the black earth can turn into such beautiful roses, what might not the heart of man become in its long journey toward the stars?

In April, remember to:

- put down crabgrass herbicides when the honeysuckle bloom;
- remove rose cones on warm, sunny days;
- mow groundcovers to remove winter-browned foliage; set the mower at its highest setting, then fertilize and water the plants;
- cut all perennials that were left standing for winter interest;
- repot houseplants;
- prune back overgrown yews and junipers by 1/3 this spring and again the following 2 springs. cut junipers to green growth only;
- prune forsythia and other spring blooming shrubs after they bloom;
- cut back butterfly bushes to 12" tall to stimulate new growth;
- harden off cool season vegetable seedlings gradually over a period of 7-10 days;
- plant cabbage, peas, broccoli and other cool weather plants.

-with help from Chicagoland Gardening, March/April 2005

A Rose By Any Other Name, or, What Is A Weed?

Many of the plants that we now call 'weeds' were brought here from Europe by the early settlers for herbal uses. They were cultivated, and those that were able to survive with little care, and that multiplied where not wanted, became known as weeds. Unfortunately the word 'weed' is applied to any uncultivated plant in the field *condemning many beautiful native plants*. Common 'weeds' restore eroded land, help hold water during dry spells, add beauty to our landscape, are used as food, have medicinal purposes and have vital functions in the scheme of nature. Most 'weeds' are valuable and useful to the environment and great beauty to the landscape. For instance, rag-

weed unfortunately a nuisance to hayfever sufferers, is one of the best soil improvers. It will detoxify contaminated soil, hold disturbed soil in place until other plants become established and then, surprisingly, the ragweed is displaced. Weeds supply food for birds and wild animals and forage for farm animals. Finally, their dried seed pods are a wonderful addition to any dried arrangement.

"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."

- *The Book of Hebrews*

Curious about the origin of plant names? Gerbera was named after the German botanist Traugott Gerber; gaillardia = M. Gaillard de Charentoneau, 18th century patron of French botanists; nicotiana = Jean Nicot, French consul in the late 1500s; browallia = the 18th century bishop Johan Browall of Columbia; begonia = Michel Begon, botanist and governor of French Canada during the 1600s; lobelia = Matthias de l'Obel, Flemish botanist and physician to James I of England; zinnia = Johann Gottfried Zinn, an 18th century botanist; Monarda = Nicolas Monardes, Spanish botanist; rudbeckia = Olaf Rudbeck, Scandinavian professor of botany and his son Olaf; yarrow = the Greek Achilles; heuchera = German botanist J. H. von Heucher.

What's Blooming Table

Please bring in your treasured plants, blooms, or flowering branches for all of us to admire at the April meeting.

Questions, comments, payment of dues?

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