



The Spade & The Hoe

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April 2006

The April Meeting

will be held on the 13th at 7:15 p.m. at the Park Center, room 102.

Joanne Icenogle of Plum Grove Gardens will speak on Everlastings and will bring samples for sale. See you there!

The Flower Family Album - Asclepias

Named for the Greek god of medicine, the ancients regarded it as an important drug source. Its seed pod opens only on one side, the seeds travel by their silky parachutes in fair weather but if rain forces them down, they can float on their corky edge. Members are hoyo, a house plant, swamp milkweed with its pink flowers, common milkweed with its purple-pink blooms that are fragrant, and butterfly weed which has orange flowers. It's old name was pleurisy-root and it was used as a remedy for lung trouble. Another member, but not native to this area, is stapelia or carrion-flower.

-The Flower Family Album
By Helen Field Fischer and
Gretchen Marshbarger

The March meeting was a presentation by Bob Nicholson, president of the Northern Illinois Gesneriad Society. There were many questions from the audience who expressed great interest in the subject. Afterwards, Mr. Nicholson gave away all the plants that he had brought.

Garden Walk and Plant Sale

Holly Jansen reported that two gardens will be open this June: Pamela Frank's and Esther Behnke's. She needs one more garden, so don't be shy. Gardens can be well-established, brand new, old but being renovated, and any kind in between. She also needs hosts/hostesses for each one. And keep in mind to pot up your excess plants for her. Our sale last year was a big source of revenue for us. Holly and her co-chairman Dolores Gilbertson will keep us informed each month as June will be here very soon.



Through the Garden Gate

Isn't it fun to see the goldfinches beginning to wear their spring finery? I see many of the tulips I planted last fall are coming up. Hallelujah! I am again attempting to grow African violet. Mr. Nicholson said that everyone can do it but so far my record shows they tend to die under my watch. I am busy cleaning up the garden and working on the front beds in anticipation of our Annual Garden Walk. At this time of year, everyone seems to be eager for Spring. We are all done with winter and lust after warm weather. It is strange how the snowdrops are still blooming—from February 1st! They are the longest-blooming of the spring flowers. Now come the daffodils, tulips, hyacinths, scillas and others. In a bow to spring, I have shucked my winter coats and opt instead for a mid-weight jacket. Winter hats & gloves are stored, too, and I'm anxious to send the woolens to the dry cleaners and take out the cottons. Even the word 'spring' has a luscious sound as it rolls over the tongue. The warming sun on my face sends me out to the garden beds. Spring is

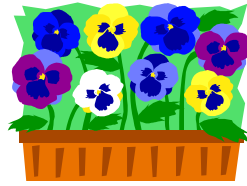


**The Flower Family—
Morning-Glories**

The only useful member of this family is the Sweet Potato vine. Try getting it to bloom by girdling the lower stem almost all the way around, leaving about a half-inch open. The other members of the ipomoea family are moonflowers with their large white blossoms (if you nick their seeds before planting the next year they may grow and bloom for you), morning-glories, cypress-vine and cardinal vine and are also annuals. The last two have small red flowers. Dodder and bindweed are two twining weeds that are the bane of farmers and gardeners, especially dodder as it is a vicious parasite that sucks out the juices of its neighboring plants, killing them in the process. Perennial morning-glories spread by root suckers and should be destroyed. A beautiful pink double one listed in some catalogs as convolvulus japonicus or calystegia should never be used except where its roots can be contained, as in window boxes.

*Gently steed our spirits,
carrying with them dreams of
flowers.*

- William Wordsworth



More than anything, I must have flowers always, always.

- Claude Monet

**In Search of Paradise:
Great Gardens of the
World**

Millennium Park will host a 5-month exhibit this year of 65 large-scale photographs of acclaimed private and public gardens, including its own Lurie, from 21 countries. It will run from May 5 to October 22 in the Boeing Galleries. Penelope Hobhouse is curator. Among the sites will be the Gilbert Strunck Garden in Petropolis, Brazil, Garden of Cosmic Speculation in Dumfries, Scotland, Garden with the Glass Wall at Garstons, Isle of Wight, and Blue Spears at Long House in East Hampton, N.Y. Blue Spears was designed by Dale Chihuly. The exhibition will be just a few steps west of the Lurie Garden where the park will offer free guided tours from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. every other Sunday from May 14th to October 22nd.

In April, remember to:

- start cucumber and zucchini seeds indoors for extra-early yield ;
- start herb seeds indoors;
- plant asparagus and rhubarb;
- divide perennials except poppy, peony and iris (do those in fall);
- cut back dead or damaged rose canes when forsythias bloom, cutting back just above an outward facing bud, at a 45' angle;
- place stakes around plants that will need them;
- aerate the lawn and dethatch if needed;
- sow grass seed in bare spots;
- apply pre-emergence crab-grass killer in late April or early May;
- increase watering of houseplants as growth occurs;
- start tuberous begonias and caladiums indoors for planting outdoors in June.

- Garden Talk, spring 2006 & Chicagoland Gardening March-April 2006.



**Guest Columnist—
Dolores Gilbertson**

During my winter garden magazine readings, several items really attracted my attention for something new for the garden this summer. First were plants which received the AAS Awards for new plants. Zinnia F1 'Zowie! Yellow Flame' is semi-tall and has bi-colored flowers which are consistent in all plants. Easy to start from seed, blooms 'til frost, drought resistant and has a vase life of two weeks. Pepper F1 'Carmen' is a 6" sweet pepper which takes 75 days for the best deep red color and sweetness. However, it is sweet green or immature. Plant is a high yielder over a wide temperature range. Its elongated shape will look good in the flower bed. Viola F1 'Skippy XL Red-Gold' is a cool season flower, ruby red with a violet red shading below the golden yellow face containing whiskers. Skippy is also tolerant of a wide temperature range for continuous bloom. Sunset magazine has an interesting article (Feb. 2006) on attracting birds and butterflies. Besides naming the plants which they prefer, other amenities to supply are mentioned such as, dig a shallow depression, line it with stone and keep the soil moist with mineral water, provide a few square feet of dry sandy soil so birds can clean their wings with dust baths, and placing flat rocks in a sunny protected area so butterflies can warm up in the sun. Also, last month I went to a

lecture, on Wicker Park and its development of the neighborhood, at 1425 N. Damen Ave. Guided tours are now offered, called the Wicker Park Trio, on Sundays this summer (June 11, July 16, August 13, and September 24) from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. Tickets are \$10. Besides the tours, there will be a Farmer's Market, free live classical music performances from 10 a.m. to noon, and restaurants and garden stores will be open from noon to 2 p.m.

Nesting Behavior

The following birds are common around here and nest in cavities. In April: house wren, robin, black-capped chickadee, purple house finch, downy woodpecker, hairy woodpecker, flicker, mourning dove, pigeon, titmouse, red-breasted nuthatch, purple martin, starling, blue jay, cardinal, house sparrow, kestrel, and killdeer. Most use as nesting materials twigs, grass, mud, hair, feathers, downy fibers, dryer lint, wood chips, weeds, fur, moss, paper, leaves, and other debris.

Planting Hints

1. Sow seed generously (One for the rook, one for the crow, one to die, and one to grow.)
2. When planting roses, add a bit of fat (bacon, beef, etc.) to the hole before setting the rose in.
3. If mint is growing too well in your garden, sprinkle fire ashes around it. Ash is fatal to mint.

- Gardeners' Lore: Plantings, Portions and Practical Wisdom by Maureen and Bridget Boland



What's Blooming Table

Please bring in your treasured plants or blooms for all of us to admire at the April meeting. Many thanks to Nancy Spears for sharing with us her blooming cyclamen.

**Questions, comments,
payment of dues?**

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