



# The Spade & The Hoe

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## February Meeting

The regular February 8th meeting will be held at 7:15 p.m. in the Training Room at the Glenview Police Station. As you enter the main door, turn right to the last room on the right. The program will be by Sheryl DeVore, *Glenview Announcements* Managing Editor of Home & Design, Health & Family, Food and Currents. She will speak on "Winter Birds—How Do They Survive?"

Yes, in the poor man's garden grow

Far more than herbs and flowers —

Kind thoughts, contentment,  
peace of mind,  
And joy for weary hours.

- Mary Howitt, *A Gardener's Miscellany*

## Help Wanted

We have a new position to fill on the board: Assistant Program Chair. This person will work closely with the Chair this year and then next year will be able to step up with experience. Please contact Gloria for more details.

**Our new website is at <http://gardens.gvkcommunity.com/>**



## The January meeting

was held in the training room at the new police station. We are thankful to Tom Bertog and Matt Menoni of Bertog Landscaping Co. and Matt Dziedzic of Autumn Tree Care Experts for stepping in at the last minute, so to speak, and giving an excellent program on pruning shrubs and trees. Our original speaker cancelled due to a death in the family.

## Useful Herbs

Feverfew is primarily grown as a medicinal herb. If you suffer from migraines, try chewing a few leaves every day. This is an effective treatment for some types of migraines.

Bronze fennel is a relative of dill, carrot and Queen Anne's Lace. Use its anise-flavored seeds in salads and soups and in sausage dishes. It will also attract the swallowtail butterfly to your garden. St John's wort was traditionally gathered at the summer solstice to ward off evil spirits. Now, steep its leaves and blossoms in olive oil in a cool place to make a soothing anti-inflammatory massage oil that can speed the healing of wounds and bruises. In recent years it has also been used as an effective antidepressant.

Through the Garden Gate One Sunday in the middle of January, Dan spied a strange bird in our garden. According to the Audubon bird book, it was a goshawk! That bird is more accustomed to living in Alaska and Ontario but, oddly enough, it came down here for lunch (another mourning dove gone). What a treat to see it! Well, we are now two-thirds of the way through winter. Spring will be arriving soon. Have you done your homework yet? Planning your garden takes a bit of work but is necessary for the long run. I've been checking out shrubs and dwarf trees. I have two bare spots due to things that had to be removed and choosing something to replace them is a big challenge. I want shrubs that look good, don't become unwieldy, provide interest all year, maybe have flowers, maybe have berries for the birds, hide neighboring yards ... in short, perfect plants! Spring won't come too early for me. I am itching to get out there and dig. But first, I'll peruse the catalogs then make up a list of wants. Then out comes the graph paper to determine placement of these 'wants'. Remember, when ordering plants, check their hardiness. Those catalogs go all over the country and many things are not hardy here.



## Guest Columnist— Holly Jansen

As some of you already know, I am an avid organic gardener. My decision to go organic was not made overnight. It took me a while to realize how many harmful products we, the general population, use in our everyday lives.

I guess the thought started when faced with the decision of when to spray the lawn so it wouldn't interfere with the kids and the dog playing in the yard. I could not imagine them out there getting that stuff on them. That's when I decided that a nice green lawn wasn't worth the risk I was taking with my children's health. So I just went with weeds. Now the weeds aren't so bad. My daughter would pick the dandelions and thrust them at me proudly. The clover was very soft, kept the bees busy, and was intentionally planted in lawns once upon a time. I do get out there every so often and pull some of the dandelions which is good exercise and mental therapy. I use boiling water on the weeds that grow between the paving stones and mulching keeps them at bay. I came to learn that not only was I keeping my family safer (the chemical 2,4,D most commonly used by homeowners and lawn care companies doubled the incidences of canine cancer!) but that I was also doing my part in keeping the environment cleaner. That is a most satisfying part of my humanistic qualities. There are unbelievable statistics out there that tell you how chemical use affects the environment! Then I went a step further and started composting to provide food for my plants. I adopted 2 rabbits, Charlie and Eddy (which soon became Charlene and Edwina) who did their part to contribute to the compost bin. They are now buried next to the bin, having accomplished their roles in life. Ironically, Charlene died of a massive tumor

Caused by my neighbor who sprayed weed killer right next to her cage. He moved away before I was aware of her condition. I miss them (the rabbits, NOT the neighbor) but decided that it's much easier not to have to go out there twice a day in the winter to replace the water bottle. So I opted out of the rabbit program and went instead with llama poo which I collect from a friend's daughter's herd in Mundelein a few times a year. My dog Rocky who is a healthy 13-year-old also does his part by learning not to chase the wildlife (especially skunks). Though squirrels are way too much fun NOT to chase so I allow that. It's their lot in life anyway.

I certified my property with the National Wildlife Federation a few years ago as an official wildlife sanctuary. I did this after realizing that I noticed more and more wildlife visiting my yard. All it takes is providing a food source such as growing native plants like Northern white cedar, gray dogwood, swamp milkweed, wild columbine, cup plant, purple coneflower and New England aster. Leaving these standing over winter provides a continued source of food. A water source such as a birdbath or pond also provides cover and places to raise young plus provide a brush pile. You can camouflage it with a cover plant if you wish. Nesting boxes for a variety of wildlife is also useful. Maintain sustainable gardening practices such as mulching to reduce watering frequency and the need for fertilizer. Reduce lawn area (which reduces mowing. Just fill in with perennial native species.

So that's it. If you'd like more information and you have a computer, you can go to <http://www.nwf.org/backyard/index.cfm>. Of course you are not obligated to officially certify. It's really just a formality, but there is a lot of good information at this site. If you are interested but are not internet-inclined, I can print out the information for you. Just give me a call at 847-8729-7729.

**Compost** leaves and twigs, grass clippings, dead flowers, fruit and vegetable scraps and peels, coffee grounds and tea leaves, egg shells, bread scraps, wood ash, cotton rags, vacuum cleaner dust, shredded newspapers, hair and wool. DO NOT COMPOST seeds or diseased plants, weeds, coffee filters, bones, meat, fish, fats, or dairy products.

The Chicagoland Flower and Garden Show will be held at Rosemont's Stephens Convention Center from March 10 –18.

The Chicago Park District is planning its own Garden in a City Show in Grant Park's Butler Field under a tent (as they did last year) for May 5-13.



**Because of its traditional medicinal and ritual uses, tobacco (nicotiana tabacum) has long been considered an herb.** Columbus found tobacco in the New World, where he wrote in his journal that he saw "native peoples carrying some sort of cylinder in which sweetly smelling herbs were glowing. The people sucked the other end of the cylinder and drank in the smoke." The natives used the plant medicinally and in ritual celebrations, with care. Nicotine is addictive. Taken internally or applied to the skin in high concentrations, it is a virulent poison that can cause fatal cardiac irregularities.

Herbal trees include ginkgo, juniper (its berries are used medicinally and to flavor gin), willow (used to make aspirin to lower fever and to reduce pain), hawthorn (a cardiac tonic), chaste tree (to treat malaria and respiratory ailments and to reduce sexual desire) and eucalyptus (antibacterial and antibiotic).



### Did You Know...

There are many different types of chamomile, all distinguished by their pretty daisy-like flowers and bright green feathery leaves which give off a strong fruity scent when crushed. The oils of German and Roman chamomile, distilled from the plants' flowering tops, share similar soothing properties.

Chamomile has long been cultivated as a medicinal herb and, no doubt due to its healing prowess, it was even considered sacred. In 1656, John Parkinson wrote: "Camomill is put to divers and sundry uses, both for pleasure and profit, both for the sick and the sound, in bathing to comfort and strengthen the sound and to ease pains in the diseased". Even before this, the Egyptian priests dedicated the plant to Ra, their sun god and India's Ayurvedic physician also used it for digestive upsets, cramps and fever.

Chamomile oil became so popular in Germany as a medicine that it was known as alles zutruat meaning "capable of anything." The soothing oil has been variously prescribed to speed healing, calm inflammation and allergies, and treat burns and bruises, earache, neuralgia, abscesses, and toothache, as a digestive and muscle relaxant, as a hair lightener and a hair conditioner, and a few drops in bath water eases dry or sun-burned skin.

*I have a garden of my own  
But so with roses overgrown  
And lilies, that you would it guess  
To be a little wilderness.*

- Andrew Marvell

### Banana Skins

Laid just below the surface of the soil, banana skins have long been known to be very good for roses and tomatoes. Scientists now approve the practice (late as usual) as they rot quickly and release a considerable amount of calcium, magnesium, sulphur, phosphates, sodium and silica.

### In February, remember to:

- houseplants require little water and no fertilizer during the winter, unless they are blooming;
- Kitty litter makes an excellent ice salt as does sand;
- continue to feed the birds; sunflower seeds attract chickadees, finches and cardinals;
- use an old pan to provide drinking and bathing water daily for the birds;
- close shades at night to protect houseplants from the cold windows.

. Chicagoland Gardening, January/February 2007

**To make oyle of chamomile**—take a pint and a halfe of oyle, and three ounces of chamomile flowers dried one day after they be gathered. Then put the oyle and the flowers in a glasse and stop the mouth close and set it into the sun by the space of forty days.

- The Good Housewife's Handbook, 1588



### What's Blooming Table

Everyone likes to see what their friends are growing. Bring your plants to the February meeting!

### Questions, comments, payment of dues?

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