



The Spade & The Hoe

Volume 5 Issue 7

July 2007

July Meeting

The July meeting will be a guided prairie walk, conducted by Kent and Jerri Fuller, on July 12th at 7pm. The prairie is on Compass Road, on the east edge of the Glen and north of the Glen. See you all there!

Let us be grateful to people who make us happy: They are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom.

Marcel Proust
(1871-1922)

Herbal Delights

An herb garden is not only pleasing to the senses of sight and smell, but it has many practical purposes. Nothing compares to using fresh herbs to spice up a recipe, or drying herbs for potpourris, flower arrangements and fragrant baths. You can plant a circular garden with one herb at the hub and other herbs planted around it. Or simply arrange them in rows or clusters.



The June Garden Walk

was better than expected, with a record number of visitors plus a record amount of plant sales. Many thanks to Holly for all her work in coordinating the sale and in securing hostesses. Many thanks, also, to the members who so graciously opened their gardens to visitors!

Grow Your Own Tea

To grow your own tea, plant chamomile (use leaves and flowers), fennel (leaves and seeds), hyssop (leaves and flowers), monarda (leaves), lemon balm (leaves), sage (leaves), and apple mint, peppermint and spearmint (leaves).

The way of cultivation is not easy.

- Latin Proverb

Growing Blueberries

Most nurseries ship 2-3 year old plants, but they must be 4-6 years old to flower. Also, they need 'two to tango', so plant another bush of a different cultivar and make sure they both bloom at the same time.

Growing Garlic

Plant sprouted garlic cloves in the fall, 1" deep, pointy end up, and harvest in early summer.

Through the Garden Gate

In spite of those dreadful rabbits eating me out of house and garden, I received many compliments on my garden. Plus I already picked two sweet peppers (I have them in the tall pot on the patio) and a tomato. That really was an early tomato! I must say, after visiting Judy's and Gloria's gardens, that our members really do have very beautiful gardens. I love Judy's pond with all the plants around and in it, and Gloria's shaded beds look so nice from her deck. But now is not the time to slack off. Keep at that deadheading and weeding else the weeds will overtake your beds! But do allow a lot of time to sit on your swing or chaise and read a good book, preferably with a glass of wine or iced tea at hand. Savor these sweet days of summer, as fall and then winter come all too soon. And now, an announcement: my 'baby' clivia, given to me by my good friend, has begun to bloom for the first time!! What a treat! What a fabulous display! I am so grateful.



**Guest Columnist—
Nancy Olderr**

Our recent garden walk got me thinking about the different ways we approach our gardening hobby. I've decided that mine is "survival of the fittest". It's an attitude that evolved after years of working my current garden. In my first house, I could put anything in the ground and it thrived. I had rich, dark soil, lots of sun, and fencing around the yard. But then I moved to Glenview. Here I have heavy clay soil, much shade, lots of rabbits and other wildlife, bugs, slugs, etc. that I never battled before. My green thumb turned brown. The only flower on my property was the common hosta, and it was everywhere. My first garden endeavor was to pull out groundcover to plant hybrid tea roses in a center circle. Before I left my first house, I had dug up a few roses—including a couple I got when I was on a J&P Rose Test Panel—put them in pots and sunk them in the ground in my parents' vegetable garden over winter. They survived the move nicely and did well the first year or two. But then the rabbits found them. I did all I could think of to discourage them short of surrounding them with chicken wire, but while we were eating dinner on our screened porch, we saw the rabbits having dinner on my roses. After a year or two they declined to the point where I gave up and pulled them all out. Another plant I brought from my first house was the common orange daylily. Out went some hostas, in went the daylilies. They did well and slowly multiplied. I divided them around the yard and gave some away. My only problem was the year we had deer. A few spikes were eaten, but many were left to bloom. Most of my best bloomers were given to me by other gardeners. These are the hardy varieties that flourish so gardeners have some to give away. I've bought perennials from garden centers over the years, but, like old soldiers, most of them have

just faded away, while the old standby plants are filling my yard with blooms. As these plants flourish, I divide them and spread them around the yard. Unusual plants may be fun to try but I've heard too many gardeners reject any common plants only to complain their unusual varieties didn't make it. I think the hardy oldies make good bones in a garden. Sometimes the rabbits will nibble on new growth but if I have enough of a certain plant, I still get good blooms. This was the case with oenothera this year. The plants at the edge of the clumps were eaten, but the remainder grew, apparently past the tasty stage, and bloomed beautifully. If rabbits find a plant they especially like, I don't work too hard to keep it.

I had grown lots of annuals from seed in the rich soil of my first garden, but seeds haven't done well in my heavy clay backyard soil, so I seldom plant seeds anymore. Annuals were the backbone of my first very sunny garden but sun is at a premium for me now, so I don't bother with even some of my favorite annuals. Besides, I've found they tend to suffer from more problems from garden pests. Vegetables are out, too. I save the sun for flowers.

All that hosta that was in the yard when I moved in is gone. Much of it I dug up to plant other flowers. I kept a section in the shady area, but rabbits ate so much of that I eventually tossed the pathetic plants that remained. More attempts at different varieties of hosta also quickly would up as rabbit food. I've sworn off hosta for good. After all, it's survival of the fittest in my garden.

Spicy Ginger Cookies

1 c. butter 1/2 tsp. baking soda
1 c. white sugar 1 tsp. cinnamon
1/4 c. molasses 1/2 tsp. Ginger
1 egg 1/2 tsp. cloves
2 c. flour 1/4 tsp. salt
Cream butter & sugar until fluffy. Stir in molasses, egg, & vanilla. Add remaining ingredients a little at a time until well-blended. Heat oven to 350'. Sprinkle a little sugar on a baking sheet & drop dough by table-spoons onto the sheet, sprinkling with more sugar. Bake 15 minutes. Cool & store in an airtight container. Makes 2 dozen.

History Lesson 103

Catnip (*nepeta cataria*) is a member of the mint family. This perennial has been cultivated for centuries for both culinary and medicinal use. In England during the Renaissance, the fresh leaves were sprinkled on green salads and the dried herb, mixed with sage and thyme, was used as a seasoning rub for meats. Before Chinese tea became available, everyone drank a tea brewed from the catnip they grew in their gardens. In contrast to the stimulant quality of Chinese tea, catnip tea had a calming effect and use used to induce sleep, quiet upset nerves, and soothe upset stomachs. It was also used to treat colds and flu, reduce fevers, and bring on menstruation. (It shouldn't be sued by pregnant women.) All felines are attracted to catnip by a chemical called nepetalactone, which induces a harmless physiological reaction that seems to be psychosexual. Susceptibility seems to be genetic and varies from cat to cat. It is both a euphoric and an aphrodisiac. However, not all cats get turned on, while some just go bananas. It is hardy, drought-tolerant, attracts bees and butterflies, and IS RESISTANT TO DEER AND RABBITS.

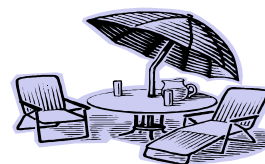
Lavender-Mint Tea

4 tsp. fresh (or 2 tsp. dried)lavender flowers
3-4 tbsp. fresh (or 4 tsp. dried) mint leaves
4 cups boiling water

In a 1 qt. teapot, combine the lavender flowers and mint. Pour boiling water over the mixture and steep 5 minutes.

O, what delights to us the garden ground doth bring? Seed, leaf, flower, fruit, herb, bee and tree, and more than I may sing.

Nicholas Grimaed





Lemon-flavored & Lemon-scented herbs

Lemon balm is a hardy perennial and needs frequent trimming. Use the cuttings in herbal teas as well as with fish and chicken dishes.

Lemon verbena is a tender perennial. Plant it in the shade or move indoors in the winter for teas and desserts.

Lemon-scented geraniums can be added to desserts, teas and pot-pourris. They need lots of water and sun. Take cuttings in the fall for next year's plants.

Lemongrass is a native of India and Sri Lanka and a must for cooks of Asian dishes. The dried leaves are wonderful in soups and teas.

*My garden sweet, enclosed with
walles strong,
Enbanked with benches to sytt and
take my rest:
The knotts so enknotted, it cannot be
exprest,
With arbors and alyes so pleasaunt
and so dulce.*

- George Cavendish
(1499-1561)

Harvesting Your Herbs

Harvest your herbs before they flower by cutting the stalks. Tie bunches of stems together and hang them upside down to dry, preferable in a dry place out of direct sunlight. You can also dry herbs by stripping the leaves and spreading them on a screen. Turn the leaves to make sure that they dry completely. You'll know when they're dry when they become brittle to the touch. Store them in tightly covered jars in a cool dry place.

In July, remember to:

- apply mulch to conserve water;
- continue deadheading;
- in hot weather, pots need to be water twice a day;
- fertilize roses for the last time—do not fertilize after mid-August;
- watch for Japanese beetles and pick them off by hand, dropping them into a can of rubbing alcohol or soapy water;
- stop mosquitoes from breeding by eliminating stagnant water, change the water in the bird bath every other day;
- water the garden with the equivalent of 1" of water per week if it hasn't rained;
- **keep eggplants**, tomatoes and peppers evenly moist;
- When basil plants flower, pinch off the entire flower stalk.

Chicagoland Gardening, July/August
2007

A Fragrance Garden, planted near a window or beside a porch, is a long-lasting source of sweet pleasure. Here are a few especially fragrant herbs you'll want to include: Catmint, chamomile, clove pink, lavender, lemon balm, lemon verbena, mignonette, penny-royal, rosemary, roses, scented basil, scented geraniums, thyme, and violets.

*In order to live off a garden, you
practically have to live in it.*
- Frank McKinney Hubbard

Excess Plants Distribution

Brigitte Steinforth has excess Siberian irises, 'Caesar's Brother'. If you are interested in acquiring some, contact her at 724-9462.

What's Blooming Table

Everyone likes to see what their friends are growing. Remember to bring something to the next indoor meeting.

Questions, comments, payment of dues?

www.glenviewgardeners.org

Esther Behnke, President & Editor 498-4178
eabehnke@earthlink.net

Joan Ruehrmund, Treasurer 729-1383
dieterueh@aol.com

Gloria Tralmer, Programs
grammygogi@aol.com

Ayse Pogue, Ass't. Programs
aysepogue@yahoo.com

Jane Prentis, Circulation
jrprentis@msn.com

Sharon Geniesse, Hospitality 724-7335
gilandsharon@aol.com

Holly Jansen, Garden Walk Chair
729-7729 & 729-2682
hollyjj77@yahoo.com

Nancy Spears, Publicity
nancy@spears.net

ggardeners@earthlink.net

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