



The Spade & The Hoe

Volume 7 Issue 1

January 2009

From the Desk of Pamela Frank

In September I wanted a basil plant for a recipe. My first thought was where can I find a basil plant in September. My second thought was where could I go that wasn't too far and wouldn't cost me an arm and a leg for a plant.

I just happened to go to Trader Joe's in Glenview and they had some lovely basil plants. I bought the plant for \$4.95 and took it home. I used a few leaves for a couple of recipes and put the plant on our back porch. In October when the nighttime temps became too cool I brought the plant into the kitchen. At this point the plant was leggy and sparse.

One day I noticed little dark balls on my white counter. They looked like very large poppy seeds. I examined the plant and couldn't see anything on it. I did suspect a caterpillar. The large poppy seeds came back a second time but again I looked for a critter, but no luck. I was starting to feel that someone was playing a trick on me because I couldn't see an insect. The third time was the last straw. I put the plant under a bright light and turned it upside down and examined it up close. Then I saw the little bugger, a green thin caterpillar. It was the same color as the plant. It had its back arched with its feet on a stem. I plucked it off and did away with it. Yea, I won! But sad to say my basil plant didn't live much longer and now has been returned to nature outside the back door.

January Program

On Tuesday, January 13th, we will meet at the police station for a program on *Solar Energy* by Larry Frank. The program will be followed by a social hour.

*Cold is the winter day, misty and dark;
The sunless sky with faded gleam is rent;
And patches of thick snow outlying mark,
The landscape with drear disfigurement.*

- Robert Bridges

December Program

Red's Garden Center again provided a good demonstration on how to make an attractive winter container with greens.

Thanks to everyone who came to the impromptu holiday dinner at Pizano's last month. We certainly had a good time talking with all of you.

Dues Are Due

Send in your dues to the treasurer Shelly Kimel, 2141 Mickey Lane, or give them to him at the January program.

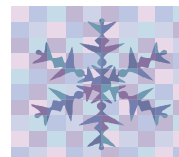
Dues Are Due

Through the Garden Gate So, the Old Farmer's Almanac was correct about this winter. It predicted more snow than usual. And colder weather, too. You do have to admit it — this snow looks so beautiful! I just love it when the lamplight from the house falls upon the delicate snowflakes, causing them to glitter like diamonds. I like everything about snow from the extraordinary benefits to our gardens, to filling up our ground water level supplies, to see children making snow angels and snowmen, to the crunching sound when you walk on it, to how lovely the trees and shrubs look with their 'dressing' of snow, BUT

I do not like the dirty snow later in the season from vehicle exhausts, nor the grayish slush, nor the gigantic piles of dirty snow left over in March in parking lots. I also am not fond of icy sidewalks and stairs, and of black ice on streets that contribute to cars sliding around (driver-error being the major contributor to that).

Happy New Year to all of you.

Esther



Wild Animals Around Us

Feeding bread to ducks and geese is very bad. It offers no nutritional value to birds and can cause severe health problems. Plus their babies won't learn how to forage.

Raccoons are normally nocturnal, but will appear during the day if you put pet food out.

Call animal control only if they act disoriented or sick or are screeching.

Skunks are terribly near-sighted. If you notice one in the backyard with you, either stand still or move very slowly. He probably won't see you, but if he does, he won't spray you at first. He'll stamp his front feet as a warning to back off. Opossums are harmless and rather benign. If confronted, they will hiss, bare their teeth, and drool. If that doesn't work, they will roll over and play dead. It is rare if they become rabid.

If a bat gets into your house, open the windows and doors so it can find its way out. Make sure there are no openings in the attic into your living quarters. They will NOT try to get entangled in your hair.

- Karen Klages,
Chicago Tribune

The true gardener, like a true artist, is never satisfied.

- H. E. Bates

Statistics

In November, the Glenview Gardeners web site recorded 670 hits, and in December there were 300.

For the year to date, it experienced 3,700 page hits. Many web sites have links to our site.

Check out our site yourselves.

It is at <http://>

www.glenviewgardeners.org/



Dues are Due!!!

The 12th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count

The 2008-09 Great Backyard Bird Count will take place February 13-16, 2009. Also, Project Feeder-Watch Season has begun. You can sign up at anytime. FeederWatchers keep track of their birds through the winter and report their tallies each week. Go to www.birdsource.org/gbbc/ for more information. Finally, make sure you're maintaining healthy bird habit in your yard by taking the Audubon [Healthy Yard Pledge](http://audubonathome.org/pledge). Go to audubonathome.org/pledge for more information.

Snowdrops

Did you know that snowdrops are members of the daffodil family? And are native of the alpenes of Europe and Asia? They have long been considered a sacred plant, a holy symbol of chastity and purity. But, they also are a symbol of death, and in many areas of England, it was considered bad luck to carry even a single bloom into the house. The Victorians also considered them to be death tokens, likening the outer petals to a shroud and reading into the fact that the blossoms grow close to the bare earth, a sure sign, in their eyes, that this beautiful and fragrant flower belonged more to the dead than to the living.

- The Country Diary of
Garden Lore
by Julia Jones and Barbara Deer

The garden that is finished is dead.

- H. E. Bates

January 6th, Twelfth Night

On Twelfth Night in many areas of England, it was common practice to wassail apple trees. In order to wish the tree and its spirit good health, or *waes heil*, revelers would gather around a large old apple tree and consume a great deal of hard cider and sing their toasts to the gods who dwelt in the orchards.

It is also the time to take down Christmas decorations as it is considered extremely unlucky to leave them up after Twelfth Night.

Feeding Birds in Winter

Each species of garden bird likes a different kind of food, so the more varied a menu you can offer, the more bird species you will attract.

Starlings and crows like scraps of fat; thistle, oilers and other commercial seed mixes will attract finches, sparrows, and cardinals; blackbirds and thrushes love apples and oranges; while robins (and there are some that over-winter here) are partial to mealworms which can be bought at Wild Birds and other seed stores. And, for those who love to feed squirrels, dried corn-on-the-cob is the treat for them. But do not feed the deer! That is a major no-no, besides being illegal.



The House Plant Placements

Certain plants prefer certain locations in order to do their best growing. For example, if you have an east window, the best plants to grow are Norfolk Island pine, begonia, orchid cactus, Christmas cactus, gardenia, Boston fern, African violet, gloxinia, bird of paradise, and cape primrose.

For a west window, try croton, coleus, jade plant, ficus, hoya plant, polka dot plant, jasmine, avocado, and sansevieria or mother-in-law's tongue. However, my hoyas sit in the east window in winter but spend summer on the west-facing porch. My jasmine spends her winter in the east window and her summer outside in the east garden.

For a south window, use chenille plant, orange or lemon tree, euphorbia or crown of thorns, shrimp plant, kalanchoe, geranium and burro's tail (a sedum).

And for a north window, use spider plant, dieffenbachia, false aralia, peperomia, schefflera, and many members of the bromeliad family.

However, for a really dark corner, a few plants will actually grow well including philodendron. Others are Chinese evergreen (mist often), aspidistra or cast iron plant (tolerates dry air), parlor palm (mist if room is heated), grape ivy (likes misting), dracaena (also likes misting), sentry palm (mist or sponge leaves), Swiss cheese plant or monstera deliciosa (mist), pothos (mist often) and nephthytis or arrowhead vine. Ferns do not like dark conditions and moist air is also appreciated, as is an east or north window.



In January, remember to:

- review last year's journal;
- start a new journal for this year;
- either spray the foliage of houseplants weekly or have a humidifier near them;
- on cold nights, be sure the houseplants are not too near windows which can cause them to become chilled;
- review seed catalogs;
- be sure to use non-damaging salt on icy sidewalks ;
- begin to fertilize houseplants at the sign of new growth;
- look out for our feathered friends by setting out seeds, suet cakes and fresh oranges and apples;
- cut off the branches of your Christmas tree and use them as mulch on new perennials;
- take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count this winter.

Plants That Require More Frequent Watering Than Usual

Most houseplants spend winter in their 'resting' mode and require little water. Too often we tend to literally drown their poor roots. A little water, enough to make the soil moist, is sufficient. However, there are some plants that need more water in order to survive. They are chenille plant, azalea, sweet flag, anthurium, camellia, parlor palm (and other palms), cyclamen, umbrella plant, venus fly trap, fern (most ferns need moist soil and humid air), gardenia, baby's tears, hibiscus, jasmine (I know from experience!), gloxinia and inch plant. Besides these, any plant that is budding out or has blooms needs more water and a bit of fertilizer. Another factor in deciding about your own house plants is how warm is your house? If it is very warm during the day and not cooler at night, you will need to add more water.

What's Blooming Table

Remember to bring your blooming or growing plants for show & tell.

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