

Dunesland Latest Dirt



ISSUE 6

February 2021

PRESIDENTS' POINTS

It's February. It's the depth of winter with cold and snow surrounding us but we're safe and warm in our homes. Though it doesn't seem like it, spring is creeping closer. February is the shortest month of the year, so we'll soon be looking backwards on this winter. To get through this time of cold and isolation, we can spruce up our homes and celebrate the good in our lives.

Here's a good thing: vaccines. What a magic word right now! I am looking forward to the time when we all have had our vaccines (both injections) so that we can safely get together again. We still don't know when that will be but it's coming closer. We're wondering if we can meet before September. We're contemplating whether or not we can safely hold our plant auction, maybe outdoors. We'd really like to know if you would be interested in trying it or if you'd feel better waiting till next year. Please send your thoughts to us at info@duneslandgardenclub.com or call any of the officers.



Another good thing is that it is Valentine's month which turns our minds and hearts to our friends and loved ones. Share that love. Call, write, zoom and send gifts; whatever makes you happy. There is always chocolate, but I'm going to suggest a green gift—a living plant. We're gardeners, aren't we? In this issue you will find some information on houseplants to help you choose that gift for yourself or someone else.

Now is the time for love and patience, waiting for spring, waiting for vaccines, waiting for the time to be free to do as we please. Wait for us; we're still here and soon we can all join each other.

Sandi Shea

Presidents' Points — Sandi.....	1
Presidents' Points — Beth	2
Letter to the Editor	2
Native Plant Nerd.....	3
Sunshine	3
Midwest Monthly Gardening.....	4
Houseplants 101	5
Recipes	6
View from my Backyard	6
Reblooming	8
Beth's Corner.....	6,7
Birthdays.....	8
Updates.....	8
Coming Next Month.....	8



You can find this month's newsletter and all articles posted on our website every month if you want to catch up, re-read something or share an article with a friend!



PRESIDENTS' POINTS

More snow is coming (until April or May?) I know everyone is getting tired of being cooped up at home with nowhere to go to get relief. Life can get pretty boring. So let's have some fun!



Get out those seed catalogs you sent for last month. If you haven't already planned your garden, now is the time. Page through those catalogs and look for something a little different this year. Maybe plant some pole beans instead of bush green beans or vice versa. (Burpee's catalog has an interesting six-foot pole with string that takes up 5 square feet of space and holds 12 plants.) Look for a different pole bean than the one you usually plant. Perhaps one that has

foot-long beans or those little narrow French beans. If you plant zucchini, maybe try a yellow one this year. How about those cute little patty pan squash? If you have a sturdy fence, try Sandi's trombone squash and grow them up the fence. Do you like peas? Give snap or snow peas a try. Plant peas in the garden early in the spring. They like cool weather.

Maybe you would like to try some raised beds this spring. Start looking for what will suit your needs. Can you make it yourself or with someone's help? Do you need to buy one that is already complete?

Did you start some cuttings last fall? Are they getting leggy? You can cut them back and start more new plants. The old plant should bush out after cutting. See the [website for a short clinic on this](#).

Check out [Beth's Corner](#). Try the [Broccoli Cheddar Soup](#)--it's really yummy and warms you up on a cold day. The [brownies](#) are about the easiest Valentine desert you can do. And I've got [three simple craft projects](#) for you to try when you tire of the seed catalogs. Time to get out that button jar that's been sitting around for a long while. Don't have a button jar? Call a friend, neighbor or your sister--I'll bet someone has one they would be willing to share. I've given you some ideas, so run with them and enjoy.



Beth Dermody

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

We received a message from Kathy Knutell last month! Send in your messages, questions and photos and we will share it the future.

I especially miss the get togethers but also the garden club too. Love the newsletter too. Earlier in December I was reminiscing about all the great Christmas parties we had and the arrangements we made. I went out & cut pine, boxwood and arborvitae branches and made an outdoor and a table arrangement.



Also, if it would be any interest to any one, we found an injured great horned owl in our back yard and called Flint Creek Wildlife Rehabilitation to see if they could save, but unfortunately the infection was too severe.

—Kathy Knutell



Do you have anything you would like to share with the club? Drop Sandi, Beth, Jan or April a line or give one of us a call. We will try to feature member's content — but you have to send it in! We love hearing from you.

NATIVE PLANT NERD

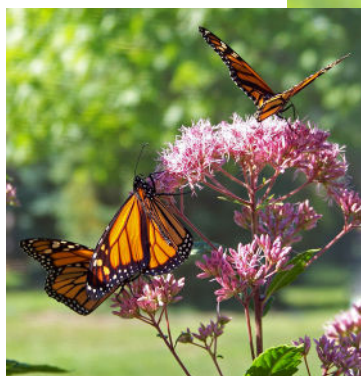
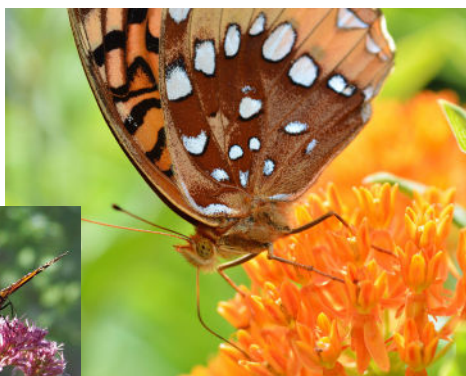
Hi, I'm Katie, your home-grown native plant nerd! I'll be popping in every once in awhile to share information with you about some of the lovely plants that are native to our area of the Midwest, their benefits, and why you might want to add a few (or a lot!) of native plants to your landscape.

If you have any questions - reach out at native@duneslandgardenclub.com



Even though it's still winter, now is the time to think about monarchs! Monarchs in the western US are especially at risk of extinction, but our monarchs east of the Rockies could use some help too. The single best thing you can do to help the monarch population is to plant native milkweed! Just a small patch in your yard, or even in pots on your patio, can make a huge difference.

Like many of our North American butterflies, monarchs are specialist feeders.



Their caterpillars are only able to eat milkweed. The butterflies can nectar on many different flowers, but their babies need

milkweed. The good news is that there are quite a few varieties of milkweed native to northern Illinois and there's sure to be one that will work in your yard.

Now is a wonderful time to get milkweed seeds started because they (like many of our native plants) do require cold stratification in order to germinate. They like to experience a bit of Midwestern winter before they'll wake up in the spring!

Native varieties for northern Illinois include common milkweed (*asclepias syriaca*), swamp milkweed (*asclepias incarnata*), whorled milkweed (*asclepias verticillata*), prairie milkweed (*asclepias sullivantii*), butterfly milkweed (*asclepias tuberosa*), and purple milkweed (*asclepias purpurascens*). To find milkweed seeds near you, the Xerces Society has a milkweed seed finder that can be found at <https://www.xerces.org/milkweed/milkweed-seed-finder>



And to read about why it's important to add milkweed to your yard this summer please see the article here: <https://www.nbcnews.com/science/environment/monarch-butterfly-population-moves-closer-extinction-rcna231>

Happy planting!

Katie

SUNSHINE

As Sunshine Chairman I send cards to members who need a little brightening in their lives. Normally I share this news each month at our meeting so that others may reach out and offer support as well.



If you know of someone to whom we should send a card please contact me at HKoetz@comcast.net or (262) 237-1950.

The only new mailing we had for February was a get-well card to Jill LaBelle for her surgery at the beginning of the month.

Helen Koetz

As an ongoing fundraiser, I also have our garden gloves for sale for \$4 a pair. They are very durable and make excellent gifts.

Please let me know if you would like some.



MIDWEST MONTHLY GARDENING

February is a preparing and monitoring month. We're finally seeing some snow to blanket our gardens, yet there's still plenty of time to dream and plan. Decide now how you will design your gardens and where new plants will go. Stay warm and have a cup of cocoa as you make your plans.

Planning—Finish ordering seeds, plants, shrubs or trees. Once your seed packets arrive decide how many seeds you will use. If you have many more than you need share those extras with family or friends. Finalize your garden and container plans on paper so you will know exactly where everything goes.

Seed Starting—Begin preparing your seed-starting equipment (containers, light systems, light timers, soil, trays) so you're ready to plant. Wash and sterilize seed-starting containers in one part bleach to nine parts water. If you plan on using seeds from prior seasons run a germination test on them. Once you test those seeds you must plant them as soon as possible, so wait until you are ready to plant. You can put a few seeds in a container of water and if they sink they're good, but if they don't sink they are bad. The best method is to use a damp paper towel and place seeds on half the towel and cover with the other half. Put the towel in a zip bag; place it in a warm temperature area. Check daily to keep moist and after three to four days begin to lift towel gently to look at progress. Within 10 days you will know if your seeds are viable.

Monitoring your Garden—Continue to take walks around your garden throughout the winter even when there is snow on the ground. You can then see if there are any signs of damage from animals such as rabbits or deer. A sure sign of voles is tunnels in the snow, which means the voles are eating the base of your plants. Gently clear off heavy snow on evergreens and shrubs so branches don't bend so badly they break off. Also clear away any broken or fallen branches in the yard.

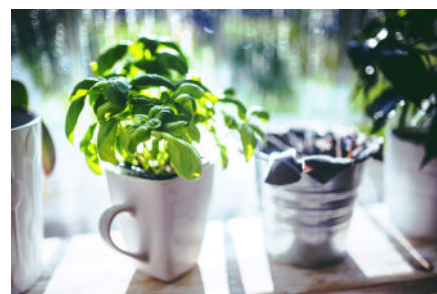


Pruning—Make sure we've had enough freezing temperatures so your trees and shrubs have gone dormant. Pruning of your trees and shrubs can be done in late February and March. When pruning make sure your pruning tools are

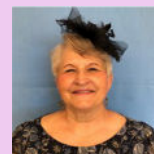
cleaned regularly so you will not spread diseases. When you're pruning, cut some branches from early flowering shrubs or trees so you can enjoy the blooms inside. Good choices are serviceberry, magnolia, flowering quince, forsythia, crab or apple trees, flowering pear, flowering cherry, honeysuckle, witch hazel and redbuds.

Indoor Plant Care—Houseplants can use a monthly shower which cleans off their leaves and sometimes eliminate pests. Monitor your plants often for gnats, whitefly, spider mites, scale and mealybugs. If you don't eliminate the problems you risk a full-blown infestation. Houseplants also require less water and very little fertilizer due to slow growth during this semi-dormant season. You will notice when it's time to water by putting your finger into the soil to test for dryness or the leaves may droop. Don't overwater or allow plants to sit in water. After watering thoroughly allow time for dripping and throw away any excess water in the trays.

Something New—Herbs make great houseplants. Enjoy their scent and use them to perk up many recipes...great additions to those hearty soups which warm up your tummy!



April is a horticulturist retired from the Chicago Botanic Garden. She shares monthly gardening tips and would love to help you out with plant and gardening questions.



April Meyers

Just [send her an email](#) and she will get back to you.

HOUSEPLANTS 101

Yes, it is winter. We gardeners especially are hungering for a touch of green. You can satisfy that hunger by adding a plant or two or three. Forget those faux plants made of plastic or fabric. Go for the real thing. Not only will you enjoy the living green of nature, houseplants are actually good for you. Studies by NASA and a number of universities have shown indoor plants are very good at clearing air of harmful chemicals released from common substances like cigarette or cooking smoke, fabric cleaners, detergent, cleaning products and plastics.

They can also improve your mental health. Their unique shapes and soothing colors lend beauty and tranquility to every room. You can use plants with any decorating style from minimalist to traditional to antique by choosing pots that complement your style.

The good news is you don't have to have the perfect setting or special knowledge. What is most important is to choose the right plant for your space. To help you choose, below is a list of common houseplants that are easy to grow. Match the plant to your room's light and temperature conditions; then water and fertilize as needed. If you remember to wipe the leaves down occasionally and mist weekly in the winter, your thumb too will turn very green.

Peace Lily (*Spathiphyllum*) is a plant that will bloom indoors and is an excellent air filter. Although it tolerates low light, filtered light in a window is great if it doesn't get cold. Water when the soil is somewhat dry but don't keep it soggy.

Chinese Evergreen (*Alaonema*) comes in a number of varieties, including a pink, yellow and green tricolor. It is also tolerant of low light and only needs to be watered about once a week. Keep its environment steady (no drafts or heat blasts) and it will reward you with intriguing leaves and occasional blooms.

Pothos or Devil's Ivy (*Epipremnum aureum*) is a vining plant with heart-shaped leaves. It is one of the easiest plants to grow and is among the top ten air purifying plants. Golden pathos can thrive in conditions in which almost no other plant can grow, including darkness and a near-complete lack of water but does best near a brightly lit window and should be watered only when the soil is dry to the touch.

Dracaena is another tropical plant that comes in many varieties. Most have leaves that are striped or bicolored with yellow, red, pink or white highlighting the green foliage. All Dracaenas prefer a bright but not sunny location and to dry slightly between waterings.

English Ivy (*Hedera*), while a pest outside, makes a wonderful hanging basket indoors. This small-leaved ivy adds a whimsical grace as it spills over the pot's edge and works its magic as an air purifier.

Snake Plant or Mother-in-Law's Tongue (*Sanservieria*) is almost impossible to kill. It has rigid, pointed leaves that grow straight up in green with white or yellow stripes or blotches. It is slow growing, tolerating drought, poor light and infrequent fertilizing, although of course like all plants it appreciates a well-lit spot.

ZZ Plant (*Zamioculcas zamiifolia*) is known as a "plant of steel" for being extremely hardy and even thriving on neglect. It has a rhizome water storage system so can go for weeks without watering and doesn't need much light.

Parlor Palm (*Chamaedorea elegans*) is small enough for a shelf or a table and doesn't need a lot of light or constant watering like other palms. A bonus is that all those fronds make it very effective at filtering the air.

Prayer Plant (*Maranta Leuconeura*) is a great plant for a bathroom because it likes humidity. The gorgeous leaves flatten out in the daytime, then fold "in prayer" at night. No direct sunlight needed; water when the top of the soil is dry.

Rubber Plant (*Ficus elastica*) does the job if you're looking for a tall, upright plant as it can grow to 10 feet tall. It has big, shiny green leaves and grows quite quickly. Best of all, studies show a mature rubber plant can remove several pounds of toxic air from your space every day.

Spider Plant (*Chlorophytum*) sounds creepy, but is so named because of its spider-like plants, or spiderettes, which dangle down from the mother plant like spiders on the web. They will grow nearly anywhere, but in good conditions (bright, but not direct light and liberal water) they arch their green and white leaves over the pot and send out their plantlets with tiny white flowers. You can easily pot these for more plants to share.

Now it's time to choose that ones that best fit your environment. Get busy! Enjoy fresh air and nature in your home.



Recipes



BROWNIE HEARTS

- Prepare brownie mix per package directions and bake as directed.
- Cool, then cut out hearts using a cookie cutter or a knife.
- Pipe on store-bought frosting or use "Writing Icing" to create chocolate "conversation hearts".

(Betty Crocker is one of the companies that makes "Writing Icing")



The brownies are from Feb 2021 Woman's Day

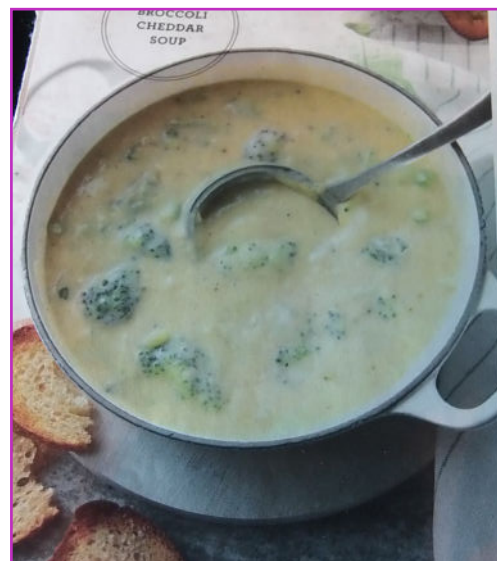
BROCCOLI CHEDDAR SOUP

Feb/Mar 2021 Country Woman

This thick, cheesy broccoli cheddar soup is proof that soup doesn't need to be made in big batches to be good.

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| ¼ cup chopped onion | ¼ cup butter, cubed |
| ¼ cup all-purpose flour | ¼ tsp salt |
| ¼ tsp pepper | 1 ½ cups milk |
| ¾ cup chicken broth | |
| 1 cup cooked, chopped fresh or frozen broccoli | |
| ½ cup shredded cheddar cheese | |

1. In a small saucepan, sauté onion in butter until tender.
2. Stir in the flour, salt and pepper until blended; gradually add milk and chicken broth.
3. Bring to boil; cook and stir until thickened, about two minutes.
4. Add broccoli.
5. Cook and stir until heated through.
6. Remove from the heat; stir in cheese until melted.
7. Add some bacon bits for even more flavor.



Makes 2 servings.

VIEW FROM MY BACKYARD

"Come feed the little birds, show them you care, and you'll be glad if you do. Their young ones are hungry, their nests are so bare, all it takes is tuppence from you."

A member suggested that since we are spending more time at home looking out our windows or taking walks in nature than we used to (a pleasant side effect of the pandemic!), we might have photos of some of the wonders we are seeing in our own backyards.

So – if you catch a curious squirrel, a beautiful bird or nature scene you'd like to share with the club, please send it to us! It might just brighten someone's day.



Backyard of Bill & Beth Dermody – Jan 2021

DOOR HEART

Whittle down that fabric stash and make this ragged heart wreath.

12-inch heart shaped wire form

1 ½ yard fabric or six fat quarters in coordinating colors

Scissors

Directions:

1. Cut fabric into 150 strips, each measuring 1 ½ x 8 inches
2. Using 1 strip of fabric at a time, wrap around two rungs of wire on wreath form and tie with a square knot facing the front.
3. Continue tying strips to wreath form, alternating between inner and outer rungs of the form.
4. Slide strips together tightly until form is covered.
5. Hang on door.



BUTTON PAPER CLIPS

Buttons with flat backs and no shank

Large, coated paper clips

Glue

Directions:

1. Apply glue to back of buttons and clips.
2. Press to adhere.
3. Allow to dry 24 hours.



Heart wreath and button projects are from Feb/Mar 2021 Country Woman

Tired of the cold and staying in the house?

Plan a project!

Here are a few simple crafts you can do for Valentines' Day and a quick Valentine dessert recipe to celebrate the occasion.

You can also make a simple homemade soup for two to share with a spouse or a friend—just add a sandwich for a great lunch.

BUTTON TREE

Floral or jewelry wire

Floral foam

Buttons

Small container

Decorative stones, optional

Wire cutters

Directions:

1. Cut 15-20 pieces of wire into 25-inch lengths using wire cutters.
2. Gather wires together and fold at middle point. Twist wires together at fold to create the tree base.
3. Fill container with floral foam. Press tree base into foam. If desired, top container with decorative stones
4. Divide wires into smaller groups and twist sections into tree branches.
5. At the end of wires, thread wire through buttonholes (place wire up from the back of the button to the front and back through the second hole to the back of the button) and twist into place.



RE-BLOOMING

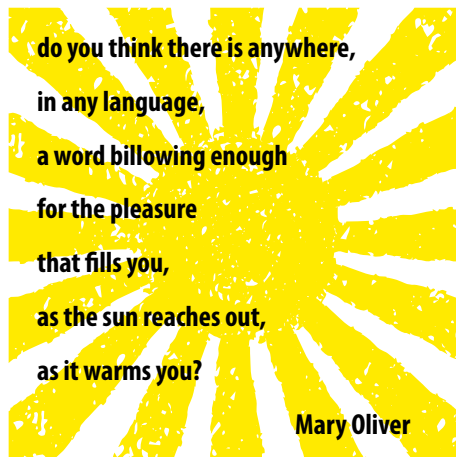
I chuckled when I read the first line of Sandi's message. "It's February." Need we say more? It reminded me of a well-worn children's book handed down to us from my husband's Aunt Mary. In it a chatty family of field mice living in an old stone wall were busy gathering nuts and grain for the winter—all except Frederick. "Why don't you work?" they asked him. "I do work," he answered. "I gather colors for the winter is gray. I gather sun rays for the cold dark days." Frederick was the resident poet. When the corn was only a memory and no one felt like chatting, his 'supplies' sustained them until spring.



Aunt Mary's gift now delights her great-great nieces and nephews, and we remember her with love. It's a reminder that our own words and deeds, no matter how simple, often have lasting impact.

After a year of living with Covid-19, could there be a better time to spread some sunshine, to lift some spirits? Another Frederick, the Philosopher Friedrich Von Hugel, reached this conclusion at the end of his life: "Caring is the greatest thing; caring matters most." So send those valentines, make some calls, connect with fellow club members to spread good cheer and keep us going strong.

Jan LaBelle



*"Surely as cometh the Winter, I know
There are Spring violets under the snow."*



- R. H. Newell

You can also find fun info
on our Facebook page:
[www.facebook.com/
illinoisduneslandgardenclub](https://www.facebook.com/illinoisduneslandgardenclub)



COMING NEXT MONTH

- Tree/shrub pruning and care
- Video on pruning on website
- Winter birds
- Early seed starting

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

Marty Butler	3	Lucretia Lynch	14
Kathleen Murray	4	Carol Awe	18
Doreen Matteson	6	Gale Dulian	24
Paul Reinier	6	Ed Waddle	26
Jan LaBelle	9	Darlene Robinson	27