

Dunesland Latest Dirt



PRESIDENTS' POINTS

April showers bring May flowers--and it certainly gets me thinking about gardening and plants. This newsletter is packed with information; probably even more than we could offer at a regular club meeting. While we await that magical meeting-together-moment, study these articles at your leisure and benefit from the expertise of fellow club members.



We thank them for their time and devotion. Let's use their knowledge to increase our gardening pleasure (one of the great perks of membership!) In this issue:

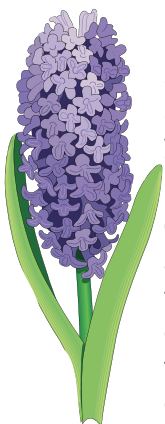
- Understand more about the "why and how" of seed starting and soil temperature
- Look for this year's exciting new plant offerings
- Share your extra plants and help our club in lieu of our annual auction
- Try sprouts or microgreens to add freshness to your diet before it's warm enough to garden

In addition to the topics in the newsletter, I hope you are also taking advantage of the numerous offerings on our website and Facebook page. We have articles there expanding on information first seen in the newsletter, and videos from both our own members as well as links to related videos we think would be helpful to you. We also share articles (as well as funny jokes) on Facebook that are timely and relatable to us as gardeners almost weekly!

Enjoy this newsletter as you plan your spring gardening.

Sandi

Beth's Corner has the world's easiest Italian Beef recipe. It's perfect if you plan to be out in the garden all day. Just put it on before you go out in the morning and (voila!) you have supper ready when you come back inside in the evening. Add a salad, kaiser or other crusty rolls and potato chips, if desired, and you are all set. Don't forget to top your salad with some of those microgreens or sprouts you've started.



Certainly remember to pick off a few fragrant spring hyacinths and daffodils to bring into the house to enjoy the scent and the bright colors. Add a forsythia sprig or two and you have a delightful bouquet. Of course, daffodils (and the whole narcissus family) need a vase of their own—they cause most flowers except iris to wilt prematurely.

Beth

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COMING NEXT MONTH

- Plant Sale May 11 - June 8
- Exercise for gardening
- Let's talk tomatoes
- Hardening off
- Containers



We're all excited about getting out of the house and getting into the garden.

Try not to get overanxious. You need to pay attention to not only the air temperature but soil temperature also.

The most important requirements for seed germination are heat and moisture, and the amount and duration of each necessary for a specific vegetable. Germination temperatures should be constant at 70° to 80°F. Time to germinate doubles for each ten degrees the temperature drops below the ideal level. Seeds of summer or hot weather vegetables will not sprout at lower temperatures. You can find more information on this topic as well as a chart of specific germination temperatures and times on our [website](#). You can also find a [chart concerning flowers](#).

These requirements apply to your transplants, too. If you put warm weather crops such as tomatoes or peppers out too early, the roots might rot or at best, simply sit there doing nothing until soil and air temperatures provide the correct atmosphere for them.



Now that you can choose the proper time for plantings and you have your equipment that we listed last month, let's consider the how:

1. Review the seed packet for planting information.
2. Place your sterile seed starting mix in a container and moisten it. Fill your pots. Place about three seeds in each, cover lightly with soil, and spray to moisten.
3. Cover and place in a warm area, preferably with a heat mat. Spray lightly daily to keep moist.
4. Uncover when seeds have germinated and make sure they have sufficient light. Begin half strength fertilization now.



5. When plants have developed and outgrown starter pots, either transplant to larger pots or to the garden if time and temperature are appropriate. Ensure they have been hardened off before planting outside.



You can find much more detailed information on our garden club's website – [Seed Starting Indoors](#).

SPROUTS & MICROGREENS



Sprouts are one of the easiest ways to get fresh, extremely nutritious veggies in our diets right now. You can grow a whole crop in less than a week from start to finish, with nothing more than a jar and some cheesecloth. Well, you do need seeds of course! You can find them at online at Amazon or if you prefer to shop local - Grow Masters in Gurnee or other health food stores.

Alfalfa sprouts are probably the quickest and easiest as well as very prolific. Radish and mustard sprouts add more spice and flavor. Broccoli and kale are highly nutritious.

Start by soaking your chosen seeds a few hours or overnight. Drain them and put them in a container—it can be a sprouting tray or just a jar with cheesecloth rubber banded on top. Rinse and drain morning and evening and let them sit. They don't need the sun. After four to seven days, you'll have an abundant crop of sprouts ready to be rinsed (to remove seed hulls if you like) and enjoyed.

YOU CAN FIND MORE SPROUT AND MICROGREEN PHOTOS ON OUR WEBSITE




Microgreens are even easier. Start with a fairly flat container such as the clear plastic containers that fresh fruits come in. (Think strawberries, blueberries, raspberries or blackberries and even better if it has a hinged lid). Fill the container with an inch of potting mix—a little less if the container is very shallow. Be sure the potting mix is moist. Place seeds on top of potting mix. Be generous and plant them thick. Add just enough potting mix to cover the seeds. Always place a tray beneath the container to catch water runoff. Place in a warm, sunny spot and wait for the seeds to sprout. Keep the potting mix moist but not saturated. When your microgreens have the second to third sets of leaves you can trim them for your salads. Use the whole stem and all the leaves on it.

The brassicaceae family of seeds do very well for microgreens—broccoli, cabbage, kohlrabi, brussels sprouts, radishes—and any of the lettuces and greens (mustard, collards, turnip). Your microgreens will be ready to use in two to three weeks. You can plant these all through the winter too.



MIDWEST MONTHLY GARDENING

PLEASE CHECK OUT APRIL'S EDITION OF MMG ONLINE FOR MORE IN-DEPTH GARDENING TIPS AND INSTRUCTIONS 

April is my favorite month, and you probably know why. Spring has sprung and bulbs are showing their beautiful blooms. This is a great time of year as the garden is nearly ready to be planted and enjoyed for months to come. Things to do:

Exercise: Get ready now for the kneeling and bending of gardening and avoid spring aches and pains.

Clean the Garden: Remove dead leaves, plants and winter mulch. Fertilize and divide perennials. Start weeding now.

Pruning Shrubs: Don't! Only prune dead wood and winter damage. Prune spring blooming ones after they bloom; summer and fall blooming shrubs in the fall.

Start Seed: This is the time to start many seeds. Check seed packet instructions to see what seeds may be started indoors and when.

Planting Outside: A few things may be planted now such as perennials and cool season crops. Most planting should wait till at least mid-May

Roses: As temperatures warm roses can be uncovered.

Spring Bulbs: Remove only spent flowers. Wait until leaves yellow to cut back.

Lawns: Aerate, dethatch or reseed now. Apply pre-emergent crabgrass herbicide. Do not mow until grass is at least four inches tall.

Preparing Garden Beds: When soil is workable, incorporate compost, manure and fertilizer.

Indoor Plants: Begin fertilizing houseplants. Repot any that have outgrown pots.



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

— April



THANK YOU
for answering the
March Communications
Survey!



Your answers
will help us to
get you garden
club news more
efficiently!

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



Katie



Ready to plant some native plants but aren't sure where to start? Here are some beautiful native plant alternatives to common nursery plants. Instead of:

1. Forsythia — try **Spicebush** (*Lindera benzoin*) instead! This beautiful shrub has yellow blooms in early spring before leafing out. The leaves and stems are very fragrant when crushed (hence the common name), its seeds are a favorite for songbirds, it is a host plant for spicebush swallowtail butterflies, and the leaves turn an eye-catching yellow in fall. Forsythia is beautiful, but the native spicebush sure has a lot to offer!
2. Burning Bush — give **Virginia Sweetspire** (*Itea virginica*) a try! In addition to lovely red fall foliage, Virginia sweetspire also has beautiful blooms that our pollinators love. And no ecosystem will be harmed if a bird carries Virginia sweetspire seeds from your yard into a nearby woods! Another great alternative is the native **Eastern wahoo** (*Euonymus atropurpureus*).
3. Butterfly Bush — plant **Buttonbush** (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*) and you'll attract so many thankful pollinators and hummingbirds! It has some of the most interesting flowers you'll see, and unlike the exotic butterfly bush, this one is a host plant for several species of beautiful native moths who are important behind-the-scenes pollinators.
4. Ornamental (Bradford) Pear tree — try a variety of **Serviceberry/Shadbush** (*Amelanchier*). A small landscape tree, serviceberry provides beautiful spring blooms, berries for the birds (and humans!) and fall color.

If you're not ready to make the leap into a new shrub or tree but want something different from some common nursery plants, give these natives a try! Instead of:

...Hosta — try **Wild Ginger** (*Asarum canadense*).

...Miscanthus — use **Little Blue Stem** (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) or **Indiangrass** (*Sorghastrum nutans*)

...Daylily — plant **Blanket Flower** (*Gaillardia*). Like daylilies, these are easy to grow and tolerate many soil conditions.



Buttonbush (*cephalanthus occidentalis*)



Blanket Flower (*gaillardia*)

...Shasta daisies — choose **Coneflower** (*Echinacea*), **Black-eyed Susan** (*Rudbeckia*) or **Tickseed** (*Coreopsis*).

Happy planting to you!

NEW FOR 2021

Gardeners are always experimenting. Sometimes it works and sometimes it fails; even tried and true doesn't always give us what we want. Every year new plants debut to tempt us. We happily oblige.

Proven Winners has "proven" many times they can provide winners. Here are some new ones that look very promising for our area.



Proven Harvest® Amazel Basil®

Basil is a garden staple, known for its versatility and usefulness in a wide range of recipes. You might be cooking, baking, or even serving up cocktails with basil--adding its unique flavor to your concoctions. The biggest challenges when growing basil are mildew and seed set, both of which can kill the plant or affect the taste of the leaves--but not with Amazel. While it isn't immune to mildew it rarely has a bad infestation and it is very late to set seed. This is basil that will hang around all summer, providing batch after batch of pesto and yummy on pizzas too! Annual. Full Sun. 20-36" Tall.

Primo® 'Wild Rose' Coral Bells Heuchera hybrid

Who needs flowers when you have a plant with such vibrant foliage? Yet in midsummer pink and purple blossoms rise above the rosy pink foliage.

Perennial Sun to Shade. 8-10" tall with 20" scapes; 18" wide.

USDA zones 4-9.



Berried Treasure® Red Fragaria ananassa

This strawberry is an easy-care perennial with both ornamental and edible features. As an everbearing strawberry, once it begins flowering it continues through the end of the year. Gardeners who grow this plant will be delighted by the presence of semi-double red flowers at the same time as the flavorful snack-sized fruit. Unlike other varieties that are aggressive and will run around the garden, Berried Treasure® Red has restrained runners and will spread slowly. The shorter runners also make it excellent for use in containers or raised beds. Perennial. Full Sun. 12-16" tall and 18-24" wide. Hardy in Zones 4-9.

Czechmark Trilogy® Weigela florida

Three colors, one plant—yes please! Czechmark Trilogy® Weigela blooms white, pink and red all at once for a dazzling spring show that will draw hummingbirds and bees to the garden. This mounded shrub with glossy green leaves is incredibly easy to grow, providing loads of blooms with minimal effort.

Shrub. 3-3.5' tall and wide. Sun to part sun. USDA zones 4-8.



Yezberry® Japanese Haskaps

There's something magical about eating food you've grown and Yezberry® haskaps will be one of your yummiest harvests yet! They taste like a combination of blueberries and raspberries but are much easier to care for. They don't need any particular soil to thrive or any special pruning regimen. Just plant two different varieties and get an abundance of berries in early summer, year after year. They're great for pies, jellies, and eating ripe from the bush (our favorite option)! Shrub. Part Sun to Sun. 3-6' tall and wide, dependent on the variety chosen. USDA zones 3-7.

Craft Ideas

WHAT TO RECYCLE FOR SEED POTS

There are a number of things you can use to start your seeds. Keurig cups, yogurt cups, small ice cream cups can all be used. Be sure to put at least one hole in the bottom of cups (Keurig cups already have a hole) for drainage. (We don't want to drown the plants.) Just use a hammer and a nail to make the hole.

Toilet paper/paper towel rolls can be used and planted in the garden without removing the plant. The paper will disintegrate in the ground. Cut the toilet paper tube in half. Place an x of masking tape on the bottom of the tube to keep the soil in the tube. Cut a paper towel tube in two-inch sections and place masking tape on each section as above.

Plastic trays that fruit and vegetables come in are great to use under the pots. If your tray has holes in it, line it with foil to catch the water runoff. If your container/tray has a lid, place your seeds in the pots, place the pots in the container, close the lid and you have a mini greenhouse.

Egg cartons can be used to start seeds. Place your potting mix in each egg space. When it's time to put your plants in the ground, just cut the egg carton apart between the egg spaces. If the carton is cardboard, plant the cardboard with the plant. If the carton is foam, just slide the plant out of the egg space and plant. You can plant in eggshells the same way—plant the eggshell together with the plant.

If you are starting plants in larger pots that you are using from last year, be sure to clean them out with soapy water or a bleach water solution. Rinse well. Be sure to put a coffee filter in the bottom of the pot so that your soil or potting mix will not fall out. The coffee filters can be found at most stores or a dollar store for around one dollar for 100 filters.

There are many things you can recycle for your plantings this spring. Let your imagination run wild.



Beth's Corner

Recipes



WORLD'S EASIEST ITALIAN BEEF RECIPE

2 to 4 pounds very lean beef roast
(rolled rump/sirloin tip/top round) thawed or
fresh

1 jar pepperoncini including vinegar (juice)

1. Place beef in slow cooker with pepperoncini and all liquid in the jar. Set on high. Cover and plan to cook for at least 8 hours.
2. Do not add any salt or pepper unless needed when serving.
3. One half hour before serving, shred the beef with two forks and stir into the liquid.
4. Serve on rolls with the au jus for dipping.

The smaller the roast, the spicier the beef will be.



What did
the tree say
when April
began?

WHAT A RE-LEAF!



View from My Backyard

Don't forget to send in your nature
photos from your own yard and
while you are out and about!

Check out this month's photos online 

RE-BLOOMING

In Time Of Silver Rain

In time of silver rain
The earth puts forth new life again,
Green grasses grow
And flowers lift their heads,
And over all the plain
The wonder spreads

Of Life,
Of Life,
Of Life!

Langston Hughes

In time of silver rain we gardeners sow our seeds. There would be no gardens, after all, if not for gardeners.



Gardening is about setting life in motion. Seeds help us create the world anew—our own world, however modest. Whether planted in a window box or on acres, seeds unlock potential. When we sow a seed, we anticipate a future. It is an act of hope and there is great satisfaction, joy even, as we settle it into the soil.

Another gardening year begins. The wonder spreads when spring and life are new.

Jan

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.



Helen

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.



You can also find fun info on our Facebook page:
www.facebook.com/illinoisduneslandgardenclub



April Birthdays


April Meyers	1
Anne Miller	3
Carol Behm	5
Barb Alexander	6
Kathy McElmurry	16
Beth Dermody	19
Joyce Lomonaco	26

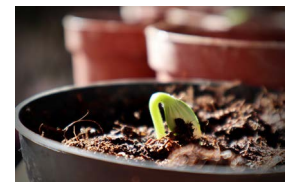


PLANT AUCTION 2.0 — MAY 11 - JUNE 8

Spring is here! Plants are popping their heads out and screaming to be divided. Since our annual auction remains on hold, how about a **REAL plant sale held virtually on our Facebook Page** to share the perennials or seeds you have with those who would love to have them?

To participate:

- Pot your plants in any type of container.
 - Label with the plant name, bloom color, light and water requirements.
 - You can list extra seeds as well!
 - Provide a description, if desired, such as 'ground cover,' 'invasive,' etc.
 - Please include a **suggested or fair price per plant or item**
 - Include, if possible, a CLEAR photo of the plant (yours or from the internet)
 - Post your offering on our **Facebook** page. Find "how to" instructions pinned at top of page approx May 1.
 - Donate your proceeds to the club by June 30th, as in auctions past, knowing your contribution keeps us going strong.
 - Questions — plantsale@duneslandgardenclub.com 
- (You can email in your listing if you are not on Facebook and we will post it but not manage sales)



Kathy Knutell - Auction Chair