



# The Trowel

**October 2025**

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## **Upcoming Events**

- November 18 - Holiday Craft and Elections
- December 14 (Details TBA)— Annual Garden Club Member Christmas Party
- December 16 - Make and Take Holiday Project

## **NOTE**

**NO MEETING IN  
JANUARY**

# PRESIDENT'S LETTER

FROM CHERYL SVEE



Hello Gardeners,  
Fall is upon us! For a while, it seemed like summer was not going to let go. I thoroughly enjoyed that final burst of summer weather, but it seems things have now cooled off for the long haul.

As autumn settles in, our gardens remind us of the beauty in change. The vibrant blooms of summer give way to the rich colors of fall —late-season mums, the last bursts of dahlias and asters and leaves on the trees beginning to change color. It's a time to celebrate the harvest, reflect on the past growing season, and prepare our beds for the rest that winter will bring.



Looking ahead, we have exciting programs and activities planned for the remainder of the year, along with opportunities to share tips, swap seeds, trade plants and inspire one another. I encourage you to take part, whether in person or through contributions to our newsletter.

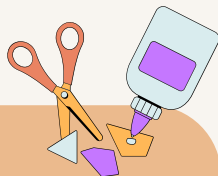


May your autumn be filled with crisp mornings, cozy afternoons, and plenty of time to enjoy the beauty of nature all around us.



Happy Gardening,  
Cheryl

# UPCOMING EVENTS



## **NOVEMBER 18 AT 6:15 PM— HOLIDAY CRAFT AND ELECTIONS**

We will hold our club's annual election of officers. Following the elections, our members will create a unique Christmas centerpiece for the West Suburban Nursing and Rehabilitation Center.

Each club member will add their own personal touches to the arrangements. The residents love our annual Christmas projects and look forward to receiving them every year!



**DECEMBER 14**

**DETAILS TBA**

**ANNUAL GARDEN CLUB  
MEMBER CHRISTMAS  
PARTY**



## **DECEMBER 16 AT 6:00 PM—MAKE & TAKE HOLIDAY PROJECT**

We will create a beautiful Christmas centerpiece, led by Kathi Rose. RSVPs will be due two weeks prior to the class with a non-refundable deposit. A fee will be added to cover the cost of materials.

Kathi has a degree in horticulture from the University of Illinois and is a Certified Landscape Architect.

As the owner of Kaleidoscope of Floral Design for 30 years, she is also gifted in floral techniques and design. She has taught several subjects for GCI's Landscape Design School, Garden Studies School and has given floral presentations at many garden clubs.

# MEMBERS' PICTURES



## SHOW AND TELL

Jamie's granddaughter, Ava, is growing a Little Jack Pumpkin from our 2025 Plant Sale.

Early drop in temperatures caused this beautiful autumn blaze red maple to completely change its pigment this year (Jamie's sister's house in Rockford). We're hoping its color will return next year!



**2024**



**2025**



# MEMBERS' PICTURES



The Castor Bean is the most poisonous plant in the world, according to trivia from September Pot Luck and Game Night.

Jamie propagated seeds from Linda Kunesh's garden to grow these Jurassic plants in her front yard.



Joyce working at Costco with her basket of beauties!



Joyce's Beautiful Begonias



# OCTOBER MEETING - BONZAI PLANTS



**OCTOBER 21 AT 6:15 PM—  
BONSAI PLANTS**



Our October speaker was Mark Karczewski. He taught us the basics of design, styling and general care of bonsai plants. His company, The Hidden Gardens, is a family-owned garden center located on a vintage farm in Willowbrook. They specialize in Japanese maples, conifers, shrubs, trees, annuals and perennials. Mark teaches basic and advanced bonsai classes.



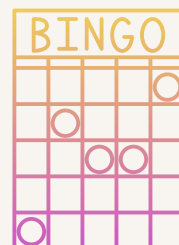
# SEPTEMBER MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

## INDOOR POTLUCK PICNIC

Our September monthly meeting was an indoor potluck picnic. Everyone brought delicious food, desserts, and drinks to share. We had a nice time socializing, followed by games. The trivia contest included questions about our garden club, recent speakers and general garden questions.



Then we played garden-themed bingo. Categories were Annuals, Perennials, Fruits, Vegetables, Herbs and Tools. Prizes were awarded in both games.



# AUGUST MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER!

Gail Sanders organized a Tomato Tasting for this meeting! Winning tomatoes were “Peaches” contributed by Jeff Dengler and “Chocolate Sprinkles” by Debbie Matuszak.

Our speakers for the evening came from our own membership.

The first to share was Cheryl Svec, whose subject was “Peculiar Pollinators”—unrecognized pollinating heroes! These include Spiders, Beetles, Wasps, Moths, and Flies.

Next up: Jeff Dengler, who has a small townhouse garden in the Westlake area of Bloomingdale gave his Top Ten Mistakes for a small garden:

10. No Big Trees
9. Note seasonal changes for sunlight/shade to make the most of the space
8. No white granite stones as mulch
7. No full-size allium— use the smaller varieties
6. No BIG Hosta
5. No Spiderwort —too invasive
4. No Solomon Seal— also invasive
3. No Bishop’s Goutweed—also invasive
2. Absolutely No English Ivy— again, invasive!
1. Never - Never plant Trumpet Vine!!! You’ll be pulling it out the rest of your life!

And our Third Speaker, Linda Kunesh, shared some interesting and helpful garden tips:

**Filling a Hole in Your Garden once Plants are Finished Blooming:** Bleeding Hearts will turn yellow as they die back. Consider cutting down to an inch above the ground. Put two bricks on either side & place a piece of flagstone on top. Pot up plants for this shady area in early to mid-June. Then in July, when the bleeding heart dies back & you’ve cut it down, put your pre-planted pot on top of the flagstone to eliminate this “hole” in your garden. The flagstone on bricks allows air and water to still penetrate the bleeding heart’s roots.



# AUGUST MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER!

**Phlox:** In mid-June, tier a grouping of phlox so some are tall, others medium, & others are short. They will start blooming about 2 weeks apart extending the bloom time. Also, did you know that phlox have multiple buds? After the first flush of flowers and what appears they are spent, “fluff” or brush them with your fingers to remove the spent flowers. New buds will be revealed and bloom. You may get 2 or even 3 flushes from the same stem.

**Heuchera:** Often heave out of the ground from the freeze/thaw cycle. In late fall, early winter, place bricks on either side. They will absorb the sun, warm up, & help to keep the heuchera in place.

**Hanging Baskets:** Many soilless potting mixes have a LOT of peat moss. This usually results in a “crust” on the top of the soil & water just running off. Consider soaking your hanging baskets weekly for an hour or two in a tub of water or even a tub of water with fertilizer to hydrate the roots. This works with both plastic and coir hanging baskets.

Hanging baskets with a lot of roots often take up all the soil space in the pot by August. To extend the vitality of the basket, consider removing the plants and shaving off the sides and about 2” off the bottom. Put in additional fresh soil and the plants back into the basket.

**Support for Climbers like Clematis on an Arbor:** Consider adding plastic “netting” to give clematis tendrils something to hang on to. You will still need to help “train” the plant to go up and over the arbor.

**Ice Cubes to Replace Water for Fairly Shallow Containers:** Consider putting ice cubes on top of the potting mix to “water” plants in shallow containers. Its slow melt will minimize water running out over the top.

# AUGUST MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER!

**Deterring Critters:** Coffee grounds have a strong scent and usually are avoided by squirrels. Consider putting them under your tomato plants and on top of your potted container gardens to (hopefully) encourage squirrels to leave your plants alone.

Set Out Bowls of Water for Squirrels: Squirrels often take one bite out of a tomato but leave it on the ground. Why? It's not that they are tasting the tomato to see if it's their preferred variety. They are probably looking for water.

Irish Spring bar soap has an extremely strong scent. Shave pieces and place in a mesh/organza drawstring bag (available at Michael's or Hobby Lobby). Tie onto a stick. Poke a hole in a paper cup & place it on the stick, covering the drawstring bag to minimize the soap from dissolving with the rain. This may prevent critters from eating or digging up your young plants.

**Mulching:** Put empty nursery pots over your plants prior to mulching to make it easier & more efficient to spread the mulch. After plants are mulched, lift the pots & give them a shake. Mulch will be around your plants, but not against the stems.

**Alliums & Hydrangeas:** When dried, these make beautiful additions to your holiday pots. Cut long stems after they have finished blooming. Hang upside down in the garage to dry for at least a few weeks. Spray paint for fall or winter arrangements. Do the spraying outside on a windless day and temperature above 60. You probably will need to reinforce the stems with twigs, hyacinth stakes, metal stakes, etc.

# AUGUST MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER!

## **Additional “Helps” from Laurie Dring:**

This is no Lemon! Get the most out of your Lemons

When a store has a deal on lemons, take advantage.  
So you don't let your lemons go bad, here's what to do:

- Grate zest (do not grate too deeply into the pith, which is bitter)  
Set aside zest. You can air-dry or put them in the freezer for future use.
- Cut lemons in half and extract juice into a canister. Then remove seeds.
- Put hollowed lemon halves onto a cookie sheet and put them in the freezer.  
Once frozen, put halves into a freezer bag. You can put in drinking water.

There you have it. The only part wasted is the seeds. If you are adventurous, you can try to grow a lemon tree, although you'd best live in the south!

## **GRAPE VINE WREATHS**

Club Member Carole Lockerbie has grape vines, and she is willing to show you how to make wreaths from them. If you are interested, please give Carole a call.





# PROPER WATERING KEEPS PLANTS HEALTHY

GAIL SANDERS FROM THE MORTON ARBORETUM

Trees and plants depend on water, and in the hot summer months, they depend on you to give them the water they need. These tips will help you make sure your trees and plants are getting enough water when they need it. If you water thoughtfully, you'll put water where your plants really need it and avoid wasting it.

**Water the soil, not the leaves.** Trees and plants can only absorb water through their roots. If you're watering by hand with a hose nozzle or watering wand, direct the water toward the base of the plant. Soaker hoses, which are laid on the soil surface to slowly seep water, are more efficient than sprinklers, although a sprinkler can cover a wide area. Be aware that the spray from a sprinkler can be blocked or diverted by trees, shrubs, or even the large leaves of some plants such as hostas.

**Check for soil moisture.** What matters to a plant is how much water is actually in the soil. To check, use a trowel to dig down. If the soil feels dry three or four inches below the surface, water. A common rule of thumb is that most plants need the equivalent of one inch of rainfall a week, on average—enough to soak into the soil about six inches. However, in hot weather, plants may need more. Some areas of your yard may be dryer than others, because trees, roof overhangs, and buildings can intercept rainfall.

**Let the water soak in deeply.** A light daily sprinkle won't penetrate very far. That's not good for plants: If water is only to be found at the surface of the soil, roots won't grow any deeper. For healthier roots and more

drought-tolerant plants, let the soaker hose or sprinkler run long, enough for water to soak in about six inches, and then don't water them again for several days. That will encourage plants' roots to grow longer and deeper, increasing their ability to soak up and hold water.

**Young plants need more water.** It takes a while for roots to grow enough so trees and other plants can absorb and store sufficient water. Until then, they need more frequent watering than mature plants.



# PROPER WATERING KEEPS PLANTS HEALTHY

**Trees need watering.** It's especially important for young, newly planted trees, which don't have many roots yet. Let the hose dribble slowly into the soil, moving it around to moisten the soil around the trunk. A good dose for a young tree a few feet tall is about 10 gallons—roughly the amount you'll get from a hose running at medium pressure for five minutes.

**Water parkway trees too.** The trees in front of your house add enormously to its beauty and value, so it's in your interest to water them, even if they are on municipal land. A parkway limits the space for roots, so it's an especially difficult place for a tree to survive. Even mature trees need watering in hot, dry weather. If the hose won't reach, pour several buckets of water slowly into the soil around the tree



**Spread mulch.** A layer of organic mulch, such as shredded wood, bark, or leaves, will insulate the soil and roots against the heat and prevent moisture from evaporating from the soil surface. Don't pile it high. It should be an even layer, no more than three to four inches deep around trees and one to two inches deep in garden beds.

**Don't get stuck in a watering rut.** Avoid creating a routine of watering at the same time every day or every week. Instead, get in the habit of paying attention to the soil and the weather so you can water when the plants really need it.

**Containers need frequent watering.** Because there is little soil in a pot to hold water, container plants need to be watered more frequently than plants in the ground. In hot weather, they may need to be watered daily. They also need more water later in the season as they grow larger. Check for moisture often by sticking a finger in the potting mix an inch or two down.



# PROPER WATERING KEEPS PLANTS HEALTHY

**Be wary about rain.** If it rains, you may think you don't need to worry about watering. However, it may not have rained enough to really soak into the soil. An inexpensive rain gauge can measure how much rain really fell in your yard, but the most useful information comes from digging down and checking for soil moisture.

**Sprinkle early.** In summer, the best time to set up a sprinkler is the early morning, before the day gets hot. The water will have time to soak into the soil so it will be available for plants to cool themselves. In the middle of the day when the sun is hottest, much of the water from a sprinkler will evaporate before it soaks in. Watering early in the day can save water and money.

**Don't sprinkle at night.** In the cool of the evening, water won't evaporate from the leaves and it may encourage disease. Water in the evening only at soil level—for example, by trickling water from the hose for a tree or by using soaker hoses.

**Why do plants need water?** All plants, from ground covers to towering trees, depend on it to carry nutrients through their stems to their leaves. It's also essential for photosynthesis, the chemical process in the leaves that transforms water, sunlight, and carbon dioxide into plant food.

**Water also keeps plants cool.** Tiny pores in plant leaves allow water to evaporate, which cools the leaves off. That evaporation also creates the suction that pulls water up from the roots into the leaves. Water-filled cells—like little water balloons—are all that keeps green plants standing up. If water doesn't fill the cells, the plant will wilt. Many plants are 95 percent water.





# RECIPES

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Who's ready to use their garden vegetables for fall cooking?

## RED CABBAGE SLAW

Jennifer Moore

### Ingredients:

1 red cabbage  
1 red onion  
2 tsp Italian seasoning  
1 tbsp kosher salt  
½ tsp black pepper  
½ cup olive oil  
¼ cup red wine vinegar

### Directions:

Thinly slice cabbage and onion. Mix other ingredients and pour over slaw. Mix well and do it again several times. Refrigerate.



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## ZAPPLE BARS

Gail Sanders from [The Classic Zucchini Cookbook](#)

### Ingredients:

Filling:

5 ½ cups peeled diced zucchini  
1/2 cup lemon juice  
2/3 cup packed light brown sugar  
1 tsp ground cinnamon  
1/2 tsp ground nutmeg

Crust:

2 ½ cups flour  
1 ¼ cups sugar  
1/2 tsp salt  
2 sticks butter  
1 tsp vanilla  
Heat oven to 350F.

### Directions:

Cook zucchini and lemon juice in a nonreactive saucepan. Bring to boil and simmer 10 to 15 minutes until zucchini is tender. Add sugar and spices, cook 2 minutes more. Mixture will thicken.

Mix dry ingredients for crust in a food processor. Add butter and vanilla, mix until crumbly. Press half of this mix to cover the bottom of a greased 9x13 glass dish and bake 10 minutes. Pour filling on top and crumble rest of crust mix on top. Bake 45 minutes or until golden brown.

Cool completely before cutting.



# Recipe - MISSISSIPPI ITALIANATE CROCK POT ROAST

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**Jeff Dengler**

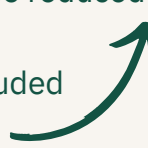
## STEP 1: INGREDIENTS:

- One 4-5 pound chuck roast with good marbling
- Two tablespoons high-heat oil
- Two to three tablespoons of flour
- Fresh ground pepper
- One stick of unsalted butter (yes, I said one stick!)
- One packet of ranch dressing mix (like Hidden Valley)
- One packet of au jus or brown gravy mix (use reduced salt if possible, available from Aldi)
- One jar of sliced banana peppers, juice included (from Aldi)



## STEP 2: ADD-INS TO TASTE

- One to two tablespoons of Worcester sauce or balsamic vinegar
- One to two tablespoons of fresh dried Italian herbs



## STEP 3: PREPERATION:

1. Trim excess fat from roast and season with fresh ground pepper
2. Lightly dust with flour on both sides, and heat a large fry pan on medium high
3. Add one to two tablespoons of oil to the pan, and fry until golden brown. You may have to cut the piece in half.
4. Remove the pan from heat, and put the meat in the crock pot.
5. When the pan has cooled, open the jar of peppers and carefully drain the juice into the pan. Put the peppers on the meat.
6. Using a wooden spoon or spatula, scrape up the brown bits with juice.
7. Add the dry dressing mix, one stick of unsalted butter, and the gravy mix to the crock pot.
8. Pour pan juice over the roast and close the lid.
9. Cook on low for eight hours.
10. Remove the lid, cool slightly, and with two forks, shred the meat lightly and stir.
11. Add about one tablespoon of dried Italian herb mix, preferably a fairly fresh jar, or your own mix or oregano, parsley, thyme, marjoram, etc. Add about two tablespoons of Worcester sauce to taste. You may also substitute a good balsamic vinegar. This adds brightness to the juice and the meat.
12. Set the crock pot on warm setting for two to three hours (see note).
13. Serve on rolls or crusty bread to soak the juices.

## NOTES:

- 1: Warm setting varies per manufacturer. I found the Crock Pot brand cooker's warm setting to be as hot as most other brand's low setting. The idea is to have the meat sit at as low a temperature as possible. You can also just slowly reheat the next day.
- 2: In a rush, you can skip the browning and resting and it will be fine, just not outstanding.
- 3: Salt—For me, it was a mistake to add any salt, as the mixes are very salty. Most people didn't care, and said it was delish.
- 4: Big batch—I had good results doubling the recipe, maxing my eight-quart pot with 7.5 pounds of meat. But I just couldn't bring myself to put two packs of dressing in, so I used 1-1/2 packets.
- 5: Butter—You can skip it...but you will be sorry!

# Recipe - SPAGHETTI SQUASH MARINARA

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**Jamie Schneck**

**from Author, Carolyn Gratzner Cope**

## **INGREDIENTS:**

- 1 medium spaghetti squash
- 1 ½ cups marinara sauce
- ¼ cup tomato paste
- 2 ounces grated parmesan or pecorino
- 4 ounces shredded mozzarella
- Lots of freshly ground black pepper
- Scallions to garnish optional

## **INSTRUCTIONS:**

1. PREHEAT OVEN TO 375°F WITH A RACK IN THE MIDDLE. CUT THE SQUASH IN HALF LENGTHWISE. SCOOP OUT SEEDS AND ANY STRINGY FLESH IN THE MIDDLE.
2. PLACE HALVES CUT-SIDES DOWN ON A PARCHMENT—OR SILPAT-LINED RIMMED BAKING SHEET.
3. ROAST UNTIL JUST TENDER, ABOUT 40 MINUTES DEPENDING ON SIZE OF SQUASH.
4. ONCE COOL ENOUGH TO HANDLE, USE A FORK TO SHRED THE FLESH OF THE SQUASH, LEAVING A BORDER OF ABOUT 1/4 INCH AROUND THE SIDES AND BOTTOM. DINERS CAN SHRED AND EAT THIS BIT AT MEALTIME, BUT FOR NOW IT WILL SERVE AS A NICE BARRIER FOR THE FILLING.
5. IN A BOWL, MIX TOGETHER THE MARINARA SAUCE, TOMATO PASTE, HALF THE PARMESAN, AND PLENTY OF FRESHLY GROUND BLACK PEPPER. DIVIDE THE MIXTURE EVENLY BETWEEN THE SQUASH HALVES AND MIX IT THOROUGHLY WITH THE SHREDDED FLESH.
6. TOP THE BOATS WITH THE MOZZARELLA, THE REMAINING PARMESAN, AND SOME MORE PEPPER. RETURN TO OVEN FOR 15 MINUTES, UNTIL FILLING IS MELTED AND BUBBLY. IF YOU'D LIKE A BIT OF BROWNING ON TOP, YOU CAN RUN THE SQUASH UNDER THE BROILER FOR A MINUTE OR TWO BEFORE REMOVING FROM THE OVEN.
7. SPRINKLE WITH SCALLIONS OR ANOTHER GARNISH IF YOU LIKE, AND SERVE.



# THANK YOU

YOUR GARDEN DONATION MADE A DIFFERENCE—THANK YOU!

Submitted by Pam Dagen, In-Kind Program Distributions Supervisor from WINGS

I would like to offer a huge THANK YOU for the gift of flowers and vegetables for our WINGS SHARED HOME!

Witnessing the families having a safe space where they are nurturing the plants, spending quality time and healing, is what makes this all so special. If you could only see the excitement on the children's faces as they check daily to see how much our garden is growing! Thank you for helping make life a little happier for our families during a difficult time.

Sincerely, Sharon M., Family Advocate





# 2025 CLUB OFFICERS & COMMITTEES

- \*Cheryl Svee, President
- \*Jean Kurzynski and Marietta Serenda, 1st Vice President (Membership)
- \*Debbie Matuszak and Kelly Vitacco, 2nd Vice President (Programs)
- \*Linda Kunesh, 3rd Vice President (Ways and Means)
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\*Denotes Executive Board

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