
CCGA - January Community Gardening Events, Grants, and Classes

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Thu, Jan 12, 2017 at 12:52 PM

» Chicago Community Gardeners Association**News for Community Gardeners**

Don't think the garden loses its ecstasy in winter. It's quiet, but the roots are down there riotous. – Rumi

Reminder: CCGA Coordinating Meeting – Saturday January 21st

The next coordinating meeting agenda promises to be exciting and includes continued planning for the upcoming Annual Conference along with updates from the CCGA committees. The meeting starts at 10am and is at the Breakthrough FamilyPlex, located at 3219 W. Carroll Ave, Chicago, IL 60624.

Please find more information and directions [HERE](#).

The **meeting minutes** from the 12-10-2016 coordinating meeting can be found [HERE](#) at the bottom of the page.

Gardeners Grow Communities: Save the Date for the 5th Annual Spring Conference - Saturday March 25th

Mark your calendars - **Saturday, March 25** - for our 5th Annual CCGA Conference. We're developing a platform for vibrant discussions bringing together Chicago's

gardening community at the Breakthrough FamilyPlex (3219 W Carroll Ave.) Stay tuned for more info on our website [here](#), and follow us on Facebook for the latest news.

FROM OUT IN THE GARDENS

Winter classes and grant information:

Check out some inspiring things to explore while it's cold outside!

Kilbourn Park 2017 Organic Gardening Series

Permaculture Series begins Jan. 21st.

Seed Starting Series begins Feb. 4th,

See our [site post](#) for full details.

Register Now for Garfield Park Conservatory's Winter Classes!

[Urban Agroecology: Ecosystem-Based Food Production for Cities](#) 6 class series begins Feb. 15

[Plant Propagation: Indoor Tropical Plants](#) on Feb. 4

[Beginning Beekeeping Class](#) on Jan. 28

Scholarships may be available!

Pullman Garden Club Lecture January 22nd

Held at the historic Hotel Florence in the Pullman neighborhood on Sunday January 22, 2017, lecture is titled Building Garden Communities. Christopher Weber, an environmental organizer and freelance journalist will share thoughts on how to build our communities and why it's as important as the plants. This FREE event is open to everyone, refreshments will be served, and there will even be door prizes. Read more about it [here](#).

Openlands TreePlanters Grant: Applications due January 16th

Would you like to facilitate a tree planting on public land within city limits? There's still time to apply for an Openlands TreePlanter's Grant. Applicants can request 10-40 trees, and will receive planning assistance from TreeKeepers staff. Read more about it [here](#).

USDA Urban Agricultural Assistance: Applications due January 20th and March 17th

If you are a grower in Cook County who is interested in using CONSERVATION and ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY ways of growing food, the USDA might have something to offer. The US Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will offer special funding for individuals and groups who produce agricultural crops in Cook County. 2016 was the first year NRCS offered an urban agricultural project through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to provide financial and technical assistance to urban farmers who address natural resource concerns. Last year participants received funding to implement three practices; hoop houses (what NRCS calls a high tunnel system), conservation cover, and cover crops. You can find all the details [here](#).

NEWS YOU CAN USE



Seed Catalogs: What to Look For

Although January may not seem like a favorite month for Chicago gardeners, it is to those who are on the mailing lists for seed companies. January marks the arrival of new catalogs, with gorgeous photos and illustrations to transport all of us from the frozen earth to the gardens of our dreams. Although usually a pleasant planning session of circling favorite seeds to order, it's easy to become overwhelmed when confronted with so many varieties and mysterious letters after the descriptions. While the decision of what to plant is highly personal, here are three tips to help you navigate the catalog codes and seed company ethics to make sure you get what you really want.

1. Look for the Safe Seed Pledge, sponsored by the [Council for Responsible Genetics](#). Although most seed companies that market to home gardeners do not sell genetically engineered seeds, you can be sure by finding the Safe Seed Pledge in the catalog or on the website of any company you're considering ordering seeds from. This voluntary pledge states that the company does not knowingly buy, sell, or trade genetically-engineered (GE) seeds or plants.
2. There's still a lot of confusion between genetically-engineered (GE) seeds, hybrids, and f1 hybrids. The heirloom Brandywine tomato is a hybrid first developed in the late 1800's. So is the more recently developed Sun Gold tomato. While neither have genetic material introduced from a non-tomato (as a GE seed would), seeds collected from Brandywine tomatoes will reliably produce Brandywines, while seeds collected from Sun Gold tomatoes will not produce Sun Gold tomatoes. Why? Sun Gold tomatoes are f1 hybrids developed with cross-pollination techniques between true-breeding parent tomato plants. Tomatoes with the Sun Gold characteristics only develop when seeds are

produced from a cross between those two parent tomato plants, not from another Sun Gold tomato seed.

3. Ever notice tiny letters like VF or LB after a seed description? These are disease-resistance codes, and explanations will often be found in the center or front of your seed catalog. If you've ever lost a whole crop to verticillium wilt or mosaic virus, planting disease-resistant seeds will give you more reliability for your harvest, without having to resort to pesticides and fungicides for production. How do seeds acquire disease resistance if they aren't genetically engineered? This happens through lots and lots of selective breeding to produce new hybrids, as well as testing and subjecting the seeds to diseases to evaluate their response.

Have ideas, suggestions or news you would like to share with fellow community gardeners in the next CCGA email? Please send those items to communications@chicagocommunitygardens.org.

For questions about CCGA and how to get involved, email membership@chicagocommunitygardens.org or visit chicagocommunitygardens.org/ccga-organization.

Need resources for your community garden? Have resources to offer? Email resources@chicagocommunitygardens.org.



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