
CCGA Conference Two Weeks Away

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» Chicago Community Gardeners Association



News for Community Gardeners

"Gardens, scholars say, are the first sign of commitment to a community. When people plant corn they are saying, let's stay here. And by their connection to the land, they are connected to one another."

- Anne Raver

Hello Community Gardeners!

Two weather records were set recently that we're sure did not go unnoticed by this group: it was the warmest February recorded in Chicago and we had no snow in January or February! None of us have ever lived through a winter here like this and plants have been responding accordingly as we've all seen bulbs popping up and Forsythia buds swelling. With weather like we've had perhaps you've wandered down to your community garden and met some of your fellow gardeners already...well, you are not alone.

As the **CCGA's 5th Annual Conference** of community gardeners is coming up in two weeks on Saturday March 25th which is sort of like a big garden family reunion and we hope to see you all there.

Chris Weber will moderate our panel discussion based on our theme this year **Gardeners Grow Communities**. What exactly do we mean when we say "gardens create communities?" Is there anything tangible, even measurable, about such communities? Why do some gardens exhibit such seemingly different communities? Panelists will tackle these questions plus those from the audience.

All details including online registration, workshop descriptions, location, and volunteer and exhibitor information are [HERE](#).

We're creating a slideshow of community gardens to be displayed at the event and on our Facebook page and we'd love to include your photos. Help us by sending your favorite garden photos, maybe a

brief description, and the garden name to: photos@chicagocommunitygardens.org.



When:

Saturday, March 25, 2017 from 9am-2pm

Location:

Breakthrough FamilyPlex, 3219 W Carroll Ave, Chicago, IL 60624

**Workshops • Panel Discussion • Exhibitors • Seed Distribution
Idea Sharing • Continental Breakfast • Delicious Lunch
Door Prizes • Community Building**

Workshops, including:

Season Extension for Community Gardens • Tips for Growing Natural, Vibrant Gardens
• Community Gardens as Organizing Hubs • Basic Vegetable Gardening
The Growing Classroom • Compost Magic • How to Plan Your Raised Vegetable Bed

Space is limited! Please register [HERE](#).

Registration fee:

\$20 per person payable online or on-site.

News from out in the Gardens...

Is it Time to Plant Yet?

Do you remember the spring of 2012? Forsythia was blooming by late March, apple and crabapple trees were in full bloom in mid April, and we had several 80+ degree days before May 1. Then, a frost hit and much of the region's apple crop was lost, annual flowers and herbs already planted in window boxes turned black with cold damage, and we were reminded why there are such things as average last frost date and first transplanting date.

Spring temperatures are always variable in Chicago and this spring is no exception, though it is rare to have temperatures ranging by 40 degrees in the same week. And although the buds on trees are starting to swell, the crocuses are blooming, and it seems that Mother Nature has announced winter to be over — *it's still too early to plant your tender indoor-grown seedlings outside.*

This is the time to take advantage of the warmer days to get a head start on garden clean-up, and keep your indoor seed starting on the same schedule as years past.

- Mulch can be scratched away from the soil surface (just a little - it can still get very cold) to allow perennial shoots to emerge.
- If you haven't already, now (yes, right now!) is the time to prune your roses, fruit trees, raspberry canes, and lilac bushes. You'll want to do this before the buds really start to swell and the sap gets flowing. Do this on a cold and clear day - not a drizzly, warm one.
- Many weeds are already starting to emerge. Pull them now and thank yourself later.

What this weather does mean is that you need to keep an eye on it. Starting around April 1, check the ten-day forecast and make a note of the highs and lows. Once you start seeing nighttime low temperatures consistently above 40-45F, you can start to direct seed vegetables and transplant well hardened-off cool-weather vegetable seedlings. This may mean that you can start planting around mid-April instead of late April, or it may mean that we'll get another cold spell, and you'll still need to wait until early May to plant. If you have tools such as row covers and cold frames for season extension, this is the perfect time to use them for even more protection as the earth shifts toward longer and warmer days.


- Contributed by Breanne Health

March Seed Starting Workshop a Big Success

A capacity crowd of ninety-one community gardeners and friends attended the Resource Committee's morning workshop March 4 at the Center for Green Technology! Additional chairs were placed in the aisles on either side of the room and at the back of the room and still some persevered after waiting in line to stand for this highly anticipated presentation. Ellen Newcomer briefly introduced the featured speaker, Nick Michaud of Westover Farms. Nick met everyone's expectations with an outlined presentation complete with slides that made it all sound and look easy. Even seasoned gardeners had something to learn and many were gratefully reminded of the importance of every step from sowing with a good starter mix, putting seeds at the right depth, having a good light source as well as adequate water and heat for good germination. Then Nick took it a bit further and talked about thinning, transplanting and hardening-off. Nick generously took questions during the presentation and afterwards so that no one left in doubt about how to get started. Judging by how eagerly folks picked up their kits and the extra packets of seeds, these gardeners will put it all to use soon.

Overall, the Resources Committee distributed fifty free-Starter-Kits which contained Purple Cow Seed Starting Mix (generously contributed by this fine Wisconsin company); seed trays; and a large envelope packed with 2017 seeds for 25 different vegetables as well as sunflower and annual flower seed mixes. A handy booklet prepared by LaVerne Morris that includes a description of each of the vegetables with detailed growing instructions was also distributed. This booklet is sure to become a keepsake and reference for many a gardener. The Resources Committee thanks Nick for his knowledge and participation, Purple Cow for their great Starter Mix, and the community gardeners for attending.

Happy growing!



News you can use...

Fruit Trees for Your Community Garden

If you want some apples, pears or plum trees for your community garden or want to find out what grafting fruit trees is all about then do attend the [Midwest Fruit Explorers \(MidFEx\)](#) grafting workshop on Sunday March 26, 2017 at 1pm.

The purpose of the **grafting workshop** is to learn how to graft. Nonmember beginners will learn how to graft selected apple varieties on apple rootstock. Learn the the whys and hows with experienced grafters as MidFEx will have some of its most skilled members on hand from 11:00-12:00 to answer questions and assist you. They also have an impressive amount of scion wood available for grafting.

For more details see our site post [HERE](#).

UIC Spring Seed Swap April 9 at the Jane Addams Hull-House Museum!

On **Sunday, April 9th**, the University of Illinois will be having their third annual Spring Seed Swap! UIC invites the CCGA gardening community to participate with other gardeners, organizations, and community members in the Chicago area to swap seeds and meet new gardening friends around the city. The event will take place at the **Jane Addams Hull-House Museum's Resident's Dining Hall** from **1-3pm**. This will be a free event, open to all audiences, and there will be food and refreshments provided as well.

UIC would love to host some community gardens at the swap! It's a great opportunity for other community organizations and gardeners to learn about the amazing work that you all do. Any resources related to gardening, sustainability, and social justice are welcome.

If you're interested in having a table space at this event, or have any questions, please contact Sarah Hernandez at sherna37@uic.edu. Find out more about the UIC Heritage Garden here: <http://heritagegarden.uic.edu/>

New Community Garden Work Day List

CCGA is maintaining a list of gardens that offer regular opportunities for individuals to participate in work days or events and welcome volunteers. If you know of a garden to add to the list, please contact communications@chicagocommunitygardens.org.

To check the list, click [HERE](#).

And finally...

[Next CCGA Coordinating Meeting – Saturday March 18th](#)

The next CCGA Coordinating Meeting is Saturday March 18th at 10am at the **Chicago Center for Green Technology CCGT** at 445 N. Sacramento Blvd. and will be our final planning meeting before the 2017 Annual Conference.

We will meet on the 2nd floor and there is parking behind the building. Bring a snack or drink to share if

you can.

NOTE: For the 1/21/2017 meeting minutes, all CCGA coordinating meeting minutes are available for you to review on the website. Look under the menu tree at 'Who We Are' and then 'CCGA Organization' and you will see links here for the coordinating committee documents.

Hope to see you there!

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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Our mailing address is:

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