

**January 20, 2026**

## **CCGA Coordinating Committee Meeting Minutes**

Draft

This was a virtual meeting on Zoom. Meeting called to order at 6:13 pm. Lorraine agreed to lead the meeting, and Amy took notes, and tested Otter AI as an AI notetaker.

Pledge was read silently.

The motion to accept the January meeting minutes was moved to the February meeting because there are edits needed, per Lorraine.

Attending: Lorraine Kells, Mamie Gray, Barb Dennis, Carolina Ara, Gina Jamison, JW Glass, Amy Olson, and Shelby Haley, researcher from UIS (U of I Springfield)

### **Project/Event Updates**

#### **Remembrances for Pat Hart and Julie Samuels**

We discussed creating permanent tributes on the CCGA website for both Pat and Julie. JW will create the basic pages and we can add content as it's available.

- Pat Hart
  - Ellen will share the content for Pat with Robert before it's published.
  - Ask Austin gardeners for remembrances. Lorraine will check with Ellen.
  - Dr. Israel
- Julie Samuels
  - JW said there are some nice pics of Julie on the CCGA Google drive.
  - Gina - Kwaanza event pics
  - CCGA has already secured a bench overlooking the demonstration garden at the Garfield Park Conservatory. It should be ready this Spring/Summer.
  - There weren't any definitive bench options at the Oak Park Conservatory so we've decided to pursue a plaque on the donor wall.
  - Amy will follow up with Mary Fran and Angela to determine what fundraising is still needed and timing for installations / tribute events.

#### **Seed Swaps / Winter events**

The CCGA website has been updated with winter events and seed swaps by JW. Sarah Batka from U of I Extension created a map of all the seedswaps in Chicagoland. Learn more here: <https://chicagocommunitygardens.org/2026/01/20/find-a-seed-swap-near-you-2026/>

#### **Report from Shelby, researcher from U of I Springfield (UIS)**

Shelby is a grad student at U of I Springfield studying the success and failure metrics for folks who want to start gardens. She intends to conduct interviews on the south and

west sides of Chicago to gather info. She still needs to get IRB approval to launch her project but wanted to introduce herself and become familiar with CCGA.

We encouraged Shelby to check out Julie Samuels “How to Start a Community Garden” document on the CCGA website. Link: <https://chicagocommunitygardens.org/starting-a-community-garden/>

Lorraine shared an update about the Chicago Urban Ag Plan project with AUA, and how that could link to Shelby’s work.

## **Committee Reports**

### **Resources & Distributions Committee**

Barb gave an update about the houseplant giveaway for school gardens that occurred on Jan 8. All plants were grown at Austin HS. She said a few people responded.

On January 24, the Chicago Botanic Garden will have their 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Seed Swap, and CCGA will be able to pick up the extra seeds. It’s from 2-4pm and is open for individual gardens. Barb will pick up the seeds and then they can be distributed back out to community gardens at upcoming Resources distributions.

### **Advocacy & Outreach Committee**

Lorraine reported that the Native Garden Registry is moving along, with support from several alderpeople. Hoping for a rollout this Spring! Still working on the allowance of 36” plants because it’s widely accepted that the higher plants offer much greater pollinator support. The Botanic Garden is exploring this relationship in detail.

Lorraine and Amy gave an update on the Chicago Urban Ag Plan. Listening sessions have been completed, and this data along with the survey results have been analyzed by May, who is creating a report. We will share next steps!

### **Education Committee**

Gina reported that there is another kombucha & fermentation workshop series in the works! Jeannie Calabrese has graciously offered to lead these workshops, and she specializes in using various local and native fruits and plants to flavor kombucha. Dates to be determined.

### **Communications Committee**

- Lorraine and Amy reported they are working on a winter newsletter.
- JW has done some yearly housekeeping on the website and moved the 2022 conference videos over to the CCGA Google Drive. He also updated the events calendar.

- The communications team will follow up with NeighborSpace about obtaining a Google non-profit account. This will give us multiple log ins and more features than a basic Google account.
- We need to reinvigorate the CCGA community forum!

### **Finance Committee**

There wasn't anyone present from the finance committee. Gina will check in with Angela and Mary Fran to see if they can give an update at the February meeting.

### **Other Updates:**

We decided to reintroduce a discussion about the status of the structure of CCGA and the possibility of becoming a non-profit. Tabled until next meeting.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:11pm.

Next meeting will be Feb 18 at 6pm on Zoom.