

The Trowel

December
2024

Volume 12
Issue 4

B L O O M I N G D A L E G A R D E N C L U B N E W S L E T T E R

Greetings from our President

Dear Garden Club Members,



December is here and I hope you all celebrated a wonderful Thanksgiving with family and friends. This is a wonderful time of year to recollect on the beauty that our gardens have brought us throughout the year. This season reminds us to pause and appreciate the joys of nature. As the days grow shorter and the temperatures drop, our gardens will rest. Winter is a perfect time for reflection and planning, scouring gardening books and catalogs, and dreaming about new planting schemes for the spring. By now our gardens should be tidy and we can start on some indoor projects.

I'm also reflecting on the Club's activities and accomplishments in 2024. Our program's team scheduled engaging speakers and a few outings and social activities throughout the year. Hopefully you submitted the survey noting your top three favorites! Thanks to the diligent work of the plant sale commi-

tee, we once again held a successful flower and plant sale raising a significant profit that will be distributed throughout the community. Considering weather and critter struggles, our Plot-to-Plate Garden yielded hundreds of pounds of produce for local food pantries. And again, we supported the West Suburban Rehabilitation and Nursing Center, spreading holiday cheer by crafting holiday table centerpieces and collecting personal items and gifts for their residents.

I want to take a moment to thank each of you for your continued support and dedication to our club. Your passion for gardening, plants, the environment, and the community inspires us all. Let's continue to nurture our gardens and our connections with one another.

Wishing you all a peaceful and joyful holiday season, filled with warmth, family, friends, and the beauty of nature. I appreciate each and every one of you and am truly grateful to be part of this club. May the New Year be filled with good health, love, friends, and laughter! Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Warmly,
Cheryl

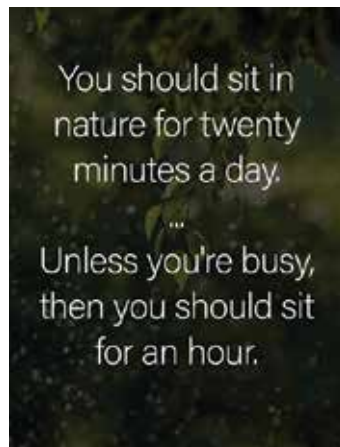
Bloomin' Geraniums



Joyce Basel

It is mid-November and these beauties are still flowering in my pots! The Rex begonia are among the most beautiful I have grown and they are still producing those delightful little pink flowers. And this magnificent coleus just keeps growing—it is one of the most colorful I have ever seen! Even the geranium and impatiens are still gorgeous! What an autumn!

Just a few days later, it snowed!! The first of the season! Thank goodness I moved everything I could into my garage! I'm so sad to see everything else wilting in front of my eyes! The geranium with snow on it now looks pitiful!



One day around 32,000 years ago, an arctic ground squirrel ate parts of a plant, *silene stenophylla*, including its seed. The squirrel was digesting it when its life ended. Its body was recovered from permafrost and examined. Scientists germinated this plant seed. This *silene stenophylla* just bloomed. It is 32,000 years old.

Submitted by Dawn LaVeau Orr

From Archaeology & Civilizations by Guinevere Lakelady



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The Bloomingdale Garden club was formed to encourage the advancement of gardening, development of home grounds, and civic beautification. To stimulate interest, knowledge and love of gardening among amateurs. To aid in the protection of native trees, flowers and birds. To further the extermination of noxious weeds and to cooperate with other organizations in the beautification of the community.

2024 BEST OF BEST WINNERS

PARTNERSHIP

Bloomington Park District with the Bloomington Garden Club



Bloomington Park District nominated Bloomington Garden Club for the (statewide) Association Partnership Award. Henia Sullivan and Linda Kunesh accepted the award on behalf of the club, pictured here with with Bloomington Park District's Joe Potts, Tania Rodriguez, and Lonna Converso, along with Members of the Illinois Association of Park Districts.

Proclamation Edited by Cheryl Sovee

As the Bloomington Garden Club (BGC) celebrates its 61st anniversary, it marks a significant milestone that parallels the founding of the Bloomington Park District (BPD) in 1964. Over the past six decades, these two organizations have grown together, contributing to the betterment of the community in meaningful ways. Their collaboration has enabled initiatives that have enhanced the quality of life for residents and fostered a strong sense of community pride and environmental stewardship.

One of the most impactful collaborations between the BGC and the BPD is the Plot-to-Plate initiative. This program was designed to address food insecurity within the community. The BGC has donated all produce grown to local food pantries, ensuring that fresh, healthy food reaches those in need, improving their quality of life. The success of the Plot-to-Plate initiative is a testament to the BGC's dedication to social responsibility and community well-being.

The partnership extends beyond addressing food insecurity. Recognizing the therapeutic and social benefits of gardening, the BGC collaborated with the DuPage County Convalescent Center to sup-

port a community garden for residents on the property. This garden has become a sanctuary for the residents, offering them an opportunity to engage in physical activity, socialize with fellow residents, and foster a sense of purpose and accomplishment. This has a profound impact on the well-being of the residents, enhancing their quality of life.

Another highlight is the annual garden sale organized by the BGC. This event provides local residents the opportunity to purchase a variety of flowers, plants, and gardening supplies. The sale encourages residents to engage in gardening and beautification efforts at home and fosters a sense of community as neighbors come together to share their love for gardening. The proceeds from the sale are reinvested into community programs. The sale has become a beloved tradition, reinforcing the community's connection to nature.

During the uncertain times of the COVID-19 pandemic, the BGC's commitment to the community remained unwavering. The BGC took it upon themselves to ensure flowers planted around the Old Town Veteran's Memorial were properly cared for. They not only donated the flowers but also organized a watering schedule to ensure that

2024 Best of Best! (cont'd)

the memorial remained a place of beauty and reflection for residents. The presence of the vibrant flowers during such a challenging time provided a much-needed source of comfort and hope for the community.

The partnership between the BGC and the BPD has been instrumental in enhancing the quality of life for the residents of Bloomingdale and surrounding community. Through initiatives mentioned, the BGC has demonstrated a profound commitment to the well-being of the public. Their contributions have addressed immediate needs and provided long-term benefits.

The BGC's collaboration with the BPD exemplifies the power of partnerships in creating positive change and enhancing the quality of life for residents. It is for these reasons that we strongly recommend the BGC for the IAPD Partnership Award, as their efforts have truly made a difference in the lives of many and have set a standard for community collaboration and impact.

Senator Seth Lewis Presents at Park District Board Meeting



Pictured: State Senator Seth Lewis, Cheryl Svec, Andre Burke (President, BPD Board of Commissioners), Joyce Basel, Joe Potts (BPD Executive Director)

Our club was once again recognized for our Partnership Award from the Illinois Association of Park Districts at the Bloomingdale Park District Board Meeting on December 16. State Senator Seth Lewis was in attendance and presented a Senate Recognition certificate to Cheryl and Joyce acknowledging our receipt of this esteemed award.



2025 Upcoming Meetings

January 21
No Meeting

February 18
Annual Business Meeting

March 18
Do's, Don'ts and Myths of Landscaping with Curb Appeal with Ken Benson

April 15
Annual Flower & Plant Sale Prep Meeting

May 9 - 10
Annual Flower & Plant Sale

May 20
The Best of OUR Garden Club!

June 17
Gardens of the Pros with Nina Koziol

July 17
Plant Propagation (From stem cuttings, layering and divisions) with Dolly Foster

Dan Vitacco Appointed to the Village Board

From the Bloomingdale Village Almanac



WooHoo! Congratulations Dan and thank you for your support at Bloomingdale Garden Club. You and Kelly are valued members and we couldn't be more proud of your achievement!

The Bloomingdale Village Board is pleased to welcome Dan Vitacco as it's newest member! Dan was appointed at our meeting on Monday, September 9th, to complete the unexpired term of Chris Troiola, serving through April 2025. Dan has been a dedicated and valued member of our community, including service on the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Septemberfest Commission, as well as active involvement in the Bloomingdale Garden Club. At the meeting, Dan expressed his excitement about joining the Board at such a pivotal time, as we embark on many exciting developments for the Village's future. His commitment to Bloomingdale is evident, and we are excited to see his leadership in action on the Village Board, as we continue building a bright future for Bloomingdale.



Snowman's Crossing at Bloomingdale Library



The club's merry band of elves (left to right): Henia Sullivan, Joyce Basel, Carole Lockerbie, Cheryl Svec, Jennifer Moore, and Cathy Gall braved the cold the Sunday after Thanksgiving to decorate the Bloomingdale Garden Club's tree at the Bloomingdale Library.



Thank you Henia, for making the ornaments and having everything ready for decorating. Our tree is bright and cheerful with reminders of summer-time flowers!



An African Adventure

Cheryl Svee



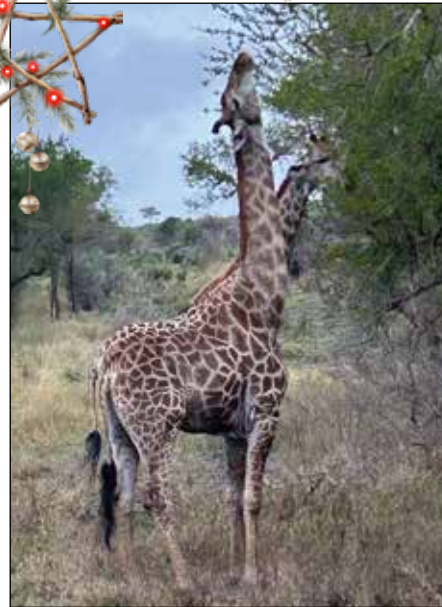
Garden Club members Joyce Basel (our leader!), Cheryl Svee, Peggy Laraia, Dawn LaVeau Orr and her husband, Jason, joined five other friends on an incredible journey in Southern Africa. It was a trip of a lifetime, filled with unforgettable experiences and lessons from the wild.

After a long trek across the pond (15 hours from Newark to Johannesburg!) we spent six days at the Zulu Nyala Safari Lodge in eastern South Africa. Our days began with a 6 am game drive.



I was immediately captivated by the rugged landscape of the African bush, where vast savannahs stretched out beneath an endless sky. As we drove deeper into the reserve, the sounds

of the bush surrounded us. Birds sang from the trees, and the wind rustled through the tall grasses. Almost immediately, wildlife sightings began: nyala, impala, countless birds



and then giraffe! They were so close and the size of the giraffes were awe-inspiring as they gently stripped the leaves off the trees to munch on and gracefully moved from tree to tree. The sightings continued throughout

the 2-hour drive and we had a second game drive in the afternoon. By the end of the first day alone we also saw warthog, buffalo, rhino, zebra, monkeys, cheetah and elephants! Our guide, Musa, was extremely knowledgeable about all the plants, birds and animals. Joyce almost always had something more to add to Musa's lessons, making it a truly remarkable learning experience.

We filled the time between game drives taking other excursions. We had an interactive elephant experience where we got close, touched them and even put our hand in their mouth! (Ewww, slimy!) We visited a cheetah rehabilitation center where we saw caracal, serval and cheetahs. We were able to be in the enclosure with the cheetahs only 15 feet away!



We visited other game reserves in search of big cats (we did see lions!)

An African Adventure (cont'd)



and we took a boat ride through the estuary where hippos were plentiful. And, we were close enough to hop over to the beach and waded in the Indian Ocean (a highlight for me).



After our safari adventure, we travelled to Cape Town, a beautiful city with stunning landscapes. Highlights included Table Mountain, a must-see for anyone visiting the city. The cable car ride up offered breathtaking views of the city, the sprawling coastline, and the iconic flat-topped peak that loomed above. At the summit, the panoramic views stretched as far as the eye could see. The city below looked like a painting, with its mix of natural beauty and urban development.

We toured the Cape peninsula, which included a boat ride to seal island to view the Cape seals, a stop at the Cape of Good Hope and Cape Point, with captivating views of the coastline, and Boulders Penguin Colony, home to a growing colony of the endangered African Penguin. We also headed to the winelands, tasting wine and lunching in the rolling vineyards with the towering mountains in the distance. Finally, no visit to Cape Town would be complete without exploring the magnificent Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden, nestled against the slopes of Table Mountain. The garden grows only indigenous South African plants—from towering trees to intricate fynbos plants, every corner of Kirstenbosch felt like a living art gallery.

But we weren't done yet! We then travelled to Zimbabwe to the world-renowned Victoria Falls. As we approached the edge of the falls, I was



struck by the sheer scale of it all. Victoria Falls (known as "The Smoke That Thunders") is vast, its mist rising high and creating rainbows on sunny days. I stood there, soaking in the sight of the mighty Zambezi River crashing down into the gorge below. We walked along the trail, taking in different viewpoints, each with a distinctive perspective of the falls. But the most unique



perspective was when five of us adventurous travelers took a helicopter ride above the falls! The view was nothing short of breathtaking.

We concluded our adventure with a dinner cruise on the Zambezi River, soaking in the sights with a gorgeous sunset to cap off our trip.

Leaving Africa was saddening, but the memories of the animals, the landscapes, and the lessons learned will stay with me. This trip opened my eyes to the wonders of the natural world, and I would love to return one day to continue the adventure.



Holiday Recipes



Almond Pinecones

Jamie's Family Recipe

- 1 ½ cup whole raw almonds
- 1 – 8 oz cream cheese
- 2/3 cup mayo
- 1 tbsp green onion, chopped
- 1/2 tsp dried dill weed
- 1/8 tsp pepper
- 12 oz bacon, fried crispy and chopped



- 1) Spread almonds on a baking sheet in a single layer and bake at 300° for 15 minutes until almonds are fragrant (be careful not to burn).
- 2) Combine cream cheese and mayo. Add onion, dill weed, pepper and the bacon last. **Cover and chill overnight.**
- 3) Cut cheese in half and shape into 2 pinecones. Place each on a serving platter and press almonds in flat overlapping each in rows until all cheese is covered.
- 4) Garnish tops with rosemary or fall greens so they resemble pinecones. Serve with crackers.

Our Favorite Pasta Dish

Marilyn Dattilo

I take this pasta dish to church often...it's enjoyed by all!



- 1 small butternut squash, skinned and cubed
- 1 lb pasta (whatever is your preference)
- Olive oil
- Swiss chard/spinach/kale, chopped
- Garlic

- 1) Cook pasta, drain and set a side. Add some olive oil to keep it moist.



- 2) Season butternut (I use no salt!) and drizzle with olive oil. Bake in the oven for about 30 minutes at 325° as needed until tender.

- 3) Fry a small amount of swiss chard, spinach, and kale with the garlic. You decide on the amount. (Italians use a lot of garlic!) Use only olive oil for this frying adventure!

- 4) Add the fried swiss chard, spinach, kale and the garlic to the pasta. Gently toss in the cubed butternut squash. Serves 4.

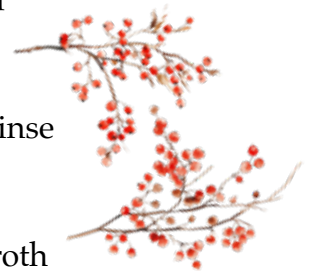
This is a really good tasting and healthy meal. Try frying 1/2 lb of Italian Sausage and add to the mixture for a very satisfying meal!

White Chili

Wondering what to do with your leftover turkey? Try this! Jamie



- 1 tbsp canola oil
- 1 medium yellow onion, diced
- 1 yellow or orange bell pepper, diced (or a seeded, finely chopped jalapeno for more heat)
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 2 cans white beans, drained, rinse
- Leftover turkey or chicken
- 1 ½ cup frozen corn
- 5 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 2 (4.5 oz) cans green chiles (I get at Aldi)
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper



Sauté onion and bell pepper in oil until translucent. Add chopped garlic, oregano and cumin until fragrant. Add the white beans and mash some (not all) against the side of the pan. This is the thickener. Add remaining ingredients and simmer uncovered for ½ hour. Enjoy!

Can also be garnished with sour cream, avocado, cilantro, tortilla chips, or Monterey Jack cheese.

Contributions to West Suburban



Cathy Gall

Year after year our club members help to brighten the spirits of the residents of the West Suburban Nursing and Rehabilitation Center. After four days of collecting in December, all the items were delivered to the Activity Director, Vina. On behalf of the residents, she expressed her continued appreciation for our club's thoughtfulness. As a special thank you, club members were invited to the Center's Annual Holiday Brunch which took place on Saturday, December 14th. Six members were able to attend, and had a very nice time! Vina mentioned that the Holiday Trees we created at our November meeting were used as centerpieces for the resident's brunch. They were enjoyed by all!

Through the dedication and generosity of our members, we were able to donate fleece blankets, socks, slippers, gloves and scarves to keep the residents warm; shampoo, deodorant, lotions, body wash, toothpaste, toothbrushes, shave cream, etc. for personal hygiene; 60 beautiful handmade bracelets; snacks, activity books, markers, crayons, puzzles, and other holiday trinkets to keep everyone entertained.

Whether this was your first or fifth year contributing to the Center, you're owed many thanks for your thoughtfulness!! We truly are an exceptional group of men and women!!



Activity books



Blankets



Toothpaste and deodorant



Body wash and hair products



Bracelets



Socks



Gloves and holiday gifts



Lotions and scarves



Snacks

West Suburban Luncheon

Joyce Basel

As you all know, our Club has supported the West Suburban Nursing Home for many years, not only with decorations for Christmas but also with a huge variety of items to be used as gifts for the residents, many of whom has no family or friends. To show their appreciation, we were invited to their Holiday luncheon on

Saturday 14th December. Eight of our members were welcomed personally by Vina—the coordinator and shown to our table. A really fine buffet was served by the staff and we all enjoyed the excellent variety offered. It was a fun event and we were glad to have been there. On display also were a number of the items that our club members have made over the years. Santa was on hand and so our happy picture is here for all to see.



Christmas Craft

Debbie Matuszak

For our November meeting, our members created unique Christmas tree centerpieces for the dining room tables at West Suburban Nursing and Rehabilitation. The residents love our annual Christmas projects and look forward to receiving them. Every centerpiece was a work of art as our creative group added their own personal touches. We made over 30 centerpieces for West Suburban. Also, each person was able to make a centerpiece to take home.



Bobbie Pulido Update

Joyce Basel

I visited with Bobbie at Sunrise and brought two new scarves to keep her warm. She liked the feel of them, but I am pretty sure she is unaware that they are gifts for Christmas. While our friend and long-time member does continue to decline, she is well taken care of and is loved by the staff. Say a prayer for her for the New Year.

A Very Merry Christmas Party 2024!



Joyce Basel

Sunday, 8th December at Jamesons!! Once again many members gathered together for a truly fine lunch, beverages and great camaraderie! Our members truly know how to enjoy each other and share a fun time. The table centerpieces were once again created by Joyce and were taken home to be further enjoyed by six lucky people. We had a gift exchange of fun and imaginative gifts. Linda made sure we took turns and could "steal" or exchange afterwards.

Jamesons continues to honor the arrangement that we made with them ten years ago and handed our 80+ members a gift card! to be used any time this year for a meal. We are so fortunate to

have these seniors still active in our Club: Marilyn and Art Datillo, Jennifer Moore, Pauline Thomas-Brown, Sandy Kappeler, Joyce Basel and most importantly, our most senior member, Jo Dabrowski. Each of them may expect to receive this gift from Jamesons every year for the rest of their lives! Once again it was an afternoon that everyone thoroughly enjoyed.





OUR VISION

To educate members and the community about gardening through informative and educational meetings, workshops and activities

- To develop and promote projects for civic beautification and environmental stewardship
- To support philanthropic endeavors which aid the residents of the Bloomington community and surrounding areas
- To provide opportunities for fellowship for those interested in gardening and environmental and civic responsibility
- To aid in the protection of native trees, flowers and birds
- To further the extermination of invasive and/or noxious plants

MEMBERSHIP

Membership is open to all persons at his or her request of application regardless of residence. Annual dues are \$25.00 for a single member and \$30.00 for a couple when paid January 1st through June 30th. (\$6.00 pays each member's State Garden Club dues; and \$7.00 for each couple).

Half year dues for new members are \$12.50 for single member, and \$15.00 per couple when paid July 1st thru December 31st.

Visitors are always welcome, but we encourage them to join the club after 3 visits in order to help out with the costs of our monthly programming.

Meeting Location:

The 3rd Tuesday of each month. Social time and announcements at 6:15 PM. Program begins at 7.

We meet at:

Cornerstone Faith Community Church
118 S. First Street, Bloomington, IL 60108

Contact Us At:

bloomingtongardenclub@gmail.com

We're On The Web:

bloomingtongardenclub.org



2024 Club Officers and Committees

*President	Cheryl Svee
*1st Vice President	Jean Kurzynski
(Membership)	Marietta Serenda
*2nd Vice President.....	Debbie Matuszak
(Programs)	Kelly Vitacco
*3rd Vice President	Linda Kunesh
(Ways and Means)	
*Treasurer.....	Laurie Dring
*Publicity	Jamie Schneck
Publicity Contributors	
Publications.....	Akhila Meda
Proofreading	Linda Kunesh
Photo Retouching.....	Alan Schneck
Facebook.....	Cathy Gall
Website & Trowel	Jamie Schneck
Website Support	Dan Vitacco
*Secretary	Joyce Basel
Plot-to-Plate Garden	Gail Sanders
Susan Glick-Shore, Eileen Spaman, Barbara	Weisenburger
Good Cheer	Jennifer Moore
Hospitality.....	Henrietta Sullivan
Memorial Garden.....	Joyce Basel
Nursing Home Liaison.....	Chris Magnatowski

*Denotes Executive Board

Let Us Hear From You:
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Posting Months:

March, June, September and December