

THE HIDDEN GEM

1 March, 2026

President's Message



She turned to her neighbor and shook her yellow head, & whispered to her neighbor: "Winter is dead" - A.A. Milne

Every year, I search for the gardens near my home to see if the snowdrops are starting

to poke their heads out of the ground. When I see them, I breathe a sigh of relief - Yes! Winter is leaving and spring is on its way!

With Spring, we all get back together, and I can't wait to see everyone at our March meeting. Carol Braunschweig and Mary Gay Kay have curated an exciting array of programs for 2026. Programs include a trip to see the gardens of the man who developed the Knock Out® Rose, learning about the Cut Flower Industry, our favorite Spring Ephemerals, how to create Pave´ Flower Arrangements, and Plantings in Iceland - Of Course! Sounds like fun and looking forward to seeing everyone soon.

Sue Hazelwood

Town & Country Garden Club of Libertyville celebrates 74 years of serving the greater Libertyville area with civic plantings, scholarship awards, local charitable donations and our Hidden Gems Garden Walk.

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The Hidden Gem newsletter is published eight times/year as a .pdf. Join our mailing list [HERE](#).

Submissions are from Club members; contact us at towncountrygardenclub5@gmail.com regarding an upcoming event listing or with membership inquiries.

Editors: Ann Baker, Laura Edwards, Janet Lichtenberger.

Delay Spring Garden Cleanup and Encourage Native Insects



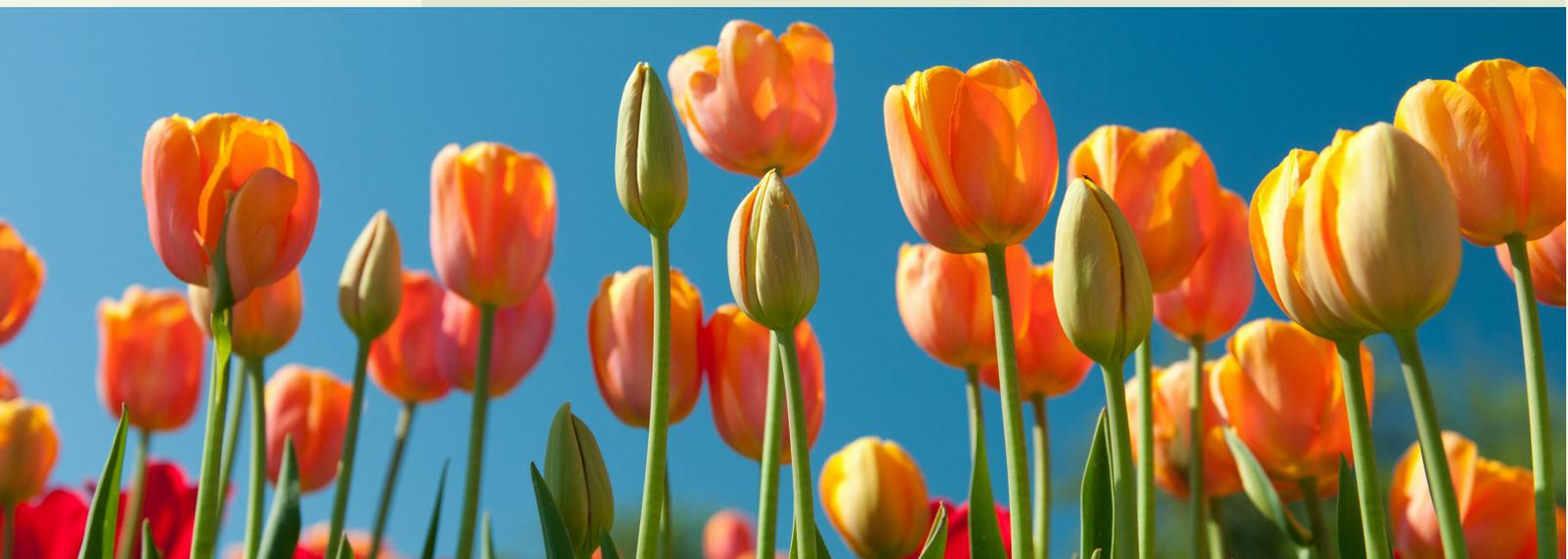
With the arrival of spring, our thoughts turn to cleaning up our gardens for the growing season. However, this is the time of year that we need to practice patience. Why? It's due to protecting the awakening insect world in our gardens.

Do not clear or cut back plant material until temperatures are consistently above 50 degrees overnight. These warmer temperatures will stimulate insect activity, including eggs to hatch, larvae to emerge and butterflies or moths to break forth from their chrysalis. For any materials that you do remove now in the way of dead stems, leaves, or fallen limbs and twigs, find a place to loosely stack them in the hopes that insects may still emerge.

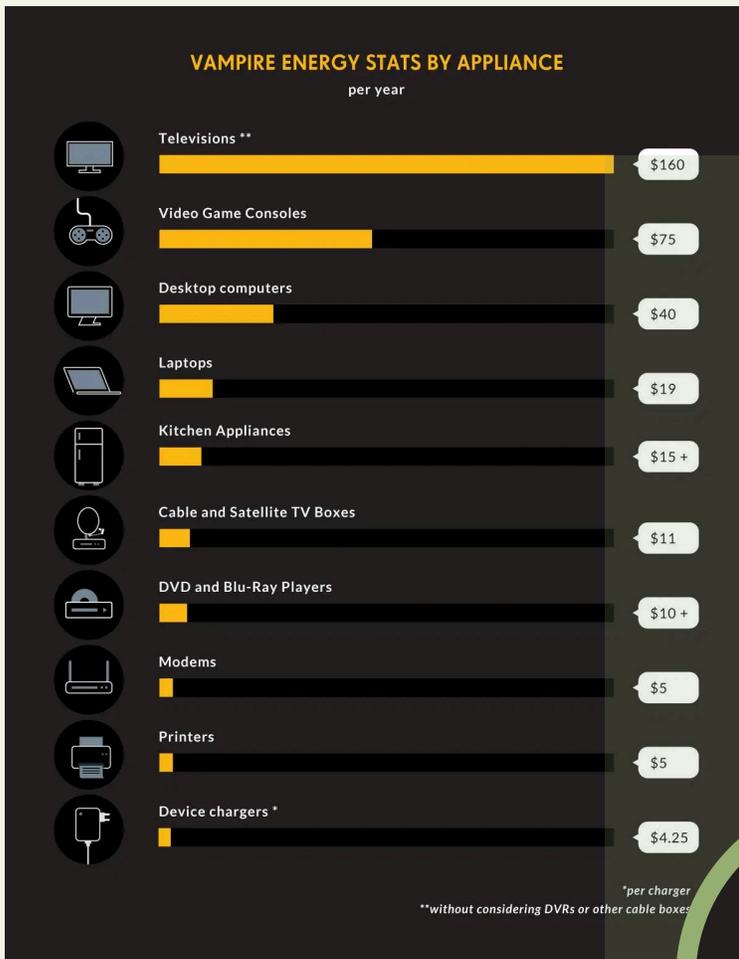
As for applying mulch to our garden beds, a delay in mulch addition can really benefit ground nesting bee species. They need a more open soil surface to emerge and begin their life processes.

Resource:

University of Illinois Extension
The Garden Scoop - February 26, 2021



VAMPIRE POWER



Vampire power refers to the loss of electrical energy consumed by appliances and electronic devices while they are switched off or in standby mode but remain plugged into a power source. This hidden energy draw supports functions such as clocks, sensors, remote activation, or network connectivity. Although the power consumed by any single device is small, the cumulative effect across households and buildings contributes to unnecessary energy use, higher utility costs, and increased environmental impact.

According to a report from the National Resource Defense Council, Americans spend about

\$19 billion

per year in vampire energy costs. On average, that means about **\$165 to \$440** per household depending on tier rates and location.



PULL THE PLUG: HOW TO DEFEAT VAMPIRE POWER

- Unplug rarely used devices such as chargers, small kitchen appliances, and entertainment equipment when they are not in use.
- Use advanced power strips that automatically cut power to devices in standby mode.
- Choose ENERGY STAR–rated appliances and electronics designed to minimize standby power consumption.



Sign ups for Civic Teams will be open after the March meeting!

Winter Break

How Trees and Plants Survive Harsh Winter Conditions by Laura Edwards, U of I Extension Master Gardener

Could our 2025-2026 winter weather be a past memory? That would be nice! We certainly had a “real Chicago winter.” In a webinar, Chris Enroth, a Horticulture Educator for University of Illinois Extension, asks “How do plants acquire the ability to survive subzero temperatures?”

Chris explains that over time plants have evolved from living in a primarily tropical environment with droughts, to a more temperate environment with hot summers and cold winters. One of the biggest stressors a plant experiences is drought, especially in the winter. The majority of our plant roots occupy the top 2-4 inches all the way down to 18 inches below the surface. Our frost layer can measure up to 3-4 feet deep. When the soil is frozen, the water is locked up.

Over time, deciduous and evergreen plants have developed creative strategies to overcome the damaging effects of drought. Rhododendrons have a waxy coating on their leaves which offers protection from cold. Needled evergreens have minimized their leaf surface area to little spiked leaves which provides a decreased surface for water evaporation.

On a cellular level, the tubes (xylem) inside the leaves, which carry water from the ground to the leaf, are narrower. This prevents tube clogging. Metabolites (sugar) found in the plant acts as an antifreeze. Plant cells have an extracellular space that can expand when cold, preventing the cell from bursting.

Snow pack acts as an insulator. Fortunately, we had sufficient snow this winter to help the plants survive the frigid temps. Anything under the snow stays at 32 degrees. The caveat is the snow needs to be dry. Wet snow can cause structural damage to trees and plants.

Need we worry about trees exploding due to cold? Chris say no - the splitting bark is a rare phenomenon related to cold temperatures.

How can we help our trees and plants prepare for the winter? The tried and true practices of mulching and watering during the fall give the plants a helping hand before winter.

Enjoy the early Spring sunshine!

MEMBER OF THE MONTH: JOYCE GEIB



I started my life in a four room flat in the inner city of Chicago - so there was no garden growing up. My mom did have many house plants, as I also have today. My dad taught me to love nature. He couldn't wait for retirement in the north woods of Wisconsin. We lived in the city only for a job to take care of his family. Every Sunday afternoon, he and I went to a forest preserve or Douglas Park. Still remember eating crabapples off those trees.

By working after school, two jobs in the summer, and getting a scholarship, I was able to attend Illinois State Normal University. There I met Ron, who also grew up in Chicago, only on the north side. I taught third grade in Skokie and Ron worked as an

accountant. Once we were married, we lived in a one bedroom Rogers Park apartment; after having two children, Cindy and Chris, it was time to look for a house.

We ended up in Mundelein in a two bedroom home. After five years and another child, Mike, we started looking for a three bedroom home. We found a 1906 house on Lincoln in Libertyville with a very large back yard just behind Rockland School. As I was very busy raising three small children, I had no time for gardening. Once they were in school all day, I worked part time for ten years at the Sportsman in downtown Libertyville.

Once the kids were at Highland, I started taking classes at National Louis University to renew my teaching certification. I received my Masters Degree and my first teaching job was at Holy Family in North Chicago. After three years there, I taught second and third grade in Waukegan for 18 years before retirement.

In 1996, we thought about moving again. On one of our driving excursions, we found our current home. The privacy and trees said "buy." It's now been 29 years. We eventually expanded the kitchen and family room and added the gazebo, hiring a landscaper to create a larger patio and do plantings around the house. I did my best to fill in with annuals for more color.

When I retired, two close friends were co-Presidents of the garden club. After a short time on the waitlist, I became a member. I was elected Treasurer my second year, then Secretary, and finally President. During my time on the board, we had our first Garden Walk - "Beyond the Garden Gate" - and, after a break, returned to that fundraiser, renamed "Hidden Gems." I was chair of the Walk for several years.

After all these years I still can't remember names of flowers and plant what I like when I see it. On April 1, I'm quick to go to Pasquesi's for their pansy sale, as I'm ready for color in my yard. Impatiens are a must too, as I have so many trees. I encourage you to have a weeding day, as I'm so mad at myself for letting it go too long. And as my dad gave me a love for nature, there's nothing better than sitting in the quiet of my own yard enjoying the beauty and listening to the birds (I have nine feeders!).

NATIVE OF THE MONTH: SWAMP MILKWEED

Asclepias incarnata, commonly called swamp milkweed, is an erect, clump-forming, native plant which is commonly found in swamps, river bottomlands and wet meadows. It typically grows 3-4' tall. Small, fragrant, pink to mauve flowers are very attractive to butterflies and hummingbirds as a nectar source. In addition, swamp milkweed is a food source for the larval stage of monarch butterflies. "Ice Ballet" is a commonly available cultivar.

This plant requires moist soil (edges of raingardens, swampy areas) and full sun. Seeds need cold stratification of 30 days in order to germinate. This plant has a deep taproot and will not take kindly to being moved, so pick its new home wisely!



ANNUAL OF THE MONTH: PANSIES

According to Rhonda Feree of the [University of Illinois Extension](#), pansies and their relative, Johnny-Jump Ups, are cool-season annuals, which means they prefer cold weather. These charming little flowers come in many colors with a variety of markings and flower sizes.

There are more than 250 cultivars of pansies. As with other bedding plants, most of those are part of a series, like "Majestic Giant" and the "Wave" cultivars.



Pansies do best in full sun with well-drained soil. For the fullest display, plant them 8 to 10 inches apart. Use them along bed edges or in containers and window boxes. Plan to replace pansies in early summer before the hot weather fades them away. Ferree interplanted hers with coleus to take over after the pansies were done.

"Consider adding pansies to brighten your spring garden," Ferree said. "When summer fades into fall, plant some more pansies to cheer up the fall garden."

2026 National Convention St. Louis Missouri May 4 - 6

Registration and information
Click [HERE](#)



America 250

Join us in participating in the NGC initiative "America 250". PLANT AMERICA is encouraging each club/district to support the planting of red, white, and blue flowers around every Blue Star and/or Gold Star Families Memorial Marker within your area. This is an opportunity to show pride and express appreciation. We can also do this in our civic planters and home containers. A comprehensive list of red, white, and blue flowers is available [HERE](#)



On the Road Again

A National Garden Clubs, Inc. Standard Flower Show

Presented by
Garden Clubs of Illinois, Inc.
at
Lincoln Square Mall
300 S. Broadway Avenue, Urbana, IL 61801

July 23-25, 2026



Admission is free and open to the public
4-8 pm, Friday July 24
and
8 am-Noon, Saturday July 25

Member of
National Garden Clubs, Inc.
Central Region

Congratulations to Ann Baker
for completing the NGC
Gardening Certification series
and becoming a NGC
Gardening Consultant.

UPCOMING EVENTS



Hidden Gems Garden Walk

Saturday, June 27th, 2026

Five exceptional gardens

Meet the gardeners and be inspired by unique designs and specimens.

Online tickets Available [HERE](#).

Village Hall sales open 6/1.

Members receive tickets 6/3.

Farmers Market Thursday sales June 4, 11, and 25th

Soft Landings at The Dunn Museum

Session 2 of U of I Extension Garden Learning Series

March 11th, 2026

6:00 p.m.-7:30 p.m. at the Dunn Museum

Soft Landings are landscaped areas under native trees that provide important habitat for beneficial insects during one or more stages of their life cycle. Learn more about adding a Soft Landing to your yard. Installation, plant choice, and maintenance will be covered.



Click [HERE](#) for more information

University of Illinois
Extension Master Gardeners



**Rain or Shine
Cash, Check or Charge**

Extension Grounds:
100 South US Hwy 45
Grayslake, IL 60030
847-223-8627

PLANT SALE
Saturday, May 16, 2026
9 am to 2 pm

WE ARE OFFERING

- Natives, New Cultivars of Perennials, Grasses, Pollinator-Friendly Plants
- Vegetables, Herbs
- Garden Treasures
- Garden Advice from Master Gardeners

All Proceeds Support Extension Projects for
Volunteers, Youth, Adults



2026 EXTENSION MASTER GARDENER
SEED EXPO
AT CLC
GRAYSLAKE CAMPUS, BUILDING F
MARCH 7, 2026
10AM-2PM

FREE SEEDS,
SEED SWAP &
RESOURCES!

FREE
ADMISSION!

BREAKOUT
EDUCATIONAL
SESSIONS!

RAFFLES AND
FREE DOOR
PRIZE ENTRY

40+ EXHIBITORS &
VENDORS!

Stop by the TCGC
table and register
for a chance to win
tickets to the
Hidden Gems
Garden Walk