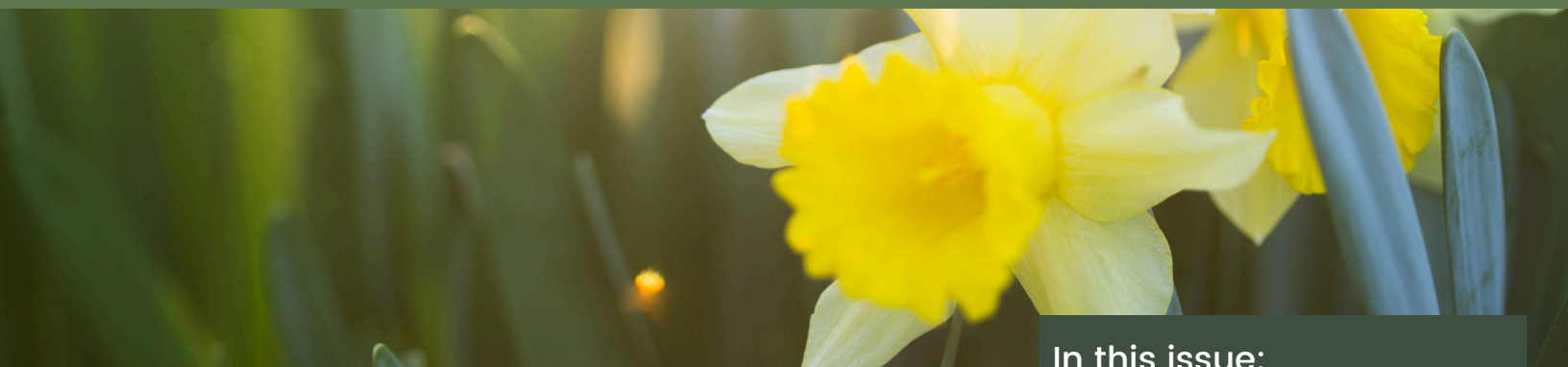




April, 2025

www.towncountrygardenclub.com

# The Hidden Gem



**Town & Country Garden Club of Libertyville**  
celebrates 73 years of serving the greater  
Libertyville area with civic plantings, scholarship  
awards, local charitable donations and our  
**Hidden Gems Garden Walk.**

*"Spring is nature's way of saying, 'Let's party!'" - Robin Williams*

Spring is a time of joy and celebration as nature bursts into vibrant colors and energy. It's a time for action, and we have plenty of action planned for our 2025 spring season!

Our club starts the celebration in April with the "planting of the pansies". Daffodils join the party at the Blue Star Marker planted by Ann Baker and Rise Barkhoff – I can't wait to see these sunny symbols of joy.

In May, it's the favorite Senior Planting – helping seniors plant their own annual pots. Look for the North library entrance to be getting a face-lift on May 28 with a beautiful array of pollinator-friendly perennials.

Join the party and help – There are still openings for Civic Teams available. Click [HERE](#) or contact Evelyn Olson.

Celebrate and enjoy these first days of Spring,

*Sue Hazelwood, President, TC&C*

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# News and Notes

## by Sue Hazelwood

We had a special day at the District IX, Garden Clubs of Illinois Annual meeting. Twelve members attended and we had a great time – good presentation on flower arranging, nice meal and amazing raffle baskets. Sally Steele and Jeanne Curtin were each winners.

The highlight of the day was the three awards that our Town and Country Garden Club was awarded for our outstanding achievements!

**First Place Medium Clubs: Ongoing Civics Project Award.** This award seeks to recognize and reward district garden clubs for their ongoing hard work on projects in their communities.

**Second Place Medium Clubs: Excellence in Programs Award.** This award recognizes excellence both in the development and execution of club programs. Great Job Liz and Rise for your awesome programs!!!

**Third Place Medium Clubs: All-Star Award.** This award recognizes all the activities of a club in a calendar year.





# To Till or Not to Till: Preparing Your Spring Vegetable Garden

As spring approaches, gardeners face the classic question: should you till your vegetable garden beds or leave them undisturbed? Both methods have advantages and drawbacks, depending on your soil type, climate, and gardening philosophy.

Tilling aerates compacted soil, making it easier for roots to spread and absorb nutrients. It also incorporates organic matter, such as compost, and helps disrupt weeds before planting. However, excessive tilling can break down soil structure, deplete beneficial microorganisms, and lead to erosion.

No-till gardening, on the other hand, preserves soil health by maintaining its natural structure and microbial activity. It reduces erosion, improves water retention, and minimizes weed seed disturbance. Cover crops and mulch are often used to enrich the soil naturally. While no-till gardening requires patience and an initial investment in organic matter, it leads to healthier soil over time.

Ultimately, the best approach depends on your soil's condition and long-term gardening goals. If your soil is heavily compacted, light tilling may help. Otherwise, a no-till approach can build sustainable, nutrient-rich soil for future harvests.





# Conservation Corner: Microplastics

by Ann Baker, Environmental Consultant, NGC

I've been looking for ways to eliminate microplastics in my life, and my kids' and grandkids' lives. Plastic use has increased over our lifetimes, and with it microplastic pollution. Microplastics are small plastic particles, typically less than five millimeters in size. They come into our homes, water, and bodies from products with microbeads in cosmetics, personal care products, and microfibers shed from synthetic textile. Fragments of larger plastic items like bottles, bags, and packaging break down and accumulate in various environments, including oceans, lakes, rivers, and soils, posing a threat to aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems. There is growing concern about the potential impacts of microplastics on human health, as they can be ingested through contaminated food, water, and air. Researchers have found microplastics in every organ of humans' bodies.

Last year, we wrote about changing from plastic storage to glass. Another source can be plastic cutting boards. Consider switching to wood cutting boards, which are more durable and naturally antibacterial. Unlike plastic boards, which develop deep grooves that trap bacteria and release microplastics, wood has self-healing properties that minimize particle shedding.

When choosing a wood cutting board, opt for hardwoods like maple or walnut, which resist knife marks better than softer woods. Select a board made from a single, solid piece of wood to avoid exposure to glues and resins commonly found in laminated or composite boards. Also select a natural finish like mineral oil, beeswax, or tung oil. Regular maintenance, such as oiling with food-grade mineral oil and cleaning with mild soap, extends its lifespan and keeps it sanitary.

If using plastic boards, replace them once they develop deep cuts and avoid harsh scrubbing that accelerates microplastic shedding. Making mindful choices helps reduce microplastic ingestion while keeping your kitchen safe and sustainable.





# Meet A Member:

## Sally Steele



I am a true midwesterner – born and raised in Kansas and have lived in Illinois (Libertyville) for almost 40 years. My husband, Michael, is a practicing psychotherapist. We have two boys who both live in LA and Sacramento California and sadly, have no interest in moving back to cold weather. We have one adorable 4 year old granddaughter, who is also in California so that means lots of trips to see her. I started gardening with my mother who would plant zinnias and marigolds every summer. There was something about those perky, bright

flowers , particularly when she would cut them and place them around the house, that I just loved. They are still some of my favorites and I plant them every year.

I love that no two years or two plants are ever the same. There's always a twist that you don't expect and that keeps you on your toes. I also love that there is no end to the plants I want to try. My husband has gotten used to me saying that "just a few things" need to be moved in the garden because I want to try something new.

My favorite gardening tip is to keep it simple. I focus on easy to grow, reliable perennials and then switch up the annuals to give me lots of cut flowers for the summer. A good bed of mulch is my secret weapon and helps to get through the hottest days of the summer.

My favorite perennial is hydrangea. Any kind, any color. Growing up, my grandfather's driveway was lined with snowball hydrangea and it was so beautiful. I have Quick Fire in our backyard which gives me flowers all summer long – changing from green in the spring to dark red in the late summer. We don't cut them back until spring which gives us a nice winterscape.





# Perennial of Month: Quick Fire Hydrangea

According to Proven Winners, Quick Fire hydrangea bloom about a month before any other panicle hydrangea – usually by 4th of July in their West Michigan trial gardens. Flowers open pure white then turn pink, and will be an extremely dark rosy-pink in the fall. The flower color on Quick Fire hydrangea is not affected by soil pH. Blooms on this super-hardy and easy to grow hydrangea are produced on new wood, which means that you will see flowers even after even the harshest winters. Beautiful for use as a cut flower. Unlike other panicle hydrangeas, Quick Fire also has excellent fall foliage color for a final hurrah before winter.



# Native of the Month: Big Leaf Aster (*Aster macrophyllus*)



Late summer fall pollinator  
KEYSTONE species for our area!

Big Leaf Aster is perfect for shady areas with less than perfect soil. The large, heart-shaped basal foliage will easily form a solid ground cover, even in poor soil. Upright stems emerge from the base in late summer, bearing open clusters of bluish-white rayed flowers around 1.5" across. Great for stabilizing shaded hillsides and slopes, it spreads by rhizomes to form a ground cover, but is not overly aggressive. It thrives in both dry sand and heavy clay soils as long as there is some organic matter. Mulch with leaves.



# NGC and GCI News

## NGC Landscape Design School

The mission of the Environmental Schools is to teach environmental literacy to cherish, protect and conserve the living earth. The courses teaches participants environmental literacy, appreciation of the natural world, encourages action for sustainable development and appreciation for the interrelation of all natural things.

Classes do not need to be taken in order.

Click [HERE](#) to see when schools offered. A Zoom Course 2 is offered in March – Sign up asap. Course 4 will be offered via zoom in September.



Ann Baker successfully completed the NGC Landscape Design school. She is a certified NGC Landscape Design Consultant and joined the Illinois Tri-Council. Congratulations!

DISTRICT IX, GARDEN CLUBS OF ILLINOIS

2025 SPRING OUTING

## *ADVANCED* PLANTING FOR POLLINATORS

TUESDAY, JUNE 3, 2025

9:45 A.M. - 12 P.M.

RYERSON WOODS WELCOME CENTER

21950 NORTH RIVERWOODS ROAD  
RIVERWOODS, IL 60015

Join us for a special class by Lake County Forest Preserve's environment education specialist, Eileen Davis. Discover the challenges our native pollinators are facing and how ongoing pollinator research by LCFP ecologists' is informing restoration work and providing insight on how home gardeners can support pollinators. Tours of the rain garden and other native plantings follow presentation.

The event is free, capped at 50 attendees. A group reservation for optional self-pay lunch is at Cheesecake Factory, Lincolnshire, 12 p.m.

To REGISTER for the class and optional lunch, click [HERE](#).

Questions? Email Ann Baker, [anfbaker@yahoo.com](mailto:anfbaker@yahoo.com)



August 2 – 3  
District Flower Show,  
Chicago Botanic Garden,  
Glencoe, IL



# Upcoming Events



June 28th, 2025

Mark your calendars!

Five exceptional gardens

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

Online tickets Available. Village Hall sales open 6/2.

Members receive tickets 6/4.

Farmer's Market sales June 5, 19, and 26th.



University of Illinois  
Lake County Extension  
Master Gardeners

## PLANT SALE

Saturday, May 17, 2025  
9 am - 2 pm

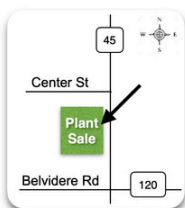


**WE ARE OFFERING**

- Natives, Perennials, Pollinator-Friendly Plants
- Vegetables, Herbs
- Garden Treasures
- Gardening Advice from Master Gardeners

All proceeds support Extension projects and programming for volunteers, youth and adults

Rain or Shine Cash, Check, Charge



University of Illinois  
Lake County Extension  
100 South US Hwy 45  
Grayslake IL 60030

### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

- Call 847-223-8627
- [www.extension.illinois.edu/lm](http://www.extension.illinois.edu/lm)
- Lake County Master Gardener: University of Illinois Extension



University of Illinois Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment. If you need a reasonable accommodation to participate in this program, please contact our office at 847-223-8627. Early requests are strongly encouraged to allow sufficient time for meeting your access needs.

## 2025 Garden Learning Series

Session 3 - Celebrating Compost!

When: April 9th 2025

Presenter: SWALCO

6 - 7:30 p.m. VIRTUAL

This program will touch on the benefits of composting for the garden, the gardener, and the planet. We'll sprinkle in a bit of how-to and various composting methods, tools of the trade and other information.

To register, click [HERE](#)