

# COUNCIL OF ROCKFORD GARDENERS, INC.

Organized 3/21/1980

E-Issue V 6 Issue 1

Editor: Kathy Batzkall

FEB 2021

## The 4 CRG Clubs:

Plantaholics

Potpourri

Seedlings

Wildflowers

## Council Motto:

"Enjoy nature's bounty  
and beauty through work  
and creativity."

## Council Website:

[councilofrockfordgardeners.org](http://councilofrockfordgardeners.org)

## Most meetings canceled until further notice.

Please check with your  
garden club on status of  
individual club activities.



## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S PEN

Co-Presidents: Ann Somers & Sarah Britton

It's predawn. The thermometer reads -4. The windchill is -12. Not ideal conditions for gardening... or are they? Ok, not so great for outside gardening but perfect for dreaming about your future garden. Free webinars and online gardening articles abound at this time of year. Because of the pandemic there are even more available than usual. Check out public garden websites and see what they have to offer. Look at the University of Illinois Extension website. Many have links to resources about particular topics that might pique your interest or pertain to an issue in your own garden.

If online sources aren't your thing, seed catalogs and gardening magazines are full of gorgeous photos of those things missing from our window views. Can you say frozen tundra? There is always something to uplift your spirits and expand your gardening knowledge.

It is still difficult to make plans for our clubs and for Council. We've cancelled our CRG Spring Luncheon & Scholarship Fundraiser. We are working on other ways to raise money for a 2021 scholarship. Any ideas? Please share.

Stay safe and healthy and know that spring will be here next month... March 20. But, in the meantime, don't wish your life away. Enjoy now!

Keep playing in the dirt,

*Sarah & Ann*

FEBRUARY  
2021

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SUBMIT questions or  
comments to:

[CRGnews815@gmail.com](mailto:CRGnews815@gmail.com)

REMEMBER to keep your  
e-mail address current with  
your individual club and  
the Council.



## 2020 CRG Scholarship Recipient Announced

Hello gardening friends,

I received this thank you note from our scholarship recipient, Nonie Broski. I seriously have never seen anyone so enthusiastic in my whole life! She was genuinely blown away and so excited that she was chosen for this year's scholarship that I could just picture her jumping up and dancing around the room! It was so refreshing.

In corresponding with her, I have no doubt that she will fulfill her dreams and aspirations for the future. In being a certified floral designer myself, it was so much fun discussing design with her.

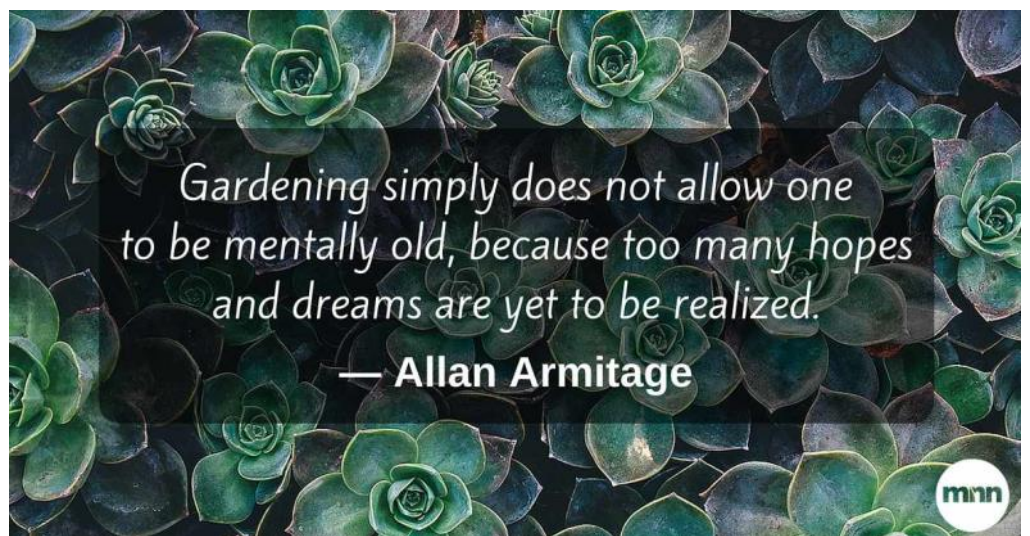
Hopefully we will have her attend our scholarship luncheon for 2021 and honor her along with the 2021 recipient. I'm hoping, as you all are, that this will be possible and we'll be pulling out of this pandemic.

Happy gardening everyone and stay well!

- Elaine Parrovecchio

11/22/2021  
Dear Elaine and the Board  
of the Council of Rockford  
Gardeners,  
  
Thank you so much for  
your generous scholarship to  
my academic endeavors!  
I am back at Kishwaukee  
College for the second semester.  
I just began a Perennials  
class where we will plan and  
design a perennial garden -  
I can't wait to get started!  
Thank you once again for  
your support and commitment  
to making the world a more  
beautiful place to live!  
Warm regards, Nonie Broski

## No Council Meeting Minutes This Month



Gardening simply does not allow one  
to be mentally old, because too many hopes  
and dreams are yet to be realized.

— Allan Armitage

# DR. PHIL O'DENDRON'S HORTICULTURE HINTS AND HUMOR

*Staff writer, Dr. Phil O'Dendron, PHD*



## Banana Peel Tea Liquid Plant Fertilizer

Similar to a compost tea, this fertilizer uses nutrients leached from banana peels to give your plants a mineral boost. To make it, fill a mason jar with warm water, and add a banana peel (dicing is an option). Let the concoction sit for at least 48 hours. Banana peels are such a healthy treat for plants. They're packed with potassium, phosphorus, iron and calcium, all essential for plants to grow and bloom. It also makes it easier for the plants to absorb water and nutrients from the soil and to transfer them between the cells. Moreover, banana peel helps the plants to develop resistance against diseases.

## FUN FACT

Science tells us a monkey opens a banana at the opposite end from the stem, making a tiny incision, then splitting the peel open.

Of course you already knew this, because you're smarter than a monkey... right? Try it next time, its much easier!

## What happens when a monkey gets hungry?



**It goes bananas!**



## Word of the Day: Guttation

Guttation is the appearance of little droplets of liquid on the leaves of plants. The plant is expelling water due to a positive root pressure. Some people notice it on their houseplants and expect the worst. Although unsettling the first time it happens, guttation in plants is completely natural and not harmful.



# “HOMEGROWN NATIONAL PARKS”

by EJ Rebman and Lori Walsh, Plantaholics members

**L**ike so many of you, we enjoy seeking out classes, books, garden clubs, podcasts, webinars, and lectures about gardening. We are pleased to share with you some of the best ideas we've found.

The most recent book we have read is, “Nature’s Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation that Starts in Your Yard” by Doug Tallamy. We’ll use this book as a springboard for a series of articles that we’ll write over the next few months. We highly recommend this book and imagine that many of you have already read it.

Tallamy shows us how to transform our own yards into ecological wonderlands full of vibrant life. He calls this idea “Homegrown National Parks” - hence, the name of these newsletter offerings.

Included in his core concept of “Homegrown National Parks” is the ability for all of us to participate, whether we have a patio or several acres. His book provides a blueprint on how we can all make a difference and help the pollinators. In this article, we’ll focus on what can do in the early spring.

An umbrella concept of Tallamy’s is that we need to create safe corridors for pollinators. Each individual who follows the basic tenets of “Homegrown National Parks” is part of a corridor. Together, we all provide a safe and healthy environment for our pollinating visitors.

## ***Delay spring clean up until 55/5***

Cornell Lab of Ornithology says that the safe time to clear and cut back your garden plants is after the

spring temperature is 55 degrees or higher for 5 days in a row. There are many hibernating beneficial insects in our gardens which we need to keep safe. Hollow or pithy centers are welcome places where these critters go for safety during the cold

weather. It’s important to leave last fall’s garden debris until “55/5” has happened. It would be such a shame to mulch up your debris too early and mulch all the beneficial insects at the same time. (Ouch)



## ***Plant for specialist pollinators***

Early spring is the time to start planning your garden. Add plants that attract and support pollinators throughout the entire season. Many native bees require special plant groups for their larvae. The best overall plants for specialists include perennial sunflowers (*helianthus* ssp.), goldenrods (*Solidago* ssp.), native willows (*salix* ssp.), *asters* (*symphyotrichum* ssp.), and blueberries (*vaccinium* ssp.).

<https://www.pollinator-pathway.org/native-pollinator-plants> has further information on this topic and [www.nws.org/nativeplantfinder](http://www.nws.org/nativeplantfinder) lists pollinator plants by county.

We hope that you will join us this year as we intentionally plan to support pollinators and create our own “Homegrown National Park” corridor. Perhaps these ideas might be a topic of conversation at future garden meetings? See you next month for a few more tips.

## **Additional Reading Suggestions from Olbrich Gardens Book Club**

*Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer, *The Seed Underground* by Janisse Ray,

*Blue Iris* by Mary Oliver

# HORTICULTURE HAPPENINGS

Gina Ross, University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener, Winnebago County

## 2021 Gardening Trends

Happy February! I am always excited to see what new trends and go-to plants will emerge for each coming season. The biggest gardening news this year is, (drum roll), A Gardening Boom! YAY!!!

This trend really began last spring with the onset of the pandemic and people spending more time at home. Many people discovered gardening for the first time ever. First time gardeners and more experienced gardeners alike were planting flowers and veggies like crazy and reaping the benefits. Not only were they getting fresh veggies to their table they were finding and, many rediscovering, just how this activity is great for our mental and physical wellbeing. This trend is gaining traction into 2021.

Other trends that that are likely to continue into the new year:

*Creating an oasis right in your own yard.* Whether it be a newly created sitting area to relax or adding containers with bright happy colors. The possibilities are endless as to how you create your garden oasis.

*Growing food in all kinds of spaces.* More people, especially those with space constraints, are creating their own kitchen gardens. Many herbs and veggies can be grown successfully in containers, or grown vertically.

*Choosing One Color and going for the monochromatic look.* This look can be really inviting. Pick one of your favorite colors in the garden and unleash that one color in your containers and borders.



Sitting area



Veggies in containers



Monochromatic look in a garden

Click below to find out what the proven winners are for 2021

[https://www.provenwinners.com/2021\\_National\\_Plants](https://www.provenwinners.com/2021_National_Plants)

*“Earth laughs in flowers”*

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

## COLD WINTER PROJECT



Deb Bieschke, Plantaholics and Potpourri, created the beautiful frozen suncatcher on the left for her yard. Her internet inspiration (above) was made in a heart-shaped cake pan—the design choice is up to you!

See a basic tutorial here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TFykbp-ziic>

To see your club's photos or stories published  
in the newsletter, please send them to:  
[CRGnews815@gmail.com](mailto:CRGnews815@gmail.com)

## PBS WISCONSIN FREE GARDEN & LANDSCAPE EXPO

<https://wigardenexpo.com/>

The Garden Expo will be held virtually this year, so you will be able to participate in all the free activities as you sit comfortably at home. Here are some examples of topics from the website.

- Shop from the Exhibitor Mall. All exhibitors' websites are included so you can see the products and buy if you wish.
- View a full schedule of presentations and screenings such as:  
Sensational Seasonal Plants, Body Stretches for Gardeners, Fearless Plant Propagation, Growing Potatoes, Old Fashioned Flowers that Pollinators and You Will Enjoy, Gardening in Small Spaces.
- A photo gallery starting February 20 will include the 2020 and 2021 Photography Competition, Botanical Quilt Show, Floral Design Exhibit, Garden Still Life Painting Demo.
- "Ask the Experts" - get advice and tips from gardening experts.
- Virtual garden tours starting February 20 of 8 inspiring community gardens. See a 365° view of the gardens from a special immersive camera.



# WINTER ACTIVITIES

## LUMINARIA

Severson Dells Nature Center—Free Event

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 6 PM – 10 PM

Tix: [www.seversondells.com/events/luminaria-2021](http://www.seversondells.com/events/luminaria-2021)

The beloved annual Luminaria event is rescheduled as a special Valentine's Day edition. Take a walk on the candlelit forest trail and warm up by a roaring fire in the moonlight. There will be s'more kits for purchase and Disco Chicken food truck will be on location so that you may add delicious food to your experience!

Keep your nose warm and keep your community healthy - please wear a mask.

This event is provided **free** to the community.

Due to Covid-19, we are requiring registration this year for this free event.

Sign up for one time slot: 6 PM, 7 PM, 8 PM, or 9 PM.

## WINTER BINGO CHALLENGE

Host: 815 Outside

Dates: January 1 - February 28

Locations: Variable

Learn more at <https://815outside.com/winter-bingo-challenge/>.

Following the success of the Explore 20 in 2020 Challenge this past summer, 815 Outside is hosting a winter challenge to inspire residents to get outdoors and enjoy local natural areas. Residents of all ages are invited to experience nature in new ways this winter.

To participate, individuals and families should sign up on 815 Outside's Winter Challenge webpage, choose a row or column, in which to make a bingo, and then get outside! Participants can choose to complete one bingo (five outdoor activities) and be entered to win a prize package from Fleet Feet Rockford (\$50 value), or complete the entire bingo card (25 outdoor activities) and be entered to win a prize package from Rocktown Adventures (\$100 value). To be entered in a prize drawing, participants must complete the activities between January 1st and February 28th and submit an online completion form.

All of the activities on the bingo card are outdoors, low to no cost, and can be completed in the 815 region. A downloadable version of the bingo card is available for participants to cross off activities as they go.

## ANNUAL KLEHM BIRD COUNT

Each year, Dan and Barb Williams and members of the North Central Illinois Ornithological Society conduct a bird count at Klehm Arboretum & Botanic Garden as a part of the Kiswaukee Christmas Bird Count. Here are their 2020 findings:

Canada Goose - 11  
Bald Eagle - 1 (adult)  
Rock Pigeon - 3  
Eastern Screech-owl - 4  
Saw-whet Owl - 1  
Red-bellied Woodpecker - 5  
Downy Woodpecker - 4  
Hairy Woodpecker - 2  
Blue Jay - 3  
American Crow - 3  
Black-capped Chickadee - 18  
White-breasted Nuthatch - 7  
Red-breasted Nuthatch - 6  
Brown Creeper - 1  
Hermit Thrush - 1  
American Robin - 15  
European Starling - 4  
Cedar Waxwing - 2  
Fox Sparrow - 2  
White-throated Sparrow - 13  
Dark-eyed Junco - 19  
Northern Cardinal - 31  
House Finch - 4  
Red-Crossbill - 4  
American Goldfinch - 8  
House Sparrow - 6



Overall, there were fewer birds at Klehm than average, probably due to lack of food availability. The crab apples and other fruiting trees and shrubs, including invasives like Japanese honeysuckle and Buckthorn, had very little fruit, so the large number of Cedar Waxwings, E. Bluebirds and Robins were not here. The few we saw were clustered around a couple of buckthorns.

The Red Crossbills are unusual at Klehm, but this is a year in which both species of crossbills have moved into Illinois due to a poor cone crop in the north. The 4 flew over and kept going. Two weeks ago, 12 White-winged Crossbills were seen in Klehm, but we did not see any of that species while we were there. Most of the White-throated and Fox Sparrows were in honeysuckles that had fruits.

# WINTER ACTIVITIES, CONTINUED

## CORNELL LAB BIRD CAM

Host: The Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Are you an avid birdwatcher but hate the cold weather? Access the natural world of birds from the warmth of your own home through the wide variety of bird cams provided by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology! Cams range from boreal birds of northern Ontario, to Panama Fruit Feeders, to Osprey nests, and more!

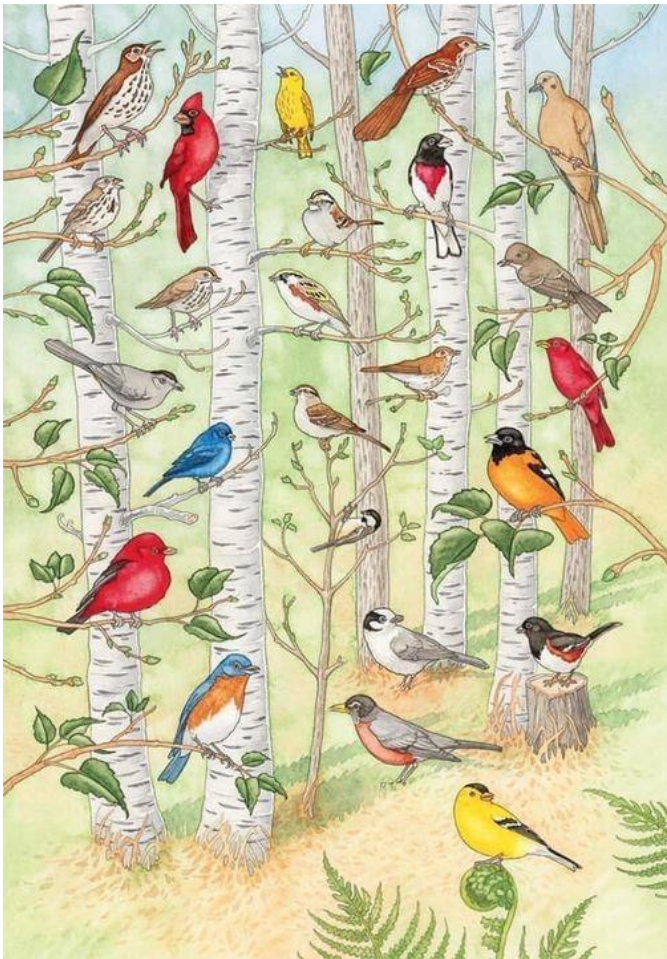
Click here for the full library of available bird cams:  
<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/cams/>

## AUDUBON BIRD GUIDE APP

Host: The Audubon Society

The Audubon Bird Guide is a free and complete field guide to over 800 species of North American birds, right in your pocket. Built for all experience levels, it will help you identify the birds around you, keep track of the birds you've seen, and get outside to find new birds near you.

Click here for more information and to download the app: <https://www.audubon.org/app>



## BIRD SONGS

Hear bird songs as you click on picture of bird:

[https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/mcvmagazine/bird\\_songs\\_interactive/index.html](https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/mcvmagazine/bird_songs_interactive/index.html)

## Blizzard

By William Beyer

Snow fills up  
The sleeping town,  
Falling slowly;  
Slowly down.

It gives dark trees  
Deep coats of white;  
Covers house roofs  
Through the night.

Out a large window  
I can see  
That snow is where  
A road should be.

Morning after storm  
Snow is everywhere.  
Eagerly we hurry out  
Into the wintry air!

### Editor's Note ~

William Beyer was Belvidere's "Poet Laureate," and I was fortunate to know him. He came often into the office where I worked and would share his latest poems. He was a writer for the Chicago Daily News before becoming a poet. His writings appeared in the New York Times, The Commonwealth Yankee English Journal and the Saturday Evening Post. He was a member of the Rockford Writer's Guild and "Who's Who in Poetry" in England. Sadly for us, he passed in January, 2014.