

Newsletter Date:
February 2018



Garden Fresh Tomatoes Yummy!

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***insectary:** garden area designated for flowering plants that attract, harbor & feed beneficial insects - both those that limit the population of harmful insects and those that encourage pollinators, including various bees, butterflies and hummingbirds.



West Plains Community Garden

Let's Get Growing

The Prez Sez...

How can you have Spring Fever one day and be drinking hot chocolate the next? Answer: live in Southern Missouri! For those of you anxious to get potatoes, lettuce, onions and other cool weather crops going, we will have an early sign-up event on February 15 with regular sign-ups the first weekend of March. You can get right into the garden as soon as you register.

While congratulating ourselves on having just completed an ambitious 3-year renovation in time for Spring Planting 2017, the ran began to fall...and fall We, along with many others, received severe damage from what is now rated a 500-1000 Year Flood. Swept away were the top several inches of highly improved garden soil, a large compost bin full of compost, 36 new western cedar garden frames and 11 Veggie Trugs & accessories, our newly-installed pathways, an almost new 10x12 wooden tool shed and all our tools including custom-made hoes and a special broadfork. The force of the water turned our smaller green shed around, breaking off and destroying the lean-to greenhouse. From almost one end of the park to the other, piling it on the picnic pavilion and grinding it into our gardens, gravel and asphalt were deposited from the Armstrong Flooring parking lot north of us. Debris was everywhere.

However, our community's determination and ability to work together became apparent in the aftermath. Dozens of people came to the garden one Saturday and started shoveling gravel. Three business owners later brought their own equipment and removed still more gravel. Grump's Grub, Ozark Cafe, The Sole Cafe at the Grizzly Lofts and The Coffee Shack are donating 5-gallon buckets of compostables. Nearby AmeriCorps teams have installed new cedar garden frames and replaced most of the ruined pathways.

All in all, we tabulated material losses of around \$24,000. The local chapter of the Community Foundation of the Ozarks provided funds to purchase lumber for 36 new garden frames. Individuals have donated tools. There remain other unmet needs, such as funds to replace 2 or 3 Veggie Trugs and the wherewithal to replace the 10x12 wooden tool shed. If anyone wishes to make a financial contribution, please see our administrator Dawn Hicks at the Health Department or speak to one of the garden committee members listed in this newsletter.

Everyone likes a "twice-baked potato". How about a twice-built garden?

Happy Gardening! Ginny Henderson

Two Sign-Up Events



Master Gardener Classes Scheduled for March:

The Master Gardener course will be held this spring at the Howell County Extension Office in the East Towne Center in West Plains, Friday & Saturday, March 22 and 23. To learn more about fees and exact times, you may stop by or call Teresa or Tammy at the local office at 256-2391 or call the Jasper County Extension office at 417 / 358 - 2158.



The first event will be Thursday, February 15, at the Health Department from 1 - 2 PM and after the "Balance in the Garden" presentation, 4 - 5 PM. The second event will be in the civic center lobby during the Home & Garden Show, Friday, March 2 from 3- 8 PM; and Saturday, March 3 from 9 AM - 5 PM. Ground-level gardens are 4' x 22' and rent for \$10; Veggie Trugs, gardens on legs for those with mobility challenges, are 2.5' x 6' and rent for \$7.50. Visiting our table at the civic center does not require a Home Show ticket.

Want to garden but short on time? Rent half a ground space, measuring approximately 4' x 10', for only \$5.00! There is nothing so satisfying as a small patch of ground, productive and well-tended. Small is good!

"Balance in the Garden" Presentation February 15th

Gail Rowley, professional nature photographer and experienced organic gardener, will present her much-loved power-point program "Balance in the Garden" at the Howell County Health Department on Thursday, February 15, at 2 PM. There is no charge to attend. All garden lovers and the public are invited.

Rowley has presented to our group before, but we never get tired of listening to her. She has added more material on native flowering plants and their positive role in an organic garden.

Refreshments are courtesy of **Health Haven Botanical Gardens, Master Gardeners West Plains Chapter, Ozarks Native Plant Society & West Plains Community Garden**. Folks from each group will be on hand to answer questions about their organization at break time.

Sign-ups for space at the community garden will be offered from 1 - 2 PM and after the presentation until 5 PM. Details are elsewhere in this newsletter.

Work Parties Set for Thursday & Sunday Afternoons!

This Spring, in suitable weather, we will be at the garden to work on garden projects and our own plots. A side growth of these sessions are the tossing about of ideas to improve the garden and - hey, you can catch up on garden gossip! An hour here and there with other gardeners will be good for you and good for your garden, too. Times will be approximately 4-6 PM on Thursdays and 1-3 PM on Sundays with reminders being sent out, your choice of email, voice messages, texts, etc. See you at the garden!

What's All the Fuss?

Why do people go to the trouble to plant heirloom or open-pollinated varieties and then save the seeds? Why are organic seeds offered in seed catalogs?

There are a variety of reasons. But the motivation we want to highlight in this newsletter is avoidance of neonicotinoids or "neonics", for short. Neonics are a family of pesticides used in large-scale agricultural settings but also in seed production and nursery settings where plants are started from seed for re-sale as seedlings, starts or transplants. Neonics are especially dangerous, because this type of pesticide is systemic and shows up in the more mature version of the plant - in the stems, the leaves, the blossoms, the pollen and the seeds. What happens when the seeds of this affected plant are saved and then sown?

There are also various reasons the honeybee population is challenged and the phenomenon of hive collapse is on the increase, but experts believe neonics are one culprit.

What can we do as individuals? For seedlings you are starting yourself or for direct sowing into the garden, obtain seeds labeled organic or seeds that come from organically raised plants whenever possible. Ask questions of your plant supplier, although most will say they have very little control over their supply chain.

We can - and are - taking action as a group! In a few weeks, we will be planting seedlings from the Missouri Prairie Foundation in our insectaries*. These "Grow Native!" transplants are from seed collected in natural prairies throughout the state. In compliance with floodway regulations that limit permanent structures at the garden, we are considering replacement of the lean-to greenhouse damaged in the flood with a small portable that can be folded up in the winter. Community gardeners can start their seedlings - from organic seed - in the portable greenhouse!

When I first heard about neonics and called a large plant supplier who had *supposedly* sworn off the pesticide, I wanted to put a towel over my head and give up, hearing Roseanna Roseanna-danna say in her squeaky voice, "Never mind!". But a journey of a thousand miles starts with the first step, and the only thing that has ever created positive change in the world is a few committed individuals banding together to make that change. So, let us take that first step, now, and be the change we want to see.

Soil Conditions for Spring 2018

Coming back from the flood is not easy, but we remain committed to an organic community garden that is user-friendly for gardeners and visitors, regardless of mobility issues, eco-sustainable and productive for years to come!

Removal of a majority of the gravel from the flood has taken place, and we thank all who helped with that chore. We continue to reduce soil compaction from the building of the concrete sidewalks and Promenade/Resource Alley/Special Needs Parking. Last fall we sprinkled some gypsum and horse stall manure on most beds to help loosen the soil and added a small amount of compostables and screened, high quality topsoil. Even a few night crawlers were added here and there from an internet worm farm, hoping they will tunnel through the compaction as they were doing prior to the flood. A black composting bin will be set up shortly in the northwest corner of the garden to accept coffee grounds, eggshells, raw fruit/veggie scraps and leaves from the bags accumulated along the east side of the garden. As always, any time you can point us to a good supply of manures and other additives for the entire garden, we are happy to pursue those.

The garden committee will purchase straw for gardeners to mulch their plots this spring. Not only will mulch keep your garden soil more consistently damp and make constant watering unnecessary, it will keep weeds to a minimum and break down over time to improve the texture of your soil. Win-win-win!

West Plains Community Garden

Here are ways you can get in touch with garden committee members:

Dawn Hicks / Garden Administrator, Health Dept., 180 Kentucky (behind Huddle House)

dawn.hicks@lpha.mo.gov 256 - 7078

Ginny Henderson / president gin52henderson@gmail.com256-6977

Sherrill Thompson / vice-president sherrillt@centurytel.net256-2391

Joyce Heddy / treasurer joyceheddy@gmail.com (417) 277 - 5744

Candace Mallory / secretary manicfisherguy@yahoo.com256-7634

Calvin Maginel / at-large talkstotrout@gmail.com

This group serves a one-year term to October 25 2018, when a meeting of all gardeners will be called and new officers elected.

We're on the web!

www.westplainscommunitygarden.org

Please Mark Your Calendars!

February 15th-the "Balance in the Garden" workshop from 2-4 pm at the Howell County Health Dept.

February 15th-sign ups for garden spaces from 1-2 pm and 4-5 pm at the health department

March 2 & 3-Home and Garden Show at the West Plains Civic Center. Community garden sign up for spaces at our booth in the Lobby. Friday 3-8 pm and Saturday 9 am-5 pm.

Insectary Gardens

Thanks to Calvin our committee member, who reached out to GrowNative and asked about getting some native plants for our garden insectaries. We will be getting 60 small plants which will include the following: butterfly milkweed, marsh milkweed, common milkweed, purple coneflower, New England aster, showy goldenrod and slender mountain mint.

These plants will be small this year but once they get established and take off they are perennials that will come back every year. They will help to bring in the "good" bugs and pollinators that we need to make our gardens grow and flourish.

Our community garden is successful thanks to everyone who finds ways such as this and helps to continually make improvements!

