

THINGS TO DO THIS MONTH

Indoor Garden

← Keep to a monthly fertilizing schedule for houseplants. Inspect regularly for pests and disease.

← Wash any empty pots that may be called into service at "potting-up" time, as salts and diseases can linger on the pot walls.

← Mist houseplants often, or use pebble trays.

Edible Garden

← Start seeds of pepper, eggplant and tomato. These need 8-10 weeks growing time before planting outdoors.

← Shop garden outlets and nurseries for interesting flower and vegetable seeds. Don't get caught with the same tired marigolds and impatiens this year!

← Keep your micro-greens going. Try experimenting with radish, arugula, and pea seeds.

February 2011 Newsletter

G Brookfield GARDEN Club

About 70 years ago, in Zone 5 and across our nation, citizens started "Victory Gardens" to provide their families with inexpensive produce that were unavailable at local markets. Today, we look to our home gardens to give us fresh organic foods not so easily found at the grocery. This year, the year of the "vegetable", we will look at some popular - and some unusual - vegetables, and at ways to make them a success in every "victory" garden.



Robin's forced crocuses (above), and overwintered cyclamen

Our Next Meeting:
Sat., February 26
9:30 a.m.

Seed Exchange and "Winter Sowing"
Don't forget to bring seeds, tubers, bulbs, and/or rhizomes - and a milk jug or transparent gallon container

Brookfield Village Hall
Lower Level
8820 Brookfield Ave.
Brookfield, Illinois

Meeting Details:

The Brookfield Garden Club is having a seed exchange at its February 26 meeting, at 9:30 a.m. Please bring seeds, bulbs, corms, and rhizomes to share... plus envelopes, containers, used medicine bottles, etc. to store and take home items collected. If you don't have any of these items to share at this time... please join us anyway as we will also be sharing gardening tips.

The club welcomes novice to experienced gardeners.

We will also be having a "winter sowing" so don't forget a milk jug or a transparent gallon container

Microgreens Update

by Char Krueger

After the January garden club meeting, I stopped by my son's house and carried the micro-greens I had brought to the meeting inside to keep them from freezing their green leaves off in the cold car. My two year old grand-daughter wanted to know what I had brought so I gave her a few to try. Then the two older girls wanted a taste too. They all seemed to enjoy them, and they especial-

ly enjoyed cutting the greens off with the little scissors attached to the tray. I have had a lot of fun experimenting with the micro-greens and can't wait to see if a second crop in the same soil works as well as the first. Brookfield Garden Club member Maryann says she plants micro-greens and sets them outside. The birds gobble them up as quickly as she can grow them.

We would like to hear about

your experiences with micro greens. Write Robin and let her know what you think. Or send her a picture of your micro greens.

At the January meeting some suggestions were made about planting micro-greens:

- To save money, buy seeds when they are on sale at the

end of the growing season.

- Starbucks napkins are chlorine free and are a free substitute for expensive chlorine free paper towels. Starbucks coffee stirrers make great free plant labels

If you missed out on the micro-green planting, come to the February 26 meeting and get your kit, which consists of seeds, organic soil, organic paper towel and planting instructions. ←



Robin's microgreens were, obviously, a success

The Solanaceum Family- Our Warm Weather Staples

by Robin O'Malley

The warmest weather crops- eggplant, pepper and tomato- take the longest to start and the most nutrition to grow in our Zone 5 gardens. But they reward us with some of the most diverse and tasty vegetables that are available for us.

Eggplant: A very common food in India, China, and the Phillipines, the eggplant thrives in hot, long summers. The plants are very attractive in a container or tucked in your summer flower garden. Colors range from pure white to lavender to deep glossy black. Sizes and shapes vary from the traditional Italian "Black Beauty" used in Parmesans and caponatas, to the long and slender small-seeded Asian varieties, such as Ichiban, Neon, and Little Fingers. Rosa Bianca, a beautiful lavender striped species, is considered to be one of the best-tasting eggplants ever.

Sweet Peppers: These beauties are commonly known as "green peppers", but all will ripen to bold reds, yellows, oranges or purple/blacks. Sweet

peppers have a distinctive "bite" from the starches in the pepper, which turn to sugars as they mature and change color, releasing rich flavors and increasing the nutritional benefit

tenfold. Classic bell peppers are blocky, large and take longer



Sweet Peppers

to mature. Sweet Chocolate, Islander, and Gourmet Orange will provide beautiful late summer color as the fruits ripen. Apple, banana, Italian, or frying peppers are smaller with varied shapes and work well in stir frying and dehydrating. Look for Mini Apple, Yellow Banana, and Carmen. Miniature peppers, such as Jingle Bells, which are great in containers, can produce up to 50 or more



Eggplant

tasty fruits for use in salads or appetizer platters. They can also be overwintered indoors in a sunny location.

Tomatoes: Found in a mind-numbing number of varieties, from tiny grapes to 3 lb mammoths in every color of the rainbow, tomatoes are the number one vegetable plant grown in U.S. home gardens. Tomatoes are divided into 2 categories:



Tomatoes

determinate-which means a more compact plant which sets fruit all at once (great for containers and smaller gardens); and indeterminate-which are large and rambling, producing fruits all season long. Almost all heirlooms are in this category. Cherry, grape and pear tomatoes are small and flavorful, and heavy producers. Try Yellow Pear, Black Cherry, or the strawberry shaped Tomatoberry Garden. Plum or Roma tomatoes have lots of flesh and very little juice, making them ideal for sauces and sandwich slices. Principe Borghese is a Roma that is outstanding for dried tomatoes. Slicers and beefsteak

tomatoes, the largest of the group come in heirloom and non-heirloom varieties. For big meaty tomatoes, try Mortgage Lifter, Giant Belgium, or the popular Brandywine, which now comes in pink and purple. Designer-looking tomatoes

include Zebra, Mr. Stripey, and Japanese Black trifle.

Follow these guidelines for all these heat-loving plants: Add lots of compost or organic soil to the planting bed as they are all heavy feeders. Eggplants need a very warm place to germinate-up to 80 degrees, and benefit from a side dressing of 10-10-10 fertilizer when blossoms set, and a high nitrogen dressing when fruits appear. Peppers are very sensitive to cold, and will drop blossoms if unprotected. They enjoy a 5-10-10 side dressing when blossoms set, and a high nitrogen dressing when first fruits appear. Tomatoes should be planted deeply-up to the first set of true leaves-to encourage good strong root production. They like a 5-10-10 side dressing at blossom time, and another of the same at fruit setting. ←

Participate in your newsletter!

If you have a gardening question, a topic you would like to hear more about, a photo of your own garden, or an article you would like to submit, please email me at quilty622@sbcglobal.net.

visit the Brookfield Garden Club online at:

<http://groups.google.com/group/BrookfieldGardenClub>

Heed the Seed Packet!

by Robin O'Malley

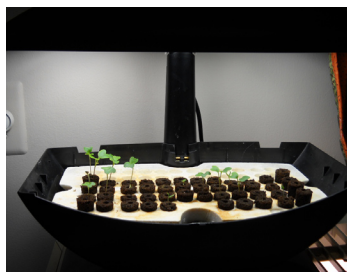
We are all enthralled by the photos of big, beautiful flowers and vegetables on the cover of seed packets. And the enticing descriptions reel us in with promised of fast-growing, abundant, disease and pest resistant plants. But, consumer beware! Some of those terms that catch our eye should make us cautious in our selections.

An example in my own garden is the obedient plant-it promised to bloom all summer, have an upright habit, and be self-seeding. That was an understatement- I spent 3 years pulling hundreds of "volunteer" obedient plants that emerged up to 70' away from the original plant. I planted a lovely bee balm, only to find it sending up suckers in every direction. Jerry recounts his battle with

the attractive herb, borage, which spread "prolifically" throughout his landscape. Others have had similar experiences with amaranth, sweet pea, raspberries, datura, anemone, and even ornamental grasses—(always look for "clumping" grass on the packet or container)

Some red-flag words to look for: prolific, fast-growing, self-seeding, vigorous, spreading habit, indeterminate, native, and naturalizing. Instead, look for neatly forming habit, compact, edging, border or mass planting species.

If you must have one or more of these for your home garden, try them out in a container for a season, and save yourself a lot of digging in the future. ←



Robin's broccoli and brussel sprouts are getting a head start in her Aerogarden.

Interesting and Informative Websites:

www.freshorigins.com

Fresh Origins Farm of San Diego is a wholesaler of microgreens and seed, with interesting FAQs and recipes.

www.prairiegodmothers.com

Prairie Godmothers out of Flossmoor IL is a network of gardeners who specialize in creating sustainable, earth-friendly gardens.

www.territorialseed.com

Territorial Seed Company offers an impressive selection of seeds, bulbs, plants and garden supplies.

Seed Starting Timetables

Horticultural Zone 5: Start seeds indoors in early March.

There are vegetables, herbs and flowers that require more or less time than the standard eight weeks. Here are the seed starting schedules for them:

Vegetables/Herbs

- Six Weeks:** Asparagus, Fennel, Onions, Rhubarb, Shallots, Tomatillos, and Basil
- Eight Weeks:** Eggplant, Tomatoes, Chiles, Sweet Peppers, Chives, Sage, and Thyme
- Nine Weeks:** Broccoli, Brussel Sprouts, Cabbage and Kohlrabi (transplant out four weeks before the last frost date).

Flowers

- Five Weeks:** Alyssum
- Six Weeks:** Cutting Ageratum, China Asters, Celosia, Cleome, Coleus, Nepeta Catmint, Echinacea, Euphorbia, Forget-Me-Nots, Dahlia, Nicotiana, Scabiosa, Snapdragons and Thunbergia
- Eight Weeks:** Baby's Breath, Black-Eyed Susans, Milkweed, Coreopsis, Gaillardia, Globe Amaranth, Helichrysum, Hibiscus, Hollyhock, Heuchera, Nigella, Platycodon, Statice and Yarrow
- Ten Weeks:** Dianthus, Digitalis, Lobelia and Heliotrope
- Twelve Weeks:** Datura, Salvia and Viola

EVENTS AROUND THE AREA

Hausermann's Open House - Orchid Show & Sale 2011

Two Weekends! Twice the Fun!
Feb 25th, 26th & 27th, and March 4th, 5th & 6th
from 9 am to 5:30 pm
2 N 134 Addison Rd. Villa Park, IL 60181
2 Blocks north of North Ave (Rt. 64)
Phone (630) 543-6855 for more info
<http://orchidsbyhausermann.com/events.html>

2011 Chicago Flower and Garden Show

Chicago's Navy Pier (discounted parking available)
Sat. Mar. 5 to Sun. Mar. 13; \$15 - \$17 Children \$5 (group discounts)
Monday - Saturday 10:00 - 8:00 Sunday 10:00 - 6:00
<http://www.chicagoflower.com>

Garfield Park Conservatory Spring Flower Show

300 N. Central Park Ave. Chicago, IL
Saturday, January 29th - Sunday, May 8th
Hours: 9 am - 5 pm daily, Wednesdays until 8 pm
Where: Show House Cost: Free! Just drop by!
www.garfieldconservatory.org www.greennetchicago.org

