

Quarterly Newsletter

Well, the groundhog *didn't* see his shadow this year which means it will be an early spring, so you better get a jump on your garden and yardwork!

This issue we have some great tips for you on preparing for your spring gardens, pests to keep an eye out for, green holidays, and more!

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- Tips, Tricks, and Upcycling

Thank you!

Thank you to everyone who participated in our Holiday Decor Swap! We were able to update our holiday without negatively impacting the environment.

Mission - Success!

Current Internal MCCA Green Events

We had such a great time with the holiday swap that we are doing more! Start looking around for things in your own home that no longer suit your mood and bring them in!

- Feb – Hobby swap
- Mar – Media/recipe swap
- Apr – Clothing swap
- May – Games/toy swap



Giving Garden Update



We will once again be planting a giving garden! This year, we will try to introduce some more vegetables and maximize space.

What is Square Foot Gardening?

The idea is maximizing production in minimal space. This is a long-standing technique that has been used for generations but has regained popularity because of its sustainability, reduced need for weeding and watering, and easier accessibility due to the size.

Endangered Creature of the Quarter

Short-Eared Owls

With very few pairs nesting in Illinois, this once abundant species of raptor (All owls are!) is now endangered in Illinois, and has declined 65% since 1970. Short-Eared Owls have a large head and a dark, circlelike flattened face and short “ear” tufts.

Facts:

- Short-Eared Owls have a “floppy” flight motion similar to butterflies.
- Their eggs incubate in 21 days.
- They typically lay 4-8 eggs in nests they make on the ground in tall grasses or reeds.
- They might make a sound like “wow”, “kee-yow”, or “waow” but not “who?”
- The most active time for Short-Eared Owls is at dawn and dusk.
- If you see a northern harrier, you will likely see a Short-Eared Owl nearby as they often roost together.



Why are they endangered?

- Habitat loss from fragmentation and human activities.
- Human development has reduced their habitat and made them unable to nest in areas where they once did.

How can we help?

- Preserving Illinois prairies and marshes
- Do not disturbing nests

Upcoming "Green" Holidays

There are many "Green" holidays throughout the year. If you are interested in knowing more, look [here](#).

February 27	<u>International Polar Bear Day</u>
March 3	<u>World Wildlife Day</u>
March 14	<u>International Day of Action for Rivers</u>
March 21	<u>International Day of Action for Forests</u>
March 22	<u>World Water Day</u>
March 23	<u>World Meteorological Day</u>
April 3	<u>World Aquatic Animal Day</u>

Green Tips - Preparing your gardens for Spring

Spring is full of fresh beginnings, but it takes a bit of work on the front end.

If you utilized the eco-friendly approach and left your plant material over-winter (which is fantastic for native insects and non-migratory birds, as they love and need them in the winter!), its likely your garden is not looking it's best.

Read on for an essential list of what you need to be doing to best prepare.



- Prune perennials back as soon as you see new growth.

- Remove any dead annuals from last year, as they have already done their re-seeding job, if they are an annual that will, indeed, reseed.
- After the last hard frost, prune back your woody shrubs, as many will only bloom on new branches. You will know it's time when you begin to see buds and new growth.
- Cut back your perineal ornamental grass as close to the ground as you can get (and split them every 3-4 years). Yes, it's a chore, but here are some [tips](#).
- Prepare your soil! Many local garden centers will test your soil and tell you what you should add for optimal growth, based on what you are cultivating.
- Divide and transplant. The University of Illinois Extension has some great [tips](#).
- Stake your plants. The earlier you do it, the easier it is.
- Rest, relax, and watch your hard work pay off!

INVASIVE SPECIES ALERT

Spotted Lanternfly

Facts:

1. They haven't been in the U.S. for long. They were discovered in Berks County, Pennsylvania in 2014. The first in Illinois was found in late September of this year.
2. They are native to China, India, and Vietnam.
3. The lanternflies pick out a "tree of heaven" that they take over and eventually kill. Adults prefer willow trees. For nymphs, they prefer, Willow, Maple, Poplar, Prunus trees, Apple trees, Pine trees, and grapevines.
4. Spotted lanternflies might look like moths, but they're not related to that flying, winged pest. They are planthoppers and related to cicadas and aphids.
5. Spotted lanternflies don't have any natural predators in the United States.
6. The adults live one season. You will see adult lanternflies from June until August. They then lay eggs in the fall that don't hatch until May.
7. Their life cycle is one year long. The eggs lay dormant from fall until spring. They spend late spring as nymphs until they reach adulthood during the summertime.
8. They aren't great at flying, even though they have two sets of wings. While some can fly better than others, you're more likely to see it hop around than fly.



Signs and symptoms:

1. Plants that ooze or weep and have a fermented odor.
2. Buildup of sticky fluid (honeydew) on plants and on the ground underneath infested plants.
3. Sooty mold on infested plants.

How to help:

- When preparing for the winter holidays, check outdoor items for spotted lanternfly egg masses, including those items you may bring indoors. Scrape any egg masses into a plastic zippered bag filled with hand sanitizer. Then, zip the bag shut and dispose of it properly.
- Inspect your trees and plants for signs of this pest, particularly at dusk and at night when the insects tend to gather in large groups on the trunks or stems of plants.
- Inspect trees (in particular, tree of heaven), bricks, stone, and other smooth surfaces for egg masses (see picture for example.)



Learn more [here](#).

Tips, Tricks, and Upcycling

Baking Soda Uses - More than just for cooking!

Did you know that you likely have another miracle worker in your home? Baking soda. It's true! Here are some uses for baking soda that you might not be aware of:

1. Cleaning toilet bowls. A mixture of baking soda (1/4 cup) and vinegar (1/2 cup) will create bubbles (think 7th grade science project), use a stiff toothbrush (old! Not your housemates), and scrub. Repeat as necessary for a sparkling throne.
2. Unclog drains. Similar to above but use one cup and one cup of HOT vinegar. Let it sit for a few minutes and *carefully* flush with boiling water.
3. Remove cooked on food from stainless steel cookware. Add baking soda to cookware, add enough hot water to make a medium paste, let sit for a few minutes, hours, even overnight. Then use a scrub pad to bring back the shine.
4. Clean fresh produce. Add a couple teaspoons of baking soda to a bowl of cold water to eliminate pesticides, wax, and dirt.
5. Sooth sunburned skin. Adding baking soda to your cool bath will help sooth, both the itch and the burn when you have enjoyed the sunshine a bit too long.
6. Craving sweets but trying not to eat them? **RINSE** (do NOT swallow) your mouth with one teaspoon of baking soda mixed with a cup of warm water. This should help curb the craving.
7. Remove sweat stains in clothing. Make a thick paste of baking soda and water, rub it into the stain, let it sit for an hour, and throw it in the wash as usual.
8. Freshen Fido! Sprinkle baking soda allover you dog (outside works best). Avoid the head and face. Pet, rub, massage your dog (likely they will love this part). Leave the powder on for a few minutes, then do your best to brush it all out of your pets fur.
9. Remove bugs and tar from your car. Make a paste of baking soda and water, rub onto the spots with a damp cloth. Let it sit for a few minutes and wipe off.
10. See more tips on the [Farmer's Almanac](#)!

Swap?

First, what is it?

[swäp]

Noun

1. An act of exchanging one thing for another: "let's do a swap"

Verb

1. Take part in an exchange of: "we swapped phone numbers" · "I'd swap places with you any day" · "I was wondering if you'd like to swap with me"

Now, to utilize it: coordinate with coworkers, neighbors, churches, friends, or even create one on Social Media! Swaps can be for anything from clothing, to decor, seasonal tools, games, ect. Get creative and get together!

Swapping has become so popular that Suzanne Agasi created a non-profit, [Clothing Swap](#).

We at MCCA enjoy swaps. In the past months, we have done a clothing swap, holiday decor swap, and have brought in winter coats that we no longer want or need (see above for our upcoming swaps). Anything that our employees don't choose to take is then offered to our clients.

[Got an idea? Let us know!](#)

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