

MANAGING SPRING ALLERGIES NATURALLY • THE ESSENTIAL SPRING GARDEN • CHAUTAUQUA BOTTOMS

# MORSEL

neighborhood.coop

Spring 2020



FREE

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Spring 2020

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## {CO-OP THROW BACK}

In the early 1900s, the Illinois Central Railroad created its St. Louis Division, which was headquartered in Carbondale. At its height, lines radiating in six directions were controlled from the St. Louis Division office, which was located on the town square, directly across the street from the Co-op's first retail location at 102 E. Jackson. In 1985, shortly after the Co-op moved in, the Division office building experienced a catastrophic fire and was torn down. Most of the area became a City of Carbondale parking lot, which it remains today.

This postcard from the 1920s shows the St. Louis Division office after it had been expanded a second time, and how the railroad maintained the lot south of the building as a park. This lot, which is on Main Street, was rededicated as a park in the early 1990s.

# MORSEL

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF  
**NEIGHBORHOOD CO-OP GROCERY**

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**EDITORIAL POLICY**

Morsel is a quarterly magazine produced by Neighborhood Co-op as a means to share news from the Co-op, promote local food, celebrate the seasons, and inspire our owners and patrons to enjoy a healthy lifestyle full of delicious and nutritious food. The views expressed in Morsel are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Co-op's directors, staff, or ownership. Health and nutrition articles are for informational purposes only and do not constitute medical advice.

**SUBMISSION POLICY**

Morsel accepts submissions on an ongoing basis. Letters, articles, artwork and ideas are all welcome! We reserve the right to edit content for brevity and clarity. Please send inquiries and submissions to amy@neighborhood.coop.

**OUR STORE**

1815 W Main Street, Carbondale, IL 62901

Neighborhood Co-op is a cooperative grocery store owned by members of our very own community. Most of our staff are even owners! We are a founding member of the National Cooperative Grocers, a network of more than 200 cooperative grocery stores all across America. We combine our buying power to bring you the best food at the best value while staying locally governed. We work hard to support our community and improve our local food system.

**OUR MISSION**

Neighborhood Co-op Grocery aims to serve the needs of its owners and patrons by providing wholesome foods, economically, in the cooperative tradition and in ways that best promote the health of the individual, the community and the earth.

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Generally, meetings are held in the Co-op Community Room once a month at 6p.m.

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**ECO PRINTING**

This magazine was printed by ModernLitho. They are certified to the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI®) and by the Forestry Stewardship Council® (FSC®) for their efforts in utilizing papers originating from a sustainable, ecological source and for maintaining rigorous processes, procedures and training to ensure their standards of excellence and environmental responsibility.

# Sales & Events

at the Co-op

## MAY

02

### Owner Fest (Zoom Meeting)

Following guidance from state and federal public health authorities, which restricts gatherings of more than 10 people, Neighborhood Co-op's Annual Owners' Meeting (AOM)/Owner Fest will be conducted online this year on the Zoom digital platform instead of at 17th Street BBQ.

The AOM will still be held on Saturday, May 2. The virtual meeting room will open at 5:30 pm to give you plenty of time to log in and get settled. Plan to log in early and make sure you can connect if you have any concerns.

Visit [neighborhood.coop/ownership](https://neighborhood.coop/ownership) for login information.

06

### Wellness Wednesday

10% off all wellness items!

01  
31



### Owner Appreciation

So that we meet the needs of as many customers as possible, we are canceling Owner Appreciation Weekend in May. INSTEAD, we are offering each owner a 10% off coupon good toward any one transaction they choose during the month of May.

## JUNE

03

### Wellness Wednesday

10% off all wellness items!

18

### Red Cross Blood Drive

TBA - Dependent on governmental restrictions due to COVID-19

## JULY

03

### Wellness Wednesday

10% off all wellness items!

## AUGUST

05

### Wellness Wednesday

10% off all wellness items!

22

23



### Owner Appreciation

TBA - Dependent on governmental restrictions due to COVID-19

## SEPTEMBER

12

### Farm Crawl

TBA - Dependent on governmental restrictions due to COVID-19



# GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT



FRANCIS MURPHY

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## Hey, how did this black swan get in here?

*We plan, God laughs* – Old Yiddish proverb

Last summer the board and management of the Co-op got together for a full-day retreat that included a scenario planning exercise where we contemplated a future 10 years distant in which was the Co-op is thriving. We brainstormed potential key drivers that would influence this future, whether from the grocery industry, society as a whole, or our own community. We then prioritized those drivers according to those that seemed both the *least predictable* and the *most critical*. Some of the top critical drivers we came up with included the fate of SIU, the 2020 election, and climate change and its impacts on the food system.

What we didn't ponder was "black swans", which are unpredictable or unforeseen events that typically come with great consequences. According to Wikipedia, the black swan theory was developed by Nassim Nicholas Taleb to explain:

1. The disproportionate role of high-profile, hard-to-predict, and rare events that are beyond the realm of normal expectations in history, science, finance, and technology.
2. The non-computability of the probability of the consequential rare events using scientific methods (owing to the very nature of small probabilities).
3. The psychological biases that blind people, both individually and collectively, to uncertainty and to a rare event's massive role in historical affairs.

In ancient times black swans were presumed not to exist because Europeans had only seen white swans. A Latin phrase which denied the possibility

of black swans came into common usage in the Middle Ages, but in 1697 Dutch explorers saw black swans in Australia. Suddenly, the phrase became a metaphor for the fallibility of human assumptions about the nature of reality.

I think that we all can relate. Here at the Co-op, I could not imagine a future in which a global pandemic would cause us to shut down or repurpose large areas of the store, that cashiers would be working behind protective acrylic shields, and that our owners and customers would arrive in masks and gloves. I never thought about the Co-op being an essential business that would remain open as large swaths of the economy shut down. And I don't think that anyone working at the Co-op knew that one day they would be doing their best to keep themselves and the community safe in the face of a potentially deadly virus.

Which brings me to gratitude. For my coworkers for continuing to be kind and patient with each other and with owners and customers despite the enormous stress that they are under. For the board, many of whom have given up their monthly stipends in support of the financial health of the Co-op. For our bankers, who got our Paycheck Protection Program loan through the log jam at the SBA portal. For the owners and customers who have expressed concern and have asked great questions about what the Co-op is doing to protect the staff. For the folks who have donated masks and hand sanitizer. For everyone who continues to patronize our relatively small, vulnerable business in the face of an unprecedented economic downturn. And finally, for everyone doing their best in the surreal new world that we share.



## Growing up Co-op: One Mom's Perspective

by **Kristy Bender**

I grew up in northern Virginia. The county I grew up in is currently home to about 1.15 million people or roughly 2,700 people per square mile. My parents grew up in Chicago and St. Louis. Growing up in an urban environment with parents who were also from an urban environment is one contributing factor that left me entirely disconnected from my food source. As a child, I didn't have the opportunity to visit any farms where food was produced, we never talked about the origin of our food, and frozen convenience food was a staple. I'm embarrassed to admit now that there was a long period of my childhood when I thought all corn grown was for human consumption. Having the opportunity to raise our kids to have a better understanding of, and be more connected to, not only the food they eat, but also the community that they live in has been a chance for me to educate myself right alongside them.

Because of the emphasis on local products in the store, we've talked about what it means to have access to and to eat locally available food. We are able to look up locations of highlighted producers on a map. We've taken advantage of Farm Crawl days to visit some of the farmers who supply food to the store, and we've even visited some of the farms on our own.

The bulk bins are a regular stop as we wander through the store. We've learned the value of different flours as we've tried our hands at bread and pizza making, we've worked our way through all sort of beans they didn't even know existed as we've tried out soup recipes, and, of course, we've tried all the sweets (Don't worry, I'm not allowing them to handpick their beloved yogurt covered pretzels out of the bin). Having a say in making their own spice blend for roasted vegetables can go a long way in encouraging even our pickiest eater to take a bite.

Although some owner presentations aren't geared towards the younger crowd, my nine-year-old recently asked to attend a presentation about mushrooms. He heard firsthand about how the farm was started, how the mushrooms are grown, and even got to examine how different varieties grow. He came home and told his siblings all about what he had learned. My kids like to tell people the story behind their food.

They are part of the generation that is focused on reducing waste and recycling regardless of the setting, so the wooden nickel program provides additional encouragement for us to bring our own bags into the store. We take time to talk about the two organizations that are currently participating in the program, who they serve, and why those donations are important. It's an easy way to have conversations about our community that might otherwise be overlooked.

Don't get me wrong, we still enjoy eating convenience food, and sometimes I rush them through the store quickly as we are on our way to another activity. When we have a chance, however, we take our time wandering through the store at their pace, where they can check out what's available that week while eating their fruit and trying out samples of food they never would have considered touching (I'm looking at you, cassava root).

We aren't always the quietest customers in the store -- you'll find us weighing every last one of our fruits and veggies just for fun and loudly exclaiming when we guess the weight correctly, having animated discussions over the merits of purple versus orange carrots, or talking about which farm to buy our eggs from. My kids are gaining an important perspective that was lost on me as a child. I hope when you see my family in the store you will stop us and say 'hello' and that you will also encourage other families to stop in and look around.



# COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

## Wooden Nickels has temporarily been suspended



The COVID-19 virus has been challenging in many ways. Sometimes we don't think about all the different ways germs are spread. So many of our customers support the initiative to reduce waste by bringing in their own bags. However the CDC and Health Department recommended not allowing personal bags to be used for shopping. In order to keep staff and customers safe, it is best that we do not encourage the use of reusable bags at this time. Therefore we have temporarily suspended our Wooden Nickles program. Have no fear, when the restrictions are lifted, we will resume with the program.

### Not familiar with our Wooden Nickel program? This is what it's about..

Locally, we support smaller organizations that have a regional impact through our Wooden Nickels program. Shoppers receive a Wooden Nickel for every baggable purchase when they bring their own bag to take items home in. They then place that wooden nickel in one of two nonprofit boxes that we house next to our exit doors. These nonprofits are chosen quarterly from suggestions made by staff, customers, owners, and community members.

**We are always looking for organizations to support! Visit [www.neighborhood.coop/community](http://www.neighborhood.coop/community) if you know of an organization that could benefit from our program.**



## Co-op Events

The last two months have been unprecedented with events around the world being canceled due to the COVID pandemic. The Co-op has felt this effect by canceling fundraisers, owner classes, and big sale promotions. Even our Annual Owners Meeting/Owner Fest party has been changed to an online format this year. We know the importance of doing our part to help stop the spread of the virus; we are doing our best to protect all those involved with the Co-op. These cancellations are not only affecting customers and owners, but nonprofit organizations are also getting hit hard.

As you may already know, we host an annual Feed Your Neighbor 5K fundraiser that raises funds for Good Samaritan House of Carbondale. Last year we donated \$3,800 that went toward feeding and sheltering those in need. Good Samaritan counts on those funds to help keep their doors open. It was with a heavy heart that we had to cancel the race this year. However, there is a silver lining to all of this. Preregistered participants, in lieu of a refund, generously donated their entry fee. Also our amazing sponsors allowed us to donate their contributions directly to Good Samaritan. In all, we raised \$2,300! This support says so much about the amazing people and businesses in our community!

With so many people off of work, the need for help is increasing. If you are able, please consider helping those in need. To donate directly to Good Samaritan, visit [goodsamcarbondale.org](http://goodsamcarbondale.org).

**Again, a BIG thank you to our generous 5K sponsors:** AES Solar, Southern Illinois Healthcare, Budslick Management, University Place Dental, Arthur Agency, J&L Robinson Construction Company, John and Marcia Phelps, Monica and Jak Tichenor.

Stay safe and we hope to see you next year!!



# GESUNDHEIT!

## Managing Spring Allergies Naturally

by **Monica Tichenor**



Sneezing. Runny nose. Watery, itchy eyes. Do these uncomfortable symptoms sound familiar? When spring blooms, so does the misery of allergic rhinitis, more commonly known as hay fever. More than 50-million Americans suffer from some kind of allergy, making it the 6th leading cause of chronic illness in the U.S., according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"Allergies are an overactive response made by our immune system to normally harmless substances," says Todd Pierson, N.D., Ph.D and Clinical Associate Professor of Family and Community Medicine for SIU Carbondale's Physician Assistant Program. "Pollens, certain foods (nuts, gluten, dairy), mold, and dust mites are common culprits. In allergic individuals, certain substances are identified as a threat by the body. In these cases, the body releases defensive antibodies that trigger chemical reactions to protect the body, causing allergic reaction symptoms."

If you're one of the many Americans afflicted with seasonal allergies, you may have noticed more intense symptoms in recent years. Changes in our environment, say scientists, are a contributing factor in this phenomenon. According to Climate Central, an independent nonprofit news organization of scientists and journalists who analyze and report on climate science, allergies are a growing problem in the U.S., thanks to the extended growing season caused by rising temperatures and higher pollen production triggered by increased levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. [*"Pollen Problems: Climate Change, the Growing Season, and America's Allergies, 3/27/19, [climatecentral.org/news/report-pollen-allergies-climate-change](https://www.climatecentral.org/news/report-pollen-allergies-climate-change)*]

Pollen, a fine powder released by trees, grasses, flowers, and weeds, is the primary culprit for seasonal allergy sufferers, says Dr. Pierson.

"The pollen from many of our native and non-native trees, as well as grasses such as bermudagrass, bluegrass, ryegrass, and johnsongrass can cause allergies. Many people know about

ragweed allergies, but other common weeds that trigger an allergic response are lambs quarters, pigweed, plantains, nettles, feverfew, and dandelions. Southern Illinois has high humidity during the spring and summer months and, therefore, mold spores are also a big allergen problem for people. The wet and humid climate greatly increases mold spore production."

To identify the specific allergens that are causing you distress, make an appointment to see a healthcare professional and be ready to answer a battery of questions.

"Keep a detailed diary about symptoms and possible triggers before your visit and be prepared to answer questions about signs and symptoms you are experiencing," says Dr. Pierson.

"A skin test may be performed to expose you to small amounts of the proteins found in potential allergens. If you're allergic, you'll likely develop a raised bump (hive) at the test location on your skin. You may also receive a Blood test. Specific IgE (sIgE) blood testing, commonly called radioallergosorbent test (RAST) or ImmunoCAP testing, measures the amount of allergy-causing antibodies in your bloodstream, known as immunoglobulin E (IgE) antibodies. A blood sample is sent to a medical laboratory, where it can be tested for evidence of sensitivity to possible allergens."

If you experience more severe symptoms, beyond the more common symptoms noted earlier, you should request immediate medical intervention.

"Some less common symptoms can be headache, shortness of breath, coughing and wheezing, lightheadedness, a rapid weak pulse, nausea, and vomiting," says Dr. Pierson. "These can also



be signs of asthma or a more severe allergic reaction. Many people with allergies also develop asthma and vice versa. If you experience these symptoms, call 911 or seek advice and care from a health professional."

In addition to checking the daily pollen count and limiting your time outdoors on high pollen days, you can try a variety of at-home interventions that may provide relief.

"You can use a neti pot or a specially designed squeeze bottle to flush out thickened mucus and irritants from your nose," suggests Dr. Pierson. "You can also reduce your exposure to dust mites or pet dander by frequently washing bedding and stuffed toys in hot water, maintaining low humidity in your home during the wet, humid months, regularly using a vacuum with a fine filter, such as a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter, and using a HEPA filter on your home furnace/air-conditioning system."

Other tips include refraining from hanging your clothes outside to dry, replacing carpeting with hard flooring, adopting healthy practices to boost your immune system before allergy season strikes, and wearing a mask with a filter when working outdoors.

If your at-home interventions prove inadequate in managing your symptoms, you may need to seek a specialist.

"For severe allergies or allergies not completely relieved by other treatment, your doctor might recommend allergen immunotherapy," explains Dr. Pierson. "This treatment involves a series of injections of purified allergen extracts, usually given over a period of a few years.

Another form of immunotherapy is a tablet that's placed under the tongue (sublingual) until it dissolves. Sublingual drugs are used to treat some pollen allergies."

Although there has not been a significant amount of research conducted in the U.S. to substantiate the efficacy of natural remedies, some European studies support the use of certain herbs to treat seasonal allergies as a complement to allopathic treatments.

"Herbs that have been shown to help are goldenseal, rosemary, butterbur, elderberry, Chinese licorice, stinging nettle, milkvetch (astragalus), turmeric, skullcap, ginkgo, shisandra, and reishi mushroom," says Dr. Pierson. "Vitamins like B, C, E, and Quercetin can be helpful. Probiotics can help improve digestion, which also can improve the overall immune system."

Don't let seasonal allergies sideline your enjoyment of the great outdoors this year. Meet with your doctor and be specific about your symptoms and concerns. Together you can fashion a well-rounded treatment plan that will not only help to improve your quality of life, but make it a bit easier for you to seize (not sneeze!) the day.

**For more information about seasonal allergies and available treatments, pollen counts, and managing allergy season during the Coronavirus outbreak, visit the following websites:**

- **American College of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology website:** [acai.org/allergies/seasonal-allergies](http://acai.org/allergies/seasonal-allergies)
- **Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America:** [aafa.org/pollen-allergy](http://aafa.org/pollen-allergy)
- **American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology:** [aaaai.org/conditions-and-treatments/allergies](http://aaaai.org/conditions-and-treatments/allergies)
- **National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health:** [nccih.nih.gov/health/allergies/seasonal](http://nccih.nih.gov/health/allergies/seasonal)
- **National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences:** [niehs.nih.gov/health/topics/agents/allergens/pollen/index.cfm](http://niehs.nih.gov/health/topics/agents/allergens/pollen/index.cfm)
- **Pollen.com:** [pollen.com/allergy/news/755855](http://pollen.com/allergy/news/755855)

# The Essential Spring Garden: Tips for the Beginning Gardener

by *Monica Tichenor*

Gone are winter's gray skies, bitter winds, and ice-covered sidewalks. Suddenly, pops of vibrant green dot the landscape and a familiar earthy scent fills the air. It's springtime in southern Illinois!

What you may not realize is that even in the midst of winter, life was pulsing below the frost layer. Complex root systems, microbes, and soil-dwelling animals such as insects and worms were very much alive, quietly preparing for their roles in the growing season ahead.

With spring's arrival and the important work of nourishing organisms already begun, now is an ideal time to plant the garden you've always wanted. If you're a first-time gardener, congratulations on stepping out of your comfort zone! To ease any worries you might have about this new endeavor, two of our region's most experienced gardeners are here with tips to get you started.

## LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Picking the right location is key, says organic gardener Shari Sweeney-Sadowski of Anna, IL, former farmer/owner of Green Ridge Farm in Carbondale, and her husband, Tom Sadowski, both co-founders of the Union County Food Pantry Garden in Anna.

"You'll want a sunny location with good air circulation and soil that drains well," says Shari. "Pick a spot that isn't too close to trees," adds Tom, who says a good rule of thumb, if possible, is to make sure the distance from the garden to the trees is no closer than the length of the tallest tree.

## SIZE MATTERS

Shari and Tom encourage beginners to start small, but think big, so there's room to grow in subsequent years.

"I recommend building 2 raised beds, each about 4x20' in size," says Shari. Raised beds are comprised of 6-12" of





compost (your own or locally made, not commercially bagged) placed on top of existing soil, bordered by a wood, plastic, stone, or concrete frame, and no bottom or top. They are ideal for small spaces and can help keep plants organized. An excellent primer on raised-bed gardens can be found on the website of the PBS series *This Old House* at [www.thisoldhouse.com/gardening/21019438/all-about-raised-bed-gardens](http://www.thisoldhouse.com/gardening/21019438/all-about-raised-bed-gardens).

"For a novice gardener, I'd suggest planting in squares using short rows, dividing each raised bed into fourths," explains Shari. "If you have 2-4x20' beds, you could plant 8 different crops or rotate 2 sets of 4 crops each. You can also plant the same crop, like spinach, every 2-3 weeks, but in different locations, so you have a continuation of the crop."

You should also think about how much food you'd like to produce, adds Tom. "For example, a 10' row of bush beans will produce enough beans for a family of 3 or 4, but a 10' row of zucchini would produce enough for the neighborhood."

### PREP YOUR SOIL

Enhancing your soil with nutrient-rich compost before planting not only improves the soil structure in which your plants grow, so they can root deeply, it also acts like a multi-vitamin for your plants and stimulates the growth of good bacteria to fight pathogens.

**I love spring anywhere, but if I could choose, I would always greet it in a garden.**

– Ruth Stout, author



"If you're digging up a garden area for the first time, add about 2 inches of compost onto your garden bed before your final tilling before planting," suggests Shari. "I would do this each time I planted. This creates a beautiful, well-drained loamy soil." Learn more about compost in the section at the end of this article.

### PICK YOUR PLANTS

Vegetables that thrive in spring gardens include brassicas (cruciferous veggies) like kale, chard, and kohlrabi, which can be grown from seeds indoors and transplanted outdoors in late April or early May, says Shari.

"In late March and early April, I'd also plant spinach, radishes, and sugar snap peas, followed by carrots and beets in mid-April, and zucchini, cucumbers, and tomatoes in May. Crop rotation minimizes pests and is good for the soil. For example, after you harvest a crop like spinach, which is a heavy feeder of nitrogen, you can plant green beans in their place to replenish the soil."

Other vegetables that are easy to grow and that compliment each other in recipes, says Tom, are summer squash, lettuce, snap beans, broccoli, sweet potatoes, and onions.

Herbs to add to your first-time garden include basil, dill, parsley, cilantro, oregano, rosemary, marjoram, and thyme. Grow them in your garden, in containers on your patio or bordering your garden, or in pots indoors. See these guides for assistance: [web.extension.illinois.edu/herbs](http://web.extension.illinois.edu/herbs) and [tastefulgarden.com/Herb-Gardening-for-Beginners-d19](http://tastefulgarden.com/Herb-Gardening-for-Beginners-d19).





### DON'T DRY OUT

Keeping the soil moist is critical for plant health. "Watering should be deep to encourage strong root formation," says Tom, who recommends soaker hoses to send water directly to your plant rows. "Shallow watering encourages shallow rooting that won't be able to support healthy plants."

When plants are established, it's important to keep the ground from getting completely dry, especially raised beds, which tend to dry out a bit faster than tilled gardens, but overwatering can also be a problem. "Overwatering can prevent plants from absorbing oxygen," says Shari. "If you get a deep, soaking rain, wait a few days and check your soil before watering. Soaker hoses can be set to run for about an hour and help keep water from escaping through evaporation."

### PROTECT YOUR BOUNTY

Adding a diversity of plants in and around your garden will attract beneficial insects and protect your garden from pests.

Zinnias and marigolds repel deer and rabbits, while basil, rosemary, mint, lavender, chives, garlic, citronella grass, petunias, and chrysanthemums repel pests like mosquitos, houseflies, aphids, beetles, spiders, and ants. Zinnias, along with daisies and asters, also will attract bees.

"Some plants like Alibi cucumber are resistant to bacterial wilt, while plants like dill and Japanese buckwheat will attract pollinators," says Tom. "Fencing that starts below ground level also will help keep unwelcome critters out. Lightweight row covers will keep bugs off plants, while heavier covers provide protection from frost in the spring and fall."

### THE GOOD STUFF

"The vegetables you grow at home are the freshest you can get, resulting in great-tasting, nutrient-rich food," says Tom. Shari agrees. "The most nutritious food comes from your own garden. Growing your own vegetables is a great family activity. It's also relaxing and saves you money."

Gardens have their own microbiome and research in recent years indicates that exposure to microbes in the soil may reduce allergies and autoimmune reactions, improve your mood, and strengthen your immune system. [Daphne Miller, *Washington Post*, 9/29/2019]

In studies published in *Neuroscience* in 2007 and more recently in *Psychopharmacology* in 2019, Dr. Christopher Lowry, a neuroendocrinologist at the University of Colorado-Boulder, discovered that the common soil bacteria *Mycobacterium vaccae*, or *M. vaccae*, appears to release a fatty acid that protects against stress and helps immune cells resist inflammation.

"This is just one strain of one species of one type of bacterium that is found in the soil, but there are millions of other strains in soils," Lowry said in an interview in *CU Boulder Today* in May 2019. "We are just beginning to see the tip of the iceberg in terms of identifying the mechanisms through which they have evolved to keep us healthy."

Shari can attest to the healing power of gardening and isn't surprised to learn that science is beginning to support what she's always known.

"I am a true believer that I get most of my energy from the soil," she says. "I garden barefooted because of the energy I feel from the earth. Gardening is its own medicine. Your mind is quieted. Your listening skills are sharpened. You're witnessing the tiniest changes in your plants. And you feel good that you're producing your own food."

Gardening may be the best thing you can do for your health this year, so don't be afraid to get your hands dirty. Dig in to that life-giving soil. Your mind – and your immune system – will thank you!

# Compost Basics

## COMPOSTING 101: HOW TO COMPOST AT HOME

by Kelly Reilly at [eatingwell.com](http://eatingwell.com)

Compost is decomposed organic matter and requires five basic ingredients:

1. Carbon-rich materials ("browns"), such as dead leaves, straw, bark, untreated cardboard and paper, corn stalks, wood chips, or sawdust
2. Nitrogen-rich materials ("greens"), such as grass clippings, vegetable and fruit scraps, coffee grounds, used tea bags, and plant remains
3. Water
4. Oxygen
5. Microorganisms, such as bacteria, molds, and fungi

Items to avoid placing in your home compost pile are meat scraps (which can attract pests, although meat can be composted commercially), fish, eggs, pet waste, weeds, plastic, and anything treated with pesticides.

Compost is typically stored in bins and layered with twigs and straw, followed by alternating layers of green waste and brown waste. Some experts recommend a roughly 50% balance between green and brown waste, while others recommend a 1:3 or 4 ratio of green to brown.

Keep the compost moist, but not too wet, and aerate it by turning it every 1-2 weeks with a pitchfork. You can also invest in a compost tumbler. Note that the amount of aeration needed varies depending on the items you're composting, so research your options thoroughly.

## GARDENING RESOURCES

- Illinois Vegetable Garden Guide (University of Illinois Extension): [web.extension.illinois.edu/vegguide](http://web.extension.illinois.edu/vegguide)
- Herb Gardening Guide: [web.extension.illinois.edu/herbs](http://web.extension.illinois.edu/herbs) and [tastefulgarden.com/Herb-Gardening-for-Beginners](http://tastefulgarden.com/Herb-Gardening-for-Beginners).
- Find helpful resources from your local U of I Extension Office on the Illinois County Map: [extension.illinois.edu/global/where-we-serve](http://extension.illinois.edu/global/where-we-serve) (click on your home county)
- Raised Garden Beds: [thisoldhouse.com/gardening/21019438/all-about-raised-bed-gardens](http://thisoldhouse.com/gardening/21019438/all-about-raised-bed-gardens).

## ABOUT THE UNION COUNTY FOOD PANTRY GARDEN

The Union County Food Pantry Garden grows food for the local food pantry and promotes sustainable farming and environmental stewardship. Their aim is to provide equitable access to locally grown food while building community green spaces, creating recreational and therapeutic opportunities while improving soils, and providing habitats for birds and pollinators. Partners include community members, the Shawnee Development Food Pantry, and the Anna-Jo Garden Club.

The garden is located next to the Shawnee Food Pantry Development at the Choate Center in Anna. Learn more at [facebook.com/unioncountycommunityfoodpantrygarden](https://facebook.com/unioncountycommunityfoodpantrygarden) or send an email to [sweeneysadowski@gmail.com](mailto:sweeneysadowski@gmail.com).







# Chautauqua Bottoms

Explore this Hidden Gem in Carbondale

by *Monica Tichenor*

Nestled in the woods just off west Chautauqua Road is the main entrance to a diverse multi-trail system teeming with a wide range of flora and fauna, from wild grasses and delicate wildflowers to songbirds and salamanders.

Established between 1990 and 2004 through several purchases and land donations, Chautauqua Bottoms is one of six nature preserves maintained by the not-for-profit land conservation organization, Green Earth, Inc., and features abundant tall grass prairie, stately hardwoods and pines, and lush wetlands.

At 37-acres, Chautauqua Bottoms is the second largest of Green Earth's nature preserves, although "with trails crossing properties owned by SIU Carbondale and the park district, it's closer to 80-acres total," says Stephanie Eichholz, Executive Director of Green Earth.

Bordered by Chautauqua Road to the south, Parrish Park to the north, properties fronting Emerald Lane to the east, and land just west of Little Crab Orchard Creek, this hidden gem has multiple entrances and includes three developed trails:

- **The Maurice Webb Trail** (0.8 mi), which primarily encompasses the tall grass prairie and a section of the hardwood bottomland along Little Crab Orchard Creek;
- **The Woodland Spur Trail** (0.45 mi), which travels north from the Maurice Webb trail (at the Freeman Street trailhead) through floodplain wetlands and forest with a dead-end at Little Crab Orchard Creek; and
- **The David Kenney Trail** (0.75 mi), which runs from Chautauqua Road to Sunset Drive through mostly riparian forestland.

"Originally, with Little Crab Orchard Creek running through the middle of the preserves, the trails were not connected," explains Stephanie. "We were very excited in 2015 to be awarded an Illinois Department of Natural Resources Recreational Trails Grant to install an 80-foot single span steel bridge, which connects the trails, and to upgrade a portion of the site to ADA-friendly standards."

Chautauqua Bottoms offers an experience as close as you can imagine to hiking in the heart of the Shawnee Forest without leaving the city limits. And there is much to see year-round.





"The northeast part of the preserve is known for its brief [2-3 weeks], but beautiful and abundant spring wildflowers," says Stephanie. "Spring also brings the flush of amphibians waking up and the arrival of migrating neotropical songbirds."

From mid-summer to early fall, the tall grasses come alive with blooming prairie flowers. "This area attracts hummingbirds, butterflies, dragonflies, and many insect pollinators," says Stephanie. "Rushes and sedges also can be seen blooming in wetter areas."

In the fall, the forested land provides a colorful display of leaves, while winter offers opportunities to spot wildlife. "Roosting hawks and owls are much more visible in the winter," says Stephanie. "Animal tracks in the snow are numerous and easy to see, as well. Following tracks off a side trail is one of my favorite things to do."

Since acquiring the low-lying wetland, which has been prone to erosion due to the past practice of channelizing, Green Earth has worked to restore some of the area's natural hydrology by checking overland drainage into the creek and reintroducing native plants. "We established the tall grass prairie and replanted the hardwood tree species in the bottomland area," says Stephanie. "We also regularly remove exotic invasive plant species, which are a threat to the native ecosystem."

When visiting Chautauqua Bottoms or other nature preserves maintained by Green Earth, Inc., visitors should take precautions for their own safety and to protect the habitat.

"While we encourage off-trail exploration, we ask visitors to follow common-sense rules," says Stephanie. "Probably the most obvious – please don't bother or remove wildlife. We also ask that visitors stay on the trail in marked areas where there is high biologic value, like our wildflower glade, because human foot traffic can seriously damage the habitat."

Dogs are welcome companions on nature hikes, but they need to be watched closely. "Dogs need to be under an owner's control not

only for the safety of wildlife and fellow trail users, but also for the dog's sake," says Stephanie. "Deer that might be wary of humans are just as likely to kick or stomp a dog that is harassing it."

No trip through the woods is complete without the occasional encounter with pests and poisonous plants, especially if you venture off-trail. Stephanie suggests following the usual basic precautions, such as wearing bug spray, tucking pants into socks to keep ticks and chiggers at bay, checking for and removing attached ticks, and showering as soon as possible after coming into contact with poison ivy (preferably first with cool water, which helps to close pores to prevent the absorption of poison ivy oil).

Green spaces provide a multitude of environmental and economic benefits to communities and can help to improve individual health, says Stephanie. "Green spaces improve air and water quality, reduce flooding through storm water retention, and improve neighboring property values. They also help to improve general health and well-being."

In a study conducted by the University of Michigan, spending just 20-minutes in nature reduced levels of the stress hormone cortisol by over 21%. [*Urban Nature Experiences Reduce Stress in the Context of Daily Life Based on Salivary Biomarkers; Hunter, M., Gillespie, B., Chen, S.Y., Frontiers in Psychology, 4/4/19*]. And in a 2015 research study conducted by Gregory N. Bratman, a Ph.D. candidate at Stanford University, a walk in the park reduced activity to the subgenual prefrontal cortex, an area of the brain linked to mental illness. Quite simply, being in nature can quiet the mind! [*Stanford Researchers Find Mental Health Prescription: Nature, 6/30/2015, Stanford News*]

Life can be complicated and difficult to manage – and not everyone has the time or resources to seek relief through a vacation, a weekend away, or even a full lunch hour. Take heart! In a short drive, bike ride, or walk, you can immerse yourself in the wild beauty of Chautauqua Bottoms or one of the other natural areas managed by Green Earth, Inc. and emerge calmer, more focused, and perhaps a little happier on the other side.

# Support Green Earth, Inc.

## VOLUNTEER

Volunteers are vital to the ongoing operation of Green Earth. Volunteer opportunities generally fall into two categories: trails (building, maintenance, repairs) and habitat management (removing invasive plant species, planting natives). Green Earth supplies tools, gloves, bug spray, snacks, and water. Volunteers with skills in areas such as IT, accounting, GIS, marketing, publishing, outdoor education, forestry, and construction are also welcome. Green Earth hosts monthly volunteer workdays on the third Saturday of each month from 9am to noon at various locations. Check their schedule at [greenearthinc.org](http://greenearthinc.org) or sign up for their email list at [director@greenearthinc.org](mailto:director@greenearthinc.org).

## DONATE

Donations provide critical support for Green Earth, as the organization isn't part of the city or park district and therefore, doesn't receive municipal funding. Donations are tax deductible, and thank you gifts are available. You can donate to the general fund or for a special campaign, or purchase a memorial or honorarium stone bench. Make your donation at [greenearthinc.org](http://greenearthinc.org) or mail a check to Green Earth at PO Box 441, Carbondale IL 62903. Donations of land under certain circumstances may be possible. If interested, contact Stephanie Eichholz at (618) 201-3774, [director@greenearthinc.org](mailto:director@greenearthinc.org) or contact a board member.

## Green Earth's Nature Preserves

Green Earth owns and maintains six properties in Carbondale totaling 224-acres of green space and over 9-miles of hiking trails. Each site is open to the public for hiking during daylight hours. Most trails are short and easy to moderate in difficulty. See maps to each location at [greenearthinc.org/nature-preserves](http://greenearthinc.org/nature-preserves).

- **Brush Hill Preserve** – 20-acres of forested hills, located at the top of the hill on Park Street, about halfway between Wall and Giant City Road.
- **Chautauqua Bottoms** – 37-acres of wetlands, prairie, upland forest, and bottomland hardwood. Location: West Chautauqua Road, between Emerald Lane and Tower Road.
- **Fernland Preserve** – 20-acres of forest and streams. Location: east of Kennedy Road, just off Union Hill Road.
- **Flagland Demonstration Prairie** – 1/4-acre green space within a residential neighborhood. Location: West Sunset, on the east side of Little Crab Orchard Creek.
- **Oakland Preserve** – 20-acres featuring two trails. Location: north of Owens and South of Ready Mix Road, on the east side of Oakland.
- **Pyles Fork Preserve** – 124-acres of hardwood bottomland, wetlands, and a creek. Location: Directly east of Attucks Park (North Wall Street), just off the Attucks Park exercise/walking path.



Photos by Stephanie Eichholz

Left: Volunteers work together building and upgrading trails. Right: Habitat management is commonly used to maintain and enhance the biological interest in the area.





## Parenting Amid COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has launched a new reality for most families. Parents are having to work from home while others still have to work, but all are tasked with being educators and entertainers while schools are closed. Though the future is uncertain as to when it's safe to socialize again, parents are finding themselves having to be creative to combat boredom and cabin fever. If you have children that range in age, it makes it that much harder to find activities to appease all of them at the same time. We have provided some ideas that might help!

### Experience the Outdoors

Try new trails or parks. There are plenty of places to explore while distancing yourself from other people, and for the most part, it is free. Walking a trail is not only healthy, but you can find some amazing things, like animal fossils, unique wildflowers, cool-looking rocks, Indian artifacts, beautiful overlooks and waterways. Try the following activities to influence learning and artistic expression:

- Create a scavenger hunt. Have kids find certain animals, bugs, flowers or trees. Challenge them to learn new facts.
- Collect easy to get sticks or rocks for art projects. (Please be kind to nature and don't invade the wildlife areas.)
- Find items that make great textures like leaves. Press them into salt dough to make fun ornaments or decorations. (Follow dough recipe provided or find other variations online.)
- Draw, paint or photograph what you see. Just explore a small area and you will be amazed at the art nature provides through textures and colors, not to mention amazing scenery.
- Go for a bike ride. There are many trails in Southern Illinois that are paved and accessible for all abilities; try Rend Lake or Tunnel Hill.
- Go boating! Kayaking and canoing are a great way to have fun and get some exercise, plus it allows you to see things differently than from land.



### Make your own salt dough!

There are so many crafts you can do with salt dough. Create ornaments, decorations, charms, mosaics, and more. Look for ideas online.

### Ingredients

- 1 Cup Water
- 2 Cup All Purpose Flour
- 1 Cup Salt

### Directions

- Mix 2 C all purpose flour and 1 C water into a mixing bowl.
- Next, slowly combine water to dry mix and knead the dough. Note, you may not need all of the water, just enough to form a ball. You don't want dough to be too sticky or crumble.
- Roll out your dough either with your hands or a rolling pin to about 1/4 inch thick. Place salt dough on parchment-covered baking sheets.
- Bake for 2-3 hours at 200 degrees in the oven. Time will vary depending on thickness and oven.

### Things to do

Use cookie cutters to shape dough.

Color salt dough before you make your crafts by adding paint, food coloring or natural spices to your salt dough mixture. Just add the coloring to the water before you mix it with the flour and salt. (TIP: add lots of coloring as the salt dough will fade a little once dry).

Alternatively you can wait for your salt dough creations to dry out and then paint them using acrylic paint.

Use Mod Podge all-in-one sealer glue and finish to varnish and preserve your salt dough. This will help keep your art from breaking down.



# Tofu Pad Thai



Total Time: 30 minutes

Servings: 4

## INGREDIENTS:

3 tablespoons canola oil  
1 teaspoon crushed chiles  
1 package tofu, firm  
2 cloves garlic  
1 tablespoon chopped fresh ginger  
1/2 pound rice noodles, cooked  
2 large eggs, whisked  
5 tablespoons soy sauce or fish sauce  
1/4 cup lime juice  
2 tablespoons sugar  
4 scallions, chopped  
1/2 cup peanuts, dry-roasted, chopped  
1/2 cup cilantro, coarsely chopped  
1 large lime, halved and thinly sliced

## INSTRUCTIONS:

Put on a large pot of water to boil for the noodles. Wrap tofu in a kitchen towel and put a weight on it. Press to remove excess water and make the tofu firmer. Cube the tofu. Prep vegetables and reserve, piling each on a plate separately. Mix soy sauce, lime juice and sugar in a cup, and reserve this sauce. In a wok, heat oil, and add tofu and chilis. Over high heat, fry tofu until browned.

Cook noodles according to package directions, drain. Add eggs, garlic and ginger to the tofu, stir, and quickly add noodles, scallions and reserved sauce. Stirfry gently until egg is cooked and the noodles look dry. Serve immediately, topped with chopped peanuts, cilantro leaves and lime slices.

## TIPS & NOTES

For a quick and easy chicken Pad Thai, substitute 2 to 3 cups of shredded rotisserie chicken for the tofu and add it in step 4 with the eggs, garlic and ginger.



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## **ATTENTION CO-OP OWNERS:**

### **Has Your Information Changed?**

**Have you moved? Has your name, email address, or phone number changed? Have you had a change in who constitutes your household members?**

Keep your membership data up to date by letting us know what has changed. We want to keep our owners informed with the latest news about our Co-op, and we appreciate your help.

**Send updates to Joan Phillips at [joan@neighborhood.coop](mailto:joan@neighborhood.coop)**



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# Owner Appreciation Month

**Pick Your  
Day  
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See details below



So that we meet the needs of as many owners as possible, **we are canceling Owner Appreciation Weekend in May.** INSTEAD, we are mailing each owner a 10% off coupon good toward any one transaction you choose during the month of May. **LOOK FOR YOUR COUPON IN THE MAIL!**