

*Florets*  
*Twin City Garden Club*  
*September 2023*



## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Meeting:** 1 pm Tuesday Sept 19 2023

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, 2101 S. Prospect, Champaign

Choir room is the first room on the left when using entrance from west side parking

**Program:** Chicago Field Museum's Field Guide    **Presenter:** Mike Skreiner

Mike Skreiner has completed the University of Illinois Extension Master Natural Program and is member of the Sierra Club. The collaborative Field Guide was published by the Field Museum, Chicago, on their website in May 2022, with free public access. This program discusses epilogue thoughts over one year later: what is the significance of the Field Guide and what are some take-aways stimulated by it; what are some plant and pollinator interaction issues, and what can we do about them?

**Flower Show 101** with Tori Corkery

### **Refreshment break**

**Hostesses:** Cheryl Weber and Lisa Sur

**Floral arrangement by:** Frances Simpson

### **Business Meeting**

Call to Order

President's Opening Remarks

Recording Secretary Minutes/Approval

Treasurer's Report

Corresponding Secretary Report

Standing Committee Reports

Membership

Facebook

Sunshine

Program

Website

Philanthropy

Yearbook

Social

New Business 2023-24 Proposed Budget

Unfinished Business

Adjourn

**Birthdays:** Tori Corkery (9/27)

Penny Pines Jar will be present

Plant/Seed Exchange

## AWARDS

Tori Corkery is happy to report the TCGC 2022-2023 yearbook was awarded a GCI certificate for best yearbook as judged by club size (medium club: 21-50 members). Rantoul Garden Club also was awarded in their division (small club: 20 members and under).

## Local Event of Interest

East Central Illinois Master Naturalist Tree and Shrub Sale Sept 5 – October 13 2023

Details at <https://extension.illinois.edu/news-releases/master-naturalists-kick-native-sale>

Note: if following the link to Buy Trees or Shrubs, the page next up goes to the Crop Sciences online store, at that point, highlight the East Central Illinois Master Naturalists which will then link to the catalog of items available for shopping.

## IN THE GARDEN WITH “JACK”

Tall and stately is an odd plant with an odd name: Jack in the Pulpit.

Who is “Jack” and what is his “pulpit”? Part the Arum family which include peace lilies, calla lilies, and even the enormous titan arum, *Arisaema triphyllum* is a woodland wildflower native to eastern North America with its range extending as far west as Kansas.

Emergence of this plant during the warming days of May is fascinating. A stalk shoots up, almost overnight, followed by leaflets and a flower-like appendage (the pulpit) which unfurls to reveal a fleshy looking spike (Jack). Botanically, the appendage is a bract, also named a spadex and the spike has been classified as a spathe. The true flowers are very small and barely visible but do encompass the entire spike, arranged in parallel rows (similar to corn kernels on a cob).



Another interesting feature is the development of the berries that are produced which follow the pollination of the flowers by small flies or gnats. Plump green berries form which then ripen to a brilliant bright red. Within the berries are small white seeds that can be squeezed out, dried and sown for a possible new crop.



There are stories on the uses of this plant by both the early native peoples and the newly arriving colonists, with some claiming medicinal uses and others as a food source. This seems in conflict with the notation that all plant parts contain crystals of calcium oxalate which in this form are very sharp and quite irritating. To the unwary, it can produce a terrible burning sensation in the mouth and throat leading to choking with possible convulsions and even death. Lost to us is the actual naming of the plant by the native peoples, though there are references to bog onion or wild turnip. One conjecture on the origin of the popularized name is that it was likely created by European colonists as that Jack is preaching from his pulpit warning of the burning fires of this toxic plant. It has been noted that with proper preparation (such as exposure to high heat as in cooking) this toxicity can be neutralized.

Jack does thrive here in Illinois and will be found in shady, moderately moist locations. It has been listed as a spring wildflower of Allerton Park and has also been identified in several protected woodland areas of the Champaign County Forest Preserve such as Patton Woods and Collins Woods.

I have never been fortunate to see any in the wild – it does help to know the bloom time, said to burst forth with the trillium and mayapple, but those prolific flowers may have overwhelmed and hidden any from view. My up close and personal introduction was to a somewhat look-a-like cousin, *A. sikokianum* (actually native to Japan) seen on garden walk here in Champaign. Though when inquiring about this specimen found that the cost was a bit out of my budget (listed at \$60 in a White Flower Farm catalog: ouch!). However, perusing a catalog from American Meadows, found the American native form listed in the spring wildflower section at a good, reasonable price.

The listing was for a bareroot plant, but is actually a corm, a small bulb-like form similar to a crocus bulb, somewhat flattened on one side which is the bottom side. Planting instructions that came with the corms advised planting at a one-inch depth below the soil surface. Some gardening websites claim to plant at a 6-inch depth, or even 8, both of which seem much too deep. Does help to tamp down the soil, cover with light mulch and crushed leaves to keep prying squirrels away. Only one of the three that were planted did sprout up the following spring, and did see a hint of a second this year (3 years after the first sprout). Don't personally have a woodland forest, but there is one partially shaded area in my garden that can stay moderately moist throughout the year. Also tried another very shady area, but which can get too dry during the summer months and haven't seen any sprouts there.

If interested in adding this beauty to your garden, fall is the time to order it and plant it. As mentioned, American Meadows is a good source. Prairie Nursey located in Wisconsin and Breck's also have it listed. Though do heed Jack's warning and be cautious, especially for any small children that may visit. Use gloves when handling any plant parts.