

PENNCROSS KNOLL

Views

July | 2020

The Newsletter of the Penncross Knoll Homeowners Association

Summer is here so check out your garden!

The arrival of summer usually means it's time to start planning our perennial and annual flower gardens. It also signals the return of many migratory species to our backyard bird feeders including the ruby-throated hummingbird as well as native bees—Both important pollinators for our flowering trees, bushes, as well as flower and vegetable gardens.

May marked the return of hummingbirds from their wintering grounds in Mexico and Central America. In an effort to attract hummingbirds, the first step is putting out a hummingbird feeder, which can be obtained at The Home Depot, Lowe's or specialty retailer like Wild Birds Unlimited.

Unlike the seed used for most bird feeders, hummingbird feeders use a simple sugar water mixture comprised of one part sugar dissolved into four parts of boiling water. Once the sugar water has cooled, it can be poured into your feeder with the rest saved in the refrigerator.

While hummingbirds are attracted to the color red, the sugar water doesn't need to be red like some store brand hummingbird sugar waters. Since most feeders are already red, hummingbirds will be attracted to it already. Red native or perennial flowers will also help to attract the birds to your yard. It's best to hang the feeder from a shady tree so direct sunlight doesn't "cook" the sugar water which should be changed once a week in hot summer weather, or every two weeks in cool weather.

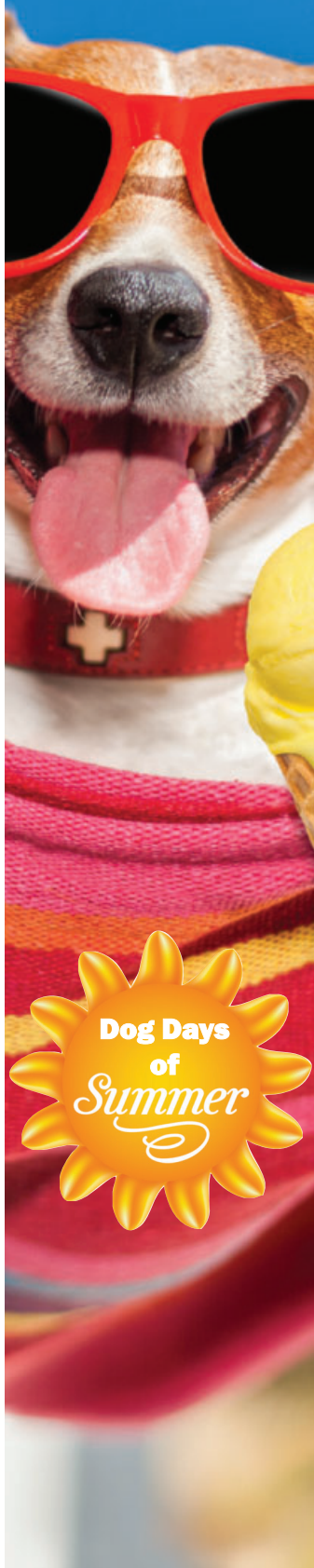


Planting the Right Habitat for Birds and Bees

In addition to providing nectar, flowering plants also attract insects that become additional nutrition for hummingbirds who eat gnats, mosquitos, spiders, aphids, and small caterpillars. Insects are also an important food source for nestlings. Why plant perennials? They usually live more than two years and flower annually. Planting different perennials allows you to have a succession of blooming plants from early spring up to late fall frost. Perennials not only bring beauty to your yard, they provide shelter and food for the birds, bees, butterflies, and other essential pollinators.

Buddleia, also known as the butterfly bush, is a magnet for pollinators. Try red, tubular flowers that bloom all season, like Agastache, Heuchera, and Lobelia. Monarch butterflies will only lay their eggs on Asclepias. Amsonia 'Blue Ice' is another stunner in the garden blooming blue. Some perennials bloom later than others, and some can be divided after a few years. You will enjoy the walk around the yard, then sit back and enjoy the view.

There are over 400 species of native bees in Illinois. While much has been reported about "colony collapse" of honeybees across the United States, many species of native bees are also in decline. Fortunately, homeowners can easily help bee populations in their yards by planting flowers that will bloom throughout both early spring and the fall. Avoiding pesticides which include neonicotinoids is especially important. Neonicotinoids can be found on labels listed as imidacloprid or acetamiprid.



Dog Days
of
Summer

Explore the Outdoors!



Outdoor activities that are good for your family's mind and body

GO CAMPING IN YOUR BACKYARD:

Camping in state or national parks isn't available in all states right now. Even if it is an option for you, the demand is high, and it might be difficult to land a spot. Thankfully, you don't have to go far to enjoy a camping adventure. Instead, host a family "staycation" and enjoy camping in your own backyard! Help your kids pitch the tent, unplug from your phones and tablets, and roast marshmallows over a backyard fire pit or camping stove.

HIT THE HIKING TRAIL: Hiking is not a banned activity in most areas—Especially not on trails near your home. Pack some snacks, water, and sunscreen, and take your family on a hike to enjoy the scenery and the feeling of getting lost for a little while. This can help soothe stir-craziness and give everyone some exercise.

GO GEOCACHING AS A FAMILY:

Geocaching is like a real-life treasure hunt that your whole family can participate in. Better yet, you can do it without interacting with anyone else. All you need is a GPS system and the coordinates of a cache before you can hit the town in search of treasure. Because geocaching is like a game, it's perfect for kids. Encourage them to bring a small trinket or toy to leave in the cache for others to find later.

GET A LITTLE MESSY WITH CRAFTS:

Kids love craft time, and there are tons of educational and creative activities you can find online. However, some of them can create a big mess you don't want in your house. When the weather is nice, set up a tarp or table outside and let your kids get a little messy! Now is the perfect time for slime, sidewalk paint, and bubbles thanks to easier clean up.

TAKE THE PUP TO A DOG PARK: Our furry friends need to get out, too! If your local dog park is open, bring the family and pups out to play. Being there also gives you the opportunity to chat with other dog owners and get to know more community members while still social distancing.

DO A LITTLE BIRDWATCHING: Nature has lots to offer, including peace and quiet. Birdwatching can be a relaxing and fun hobby for people young and old. Purchase a simple birdwatching guide and binoculars, and head to your local park to help your kids identify the birds twittering in the trees. You can even make birdwatching into a game to get the little ones involved. Challenge them to identify as many birds as they can in a day, or make a list of common local birds and give them a stamp for each one they see.

HOLD A BACKYARD SPORTS

TOURNAMENT: Many recreational and school sports clubs have been cancelled and your kids might have lost their creative and energetic outlets in the process. This doesn't mean they can't play, though! Get the family together to host a sports tournament in the backyard. You can switch between your kids' favorite games, like basketball, soccer, flag football, or even ping pong. Don't forget to reward the winners with a small prize for their sportsmanship!

TAKE WEEKLY FIELD TRIPS: It's likely that your local community has a ton of hidden gems, so take advantage of them by going on local field trips. Pick one day a week that works for your family, and head to a nearby museum, monument, park, or another interesting place. While there, teach your children something new about the place you're visiting and why it's important. You can even get your kids involved with planning by asking what they're interested in and creating a field trip destination list as a family. Getting outside and exploring your local community this summer can keep kids occupied, help you get exercise, and stimulate your minds—all while social distancing. By making time for family outdoor activities, you can fight off boredom and help your children enjoy their summer in new ways!

Dear Editor

Articles, classified ads and written submissions for the Penncross Knolls Views newsletter are to be submitted to Jan Foster by the 15th day of February, April, June, August, October and December.

The Penncross Knoll Views newsletter is a bi-monthly publication for the homeowners. Newsletters are mailed to residents in January, March, May, July, September and November.

EDITOR

Jan Foster

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Classified ads are free to all Penncross Knoll residents. A classified ad is something to sell, looking for something to buy, lost items, found items, or in need of childcare, etc. All other advertising should be addressed to our publisher, Preferred Business Services as identified below.

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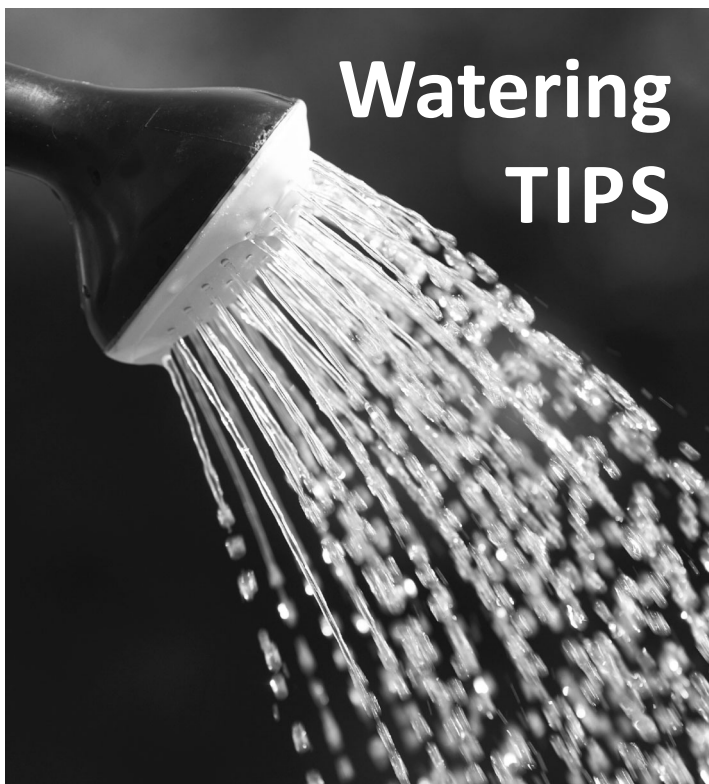


"Your cubicle is on back order, so for the time being, work within these chalked lines."

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The Happy Gardener

Are Your Plants Thirsty



ARE YOUR PLANTS THIRSTY?

Dig down 1"- 2" underneath the mulch and feel the soil. If the soil is wet, you don't need to water. You can also use a moisture meter to check if you need to water. When the indicator reads [1] or [2] watering is needed.

likes

WATER LIKE A PRO!

Know your plant's moisture needs. Some plants need more water than others. Plants under trees may require more water.

When soil feels dry, water slowly and deeply. Allow the water to pool and sink in at least three times. Be sure to water out past the edge of plants. Watering deeply encourages roots to grow deeper.

If you have shredded mulch over your beds, you may need to break up the crust to get water through to the soil.

Water at the base of plants to keep water off the leaves. This reduces diseases.

Water in the morning, giving foliage time to dry especially if using sprinklers.

WHEN TO WATER NEW PLANTINGS

Plants installed this year have higher water needs because their root systems have not grown much further than the original pot area.

First Day — Water slowly and deeply after planting.

Week 1 — Check daily. Only water when soil is dry about 1"-2" under the surface, water slowly and deeply. (Test with your finger or a moisture meter.)

Week 2 — Check every 2 days. Only water when soil is dry about 1"-2" under the surface, water slowly and deeply.

Week 3 — Check every 3 days. Only water when soil is dry about 1"-2" under the surface, water slowly and deeply.

Ongoing — During the rest of season, check at least once a week.

WHEN TO WATER EXISTING PLANTINGS

Be sure to check your perennials, trees and shrubs for water needs. Water if we have not had significant rain in 2 weeks. Remember to check on plants that were installed the previous year or ones that especially love water more often. In many cases, these plants will need a little extra attention.

If no rain continues, water again when the soil is dry 1"- 2" below the soil surface. Make sure water gets through the mulch into the soil.

Watering by hand is a good way to learn the needs of each plant in your garden and it uses less water. If using a sprinkler, run just long enough to equal an inch of rain, preferably in the morning. You can test how much water your system delivers by using a rain gauge.

TOO MUCH OR TOO LITTLE?

Limp, hanging or yellowing leaves may indicate either too much or too little water. Check the soil two inches under the mulch.

If it is dry, water the ground slowly and deeply. If it is wet, do not water until the soil has had time to dry out. If it is really wet, you can thin or loosen the layer of mulch to help air get in and dry out the soil. Do not water until soil has had time to dry out below the surface. Plants need air as well as moisture.

COVID-19 Contact Tracing Text Message **SCAMS**

You've probably been hearing a lot about contact tracing. It's the process of identifying people who have come in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, instructing them to quarantine and monitoring their symptoms daily.

Contact tracers are usually hired by a state's department of public health. They work with an infected person to get the names and phone numbers for everyone that infected person came in close contact with while the possibly infectious. Those names and phone numbers are often kept in an online system. People who had contact with someone infected with COVID-19 may first get a text message from the health department, telling them they'll get a call from a specific number. The tracer who calls will not ask for personal information, like a Social Security number. At the end of the call, some states ask if the contact would like to enroll in a text message program, which sends daily health and safety reminders until the 14-day quarantine ends. But tracers won't ask you for money or information like your Social Security, bank account, or credit card number. Anyone who does is a scammer.

There's no question, contact tracing plays a vital role in helping to stop the spread of COVID-19. But scammers, pretending to be contact tracers and taking advantage of how the process works, are also sending text messages. But theirs are spam text messages that ask you to click a link. Check out the image below. Unlike a legitimate text message from a health department, which only wants to let you know they'll be calling, this message includes a link to click.

Don't take the bait. Clicking on the link will download software onto your device, giving scammers access to your personal and financial information. Ignore and delete these scam messages.

There are several ways you can filter unwanted text messages or stop them before they reach you. Your phone may have an option to filter and block messages from unknown senders or spam. Your wireless provider may have a tool or service that lets you block texts messages. Some call-blocking apps also let you block unwanted text messages.

- Protect your online accounts by using multi-factor authentication. It requires two or more credentials to log in to your account, which makes it harder for scammers to log in to your accounts if they do get your username and password.
- Enable auto updates for the operating systems on your electronic devices. Make sure your apps also auto-update so you get the latest security patches that can protect from malware.
- Back up the data on your devices regularly, so you won't lose valuable information if a device gets malware or ransomware.

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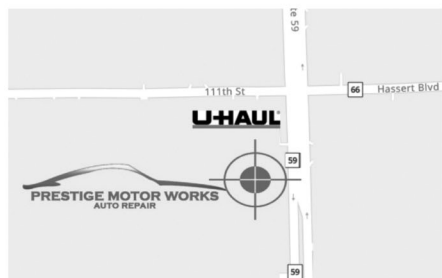


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