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Towanda HCE

The Towanda HCE group will be meeting on Monday, March 14, 7 pm at the Towanda Community Building. Hostesses, Tammy Stewart and Ruth Stewart will be welcoming members and guests. Sharon Joplin will be giving the program on "Straw Bale Gardening." The gardening fact find will be on "Think Garden Season".

Other HCE activities to consider this month include Super Saturday on March 12, 9am-noon held at Christ Lutheran Church, corner of Ft Jesse and Hershey Roads. Light refreshments will start the morning followed by a scarf tying demonstration. Bring a scarf to practice with. This free event includes three programs presented at the same time as follows: From Barley to Wheat, Grain is Neat by presenter, Bill Davidson; Hold that thought presented by Chelsea Byers and Save \$\$-Recycle, Repurpose your Garden presented by Nancy Welsh. For more information, contact Delilah Finnegan, 309-532-0314.

Seven members of Towanda HCE will be attending the Illinois Association for Home and Community Education (IAHCE) Annual Conference in East Peoria at the Embassy Suites, March 15-17. Our theme will be "Rollin' On The River" and include many workshops and classes. For more information- Eileen, 309-533-1135.

Want to know more about Towanda HCE? Call Cindy Kelley, 309-663-4796 or Robin Pearson, 815-579-1650 or rbnprsn@mchsi.com. Towanda HCE meets on the second Monday night of the month, September through May and we also have sponsored the July 3rd Spaghetti Supper at the Towanda Community Building since 1993.

Join us for interesting programs and good fellowship!

Gardening Tips

by Helen Leake



If you haven't already pruned the grape vines, now is the time to do it. Grapes bear on new wood, so don't be afraid to cut them back. Leave the one main stem and cut the side shoots back to about 10-12 inches.

The pretty, bright yellow dandelion is more than just a weed. An Arabian Doctor recorded curative properties of it in the 10th century. It has been used in many ways, the plant and the root, and for many different problems.

The dandelion is one of the first flowers to bloom in the spring and the honey bees like to feed on it. You can let it bloom and after the flower folds up, pull it off. Take an evening walk and get fresh air and exercise. Kids like to blow on the seed, the puff-ball type seed head.

Before the use of pesticides and pollutants, dandelions were used in salads and teas. The root was also used to make a tea. If you want to try using parts of the plant, be sure you live away from high traffic areas and the lawn hasn't been sprayed for several years. You might find the greens at an organic farmers market.

The dandelion has a long, large root that goes deep into the ground and helps open up the soil. We go out with our dandelion digger and cut the plant off, but we don't get all of the root. After a rain, sometimes you can pull the smaller plants and get the whole root.

In order to have a healthy vegetable and flowers, we must have healthy soil. Research has shown that the vegetables grown today, with synthetic fertilizer, don't have as much nutrition as the vegetables had when the farmers cleaned out the barn in the spring and spread it on the fields. We keep taking from the soil and give nothing back. Now is a good time to apply manure from a farmer or buy organic fertilizer and spread it on the garden. The spring rains will wash it into the soil, and when the soil dries, you can till it into the soil. Also, using wood chip mulch around the plants helps feed the soil. A garden with mulch requires less care, the organic mulch, which includes wood chip and straw helps prevent weeds and helps the soil retain moisture. It also feeds the earthworms other good insects, bacteria, and fungi, which are needed in healthy soil, don't apply insecticide to the lawn unless it is really needed. The worms moving around help to loosen the soil. Some people throw their coffee grounds onto the lawn. Leftover tea and used tea bags help the azalea plants. You can also crush the eggshells and add them around plants or add to your compost pile. An old fashioned way is to dig holes around the garden and "plant" kitchen scrapes, no composter needed. Just don't place

meat, because animals will dig that up.

We are enjoying the longer daylight hours and so are our indoor house plants. They are waking up from their winter nap, and starting to show some new growth. It is time to start fertilizing them. Some people use full strength of fertilizer and do it once a month and some use 1/4 strength and feed plants every week when they water. As always read and follow the direction on the container. When you fertilize, always be sure the soil is not overly dry. The fertilizer could damage the dry roots.

When you water the plants, if you will turn the container 1/4 turn, that will prevent the plant from leaning toward the window for the light.

The warm, sunny days make us want to get out in the yard and clean it off. It is OK to pick up the sticks and other debris now, if it isn't too muddy. It is too early to rake out the leaves to uncover the perennials. We will have some more cold weather.

The maple leaves do tend to compact when they get wet. You can use a rake and fluff them up so they can dry. When it is warmer, leave the leaves that have collected under the shrubs. They will break down and return nutrients to the soil. Also some of the good insects have laid eggs there or they have spent the winter there. We want to keep the good insects. When the leaves come out later, you won't notice the mess under the shrubs, but the roots will like it.

We have been hearing a lot about the Zika virus and that pregnant women should take precautions. Really anyone visiting those places should be careful. Anytime that someone is bitten by a Zika virus carrier mosquito, that person could become a carrier and pass the virus onto the next mosquito that bites them, and so on. You could, unknowingly, bring the virus home with you.

When you visit any other country, be sure to use insect repellent. For years, Deet was in most repellents now they have some safer ones to use. Picaridin can be found listed in the ingredients and can be sprayed or use as a rub on. Lemon Eucalyptus is a lotion that comes in a tube and can easily be placed in your carryon luggage. There are some herbal repellents that use a mixture of oils but they do need to be applied more often.

It is time to check the fall planted trees and shrubs for frost heaving. Also as the soil freezes and thaws, it gradually pushes the raspberry plants and Choral Bells plants up out of the ground. Add mulch to try to keep the soil more even temperature.

Begin pruning your fruit trees, sterilize your tools after each cut to prevent spreading disease. Grape and bramble, [raspberries] can also be pruned. If the raspberry stem is brown, it had last years' fruit and should be cut to the ground level. The nice green stems are last years' new growth and will bear fruit this year.

Helen J. Leake

BOY SCOUTS

The Towanda Scouting Organization would like to thank the community for their support at the 60th Annual Pancake and Sausage Breakfast. This tradition could not continue without the continued support of the community members who volunteered their time to work in the kitchen and dining room, who placed advance orders and attended the breakfast. This year we served over 1,100 people. With the support of the community, Scouting will continue to thrive in Towanda.

Legion News

The Towanda American Legion will have a breakfast on Sunday March 6th from 8:00-11:00. Breakfast includes eggs, sausage, bacon, hash browns, pancakes, French toast, fresh fruit, biscuits and gravy, juice, milk and coffee for \$9.

Celebrate St Patrick's Day at the Legion. There will be a dinner on Thursday March 17th. Dinner will include corned beef, cabbage, carrots, new potatoes, rye bread, dessert and drink for \$10. Dinner will be served from 4:30pm to 7:30pm.

All dinners are open to the public. Carry outs are available. Thank you for your continued support of the Legion and our Veterans.

Legion, Sons of the Legion and the Legion Auxiliary will have their regular meeting on Thursday March 24th at 7:00 at the Post. The Legion is available for rent for reunions, parties and meeting. For more information contact Mike Potts at 728-2384 or Tom Wagner at 287-7861.

Towanda 4H

The Towanda 4-H group met on Tuesday, February 2nd. Our next meeting will be on Tuesday, March 1st at 6:30pm at the Towanda Community Building. We will have a speaker presenting on cartooning/caricature. Talks will be given by Abby Scheltens & Caleb Vogel and demonstrations will be given by Avery Wietfeldt & Anna Yard.

Cloverbuds is open to kids 5 to 7 by September 1st. 4-H is open to kids from ages 8 to 18 by September 1st. If you have any questions about enrollment or more ways to get involved in 4-H. Please contact Jeanie Wager at 309-728-2852, Scott Clements at 309-275-5913 or Malisa Kraft at 309-825-1235.

Our Resident Bald Eagle



Photos courtesy Jim R.

Ecology Action Center

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Phone: 309-454-3169 • Fax: 309-454-7508

PRESS RELEASE

Illinois Green Office Challenge Kickoff Announced for February 29 in Normal
Join the Illinois Sustainable Technology Center, the Ecology Action Center, and Heartland Community College's Green Institute for the kick-off of the Illinois Green Office Challenge of Bloomington-Normal, a friendly competition amongst organizations looking to save money by conserving energy and water, while reducing waste. This year provides an opportunity for participating organizations to build on last year's experiences and take on new cost saving conservation practices.

The Challenge is played like a game, where participants can score points for fulfilling or issuing specific sustainability challenges to colleagues and competitors. The Challenge website provides participants with the information and tools they need to compete, and participants can share best practices and ideas with their peers at fun networking events held within the Bloomington-Normal Community. Participants will be acknowledged for their hard work through media, peer recognition and year-end awards. A Kick-Off event will be held **on Monday, February 29, 2016 at 3 p.m. at the Normal Public Library in Room A.**

The Illinois Green Office Challenge has expanded across the entire state this year, with the help of local champions such as Ecology Action Center and The Green Institute at Heartland Community College. Training and program support is being provided by Illinois Sustainable Technology Center, a division of the Prairie Research Institute at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

There is still time to join the Challenge; organizations can register now online at <https://www.illinoisgoc.com/register.cfm> or at the kick-off event on February 29, 2016. Registrations for the Green Office Challenge Kick-Off event may be made at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/illinois-green-office-challenge-of-bloomington-normal-tickets-21641442136>.

Towanda Library

March Story Hours @ 10:30 each Wednesday morning: March 2 – Happy Birthday, Dr. Seuss! March 9 – Pirates! March 16 – Rainbows and Shamrocks; March 23 - Dinosaurs! March 30 – Follow the Rules!

Bulldog Book Club on March 9th right after school: Discuss “The Invention of Hugo Cabret” by Brian Selznick. Introduce “Chains” by Laurie Anderson.

Stay-cation Family Art Times from 2:00 to 4:00 on March 24 and 25: Paint, color, or draw yourself in an imaginary get-away setting. Will it be the beach or Hogwarts or the setting of your favorite book? Books can whisk you immediately away to incredible places! Use our art supplies and your imagination!

Read to Dogs @ 5:30 to 6:30 each Tuesday in March: Reluctant young readers blossom when they have a lovable dog listening to them! Therapy dogs love the child’s attention, too! Register for an appointment time by calling the library at 728-2176. Our Open House -- to meet all of the dogs -- is March 1st.

Towanda READS Book Club is reading “What She Left Behind” by Ellen Marie Wiseman to discuss on April 12th at 5:00 pm at the library.

Crochet, Color, and Craft Group meets each Tuesday from 5:00 to 7:00: Did we mention that there is one more “C” – plenty of conversation. This group welcomes new members or people who wish to stop by to ask for one-time help on a project.

Karen

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Annette Hancock

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Text or call- 309-242-1802

Email - oldcars@frontiernet.net

Website - www.pamperedchef.com/pws/annettehancock

Pinterest Recipes - www.pinterest.com/ahancock0935



For Hire:

Do you need a babysitter? Do you need your house cleaned? Or, just an extra set of hands to help out around the house? Anna Kraft is willing to help! She is a sophomore at NCHS and can be contacted at 728-8088 (home) or (309) 830-7721 (cell).

The Schwamberger boys, Jairon 17 and Justin 15, are available for snow removal services or as maintenance helpers. Call 728-2857

If you need help with snow removal on your driveway or sidewalk, call Joe and Chet Kaufmann at 309-728-8095

Lauren and Myles Smith will provide child care and pet care - call 728-2930