

BCSEM  
JUNE 20156

DATE CHANGE

OUR NEXT  
QUARTERLY  
MEETING IS:

JUNE 23  
IN AUBURN HILLS  
AT FIELDSTONE  
GOLF COURSE



Learn about tree  
planting at our  
June meeting.

**CALENDAR**

**JUNE 30** ISA NOMINATION  
DEADLINE

**SEPT. 15**  
**QUARTERLY** MEETING IN  
BROWNSTOWN TWP.

**DEC. 8** (TENTATIVE)  
**QUARTERLY** MEETING IN  
HUNTINGTON WOODS  
WITH OAK PARK

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# Beautification Council of Southeastern Michigan

Area 1 of Keep Michigan Beautiful, Inc.

June, 2016

## President's Message: Spring is full of promise and rebirth of the earth.

Our Spring Quarterly Meeting in Ferndale was full of inspiration in helping us plan our spring gardens. The Ferndale Beautification Commission and the folks at Blumz were terrific hosts. The speakers were informative, interesting and motivating. Rebecca Hammond was very knowledgeable about native landscapes and monarch butterflies. She did not let obstacles (poor soil, lack of information, limited success, lack of support) thwart her drive to succeed. Brian Allman opened our eyes to the growth of urban farming in the city of Detroit. Thank you to everyone who worked so hard to make this meeting a success.

As we look ahead, we need to make a change in the schedule for the June Quarterly Meeting in Auburn Hills. The meeting will be on June 23rd (instead of the previously announced June 16) at the Fieldstone Golf Course. Auburn Hills has hosted several times, always doing a great job and thought this change in venue would be nice.

**We are in need of meeting hosts for 2017.** Please consider having your community offer their services. This is a nice opportunity to show off your city and local commission. If this is more than your group wishes to handle on their own, ask a neighboring community, garden club or business to partner with you. We are open to having at least one evening meeting where only coffee and dessert are served.

**As I write this column, we are in the midst of celebrating Arbor Week.** This is a magical time of year when the winter skeletons of branches are suddenly filled with beautiful blossoms and new green growth. Trees are nature's largest and oldest living organisms. They are the lungs of the

earth and give us gifts beyond measure. Here is a sampling of some amazing tree facts:

- Trees cover about 1/3 of the earth's surface. They also live the longest of any plants.
- The largest trees are the giant sequoia. They can grow over 260 feet tall, weigh over 6,500 tons and have a circumference of up to 80 feet. The stump of one giant sequoia was so big it was used as a dance floor and 32 people could dance on it at once. Sequoias can live for more than 3,500 years but they are not the oldest or tallest trees.
- The world's oldest living trees are the Bristlecone Pine Trees that grow in the Rocky Mountains of California. Some are estimated to be 6,000 years old. These trees grow very slowly because they are found at high altitudes in harsh conditions. As a consequence, they do not grow taller than 15-30 feet.
- The world's tallest trees are the Sierra Redwoods of California. They can reach heights of 360 feet.
- Trees come in an amazing variety. In the forests of North America there are about 400 types of trees. In the tropical rain forest on the island of Madagascar alone there are over 2,000 types of trees.
- A tree can absorb 26 lbs. of carbon dioxide per year and replace it with life-giving oxygen.
- On a warm, spring day, a large street tree takes up to 250 gallons of water from the soil. An average full grown tree releases 50 gallons of moisture into the air each day as a by-product of food making and evaporation.
- The center of a tree trunk (the heartwood) is not vital to its survival since a tree's water and sap channels lie just beneath the bark. The heartwood is the oldest part of the tree but it is no longer living. That explains how a tree can survive with a hollow trunk.

Trees are a treasure. Hope you have a new sense of appreciation for them.

**Celebrate the trees in your community, Pat Deck .**

## Container Gardening by Milo Lou Shammass

*"You can grow enough organic fruit, vegetables & herbs on a 4-foot by 8-foot balcony to satisfy your hungry appetite."*

You can grow enough organic fruit, vegetables and herbs on a 4-foot by 8-foot balcony to satisfy "your hungry appetite. Space may be limited in your garden. Perhaps you live in an apartment. Or you may not want to invest a lot of time in a full scale garden. Whatever your situation, you can still enjoy produce you grow within reach of your kitchen. Using containers to grow organic edibles is rewarding and easy. Container produce can give you nutritious, tasty and visually pleasing organic plants. Nothing tastes better and is healthier than a few fresh herbs, vegetables or fruits from your garden. Put them in a salad within minutes of harvest when they

contain the most nutrients and are full of flavor.

Pay close attention to a few important rules, and you will need to invest only minimal time to enjoy an abundance of organic and healthy fruits and vegetables. You must consider five factors before you plant your organic container garden. Considering these variables will allow easy set up, maintenance and harvest of a productive container garden. *The five variables are sunlight, container size, potting medium, fertilizer and trellising support*

### Light is Energy

Sunlight is the most important factor to consider. Too little prevents your plants from converting enough sunlight energy to produce fruit of real value. (On the other hand, some herbs grown specifically for their foliage do fine with less sunlight.) Track the sun and shade patterns in your immediate area to get a good sense of the space where you intend to garden and what plants will do well there.

Here is a simple rule: Fruit trees and vegetables that set flowers (such as oranges, plums, tomatoes, cucumbers, eggplants,



Milo Lou Shammass,  
Founder & Formulator of  
Dr. Earth Company

peppers, or squash) need a lot of sunlight. Photosynthesis produces sugars that directly feed flowers and help grow fruits of appealing size, taste and nutritional value. A good local nursery has staff people who can help you understand the sunlight you need for the kind of plants you can grow in your region.

### More Soil/Equals More Nutrition

The second most important variable for container gardening is the size of the container. The more soil volume your plants have, the more extensive the root system that can draw on

a larger pool of nutrients and water. Available container space directly influences the nutritional value, size and quality of the fruits, vegetables and herbs you will harvest. More is definitely better. For example, tomatoes require a minimum of 15 gallons of soil in order to develop into full size plants with rewarding taste and nutrition. Other vegetable crops can survive in smaller containers with less soil volume. They still benefit from more soil by producing larger, more bountiful crops in a larger container.

The type of container you use can also make a big difference in growth and quality. Terracotta containers are a good choice, because they breathe with the soil and do not fluctuate quickly with extreme temperatures. Redwood is another good choice that also breathes and retains moisture longer. Plastic containers, which come in a great variety of styles, work fine but will require more watering than thicker, denser pots. With plastic containers, you must use mulch to retain moisture. I use mulch with all containers. Plants in small containers will dry out quickly, so keep a close eye on these pots. In general, less plant foliage requires less regular watering. A larger plant needs more water. Pay close attention to all your plants, and water them regularly as needed.

### Premium Quality, Better Nutrition

Soil is the source of life for every living thing on earth. Healthy soil produces a healthy crop. The type of soil or "potting medium" you choose has a large effect on your plants and their ability to produce an abundance of large, nutritious fruits and vegetables. If you have a potting soil that gives you good results, stay with it. Chemicals are common in many bagged potting soils. Make sure your bagged potting soil contains no chemicals such as synthetic plant nutrients or chicken manure and biosolids.

Potting soil is different from composts or planting mixes. It can be difficult to formulate. Getting the balance right is the key. You want potting soil to drain fast to prevent root rot but you also need the soil to hold on to enough moisture to support a healthy transfer of nutrients to the root. Pot of Gold® is the best and is clean and pure.

Use some of that compost from your kitchen and yard waste. It makes a good component to mix with the potting soil. A good formula is about 1/3 compost to 2/3 potting soil. Do not skimp on the soil, as it is the only source of nutrition for your edibles. If the soil is poor, the nutrient value will be poor. A plant grown in a container is like a caged animal; it eats only what you feed it. Container plants do not have the luxury of drawing nutrients from the native soil. Therefore, spend a few extra dollars for the best soil available.

### Fertilizer: Feeds the Living Soil

You must feed the soil that feeds your plant root systems. Chemically fertilized soils are low in organic matter, which helps conserve the soil and its moisture, providing insurance against drought. Soils lacking organic matter are more vulnerable to drought and to extreme climate changes.

Fruit trees, tomatoes and most other vegetables, especially in containers, need a lot of fertilizer to reach full potential. Roots in containers cannot tap into food reserves the way they can in natural soil. Because the plants receive only what you give them in the container, it is especially important to use the best quality organic fertilizer. Feed the roots in your container plants slowly with the best organic fertilizer to harvest the maximum amount of nutrition from your plants. Sea based organic fertilizers are superior and contain the most multi-minerals. You will benefit from these nutrients as you consume your harvest. Healthy soil leads to healthy food. Feed containers every two months throughout the year to maximize the plant's potential. Because the plant is in a confined space, it will use all of the nutrients quickly. Keep container plants on a regular feeding schedule. Rich, tasty & nutritious vegetables are just outside your kitchen. Enjoy.



### Trellising Support: Form and Structure with Better Health

Exposing as many leaves to sunlight as possible helps to increase your harvest. Some of your vegetables will not require any support at all, but cucumbers, tomatoes and other vine plants need support to keep them off the ground and growing in the desired location. Air space between your plants is also important to help minimize fungal diseases. Air space also encourages beneficial insects to do their pollination work more easily by making flowers more accessible. When you buy your trees or vegetable transplants, ask your nursery professional what he recommends. Some plants may need a stake in the center of the container, while a tomato wants a sturdy cage, and a cucumber needs a grid-like trellis. You can build many of these support systems from scraps around the house. I like a well-assembled product that looks good. Some gardeners prefer a grungy and scrappy look. Plants do not know the difference. Just give them a shoulder to lean on!

**WATERING:** Wet Your Whistle Just a Little Every living organism needs water. Most plants are 90 percent water. The task of delivering water from the soil to the plant is considerable. Sixty percent of water is absorbed by plant root hairs. To keep your plants healthy and thriving you must have a good soil with plenty of organic matter to act like a sponge and allow the almost microscopic

roots to travel through porous, well draining soil. Organic matter allows the soil to breathe with a good ratio of minerals that holds onto water.

When and how often should you water? No set watering schedule can be prescribed. The only schedule to go by is the one that literally feels right. I have studied many plots of land supporting many different crops. Whether growing an annual vegetable crop or perennial walnut trees that are 30 years old, I have drawn the same conclusion: you have to water when it FEELS right to you. The best way to tell when and how much water your plant needs (whether in the ground or a container) is to feel the soil. Probe your finger about an inch or two and feel if it is dry or moist to the touch. You can buy a water meter at your local nursery. They work, but I feel closer to the soil and my plants when I touch the soil with my bare hands. When a reference book says something like, "Water every three days in the summer and cut back to once a week in the winter" I am amazed and disappointed. I wonder: has the author ever been a farmer and paid attention to the watering needs of plants? The soil type makes a huge difference. Also, the more organic material in a soil, the less you have to water. The hotter the day and the shallower the root system, the more you have to water. I could go on and still not cover all the unique watering needs of the plants in your backyard or in a container. Gardeners should pay attention to soil, weather, dryness and humidity. You must base your watering decisions on observation not rigid rules that may not apply to your environment.

Do not set your sprinkler system solely based on what your gardener tells you. You might need to change those sprinkler timers once a month depending on weather conditions. Otherwise, you may waste water. Best for your plants is to get just the water they need when they need it. Inspect your soil. Look at it and feel it. If it looks and feels dry, you may need to alter your watering schedule. Watering in the morning gives your plants the entire day to draw the water from the soil as needed, especially on hot days. Water slowly to insure proper absorption. Water deeply so that it does not run off the surface, never making it down into the root zone. Plant roots are sunk down deep in the soil where you cannot see them. Pay attention to shady spots. They need less water, while the sunny areas dry out more quickly and need more water.



## Nominate for our 2016 ISA Award

We invite all BCSEM member communities to nominate their outstanding volunteer for the BCSEM Individual Service Award for 2016!

To nominate an individual volunteer in your community go to [www.bcsem.org](http://www.bcsem.org). Put your mouse over the "Community" tab. Then move the mouse down to "BCSEM forms" and then to the right and down to "ISA Nomination form." Click on the "ISA Nomination form." Instructions and information are on the form. Good luck! Mail nominations to John Darin by June 30th!

*Participate in this important volunteer recognition program!*

**Newsletter editor needed for 2017! Contact Pat or Barbara**



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## Directors for 2016/2017:

1. Henrietta Baczewski
2. Jerald Stone

**We're on the web**  
[www.bcsem.org](http://www.bcsem.org)

## Committees:

## ISA Award

John Darin

## Travel Trophy

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## Summer Quarterly Meeting June 23 in Auburn Hills

The Auburn Hills Beautification Advisory Commission (BAC) is excited to invite all BCSEM members to the summer quarterly meeting June 23rd, one week later in the month than our regularly scheduled meetings. With our chilly spring temperatures, the extra week could not hurt!

This year to celebrate summer and show you a different spot in Auburn Hills the meeting will be held in our newly renovated Arrowhead Grille at Fieldstone Golf Course. Horticulturist, professional gardener and writer Steven Nikkila will treat us to a presentation "Plant It Well, Enjoy It Forever: Critical News About Planting Trees." This topic provides

valuable information to private homeowners/gardeners, municipalities



and forestry departments.

*"Most people consider trees and shrubs to be long term or permanent parts of a landscape. They commit a big part of their garden budget and years of patience to their trees. Unfortunately, we're gardening and landscaping in an age when a*

*perfect storm of production practices and economic realities has greatly reduced the performance and longevity of trees and shrubs — unless you know what to look for and correct compromised root systems at planting time."*

The second topic involves you! The Auburn Hills BAC would like attendees to share information about their city's successful beautification programs, fun events and best practices. Just one new idea can get those creative juices flowing.

If you have questions contact:  
 Elizabeth Brennan  
 248-330-2488 or

[eabrennan@auburnhills.org](mailto:eabrennan@auburnhills.org).



*bcsem* Newsletter

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### Advice From a Tree

Stand Tall and Proud  
 Sink Your Roots into the Earth  
 Be Content with Your Natural Beauty  
 Go Out on a Limb  
 Drink Plenty of Water  
 Remember Your Roots  
 Enjoy the View

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