



April 2026

SIDELITES

FURTHERING THE CHARITABLE, CIVIC AND SOCIAL INTEREST OF OUR COMMUNITY



Installation Dinner - Marco's Kitchen

May 5, 2026 – Cocktails 6:30 pm

Dinner 7:00 pm

Please join us in celebration for a successful club year! It is a night mixed with good friends and good food as we look back at all of our events and we give away lots of money. You can pay online or you may drop a check off at Laura's house. Payment should be received by May 1st.

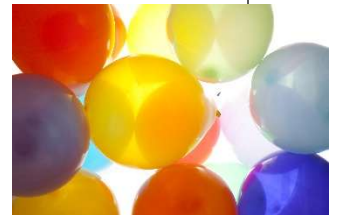
News Briefs

- Charity of the Year Voting Will Soon Begin – you will soon be receiving an email with the information regarding the charities that have been nominated and a link to place your vote. Thank you to everyone who nominated a charity.
- We are still looking for someone to fill the board position of Sidelites and Membership. Send an email to lghighlandsclub@gmail.com if you would be willing to fill either of those positions. See our handbook for a description for each of those positions.
- Laura has volunteered to hold our garage sale at her house again this year. A date has not yet been set but put aside items for the sale as you perform your spring cleaning.
- We are looking for suggestions for speakers or ideas for next year's meetings. Please email the club if you have a friend or know someone who might want to talk about their hobby, etc. Do you have a fun game we could play or an activity we could attend? Let us know what your favorite types of meetings. We need new ideas!

**Flag Creek Heritage Society
Honors Our Country's 250th Anniversary
"A Call to Arms" – Military Display**
Historic Robert Vial House
7425 S. Wolf Road, Burr Ridge
1st Sunday of Each Month 2 – 4
June 7th thru October 4
Also Open Most Thursdays 10 – 12:30
No Admission Fee

Happy Birthday!!!

Linda Conrath – April 14th
Mary DeSimone – April 5th
Kathy Pastwa – April 4th
Alison Credit – May 23rd
Robyn Lavaty – May 23rd
Diana Rodkin – May 6th
Pat Sheneman – May 2nd
Laurie Stevens – May 27th





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At our April meeting, we had a very interesting speaker, Beth Piersialla, a University of Illinois Master Gardener, share her knowledge about Permaculture. Permaculture offers a new way to think about gardens that mimic natural ecosystems. Below is the information that she shared at the meeting.

The 5-Layer "Soil Sandwich"

1. The Foundation (The Prep): Mow your grass or weeds as short as possible. Don't bag the clippings—leave them right there. They are full of nitrogen and will be the first "snack" for the worms once the process starts.
2. The Weed Barrier (Cardboard or Newspaper): Lay down large sheets of plain brown cardboard (remove all plastic tape!) or thick layers of newspaper (at least 10 sheets thick). Crucial step: Overlap the edges by 6–8 inches so weeds can't squeeze through the gaps. Once it's down, soak it thoroughly with a hose until it's floppy.
3. The Nitrogen Layer (The "Green"): Spread about 2 inches of "green" material on top of the wet cardboard. This could be fresh grass clippings, aged manure, or even kitchen vegetable scraps. This layer acts as the "engine" that heats up the pile and starts the composting process.
4. The Carbon Layer (The "Brown"): Add 4–6 inches of "brown" material. Fall leaves are the gold standard here, but you can also use weed-free straw or shredded paper. This layer provides the bulk of your future soil and helps keep the pile airy so it doesn't get smelly.
5. The Protecting Cap (The Mulch): Finish it off with 2–3 inches of wood chips, bark, or clean straw. This top layer isn't just for looks; it protects the layers underneath from the sun, holds in moisture, and prevents the wind from blowing your "brown" layer away.

Water every single layer. Don't wait until the end to turn on the hose. You want the whole "sandwich" to be as damp as a wrung-out sponge from the very beginning to jumpstart the biology.

Sheet Mulching Supplies

- Cardboard (plain brown, tape/staples removed) or Newspaper (non-glossy)
- Fresh grass clippings or aged manure (Nitrogen/Green)
- Kitchen vegetable scraps (Nitrogen/Green)
- Dry leaves, straw, or shredded paper (Carbon/Brown)
- Wood chips or bark mulch (Top layer)
- Garden hose or watering can
- Mower or weed whacker (for prep)

The Top Mineral Miners

Here are the heavy hitters you should consider adding to your garden:

- **Comfrey (The King):** This is the most famous dynamic accumulator. Its roots can go down 10 feet or more. It is particularly great at pulling up **Potassium**, which is essential for fruit and flower production.
- **Dandelion:** Don't pull them! Dandelions pull up **Calcium** and **Iron**. Their deep taproots also help break up compacted soil (like heavy clay).
- **Borage:** Excellent for accumulating **Potassium** and **Calcium**. Plus, its blue flowers are a magnet for bees.
- **Yarrow:** This plant is a "multivitamin" for the soil. It accumulates a broad range of minerals, including **Copper, Nitrogen, and Phosphorous**.
- **Stinging Nettle:** While it bites, it's incredible at pulling up **Iron** and **Magnesium**. It's often used to make "compost tea" to liquid-feed other plants.
- **Alfalfa:** Often used as a cover crop, its roots can reach staggering depths (sometimes 20+ feet!), bringing up almost every trace mineral imaginable.

You don't just leave these plants to grow forever. To get the minerals *into* your soil, you practice **Chop and Drop**:

1. Wait for the plant to grow large and lush.
2. Cut the foliage down before it goes to seed (leave the roots in the ground so the plant grows back).
3. Lay the cut leaves directly on the soil surface around your fruit trees or vegetables.
4. As the leaves rot, they "gift" those deep-earth minerals to the topsoil.

These are some alternatives to Commercial Fertilizers

The "Main Course" (Bulk Organic Matter)

These should make up the bulk of what you add to your garden.

- **Finished Compost:** The "Gold Standard." It adds nutrients, beneficial bacteria, and fungi all at once.
- **Leaf Mold:** These are just semi-rotted leaves. It is the best way to improve soil structure and hold onto water.
- **Aged Herbivore Manure:** (Cow, horse, goat, or rabbit). Make sure it's "aged" or composted for at least 6 months so it doesn't "burn" your plants with too much nitrogen.
- **Worm Castings:** "Black Gold." Even a small handful around a plant acts like a powerful immune booster and growth stimulant.

The "Supplements" (Mineral & Nutrient Boosters)

Use these in smaller amounts to target specific needs.

- **Wood Ash:** From a fireplace or campfire (untreated wood only!). It is very high in **Potassium** and **Calcium**. *Use sparingly, as it can raise your soil's pH.*
- **Kelp or Seaweed Meal:** Contains over 60 trace minerals and growth hormones that help plants handle stress like heat or drought.
- **Rock Dust (Azomite):** Literally ground-up rocks. It doesn't provide a "hit" of energy, but it slowly releases minerals into the soil over several years.
- **Epsom Salts:** A quick source of **Magnesium** and **Sulfur**. Great for peppers, roses, and tomatoes if their leaves are turning yellow.

The "Energy Drinks" (Liquid Feeds)

If your plants look like they need a quick pick-me-up, try these natural liquids.

- **Compost Tea:** Steeping compost in water (with an air bubbler if possible) to multiply the beneficial bacteria before pouring it on the soil.
- **Comfrey or Nettle "Juice":** Soak the leaves of these "mineral miners" in a bucket of water for 2–4 weeks. It smells terrible, but it's a world-class liquid fertilizer.
- **Fish Emulsion:** An organic liquid made from fish scraps. It's high in nitrogen and great for leafy greens.

A Quick "What Not to Add"

To keep your soil healthy, avoid these common mistakes:

- **Fresh Grass Clippings from treated lawns:** If the lawn was sprayed with weed-killer, those chemicals will kill your garden plants too.
- **Pet Waste (Dog/Cat):** These contain pathogens that aren't safe for food gardens.
- **Fresh Pine Needles in bulk:** They are very acidic and slow to break down (fine for blueberries, bad for most veggies).

The Permaculture Trick: Instead of buying these things, you can grow your own fertilizer by planting a "Green Manure" (like Clover or Vetch). You grow them for a few months and then just chop them down and let them rot into the soil.