



While much of the country struggles with either drought or floods, Chicagoland seems to have been blessed this first half-year with enough moisture to help almost all gardeners. Now, will it continue? Read along to find out first half totals. There were a few raindrops over the weekend but the many garden walks that were scheduled were able to go ahead. Everything is on hold this holiday weekend but the third weekend in July brings both the [Sheffield Garden Walk](#) and the [North Dearborn Garden Walk](#) (Sunday only). See below for details about the magazine's participation at Sheffield.

Congrats to columnist [Mike Nowak](#) for adding a second hour to his Sunday garden talker on WCPT-AM radio and to [Tony Abruscato](#) for convincing the many layers of Chicago government that there indeed needs to be one flower show in town. So off with the old name, "Chicagoland Flower & Garden Show," and return to "Chicago Flower & Garden Show." Well, actually the "Belgard Hardscapes Chicago Flower & Garden Show." Sponsorships are *very* important.

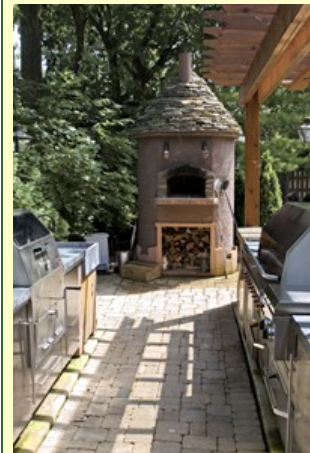
Bill Aldrich

President/Publisher, Chicagoland Gardening

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**July/August 2008
Success with
Natives**

- Pat Armstrong's prairie on a roof
- Butterfly Weed: easy, colorful, hardy

PLUS:

- Cookin' Al Fresco
- Garden Walk Calendar
- Public Garden

A Blooming Hulabaloo



Some interesting reactions to the news that the Flower Show is returning to Navy Pier for 2009 and years beyond that. "Back in Daley's Arms" was the title of one e-mail that arrived in our office. Well, yes, to be blunt, if the City of Chicago gets behind the Flower Show, there is every reason to hope that the area's gardening cognoscenti will help make it the event we in the industry hope it can be.

Show Director Tony Abruscato has already scored one of the city's best landscape firms to help: "I am pleased to welcome Christy Webber and the team of Christy Webber Landscaping into the 2009 Show. Christy was on-hand for the press conference and said on the spot that she was 'in for '09'."

The press conference at Navy Pier featured the Mayor saying the expected things about being pleased the show has returned to the city after two years in Rosemont. "It is a perfect complement to our long-standing goal of making Chicago the most environmentally-friendly city in the world," Daley told the media. Unfortunately, the media wanted to hear the Mayor's reaction to the Supreme Court's ruling on gun ownership which drew a predictably angry response and made for the soundbites on the evening newscasts.

Moisture Measurements

With all the flooding news to the west of Chicagoland, we thought about finding how much moisture we've received around here. Spring has rarely blessed us with such timely rainfall. Precipitation amounts vary widely within even a very close proximity but we thought we could find a pattern by surveying some divergent communities in the Chicagoland area. The big winner (or flood contender): Rockford.

Rain Totals: January 1 - June 26, 2008

	Actual	Normal	Difference
Chicago	18.47"	16.72"	+1.75"
Rockford	20.88"	16.87"	+4.01"
South Bend, IN	18.76"	17.90"	+0.86"

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Blackbirds

Chicago has made national news recently over a spate of attacks by [red-winged blackbirds](#). Male birds are known to spend up to a quarter of their day defending their territory against other males or predators--in our case, humans. They can chase their "prey" up to 100 yards and peck at intruders' hats or even bare heads. Signs have been posted in some city parks warning pedestrians and bikers to detour around areas where the birds have nests that the males feel need protection.

Plant Profile: Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias*)



Type: Native perennial

Flower colors: orange, yellow, white, red, pink, light purple

Height: 12-24".

Bloom time: Summer.

Light: Full sun.

Soil Requirements: Fertile, well-drained soil. Drought tolerant once established.

Source: "Perennials for Illinois," by William Aldrich and Don Williamson, Lone Pine Publishing.

See the article "Butterfly Beacon" in the July-August issue of Chicagoland Gardening magazine, [on sale now](#) or by [subscription](#).

More Milkweeds

Butterfly weed, our cover image for the July/August issue, is one of many species of milkweed, a plant family that has come under scrutiny by scientists attempting to connect how the plants interact with aphids and ants that live among its leaves. The conclusions seem like a big deal to the science types but won't affect how you use the plants

in your garden. About the only ant-plant controversy we usually encounter is whether ants are necessary to help a peony flower bloom (answer: not). The milkweed controversy is reported in the journal [Science](#).

Judging Sheffield...or Not

The [Sheffield Garden Walk](#) has always had more of a carnival feeling than that of a serious, check-your-ticket-at-the-door garden walk. Something about the music emanating from the outdoor stage into many corners of the rather expansive neighborhood. But every year more than 100 homeowners open their courtyards, side alleyways and tidy front gardens to thousands of visitors. To do something a little different, garden chair Laury Lewis this year is instituting a contest to honor those who do exemplary work. Hopefully he will recuse himself, since his garden is always ultra special. Anyway, Laury has recruited two members of the magazine team to help judge-publisher Bill Aldrich and always opinionated columnist Mike Nowak. Come to the walk on the weekend of July 19-20 and make sure we anointed the proper winner. Admission is \$6. And then go enjoy the music and, ah, refreshments.



What to Do in the Garden

Ornamental Garden

- Prune back annuals that may be becoming leggy and fertilize with a half-strength liquid fertilizer.
- Weed beds often. Every weed that sets seed will be producing another round of plants both this year and several years to come
- Watch for sales at garden centers to increase your collection of perennials. You may not get flowers this season but by planting now, roots will settle and be ready for winter and next year's season.

Edible Garden

- Tie up tomato vines that may be sprawling. This will help keep fruit off soil that could rot the fruit.
- The soil has warmed, so now is the time to mulch to keep moisture in and weeds out. Straw does a fine job.
- Harvest often to keep plants producing more fruits. Watch for wilt in vines such as cucumber. Pull plants out and plant another crop if this occurs.

Indoor Garden

- Guard plants that are placed in west-facing windows. The hot summer sun can affect leaves of tropical plants that grow in dense understory in nature. Move the plants a few feet from windows or to the side where direct sun does not reach. Curtains or sheers can also cut down the glare.
- Lift plants regularly to make sure insects are not being harbored under pots or saucers. Many pests can find their way into interior spaces from the outdoors at this time of year.
- If you didn't do so this spring, repot plants that need larger places to grow. Move root-bound plants to a larger pot, but not an overly large differential.

For more information on what to do this month, visit our [website](#).

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