

Botanic Garden receives grant

The North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education program, funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture—National Institute of Food and Agriculture, recently awarded the Chicago Botanic Garden with a grant to educate its visitors about how to integrate sustainable agriculture techniques into their own backyards. The Regenstein Fruit & Vegetable Garden (RFVG) will be one of the main locations where visitors can learn about sustainable agriculture, with additional events, programs and classes offered throughout the Chicago Botanic Garden. The grant funding will make possible the installation of a solar-powered irrigation system and water collection tank for irrigating a portion of the four-acre RFVG, a demonstration garden for organic vegetable gardening techniques. This irrigation system will be designed to be replicable in home gardens to serve as an educational demonstration for visitors.

Events and programs that will educate visitors about sustainable gardening and sustainably-farmed products include the Farmers' Markets on the first and third Sundays of each month from June 4 through Oct. 16. This year will feature a larger more open marketplace as well as free 15-minute demonstrations on a variety of sustainable agriculture

topics at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Visit www.chicagobotanic.org/calendar/farmers_market for a schedule of topics.

Two Farm Dinners will be held from 5-8 p.m. on July 13 and Aug. 17, bringing together local farmers, winemakers, breweries and the Green Youth Farm for a spectacular multi-course meal. Guests will meet the chef, farmers, winemakers, brewers and more during dinner. The cost is \$200 per person. Tickets are available online or at the Visitor Center information. Price includes cocktails, appetizers, dinner and dessert. For more information visit www.chicagobotanic.org/farmdinners or call (847) 835-5440.

Family Drop-in Activities from 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays from June 4 through Sept. 25 allow visitors to get close to nature and discover where food comes from with fun, free activities each weekend. Visit www.chicagobotanic.org/forfamilies for more information.

Classes through the Joseph Regenstein, Jr. School of the Chicago Botanic Garden include The Heritage Prairie Farm Trip, a family tour of a four season, certified naturally grown farm in northern Illinois which takes place from 1-2:30 p.m. Sept. 21 as well as a class, Let's Grow Together, a class that encourages families to learn about and grow vegetables and

compare them to the ones growing at the Garden and meets Feb. 26, May 21, July 23 and Sept. 24. Visit www.chicagobotanic.org/school/symposia/ for more information and registration.

Classes through the Windy City Harvest Program include short courses in urban agriculture held at the West Side Technical Institute. Classes include Seed Starting on Feb. 26, Season Extension Part 1 on March 26, Window Box or Container Gardens on April 23, Building Healthy Soil on May 21, Organic Pest and Disease Control on June 25, Seed Starting: Cool Season Crop Planning on July 30, Cover Cropping on Aug. 27, Tools for the Small Farm and Harvesting Techniques on Sept. 24, Season Extension Part 2 on Oct. 15, and Fruit Tree Pruning on Nov. 19. Visit www.chicagobotanic.org/windycityharvest/courses.php for more information and registration.

Writing retreat contest

StoryStudio is expanding its annual weekend writing retreat at the historic Ragdale Foundation in Lake Forest to include more class sessions, evening programs, and focused "track" options. The 2011 Writers Retreat will be July-July 24. To celebrate the expanded retreat format, StoryStudio is hosting a writing

