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Explore Elgin's Spring Flora

Column written by Madison Bishop, Marketing & Experience Specialist for the Explore Elgin Area tourism bureau.

As the snow begins to melt and the flowers begin to bloom, watching spring come to life is truly a beautiful sight. After all the time spent inside, a breath of fresh air never feels as sweet as it does in the spring. Lowered stress, improved sleep and increased immunity and creativity are just a few benefits you can gain by spending time outdoors. Elgin boasts so many spaces perfect for getting out and into nature, but how do you know which spots are best for you? Whether your interests be in sprawling lush flora, wildlife spotings or ideal exercising locations, you can find it all in the Elgin area.

If you wish to see a stunning, blooming landscape, look no further than Bluff Spring Fen, located adjacent to the southern edge of the Bluff City Cemetery. This 160-acre preserve is named for the rare fen within which it resides. A fen is a type of wetland fed by mineral-rich springs. This particular spring stays warm enough throughout the year that the stream never freezes. Because of this constant source of water, a wide variety of animals call the Bluff Spring Fen home. Come spring, this fen explodes into an assortment of vibrant colors between the animals, plants, butterflies and dragonflies that can be spotted. In fact, 450 varieties of plants, 57 classes of butterflies and almost 100 bird species have been counted in the preserve.

Bring your binoculars because this fen is a birdwatchers dream! Woodpeckers, great horned owls, hawks and ducks have been seen here. Bring the family for a day of play and see what wildlife calls this fen home!

Bluff Spring Fen



No matter where you explore this spring, it's important we all do what we can to support our local businesses, many that have experienced countless challenges this past year! Numerous restaurants adapted to the safety concerns surrounding the pandemic, and as winter comes to an end, patio dining spaces will reopen. Enjoying a meal outdoors is a wonderful way to relish in the weather while also boosting the local economy. Stopping for lunch while out for a walk or spending quality time with the family can make for both new experiences and special memories. You can learn more about restaurants, parks and forest preserves in the Elgin area by visiting ExploreElginArea.com.

Elgin Cultural Arts Commission Expands Public Art through Programs

Every year, the Elgin Cultural Arts Commission is committed to enhancing the quality of life in Elgin by adding new pieces of public art. They have several ways to make this possible, including a new works program, a utility box wrapping program and paint the plows program. The Cultural Arts Commission also supports other local efforts to bring more art to the community through sponsorships and grants.

Public Art Tour: Visit the regularly updated interactive public art map at cityofelgin.org/publicart. On the map, you can find each piece of public art in a walkable area of Downtown Elgin. There is also a printer-friendly version of the map available that can be printed at home.

Call for Art: As part of the new works program, the commission puts out a call for art each year to acquire new public art. The call for art is open to artists of all levels, worldwide. For more information about all of the public art initiatives in the Elgin, visit cityofelgin.org/publicart.





April 6, 2021 Consolidated General Election Information

The Consolidated General Election will be held on April 6, 2021. This election includes contests for city council seats, township elected offices, library district elected offices, school boards and fire districts. Your ballot may look different than other fellow Elgin residents depending on the district boundaries in which you reside. Find more information at cityofelgin.org/election.

Elgin residents who are registered to vote can apply to vote by mail, vote early, or vote on the day of the election at their designated voting location. Voting information and locations also differs by residing county.

For a complete listing of important voting dates, deadlines, candidates, voting locations, registration information and more, visit your county election website:

- **Kane County:** kanecountyclerk.org/elections.
- **Cook County:** cookcountyclerkil.gov/agency/2021-elections



Important Voting Information

Voter Registration

Not sure if you are properly registered to vote? Elgin residents may check their county election websites to verify their information. The last day of regular voter registration is March 9. However, you can still register to vote through grace period registration. Find more information on grace period registrations on your county's election website. Cook County residents also have the option to register to vote online by March 21.

Mail Ballots

Mail ballots are a safe and convenient option for residents to vote in the upcoming election without physically showing up to a polling place. If you wish to vote by a mail ballot, you need to request a ballot online with your county and make sure it is postmarked by election day, April 6. The last day to request a mail ballot for both Cook and Kane Counties is April 1.



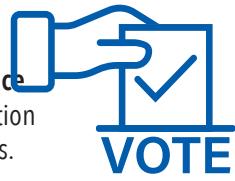
Early Voting

Early voting allows voters to cast a full ballot before the observed Election Day. Although voters can still go to their polling place on Election Day, early voting is intended to make voting easier for everyone. This cuts down on lines at the polling place on election day as well as allows voters to vote when it fits their schedule.

Early voting is conducted at assigned locations throughout Cook and Kane County. You may go to any one of these assigned locations to vote early. Early voting is **not** conducted at your usual polling place. Polling places will only be open for voting on the observed Election Day. Early voting takes place March 10-April 5 for Cook County residents and March 12-April 5 for Kane County residents.

Election Day Voting

Election Day is Tuesday, April 6, 2021. Find your polling place at cityofelgin.org/pollingplace. Polls are open until 7:00 p.m. Same day registration (grace period registration) is available at the polls. For more information, visit cityofelgin.org/vote.





Gardening in Elgin

Gardening has so many benefits! You can grow beautiful, delightfully smelling flowers as well as varieties of vegetables and herbs to enjoy with meals. It's also a great way to spend quality time outdoors and is known to be good for the mind and soul, too. There are many ways to garden. You can grow in containers, raised beds, or in the ground.

Before you begin gardening, read about the necessary steps to take to ensure your garden is in compliance with Elgin's municipal code. Access the City of Elgin gardening guide at cityofelgin.org/gardening.

The website also provides several helpful resources from the University of Illinois Extension College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences to assist you in achieving your gardening goals.



Attract Butterflies and Pollinators to Your Yard

There are many native plants you can add to your garden and landscaping to help attract a variety of butterflies and pollinators. These plants can add color to your garden and provide food for butterfly and pollinator species.

Not sure where to start? These helpful, local organizations are great resources:

- The Conservation Foundation theconservationfoundation.org
- Wild Ones of Northern Kane County northernkanecounty.wildones.org



Recycle Your Food and Yard Waste by Composting



Backyard Composting

Composting is a way to break organic materials and recycle them back into the soil in a natural cycle, rather than disposing items in your regular garbage program. Waste from food and your yard make up a large portion of the waste stream. Making compost can keep materials out of the landfill, while also offering several benefits to your yard and potentially saving you money as well.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), since healthy plants come from healthy soil, one of the best ways you can build healthy soil in your garden and lawn is by using compost. You can easily make compost with landscape trimmings and food scraps in your own backyard.

Compost improves soil structure and texture, increases the soil's ability to hold both water and air, improves soil fertility, and stimulates healthy root development in plants with a variety of macro and micronutrients. Find information on how to get started composting at home by visiting cityofelgin.org/composting.

Curbside Organics Collection

Elgin has a curbside organics collection program, commonly referred to as a "ride-along" program because the food scraps collection rides along with the yard waste collection to the composting facilities. The program is subscription-based and runs from April to November, consistent with the City's yard waste collection program. This program allows residents to combine acceptable organic food waste in a designated bin along with yard waste. The annual subscription fee is billed separately through Waste Management for this service. Residents have three cart size options at different subscription rates:

- 96-gallon cart: \$141/season
- 64-gallon cart: \$131/season
- 35-gallon cart: \$121/season



Contact Waste Management at 800-964-8988 to subscribe to this service. Find more information at cityofelgin.org/organics.



Spring Cleaning Programs

As the weather warms up, residents are eager to get outside and tidy up their home and yard. City staff is equally excited to transition seasons and has several programs in place to help cleanup Elgin, too!

Yard Waste Collection

Free yard waste collection by Waste Management begins April 1. No stickers are required on yard waste bags during the entire month of April. Learn more at cityofelgin.org/yardwaste.



Branches and Brush

Branch/brush bundles are always collected for free if they are:



- Tied into bundles no longer than 5 feet
- Branches are less than 2 inch diameter
- Bundles weigh less than 45 pounds each

Storm Drain Clearing

With over 6,000 storm drains citywide, the City seeks help from residents to keep them clear of leaves and debris. When it rains, leaves can clog drains and lead to street flooding.



Right of Way Cleanup

During April and May, crews from public works conduct an annual right of way cleanup initiative along major corridors. This spring initiative takes several weeks to complete.



Street Sweeping

Beginning April 1, weather permitting, public works will deploy its street sweepers to clean up after the long winter. The sweeping program will run through September.



Pothole Patching

Pothole patching is ongoing with three crews dedicated daily through May. Temporary "cold patch" is used until "hot patch" is available when asphalt plants open for the season.

Join the "Elgin Litter League"



Making a Difference One Bag at a Time

It's really quite simple to join the "Elgin Litter League." You can collect litter by yourself, or with a group of family, friends or other volunteers. Take a walk around your neighborhood and collect litter. If you are able to, bring two separate trash bags (it can be as simple as small grocery/retail bags) so that you can keep trash and recyclables separate. Remember to empty those recyclables loose into your curbside recycling cart, as you cannot recycle plastic bags loose or around recyclables in the curbside recycling program. Bags can be recycled at most retailers.



Mayor Kaptain loves to stay active and routinely goes on walks with his wife, Sandy. On their walks, they collect recyclables found in their neighborhood.

"Together we can work to beautify our community - the place we are proud to call home," said Mayor David Kaptain.

You too can take pride in your neighborhood by simply clearing up any visible waste. If you are going on a short walk, use a small grocery bag to collect waste. Using large garbage bags can contribute to unnecessary plastic waste if you don't fill it completely.



Organizing a large cleanup effort?

The City of Elgin can provide waste bags and grabber reachers (litter pickup tools) to help with your efforts. Depending on the need and availability, you may also request assistance from Elgin Allies, volunteers who work on projects to enhance the community (cityofelgin.org/elginallies). Contact Elgin 311 with these requests.



Share your good deeds and find others like you. Upload your photos on social media with #LitterLeague. The City may share your photo or offer you a prize! For more information, visit cityofelgin.org/litterleague.

