

April 17, 2025 Lake Minnetonka Garden Club Meeting Minutes

Kate Bryant called the meeting to order at 1:20 PM. She welcomed the members to the 2025 LMGC garden year. Guests were introduced. Kate thanked Connie Linder for today's meeting and all her great meetings this year. Derek Carwood Arboretum Adult Education Manager, welcomed the club and thanked us for coming.

Kate introduced Hazel Schrader, one of the 2025 LMGC scholarship recipients and also the national 2024 GCA Montine M. Freeman Scholar for Native Plant Studies. At the U of M is she is completing her MS and is studying resilient landscape plants specifically prairie willow. She shared her research project of propagation and increasing awareness of *Salix humilis* or prairie willow. There are dwarf and normal sized (10 feet) prairie willow forms. The plants have early spring red flowers, attractive foliage, and pollinator benefits. This native shrub is more difficult to propagate than most willows and yet it can grow in diverse landscape settings: wet or dry and has a lovely light grey foliage. Her research findings have found ways to increase rooting of prairie willow. Hazel thanked the club for the scholarship and investing in her work. Kathleen Jones indicated that a prairie willow had been planted in the Depot Garden in Wayzata.

Connie Linder, Programs Chair, then introduced our conservation meeting program on CommonGround, Minnesota. Kelly, the state staffer for the Minnesota CommonGround programs. CommonGround is a farmer funded non-profit organization where farmers volunteer their time to talk about farming. Kelly encouraged us sign up for newsletter and follow them on Instagram and Facebook at Common Ground Minnesota.

Mission statement from their website: "We are women in agriculture from across Minnesota who volunteer our time to share information about food and farming. Together, our group raises a variety of conventional and organic crops, livestock and produce. We share our personal experiences, as well as science and research, to help you sort through the myths and misinformation surrounding food and farming." Kelly emphasized the three parts of sustainability: economic and social as well as environmental issues. She introduced Barb and Rachel.

Barb Liebenstein from Wolf Creek Farm, Dundas, MN (Rice County) demonstrated the world as a apple. She divided the apple into 4 quarters, 3 of which we cannot use for sustenance, so we are left with 1 quarter. This quarter was cut in half: 12.5% is desert, arctic and unusable. With the remaining 12.5% she cut into quarters of 3% rocks, etc; then 3% too wet, 3% human needs, living, etc; leaving 3% of the world to feed everyone. In 1950 one farmer fed 25 people, today 1 farmer feeds 142 people.

Rachel Gray from Blackduck, MN (Beltrami County) talked about her 3,000 acre Little Timber Farm and their program on Heifer Development. Little Timber is a multiple generation farm. She raises cows that can work in different environments. She supports her local community and focuses on genetics; her cows are half Angus and half Herford cattle. Low feed and heavy early calf development are her goals. She buys young heifers, breeds them and sells cows that are pregnant to farmers across the U.S . Little Timber is the 2024 winner of the National Cattleman's Beef Association's Environmental Stewardship Award. We watched their winning video, showing how they manage the watershed around their farm. Their farm is veery well suited for growing pasture grasses. Rachel uses drones for weed control and GPS trackers on her bulls to show their behavior. She feeds garlic to her cows for fly control! The cows are fed predominately grass pasture in summer and hay in winter. She works with a nutrition specialist to monitor the health of each cow and track their growth and development.

Barb is a "recovering" dairy farmer, she recently left dairy farming and is now farming soybeans and corn. She emphasized the need for manure and water management today. Robotic milking is an exciting happening today and makes dairy farming much easier. Water is our most valuable resource and needs protection and management from manure and other nutrient pollution. She cited that a dairy cow produces 18 gallons of manure per day ! Environmental stewardship is critically important and as farmers they are very happy to come and talk about their work and farming. There were many questions about farm management which Barb and Rachel were happy to answer and discuss with club members.

Connie announced the CommonGround honorarium will go to Second Harvest Heartland. She adjourned the meeting at 2:50 PM.