

# This is CEGA.



## SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES





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CEGA is an Illinois not-for-profit organization that receives support from Advocates for Urban Agriculture, Chicago Community Gardeners Association, Chicago Flower & Garden Show, *Chicagoland Gardening* magazine, Chicago Park District, Forest Preserve District of Cook County, GreenMark Public Relations, *Natural Awakenings Chicago* magazine, Shedd Aquarium, *The Mike Nowak Show with Peggy Malecki* and University of Illinois Extension: Cook County.

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## Why Awards?

Why happiness? Why health? Why community?

Our awards make a difference to the people who receive them. Our awards validate hard work and a place in the world. Our awards create pride in backyards and on blocks and in neighborhoods. We know it because we've seen it.

We're not patting ourselves on the back. We're acknowledging a simple truth: it's important to reward people for being better people. For lifting up their communities, for doing things that are important to themselves, their neighbors and the planet.



Many of these gardens need support, and our awards help them get it--from granting organizations, from civic groups, even from Chicago police districts. Our awards also help community groups receive newspaper, television and radio recognition, which leads to more support. And that's just a start.

We're asking you to support us because we support things that are important.





## CEGA's History

In a way, the seeds of CEGA were planted in 2011. In that year, the Green on McLean community garden, located in a gang-ridden neighborhood on a vacant lot reclaimed from decades of trash and violence, entered the Mayor's Landscaping Awards. The small garden, which radio host Mike Nowak had helped to create, won third prize for community gardens in their area of the city. The kids who had worked on the garden were so proud that they passed around the award, a small plaque, all winter. (The kids have graduated from high school now, and one of them is going on to culinary school.)

That was the last year of the Mayor's Landscaping Awards. They were canceled, and Chicago lost an invaluable program, which for more than fifty years had recognized and encouraged the city's gardeners. A few years later Nowak, who does an environment and gardening show on WCGO Radio (*The Mike Nowak Show with Peggy Malecki*), decided it was time to recreate the program. His co-host, the publisher of *Natural Awakenings Chicago* magazine, agreed, and the two of them went to some of their urban gardening friends: Christine Nye, horticulture manager at the Shedd Aquarium; Ron Wolford, extension educator in horticulture at University of Illinois Extension: Cook County; and Julie Samuels, co-founder of the Chicago Community Gardeners Association (CCGA).

This group of gardening movers and shakers formed a committee to start giving out awards themselves. Ron and his team recruited Master Gardeners from Extension to do the judging, Mike and Peggy took charge of the publicity and graphics and helped organize the ceremony, Julie got the word out through CCGA, and Christine worked with the Forest Preserve District of Cook County to get the metal award signs printed and bolted to poles.





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Extension paid for the venue for the ceremony, the auditorium at the Chicago Cultural Center. And all of these people and groups did the other day-to-day work necessary to create what they called the Chicago Excellence in Gardening Awards (CEGA).

Even in the first year—and certainly since then—other groups concerned with our community environment stepped up to help get the word out. At the first awards ceremony, former commissioner of the environment for the city of Chicago Suzanne Malec-McKenna gave a brief but inspiring keynote address, and then the award winners came to the front of auditorium to receive their awards as Mike read descriptions of their accomplishments while images of their gardens flashed behind him. The room was filled with the joy and pride of gardeners who ranged from pre-school kids to at least one who remembered working in a World War II victory garden. Everyone involved knew that something important had begun.

In the first two years CEGA recognized more than 100 gardens from all over Chicago for making their neighborhoods more beautiful and sustainable. As the 2019 growing season *slowly* unfolded, CEGA once again invited gardens of all shapes and sizes, including residential, community, school, church, business and urban farms to enter its free and citywide competition. For a time, there was concern that the wet, chilly spring would discourage gardeners from entering, but CEGA launched a social media campaign, sent out email blasts and received remarkable support from the press (see below). Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) commissioner Kim Du Buclet arranged for the MWRD to donate 5 rain barrels for a raffle that every entrant was eligible for. And new Chicago garden center City Grange gave each entrant a \$15 gift certificate.

In the end there were almost as many entries in 2019 as in the first two years combined, and this time they came from 76 neighborhoods in 43 of the city's 50 wards. For 2020, we look forward to broadening our reach to every ward and every neighborhood in the city.

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## The Contest

The Chicago Excellence in Gardening Awards contest has three stages: entries, judging, and awards.

### The Entry Stage

This is our most intense period of publicity and outreach. We begin planning and publicizing the contest in March and open the application process in April when the online form is posted. Increasingly, we've been able to gain the attention of the press, and we really work social media. We reach many gardeners through the newsletters of gardening and horticulture organizations and even some Chicago aldermen.

Actually, we'll do just about anything to get the message to gardeners. A couple of our volunteers drove around some of the more hard-to-reach wards and left little notes when they saw good gardens. And we made a cat video.

### The Judging Stage

In July, the application process closes and judging begins. Contest judges include Illinois Master Gardeners and other horticulture and gardening experts, organized by University of Illinois Extension: Cook County and trained by the contest committee.

The CEGA judges are also, in a way, ambassadors and educators. They visit each site and interview gardeners about their gardens. They talk about choices and options, often helping gardeners to move towards better design and more sustainability.

Then they complete an online form, rating the gardens on various elements, describing their important features and making recommendations to the committee.



We put these up on Youtube for you, in case you want to watch them.

<https://youtu.be/SoMRASNoGzY> and

<https://youtu.be/ZGUB9pnSFuk>.





## CEGA Judging Criteria

- Is the garden well-planned in terms of horticulture and functionality?
- Is the garden well-maintained?
- Does it have a good overall design, aesthetically speaking?
- Does it exhibit good environmental practices, such as edibles, native plants and pollinator attractors?
- Are sustainable practices used in design and maintenance?
- What intangibles—such as art, neighborhood culture, child-friendliness—are expressed in the garden?

For community gardens, judges look at two more aspects:

- How does the garden engage and involve the community?
- How does the garden give back to the community?

## The Awards Stage

After the judges have submitted their recommendations, with photographs of the gardens, ratings and descriptions, the contest committee meets to review all the gardens. This can be a long process, but it is completed and awards announced in September. The ceremony takes place in October.

And the awards ceremony is a moving, inspiring and joyful event. More than 150 people filed into the room at the Garfield Park Conservatory last year and remained there, happy, proud and interested in each other's gardens until the two-hour ceremony was over. Even the kids sat without squirming, although when they received their awards, some of them mugged for the camera and held their signs and certificates high in the air. Many of the winners stayed afterwards to give each other compliments and ask each other questions. And, of course, to delight in the treasures our supporters provided in their swag bags!

As one of our volunteer greeters said after the ceremony, “Just seeing their faces as they arrived gave me a wonderful feeling. I don't think I've ever seen a group of sweeter, happier people.”



## Recognition for CEGA

### Forbes.com

“Flip through any home décor or lifestyle magazine and it’s likely you’ll see lush and manicured gardens framing splendid homes. We don’t often get a sneak peek into more traditional, but no less impressive, urban gardens grown with love and attention that rivals those larger properties. Thanks to the Chicago Excellence in Gardening Awards, many of those thoughtfully-designed gardens are getting the recognition they deserve.” [more . . .](#)

### John Williams on WGN Radio

Mike Nowak and Peggy Malecki joined John Williams in the WGN studio for an intelligent, enthusiastic [interview](#). (about 18 minutes in)

### Chicagoland Gardening Magazine

“Gardeners change the world. And if you think that’s an exaggeration, you haven’t met the people who enter the Excellence in Gardening Awards (CEGA) each year. Some are individuals who, working alone or with their families, create oases of peace and beauty in the urban landscape. Some are teachers whose students are growing food and developing skills they can use to find jobs and live useful lives. Some approach gardening as scientists, some as artists, and some as wild-eyed dreamers. And they all contribute to making Chicago a healthier, more beautiful, and even more socially just place to live. [more . . . \(pdf\)](#)

### Natural Awakenings Chicago

“When does an event become a tradition? If the first year is inaugural and the second year is a return, is it the third year? Regardless of the label, in 2019 the Chicago Excellence in Gardening Awards (CEGA) is starting its third season as the preeminent citywide gardening competition.” [more . . .](#)



### Monica Eng on Worldview, WBEZ Radio

This [interview](#) helped bring in the entries.

### Block Club Chicago

“Gardening in Chicago is no walk in the park what with the unpredictable weather — either too wet, too dry, too hot or too cold — heavy clay (possibly toxic) soil, voracious wildlife and an overall lack of plantable space. And still the city’s green thumbs persist.” [link . . .](#)

## CEGA's Structure and Workings

As of April 2019, the CEGA program operates under the direction of the Chicago Excellence in Gardening Alliance, a 501(c)(3) organization and Illinois not-for-profit. The structure of the organization has three elements.

**The board of directors** comprises 5 to 15 members, who may or may not also be members of the CEGA contest committee. Currently, the board has 5 members, but we are looking at other possible candidates for addition in the near future.

**The CEGA contest committee** is the organizing body. Drawing its members from organizations that support the program, it meets regularly from approximately March through October. The committee is responsible for the decisions and organization required to conduct the awards, including but not limited to schedule, promotion, registration, judging, award selection and the award ceremony. At this point and for the past three years, all committee members have been volunteers for the organization.

**The administrative team** handles the ongoing core work of the contest throughout the year, including but not limited to: website design and maintenance; contest entries and database administration; graphic design; regular communications to entrants, committee and judges; judging assignments and the judges supporting material packets; award notification and preparation; social media coordination; ongoing publicity and outreach coordination; and meeting/project coordination.

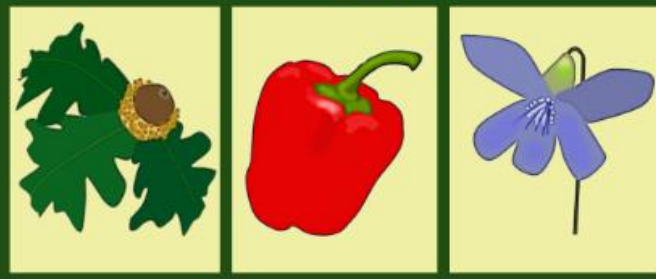
To this point, the team has consisted of three volunteers, with help from others on the contest committee. If we're going to grow and increase our outreach, this needs to become paid staff.



And the staff needs to have a budget. While several of our supporting groups make substantial contributions of work hours and materials, as well as paying for specific elements of the program, a great deal is still coming out of the pockets of our volunteers. That's not sustainable. And it puts significant constraints on what we can do to reach the gardeners we most want to reach.

That's why we need your support.





# CHICAGO EXCELLENCE IN GARDENING AWARDS

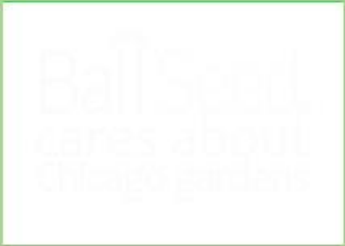
Your name as presenter.



Welcome from the Chicago Excellence in Gardening Awards team. Our judges are out in the city right now, looking at more than 100 finalist garden in more than 40 wards. Please read more about what we're doing and, if you'd like to be involved as a volunteer as we move closer to our October awards ceremony, let us know.



Your message and link



## HOME

The Chicago Excellence in Gardening Awards (CEGA) are Chicago's only citywide gardening honors recognizing the hard work and creativity that make our city a healthier, more beautiful and more sustainable place. They support the pride we take in our neighborhoods and...

Last year the CEGA committee honored gardens from 33 wards parkways to elegant home gardens to large and productive urban motto, adopted in 1837, "Urbs in Horto." For a complete list of v

The audience in the Jens Jensen Room at the Garfield Park Conservatory showed great interest in the photos and descriptions of all the gardens. TOP: Gardeners from Kellogg Elementary School receive their award from radio host and CEGA co-founder Mike Nowak.

Levels of Sponsorship

	Sponsorship Opportunities			
Benefits	Presenting Sponsor	Supporting Sponsor	platinum	gold
<b>Sponsor Level</b>	<b>\$ 10,000</b>	<b>\$ 5,000</b>	<b>\$ 2,500</b>	<b>\$ 1,000</b>
"Presented By" credit on CEGA website, signage and awards program	x			
"Presented By" credit in most major publicity, including press interviews and ads, and in social media	x			
"Presented By" credit in news releases to press and city agencies	x			
A brief address by your representative at the CEGA awards ceremony	x			
Featured position and treatment on CEGA website sponsor page	x			
Naming privilege of special award	x	x		
Your logo and message with link on CEGA website sidebar (on most pages, including homepage)	x	x		
Logo on most publicity materials	x	x		
Signage and exhibit table at award event	x	x	x	
Mention in press releases and other publicity	x	x	x	
Social media shoutouts	x	x	x	x
Logo on select publicity materials	x	x	x	x

Supporters who donate between \$250 and \$999 will be acknowledged in the awards ceremony program, will receive 2 tickets to the ceremony and will have their logo and a link on the CEGA website sponsors page. Sponsor levels indicated above will also receive these benefits.

All supporters will have the satisfaction of knowing that they have helped to support good gardening in our community.