

Editor [Lauren Williamson](#): There's flooding on Cass Ave outside Lace School. Be careful out there, guys! —[Tweeted](#) 2 hours ago

Like 169

[Get the Patch Newsletter](#)

Like what you see here? Then "Like" us on Facebook too: <https://www.facebook.com/DarienILPatch>

[The Neighborhood Files](#)

HGTV's Garden Boss Moss Speaks at Indian Prairie

Chicago's urban garden guru William Moss shared his expertise.

By [Michelle Iskowitz](#) | [Email the author](#) | June 7, 2011 [Print](#)

[0 Comments](#)

[Recommend](#)

18 people recommend this. Be the first of your friends.

[Email](#)

[Tweet](#)

[View full size](#)



[Tell Your Neighbors About Patch](#)

The heat was on in Darien Monday—so the scene was well set for HGTV gardening guru William Moss to present his talk "Beat the Heat Gardening" at [Indian Prairie Public Library](#).

Moss received zealous applause from the roughly 60 audience members as he began his presentation, aimed at selecting plants that will thrive in extreme sun, wind and heat conditions.

The garden expert has firmly established his reputation as a sustainable urban garden and green living expert with his current [HGTV show, Dig In](#), as contributor for the [CBS Early Show](#), TLC's *Town Hall* and Discovery Channel's *Rally Round the House*.

A Northwestern University graduate, Moss taught for three years in Chicago Public Schools before recognizing his passion to combine nature and education.

Added to an already impressive resume is his position as environmental educator at the Chicago Botanic Garden where he developed youth education programs.

Moss, a South Carolina native, is currently a University of Illinois NRES (Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences) graduate student and has earned acclaim as an urban gardening expert with the National Gardening Association. He recently helped CPS students build a school vegetable garden in conjunction with Burpee Home Gardens.

Moss's enthusiastic presentation gave the audience valuable and specific information in plant care and selection that's useful in extreme Midwest summer weather.

Wind exposure can cause as much or more moisture evaporation in plants than the sun can, Moss said, and strategic placement of containers is a key factor in plant survival.

Moss explained the dangers of allowing plants to wilt, noting that the two chemicals released during wilting—ethylene and abscisic acid—begin the plant's death process.

[Close](#)

Water drops on leaves during the hottest, sunniest part of the day can act as a magnifying glass, intensifying the sun's rays and potentially causing holes in the leaves.

And longer, saturating watering periods a few times per week promote deeper root growth than frequent, short periods.

Moss gave these tips on container planting:

- Drill holes in sides, not bottoms of containers so that drainage occurs but leaves a small reservoir at the base.
- Because terra cotta pots dry out faster than ceramic, place a terra cotta pot inside an undrained ceramic pot filled with a little water when you're unable to water for a few days, giving the plant a water supply.
- Group containers together when out of town to increase humidity levels among the plants.
- Plants in windy, sunny areas require more water, so place containers in a less windy, shady spot if you have to be away for a few days. Northern or eastern exposures provide the most protection.

Mulching and compost are staples in all gardens, and while Moss says the best is the gardener's own compost, any variety will suffice and should even be used in containers to aid in moisture retention.

"There should be one to two inches of mulch around annuals and perennials," Moss said, "and three to four around trees and shrubs, with a shallower application next to the trunk."

Moss laughed saying that he has killed hundreds of plants over the years on his own rooftop garden and gave some suggestions on drought-tolerant plants that are characterized by small, hairy, thin, grayish, hard or waxy foliage:

Trees: Oak, hickory, ash, honey-locust, pine and ginkgo.

Shrubs: Serviceberry, St. John's wort, sand cherry, blue sage, junipers and leadplant.

Perennials: Nodding onion, flax, hyssop, thyme, Raydon's favorite aster, sedum, Ozawa onion and basket-of-gold.

Vegetables: Okra, chili peppers, chives, melon, gourd, persimmon and fig.

Moss' talk was part of the [Darien Park District Garden Club's](#) 10th anniversary celebration.

Before Moss began his presentation, DPDGC president Liza Branham spent a few moments thanking the library and garden club members for a hugely successful [plant sale fundraiser](#) that took place during Saturday's hot, steamy weather.

"We think the IPPL rocks," said Branham, "and our members did a fantastic job [at the sale]."

Plant sale chairman Cathy Streett said the group raised more than \$5,000, which was up 30 percent from last year's sale. Funds are used for speakers, scholarship awards and community beautification projects, and serve as donations to the Illinois Extension Master Gardener training program and the not-for-profit organization We Grow Dreams. The club donated any leftover plants from the sale to local churches.

The club's scholarship committee presented a \$1,000 award to University of Illinois horticulture student Sean Mullahy who is a research assistant in an urban pollination study.

"I'm honored to receive this award and I'm so grateful to the Garden Club," an enthusiastic Mullahy said.

Moss has multiple websites where you can obtain more information on a multitude of gardening topics:

<http://www.facebook.com/?ref=home#!/williammosstv>

<http://www.youtube.com/user/mossthegardenboss#p/f/0/DcCDDNSYvBA>

<http://www.hgtv.com/dig-in/show/index.html>

<http://www.garden.org/urbangardening/>

Interested in a follow-up to this article?

Keep me posted!

Recommend

18 people recommend this. Be the first of your friends.

Email

Tweet

Get Patched In

Darien news, events, and deals, delivered straight to you.

Sign Up

[Terms of Service](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

[Close](#)