Greg Glavan once was cited for possession of sparklers when they were among the fireworks banned under Minnesota law. Hands slapped, he decided to become a professionally licensed pyrotechnician. Today, his “sparklers” span the night sky.

Glavan, of Delano, is among the 100 or so members of Northern Lighter Pyrotechnic Inc., a nonprofit group based in Minnesota and one of the oldest all-volunteer fireworks clubs in the United States, formed in 1977.

The Lighters present about 20 fireworks shows every year around the region, “but we never look at the sky,” Glavan said. “I’m a dentist by trade, so I certainly value my hands.” Sometimes, if they have a particularly spectacular or unusual shell, they’ll pause the show to study it. Mostly, though, they keep their sights on safely igniting the explosive shells and waiting for the “oohs” and “ahhs” of the crowd to tell them how they did.

Fireworks sales to the general public had been illegal in Minnesota since 1941, but that changed in 2002 when Gov. Jesse Ventura vigorously supported legalizing low-level pyrotechnics such as sparklers and certain fountains.

Still, lighting a festive fountain in your driveway hardly compares to sending a giant Chrysanthemum soaring into the sky. But no one sets fire to fuse without lots of training, said Glavan, the group’s media liaison. All members undergo background checks and must pass the Pyrotechnics Guild International’s shooter certification course, among other safety courses. “There are some hoops to jump through,” Glavan said.

Members present shows throughout the year and can learn how to build their own fireworks shells.

Here are the guys beneath the fireworks, listening for our “oohs” and “ahhs.”

Pyromania!
What to look for in the skies tonight.

**WILLOW**
Soft, dome-shaped silver or gold effects that gently drift to earth.

**CREMORA**
Made with coffee creamer to create a mushroom cloud effect in a ground display. Propelled in the air, it looks like flak.

**COMET**
Single large star that leaves a glittering trail, with a Blue Fan at left.

**CROSSETTE**
Several large stars break into smaller and smaller stars to create a criss-cross effect.

**GO GETTERS**
Stars that fly, wriggle or “swim” in silence away from the center of a burst.

**PEONY**
The most common shell, differing from a Chrysanthemum in that the stars do not appear to radiate from the center, with Crackles below.

**MINES AND SALUTES**
Quick flashes of intense white light followed by a loud report like a thunderclap.

**PATTERN SHELL**
Hearts here, but there are smiley faces, elephants, donkeys, etc.

**CHRYSANTHEMUM**
Perfectly spherical with stars that leave a visible trail of sparks appearing to radiate from the center.

**COMMUNICATION SHELL**
Hearts here, but there are smiley faces, elephants, donkeys, etc.

**COMET**
Single large star that leaves a glittering trail, with a Blue Fan at left.

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