

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS – RECRUIT (110821):

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed here are strictly those of the individual contributors and do not necessarily represent the entirety of NGC, Inc, its staff, member states, and/or International Affiliates. In all matters, NGC Bylaws and Standing Rule serve as our governing authority.

<https://gardenclub.org/bylaws-and-standing-rules>.

Q. Are the “Ask Me About My Garden Club” bumper stickers available?

A. The NGC Membership committee is currently researching options to present to the Finance committee. You can also order your own or encourage your state to order them in bulk.

Q. How do we get a copy of the Membership Matters Book?

A. The original book was written by Gaye Stewart and Robin Pokorski, both of Pacific Region. You can order books from their website: <https://pacificregiongardenclubs.org/membership-matters-1>

Q. Is there an example of what the NGC Membership Brochure looks like? I'd like to see an example before I order some.

A. <https://www.gardenclub.org/member-resources>

Q. Where can we purchase Membership Matters brochures?

A. You may be confusing two different offerings. The Membership Matters book is available for download or printed purchase from Pacific Region at

<https://pacificregiongardenclubs.org/>

NGC also offers a tri-fold brochure about joining a garden club. These can also be ordered on the Member Resource page. . <https://www.gardenclub.org/member-resources>

Q. Will the zoom link remain the same for all meetings and how do we get on the list for the zoom links to these meetings?

A. Yes. Starting in 2022, we will keep the Membership Mondays link consistent and will host monthly meetings on the 2nd Monday from now through May 2022.

We still ask that you still register each month so that we know you were there or can send you the recording afterwards. This also helps NGC track our outreach.

Your state president and your state Membership chairperson will also receive the invitation to be broadcast to all state members and clubs.

Q. Will this presentation of Membership Mondays be posted? Or how can we receive a copy? Please post the link to website!!!

A. These videos will all be posted after editing and made available at <https://www.gardenclub.org/member-resources> This generally takes about 2-4 weeks. Once posted, an email will be sent to all who registered.

Q. Is there an opportunity to get copies of the slides to present to my club?

A. The slide presentation will also be made available on the Member Resource page at <https://www.gardenclub.org/member-resources>

We encourage all members, especially garden club officers and club leaders, to visit this page often as it is constantly being updated with new, helpful resources.

Q. What is a Federated club?

1st VP Brenda Moore: Federated means a state club that is a member of NGC. Most states have dropped the title from their official name, but the meaning remains the same, i.e. connection.

A. Federation, by its very definition, is a union of agreement. It is connection renewed annually through membership dues and rosters. It is not governance as each state organization remains autonomous, governing by their own Constitution, Charter, Bylaws, Policies, and Robert's Rules of Order to make decisions.

When garden clubs were first organizing in the early part of the 20th century, the leaders gathered together and decided that we would have greater impact if we banded together as a unified group. Originally, we were called The National Council of Garden Clubs. That name changed over time to become National Garden Clubs, Inc.

When a club becomes federated, the club and its members are officially considered members of National Garden Clubs, Inc. and through that federation, are entitled to all membership benefits.

These benefits change term to term but currently include:

- The National Gardener magazine
- Attendance at local, state, regional, and national garden club conventions
- Educational opportunities and certifications through our four schools
- Access to resources that improve skills and community projects through our National Garden Club committees
- Eligibility for awards and grants
- Networking opportunities with like-minded individuals and organizations
- Greater impact on the issues that we care about.

Q. What does the acronym DEI Stand for?

A. Diane Dawson: DEI = DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION

Q. Are there different types of clubs?

A. YES! NGC offers several types of Voting and Non-Voting Memberships. These can be found in our Bylaws and Standing Rules located at <https://gardenclub.org/bylaws-and-standing-rules>.

Currently, clubs join NGC by joining their state or International Affiliate organization. Each state provides their own categories of club membership. Here are just a few examples and many clubs are hybrids of these categories. Please check with your state for a detailed list of options:

1. **501(c)(3) Clubs** – These clubs are generally service oriented non-profit entities and have language in their Bylaws that specifies what they can and cannot do. In general, they exist as community-focused service organizations that provide skills training and education to their members and expect their members to actively participate in projects, programs, and community outreach such as civic beautification, public education, public gardens, design education, historic preservation, etc. Some are independent 501(c)(3) clubs, achieving the IRS tax-exempt status on their own, while others become subordinate 501(c)(3) clubs under a state umbrella called a Group Exemption Letter from the IRS. Every state is different so please ask your state officers. 501(c)(3) clubs generally are restricted from discriminating in their membership, must make all financial records public upon request, and generally have meetings that are open to the public. They are also eligible to accept tax deductible donations and qualify for special grants, municipal sponsorships, and other benefits of a public charitable/educational organization. All 501(c)(3) Clubs are required to file an annual tax return.

2. **501(c)(4) Clubs** – These clubs are generally member focused and can choose how much activity they wish to designate for the public good. Many of these clubs do amazing charitable and educational outreach too, but their primary focus is on member enrichment. 501(c)(4) Clubs are not restricted from lobbying or supporting a political platform. Many of their meetings are more social in nature, although they often serve the public good. Unlike 501(c)(3) clubs, they are restricted from accepting tax deductible donations and cannot give a tax donation receipt to a donor. They are often disqualified from municipal grant programs and corporate discounts, partnerships, etc. 501(c)(4) Club status must be acquired independently through an accountant or directly from the IRS. There is no subordinate Group Exemption status for 501(c)(4) clubs.

3. **Non-designated Clubs** – Many of our smaller clubs are neither of the above. They do not raise significant annual funds and most of their activities are self-funded or done in partnership with other non-profit or for-profit groups. These clubs cannot provide a tax deduction receipt for any donations received.

4. **Restricted Clubs** – Some of our clubs are self-restricted by sex, location, association or subject. For example, we have Men's Only Clubs, Women's Only Clubs, Family Clubs, Neighborhood Clubs, Design Study Clubs, Horticulture Clubs, Environmental Clubs, High

School Clubs, College Clubs, Junior League Clubs, Senior's Clubs, Youth Clubs, etc. Each of these are organized according to their own bylaws.

5. **Virtual Clubs** – Our newest style of club is all virtual. In other words, members join and meet online, pay dues to belong, organize via bylaws (or not), and conduct themselves similarly to the above categories. They just do it online. Sometimes, they meet up for in-person programs, projects, and special events. Some only know each other through an online forum.

Q. What are the different levels of Membership? Inactive, Honorary, etc.?

A. NGC membership is categorized by Voting and Non-Voting Members and can be found in our Bylaws and Standing Rules located at this link <https://gardenclub.org/bylaws-and-standing-rules>.

However, many states and local clubs employ further classification of membership. These classifications are as diverse as one can think to create. Here are just some that we have seen in our experience. We encourage you to check with your state for further information:

1. **Active Members** – Members who are counted in your roster, pay dues, and receive ALL local, district, state, regional, and national benefits. Many clubs have requirements for volunteer participation, attendance at meetings, and support of projects. This is determined by the club policies.

2. **Sustaining/Associate/Supporting Members** – Members who are not counted in your roster as active members, but help your club in a tertiary way, either through donations or part-time participation in projects and other club activities. Many Sustaining Members pay a different amount for dues, usually higher than Active Member dues since their volunteer participation is less.

3. **Honorary Members** – This category spans that spectrum in definition, but generally is reserved for one of three categories:

a. Older members who have served their clubs in leadership roles over time, have been removed from Active Membership but remain a vital part of your club, revered for their historical participation and experience. Many of these members are funded by the club itself to remain a member of NGC. Those who are not, are not considered NGC members.

b. Outstanding members who have advanced to higher levels of leadership and have been rewarded by their club as an Honorary Member of Distinction. These members may still play an active role in their local club or may serve their clubs best by leading at higher levels. Often these members are excused from local activities with the understanding that leadership at higher levels is still considered active participation of benefit to the local club.

c. Distinguished members of the community that are not Active Members but are considered special to the club by their community activities, business activities, expertise, etc.

Think of these as someone who would get a key to the city, but not be expected to turn up at a meeting. Sometimes these are considered Associate or Affiliate Members too.

4. Provisional Members – For clubs who restrict their membership, a provisional status is used for newer members for the first year or two. During this time, provisional members are intensely trained, mentored and expected to earn their membership status through active participation. At the end of the provisional time period they are then granted Active Member status at the discretion of the club's rules.

5. Donors/Volunteers – Many local clubs keep a list of donors and volunteers from their community who are contacted for special events and big projects. These are not considered Active Members and are not expected to participate regularly. They are simply individuals who want to participate when they can to help out or contribute.

6. Affiliate Members – In general, Affiliate Membership is granted to individuals, organizations, and businesses that run like-minded activities and wish to be associated with our organization (at any level) in a meaningful way. Some states list Affiliates as Partners, Sponsors, Donors, Subject Matter Experts, etc. Often this category is not considered part of Active Membership but instead more of an association of like-minded goals and activities.

Q. Do ALL clubs have to get an EIN number with the IRS to have tax exempt status?

A. Each state has its own tax rules. An EIN is the IRS term for Employer Identification Number. It is basically a club's federal ID and is used on all banking and tax documents. Once you obtain an EIN for your club, council, district, etc. you will be required to file taxes using that EIN in compliance with local, state, and federal tax regulations. Many clubs make the mistake of obtaining an EIN when they open a checking account and then never file with the IRS, the secretary of state or other state authority. After 3 years, the IRS negates that EIN and it is no longer valid.

Also note that obtaining an EIN DOES NOT GIVE YOU TAX EXEMPT STATUS. You must also register with your secretary of state's office and file to become a 501(c)(3) through the IRS or as a subordinate of your state's Group Exemption Letter from the IRS if that is offered. Ask your state leadership about this.

Q. What does the state federation give to members?

A. NGC receives \$1.00 per member (paid through the state or IA dues) to provide you with all of the NGC membership benefits, schools, information, TNG magazine, and other educational

and outreach resources like our website and our wonderful programs. Anything above that amount would need to be addressed directly from your state leadership.

Q. Wouldn't it work best for some of the recruiting to generate from the District or State level?

A. ABSOLUTELY! NGC provides all of these tools so that you can take the ball and run with it at the club, council, district, state, and regional levels. We hope all will use this Mindset/Skillset/Toolset in your own way, in your own style, and reap your own rewards from it.

Q. If a club has a requirement of members attending a certain number of meetings, is this something they should reconsider?

A. Perhaps. Keep in mind, clubs are self-governed. If a club's policies are not working in the best interest of the members, it may be time for the members to propose changes. NGC does not mandate how a club operates. We simply appreciate your group as part of our larger force for good.

Q. What are plans for advertising from the National level—public service announcements, etc.? I have seen ads on Facebook which is fabulous! I would love to see a big North American campaign to spread the word about garden clubs—on TV and through other means.

A. Leadership decides on public advertising each term. Currently we advertise through our website and Social Media platforms. The Plant America Campaign is HUGE and we hope each of you help us promote that initiative along with the many other NGC programs.

Q. How about starting a section on the website where folks can post ideas for new members, what worked, what didn't—would be a great resource.

A. <https://www.gardenclub.org/member-resources>

Q. Are clubs required to have Bylaws to be federated under NGC?

A. No. While Bylaws and Standing Rules are considered a 'Best Practice for Non-profits' the only requirements for membership with NGC are that dues and rosters be sent annually. A club may organize according to their own policy and their state/IA requirements.

It should be noted that bylaws often make it easier to run an organization so that similar decisions don't have to be made over and over again. However; there are several newer clubs that run their club without them. Again, it's up to you and your state/IA organization.

SUCCESS STRATEGIES:

The following suggestions from our general membership are meant to serve as examples of what's working out in the membership world. We hope you find them helpful.

Kathryn Harris: **Hybrid Meetings** - We have gone back to in-person meetings this year but are working to be able to stream our live meetings so that we can bring in members who can't make the in-person meeting and take advantage of a wider audience.

Suzanne Lewis: We hosted a **'Bring a Millennial to a Meeting'** and gained 4 new members. We meet on a weeknight at 6:30 pm (social), 7 pm (program), 8 pm (business meeting). We pledge to end by 9 pm

Deborah Dodds: **Zoom in Winter** - Our club has set up some of our winter meetings to be Zoom at 6:30 pm. Many of our older members don't want to drive in the winter months (CT) so this solves that and then it allows prospective members who work full time to experience in a time frame that works for them.

Kathryn Harris: We added 3 members last year (during the Pandemic) due to holding our meetings via Zoom.

Meigan Cameron: **Vary your Membership Category** - Our club has a variety of membership types - younger, busier members who want to work on our public gardens are members whose dues are considered paid by their work in our public gardens, and they receive our newsletter and invitations to special events such as garden art workshops and plant sales

Judy Gray, (RIFGC): **Host a drive along with an event** - My club has a book in bloom once a year at local library. we offer a people's choice award, tying in a membership drive with the show.

Karen Wells: **Encourage Youth Participation** - One garden club I belonged to have a youth club that met at the library on Saturday mornings. They had a youth garden there. Another youth club meets at an elementary school and the children help with the Monarch butterfly way station that is on the school property.

Dianne Runnels: **Encourage Seniors** - We put on programs at a local senior center.

Arlene Field, Monroe, CT: **Libraries are a great place to get members** -Our club in CT sponsors the "Nature Nook" in the children's room at the library. We change it quarterly. We've featured the live growth of a tadpole, the metamorphosis of a Monarch egg to a butterfly, among other wonderful educational exhibits.

Sue Bennett: Bring NGC books to the library and use it as a reference. This is great for any time of year, especially National Gardening Week.

Diane Dawson: **Connect with a Local School** - My hometown club sponsors our public high school club that does wonderful work. They even received an Ames tool grant.

Rachel Weston: **Host a Day of Service** -Our club in Shrewsbury NJ began a day of service in 2020 to encourage members to garden together safely in the public gardens we maintain. By being out in a group with our club shirts on, members of the community took notice.

SUSAN MINER-NH State President: **Expand Meeting times** - One of our local clubs has a morning meeting and then an evening meeting that same day - different speakers/programs. This allows for members who can come in the day and those who need a night meeting.

Erin Ramich: We do an evening meeting once a month

Wendy McKeown: We changed our meeting time to **Saturday morning** at 9:30 am. Then we can have programs, tours, and projects when people who work can go too.

Wendy McKeown: **Family Membership** - We decided to have a family membership, and we got lots of men to become members this way!

Sue Bennett: Due to diversity my garden club has one price for member and another price for "household"

Sue Bennett: **Partner with a Plant Nursery** - Work with local nursery and have a kid's workshop

Carol Smith, Maine: **Form a Junior Club** - Our Junior Garden Club is an After School program, but we can't meet right now due to Covid rules

Cathy Carter: **Plan to Expand** - If clubs meet in homes, then size can matter and speaker needs should be considered way ahead of time. Be realistic and plan with your growth, speaker needs, and membership experience ahead of time. You only get one chance to make a good first impression. Plan to give visitors a great experience so they'll be encouraged to come back and join.

Diane Olsen: **Yard Awards are great opportunities for new members.** Some cities give yard awards. See if they need judges and offer your garden clubs to be judges. So, you will see all the winners and you could invite them to attend a "thank you/congratulations" meeting

Lynn O'Shaughnessy: **Share the Love of Gardening** - I grow lots of native plants, so I collected seeds, packaged them up and give new members a packet.

George Speer: **Promote Friendship** - My club's theme: Join a Garden Club. Come for the Knowledge- Stay for the Friendships

ADVERTISING SUCCESS:

Diane Dawson: There are a lot of ways to advertise! All are effective, but the beauty is do what works for your club, you community. ALL WAYS to advertise!

Wendy Young: We are giving our members a few business cards each, with our logo and contact info....so people can hand it out if they happen to meet someone at a garden shop, etc. We also list our programs in the local newspaper and community calendar online.

Diane Olsen: I've gotten events for garden club on the local PBS radio station. What about Church bulletins? Some towns have beautification committee.

Ann Dillman, try working with a local home sales agent or a "newcomer" group. And also try to advertise with a local nursery or grocery store.

Wendy Young: public libraries often allow a little poster

Dee Obrochta: We have used the Chamber of Commerce and the local library using our clubs' brochures and we do have a website which has brought us new members.

Diane Olsen: All our membership drives include all the info on all clubs in our district.

Sheryl RIFGC Pres: If you use city bus to get around town, keep brochure in your bag. I recruited member of our GC from city bus 🌻

Sue Bennett: When we celebrated our garden anniversaries, we had the newspaper come and take photos.

Arlene Field, Monroe, CT: We have a special Federated Clubs of CTG license plate in CT which features our logo and state flower, *Kalmia latifolia*.

Wendy McKeown: People really care about environmental issues, drought-tolerant plants in our region. We advertise our programs as open to the public and get speakers on those topics.

Cheryl Kopyt: My Club had aprons made for us to wear when we garden in the community.