

# THE NATIONAL GARDENER

2026 WINTER ISSUE

VOLUME 98, NUMBER 1

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## National Garden Clubs, Inc.

National Garden Clubs, Inc. provides education, resources, and national and international networking opportunities for its members to promote the love of gardening, floral design and civic and environmental responsibility.

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# *This Month in*



## THE NATIONAL GARDENER

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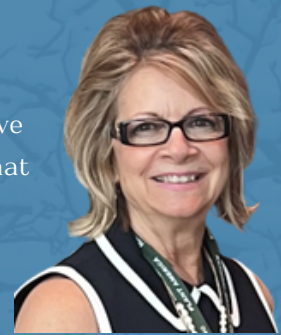
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# THE PRESIDENT'S PAGE

As the holiday season approaches in this first year of the 2025-2027 administration, I find myself reflecting on the spirit of giving and the joy of our NGC community. We have much to be grateful for, and it is thanks to your unwavering support and dedication that NGC can celebrate the success of fulfilling its mission during this season.



As I traveled to state and region meetings across the country, it has been wonderful to see the enthusiasm and commitment of the members reflected in the National Garden Club's programs and projects, which continue to improve as you demonstrate a strong sense of community and environmental stewardship. This dedication inspires all members to connect with nature and each other. You might have noticed the new and improved website look as well as the recent updates. It's now easier to find resources and participate in the events and programs that NGC is known for!

Your recent generous contributions to the PLANT AMERICA Matching Grant program are bringing us closer to the \$50,000 goal! Your donations allow NGC to offer grants to garden clubs supporting the NGC initiative PLANT AMERICA. The PLANT AMERICA/Keep America Beautiful program provides a great opportunity to contribute to the matching grant and double your generosity. I want to thank everyone who has donated. The \$50,000 goal is within reach, and if each garden club contributes a small amount, we will reach it! Donations can be made by visiting the NGC website at [www.gardenclub.org](http://www.gardenclub.org). One of the most exciting goals of PLANT AMERICA during this term is to plant red, white, and blue this spring and summer at the four thousand Blue and Gold Star Memorial Markers across the country in celebration of America's 250th birthday on July 4, 2026! This effort, in collaboration with Keep America Beautiful, will not only beautify our communities but also honor those who served our country.

One incredible perk of your membership is The National Gardener magazine. The articles vividly highlight our gardening journey with sustainable practices, seasonal planting guides, innovative techniques, and inspiring garden designs. Whether you're an experienced gardener or just starting out, you are encouraged to share your unique insights, tips, and stories that reflect your passion for growing plants and nurturing landscapes. Your contributions will help create a lively community of gardening enthusiasts who celebrate gardening and conservation nationwide.

During this season of giving, let us continue to inspire one another and spread joy through our actions. Your passion and dedication to our mission make the friendships we build at NGC truly special and rewarding. Thank you for your hard work, generosity, and belief in the power of planting to create change. We have much to look forward to in the coming months.

Wishing you and your loved ones a joyful Christmas and holiday season, filled with peace, warmth, and togetherness. May the New Year bring growth, both in our gardens and in our hearts. With sincere gratitude and appreciation for each of you,

*Donna Donnelly*  
NATIONAL GARDEN CLUBS, INC.  
PRESIDENT 2025-2027





# The National Gardener Staff

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**Advertising:** Full Page \$650 | Half Page \$350 | Quarter Page \$175.

See the [TNG page](#) for more information on advertising.

## Write for TNG

We welcome ALL NGC members, garden writers, designers and outdoor enthusiasts to share their club, community or personal story. You do NOT have to be a professional author to submit an article. See [The National Gardener page](#) for submission information.

## Submission Deadlines:

- Fall Issue September 1 (Publish first week of October)
- Winter Issue December 1 (Publish first week of January)
- Spring Issue March 1 (Publish first week of April)
- Summer Issue July 1 (Publish first week of August)

# About Us

**PLANT AMERICA**  
**for the next 100 years**

National Garden Clubs, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization that aims to promote the love of gardening, floral design, and civic and environmental responsibility. We help coordinate the interests and activities of state and local garden clubs in the U.S. and abroad.

NGC Headquarters: Monday - Friday 8:00 am - 4:00 pm CT  
4401 Magnolia Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63110-3492  
Phone: 314-776-7674 | Email: [Headquarters Staff](#)

Follow us: [gardenclub.org](http://gardenclub.org)



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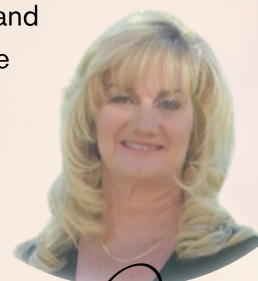


## FROM THE EDITOR

Winter may be the garden's quiet season, but it's the most valuable time for reflection and planning. With beds at rest and tools put away, garden clubs can look back on the past year with clear eyes: which plants and projects thrived, what sparked member enthusiasm, and where things fell short. Taking time now to note successes, challenges, and lessons learned creates a strong foundation for the year ahead.

The off-season is also ideal for looking forward together—sketching new beds, researching varieties, planning rotations, and brainstorming ways to boost participation and outreach. Gathering feedback, strengthening partnerships, and setting realistic, shared goals helps clubs start spring organized and energized. Think of winter as your club's planning season: low pressure, high payoff, and best enjoyed with warm drinks, good company, and plenty of fresh ideas that we hope you'll share with us!

Be sure to check out the new Table of Contents. Click on any title and it will jump to that article. Use the TOC icon in the bottom left of each page to return to the TOC. I also want to introduce our IA Editor to our audience. Below is her impressive bio!



*Victoria Schmidt*  
TNG EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

## FROM THE IA EDITOR

Pampa serves as the International Editor of The National Gardener (TNG), a natural progression after initiating bilingual articles for Editor Gerianne Holtzman five years ago. This effort has flourished into TNG en Español, a full Spanish-language edition of this informative, quarterly magazine thanks to the vision of Donna Donnelly. Last year, Pampa was honored to assume the position of International Liaison for NGC, Inc. and COMAAI (the International Affiliates organization), following the successful path set by Idalia Aguilar.

Pampa's roots are planted in both North and South America. She resides in Hurlingham, a suburb of Buenos Aires, Argentina, and in the US, based on Singer Island, in Palm Beach, Florida. Her family's connection to the U.S. began in the 1940's when her parents, Trudi and Roberto, met while attending the University of Wisconsin, in Madison. Following their footsteps, Pampa attended higher education in Houston, Texas, after finishing high school at Gartenstadt Schule in Buenos Aires. She studied art history and languages (German, Italian, Portuguese, French, and Japanese) at the University of St. Thomas and the University of Houston, building upon the English and Spanish she mastered at home. Her daughter, Audrey, holds a PhD in architecture and currently lives and works in Houston.

Committed to her interest in cultural exchanges, in 1980, Pampa founded Pan American Cultural Exchange (PACE), a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. PACE has continued its mission to inspire, educate, and unite the diverse peoples of the Americas. Pampa has been a member of the Garden Club Argentino for fifteen years and belongs to Grupo Olivos. Recently, she joined Gardens of the World Virtual Garden Club, based in Florida. Reflecting on her dedication to international gardening and extensive cultural work, she notes, "This year has been exceptionally exciting. I feel as though I am finally germinating—blossoming into the perennial plant I was always meant to be."



*Pampa Riso Patron*

INTERNATIONAL EDITOR OF THE NATIONAL GARDENER (TNG)  
INTERNATIONAL LIAISON FOR NGC, INC. AND COMAAI



# Conserving Our Precious Native Bees





# CONSERVING OUR PRECIOUS NATIVE BEES

Author: © David Kollen

For many, if not most of us, our yard flowers are gone until next year. So why discuss conservation now? After all, saving bees is all about flowers, isn't it? Well, no. If we limit our efforts to providing flowers, we miss so much. In fact, we miss too much. Let's review the basic things that bees need to survive and thrive: forage, nesting and overwintering sites, and protection from pesticides. At the end of this article there are links to additional resources.

Providing flowers is important, but all flowers are not equally beneficial. In fact, some may provide no benefit at all. The relationships between flowers and bees are quite complex and could easily fill a book. When you consider that there are 4000 native bee species in North America and 20,000 in the world, this isn't surprising. Different bees can have different floral preferences, so things get complicated fast.

Nonetheless, there are some general principles we can follow. Try to aim for maybe 50% native flowering plants if you can (see resources for ideas). Native bees and plants evolved together and this tends to make them good partners. Have a diversity of flower types. Think open flowers like asters or cone flowers, flowers with corollas and plants like goldenrod for variety.

One of the most important things is seasonal bloom coverage. You want flowers blooming from late winter or early spring all the way through the summer and into the fall. This means you have to plan accordingly.

Early season bees like bumble bees depend on early blooms. Since their colonies last through the summer and early fall, you want to have flowers blooming as much as possible over that time. Most bee species show up and remain for three or four weeks, only to be replaced by new follow-on species. This pattern repeats from first bloom until late fall and winter. This is another reason why continuous bloom is so important. You don't want new bees emerging into a flowerless landscape.



CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE



# CONSERVING OUR PRECIOUS NATIVE BEES

Author: © David Kollen (Continued)

Providing nesting sites is both important and easy. Roughly 70% of our native bees nest in the ground. All they need are some bare patches of ground here and there. These needn't be large – maybe a strip along a walkway or between flowers in a bed. The remainder of our bees nest in various cavities, some of which you can provide by having appropriate plants and properly pruning them. (See the habitat resources at the end of article.)

With respect to bees, overwintering sites only apply to bumble bees, specifically next year's queens. When floral resources run out, they like to dig under a blanket of leaves or in some cases burrow into loose soil. There they hibernate through the winter and emerge in late winter or early spring, depending on the region.

It might seem unnecessary to state that pesticides are bad for bees, but there are many nuances. What may not be obvious is the many ways that bees can be exposed to them. It takes more than keeping pesticides off of your flowers. Spraying foliage can be a problem for leaf-cutter bees that use leaf pieces in their nests. Likewise, when pesticide sprays fall to the ground, it can be an issue for soil-nesting bees.

Systemic pesticides are particularly bad. You may not even know you have them if you've purchased a nursery plant that has been treated with them by either the nursery or grower. These pesticides are designed to get into plant tissues and can end up in pollen and nectar. Woody plants can retain these poisons for a year or more. It would be heart-breaking to find out that what you thought was helping bees was actually hurting them.

You might be wondering, really, are they that bad? Well, back in 2013, in Wilsonville, Oregon, there was a massive killing of bumblebees. They were poisoned by a systemic pesticide applied to linden trees in a public parking lot. By two weeks after the application, the pesticide had reached the flowers. One of the scientists involved in analyzing this tragedy estimated that somewhere between 50 and 100 thousand bees perished!

CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE





# CONSERVING OUR PRECIOUS NATIVE BEES

Author: © David Kollen (Continued)

Neem oil is something most gardeners consider safe, but it is a growth regulator. If it contaminates pollen being used for bee larvae (babies) it can slow their growth and result in smaller adults that can have a harder time surviving and reproducing. Are you treating mildew with fungicides? These can affect bee immune systems, so make sure to keep them off of blooms.

If we all do what we can to provide the things our native bees need, perhaps we can ensure that they continue to thrive and provide the valuable gifts that they bring to us.



## Resources

- 100 Plants to Feed the Bees, The Xerces Society
- Nesting and Overwintering Habitat for Pollinators and other Beneficial Insects, [xerces.org/publications/fact-sheets/nesting-overwintering-habitat](http://xerces.org/publications/fact-sheets/nesting-overwintering-habitat)
- Buying Bee-Safe Plants: [xerces.org/publications/fact-sheets/buying-bee-safe-plants](http://xerces.org/publications/fact-sheets/buying-bee-safe-plants)
- Smarter Pest Management: Protecting Pollinators at Home, [xerces.org/publications/fact-sheets/smarter-pest-management-protecting-pollinators-at-home](http://xerces.org/publications/fact-sheets/smarter-pest-management-protecting-pollinators-at-home)
- Bring Back the Pollinators: [xerces.org/publications/brochures/bring-back-pollinators](http://xerces.org/publications/brochures/bring-back-pollinators)

## Author: David Kollen

Dave has been a Xerces Society Ambassador for five years and in that role he is involved in educational and outreach work. Additionally, he is an Oregon Naturalist and Master Melittologist. His involvement in community science includes the Pacific Northwest Bumble Bee Atlas, the California Bumble Bee Atlas, and the Oregon Bee Atlas. Dave also writes pollinator-focused articles for the Oregon State Federation of Garden Clubs newsletter, Mahonia.







# WHERE DO BUTTERFLIES GO IN WINTER?

Author: Jan Pingel



You may have noticed that butterflies seem to disappear as the mornings and evenings become cooler. Since butterflies are ectothermic or cold blooded, they need the warm sunshine to heat their bodies so they can fly and feed. In the winter when the temperature is too cold to fly, even in the daytime, butterflies use several methods to survive.

Most of us are familiar with the long-distance migration of the monarch butterflies that spend the winter in central Mexico, southern California, and more recently in southern Florida. But other butterflies migrate too. Red admirals follow their food source, nettles, as the plants bloom from Canada to southern Texas. Scientists are studying how six successive generations of painted ladies in England use upper-level air currents to return to Africa every autumn. Common buckeyes and variegated fritillaries move to the southern limit of their usual ranges.



Other butterflies, such as coral hairstreaks and purplish coppers, lay eggs late in the season on or close to their host plants. The eggs are delayed in hatching until the spring when the host plant begins to grow. Caterpillars of the great spangled fritillary, red-spotted purple, and white admiral butterflies use curled leaves, seed pods, rock crevices, and soil to protect themselves for the winter. Other caterpillars gather in groups inside silken nests and wait for spring.

Many varieties of swallowtails, checker whites and orange sulfur butterflies survive the cold in the chrysalis phase. These butterflies find a sheltered place to go into chrysalis and enter diapause, which is when their development into a butterfly stops. The pupae produce an antifreeze chemical that allows them to survive cold temperatures. Once the daylight hours increase in the spring, the pupae continue their transformation into a butterfly.





# WHERE DO BUTTERFLIES GO IN WINTER?

Author: Jan Pingel  
(Continued)



After heavy late fall feeding, the adult mourning cloak and comma butterflies live through the winter as adults by tucking themselves into spaces in the bark of a tree, a crack in a rock formation, or in leaf litter. They reemerge three to six months later in early spring and live on tree sap until the nectar flowers appear.

## What can gardeners do to help the butterflies survive the winter?

**Grow** native host plants for the butterfly species in your area. Plant a variety of nectar producing flowers that bloom from early spring into late fall to feed the butterflies.

**Skip** raking leaves, disturbing the soil, and getting rid of garden debris until mid-spring so that overwintering eggs and caterpillars have places to hide and the opportunity to become butterflies. If you find what looks like a dead chrysalis, leave it there – the butterfly might emerge in the spring. **Avoid** using pesticides as much as possible.

Butterflies survive the winter months in several unique ways specific to their species. Some migrate long or short distances. Others spend the winter as eggs, caterpillars or chrysalises. A few hardy adult butterflies spend the winter protected in crevices or leaf debris until early spring.

*Jan Pingel has been a member of Violet Bank Garden Club in the Virginia Federation of Garden Clubs since retiring from teaching in 2013. Her interest in butterflies began in 2016 when her club was awarded a grant to plant a Monarch Way Station garden at Violet Bank Museum in Colonial Heights, VA. Jan has nurtured and protected primarily black swallowtail and monarch butterflies in her pollinator garden by raising their host plants to encourage egg laying, later netting the developing caterpillars to protect them from predators. She has served as Butterfly and Pollinator Education Chairperson for the Piedmont District since 2021.*

**Author:** Jan Pingel,  
Butterflies and Pollinators Education  
Piedmont District  
Virginia Federation of Garden Clubs







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# UNDERLAY IN DESIGN: A SPECIAL TOUCH

**Author:** Pilar Medellín

When we analyze a design repeatedly, we want to add a special touch to attract attention and create appeal and interest. NGC, Inc. gives designers the freedom to incorporate non-plant components into their designs, stimulating creativity to implement new ideas. This results in greater presence and distinction, increasing the curiosity and attraction of those who view our design.



**Underlay:** This is any material placed beneath a design, generally with dimensions that correspond to the width and depth of the area defined in the program. It is not mandatory, but its presence can enhance Principles and Elements and accentuate the qualities of a design. It can be made of various materials such as fabric, metal, acrylic, wood, etc. Occasionally, if permitted, it can extend above the main structure to achieve a special effect.

Once placed in the design, it becomes part of it and will be evaluated accordingly. It can be a resource used to achieve different objectives, such as emphasizing or contrasting color, adding height, accentuating the theme, or enhancing shapes or texture. However, be careful; if not used appropriately, it may not benefit the design.

The dimensions of the underlay should not exceed the width and depth stipulated in the program, unless otherwise permitted. For example, it could extend below the base of the pedestal to simulate a tablecloth for a Display Table Design. If allowed, the program may specify the drop measurement to achieve uniformity within the class.

It is up to the designer to make creative decisions and assess whether they can add a special touch to their design by adding something of interest. It is up to the observer or the judges to evaluate whether the presence of an underlay in the design achieves its objective. In my presentation of designs accompanying this article in the link below, you will be able to discern and form your own opinion about whether it fulfilled its purpose or, on the contrary, failed to achieve the desired effect.

I hope you enjoy this exercise and remember it in your next design.

**Author:** Pilar Medellín

**CLICK BELOW TO ACCESS MORE DETAILS**

**Spanish:** <https://gardenclub.org/sites/default/files/2025-12/underlayindesign-spanish.pdf>

**English:** <https://gardenclub.org/sites/default/files/2025-12/underlayindesign-english.pdf>





# Vertical Gardening 1, 2, 3, 4

Author: Brynn Tavasci

“ 1,2,3,4 - with vertical gardening I can grow more.  
5, 6, 7, 8 - upcycling will make it great. ”

Poor poetry aside, the message is clear. “Growing Up” is a winning path to expanding your space and opportunities for growing more abundantly. Plus, any time you can upcycle some supplies for your project you collect bonus points. Another plus for combining vertical planting and second-use materials is the creativity that comes with the planning. Imagination, inspiration, and experimentation can help fuel the gardening experience. Here are just a few “Growing Up” projects to inspire your own creativity.

The sign says, “Free Pallets.” Free is always in the budget. You can lean a pallet against an existing structure like a fence or brick wall, give it supporting feet, or stack multiple pallets on top of each other. Use plants in pots or chicken wire and moss to hold the soil. Tuck in your shallow rooted herbs or annuals. Whatever design you choose, the recycled pallet is the basis for your vertical garden; your custom design will make it all yours.



What to do with the old gutters stacked up behind your shed? Now's the time to drag them out and put them to work. Cap the ends and drill a few holes in the bottom for drainage. Hang them on the shed that used to hide them and fill them with all the small plants that you don't want the rabbits to eat. Slugs will have to work a little harder to get to those strawberries that are enjoying their shed retreat. Set up a lawn chair and have a snack while you admire the beauty of your gutter art planting.



Now, about that screen door that you removed from the back porch because it refused to latch. It has retired from being a door, but you just can't say goodbye. Suspend it from the overhang or lean it against a wall. Now you can attach your decorated coffee cans filled with trailing plants to the built in bars or secure chicken wire to the frame for more options. It won't keep the flies out of the house anymore, but it will keep the slugs out of the petunias, and it is still a valued part of the family.

CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE



# Vertical Gardening 1, 2, 3, 4

**Author:** Brynn Tavasci  
(Continued)

Recycled metal shelving grids can be hung from a fence or wall. Zip tie several together to create a larger area for hanging recycled plastic food containers. You can poke drainage holes in deli containers, soda bottles, soap dispensers, milk jugs, etc., and zip tie to the hanging grids. Place in such a manner so that watering the top row also drips into the rows hung below. Herbs and vegetables might enjoy spending the summer hanging around together and inspire some new recipes. Sit close and take notes.



Did you find out that the over-the-door shoe organizer just didn't work out the way you hoped? Those shoes just wouldn't jump into the pockets and put themselves away? Take it outside, hang it on the fence, and see if the marigolds like it better. The pockets made of mesh should work as it is. Other pocket materials may need you to punch holes for drainage.

Gabion walls can be beautiful and are surprisingly versatile. The metal mesh used on the outside to form the structure can be shaped like a wall, cube, or round like a cylinder. You can fill them with rocks, chipped bricks, broken steppingstones, and other durable refuse materials. If you strategically leave open spaces at various points, you can fill in with potted plants or easy to grow sedums. Leave areas at the top to set in more plants. Bee tubes can also be inserted for nesting if in a suitable spot in your garden.



Lack of space got you down? Explore ideas for vertical gardening and you will find yourself looking up! Take a walk through your house, garage, or shed and I bet that you will find many materials to help you "Grow Up" your garden.

**Author:** Brynn Tavasci  
PLANT AMERICA  
Upcycling, Recycling and Stewardship Chairman

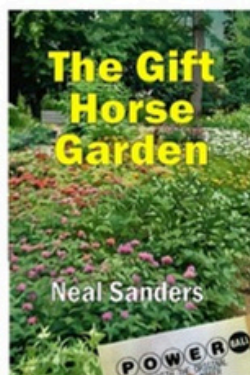




## A horticultural talk unlike any you've ever heard. Horticultural mysteries that will keep you guessing.

Whether it's a speaker for your special meeting or books that will keep you turning pages well past your bedtime, Neal Sanders needs to be at the top of your contact list for your next 'fill those seats' event.

He is one of the most entertaining speakers you'll ever hear. 'Gardening Is Murder' is equal parts humor, psychology, and gardening wisdom; a husband's point of view of what goes on in the garden. State federations from Washington and Maine to South Carolina and Michigan have already enjoyed his talks. In 2026, you'll see him at state meetings in Florida and Pennsylvania. To book him for your club, state, or regional event, write [Neal02052@Gmail.com](mailto:Neal02052@Gmail.com).



**New for 2026!**

His 17 fast-paced, intricately plotted mysteries draw rave reviews from readers. They all feature strong, independent women – some of whom solve crimes, and some who commit them. Many of his books use garden club settings and 'women of a certain age'.

But don't mistake these for 'cozies': his plots involve everything from romance scams to 'protect your assets' schemes and fraudulent reverse mortgages. There's frequently a strong horticultural element. *You can order his books in print and Kindle formats on Amazon. Or, to read first chapters, go to [www.TheHardingtonPress.com](http://www.TheHardingtonPress.com).*



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# PLANT AMERICA


## Double Your Impact with the PLANT AMERICA Matched Giving Program

Now is the perfect time to give! Thanks to a generous matching donation from Barbara Baker, **every contribution** to the PLANT AMERICA Grant Program **will be matched** dollar-for-dollar—up to \$50,000. That means your gift has *twice the impact* in supporting community gardens, beautification projects, and conservation efforts nationwide.



From providing soil, seeds, and trees to funding tools, pollinator gardens, and large-scale landscaping, your donation directly powers projects that transform neighborhoods into greener, healthier, and more vibrant spaces.

As a special thank-you, donors have the opportunity to be recognized on the **PLANT AMERICA Donor Wall**, celebrating your commitment to growing a better tomorrow. Join us in making a lasting difference. Together we can reach our \$50,000 goal and expand the impact of community gardening efforts across the country.

 **Give today and double your impact!**  
Visit [www.plantamerica.org/matched-giving](http://www.plantamerica.org/matched-giving)  
to donate and view our wall of donors.

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**Texas State Garden Clubs, Inc. has received a \$5,000 NGC Disaster Relief grant to assist Hunt Garden Club in the Hill County of Texas, in creating a Memorial Garden in memory of the lives lost. See the Natural Disasters Grants page for more information.**



# YOUTH CELEBRATING GROWING GOOD KIDS

## Celebrating Growing Good Kids through Garden-Themed Literature

Author: Regina "Reggie" Doherty

The DVII Bloom & Grow Garden Society (<https://www.bloomandgrow.club/>) has long supported a remarkable initiative that nurtures young minds through nature-focused storytelling: The Growing Good Kids – Excellence in Children's Literature Awards, a collaboration between the American Horticultural Society and the Junior Master Gardener Program. Learn more at <https://ahsgardening.org/growing-good-kids-book-awards>.



At our October DVII Fall Meeting, Bloom & Grow President Katy Moss Warner shared an exciting update: The club has already distributed eight sets of 2024's award-winning children's books, sparking enthusiasm among attendees. These beautifully illustrated titles celebrate plants, gardens, and ecological stewardship in ways that captivate and inspire young readers.

As Katy explained, the program honors outstanding children's literature that connects kids to the natural world. This year's selection includes five engaging books recognized for their excellence in storytelling and environmental education. You can explore the full list at <https://jmgkids.us/bookawards> - here are the titles for 2025:



**The Soil in Jackie's Garden** by Peggy Thomas, illustrated by Neely Dagget (Feeding Minds Press)

**When You Go into Nature** by Sherry M. Bestor, illustrated by Sydney Hanson (Sleeping Bear Press)

**Just Flowers** by Erin Dealey, illustrated by Katie Cosgrove (Sleeping Bear Press)

**A Place for Rain** by Michelle Schaub, illustrated by Bianca Gomez (Norton Young Readers)

**Lola Meets the Bees** by Anna McQuinn, illustrated by Rosalind Bradshaw (Charlesbridge)

After hearing about this fantastic way to help educate our youth, many clubs are interested in the American Horticultural Society and the Junior Master Gardener program, "Growing Good Kids Book Awards." So, I asked Katy for further details.



Laura Radius, Louise Clayton and I presented the first set to the Eight Waves youth organization. They were delighted to receive them.

CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE



# YOUTH

## CELEBRATING GROWING GOOD KIDS

### Celebrating Growing Good Kids through Garden-Themed Literature

**Author:** Regina "Reggie" Doherty

(Continued)

**Q:** How can our clubs become involved?

**A:** Purchase the books. Information on the program including the winners each year is available through the American Horticultural Society, <https://ahsgardening.org/growing-good-kids-book-awards/>.

**Q:** Where do we get the books?

**A:** This year's books were all available through Amazon.

**Q:** Is there a reporting requirement to the AHS-JMG or other organization after books are delivered?

**A:** There is no need to report. However, I alerted Katie Tukey, the Director of Development & Engagement for The American Horticultural Society ([kathryn.tukey@gmail.com](mailto:kathryn.tukey@gmail.com)) as I think it is a great program and wanted her to know that we were taking advantage of their good work.

**Q:** How did you become involved?

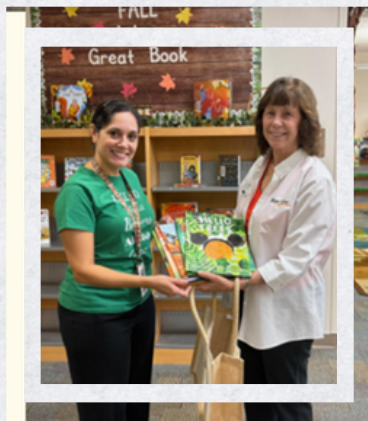
**A:** [Katy] used to be the President of the American Horticultural Society and was aware of the program. Our garden club had budgeted \$1000 each year to give books to schools but had not used this money for years because it was a big job to determine which books would be appropriate. This was the perfect solution.

**Q:** Does your club have to have a JMG program?

**A:** No. JMG has traditionally been an adjunct program of the land grant university extension service.



The third collection was presented to Summer Lake Elementary School. Angela Cox, the media specialist, was very welcoming and will be setting up a display of just our books!



Delivering the second set to the media specialist, Darcy McGuire at Maxey Elementary. This is an art magnet school, so the library was decorated beautifully with the children's art. Darcy was thrilled to receive them and work them into their extraordinary library.



Carole Engle delivered our fourth set this month to Windermere Elementary School. Carole is the Pollinator Power School Liaison to the school and has been involved with their beautiful garden for many years. She and I met with Jen Pilgrim, WES Learning Garden Specialist.

Regina "Reggie" Doherty is an FFGC District VII member of the Lakes & Hills Garden Club of Mount Dora where she is the 2nd VP for 2025-27 & PR Chair. She serves as the FFGC DVII Recording Secretary & Media person. She is an NGC LDS Consultant, has been writing for and editing newsletters & magazines, a Master Gardener in NJ & FL, and loves creating websites for non-profits.



# INSPIRING YOUTH TO PURSUE CAREERS IN HORTICULTURE

**Author:** Susan Miner

Garden club members regularly share their love of gardening with their family, friends and community. It is not unusual when they are the ones who plant the horticultural spark in their children, grandchildren and local youth. The younger generation (and their parents) typically see gardening and horticulture as an inspiring and relaxing hobby but rarely as a suitable career or occupation. The business and STEM-related opportunities are often missed due to lack of awareness of career paths in this area.



I recently represented National Garden Clubs at the in-person Leadership Meeting for Seed Your Future (SYF) at Longwood Gardens in Kennett Square, Pennsylvania. When meeting some of the interns at Longwood, they all named their grandparents as the source of their inspiration to pursue a degree in horticulture.

*Jazmin Albarran, Executive Director of Seed Your Future, at a high school career fair in Baltimore.*

Seed Your Future is a non-profit that promotes horticulture and inspires people to pursue careers working with plants. The organization envisions a U.S. where everyone understands the power of plants and is aware of the promising careers in the art, science, technology, and business of horticulture.

This is especially important now because of declining interest in plants and pursuit of careers in horticulture. This decline has caused many challenges including: low appreciation for how plants impact the world; low enrollment in college, university and certification programs in horticulture; and plant blindness (the inability to see or notice the plants in one's own environment, leading to the inability to recognize the importance of plants in the biosphere and in human affairs).



*Jazmin Albarran, Executive Director of Seed Your Future, at Green Circle Growers in Ohio.*





# INSPIRING YOUTH TO PURSUE CAREERS IN HORTICULTURE

**Author:** Susan Miner

We are also challenged by negative stereotypes about careers working with plants. Check out a few of the alarming statistics:

- The average U.S. citizen can identify more than 1,000 brands and logos, but fewer than 10 local plants.
- Most schools stop teaching plant-based concepts in the third grade.
- ZERO middle-schoolers in focus groups across the country said they have heard the word "horticulture."
- Only 61% of the average 57,600 annual job openings in food, agriculture, renewable natural resources or the environment are filled due to lack of qualified candidates - causing a severe workforce gap.

The annual in-person leadership meeting in September brought together educators, organizations, and businesses to workshop ways to interest students at all levels in horticulture and educate them on the job opportunities in the field.

I would encourage you to check out the [Seed Your Future](#) website. There are great resources for students, parents and families, educators, and employers. You will also find job boards, webinars about Growing Careers, and information about SYF's work including Green Career Week, Horticulture STEM Career Videos, BLOOM! (tools and resources for adults working with youth), career exploration lessons, and much more. Additional information is available on their Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube links at the bottom of their website. I am honored to represent NGC on the Seed Your Future Advisory Board, and I encourage you to inspire and share resources with the youth in your life. Please contact me directly regarding your interest in SYF or if you have questions.

**Author:** Susan Miner

NGC 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice President

Susan Miner is the NGC 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice President for the 2025-2027 term. Sue represents NGC on the Seed Your Future Advisory Council. She lives in New Hampshire and is a member of the Atkinson Garden Club and the Salem Friendship and Garden Club.





# WINTER GARDEN TO-DO LIST

Author: Sarah McReynolds  
NGC Garden School Chair

## Protect Plants

- Mulch around trees, shrubs, and perennials to protect roots from freeze–thaw cycles
- Cover tender plants with burlap or frost cloth on freezing nights
- Move potted plants indoors or to a sheltered area if they're not cold-hardy
- Water evergreens during dry spells (when the soil isn't frozen)

## Clean and Maintain

- Rake leaves off lawns and garden beds to prevent mold
- Prune dead, diseased, or damaged branches from trees and shrubs
- Cut back spent perennials once the foliage turns brown
- Remove weeds before they set seeds in spring
- Clean and oil garden tools before storing

## Plan and Prepare

- Order seeds and garden supplies early for spring planting
- Test your soil and add lime or compost as needed
- Sharpen mower blades and pruners
- Sketch next year's garden layout — plan rotations, new beds, or color schemes

## Indoor Gardening

- Start seedlings indoors (for cool-weather crops like lettuce, onions, or broccoli)
- Grow herbs such as basil, parsley, and thyme on a sunny windowsill
- Check houseplants for pests and give them light and humidity

## Wildlife & Yard Care

- Feed birds with seed and suet; keep water unfrozen
- Check trees after ice or wind storms for damage
- Brush off heavy snow from shrubs and evergreens gently

## Winter Fruit Tree Care

- Add 3–4 inches of mulch around the root zone (keep away from trunk)
- Deeply water before ground freezes
- Wrap young trunks to prevent sun scald and rodent damage
- Prune in late winter before buds break
- Paint trunks with diluted white latex paint to prevent cracking
- Protect from deer and rabbits with mesh or fencing



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# *Gardens to Tour*

This issue we are going to look at a couple of noteworthy gardens in the southern United States. The south is home to some of the most beautiful and historically rich gardens in the country, shaped by warm climates, long growing seasons, and deep cultural roots. From formal estates to wild coastal landscapes, these gardens offer unforgettable places to wander.

## **THE NORTH CAROLINA ARBORETUM: ASHEVILLE, NC**

While often associated with grandeur, the Southern Garden at the North Carolina Arboretum in Asheville blends cultivated beauty with Appalachian scenery. Native plants, winding paths, and seasonal blooms highlight the region's biodiversity, especially in spring and fall when mountain weather keeps the colors vibrant and cool.

## **BELLINGRATH GARDENS: MOBILE, ALABAMA**

Located near Mobile, Bellingrath Gardens is famous for its year-round color and carefully designed themed areas. From rose gardens to cascading fountains, the estate blends formal European influences with Gulf Coast lushness, making it especially striking in spring and during its elaborate holiday displays.

## **GARVAN WOODLAND GARDENS: HOT SPRINGS, ARKANSAS**

Nestled along Lake Hamilton in Hot Springs, Garvan Woodland Gardens offers a more naturalistic experience. Woodland paths, scenic overlooks, and a stunning glass chapel showcase native plants and seasonal wildflowers, creating a peaceful balance between architecture and nature.

## **ATLANTA BOTANICAL GARDEN: ATLANTA, GEORGIA**

Set beside Piedmont Park, the Atlanta Botanical Garden combines cutting-edge design with Southern horticulture. Its elevated canopy walk, expansive orchid collection, and imaginative seasonal exhibits make it both educational and visually dramatic, especially for visitors who enjoy a modern twist on traditional gardens.

## **FAIRCHILD TROPICAL BOTANIC GARDEN: MIAMI, FLORIDA**

Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden (Florida) – Located near Miami, Fairchild specializes in tropical plants from around the world. Palms, cycads, flowering trees, and rare species thrive here, offering visitors a vivid look at how subtropical and tropical gardening defines much of the southernmost U.S. This is a great winter escape to a tropical wonderland!

## **SUMMARY**

Together, these gardens reflect the diversity of the southern landscape—coastal, woodland, historic, and contemporary—making them rewarding stops for travelers who love nature, history, or simply a beautiful place to stroll.

*BY VICTORIA SCHMIDT, TNG EDITOR*







## 2026 NGC Convention

The NGC 2026 Convention will be held in St. Louis, Missouri, on May 4-6, 2026.

- Registration and schedule will be available after January 5, 2026.
- Hotel Information and link will be available after January 5, 2026.

## NGC News

- NGC Convention (May 4-6, 2026)
- NGC Events list on the NGC Website: <https://gardenclub.org/events>
- TNG is now available in Spanish! Access the *TNG en Español* on our [website](#)
- See our NGC Blog News & Updates
- PLANT AMERICA/KAB collaboration: Deadlines - Funds will be awarded on March 5, 2026. Projects and final reports must be completed and submitted by August 1, 2026. Go to the NGC Website homepage and click on 'Apply now' and start the application process. Funds will be awarded on March 5, 2026. Projects final reports must be submitted by August 1, 2026
- Check out our latest Plant-A-Tree Information on the NGC website.
- Membership Mondays: Dates TBD
- 2025 AMES Grant Applications accepted from January 1, 2025 through March 1, 2025.
- Espoma Grant Applications accepted from October 1, 2024 through May 31, 2025.
- Scholarships deadline: 1 February, 2026
- Nominating Committee will meet at the May 2026 Convention in St. Louis

We are close to achieving our goal, so don't forget to donate to PLANT AMERICA Matching Grant. Go to the NGC website, click "DONATE" located at the top of the page or use the PLANT AMERICA Matching Grant link.

## Upcoming Events

Winter Executive Committee Meeting (WEM) (Virtual):

- Tuesday, January 20<sup>th</sup> at 12:00 PM CST (Central Time Zone) via Zoom



## HQ News & Announcements

Please send HQ your member email addresses to update our contact list for TNG and important blast messages. We do not sell or give the contact list to anyone else. We also need your State Chairpersons emails so NGC Chairs can send information about programs and committees to include deadlines.





# PLANT AMERICA

## Celebrating our Nation's 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

**Author:** Val Story

National Garden Clubs, Inc. and PLANT AMERICA Grants Program is promoting a wonderful project, partnering with Keep America Beautiful. As we look ahead to our nation's 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, we have a unique opportunity to bring beauty to the Blue and Gold Star markers across each state that has a memorial to our veterans and families.



PLANT AMERICA is encouraging each club/district to support the planting of red, white, and blue flowers around every Blue Star and/or Gold Star Families Memorial Marker within your area. This is an opportunity to show pride and express appreciation. These plants and floral tributes will serve as a visual celebration of our nation's history. The vision is simple, yet powerful enough to demonstrate and respect the dedication and sacrifices made by our armed forces throughout the past 250 years.

The application process started November 17, 2025 and will continue through February 17, 2026. Grant funding will be up to \$1000.00. The application will be reviewed with 75% of the funds awarded initially, and the remaining 25% of the funds given after the project is completed and the final report is received.

Listed are a sample of plants that may be purchased (depending on the area of the marker). The funding may also cover soil and mulch.

- Red: salvia, petunias, geraniums, zinnias, Firefrost lantana, Crimson Feathers, Dark Fire Montbretia (crocosmia)
- White: alyssum, begonias, dusty miller, shasta daisies, Li'l Annie oakleaf hydrangea, Viennetta clematis
- Blue: lobelia, Black and Blue salvia, ageratum, blue petunias, Blue Marvel salvia, Surf Swell hebe

We encourage you to support this worthwhile program which may include club members, youth, Keep America Beautiful volunteers, and the community in joining together to care for the Blue and Gold Star memorials. Feel free to ask questions and be sure to follow the NGC website for continued information.

**Author:** Val Story

Plant America Community Grant Program





# RETAINING MEMBERSHIP IN A GARDEN CLUB

Author: Bonni Dinneen

***Make new friends but keep the old; one is silver and the other is gold.***

This little ditty I learned in Girl Scout camp. For many decades it has remained with me somewhat as a mantra. That ditty has a lot of wisdom when we reflect upon it.

Becoming and remaining a member of a garden club offers valuable opportunities for learning, networking, and community involvement. To ensure you retain membership and continue to enjoy the benefits, I follow and promote the following practical steps:

## **Pay Dues Promptly**

- Federated garden clubs require members to pay annual dues. Ensuring dues are paid on time avoids lapses in membership. Membership dues can be collected by the club treasurer at a meeting designated for that purpose. Be aware of membership expiration date and complete renewal forms with updated contact information before the renewal deadline.
- Keep a calendar specifically for garden club activities and track important dates for items such as dues, awards, and meetings for your district, state, region, and NGC.
- Include dates for NGC schools and flower shows. This is a good task for the club vice-president to use in sharing information with members. An informed membership is a healthy cure for meeting boredom that may result in a potential loss of membership.

## **Participating in Meetings and Events**

- Active participation demonstrates your commitment to your garden club. Attend regular meetings, workshops, and special events whenever possible. This not only keeps you informed but also helps you build relationships with fellow members.

## **Volunteering and Contributing**

- Many clubs rely on volunteers for events, committees, or community projects. Offering your time and skills is often recognized and appreciated, and it may be required for continued membership in some groups.

## **Staying Informed**

- Keep up-to-date with the club's newsletters, emails, or social media updates. Log into the State, Region, and National website. Inform members to do this often. The websites have valuable information and photos that will appeal to many of the members. In this age of technology, it is a simple action, and it is not time consuming.
- Remember as a president of your local garden club, it should be on your agenda each meeting to inquire if the members have researched the websites for news and activities and deadlines. This will help members stay aware of upcoming events, changes in policies, and opportunities for involvement.





# RETAINING MEMBERSHIP IN A GARDEN CLUB

**Author:** Bonni Dinneen  
(Continued)

## Following Club Guidelines

Adhere to the club's code of conduct, bylaws, and rules. Respectful behavior and compliance with club guidelines are essential for maintaining membership. I often hear when approaching a non-federated garden club, that they decline membership in NGC not because of the payment of dues, but because of the "rules and regulations," such as having bylaws. The general attitude is that bylaws and regulations make the sociability of the club too rigid.

Be prepared to discuss why bylaws are important. Here are some tips to use:

- Bylaws serve as a blueprint for the club. They create consistent and predictable procedures for meetings, voting, and decision-making, reducing conflict and confusion.
- Bylaws clearly outline the roles and duties of the officers and its members.
- They provide guidelines for handling disputes.
- Bylaws are a legal requirement for the organization that help us stay in compliance with state laws and regulations.
- Bylaws promote transparency by clearly communicating the club's conduct to the public.
- By defining rules for things like how funds are managed, meetings are conducted, and new members are admitted, bylaws keep the organization running smoothly.
- They serve as an educational tool for (new) officers and members, ensuring everyone understands the rules.

## Engaging with Members and Local Clubs

Building connections with fellow members fosters a sense of community and encourages ongoing involvement. Participate in group discussions and share ideas. An effective way to do this is to follow NCG's example of exchange of ideas at perhaps a breakfast meeting with other local clubs. Here are a few tips:

- Meet away from the club's standard meeting space such as a restaurant that serves large groups.
- Share the discussion of ideas with non-federated clubs by inviting them.
- If possible, a club or a member can cover the cost of one invited guest.

This relaxed setting promotes the ease of participation, fosters camaraderie with shared thoughts and ideas, and potential collaboration on projects. By consistently meeting these expectations, you can retain your membership in a gardening organization and continue to benefit from shared knowledge, resources, and friendships. Staying active and engaged ensures that you remain a valued member of the gardening community.

**Author:** Bonni Dinneen, NGC 5-Star Emertius  
GCFMA - Curbs & Cobblestones Garden Club – Lowell, MA  
NGC Membership Committee





# Attracting New Members

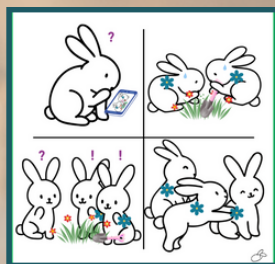


Garden clubs, much like the plants they nurture, need to grow. One challenge that many clubs face is getting new members. Let's look at ways to draw new people to your club and help you to grow.

**Be visible** – Don't be the tree that falls in the forest with no one around to see. Even if you make lots of noise, it won't matter. If your club takes care of a public garden, let people know. Put up a sign that tells visitors who makes this garden look amazing! When you are going to have a workday, post on Facebook or Instagram, or even put up a flyer at the local grocery store if they will let you. If you're on a local social media site like NextDoor, post about it there. Announce well in advance so people know when to look for you, and that it's your club doing this work, not the garden gnomes that come to life during the night.

**Be inviting** – During that workday at the public garden, talk to the people who walk by. These people have left the safety and isolation of their home, or their car, and are interested. They aren't there by accident! Something drew them to see what's going on. Not many will be brave enough to interrupt what looks like a closed group of friends to ask questions. Keep an eye out for visitors; be the one to be friendly and inviting! Ask questions, draw them in, and invite them to come to your next meeting.

This almost always works. That new member has already done the hard part. They found you. Now it's up to you to bring them into the amazing, ever-changing world of Garden Club.



**Author:** Bernadette Sterry  
Pacific Region  
- Membership  
OSFGC (Oregon)  
- 1st Vice President  
- Membership  
Beaverton Garden Club  
- President





# THIS IS ART TAKING THE NEXT STEP IN PHOTOGRAPHY

Author: Lynn O'Shaughnessy

This past week, the topic at our MGC District 2B Photographers group was Intentional Camera Movement (ICM). While it sounded interesting, I didn't think I would ever use it as I am more of a realist when it comes to nature photography. However, we were encouraged to try it, so I did.

I noticed that one method of creating ICM photos was to layer two or more photos together...one ICM photo and one or more normal photos. I thought this would be a great place to start as it would allow me to incorporate my realistic side.



After taking two photos, I started by putting the ICM photo in the background and a normal photo taken at the same location on top of it. I made the normal photo a little transparent so that the ICM showed through, and liked the results, but I felt there was still more that could be done to make the photo work. The next thing I tried was creating another layer with the same regular photo transposed and enlarged for a foreground. I also made this third layer a little transparent.

Then it hit me. With the muted colors of the different layers, why not try adding a critter as an additional layer, interacting with the scene I just created, but keeping the critter as a solid photo to make it stand out. The result of my first try at this is the photo included here with a squirrel in among the ferns. I was blown away by how stunning, yet artistic, the photo looked.

Don't be afraid to try something new. Let your creative juices flow and they may lead you to an amazing discovery!

**Author:** Lynn O'Shaughnessy

Lynn is one of the admins for the NGC Photographers Facebook group and an avid nature photographer. The majority of the nature photos she takes are on her own ten acres that she has turned into a haven for biodiversity.





# EXPLORING MOTION IN PHOTOGRAPHY

Author: Arabella Dane

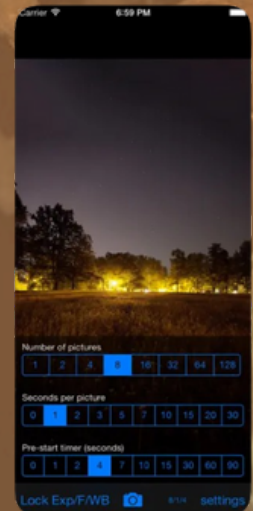
I worked so hard to master the technique of capturing fast moving subjects with clarity - by stopping the motion - that I could not believe there would be other ways to capture moving objects that would be as compelling.

Then I learned about Intentional Camera Movement (ICM), and wow did that resonate with me. So, I began to explore ways to do this:

Capturing moving objects in front of a stationary background, moving objects in focus against a blurry background, and even intentionally having things that were stationary appear to move were all options. Each technique took forever to master. And each told a different story.

With my iPhone I can take pictures in slow motion, or if I use an app called AvgCamPro, I can make everything move - i.e. blur everything.

Each technique becomes a story on its own, or it can be layered into other images to give them more interest. I discovered that combining the ICM technique with images turned into stickers gave me a whole new way to tell a story. This background image is of the Harley Davidson Museum here in Milwaukee.





# EXPLORING MOTION IN PHOTOGRAPHY

**Author:** Arabella Dane  
(Continued)

I made a sticker out of my photo of the famous statue of the biker (The Hill Climber by Jeff Dexter) and placed it onto my ICM image of the motorcycles in the parking lot, positioning my sticker and cropping it to give this result.

I submitted my image to two international judging forums. One group of photographers panned the image because of the placement of the statue and my amputations of the biker's arm and part of his bike. Yet the other group of judges awarded it first prize. So which group gave me the correct evaluation? Has my biker transitioned from photography into another art form?



[Click to see the NE Region Photography Judging Group Newsletter.](#)

**Author:** Arabella Dane, NE Garden Clubs, Inc. and Central Region Garden Clubs





# A Prairie Promise

**Author:** Claudia Edwards

Receiving The Plant America Grant from the National Garden Clubs energized not only our Bull Valley Garden Club, but it created a unique opportunity for our small midwestern community. It was the igniting spark that gave impetus to a group of twenty-five women to reach out and ask for a “helping hand.”



A recent program by The Land Conservancy of McHenry County made all of us aware that a farm of 275 acres had been saved from becoming a gravel pit or a new subdivision. This tireless group of conservationists had pulled off a miracle and raised the funds to purchase a property that had been farmed since its original owners had ventured out West. These kind owners recognized the equine enthusiasts in the area and had permitted those horse owners to ride undisturbed on the property.

The purpose of the acquisition was to restore the acres -- which include prairie, woodlands and wetlands -- to native plant species, to cultivate the wetlands so they might continue to receive the native bird species, to preserve the natural wildlife, and to provide a place of enjoyment for the community.

The dreams of the Conservancy were in alignment with the garden club's interest in creating a welcoming area for the visitor. What could be created that drew families, groups, children and adults to the area was a question brought forward. We elected to create a pollinator garden on a 1/10 acre plot utilizing 1,100 native plants specified by the Conservancy's ecologist. The Plant America Grant helped us purchase these plants. We created savings by combining our plant purchases with the annual plant sale of the Conservancy.

We faced challenges. We were an eighty-year-old organization with members aging in place. Many could not perform the actual planting, preparation, and eventual tending. Where would we get all the cardboard for the weed control barrier? How would we get water to the plants? How would we instruct the volunteers? Could we afford to have planting knives? Who would drill all 1,100 holes in the cardboard, and who would drill the holes in the soil for planting?

We had entitled our project A Prairie Promise because the conservationists had made a promise to the community to preserve the land. Our club had made a promise to Plant America to “plant” a pollinator garden. It was time for the community to make its promise of involvement in all aspects of the project.





# A Prairie Promise

**Author:** Claudia Edwards

(Continued)

While our Master Gardeners charted the scheduled plants and color-coded instructional materials, the garden club members canvassed all the area's organizations which could possibly come and assist with the planting. All avenues of local dual-language publicity were engaged through texts, Facebook, Instagram, newspapers, flyers, and personal outreach. The community volunteers were asked to email a central coordinator which planting shifts would be possible for them.

We planted on May 30 & 31, 2025, with over one hundred volunteers participating, ranging from age 12 to a 92-year-old greeter. We offered hospitality, a first-aid tent, resting stations, instruction, and plenty of free parking on an adjacent field. We received donated mulch from our local parks and recreation department. The cardboard was donated by local businesses. The local newspaper ran a cover story calling for volunteers. Teachers encouraged groups of students to get involved. A university student heard of the project and volunteered his time to prepare a documentary of the entire process. Local high school woodworking students crafted wooden Leopold benches with donated lumber for visitors to the area. A kiosk was designed by a local eagle scout.

We had so many volunteers we completed the planting six hours earlier than planned! Promises were made and kept. Imagine our joy when just two weeks after planting we began to see the first bees and viewed our first monarch visiting the area.

Without the help of the Plant America Grant, our community would not have had this magnificent opportunity to come together and plant together for the future. Together we created a strong beginning for a lasting use of a property sought by pioneers and preserved by conservations and naturalists. Our Bull Valley Garden Club feels privileged to have played a part in the fulfillment of A Prairie Promise.

## **Author: Claudia Edwards**

Claudia Edwards is the Grants Committee co-chair of the Bull Valley Garden Club of Illinois. She is a retired bilingual bank vice-president, a CPA and transplanted Texan living in Illinois. She credits her namesake Aunt Frances, a national flower judge, with instilling in her the love of flowers and design.



## **View the Prairie Promise Video:**

<https://www.youtube.com/@LandConservancyofMcHenryCounty/videos>





# ECHOS FROM THE GARDEN

## Remembering the Plants our Ancestors Grew

Author: Carla Waldrep

Have you ever wondered what grew in your ancestors' gardens—what they tended with care, what they relied on year after year, and what brought them simple joy? It's easy to picture the vegetable garden: rows of corn standing tall, beans climbing their poles, tomatoes ripening in the sun, potatoes, and leafy greens. These staples sustained families throughout the year.

But beyond the vegetables, there were other plant filled spaces—flower borders and herb patches filled not with mass-produced annuals, but with hardy heirloom varieties. These plants survived not because they were pampered, but because they endured. And in these spaces, a single plant often carried many purposes: beauty, nourishment, medicine, memories.

### **My Grandmother's Garden Legacy**

When I think back to my childhood, I can still see my maternal grandmother's garden as clearly as if I were standing in it now. She always grew poppies, marigolds, petunias, sedum, forsythia, and the enchanting rose campion with its vivid fuchsia blooms and delicate silver foliage. These flowers circled the edge of her vegetable beds with fullness and color that made the whole garden feel vibrant and alive. The hum and buzz of pollinators added to its liveliness.

What amazes me today is that I never recall seeing her transplanting or starting new flowers from seed. They seemed to simply appear each spring—self-seeded or returning as faithful perennials. Many of those plants still live on today. I have sedum, rose campion, forsythia, and others that are direct descendants of her garden, even though she passed away in 1995. They are more than plants now—they are traditions, heritage and memories rooted in the soil. And every so often, spring brings her little surprises. I'll find a lone petunia blooming in the pasture near where her garden once stood—an unexpected reminder that her flowers continue to scatter their legacy across the land.

### **Sweet Strawberries and Sweeter Memories**

In addition to the flowers, along two sides of the garden were strawberries—the sweetest, most irresistible little jewels I've ever tasted. In springtime, they were my ready-made snack: a handful on the way to the school bus, another when I came home. Those same heirloom strawberries still linger today, still producing, still bringing joy. They make the tastiest jams, cobblers, and old-fashioned desserts, carrying both flavor and memory.

### **Sage: More Than a Seasoning**

Nearby grew something my grandmother tended with special care: sage. It seasoned the sausage made from farm-raised hogs and gave her cornbread dressing its unmistakable flavor. But sage held more importance than its culinary uses.

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# ECHOS FROM THE GARDEN

## Remembering the Plants our Ancestors Grew

**Author:** Carla Waldrep  
(Continued)

For generations, sage has been valued in folk traditions. Sage tea has long been used to soothe sinus and upper respiratory discomfort. Often called the “Herb of Wisdom,” it has been associated with clarity, focus, and memory. Traditional herbal knowledge also suggests sage may ease menopausal symptoms like hot flashes and support general cognitive well-being.

Other traditional uses include supporting digestion, providing antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects, and helping maintain healthy cholesterol and blood sugar levels. Some even use sage rinses to promote scalp health and help with thinning hair.

### **A Garden Was a Pharmacy, a Pantry, and a Sanctuary**

Our ancestors often grew other plants with dual culinary and medicinal purposes—garlic, mint, rosemary, dill, and oregano were the quiet workhorses of many ancestral gardens—modest in appearance but mighty in purpose. Garlic was prized for its bold flavor and its reputation as a natural protector against illness. Mint spread eagerly, offering refreshing and cooling teas and soothing remedies for digestion. Rosemary, with its piney fragrance, was both a culinary staple and a symbol of remembrance and clarity. Dill added its delicate, feathery charm to the garden while flavoring pickles and calming upset stomachs. And oregano, served as both seasoning and traditional support for wellness with its powerful antibiotic properties. Together, these herbs formed a small but powerful apothecary.

Their gardens were more than food plots. They were pharmacies, pantries, and sanctuaries all in one. For me, any place where I grow and tend plants becomes an extension of that heritage. Whether flowers, vegetables, or herbs, it all feels like part of a living tradition passed down through hands that cared for the earth long before mine.

### **Ask the Elders: Wisdom Lives in Their Stories**

If you have the chance, ask your parents, grandparents, or older neighbors what they grew in their gardens. Ask what *their* parents grew. You will uncover a treasury of knowledge—stories of the plants that fed them, healed them, colored their summers, and flavored their food. This wisdom doesn’t belong only to the past. It can nurture you today and be passed on again, continuing a chain of memory rooted in the earth.

Our ancestors’ gardens were reflections of their lives, their needs, and their loves. And if we’re fortunate, those gardens still echo through the generations—blooming for us, reminding us where we come from, and offering a bit of inherited beauty along the way.

**Author:** Carla Waldrep - Herbalist, Historian and Librarian





# THE STORY BEHIND THE UNDERSTORY

Author: Sheryl Hanson

The forest understory, a hidden gem of the forest, is a vibrant tapestry of life, teeming with plants that thrive at the lowest level. It's not just essential for maintaining the forest's health and diversity, but it is also a sight to behold. From the delicate beauty of mosses to the intricate patterns of herbs, the understory is a testament to nature's wonders. It plays a significant role in everything from supporting different habitats to cycling nutrients and maintaining soil stability. Most importantly, it's a key player in forest regeneration and resilience.

The understory is home to the most incredible biodiversity of any forest. The understory plants influence a forest's biogeochemistry, water availability, litter decomposition, nutrient cycling, and habitat structure. The understory is defined as the layer of plants growing at the lowest level of the forest, typically a few feet high, including mosses, herbs, small shrubs, and tall vines. Although understory plants vary significantly across forest types and even within the same forest, their role is similar, with a measurable impact on forest health and the species it supports. The forest understory, with its diverse plant community, provides a wide range of habitats for mammals, insects, and birds. This not only increases overall biodiversity but also offers food, shelter, and nesting sites, making it an essential part of the forest ecosystem.

The understory improves the health of the entire ecosystem. It stabilizes and enriches the soil, cycles nutrients, and helps to regenerate water and regulate the climate. The roots hold soil in place, reduce erosion, add organic matter, and fix nitrogen. This special piece of forest helps decompose plant matter, restores nutrients, and makes them more available to the plants. The vegetation softens the impact of rainfall, reduces runoff, contributes to soil and its porosity, and the understory plants insulate the soil from extreme temperatures. The plants also help store carbon, cycling it through the ecosystem. The understory, when populated primarily with native species, significantly contributes to forest regeneration and resilience. These native plants, which evolved naturally in the regions where they occur, are the ecological basis upon which life depends, including birds and people. Preserving the understory is crucial to the survival of local wildlife.

The understory also benefits our urban settings. It adds visual interest, improves air quality by mitigating pollution, provides shade and privacy, and provides a barrier to construction sites. Speaking of us, this entryway to the forest also has another benefit for humans. Plant diversity promotes the distribution of better nutrients throughout the ecosystem. These nutrients become available to herbivores, improving wildlife health and benefiting everyone.

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# THE STORY BEHIND THE UNDERSTORY

Author: Sheryl Hanson  
(Continued)

Biodiversity is essential, and our forest understories play a crucial role. They promote genetic diversity, thereby enhancing species survival against environmental and ecological challenges, such as drought, pests, and severe weather. Plant biodiversity supports mammal biodiversity.

Humans and other mammals use the understory for foraging plants like ramps, wild yams, ginseng, bloodroot, and goldenseal, to name a few. The understory also offers beauty in the form of attractive plants and shrubs, bird sounds, and natural fences, fostering an appreciation for our environment. Plant materials you may recognize include beauties such as lady slippers, jack-in-the-pulpit, cinnamon ferns, wood geraniums, China berry, and Virginia bluebells. Birds like the Ovenbird, Hermit Thrush, and Eastern Towhee live in the understory. This vital forest feature is home to shrub and low-branch dwellers such as the Kentucky Warbler, Hooded Warbler, and Scarlet Tanager.



The more diverse the plant community, the more material available for wildlife, fungi, and insects to use as food, shelter, and nesting sites. As gardeners, we have the power to impact the ever-important understory positively. By understanding its importance and protecting this vital source of environmental health and its native plantings, we can make a significant difference. I invite you to research plants that benefit the understory in your habitat. Examples of such plants may include blackberries, wild azaleas, moss, lilacs, mountain laurel, black alder, dogwood, and Virginia creeper. What do you see and hear at the edges of your forests? Your observations and actions can help preserve this crucial ecosystem.

For more information:

#### **Louisiana State University College of Agriculture**

- DiStefano, A. (2023, June 2). Promoting understory for sustainable forest management.
- LSU AgC <https://www.lsuagcenter.com/articles/page1685722875400>

#### **Penn State Extension**

- Pugh, C., Brooks, K., & Palmer, N. (2025, October 10).
- Forest layers: The Understory. Penn State Extension. <https://extension.psu.edu/forest-layers-the-understory>

#### **Audubon Society**

- Tallamy, D. (2024, November 6). Why native plants matter.
- Audubon. <http://www.audubon.org/content/why-native-plants-matter>





# WINTER SOWING—GET A HEAD START ON SPRING!

**Author:** Virginia Schmidt

**PLANT AMERICA:** Planting for Pollinators in Urban and Container Gardens

Winter sowing is an easy, inexpensive way to start seeds outside for your own garden, or perhaps for a community garden or plant sale. Let Mother Nature lend a helping hand and take away some of the guess work! You don't need grow lights or heated pads—just sit back and wait for the magic to begin!

There are several methods for winter sowing. You can use milk jugs, Ziplock bags, plastic cups, and more.

The common denominator is that the seeds and soil have access to light and water and are out in the elements but protected from wind, so the containers don't blow away.

I suggest using “milk jug sowing” because that is the most common method and is the easiest. The jug becomes a “mini greenhouse.” Basic supplies are translucent milk jugs, scissors, or knife to cut the jug and make drainage holes in the bottom, potting soil without fertilizer or moisture control additives, tape or twist ties, and a weatherproof marker.

- Cut the top of the jug almost all the way around, but leave the handle attached, at least four inches from the bottom of the jug. Remove the cap. Poke at least four drainage holes in the bottom. Fill the bottom of the jug with about four inches of potting soil. Scatter seeds on top, then sprinkle a thin layer of soil on top of the seeds. Lightly water.
- Using a popsicle stick or plastic stake, make a plant label for the inside. Also write the plant name on the outside of the jug with the weatherproof marker. Next, use either masking or painters' tape to close the jug, or poke holes on the sides and use twist ties to close it.



CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE





# WINTER SOWING—GET A HEAD START ON SPRING!

**Author:** Virginia Schmidt  
(Continued)

- Place the jug in an area that will receive sun and rain or snow but will not be buffeted by wind and knocked over. They can be on the ground or on a deck, patio, etc. Many people put their jugs in a milk crate or similar for a bit of protection or tie the handle to a fence pole or other object.
- That's it! The seeds will germinate at the appropriate time, and as they grow and the weather gets warmer, you can remove the top of the jug and get ready for transplanting.

This is meant to be a VERY BASIC description of winter sowing to get you interested in trying something fun and different.

Below are resources that provide additional information on container options, seeds to try, and secrets to success. Have fun experimenting, and good luck!

## Resources:

- <https://u.osu.edu/ohiohistorygardens/2024/01/09/winter-sowing-to-fend-off-the-winter-blues/>
- <https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/garden-how-to/seeds/winter-sowing-seeds>
- <https://extension.umd.edu/sites/extension.umd.edu/files/2021-12/All%20the%20Dirt%20on%20Winter%20Sowing%20Power%20Point.pdf>
- <https://growitbuildit.com/illustrated-guide-to-winter-sowing-with-pictures/>





# LEGACY GIFTING

Author: Bud Qualk

We want our lives to have meaning while we live and even long after we are gone. Being involved with charitable nonprofits such as the National Garden Clubs, Inc. is an expression of our desire for meaning and commitment to making the world a better place. To assist you in helping NGC, we've created the **Legacy Gifting Committee**.

Legacy Gifting is a form of charitable donations in which you leave a personal legacy by planning future gifts to NGC from your assets. Your legacy will have a positive lasting impact on NGC's sustainability and fiscal stability resulting in NGC's ability to continue its mission.

The benefit to you, first and foremost, is a lasting personal legacy to be appreciated by future generations. Other benefits could include estate and income tax deductions, avoiding capital gains tax on appreciated assets, and the fulfillment of supporting a cause you value. Legacy gifting gives you financial flexibility as you can make large contributions without impacting current lifestyle. By discussing your legacy gifting with family members, you can share your philanthropic philosophy, why you value NGC's mission, and your commitment to ensure its continuance.

There are several ways to make a legacy gift:

1. Bequests through your will or revocable trust.
2. Life insurance policies where NGC is the named beneficiary.
3. Retirement plans like IRAs where NGC is the named beneficiary.
4. Charitable trust which you establish that distributes assets to NGC after your death.
5. Charitable gift annuities to which you make a large contribution and NGC pays you a fixed income for life.

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Legacy gifts are future donations. Remember that NGC is a 501(c)(3) and current gifts you make will normally be tax deductible (depending on your personal tax situation).

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# LEGACY GIFTING

**Author:** Bud Qualk  
(Continued)

Your current gift could be directed toward PLANT AMERICA, which awarded more than 250 grants totaling more than \$390,000 to member clubs since 2017. PLANT AMERICA was established in 2017, guided by former NGC President Nancy Hargroves. Right now, thanks to generous donor Barbara Baker, your support made through the “Double the Impact” donation form will be matched (up to \$50,000)! You could support NGC’s current mission to enhance public areas and community gardens.

I’ll share a quick story from my trust officer career days. A client intended to bequest his estate assets to his favorite library at death. After a few discussions, I mentioned that he might enjoy seeing the library staff’s joy and how his gift was being used in their work. He did not give all his assets at that point, but he gave a sizeable gift. The library staff was overjoyed and discussed with him how those dollars were going to advance their work, especially with children. He was delighted!

There are several ways to make current gifts:

1. Monetary donations – just write a check.
2. Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCD) from your IRA. If you are 70 ½ or older, you can donate up to \$108,000 in 2026 directly from your traditional IRA. This donation is not tax deductible, but the amount is excluded from your taxable income and can satisfy your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD).
3. Appreciated non-cash assets such as stocks can be gifted. You can deduct the full fair market value of the gifted asset and avoid paying capital gains tax on the appreciation.

In the future we will share estate planning tips concerning Conservatorships, Power of Attorney, Guardians, Wills, Trusts, Health Care Surrogates, Taxes, and Gifting. In the meantime, you can contact me with questions concerning Estate Planning and/or Legacy Gifting.

**Author:** Bud Qualk  
Retired Trust Officer  
NGC Legacy Gifting Chairman  
[budqualk@gmail.com](mailto:budqualk@gmail.com) / 270-933-7051







ESPOMA ORGANIC AND NATIONAL GARDEN CLUBS  
WANT TO HELP YOUR CLUB

*Plant America!*

Grant applications for 2025-2026 will be accepted October 1, 2025, through May 31, 2026. Twenty Grant Recipients will receive their choice of \$250 of Espoma Products.

NGC Member Clubs should complete the following online form: <https://www.espoma.com/garden-clubs/> Attach a word document that includes a description of the project, “before” photos of the site, simple sketch of the master plan, plant list, etc. Be sure to indicate when your project is scheduled to begin.

Questions about applying? Need help?

**Contact** Debi Harrington

NGC Sponsors' Grant Chair

[grants2025.27ngc@gmail.com](mailto:grants2025.27ngc@gmail.com)



## Winter Planning:

### Setting the Stage for a Successful Garden Year

Winter may quiet the garden, but for garden clubs and community groups, it's the most productive season of all. With beds resting and busy schedules slowed, the colder months offer a valuable opportunity to reflect, regroup, and plan for the year ahead.

Successful clubs use winter to review the past season—what projects inspired participation, which activities strengthened community ties, and where challenges emerged. These conversations help shape smarter goals and more inclusive plans. Winter meetings are also ideal for mapping out upcoming projects, refining garden layouts, coordinating volunteer schedules, and exploring new partnerships or educational programs.

By taking time now to plan thoughtfully, garden clubs can enter spring organized and energized, ready to grow not just plants, but stronger connections and more meaningful community impact in the seasons ahead.





# REGION NEWS



## *Pacific Region*

My term's theme is **PLANT AMERICA: WILD, WISE and WONDERFUL!** From the heat of the deserts in Arizona and Nevada, to the beaches in California, to the snow in Alaska, and to the rainforests in Washington and Oregon, our members come from such different climates, but they are all dedicated and working hard. All six states have WONDERFUL presidents. I am awed by all of them!

Here are some of the WONDERFUL projects the states in the Pacific Region are working on:

- Dorrie Carr, Washington president: We are having "The Red, White and Bloom" State Flower Show at the Bellevue Botanical Garden on August 22 and 23! We also started a new committee: Marketing and Outreach, focusing on encouraging new members and clubs to join the state. <https://www.wagardenclubs.com/>
- Jennifer Moreland, Arizona Garden Club president: We are doing many WONDERFUL new projects. One is an educational webpage: "The Challenge Wall" where you can visit 4 focus areas of study. <https://azgardenclubs.com>. Arizona is also offering a Landscape Design School via Zoom in January 2026 for \$110.
- Adele Kelly, California president: Her special project is the Abraxas High School Garden. Check out their website and see all the WONDERFUL things the garden club is doing at the school! <https://www.abraxasgarden.com/>
- Becky Cook, Oregon Garden Clubs president: She is doing a WONDERFUL job keeping her members motivated, focusing on networking and communicating. The garden clubs are planning to participate in the Oregon State Fair. <https://oregongardenclubs.org/>
- Karen Elliott, Nevada's second-term president: They are continuing their projects. Nevada owns a WONDERFUL club house and rose garden. Constant fundraising is needed for the upkeep. Bus tours called "Seats on the Bus" are offered. <https://www.nevadagardenclubs.org>
- Debbie Hinchey, Alaska president: We had to deal with the sudden passing of Carol Norquist in July. We all miss Carol, but especially in Alaska, we miss her every day.

I keep in contact with all the states through my "Tuesday Thoughts" newsletters and through Zoom meetings for the board and executive committee. The presidents like to talk to each other and learn that they aren't alone. They also get ideas from each other on solving problems and get fun new ideas! I am honored to serve with these WONDERFUL garden club people!

**Tanja Swanson, Pacific Region Director 2025-2027**





# REGION NEWS



## ***Central Atlantic Region of State Garden Clubs***

Greetings from “CAR-SGC” where we are still ‘riding high’ after our very successful C.A.R. Annual Conference with Tri-Refresher hosted by The Federated Garden Clubs of Maryland on October 19 – 22, 2025, in the historic village of Cambridge, MD. A special thank you to the extraordinary duo of conference co-chairs Susie Middleton and Diana Bonner along with all the volunteers who created a truly memorable event. Registration included 196 attendees from all 7 states in our region plus 1 very special dignitary ... Donna Donnelly, President of the National Garden Clubs, Inc.

The conference, themed “Maryland: America in Miniature,” offered a variety of inspiring speakers, round table discussions, seminars, business meetings, awards, scholarships, tours, and much, much more. The Hyatt Regency was an exceptional and stunning resort overlooking the impressive Choptank River. The venue delighted the visitors with both sunrises and sunsets.

Highlights of the conference included NGC President Donna Donnelly’s rousing speech praising our region for its long history of leadership and activism while encouraging future participation in the PLANT AMERICA project celebrating America’s 250th anniversary. Additionally, there were outstanding floral tributes, centerpieces, and a Fabulous Flower Arranging demonstration by Mike Burch. Programs also included Growing Trends by Kirk Brown, Wows of Longwood Gardens by Jim Sutton, and Gardening is Murder by Neal Sanders, to name a few of the speakers.

The post meeting bus tour took our attendees to experience scenic landscapes, cultural history, and delicious food and drink harvested from the surrounding farmland and waterways of the Chesapeake Bay. (I long for another bowl of crab soup!) Tours included Layton’s Chance Vineyard & Winery, Blackwater Wildlife Refuge, and the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science with a visit to Horn Point Lab to see their oyster restoration project.

Lastly, and perhaps best of all, are the many friendships that were made and renewed. The camaraderie of our members is a wonderful bonus of being part of the 7 states that make up the garden clubs in the CAR-SGC!

**Beverly Kazickas Director, 2025 - 2027**

Central Atlantic Region of State Garden Clubs, Inc.

CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE

[www.gardenclub.org](http://www.gardenclub.org)





# REGION NEWS



## ***Central Atlantic Region of State Garden Clubs (Continued)***

3 PHOTOS: photo credits: Robert Howatt

- **Photo #1:** Beverly Kazickas, Director of CAR-SGC, admires the Tribute Design made in her honor by designer Ann Street of Maryland.
- **Photo #2:** CAR Leaders had a chance to get to know one another. L to R: Danielle Brabazon, President, National Capitol Area Garden Clubs, Inc., - Sue Berdahl, President, The Garden Club of New Jersey, Inc., - Donna Miller, President, The Federation Garden Clubs of Maryland, Inc., - Beverly Kazickas, Director CAR-SGC, - Alva Hutchison, President, Delaware Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc., - Debra Turner, President, Garden Club of Ohio, Inc., and Elizabeth Walker, President, Federated Garden Clubs of New York State, Inc.
- **Photo #3:** CAR-SGC Director Beverly Kazickas welcomes NGC President Donna Donnelly to the 2025 C.A.R. Conference while congratulating event co-chairs Susie Middleton and Diana Bonner.



## ***Central Region***

Kitty Larkin wanted to have a photo show at the transition between the symposium and the regional meeting, and I agreed to help her with it. We did the show, and I also did a program, but mostly they loved seeing their images! It was juried, and all the survivors' images were on display. Then they had a People's Choice award and sold the images. Lynn Ehnert did a great job.

**Presenter: Arabella Dane**

<https://conta.cc/3JzgSxg>





# NGC SCHOOLS

## NGC Environmental School Courses

Roxanna Champagne

NGC Environmental School Chair

### Courses 1-4

<https://gardenclub.org/school/environmental-school-courses>

## NGC Gardening School Courses

Sarah McReynolds

Gardening School Chair

### Course 1-4

<https://gardenclub.org/school/gardening-school-courses>

## NGC Landscape Design School Courses

Carol Yee

Landscape Design School Chair

### Course 1-4

<https://gardenclub.org/landscape-design-school>

## NGC Flower Show School Courses

Gina Jogan

FS&FSSC Chairman

### Course 1-4

<https://gardenclub.org/school/flower-show-school-courses>



**NGC School Information and Dates  
can be found at**

**<https://gardenclub.org/our-schools>**





# NGC Reports

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## Natural Disasters USA Grants

Since accepting the Chairmanship for National Garden Club's Natural Disaster Grant Fund, three garden clubs have been awarded \$13,745.00.

The first grant was awarded in August to the Hunt Garden Club of Texas. The club is creating a Memorial Garden in the heart of Hunt, Texas, to commemorate the people who lost their lives in the flood of July 2025. This flood took the lives of 119; of these, 27 were young ladies attending a summer camp along the Guadalupe River.



This garden will be a peaceful oasis for reflection and remembrance. It will be a promise to remember the ones lost, to honor the compassion felt and shared, and to create a place where visitors can connect.

The second grant was given in September to the Perry Garden Club in Florida. This grant will allow the club to assist the city of Perry, Florida, recover from three devastating hurricanes: Idelia, Debby, and Helene. These three hurricanes hit within a year of each other and created a path of destruction which destroyed many trees and plantings as well as damaged buildings in the city. One building hit was the Perry Garden Club historical clubhouse which dates back to approximately 1900. The landscaping was lost except for the surviving camellias. The club's goal is to focus on native plants as well as restoring and maintaining their legacy camellia garden.

The third grant was awarded to the Azalea Garden Club of Augusta, Georgia. They are replacing trees and azaleas in the Azalea Walk at Pendleton King Park that were lost during Hurricane Helene last September. They have received help from their county extension agent, members of the non-commissioned Officer Academy at Fort Gordon and an NGC Espoma Grant, which was used to add their Soil PerfeCTOR product to the severely erosion damaged soil.

All of these grants are still in progress, and no final reports have been submitted to date. As the final reports are received, I will post their findings in future reports. As always, NGC is truly an extraordinary resource for garden clubs committed to public gardens. I am very proud to hold a position that allows me to continue to assist our garden clubs hit by natural disasters.

**Author:** Josephine Goodenow

NGC Natural Disaster USA Grant Chairman

[www.gardenclub.org](http://www.gardenclub.org)





# NGC Reports

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## AMES Tools Grants to Continue in 2026!

AMES Tools has been sponsoring Grants to NGC clubs since 2014. Each year AMES grants over \$5,000 in tools to 20-25 clubs. Additionally, AMES Tools Representative, Karen Richwine, often brings, or sends, tools to the annual NGC Convention and gives them away at the close of the convention. AMES Tools recently announced that their grants to NGC clubs will continue in 2026!



In March 2025, twenty-four NGC member clubs were notified that their clubs' projects had been awarded an AMES Tools Grant for their selected tools worth \$250. These 24 clubs were selected from 69 applicants from the 2025 AMES Tools Grant period of January 1<sup>st</sup> through March 1<sup>st</sup>.

The projects for the 24 award winning clubs varied from: planting a Miyawaki style urban mini forest; growing edibles for schools, nursing homes and food banks; beautifying community parks, schools, churches and civic areas; restoring natural disaster areas; gardening with children, senior adults and physically or intellectually challenged adults, as well as many more traditional gardening projects.

Many of the winning projects were carried out in conjunction with other local groups, such as scouts, nature conservancies, historical societies, Master Gardeners and other NGC garden clubs. All of the projects were in highly visible areas of their communities and therefore beautified and benefited the entire community.

If you would like to see your club receive up to \$250 of AMES Tools, visit the NGC website (<https://gardenclub.org/awards-and-grants>) to learn about this wonderful grant and how to apply in 2026. The 2026 AMES Tools Grant Application period runs from January 1, 2026 through March 1, 2026. Winners will be notified by March 30<sup>th</sup>. If you have questions or need help contact Debi Harrington, NGC Sponsors Grants Chair @ [grants2025.27ngc@gmail.com](mailto:grants2025.27ngc@gmail.com)

**Author:** Debi Harrington, 2023-2027 NGC Sponsors' Grants Chair

**Email:** [grants2025.27ngc@gmail.com](mailto:grants2025.27ngc@gmail.com)



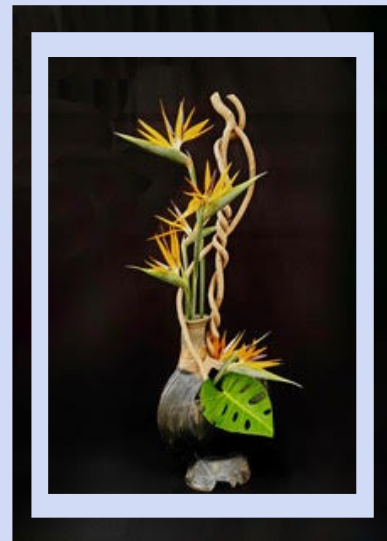


# NGC Reports

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## Vision of Beauty Calendar Report

All members of clubs affiliated with National Garden Clubs, Inc. are invited to send photos and entry forms to the VOB CALENDAR Chairman by August 15. All types of designs are requested: Traditional, Contemporary, Botanical Artists Crafts, New Trends and those appropriate for seasons of the year and holidays. Photos of a small area of your garden are encouraged. This year we will accept photos and entry forms for a Horticulture Display. A display is defined as a collection of specimens exhibited with a strong overall artistic effect. Refer to page 60 of the NGC Flower Show Handbook for full description.



**REQUIREMENTS** to enter a picture for the **VOB CALENDAR**. A completed entry form **TYPED** with complete email, mailing address, and garden club membership. **NO hand written entries PLEASE!**. A 5" x 7" print and a **digital JPEG** image is sent to the Chairman at [vob@gardenclub.org](mailto:vob@gardenclub.org).

**Designs must be photographed in front of a blank, seamless background free of wrinkles, patterns and creases between background and underlay. Do not include pictures with flower show ribbons or entry cards.**

- All entries will be judged by the same criteria used to judge National Garden Club, Inc. Flower Show Designs. All decisions of the judges are final. Please see the judging criteria found in the recent edition of the Handbook for Flower Shows.
- Once submitted, photos become the property of National Garden Clubs, Inc. Notification will be given if the entry is used. No entries will be returned. NGC is not responsible for any lost, late, delayed, or misdirected entries. Entries that do not comply with these guidelines cannot be considered.
- The official Entry Form can be found on the NGC Website. When you sign in, go to the Forms Library, and scroll down to the bottom of the list.

**Author:** Nancy Voyles, VOB Chairman [nvoyles62@aol.com](mailto:nvoyles62@aol.com)

[www.gardenclub.org](http://www.gardenclub.org)





# NGC Reports

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## Blue Star and Gold Star Families Memorial Marker Program

On September 19, 2025, a Blue Star Memorial By-Way, the first to be placed in Nebraska, was dedicated. The dedication occurred in conjunction with the annual POW/MIA ceremony in Omaha's Memorial Park. Mary Carlson, the Nebraska and Rocky Mountain Region Garden Clubs Blue Star/Gold Star Memorial representative for the National Garden Clubs, Inc., presented the Memorial to Mayor John Ewing for the city of Omaha.



Addressing the national, state, and local significance of the Memorial and the Blue Star program, in addition to Carlson and Ewing, was the Honorable Hal Daub, who served four terms in the United States House of Representatives and was the 48<sup>th</sup> mayor of Omaha.

Besides the Memorial By-Way, Nebraska has 14 existing Blue Star Memorials, the latest being installed in Fort McPherson National Cemetery, Maxwell, Nebraska, in April 2025. Installation of the Blue Star Memorial By-Way is Carlson's latest effort to expand, document and preserve the history of the Nebraska Blue Star Memorials. In the past three years, restoration was completed on seven Nebraska Blue Star Memorials which were over 50 years old (five at Interstate 80 rest stops and two on Nebraska Highway 83 – Blue Star Highways).



In addition, after being damaged in a windstorm, the original first Nebraska Blue Star Memorial (1950) in Plattsmouth, which had been replaced, was relocated and found its way 217 miles west to the Military Vehicle Museum in Lexington. That Memorial joins the second Nebraska Blue Star Memorial (1952) in Wellfleet which is also in a museum, namely the Lincoln County Historical Museum in North Platte.

The next objective is to install a Blue Star Memorial in the panhandle area of western Nebraska. Stay tuned.

**Author:** Mary Carlson

### Photo References:

- **Top Photo:** Fort McPherson Nebraska National Cemetery Blue Star Memorial dedicated March 2025.
- **Bottom Photo:** Mary Carlson with wreath and By-Way Memorial in Omaha Memorial Park.





# LANDSCAPE DESIGN

Down the Garden Path

## Landscape Design School News

Author: Carol Yee

**“Of all human activities...gardening is the most optimistic and hopeful. The gardener is by definition one who plans for and believes and trusts in a future, whether in the short or the longer term.” Susan Hill, author (A-Z Quotes ).**

Environmental, Gardening, and Landscape Design Schools help fulfill the NGC mission by providing educational courses throughout the regions, in person, and virtually. Website contact tabs for listed courses help individuals easily gain access to information they need.

### **NGC’s mission statement:**

*“We are dedicated to fostering a love of gardening, floral design, and civic and environmental responsibility. We provide education, resources, and national networking opportunities for our members while coordinating the efforts of state and local garden clubs in the U.S. and abroad to promote environmental stewardship and enhance communities through gardening.”*

A good guide to use for general information and that helps answer many questions is the “Guide for Students/Consultants: Maintaining Certification” located on the NGC website: [gardenclub.org](http://gardenclub.org) in the “Member” section under “School Resources (ES,GS, LDS).”

For those organizing courses (or for more detailed information), the newly revised 2025 digital NGC Schools Handbook (Environmental, Gardening, and Landscape Design Schools) is now available. The Handbook is still a work in progress. Annual updates will be made beginning July 2026. The following Chairmen reviewed Handbook revisions began by Pat Rupiper (former NGC Schools Policy Coordinator) and formatted by Pamela Grotts with suggestions by all the NGC Schools Region Accrediting Chairmen:

- Schools Policies Coordinator for Environmental, Gardening, and Landscape Design Schools: Terri Ewers
- Environmental: Roxanna Champagne
- Gardening: Sarah McReynolds
- Landscape Design: Carol Yee





# LANDSCAPE DESIGN

Down the Garden Path

## Landscape Design School News

Author: Carol Yee  
(Continued)

Because of changes to the Handbook, several School Forms now on the NGC website may need revising. Any suggestions/comments on the newly revised Handbook as well as suggestions for Form revisions are appreciated.

Why should a local club or state organization organize a school? Greg Pokorski, (Master Consultant ES, GS, LDS and former chairman of several NGC Schools committees) in his Spring 2025 Newscape (Schools newsletter) article gives good reasons:

“Conducting a school gives the sponsoring organization new connections: to the public (prospective students); to instructors; to those associated with the school venue. At the school you might have displays about the projects, activities and meetings of your club. Even those students who do not join your club or become Consultants can become ambassadors of goodwill once they learn something about your organization and its good works. All outreach and exposure increase the visibility of your organization and has the potential of attracting new members.”

I hope clubs and state school chairmen will consider organizing a school in the near future. As Landscape Design School Chairman, the NGC LDS Accrediting Chairmen for the regions and I are always willing to help. State Landscape Design School Chairs, contact [Carol](#) with your questions or to start a School in your state.

**Author:** Carol Yee

**Email:** [mscyee@hotmail.com](mailto:mscyee@hotmail.com)

Carol Yee, of Illinois, is the NGC Landscape Design School Chair and a 5-Star Member.





# Q & A

Welcome to our Q&A section! Here, we tackle your gardening questions with practical, easy-to-follow advice.

## QUESTIONS

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**Q: How can winter observation improve long-term garden design and plant performance?**

**A:** Winter reveals the true structure of the garden. With foliage absent, issues such as poor branch architecture, overcrowding, drainage patterns, and wind exposure become clear. Use this season to evaluate plant placement, note microclimates, and identify opportunities for structural pruning or future transplanting.

**Q: What strategies help mitigate damage from freeze-thaw cycles?**

**A:** Consistent soil insulation is key. Apply mulch after the ground has cooled but before hard freezes to stabilize soil temperatures. In exposed sites, wind barriers can reduce desiccation. Avoid late-season nitrogen fertilization, which can encourage tender growth vulnerable to winter injury.

**Q: How should irrigation be managed for established landscapes in winter?**

**A:** While most deciduous plants require little winter water, evergreens—especially broadleaf types—remain physiologically active and benefit from deep watering during extended dry periods. Prioritize watering before forecasted freezes, and adjust based on soil type and drainage to prevent root damage.

**Q: Which pruning tasks are best addressed during dormancy?**

**A:** Dormant-season pruning is ideal for shade trees, fruit trees, and many summer-flowering shrubs. Focus on correcting structural defects, reducing crossing branches, and improving airflow. Delay pruning spring-flowering species and plants prone to dieback until growth resumes.

**Q: How can gardeners support overwintering wildlife without increasing pest pressure?**

**A:** Balance is essential. Retain seed heads and hollow stems selectively to provide habitat while managing areas prone to rodents or insect pests. Clean feeders regularly and rotate feeding sites. Incorporating native woody plants ensures consistent, ecologically appropriate winter resources.

**Q: What winter tasks best support a strong start to the next growing season?**

**A:** Conduct soil tests and interpret results now to guide spring amendments. Inventory seeds and evaluate germination rates. Service tools and irrigation systems, and review garden records to refine crop rotation, pruning schedules, and plant selection for resilience and succession planning.

Have a garden question? [Email us](#) and you might see your question in the next issue!

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[WWW.GARDENCLUB.ORG](http://WWW.GARDENCLUB.ORG)

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