

THE NATIONAL GARDENER

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TEN

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.

SCAN ME

02 Spring 2026 | FREE





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THE NATIONAL GARDENER

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THE PRESIDENT'S PAGE

Dear Members and Friends of National Garden Clubs,



Spring is upon us, and with it comes a season of growth, renewal, and inspiration. As gardens across the country begin to bloom, so too does the extraordinary momentum behind **PLANT AMERICA**.

The PLANT AMERICA Matching Grant Program has already proven to be a remarkable success. To date, we have received more than 140 applications, with over \$65,000 awarded to support impactful planting projects nationwide. These projects are helping elevate the visibility of National Garden Clubs while strengthening our partnership with Keep America Beautiful, bringing national attention to the vital work our members do in communities across the country.

As we prepare to celebrate the 250th birthday of the United States, every Region, State, and Garden Club is invited to participate in this historic initiative by PLANTing AMERICA red, white, and blue. Even if your club did not apply for a grant, everyone can take part in what promises to be the largest July 4th display of patriotic color in the nation.

Looking ahead, we are delighted to invite you to join us at the 2026 National Garden Clubs Convention in St. Louis, Missouri, on May 5–6, 2026. This special two-day event offers a truly unique experience:

- **May 5:** Spend the day at NGC Headquarters and the renowned Missouri Botanical Garden (MOBOT)
- Tour NGC Headquarters and grounds
- Explore three special exhibits highlighting the history of NGC Headquarters, the PLANT AMERICA initiative, and the 25th Anniversary of our International Affiliates
- Enjoy guided tours of MOBOT's beautiful gardens
- Attend engaging educational seminars at the hotel
- Experience a Petite Flower Show, presented by the NGC Flower Show Committee

Reservations are now open, and we encourage you to secure your place for what promises to be an inspiring and memorable gathering—an opportunity to reconnect with friends, learn, celebrate, and support National Garden Clubs.

Finally, thanks to your continued generosity, the PLANT AMERICA Matching Grant Fund has reached \$42,769 (at print time). We are thrilled by this progress and look forward to announcing that we have achieved our \$50,000 goal by the time we gather in St. Louis. Thank you for your dedication, enthusiasm, and unwavering support of National Garden Clubs. Together, we are planting beauty, pride, and purpose across America.

Warm regards,

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



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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.

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FROM THE EDITOR

With my recent move to a very different gardening zone, I've been reflecting on ways to dedicate more time to gardening, which has led me to consider the valuable applications and online tools developed in recent years. I am taking an online gardening course that offers a plethora of practical guidance on information **based on your location**. Some of this is done using online tools. The course covers an extensive range of information for both new and experienced gardeners.



This course is delivered through a flexible, self-paced format. It includes recorded video segments that are broken down into small, manageable pieces, making it convenient to pause, rewind, and replay whenever needed. Alongside these videos, the course has periodic live online discussions, providing opportunities to connect with instructors and fellow gardeners. The curriculum utilizes workbooks and covers interactive online tools to help participants identify their gardening zone, calculate average dates for the first and last frost, track when temperatures rise above 85°F, determine the Persephone period, analyze sun movement, and examine shadow casting **at your location**, among other useful information.

I am truly impressed by the effectiveness of these tools. Motivated by their utility, I sought out additional resources and compiled a list of online tools for gardeners, which I share in the article **Cool Online Tools**. These tools are most effective when used together. For instance, combining PlantNET, PictureThis, and Plantix can help with plant identification, diagnosing diseases, and creating personalized care plans. Additionally, tools like ChatGPT are useful for planning garden layouts and researching. I intend to explore generative AI tools such as ChatGPT and plant identification tools in future articles.

Along these lines, a friend recently recommended a film titled **The Gardener** (in theaters April 17), which tells the story of a woman who retreats to a quiet garden setting and discovers healing, connection, and a renewed sense of purpose. With stunning visuals and a message that will resonate deeply with anyone who has ever found peace in the garden, this film is a tribute to the role gardens play in our lives. I think you will enjoy this film. Consider organizing a garden club outing or inviting members to attend together. Watch the trailer and learn more here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akziMbR960o>



Victoria Schmidt
TNG EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

FROM THE IA EDITOR

Are you passionate about gardening and fluent in Spanish? The National Gardener is seeking bilingual volunteers to help translate insightful articles from our International Affiliates into English. Help us share the unique views and customs of horticulture, design, and the environment from across Latin America with our entire membership.

Contact Victoria Schmidt, TNG Editor-in-Chief, at GardenWithVictoria@gmail.com or Pampa Riso-Patrón, TNG International Editor, at PampaRP@pacefund.org to learn more about how you can help.

Pampa Riso Patrón



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



NATIONAL GARDEN CLUBS, INC.

2026 CONVENTION

“MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS, WHERE THE RIVER BENDS & THE ARCH REACHES THE SKY!”



Join us at the 2026 Convention and discover all things St. Louis and Missouri from the Gateway Arch on the mighty Mississippi across the Missouri Prairie and back again to visit with our next-door neighbor, the Missouri Botanical Garden, and best of all, going home to NGC HQ to explore its collections and stroll the Path to Success. **At the Convention ...**

Extraordinary Luncheon Speakers

Our Kick-Off Speaker, **Ryan McClure, Executive Director of The Gateway Arch Park Foundation**, can relate to our Convention theme, especially **“Where The Arch Reaches The Sky!”** He will amaze us with the tale of reinvigorating the Gateway Arch as a National Park and invite us to visit the Arch on this trip or the next time you “Meet Us in St. Louis!”

Our Keynote Speaker, **Carol Davit, Executive Director of the Missouri Prairie Foundation**, will show us her organization’s extraordinary efforts to reclaim the Missouri Prairie/Grow Native Plants and how they can be translated into landscaping our own properties.

Spectacular Seminar Speakers

ROSE... LOVE... PASSION

ORCHID... LUXURY

CACTUS... PROTECTION

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NATIONAL GARDEN CLUBS, INC.

2026 CONVENTION

(CONTINUED)

The **Language of Flowers** is mysterious and intriguing, almost as much as finding the keys to nurturing a rose garden, guiding the growth of an orchid collection, and tending to the needs of your indoor or outdoor xerophyte showcase! Fortunately for us, our next-door neighbor, the Missouri Botanical Garden ("MOBOT"), has professionals with decades of experience that they are willing to share with us in **SEMINARS**. They will be joined by the St. Louis Master Gardeners.

On Tuesday morning (9:00 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.) in **Seminar A**, **Matthew Norman** will draw from his decade of working in the MOBOT Lehmann Rose Garden and Gladney Rose Garden to take us on a guided tour and divulge the secrets of such happy roses! Also on Tuesday morning, **Carol Gravens**, an Advanced St. Louis Master Gardener and 17-year MOBOT Orchid House volunteer, will reveal the secrets of coaxing Missouri native orchids to flourish in **Seminar B**.

On Tuesday afternoon (2:30 p.m. & 4:00 p.m.) in **Seminar C**, **Pat Scace**, MOBOT's Supervisor of Floral Display, will dazzle us with a trip through the Last 100 Years of Flower Shows at the Missouri Botanical Garden. Also, on Tuesday afternoon in **Seminar D**, **Charling Chen**, MOBOT Senior Manager, Landscape Planning and Design, will amaze us with the stories of how the stunning MOBOT xerophyte collection has been recreated in the new Shoenberg Arid Collection. She will also take us through the historic Linnean House, which can be described as a Victorian plant conservatory with an extraordinary collection of plants that certainly could tell many stories in the language of flowers. What wonderful ways to tour the Garden!

On Wednesday morning, we have joining us from MOBOT the team of **Jeanne Carbone**, retired Supervisor of Therapeutic Horticulture, and **Liz Byrde**, current Therapeutic Horticulture Coordinator, for **Seminar E**. Jeanne and Liz will invite us to consider an entirely different language of flowers embodied in activities designed to stimulate the senses and enhance the physical, mental and social lives of the participants. Perhaps you have in mind a group in your garden club's community that would benefit from such a program.



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NATIONAL GARDEN CLUBS, INC.

2026 CONVENTION

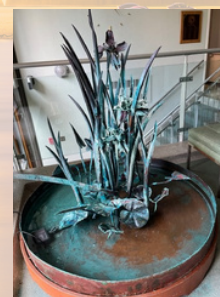
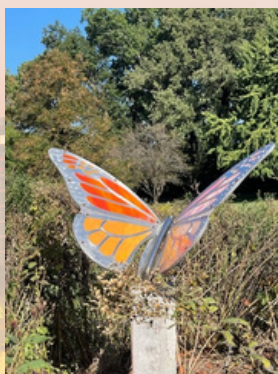
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Tours to Be Talked About

What is better than a visit back **home**?! Executive Director Bill Trapp, Assistant Executive Director Katie Roth and the entire Headquarters team invite you to join them during either the morning or afternoon of Tuesday, May 5th. Come and meet the team in person, tour the **NGC Headquarters Building** (an extraordinary example of mid-Century Modern architecture), watch the video of how HQ was born and developed, be dazzled by the donated collections of porcelain, crystal and silver, shop at the NGC Store, and learn about “**PLANT AMERICA. Keep America Beautiful!**” and the International Affiliates 25th Anniversary. Thrill to the gardens and memorials that have been installed throughout the grounds and explore the **Path to Success** to find your paver!

While you're in the neighborhood (well, right next door!), the **Missouri Botanical Garden** or “MOBOT” is a **MUST VISIT** too! Show your Convention ID and you will receive a discounted admission for your visit. From the stunning Chihuly piece in the Visitors' Center atrium to the Rose Gardens and Japanese Garden to the collections of orchids and xerophytes to the amazing design of the Victorian Conservatory Linnean House, you will find wonders to amaze you and plants to pique your curiosity. Best of all, MOBOT's experts will be available to answer your questions at our Seminars! And “Oh, guess what I found in the Gift Shop?!”

BUT ... HOW DO I GET THERE? The **BEST SHUTTLE** will be running in a continuous loop among the **Hilton** to **HQ** to **MOBOT** back to the Hilton ... and so on ... from 8:30 a.m. Tuesday morning until 5:30 p.m. Tuesday afternoon. Spend the morning or afternoon touring!



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NATIONAL GARDEN CLUBS, INC.

2026 CONVENTION

(CONTINUED)

Special Guest Floral Designer

Speaking of a native flower, our **Special Guest Floral Designer** is **Madelyn Hucker** from St. Peters, MO! Not only is Madelyn an award-winning floral design industry professional, but a talented member of National Garden Clubs, Inc. She is an NGC Master Judge and Design Instructor Emeritus and currently is kept busy as President of the St. Louis Judges Council. Her design career has included displays at WAFA and the St. Louis Art Museum's annual "Art In Bloom," where in 2019, her design was used in the event's advertising campaign. At Tuesday evening's Design Banquet, Madelyn will treat us to her interpretations of "Meet Me in St. Louis, Where the River Bends & the Arch Reaches the Sky!"

The 2026 National Flower Show, a Petite Show

Join us to celebrate nature, enjoy delightful displays, immerse yourself in a world of color and creativity, and experience "**America, the Beautiful!**" Within this national petite show, you will learn first-hand about the beauty of the many regions of America interpreted through Floral Design and displayed in the horticulture specimens. Artistic Crafts will inspire you, while Educational Exhibits will inform you.

President Donna Donnelly and Flower Show Chairs Debby Cooper and Carol Bullard invite you to join them at the Show! Check the Tentative Convention Schedule to see when you will have time to experience "**America, The Beautiful!**"

What Am I Missing?

You are also invited to support our **Vendors**. Visit with our **National Sponsors** and make sure to say a special hello if you are one of the **Espoma** or **Ames Tools** grant winners! Have fun at our social hours. Meet new friends at our meals. Enjoy all that the Convention has to offer. There may even be a few surprises! Check the Tentative Convention Schedule posted at the Convention Registration Desk.

We invite you to ...

**"MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS,
WHERE THE RIVER BENDS & THE ARCH REACHES THE SKY!"**





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Your local garden projects and programs provide inspiring opportunities that bring neighbors, cultures and generations together to share the experience and joy of gardening. As recognition of the valuable resource that your club contributes to your community, up to 20 local garden clubs across America will be awarded grants. Recipients will earn up to \$250 of Espoma Organic Plant Foods & Potting Soils. So be inspired America! Join our effort to Plant America Together. Apply for a \$250 Espoma Product Grant at: www.espoma.com/garden-clubs



Visit us at www.espoma.com and join our gardening community.



Check the Health of Your Garden Soil!



CHECK THE HEALTH OF YOUR GARDEN SOIL!

Author: Thomas Mrazik

Why not check your garden soil's health? Healthy soil is naturally alive and life-giving, sustaining plant growth and vitality. This primer provides straight forward practical steps to check the health of your garden soil and options to help improve it.

Health Check #1: Inspect Soil Physical Structure

Garden soil is built of solid minerals - clay, silt and sand particles (~45%), organic matter (~4-6%), living plant roots and biota and "pore space" (50%), which allows air, water, and nutrients to move to plant roots and biota.

Inspect an in-ground clump of garden soil. Dig up a sizable sample, at least ~6-9 inches deep, and look it over. Good workable soil structure feels crumbly or granular, having visible small clumps, loose pieces of soil mingled with clinging plant roots, decaying organic matter and earthworms. If a soil clump lacks these characteristics, it may have limitations including:

Insufficient organic matter

- Insufficient organic matter (i.e. decaying and dead plant residues and humus) leads to poor soil aggregates, reducing nutrient and water handling. Surface crusting, cracking and erosion appear.
- Routinely amend soil with organic matter since it provides essential carbon and forms aggregates. Dig-in at least ~1-3 inches of an organic matter amendment into the top 6 inches of soil. Organic matter amendments include dead shredded leaves, composted spent mushroom substrate, home lawn/leaf composts, peat moss, aged/dried animal manures, or humus.

Compaction or compression

- Compacted soil is sticky and muddy when wet. When dry, it becomes hardened. Compaction reduces open pores. This occurs when soil is too wet, and then it is worked, and/or has too much foot traffic, tilling or heavy equipment. To improve, dig-in at least ~1-3 inches of an organic matter amendment into the soil. Core aeration may alleviate compaction by pulling out small soil cores from its top layer.



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CHECK THE HEALTH OF YOUR GARDEN SOIL!

Author: Thomas Mrazik (Continued)



Insufficient topsoil layer

- Insufficient topsoil appears as compacted soil because of its exposed dense subsoil layer. “Topsoil” is the soil’s surface layer, ~3-10 inches in depth, and rich in dark, brown humus, and mineral particles. Most plant root activity occurs here.
- To help restore topsoil, dig or rake-in at least ~1-3 inches of a finely textured organic matter amendment and/or loamy soil.
- If using a bulk product, look for it to have sufficient compost and soil minerals without excessive clay or sand. It should feel loose and crumbly, but not cloddy. Be sure it is screened of rocks, sticks, debris and wood.
- If using packaged “topsoil,” always look for organic matter and soil minerals on the package’s ingredients. Avoid topsoil products with no labeled ingredients.

Health Check #2: Confirm Soil Texture and Function

Soil mineral texture influences a soil’s role in life-giving functioning. Clay, silt and sand particles mix together in soil to make-up a texture type. Table 1 describes key soil functions of these 3 soil particles.

Table 1: Key soil functions of separate soil mineral particles

Key Soil Functions	Functions of Soil Mineral Particles (Size)	
	Clay (<0.002 mm -very fine) or Silt (0.05-0.002 mm - fine)	Sand (0.5-2 mm - coarse-very coarse)
Holds Water	High	Low
Holds Nutrients (CEC value)	High	Low
Soil Aeration	Lower	Higher
Drainage	Slow	Fast
Organic Matter Breakdown	Slower	Faster

Soil texture type is defined by the relative percentages of clay, silt and sand mixed together in soil. **See Figure 1:** USDA Soil Textural Triangle on the next page. Most outdoor soils differ in texture.

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CHECK THE HEALTH OF YOUR GARDEN SOIL!

Author: Thomas Mrazik (Continued)



Be sure to confirm a soil's texture type:

- Use the USDA Web Soil Survey, an online tool, which provides soil texture data for your location (USDA NRCS (<https://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/>), and/or
- Submit a sample of your garden soil for a soil particle size test to a state university's agricultural or soil sciences lab. This test identifies a soil's textural type. For example, Penn State University Agricultural Analytical Services Lab offers this test (<https://agsci.psu.edu/aasl/soil-testing/particle-size-and-sand-sieve-test>).



Figure 1: Soil texture type is based on a mixture of the relative percentages of clay, silt, and sand particles in a mass of soil. Source: USDA Soil Textural Triangle (<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov>).

Loam texture soil is mostly sand and silt particles with less clay. Loam is ideal for cultivation and plant growth. Silty loam contains all 3 particles with mostly sand and silt, but a higher percentage of silt.

Some soil textures are not as well suited for best functioning, including:

- **Heavy clay texture:** High clay texture soil (~40% or more clay) appears sticky and dense when moist. When dry, it tends to harden, crust and crack and form small clods. Clay soil tightly holds water, does not drain well and is difficult to work.
- Adding organic matter improves its structure and workability. Carefully dig in with a spading fork ~1-3 inches of organic matter amendments like composts. Avoid peat moss since it holds water. Be cautious, mixing clay soil with sand may result in an even more compacted soil.
- **Heavy sand texture:** High sand texture soil (~85% or more sand) doesn't hold water or nutrients well. As such, frequent watering, of smaller amounts, near to the root zone may be needed. Since nutrients are not retained well, close checks of its nutrient levels by a soil test may be needed.

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CHECK THE HEALTH OF YOUR GARDEN SOIL!

Author: Thomas Mrazik (Continued)



Adding in an organic matter amendment, at least ~2-4 inches, into the top 6-12 inches of the soil improves its water and nutrient holding. Consider top surface organic mulching to help retain soil moisture and to provide organic matter as it slowly breaks down. Be cautious, mixing clay into a sandy soil may create a too hardened soil material.

Health Check #3: Test for Soil Nutrients

- Plants need a proper balance of nutrients. From the environment plants obtain carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen (~96%). The remaining ~3-4% are the soil macronutrients, nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. Organic matter is a source of carbon and macronutrients.
- Don't guess. To know for sure the adequacy of a soil's macronutrients, take a sample of your soil, and conduct a soil fertility test, available through your state's university extension service or local garden nursery.
- A soil test measures soil macronutrients - phosphorus (P), potassium (K), calcium (Ca), and magnesium (Mg), but not nitrogen (N) since it is volatile. It also reports soil pH, which affects the release of nutrients into the soil and the cation exchange capacity (CEC), which gauge a soil's nutrient-holding capacity.

A soil test informs about:

1. The level (suboptimal or optimal) of soil macronutrients.
2. Recommendations on applying N-P-K fertilizer, if needed.
3. Recommendations for adjusting pH (with lime or sulfur), if needed.
4. Applying organic matter, based on the CEC value.

Author: Thomas Mrazik

Thom is a horticulturist and owner of Goodly Gardens in Worcester, PA. Goodly Gardens is an awarded, pleasantly attractive naturalistic, meadow-style garden. Thom's garden articles are published at finegardening.com and extension.psu.edu. He is a member of the Norristown Garden Club in PA.

References:

- Soil Science. USDA. National Resources Conservation Services. US Department of Agriculture. www.nrcs.usda.gov
- Soil Health Manual Fact Sheets. Cornell Soil Health Laboratory. Cornell University, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences soilhealthlab.cals.cornell.edu



NGC HEADQUARTERS HISTORY

Author: Mary Warshauer

The 1959 dedication of the National Garden Clubs, Inc. (NGC) Headquarters celebrated the fulfillment of a long-held dream: a permanent home that reflected beauty, stewardship, and service to future generations of gardeners.



NGC's early offices were in New York City, beginning with a symbolic \$1 lease in Rockefeller Plaza in 1934. Rapid membership growth—from 84,661 to more than 300,000 by 1953—led to successive moves to the Roosevelt Hotel and later the Essex House.

At the 1953 Convention, Judge Grover Cleveland Spillers proposed building a permanent headquarters as the organization's Silver Anniversary Project. Members selected St. Louis for its central location, and in 1954 John and Anne Lehman donated funds to purchase 6.2 acres beside the Missouri Botanical Garden. Successful fundraising and NGC's new 501(c)(3) status allowed the \$290,000 mid-century modern building—designed by architect Frederick R. Dunn and constructed debt-free—to open on May 10, 1959. Its materials honored NGC's origins: Georgia granite and New York brick. In 1995, the building received a 25-year Award for Excellence in Architecture.



As NGC's needs expanded, Kellogg Hall was enlarged in 1997–1999 through a gift from the Cecil B. Day family, maintaining the original architectural style and improving accessibility and meeting space.

In 2019, NGC dedicated new enhancements: a redesigned entrance by SWT Design, a refreshed interior patio by Jon Carloftis, and a new monarch butterfly sculpture by Abraham Mohler, accompanied by a reimagined Butterfly Garden planted with native species.



Author: Mary Warshauer
NGC PH&E Director



National Garden Clubs Inc.
4401 Magnolia Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri



VIRTUAL TOOLS: CAN THEY HELP MY GARDEN CLUB?

Author: Idalia Aguilar

Virtual tools are transforming garden clubs around the world. Within COMAAI, the international outreach of NGC, Inc., these tools have been embraced to provide accessible, high-quality online education through all four Schools, using a system that combines self-paced study with live Zoom classes.



Even better, today's virtual platforms, whether free or paid, allow members to communicate instantly using just their phones. As an international liaison, it has been especially gratifying to see many "experienced, long-time members" embrace this new window of opportunity and actively participate in a wide range of activities from the comfort of their homes. Projects, documentaries, programs, and events can now be shared regardless of country, distance, or time zone.

It is amazing to think that the internet now allows us to organize, host, offer, and even accredit online flower shows, whether exhibiting or judging. Additional opportunities include workshops with international designers, continuous education programs, and full participation in the virtual biennial COMAAI Regional Convention. During this event, IA members are able to participate in meetings, share projects, attend committee sessions, and enjoy tours organized by the host country, all from a home computer, tablet, or phone, with no travel or added expenses.

The results speak for themselves. International virtual communications have strengthened membership, increased participation, and fostered lasting friendships. This success is also reflected in the growing number of 4/5 Star applications being submitted.

Could embracing virtual tools help your garden club increase membership? Is your club willing to promote education and offer virtual activities so members of all ages can remain active and connected? If you have any questions regarding the experience of adopting virtuality for your garden club, ask any of our IA members that will be attending our NGC, Inc. Convention, where they will be celebrating COMAAI's 25th. anniversary!

Author: Idalia Aguilar
International Liaison

ONLINE
CLASSES



PARALLEL DESIGN

Parallel Design from our Handbook for Flower Shows, 2017, page 73, is defined as “A Creative design consisting of three (3) or more groupings of plant material and optional components with a strong parallel placement in a single container and/or base.



1. Multiple containers/bases may be used if combined so as to appear as one unit.
2. Parallel direction may be vertical, horizontal, or diagonal within the allotted space.
3. The overall effect must appear parallel. Groupings need not be equidistant from each other.
4. A connective/s may be used at the base of the design.

As an NGC Design Instructor and FTD Master Designer, I find the Parallel to be an especially interesting and pleasing design. It may be used in NGC flower shows, or for the home as a centerpiece. Because it MUST have space between the uprights, it is possible to “see” between these parallel lines, allowing folks seated at a dining table to see and talk to each other. This makes it popular with “regular” garden club members, not just judges.

Here are some tips:

- The Creative aspect of this design does limit what may be used to make the design but also helps to limit the fussiness of the design and the possibility of materials obscuring the space between the parallel lines.
- The requirement that the design be in a single container may be altered by using containers that match, placed together to appear to be a single unit. This will allow the design to have more depth. Diagonal designs often leave a big space at the top on one side, creating a problem with proportion. Horizontal ones could be made so that they don't have that proportion issue, but instead may appear to be flat with little depth. Space assigned to these designs must give enough freedom to the designer to be able to fit their design within the Frame of Reference. Sometimes parallels may be wider than another type of design and perhaps not as tall. Frame of Reference needs to be altered to accommodate this.
- Frequently I use either river cane or bamboo for the uprights, but other materials may be used as well, such as “party sticks,” sansevieria, snapdragons, liatris, or horsetail reed. I usually “bind” these materials with Oasis colored wire, but yarn or wrapped wire of any type would work as well. Binding is NOT mandatory. Whatever I've used for binding frequently reappears at the base with the connective.
- It is not necessary to only use three uprights. You MAY use more if your container will accommodate more. BUT, when using more, it is necessary to remember that one of the primary objectives is to have visual space between the parallel lines. NOTHING may cross over.
- Because it is “Creative,” I prefer to use materials that are either tropical or contemporary rather than heavily traditional materials such as roses. For a flower show, roses will work IF the design is entered and judged on the same day, for a one-day show. But if the design is to be in place for several days, the roses may open and obscure the line, causing the design to no longer meet the requirements of the Handbook. The same may be said of lilies. They start out tight but will take up a lot of space as they open. I find anthuriums to be a great choice with spike flowers, such as liatris or snapdragons, for the uprights.

CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE



PARALLEL DESIGN

(Continued)



Here are some tips: (Continued)

- At the base the designer may use whatever they wish that is allowed by the Handbook.
- Because most of these designs are done with Oasis, it is necessary to cover that Oasis with something. My preferences are pittosporum, other broad-leaf shrubs, or “Green Trick” dianthus, but certainly various mosses would work as well, combined with curled aspidistra. A combination of these materials will work also. Black Oasis helps to diminish the judge’s view of the Oasis.
- Exhibitors may use a connective at the base. Whatever they wish to use is OK so long as it stays at the base. Most often my choices include curled colored wires (that I’ve bound the uprights with) or even bear/lily grass placed around the base.
- Questions arise as to how high above the base these materials may be. My answer is that it depends on the size of the design itself. The base is obviously the “lowest” part of the design and shouldn’t reach more than a few inches above the container. Keeping the base low and even helps to emphasize the parallels and keep the design within the definition of the design type.
- The parallels do NOT need to be in a straight line but may be offset and not placed evenly. This adds more interest to the design and keeps it from being “flat” and not having any depth.
- Also, exactly the same materials do NOT need to be used in each parallel line, but instead they may be different. They should certainly “go together.”

How to include them in a schedule?

A Tricolor Award section in the Daylily Plant Society one-day show should follow these guidelines:

Design 1 - “Daylilies Marching in a Row”

- NGC parallel design to be placed within a space of 30”H x 36”W x 18”D. Daylilies must be used, and staging panel and underlay are required that match the size of the allotted space or Frame of Reference. All fresh materials - Tricolor Award. To be placed on a table covered in black by the committee. A 3” x 5” card listing plant materials is required.
- They could also be included in a Designer’s Choice Award Section with mixed fresh and/or dried materials.

Design 2 - “It’s Spring”

- An NGC parallel design to be placed within a Frame of Reference of 30”H x 36”W x 18”D, placed on a table covered in black fabric by the committee. May use fresh and/or dried materials- Designers’ Choice Award. A 3” x 5” card listing plant materials is required.
- This would be fun with daffodils, liatris, camellia leaves, and other spring materials.

Judging these designs would require the judge to know the definition of a parallel design and the requirements. Secondly, the judge should be aware of the possibility that not all the lines have to match in materials or in spacing. These same things should be considered when grading these designs for schools.

Author: Frances Thrash, Design Instructor

Frances Thrash is an NGC Design Instructor but has been "doing flowers" since she was a little girl. She currently lives in Virginia Beach, **Virginia**.



INVASIVE ANIMALS

Author: Tina Tuttle

Invasive animal species are non-native organisms that cause harm to the environment, economy, or human health in a new ecosystem where they have spread and established themselves. Their impacts can be devastating, contributing to the decline of native species, reducing biodiversity, and inflicting billions of dollars in economic and ecological damage annually. Let's go over some common invasive animals and their impacts.

Zebra and quagga mussels (*Dreissena* spp.)

- **Introduction:** Accidentally transported from Eastern Europe in the ballast water of ships to the Great Lakes in the 1980's.
- **Impact:** They have spread to other U.S. waterways, clogging water intake pipes, outcompeting native mussels, altering the food web by consuming plankton, and contributing to harmful algae blooms.
- **Related information:** <https://apple.news/A8BQNk4QOQ6CAQ-lvclAvPg>



Burmese python (*Python bivittatus*)

- **Introduction:** A popular exotic pet that became established in South Florida, primarily due to accidental or intentional releases.
- **Impact:** These large, voracious predators have led to severe declines in native mammal and bird populations in the Everglades and compete with native species like the indigo snake.



Feral swine (*Sus scrofa*)

- **Introduction:** Domesticated pigs were brought to the Americas by early colonists as a food source. Wild hogs are not native, but according to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission have been in the state for hundreds of years, possibly introduced by Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto around 1539.
- **Impact:** Feral swine cause extensive damage to crops, landscapes, and water sources through rooting behavior. They can also prey on native wildlife, spread diseases, and contribute to erosion.
- **Related information:** <https://apple.news/A8BQNk4QOQ6CAQ-lvclAvPg>



European starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*)

- **Introduction:** Brought to North America in the late 19th century and now found throughout the continental United States.
- **Impact:** Large flocks of these birds displace native species from nesting sites, compete with them for food, and are responsible for significant agricultural damage.



INVASIVE ANIMALS

Author: Tina Tuttle
(Continued)

Lionfish (*Pterois* spp.)

- **Introduction:** Released from the exotic pet trade, these venomous marine fish have established self-sustaining populations along the U.S. eastern seaboard and in the Gulf of America.
- **Impact:** Lionfish are aggressive predators that devour juvenile reef fish, outcompete native species for food, and pose a threat to commercial fisheries.



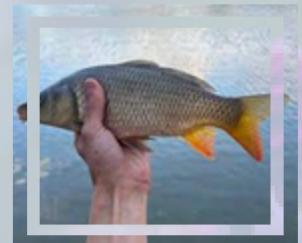
Domestic cats (*Felis catus*)

- **Introduction:** The ancestors of domestic cats originated in Eurasia and were brought to the Americas by settlers. Feral cat colonies now exist worldwide.
- **Impact:** Free-roaming and feral cats are highly destructive predators, responsible for killing billions of birds and small mammals annually. They also transmit diseases to other animals.



Asian carp (*Cyprinidae* spp.)

- **Introduction:** Imported in the 1970's to filter pond water on fish farms in Arkansas, they escaped and spread to the Mississippi and Illinois River systems.
- **Impact:** These large, voracious filter feeders can outcompete native fish for plankton, drastically altering aquatic ecosystems. One species, the silver carp, is known for leaping out of the water and injuring boaters.



Brown marmorated stink bug (*Halyomorpha*)

- **Introduction:** Discovered in Pennsylvania in the late 1990's, likely arriving from Asia as a stowaway.
- **Impact:** In the absence of natural predators, its population has exploded. This insect has become a significant agricultural pest that feeds on a wide variety of crops and is a major nuisance to homeowners when it seeks shelter in the fall.



Invasive animals cause harm in a variety of ways, negatively affecting both ecosystems and human activities.

Author: Tina Tuttle, *Invasives Chair*



Acres of Hope Community Services Project,
Auburn Garden Club, CA



Edmonton, OK Police Department Landscape Beautification,
Amaryllis Garden Club, OK



Therapy Garden Project, Willow River Garden Club, WI



TOOL GRANT PROGRAM

AMES proudly sponsors the National Garden Clubs' Tools Grant Program since 2014. AMES provides tools for grant winners to support local community gardening projects.

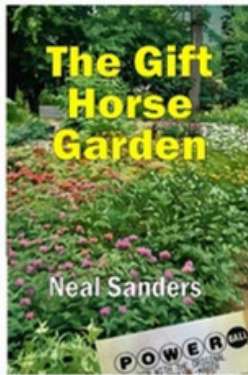
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A horticultural talk unlike any you've ever heard. Horticultural mysteries that will keep you guessing.

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.



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.*



Congratulations to the 2026 AMES Tools Grant Winners

AMES Tools and NGC are pleased to announce that the following 22 NGC clubs have won a total of \$4999.62 worth of tools in the 2026 AMES Tools Grant period! THANK YOU, AMES Tools! And THANK YOU to all the clubs who are beautifying, educating and helping feed their communities!

- Connecticut - Green Farms Garden Club
- Connecticut - Quiet Corner Garden Club
- Georgia - English Laurel Garden Club
- Georgia - Magnolia Garden Club
- Florida - Garden Club of Fleming Island
- Florida - Old Fashioned Circle/Tampa Garden Club
- New Hampshire - Bow Garden Club
- Illinois - Anna-Jo Garden Club
- Kentucky - Gateway Garden Club
- Massachusetts - Garden Club of Norfolk
- Massachusetts - Haverhill Garden Club
- Michigan - Touch the Earth Garden Club
- Michigan - Periwinkle Garden Club of Frankfort
- Mississippi - Laurel Garden Club
- Mississippi - River of Pearls Garden Club
- New Jersey - Mt. Laurel Garden Club
- New Mexico - Lincoln County Garden Club
- New York - Orchard Park Garden Club
- Oklahoma - Chouteau Garden Club
- South Carolina - Pickens Garden Club
- Texas - Arp Garden Club Texas
- Virginia - Quantico Spouses Garden Club

Author: Debi Harrington, NGC Sponsors' Grants Chair



COOL ONLINE TOOLS

Author: Victoria Schmidt
TNG Editor-in-Chief

Here's a detailed list of useful online tools and apps for gardeners—the kinds many experienced gardeners, landscape designers, and garden clubs can use for planning. I grouped them by purpose so you can quickly find the right type of tool.



Sun, Shade, and Light Analysis

These tools help determine sun exposure and shadow patterns, which is critical when deciding where to place flower or vegetable beds, trees, or shade plants.

- **SunCalc:** Sunrise, sunset, shadow length, solar eclipse, sun position, sun phase, sun height, sun calculator, sun movement, map, sunlight phases, elevation, and photovoltaic systems. (<https://www.suncalc.org>)
- **Shadowmap:** A web-based 3D tool that shows sunlight and shadows for any location, date, and time of day. Helps visualize how buildings, trees, and terrain affect light in your yard. (shadowmap.org)
- **Coffee in the Sun:** An app that maps how shadows move across your property through the day so you can identify full-sun, partial-sun, and shaded areas quickly. (<https://coffeeinthesun.app/use-cases/gardeners>)
- **Sunscape Maps:** A detailed mapping tool that generates color-coded sun-exposure maps for different seasons to guide plant placement and landscape design. (<https://www.ecoscape.app/sunscape-maps?>)
- **GarDsign Garden Design Software:** A sun and shade simulation within a garden design program so gardeners can visualize how light changes across their design. (<https://www.gardsign.com/en/zon-en-schaduw-simulatie/>)

Garden Planning and Layout Tools

These tools help design beds, plan spacing, and organize crops or ornamentals.



- **Embracing Harvest Virtual Garden Planner:** Design layouts, track planting schedules, and plan crop spacing and quantities. (<https://embracingharvest.com/garden-planner/>)
- **GardenCalc:** Calendars for seed-starting, companion planting, soil amendments, spacing, and harvest timing. (<https://gardencalc.app/>)
- **Online Garden Planner:** (<https://gardenplanner.almanac.com>)
- **Free Garden Layouts & Plans Library:** (<https://www.almanac.com/free-garden-layouts-plans-library>)

Commonly used planning tools:

- **GrowVeg Garden Planner:** A popular drag-and-drop garden design tool that helps gardeners map beds, plan crop rotations, and schedule plantings. **Note:** this App does have a cost after the free trial. (<https://www.growveg.com/garden-planner-intro.aspx>)
- **Smart Gardener:** A web and mobile garden-planning app that helps design, plan, and manage edible gardens. It combines a vegetable-garden layout tool with personalized crop recommendations, scheduling, and task management based on location and preferences. (<https://www.smartgardener.com>)
- **Planter:** Planter is a mobile garden-planning app focused on visual, square-foot style layouts for veggie gardens. It helps design beds, choose crops, and time plantings using simple drag-and-drop tools, plant databases, and basic scheduling features. (<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/planter-garden-planner/>)



COOL ONLINE TOOLS

Author: Victoria Schmidt
TNG Editor-in-Chief (Continued)



Seasonal and Climate Tools

These help gardeners determine planting windows and climate timing.

- **Persephone Period**: A concept used by vegetable gardeners describing the time when daylight drops below 10 hours; plant growth slows dramatically during this period.
- **USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map**: Helps determine which plants are suited for a location.

Timing & Planning tools, Planting Calendars, and Crop Planning

Tools that generate planting schedules based on frost dates and location. These tools can automatically calculate when to start seeds indoors, transplant, and harvest.

- **Almanac Garden Planner**: [Online Garden Planner](#)
- **Seedtime & Gardenate**
- **Planting Calendar**
- **Frost Date Calculator**
- **Monthly Gardening To-Do List**
- **When to Prune Lookup Tool**



Soil and Garden Calculators

Helpful for improving soil and estimating garden inputs. Many are available through tools like [GardenCal](#), which includes calculators for soil amendments, spacing, and harvest timing.

- **Mulch Calculator**
- **Soil Calculator**
- **Topsoil Calculator**
- **Vegetable Container Size Tool**



Tip: Combining several tools works best—use a sun-mapping tool to understand your light conditions, a planner to design the garden layout, and a calendar tool to schedule planting dates.

- **USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map**: <https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/>
- **Farmers Almanac Frost Dates**: <https://www.almanac.com/gardening/frostdates>
- **First & Last frost Dates by zip code**: <https://garden.org/apps/frost-dates>
- **Weather Spark Climate and Average Weather**: <https://weatherspark.com>
- **Latitude and Longitude Finder**: <https://www.latlong.net/>
- **Determine Daylengths**: <https://www.timeanddate.com/sun/>
- **Plant Problem ID Tool**: <https://www.almanac.com/tool/diagnose-plant-pests-and-diseases>

Planting & Pairing Tools

- **Companion Plant Lookup Tool**: <https://www.almanac.com/companion-planting-guide-vegetables>



Gardens to Tour

Let's look at a few noteworthy gardens in the western United States. Western U.S.A. is a study in contrasts—desert and rainforest, alpine meadow and coastal bluffs—and its gardens reflect that dramatic range. From sculpted botanical collections to wild, regionally inspired landscapes, these gardens highlight how plants adapt and thrive across the West's varied climates.

DENVER BOTANIC GARDENS: DENVER, COLORADO

Set against the backdrop of the Rocky Mountains, Denver Botanic Gardens celebrates high-altitude and arid-region plants with striking clarity. From its carefully curated xeriscape gardens to Steppe gardens, concerts, and stunning seasonal displays bring vibrant color to the Mile High City from spring tulips to winter holiday light displays. DBG also performs horticultural research locally and abroad.

DESERT BOTANICAL GARDEN: PHOENIX, ARIZONA

In the heart of Phoenix, this garden transforms perceptions of desert landscapes. Towering saguaros, sculptural agaves, and brilliant wildflowers reveal the diversity of the Sonoran Desert. Evening visits are especially magical, when golden light softens the cacti and the air cools enough for a leisurely stroll.

HUNTINGTON BOTANICAL GARDENS: SAN MARINO, CA

Part of a larger cultural estate in San Marino, the Huntington's gardens span more than 100 acres and move seamlessly from a tranquil Japanese Garden to a dramatic Desert Garden filled with rare succulents. The Rose Garden remains a perennial favorite, blending classic design with Southern California's near-perfect growing conditions.

PORTLAND JAPANESE GARDEN: PORTLAND, OREGON

Often considered one of the most authentic Japanese gardens outside Japan, this hillside retreat offers carefully composed views, moss-covered paths, and serene water features. Framed by towering evergreens and misty Northwest skies, it embodies the quiet artistry that defines traditional Japanese landscape design.

WASHINGTON PARK ARBORETUM: SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

Managed in partnership with the University of Washington, this expansive arboretum showcases plants from temperate regions around the world. Spring brings an explosion of cherry blossoms and rhododendrons, while autumn colors reflect beautifully in the waters of Lake Washington.

SUMMARY

These gardens demonstrate the ingenuity and diversity of Western horticulture—places where climate challenges inspire creativity, and where visitors can experience the West's landscapes in all of its beautiful forms.

AUTHOR: VICTORIA SCHMIDT, TNG EDITOR



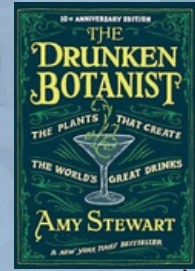
THE DRUNKEN BOTANIST

Book Review: The Drunken Botanist

Author: Amy Stewart / **Reviewer:** Regina Doherty

I was asked by a friend to create a presentation on botanicals and alcohol.

As strange a request as this was, I considered it a challenge. I found two books on such a subject, and this was the first one I read. Yes, I READ this cover to cover because it was very fascinating and educational! I took plenty of notes (for my future gardening) and summarized them below.



Broken into three parts, Fermentation & Distillery, Suffuse Creations with Botanicals, and Using Herbs in Cocktails, the author brings us through the history, origin country(s), and relevant information for each botanical and the spirit it is used in. I enjoyed the enlightening and interesting anecdotes added as well. I found the following very interesting:

- **Grains:** They convert starch back into sugar into alcohol. The brown color is from beer caramel – uses ammonium compounds. Spirit caramel doesn't use ammoniums.
- **Potatoes:** Different types have different starch levels, but no flavor difference to alcohol.
- **Rice:** Varieties DO give different tastes depending on how polishing is done to produce the kernel. Kernels are then soaked in water & get koji mold which gives flavor & potency.
- **Rye:** George Washington had a 1797 distillery. Whiskey is a blend: 60% rye + 35% corn + 5% barley then stored/fermented in barrels. It is called Common Whiskey. Rye gets ergot fungus – spores that attack flowers and the plant gets dark growths. Then it becomes toxic to people – like LSD. It is rinsed in a salt solution to remove fungus. It may have been the cause of the Salem Witch trials' hysteria and Middle Ages' "St. Anthony's fire."
- **Sugarcane:** Sugarcane was reported to have led to slavery in Americas due to back-breaking work to harvest. Sugarcane is used to make molasses into rum.
- **Sailor's Grog:** Made of rum + water + lime + sugar. It helped fight scurvy & was part of their pay. Sailors demanded proof of alcohol content. So, the steward would add gunpowder to a cup and light it. If it was 57%+ alcohol, it would ignite and be "proof."

The first section relates to:

- How the fermentation process with each plant works to produce sugars into alcohol
- How to grow & harvest plants for alcohol
- Recipes – some dating back thousands of years
- "Field guides" for types of alcohol derived from each plant
- Bugs in booze (they claim to enhance flavors)
- How the classic botanicals are used with alcohol

The second section discusses how to suffuse various botanicals, herbs/spices, flowers, trees, fruit, and nuts/seeds with different alcohols. The final section actually brings you into a garden of your own making in order to add flavor to your favorite cocktails and spirits.

Author: Regina Doherty grew up in a backyard gardening family and inherited her passion for gardening from her father. She's a Master Gardener in NJ and FL, an NGC Landscape Design Consultant, and a former IT professional, trainer, and teacher. She loves sharing her knowledge and creating presentations tailored to learners' interests.



Brazil National Floral Show & NGC Affiliates

Last fall, I felt humbled to be invited to attend the greatest flower show in Latin America. I visited the wholesale flower fields and also had the privilege to meet NGC affiliates in Brazil.



ExpoFlora in Holambra, Brazil

The name **Holambra** is derived from the words **Holland-America-Brazil** and is a municipality in the state of São Paulo in Brazil.



Brazil's Holambra region is often called "**Little Holland**" because it's home to a vibrant community of Dutch settlers who have brought their traditions, passion for gardening, and culinary influences on the area.

ExpoFlora is considered the largest flower fair in Latin America which includes gastronomy, Dutch culture, and attractions for all ages.

More than 30,000 people attended this flower show.



More than 4,000 varieties of ornamental and flowering plants were showcased, along with floral inspired gastronomy.



CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE



Brazil National Floral Show & NGC Affiliates (Continued)



Tour

The tour of the 133 acres of flower fields was breathtaking! It is comprised of a system of rotational planting to yield a continuous supply of flowers throughout the year for worldwide retailers. Also, I was impressed by their live online auction for flowers onsite.

They have an **extensive irrigation** system with a huge rainwater catchment basin that pumps water to the flower fields.



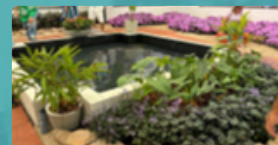
The Flower Arrangement Exhibition

had stunning, extensive themed floral installments-transforming flowers into works of art.

The **Magic Garden Tour** included a display of breathtaking themed garden rooms.



The **Flower Parade** featured floats decorated with flowers and music and characters from the fair.



Typical **Holland Dance** performances further deepen the bond between Holland and Brazil.



CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE



Brazil National Floral Show & NGC Affiliates (Continued)

Meeting with NGC Affiliates in Brazil

- **Sandy Mangels:** (Host) NGC accredited master judge, FSS and Credentials Chair for Brazil, NGC Board as a member of the Vision of Beauty Calendar Committee, member of the Sao Paulo Garden Club, Member SP FS Judges Council.
- **Jolly Sinha** (guest)
- **Marie Kaufmann:** NGC accredited life judge, Vice-Chair of Clube Paulista de Jardinagem, member of SP Garden Club, Member SP FS Judges Council.
- **Sonia Merkel:** NGC accredited life judge, member of SP Garden Club, official translator of the NGC Handbook for Flowers, Shows - from English to Portuguese.
- **Maralice Higgins:** Vice Chair member of São Paulo Garden Club.
- **Lynden Bohlen:** Member São Paulo Garden Club, Design Division Chair for the Annual Joint Flower Show of the two clubs in Brazil.



Members unable to attend:

- **Regina Bicudo:** NGC accredited life judge, Chairman of Clube Paulista de Jardinagem, member of São Paulo Garden Club, SP FS Judges Council, chairman of annual FS.
- **Malu Toledo:** accredited life judge, Chairman SP Garden Club, member SP FS Judges Council.

NGC affiliated garden clubs in Brazil

- **The São Paulo Garden Club** has 48 members divided between 4 working groups. The club was founded in 1939 by ladies from England, New Zealand and South Africa living as ex-pats in São Paulo. This club used to operate in English but has gradually transitioned to Portuguese since 1982.
- **Clube Paulista de Jardinagem** has nearly double the members of São Paulo garden clubs, and also divided into working groups. This club was founded in 1970's by Brazilians. This club celebrated their 50th Annual Flower Show in 2024.
- **Jaguarão Garden Club** is down south. They have about 30 members as well as an active Junior Gardening Group. This club is on the border of Uruguay.
- **S. Paulo Flower Show Judges Council.** The Judges Council has 23 members, 20 of whom are still active.

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Brazil National Floral Show & NGC Affiliates (Continued)

Highlights of NGC clubs in Brazil

- The Handbook for Flower Shows is officially translated into Portuguese with NGC's blessing.
- Refreshers are now virtual.
- The first class of accredited judges was trained in the seventies by NGC instructors from the U.S.
- Today Latin America enjoys a group of talented Spanish-speaking Flower Show Schools instructors. The last group of judges in Brazil were trained in Spanish.
- The rest of Latin America uses the Handbook translated into Spanish.
- The clubs in Latin America have banded together to form a group called COMAAI, Committee for International Affiliate Activities.
- COMAAI has a website in Spanish <http://www.comaa.org>.
- COMAAI just put on a virtual convention complete with virtual tours, refreshers for the various educational schools and an extensive virtual flower show with the online events taking place throughout this year. COMAAI also sponsors regular virtual presentations from the various countries with topics ranging from horticulture, design, botanical arts, and other topics related to NGC objectives, such as landscaping and ecology.



Challenges for garden clubs in Brazil

Just like NGC anywhere else in the USA, Brazil faces similar challenges of attracting and retaining members.

- Their clubs have an older demographic, leading to concerns about sustainability and generational gaps.
- Their apprehension is related to lifestyle changes - interest in gardening is being replaced by other hobbies.
- They fear changes in the economy and its potential impact on donations and membership fees, thus limiting resources for club initiatives.

Hopefully, NGC will come up with innovative initiatives to help garden clubs to thrive and survive into the future!

Author: Jolly Sinha, Brentwood, TN





President's Welcome Message

My president's projects will include celebrating **America's 250th Birthday** with *Red, White & Blue Gardens!* 



"PLANT AMERICA for the Next 100 Years" is proud to support our nation's youth gardeners! 2026 marks America's 250th birthday, and what better way to celebrate than by helping the next generation grow, both in the garden and in their communities?

We're encouraging **NGC-Affiliated Youth Clubs** to plant patriotic gardens in red, white, and blue to honor this historic milestone. Whether it's a school garden, a community space, or even container gardens, young gardeners can show their love for our country through creative and colorful planting.

Calling all future Youth Club Leaders!

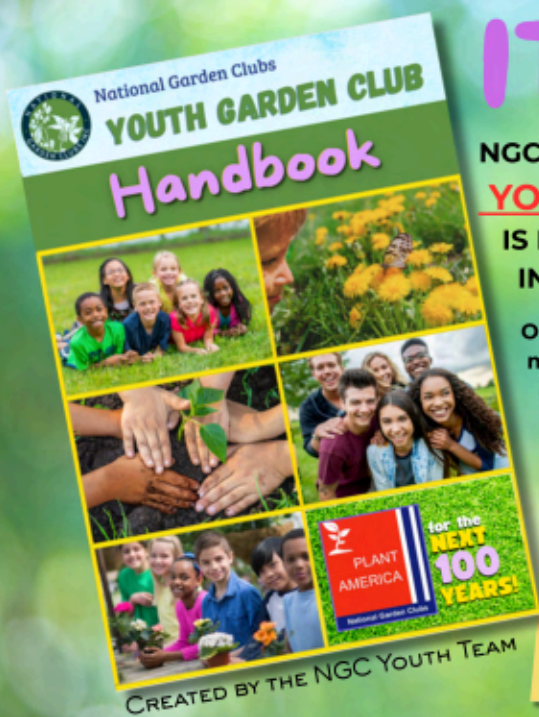
Join the movement and inspire youth across the nation to get their hands in the soil and their hearts in service. Help us share the message and cultivate pride, sustainability, and celebration through gardening.

Let's **PLANT AMERICA for the Next 100 Years** - starting with the youth of today.

Donna Donnelly

**President,
National Garden Clubs, Inc.**






IT'S HERE!!!

NGC'S FIRST FULLY UPDATED
YOUTH GARDEN CLUB HANDBOOK
 IS NOW AVAILABLE ON OUR WEBSITE
 IN BOTH DIGITAL & PRINTABLE FORMATS!

Our NEW handbook is designed to make it easier and more enjoyable than ever to form, fund, and lead your own NGC-Affiliated Youth Club.





Mr. Bob the Gardener
 bob@mrbobthegardener.com
 732.259.8642 call/text

FOUNDER-DIRECTOR
 Mr. Bob's GARDEN FOUNDATION FOR YMCA CAMPERS
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NGC News

- NGC Events list on the NGC Website: <https://gardenclub.org/events>



APRIL

- April is the National Garden Club's **PLANT AMERICA MONTH**
- PLANT AMERICA in red, white, and blue! Plant your gardens, towns, cities, and states in vibrant patriotic colors as we celebrate America's 250th birthday!
- Together, let's create the most breathtaking July 4th display of red, white, and blue our nation has ever seen. Join us in making this the most unforgettable floral celebration in our nation's history!
- April is also: National Native Plant Month, National Garlic Month, and Earth Month.
- April 13- Plant Appreciation Month
- April 14- National Gardening Month
- April 19- Plant Appreciation Day
- April 22- Earth Day
- April 24- Arbor Day



MAY

- **NGC Convention** (May 4-6, 2026) in St. Louis, Missouri
 - We invite you to join us in St. Louis for the NGC 95th Convention. Please visit the NGC website for registration information and a tentative schedule highlighting the many programs and activities planned.
- Nominating Committee will meet at the 2026 Convention in St. Louis on May 4th.

GENERAL

- The *TNG en Español* is on hold. We need more volunteer translators.
- See our [NGC Blog News & Updates](#)
- Check out our latest [Plant-A-Tree](#) Information on the NGC website.
- Membership Mondays: Dates TBD
- AMES Grant Applications accepted from January 1 through March 1 each year
- Espoma Grant Applications accepted from October 1 through May 31 each year
- [Scholarships](#) deadline: 1 February each year

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.



SPRING INTO THE SEASON: SMART TIPS FOR A STRONG START

Author: Victoria Schmidt

Spring is every gardener's favorite fresh beginning—a season of possibility tucked into every packet of seeds and nursery flat. But a successful spring garden starts with thoughtful preparation. Begin by assessing your soil. Clear away winter debris, loosen compacted areas, and incorporate compost to restore nutrients and improve structure. Healthy soil sets the stage for everything that follows.



Next, plant with intention. Pay attention to your region's last frost date, choose varieties suited to your climate, and stagger plantings of vegetables and annuals to extend the harvest and bloom season. Early crops like lettuce, peas, and cool-season flowers go in first, while warm-season favorites wait for consistently mild nights.

Don't overlook maintenance basics. Sharpen and clean tools, inspect irrigation systems, and apply mulch once the soil warms to retain moisture and suppress weeds. Finally, take time to observe. Spring weather can be unpredictable, and attentive gardeners adjust quickly—protecting tender plants from late frosts or providing support as growth accelerates. With preparation, patience, and a willingness to adapt, spring becomes more than a season—it becomes the foundation for a thriving garden all year long.

- Clear out winter debris, dead annuals, and spent vegetable plants
- Cut back perennials and ornamental grasses before new growth takes off
- Test and amend soil with compost or other needed nutrients
- Edge and redefine garden beds for a clean, fresh look
- Divide overcrowded perennials
- Prune shrubs and roses (according to bloom type)
- Check irrigation systems for leaks, clogs, or broken emitters
- Sharpen, clean, and oil garden tools
- Start seeds indoors or direct sow cool-season crops
- Transplant hardy annuals and vegetables after danger of frost
- Apply a fresh layer of mulch once soil has warmed
- Fertilize lawns, trees, shrubs, and garden beds as needed
- Scout early for pests and diseases
- Plan succession planting to extend harvests and blooms
- Refresh containers with new potting mix and spring color

Author: Victoria Schmidt
TNG Editor-in-Chief



BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

Author: Regina Doherty

What better way to build community than to bring generations of people together on a local beautification project? That's exactly what Lakes & Hills Garden Club (LHGC) of Mount Dora, FL, did to redesign an overcrowded park into a neighborhood gathering area.

Blair Park, a pocket-park in Mount Dora (GPS: [28.8090094](#), [-81.6562291](#)) located between Sylvan and Oakland Drives across from Lake Gertrude, was originally adopted by the Azalea Circle with the goal of beautifying it using bromeliads donated by members. It was dedicated as Blair Park, after an LHGC member's family in Feb. 2012.

In April 2025, a large live oak tree (*Quercus virginiana*) was removed, resulting in the shade-loving plants under it (like bromeliads) being scorched and wilting. After a decision was made in partnership with the City of Mount Dora's Parks & Recreation to give the entire park a redesign, the remaining live oaks and a Sabal palm were also removed by the end of summer. We aided the city in the removal of all remaining growth, and then they prepared the site for a fresh start.

LHGC Park Committee Chair, Betsy Rice, collaborated with the committee members and the Sylvan Park neighbors to create a new landscape design with the assistance from one of LHGC's NGC Landscape Consultants Regina Doherty. We identified a plant list consisting of Florida natives, pollinators, and colorful shrubs, and then began making plans for workdays.

In the meantime, two storm events in Fall 2024, the 14"+ deluge of rainfall in Oct. 2025, and record freezes in early 2026 all delayed the makeover until now. In Jan. 2026, the park sign was relocated to a better vantage point for traffic. A crape myrtle 'Natchez' (*Lagerstroemia Natchez*) was planted near the site of a newly constructed 10'x10' pergola. The city even rebuilt the original dedication bench in addition to laying sod around the park edges to prevent erosion from stormwater run-off.



2012 Dedication plaque on Blair Park bench

Since, we've revised our plant list (see next page) due to nurseries getting hit by the low temperatures.

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BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

Author: Regina Doherty (Continued)

We also partnered with our local Scouts BSA troops #277 & #4277, as part of an Eagle Scout Leadership project, to assist with the installation of the mulch, sod, plants, and stepping stones, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1255691229945820>.

March 7th was the date set to commence work. First, the LHGC members educated the Scouts so they were familiar with how to read the design, how to plant, where to plant, and the correct order of operations. We then stood back while Scout Joey G. led the team using the knowledge he gained to oversee the nine Scouts from his troops.

In attendance there were 10 Eagle Scouts (& 5 adults), City Horticulturist Bob Austen, and LHGC members: Betsy R., Elaine S., Linda D., Kim V. and the author.

We began instructing the volunteers to follow the design by laying out the plants in the spots they'd be planted. While that was underway, others began digging shallow trenches for the mulch pathway edging and unloading the city truck of sod and mulch bags. The Scouts worked hard, stayed engaged, and took needed breaks for hydration and rest. After the plants were in the ground, the sod installed, and the pathway edging was nearly complete, it was time for a pizza lunch with Gatorade. Afterward, they completed the pathway with red mulch along with black mulch over the rest of the landscape.

We're so pleased with the outcome we've already begun exploring other Scout engagement opportunities in the near future. Things are looking up! Stay tuned...



Before photos. After photos, <https://www.facebook.com/LHGCmountdora>

CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE



BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

Author: Regina Doherty (Continued)

This first phase of the project was a labor of persistence and love of gardening and our environment.



Lakes & Hills Garden Club meets monthly, Oct-May, the second Tuesday of the month. Go to our website, <https://www.lakesandhillsgardenclub.com/> for more information!

SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON
<i>Galliardia pulchella</i>	BLANKET TOWER
<i>Monarda punctata</i>	SPOTTED BEEBALM
<i>Pentas lanceolata</i>	PENTAS
<i>Melantnera nivea</i>	SNOW SQUARESTEM
<i>Udantonema strictum</i>	FIRESPIKE
<i>Gardenia vecni</i>	GARDENIA
<i>Lantana involucrata</i>	LANTANA
<i>Micanthus sinensis</i>	SILVERGRASS
<i>Myrcianthese fragans 'Geode'</i>	SIMPSON STOPPER
<i>Vitex spp</i>	CNASTE TREE
<i>Portulaca pilosa</i>	KISS-ME-QUICK
<i>Lonicera sempervirens</i>	CORAL NONEYSUCKLE

Author: Regina Doherty

Reggie's love of gardening began in her family's backyard, learning from her father and forming a lifelong bond with plants. Now a Master Gardener in New Jersey and Florida and an NGC Landscape Design Consultant, she draws on her IT and teaching background to create welcoming, skill-building presentations for all learners.



PLANT AMERICA: NATIVE PLANTS FOR WILDLIFE

Author: Barbara Campbell

There is a symbiotic relationship between native plants and the wildlife they support. This article is about a specific wildlife problem and native plants. Many people enjoy watching deer. Others try many ways to keep them out of their gardens and property.



I was fortunate enough to hear Doug Tallamy lecture this past month. He ended his talk with a brief statement that deer are endangering native species. He stated that the overpopulation of deer is killing off our native plants, which helps invasive plants thrive. We should begin to think of protocols to control the population. Some will say they were here before us. Yes, but we have eliminated most of their predators.

I live two miles from the Mohonk Mountain House, a national historic hotel in Florida. Many NGC members visited the hotel on a recent bus tour. In the 1880's, the hotel had a paddock on site so guests could see what a deer looked like. Today, you cannot drive or walk Mohonk's 10,000 acres without seeing many deer.

Recently in Florida, there was an incident at North Palm Beach Airport where a small jet was taking off and hit a herd of deer. Luckily, the plane was able to do an emergency landing at Palm Beach International Airport a few miles away and no one was injured.

As of February 2026, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife approved a plan to eradicate the entire population of approximately 2000 deer on Catalina Island in California. These deer were introduced in the 1920's for hunting. The deer are accused of destroying native vegetation and preventing ecosystem recovery.

In New York State, some municipalities like Ithaca and Syracuse have voted to cull the herd. This is in the hope that accidents will be cut down and damage lessened. Purdue University statistics state that deer cause 1.5 million vehicle accidents each year with over 1 billion dollars in damages. The out-of-balance deer population impacts agriculture. Rutgers University in New Jersey reports very troubling statistics with millions in crop losses. There are more troubling statistics in a paper titled, "Assessment of Negative Economic Impacts from Deer in the Northeastern United States" authored by Rutgers extension experts. As stewards of the land, this is something we need to think about.

Author: Barbara Campbell
Chairman, Plant America, Native Plants for Wildlife



A GARDEN LEGACY IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL: NCAGC CELEBRATES 75 YEARS

Author: Danielle Brabazon

In the heart of the USA's capital region, a unique gardening organization defies the typical state-by-state structure that defines most of the horticultural world. In 1951, the National Capital Area Garden Clubs (NCAGC) cultivated something rare: a cross-jurisdiction community where garden enthusiasts from Washington, DC, Virginia, and Maryland unite under a shared passion for plants, education, and beauty.



A Post-War Vision Takes Root

Picture 1951: America is finding its footing after World War II, suburbs are blooming, and civic engagement is flourishing. That year 42 garden clubs and 12 passionate individuals came together to form something unprecedented—the National Capital Area Garden Club League. Their mission, as bold then as it remains today, centered on three pillars: advancing flower shows, coordinating regional garden interests, and serving as an information clearinghouse for horticultural knowledge.

The organization's geographical footprint tells its own fascinating story. When neighboring Federated Garden Clubs of Virginia and Maryland negotiated boundaries with NCAGC, they turned to an unlikely arbiter: the Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company's Metropolitan Washington, DC, phone book. What once defined who could make a local call now defines who could join this distinguished gardening community.

An Arboretum Romance

Since 1956, NCAGC has called the United States National Arboretum home—a partnership honoring decades of member service through the Volunteer Guide Program. This relationship deepened in 1959 when members led the development of Fern Valley, a stunning 3.5-acre showcase of native plants that continues to educate and inspire visitors today.

Three decades later, in 1989, NGC inspired the creation of Friendship Garden, where benches representing NGC's various regions invite contemplation among the blooms. It's a living testament to collaboration across regional lines.

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A GARDEN LEGACY IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL: NCAGC CELEBRATES 75 YEARS

Author: Danielle Brabazon (Continued)

Celebrating Diamond Excellence

To commemorate this special 75th anniversary, NCAGC is doing what it does best—combining beauty with purpose. Members will soon have access to exclusive commemorative pieces: an elegantly designed scarf and a ceramic floral frog (that essential tool every serious flower arranger treasures). We will gather, starting in the spring with our Awards Recognition Meeting and Design Program, a celebratory community and leadership luncheon in June, followed by a spectacular flower show at the National Arboretum in September.



Our organization takes particular pride in our educational legacy, having offered all NGC Schools over the decades. In a fitting final flourish, NCAGC hosted the last-ever Flower Show School Course V.

Regional Pride, National Impact

As part of the Central Atlantic Region, NCAGC proudly claims our connection to NGC's 42nd President, Shirley Nicolai -- a reminder that this geographically small organization's influence extends far beyond the Capital Beltway. From telephone books to flower shows, from Fern Valley to Friendship Garden, NCAGC's 75-year journey reflects something beautifully American: the power of community to transcend boundaries, nurture growth, and cultivate lasting beauty.

Here's to another 75 years!



REGION NEWS



Pacific Region: Firewise

When I was OSFGC President, all of Oregon seemed to be on fire during the Labor Day fires in 2020. After that we started the Promise Trees project: giving out \$50 vouchers for trees or shrubs to people who rebuilt their homes. We added fires that occurred later and with permission from the OSFGC board have extended the deadline to December 31st, 2030.

When I became Pacific Region Director in 2025, “Firewise Communities” as my special project was a natural progression from helping after the fire to helping before a fire. I was so lucky that Susan Piper, one of Oregon’s district directors, offered to organize a series of one-hour webinars dealing with anything that will help you to be prepared before a fire.

Susan herself went through a horrific fire in Oakland some 30 years ago. Ever since then she has been involved with Firewise Communities at all levels. Therefore, she knew all the right people to ask for the five different webinars. All were experts in their field!

You will have to register for each webinar. Each one will be held on the second Monday of the month at 2 p.m. (Pacific Time). Some of the webinars will have been passed by the time you read this, but each webinar will be posted on the Pacific Region website:

<https://pacificregiongardenclubs.com/>

- **February 9:** Firewise Landscaping.
- **March 9:** Making Your Home Fire Resistant.
- **April 13:** Insurance Matters: Understanding and Renewing Your Insurance.
- **August 10:** Personal and Family Preparedness Before a Disaster.
- **September 14:** Organizing Your Neighbors (Firewise Communities).

A lot of these subjects are not only informative before a fire, but for any disaster! I hope you’ll take advantage of this opportunity!

Tanja Swanson
Pacific Region Director
2025-2027



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>*



Membership Tips

Get Them Involved (and Coming Back)



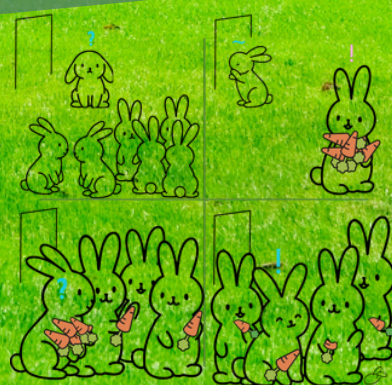
There's an interesting phenomenon that happens when a new member walks into a meeting. They get greeted; they get a name tag; and then they get ignored. It's not just garden clubs – civic groups, craft groups, hobby groups, even corporate groups, all tend to group into the people who know each other and the people who are new.

Established members are there to reconnect with friends they haven't seen in a month or so, and many of us get so caught up in getting caught up, that we unconsciously exclude the fresh faces from our conversation, thinking, "someone else will talk to them; I just need to find out how X is doing." Suddenly, when you look around, that new face has disappeared. They took a big step and walked into the meeting, but unless they have a reason to stay, they will walk out and find another club to join or activity to do.

To break this cycle, ask the new person to help. Is there something in your car that they could carry in for you? Could they bring a plate of cookies to the next meeting? Do they have an hour to do some weeding with you at the garden your club takes care of? We all love to feel needed.

It's so important to talk to the friends you have at garden club. They are likely the reason you are there. You can be the reason that someone else is there.

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



NGC Reports

National Garden Clubs (NGC) Life Membership

It is my pleasure to serve as the NGC Life Membership Chair for the term of 2025-2027. National Garden Clubs Life Membership has been an integral part of our organization for over 50 years. I follow a long line of dedicated committee chairs who have worked diligently to increase memberships in every state and our International Affiliates.



NGC LIFE MEMBERS DO MAKE A DIFFERENCE – These are dedicated members and individuals who strive to maintain and encourage NGC’s goals, programs and projects.

A donation of \$200.00 supports two long-term and continuing NGC funds:

- The PLANT AMERICA COMMUNITY GRANTS Fund
- The Permanent Home and Endowment Fund

I personally want to encourage you to become a valued National Garden Clubs (NGC) Life Member. You can also give a gift membership to honor an individual who has shown outstanding leadership and support for your garden club’s programs and projects in the community.

A membership could be presented to individuals in your community who share your passion for horticulture, design, environmental programs, and projects that are offered through National Garden Clubs. A Life Member does not have to be a garden club member.

All new Life Members in attendance at National Garden Clubs Convention are recognized. Applications are available on the NGC website under Member Resources. Please follow the directions listed for submission with a check. My contact information for questions is Betty Cookendorfer, 513-616-4492 or bcooken@aol.com.

Author: Betty Cookendorfer, Life Membership Chair



www.gardenclub.org



NGC Reports



Blue Star and Gold Star Families Memorial Marker Program Planting Patriotism: A call to all Garden Clubs to honor our Blue Star and Gold Star Families

Across America, garden clubs have long been the quiet stewards of beauty, remembrance, and community pride. From courthouse lawns to national parks, city parks, and botanical gardens, from national cemeteries to colleges and universities, our gardens tell stories - stories of hope, sacrifice and love of country.



As we look ahead to the historic milestone of our nation's 250th anniversary in 2026, we have the privilege to honor the service and sacrifice of our military in a powerful and visible way. In light of this momentous occasion, National Garden Clubs is urging every state to join in a unified, patriotic beautification initiative. We are encouraging each state president and each Blue Star and Gold Star Families state chair to support the planting of red, white, and blue flowers around every Blue Star and/or Gold Star Families Memorial Markers within your jurisdiction.

The Blue Star and Gold Star Families Memorial Marker Programs stand as living memorials honoring those who have served in the United States Armed Forces - and their families who support them. Blue Star Memorials recognize all service members, past, present, and future. Gold Star Families Memorials hold an especially profound meaning, honoring families who have lost a loved one in service to our nation. These families have borne the ultimate sacrifice, and their courage, resilience, and love deserve our deepest respect.

Color speaks when words fall short. Let us be mindful of the symbolism of each color. The color red represents valor, sacrifice, and the blood shed for our freedoms. The color white represents purity of purpose, peace, and the unwavering integrity of service. The color blue represents loyalty, perseverance, and the unity of a grateful nation. By planting memorial gardens in red, white, and blue, garden clubs create a universal symbol of patriotism and gratitude that is instantly recognizable to every visitor. Together, these colors not only form the colors of our flag, but the heart of the American spirit. These colors remind us of freedom earned, lives given, and families forever changed.

A red, white and blue planting scheme transforms a Memorial Marker into a living flag - one that blooms, grows, and endures through the seasons. It invites reflection, sparks conversation, and ensures that the stories of our military heroes and their families are never forgotten.

These floral tributes will serve not only as a visual celebration of our nation's history, but as a living message from the shores of California to the coast of Maine. Our vision is a simple, yet powerful display of respect for the valor, dedication, integrity, and sacrifices made by our Armed Forces throughout the past 250 years.

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NGC Reports



Blue Star and Gold Star Families Memorial Marker Program Planting Patriotism: A call to all Garden Clubs to honor our Blue Star and Gold Star Families

Imagine traveling across America and seeing a shared message blossoming in every state: red, white, and blue gardens standing proudly beside Blue Star and Gold Star Families Memorial Markers. Each garden becomes a promise - that we remember, that we honor, and that we teach future generations the cost of freedom.



Through thoughtful design, community involvement, and educational outreach, clubs can bring together veterans, Gold Star Families, students, and local leaders to dedicate these memorials and keep their meaning alive.

Below is the pricing for Memorial Markers for 2026. Pricing Effective 1/1/2026-12/31/2206.

- Marker, 7' post, shipping \$2,460.00
- Marker, 10' post, shipping \$2,635.00
- Byway Plaques \$ 785.00
- Replacement 7' Posts \$ 375.00
- Replacement 10' Post \$ 500.00
- Refurbishment \$1,230.00
- Refurbishment with Cap Repair \$1,485.00
- Extra Shipping (western states) \$ 300.00



Let us embrace this unique moment in American history with dedication, color, and care. Let every Blue Star and Gold Star Families Memorial Marker become a beacon for generations of Americans to be aware of the daily sacrifices, constant worry, and long separations that go unseen by our brave Armed Forces. Gold Star Families have a loved one who made the ultimate sacrifice to the service of our country. Their families' pain is deep and their sacrifice is permanent. Let us establish this legacy with pride in our military as we unite in the celebration of 250 years of shared history and freedoms. Let every sown seed in the soil of our United States serve as our remembrance of a soldier, a family, and a community that never gave up. These red, white, and blue flowers will be our living commitment to honor our military's service and to acknowledge that they are not forgotten.

We invite every garden club - urban and rural, large and small - to this meaningful national tribute. Apply for the National Garden Club Blue/Gold Star Memorial Beautification Grant. Plant your patriotic planting. Dedicate your gardens with intention and heart. Freedom is not free.

Author: Candace F. Wells, Blue Star and Gold Star Families Memorial Marker Chairman
TGFC Scholarship Chairman / Deep South Scholarship Chairman
cfw1865@gmail.com / 423-304-3577



NGC Reports



Natural Disasters USA Grants

My first report received as the Chairman for the Natural Disaster USA Grant is from the Perry Garden Club in Taylor County, Florida. The amount of headway these garden club members have made since receiving their grant in September is absolutely amazing! The devastation caused by the three hurricanes had left the county a FEMA “Disaster Area.” The county funds were short and the competition for the limited funds was fierce. In order to remove diseased and damaged trees from the garden club’s clubhouse property, the members engaged in political advocacy. Garden club members spoke at county commissioner meetings and eventually convinced the politicians that the nearly 100 year-long legacy of the Perry Garden Club and their historical club house warranted \$8,500 in county funds to remove the diseased and damaged trees surrounding the clubhouse.

Once it was safe to work in the area, the club partnered with their local county extension agent who designed a new layout for the gardens, using a native plant selection to form a base for the overall garden plan. The club did not have to pay for this service, which allowed them to use their grant funds to purchase plants, topsoil, soil amendments, and other items for the project.

The club also raised money with a fish fry, flower auction, chili fundraiser, and ways and means at their monthly meetings as well as other revenue opportunities raising an additional \$8,104.00! These funds were used to cover expenses that are not covered by the NGC Grant.

Perry Garden Club activities and fundraisers are consistently reported in the local newspaper which covers five counties. They also have a Facebook album that documents their restoration project beginning with the first volunteer workday in October. They keep their members and community updated on all garden club efforts, using this as a means of public relations and communications.



Work Week 1: October 13-17, 2025: IRRIGATION



Work Day 2 - October 31
2025 - Marking out
walkways and planting beds



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NGC Reports



Natural Disasters USA Grants (Continued)

The garden club members and the Master Gardener volunteers began work on the irrigation system plan and installation the second week of October. The club started working on the walkways and planting beds at the end of October. The Taylor County Extension Agent, the Master Gardener volunteers, and the garden club members worked as a team to keep this project moving forward and within budget. They paused during the holidays to hold fundraisers and participate in annual community events. They resumed work in January, just in time for one of the coldest winters on record! February's high winds blew off the landscape fabric and grounding stakes used to lay the pathways. Despite this setback, volunteers salvaged the fabric and stakes and carefully stored them for a second attempt after the weather calmed down.

I am so proud to have assisted, though in a very small way, with this very important project. As their report stated: Although we have already faced setbacks in the new year, we have proven we will overcome them with the humor, camaraderie and good will that set our organization apart." I feel the same way about NGC!



January 30, 2026



Tenacious volunteers of February 6, 2026 workday. L-R Cody Scott, Amanda Beckett, Lise Cassidy, Kay McCullough, Carrel Robinson, Michael Powell and Andy Jackson, not pictured Audrey Adams.

Author: Josephine Goodenow
NGC Natural Disaster USA Grant Chairman





Down the Garden Path

Landscape Design School News

Author: Caroline Carbaugh

Down the Garden Path

The article in this issue of The National Gardener is written by Caroline Carbaugh, editor of the NGC publication Newscape, who seeks contributors throughout NGC willing to share schools' news, local group happenings, and places of interest to visit in their area. Caroline gives information on the type of submissions she requests. - Carol Yee, NGC Landscape Design School Chairman.



Newscape

Newscape is the twice-yearly National Garden Club Landscape Design newsletter which provides news from the NGC Landscape Design Councils and Schools and from the NGC Environmental and Gardening Schools and Councils. It is published in the spring and fall, and the next issue is due to come out in mid-March 2026. It is sent to Landscape Design Consultants, the Executive Board and State Presidents digitally and is available on the NGC website (www.gardenclub.org/newscape).

In the month before the issue is to come out, I request input from our NGC Landscape Design Councils and Schools and from the NGC Environmental and Gardening Schools and Councils consultants. I request articles on the activities, trips, and new projects that the Landscape Design Councils are involved in and are planning, and on speakers that they have heard or are planning for. Share your ideas with your gardening friends. What has been successful, what was fun, what will you try next, what will you try again? These activities are the source of articles from the states for our Newscape issues. Some states include information on the NGC courses that they are offering. I also list all the schools that are listed on the NGC website by state for easy reference. It's also good to get ideas of projects that didn't work so well.



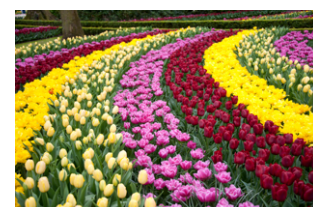


Down the Garden Path

Landscape Design School News

Author: Caroline Carbaugh (Continued)

We welcome input from any members of NGC, even if they don't belong to the councils. It adds interest to read about unusual ideas and places. The articles don't have to be lengthy. The idea is to share info and thoughts to spark ideas in others. Give them suggestions on topics they could write about or teach us about. Pictures are an excellent addition and bring the articles to life. Some states take carefully planned trips to other states and European countries. Their articles are even more effective and eye-catching when they include photos of the lovely landscapes and gardens that they saw and include write-ups of the places that they visited.



I place a picture of an attractive landscape on the front page of the newsletter. Here is one of our recent front pages with a picture of the Generalife Garden in Granada, Spain, with Alhambra in the background. Alhambra is a palace and fortress complex located in Granada, and the gardens next door are spectacular. It is one of the most famous monuments of Islamic architecture and one of the best-preserved palaces of the historic Islamic world. I also include colorful pictures of flowers and landscapes throughout the issue.

Author: Caroline Carbaugh
Editor of the NGC publication Newscape

Chair: Carol Yee

Email: 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. Spring always brings a surge of activity in the garden, even for seasoned gardeners. We asked several experienced growers to share practical answers to common spring questions that arise as the growing season begins.

QUESTIONS

Q: What is the most important task to tackle early in spring?

A: Focus on the soil first. Before planting begins in earnest, take time to add compost or other organic matter and lightly cultivate beds to improve structure and drainage. Healthy soil supports stronger plants, better moisture retention, and fewer pest problems throughout the season.

Q: When is the right time to begin planting?

A: Timing depends on your region, but experienced gardeners watch soil temperature as closely as air temperature. Cool-season crops such as lettuce, peas, and spinach can go in early, while warm-season vegetables and many annual flowers should wait until the soil has warmed and the risk of frost has passed. There are tools to help you determine times for your location.

Q: What's the best strategy for maintaining continuous color or harvest?

A: Succession planting is key. Plant smaller amounts at regular intervals rather than everything at once. This approach extends harvests in vegetable gardens and keeps flower beds looking fresh as earlier plantings fade and new ones come into bloom.

Q: How can gardeners reduce pest and disease problems early in the season?

A: Prevention begins with good garden hygiene. Remove old plant debris, rotate crops when possible, and give plants adequate spacing for air circulation. Early monitoring also helps—spotting pests or disease symptoms early makes them far easier to manage.-

Q: Any advice for keeping gardens manageable during the busy spring season?

A: Work in stages and plan ahead. Install trellises, stakes, and plant supports early, while beds are still easy to access. Apply mulch once the soil has warmed to conserve moisture and suppress weeds. These small steps early in the season save considerable effort later.

Spring rewards preparation and observation. By focusing on soil health, thoughtful planting, and early maintenance, experienced gardeners set the stage for a productive and beautiful growing season.

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





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