National Garden Clubs

YOUTH GARDEN CLUB

Handbook











PLANT AMERICA

National Garden Clubs

for the NEXT 100 YEARS!

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION



Welcome from the NGC President - Pgs 3-4
About National Garden Clubs, Inc - Pg 5
All About Plant America - Pg 6
National Garden Clubs Mission - Pg 7
NGC Youth Policies & Guidelines - Pg 8
Intro to the Youth Garden Handbook - Pg 9

FORMING A NGC YOUTH CLUB

WHY Form an NGC Youth Club - Pg 10
WHO can Form an NGC Youth Club - Pgs 11-12
HOW to Form an NGC Youth Club - Pg 13
Annual Youth Club REGISTRATION - Pg 14
Sample Youth Club State REGISTRATION FORM - Pg 15
HOW to Fund an NGC Youth Club - Pg 16
MORE Funding Ideas - Pg 17

NGC YOUTH CLUB ACTIVITIES

Youth AWARDS, GRANTS & SCHOLARSHIPS Pg 18
Annual NGC Youth CONTESTS - Pg 19
Youth PARTICIPATION In Flower Shows - Pg 20
NGC Youth Club CHECKLIST - Pgs 21-22
GET STARTED today! - Pg 23
Children's PICTURE & WORKBOOKS - Pg 24
Youth Club COLLABORATIONS - Pg 25
Fun TIPS! - Pg 26
NGC Youth Team - Pg 27

President's Welcome Message

Dear Youth Leaders,

Welcometo the **Youth Garden Club Handbook**!As thepresident of the **National Garden Clubs, Inc.(NGC)**, I am delightedtoinvite you on this exciting journey into the world of youth gardening.



Your leadership will inspire our young gardeners to cultivate not only plants but also a deeper connection with our environment.

This handbook is your tool for forming and growing **NGC-Affiliated Youth Clubs** that foster a spirit of stewardship and environmental responsibility.
Whether you are working with children or teens, each garden grown and every idea nurtured contributes to a healthier, more beautiful world.

Donna Donnelly
President,
National Garden Clubs, Inc.

President's Welcome Message

My president'sprojects will includecelebrating**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.



About
National Garden Clubs, Inc.

National Garden Clubs,Inc. (NGC) is anonprofit 501(c)(3) organization headquartered in St. Louis, Missouri, USA adjacent to the Missouri Botanical Gardens. NGC's first garden club meeting took place in Athens, GA in 1891 and as of today, there are over 138,000 members and growing. The organization now coordinates the interests and activities of its 5,000 member clubs and their affiliated youth clubs in 50 states as well as the National Capitol Area. There are also numerous US affiliated organizations as well as nearly 330 internationally affiliated organizations with locations ranging around the globe.

Plant America

The **PLANT AMERICA** initiative began in 2017 under the leadership of former NGC President Nancy Hargroves and has been continued by each subsequent president. It is now celebrated every April, coordinating with Arbor Day and Earth Day. The grants are readily available to member clubs, supporting their diverse projects which have a profound impact on public spaces, including:

- ***Enhancing*** public areas with beautiful landscapes
- ***Honoring*** veterans through Blue Star landscaping projects
- ***Educating*** both children and adults about the joys of gardening
- ***Fostering*** local pride through city and county projects
- ***Improving*** community well-being and environmental health



The **PLANT AMERICA Community Project Grants*** are designed to enhance and beautify public areas and community gardens. These grants, available to member clubs and affiliated youth clubs of the **National Garden Clubs, Inc. (NGC),** aim to educate both adults and children about the joys of gardening, while fostering a sense of pride within the community.

Grants can be utilized for a variety of purposes including physical landscaping, environmental projects, or horticultural and educational opportunities for the community. Since their inception in 2017, over 250 grants have been awarded to NGC member clubs, amounting to more than $225,000. Each grant can provide up to $2,000 for eligible projects.

Click here for additional Plant America Grant Information.

- *Up to 10% of the PLANT AMERICA Community Project Grant fundscanbe allocated to non-NGC Garden Club 501c(3) organizations.*

Our Mission

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

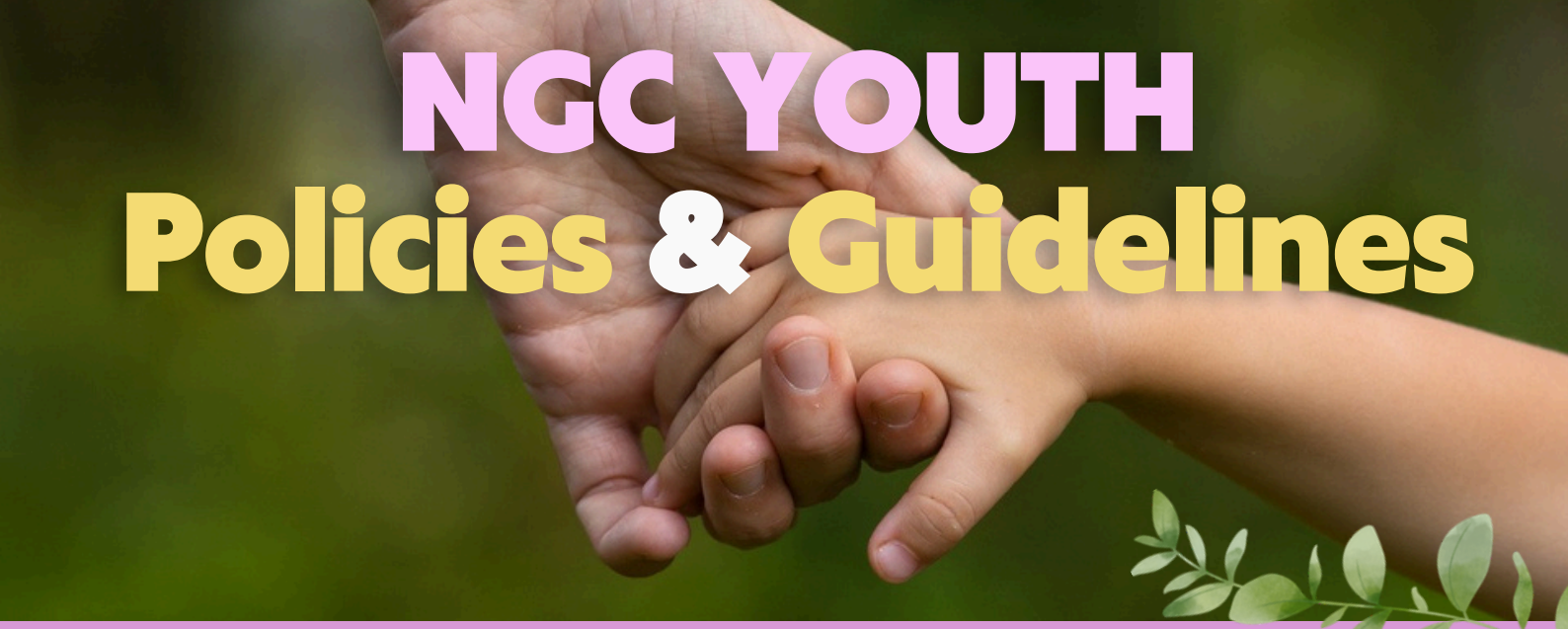


National Garden Clubs, Inc. Conservation Pledge

"I pledge to protect and conserve the natural resources of the planet earth and promise to promote education so we may become caretakers of our air, water, forest, land, and wildlife."

NGC Environmental Mission

"The environmental mission of **National Garden Clubs, Inc.** is to review the environmental problems and their possible solutions, to promote environmental literacy and to advocate sound environmental stewardship."



NGC YOUTH Policies & Guidelines

Child Protection Policy

The**NGC ChildProtection Policy (CPP)** outlines procedures to safeguard children from harm, abuse, and exploitation. It affirms NGC's commitment to creating a safe and supportive environment where the best interests of children are always prioritized.

Click MEMBER SECTION/Governing Documents for details

Child Photo & Media Release

Before using a photo ofany youth under the age of 18, a *Child Photo Release Form* must be signed by a parent or legal guardian. If your state does not provide their own photo release forms ...

Click MEMBERS SECTION/Resources&Forms/Forms for details

Youth Club Insurance Coverage

NGC doesnot provide specificliability insurance for youth clubs.

- If liability insurance is needed for events or activities, the Youth Club President should first check with their State Garden Club to determine if coverage is available.
- If no coverage is provided through the state, the club may consider obtaining an Activities & Social Clubs Policy or similar coverage through a private insurance provider.

INTRO to the Youth Garden Club HANDBOOK

Welcome to the NGC Youth Garden Club Handbook, your comprehensive resource for starting an NGC-Affiliated Youth Garden Club.

Our Commitment

At NGC, we are committed to inspiring young individuals to take responsibility for conserving natural resources and protecting our plants, animals, and environment. We believe that by fostering a love for gardening, we can cultivate a generation of environmentally conscious citizens.

Acknowledgments

We extend our gratitude to all NGC Presidents and club members who have supported youth gardening over the years. It provides many benefits that can positively impact a child's physical and mental health, social and life skills, emotional growth, and cultural awareness. Spending time in the garden and sharing gardening wisdom with children is good for the planet and enriches the lives of all of us.



Special thanks are also due to Bob Markey, NGC's 2023-2026 Youth Committee Coordinator, graphic designer Francesca Rizzo, and the entire NGC Youth Team. Their efforts in reimagining NGC's 2006 Youth Garden Club Handbook for today's world have been invaluable.

WHY form an NGC Youth Club?

When youth groups choose to become affiliated with NGC, there are myriad benefits provided:

Fostering Wonder: *Encourages a sense of wonder about the natural world and educates youth on making wise choices for conserving and protecting our planet.*

Wide Range of Programs: *Offers activities, projects, programs, scholarships, and contests to promote horticulture.*

Partnerships: *Working in tandem with nationally recognized organizations such as the U.S. Forest Service, international affiliates and programs offered by NGC's local, state and regional garden clubs.*

Nature Arts Programs: *Provides nature-related arts programs that inspire creativity through observing life cycles.*

STEAM Education: *Combines nutrition with gardening using STE (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics) learning.*

5 Rs: *Encouraging responsible consumer behavior by introducing the 5 Rs: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Repurpose & Refill.*

Green Careers: *Raises awareness of future career opportunities in fields like solar farming, aquaculture, recycling, landscaping, and water and turf management.*

WHO can form an NGC Youth Club?

In order to form an **NGC-affiliated Youth Garden Club**, it is required to have an **NGC Sponsoring Club**, which can be any garden club affiliated with NGC.

These are the four types of **NGC-affiliated Youth Garden Clubs**:

TYPE 1: Formed by a Sponsoring Club

Any **NGC-affiliated Garden Club** may become a Sponsoring Club by **forming it's own NGC-affiliated Youth Garden Club**. For example, youth may be invited from the club members' families, friends and neighbors.

TYPE 2: Formed with a School Group

The Sponsoring Club may connect with **a school group** in order to form an **NGC-affiliated Youth Garden Club**.

A school group may be any group of students (class, grade level, or mixed grade) and can meet anytime (before, during, or after school, in the evenings, or on weekends.)

TIP: *When reaching out to a school principal, teacher, or staff member to see if their school is interested, it's essential to educate them on the benefits of youth gardening.*

WHO can form an NGC Youth Club?

TYPE 3: Formed with a Youth Organization

The Sponsoring Club may connect with an **existing youth organization** in order to establish an **NGC-affiliated Youth Garden Club**.

Examples include:

- **National 4-H Council**
- **Scouting America**
- **Girl Scouts of the USA**
- **Camp Fire**
- **Future Farmers of America**
- **Junior Master Gardener**
- **Latino Outdoors**



TYPE 4: Formed with a Community Youth Group

A Sponsoring Club may connect with any existing adult-led, **community-based youth groups**, to form an **NGC-affiliated Youth Garden Club.**

Examples include:

- Home-school Groups
- Daycare Centers
- After-school Programs
- Boys & Girls Clubs of America
- Neighborhood Youth Associations
- Science and Ecology Youth Clubs
- Church Youth Groups

HOW to form an NGC Youth Club.

When receiving authorization from a sponsoring organization, the youth club leader needs to discuss age/grade level, club size, member selec tion, and number of yearly meetings to meet basic requirements of an NGC-Affiliated Youth Garden Club. The program content is often geared to the appropriate grade-level science curriculum.

A youth garden club can meet before, during, or after school or evenings and weekends.

It is important to complete the paperwork to register each **NGC-Affiliated Youth Garden Club** yearly at the state level. Regional and national registration is automatic once the state registration forms are submitted.

The sponsoring club may pay the nominal state registration fee, if applicable. Both the sponsoring club and it's youth club should strive to maintain close ties the first year and consistent ties throughout later years with visits, emails, and phone calls.

Participation in the nationally sponsored youth contests and awards is optional, and many youth clubs wait until becoming fully operational before submitting entries. Some states have award ceremonies for state contest or award winners at their state conventions; other states, at alternate sites at a different time.

State Youth Club REGISTRATION

REGISTERING AN NGC-AFFILIATED YOUTH CLUB

At present, **Youth Club** registration requirements vary by state. Some **State Garden Clubs** ask Youth Clubs to register at the state level, while others do not. Please contact your state club for their current policies and guidelines.

In the future, **NGC** anticipates that states may be asked to use a standard **Youth Club Roster Form** to collect the numbers of clubs and members nationwide.

Similar to a census, this data would help **NGC** strengthen planning, expand support for youth initiatives, and improve opportunities to secure funding.

A sample Youth Club Registration Form currently used by the Garden Club of New Jersey is included on page 15.



SAMPLE Youth Club State Registration Form

EachNGCstate garden club is autonomous,andhasit's own policies regarding youth club membership. Check with your state representative to see If there's an existing registration form. If not, here's an example of a form your club or state may wish to adopt.



GCNJ Youth Club REGISTRATION

To be registered with the state and eligible for any youth awards, this form must be completed and sent to the Youth Chair at the address below by September 30. Please enclose a check payable to GCNJ in the amount of $20.00 to cover your club's annual Youth Club registration fee.

Name of Youth Club _____

Type of Club (Junior K-6th, Middle 7-8th, HS 9th-12th) _____ # of Youth Members _____

Association (with a garden club, a school or a local organization _____ # club meetings per/yr. _____

Name of Sponsoring Club _____ District # _____

Club Interests (please check all that apply to your group)

Gardening	___	Arbor Day	___	Flower Design	___
Protection of Wildlife	___	Civic/School Project	___	Children's Gardens	___
Insect Study	___	School Gardens	___	Annual Youth Contests	___
Garden Therapy	___	Flower Shows	___	Nature Camps	___
Pollinators	___	Bird Study	___	Ecology	___
Three R's	___	Composting	___	National Garden Week	___

Other, please describe _____

SAMPLE

Youth Chair contact information

Youth chair name (please print) _____

Address _____ City _____ Zip Code _____

Telephone _____ # Email _____

Makes checks payable to GCNJ and mail to:
Susan Berdahl
72 Beechwood Dr.
Shrewsbury, NJ 07702

HOW to fund an NGC Youth Club.

Each year, an NGC-Affiliated Youth Garden Club begins by creating a realistic budget in order to prepare appropriate fundraising strategies. Starting small in your first year is a good idea as the focus will be on fun and growing the club.

Funding is often a shared effort between the sponsoring club and the youth club. An **NGC-Affiliated Garden Club** willing to sponsor a youth club may choose to provide only the initial organizational funding or allocate an annual contribution from its budget.





A small annual dues requirement may be a funding option for some youth clubs and those operating within a school system may be eligible for financial support from the school's PTO/PTA.

More Funding Ideas!

Should your club need additional funding, approaching the corporate or small business communities may be the answer. A formal written request, which includes your youth club's annual budget, agenda and club photos, can increase the likelihood of approval. Here are just a few possibilities to get you started on the funding journey.

Corporate Grant Ideas

Target, Whole Foods, Shoprite, Lowes, Home Depot, Dole, Nestle, Subway, Big Green – Kimbal Musk, United Health Care Captain Planet Foundation, Tree Fund, Nature Works Everywhere Garden Grants & Kids Gardening



Mom & Pop Business Ideas

Local hardware stores, service clubs & organizations, physician's offices, pharmacy, movie theater, restaurants & diners, delis, taxi services, beauty salons & barber shops

Using some imagination and creativity, your club can develop youth-led initiatives that not only raise money but involve children within the community in a hands-on way.



Youth-led Fundraising Ideas

Potted Plants & Seedlings
Baked Goods Sales
Fruit & Veggie Produce
Lavendar Sachets & Potpourri
Handmade Holiday Ornaments
Decorated Flowerpots



YOUTH Awards, Grants & Scholarships



NGCoffers a youth college scholarshipprogramfor students majoringin horticulture or environmentalstudiesas well as various youth grants and awards.

NGC Grants

Ames Tools Grant
Espoma Products Grant
Native Plant and Wildflower Education Grant
Youth Pollinator Gardens Grant

NGC Scholarship

NGC College Scholarship Program

NGC Awards

Youth Garden Club Outstanding Sponsor
Horticulture Activity for Youth Garden Club
Outdoor Planting with Youth Garden Club Environmental Activity with Youth Garden Club
Junior Garden Club Wildlife Gardening Education Project
High School Garden Club Outstanding Sponsor
High School Distinguished Service Project
Horticulture Education for Youth
Environmental Education Project with Youth
Individual Outstanding Service to Youth

Annual NGC Youth Contests

NGC offers a variety of Youth Contests that aim to encourage environmental responsibility and gardening skills in young people. These contests aim to foster a love for nature, conservation, and civic engagement.

Smokey Bear - Woodsy Owl Poster Contest



Sponsored by NGC & the US Forest Service, this annual drawing contest has students in grades 1-5 create posters featuring either the Smokey Bear or Woodsy Owl image to demonstrate their understanding of wildfire prevention and environmental conservation.



Youth Poetry Contest

A writingcompetitionfor students in kindergarten through 12th grade that aims to encourage and celebrate creativity and allows for various poetic forms.



Youth Recyclable Sculpture Contest

Encouragesstudentsin grades 4-8 to create sculptures using recycled, reused, and reduced materials. The goal is to inspire environmental awareness and creativity among young people.

Youth Participation in NGC Flower Shows & Floral Design Classes

NGC serves as the primary national organization for floral design education, exhibitions, and judging in the United States through its Flower Show School courses. These courses train and certify flower show judges and promote the art of floral design.

Although NGC currently does not offer specific floral design classes for youth, an interested NGC-affiliated Youth Club is encouraged to contact its state president for advice and guidance.



NGC Youth Club

Checklist

Basic Requirements:

- **SPONSORED** by an **NGC-Affiliated Garden Club**.
- **DESIGNATE** a *Youth Club Leader* (by sponsoring club president.)
- **INTEREST** in promoting youth gardening and environmental awareness by any club, organization, or group with adult leaders.
- **OPEN** membership to youth from preschool through high school.
- **MAINTAIN** a minimum of five youth members.
- **HOLD** at least five meetings annually.

Sponsoring Club's Involvement

- **DETERMINES** its own level of involvement beyond the Basic Requirements.
- **STRIVES** to maintain close ties with the Youth Club during the year.
- **COMMITMENT LEVELS** may include:

Individual member(s) ***mentor*** youth on a limited basis.
Entire club membership ***meets*** regularly with the YC.
The YC is ***invited*** to attend meetings & special events.

NGC Youth Club Checklist

Youth Club Leader (YCL) Responsibilities:

- **ESTABLISHES** age ranges and groupings of members, with input from the sponsoring club.
- **EXPLORES** and utilizes all available NGC resources, including the NGC website and *The National Gardener* quarterly publication.
- **DISTRIBUTES** information about NGC Youth Contests, Awards, Scholarships, and Grants, including deadlines, upon release by NGC.
- **NOTIFIES** members each spring of the winners of the annual NGC Contests, Awards, Scholarships, and Grants.
- **DETERMINES** the activities, education, and programming for their club.

Youth Club Activity Guidelines:

- **MAKE** meetings and activities FUN for all ages.
- **SEEK** new gardening ideas and materials.
- **PRESENT** gardening activities in a practical, hands-on way.
- **MAINTAIN** an exciting, educational focus for youth members.
- **ENCOURAGE** learning as a mutual process for both leaders and youth.

Get Started TODAY!

Eachstate maintainsitsown website andprocedures.

Toestablish anew NGC-AffiliatedYouthClub, please contact yourNGCStateCluband ask for guidance onhowtoproceed.

Click to see the list of
NGC State Clubs



Children's Picture & Workbooks

Nature PICTURE BOOKS

You can buythesechildren'sbooks from our NGC store!



Nature WORKBOOKS

These informativeactivity booksare free to all (plus, they are printable, too!)



pg 24

COLLABORATING with Youth Organizations

It's great to expand our reach, foster environmental stewardship, and create a stronger sense of community and belonging. It also allows for sharing resources, expertise, and best practices! Here are just a few of the many possibilities that may be available to you.



International Youth Affiliates

Collaborate with international affiliatesby participating in joint projects, sharing gardening techniques and resources, and engaging in virtual exchange programs. These collaborations can foster a global network of young gardeners and promote international understanding through shared passions.

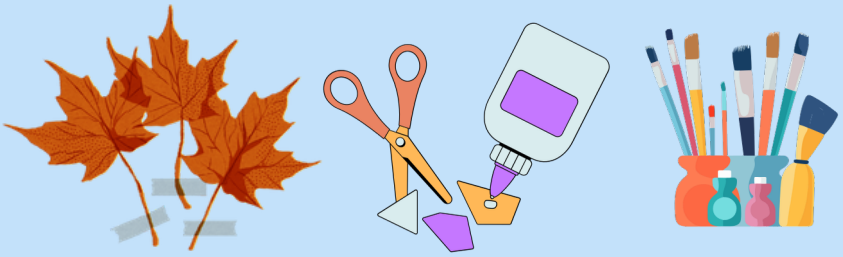
FUN TIPS!

and hands-on activities!

Themed Gardens



- **Pizza Garden:** Tomatoes, peppers, basil & oregano
- **Fairy Garden:** Succulents with miniature fairy figures
- **Native Plant Garden:** Attracts butterflies and pollinators
- **Scent-Touch-Sight Garden:** Mint, lambs ear, grasses, flowers



Nature Crafts

- **Collect:** leaves, pine cones, rocks, flowers, pods, nuts & pumpkins to paint on, make a sculpture or create collages
- **Create:** a nature fort by planting sunflowers in a circle, square, triangle or rectangle.

Technology/Science



- **Apps**: Use phone garden apps to identify plants & their care
- **Timeline:** Photograph flowers to document their growth
- **Experiment:** Try putting cut white flowers in colored water



Events

- **Harvest Sharing Party:** Invite family, friends & neighbors
- **Pumpkin Patch Sale:** Pumpkins grown from harvested seeds
- **Painted Flower Pots Sale:** Filled with seedlings & young plants
- **Holiday Events:** Themed celebrations for all seasons