

THE NATIONAL GARDENER

2026 FALL ISSUE

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FALL

National Garden Clubs, Inc.

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





This Month in



THE NATIONAL GARDENER

Featured Articles

<u>Blue Star Mem. Marker Dedication @ Carter Presidential Center</u>	08-10
<u>Ornamental Grass Molinia</u>	11-15
<u>Flowering Plant Nutrient Storage</u>	17-21
<u>The Case for Imperfect Gardens</u>	28
<u>Upcycle Solutions</u>	35-36
<u>Glass Moyer Bottles</u>	37-38
<u>A Century of Club Membership</u>	49-50
<u>Bee Pastures</u>	51-52

Columns

<u>President's Page</u>	03-04
<u>TNG Staff & About Us</u>	05
<u>From the Editor</u>	06
<u>Gardens to Tour</u>	41
<u>Mark Your Calendar & HQ News</u>	43
<u>Region News</u>	53-55
<u>Q & A</u>	87

International Section 67

ENGLISH VERSION

<u>Oscar the Gnome</u>	68-69
<u>Distinction in Floral Design</u>	70
<u>Buffeted by the Wind</u>	71-73
<u>Our Digital Evolution</u>	74-77

Education

<u>Book Review: Native Perennials for the Southeast</u>	16
<u>NGC Creative Design Style</u>	23-27
<u>Garden Week: B&G Garden Tours</u>	29-32
<u>Creating a Small Standard Flower Show</u>	39-40
<u>Cool Online Tools For Gardeners</u>	42
<u>10 Tips for a Fall Garden</u>	44
<u>Fall To-Do List by Region</u>	45-46
<u>Did You Know? Legacy Gifting</u>	48
<u>NGC Schools</u>	56

Programs

<u>PLANT AMERICA Red, White & Blue</u>	33-34
<u>Membership Tips: Visibility Matters</u>	57
<u>Environmental School News</u>	58
<u>FS&FSSC School News</u>	59
<u>Award of Excellence Dates</u>	60
<u>Natural Disasters USA Grant</u>	61-62
<u>Landscape Design News</u>	63-64
<u>Awards</u>	65-66

Sección Internacional 78

VERSIÓN EN ESPAÑOL.

<u>de Óscar el Gnomo</u>	79-80
<u>La Distinción en el Diseño Floral</u>	81
<u>Rozado por el viento</u>	82-84
<u>Nuestra evolución digital</u>	85-88

Author: Donna Donnelly, NGC President

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.

Midpoint Progress Report: Building NGC's Future

As National Garden Clubs moves into the midpoint of the 2025–2027 administration, I am proud of what we have accomplished together. Guided by five strategic priorities—**PLANT AMERICA** for the Next 100 Years, Governance Review, Leadership Development, Convention and Meeting Standards, and Youth Engagement—we are strengthening our organization while laying the foundation for a vibrant and sustainable future.

One of our most visible successes has been the **PLANT AMERICA** Matching Grant Initiative. Designed to encourage the creation of red, white, and blue gardens at Blue Star and Gold Star Memorial Markers in celebration of America's 250th birthday, the initiative exceeded every expectation. In just nine months, it generated \$100,000 in donations while bringing increased visibility and recognition to the **PLANT AMERICA** brand. More importantly, it demonstrated what is possible when garden club members across the country unite behind a common purpose. Together, we have shown that a strong national initiative can advance our mission, strengthen communities, and create opportunities for future growth.

We have also made meaningful progress in our **Governance Review**. Through the dedicated work of the Special Committee, in partnership with legal counsel and guided by nonprofit governance best practices and Missouri law, NGC's Bylaws, Standing Rules, and Policies are being thoughtfully reviewed and modernized. This effort is about more than updating documents—it is about creating a governance framework that provides clarity, consistency, transparency, and efficiency for NGC's leaders. Strong governance is essential to a strong organization, and this work will serve NGC well into the future.

Another significant milestone has been the launch of the **NGC Schools Portal**. By centralizing records and improving access to information, the portal strengthens support for all four NGC Schools programs while preserving valuable educational resources. Recognizing its long-term benefit to our members, NGC removed the access fee so that the system is available to everyone. This investment reflects our commitment to educational excellence, innovation, and responsible stewardship of NGC's resources.

Developing future leaders remains one of my highest priorities. Through training opportunities, board meetings, conventions, and ongoing communication, we continue to expand understanding of NGC's mission, governance, finances, and operations. By encouraging mentorship, collaboration, and strong partnerships between officers and our Executive Director, we are building a strong pipeline of capable leaders while supporting smooth leadership transitions. It was especially rewarding to see NGC recognized at the *Seed Your Future* Conference for supporting 45 horticultural and environmental scholarships each year—an investment that is helping cultivate the next generation of professionals and advocates in our field.



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THE PRESIDENT'S PAGE



Author: Donna Donnelly, NGC President

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Midpoint Progress Report: Building NGC's Future (Continued)

Our focus on **Convention and Meeting Standards** is also yielding important results. Lessons learned from the 2025 Virtual Fall Board Meeting and the 2026 Convention in St. Louis have helped improve planning, budgeting, financial reporting, programming, and operational support. By creating consistent, repeatable processes, we are giving future administrations a solid foundation to build on. These efforts promote fiscal responsibility, improve efficiency, and contribute to successful meetings and conventions for years to come.

Of course, no investment is more important than our investment in our youth. The future of National Garden Clubs depends on engaging the next generation in gardening, environmental stewardship, and community service. Ongoing conversations with youth leaders are focused on expanding opportunities and developing new ways to connect young people with our mission. By nurturing their interests today, we are cultivating tomorrow's gardeners, environmental advocates, civic leaders, and future garden club members.

As we enter the second half of this administration, our goals remain clear. We will continue to strengthen governance, develop effective leaders, promote financial responsibility, expand youth engagement, and advance the **PLANT AMERICA** brand. At the heart of this vision is a commitment to building long-term support for **PLANT AMERICA**—an investment in NGC's future that will expand grant opportunities, increase community impact, and attract new resources to support our mission.

Thank you for your dedication, your expertise, and your countless hours of volunteer service. Every project completed, every garden planted, every student encouraged, and every community served contributes to the strength of National Garden Clubs. Together, we are honoring our rich legacy while building a brighter future—and continuing to **PLANT AMERICA for the Next 100 Years. With gratitude and confidence, we can accomplish it together!**



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 June 1 (Publish first week of July)

About Us

PLANT AMERICA
for the next 100 years

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

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

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FROM THE EDITOR

A New Season, A New Garden

Author: *Victoria Schmidt, TNG Editor-in-Chief*

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There is something about fall that makes gardeners pause and take a closer look. We notice the garden beds that flourished, the plants that struggled, and perhaps that one bed that has been “temporarily” neglected for the past few years. We make notes about what we want to change next spring. We collect seeds, plant bulbs, move perennials—and begin dreaming about what our gardens might become.

This fall, I would like to suggest adding one more tool to your gardening toolbox: Established AI tools like ChatGPT, Gemini, or Copilot. I **know** that may cause some of you to pause. And that’s OK! AI is a new concept to many people, and with anything new comes questions. *How does it work? What is AI? Can I trust what it tells me? Will it really understand my garden? Why would a gardener need AI?*

Much to many people’s surprise, you’ve likely been using AI for years.

- *Have you ever done a Google search or used a GPS map application?*
- *Have you used Canva or other graphic software’s background remover?*
- *Have you ever used chat on a website or predictive text on your emails or texts?*

*If so, you’ve used AI. It’s been around for decades. It’s just that Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) or superintelligence, AI has been in the news lately without explaining the difference. AGI is a theoretical future AI capability that does not yet exist in released applications. These are **NOT** the same as the simple AI tools like ChatGPT, Gemini, Copilot, etc. that answer questions, write drafts, summarize information, generate images, and help with specific tasks. They don’t work on their own. They are prompt based. You must ask it something specific and it will research the answer. So, back to why you might use AI tools...*

My answer is simple: These are *simply another tool*. You don’t need AI tools to be a good gardener. But learning how to use it can give you something interesting and surprisingly useful for your toolbox. Think of AI as a brainstorming partner, or a research assistant, not a garden expert. It doesn’t replace your knowledge or the tools you already use. But, as with any tool, you should verify the answers.

Imagine that you have an established garden bed that has become tired and overgrown. **First:** Take a picture of it and upload it to an AI tool. Then, tell it your USDA hardiness zone, how much sun the bed receives, the size of the space, the type of soil, any plants you want to keep, your color scheme, your gardening style, and how much maintenance you are willing to do. Use your experience and other tools such as the online USDA hardiness zone map and the [SunCalc](#) app for the amount of sun you receive.

Then ask: “Give me three different ideas for redesigning this garden bed and include pictures.” You may get three very different approaches. One might be a pollinator garden. Another might emphasize four-season interest. A third might create a more formal design. And that’s where the conversation gets interesting. You don’t have to accept the first answer. You can ask AI to change it.

In the next issue there will be an article about what ChatGPT, Copilot and other AI tools really work, and how to write prompts to better use those tools.



Victoria Schmidt
TNG EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Blue Star Memorial Marker Dedication at the Carter Presidential Center



Blue Star and Gold Star Families Memorial Marker Program

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Blue Star Memorial Marker Dedication at the Carter Presidential Center

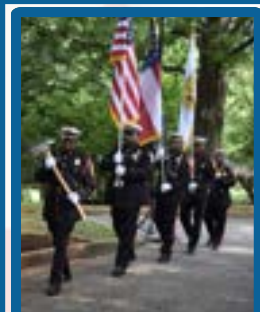
Authors: Jan Thiese & Linda Dorian

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On June 30, 2026, The Garden Club of Georgia, Inc., in cooperation with its seven districts and the Carter Presidential Center, dedicated a Blue Star Memorial Marker at the Carter Presidential Center in Atlanta. The marker honors all men and women who have served, are serving, or will serve in the Armed Forces of the United States.



The dedication was especially meaningful because it is one of only two Blue Star Memorial Markers located at a Presidential library or Presidential center in the nation. The ceremony began with a welcome and remarks from Jan Thiese, Blue and Gold Star Memorial Marker program chairman for The Garden Club of Georgia, Inc.; President Diane Hunter, The Garden Club of Georgia, Inc.; President Donna Donnelly, National Garden Clubs, Inc.; and Beth Davis, Chief Operating Officer of The Carter Center, before Dr. Juanita Barron, Chaplain for The Garden Club of Georgia, Inc., gave the invocation.



The Presentation of Colors by the DeKalb County Fire Rescue Honor Guard, led by Battalion Chief Doug Harms, set a patriotic tone for the morning, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance by Susan Turner, Scholarship Chairman, and the national anthem, sung beautifully by Bess Hartley, First Vice-President.

Distinguished guests were introduced by Diane Hunter, including Donna Donnelly, President, National Garden Clubs, Inc.; Denise Thorne, Director, Deep South Garden Clubs, Inc.; Candace Fleming Wells, National Garden Clubs, Inc. Blue and Gold Star Marker Chairman; and Deen Day Sanders, Honorary Life President, National Garden Clubs, Inc., and Honorary Life President of The Garden Club of Georgia, Inc. Other distinguished guests announced included representatives from The Carter Center; Josh Carter, keynote speaker and grandson of Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter, Battalion Chief Douglas Harms, DeKalb County Fire Rescue Honor Guard; The Garden Club of Georgia, Inc.'s Blue Star and Gold Star Markers Chairman Jan Thiese; district directors (past and present); Blue Star district chairmen; executive board members; and former presidents.

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Blue Star Memorial Marker Dedication at the Carter Presidential Center

Authors: Jan Thiese & Linda Dorian

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Blue Star and Gold Star Families Memorial Marker Program

Josh Carter offered the keynote address with personal reflections on his grandfather's life and service. While he spoke of President Carter's years as Governor of Georgia and President of the United States, he returned repeatedly to the years his grandfather spent in the U.S. Navy. He recalled that President Carter often considered his naval service among the defining experiences of his life, mentioning with pride the submarine that bears his name.



Carter explained that the Blue Star Memorial Marker holds special meaning for his family because it brings together two of his grandparents' lifelong passions. It honors military service, which remained deeply important to President Carter throughout his life, while its garden setting reflects the love of gardening shared by First Lady Rosalynn Carter. He also spoke of the Rosalynn Carter Butterfly Trail, a project that continues to reflect her appreciation for nature and the environment and remains meaningful to the Carter family today.

Peggy Tucker, Azalea District Blue Star Marker Chairman, shared the history of Jimmy Carter's lifelong dedication to peace, public service, and humanitarian efforts. She also traced the history of the Blue Star Memorial and Gold Star Families Memorial Marker programs. The program began with the planting of eight thousand dogwood trees by the New Jersey Council of Garden Clubs in 1944 as a living memorial to honor veterans of World War II. A year later, the program was adopted by the National Council of State Garden Clubs, Inc. as the Blue Star Memorial Highway System, encouraging the placement of memorial markers surrounded by landscaped plantings as lasting tributes. In 2015, a Gold Star Families Memorial Marker was added to honor families whose loved ones made the ultimate sacrifice defending our country while serving in the nation's Armed Forces.



Jan Thiese then led the dedication of the marker, followed by its unveiling by the seven district directors of The Garden Club of Georgia, Inc. Members of the Dogwood District presented a traditional tribute of flowers before Amy Williams, Deputy Director, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum, formally accepted the marker on behalf of the Carter Presidential Center.

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Blue Star Memorial Marker Dedication at the Carter Presidential Center

Authors: Jan Thiese & Linda Dorian

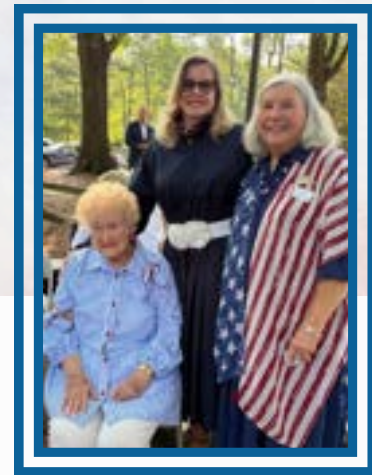
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Blue Star and Gold Star Families Memorial Marker Program

Certificates of appreciation were presented by Jan Thiese and Donna Donnelly, and the ceremony concluded with the “Armed Forces Medley,” honoring each branch of the United States military.

This new marker becomes Georgia’s 187th Blue Star Memorial Marker and joins a nationwide network of memorials established by garden club members over the past eight decades.



Above all, it serves as a permanent reminder of the sacrifices made by our nation’s service members and the gratitude of the communities they have protected. Set among the grounds of the Carter Presidential Center, the marker reflects the shared values of service, patriotism, and remembrance. Visitors to the Carter Center may find the marker next to the picnic deck near the entrance to the museum, where they can encounter not only the legacy of President Carter, but also a lasting tribute to those who have answered, or will answer, the call to serve.

Thank you all for your support of this project, for your attendance and participation. Because of you this dream became a reality.

Perhaps no words better captured the significance of the dedication than those offered in the invocation by Dr. Juanita Barron, Chaplain for The Garden Club of Georgia, Inc.:

*“What a beautiful day to assemble and earmark this momentous occasion to remember and honor the gallantry of men and women who have served and are serving in the United States Armed Services. With humility and deep gratitude, we unite to ensure that the legacy of military personnel is preserved. They are the watchmen on the wall, fiercely fighting to safeguard our most precious assets as human beings —
PEACE AND FREEDOM.”*

Authors: Jan Thiese & Linda Dorian



SPOTLIGHT: ORNAMENTAL GRASS *MOLINIA* (PURPLE MOOR GRASS)

Author: Thomas Mrazik

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.

Ornamental grasses (*Poaceae*) are dynamic garden plants, providing dramatic bursts of foliage, shapes and textures of every kind, distinctive flowering, and long-lasting features.

Molinia (purple moor grass) is a naturalistic beauty among ornamental grasses, having showy bountiful foliage, graceful slender culms, airy panicle flowerheads, and an eye-catching golden yellow color in late fall.



Ornamental Grass Basics

The *Poaceae* family of ornamental grasses is considered true grasses. They have cylindrical hollow stems or culms, with solid swollen nodes or joints along the culm. Other "grass-like" plants such as sedges (genus *Carex* in *Cyperaceae*) and rushes (*Juncaceae*) are not considered a true grass.

Growing

The vast majority of ornamental grasses, including *Molinia*, grow as discrete clumps (i.e. bunch), with a central dense crown below ground. While a growing crown does expand, it stays where it was planted.

Ornamental grasses emerge, grow, and flower in either a "cool" or "warm" garden season. Cool-season grass foliage emerges in early spring and flowering begins early summer. After flowering, further growth stalls. However, their established features mature late into the season. In contrast, warm-season grass foliage emerges from late spring to early summer, with flowering starting mid-late summer, a few even into early fall. Their mature features last well into late fall, even early winter.

Ornamental grasses prefer sun/part shade. Cool-season grasses like some shade and moist conditions. Warm-season grasses are often drought tolerant once established. Culms and foliage should be cut down to ~3-6 inches in either late fall to early winter, or in late winter to early spring before new leaves emerge. Grasses left up over winter provide interesting structures and skeletons, colorful impressions and shelter and protection for wildlife.

Distinctive Features

Each ornamental grass species has its own special set of ornamental features, comprised of foliage habit and color, culms, flower parts, and flowerhead inflorescence. Once established, ornamental features mature and persist late into the garden season.

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SPOTLIGHT: ORNAMENTAL GRASS *MOLINIA* (PURPLE MOOR GRASS)

Author: Thomas Mrazik (Continued)

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.

Distinctive Features (Continued)

Ornamental grass foliage emerges first at the plant's base (i.e. basal) in forms that are either tufted/mounded, upright, or arching/cascading. Later, multiple culms rise up from the basal foliage. Culms are erect and have no branches. Instead, they are sheathed with leaf blades, sometimes extending outward from the culm. Culm length varies by species.

Ornamental grasses have showy flowers, although an absence of petals, sepals, or nectar. Still, the floral ornament of every grass is unique because its flower parts and flowerhead have differing shapes, colors, sizes and arrangements.

- **Flower Parts:** A floret (i.e. tiny single flower) is made of small, scaly bracts; more than 1 floret is a spikelet. Inside a fertile floret is a stamen and pollen, an anther, and a pistil. Extending up at the tip of a bract is an awn, which is a long, hairy-like, bristle. Ornamental grasses are wind-pollinated.
- **Flowerhead:** A flowerhead inflorescence is a grouping of florets or spikelets arranged on a stalk (peduncle) held atop a culm. Inflorescences vary - a panicle is the most open and has the longest branching (i.e. pedicel) out from its stalk. Raceme branching is shorter while a spike has florets/spikelets that adhere directly to the peduncle (i.e. sessile), without branching.

Discover *Molinia* (Purple Moor Grass)

Molinia (purple moor grass) is a versatile and easy to care for perennial ornamental grass. It is well-suited for a naturalistic-style or meadow garden, as a dramatic specimen planting, and/or as a grouping along a garden bed border.

Today, *Molinia* is increasingly planted in home gardens and available from nurseries. Chicago Botanic Garden evaluations show *Molinia* cultivars as having excellent ratings and attributes. Purple moor grass is also displayed in public gardens designed by noted plantsman Piet Oudolf, such as at Lurie Garden in Chicago and the High Line in New York City.

Growing

Molinia belongs to the *Poaceae* family. It is a perennial grass, growing as a clump. The main species *Molinia caerulea* is separated into two subspecies (subsp.) *caerulea* and *arundinacea*. *Molinia caerulea*'s native range is Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Caucasus, growing in moors, bogs, low-lying wetlands, and grasslands. Its USDA hardiness zones range from 4/5-8.



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SPOTLIGHT: ORNAMENTAL GRASS *MOLINIA* (PURPLE MOOR GRASS)

Author: Thomas Mrazik (Continued)

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.

Growing (Continued)

Purple moor grass prefers sunny/part-shade locations with moist, well-drained, cool soils. Consistent moisture is important during hot, dry periods since it is not drought tolerant. Flowering may be less in too much shade or dry conditions.

Molinia is slow to reach maturity, typically taking 2-3 years. The two subsp. differ noticeably in their mature heights, including their flowerhead. Medium height (~4-5 feet) plants are of the subsp. *caerulea*; popular cultivars include 'Dauersthal,' 'Moorhex,' 'Moorflamme,' 'Poul Petersen,' and 'Heidebraut.' The subsp. *arundinacea* plants attain tall heights of ~6-8 feet; popular cultivars include 'Skyracer,' 'Transparent,' 'Cordoba,' and 'Bergfreund.'

Unlike other ornamental grasses, purple moor grass foliage and culms typically break down over winter. Since it is deciduous, leaves drop. The culms may flop and detach. It may be prudent to cut down this grass before winter, rather than wait until early spring.

Distinctive Features

The subtle beauty of purple moor grass manifests as dense basal foliage, elegant slender leafless culms, airy flowerheads held atop, graceful motion in the wind, and leaves and culms turning golden yellow in late Fall.

Foliage

Molinia foliage is quite attractive - green to dark green leaves, dense, plentiful growth forming the plant's base (i.e. basal). A cultivar, *Molinia caerulea* 'Variegata,' has foliage that is striped in green and creamy white.

In my garden (USDA Zone 7), foliage emerges from late April through May for cultivars of both subsp.: springtime ready, just like other cool-season ornamental grasses. Their habits vary, with the coarse wide, arching/cascading leaf blades of *Molinia caerulea* ssp. *arundinacea* compared to the narrow, fine-textured, upright foliage of the subsp. *caerulea*.

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SPOTLIGHT: ORNAMENTAL GRASS *MOLINIA* (PURPLE MOOR GRASS)

Author: Thomas Mrazik (Continued)

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.

In late fall, *Molinia*'s foliage color changes to a radiant golden yellow to orange yellow. In my garden (USDA Zone 7), this change takes place from late October through November, fading to soft tawny brown during winter.



***Molinia* Emerging Foliage**

Left: *Molinia* 'Dauersthral' emerges with narrow, upright green foliage in May.

Right: *Molinia* 'Bergfreund' emerges with wide, arching green foliage in May.



***Molinia* Foliage in Fall**

Left: *Molinia* 'Cordoba' has golden yellow cascading foliage in November.

Right: *Molinia* 'Skracer' exhibits golden yellow cascading foliage with culms in November.

Culms

- *Molinia* culms are an artistic sight! Green in color, strongly erect, slender and leafless, they create an attractive vertical presence, enhanced by having multiple culms on every plant.
- Tall cultivars are even more dramatic, showing a graceful arching habit and swaying in the wind. The culms of purple moor grass show a great distance between their leafy basal mounds and atop flowerheads. In late fall, culms change to a golden yellow color.



***Molinia* Culms**

Left: *Molinia* 'Skracer' culms with panicle flowerheads that tower above foliage in September.

Right: *Molinia* 'Dauersthral' culms with basal foliage turn golden yellow in November.

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SPOTLIGHT: ORNAMENTAL GRASS *MOLINIA* (PURPLE MOOR GRASS)

Author: Thomas Mrazik (Continued)

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.



Molinia Flowerhead

Left: *Molinia* “Dauersthral” has an airy panicle flowerhead held atop culm in late June.

Right: *Molinia* dark purple-green spikelets-anthers along its flowerhead.

Flowerhead

- *Molinia*’s flowerhead (i.e. inflorescence) is comprised of spikelets arranged in an airy open panicle. Flowering emerges in early summer and may continue to early July. Its common name of purple moor grass is due to the color (purple, purple-green or dark purple) of the tiny anthers dangling from each tiny floret/spikelet. Flowers fade to tawny, brown or bronze over the season.

Author: Thomas J Mrazik is a horticulturist and owner of the Goodly Gardens in Worcester, PA. His garden articles are published at The National Gardener Magazine gardenclub.org, Fine Gardening Finegardening.com and Penn State Extension extension.psu.edu. Thomas is a member of Norristown Garden Club, PA.

All original photograph images are owned by Thomas J Mrazik.

Learn More:

- Get to Know Molinia - Trial Results, Richard Hawke. Fine Gardening. finegardening.com
- A Evaluation Study of Hardy Ornamental Grasses. Richard G. Hawke. Chicago Botanic Garden. chicagobotantic.org
- Cool Season Native Ornamental Grasses for the Home Garden. Thomas Mrazik. extension.psu.edu
- Warm Season Native Ornamental Grasses for the Home Garden. Thomas Mrazik. extension.psu.edu

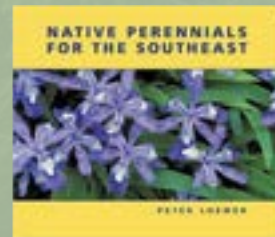


NATIVE PERENNIALS FOR THE SOUTHEAST

Book Review: Native Perennials for the Southeast

Author: Peter Loewer / **Reviewer:** Regina Doherty

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.



“When natives are planted out in the environment they were made for, they immediately settle in, hunker down, and perform like troopers.”

A direct quote from the author opens up this book and how right it is! As I've learned over the past eight years, *EVERYTHING* grows in Florida, but not everything belongs in Florida. As I've stated in previous book reviews, this author also feels mapping out and getting to know your landscape is step number one in gardening.

Questions we need to answer:

- What type of soil we have and its pH?
- When does the sun move over your property and when is shade created by structures and trees?
- Where does water settle, creating damp areas or runoff, creating depressions or dryer areas?
- How can you use this information to create your garden areas?

Like most gardening books, the author discusses microclimates and soil/soil types. All landscapes have microclimates:^[1] warm/cold spots in areas of your yard that can impact your plantings:

- Northside – gets very little sun
- Southside – full sun all winter, warmer in spring
- Cold air migrates to low spots in yard

The bulk of the book is then broken into sections^[2] that include native plants, best zones to grow them in, color photos, his personal experiences/thoughts, and how best to plant them. The book is very informative, and I found 100 perennials that are safe to grow in or native to Florida (Zone 9), as well as 17 aquatic plants. I also found 4 genus that can have invasive species. So, *ALWAYS* check the UF/IFAS Assessment page, <https://assessment.ifas.ufl.edu/> (or one specific to your region) to make sure you are not planting something that will take over your ecoregion (see below for some sites).

The final chapter gives advice from his gardener friends in the Southeast. I love the quote on page 181 from Tom MacCubbin of Apopka, FL – “How lucky could one be but to live in Florida where we garden year-round?” It's exactly how I felt when I made the same realization the year we moved here.

- USDA NISIC (<https://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/species-profiles-list>)
- Invasive Plant Atlas of US (<https://www.invasiveplantatlas.org/vines.cfm>)
- USDA Forest Svc (<https://www.fs.usda.gov/wildflowers/invasives/index.shtml>)

The beauty of planting natives? Wildlife!
Monarch (*Danaus Plexippus*) on *Liatris spicata*



Reviewer: Regina Doherty, FFGC DVII Lakes & Hills GC of Mount Dora. Regina 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.

[1] As explained by Bobbie Schwartz in his Garden Renovations book – see Fall 2025 TFG book review

[2] Perennials, Ferns, Grasses/Sedges, Water/Bogs



Flowering Plants Nutrient Storage

Author: Arabella Dane

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.

Some of the Ways That Flowering Plants Store Nutrients

Plants convert the raw materials of sunlight, carbon dioxide, and water to manufacture the sugars and starches they need for food and energy^[i]. Some vascular plants^[ii] can store excess sugars and starches as carbohydrates in specific organs. This allows them to survive seasonal or annual fluctuations in temperature and rainfall. When conditions are adverse, their foliage dies and the plant goes dormant, keeping its potential resources ready to burst forth when the conditions are suitable. Some do this in one season; others take two years, and some do this for many years sequentially. They must store the nutrients to complete their life cycle.^[iii]

Many plants store nutrients in their stems

Some store them in “above ground stems.” For example, sugar cane, a perennial grass, stores sugar in the internodes^[iv] of its stems. The cane is cut and harvested annually to process into sugar, regrowing annually from the underground stalks called ratoon stools.



Kohlrabi, a biennial, stores its nutrients in an enlarged area of the stem just above the soil level. This enlarged engorgement appears in the stem in the first year, and its purpose is to support the growth of flowers and seeds in the second year when its life cycle is completed.

Other plants store nutrients in their bulbs

Underground bulbs are one of the plants' adaptations for underground stem nutrient storage. Bulbs are comprised of scales which grow at the top of the basal plate in a circular pattern around the meristem (the growing shoot). The individual scales are clones. This means they can be separated and can grow as individual plants. Members of the onion and the lily families grow from bulbs.

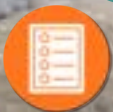


So how does this work?

Within the plant stem, a **basal plate** is formed underground. The basal plate is the basic structure - the core - from which both the bulb and the roots of the plant emerge. A new basal plate is formed in the stem below the old bulb as the nutrients in the old bulb are depleted. In perennials, this basal plate slowly expands, getting wider, generating new scales upward and roots downward.

The basal plate is a permanent feature with new bulbs and bulblets growing below the old plate, year-after-year, forming new rings of scales as the stores in the original bulb are depleted.

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(Continued)

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Some bulbs are covered with a papery skin called a tunic. This outer layer, which is the oldest part of the bulb, protects the inner layers. In some cases, the inner layers of each segment may also have a tunic – as in a garlic clove.

In a bulb with a papery tunic, the newest scales are those closest to the central meristem^[v]. When conditions are favorable, the apical meristem grows new leaves and begins photosynthesis. The floral shoot emerges and the meristem provides cells for future root growth.

Examples of Bulbs



Onions



Garlic

CORMS

Another way plants may store food in the underground part of their stem is by developing **CORMS**. Corms form during the plant's active growth cycle giving nourishment to the growing plant. The corm is depleted as the plant grows. Each year, during its growth cycle, a new corm forms on top of the old, shriveled one.

CORMS may look like bulbs, but they are very different. Corms are comprised of solid tissue, while bulbs are comprised of scales (modified leaves). Corms have a papery outer coating (a tunic) which stops water loss and protects them from pests and physical damage. Corms have nodes^[i] and during the growing season, shoots sprout from the top of the corm and roots grow from the bottom. These vigorous roots can pull the corm deeper into the soil. In addition, the corm may grow little cormels around its base. These little cormels may be attached directly to the base plate or may form directly on the stem. They can be detached and grown as individual plants. **Examples:** Taro is a corm as are crocus, gladiola and crocosmia.

Corm

Corm Sliced Open

Taro



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Flowering Plants Nutrient Storage

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(Continued)

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Another example of an underground stem adaptation that stores food is **rhizomes**. Rhizomes are fleshy underground STEMS that grow horizontally along the surface of the soil or just below the surface. Rhizomes are a permanent part of the plant - storing the nutrients needed by the plant in its growing phase - and produce shoots which grow up from the nodes and roots that grow downward into the soil. ^[VI]

Rhizomes can also form tubers. Rhizomes allow the plant to safely store nutrients during periods of extreme weather conditions or drought. In addition, rhizomes allow the plant to reproduce asexually - by making clones. These clones run across the ground either on the surface or just below the surface, or by forming clumps. Many rhizomatous plants also reproduce sexually. Typical rhizomatous plants are the bearded iris, ginger and bamboo.

Tumeric and Ginger



STOLONS

Stolons are another stem adaptation. These short-lived horizontal stems grow from the base of a plant and sprout both roots and shoots. While these 'runners' are not used for nutrient storage, they help a plant spread by growing new plants at their nodes. The tips (meristem) of a stolon (potato) or rhizome (sunchoke) may swell and become a tuber.

Stolon/runner & rhizome Meristem



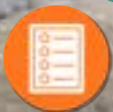
TUBERS

These are stem parts that form on the tip of a stolon or on the tip of a rhizome. They store nutrients. Tubers have nodes and internodes, and you can grow a new plant from them. An example is the potato that forms at the tip of a stolon from the shoots we call 'eyes'. Sunchoke form on rhizomes.

Photo Left: Tuber grown from a Stolon (potato) and its eyes

Photo Right: Tuber grown from a rhizome (sunchoke)

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Flowering Plants Nutrient Storage

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(Continued)

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Plants can also store nutrients in their roots

When the embryo is forming within the seed, the radicle emerges from the bottom of the seed, either as a big fleshy root, a tap root, which grows straight down into the soil, or as fibrous roots, a network of little roots that spread out just below the surface of the ground, or as tuberous roots which may form in clusters radiating off the main root.

The tap root stores the nutrients and moisture needed by the plant for its entire growing season. Examples are carrots and parsnips. The enlarged fleshy root has a protective outer layer, and just inside this is the cortex^{IVIII} where the nutrients are kept. A tap root may have lateral and secondary roots that make it possible to get additional nutrients and water from the soil. The nutrients in the cortex are used both during the growing season and for restarting the plant in the next growth cycle.

Carrots and Parsnip Turnips

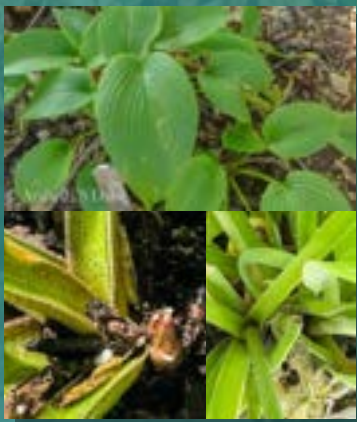
Interior view of a carrot showing the structure: epidermis, cortex and vascular core.



TUBEROUS ROOTS - are enlarged lateral roots that form where the root meets the stem. Tuberous roots do not have nodes, internodes or eyes. A tuberous root has shoots at one end and roots at the other. A sweet potato and a yucca are examples of a tuberous root.

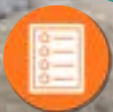
Sweet Potato

Yucca



In addition to stems and roots, there are also **TRANSITION ZONES** in plants where they can store nutrients. For example, the **CROWN**, located where the stem and the root connect, is located just below the soil surface and where some perennial plants store nutrients and then produce new growth for the plant year after year. Hosta and peonies are examples of perennial plants that have crowns.

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(Continued)

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Other plants like radishes and celeriac form their storage organ from the **HYPOCOTYL**- which is the plant part that forms within the seed's embryo between the seed leaves and the radicle. As the seed's embryo starts to germinate, the hypocotyl grows and enlarges at ground level, pushing the tiny shoots upwards to form the leaves, and pushing the radicle down into the soil to make roots. This hypocotyl forms a mass of food storage tissue on the lower part of the stem connecting it to the roots.^[VIII] Many of the ones we eat are biennials, forming this growth in their first year and completing their life cycle in the second year by growing flowers and seeds.

Radish, Celeriac, Rutabaga, and Beets

All formed in the hypocotyl area of the embryonic plant and enlarging in the first year.



Beets are also formed in the hypocotyl.



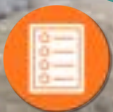
CONCLUSION:

Whether the plant stores its nutrients in its stem or roots or in transitional zones for one season, one year, biennially, or for many years sequentially, these adaptations provide successful survival mechanisms to that plant. We benefit from their adaptations in many ways above and beyond the oxygen they provide to our world.

[Click to access the article references and end notes.](#)

Author: Arabella Dane

She is a National Garden Club Master Flower Show Judge, Master Landscape Critic, and Gardening Study Consultant. She is also a NH Master Gardener, and until her recent move to Wisconsin, was a UNH extension service volunteer, and is a Certified Pollinator Steward.





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NGC CREATIVE DESIGN STYLE

Author: Frances Thrash, Design Instructor

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.

History of Creative Design Style

NGC Creative Floral Design was first introduced in the late 1950's as flower shows flourished throughout the United States and as the garden club members' talents expanded. Many members were studying art and applying their knowledge of international art history and its creative movements to floral design.

Most of these designers were searching for a creative release from the prevailing tedium of the floral medium; rebelling against the set "rules," "pretty" designs, geometric patterns, and copies of naturalistic scenes. They came to feel that the copying of a scene or a set geometric pattern was nothing more than a display of mechanical skill; a craft, rather than a creative achievement.



Primary among their influences were:

- **Impressionism:** the effect of light on objects; Fauvism, simplified design in strong color
- **Expressionism:** spirit of revolt and self-expression
- **Art Nouveau:** a highly decorative style, dedication to natural forms
- **Art Deco:** an elegant style of decorative art characterized by angular symmetrical geometric forms
- **Cubism:** geometrical forms and fragmentations
- **Surrealism:** the psychological aspect in art
- **Abstractionism:** with emphasis on the non-realistic and unnatural.

In direct contrast to the traditional/conventional realism with its preoccupation with the imitation of nature (sight), the modernists swung to non-imitative, with emphasis on the dramatization of the inner self, inner feelings, emotions and ideas (insight) executed with combinations of organic and inorganic materials but still inseparable from the principles of design and a common point of radiating emergence. Natural scenes were still depicted, but with greater imagination and freedom of interpretation, not so realistically or literally; the Creative Class was born, and its popularity continues. (*Encyclopedia of Judging & Exhibiting, Esther Hamel*)

Today NGC Creative Floral Design is an acknowledged art form in which creativity, imagination and originality are essential ingredients. No longer are designs bound by rules, styles, or traditional patterns; nor are they designs in space. They are designs of space, for in all Creative Design the relationship between form and space has become a vital consideration.

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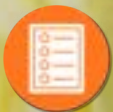
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Characteristics of all NGC Creative Design Style

1. Designs continue to conform to the Principles of Design.
2. They are eclectic in concept, borrowing from different styles and/or periods to create new concepts and forms.
3. Creative Designs usually show restraint in the amount of plant material and/or number of components used. Exception: most Creative Mass Designs and Assemblages.
4. They may have more than one focal area and more than one point of emergence, but clarity of design is all important.
5. They may include non-naturalistic qualities. Lines may be crossed vertically or diagonally and may be used to stabilize or to deliberately confuse the viewer.
6. Any part of the design may be dominant.
7. Creative Design is the expression of the designer's unique ideas. It is not a copy of a design previously created. Each chosen piece in the design, organic or inorganic, has an individuality, a character of its own, and must have been used in such a way that this individuality is expressed in keeping with the main idea being communicated.
8. The designer positions components according to **plastic organization**. Plastic organization is a term used in the art world. It refers to the thoughtful placement of components within a three-dimensional area (height, width and depth) in order to mold space. Components may be **juxtaposed** (adjacent to each other, side-by-side, one behind the other, above and below, etc.) to increase the illusion of depth.
9. Additional techniques to enhance depth in Creative Design are: Applying the organizational technique of **interpenetration of space** by creating space within, around and about the physical components. It is the result of successful plastic organization and therefore a characteristic of a design **of** space; or it is applying the technique of **penetration of space**, which is the strong thrusting of plant materials and/or other physical components through space, usually a diagonal thrusting from foreground to rear ground. This technique may add to rhythm and balance. Selecting components having contrasting advancing and receding colors and shiny vs. rough textures creates eye movement. Colors having maximum saturation are the most stimulating. Of all the spectral colors, in natural light, yellows advance the most, then oranges, then reds. Receding colors are referred to as "cool" and retreating colors. If pure colors, they are green through blue to violet on the color wheel. They do not attract or hold attention as do warm colors and tend to retreat. Gray and black, though neutral and not colors, are also receding. Of all spectral colors in natural light, violet is the most retreating, then green, then blue. Since every color has three properties, hue, value and intensity, it is these combined qualities that determine a color's strength or weakness in design. Areas of receding and advancing color in a design create tension if juxtaposed. Texture modifies form, color, and impact. Smooth or shiny textures make areas appear larger and create greater impact. Incorporating components having transparent and/or reflective qualities will add interest.
10. Filler and/or transitional materials are not needed in Creative Design, as structural clarity is important.

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NGC CREATIVE DESIGN STYLE

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(Continued)

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Design types which are considered to be creative include Angular, Construction, Creative Line, Creative Line Mass, Creative Mass, Framed Spatial, Illuminary, Multi-Rhythmic, Panel, Parallel, Reflective, Spatial Thrust, Transparent, Tubular, Abstract, Armature, Assemblage, Duo, Grouped Mass, Low-Profile (added 9/25), Tapestry, and Underwater.



All designs may possess varying degrees of abstraction (non-naturalism). There are categories for Degrees of Abstraction. Traditional and Creative Designs may have no abstraction. It is a design in which all components are untreated and organized in a naturalistic manner. Traditional and Creative Designs may have minor abstraction. It is a design in which only one or two components are treated, and/or organized in a non-naturalistic manner.

All Creative Designs may have moderate abstraction. It is a design in which several components are treated and/or organized in a non-naturalistic manner. All Creative Designs, except Still Life Designs, may have a dominance of abstraction. It is then referred to as an Abstract Creative Design. All designs fit into one of the above categories depending upon the amount of abstraction included in a design.

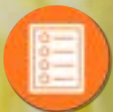
American Abstract Creative Design

Abstract Creative Design Distinction: They share the same tangible characteristics as all other Creative Designs but go a step further. They are designs with a dominance of abstraction. Abstraction in floral design is the act of separating the inherent physical qualities of plant material and other components from the associated or naturalistic concept of them. Abstract designing is the unification and organization of all elements restricted to the simplest form and emphasizing space, movement and creativity, and the elimination of detail. All Abstract Creative Designs are creative, but not all Creative Designs are abstract.

Definition and Characteristics of Abstract Creative Design: It is a design for which the designer selects, treats and/or organizes plant materials and other components in order to create a non-naturalistic and non-realistic design with a dominance of abstract characteristics. Components are not selected for their normal function as the design is non-representational. They are selected solely for their elemental qualities of line, form, color and/or texture. Typically, they are bold in form, size and color. Plant materials which need not be in water are frequently used, as are non-traditional container/s with multiple openings and unconventional, man-made objects not normally associated with floral design or art. Space is vitally important as it is used to create new patterns. Plastic organization, interpenetration of space, and penetration of space are essential design techniques in Abstract Creative Design.

Rhythm and balance are achieved through dynamic balance – a technique for organizing a creative design, relying on balance and counterbalance between components, rather than traditional balance. Interest is equated throughout the design.

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NGC CREATIVE DESIGN STYLE

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(Continued)

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Abstracting Materials and Components: There are ways of abstracting plant material and other components through selection, treatment and organization. Pattern or form of the plant materials used may have been altered by nature, e.g., water, wind, disease, or by chemical. In the flower show, fresh plant materials may be abstracted by clipping, wiring, stripping, bending, tying, folding, or placement, but must never be dyed, painted, waxed, glittered, etc.

In the flower show, dried plant materials may be abstracted with substance/s such as dye, paint, wax, polish, glitter, etc. It is then referred to as treated dried plant material. The designer avoids radial placement of plant materials as that would simulate nature. The designer ignores gradation and transition of color, size, and texture as rhythm and counter-balance of solids in space, rather than traditional balance. Interest is to be equated over the entire design, with the central area having lost its importance.

Design Types that are Abstract Creative

Assemblages and Collages must always be Abstract.

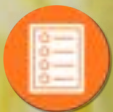
- **Assemblage:** Assemblage is a three-dimensional Abstract Creative Design, consisting of a combination of “found,” disparate objects, and plant material. “Found” objects are non-art objects, **not made or manufactured for decorative purposes**. They may be painted but should remain recognizable and not contrived. “Disparate objects” refer to unlike objects that have never had a prior use **together**. Though objects are considered non-art and previously unrelated, the designer creatively relates them through their compatible elemental qualities of line, form, color and texture. In order to be **disparate** from one another and satisfy the term “assemblage,” objects must **dominate** and there should be three or more **different** objects. Plant material enhances. Suggested materials are metal, plastic, wire, rope, industrial discards, electrical and mechanical parts. Plants in containers must not be included as they exemplify nature as opposed to abstraction. Components are juxtaposed in non-realistic, non-naturalistic, and non-representational organization. An Assemblage may be identified by its staging (a, b, d) or construction (c).

Staging may be:

- a. Staged on a table or pedestal surface
- b. Staged on a background panel
- c. Components attached to each other and self-supported as a sculptural form
- d. Or any combination of the above types

Types a, b, and d must have interest equated throughout the frame of reference. Type c must have interest equated throughout the design itself.

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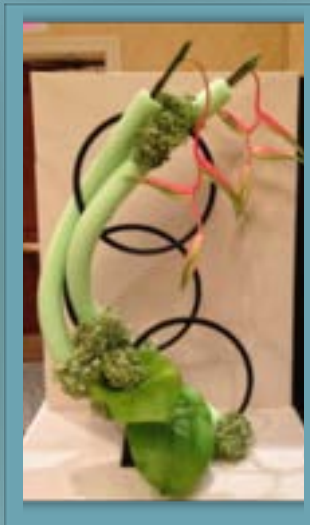
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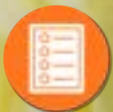
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- **Mobile from Botanical Arts** is a free-hanging design with groupings of freely moving units or parts. Must have interest equated throughout, and all units must be able to move in air currents. Balance within the mobile is essential to unhampered movement. Weight of components must be judiciously calculated. Forms, colors, and textures must be balanced throughout the Mobile. Penetration and interpenetration of space play vital roles in a successful Mobile.
- **Collage from Botanical Arts** is an abstract design created on a background panel(s) with a dominance of components attached in a non-realistic arrangement. Components include plant material and other found objects. May be staged in upright position on walls, easels, or other vertical structures.



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**.*



The Case for Imperfect Gardens

Author: Theresa Chapman

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I have noticed something over the years. Flower gardeners speak in the language of promise: buds, blooms, color, fragrance — it's a vocabulary of anticipation. My garden, on the other hand, speaks in the language of proof. Mine is less about hope and more about dinner.



In many ways, blooms are a kind of “hopium.” They are a belief in what might open tomorrow. I admire that deeply. But my particular joy has always been in the literal fruits of my labor — the tomato that actually ripens, the lettuce that becomes lunch, the harvest that justifies the mosquito bites and the crooked trellises. My beds in August are not photogenic. They are sprawling, chewed, uneven...and unapologetically productive.



That said, I'm learning. I've begun planting flowers — not because I can pronounce all their names yet, but because I've come to appreciate what they do. They bring pollinators. They bring birds closer to the feeder. They soften the edges of my utilitarian rows. I still measure success in pounds harvested, and yes, I once gave an entire presentation on software that calculates optimal seed-starting dates.

But I am beginning to understand the quieter pleasure of growing something simply because it is beautiful.

Perhaps an imperfect garden is simply an honest one. Some of us grow bouquets. Some of us grow salads. Most of us, if we're lucky, are growing into something new.

About the Author: Theresa Chapman, Seasons IV Garden Club, Southwest District, Virginia Federation of Garden Clubs. Theresa and her husband garden together at Beartown Homestead near Tazewell, Virginia. She serves as club secretary, District Horticulture Chairman, and District Editor for the Virginia Federation magazine. Theresa works as a senior software developer for an e-commerce technology company.



National Garden Week

Authors: Joyce Carcara and Katy Moss Warner
B&G Garden Tours

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.

National Garden Week was established in the U.S. by a Presidential Proclamation in 1986 to honor gardens, gardening and gardeners. It is an annual celebration held during the first full week of June. Spearheaded by the National Garden Clubs, it encourages communities to appreciate the mental, physical, and ecological benefits of gardening and highlights the importance of environmental stewardship and community beautification.



As proud members of the National Garden Clubs, the Bloom & Grow Garden Society of Winter Garden, FL, decided to celebrate National Garden Week this year with special visits to gardens our members maintain.

Our Member Programs Chair Van Donnan made all the arrangements. Each morning from 10-12 each day of National Garden Week, members who maintain the gardens offered a tour that gave insight into the history, design, intent and collection of plants. Each garden was unique. Most were full of flowers for pollinators. Over 20 Bloom & Grow members attended each day. It was a fabulous way to celebrate National Garden Week. It was a great way to make us all proud of the work we are doing in our community. Van is hoping to make this an annual event!

Day #1 - Monday, June 8th

The first day we visited the courtyard gardens at the Orlando Health Central Park Nursing and Rehabilitation Center. There are 5 enclosed garden areas – one of them very large. Bloom & Grow Garden Therapy Chair Ellen Shapiro with her committee Rochelle Rupp, Julie Farr, Tina Burriss, Pam Taylor, Zoe Zachary, and Jen Walker and honorary member resident Shirley, have completely transformed two of these courtyards, including the large one, over the last two years into pollinator habitats filled with lush growth and dazzling flowers.



The residents, staff and guests love sitting under the gazebos to watch the bees, birds, and butterflies flit from stem to stem. Many residents come out to visit the "Flower Lady" when she comes on Wednesday mornings to help water and weed. During the tour, the Center's Director Fanley Romelus presented Ellen with a plaque recognizing her dedication to this project. The plaque will reside in the garden.

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National Garden Week

Authors: Joyce Carcara and Katy Moss Warner
B&G Garden Tours (Continued)

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Day #2 - Tuesday, June 9th

Bloom & Grow members Wes and Vickie Parrish were the perfect hosts as members toured the breathtaking gardens and collections of plants surrounding their home on the shores of Lake Apopka in Winter Garden. Each are trained horticulturists and avid plant collectors. For years they had a nursery in South Florida. Their landscape is a profusion of palms, cycads, bromeliads, tillandsias, staghorn ferns, pollinator plants, and gloriously colorful container gardens. Even with the killing frost we experienced in February, everything was lush and green.



They honor the importance of native vegetation along the lake shore and have some spectacular 100-year-old sabal palms in this native habitat. From the back deck, with Lake Apopka as the backdrop, Mother Nature is in full force with soaring birds, fluttering butterflies, and fat and sassy bees, all enjoying the ecosystem. It is always a treat to visit the gardens of members.

Day #3 - Wednesday, June 10th

The West Orange Trail Pollinator/Butterfly Garden is decidedly different from the other gardens we visited this week. This garden, located on the West Orange Trail at 1061 Tildenville Rd. in Winter Garden, was specifically planted to give pollinators the ecosystem they need to prosper. Dr. Becki Lynch and her Pollinator Power Committee meet weekly on Thursday and make sure the bees have abundant pollen and nectar sources, safe nesting sites, and protection from pesticides...and the butterflies have caterpillar host plants and adult nectar plants in a sunny, sheltered environment.



There is continual bloom in this garden for the pollinators, as well as logs and brush piles that offer shelter. Interpretive signage encourages visitors to learn about the plants and maintenance practices necessary for thriving pollinator habitats. Clever fun additions to the garden make it a popular destination for children. Becki gave a great tour, sharing that the look of the garden is one of "a chaotic hodgepodge of diversity." The plantings are allowed to move into sun or shade according to their needs. This garden is truly an inspiration.

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National Garden Week

Authors: Joyce Carcara and Katy Moss Warner

B&G Garden Tours (Continued)

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Day #4 - Thursday, June 11th

In 2022, the Bloom & Grow Garden Society offered to plant 4 large garden beds in front of the new Eco Education Center at Magnolia Park in Apopka. Each structure was an 8' x 25' concrete raised bed. These were to be habitats for endangered bees and butterflies using native plants along with non-invasive plants, nectar-rich flowers, and larval host plants. What is unique about these plantings is that they are in hot full sun all day long. Using sand as the planting medium, all the beds were planted with plants and seeds necessary for bees and butterflies to thrive.



Bloom & Grow member Paul Willman visits the garden 2-3 times a week to keep these beds looking perfect. One of the most striking plants was the giant milkweed (*Calotropis gigantea*). Interpretive signs identify plants and provide information about pollinators – what they need to rest, nest, eat and drink. The fritillary and zebra longwing butterflies were out in force, enjoying their host plant, the passion flower. It was loaded with caterpillars. Becki and Paul gave a great tour of the garden beds, and then we visited the educational exhibits inside the Eco Education Center. This is a must-see garden for those eager to encourage pollinators!

Day #5 - Friday, June 12th

The Path of Life Garden in Chapin Station is the grande dame of our Bloom & Grow gardens. Designed and installed by Bloom & Grow members, it opened in 1999, just 2 years after our incorporation as a club. Two years later, we received the prestigious Kellogg Award for Civic Achievement. The National Council of State Garden Clubs bestows this award to one garden club that has shown distinguished civic or conservation work that has made a permanent improvement for the benefit of the public.

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National Garden Week

Authors: Joyce Carcara and Katy Moss Warner

B&G Garden Tours (Continued)

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.

Day #5 - Friday, June 12th

Ellen Shapiro gave a fascinating tour of the garden – the history, the unique specimens, the special collections, the seasonal bloom. The garden is gorgeous – lush and green. It is filled with camellias, azaleas, ferns, bromeliads, gingers, aspidistra and so many others. We strolled along the hand-set brick path etched with names of members and friends under the shade of tall stately trees with butterfly sculptures glistening above. Caladiums offered a burst of color. The peacock ginger sparkled with its lavender flowers.



It takes a lot of work to make the Path of Life the hidden gem that it is. Bloom & Grow member Jackie Brown Colberg conceived the idea over 27 years ago and is still the driving force in the planning and upkeep. Thanks to her committee Heather Peery, Van Donnan, Bob & Gloria Cox, Alan & Ellen Shapiro, Steve Spreier, Debbie Stein, and Arlen Colberg, the garden continues to receive excellent care. It is a garden to visit in all seasons. It is a garden filled with the right plants for Central Florida gardens.



About the Authors: Joyce Carcara and Katy Moss Warner of FFGC DVII's Bloom & Grow Garden Club are a very active club with projects and their Winter Garden community.



PLANT AMERICA JULY 4TH RED, WHITE, AND BLUE PLANTINGS

Authors: Donna Donnelly, NGC Presidentt
Mary Lou Kenney, Mountain Laurel Garden Club
Juanita Burnett, President of Azalea Garden Club

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.

These wonderful photos provided by Juanita Burnett perfectly say PLANT AMERICA!



Author: Juanita Burnett
President of Azalea Garden Club of Conway, SC, Conway Garden Club
Council and Assistant Coastal District Director

North Carolina Department of Transportation shared this lovely photo of Red, White and Blue-tiful! A favorite of patriotic wildflower beds planted ahead of the 4th of July celebration of our nation's 250th birthday!



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PLANT AMERICA JULY 4TH RED, WHITE, AND BLUE PLANTINGS (CONTINUED)

The Mountain Laurel Garden Club of Garrett County, MD, affiliated with the Federated Garden Clubs of Maryland, has committees that maintain gardens at three of our county libraries, the Ruth Enlow Library. As chair of the committee that maintains the Accident, MD, library branch, I am proud to show our celebration of America's 250th anniversary. We planted red, white, and "bluish" annuals in our six outdoor containers.



Author: Mary Lou Kenney
Mountain Laurel Garden Club of Garrett County, MD Member

PATRIOTIC RESIDENTIAL DISPLAY

In honor of our nation's 250th birthday, Editor Victoria Schmidt planted the front entry bed in her new home with red, white, and blue perennials and added a jaunty 250th birthday garden flag!



PLANT AMERICA BLUE STAR PLANTINGS

PUNTA GORDA GARDEN CLUB & PORT CHARLOTTE GARDEN CLUB IN FLORIDA



Upcycled Solutions to Weather Issues

Author: Brynn Tavasci

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.



Topic: Recycling, upcycling, and finding second uses for everyday items can help protect your plants from harsh or sudden weather changes.

You can find many useful materials in your junk drawer, shed, corner of your garage, or even in your clothes closet that can help you protect your plants when weather makes a sudden shift.

Freeze and Frost Protection

Plants that are exposed to frosts and freezes can experience cell rupture as the water inside the leaves freezes and expands. When the ice thaws, the damage may continue. To help your tender plants preserve warmth, you can cover them with items you likely already have at home. Plastic water jugs or totes come in many sizes and can create a temporary greenhouse. Bubble wrap attached to a lampshade frame, tomato cage, or a chicken wire structure will help to keep the chill off new seedlings or end-of-season annuals. A sheet supported over a large garden bed can protect a larger area. Old curtain rods can be used to create a teepee structure to hold the sheet safely above. Use rocks or tent pins to keep the edges from catching the wind.



UPCYCLING

Wind and Wallop Protection

Wind can cause leaf desiccation, broken branches, and a reduction in bloom and fruit production. The wire from a collapsible laundry basket can create a spiral support for weak-stemmed plants. You can add chicken wire to a lampshade frame, creating a cage that can be placed around a plant and pinned to the ground. Wire a few beads to the cage for added color and personality. A side benefit of cages is keeping the bunnies from pruning your plants for you. Floor lamp pipes can be long enough to support plants up to 3 feet tall when stuck into the ground next to your long-stemmed flowers. For whimsy, glue a decorative saltshaker to the top. Loosely tie your flowers to the pole with a ripped t-shirt. Similarly, one hailstorm can cause extreme damage to plant foliage. Use totes or laundry baskets weighted with a rock or brick on top as a temporary shield.

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Upcycled Solutions to Weather Issues

Author: Brynn Tavasci

(Continued)

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.

Topic: Recycling, upcycling, and finding second uses for everyday items can help protect your plants from harsh or sudden weather changes.

Heat and Scorch Protection

During photosynthesis leaves open their stomata to let in carbon dioxide. In extreme heat the stomata sometimes stay open using transpiration to keep the leaves cool. Regular photosynthesis can be disturbed by unusually high temperatures and excess sun exposure, resulting in tissue damage. You can help your plants preserve water and avoid scorch injury by providing shade with an umbrella. Or create a “shady person” in your garden by tying a shirt to a tomato cage using its sleeves. Add a wide-brimmed hat to keep the neighbors guessing. Both can be moved easily from plant to plant. Move a gardening basket along with the “shady person” to create a tableau.

Recycling, upcycling, and finding second uses for objects will always provide just the thing that you need to protect your beautiful garden plants. Special shout out to lamps--their parts have many second uses and will always help you to weather the storm.



Author: Brynn Tavasci,
PLANT AMERICA Committee-Upcycling, Recycling, and Stewardship



Glass Moyer Bottles

Author: Sarah McReynolds

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.

Glass Moyer Bottles: An Old-Fashioned Way to Protect Garden Plants

Long before modern row covers, cold frames, and electric greenhouse heaters, resourceful gardeners found creative ways to protect tender plants from chilly nights. One little-known technique involved burying Glass Moyer bottles in the soil near young plants. While simple in appearance, these glass bottles worked by storing the sun's warmth during the day and slowly releasing it after sunset, helping to moderate soil temperatures around delicate seedlings. The old milk bottles worked; wine bottles can be used as well.



The concept is based on a basic scientific principle known as thermal mass. Glass absorbs heat from the sun throughout the day. When partially buried in the ground, the bottle also transfers warmth to the surrounding soil. As nighttime temperatures fall, the stored heat is gradually released, reducing temperature fluctuations and offering a small measure of frost protection. Although the temperature increase is modest, even a few degrees can make the difference between a healthy plant and one damaged by an unexpected cold snap.



Gardeners often buried the bottles at an angle, leaving the neck exposed above the soil. This allowed sunlight to warm the bottle while making it easy to remove or reposition if needed. Some gardeners filled the bottles with water, increasing their ability to store heat because water retains warmth much longer than air. The warmed water then released heat slowly through the night.

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Glass Moyer Bottles (Continued)

Author: Sarah McReynolds

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.

Glass Moyer Bottles: An Old-Fashioned Way to Protect Garden Plants

This traditional method was especially useful for protecting tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, and other warm-season vegetables planted early in the spring. While Glass Moyer bottles were never intended to replace larger protective structures during severe freezes; they provided an inexpensive and reusable solution for extending the growing season.

Today, many gardeners appreciate these historic techniques as examples of sustainable gardening. Reusing glass bottles reduces waste while demonstrating how earlier generations relied on observation and ingenuity rather than expensive equipment. Whether used as a conversation piece in a heritage garden or as a practical aid for starting vegetables a little earlier in the season, Glass Moyer bottles remind us that some of the best gardening ideas are rooted in simple science and time-tested tradition.

Sometimes the oldest gardening practices still have something valuable to teach modern gardeners.

Author: Sarah McReynolds, NGC Gardening School Chairman.



CREATING A SMALL STANDARD FLOWER SHOW

Author: Shirley A. Tetreault

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.

HOW TO CREATE A SMALL STANDARD FLOWER SHOW

Let's go over how to create a small standard flower show. Follow the steps below, and you'll be on your way!

1. Go to the NGC website – <https://gardenclub.org>



- a. Go to *Member Log-In* at the top right of the page. You will need your member password to proceed. **Note:** If you don't have a member account, you'll need to create one first. Use "Create account" at the bottom of the Member Login page.
- b. Select the link to the "*Flower Show School Resources*".

- c. Scroll down to the *Sample Schedules* section and select "*Small-Standard FS Sample Schedule*."
- d. Click on it to open the PDF. Then, **save** it in your favorite location using the *download* button at the top right of the page.

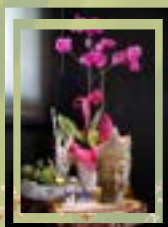


- e. Your document is now ready to fill in the blanks.

Depending on the program you are using to open the PDF, you will take the necessary steps to edit the document. In some cases, it may be selecting "*enable editing*," but in others, it may be just highlighting the text to change and selecting "*Edit Text*."

2. The front page has a lot of information that you already know—relax in front of your computer and fill in the blanks.

- a. **Theme:** You will need a "Theme" that will carry throughout the schedule.
- b. Select something you know or like. **Examples:** "A Spring Garden Tour," "The 4th of July," "Christmas Magic," "Let's Go to the Movies," and "Thanksgiving Celebration." Make it simple and make it fun so that your members will want to participate.
- c. **Table of Contents:** You may need to skip this for now and come back to it later.
- d. **Show Committee:** These are members of your club. Try asking someone that doesn't participate often. Train them for the job you need. You may be surprised at what a good job they can do. You might learn their strengths.
- e. **General Rules:** This is major information telling the exhibitor where they can get the entry cards, times and dates, etc.



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CREATING A SMALL STANDARD FLOWER SHOW

Author: Shirley A. Tetreault

(Continued)

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HOW TO CREATE A SMALL STANDARD FLOWER SHOW

f. **Awards:** Everything is listed as you see in the PDF. Page 45 of the Handbook has details.

g. **Horticulture Rules:** This is already done for you, so continue down to horticulture classes.

h. **Horticulture Classes:** Your show should have horticulture that is blooming in your area at the time of your show. Don't schedule your show for December in the middle of a snowstorm. Plan fall, early spring or summer when your members can show off their efforts.

i. **Division II Design:** Everything is stated.

j. **Design Classes:** Select designs that you know your members can achieve. Make sure you give details—design type, staging, frame of reference, color, etc. All classes must have a theme.

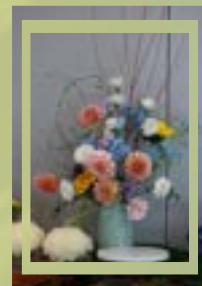
3. You're almost done!

a. **TOC and Page Numbers:** Go back and complete your table of contents and make sure that all pages are numbered.

b. **Review:** Send your schedule to a few committee members to double-check your work for spelling, dates, times, location, etc.

c. **Add Name:** Write your name in the Table of Contents—you just finished your schedule.

d. **Finish:** Enjoy the show and good luck on all of your wonderful entries.



Author: Shirley A. Tetreault

FS-FSS Committee – State Judges' Council Chair

ammasangels@comcast.net | (505) 259-2263

Gardens to Tour

Author: Victoria Schmidt, TNG Editor

Published in *The National Gardener*, Fall 2026 **National Garden Clubs, Inc.**

FIVE EXCEPTIONAL GARDENS TO TOUR IN THE SOUTHWEST

The Southwest offers some spectacular gardens to visit. Its deserts and high-desert landscapes have some fascinating horticultural experiences. These five gardens demonstrate how thoughtful design, specialized plant collections, and creative water-wise gardening can transform even the most challenging climates.

BOYCE THOMPSON ARBORETUM: SUPERIOR, ARIZONA

An hour east of Phoenix you'll find the Boyce Thompson Arboretum, Arizona's oldest and largest botanical garden. It encompasses 135 acres of dramatic desert and mountain terrain. Its collections include plants from arid regions around the world, including Africa, Australia, Mexico, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East. With winding trails, towering trees, desert gardens, and spectacular views, it feels more like exploring a natural landscape than visiting a traditional botanical garden.

TOHONO CHUL: TUCSON, ARIZONA

Tohono Chul combines a botanical garden, arboretum, nature preserve, art, and Southwestern culture across 49 acres. Its many gardens include a penstemon garden, desert palm oasis, succulent and cactus garden, sin agua garden, and Sonoran seasons garden. Those interested in water-wise landscaping will find useful ideas, including demonstrations of rainwater harvesting and low-water residential landscapes.

TUCSON BOTANICAL GARDENS: TUCSON, ARIZONA

This intimate 20-themed-garden offers a variety of horticultural experiences within a historic property. You can explore a Barrio Garden inspired by traditional Mexican-American neighborhood gardens, a modernist garden, a Frida Kahlo-inspired garden, a xeriscape garden, a rose garden, and a tropical butterfly greenhouse. It is particularly appealing to gardeners because the individual spaces provide practical ideas that can be incorporated into home landscapes.

ABQ BIOPARK BOTANIC GARDEN: ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

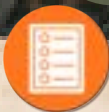
The ABQ BioPark Botanic Garden is a lush contrast to the surrounding high-desert landscape. The highlights include the Sasebo Japanese Garden, created in collaboration with Albuquerque's Japanese sister city, along with the Rio Grande Heritage Farm, which highlights New Mexico's agricultural traditions. The lush gardens, regional plants, cultural history, and conservation makes this a great choice for travelers.

DESERT BOTANICAL GARDEN: PHOENIX, ARIZONA

Within the Sonoran Desert, this garden is an extraordinary place to see plants thriving in an arid environment. Its collections include thousands of desert-adapted plants, with towering saguaros, colorful wildflowers, agaves, and other succulents creating a dramatic landscape. For gardeners from wetter parts of the country, the garden offers an entirely different perspective on plant selection, design, and water conservation.

SUMMARY

Together, these gardens show the expansive diversity of Southwestern horticulture. Rather than trying to defeat the desert, they work with it—using native and adapted plants, creative design, and careful water management to create landscapes that are both beautiful and sustainable.



COOL ONLINE TOOLS

Author: Victoria Schmidt
TNG Editor-in-Chief

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.

The modern gardener's toolkit now includes journals, website bookmarks, satellite sun maps, AI research assistants, gardening apps and horticultural databases. Technology won't replace gardening knowledge—but it can help gardeners make better decisions and spend more time enjoying the fruits of their garden."

10 Online Tools Every Advanced Gardener Should Know

1. **USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map:** The definitive U.S. tool for determining perennial plant hardiness by ZIP code, with detailed interactive mapping. <https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov>
2. **USDA Web Soil Survey:** Explore detailed soil maps and information about soil properties, drainage, limitations, and land-use characteristics for specific locations. <https://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/>
3. **Plants of the World Online (Kew):** An outstanding botanical reference for plant names, taxonomy, distribution, descriptions, images, and worldwide plant data. It currently includes more than 1.4 million plant names. <https://powo.science.kew.org/>
4. **International Plant Names Index (IPNI):** A valuable resource to verify the correct scientific name, author citation, publication information, or nomenclatural history of a plant. <https://www.ipni.org>
5. **RHS Find a Plant:** Search an extensive plant database by characteristics such as light, soil, moisture, hardiness, size, season, color, and garden use. <https://www.rhs.org.uk/plants>
6. **Missouri Botanical Garden Plant Finder:** A comprehensive horticultural database useful for researching plant characteristics, cultivars, and landscape suitability. <https://plantfinder.mobot.org/PlantFinderSearch.aspx>
7. **iNaturalist:** Use photographs to help identify plants. Explore observations and community-supported identifications; useful for unusual or unfamiliar plants. <https://www.inaturalist.org>
8. **USDA PLANTS Database & Identification Keys:** Provides botanical information and interactive identification keys that allow gardeners to identify plants using multiple characteristics. <https://plants.sc.egov.usda.gov>
9. **RHS Horticultural Database:** A more specialized RHS resource for researching individual plants and horticultural information, particularly useful when working with botanical names. <https://www.rhs.org.uk/plants/search-form>
10. **USDA Agricultural Research Service Gardening Tools:** A collection of research-based tools and apps, including resources for soil, plant hardiness, and other growing-related information. <https://aglab.ars.usda.gov/the-app-store>

NGC News

- [NGC 2027 Convention May 13–17, 2027 in Madison, Wisconsin](#)

EVENTS

- [See the NGC Events Page for more details](#) (Events and Schools)

SCHOOLS INFO

- The [NGC Schools Portal](#) is now available at no cost to all users. The previous \$15 annual fee has been eliminated. Moving forward, the Schools Portal will be the central location for all NGC school information and resources, including handbooks, forms, and other important materials.
- The Handbook for Flower Shows has been updated to reflect the recent changes approved by the Executive Committee. The revised handbook is available in the [Schools Portal](#) and will serve as the current official version.
- Thank you for your patience and cooperation throughout the review and update process as we worked to maintain the appropriate process for approval of changes to the Handbook for Flower Shows. We encourage you to visit the Schools Portal at www.ngcschools.org and explore the resources now available to everyone at no cost.

EVENTS

GENERAL

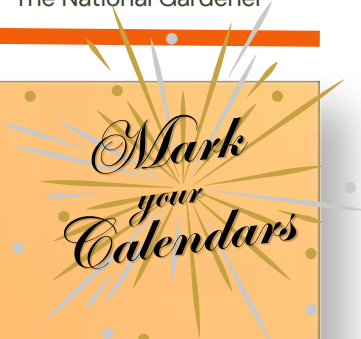
- See our [NGC Blog News & Updates](#)
- Check out our [Video Cafe](#) (login required).
- Review the latest [Plant-A-Tree Information on the NGC website](#).
- Membership Mondays: Dates TBD. See the [Video Cafe](#) (login required) for past presentations.

AWARDS & GRANTS:

- 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

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

- We need volunteers to help get articles into Canva for TNG. **We will train you!**
- We need volunteers to help translate the TNG into Spanish for TNG en Español.
- Contact [Victoria Schmidt](#) for more details.



HQ News & Announcements

- Please send HQ your member email addresses for our TNG contact list and important 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.

FALL GARDENING: TIPS FOR A FALL GARDENS

Author: Victoria Schmidt

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.

Fall is one of the most rewarding seasons in the garden. It is also a season for reflection—evaluating what worked, improving the soil, planting for spring, and creating habitat for wildlife. Whether your garden is preparing for winter dormancy or entering its prime growing season, these tips can help you make the most of the months ahead.



- 1. Take Stock of Your Garden:** Before putting the garden to bed, take a critical look around. Photograph successful combinations, note plants that struggled, and identify areas that need redesign or additional plants. Your fall observations can become next year's garden plan.
- 2. Plant Trees, Shrubs & Perennials:** In many regions, fall is an excellent planting season. Cooler air temperatures reduce stress on newly planted specimens, while warm soil encourages root development. Give newly planted plants adequate water and mulch, and select species appropriate for your local climate.
- 3. Plant Spring-Blooming Bulbs:** For gardeners in areas with sufficient winter chilling, fall is bulb-planting time. Daffodils, tulips, hyacinths and other spring bulbs should be planted before the ground freezes. Choose firm, healthy bulbs and follow planting-depth recommendations for each species.
- 4. Keep Watering:** Plants don't stop needing water simply because temperatures have dropped. Newly planted trees, shrubs and perennials especially need consistent moisture while establishing roots. In dry climates, continue monitoring soil moisture even after the growing season appears to be winding down.
- 5. Make the Most of Fallen Leaves:** Leaves are one of the garden's best—and free—resources. Shred them with a mower to use as mulch, add them to the compost pile, or incorporate appropriate amounts into garden beds. Avoid piling thick layers of whole leaves directly onto lawns or delicate plants.
- 6. Don't Clean Up Everything:** A perfectly tidy garden isn't necessarily a healthy garden. Seed heads can provide food for birds, while hollow stems and leaf litter can provide shelter for overwintering insects. Remove diseased plant material and invasive weeds, but consider leaving healthy stems and seed heads standing through winter.
- 7. Build Better Soil:** Fall is an excellent time to add finished compost or other appropriate organic matter. Consider having your soil tested before adding lime, fertilizer or other amendments. Healthy soil is the foundation for healthier plants—and testing helps prevent unnecessary amendments.
- 8. Collect Seeds & Propagate Plants:** Fall provides an opportunity to collect mature seeds from many garden plants. Label collected seeds immediately with the plant name and collection date. Depending on the plant and your climate, fall can also be an excellent time for division, layering or taking cuttings.
- 9. Protect Plants From Extreme Weather:** Know your garden's hardiness zone and approximate first frost date. Protect tender plants when necessary, bring susceptible containers indoors, and use appropriate mulch or protective coverings. In warm climates, however, fall may signal the beginning of another growing season rather than winter preparation.
- 10. Plan Next Year's Garden:** Don't wait until spring to start planning. Review your garden journal, order seeds and bulbs, research new plants, sketch potential changes and make a list of projects. Fall planning gives you a head start when spring arrives.

Author: Victoria Schmidt, TNG Editor-in-Chief



FALL GARDEN TO-DO LIST BY REGION

Author: Victoria Schmidt

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.

The National Gardener reaches gardeners across the country and beyond to our international affiliates. So, in this issue we hope to help readers translate the general advice on gardening fall to-do lists to your own climate.

Gardener's Tip: Instead of treating fall cleanup as simply a chore, think of it as garden management. Every decision—what to remove, what to leave, what to compost, what to plant and what to protect—can influence soil health, wildlife habitat and next year's garden.



Northeast & Mid-Atlantic

- Plant spring bulbs before the ground freezes.
- Plant trees, shrubs and perennials early for root establishment.
- Continue watering newly planted specimens until the ground freezes.
- Compost fallen leaves and use shredded leaves as mulch.
- Clean up diseased plant material, but leave selected stems and seed heads for wildlife.
- Protect tender plants according to their hardiness and local conditions.
- Clean, sharpen and store garden tools before winter.

Midwest & Great Plains

- Take advantage of fall's cool temperatures for planting trees and shrubs.
- Complete spring-bulb planting before the soil freezes.
- Keep newly planted trees and shrubs watered during dry autumn periods.
- Mulch after the ground begins to cool, rather than applying an excessively thick layer too early.
- Use fallen leaves for compost or shredded-leaf mulch.
- Secure containers and garden structures before winter winds and snow arrive.

Southeast

- Fall can be a prime planting season for trees, shrubs and many perennials.
- Plant cool-season vegetables and herbs appropriate to your area.
- Continue watering during periods of drought or unusually warm weather.
- Watch for fungal diseases and insect activity that can persist in warm temperatures.
- Plant cool-season annuals for winter and early-spring color.
- Use fallen leaves as mulch or compost rather than automatically removing them.

CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE



FALL GARDEN TO-DO LIST BY REGION

Author: Victoria Schmidt (Continued)

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.

Southwest & Desert Regions

- Fall's cooler temperatures can provide an excellent planting window.
- Adjust irrigation as temperatures fall, but don't stop watering automatically.
- Plant cool-season vegetables and herbs where appropriate.
- Protect newly planted trees and shrubs from drying winds.
- Use mulch to moderate soil temperatures and conserve moisture.
- Choose plants adapted to your specific elevation, soil and water conditions.



Pacific Northwest & California

- Take advantage of cooler temperatures and seasonal moisture for planting.
- Plant trees, shrubs and many perennials while soil temperatures remain favorable.
- Continue monitoring irrigation during dry periods.
- Remove diseased foliage and dispose of it appropriately.
- Add compost and organic matter where needed.
- In Mediterranean climates, fall can mark the beginning of the active gardening season.

Mountain & High-Elevation Gardens

- Complete planting of hardy trees, shrubs and perennials early enough for root establishment.
- Monitor frost and freeze forecasts closely.
- Protect newly planted specimens from temperature extremes and drying winds.
- Finish collecting seeds before heavy frost or snowfall.
- Clean and store tools before winter conditions arrive.
- Use the dormant season to plan spring projects and order hard-to-find plants.

Florida, Gulf Coast & Other Warm Climates

Fall isn't necessarily the end of the gardening season—it's often the beginning of another one.

- Transition from heat-loving summer annuals to cool-season flowers.
- Plant vegetables such as lettuce, greens, carrots and other crops suited to your local fall calendar.
- Plant trees and shrubs as temperatures moderate.
- Continue watching irrigation needs during dry periods.
- Prune only when appropriate for the specific plant; avoid unnecessary fall pruning.
- Take advantage of cooler temperatures for garden renovation and planting projects.

Author: Victoria Schmidt, TNG Editor-in-Chief



Is it a horticultural lecture disguised as a stand-up comedy routine? Or is it the other way around?

Whatever it is, 'Gardening Is Murder' educates audiences as it makes them laugh. It is equal parts humor, psychology, and gardening wisdom; a husband's point of view of what goes on in the garden. State federations, district meetings, and individual clubs across the country have enjoyed his talks. Their feedback? "Uniformly positive comments – highest praise." and "More people signed up for your talk than any other event."

To book Neal for your club, state, or regional event, write Neal02052@Gmail.com.



But he also writes books that will keep you turning pages well past your bedtime. 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. There's frequently a strong horticultural element and more than a dash of humor. *You can order his books in print and Kindle formats on Amazon. Or, to read first chapters, go to www.TheHardingtonPress.com.*

"5 ways to become my BFF"

Author unknown

1. Talk to me about gardens.
2. Text me photos of gardens.
3. Help me with my garden.
4. Buy me plants for my garden.
5. Be a garden.



WELCOME BACK TO LEGACY GIFTING

Author: Bud Qualk

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.

What is the difference between a will and a trust? We are trying to make our garden club members more estate planning savvy. First and best of all, a will is public knowledge and a trust is private. When you die, your will goes to the courthouse and can be seen by anyone who requests a copy. They can see where you gifted all your assets, etc.



With a trust, no one will even know you have one unless you or your trustee tells someone. Trusts are not registered with the courthouse and are completely private. Some will say that is not a big deal, and some will like that convenience.

Another difference is that when someone dies with a will, all the assets are distributed somewhat immediately. The will can't hold on to assets to be distributed in the future. A trust can do just that. You can put any language in a trust as long as it is not illegal. For instance, a trust can distribute assets monthly to whomever or maybe distribute a lump sum at a point in time of your choosing.

With a will, the judge will make sure the executor distributes your assets according to your written wishes. With a trust, your trustee will have no such oversight, so you want to choose your trustee with that in mind. We hope this helps. Don't forget to consider a specific bequest in your will/trust to your Plant America Committee. Plant America has distributed hundreds of thousands of dollars to worthy garden club projects. See you next spring.



Author: Bud Qualk

Email: budqualk@gmail.com **Phone:** 270-933-7051

NGC Legacy Giving Committee Chairman

- Previous Trust Officer at 2 banks and 2 law firms
- Former NGC Corresponding Secretary
- NGC Flower Show Judge
- Previous and Current Chairman for State, Region, and NGC



A CENTURY OF CLUB MEMBERSHIP

Author: Greg Pokorski

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.

MEMBERSHIP

At Southern California Garden Club, based in Encino (suburban Los Angeles), we say we've been "Growing Better Gardeners since 1927." Founded on June 13, 1927, we are commencing a year-long celebration of our 100th anniversary, "A Century in Bloom," with special activities at club meetings and special events such as an Anniversary Tea and Fashion Show, a Holiday Home Tour, and the Dedication of the Rose Garden we have renovated at our meeting place. Rather than identifying with a specific local community, our name was chosen with the aim of attracting a large membership from throughout the region.

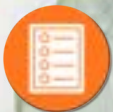
As the first garden club in the San Fernando Valley, we did initially attract a large membership from all over Los Angeles. Our first reduction in membership was attributable to gas rationing in World War II and the advent of additional garden clubs. We were one of twenty-three clubs that founded California Garden Clubs, Inc. in 1931, and we have always had club member representation on the state board. Eight members have served as state president and one member, Mrs. Leonard Slosson, served as the 11th president of NGC (National Council of State Garden Clubs at that time).



There have been ups and downs in membership numbers, but we're still here and going strong, and the factors that contribute to the increase and maintenance of membership are the factors responsible for our longevity. We remain the largest club in California's San Fernando Valley District. We ended the 2025-2026 season with 188 members, and after the summer renewal process begin our 2026-2027 season with 167 members. That is fairly typical, but we tend to add two to five members a month throughout the year. We build loyalty and even retain members who move away. We know that one of our members belonged to the club for 54 years, and our current longest-term member has been here for 37 years.

Why do they come and why do they stay? Promote, promote, promote. Invite, invite, invite. A former club president walks in her neighborhood and invites everyone she meets to a meeting. If they come, they often stay. Club brochures and business cards are distributed liberally. Monthly programs and special events are publicized. Once they become members, involve, but don't overwhelm them. And thank them and recognize them and honor them for all they do. You cannot thank volunteers too much. Among many recognitions, each year we give state, region and national life memberships to three members (one life membership to each person).

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A CENTURY OF CLUB MEMBERSHIP

Author: Greg Pokorski (Continued)

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.

Communicate.

Our award-winning newsletter keeps us in touch, and some join the club just to receive it even if they are unable to attend meetings. We combine elements of stability (we've had the same meeting day since 1981, and we hold an NGC Flower Show annually) and flexibility (try new things). A variety of informative and interesting programs is important. A variety of projects and activities is also essential. Not every member will be interested in everything we do, but each activity will engage some members (and attract new members).



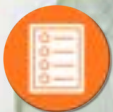
Separate business from garden club. Most members are not interested in the business. For decades, most of our business is conducted at monthly board meetings. We have a large board (officers and all committee chairmen) who are committed and engaged. In the interest of transparency, all club members are welcome to attend all board meetings (a few, not many, do attend – some then get interested in joining the board). There is no secrecy, and without secrecy there is no drama. Nobody wants drama in garden club.

We have installed five large Blue Star Markers since 2000 and continue to plan for the next one. We've made 253 \$68 donations to Penny Pines (still alive in California) – all from member donations at club meetings. We have a strong scholarship program. We care for the Rose Garden and Pollinator Garden at our meeting location. We have hosted two state conventions. The Country Store fundraiser at our monthly meetings attracts many – including some who are not interested in the program. And NGC Schools! We have conducted four Gardening Schools, one Landscape Design School, one Flower Show School and two Tri-Refreshers. Each of these activities provides education to our members and always attracts new members. Because of careful budgeting and extensive promotion, all have been very successful financially. We offer registration discounts to club members. People will join the club to get the discount. People will join because the classes have been so interesting and useful.



So, try new things and try old things. Try many things. Provide variety. Provide education. Provide food, fun and friendship. In California we say the people come to garden club for the knowledge and stay for the friendship. May all of your clubs bloom and grow and celebrate 100th anniversaries, and many more.

Author: Greg Pokorski, NGC Membership Committee, 1st Vice President, Southern California Garden Club



Bee Pastures: Bees and Trees

Author: Sheryl Hanson

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.



Flowering forage areas support bees, farms, and biodiversity

A bee pasture sounds almost too charming to be scientific. It's a field planted not primarily for livestock, crops, or scenery, but for bees as well. As many of you know, there are hundreds of different types of bees. A bee pasture is practical, ecological, and increasingly relevant. It's a managed area of flowering plants that provide nectar and pollen for pollinators, especially honeybees and wild native bees. In plain terms, it is a food landscape designed to make sure bees have something useful to eat across the growing season.

Bees need both nectar and pollen. Nectar supplies carbohydrates, while pollen provides protein, fats, vitamins, and minerals that are essential for brood development and colony health. Managed bee pastures help by offering a more reliable sequence of blooms. Pollinators can improve fruit and seed production and support genetic diversity in plants.



Annual clovers, wildflowers, and perennial flowers provide nectar. But we should also consider shrubs or trees as they offer long-term nectar and pollen resources with relatively low maintenance.

Tree Varieties as Bee Forage

Trees deserve a special place in any discussion of bee pastures because one mature tree can produce thousands, sometimes millions, of blossoms in a compact vertical space. For bees, it reduces the energy spent moving between scattered flowers and creates concentrated sources of nectar and pollen. The tree canopy, understory, shrubs, and ground flowers all contribute food at different times.

Early blooming trees are especially important because they help bees recover from winter and begin spring brood production. Willows (*Salix* spp.), including the pussy willow, are among the most valuable early pollen sources for both honeybees and native bees. Red maple (*Acer rubrum*) is another early-season workhorse, offering pollen and nectar before many plants are in bloom. Serviceberry (*Amelanchier*) and Eastern redbud (*Cercis canadensis*) also bloom early, supporting bees emerging during the first warm temperatures of spring.

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Bee Pastures: Bees and Trees

Author: Sheryl Hanson

(Continued)

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.



Flowering forage areas support bees, farms, and biodiversity

Fruit trees such as apple, cherry, black cherry, plum, pear, and crabapple are especially pollinator-friendly, as their open blossoms are accessible to many bee species. The tulip tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), also called tulip poplar, produces nectar-rich flowers high in the canopy, and the black locust tree (*Robinia pseudo acacia*) blooms provide considerable nectar, but keep in mind that this tree can spread aggressively in some settings.

Basswood (*Tilia americana*) or linden trees provide early to mid-summer blooms. Their flowers are fragrant and produce abundant nectar. Sourwood (*Oxydendrum arboreum*) trees, where climate and conditions allow, are another excellent nectar tree. In wetter or more acidic sites, black tupelo (*Nyssa sylvatica*) or sour gum trees can support bees and other insects despite their small flowers, while also adding exceptional beauty to a landscape. Consider planting native tree species as they tend to do better in local soils, seasonal rhythms, and feed the native bee communities. Remember to plant trees where they have enough room to mature and contribute to a lightly managed, pesticide-free landscape so bees have both food and nesting opportunities.

Conclusion

Bee pastures can be beautiful in appearance and function as a feast for so many pollinators. Consider using fields, margins, and unused corners of your yards to create a bee pasture. By providing food and habitat, you are supporting pollinators that in turn support crops, wild plants, and a healthy ecosystem; trees count! Consider carefully and purposefully those trees and bushes you can add to your landscape. Source out 'bee trees' native to your own climate. If we want bees and other pollinators to keep working the landscape, the landscape must keep feeding the pollinators.

Sources available upon request

Author: Sheryl Hanson, NGC Plant A Tree Chair
NEGC Environmental and Youth Awards Chair
URI Master Gardener
Past RIFGC President
Co-Chair RIFGC Environmental Education Day



REGION NEWS

SOUTH CENTRAL
REGION

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.

South Central Region

It has been an unrelentingly hot season, but we hope the monsoons will come to central New Mexico soon and revive our yards. I want to share something that I was reminded of recently from William Wordsworth, the poet. Wordsworth explored intensely the influence of nature on the inner life. He believed that a living relationship with nature is a source of strength that can help foster healthy growth and healing of the mind. He also understood what it means to be a gardener.

Creating a garden healed him and his sister Dorothy as a response to losing their parents who died when they were children. At Dove Cottage they cultivated vegetables, medicinal herbs and other useful plants. Their garden was full of “gifts” of wildflowers, ferns and mosses they collected on their walks and brought home like offerings to the earth.

In 1987, I took 32 New Mexico Garden Club ladies on a tour of gardens in the United Kingdom, and we went to the Lake District to his cottage and saw this beautiful garden. I remember going up to the attic where Wordsworth wrote his poetry and saw the view that inspired “Daffodils,” one of my favorite poems. My hope is that our yards sustain us through days when we are feeling adrift in world events and enjoy the healing that nature guarantees.

South Central Region (SCR) continues to sell jewelry to provide each of the four states in the region with a Gold Star marker as my Director’s project. We recently purchased the first one and have permission to install it at the National Cemetery in Santa Fe, New Mexico, possibly in the spring. We travel around the state selling the donated jewelry so that we can purchase more markers soon.

I want to remind those in the South Central Region to submit your awards. You can find the forms on our newly revamped website. Read them and gather what you need to fill out the form. This will enable you to have everything ready, and you will represent our region well.

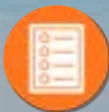
We hope to have our newly updated website completed by the beginning of the month. If anyone has an article of interest for the members of South Central Region, please send it to me. I will forward it to the webmaster. Please note my new email address and phone number.

May your gardens bless you with peace.

Author: Christine Longthorp
South Central Region Director 2025-27
calongthorp@hotmail.com / (505) 480-0673



www.gardenclub.org



REGION NEWS

Rocky Mountain
Region

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.

Rocky Mountain Region

This year, members of the Rocky Mountain Region gathered in Fargo, North Dakota, for a wonderful annual meeting filled with friendship, learning, and plenty of inspiration for our gardens.

Our time in Fargo began with a spectacular tour of **Sandra Vigen's yard**. Her beautiful garden provided the perfect introduction to the area and was a wonderful reminder of the creativity and dedication gardeners bring to their landscapes.

Following the garden tour, we gathered for a picnic dinner and enjoyed the opportunity to reconnect with friends and fellow garden club members. Our business meeting followed, along with an engaging presentation by **Don Kinzler of North Dakota State University**, titled "50 Ways to Make Us All Better Gardeners." His presentation offered plenty of practical ideas and inspiration to take home and put into practice.

The learning continued with visits to an **edible forest** and a **demonstration garden**, giving attendees the opportunity to explore innovative approaches to gardening and see new ideas in action.

We were also delighted to spend time with **Donna Donnelly, NGC President**, who joined us on both Friday and Saturday. Her presence added to an already memorable gathering and provided another wonderful opportunity for fellowship and conversation.

A heartfelt thank-you goes to the **North Dakota Garden Club** for being such gracious and welcoming hosts. From the beautiful gardens and educational programs to the wonderful hospitality, the annual meeting in Fargo was a memorable experience for everyone who attended.

Author: Shirley Pursel
RMR Director



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REGION NEWS

PACIFIC
REGION

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.

Pacific Region

Sometimes something good comes out of dire times. I am talking about Zoom. When Covid first hit, I was President of the Oregon Federation of Garden Clubs. How could we meet without getting together? I asked my son-in-law and he immediately said, "Zoom."

I was ready to try that, but got a lot of objections. "No. That's not possible. We have to meet in person!" But then even the NBA stopped playing games and my Executive Committee had to admit that Zoom was the only way to go.

At first, it was strange and we all had to get used to Zoom meetings. There were many who just didn't want to or didn't have the right equipment.

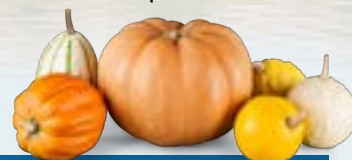
And I am glad that we are all meeting in person again. Nothing is better than a personal hug! But we used Zoom during Covid for meetings and even conventions. We did ours just like a real convention over three days with memorials and Life Memberships one night, awards another afternoon, and business meetings in between, and even a speaker talking about my special project at the time! Others after me did conventions in just a few hours, but at least we met and changed bylaws and so on.

Now that I am Pacific Region Director I have used Zoom for meetings with my board. These aren't official meetings, so everyone is welcome to join us. Every time we conclude one meeting, the members ask for another one. They seem to like getting together and exchanging ideas! Pacific Zoom- Chat to Connect" Today: August 24th, I had asked South Central Region Director Christine Longthorp to talk about Flower Show Schools and Symposiums. I heard Christine talk a few weeks ago and she was so enthusiastic that I asked her to talk to my Region! And as an extra bonus she brought along NGC 2nd Vice-President Suzy Andrego! So much fun!

Such a lively meeting! We even had Judy G join us from the East Coast! Of course, we also do the Firewise webinars on Zoom.

So that's what I mean that Zoom was the best thing that came out of Covid! The possibilities are endless! Just think outside of those little boxes!

Author: Tanja Swanson
PRGC Director 2025-2027



www.gardenclub.org

NGC SCHOOLS

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.

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

The Power of a Shirt

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.

At many sporting events, school events, and social events, it's extremely common to see people wearing matching t-shirts with their logo on it. This provides an instant sense of community and belonging, and who doesn't want that?

Club shirts can be a great way to get your brand out and seen, especially if several of your members wear the shirts when they care for a community garden, Blue or Gold Star Marker, or attend a community event like a farmer's market, state or local fair. If you care for a garden where Memorial Day or Veteran's Day or 4th of July events take place, showing up to those events in your club's shirt is guaranteed to raise the awareness of who cares for that important place.

Some clubs have a new shirt every year or to commemorate an event or milestone. Some clubs just have one general shirt. But most clubs don't have anything like that to wear when you're out in the public eye. Perhaps it's time to think about it and open the discussion to your members for their design suggestions. If you need inspiration, the internet is chock full of excellent ideas!

Have a little fun with this, and you will be surprised at the interest a garden club t-shirt can generate!

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



NGC Reports

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.



National Garden Clubs (NGC) Environmental School

A total of 11 NGC Environmental Courses were offered or are being offered in 2026. Here is the chronological breakdown of the 2026 course schedule:

Winter 2026

- **January:** 2 courses (Course 1, all virtual from Florida and Georgia)
- **March:** 2 courses (Course 2, virtual from Georgia; Course 4, virtual from Missouri)

Spring 2026

- **April:** 2 courses (Course 3, virtual from Georgia; Course 3, in-person in Michigan)
- **May:** 1 course (Course 4, virtual)

Summer / Autumn 2026

- **August:** 1 course (Course 2, virtual from Florida)
- **September 17-18:** 1 course (Course 1, virtual from Connecticut)
- **October 23-24:** 1 course (Course 4, in-person in Wisconsin)
- **November 2-3:** 1 course (Course 4, in-person in Michigan)

Important Reminder for Students and Consultants

If you are attending a virtual or in-person course outside of your home state:

- Do not email your Form 6/7 directly to the school registrar yourself.
- Notify your state Environmental School Chairman, who is responsible for emailing the form.
- Direct submissions by students this past year contained errors regarding previous course history, which delayed course accreditation.

I celebrate you for taking the initiative to educate yourself on sustainability, which is a wonderful way to foster a community of active changemakers.

Author: Roxanna Champagne
NGC Environmental School Chairman



Flower Shows and Flower Show Schools Committee

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.

Hello from the Flower Shows and Flower Show Schools Committee. First and foremost, I'd like to thank those of you who have reached out with your questions, suggestions, and concerns. We are here for you and to help you with your Flower Shows, Schools and Symposium endeavors.

Please note that there are updates in the Handbook for Flower Shows online. These updates take effect as of 9/1/2026; they are easy to find when you scroll through the HB since they are printed in red ink. Download a copy to your computer, iPad, phone, laptop, or other device and remember to take your HB with you when you judge or attend schools, symposia, and your council meetings. Please download these updates now.

The FS&FSS Committee is working hard to update the HB to accommodate the suggestions you have given us. There are proposals for several new design types; we are working on putting the HEJ (Horticulture Exhibiting and Judging) book online; we are updating the manuals for state chairmen; we continue to meet regularly as a committee and also with State Flower Show Chairmen (Schools, Symposia, Credentials and Judges' Councils).

The committee has answered questions regarding ethics. NGC views judging as "a responsibility, not a right." Judges have a responsibility to the exhibitors, the public, and the sponsoring flower show committee to be unbiased, honorable, truthful, up-to-date, physically able, prepared and knowledgeable about their assigned Sections and Classes without any appearance of conflict of interest. Judges are invited to judge in a show; they do not solicit assignments. Remember: Judges do not judge in Sections where they have an exhibit, evaluate shows they are chairing, should not exhibit in a show they are going to judge, and should not be overly critical of the efforts of others. (HB pgs. 97-99).

Stay in touch with us; we are only a mouse-click away....and please note my new email address: gvjogan@outlook.com.

Gina Jogan
FS&FSSC Chairman 2025-2027

NGC Reports

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Award of Excellence Report

It is time to start thinking about whom you will nominate for the NGC Award of Excellence 2027 in your state or region!

The Award categories are:

1. Award of Excellence for Non-Member (# SR-1)
 - For an Individual, Non-member, Organization, or Institution
2. Award of Excellence for State Garden Club (#SR-2)
 - a. Membership up to 999
 - b. Membership from 1,000-2,999
 - c. Membership from 3,000 – 7,999
 - d. Membership over 8,000
3. Award of Excellence for Region (#SR-3)

Instructions: Complete the **Award of Excellence application form**, found in the Awards section of the Forms Library, along with your Book of Evidence. All Award of Excellence applications are limited to five single-sided pages plus this cover sheet for six total pages. See the 2025-2027 NGC Awards Handbook p 40 and 41 for details and scale of points.

All applications are preferred to be submitted electronically. Send all applications to Susan Miner by January 1, 2027.

Author: Susan Miner

Susan is NGC's 3rd Vice President and Award of Excellence Chair. Contact Sue with any questions regarding award submission.



NGC Reports

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Natural Disasters USA Grants

In September of 2025, the Perry Garden Club of Florida received a Natural Disaster USA Grant to assist the city of Perry, Florida, to recover from three devastating hurricanes that hit within a year of each other and created a huge path of destruction.

The club members have been working very hard to move along at an amazing pace. They have purchased locally in order to continue to support disaster recovery efforts in their community. They have developed a booklet discussing every plant in the garden that will become a resource to others in their USDA Agriculture Zone 9a, both locally and globally.



The members learned that their growing zone is shared by many locations all over the world! The other countries with zone 9 growing zones are in France, China, Japan, parts of South Africa, North Africa's Mediterranean coast, as well as Mediterranean Italy and the Greek Islands.

This knowledge has opened a whole new world of plants that would grow well in their gardens. They transitioned from their "native plant garden" to a teaching and demonstration garden built around Zone 9 plants from all over the world. They call their new garden a "Passport Garden" as plants originating in different countries are planted side by side. The plants grow in this climate wherever on earth it occurs naturally.



Club volunteers took soil samples from different areas of the grounds around their clubhouse and had the samples tested. This allowed them to apply the appropriate amendments and fertilizers based on their anticipated plantings. The members learned much from the very detailed results of these soil sample tests.

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NGC Reports

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Natural Disasters USA Grants (Continued)

Club volunteers took soil samples from different areas of the grounds around their clubhouse and had the samples tested. This allowed them to apply the appropriate amendments and fertilizers based on their anticipated plantings. The members learned much from the very detailed results of these soil sample tests.

The members have kept comprehensive records and created a log to keep track of long-term fertilizer applications. They have installed an extensive irrigation system and have expanded the system to cover each new planting as they progressed. The members have done much of the hands-on construction themselves,

including cutting the tubing and adding the irrigation heads. This will allow them to do troubleshooting, repairing or replacing sprinkler heads, which will save maintenance funding. They also know how to operate the main control box. They learned all of this on the job!



This is one amazing garden club! The members are hard-working, dedicated gardeners who have learned so much while rebuilding their club's gardens into a true educational showcase destination. I hope to be able to visit them in the future and see firsthand the fruits of their labor.

Author: Josephine Goodenow
NGC Natural Disaster USA Grant Chairman



LANDSCAPE DESIGN

Down the Garden Path

Landscape Design School News

Author: Carol Yee

Down the Garden Path

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.

In case you missed it, the NGC Schools Handbook (Environmental, Gardening, and Landscape Design Schools) was revised in 2025. The following introduction is an overview of NGC's 3 schools and policies and procedures covered in the handbook:



“National Garden Clubs (NGC) provides educational opportunities through attendance at Landscape Design Schools (LDS) - implemented in 1958, Gardening Schools (GS) formerly Gardening Study Schools - implemented in 1977 and Environmental Schools (ES) - begun as Environmental Studies Schools, approved by NGC in 1991, first school conducted in 1993. Flower Show Schools are administered with a separate Handbook with unique requirements to be Flower Show Judges. The three schools (ES, GS, LDS) each have subject matter that overlaps and/or complements the curricula of each school. Each of the schools has a series of four - 10 hours total - courses and Refreshers (8 hours). The Refreshers are opportunities for continued education and to attain Master Consultant status upon completing four refresher credits. A Handbook common to all three Schools with common forms is used to conduct each of the three schools. It is believed that achieving as much consistency as possible between the three schools would be beneficial to those who conduct and attend the ES, GS and/or LDS. There is a section containing criteria applicable to all three schools. This Handbook also contains a separate unit for each School with information applicable to only that school. NGC welcomes all students, both members and non-members, to its schools, which are sponsored by the State Garden Clubs and/or their member organizations (clubs, districts, councils) and Regions or International Affiliates.”

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Landscape Design School News

Author: Carol Yee (Continued)

Down the Garden Path

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.

School organizers and students/consultants: Please review Handbook sections pertinent to your individual needs. There may be **inconsistencies between the Handbook Revision and Forms now being used**. Please send comments and suggestions to NGC Policies for ES, GS, and LDS Coordinator Chairman (Terri Ewers) and/or any of the Schools Chairmen: Environmental School (Roxanna Champaigne), Gardening School (Sarah McReynolds) and Landscape Design School (Carol Yee). Your input is welcomed.



Students and consultants: Please keep track of your own school records (forms). With all the courses that are available and because a student/consultant doesn't have to take a course only within their own state, updated forms may not be received. Please contact your state Schools Chairman if you have not received updated forms after taking a course. However, please keep in mind that it does take time for a completed course to be processed and accredited.

We welcome your ideas and comments to help schools run smoothly and also to enhance student and consultant enjoyment and enrichment. If your state would like to organize a school, please contact us, as our schools committee members will be glad to help!



Author: Carol Yee, ChNGC Landscape Design School Chairman

Email: mscyee@hotmail.com

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



NGC Reports

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.



Awards Report

It's Awards Writing Season!

When the cooler months of fall begin, garden clubs know that it's time to prepare Award Applications for their work during the current calendar year. Be sure to check out the 2026 revisions in the Awards Handbook (<https://gardenclub.org/ngc-awards>) as there are a few changes you will need as you prepare your applications. This is also the year (2 nd year of a term) for Regions to apply for an Award of Excellence. Regional Directors, be sure to think about your projects that may qualify for this prestigious award.

The application Cover Sheet has a minor revision, adding a place to enter the city of the garden club. Please download and use this revised fillable form available on the Forms page of the website. This will allow us to add the city to the award certificates and alleviate confusion from duplicated club names. And please be sure your photos are of the highest quality, not blurry or grainy.

And speaking of certificates, we have new names for the levels of honor for the certificates. All worthy award entries will receive an Award of Merit. The top application from each group will receive an Award of Excellence and the overall top winner from all groups will receive the Grand Award.

Several of the Flower Show Achievement Award forms have also been revised. Please follow the guidance given from our Flower Show Awards Chairmen on using these forms. And remember that this is the perfect year to apply for the Blooming Beginnings Award for hosting a first-time Standard or Small Standard Flower Show!

Consider becoming a sponsor for one of the awards currently without a sponsor as noted throughout the Handbook. You can sponsor as an individual, as a club or group of clubs, as a state, or even as a region. There is a form on the awards page of the website for becoming a sponsor. This form and the check are to be sent to NGC Headquarters with a copy to the Awards Chairman. Recognition will be given during the Awards Presentation at Convention and will appear in the next edition of the Awards Handbook if continuing.



NGC Reports

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.



Awards Report

(Continued)

Have you checked out the helpful resources on the Awards page of the website? We offer ideas on how to write a winning application and how to combine the application cover sheet with your written application to create a single document for both mac and pc users.

Watch carefully for deadlines. Be sure to follow instructions from your State Awards Chairman and get your applications in prior to their due dates. All award applications except Calendar Arranger of the Year are due electronically in January to NGC. Dates are on page 6 in the Handbook. States will have their deadlines prior to that. Remember, states set their own awards and your state may not offer some of the same awards as NGC. You can still send an application through your State Chairman just for NGC recognition.

Questions? Email NGCAwards@gardenclub.org.

Author: Marilyn McDonnell
NGC Awards Chairman 2025-2027





COMAAI



NGC, Inc. International Affiliates

Sharing an International Love of Gardening

It is quite an honor to be the International Editor of TNG and to see how, slowly but surely, *TNG en Español* is taking shape. Our endeavor is to feature engaging articles on the customs, traditions, and practices of Floral Design, Horticulture, and Environmental Care— contributed by and for our Latin American Affiliates to share with all our readers.

This issue takes us to New Zealand, where a dear Garden Club Argentino member has recently moved. Even though she is 8,000 miles away from our St. Louis Headquarters, she remains deeply involved with nature and NGC.

A little closer to home, we welcome our Accredited Master Judge and International Floral Design Instructor from Torreón, México, who has been an integral part of *TNG en Español* since its inception five years ago. Time truly flies when you are having this much fun!

Last but not least, Madam President Donna Donnelly shares "The Story of Oscar," highlighting a beloved and essential member of our current presidential team.

Our editorial focus in this issue highlights the remarkable headway made by our Affiliate Organization, COMAAI (Comité de Actividades de Afiliadas Internacionales), in digitizing their schools.

We hope you enjoy these articles. Please let us know if you would like to share something or if there is a particular topic you would like to read about in future issues— we are here to serve you!

Author: Pampa Risso-Patrón
NGC, Inc. Internacional Co-Liaison
TNG International Editor PampaRP@pacefund.org



The Story of Oscar the Gnome

Author: Donna Donnelly

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Special thanks to Pampa Riso Patron, whose appreciation for Oscar inspired and encouraged the creaóion of The Story of Oscar.

Oscar: How a Little Gnome Became a Big Deal

Every organization has its symbols. Some have mascots. Others have trophies. National Garden Clubs has Oscar. Oscar is not a celebrity, a movie star, or even a garden club member. Oscar is a PLANT AMERICA gnome. And like many great stories, his journey began with a simple idea.



Early in my administration, I was looking for a creative way to promote PLANT AMERICA, the mission-focused initiative that encourages gardening, environmental stewardship, and community beautification. Somewhere along the way, a cheerful garden gnome entered the picture. Dressed in his pointed hat adorned with the PLANT AMERICA logo, he quickly became more than a marketing tool.

I have always had a soft spot for gnomes. There is something about their whimsical nature that brings a smile to my face. Before long, this little fellow had taken up residence in my office, where he quietly observed Zoom meetings, correspondence, and the daily activities of a busy National Garden Clubs president.

Over time, Oscar became a cheerful reminder of the work being accomplished through PLANT AMERICA. While others saw a small garden figure, I saw a symbol of our mission. He represented the educational programs, environmental initiatives, community projects, and countless acts of volunteer service taking place across the country and Latin America.

As the first year of my presidency drew to a close, convention season arrived. It was time to recognize individuals who had gone above and beyond in supporting National Garden Clubs and advancing our mission. Presidential recognition certificates were already planned, but something seemed to be missing.

Recipients deserved more than a piece of paper.

They deserved something memorable.

And so, Oscar the Gnome made his official debut, transforming from a desk companion into a symbol of extraordinary service and the spirit of PLANT AMERICA.

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The Story of Oscar the Gnome

Author: Donna Donnelly (Continued)

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Each gnome would accompany a President's Special Achievement Award, creating a lighthearted but meaningful symbol of dedication and achievement. The name Oscar seemed fitting. After all, these recipients were among the organization's stars, and the award represented the highest level of presidential recognition.

Then came the big moment at Convention. The Oscars were lined up in front of the podium, their pointed hats proudly displaying the PLANT AMERICA logo. No one knew quite what to expect or how a room full of distinguished garden club leaders would react to receiving a gnome— the answer came immediately.

As the awards presentation unfolded, I presented each Presidential Certificate along with a PLANT AMERICA gnome and introduced it as the NGC Oscar. The reaction was priceless. The room came alive with smiles, laughter, and excitement as recipients admired their Oscars. The cheerful little gnomes added an unexpected touch of fun and camaraderie to the ceremony— everyone loved it!

What began as a simple idea quickly became one of the highlights of the evening. Merriment filled the room. Cameras flashed. Recipients proudly posed with their Oscars. The little gnome did exactly what recognition should do: celebrate achievement while bringing joy.

Since then, Oscar has taken on a life of his own. He is no longer just a figure sitting in my office. He has become a symbol of dedication, achievement, and the spirit of PLANT AMERICA. More importantly, he reminds us that serious work can still include a little fun.

After all, gardening teaches that lesson every day. We work hard, nurture growth, solve problems, and create beauty, but we also find moments of delight along the way.

Oscar represents exactly that. Not bad for a little garden gnome in a pointy hat.

And if you happen to visit my office, you will still find him standing proudly in his special place, quietly reminding me that even the smallest ideas can grow into something truly extraordinary!

Author: Donna Donnelly
NGC, Inc. President



Distinction in Floral Design

Author: Pilar Medellín

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.

In floral design, **distinction** is not an award; it is an aesthetic and conceptual quality that elevates a piece above the ordinary. It reflects the refinement, individuality, and technical mastery that give a design its unmistakable elegance.

At first glance, the piece captures the observer with an immediate, arresting presence. This intuitive impression of excellence invites closer attention, subtly guiding and refining the viewer's judgement during a deeper evaluation.



José Miur Design - Lima, Perú

What gives a design distinction?

It stems from four essential components: **authentic originality** that avoids imitation to create a signature visual voice; **technical mastery** demonstrated through the confident handling of tools and plant material; **compositional harmony** achieved through the purposeful balance of line, form, and color; and an **economy of means** that achieves striking visual impact without clutter or excess.

Equally vital is the **depth of artistic intent**, which bridges technical execution with emotion to convey a clear, confident and deliberate visual signature. Distinction further reveals itself in the thoughtful or daring use of color, as well as an unwavering attention to texture, finish, and final presentation.

Within National Garden Clubs, Inc. (NGC) standards, distinction is a key criterion in the Scales of Points used to evaluate a floral design. It represents marked superiority across every dimension: creative concept, technical precision, component selection, excellence in mechanics and flawless execution.

Plant material must be in peak condition, fresh, vibrant, and thoroughly conditioned. Craftsmanship should reflect equal precision, showing mastery in the handling of components, clean mechanics, and secure supports, alongside the seamless integration of non-plant elements.

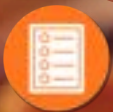
Distinction never occurs by chance. It is the natural outcome of deep knowledge, artistic sensitivity, deliberate practice, and a relentless pursuit of refinement.

“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.”

Attributed to Aristotle

Author: Pilar Medellín, NGC Design Instructor

[Link to PowerPoint Presentation \(PDF\)](#)



Buffeted by the Wind

Author: Sylvia Wray

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.

Tiritiri Matangi is a small island in the Hauraki Gulf of Aotearoa New Zealand. Its name in te reo Māori means "buffeted by the wind," evoking the vital force that sweeps over the land and brings new life and energy to everything it touches. The island stretches about 3 km from north to south and 1 km from east to west, with beaches to the east, steep cliffs to the west, and turquoise sea all around, close to the North Island of New Zealand.



Tiritiri, as seen from my home, after a storm!

What has unfolded there is nothing short of a miracle

In Māori tradition, Tiritiri Matangi island is one of the floats of an ancestral fishing net. It is named after a Kawerau pā on the island. The Kawerau people occupied the island from very early times to the 1820s, and again briefly in 1830-50. Ngāti Paoa also occupied the island and built a second, smaller pā known as Papakura towards the northern end of the island. Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki and the Marutūāhu iwi also have ancestral links with Tiritiri Matangi. Today, these iwi (extended kinship groups) continue their relationship with this motu (island).

Later, after British settlers arrived on the mainland, the island was used for animal farming from 1863 to 1971. The farmers burned down most of the remaining native bush to plant pasture grasses like clover and cocksfoot for sheep and cattle, leaving only scattered trees near the cliffs. In 1865, a cast-iron lighthouse, shipped from England in pieces, was assembled and erected. It still stands, marking the entrance to the port of Auckland, a strategic enclave during World War II. Today, the lighthouse is powered by solar energy and operates through a fully automated system.

But I am getting ahead of myself, because the story goes that the last lighthouse keeper, Ray Walter, set up a nursery of his own whilst living there, growing seeds that he collected in the few places where there were trees and shrubs on this tiny island that had been so devastated by years of neglect. Several years went by, until a visionary adventurer from the University of Auckland came along, who thought it was a privileged place, given its proximity to the North Island and the largest city of Aotearoa, New Zealand. It provided an ideal opportunity to create an endangered bird sanctuary and a scientific reserve open to the public.

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Buffeted by the Wind

Author: Sylvia Wray (Continued)

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.

And so began an incredible task: From 1984 to 1994, an army of volunteers, men, women, teenagers and children got to work, planting more than 280,000 native species to provide sustenance and habitat for the birds, invertebrates, reptiles, and other animals translocated to the island and who now inhabit this amazing nature reserve. Today, with 40 years of sun, rain and buffeting winds, 71 species of native, endemic and reintroduced birds have been recorded. The island represents a successful conservation project, with 11 threatened native bird species moved to this predator-free environment.



Kererū is the North Island Pidgeon. It is a huge bird!

But what fascinates me more than anything else, as a gardener, are the plants! Those plants that I used to buy in the nurseries back home in Argentina: Pittosporum, Coprosma, Leptospermum, Cordyline, Schefflera, Dodonea, Formium, etc. are here in their natural habitat, so much larger and impressive than I remember.

But let me tell you about the ferns! I was told the other day that ferns were never planted on the island, but when the conditions were favourable, they appeared spontaneously, the spores carried on the buffeting winds found the perfect place to take root. Now there are 42 different species, the tree fern reigning supreme amongst them all, of which the most common are Cyathea dealbata, C. medullaris, C. smithii. My greatest pleasure is to show the school children, who visit the island to learn about the environment and sustainability, the different patterns that the spores draw on the underside of the fronds. And how can I not mention the fungi?... An uncountable variety of colours, shapes and textures. One even looks like a basket (Ileodictyon cibarium) and many of them have their own Māori legend.

Tiritiri Matangi is now a place of beauty and quiet, a magical motu where local and international visitors and school children spend the day walking along the tracks, spotting species of birds, plants and animals that are not seen on the mainland, all marvelling at how the birds approach, how you can hear the cacophony of their echoing voices, while the buffeting winds continue to caress, bringing life and colour to the island.



Fungi

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Buffeted by the Wind

Author: Sylvia Wray (Continued)

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.

I have had the great opportunity to become a Volunteer Guide on Tiritiri Matangi Island, accompanying the visitors, showing them and telling them how in this place, buffeted by the wind, a miracle happened, perpetrated by a vision and the volunteer work of the community – the main ingredients of any success story.



Pōhutukawa (*Metrosideros excelsa*) on Tiritiri Matangi. Known as the New Zealand Christmas Tree, due to its December flowers.

Autor: Sylvia Wray

“El Maiten” Bariloche Garden Club, Argentina

Sylvia Wray, a valued *TNG en Español* contributor, brings a rich legacy of dedication and expertise to National Garden Clubs. For 20 years, while living in Argentina, she served as Flower Show Schools Chairman for the International Affiliates— a role in which she was instrumental, along with her team, in digitizing NGC Schools for international members. Now enjoying family life in New Zealand, Sylvia continues to generously share her deep knowledge with our global community. Kia ora Sylvia!



Our Digital Evolution

Editorial: Pampa Risso-Patrón

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The Digital Evolution and Innovation at NGC, Inc. / COMAAI

As affiliated organizations, National Garden Clubs, Inc. (NGC) and the Comité de Actividades de Afiliadas Internacionales (COMAAI) share a unified mission: to promote and oversee official and sponsored events, while advancing educational growth across Latin America in Gardening, Floral Design and Environmental Studies. Through these efforts they strengthen NGC's core objectives and foster a spirit of fellowship among members.

Structure and Geographic Coverage

COMAAI's governance is led by the NGC President, represented by the International Liaison and the Director of the NGC/COMAAI Digital Schools.

Executive Management is headed by a General Director, who coordinates operations alongside three key Directors— Internal Organization, Digital and Academic —supported by an Advisory Committee, a Board of Directors, Regional Managers, and the Administrative-Academic and Digital Communications Committees.

COMAAI operates through three NGC-affiliated Regional Offices, covering 13 countries across North America, Central America, the Caribbean and South America:

- Region I: Mexico
- Region II: Central America and Caribbean Islands
- Region III: South America

This robust academic structure ensures continuous updates and seamless access to official Protocols and Forms of the four NGC Schools via comaai.org, keeping COMAAI fully aligned with NGC's programs and initiatives.

Origins of Virtual Training (2017–2019)

In 2017, President Linda G. Nelson entrusted International Liaison Idalia Aguilar with overseeing the pioneering proposal from Instructor Patricia Nasrallah, International Virtual Academic Director. This initiative sparked the creation of the first Spanish-language Virtual School of Horticulture Self-Study, developed pro bono in partnership with the *Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey Campus Tampico* (ITESM) in Mexico. The innovative online learning system was formally approved in May 2019 by President Nancy Hargrove during the NGC National Convention in Biloxi, Mississippi.



NGC National Convention in Biloxi, Mississippi, 2019. A giant step for NGC, Inc. / COMAAI (left to right) Idalia Aguilar, Patricia Nasrallah and Nancy Hargrove

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Our Digital Evolution

Editorial: Pampa Risso-Patrón
(Continued)

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2026 National Garden Clubs, Inc.

Under the leadership of Instructor Patricia Nasrallah, a team of experts was formed, including NGC Instructors Emilia Luna and Delia Astrini, NGC Master Judge Blanca Niño Norton, horticulture professionals, and an ITESM advisory professor. Together, they adapted the fourteen-hour courses and the Refresher Course, designing all presentations, recordings, exercises, evaluations and operational logistics necessary for official NGC accreditation.

Educational Impact and Expansion (2020–2021)

When in-person activities were suspended in 2020 due to the global pandemic, COMAAI was uniquely positioned with an established Digital Self-Study Platform. Despite the global disruptions, 110 students enrolled across the Schools and Refresher Courses, marking a major educational milestone.

In 2021, with support of Texas A&M University, the Environmental Studies and Landscape Design Schools were digitized for International Affiliates via Zoom. Formally approved by NGC, the schools embraced virtual, hybrid and in-person formats. This expansion prompted the establishment of specialized committees, protocols and internal guidelines to provide robust logistical support to local directors and to curate distinguished Latin American speakers.

Technical Management and Operational Support

Fortifying these multicultural virtual classrooms required dedicated technical oversight, expertly provided by the Technical Committee, under the leadership of Rosita Longo Prieto, together with Lucía Napoli and Serrana Cabrera.

The operational model evolved further in 2023 with the appointment of Beatriz Verduzco as Counselor for the Organization of Virtual Events. She implemented preliminary review sessions connecting local directors and students before every course, creating an essential feedback mechanism to accurately assess strengths and areas for improvement.

Innovation in Flower Show Schools (FSS)

Adapting the FSS to virtuality presents a unique challenge given NGC's rigorous regulatory standards, yet it was executed seamlessly in full compliance with Chapter 13 of the NGC, Inc. Flower Show Exhibition Manual.

The initiative was coordinated by a distinguished team: Idalia Aguilar, who managed the submission, review, and authorization of Protocols, Guidelines and Forms before NGC; Sylvia Wray, who brought two decades of experience as Director of the School; and Patricia Nasrallah, who provided key expertise from the Online Self-Study Judging School and educational digitalization.

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Clubs, Inc.

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1. **Current Identification Code (CIA):** A unique, three-character code assigned to each Course or Symposium to ensure that photographs of submitted asynchronous exhibits correspond strictly to that specific event.
2. **Editable PDF Forms:** Standardized digital documents created to streamline and optimize the evaluation for Horticulture and Design exhibits across FSS courses and Virtual Symposiums.
3. **Online Study Committee (CEL):** Composed of NGC-accredited Instructors for International Affiliates who successfully adapted official course materials, judging criteria, and instructional methodology for online delivery.

Following the resolution of the global health emergency, and considering regional security conditions, NGC approved a policy allowing International Flower Show Schools Instructors to conduct courses and symposia exclusively online.

In recognition of these milestone achievements and the dedicated service of COMAAI volunteers, NGC authorized the administration of a dedicated Website Operating Fund, sustained by processing fees from Academic Credits earned in the Educational Schools, Flower Show Schools, and Symposia. This initiative solidified the website as the central educational and archival pillar of the organization while formally institutionalizing the CEL Committee.

Author: Pampa Risso-Patrón
NGC, Inc. International Co-Liaison
TNG International Editor

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Our Digital Evolution

Editorial: Pampa Risso-Patrón
(Continued)

Published in The National Gardener, Fall 2023 National Garden Clubs, Inc.

**NGC, Inc. Award of Merit issued to International Instructor
Patricia Nasrallah by President Mary Warshauer (2021-2023)**





COMAAI



Afiliados Internacionales de NGC, Inc.

Compartiendo la pasión internacional por la jardinería

Es un verdadero honor desempeñarme como Editora Internacional de TNG y ver cómo lentamente, pero a paso firme, nuestro *TNG en Español* cobra vida en su afán de acercarnos interesantes artículos sobre las costumbres, tradiciones y formas de trabajar en Diseño Floral, Horticultura y Cuidado del Medio Ambiente, brindados por y para nuestros Afiliados Latinoamericanos para compartir con todos nuestros lectores.

Esta edición nos lleva hasta Nueva Zelanda, adonde se ha mudado una querida socia del Garden Club Argentino quien, a pesar de estar a más de 13.000 kilómetros de nuestra Sede Central en St. Louis, continúa muy comprometida con la naturaleza y con NGC.

Un poco más cerca de casa, le damos la bienvenida a nuestra Juez Master Acreditada e Instructora Internacional en Diseño Floral de Torreón, México, quien ha formado parte de *TNG en Español* desde sus inicios hace ya 5 años... ¡el tiempo vuela cuando uno la pasa tan bien!

Por último, pero no por ello menos importante, compartimos "La historia de Oscar", una parte muy querida e importante de nuestro actual equipo presidencial, contada por nuestra propia Presidente, la Sra. Donna Donnelly.

La nota editorial está dedicada a brindar una mejor comprensión sobre los extraordinarios avances de nuestra Organización Afiliada, COMAAI (Comité de Actividades de Afiliadas Internacionales), en lo respectivo a la digitalización de sus escuelas.

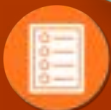
Esperamos que disfruten de estos artículos y, por favor, no duden en hacernos saber si tienen algo para compartir en futuras ediciones o si hay algún tema en particular sobre el cual les gustaría conocer más. ¡Estamos aquí para servirles!

Autora: Pampa Risso-Patrón

Co-Consejera Internacional de NGC, Inc.

Editora Internacional de TNG

PampaRP@pacefund.org



La historia de Óscar el Gnomo

Autor: Donna Donnelly

Publicado en The National Gardener, otoño 2026, National Garden Clubs, Inc.

Un agradecimiento especial a Pampa Risso-Patrón, cuyo aprecio por Óscar inspiró y animó la creación de esta historia.

Óscar: Cómo un pequeño gnomo se convirtió en un gran símbolo

Cada organización tiene sus símbolos. Algunas tienen mascotas. Otras tienen trofeos. National Garden Clubs tiene a Óscar. Óscar no es una celebridad, ni una estrella de cine, ni siquiera un miembro de club de jardinería. Óscar es un gnomo de PLANTA AMERICA. Y, como ocurre con las grandes historias, su viaje comenzó con una idea sencilla.



Al comienzo de mi gestión, buscaba una forma creativa de promover PLANT AMERICA, la iniciativa central de nuestra misión dedicada a fomentar la jardinería, la gestión ambiental y el embellecimiento comunitario. En medio de esa búsqueda, apareció en escena un alegre gnomo de jardín. Vestido con su sombrero puntiagudo y luciendo con orgullo el logotipo de PLANT AMERICA, muy pronto demostró ser más que una herramienta de difusión.

Siempre he tenido debilidad por los gnomos; hay algo en su naturaleza caprichosa que me saca una sonrisa instantánea. En poco tiempo, este pequeño personaje se instaló en mi despacho, observando en silencio las reuniones por Zoom, la correspondencia y el ajetreo diario que exige la presidencia de National Garden Clubs.

Con los días, Oscar se convirtió en un recordatorio constante y ameno del trabajo que florece a través de PLANT AMERICA. Mientras otros veían en él una simple figura decorativa, yo descubrí un símbolo viviente de nuestra misión: la encarnación de los programas educativos, iniciativas ecológicas, los proyectos comunitarios e innumerables actos de servicio voluntario en todo el país y Latinoamérica.

Al acercarse el cierre del primer año de mi presidencia, llegó la temporada de convenciones y, con ella, el momento de reconocer a quienes habían ido más allá en su apoyo a National Garden Clubs. Ya se habían preparado los Certificados de Reconocimiento Presidencial, pero sentía que faltaba un toque especial. Los galardonados merecían algo verdaderamente memorable.

La respuesta estaba justo allí, en mi escritorio, sonriendo bajo su sombrero puntiagudo. Si Hollywood tenía sus célebres premios Óscar ¿por qué National Garden Clubs no podía tener los suyos?

Fue así como Óscar el Gnomo hizo su debut oficial, transformándose de compañero de escritorio en el máximo símbolo de servicio extraordinario y del espíritu de PLANT AMERICA.

CONTINÚA EN LA PÁGINA SIGUIENTE



La historia de Óscar el Gnomo

Autor: Donna Donnelly (Continuación)

Publicado en The National Gardener, otoño 2026, National Garden Clubs, Inc.

Cada gnomo acompañaría el *Premio Especial al Mérito del Presidente*, creando un símbolo alegre pero significativo de dedicación y logro. El nombre no podía ser más idóneo: al fin y al cabo, estos galardonados son las verdaderas estrellas de nuestra organización y el premio representa el más alto nivel de reconocimiento presidencial.

Entonces llegó el gran momento en la Convención. Los Óscar estaban alineados frente al atril con sus sombreros puntiagudos bien erguidos. Nadie sabía con certeza qué esperar ni cómo reaccionaría una sala repleta de distinguidos líderes de la jardinería al recibir un gnomo— la respuesta fue inmediata y conmovedora.

Mientras se desarrollaba la entrega de premios, entregué cada Certificado Presidencial junto con un gnomo de PLANT AMERICA y lo presenté como el “Oscar de NGC”. La reacción del público fue memorable. La sala cobró vida con sonrisas, aplausos y emoción mientras los galardonados admiraban sus Óscares. Los alegres gnomos aportaron un toque inesperado de calidez, diversión y camaradería a la ceremonia— todos quedaron encantados.

Lo que comenzó como una ocurrencia sencilla se convirtió rápidamente en el momento cumbre de la velada. Alegría llenó el salón, las cámaras no dejaron de destellar y los homenajeados posaron orgullosos con sus estatuillas. El pequeño gnomo cumplió con creces el verdadero propósito del reconocimiento: celebrar el esfuerzo mientras se comparte la alegría.

Desde aquel día, Óscar ha adquirido vida propia. Ya no es solo la figura de mi escritorio, sino un emblema de dedicación, logro y fraternidad. Más importante aún, nos recuerda que el trabajo serio no está peleado con la alegría.

La jardinería nos enseña esa lección a diario: trabajamos la tierra con esfuerzo, guiamos el crecimiento, resolvemos problemas y creamos belleza, pero siempre encontramos momentos para disfrutar el camino.

Oscar representa exactamente eso. Nada mal para un pequeño gnomo de jardín con un sombrero puntiagudo. ¡Y, si alguna vez visitas mi oficina, aún lo encontrarás en su lugar de honor, recordándome en silencio que hasta las ideas más pequeñas pueden convertirse en algo verdaderamente extraordinario!

Autora: Donna Donnelly
Presidente de NGC, Inc.



La Distinción en el Diseño Floral

Autor: Pilar Medellín

Publicado en The National Gardener, otoño 2026, National Garden Clubs, Inc.

En el arte floral, la **distinción** no se refiere a un premio, sino a una cualidad estética y conceptual que eleva una obra por encima de lo ordinario. Es la manifestación de refinamiento, singularidad y dominio técnico que permite a un Diseño destacar de manera elegante.



Desde una primera mirada, el observador percibe un impacto visual que le permite identificar algo especial. Intuitivamente reconoce una obra destacada; esa primera impresión afina e influye posteriormente en sus criterios al momento de evaluarla.

Diseño: José Miur - Lima, Perú

¿Qué componentes hacen que un Diseño posea distinción?

La **originalidad auténtica**, que evita la copia y desarrolla un lenguaje visual propio; el **dominio de la técnica**, evidente en el manejo seguro de materiales y herramientas; la **armonía compositiva**, mediante el equilibrio intencional de líneas, formas y colores; y la **economía de recursos**, capaz de producir gran impacto visual sin recurrir a la saturación o al exceso.

A ello se suma la **profundidad de la organización plástica**, que relaciona la ejecución técnica con una idea o emoción y permite percibir una firma visual única, segura y deliberada. La distinción también se manifiesta en el manejo sensible o audaz del color y en el cuidado meticuloso de acabados, texturas y presentación.

En el Diseño Floral regulado por National Garden Clubs, Inc. (NGC), la distinción forma parte de los criterios considerados en las Escalas de Puntos utilizadas para evaluar un Diseño. Implica una marcada superioridad en todos sus aspectos: creatividad, calidad técnica, selección y uso de los componentes y excelente mecánica en la ejecución.

El material vegetal debe encontrarse en óptimas condiciones, fresco y adecuadamente acondicionado. Asimismo, la artesanía debe demostrar destreza y limpieza en la manipulación de materiales, mecánicas y soportes, así como una integración cuidadosa de los componentes no vegetales.

La distinción no surge por casualidad. Es resultado del conocimiento, la sensibilidad, la práctica constante y el deseo permanente de superación.

“Somos lo que hacemos repetidamente. La excelencia, entonces, no es un acto, sino un hábito.”

Atribuida a Aristóteles

Autor: Pilar Medellín, NGC Design Instructor

[Enlace a presentación en PowerPoint \(PDF\)](#)



Rozado por el viento

Autor: Sylvia Wray

Publicado en The National Gardener, otoño 2026, National Garden Clubs, Inc.

Tiritiri Matangi es una pequeña isla situada en el golfo de Hauraki de Aotearoa Nueva Zelanda. Su nombre en te reo Māori, significa "rozado por el viento" y representa la fuerza vital que se desplaza por la tierra, trayendo nueva vida y energía a todo lo que acaricia. La isla tiene una extensión de 3 km de norte a sur y 1 km de ancho de este a oeste, playa al este, escarpado al oeste, y se encuentra en un mar azul muy cercano a la Isla Norte de Nueva Zelanda.



Tiritiri, visto desde mi casa, luego de una tormenta!

Allí ha ocurrido un milagro

En la tradición maorí, la isla Tiritiri Matangi es uno de los flotadores de una red de pesca ancestral. Recibe su nombre del pā (poblado reforzado) Kawerau en la isla. El pueblo Kawerau ocupó la isla desde tiempos muy antiguos hasta la década de 1820, y de nuevo brevemente en 1830-50. Ngāti Paoa también ocupó la isla y construyó un segundo pā más pequeño conocido como Papakura hacia el extremo norte de la isla. Ngāi Tai ki Tāmaki y el iwi Marutūāhu también tienen vínculos ancestrales con Tiritiri Matangi. Hoy en día, estos iwi (grupos de parentesco extendido) continúan su relación con este motu (isla).

Más tarde, tras la llegada de colonos británicos al continente, la isla se utilizó para la ganadería desde 1863 hasta 1971. Los agricultores quemaron la mayor parte del bosque autóctono restante para plantar pastos como trébol y patas de gallo para ovejas y ganado, dejando solo los árboles dispersos cerca de los acantilados. En 1865, se ensambló y erigió un faro de hierro fundido, enviado desde Inglaterra en pedazos. Aún se mantiene en pie, marcando la entrada al puerto de Auckland, un enclave estratégico durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Hoy en día, el faro funciona con energía solar mediante un sistema totalmente automatizado.

Pero me estoy adelantando, porque el último farero, Ray Walter, instaló allí un vivero propio, donde hacía cultivos de semillas que juntaba en los pocos lugares donde había árboles y arbustos en esta pequeña isla, tan devastada por años de descuido. Pasaron varios años más cuando apareció un visionario aventurero de la Universidad de Auckland, que pensó que era un lugar privilegiado, dado su cercanía a la Isla del Norte y a la ciudad más grande de Aotearoa Nueva Zelanda, para crear un santuario de aves en peligro de extinción y una reserva científica abierta al público.

CONTINÚA EN LA PÁGINA SIGUIENTE



Rozado por el viento

Autor: Sylvia Wray

(Continuación)

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Y así comenzó un trabajo increíble: desde 1984 a 1994, un ejército de voluntarios, hombres, mujeres, adolescentes y niños pusieron manos a la obra, plantando más de 290.000 especies autóctonas para proveer sustento y hábitat a las aves, invertebrados, reptiles, y demás animales que ahora habitan este vergel. Hoy día, con 40 años de sol, lluvia y viento acariciante se han registrado 71 especies de aves nativas, endémicas y reintroducidas. La isla representa un proyecto de conservación exitoso, con 11 especies de aves nativas amenazadas trasladadas a este entorno libre de depredadores.



¡Kererū es una paloma verdaderamente gigante de la Isla Norte!

Pero lo que a mí me fascina, como jardinera, ¡son las plantas! Aquellas plantas que solía comprar en los viveros de Adrogué en la Argentina, Pittosporum, Coprosma, Leptospermum, Cordyline, Schefflera, Dodonea, Formio, etc. etc. aquí están en su hábitat natural, tanto más grandes e importantes de los que yo recuerdo. ¿Y los Helechos? Me contaban el otro día que nunca se plantaron helechos en la isla, pero cuando las condiciones fueron propicias, ellos aparecieron, sus esporas transportadas en esos vientos acariciantes encontraron el lugar perfecto para echar raíces, y ahora existen 42 especies diferentes, reinando como ser supremo el helecho arbóreo, de los cuales los más comunes son Cyathea dealbata, C. medullaris, C. smithii. Mi mayor placer es mostrarles a los niños los diferentes patrones que las esporas dibujan en el envés de las frondas. Ni hablar de los hongos.... una variedad incontable de colores, formas y texturas. ¡Uno hasta parece un cesto! Ileodictyon cibarium y a cada uno le acompaña una leyenda maorí.

Tiritiri Matangi es ahora un lugar soñado, donde las visitas locales e internacionales y niños de las escuelas de la zona pasan el día caminando por los senderos avistando las especies que no se ven en otros lados, todos maravillados por cómo se acercan las aves, como se escucha el bullicio de sus voces sonoras, mientras el viento sigue acariciando, trayendo vida y color a la isla.



Fungi

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Autor: Sylvia Wray (Continuación)

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He tenido la gran oportunidad de convertirme en Guía Voluntaria de esta isla, acompañando a las visitas, mostrándoles y contándoles como en este lugar acariciado por el viento, se produjo un milagro, perpetrado por una visión y el trabajo voluntario de la comunidad— ingredientes principales de historias de éxito.



Pōhutukawa (*Metrosideros excelsa*) en Tirititi Matangi.
Conocida en Nueva Zelanda como el árbol de Navidad,
por el color de sus flores en diciembre.

Autor: Sylvia Wray
“El Maiten” Bariloche Garden Club, Argentina

Sylvia Wray, una estimada colaboradora de *TNG en Español*, aporta a National Garden Clubs un valioso legado de dedicación y conocimientos. Durante su gestión de 20 años fue Directora de las Escuelas de Exposiciones de Flores para las Afiliadas Internacionales desde Argentina, lideró junto a su equipo la digitalización de las Escuelas de NGC para la membresía internacional. Hoy, desde Nueva Zelanda donde disfruta de su vida familiar, Sylvia sigue compartiendo su experiencia con nuestra comunidad global. ¡Kia ora Sylvia!



Nuestra evolución digital

Editorial: Pampa Risso-Patrón

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Evolución e Innovación Digital en NGC, Inc. / COMAAI

Como organizaciones afiliadas, National Garden Clubs, Inc. (NGC) y el Comité de Actividades de Afiliadas Internacionales (COMAAI) comparten la misión de promover y supervisar eventos, tanto propios como auspiciados, y de impulsar el desarrollo a nivel latinoamericano en la Jardinería, el Arte Floral y el Medio Ambiente fortaleciendo los objetivos de NGC y la fraternidad entre sus miembros.

Estructura y Cobertura Geográfica

La administración de COMAAI está encabezada por las Presidentes de NGC, representadas por la Consejera Internacional y la Directora de las Escuelas Digitales NGC/COMAAI.

La Gerencia Ejecutiva es liderada por una Directora General, quien coordina la gestión con el respaldo de tres Consejeras— Organización Interna, Digital y Académica; un Comité Consultivo; una Junta Directiva; Gerencias Regionales y los Comités Administrativo-Académico y de Comunicaciones Digitales.

COMAAI opera mediante tres Gerencias Regionales, afiliadas a NGC, cubriendo 13 países de Norteamérica, Centroamérica, el Caribe y Sudamérica:

- Región I: México
- Región II: Centroamérica e Islas del Caribe
- Región III: Sudamérica

Esta estructura académica garantiza la actualización constante y el acceso a los Protocolos y Formularios oficiales de las cuatro Escuelas de NGC a través de su plataforma comaai.org, manteniendo a COMAAI alineada con los programas y actividades promovidos por NGC.

Orígenes de la Formación Virtual (2017–2019)

En 2017, la Presidente Linda G. Nelson encomendó a la Consejera Internacional de NGC, Idalia Aguilar, la supervisión de la propuesta presentada por la Instructora Patricia Nasrallah, Directora Académica Virtual Internacional. Esta iniciativa impulsó la creación de la primera Escuela Virtual de Autoestudio de Horticultura en español, desarrollada gratuitamente con el Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey Campus Tampico (ITESM) en México. El nuevo sistema de estudios en línea fue aprobado formalmente en mayo de 2019 por la Presidente Nancy Hargrove durante la Convención Nacional de NGC en Biloxi, Mississippi.



Convención Nacional de NGC en Biloxi, Mississippi, 2019. Un paso gigante para NGC, Inc. / COMAAI (de izq. a der.) Idalia Aguilar, Patricia Nasrallah and Nancy Hargrove

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La Instructora Patricia Nasrallah lideró un equipo asistido por dos Instructoras NGC, Emilia Luna y Delia Astrini; Blanca Niño Norton, Juez Master NGC; profesionales de Horticultura y un catedrático asesor de ITESM. Juntos adaptaron los cuatro cursos de diez horas y el Curso de Renovación; diseñaron las presentaciones, grabaciones, ejercicios, evaluaciones y la logística para su acreditación oficial ante NGC.

El Impacto Educativo y la Expansión (2020–2021)

Al suspenderse las actividades presenciales en 2020 por la pandemia, COMAAI ya disponía de una sólida Plataforma de Autoestudio Digital. Pese a la coyuntura global, se inscribieron 110 estudiantes entre la Escuela y sus renovaciones, marcando un hito educativo.

En 2021 y con el respaldo de la Universidad Texas A&M, se digitalizaron las Escuelas de Medio Ambiente y Paisajismo para las Afiliadas Internacionales vía Zoom. Aprobadas por NGC, las escuelas adoptaron formatos presenciales, virtuales e híbridas que impulsaron la creación de comités especializados, protocolos y normas internas de apoyo logístico a las Directoras Locales y la selección de conferencistas latinoamericanos.

Gestión Técnica y Soporte Operativo

El fortalecimiento de estas aulas virtuales multiculturales contó con el valioso apoyo del Comité Técnico, liderado por Rosita Longo Prieto junto a Lucía Napoli y Serrana Cabrera.

En 2023, Beatriz Verduzco asumió como Consejera de Organización de Eventos Virtuales implementando reuniones de verificación previas a cada curso entre Directoras Locales y estudiantes, lo que facilitó el diagnóstico preciso de fortalezas y áreas de mejora.

Innovación en las Escuelas de Exposiciones de Flores (EEF)

Adaptar las EEF a la virtualidad representó un reto por la rigurosidad normativa de NGC, pero se ejecutó con éxito alineándose al Capítulo 13 del Manual de Exposiciones de Flores NGC, Inc.

El proyecto fue coordinado por Idalia Aguilar, quien gestionó la revisión y aprobación de Protocolos, Guías y Formularios ante NGC; Sylvia Wray, quien aportó sus 20 años de experiencia como Directora de la Escuela; y Patricia Nasrallah, quien contribuyó con su experiencia en la Escuela de Autojuzgamiento en Línea y la digitalización educativa.

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Los siguientes puntos fueron claves para seguir adelante con esta escuela digital:

1. **Código de Identificación Actual (CIA):** Identificador único de hasta tres caracteres asignado a cada Curso o Simposio para verificar que las fotografías de trabajos asincrónicos correspondan exclusivamente a cada evento.
2. **Formularios PDF editables:** Diseñados para optimizar la evaluación de Horticultura y Diseño en EEF y Simposios Virtuales.
3. **Comité de Estudios en Línea (CEL):** Conformado por Instructoras autorizadas por NGC para las Escuela de Exposiciones de Flores para Afiliadas Internacionales, quienes adaptaron los materiales educativos y la metodología de enseñanza al entorno virtual.

Hacia un Modelo Consolidado e Integrador

Concluida la emergencia sanitaria, y ante las condiciones de inseguridad en la región, NGC dispuso que las Instructoras Internacionales de las Escuelas de Exposiciones de Flores impartieran sus cursos y simposios exclusivamente en modalidad virtual.

Tras validar los nuevos Protocolos, Guías y Formularios con NGC, surgieron las Exposiciones de Flores Virtuales e Híbridas para el otorgamiento de Créditos Académicos, integrando activamente a los 13 países afiliados. La plataforma comaa.org, ha permitido difundir Videos de Premiación de Exposiciones de Flores de alto nivel de las Afiliadas Latinoamericanas. Asimismo, se autorizaron clases presenciales para las Escuelas Educativas (EE), al no requerir el traslado de las Instructoras NGC.

En reconocimiento a estos logros y al trabajo voluntario de COMAAI, NGC autorizó la administración de un Fondo Monetario del Sitio Web, alimentado por la recaudación de Créditos Académicos obtenidos en las EE, EEF y Simposios. Esto consolidó la web como el pilar educativo y documental de la organización, estableciéndose asimismo el Comité CEL.

Cuando el monto recaudado supera el fondo fijo anual autorizado, el excedente se destina a programas de Capacitación Técnica y a los Premios Plant America. La administración responde ante NGC y está a cargo de la Directora Académica Digital, la Directora de Eventos Digitales, la Tesorera de COMAAI y la Consejera de NGC, bajo la supervisión de la Directora General de COMAAI.

Autor: Pampa Risso-Patrón
Co-Consejera Internacional de NGC,
Inc. y Editora Internacional de TNG

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**NGC, Inc. Certificado al Mérito, otorgado a la Instructora Internacional
Patricia Nasrallah por Presidente Mary Warshauer (2021-2023)**



Q&A: FINDING FALL GARDENING INFO

In this issue we are focusing on providing resources for gardeners looking to make the most of the autumn season. This way you will find information specific to your region.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q: Where can I find reliable information about what to do in my garden this fall?

A: Start with your state's University Extension Service. Extension horticulture specialists provide research-based recommendations tailored to local growing conditions, including fall planting, pruning, lawn care, pest management, and winter preparation. Because gardening varies by climate, local resources are more useful than generic gardening advice or calendars.

Q: How can I determine the right time for fall planting in my area?

A: Consult your local Extension Service and the **USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map**. Your zone provides a useful starting point for selecting perennials, trees, and shrubs, while local frost dates and weather patterns help determine planting timing. Also consider your garden's microclimate, soil temperature, and exposure rather than relying on calendar dates. Also consult the gardening tools mentioned in our Cool Tools articles in this and past issues as they can provide specific information for your exact location.

Q: Where can I find information about planting spring-flowering bulbs in the fall?

A: Botanical gardens, University Extensions, and horticultural organizations offer excellent bulb-planting guides. Look for information specific to your climate, since planting depth, timing, chilling requirements, and bulb selection vary by region. Your neighbors can also provide insight into bulbs that perform well in your area.

Q: Where can I find trustworthy information about fall garden pests and diseases?

A: Begin with your Extension Service or their plant diagnostic laboratory. There are also helpful apps where you can take a photo to help identify insects, diseases, and other problems and provide recommendations based on integrated pest management (IPM). Accurate identification comes before selecting a control.

Q: How can I find information about fall vegetable and herb gardening?

A: Extension vegetable-gardening guides are valuable because they often include regional planting calendars and recommended cultivars. Seed companies can provide useful information about days to maturity, but compare that information with local frost dates and use gardening apps to narrow in on your specific area. Explore succession planting and season-extension techniques such as cold frames and row covers.

Q: Where can I learn about fall garden practices that benefit pollinators and wildlife?

A: Check the Xerces Society, National Wildlife Federation, local native-plant societies, botanical gardens, and Extension programs. These resources help determine which seed heads and stems to leave standing, when to clean up beds, and how to provide overwintering habitat while maintaining a healthy landscape.

Q: What resources should experienced gardeners use when planning for next year's garden?

A: Fall is an excellent time to review your garden journal alongside Extension recommendations, seed catalogs, botanical garden resources, and information from professional horticultural organizations. Record what thrived, what struggled, pest and disease problems, bloom times, and weather conditions. Your own observations, combined with research-based resources, are one of your most valuable tools.





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