

THE NATIONAL GARDENER

A close-up photograph of several dandelion seed heads on a stem. The seed heads are in various stages of maturity, with some showing the characteristic white, feathery pappus and others showing the brown, seed-like structure. The background is a soft, out-of-focus mix of green and yellow, suggesting a garden setting.

Winter 2024
gardenclub.org



The National Gardener

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GO GREEN - PLANT AMERICA



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Coming in TNG

Spring 2024 - April

- ❖ The Environment!
- ❖ PLANT AMERICA
- ❖ Arbor Day
- ❖ Earth Day

Submissions welcome and encouraged! See [The National Gardener](#) page for guidelines.

Cover Photo - Plant for Pollinators • Victoria Foulke, This Page • Iuliia Savinova, Page 4 Columbine • Klickblick

About Us

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

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Snowdrops • Muzka

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Charlotte Swanson, *Happy Gardener*

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 [TNG page](#) for submission information.

Deadline/Publication Dates:

- Fall Issue Sept. 1/Oct. 1
- Winter Issue Dec. 1/Jan. 2
- Spring Issue Mar. 1/Apr. 1
- Summer Issue Jun. 1/Jul. 1

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- Full Page \$650
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See the [TNG page](#) for more information on advertising.



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3. Infringe any patent, trademark, trade secret, copyright or other intellectual property or other rights of any other person.
4. Violate the legal rights (including the rights of publicity and privacy) of others or contain any material that could give rise to any civil or criminal liability under applicable laws or regulations or that otherwise may be in conflict with these Terms of Use and our Privacy Policy.
5. Be likely to deceive any person.
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7. Cause annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety or be likely to upset, embarrass, alarm or annoy any other person.
8. Impersonate any person, or misrepresent your identity or affiliation with any person or organization.
9. Involve commercial activities or sales, such as contests, sweepstakes and other sales promotions, barter or advertising.
10. Give the impression that they emanate from or are endorsed by NGC or any other person or entity, if this is not the case.

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BRENDA'S JOURNAL

In seed time learn, in harvest teach and in winter enjoy
William Blake

Winter is a time to sit back and simply enjoy life. That might mean reading a book by the fire, looking at seed catalogs, and planning your garden. After a busy year, we need time to rest and time to plan. We will soon again have the time of seeding, learning, harvesting, and teaching. Do not wake your gardens up early. Let your gardens sleep in. Wait to tidy up your spent flowers, stems, and plants until several weeks of 50° and above temperatures in the spring. Many pollinators are sleeping in those plants. Birds continue to eat their seeds.

Garden club activities slow down a little bit in winter, too, although they never cease. We are always planning and communicating. Your NGC Executive Committee meets virtually in late January. The Awards Committee convenes to review award applications and determine the winners. The Award of Excellence Committee chooses recipients in December. The Convention Committee is diligently getting ready to welcome you to the 2024 Convention in Westminster (Denver), Colorado.

Winter typically means setting resolutions for the new year. Use this time to set some gardening/environmental resolutions for 2024. Some suggestions are:

1. Plant native plants. Native plants require less maintenance and provide a food source for many insects and other animals. Apply for the *NGC PLANT AMERICA-Plant for Pollinators* certification.
2. Start to get rid of invasive plants on your property. Look up what plants are invasive in your region, such as knotweed, Japanese honeysuckle, Oriental bittersweet, kudzu, barberry, and burning bush. Apply for the *NGC PLANT AMERICA – Landscape for Wildlife* certification. Landscaping for wildlife does not mean inviting unwanted animals to your property. It does help small mammals, such as bats and squirrels, plus birds, survive.
3. Start planning to use less light on your property at night. Artificial lights affect animal migration. Look for an NGC online seminar on light pollution in 2024.

4. Lessen the size of your lawn. Consider planting native grasses or enlarging your gardens.
5. Cut down on your plastic usage. Begin with saying no to straws in restaurants.
6. Become Lifelong Learners. Take advantage of NGC Schools. Set goals to become judges or consultants. Participate in NGC quarterly webinars.
7. Practice kindness within National Garden Clubs. Often, we are quick to judge but do not know or understand all the facts behind decisions. Asking questions is always welcome; sometimes we need to give leaders the benefit of the doubt.
8. Offer to serve in a position. ALL of us have some form of leadership ability. It might be taking minutes or leading a committee. Discover your talents and use them.
9. Invite someone to join a garden club. If every garden club member invited another person to join, our membership would double.
10. Make plans to attend the 2024 National Garden Clubs' convention in Westminster, Colorado, a suburb of Denver. All are welcome to participate in these meetings.

I look forward to 2024 and all it holds for National Garden Clubs. Happy New Year!





Happy Gardener

Color Recall

Charlotte Swanson

Brown and gray are the current colors in the garden. Gone are the veggies, blooms, and herbs. We have transitioned to rest mode, yet colorful memories remain. The yellows of the abundant sunflowers, spiraling roses, and multi-layered *Chrysanthemums* have not faded from memory. The reds of the *Zinnias*, lilies, and 'Chrysler Imperial' rose linger. The oranges that appeared among the *zinnias*, lilies, and *Dahlias* still register in my mind's eye. The treasured blues in the *Salvia*, catmint, and Russian sage played a pleasant contrasting role. Pinks were popping up in snapdragons, the 'Painted Porcelain' rose, the 'Southern Belle' *Dahlia*, and the ever-blooming shell pink landscape roses. A dash of purple comes to mind as I recall the fall's 'Grape Crush' New England *Aster* and spring's parade of purples amongst the *Iris*s. Coral, beautiful coral, appeared early in the peony 'Coral Charm' and lingered in the 'Fragrant Cloud' tea rose and some of the snapdragons. White was sparser but climbed upward in the newly planted 'Tsukiko' *Clematis*. Daisies were prolific with white petals, and the 'Anouska,' a white double oriental lily, was exquisitely trimmed in pale pink.

All those vibrant colors are captured in my digital library but are richer in my mind. Presently, my eyes register dull neutrals when I gaze at the garden. In my spirit, there is a vibrant promise of a colorful new life in the coming gardening season! Though my feet rest, my hands hold plant catalogs, and my fingers walk down the aisles of their pages while the fireworks in my head dazzle with possibilities. Spring 2024, we will be rested and ready for you!

Charlotte Swanson is a NGC Gardening Consultant and a long time writer for *The National Gardener*.



Planning the Home Landscape, Part 3 Delight or Disaster Bruce Crawford



Chanticleer Focal Point • Bruce Crawford

Having completed the spatial diagram, one focuses on developing the spaces on the diagram. The Elements and Principles of Design are helpful in this process. These concepts developed from painting and sculpture, not garden design. As a result, they only focus on the sense of sight and negate the other human senses that should be considered. However, they remain essential in understanding proper design. The Elements of Design include:

1. **Line** is ubiquitous in design. Lines appear as bedlines, the edge of buildings, or even the mortar joints of brickwork.
2. **Form** is the shape of objects.
3. **Mass** is the visual density or weight of an object or plant.
4. **Color** is how the reflective light of an object appears to the eye.
5. **Texture** is coarse or thin, and the tactile description of a surface is smooth or rough.

The Principles of Design employ common sense and control or manage the Elements of Design. They include:

1. **Simplicity** The most effective gardens focus on two Elements of Design and suppress the remaining three. I always blame what we see daily for influencing our design sense. For example, we are well-accustomed to the inside of our homes, which typically feature non-matching chairs, lamps, and knickknacks. It works indoors since the walls are one cohesive color, and the

scale is much smaller. In contrast, the outdoor environment lacks the consistency of painted walls, and using an overwhelming diversity of plants (alias, the 'furniture') creates a nervous and distracting environment. For the plant enthusiast, simplicity is also the most challenging principle to control. We are seduced into acquiring too many plants of different colors, forms, and textures or complicate bedlines or walkways with too many curves.

2. **Scale** What may appear as a small and tidy plant when newly purchased will often grow to monstrous proportions, obliterating walks and obscuring houses. For example, the two dwarf Montgomery Blue Spruce (pictured next page) looked appropriate when planted, but 30 years later, they are no longer in scale. Removing them (pictured next page) gives the door some "breathing space." The rooms of our home once again influence the other problem we encounter with scale; we think in terms of indoor scale, not outdoor. Items that appear appropriate inside a home are often much too small when placed outdoors.
3. **Sequence** This refers to how one space relates to the next in the spatial diagram. It also refers to the repetition of plants and objects as we navigate and observe the garden or the seasonal changes occurring in the garden.

(Continued on page 7)



4. **Balance** To appreciate the principle of balance, you must become aware of plants' visual weight. A densely branched plant with dark-colored or coarsely textured foliage will have greater visual weight than an open, lightly colored plant with delicate textured foliage. With this in mind, there are two types of balance – formal and informal. With formal balance, there is an exact duplication of plant materials and objects on either side of an axis line or focal point. Informal balance uses the visual plant and material weight and proximity to the focal point to achieve balance on either side of the focal point. For example, a denser (heavy) plant near the focal point could be balanced with an extended sweep of smaller plants on the other side. Clearly, informal balance is far more challenging to develop appropriately.
5. **Focalization** A focal point is the object that stops and holds the eye, such as the fountain in the Teacup Garden at Chanticleer (pictured previous page). The logical location for the focal point is at the terminus of an important view, such as from a dining room window or backdoor. In the front yard, the primary focal point is the front door, although there can be points of interest discovered en route to the door. Focalization uses plants and architecture to enhance and develop the focal point rather than distract. The advent of cubism in the early 1900s brought about the philosophy of studying objects from multiple viewpoints. This philosophy has slowly crept into landscape design, proposing multiple axes and focal points within a view. Unfortunately, developing it effectively is very difficult, and few succeed.

Moving forward with the design, you have hopefully developed a Site Plan for the spatial analysis on which you can begin to hardline patios, walks, and other parts of the "hardscape." As mentioned in the first article, surveys generally have a scale of 1" = 50', too small for crafting detailed planting designs. The larger architectural scale of 1" = 8' is ideal for most uses, although a scale of 1" = 4' is ideal for detailed perennial or mixed borders. I also prefer using a scale of 1" = 8' since marking the garden in the field with a tape measure is easier. With a small drafting table and a T-square or graph paper, one can transfer the property's details to the larger scale. Essential items to be noted if not done so already include:

1. Doors and windows. Especially note those windows with important views, such as from an office, living room or over the kitchen sink.
2. Location of outdoor spigots, electrical outlets, basement windows, and other features requiring access.
3. Location of downspouts that could impact plant health.
4. Location of wells, septic systems, and utility lines that need access or could be compromised by roots or tall canopies.
5. Location of existing trees, vegetation, or other features like stone walls or outcrops you wish to retain, will impact the design, or both.

The concepts of Elements and Principles of Design can be beneficial in helping to manage and prioritize design decisions. In the following article, we will look at putting design theory to paper, defining the hardscape while creating outdoor rooms by properly using plant materials.

Bruce Crawford, of New Jersey, is the Manager of Horticulture, Morris County Parks Commission, Morris Township, NJ. He received an NGC Award of Excellence in 2021. [Printable Article](#)





Colorado Garden • Nancy Griffin

Colorado Welcomes You! NGC Convention June 2 - 5, 2024

Imagine experiencing a beautiful and colorful Colorado June morning as shown in the above image. We invite you to see this and more as you attend the National Garden Clubs' annual convention in Westminster, just west of Denver. Come and enjoy the entirety of what we love about our state, including the foothills, mountains, the never-ending blue sky, and everything else the West offers.

You can enjoy our city's diversity from the Rino and the Arts District, Cheesman Park, Central Park, Highlands, and Capitol Hill. Take time to visit one of our many museums, attend a show at the Denver Center for Performing Arts, or our famed Red Rocks Amphitheater. Shop till you drop in Cherry Creek. Sit down to a scrumptious meal in LODO (Lower Downtown) and experience the city's up-and-coming culinary reputation. Remember to try one of our well-known local craft beverages.

Pack your hiking boots, fishing, and biking gear and experience a few of our over 300 days of sunshine as you venture into nature just a short driving distance from the city. Plan a day trip to Golden/Morrison, Boulder, Colorado Springs, Estes Park, or the Rocky Mountain National Park. Use all five senses to experience fresh mountain air and a memorable trip. Colorado welcomes you with open arms and hearts and looks forward to getting to know you!

National Garden Clubs Convention

June 2-5, 2024

The Westin Westminster, Westminster, Colorado

REGISTRATION: [CONVENTION WEBPAGE](#)

HOTEL: [THE WESTIN WESTMINSTER](#)

Online and credit card registration only. See the convention webpage for more details and hotel information. Convention registration deadline is May 24, 2024. No walk-ins are accepted. The hotel reservation deadline is May 13, 2024.

EDUCATORS

PATTY ARNDT, *PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE*



Patricia (Patty) Arndt is a native of West Virginia and a member of the West Virginia Garden Club, Inc. (WVGCI) for 28 years. She has served as the NGC Parliamentarian since June 2021. It is a pleasure and honor for her to serve in this position. In Arndt's tenure as a garden club member, she has served in many roles, including WVGCI President (2013-2015) and South Atlantic Region Director (2019-2021), as well as those in her local club, Berk-Mar, and the Shenandoah-Potomac District of WVGCI. Professionally, she is the co-owner and Broker of The Phenix Group, a full-service real estate agency and rental property management company. As a Realtor, she is a member of the West Virginia Association of Realtors and the National Association of Realtors. Arndt and her husband of 37 years live in Martinsburg, WV. They love vegetable gardening and adore their two cats, ten hens, and two roosters. Anyone familiar with Arndt knows her as a "chicken lady!"

JIM FRICKE, *COLORADO GARDEN FOUNDATION*



Jim Fricke is the executive director of the Colorado Garden Foundation (CGF) since 1997. This charitable organization owns and produces the Colorado Garden & Home Show and Denver's Colorado Fall Home Show. The shows' proceeds have awarded over \$13 million in horticulture-related scholarships and grants throughout Colorado. The partnership between the CGF and the Colorado Federation of Garden Clubs began in the 1980s, with the Federation participating in the Colorado Garden & Home Show with their annual Flower Show attended by over 45,000 people. In 2002, the Denver Business Journal honored Fricke as one of the Top 40 Under 40 Business People of the Year. In 2015, he was awarded the Thomas O'Loughlin Award, the highest honor presented by the National Association of Consumer Shows, for significant contributions to the advancement of the show industry.

LYNN FRONK, *LEGENDARY LADIES IN FLOWERS*



Meet some of Colorado's Legendary Ladies: Mollie Brown, Calamity Jane, and Katherine Lee Bates portrayed by Legendary Ladies Inc., a volunteer organization that promotes the history of women of the West. Lynn Fronk will interpret each Legendary Lady in a floral design. Fronk is an NGC Master Flower Show Judge and NGC Instructor in Design and Procedure. A celebrated creative designer, Fronk has served on the NGC Board for over 20 years and currently serves on the Floral Design Committee and is the Symposium Coordinator.

EDUCATORS

CHERIE LEJEUNE AND VICTORIA SCHMIDT, *GETTING STARTED WITH CANVA WORKSHOP*



Cherie Lejeune is a member of the NGC Membership and Leadership Committee. She serves as the Virtual Resources Chair for the Central Atlantic Region (CAR). Lejeune's business background includes more than 30 years in global marketing and communications. Her businesses included international historic photography followed by a sports marketing firm, with clients and projects within the sailing world. Lejeune worked as a writer/editor for NBC's *The Today Show* and served as an editor/producer for media projects, movies, videos, and TV specials. Lejeune served as President of the National Capital Area Garden Clubs (2019-2021) and she trained and motivated clubs to use virtual tools.



Victoria Schmidt is the President of the Colorado Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc. and CyberTrain, Inc., a software engineering, education, and training company. She is a highly skilled Program Manager, Software Architect, and Master Instructional Designer/Developer. Schmidt's company specializes in interactive training, design, development, and delivery for government, commercial, technical, and non-profit organizations. She presents at worldwide conferences, national conventions, and local events. Schmidt has expertise in many software programs, including Artificial Intelligence and is a member of the NGC Virtual Resources Committee.

CAROL LENAHAN, *LAVENDER WORKSHOP*



Carol Lenahan lives in Colorado Springs, Colorado. A Front Range Herb Society member, she helps maintain the McAllister House Museum's herb garden. Her love for growing vegetables and herbs and her joy of cooking and crafting fed her curiosity in learning and using herbs in the kitchen and body and home products. A self-taught gardener, Lenahan spends time outside tending her flowers, herbs, and vegetables, her favorite activity during the growing season.

TIME FOR TEA WORKSHOP



Ever think of the possibility of going outside to pick your herbs and make that perfect pot of tea? Now is the time to learn all the little secrets to making it an afternoon tradition in your home! Come and smell, feel, mix, and taste how wonderful it is to grow your herbs. Mixing them with other daily ingredients in your kitchen can turn a gloomy day into a relaxing, refreshing, and memorable experience. (The educator for this workshop is to be announced.)

EDUCATORS

FRANCES THRASH, *FLORAL DESIGN BASICS WORKSHOP*



Frances Thrash is a past president and founding member of Lynnhaven Heritage Garden Club and president of the Richmond Designers Guild. She serves her state as Flower Show Schools Chair. Thrash is a Master Judge and a Design and Flower Show Procedure Instructor for NGC flower show schools and symposia. She has served on the NGC Board for six years, is the Floral Design Coordinator, and serves on the nominating committee. She is an American Iris Society Master Judge and a Hemerocallis Society Senior Judge, as well as a board member of Creative Flower Arrangers of the Americas. She presents programs far and wide for garden clubs, state conventions, and plant societies. In addition, she finds time to work at the Wholesale Flower Market in Chesapeake, Virginia, where she is an FTD Master Designer. Thrash's business, Seascapes, provides designs for weddings, meetings, churches, and others.

BRIAN VOGT, *DENVER BOTANIC GARDENS*



Brian Vogt has been Chief Executive Officer of Denver Botanic Gardens since April 2007. In that time, attendance grew to over 1.3 million visitors per year. His professional experience includes three cabinet positions with the State of Colorado and as President of the South Metro Chamber of Commerce. Vogt served as President of the Board of the American Public Garden Association. He now serves as Board Trustee for the Center for Plant Conservation and Board Treasurer for Plant Select. He received the 2019 Cynthia Pratt Laughlin Medal from the Garden Club of America for leadership in environmental protection and quality of life.



TOURS

DENVER BOTANIC GARDENS

A docent-led walking tour of the beautiful Denver Botanic Gardens. Learn more at [Denver Botanic Gardens](#). (This tour is offered on June 2 and June 3.)

THE BUTTERFLY PAVILION

A short walk to the Butterfly Pavilion located next to the hotel. Learn more about this site at [Butterfly Pavilion](#). (This tour is offered on each day of the convention.)

BETTY FORD ALPINE GARDENS

Tour the Betty Ford Alpine Gardens, explore and have lunch on your own in Vail Village, and then visit the western museum in beautiful Idaho Springs (be on the lookout for bighorn sheep that frequent the area) on the way back to the hotel. Tour includes transportation through scenic mountains and a tour guide at the gardens. Learn more about the [Betty Ford Alpine Gardens](#). (Note: minimum attendance is required for this tour to take place on June 6.)

2024 NGC CONVENTION SCHEDULE

SUNDAY, JUNE 2 PRE-CONVENTION

Start	End	Event
7:00 a.m.	7:00 p.m.	NGC Staff Office/Storage
7:00 a.m.	7:00 p.m.	Floral Workroom
7:00 a.m.	5:00 p.m.	Awards Workroom
2:00 p.m.	5:00 p.m.	Registration And Credentials
3:00 p.m.	7:00 p.m.	Denver Botanic Garden Tour

MONDAY, JUNE 3

7:00 a.m.	7:00 p.m.	NGC Staff Office/Storage
8:00 a.m.	5:00 p.m.	Registration & Credentials
8:00 a.m.	7:00 p.m.	Floral Workroom
8:00 a.m.	12:00 p.m.	Vendor Set Up
8:00 a.m.	7:00 p.m.	Awards Workroom
8:00 a.m.	9:00 a.m.	Membership & Leadership Committee
9:00 a.m.	10:00 a.m.	Organizational Study Committee
9:00 a.m.	11:00 a.m.	Nominating Committee
9:00 a.m.	11:00 a.m.	Flower Show School Committee
10:00 a.m.	2:00 p.m.	Denver Botanic Garden Tour
10:15 a.m.	11:15 a.m.	Finance Committee
11:30 a.m.	12:30 p.m.	PH&E Trustees
12:00 p.m.	1:30 p.m.	Optional Lunch (Pre-Purchase)
12:00 p.m.	6:00 p.m.	Vendors Open
1:00 p.m.	2:00 p.m.	Gardening School Committee
2:00 p.m.	3:00 p.m.	Landscape Design Committee
2:00 p.m.	3:00 p.m.	Executive Committee
2:00 p.m.	4:00 p.m.	International Affiliates
3:00 p.m.	4:00 p.m.	Parliamentary Procedure Seminar
2:30 p.m.	4:30 p.m.	Butterfly Pavilion Tour
3:00 p.m.	5:00 p.m.	School's Procedure Committee
4:00 p.m.	5:00 p.m.	State Presidents & Region Directors
		Dinner On Your Own

TUESDAY, JUNE 4

Start	End	Event
7:00 a.m.	7:00 p.m.	NGC Staff Office/Storage
7:00 a.m.	7:00 p.m.	Floral Workroom
8:00 a.m.	7:00 p.m.	Awards Workroom
8:00 a.m.	12:00 p.m.	Registration
8:00 a.m.	9:00 a.m.	Credentials
8:00 a.m.	9:00 a.m.	Exhibits Set-Up
9:00 a.m.	5:00 p.m.	Vendors Open
9:00 a.m.	5:00 p.m.	Exhibits Open
9:00 a.m.	11:30 a.m.	Board Of Directors Meeting
10:00 a.m.	11:30 a.m.	Butterfly Pavilion Tour
11:30 a.m.	12:00 p.m.	Credentials
12:00 p.m.	2:00 p.m.	Opening Luncheon
2:00 p.m.	5:00 p.m.	Credentials
2:30 p.m.	3:30 p.m.	Lavender Workshop
2:30 p.m.	4:30 p.m.	Butterfly Pavilion Tour
3:45 p.m.	4:45 p.m.	Getting Started with Canva Seminar
5:15 p.m.	6:00 p.m.	Awards Banquet Rehearsal
6:00 p.m.	7:00 p.m.	Social Hour
7:00 p.m.	9:00 p.m.	Awards Banquet – AOE Recipients, State and International Affiliates Awards, Member Award of Honor

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 5

7:00 a.m.	7:00 p.m.	NGC Staff Office/Storage
7:00 a.m.	7:00 p.m.	Floral Workroom
7:30 a.m.	8:30 a.m.	Credentials
8:00 a.m.	5:00 p.m.	Registration
8:30 a.m.	11:30 a.m.	General Meeting
9:00 a.m.	4:30 p.m.	Vendors Open
9:00 a.m.	4:30 p.m.	Exhibits Open
12:00 p.m.	2:00 p.m.	Luncheon - New 4/5-Star, Life & Golden Circle Members Honored
2:30 p.m.	3:30 p.m.	Floral Design Basics Seminar
2:30 p.m.	4:30 p.m.	Butterfly Pavilion Tour
3:45 p.m.	4:45 p.m.	Time For Tea Workshop
6:00 p.m.	7:00 p.m.	Social Hour
7:00 p.m.	9:00 p.m.	Banquet

THURSDAY, JUNE 6
9:00 A.M. - 5:00 P.M.
BETTY FORD
ALPINE GARDEN TOUR



Front Entry • melindamyers.com

Helping Gardeners Create Curb Appeal

Melinda Myers

A recent survey of 2024 garden trends by Axiom Marketing found that 57.6% of those surveyed, ages 19 to 58, were interested in creating front of the house plantings. Throughout the year, as you meet with and advise gardeners, you may have the opportunity to share some quick fixes and more involved strategies to help them accomplish this goal.

Adding a splash of color by painting a front door can welcome visitors and boost their mood whenever they enter. Select colors that complement the home's siding, architecture, and surrounding landscape. Dressing it up with a seasonal wreath or other door decoration allows them to add a personal touch while giving family and friends something to look forward to with the change of seasons.

Including a few containers at the front entrance is a quick way to bring life to new and existing landscapes. Help newbies, busy gardeners, and those who may have failed in the past boost their container gardening success with self-watering pots. These pots can save time by extending the days between watering while reducing the risk of over and under-watering.

Help them extend their enjoyment throughout the year by changing the plantings each season. Forced spring flowering bulbs, pansies, stocks, snapdragons, sweet alyssum, and *Pericallis* like Senetti make great combinations for spring and areas with mild winters. Suggest they replace faded annuals or create a new container with warm-weather flowers, grasses, and more. Encourage them to repeat those cool weather favorites for fall and greens, colorful twigs, berry-laden branches, and dried materials for winter displays.

Even edging existing garden beds can help freshen and improve a home's curb appeal. Edging materials are an option. A physical edge will also define the space, improve the appearance, and help slow the invasion of weeds and grass into the garden beds. Show new gardeners how to use a sharp shovel to dig a V-shaped trench around small garden beds or encourage them to rent an edging machine for larger areas. Have them fill the trench with mulch to create a mowing edge.

Weeding garden beds can quickly improve garden plants' overall appearance and health. Explain that weeds not only compete with desirable plants for water and nutrients, but many are hosts for insect pests and diseases that can harm desirable plants. After weeding, recommend they spread a one- to three-inch layer of organic mulch like shredded leaves, evergreen needles, or woodchips over the soil surface. The finer the material, the thinner the layer of mulch needed. Organic mulch helps conserve moisture, suppress weeds, and improve the soil as it breaks down.

(Continued on page 14)

Select a mulch that is aesthetically pleasing and will not overwhelm the beauty of the plants. Emphasize the importance of keeping mulch off tree trunks, shrubs, stems, and crowns of perennial and annual plants. Covering stems and plant crowns can lead to root rot and other problems that can negatively impact the plants' health and longevity.

Help them evaluate existing plantings to decide what plants stay and which ones go. Diseased, insect-infested, or plants too large for the space may be candidates for replacement. Some may need a bit of proper pruning to restore their natural beauty and bring them down in size. Your experience and plant knowledge can help them decide what to compost and what to keep.

Recommend methods for reinvigorating overgrown and tired plants they plan to keep. Removing one-third of the older stems to the ground is an excellent method for suckering type shrubs. This pruning is best done in late winter or early spring before growth begins. Gardeners can reduce the height of the remaining stems by no more than a fourth or one-third. Repeating this over the next few years and, as needed in the future, encourages healthier new growth. Remind them to wait until after spring flowering shrubs like lilacs and forsythia bloom if they want to enjoy a bountiful spring floral display.



Front Garden • melindamyers.com



Quick Fix • melindamyers.com

Some gardeners may take the plants back several inches above the soil surface. The regrowth may be taller than the original plant since all the stored energy had nowhere else to go. Next spring, remove a third of the stems and reduce the height as desired.

When starting a landscape from scratch or replacing existing plantings, remind them to consider the right plant for the proper purpose and one that will fit the available space once it is mature. You and your state's extension service can recommend the best plants for your region. Encourage gardeners to visit the [Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health](#) to avoid planting invasive plants that leave our landscapes and disrupt nearby natural habitats.

Encourage gardeners to read the tags and plant trees and shrubs at the proper spacing. Fill the voids with flowers and grasses for a quick and attractive display. They will need fewer annuals each year as the woody plants grow and spread. Perennials can be moved to new locations as needed.

Equipping new and overwhelmed gardeners with some primary plant and landscaping information, a list of resources, and your advice will get them off to a good start. As their confidence builds, you may soon find they are anxious to become more involved in sharing the joy of gardening with others.

Melinda Myers authored more than 20 gardening books, including *The Midwest Gardener's Handbook* and *Small Space Gardening*. Her website is www.MelindaMyers.com.

Let's COOK!

Easy Overnight Apple Butter Mary Ann Ferguson-Rich

The apple harvest is completed throughout the country. This recipe requires minimal effort to produce a perfect pint of apple butter!

Ingredients:

- 4 cups (about 1 1/4 pounds) peeled, chopped Granny Smith apples (Or any combination of sweet and tart apples that you like.)
- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar (I prefer 2 tablespoons of lemon juice.)
- 3/4 cup packed dark brown sugar
- 1/4 cup butter divided (You can omit the butter if desired. I always do.)
- 1 tablespoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves (Depending on taste, the cloves can be omitted.)
- 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla (Depending on taste, the vanilla can be omitted.)

Combine apples, sugar, vinegar (or lemon juice), two tablespoons of butter (if using), cinnamon, salt and cloves in slow cooker. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours.

Stir in the remaining two tablespoons of butter and vanilla (if using). Food process the apple butter (I like the smooth texture.), or skip this step if you like it chunky. Pour into a one-pint canning jar and refrigerate.

If you want to preserve it for the shelf, sterilize the canning jar, and after filling it with the hot apple butter, water bath can according to the manufacturer's directions. (It makes a beautiful gift if canned.)

[Mary Ann Ferguson-Rich](#) is the NGC Food to Table Chair. She cooks and gardens in Ohio. **Click here for printable [Apple Butter Recipe](#).**



Hiring • PeopleImages

Leaders Wanted!

Betty Cookendorfer

Are you interested in serving in a leadership role to help guide our organization with your time, energy, and innovative ideas? Do you want to work to keep NGC strong and vibrant while promoting our goals and objectives? The NGC Nominating Committee is currently accepting applications for the NGC 2025 – 2027 elected officers. Applications are welcomed for First Vice President, Second Vice President, Third Vice President, Treasurer, and Recording Secretary.

As listed in our bylaws, the requirements to apply for an office include the following.

1. A candidate must have the eligibility requirements for the office as stated in the NGC Bylaws VIII, Section 1. B and Section 1. C.
2. A candidate must have the official endorsement of the State Garden Club Governing Board for a specific office, signed and dated by the State President. Article VIII, Section 1.E.
3. A candidate may apply only for one office. (Exception: If a vacancy occurs in the First, Second, or Third Vice President a candidate may be considered for a position one step higher than the endorsement.)
4. The application includes:
 - a. **Sent by the candidate** to the NGC Nominating Committee Chair:
 - i. NGC Official Endorsement Form stating specifically

the office to which the candidate is applying, signed and dated and in a sealed envelope by the State Garden Club President.

- ii. One-page NGC Resume Form of the candidate's related qualifications and experience.
- b. **Sent directly by the candidate's references** to the NGC Nominating Committee Chair:
 - i. A maximum of three one-page letters of recommendation requested by the candidate.
 - ii. If the candidate is currently an NGC Officer, they do not have to file an additional three (3) letters of recommendation. The letters of recommendation were filed with the original forms when they were selected for their position as an NGC Officer.

Application information is on the NGC Website in the Board Member section, which includes the administrative forms.

1. NGC Official Candidate Endorsement Form for NGC Elected Officer.
2. Resume of Candidate for NGC Elected Office.
3. NGC Nominating Committee Procedure Manual (Revised 2023).

Details for selecting officers are in the [NGC Bylaws](#) Article VIII, Section 1. B and Section 1. C and Article III Section 1. E. All applications, endorsements, and additional information must be emailed by **April 15, 2024**, to [Betty Cookendorfer](#).

Betty Cookendorfer, of Ohio, is the 2023-2025 NGC Nominating Committee Chair. Contact Betty for more information.

AMES

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TOOL GRANT PROGRAM

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

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"WELLNESS GARDEN"
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The Wedowee Garden Club, Alabama



"POLLINATOR FRIENDLY GARDEN"
The Ramblers Garden Club Louisville, Kentucky



Point Pleasant GC • Kelly Noto

Ames Tool Grants

Debi Harrington

National Garden Clubs' grant program with The Ames Companies, Inc. began in 2014. The Ames Companies has generously agreed to extend its in-kind grant program for 2024. Grant Applications are accepted until March 1, 2024.

In 2024, garden tools with a total retail value of \$4,500 are available for NGC gardening projects. Gardening programs performed or supported by NGC local member clubs and scheduled to be carried out from March 1 through September 30, 2024, are eligible. Projects may be a joint venture with another organization; however, the applicant must be a member of a state garden club of NGC. Awarded tools will be shipped to the successful applicants in May of 2024.

The application form may be found at the [Ames Tool Grant](#) webpage. Select "Resources and Forms" to see the application and the tool Item Selection List. Clubs may select tools up to a retail value of \$250 for their community garden or garden therapy club project. Many Ames tools are appropriate for children or gardeners who prefer a cushion grip handle. Take advantage of this benefit of being an NGC garden club.

For the selection of the Ames Tool Grants, consideration will be given to the following:

- ◆ Value of the project to the community.
- ◆ Level of club member participation.

- ◆ Need and planned usage of the tools requested.
- ◆ Uniqueness of the project.

All successful applicants must deliver a completed final report no later than 45 days after project completion. Please include the following:

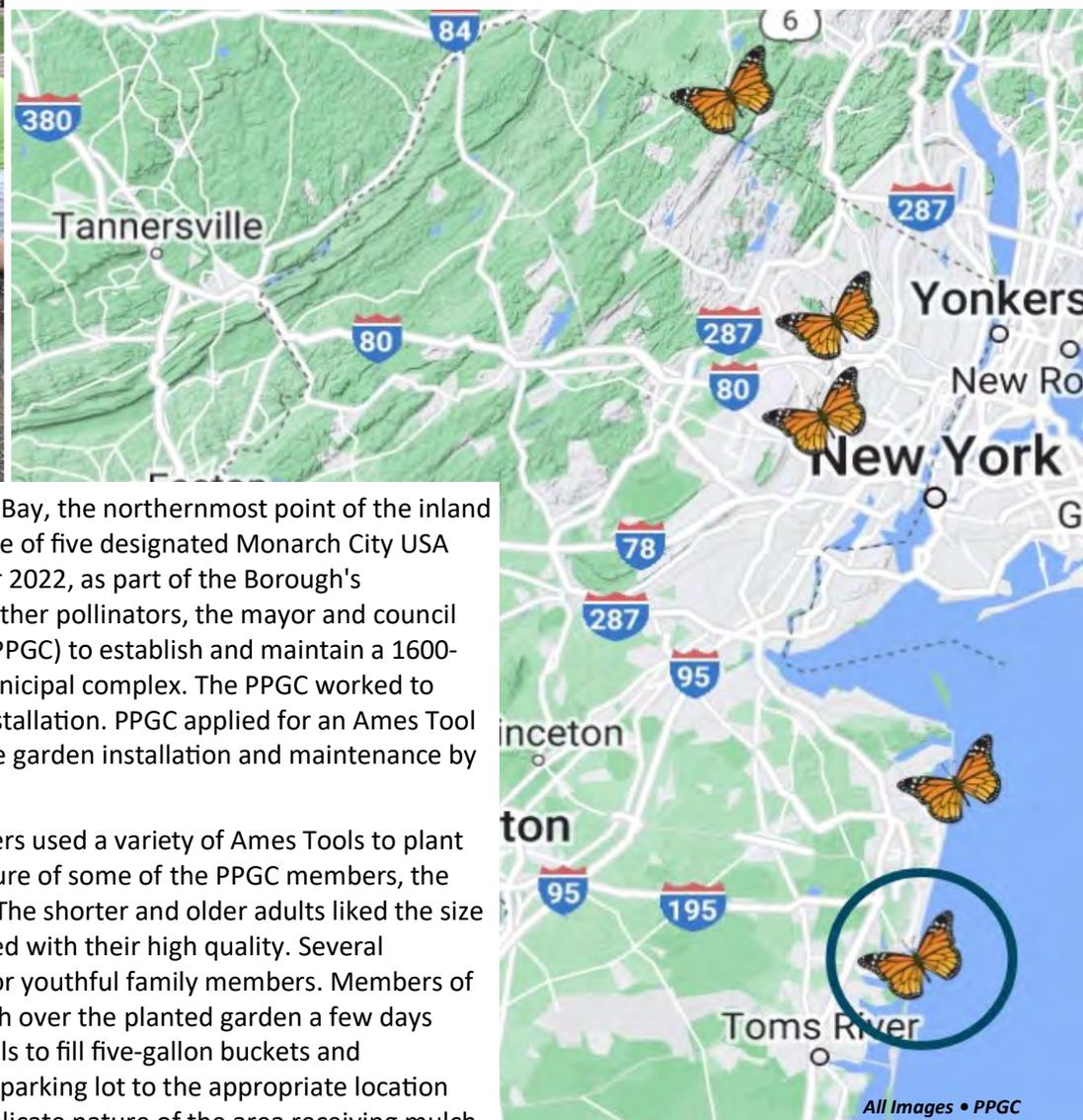
- ◆ A one-page report describing the project, including special tips on using the Ames tools.
- ◆ Brief final financial report showing sources and uses of funds.
- ◆ Copies of any project publicity generated by the applicant.
- ◆ AMES Companies Confirmation of Charitable Goods Receipt.
- ◆ Photos must include the tools received from Ames being used, before and after images of the area planted, and the garden in bloom.
- ◆ Names and Release forms (permission to use photos) of individuals in photos. Both the NGC Photo Release and the Ames Photo Release forms are required.

An NGC local member club applying for an [Ames grant](#) may also apply for an [Espoma in-kind grant](#), a [PLANT AMERICA grant](#), or all three. Each application period is different.

[Debi Harrington](#) is the NGC Sponsored Grants Chair. Contact Debi with any questions. Debi lives in New Mexico.

Point Pleasant GC Receives Tools

Kelly Noto, Heidi Riley, Sharon Moritz



Located at the northern tip of Barnegat Bay, the northernmost point of the inland waterway, Point Pleasant Borough is one of five designated Monarch City USA municipalities in New Jersey. In October 2022, as part of the Borough's dedication to monarch butterflies and other pollinators, the mayor and council asked the Point Pleasant Garden Club (PPGC) to establish and maintain a 1600-square-foot pollinator garden in the municipal complex. The PPGC worked to raise funds and plan for the garden's installation. PPGC applied for an Ames Tool Grant requesting various tools to enable garden installation and maintenance by various age groups.

On May 20, 2023, over 20 PPGC members used a variety of Ames Tools to plant over 200 plants. Given the age and stature of some of the PPGC members, the kids' tools were the most sought-after. The shorter and older adults liked the size and weight of the tools and were pleased with their high quality. Several considered buying sets for themselves or youthful family members. Members of the PPGC used the tools to spread mulch over the planted garden a few days after planting. The team used the shovels to fill five-gallon buckets and wheelbarrows to move mulch from the parking lot to the appropriate location within the garden. Depending on the delicate nature of the area receiving mulch, PPGC members chose to use hand trowels, rakes, kids' shovels, or kids' rakes.

More than 75 people attended the formal ribbon cutting of Pollinator Point in August, including Point Pleasant dignitaries, PPGC members, and the public. The various Ames Tools were available for viewing and inspection. During the ceremony, Ames Tools was thanked for its grant.

The Kiwanis Club of Point Pleasant organized *Pointsgiving* in November as a day of hands-on volunteering open to people of all ages. The PPGC club participated with over 25 organizations offering projects to engage residents and introduce them to local community service activities. Volunteer community members helped put the pollinator garden to bed for the winter by spreading compost to amend the soil and keep the plants warm. Teenagers used the Ames shovels to load compost into five-gallon buckets and then carry it to zones within the garden. PPGC is grateful to Ames Tool for its partnership in the establishment and continued maintenance of Pollinator Point with their tools.

Kelly Noto and Heidi Riley are Co-Chairs of the PPGC Pollinator Point Project. Sharon Moritz is the current President of PPGC.



In Memoriam, Eleanor Yates

Susan Hooper

A native of Rocky Mount, North Carolina, Eleanor Yates grew up in the 1930's and 1940's as a farm girl who loved to garden. Home Demonstration and 4-H clubs sparked this interest. After Eleanor and her husband, Graem, moved into a new neighborhood in Charlotte with their three children, she was the catalyst for starting the Eager Diggers Garden Club in the 1950's. Her interest in garden clubs didn't stop at the local level. In 1977, she became President of The Garden Club of North Carolina while remaining a member of the Sardiswood Garden Club.

A parade of National offices followed, including the South Atlantic Regional Director from 1983 to 1985, on the road to the NGC Presidency. However, she did not neglect her local roots, being a director of the Charlotte Camellia Society, North Carolina Nature Conservancy, and Charlotte Botanical Garden. To better communicate with the national affiliates, she studied Spanish, which paid dividends as she traveled seven times south of the border as NGC President.



Speaking of traveling, her frequent flyer miles increased faster than bunnies multiplied. She visited all 51 state garden clubs and all eight regions, often with repeat visits, plus her international trips. What adventures she had, from going on a hayride in Nebraska to riding a real steer at the Dallas convention. She toured seven covered bridges in Iowa, receiving a copy of the best seller, *The Bridges of Madison County*. Hawaii presented her with three leis, one with 1000 flowers. On April 26, 1995, she visited the White House, returning in June with 11 other garden club members to decorate the White House for a congregational picnic.

Her talented commercial artist husband had a green thumb, creating a new *Camellia sasanqua* 'Eleanor Yates.' Many cultivars bear her name, including a white and yellow iris, a daylily, an Asiatic lily, a rex begonia, and an exotic Phalaenopsis orchid. In addition to growing flowers, she was an NGC Flower Show Judge. She participated in numerous shows and won many top awards and ribbons for her creativity.

Eleanor is remembered for coordinating with Lady Bird Johnson to plant flowers along the highways. The North Carolina Department of Transportation was instrumental in planting roadside flower beds. One of her friends wrote, "She is bright, gracious, and hard-working. To know her is to love her. Noted for her smile and friendliness, her trademark 'Hello, Pal' greeting made her presidency a delightful journey." The Eleanor Yates Nature Conservancy Award was established by the Garden Club of North Carolina and is funded by the Sardiswood Garden Club. It recognizes clubs making the greatest contribution to the Nature Conservancy.

Eleanor spent many years in Florida, enjoying the opportunity to continue participating in garden club activities and flower shows. In November 2023, she experienced a head injury and soon gave up her life. Although she is no longer with us, we remember and honor her dedication to the organizations we now enjoy and find ways to share the love of flowers with our friends and neighbors. We are grateful for Eleanor's long and happy life.

Susan Hooper is the past President of Sardiswood Garden club.

We all leave our footprints on the planet, but it is the trail that we take that counts. Truly our trail has been carpeted with wildflowers and love.

Eleanor Yates,
Dallas Convention, 1995





Outdoor Fun • P101021

Looking for Youth Groups

Do You Work With Youth? Bob Markey

Forming and registering new youth clubs in each state will help National Garden Clubs create a comprehensive Youth Club database for the first time. This database lets NGC quickly get the word out with up-to-the-minute youth info about grants, events, scholarships, contests, awards, publications, and many more benefits! Forming a youth club under NGC helps us team up with other like-minded organizations for even greater youth gardening opportunities!

Only 12 states have registered NGC Youth Clubs, which leaves us *no direct way* of informing all our young people around our country of the myriad youth gardening benefits and opportunities that NGC offers.

Why not make forming new youth clubs your winter project? Registering a new youth club is easy to do! Your State Youth Chairs can encourage local clubs to create and register the kids *they already work with* as NGC Youth Clubs. The registration fee to NGC is only \$10* per year, whether you have one Youth Club or twenty, and it requires a simple one-page form. (*Check with your state club regarding any additional registration fees that may be charged on a local or state level.)

Let us all work on this noble project of increasing the number of youth clubs so that we can connect more kids with nature in the spring than NGC has ever done before.

Bob Markey, of New Jersey, is the NGC Youth Coordinator. Bob is the founder of Mr. Bob's Garden Foundation for YMCA campers that received a 2023 NGC Award of Excellence.



Pilar Miñarro • Designer



Rosy Torres • Designer



Pilar Miñarro • Designer

Design and Perfection of Cultivation in Botanical Arts Pilar Medellin

Choosing a design theme for the next edition of *The National Gardener* is always a challenge. At this time, I realize how enriching it can be to work in Perfection of Cultivation and Design with a single artistic expression. With the evolution, changes, and challenges of the *Handbook for Flower Shows, 2017*, this interesting opportunity appears in the Botanical Arts Division with the *Pot et Fleur* design.

The possibility to combine horticulture and design with creativity and freedom of expression takes us beyond the options we previously had. Now, there is a new and wonderful way of combining them. The designers discover, at their fingertips, varying and stimulating alternatives when creating this design. New containers or structures, colors, ideas, and combinations provide a surprise in this division.

The *Pot et Fleur* designs shown within this article are taken from a workshop held by individual members of the Lagunero Council of Judges in Horticulture and Design (CLJHD) of Torreón, Mexico, of which I am a member. Here, we combine two elements, with the possibility of highlighting the presence of *Euphorbia pulcherrima* as a native species to

Mexico. It is known and cultivated worldwide and is always present at this time of year. The creativity of each of the enthusiastic participants is applied by using the inflorescence of at least two with roots in kokodama or a pot.

Remembering a little history of how this plant spread worldwide, we encounter a botanist and statesman, Joel Roberts Poinsett, who later became U.S. Ambassador to Mexico (1825-1829). Hence the name Poinsettia and many others, such as Christmas Star, Easter Flower, Federal Star, Christmas Eve, and many more.

With this presentation, our wish to all is for this new year to be especially different for our lives, the environment and always better. I end with this anonymous thought: *Lord, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.*

Pilar Medellin de Miñarro, is a TNG international feature writer and NGC Instructor. She lives in Mexico. [Click to view more images of *Design and Perfection of Cultivation in Botanical Arts*.](#)



Lucila García • Diseñadora



Diana Quiñones • Diseñadora



Marilu Blackaller • Diseñadora

Diseño y Perfeccion de Cultivo en Artes Botánicas

Pilar Medellín

Siempre es un reto elegir un tema de diseño para la próxima edición de *The National Gardener*. Esta vez me di cuenta de lo enriquecedor que puede ser trabajar la Perfección de Cultivo y Diseño en una sola expresión artística. Con la evolución, los cambios y los retos en el *Manual de Exposiciones de Flores 2017*, aparece esta oportunidad en La División Artes Botánicas con el diseño *Pot et Fleur*.

La oportunidad de combinar horticultura y diseño con creatividad y libertad de expresión, nos lleva más allá de la opción que teníamos. Ahora, es una nueva y maravillosa forma de combinarlas. Las opciones que tiene el diseñador, al conformar este diseño, son tan variadas y estimulantes que está en nuestras propias manos la posibilidad de probarlo todo. Nuevos recipientes o estructuras, colores, ideas y combinaciones nos sorprenden en esta División.

Para los diseños *Pot et Fleur* mostrados junto con este artículo, aprovechamos un taller donde participaron individualmente los Miembros del Consejo Lagunero de Jueces en Horticultura y Diseño (CLJHD) de Torreón, México al que pertenezco. Aquí conjuntamos dos cosas, la posibilidad de resaltar la presencia de la *Euphorbia pulcherrima* como especie originaria de México. Es conocida y cultivada en todo

el mundo y siempre tan presente en esta temporada. Con la creatividad de cada una de las entusiastas participantes, utilizamos un mínimo de dos inflorescencias, con raíz, en kokodama o en maceta.

Recordando un poco la historia de cómo fue difundida esta planta en todo el mundo, nos encontramos al botánico y estadista Joel Roberts Poinsett, quien posteriormente fuera Embajador de EEUU en México (1825-1829). De allí su nombre *Poinsettia* y tantos otros nombres como ser Nochebuena, Estrella de Navidad, Estrella Federal, Flor de Pascua y muchos más.

Con esta presentación deseamos a todos ustedes que este año que se inicia, sea especialmente distinto para nuestras vidas y nuestro entorno...siempre mejor y acompañado por este pensamiento anónimo: *Señor concédeme la serenidad para aceptar las cosas que no puedo cambiar, el valor para cambiar las cosas que puedo y la sabiduría para reconocer la diferencia.*

Pilar Medellín de Miñarro, es escritora internacional de artículos especiales para TNG e Instructora NGC. Ella vive en México. [Haga clic para ver más imágenes Diseño y Perfeccion de Cultivo en Artes Botánicas.](#)

The Natural Disaster USA Fund was established by NGC in 1997 to receive monetary contributions from states, clubs, and individuals to assist local and state clubs with their garden-related restoration efforts. This fund has helped to replant parks, municipal gardens, and other garden-related sites due to natural disasters caused by floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, tornadoes, ice storms, and wildfires.”

Palm Trees • Antsmarching

Help to Restore

Debra Turner

We are proud that our garden club members so quickly asked how we can help people in Hawaii, Florida, California, and elsewhere recover from fires, floods, hurricanes, and tornadoes. Initially, people may want to contribute to local disaster relief funds. Our NGC Natural Disasters USA fund explicitly targets the restoration of gardens, forests, and other plantings after natural disasters. You may [donate online](#) or send a check payable to Natural Disaster USA Fund to NGC Headquarters, 4401 Magnolia Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63110. All donations are tax-deductible and will be gratefully acknowledged.

To apply, visit the [Natural Disaster Grant](#) webpage for all information and the application form. The Natural Disaster Grant Fund’s general rules include the following.

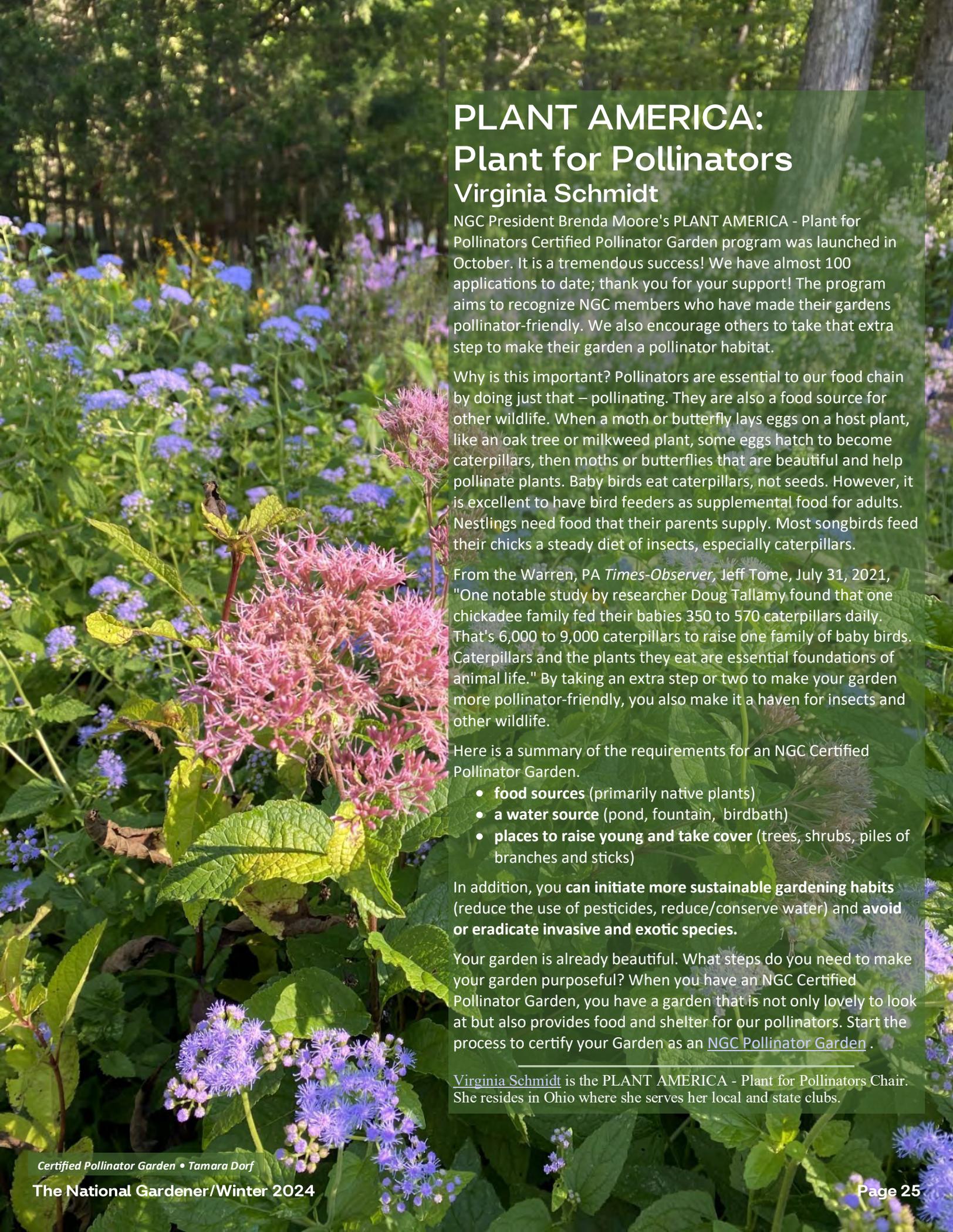
1. A state garden or member club sponsors the restoration project.
2. Upon review by the Natural Disasters USA Committee, applicants may receive up to \$5,000 per natural disaster project. However, they may not receive more than \$5,000 per disaster within the NGC fiscal year.
3. Clean-up and restoration will be provided by the garden club applicant and local service organizations unless the Natural Disasters Grants Committee approves exceptions.
4. Funds provided are for the restoration of trees and plants and not for professional landscaping fees.

Helpful hints for completing the application form.

1. The cost of replacing plants must be expressed as an itemized estimate. Do not bundle that into the cost of removal and replanting; separate the cost of plant materials. Cite or show a basis for the itemized estimate.
2. Be specific: for example, write down the date the damage occurred and the speed of the winds. Tell or show the story of the disaster, especially if it was not a named storm or an event that received national attention. That said, do not self-censor your club by thinking your disaster was too local or too small to make an application.
3. Provide enough information so the reviewer can independently confirm the natural disaster and the applicant’s identity. We sometimes receive an application that is not from a member club, state club, or otherwise suspect.

Please apply for these plant restoration grants. Our club members choose to donate money to the Natural Disaster Grants because they want to help the recovery. We want to approve the grant requests. We at NGC take great care in approving the grants to ensure donations go where they are needed and for what they were intended. If your application is returned with a request for more information or greater specificity, please resubmit the application with the questions answered. Chances are excellent that it can then be approved. If you have not heard back within a month of making a grant application, contact [Debra Turner](#).

Debra Turner, of Ohio, is the NGC Natural Disasters Fund USA Chair. Contact Debra for more information.



PLANT AMERICA: Plant for Pollinators

Virginia Schmidt

NGC President Brenda Moore's PLANT AMERICA - Plant for Pollinators Certified Pollinator Garden program was launched in October. It is a tremendous success! We have almost 100 applications to date; thank you for your support! The program aims to recognize NGC members who have made their gardens pollinator-friendly. We also encourage others to take that extra step to make their garden a pollinator habitat.

Why is this important? Pollinators are essential to our food chain by doing just that – pollinating. They are also a food source for other wildlife. When a moth or butterfly lays eggs on a host plant, like an oak tree or milkweed plant, some eggs hatch to become caterpillars, then moths or butterflies that are beautiful and help pollinate plants. Baby birds eat caterpillars, not seeds. However, it is excellent to have bird feeders as supplemental food for adults. Nestlings need food that their parents supply. Most songbirds feed their chicks a steady diet of insects, especially caterpillars.

From the Warren, PA *Times-Observer*, Jeff Tome, July 31, 2021, "One notable study by researcher Doug Tallamy found that one chickadee family fed their babies 350 to 570 caterpillars daily. That's 6,000 to 9,000 caterpillars to raise one family of baby birds. Caterpillars and the plants they eat are essential foundations of animal life." By taking an extra step or two to make your garden more pollinator-friendly, you also make it a haven for insects and other wildlife.

Here is a summary of the requirements for an NGC Certified Pollinator Garden.

- **food sources** (primarily native plants)
- **a water source** (pond, fountain, birdbath)
- **places to raise young and take cover** (trees, shrubs, piles of branches and sticks)

In addition, you **can initiate more sustainable gardening habits** (reduce the use of pesticides, reduce/conserves water) and **avoid or eradicate invasive and exotic species**.

Your garden is already beautiful. What steps do you need to make your garden purposeful? When you have an NGC Certified Pollinator Garden, you have a garden that is not only lovely to look at but also provides food and shelter for our pollinators. Start the process to certify your Garden as an [NGC Pollinator Garden](#).

Virginia Schmidt is the PLANT AMERICA - Plant for Pollinators Chair. She resides in Ohio where she serves her local and state clubs.

From the editors...

We have had the great pleasure of featuring Spanish/English articles in *The National Gardener* (TNG) since I became editor in June 2021. As gardeners, floral designers, landscapers, and environmentalists from all across the Americas, these articles have brought us all closer together. Learning about unique gardens, environmental initiatives, and special projects in Central and South America brings an additional perspective to our TNG readers.

We recently learned that our outstanding and talented environmental and gardening contributors need to resign from their positions. We very much want to continue our bilingual articles. We hope to enlist our International Affiliate friends in COMAAI to identify individuals who may contribute articles in the future. We have made so much progress and hate to see this disappear. Thank you for being so helpful and please contact me or Pampa for more information.

We wish Ana Calegari, IA Region III, and Blanca Niño Norton, IA Region II, the best in their future endeavors. Their interesting articles provided education and enrichment for all. Thank you both!

[Gerianna Holzman](#) is the editor of TNG. [Pampa Risso Patrón](#) is the international editor of TNG.

De las editoras

Hemos tenido el enorme placer de presentarles artículos en español e inglés en *The National Gardener* (TNG) desde que asumí el cargo de editora en junio de 2021. Como jardineras, diseñadoras florales, paisajistas y ambientalistas de todo el continente americano, estos artículos nos han acercado aún más a todas. El aprender sobre jardines únicos, iniciativas ambientales y proyectos especiales en Centro y Sur América brinda una perspectiva adicional a nuestros lectores de TNG.

Recientemente nos enteramos que nuestras destacadas y talentosas contribuyentes en temas del medio ambiente y horticultura deben renunciar a sus puestos. Deseamos fervientemente continuar con nuestros artículos bilingües. Por esa razón, esperamos contar con la ayuda de nuestras amigas Afiliadas Internacionales de COMAAI para identificar a quienes puedan contribuir con artículos en el futuro. Hemos progresado mucho y nos da pena pensar que esto pueda desaparecer. Les agradezco su gentil ayuda y les pido que por favor se comuniquen conmigo o con Pampa para obtener más información.

Les deseamos a Ana Calegari, IA Región III, y Blanca Niño Norton, IA Región II, lo mejor en sus proyectos futuros. Sus artículos tan interesantes proporcionaron educación y enriquecimiento para todos. ¡Gracias a las dos!

[Gerianna Holzman](#) es la editora de TNG. [Pampa Risso Patrón](#) es la editora internacional de TNG.



His books are page-turners. His talk is horticulture at its funniest.

Neal Sanders' 15 fast-paced, intricately plotted mysteries draw rave reviews from readers. They all feature strong, independent women – some of whom solve crimes, and others who commit them. Many of his books use garden club settings and ‘women of a certain age’.

But don't mistake these for ‘cozies’: his plots involve everything from romance scams to ‘protect your assets’ schemes and fraudulent reverse mortgages. There's frequently a strong horticultural element. You can **order his books in print and Kindle formats on Amazon**. Or, you can go to www.TheHardingtonPress.com to explore his titles and read first chapters. You can also purchase books directly from the author at www.the-hardington-press.square.site.

Neal is also one of the most entertaining speakers you'll ever hear. ‘Gardening Is Murder’ is equal parts humor, psychology, and gardening wisdom; a husband's point of view of what goes on in the garden. In 2023 he spoke at the **NGC Deep South Convention**, state meetings in **South Carolina, Michigan and Connecticut**. To book him for your club, state, or regional event in 2024 and 2025, write Neal02052@Gmail.com.





PFAS, Forever Chemicals Striking Near Home

Harriet Robinson

When I recently took the NGC Environmental School, I learned about the dangers of microplastics. The issue was underscored by a talk by a specialist at a district meeting I attended as state president. What are microplastics? They are pieces of broken plastic that break down into smaller and smaller pieces. They also may start as tiny fibers that blow off synthetic clothes and are air-distributed. Besides being an eyesore, they are an environmental hazard. They are in our water supply, they threaten marine life, and the most minor pieces can cross cell walls. We can see these plastics in their larger forms of discarded water bottles or plastic bags on the roadside. These plastics never biodegrade. They just get smaller and smaller.

Another danger is lurking that we cannot see. Across the country, the issue of “forever chemicals,” or PFAS, which stands for per- or poly-fluoroalkyl, is in our news media. These chemicals are used as coatings for fire retardation, stain resistance, and other functions.

PFAS can be compared to plastic because they never biodegrade. That is where they got their nickname, “forever chemicals.” Their environmental impact can be devastating. Contaminated farm fields cannot be used to grow crops or livestock. Wild animals who forage can become so toxic that their meat is not recommended for human consumption.

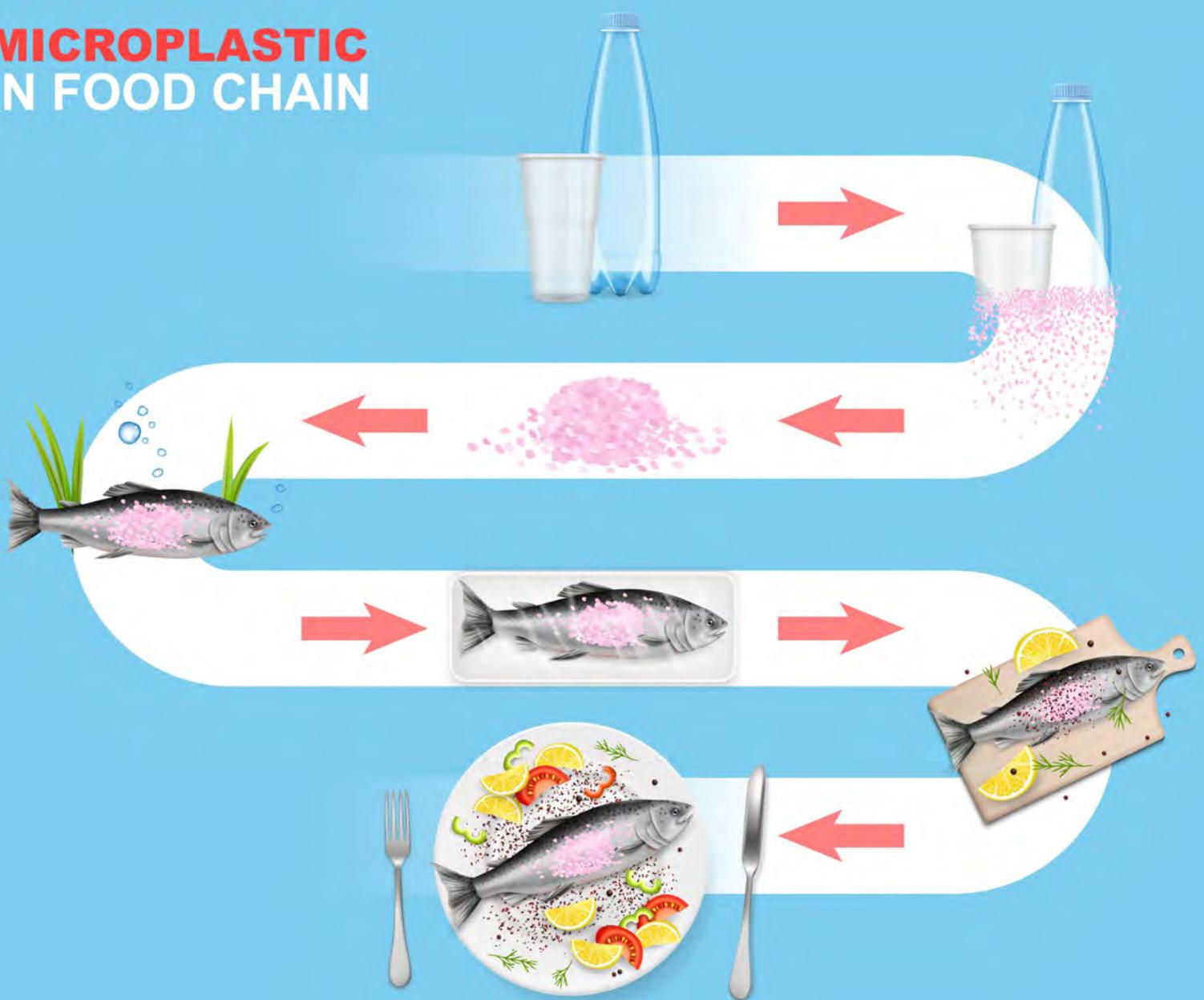
How did we get to this situation? My state of Maine is environmentally conscious. In the 1980’s and 1990’s, an issue arose for the sewage treatment plants used to keep our

waterways clean: What should be done with the solid by-products left from treating the waste? Our state’s Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) suggested that the solids could be added to fields as sludge or compost. The plan seemed to be a responsible solution that would help field fertility and eliminate the need for more landfills. My husband’s family’s woolen mill was at the forefront in following the state’s DEP’s recommendations. The mill had its treatment plant and was one of the first to compost the sludge. “Good Morning America” did a story on it, filming at the mill and treatment plant and in our yard, where we used a lot of the compost preparing the lawn for our new house. My older son, about four at the time, was pulling a wagon full of compost to a flower bed in the TV clip. Fortunately, as far as we know, our mill’s industrial process was clean of PFAS.

Because of the manufacturers it serves, the PFAS content from one particular treatment facility in Maine had very high PFAS levels that have recently been discovered. The sludge, compost, or both were spread regionally. Displaced farmers take the most brutal hit. They can no longer farm their land. Public drinking water along the chief river that drains the region is contaminated. The effluent of treated water released by the treatment plant contains PFAS, although pilot projects are underway to screen it out. There is also concern about groundwater. How safe is the well water that so many rural people rely on? Testing is ongoing throughout the state to determine the extent of the problem.

(Continued on page 28)

MICROPLASTIC IN FOOD CHAIN



Microplastics • SiberianArt

How can we clean this up? Researchers are on it. It turns out that these chemicals are more prevalent than initially realized. Can we stop further contamination? We are still learning about the effects on human health. Click to view the [Environmental Protection Agency's current information](#).

There are small things we can do as gardeners. According to a recent press release by The Environmental Working Group, 13% of the registered pesticides in Maine contain a per- or poly-fluoroalkyl. Maine's Board of Pesticide Controls lists 56 active ingredients as forever chemicals. These include lawn care products by well-known manufacturers. The companies are expected to reformulate products to remove these chemicals, but what should we do in the meantime?

An organic approach works for small-scale home gardeners. We can handpick insect pests, use organic sprays only when necessary, and perhaps do without a plant if control is not possible by those methods. There are many ways in which rethinking "perfection" is a benefit. Weeds in lawns provide diversity and help pollinators. There is a case to be made for a higher nutrient content in some organic food. It is a much more complex issue for farmers growing food. Handpicking may not be cost-effective, and the public may not buy imperfect-looking produce. We can take small steps in our gardens, and many garden club members already have. We are literally the grassroots and can take a positive step. We can rethink the products we buy and the amount of "stuff" we need. As National Garden Club members, we can take Environmental School to learn about issues such as these. We can take Gardening School and learn how to grow some of our food if we are not already doing that. Education is the beginning of change.

Harriet Robinson is the former president of the Garden Club Federation of Maine. This article originally appeared as an NGC blog in June 2023. Pat Rupiper, NGC Environmental School Chair, recommended reprinting in *TNG*.

NGC Certified Wildlife Habitat

Barbara Campbell



Circle Garden • Lynn O'Straughnessy

Our NGC President's Project for certifying a wildlife habitat is off to a great start. We have over 40 certified gardens representing 18 states. Lynn's garden from Michigan is pictured above and Shelly's garden from New York is picture to the right. These gardens range from well under one acre to many acres, and each participant is helping to sustain wildlife in their yards. Go to the [Gardening for Wildlife](#) webpage for more information and the application form.

Upon certification, Wildlife Habitat Signs are available to purchase. Every participant receives a letter of commendation and a frameable certificate. Our President, Brenda Moore, was the first to have her garden certified as an NGC Wildlife Habitat.

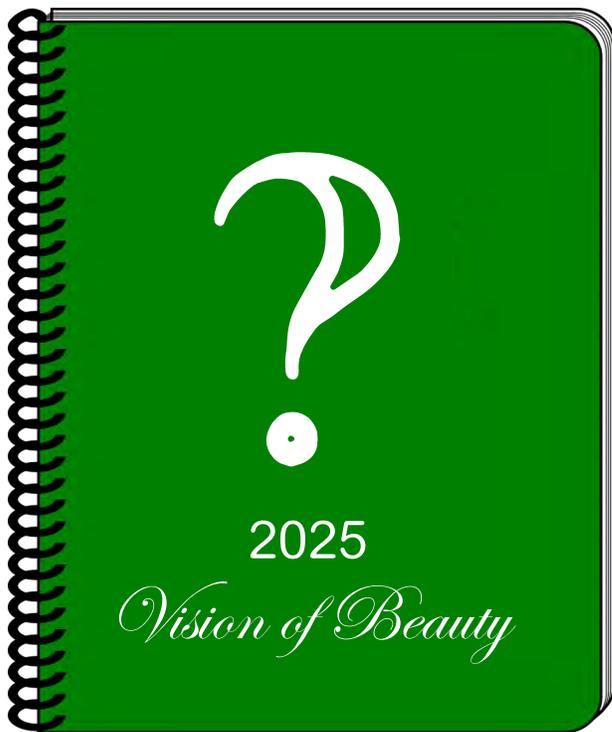
[Barbara Campbell](#), of New York, is the NGC PLANT AMERICA - Landscape for Wildlife Chair.



Colorful Garden • Shelly Ottens



Birds • Galynd_p



Vision of Beauty 2025

Nancy Voyles

The *Vision of Beauty* Calendar Committee met many times via Zoom to review all the entries of floral designs, botanical arts, and gardens from designers worldwide. We will produce another outstanding calendar for 2025 with these high-quality submissions.

With so many entries and limited space in the calendar, we can only publish a certain number of images. Please continue sending us your beautiful photographs. Check out this [NGC Blog](#) for VOB photography tips. We are already accepting new entries for the 2026 calendar. Download and complete the [Entry Form](#) and send it with your digital entry to [Vision of Beauty](#). You can still order your [2024 Vision of Beauty calendar](#) from our NGC store.

[Nancy Voyles](#) of Arkansas is the NGC *Vision of Beauty* Calendar Chair.

Members Are Generous

Suzanne Bushnell

I write this article as we enter what is traditionally known as the “giving season” of Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, and Christmas. It is also the time of the winter solstice when most of our gardens have been put to bed. For those in our communities who are food insecure, this is also a time of great need. Looking through all the donation forms I have received for the PLANT AMERICA, Feed America President’s Project, I am genuinely humbled by the generosity of participating members and clubs.

Entering the week of Thanksgiving, 79 donation forms have been received, representing 26 states with all regions participating. During the upcoming growing season, I hope to hear from the other 24 states that have not sent in a donation form. Almost 19,000 pounds of food have been donated so far. For those making donations, please do not forget to let me know how much you are donating! You can either estimate the value of the food you are donating, the weight of the donation, or the number of servings you think your contribution will equate to. You need only pick one of these three ways of reporting.

A few members and clubs have asked me if they could report food donations that they did not necessarily grow. Many do not have a vegetable garden or have been participating in food drives to help out in their community. I encourage anyone who wants to participate in some way to feel free to help in this vital endeavor. If you donate something other than produce, indicate it on the donation form. In the next issue of *The National Gardener*, I will highlight a few from around the country. Meanwhile, keep up the excellent work with the PLANT AMERICA, Feed America President’s Project! Click here to complete the online donation form [PLANT AMERICA, Feed America](#).

[Suzanne Bushnell](#) is the PLANT AMERICA - Feed America President’s Project and NGC’s Community Gardens Chairs.





Lakeshore State Park • David Robson

PLANT AMERICA Grants

David Robson

Members of the Garden Club of Greater Milwaukee, 165 strong, submitted a Plant America Community Project grant to purchase native trees, additional grasses, and forbs to continue their project at the Fox Prairie in the Lakeshore State Park, abutting Lake Michigan. Lakeshore State Park is the only urban state park in Wisconsin. The Garden Club of Milwaukee received a \$1000 grant for the National Garden Clubs, Inc. program.

Throughout their project and grant, members of the “Prairie Pals,” as the members call themselves, have planted more than 40,000 (!) forbs and grasses on at least 10 acres, restoring the prairie to a similar habitat from hundreds of years ago. Working jointly with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and Friends of Lakeshore State Park over the past six years, they created a wildlife habitat full of birds, butterflies, bees, and other natural wildlife. More than 60 hours of combined labor were expended planting. Club members developed a weekly working schedule to maintain the park from May through October.

Witch hazel (*Hamamelis*), sumac (*Rhus*), dogwood (*Cornus*), and Chokeberry (*Aronia*) were planted behind and near park benches in a little resting plaza, affording a splendid view of the prairie and Lake Michigan. More than 250,000 people visit the park yearly, enjoying the paths and the festivals held on-site.

A dedication was held in early September 2023. If you are in the Milwaukee area, check out the park south of the Art Museum and Discovery World. Paths are perfect for strolling.

[David Robson](#), of Illinois, is the NGC PLANT AMERICA Community Projects Grants Chair.



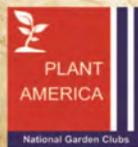
ORGANIC

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Think Outside the

BOX

Lesley Parness

In a world spinning out of control, window boxes give gardeners a place to exercise complete dominion. Their history began in ancient Rome's early apartment houses. Terracotta window boxes were used to grow herbs to treat first-century BCE ailments. Roman philosopher Pliny the Elder reminisced about the days "when the villagers' windows were brimming with colorful window boxes."

From then on, people throughout urban centers of Europe used window box planters to grow herbs, vegetables, and medicinal plants. Over the centuries, window boxes took on various forms, such as wire hay baskets of England and Ireland, wrought iron boxes of France and Spain, and intricately carved wooden boxes of the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Germany. Window boxes were an essential element in early American colonial homes. Many period architectures are well suited for window-box displays, including Colonial Revival, Georgian, and Victorian.

If you want to add a window box to your home's exterior, size and proportion are critical considerations:

- The box should extend several inches beyond the window's width or group of windows.
- The height of the box should be 20 to 25% of the height of the windows.
- Make a cardboard cutout of the proposed box to check its size. Paint the cardboard to decide whether the box will look best in the house's body, trim, or accent color.

When the box is prominent and will remain on the house year-round, natural materials that age well (wood, wrought iron, copper, stone, cement) are better than plastics. Wood is the most popular material, but it does require refinishing every few years. Priming with a sealer and using a semi-gloss paint repels water damage. Whatever you choose, adequate drainage holes are a necessity.

The National Gardener/Winter 2024

Planting in a plastic liner makes it easy to change plants seasonally. The copper window boxes on my garden shed are veined with a rich blue patina. It includes a permanent planting of ivy in several strategic places in which to insert spring bulbs, seasonal annuals, and, in winter, interesting bare tree branches. A plastic liner holds moisture and protects the box from wet soil and eventual deterioration. If the planter is on an upper story, and there is concern about it shifting or falling, attach the back to the masonry or studs in the wall under the window. Brackets, screwed into wall studs, can be used for additional support. Remember, the box should not directly contact the wall.

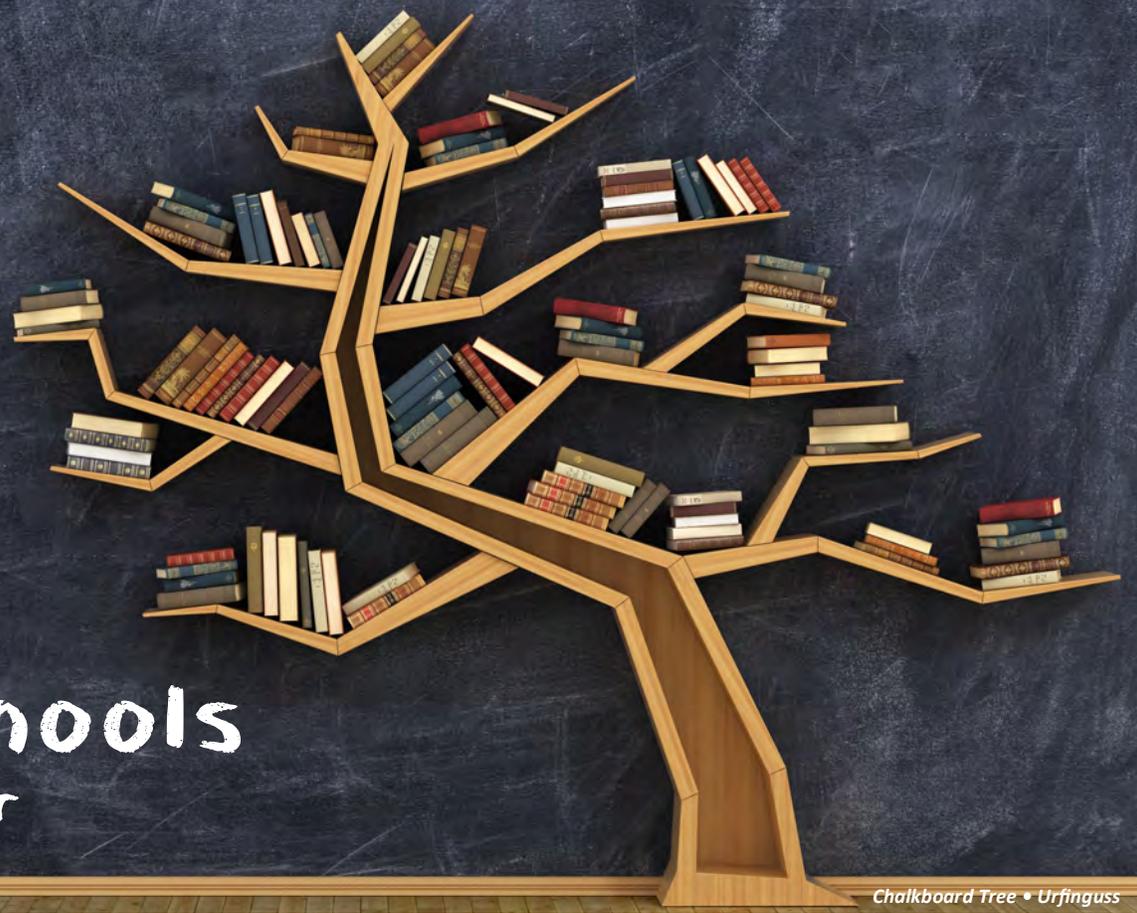
When choosing plants for your window box, determine the amount of light and wind the plants will receive. Plants sharing soil must likewise share cultural needs to thrive. Here is a recipe for a simple window box growing medium.

- 2 gal. sphagnum peat moss
- 1 gal. perlite or vermiculite
- 1 gal. compost
- 2 tbsp. ground limestone

Mix in a wheelbarrow, blend thoroughly, and sprinkle with water to control dust. Add water to lightly moisten before using. For a peat-free mix, substitute coir and use 1 tbsp ground limestone. For acid-loving plants, leave out the limestone. For succulents, use 2 gal. perlite, 1 gal. sphagnum peat moss, 1 gal. compost, 1 tbsp. ground limestone.

Have fun and think outside the box!

Lesley Parness is a member of the Garden Clubs of New Jersey. Her original article appeared in the September, 2023 Issue of *Bloomin' Times* of the Rake and Hoe Garden Club, Westfield, NJ, Joseph Darold, editor. Reprinted with permission of lesleyparness.com



NGC Schools

Pat Rupiper

Chalkboard Tree • Urfiguss

The NGC Schools team is busy processing forms and signing up new schools. Please update your instructors during this next year. We have switched to seven years of accreditation for the instructors. A shorter accreditation time helps to keep them relevant. Updating their information lets you determine if they are willing to teach via Zoom (or some electronic platform) and reminds them to confirm their communication channels. It also aligns with our most extended certification timing, seven years from the first course to completion for students. Send your instructors "Form 3 – Credentials" to update. I have been doing this for my instructors and have found a multitude of increased education and email and phone changes.

Check the [NGC Schools Website](#) for upcoming courses. They are now also posted on the [NGC Calendar](#). Click on the

individual courses (1, 2, 3, or 4) to see all available options. Encourage your state members to support our schools. We strive to provide the best education in person, via Zoom, or as hybrid classes.

The recent NGC-hosted Environmental School via Zoom had a great start, with 65 students and many consultants attending. Course 2 is March 11-12, 2024. Gardening and Landscape Design Schools are also available via Zoom. We aim to have one of each available school via Zoom each quarter. Just click on each course tab to find one that fits your needs.

[Pat Rupiper](#) is the NGC Schools Policy and Procedures and NGC Environmental Schools Chair. Contact Pat with any Schools' questions. She appreciates everyone's support of our schools.



Marker Price Increase

Candace Wells

Sewah Studios, the manufacturer of our Blue Star and Gold Star Families Memorial Markers, has increased their prices. Recruiting and retaining employees increased their labor costs 40%. A strong employee base is vital for them to meet their customers' expectations. Rising material and shipping costs also factored into the price increase.

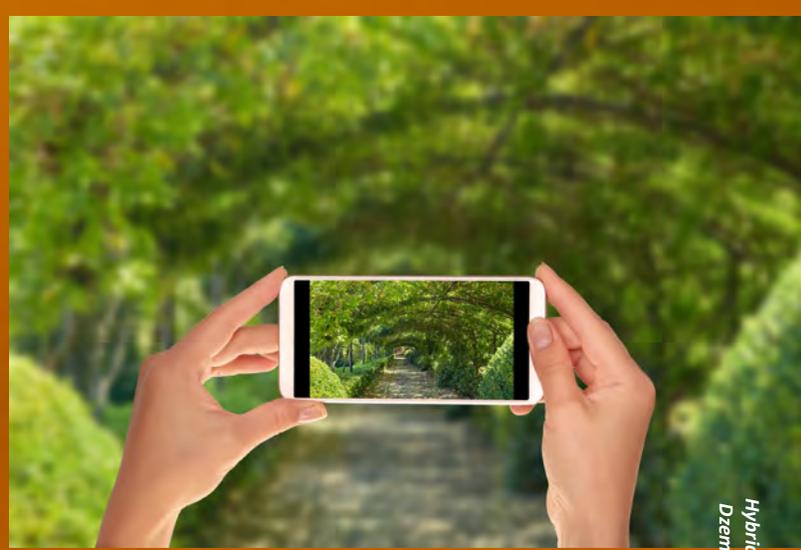
[Candace Wells](#) is the NGC Blue/Gold Star Chair. She lives in Tennessee.

BLUE STAR-GOLD STAR	2024
Marker w/7' Post	\$2350
Marker (No Post)	\$2225
Marker w/10' Post	\$2460
By-Way	\$750
Replacement 7' Post	\$375
Replacement 10' Post	\$475
Refurbishment	\$1200
Refurbishment/Cap Repair	\$1450
Shipping Western States	\$300

Down the Garden Path

Landscape Design School News

Harriet Robinson



Hybrid Learning • Dzimtry Dzenidovich & Maksime

HYBRID IN-CLASS LEARNING

Landscape Design School Chair, Carol Yee, asked Harriet Robinson to share her experiences with the first hybrid LDS.

Many of us loved in-person NGC schools, but some members were left out because they lived far from venues. The pandemic brought us Zoom, allowing for distance learning. Some of us took courses we never thought we would be able to attend but missed the in-person camaraderie. Now, we can have the best of both worlds with hybrid courses. Maine took the plunge with a hybrid Landscape Design School with great success.

Hybrid allowed us to offer this to Garden Club Federation of Maine members living far from the venue. We could also open it to out-of-state students and consultants. Fifty-eight registered attendees were split nearly evenly between in-person and Zoom. Twenty-four students and ten refreshing consultants were from Maine.

The hybrid format worked well with minimal technological issues. One computer was set up on the podium for the speakers' use. We cautioned the instructors not to wander too far from it so that its microphone could pick up their voices and Zoom attendees could see them. However, many on Zoom preferred a full-screen view during the presentations to see the slides better. The speakers' computers were screenshared on Zoom and projected for the in-person audience.

An online refreshing consultant served as the Zoom hostess. A second Zoom hostess sat near the podium and monitored the chat. She could ask the speakers to get closer to the microphone, relay any questions typed into chat, and interface with the online and in-person audiences.

The schedule incorporated 10-minute breaks between every presentation to allow attendees to stretch. We cautioned

Zoom attendees not to put their devices to sleep so that they would remain connected during breaks. There were a few minor technical glitches, but nothing that held everything up. There are more sophisticated ways to produce a hybrid class. We worked at our comfort level using technology we could operate.

The test was administered as a "survey" on Google Docs (a link was sent to all students after everyone left the venue), giving instant feedback so students knew they had passed. Volunteers did not have to correct and score exams. There were a few issues with the test, and students were warned not to expect 100%. There was a glitch in inputting the correct answer for one question. In nearly every course, there is a question that, in spite of the best efforts of a monitor in the room, was not answered in the class or a question that passed through several levels of evaluation but was still ambiguous. Does it matter? Not at all! Schools are a lifelong learning opportunity, not a credential that we will use for a life-or-death situation. (Although a Massachusetts Gardening School director says, "What is the worst thing we will do, kill a plant?")

One caveat for first-time Zoom students: Please be familiar with your equipment. If you will borrow a device, learn how to use it by practicing beforehand!

Maine's was the first NGC hybrid LDS school; others have been in-person or on Zoom. The overall NGC Schools Policies Coordinator and NGC ES Chair Pat Rupiper and NGC LDS Chair Carol Yee were both present via Zoom and liked what they saw. Attendees in person and online were optimistic about the instructors and the information taught. Everyone passed! Plans are in the works for Course 2 next fall.

Harriet Robinson is the former president Garden Club Federation of Maine and Landscape Design School director.



Gardening School News

Indoor Citrus - Give it a Try Sarah McReynolds

Why not grow some citrus in the winter in your house and maybe win a flower show award? During the cold winter, nothing is more satisfying than smelling citrus blossoms blooming in your home. Typically, they bloom in spring, but they can bloom anytime. Also, watching the fruit grow is equally satisfying; indoor citrus trees are also beautiful house plants. The key to success is to pick the dwarf varieties of trees. They will last many years and are easy to grow. You might prefer to put them outside during the warmer months and let them flourish in the sun and outside air. When the first frost appears, it is time to bring them indoors. I have done this successfully for years.

Growing your produce is a great way to take your home's greenery from decorative to functional, and many people do not have the space or ability to maintain a full-blown outdoor garden. Plenty of plants do not require a large backyard for harvest. Indoor fruit trees offer great decoration and summery freshness through the year, and nothing beats the feeling of seeing and tasting the results of your hard work in the form of homegrown fruit.

Gardening in containers is an excellent option for beginners because you can control the plant's environment and surroundings completely. Growing citrus in pots enables you to leave them outdoors till the cold winter comes. The dwarf varieties can be planted in smaller pots than you think and live happily there for years. Growing in containers allows you to maintain good soil quality and ideal growing conditions in your home. Typically, these dwarf varieties only grow 6 - 8 feet tall.

Choose the best citrus tree for you, like lemons, limes, and small oranges. Kumquats, tangerines, and grapefruits can also be grown on a smaller scale in your home. Many dwarf citrus trees can be purchased at your local nursery or online. Most dwarf varieties produce full-sized fruit. Consider the following varieties.

- ★ Dwarf Key Lime, Dwarf Persian Lime
- ★ Dwarf Improved Meyer Lemon, Dwarf Eureka Lemon
- ★ Dwarf Valencia Orange, Dwarf Glen Navel
- ★ Dwarf Satsuma (Tangerine)
- ★ Dwarf Rio Red Grapefruit, Dwarf Ruby Red
- ★ Cocktail Trees (two types of fruit on one tree) Dwarf Persian Lime & Dwarf Meyer Lemon, Dwarf Key Lime & Dwarf Meyer Lemon

Once you choose which citrus plants to grow, you must ensure they have the environment they need to thrive. Citrus plants are native to warm and tropical climates. To mimic these conditions, focus on three basic things: soil, water, and sunlight.

(Continued on page 37)



Linda's Calamansi • Gerianne Holzman

When planting your citrus tree, use sandy loam soil with excellent drainage to prevent soggy soil and root rot. Water the soil only when the top few inches dry out. Consider bringing in additional humidity with a mister if your air is particularly dry. Citrus plants thrive in bright, direct sunlight of at least 6 - 7 hours, with a fair amount of heat, so feel free to keep them outdoors during the warmer months and provide similar indoor conditions during winter.

Citrus trees might not require much care and upkeep when it comes to watering, but they do need a bit more tender loving care to ensure the soil stays nutritious during their peak growing season. The months of active growth are early spring through summer, usually around March through August, depending on your environment. During this time, fertilize your plant's soil every two or three weeks with a liquid or solid fertilizer. If you do not already have a brand or mix you

typically use, specific citrus-focused fertilizers promise a more fruitful yield at the end of the active growing season. A ratio of 6-3-3 or 4-3-4 is ideal.

Citrus trees meant for indoor growth and cultivation are smaller than their outdoor counterparts but still occupy more space than flowers or herbs. You need the appropriate-sized pot to ensure your plant has enough room to grow. Select a large enough container to prevent overcrowding and damage to the root ball but not so big that it will be hard to maintain the correct soil moisture level.

An 8 - 10 inch container is the perfect size when first starting. Throughout the years, you might have to repot your plant as it grows unless you prune it often. After a few years, upgrade to something 10 - 12 inches in diameter, then swap this out for 16 - 20 inches when your tree reaches full maturity. No matter the size, it is imperative to ensure the pot you choose has an adequate drainage system to prevent root rot. Plan to buy a plant dolly for larger containers if you move the trees out for the summer.

For many, harvesting fruit is the main appeal of growing a citrus tree indoors. Thankfully, most citrus plants make this process easy as they self-pollinate, so they do not need other plants around to create fruit. However, you can increase your chances of success by trying hand pollination. To do this, grab a small, clean paintbrush or makeup brush. Collect pollen from each open bloom's stamen (the part that produces pollen) and rub the brush over each stigma (the sticky bulb that receives pollen.) This process increases the plant's chances of bearing more fruit.

Growing your produce — especially when it is coming from a tree — can be pretty intimidating, but indoor citrus plants are relatively simple to grow and maintain. As long as you ensure that you are giving your plants the proper care they need, you will have an indoor tree that bears fruit and acts as a lovely decorative accent year after year. As a bonus, you can win flower show ribbons with these trees!

Sarah McReynolds of Texas is the NGC Gardening School Chair.



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Save Money - Sow Seeds

Teri Speight

Any time is a great time to sow seeds. There are many reasons for this and most gardeners agree that seed starting is worth their time and efforts.

Seed starting offers the advantage of diversity in the garden. Seeds may provide cultivars or colors of plants that are not readily available in a garden center. Each year, catalogs offer selections, including new introductions, heirloom cultivars, or even culturally significant seeds. From color palettes to flower shapes, seeds allow any gardener to grow unusual plants for a fraction of the price of purchasing plants. Often, seeds grown by the home gardener are healthier due to the controlled conditions and minimal use of pesticides. Knowing how a plant is grown offers peace of mind, especially when growing food crops.

Recently, the USDA adjusted the [Plant Hardiness Zone Map](#) due to changes in our climatic conditions. For some, this can cause a difference in how we grow things, such as when to start seeds. In some areas, there are more options in the varieties of things we can grow. Click the above link to check your current zone.

When is the best time to sow seeds? The back of the seed packet offers essential information for successful growing. Note the last frost date; then count backward by the number of growing weeks to determine the optimal time to sow your seeds. Remember, you must harden off the seedlings as the soil temperatures increase for optimal planting in the ground.

The [National Garden Bureau](#) is an excellent resource for more detailed information on successful seed starting.

Sowing seeds indoors with grow lights, plus using seed starting mix and sterile containers, are ways to sow seeds. Winter sowing has become a popular way to start certain seeds like hardy herbs, perennials, and sometimes hardier annuals. This method utilizes recycled jugs and potting soil. It has proven to be a mess-free way to grow seeds outdoors. The jugs create an environment that encourages seeds to germinate and grow. The University of Pennsylvania has a fact sheet on how to get started with [Winter Sowing](#).

Naturalistic wildflowers and meadows are currently trending. Anyone can sow a perennial meadow by starting in the fall of the prior year. Summer sown fields typically have annual plants, which can be started in the early Spring. Sowing a meadow is as easy as selecting a site, disturbing the soil's surface, and removing aggressive weeds. Mix the seeds with sand and sprinkle evenly. Water thoroughly and allow nature to jumpstart your meadow. American Meadows is a leader in showing how simple it is to create a meadow - <https://www.americanmeadows.com/>. Seed starting is a fun idea and a great way to save money on the garden of your dreams.

Teri Speight of Maryland is an author, Fiesta Place Community Garden co-chair, and president of Jabali Amani Garden Collective - a hybrid garden club. She chairs NGC Urban Gardening and Container Gardening.



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[Click here to learn more and purchase a paver for NGC's Path of Success project!](#)

Fort de Chartres Heritage Garden Project

Carol Kuntz

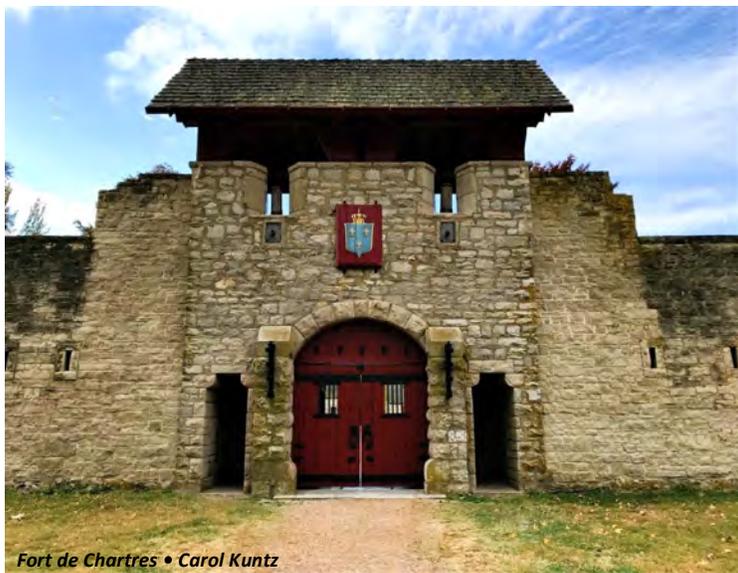
Off the beaten path, less than a mile from the Mississippi River, impressively rising from the surrounding fertile fields of the American Bottom, lies Fort de Chartres State Historic Site. The fort is a partially reconstructed stone structure of the eighteenth-century French Colonial era in Prairie du Rocher, Illinois, historically known as *Le pays des l'illinois*, the Illinois country. On the site grounds, history lovers and garden enthusiasts are welcome to visit the French Colonial *jardin potager* outside the walls of Fort de Chartres.

This kitchen garden has been planted in the style of a French *habitant* kitchen garden generally tended by the women of the Illinois Country in the mid-eighteenth century. The accounts of the era remarked, "...the gardens contained a variety of the finest vegetables that were cultivated in raised beds, intermingled with herbs, flowers, and shrubs, located next to small orchards containing a variety of the choicest fruits." It was noted that *habitants* needed a substantial garden to lay in a supply of vegetables and fruits for the winter months and seasonal produce to be enjoyed during the growing season.

In deciding what to plant in this recreation of a period *jardin potager*, related historical and horticultural research was conducted and continues - including time spent exploring handed-down regional French-era *recettes* or recipes. These recipes are enlightening, as their ingredients leave important clues as to the types of vegetables and fruit that would have been cultivated. The kitchen garden at Fort de Chartres has been planted with heirloom seeds and plants selected to reflect the varieties that might have been grown in Illinois in the mid-18th century. To begin a journey exploring written accounts of the colonial French era and hints at its foodways history, one can reference the writings of contemporaries of the period and current historians.

Heritage vegetables and fruits planted each season in the raised bed of the *jardin potager* at the Fort include asparagus, bush and pole bean, beet, cabbage, carrot, corn, cucumber, currant, eggplant, gooseberry, kale, leek, lettuce, melon, onion, pea, pepper, radish, spinach, strawberry, summer and winter squash, turnip, and period varieties of flowers and herbs. Surrounding the raised beds within the garden area are examples of the types of fruits typical to a period orchard. It contains heritage espaliered apple trees in the form of a living fence, along with heirloom pears and a section of wild grapes that were documented to have been cultivated by the French in the region. New this year are recently planted saplings grafted from heritage pear trees still growing today on French-descendant properties.

(Continued on page 41)



Fort de Chartres • Carol Kuntz

While there has long been a garden on the fort grounds, the current area was created in 2010, and this year, it will celebrate its 15th year, welcoming visitors to view this region through its foodways history. One of the continuing missions of this heritage project is to share sample heirloom seed packets with visitors. The garden encourages exploration of the unique vegetables, flowers, and herbs of the past and learning about practical examples of eighteenth-century gardening techniques. While this endeavor is an independent heritage garden project, additional support has been received from site staff, Les Amis de Fort de Chartres and others. Visit [Fort De Chartres Heritage Garden](#) for more information and learn how to visit the garden.

[Carol Kuntz](#) is the Fort de Chartres State Historic Site Garden Volunteer Curator. Carol is an author and master gardener and has designed many historical gardens.

A Vision Fulfilled Jan Fritz

Jan Fritz, President of the Hanover Garden Club, Pennsylvania, fell in love with Winterthur Museum's annual Dried-Flower Tree the first time she saw it. Last year, on members' recommendations, she applied for the invitation-only privilege of decorating a tree for the Hanover Area Historical Society's annual Warehime-Myers Mansion Christmas Tree Tour 2023. Inspired by her visits to Winterthur, she asked her members, "What could be a better theme for a garden club than a gardeners' tree - covered in flowers grown in our own members' gardens?" The idea of the Hanover Garden Club "Family Tree" began!

After members agreed, their next question was, "How do we do it?" Jan provided instructions on how to dry flowers. She suggested hanging them to air dry, using silica gel or playground sand and provided the pros and cons of each method. She encouraged everyone to try it over the next few months when their gardens began to bloom.

During the summer, members observed as beautiful flowers appeared in their gardens. They harvested the choice specimens and began to dry them using a variety of methods.

It was a learning experience for everyone. Through trial and error, exclamations of glee, and sighs of defeat, they learned which flowers were the best candidates for drying. They learned which methods

proved to be most successful for each type of flower. Houses began to fill up with containers holding all kinds, colors, and shapes of plant material.

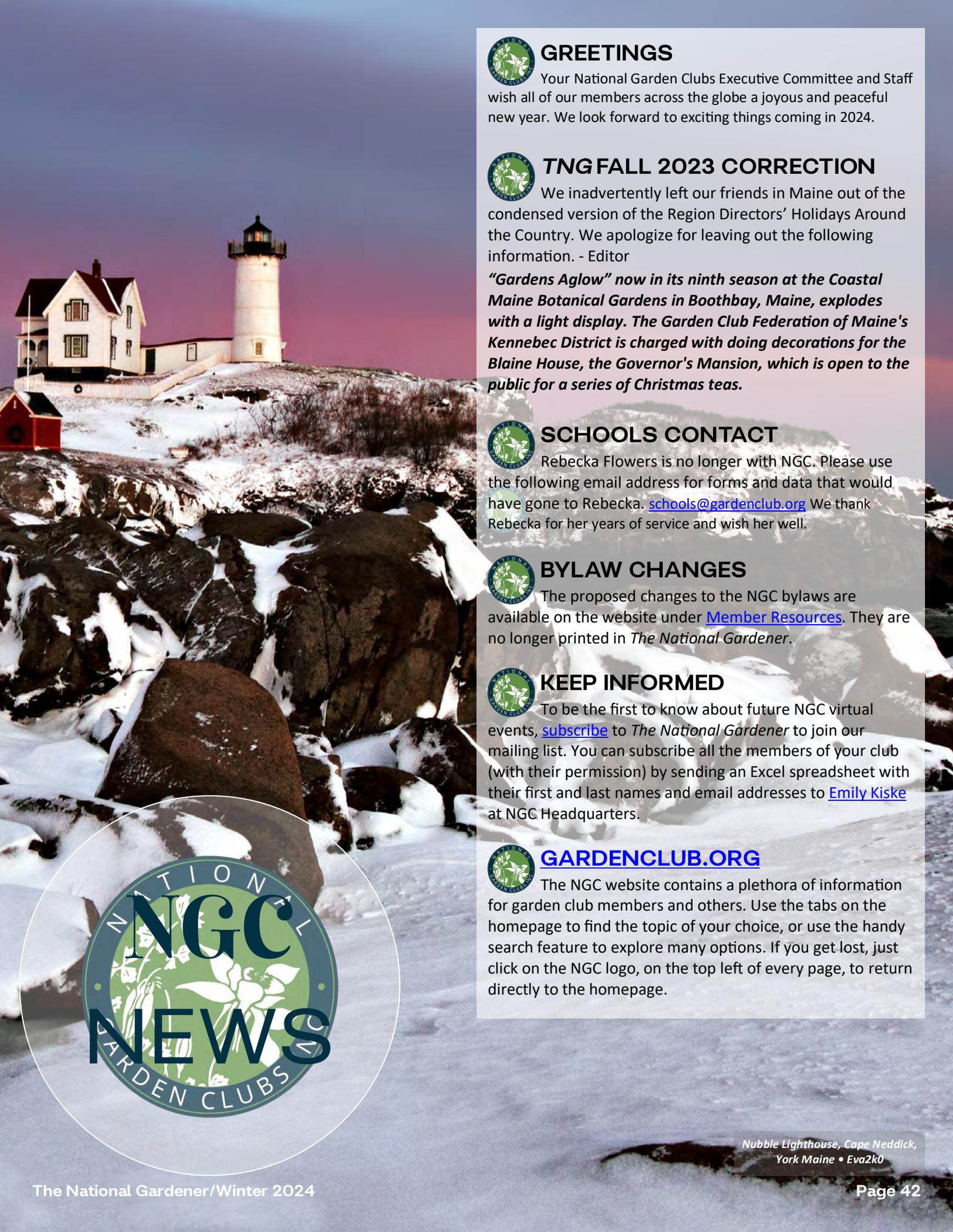
By early fall, boxes and boxes of dried flowers were gathered, and a committee was appointed. They worked for days in Jan's driveway, garage (which no longer had room for the car), backyard, and porch to process the flowers, branches, leaves, and grasses to create adorable bouquets of every size to adorn the tree.

When all contributions were finally processed and ready to go, the committee transported box upon box of their creations to the mansion and unloaded them over several days. Cooperation, brainstorming, and group decisions guided the workers in the best way to attach each item. Their gardeners' tree emerged after almost a week of delicate work with hundreds of fragile flowers. What a beauty it was! It was a much-appreciated hit of the tree tour and inspired other clubs and groups to create their own dried flower trees. Jan's vision was accomplished by all involved with great enthusiasm and pride, and she thanks every member who contributed.



Hanover GC Family Tree • Jan Fritz

Jan Fritz of Hanover, PA, is the Hanover Garden Club President and chairs several committees. This article is modified from a Facebook post: [@PAflowerlover](#).



GREETINGS

Your National Garden Clubs Executive Committee and Staff wish all of our members across the globe a joyous and peaceful new year. We look forward to exciting things coming in 2024.



TNG FALL 2023 CORRECTION

We inadvertently left our friends in Maine out of the condensed version of the Region Directors' Holidays Around the Country. We apologize for leaving out the following information. - Editor

"Gardens Aglow" now in its ninth season at the Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens in Boothbay, Maine, explodes with a light display. The Garden Club Federation of Maine's Kennebec District is charged with doing decorations for the Blaine House, the Governor's Mansion, which is open to the public for a series of Christmas teas.



SCHOOLS CONTACT

Rebecka Flowers is no longer with NGC. Please use the following email address for forms and data that would have gone to Rebecka. schools@gardenclub.org We thank Rebecka for her years of service and wish her well.



BYLAW CHANGES

The proposed changes to the NGC bylaws are available on the website under [Member Resources](#). They are no longer printed in *The National Gardener*.



KEEP INFORMED

To be the first to know about future NGC virtual events, [subscribe](#) to *The National Gardener* to join our mailing list. You can subscribe all the members of your club (with their permission) by sending an Excel spreadsheet with their first and last names and email addresses to [Emily Kiske](#) at NGC Headquarters.



GARDENCLUB.ORG

The NGC website contains a plethora of information for garden club members and others. Use the tabs on the homepage to find the topic of your choice, or use the handy search feature to explore many options. If you get lost, just click on the NGC logo, on the top left of every page, to return directly to the homepage.



*Nubble Lighthouse, Cape Neddick,
York Maine • Eva2k0*



Cozy Desktop • Bohdan Beviz

President Brenda’s Travels

- ❖ March 19: Deep South Region, Gatlinburg, TN
- ❖ April 6: Federated GC of Minnesota, virtual
- ❖ April 16: Florida Federation of GC, Jacksonville, FL
- ❖ April 22: Arkansas Federation of GC, Little Rock, AR
- ❖ April 24: South Central Region, Little Rock, AR
- ❖ June 2: NGC Convention, Westminster, CO

Looking for Events?

- ❖ Search the [NGC Calendar](#) for upcoming in-person and virtual events near you or across the globe.

Coming Soon, In-Person & Online

- ❖ January - September 2024 - : [Environmental Schools*](#)
- ❖ January - April 2024: [Flower Show Schools*](#)

- ❖ January - May 2024: [Gardening School*](#)
- ❖ January - August 2024: [Landscape Design School*](#)
- ❖ January - April 2024: [Multiple Refreshers](#)
- ❖ None Scheduled: [Symposiums*](#)
- ❖ [International Events*](#)

*Clicking on the above links takes you directly to the most up-to-date course listings and details on the website. Looking for a specific course? Click on Course 1, 2, 3 or 4 or Month on the course listing chart.

[Subscribe to TNG](#) to assure email notification of future NGC events including webinars.

NOTE: Throughout TNG click on ads to go directly to our advertisers’ webpages and click on blue, underlined links to get more information, contact a committee chair or author.

Westfield Native Seed Library Joe Darold

The Westfield (NJ) Memorial Library’s Native Seed Library was created to encourage “...Westfield residents to practice more sustainable forms of gardening while also bringing community members together...” The library held workshops and lectures related to growing native plants. Native plants improve the biodiversity of our community. They support the habitats of native birds and insects. Native plants can slow the rate of climate change as they store greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide. They require fewer fertilizers and insecticides and help conserve water. All seeds are from local sources. They are organized and made available to anyone who uses the library. Each seed packet is labeled with brief facts and information about that plant. They are freely available to the entire community. The library encourages residents to do their part in combatting climate change. One of the main goals is to improve Westfield’s overall health by decreasing the need for pesticides and herbicides. These chemicals can harm local areas in rain runoff. Consider starting a native seed library in your local community.

Joe Darold is the editor of *Bloomin’ Times* of the Rake and Hoe GC in Westfield, NJ. A version of this article appeared in *BT* 12/2023.

Seeds • FoodDiets



Hidden Potential • Zelenka

Sitting on the Porch

Gerianne Holzman, Editor

A decorated pebble sits on my dresser and reminds me daily to live life to my full capacity. We picked up the pebble during one of my husband's cancer treatments in 2022. The proton-radiation center encouraged patients and loved ones to take home any decorated stone that inspired them. My choice says, "Don't limit your challenges; challenge your limits." As we enter this new year, what might we see as challenges? Will we have the grace and fortitude to meet those challenges face-to-face and say, "You might be here now, but I am better than this, so get out of my way?" We often hear of garden club members who limit themselves by not entering a flower show. They are afraid of making a mistake. As mentors, we have the duty to encourage them to challenge their limitations and remind them that we have all been there – often more than once. Do you have a friend who feels limited by a lack of gardening knowledge, so they think garden clubs are not for them? Remind them that life is a continuing learning journey, even if right now it looks like a challenge. Many, many people limit their challenges by not stepping into leadership roles. The funny thing is, when you step beyond a self-imposed limit, you find amazing people to support you to be the person you never thought you could be. As we move into 2024, take one step and then another and then another, and embrace your challenges. Do not limit yourself; reach for the sky!

Don't limit your challenges. Challenge your limits.

Jerry Dunn

We appreciate all of the amazing stories, articles and images in this issue of The National Gardener. Send comments and suggestions for future issues to [Gerianne Holzman](#), editor. We encourage all NGC members to submit articles.