

# THE NATIONAL GARDENER



Spring 2024  
[gardenclub.org](http://gardenclub.org)



# The National Gardener

Spring 2024, Volume 94, Number 2  
**GO GREEN - PLANT AMERICA**



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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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## Go Green PLANT AMERICA

Hummingbird • mbolina

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# BRENDA'S JOURNAL

*In the spring, at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt.*  
Margaret Atwood

While cleaning out my parents' house almost a decade ago, I came across a poem I wrote about spring for the Fort Foote Elementary School newspaper. It included my drawing shown below.

*It's Spring! It's Spring!  
Now is when the birds sing.  
My sister might get a ring,  
Because her birthday is in spring.  
What is spring anyway?  
Is it sort of like today?*

*Spring's when the bunnies come.  
Now, the hummingbirds can hum!  
Caterpillars with lots of fuzz,  
Bees going buzz, buzz, buzz!  
That is spring.*

Spring is so much more than what I wrote about, but even then, I understood the importance of the presence of bees, birds, and bunnies. Spring is a time of reawakening. Spring flowers bloom, animals come out of hibernation, and gardeners often want to rush the

season and start planting before the last frost date. Spring is a time of hope and new beginnings. We leave the darkness of the colder winter months behind and look forward to warmer weather and playing outdoors.

I am already planning gardening projects. I will continue to lessen the size of my lawn by expanding my gardens. I plan to continue working on removing invasive plants such as Bishop's weed or Goutweed (*Aegopodium podagraria*.) Once, while reading an article on this very invasive plant, it said the best way to get rid of Bishop's weed is to move. I also plan to tackle creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*) removal. So many plants in our landscape can become invasive. That is why educating ourselves on what we have or purchase is so important and necessary.

I only wish the overabundance of neighborhood deer would find Bishop's weed and creeping buttercup as appetizing as my *Hostas*. That is for another column.

Be sure to celebrate [PLANT AMERICA](#) Month in April. Happy Gardening! *Brenda*



Spring • Brenda Moore



Westin Westminster • Westin

## Welcome to Colorado - NGC 2024 Convention

We are thrilled to warmly welcome each of you to the upcoming 2024 National Garden Clubs' Convention! As we prepare for this exciting event, we provide you with some updates and important information to ensure your experience is enjoyable and productive.

***Date and Venue*** The NGC Convention is June 2 – 5 at The Westin Westminster in Westminster, Colorado. The venue boasts beautiful surroundings and ample space to accommodate our guests comfortably.

***Convention Highlights*** Our program contains engaging sessions, insightful discussions, and hands-on workshops led by our national leadership and gardening enthusiasts. Whether you are a seasoned gardener or just starting, there will be something for everyone to enjoy and learn from. You can find a detailed schedule of events on the [NGC 2024 Convention](#) webpage.

***Networking Opportunities*** One of the highpoints of the NGC Convention is the opportunity to connect with fellow gardeners, horticulturists, and gardening professionals from around the region, nation, and internationally. We encourage you to take advantage of the networking breaks and social events to exchange ideas, share experiences, and build lasting connections within our gardening community.

***Exhibition Hall*** Be sure to visit our Exhibition Hall, where you can find additional information on

sponsors and their programs. Do not forget to visit our vendor room; you will enjoy an array of vendors showcasing the latest gardening tools, equipment, plants, and accessories. Explore the exhibits, meet with suppliers, and discover new products and innovations to enhance your gardening endeavors.

***Safety Measures*** The health and safety of our attendees are our top priorities. We are aware of the possibility of altitude sickness and will implement appropriate safety measures following local guidelines to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for all participants. At the registration tables, you will find additional information on staying hydrated and on top of your gardening game!

***Registration and Information*** Please register for the NGC Annual Convention by May 2nd, 2024. After that date, you can register until May 24th, 2024, but will incur a \$50.00 late fee. Register early to secure your spot. For more information about the event, including registration details and accommodation options, please visit our [webpage](#). We are genuinely excited to welcome you to the 2024 National Garden Clubs' Convention and look forward to sharing this enriching experience with each of you. Together, let us celebrate our shared passion for gardening and cultivate inspiration, knowledge, friendships, and growth!

---

Nancy Griffin, of Colorado, is the NGC 2024 Convention Chair and welcomes you to Colorado. Contact [Nancy](#) with convention questions.

Mountain Background • Katerina Sisperova

# Gardening and the Changing Climate

## Melinda Myers

The extreme weather conditions of the past few years have added to the challenge of growing a successful garden. Prolonged periods of excessively high temperatures, drought, wildfires, floods, and an increase in heavy rainfall events impact our gardens, homes, communities, and health.

As gardeners, we have an opportunity to make a positive impact on climate change. As an influencer who shares knowledge, you can help other gardeners do the same. Implementing sustainable and smart gardening strategies can help increase our growing success and help slow future warming by reducing carbon emissions and increasing carbon storage in plants and the soil.

Start by looking for ways to improve the soil and keep it covered year-round. When land is cleared, wetlands filled, and soil tilled or left uncovered, CO<sub>2</sub> is released into the atmosphere. Exposed soil is also subject to erosion and nutrient run-off that pollutes nearby waterways. Increasing the organic matter in the soil allows rainfall to infiltrate the soil more readily, reducing the risk of erosion while improving the soil's water-holding capacity. This process helps our gardens as we are experiencing more periods of intense rainfall and droughts.

Grow various plants suited to the growing conditions in your gardens and landscape that can best tolerate the extreme heat and cold, wet, and drought conditions we are experiencing with climate change. A diverse group of plants supports a healthy soil ecosystem that is better able to store carbon and promote healthy, productive plant growth. Grow native plants whenever appropriate and suitable for the growing conditions and your garden space. These plants slow and capture stormwater. Their deep roots provide pathways for water to infiltrate the soil. They have evolved with insects, songbirds, and wildlife while providing them an important food source and shelter.

*(Continued on page 7)*





Maple Grove • melindamyers.com

Plant trees, shrubs, and groundcovers to help reduce the use of fossil fuels for heating and cooling our homes. Properly placed trees, shrubs, and vines can provide welcome shade, direct cooling breezes toward the house, and block or deflect hot summer or cold winter winds away while allowing warming winter sunshine to help reduce energy use. Planting trees in the right place for your climate can help reduce energy use by up to 25%. Trees and shrubs also take up and store carbon for many years. Washington State University says, “Trees in U.S. urban and community areas store 1.4 billion tons of carbon and continually take up more than 26 million tons a year.”

Avoid invasive plants that leave our gardens and invade nearby natural spaces. These bullies outcompete native plants, thus disrupting the natural ecosystem on which wildlife depends. According to the North American Invasive Species Management Association, “Invasive species can negatively impact climate change mitigation efforts in many North American ecosystems. Invasive tree pests reduce carbon sequestration rates in forests. Aquatic invasives decrease the resilience of green infrastructure to resist flooding and sea-level rise. Aquatic invasive species can also increase the temperatures, negatively influencing the hydrologic cycle.”

Reducing the amount of lawn and considering less energy-consuming alternatives are options many gardeners enlist.

When managing any lawn size, consider ways to make it more climate-friendly. Mow high to encourage deeper roots and healthier plants that are better able to outcompete the weeds and are more drought-tolerant and pest-resistant. Leave grass clippings on the lawn to return moisture and nutrients to the soil. A season’s worth of clippings is equal to one fertilization. Use compost to improve the soil and fertilize the lawn. A quarter inch of compost spread over the soil surface provides two pounds of nitrogen per 1000 square feet. Use water wisely. Keep equipment serviced and running efficiently. The simple act of keeping mower blades sharp can reduce fuel use by 22% and the lawn’s water use by 30%. Choose low-emission equipment when investing in replacements or new products. Gas-powered garden equipment is a significant emitter of CO<sub>2</sub>. Consider hand and battery-powered options whenever possible.

Do not let the challenge of incorporating climate-friendly garden practices overwhelm you and the gardeners you advise. Start by evaluating your and their current gardening practices. Look for ways to be more climate-friendly when managing gardens and landscapes. Then, begin tackling that list of changes. Together, we can make a difference.

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Melinda Myers authored more than 20 gardening books, including *The Midwest Gardener’s Handbook* and *Small Space Gardening*. Her website is [www.MelindaMyers.com](http://www.MelindaMyers.com).

# Cover Crops in the Home Garden

## Roxanna Champagne

People have used cover crops throughout agricultural history, with documentation of cover crops being grown during the early Roman times, ancient China, and India. Early North American farmers used cover crops during crop rotations and under trees in orchards. George Washington used and promoted the use of cover crops.

It is easy to assume that cover crops were only helpful in commercial agriculture. Things are changing, and cover crops are used in small home garden plots and raised beds. After harvesting your summer vegetables, your soil may be bare, which can lead to compaction from rain or erosion when the soil dries out from exposure to the sun, as well as weed growth. Cover crops act like mulch in protecting bare soil from erosion and compaction and prevent the development of weeds. Cover crops can aid in making your soil healthy again. They turn into green manure, which increases the availability of air, water, and nutrients for your plants. Cover crops increase the activity of earthworms and beneficial microorganisms. Pollinators and other beneficial insects are attracted to cover crops. Some cover crops release chemical compounds that inhibit weed growth.

So, what exactly are cover crops? Cover crops are plants not grown to be consumed or sold but mainly to replenish the soil and prevent erosion. The benefits of each type of cover crop vary, and the home gardener should pick the right cover crop for their garden soil needs. Your location and season of planting will also affect the type of cover crop you choose.

There are four classes of cover crops: grasses, legumes, brassicas, and non-legume broadleaves.

### ❖ Grasses

- ◆ Examples: Rye and winter wheat, winter oats, millet
- ◆ Benefits: Improves soil retention and water quality, aids in weed control, adds organic matter to the soil, and prevents erosion.

### ❖ Legumes

- ◆ Examples: Crimson clover, hairy vetch, white clover, eas, alfalfa
- ◆ Benefits: Adds nitrogen for use by subsequent crops, reduces or prevents erosion, adds organic matter to the soil, and attracts beneficial insects.

### ❖ Brassicas

- ◆ Examples: Radish, turnips
- ◆ Benefits: Rapid fall growth, weed suppression, absorbs excess nutrients from the soil, breaks up soil compaction, releases chemical compounds that can be toxic to soilborne pests.

*(Continued on page 9)*





Buckwheat • UrosPoteko

- ❖ Non-legume broadleaves
  - ◆ Examples: Spinach, flax, buckwheat
  - ◆ Benefits: Helps mobilize phosphorus in the soil, builds organic matter in the soil, breaks down soil compaction.

Plant cover crops in late summer or early fall, depending on the type. They will need at least four weeks to get established before a frost. Scatter the seeds in your planting area. Follow the label on your seed package for seeding recommendations. Some cover crops may freeze and die during a cold spell. Leave the dead plant on top of the soil as it has roots that will feed soil microorganisms during the winter. At the end of the growing season, if you still have some living crops, make sure to cut them down before they set seed. You can work the cut plants into your soil. The plants will need about three weeks to break down before planting your next edible or ornamental crop.

Remember that soil is not dirt; it is a living ecosystem teeming with microorganisms – bacteria, fungi, nematodes, worms, and insects. Soil puts food on our plates, purifies water, protects us against flooding, and combats drought. We must take care of our soil and keep it healthy by feeding and protecting it. Cover crops are one way to improve soil health and conserve our soil.

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Roxanna Champagne, of Louisiana, is the NGC Land and Soil Conservation Chair. She recently served as the Louisiana Garden Club Federation’s State President. She is an NGC Four-Star Member.

## Penny Pines

### Sandy Dennis

Thanks to all the clubs and individuals donating to our NGC Penny Pines program. You have been extremely generous, as demonstrated by the following donations.

- ❖ During President Mary Warshauer’s term:
  - June 1, 2021, through May 31, 2022 = 1528 plantations, \$103,904.00
  - June 1, 2022, through May 31, 2023 = 1510 plantations, \$102,680.00
  - Two-year total year total = 3038 plantations, \$206,584.00
- ❖ For the first 7 months of President Brenda Moore’s term:
  - June 1, 2023, through December 31, 2023 = 618 plantations, \$42,024.00

The NGC Penny Pines Program has a long history dating back to the 1940s. National Garden Clubs, Inc. members collect money to donate to the USDA Forest Service to promote the procuring and planting of trees in our National Forests. A Memorandum of Understanding between NGC and the USDA Forest Service outlines the purpose of the Penny Pines Program.

We donate the money in increments of \$68, which we refer to as a plantation. A plantation represents the number of

trees of a species appropriate to the ecosystem in a particular National Forest that can be acquired for \$68. The number of trees per plantation varies depending upon the species selected by the Forest Service, which may not necessarily be pine trees.

Some reminders:

- ❖ The donation form is on our NGC website on the [Penny Pines](#) page.
- ❖ Notify your state and region chairs of donations from a club or member.
- ❖ The donation form has a line to name the US National Forest that will benefit from the donation. This forest can be in your state or any other of the 40 states with US National Forests.
- ❖ The donation form has a line to name a person, group, or club “In Honor of” or “In Memory of” if you want a certificate issued.

The NGC Penny Pines Program is a fantastic way to help contribute to the sustainability of our beautiful natural forests set aside for all to enjoy by the USDA’s Forest Service. I encourage all clubs to consider “passing the can at meetings” or allocating a percentage of money from a fundraiser to allow your members to contribute to our Penny Pines Program.

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[Sandy Dennis](#) is the NGC Penny Pines Chair and lives in Wyoming.



# What Is Environmental Impact and How Is It Measured? ¿Qué es el impacto ambiental y cómo se mide?

Pilar Oviedo

What is environmental impact? It is the effect that human activity generates on the environment, resulting in the disruption of the environmental balance. One of the most prevalent is air pollution.

One of the closest examples linked to the balance of ecosystems has been the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID made obvious the importance of measuring the impact of human activity on the environment to move toward sustainable development.

As the pandemic continues to cause the loss of human lives and the destruction of our planet's economy, the United Nations warns that human, animal, and environmental health should be considered as "one" to prevent a future pandemic. They also noted that science has shown that if we continue to exploit wildlife and destroy ecosystems, we will have a steady stream of diseases transmitting from animals to humans.

The report indicates that a few reasons driving the emergence of zoonosis might be the increased demand for animal protein, the increase in unsustainable intensive agriculture, the exploitation of wildlife, and the climate crisis.

It also identifies the steps governments can take to prevent future outbreaks:

- Incentivize sustainable soil management practices, alternative food security, and livelihoods that do not depend on the destruction of habitats and biodiversity.
- Support the sustainable management of landscapes and seascapes to enhance and improve the coexistence between agriculture and wildlife.

---

Pilar Oviedo is a lover of horses and an Agricultural Engineer. She is very interested in the environment. Pilar is the daughter of Adriana Oviedo, of Argentina, who represents COMAAI Region III - South America. Adriana is the *TNG* bilingual Environment contributor. [Click to view images, information and bibliography of Environmental Impact.](#)

¿Qué es el impacto ambiental? Es el efecto que genera la actividad humana sobre el medio ambiente, supone como resultado la ruptura del equilibrio ambiental. Uno de los más frecuentes es la contaminación del aire.

Uno de los ejemplos más cercanos ligado al equilibrio de los ecosistemas fue la pandemia del COVID-19. Esto hizo evidente la importancia de medir el impacto de la actividad humana en el medio ambiente para avanzar hacia un desarrollo sostenible.

Mientras la pandemia sigue causando pérdida de vidas humanas y destruyendo la economía del planeta, las Naciones Unidas advierte que se debería considerar a la salud humana, animal y ambiental una sola para prevenir una futura pandemia. Así también destacaron que la ciencia ha demostrado que si seguimos explotando la vida silvestre y destruyendo ecosistemas tendremos un flujo constante de enfermedades pasando de animales a humanos.

El reporte indica que alguno de los motivos que impulsa la aparición de zoonosis, serían la mayor demanda de proteína animal, aumento de la agricultura intensiva insostenible, la explotación de vida silvestre y la crisis climática.

También se identifican los pasos que pueden tomar los gobiernos para prevenir futuros brotes:

- Incentivar prácticas sostenibles de gestión de suelos y alternativas de seguridad alimentaria y medios de vida que no dependan de la destrucción de hábitats y biodiversidad.
- Apoyar la gestión sostenible de paisajes terrestres y marinos para mejorar la coexistencia sostenible entre agricultura y vida silvestre.

---

Pilar Oviedo es amante de los caballos, además de Ingeniera Agrónoma, muy interesada en el medio ambiente. Pilar es la hija de Adriana Oviedo de Argentina, quien representa a la Región III - Sud América — de COMAAI. Ella contribuye a *TNG* artículos bilingües sobre el Medio Ambiente. [Haga clic para ver imágenes, información y bibliografía de Impacto Ambiental.](#)

# Upcycle: Express Yourself and Get Creative

Brynn Tavaschi

Gardeners and floral designers find many ways to express themselves with their creative activities. In your yard or patio, you select your containers and plants and place them with care. You see a plant, want the plant, buy the plant, then figure out where it goes later. Whatever your method, it reflects you. The fact that you spend time tending, planning, and obsessing about your garden demonstrates your love of being involved in the whole growing process and its results. Likewise, floral designers are constantly looking for that element that will create the visual image they are trying to express. The growing process and the design process are both means of expression.

You can fuel that process with many things that you have on hand. Things like that “stuff” that you are trying to figure out how to get rid of as soon as you bring it home or someone delivers it to your front door. Excessive packaging or the results of production planned obsolescence contribute to the piling up of stuff. These practices produce a lot of “donations” to landfills. To be part of the solution, you can do some creative sorting. Some of your piles will go into the recycling bins. Some of it can be called “project materials.” You may find yourself with a reputation for resourcefulness, and people will always give you boxes and bags of project materials. They will hand it over and then run away, delighted that they have you as a friend. Inspiration and solutions are in those boxes. How you transform your project materials can reveal another layer of the creative process and how you express yourself in your garden or your design work.

Limitations and concerns are two paths of thought we all deal with daily. We recycle some items effectively, while others have certain limitations. We should all be glad that specialists research recycling and constantly discover and report new solutions. We can also be happy to contribute to the solutions path by considering second uses for items, upcycling for the garden, and transforming objects, formally known as trash, into something visually new and artful. (You may be surprised by the rosette ribbon placed next to your

unique design.) What could be more satisfying than gardening and designing with the health of our planet in mind? This sounds like any day in the life of a productive and solutions-minded garden club member.

[Brynn Tavaschi](#), of Washington, is the NGC Recycling, Up-cycling, and Stewardship Chair. She is an NGC Four-Star Member.



Plastic Bottle Scoop • Brynn Tavaschi

## “On-Hand” Project Materials

### Paper Products

#### Garden:

- Layer to reduce weeds.
- Make paper plant pots for seed-starting.

#### Design:

- Formulate paper mâché to create containers and sculptures.
- Create paper pulp to form unique components.

### Plastic Bottles

#### Garden:

- Cut to form scoops and watering cans. (See photo of a scoop made from a plastic bottle.)
- Employ a single bottle as a small plant cloche or combined for small greenhouses.

#### Design:

- Put inside leaky containers or provide a water supply for paper-based containers .
- Apply paint, paper mâché, or other materials to create the color and texture of the container that you need.

### Cans

#### Garden:


- Construct a bird feeder. (See photo of bird feeder made from a can.)
- Plant up as temporary pots for plant sales, paint to catch the eye.

#### Design:

- Use for mass-produced centerpieces for functions.
- Paint and attach small bottle lids as feet for group beginner design class.



Can Bird Feeder • Brynn Tavaschi



# Planning the Home Landscape, Part 4

## Delight or Disaster

Bruce Crawford



The time has come to put theory to paper! Once you feel comfortable with the layout of spaces and the accompanying hardscape of walls, patios, and walks, it is time to focus on plants. Although there is no precise order for laying out the planting design, I prefer to start by locating the shade trees and significant conifers altering the hardscape to accommodate the plants. From this point, layers of small trees, shrubs, and herbaceous materials complete the design.

From largest to smallest, below are some thoughts for each category of landscape plants.

### 1. Shade trees

When evaluating plants, shade trees and conifers are the largest and longest-living plants. This reason makes their location critical to the garden's long-term success. They provide a "ceiling" or sense of enclosure from above while also serving as solar-powered air conditioners. The evaporation of water from the leaves cools the air. When planted on the SW corner of the house, trees protect the house from the hot afternoon summer sun. In addition, once the leaves drop, trees permit solar heating of the home during winter!

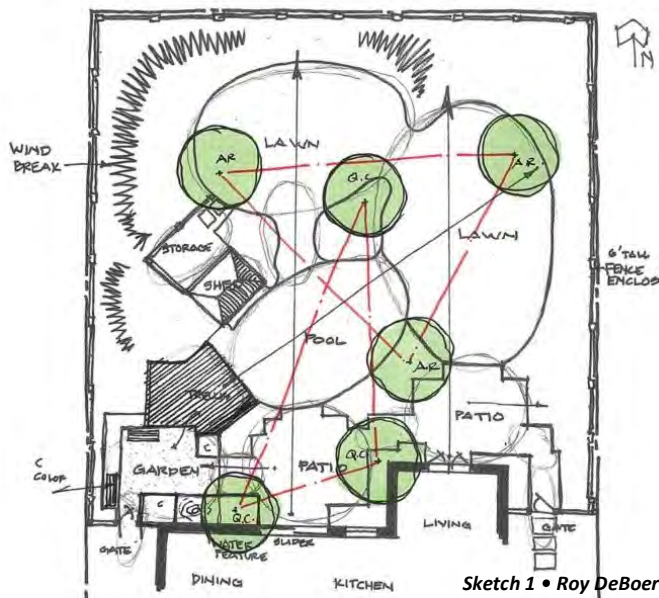
Shade trees also provide a great sense of depth for the garden. The presence of a trunk and canopy produces a physical marker that allows the observer to gauge depth, and the shadows cast by the plant also create depth-gauging markers. If modifying an established garden, the root system

of healthy shade trees should be protected from compaction by heavy equipment. If you are considering changes in soil grade, always remember - *fill kills!*

Trees (shade trees, small trees, or large shrubs) can be planted as:  
**Feature plants** – only one plant is selected, which attracts the eye since it is solitary.

**Pairs** – acting as sentinels, the eye naturally passes between the two plants. I have seen two small trees planted on either end of a shrub bed in a front yard, which drew the eye to the shrubs and away from the preferred front door.

**Threes or Triangulation** – produces a much more natural and calming appearance, as seen in the center design the interlocking three Red Maples (AR) and three Scarlet Oaks (QC). The above image of the Paper Birch (*Betula papyrifera*) straddling a walk illustrates how one point of the triangulation can be a grouping of trees. Although designed, it feels and looks very natural.



**Groves** – naturally appearing masses you can sit beneath or pass through.

Interestingly, trees also allow us to live healthy and longer lives! A study released by Texas A&M University found that visual exposure to trees significantly reduces stress within five minutes, as denoted by changes in blood pressure and muscle tension. The USDA calculated that one acre of forest absorbs upwards of six tons of CO<sub>2</sub> and emits four tons of O<sub>2</sub>. That is enough to meet the needs of 18 people!

## 2. Evergreens

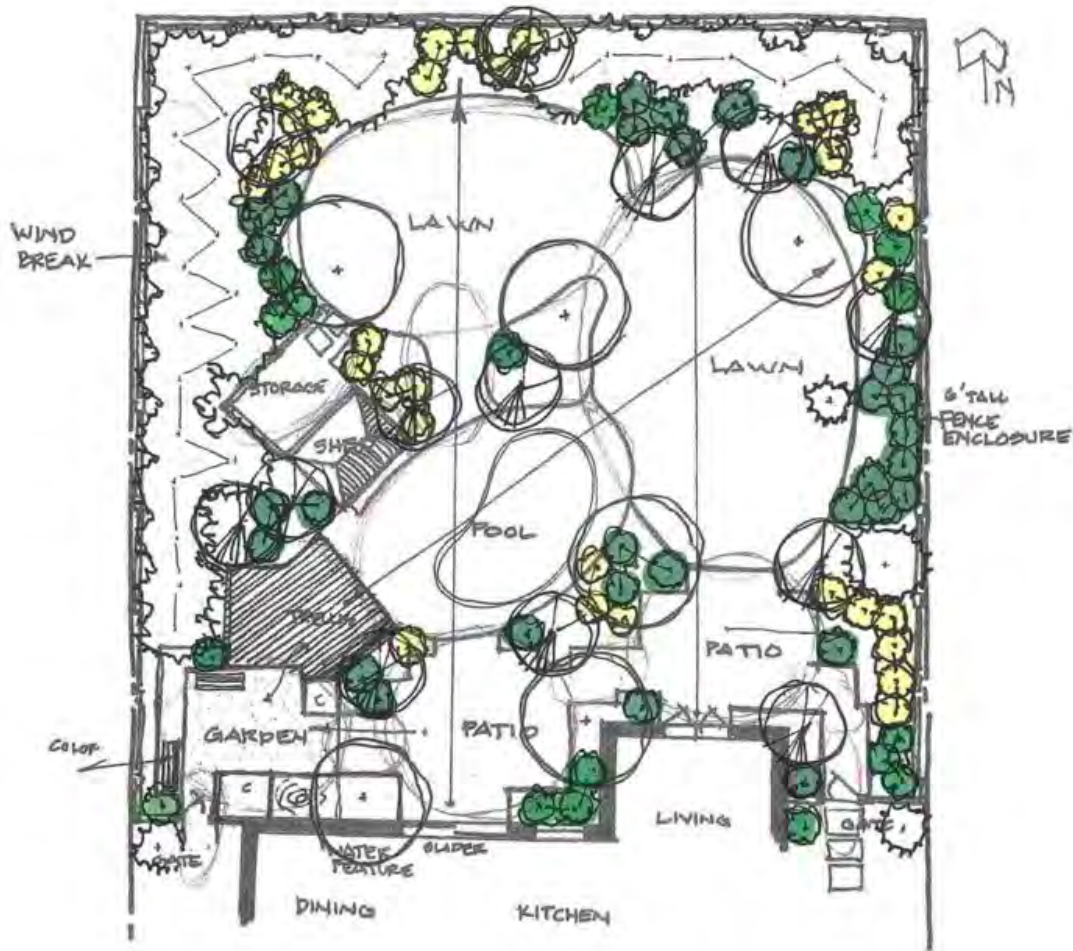
With the presence of year-round foliage, evergreens can serve as the environmental workhorse of the garden. They are valuable as screens, windbreaks along NW boundaries, light and sound filters, and air pollutant absorbers. Be careful not to plant where it will shade a drive or walkway come winter, as the shadows will prevent the melting of accumulated snow and ice. Try to avoid planting evergreens in rows, as “bumping” a few plants in or out makes for a far more natural appearance, as seen in the design of the windbreak above.

## 3. Small trees

A highly versatile group of plants for the garden, small trees provide year-round interest with flowers, foliage, bark, and habit. Maturing to 25-30' tall and wide, they can serve as a tree or large shrub, depending on the pruning treatment. They can be a feature plant or massed for screening. In front of a house, a small tree may break the horizontal line of the roof and siding or soften the many vertical lines of the architecture. From inside the house, a small tree can filter the view from a window via its branching, adding mystery, depth, and a perch for birds. A small tree may provide shade in the patio area and serve as a focal point.

## 4. Shrubs

This is the layer we depend on most to create the walls of the outdoor room. We also rely on shrubs for color through flowers and foliage. Shrubs are depicted by the green and yellow circles in the drawing above. Those growing to 5' tall or taller are typically best not placed adjacent to a patio or walkway where they will grow up to, or over, the edge of the hardscape, creating an overgrown and claustrophobic feeling. Shrubs reaching 3' or less do not generate this feeling. We often think of evergreens as best for baffling noises from roadways. Large deciduous shrubs and small trees, especially those with large leaves, are best!



## 5. Herbaceous layers, including groundcovers

The easiest groundcover to consider is turf. Other ground covers are especially useful where grass will not grow, e.g., shade, steep banks, or where grass is difficult to maintain, e.g., around shrubs, buildings, or rock outcroppings. Aesthetically, groundcovers provide a change in texture or color from that of grass and unite isolated plants into a single unit. Permitting nature to reclaim a portion of the property may also be viable. If too much of the property is covered by turf, the property lacks creativity and can become an environmental nightmare. The “perfect” lawn demands too much water and chemicals while providing no food or habitat for beneficial insects, caterpillars, and animals!

As mentioned before, do not think in terms of “Foundation Planting.” Instead, think about creating outdoor rooms with plants - like sheetrock in a house. This planning helps to eliminate the static quality exuded by many residential landscapes.

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](#)



# Happy Gardener

## *The Tomato and I* Charlotte Swanson

Some years ago, when I yearned for a garden-ripe tomato, I jumped at the first-ever opportunity to plant my very own tomato plant. I knew little beyond the rudiments of gardening: dig a hole, place the roots in the soil, water, and expect tomatoes to appear eventually. The young transplant from the box store grew despite its sandy location in partial shade and unfriendly breezes. Though that tomato crop was limited, I relished that fresh burst of flavor in my mouth. So thrilled with that touch of success, I entered some of my red darlings in the county fair. The competition was fierce, and I did not land a blue ribbon. However, I met the local garden club president and accepted her invitation to the next meeting. That yearning for a fresh tomato opened the door to discovering the joys of gardening and fellowshiping with the club members.

More adventures with tomatoes lay in store. At the club meetings, people surrounded me with their much-acquired wisdom concerning tomato growing through experience and instruction. Armed with a better understanding of what tomatoes prefer, I had a much fuller crop the following summer. Full sun, amended soil, and a proper dose of fertilizer went a long way toward producing a robust plant and a pretty ribbon at the fair.

In the beginning, my troubles were few in the tomato patch. However, there came a summer when my hopes of gathering those juicy orbs of deliciousness were crushed by an enemy: verticillium wilt. It doomed my bush before maturity with ugly brown spots and curled leaves. Yes, I had no tomatoes that year. Since then, I learned to rotate my tomatoes to outfox the virus and to choose cultivars that resist it. Unfortunately, my favorite tomato, the heirloom 'Brandywine,' is very susceptible. My best alternative has been 'Damsel,' a hybrid that retains that lovely tang but has good resistance to the virus.

Perhaps my favorite tomato memory happened a few summers ago when I gave straw bale gardening a whirl. After conditioning the bales and readying my tomato transplants, I anxiously waited for the newbies to take hold. All was well for about two weeks until the leaves started to curl and turn brown. Mystified, I scrolled through some pictures of troubled tomato plants and landed on the culprit— chemical contamination. Unbeknownst to me, someone had gathered the bales from straw subjected to herbicides. My dear tomatoes had drunk poisoned water! But in a spot, far away in the garden, where last year's sprawling tomato had flourished, a surprise awaited. A tiny seedling had taken hold and caught my eye. That wonderful unseen hand that often produces pleasant surprises offered me a small but healthy seedling. Though it got a late start, my seedling persevered and bore tomatoes toward the very end of the season. This year, I will be content to have no new adventures in the tomato patch - just lots of juicy, tangy, beautiful tomatoes, minus the drama!

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



*Antique Watering Thumb Pot • Metropolitan Museum of Art, c/o Wikicommons*

## Kindred Spirits: Connecting to our Early American Garden Heritage Lesley Parness

America's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary is fast approaching. Historians will be busy pointing out similarities and differences between 18<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup>-century Americans. So, what do modern-day gardeners share with their gardening ancestors? A lot!

Let us start with our mutual love of tools. For example, the watering can. The first metal watering cans appeared in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. English Lord Timothy George wrote the term "watering can" in his garden diary in 1692, and the former "watering pot" was re-branded forever. The tin Haws watering can, the iconic form still in use, was patented in the 1880s. Its design moved the handle from the top to the rear of the can, making it easier to use. This change was a vast improvement over the clay or ceramic thumb pot (yes, your thumb kept the water from spilling out), which dominated the scene since Roman times. (These are available online.)

You cannot garden without a shovel, and the Ames Shovel Company of West Bridgewater, Massachusetts, traces its origins to 1774. Captain John Ames made iron shovels known for their excellent quality. Successive generations of the Ames family built the company through the years, supplying the standard issue shovel to U.S. Army troops from the Civil War to the Korean War. Ames shovels dug railroad tracks, prospected for gold, and built America's gardens.

The bell-shaped glass cloche has been a favored gardener's tool for centuries. Colonial gardeners extended the gardening season for their "sallet" (salad) greens. Early American gardeners enjoyed an increased availability of these tiny glass greenhouses for individual plants when, around 1780, New Jersey's burgeoning glass industry, located near Glassboro, supplied them. Today, high-end garden catalogs tempt us

with their many cloches, still providing garden charm and insulation against the cold for tender seedlings.

Garden pests have frustrated gardeners for every one of the past 250 years. Twenty-first-century gardeners have an arsenal of chemicals to combat them. What were some Early American solutions and best practices for insect damage? They placed fresh onion skins around hills of cucumbers to control squash bugs. Cabbage leaves were laid between plants to capture slugs and snails, then collected and burnt early the next day. Toxic mayapple roots were dried and used as insecticides for crops. Gardeners soaked seeds in this root powder to eliminate pests before planting. A dousing of lime water killed aphids.

We use black plastic nowadays to heat the ground to promote early crops. They spread charcoal dust from their fires on the soil around early crops to absorb the sun's heat. We use polypropylene floating row covers to protect crops from frost. Gardeners of yore used oiled paper set over rounded wooden hoops to accomplish the same task. We plug our heat mats into outlets to warm flats of germinating seeds. Eighteenth-century gardeners sped germination by shoveling manure under the soil into brick-lined hotbeds.

We purchase acres of metal trellis and cages to grow things up. Gardeners "in the day" used branch prunings and cut saplings to create towers and teepees for vining plants long before "vertical gardening" was even a term.

We have our indoor grow racks for seed starting and outdoor winter sowing in plastic jugs. Colonists dug up sod in the fall, stored the clods in their cellars over winter, then planted

*(Continued on page 16)*

# NGC Certified Wildlife Habitat

Barbara Campbell



Thank you to all of the members who have certified their gardens as Wildlife Habitats. I am pleased to report that we are about to reach 100 certified gardens since the program began last

fall. They represent over 50% of the states. The gardens range from lot size to many acres. The wildlife varies from state to state and garden to garden. All share the same desire to help our endangered wildlife exist, reproduce, and flourish. You can even purchase a sign upon when your garden is certified. Certify YOUR [Garden for Wildlife!](#)

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

Frog • LKR Photos

their seed in the inverted sod clumps in early spring. This technique worked especially well for crops that did not like to be transplanted - the entire hunk of sod was just buried in the garden. We love our raised beds; they are available in every configuration and material imaginable. Early Americans used raised beds, too. They were constructed with tree cuttings and placed near the home for easy access.

Gardeners throughout history have loved plant shopping. We have the internet with its myriad sources. They purchased “exoticks” (exotics) from John Bartram, America’s first and self-taught botanist, in Southwest Philadelphia, PA, on the banks of the Schuylkill River. They also purchased from the Prince Linnaeus Nursery in Flushing, NY. If you think that the pickings were slim, think again. Check out the enormous selection of plants, especially fruit trees, available to the early American gardener of means. You can read about the [Linnaeus Nursery in Queens](#) here and see a list of plants from [Bartram’s Garden](#) in 1792.

They were observant, as their very lives depended on the success of their crops. Early gardeners widely practiced plant phenology, watching the weather and other environmental cues to aid in scheduling planting. For example, Virginia gardeners knew they got their best carrots when they planted the seed when the daffodils bloomed.

Yet, at the same time, Early Americans did not learn. When observing the practices of the Indigenous peoples, they did not recognize how honing the wild landscape for food abundance could be achieved while retaining native species’ diversity and function. Only now, 250 years later, do we have a word for this - permaculture. While First Nation peoples created and maintained food forests, Europeans chopped them down, preferring to plow the soil.

Then and now, gardeners have their heroes and visionaries. We have Dr. Doug Tallamy, with his dream of a homegrown national park and “Nature’s Best Hope.” They had Founding Father and 4th President James Madison, who has been called “the forgotten father of American environmentalism.” He first alerted Americans of the perils to the soil by clearing forests and over-farming land. He urged fellow Virginia farmers to protect the old-growth forests.

We are kindred spirits with our gardening forebears. Thankfully, we have retained much of our American garden history. Living history museums and the [Smithsonian Institute](#) are good places to learn about our shared gardening heritage. In remembering our ancestors’ failures and triumphs - we find they still have much to teach us.

[Lesley Parness](#) has worked in public gardens in America and abroad for five decades. Now retired, she offers illustrated lectures and hands-on workshops. Lesley lives in New Jersey.





Library Project Before • Gray Garden Club, Georgia



Library Project After • Gray Garden Club, Georgia



PLANT  
AMERICA

National Garden Clubs

## 2023-2024 PLANT AMERICA

### Grant Recipients David Robson

The Plant America Community Projects Grant Committee is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2024 Plant America grants. We awarded grants, ranging from \$450 to \$2000, to carry out clubs' projects to benefit their communities. The seven committee members reviewed nearly 100 applications using metrics to rank the applications. Final decisions came down to a hundredth of a point. We will highlight many of the 2023 recipients' final reports in *The National Gardener* and on NGC social media. Look at the [NGC PLANT AMERICA](#) page in early summer for details on the 2025 program.

- ❖ California Garden Clubs Inc.
  - ◆ Ceres Garden Club
  - ◆ San Pedro Garden Club
  - ◆ Southern California Garden Club
- ❖ Colorado Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc.
  - ◆ Greeley Morning Garden Club
- ❖ Florida Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc.
  - ◆ Coral Gables Garden Club
  - ◆ Garden Club at Palm Coast
  - ◆ Garden Club of Coral Springs
  - ◆ Steinhatchee Garden Club
- ❖ Garden Club of Georgia, Inc.
  - ◆ Garden Club of Marietta
  - ◆ Rose and Dahlia Garden Club
- ❖ Garden Club of Kentucky, Inc.
  - ◆ Garden Club of Frankfort
- ❖ Louisiana Garden Club Federation, Inc.
  - ◆ Bulb and Blossom Garden Club
  - ◆ Shady Oak Garden Club
- ❖ Garden Club Federation of Maine
  - ◆ Central Maine Garden Club
- ❖ Garden Club Federation of Massachusetts, Inc.
  - ◆ Acton Garden Club
  - ◆ Littleton Country Gardeners
  - ◆ Scituate Garden Club
- ❖ Garden Clubs of Mississippi, Inc.
  - ◆ Coastal Garden Society
  - ◆ Northwood Garden Club
- ◆ Richland-Florence Garden Club
- ◆ Starkville Town and Country Garden Club
- ❖ Federated Garden Clubs of Nebraska, Inc.
  - ◆ Elkhorn Valley Garden Club
- ❖ New Hampshire Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc.
  - ◆ Littleton Garden Club
- ❖ Garden Club of New Jersey, Inc.
  - ◆ Rockaway Valley Garden Club
- ❖ Federated Garden Clubs of New York State, Inc.
  - ◆ Gates Garden Club
  - ◆ Warwick Valley Gardeners
- ❖ Garden Club of North Carolina, Inc.
  - ◆ Southport Garden Club
- ❖ Garden Club of Ohio, Inc.
  - ◆ East Rochester Home and Garden Club
  - ◆ Perennial Gardeners of Chesterland
- ❖ Oklahoma Garden Clubs, Inc.
  - ◆ Lakeside Garden Club
- ❖ Oregon State Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc.
  - ◆ McMinnville Garden Club
  - ◆ Sou'wester Garden Club
- ❖ Tennessee Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc.
  - ◆ Chapman Highway Garden Club
  - ◆ Year Round Garden Club
- ❖ Texas Garden Clubs, Inc.
  - ◆ Cross Plains Garden Club
- ❖ Washington State Federation of Garden Clubs
  - ◆ Carleton Park Garden Club



NGC Schools  
◆ Environmental  
◆ Gardening  
◆ Landscape Design  
Pat Rupiper

Class Time • Inna Polekhina

Just a few reminders. NGC no longer employs a specific Schools' secretary; the current staff shares the workload, so please be patient. There is a delay in receiving the usual Letter of Good Standing. My Chairs and I are processing all Schools' participants without it. When the letter comes, we will send it on. Please **do not wait** for that letter to share the updated Form 6 (student) or Form 7 (consultant) with people who attended a class. State Chairs should *keep a copy of the forms before sending them to the participant*. We rely on the signed rosters and the forms to keep things moving.

- We no longer send out a little signed card after each course. We eliminated it three years ago.
- There are multiple Zoom and in-person classes scheduled in all three schools. Remember to click on EACH COURSE tab to see them. Keep your consultant status up to date.
- The first NGC Environmental School, Course 1, via Zoom, was well attended. Keep up the excellent attendance. Course 2 occurred in March; watch for information on Course 3.
- You must complete both Form 6 and Form 7 on your computer. The forms may **not be handwritten and**


**scanned; this includes all signatures.** Just type your name, please.

- **If a participant misses course hours, they MUST make them up** before Form 5 is sent to the office. Two weeks is the maximum time for someone to take the quiz they failed or missed. We have had a couple of people make everyone wait over a month to be able to send the paperwork. That is not fair to the others who abide by the rules.
- I am putting my foot down for those who want to miss due to other chosen events and wish to view the recording or take the exam whenever they feel it is convenient. Courses are not a "watch whenever you want and complete on your own time" offering.
- Take the exam when offered by the local chair or retake the whole course another time when wanted for credit. If students do not **complete** the exam, they do **NOT** receive credit. **They do not receive a course fee refund** because they have received the educational materials and experiences.

Thank you for supporting your schools.

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[Pat Rupiper](#), NGC Environmental School and NGC Schools Policy and Procedure Chair lives in Ohio.



**Down the Garden Path  
Landscape Design  
School News  
Carol Yee**

Spring Path • DropStock

*Don't underestimate the therapeutic value of gardening. It's the one area where we can all use our nascent creative talents to make a truly satisfying work of art. Every individual, with thought, patience and a large portion of help from nature, has it in them to create their own private paradise: truly a thing of beauty and a joy forever.* Geoff Hamilton

The new Landscape Design School curriculum attempts to accomplish the above while following Landscape Design School objectives. All NGC Landscape Design Schools help students create their own Home Landscape Plan (Course 3) and evaluate Landscape Plans (Course 4). Those consultants refreshing with courses (versus Refreshers) must also participate, even though they are not graded.

“Planning the Home Landscape: Delight or Disaster” by Bruce Crawford (2021 NGC Award of Excellence recipient and Manager of Horticulture, Morris County Parks Commission, Morris Township, NJ) considers all aspects of landscape design. The continuing series of articles (Parts 1-3) is available in *The National Gardener*, beginning with the summer 2023 issue.

Another resource is NGC Schools' newsletter, [Newscape](#). Caroline Carbaugh publishes *Newscape* in early spring and late summer. The issues contain news, projects, tours, and other activities of schools and councils throughout the country. Archived issues are available on the NGC website using the *Newscape* link above. NGC Schools' consultants and students are encouraged to contribute articles and photos for *Newscape* for consideration. Please email me your Landscape Design Council and Tri-Council newsletters. We love to share your ideas and events with others.

During the next quarter, there are many opportunities to attend virtual and in-person Landscape Design School courses. Look for courses on the NGC website, under each school, and on the [NGC Calendar](#) page. Consultants, please check out [Multiple Refreshers](#) on the NGC website.

Thank you, students and consultants, as you continue to attend and support our schools and refreshers. You are helping NGC accomplish its mission of providing “...education, resources, and national networking opportunities for its members to promote the love of gardening, floral design, and civic and environmental responsibility.”

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Carol Yee is the NGC Landscape Design School Chair. She enjoys designing gardens in Illinois.

The Florida Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc.  
Celebrating 100 years of service and beauty!



## Senior Gardening Considerations

David Rich

Is it time to think about downsizing your garden? Have you grown lavish flowers and amazing vegetables in a large space for many years? Are you finding it challenging to keep up with the work? Perhaps you are exploring a move from a single-family residence to a much smaller space, both inside and out. If so, here are some considerations that may help.

If you are moving to a condominium or other space with an association and rules, do not neglect to find out in advance what is allowed regarding landscaping, choice of plants, or other restrictions. Determine the sunny and shaded locations and select your property accordingly. Often, it is not possible to have anything that remotely resembles a vegetable plant visible from the street. So, if all your sun is in the front, your sun-loving tomatoes will be out of luck. Some associations are much more friendly to gardeners than others, and many designate areas for a community garden. Do your research! The burden is on you to know the rules before moving in.

If you are not contemplating a move but still wish to modify your gardening, enter the world of raised beds and containers. Waist-high boxes allow for comfortable areas to stand and work. Many

*(Continued on page 21)*

*Raised Lettuce Bed • David Rich*

# Handbook Changes

## Judy Binns

Please make the following clarifications/corrections in the *Handbook for Flower Shows* effective immediately:

### 1. JUDGING CREDITS - Chapter 12, Judges

Strike the phrase “with a minimum of six (6) classes” in the following sections (p 115, B1; p 117, A 2; p 119, VI, B) as the **NUMBER** of classes to judge is already specified for **EACH** type of show - Small Standard, Standard Flower Show, Horticulture Specialty Show, and Design Specialty Show.  
*Note: The number of classes per type of show for a Judging Credit was updated in 2021, and the deletion of this phrase was overlooked.*

### 2. LENGTH FOR ARBOREAL SPECIMENS - HB p 59, B

Strike ~~less~~ and insert no more.  
Will then read: Arboreal specimens must be **no more** than 30” in length  
**RATIONALE:** Change made to agree with HB p 41, 1d. Arboreal Award which states  
“Cut specimens must be **no more** than 30” in length

The updated digital version of the [Handbook for Flower Shows](#) is available for download with these changes. NGC Flower Show Schools Forms 3, 13, 15L, and 15M are updated to reflect these corrections.

[Judy Binns](#), of Virginia, is the NGC Flower Show Schools Chair.

Flowers • Designatures



raised bed boxes are commercially available to enable wheelchair gardening. Excellent organic soil mixes, as is compost, are widely available if you can no longer maintain a pile of home-produced black gold. You can maintain your raised bed soil carefully and with minimal difficulty, keep it adequately drained, cover it in winter, and control weeds by hand.

What should you plant in your containers and beds? Strive for maximum impact when desiring fresh vegetables. One of the most successful projects for a home vegetable gardener is creating a salad and greens garden, as shown in the photo. You can closely plant kale, Swiss chard, radishes, and various cutting lettuces in a bed rich with organic matter. Edible flowers such as nasturtiums create beauty in the box, and the flowers and leaves are delectable. Salad gardens produce a significant amount of produce from early spring to late fall. In the heat of summer, you may employ shade cloth to preserve plants from too much afternoon heat and light intensity. In the fall, protective coverings extend your season.

Do not even consider giving up on gardening before age 100 or beyond! Just learn to work around obstacles and streamline your gardening.

David Rich is the NGC Senior Gardening Chair. He is a long-time member of the Leaf & Blossom Garden Club in the Akron, OH and is a horticulture judge for the Gardeners of America.

## Bent and Twisted Containers for the Floral Designer



by Ken Swartz, Phone 414-258-7902  
Email: [kswartzbnt@yahoo.com](mailto:kswartzbnt@yahoo.com)  
Website: Garden Sculptures -  
Bent and Twisted Studios  
[Bentandtwistedstudio.com](http://Bentandtwistedstudio.com)



*Drone Image of Garden Expansion  
Below (top - bottom): Before, During and After  
Garden Expansion • Garden Club of Evanston*



# PLANT AMERICA Grant Feeds a Community

## David Robson

The Garden Club of Evanston (Illinois) used their PLANT AMERICA Community Project Grant to expand their community food garden and provide fresh organic produce to those in need in their community. In partnership with the local Evanston Grows (EG), an organization of community organizations and individuals focused on reducing local food insecurity, the grant allowed the garden to double in size and output. In conjunction with other funds, grant funds helped to add a greenhouse, provide compost, fencing, and drainage tiles, and improve growing conditions.

The garden's output was 1600 pounds in 2022. After the expansion, it produced 3,100 pounds of food. The crop included kale, collard greens, carrots, lettuce, winter and summer squashes, turnips, beans, eggplants, peppers, onions, and herbs. Tomatoes were grown in a hoop house.

This garden is part of a broader community garden outreach project that produces more than two tons of food for the community throughout the year. Garden Club of Evanston members have personally donated more than \$25,000 and 2500 hours to this project by working in the garden, soliciting grants, and organizing fundraisers.

David Robson, of Illinois, is the NGC PLANT AMERICA Community Project Grants Chair. He is an NGC Permanent Home and Endowment Trustee and NGC Headquarters' Garden Landscape Consultant.



## Time for Spring Gardening

Mary Ann Ferguson-Rich

Spring Gardening • Mary Ann Ferguson-Rich

Some of you are already well into spring in April, while snow still covers others. Wherever you are, it is time to prepare or actually start planting. Spring is the time of year for cool crops that need harvesting before summer's heat arrives. In Zone 5, where I garden in heavy, often water-logged clay soil, I grow in raised beds inside a hoop house to enjoy the luxury of vitamin-packed cool crops while avoiding the harshness of our spring weather.

Green onions (scallions or spring onions) are easily grown from sets. Plant green onions in a sunny site in fertile, neutral to slightly acidic, and well-drained soil. Green onions prefer good drainage and thus grow in a raised bed on our property. They take only 60 days until harvest and require little attention or effort.

Peas require growing temperatures between 55 and 65 degrees. Plant seeds when the ground has thawed, and the soil is workable. In heavy-clay soil, peas thrive in raised beds and take about 60 days to harvest. They do not like high temperatures and will wither and die quickly if a sudden spring heat wave arrives. If you have never had the experience of freshly shelled and cooked peas, they are sublime and nearly impossible to obtain from a grocery store in an unfrozen state. Pea vines are edible and are great in salads, along with snow peas, which are grown for their tender, edible pods.

Radishes are the perfect crop for impatient gardeners and children. They proliferate in containers and do not take up a lot of space. Radishes require soft, friable, well-drained soil with a pH range of 5.8-6.8. They do not like hot, dry weather. Keep them hydrated and cool so they will be mild, tender, and attractive. Checked growth, for any reason, may cause radishes to become tough and too hot. This 30-day crop can be succession planted until early summer. The most outstanding benefit of growing your radishes is the fabulous tops to use fresh in salads or cooked into an amazing spring soup. Radish tops in grocery stores are usually far from the blemish-free, turgid, wonder greens that your garden can produce.

Leaf lettuces grow in every color, size, and type, and there are over a thousand different varieties of lettuce in existence. The array of seeds available to the home gardener is astonishing. In as little as 35 days, you can begin harvesting small tender leaves for salads. Lettuce likes the sun but does fine in light shade. Moist, well-drained soil is preferred. Succession planting will keep you in salads until scorching weather. Then, try shading the plants or planting them in an area with morning sun and afternoon shade.

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Mary Ann Ferguson-Rich, of Ohio, is the NGC Food to Table Chair and the Gardening-Horticulture Coordinator.

# The Contemplative Garden Refuge

## Joe Novak



*Backyard Garden Refuge • Joe Novak*

Contact with nature is restorative to body and mind. It stimulates our parasympathetic nervous system and calms our sympathetic nervous system. Our parasympathetic nervous system responds to soft fascination which are the sounds and views of nature. Our sympathetic nervous system responds to everyday life, to harsh sounds and threatening situations, such as when we are about to cross a street. These stimuli deplete our attention and stress us. Contact with nature is beneficial, helping us to relax and clear our minds for contemplative thought. This involuntary response affects all humans. As a species, we evolved in nature, and the comfortable feeling we get when we are in nature is in our genes.

Our gardens provide contact with nature with similar restorative effects that nature offers. Just as we can go to the mountains, forest, or beach for a few days for restoration, we can get this vital benefit daily from our gardens. While strolling through a garden at the end of a day, we often feel the tension falling from our shoulders.

Creating a garden that works with nature dramatically reduces the work of gardening. Making it a contemplative space based on nature changes how we see our gardens.

Working with nature means that the garden will be informal and have the flowing lines of nature. Observing nature, we note many unexpected things happening in our garden refuge. Observation helps to keep our minds active. If we understand nature, working with nature can reduce the time and effort we put into our garden. Bringing nature into the garden allows our eyes to see the garden in a new way, not as manicured spaces but as free-flowing and irregular spaces. Instead of masses of a single species, there will be incredible biodiversity. With more biodiversity, we can see our gardens in a more complex way. There is also the advantage that if this year does not favor one species, another will thrive in its place.

The garden as a refuge should also be contemplative, where the gardener can rest, relax, and think deeply about things. In this type of garden, there are discoveries around every corner. The lack of formality and the chance to discover new things keeps the garden interesting. In the contemplative garden, there are changes from day to day and year to year. Seasonal changes have psychological benefits for the gardener.

*(Continued on page 25)*



The garden refuge based on nature and contemplation should be an intimate, personal space. It is unique because the gardener creating it is unique. There are no precise rules to follow in its design. Design it with experiences that have brought you happiness. If childhood was such an experience, draw from your childhood. If you have fond memories of places you have visited or a gardener who has had a distinct effect on you, draw from them.

The garden as a refuge should also be a regenerative space. Much of it will come back on its own, year after year, with little effort. Nature restores itself. The gardener needs to tend the garden, but much less effort is involved. It allows for relaxation and thought more than constant tending.

Contact with nature and contemplation work together. Nature clears the mind and makes it possible for deep thought. Essential features in a contemplative garden refuge include plants, rocks, water, wildlife, views, and seasonal change. Consider the following.

Plants of all types, old and young trees, shrubs, vines, groundcovers, and herbaceous flowering plants are garden staples. Plants flower in different seasons. Deciduous and evergreen plants create year-round interest. Plants exhibit ephemerality: going through phases quickly - new growth in spring, flowering briefly in a specific season, attracting pollinators, producing fruits and seeds, and preparing for winter or drought.

Rocks are a stabilizing feature in the garden refuge and represent permanence. They were there before you created the garden and will be there after the garden has disappeared. Rocks are the parent material of soil on which all life depends.

Water is essential for life. It is visual and creates soft fascination through its sounds and constant changes of form.

Wildlife represents both good and bad in the garden but is always restorative. Butterflies, other insects, spiders, mammals, reptiles, amphibia, and microorganisms are essential to the garden's health.

Views created within the garden refuge or borrowed from beyond are valuable for contemplation. Views beyond the garden give it the feel of a more incredible expanse. Views within the garden are often small areas that help us look inward. View of the sky is especially important.

The garden refuge should change with the seasons. The cycle of the seasons is important to us psychologically. It

represents stability and constancy as well as change. It offers hope for a new year to improve on what we did in years past. It helps us see how organisms adapt to this change and gives us hope for adapting to the changes in our lives.

Pathways allow us to move about, and benches provide a place to sit, relax, and think.

Pathways should be appropriately surfaced for our needs and safety. Benches should be comfortable and secure and placed in the shade and sun.

The garden refuge can be small or large, depending on the site and the gardener's wishes. The important thing is that it be natural and bring nature into it. Soft fascination created by the sounds and sights of nature is essential to help set the mind at

ease and help it reflect. The sounds of wind and air moving through the trees and birds singing are restorative, as is the sight of a butterfly slowly flapping its wings, ripples on a pond, or leaves moving in a breeze. All are soft fascinations that can help take our minds off our daily activities and free them for creative thought. It must be unique and speak to the gardener.

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Joe Novak has a Ph.D. from Cornell. He teaches courses in Urban Agriculture and Garden for Wellness at Rice and is Director of the Betty and Jacob Friedman Holistic Garden. He is a lifetime honorary member of Texas Garden Clubs, Inc.



*Relax in the Garden • Sutichak*



*Strongylodon macrobotrys* • Esther Rodríguez

## ***Strongylodon macrobotrys* (Jade Vine)**

**Esther Rodríguez**

It was 2015 when I was visiting a friend. In her garden, I found an exotic flower that captivated me. As I researched it, I was even more amazed. A few days later, and to my pleasant surprise, my friend gave me two little offspring of that beautiful plant.

We built an arbor in the garden to show the cascading clusters of flowers produced as the plant matures. I planted the two rooted cuttings, as usual, just in case one of them did not prosper. Two years went by, and in March 2017, the plant sprouted with its beautiful inflorescence. It is the one that I proudly present to you today.

*Strongylodon macrobotrys* is also known by various names, such as jade flower, emerald vine, or jade vine. It is a woody perennial vine that can grow up to 65 feet long with green foliage and claw-shaped flowers. It is native to the tropical forests of the Philippines and is a member of the Fabaceae botanical family.

The inflorescence stands out particularly for its turquoise color and how it appears in grouped, huge, showy, and hanging clusters, very similar to grapes. Each cluster has approximately 75 claw-shaped flowers, 2.5 to 5 inches long, and can hang as long as 10 feet. The leaves are green in color and trifoliolate, which means that each leaf has three leaflets about 9 inches in length. The fruit is an elongated fleshy pod that measures about 6 inches long and holds as many as 12 seeds. These seeds have a short lifespan.

Bats pollinate the flowers as they are attracted to the turquoise color of the flowers at dusk. Hanging upside down, the bats push their heads toward the individual flowers to reach the sticky, sweet nectar. In the process, pollen dusts their heads, which they then transfer to the female parts of the next flowers they visit. In crops where there are no bats, pollination is manual. In my experience, flowers are visited and pollinated by bees attracted by the beauty of the flower and its delicate nectar. Propagation can be by seed, layering in spring, or cuttings of semi-mature root stem sections in summer.

Due to deforestation and general environmental degradation, *Strongylodon macrobotrys* is considered vulnerable in the wild. Gardeners use it as an ornamental plant, and they highly appreciate it in warm and tropical gardens for its showy flowers that bloom in spring and summer. It does not tolerate frost or temperatures below 60° F. Its foliage remains all year round. It should be pruned after flowering to control its growth and provoke the development of new branches and more abundant flowering. It requires a moist but well-drained mix of sand and clay soil with an acidic pH. It likes partial shade, with protected exposure and east or west orientation. It may be susceptible to mealybugs.

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Esther Rodríguez, is a lawyer, who represents Region II - Central America of COMAAI and lives in Costa Rica. She is our TNG bilingual Horticulture contributor. [Click for more \*Strongylodon Macrobotrys\* information and images.](#)



*Strongylodon macrobotrys* • De Gatobarato (Wikicommons)

## Strongylodon macrobotrys (Flor de Jade)

Esther Rodríguez

Corría el año 2015 cuando visité una amiga y en su jardín me encontré una flor exótica que me cautivó. Investigué sobre ella y quedé más asombrada. Pasaron unos pocos días y, para mi sorpresa, mi amiga me regaló dos plantines de esa bella planta.

Construimos una pérgola en el jardín, con lo cual se pueden mostrar los racimos de flores en cascada que se producen al madurar la planta. Planté las dos plantas, que acostumbro hacer por si una de ellas no prospera. Pasaron dos años y, en marzo de 2017, la planta brotó con su bella inflorescencia. Es la que con mucho orgullo les presento hoy.

*Strongylodon macrobotrys* es también conocida con varios nombres, flor de jade, parra esmeralda o parra de jade. Es una enredadera perenne leñosa que puede crecer hasta 20 m de largo, de follaje verde con flores en forma de garra. Es nativa de los bosques tropicales de las Filipinas y miembro de la familia botánica Fabaceae.

La inflorescencia se destaca particularmente por su color y la forma en que se presenta en racimos agrupados, enormes, vistosos y colgantes, parecidos a las uvas. Cada racimo tiene aproximadamente 75 flores de 6 a 13 cm de largo en forma de garra y puede colgar hasta 3 m. Las hojas, de color verde, son trifolioladas lo que significa que cada hoja tiene tres foliolos de unos 25 cm de largo. El fruto, una vaina carnosa alargada mide unos 15 cm de largo y contiene hasta 12 semillas. Estas semillas son de corta vida.

La enredadera es polinizada por murciélagos que se sienten atraídos por el color turquesa de las flores al atardecer. Colgando boca abajo, los murciélagos empujan sus cabezas hacia las flores individuales para alcanzar el néctar dulce y pegajoso. En el proceso, sus cabezas se espolvorean con polen que luego se transfiere a las partes femeninas de las siguientes flores que visitan. En los cultivos, donde no hay murciélagos, la polinización es manual. En mi experiencia, las flores son visitadas y polinizadas por abejas atraídas por la belleza de la flor y su delicado néctar. La propagación puede ser por semilla, acodos aéreos en primavera o secciones de tallo semimaduro de raíz en verano.

*Strongylodon macrobotrys* es considerada vulnerable en la naturaleza debido a la deforestación y degradación general del medio ambiente. Se utiliza como planta ornamental, no tolera las heladas ni temperaturas menores de 15° C. Es muy apreciada en los jardines cálidos y tropicales por sus vistosas flores que florecen en primavera y verano. Su follaje se mantiene todo el año y se recomienda aplicar pequeñas podas, luego de la floración, para controlar su crecimiento y provocar el crecimiento de nuevas ramas y floración más abundante. Requiere un suelo de arena y arcilla húmedo pero bien drenado, con un pH ácido. La luz es de sombra parcial, con exposición protegida y orientación este u oeste. Puede ser susceptible a la cochinilla.

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Esther Rodríguez, es abogada, delegada de la Región II - Centro América de COMAAI y vive en Costa Rica. Ella contribuye a TNG artículos bilingües sobre Horticultura. **Haga clic para obtener más información e imágenes de [Strongylodon Macrobotrys](#).**

# Radish Top Soup

## Mary Ann Ferguson-Rich

It is time to plant radishes for their tasty roots and nourishing, flavorful greens. Do not let those sad and yellowing greens topping grocery store radishes turn you off. Grow your own in as little as 30 days. Homegrown radishes are one of the easiest vegetables to grow and are highly suitable for containers. Your green tops can be harvested and eaten while in pristine condition. Try this delicious spring soup.

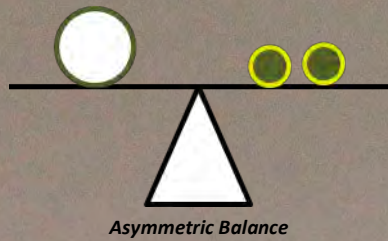
### Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 leek, white and light green part only, halved lengthwise and thinly sliced crosswise into half-moons
- 1 small yellow onion, diced
- 1 carrot, peeled and diced
- 1½ teaspoon kosher or fine sea salt
- 1 medium russet potato, about 6½ ounces
- 4 cups water
- 1½ teaspoons granulated sugar
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 5 cups lightly packed, chopped radish tops (from three bunches)
- 5 or 6 radishes, trimmed and cut into match sticks

1. In a heavy soup pot, melt the butter over medium-low heat and swirl to coat the pot bottom. Add the leek, onion, carrot, and salt and stir briefly. Cover and cook, stirring once or twice, until the vegetables are very soft but not brown, about 20 minutes.
2. Uncover, add the potato, water, sugar, and pepper; increase the heat to medium-high, and bring to a simmer. Adjust the heat to maintain a simmer; re-cover and cook, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are tender when pierced with a fork and soft enough to puree, about 35 minutes.
3. Add the radish tops and stir until the greens are wilted, about one minute. Remove from heat and let the soup cool for about 10 minutes.
4. Working in batches, process the soup to a smooth puree in a blender or food processor. At this point, the soup can be cooled, covered, and refrigerated for up to two days.
5. Return the pureed soup to the pot and place over medium-low heat. If the soup is too thick, add a little water to achieve a creamy consistency. Heat until steaming hot. Ladle soup into warmed bowls. Place a little clump of matchstick-cut radishes in the center.

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

Let's  
**COOK!**



# Asymmetric Balance in Creative Design

## Pilar Medellín de Miñarro

If you belong to a garden club affiliated with NGC and have participated in flower shows, surely you have doubts about how to create a good floral design or, even more so, how judges evaluate a floral design.

Like all aesthetic arts, NGC floral design follows *design principles*. These basic rules govern all art forms, so it is vital to understand them. At first glance, it seems like a tedious academic exercise. However, creativity and continuous practice are most important for those just getting started and seeking to improve in design or the most experienced who have yet to study the principles. Understanding these principles is essential. Let us look at the first of them.

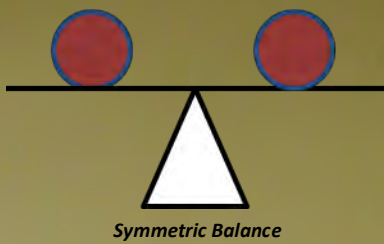
**Balance** is the first principle in evidence and refers to visual, not exactly real, balance and stability. The idea of equilibrium does not imply immobility or rigidity. One can appreciate it in two ways: *symmetrical or formal balance*, which is associated with *traditional design*, and *asymmetrical or informal balance*, which is of the utmost importance in *creative design*. Asymmetrical balance imprints change and surprise. It creates interest and activates the eye within the composition.

To evaluate this, we always draw imaginary lines or axes (vertical and horizontal) that divide the total space without forgetting the depth. Because asymmetric balance is achieved by integrating various design elements, *plastic organization* has to be offset to achieve *dynamic balance* while retaining a sense of equilibrium. It is considered alive and more attractive, with different artistic elements on each side.

In other words, both sides have a "visual weight" that complements each other to equalize their interest. As a designer or spectator, when you are in front of a design, see if it has a well-achieved balance. You can start right now with the accompanying images, which you can practice and give your opinion on. Remember that appreciation and what each observer thinks in art may be different, individual, and valid!

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Pilar Medellín de Miñarro, is a TNG international feature writer and NGC Instructor. She lives in Mexico. **Click to view more images of [Asymmetric Balance Designs](#).**



# Balance Asimétrico en el Diseño Creativo

## Pilar Medellín de Miñarro

Si perteneces a un Club de Jardinería afiliado a NGC y has participado en Exposiciones de Flores, seguramente, tienes dudas sobre cómo elaborar un buen diseño floral, o todavía más, como es juzgado un *Diseño Floral*.

Como todas las artes estéticas, el diseño en NGC se basa en los Principios de Diseño, que son las normas básicas que rigen todas las formas de arte, por eso es tan importante entenderlos. Primera vista, es un ejercicio académico tedioso, pero para quienes están iniciando y buscan mejorar en diseño, y los más experimentados, que no los han estudiado, la creatividad y la práctica continua son muy importantes, pero comprender estos principios, es indispensable. Veamos el primero de ellos.

El **Balance** es el primer principio en evidencia y se refiere al equilibrio y estabilidad visual, no precisamente real. La idea de equilibrio no implica inmovilidad o rigidez. Esto se aprecia de dos formas: el *Balance Simétrico* o formal identificado con el *Diseño Tradicional*; y el *Balance Asimétrico* o informal de gran importancia en el *Diseño Creativo*, porque éste imprime cambios, sorprende, crea interés y activa el ojo dentro de la composición.

Para evaluarlo tracemos siempre una línea o eje imaginario, vertical y horizontal, que divida el espacio total, sin olvidar la profundidad. Debido a que el equilibrio asimétrico se logra integrando una variedad de elementos de diseño, la *Organización Plástica* tiene que estar compensada para lograr un *Balance Dinámico*, conservar un sentido de equilibrio, con diferentes elementos artísticos en cada lado, se considera más vivo y atractivo.

En otras palabras, ambos lados tienen un «peso visual» que se complementa entre sí para igualar su interés. Como diseñador o como espectador, siempre que estés frente a un diseño, busca si tiene un *Balance* bien logrado. Puedes hacer una prueba ahora mismo, incluyo para ello algunos ejemplos con los que puedes practicar y dar tu opinión. ¡Y recuerda esto, en arte la apreciación y lo que opina cada observador puede ser diferente, individual, pero válido!

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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 Balance Asimétrico en el Diseño Creativo.](#)



## Women Helping Women Maybette Waldron, Jacque O'Brien, Mary Lou McGuire

When the food pantry at Mercy Learning Center, a non-profit devoted to helping women learn English and advance their education, was running low on supplies, the women of Greens Farms Garden Club (CT) stepped in to help. They collected all the usual long-shelf items food pantries usually stock - pasta, canned soup, tuna packets, jars of peanut butter. The members were generous. When club volunteers delivered the donations, they noticed there was no fresh food in sight. It was winter, and they recognized storing much produce without refrigeration would be complex. But what about during the summer growing season? Could club members bring extra vegetables from their gardens? Or maybe create new gardens devoted to raising food specifically for women like those at Mercy and their families?

From this encounter, *Growing for Good (GFG)* was born. In the summer of 2021, Greens Farms Garden Club obtained permission to grow vegetables at two sites near Bridgeport, Connecticut, the location of Mercy Learning Center. It was a trial program, and not everything went smoothly. One site was far from where most members lived and lacked reliable deer fencing. Another site was tiny and only accessible at certain times of the week. Despite the challenges, the club members donated 745 bags of garden-fresh produce for the first summer. Twenty-eight individual gardeners worked together to make the harvest possible. *Growing for Good* was on its way.

Heartened by their initial success, the gardeners were motivated to do even more. A grant from the National

Garden Club's PLANT AMERICA program allowed them to purchase seeds and other supplies to grow their organic seedlings over the winter months. In spring, a new site became available to the group when John and Melissa Ceriale, owners of Prospect Gardens in Westport, Connecticut, offered the team an additional plot of land. This venue showed great promise. It received full sun, had easy access to water, and, most importantly, the enthusiastic and unwavering support of the Ceriales, who welcomed the club's "farmers" with open arms. Now, club members could grow crops in rotation and attract even more volunteers. In turn, the quantity of fresh produce increased, resulting in a total harvest of almost 1600 pounds, all donated to needy families.

By last summer, the *GFG* group decided to consolidate its efforts to their two most productive sites at Prospect Gardens and Wakeman Town Farms. Additional grants from Ames Tools, Espoma Company, and Coast of Maine helped the group grow their farming game again and plant an even wider variety of crops. As every grower knows, however, all the garden dreams in the world are subject to the whims of nature. The summer of 2023 was the third wettest one on record for Connecticut. Despite that challenge, the team still managed to grow and donate over 800 pounds of fresh food, harvested from crops tended through days and days of rain.

Prospect Gardens is a stunning collection of professionally designed gardens over nine acres. It has been a highlight of the Garden Conservancy's Open Days for years. It turned out to be an ideal location for the club's expanding vegetable plots as well. New community partners have joined the effort, inspired by the passion of the gardeners and the

*(Continued on page 32)*



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

Neal Sanders' 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. Not all of them are about garden club sleuths, though. His books also tackle subjects such as an executive who pilfer millions from his revered non-profit (and gets justice from six women), and a Pan Am flight attendant who, in 1967, gets caught up a Cold War spy caper.

You can [order his books in print and Kindle formats on Amazon](#). Or, you can go to [www.TheHardingtonPress.com](http://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](http://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](mailto:Neal02052@Gmail.com).



Jacquie & Maybette Grow for Good • Maybette Waldron  
The National Gardener/Spring 2024

gratitude of the women at Mercy Learning Center. Members of Mercy's Board even visited the site and pitched right in! Local nursery owners Lee Ganim and Sal Gilbertie provided free expert advice, supplies, and moral support. The success of *GFG's* mission attracted new members to Greens Farms Garden Club.

*Growing for Good*, which began as a project to provide fresh, healthy food to those who might not otherwise have access to it, turned out to have a greater reach than any of its founders would have imagined. The garden sites became outdoor classrooms to learn about growing vegetables (zucchini stem surgery, anyone?), gathering spots where conversation with friends made garden tasks fly by, and places where community partners worked together to make a difference.

At times, *Growing for Good* was hard work. The weather was often frustrating. Some crops were a total bust. That is just farming! However, all those who took part in the program agree that it is a meaningful endeavor that will continue. The enormous smiles and "Thank You!" from the women at Mercy Learning Center make every minute in the soil worthwhile.

Maybette Waldron is the Past Chair of *Growing for Good* and President of Greens Farms Garden Club, Jacque O'Brien is the current Chair of *Growing for Good*, and Mary Lou McGuire is a Founder of *Growing for Good* and Past President of Greens Farms Garden Club. These women garden in Connecticut.





Low Profile Design by Dawn Mozgawa • Gerianne Holzman

# Let's Plan a Flower Show!

## Judy Binns

Your garden club members decide to have a flower show. So, what happens next? If your club has not had a flower show in years, having a flower show may seem like just too much work. But with a few basic tips and a simple schedule, a successful and educational flower show can be a reality.

A Small-Standard Flower Show may be the answer - it requires just two divisions, Horticulture and Design. The Horticulture Division requires at least five classes with at least twenty horticulture exhibits for a Small-Standard Flower Show. The Design Division requires at least **three** classes with four exhibits per class, totaling at least **twelve** exhibits but no more than nineteen exhibits. This size show fits smaller venues and is workable for even small garden clubs.

Here is a simple checklist for a Small-Standard Flower Show:

1. Select a date and location for the show.
2. Decide on a theme for the show.
3. Appoint a General Chair and/or Co-Chair.
4. Have a list of members who are willing to serve as other chairs.
5. Determine any special staging required.
6. Write the show schedule. (A Small-Standard Flower Show Schedule template is available on the [NGC Flower Show](#) page - just fill in the blanks.)
7. Obtain entry cards and show ribbons or stickers.
8. Invite NGC Accredited Judges to judge the show.
9. Encourage club members to enter Horticulture and Design.
10. Invite your club members, neighbors, and friends to attend.
11. Open the show, have fun, and enjoy!

The [Handbook for Flower Shows, 2017 edition](#), as revised, gives all the details for a Small-Standard Flower Show. If this is your first show in a while, keep it simple and enjoy the process. Ask a local or student judge for help if you have questions. They may be willing to serve as a mentor or sponsoring chair of your show. As your club members gain experience in sponsoring and entering a flower show, you may want to add more design types, expand the number of horticulture classes, or even add one of the other divisions to your next show. Remember, the Flower Show School (FSS) Committee and the FSS instructors are available to answer any questions regarding flower shows, such as writing the schedule, requirements for awards, ideas for staging, and more. So, let's plan a flower show!

[Judy Binns](#), of Virginia, is the NGC Flower Show Schools Chair. Contact Judy with any Flower Show questions.

## Design: Creative or Traditional? Frances Thrash

Most of us grew up with Traditional Designs - basic triangles, Hogarth curves, crescents, and the much-loved mass. Usually, these contained many garden flowers and plenty of greenery emerging from a single opening in a curvy container, e.g., an urn. The center was the focal point and was at the lip (edge) of the container. Designers created arrangements based on geometric shapes or patterns - triangles, circles, ovals. They used flowers in a naturalistic manner or simply as they grew. Space was within the design. Most of these designs used the flowers we could find in our gardens. Florist flowers were either unavailable or too expensive for our garden club work.

But life has changed, and flowers have become more accessible to obtain. Even though they are often still expensive, we manage to purchase much of what we use in our designs. As we travel the world, we learn about tropical flowers and include them in our designs. We find them sometime even in simple grocery store bunches! Of course, we still use our much-loved garden flowers but rely more on things we can purchase. Not only do we use flowers, but we now use lots of manufactured items, such as metal sculptures, acrylic ribbons, and midline or Mitsumata sticks. We do not use floral foam as much or not at all. Instead, we rely on branches put inside or over the top of containers or other methods of stabilizing materials, including many decorative wires.

Creative designs are different from traditional designs in many ways. The main difference is that they are usually bold and colorful, emphasizing a few flowers and fewer varieties in each design. Designers incorporate space into the design. Rather than using everything we can find in our garden, we limit the numbers and types to just a few precious flowers. We no longer need a lot of greenery or filler flowers, as neither is required. These designs also often rely on containers with multiple openings, cylinders, or even no container at all with a needlepoint or kenzan.



Love is in the Air • Frances Thrash

We have gotten bold with our treatment of flowers, bending them into all sorts of shapes, weaving them together, stripping their petals off, and rolling or twisting leaves - abstracting plant materials. We even turn materials upside down and use them without any water source. One type of new design, the "Exploration – Freedom of Style" design in the Botanical Arts Design Section, allows the freedom of painting/spraying/glittering FRESH plant materials! Who would have dreamed? This design allows us to do whatever we wish with fresh plant material! Designs have no limits. But be careful; this is the ONLY design type that allows all this treatment of fresh plant material. Many of the designs in our current *Handbook* are creative and should reflect these bold and colorful ideas with the abstraction of plant materials.

I created the design in the image with a metal sculpture, an Oasis heart form, a kenzan, and a few flowers. The carnations were first added to the heart form, then tied to the grid on the metal sculpture with a chenille stem. I inserted the anthuriums into a kenzan at the base and rolled aspidistra leaves to complete the exhibit. This arrangement was titled "Love is in the Air." Whereas a typical traditional design might take half an hour to a full hour to assemble, this design was done in twenty minutes. Constructing the pave' heart took up most of the time.

Vendors often sell metal sculptures, ceramic containers with multiple openings, and needlepoints or kenzans at district, state, regional, or national meetings. Changing your thinking about design is challenging, but it is worth investigating. Challenge yourself - give it a try!

[Frances Thrash](#) of Virginia is the NGC Floral Design Chair. She is a Flower Show School Instructor.



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Garden Rows • Shelma1

# Plan Your Garden to Feed America

## Suzanne Bushnell

With spring planting season right around the corner, it is time to consider what you will grow this year. As you dream about those fresh tomatoes you will be picking this summer, how about planning to add an extra row or two in your garden to help feed the less fortunate in your community?

We now have ten months of member donations flowing into our local food banks, soup kitchens, and other organizations across the United States that help to feed those who are hungry. I am happy to pass on the fact that 23 states have taken up the challenge to participate in the [PLANT AMERICA, Feed America](#) President's project. With 125 donation forms submitted through the [NGC](#) website by the third week in February, members contributed almost **13 tons of food or 25,463 pounds**. Donations include a variety of vegetables, fruits, herbs, and some non-perishable food and other items during the winter months. For those reporting on the value of their contributions, not necessarily how much a food donation weighed, the total is **\$30,182.87**. For those estimating the total number of servings their contribution would provide, it is **7,645**. We are DEFINITELY making a difference in our communities!

Thank you to all who took the time to write me a note on your donation form about what you are doing to participate in this worthy project. Many clubs think "outside the box" to raise public awareness about the [PLANT AMERICA, Feed America](#) project. Some are partnering with other local organizations to provide food; some are doing a special food drive or a fundraiser to help buy fresh food; and some are focusing on a specific group (such as infants) to provide nourishment and other needed items. While the primary focus of the [PLANT AMERICA, Feed America](#) project is to provide freshly grown food from our gardens and community gardens, many of you have taken the initiative to go above and beyond. I am humbled by what many of you are doing to help the less fortunate in our communities. Thank you, and keep those donation forms coming!

[Suzanne Bushnell](#), the [NGC PLANT AMERICA, Feed America](#) President's Project Chair, gardens in Maine.

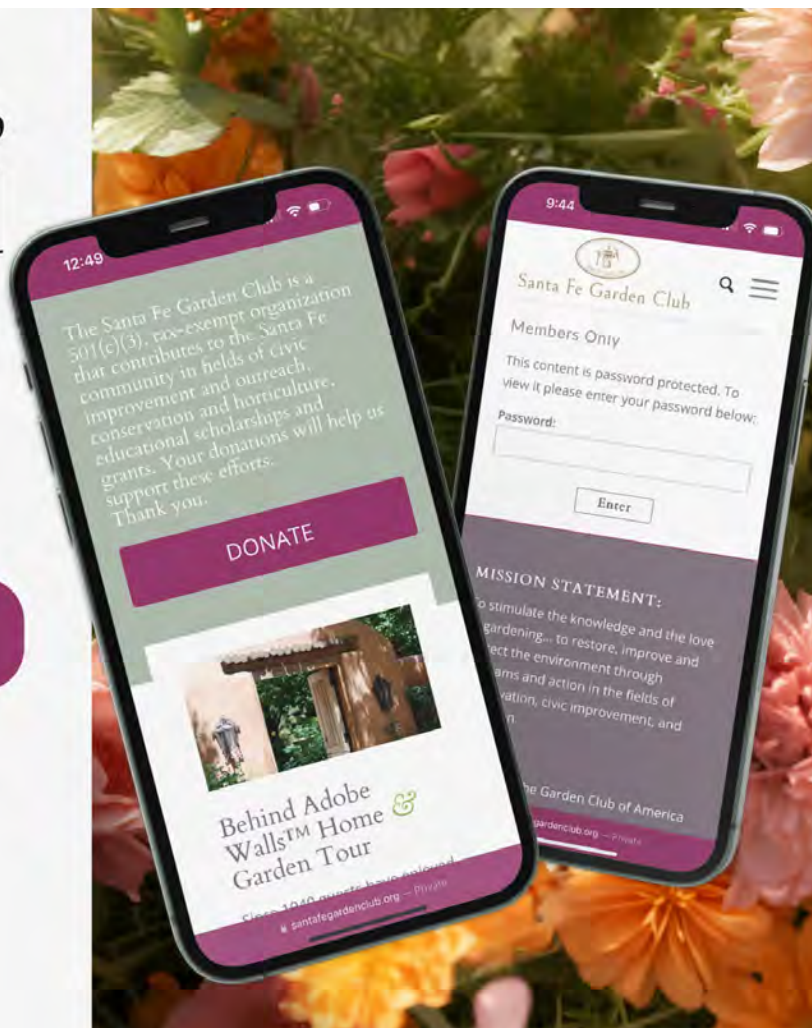
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# Native Plant Revolution

Edward Lagucki



Rocky Mountain Columbine • AmberMae

Watching ash trees die all around me while beech leaves wither away and buckthorn chokes out the woods that I grew up playing in, I became obsessed with saving my local ecosystem. After college, I pursued the green industry because of this and have worked in many sectors throughout my budding career. From running landscaping crews, managing a garden center, [publishing insect research](#), and running invasive species eradication projects, I have seen the good and the bad. “Big Horticulture” in America often contradicts environmental conservation and ecological preservation goals. Walk into most garden centers nowadays. There is a wonderful display of annuals, perennials, trees, and shrubs, but most of what is on the sales floor is non-native or invasive! Drive by a housing development and try to count the number of native species; you will likely count zero if you do not count the name of the development memorializing the nature it replaced.

The horticulture industry has grown with the false notion that humans are separate from nature. Since the dawn of commercial agriculture, humans have been conditioned to think that unless a plant is a cash crop or offers visual appeal, it is a weed or nuisance plant. [Historic shopping habits have reflected this](#). Consumers buy “[pretty, pest-free, and easy](#)” plants instead of ecologically important ones. A great example of a low ecological value plant that most home gardeners adore is the Butterfly Bush - [Buddleja davidii](#). This perennial is native to central China, only offering a food source from nectar to a few species of adult butterflies and moths. The plant leaves [support zero larval species](#) because they [do not provide the nutrients](#) our local populations feed on. “Why feed the adults but not the kids?”

There is a [major nutrition gap](#) for insects in our landscapes; therefore, native species are so critical to the future of gardening. Most native species support tens of larval species, if not hundreds. The goldenrod genus *Solidago* supports over 100 native insect species! Most native plants that are for sale at garden centers are cultivars. Cultivars of native species

have altered flower colors and shapes that may be more attractive to you but are [far less attractive to pollinators](#). Pollinators desire [wild-type native species](#) because they are most familiar with the flower. Not only do we lack a supply of wild-type native species, but vendors have been all-in on [cultivars and invasive species that have been marketed for decades](#) as go-to landscaping plants.

Today, most invasive plant species we fight to control were introduced by exotic plant sales and the shipping of exotic woody plant material from overseas. It is a pattern that has occurred [repeatedly](#) in America, but little has been done to stop it. Vendors and global trade policymakers have not been held accountable. In many cases, landowners must deal with issues caused by invasive plants. The Callery Pear, [Pyrus calleryana](#), is the most recent invasive plant to gain national headlines for being outlawed for sale in most states. The irreparable damage is already here. The species quickly outcompeted native species along wood lines across America.

It is time to revolutionize our relationship with horticulture and understand that humans are a part of nature, not separate from it. Humans’ substantial negative impact on the environment proves we are a part of nature. It can sometimes be frustrating, but the native plant revolution has germinated and is rapidly growing. Many small businesses are popping up across the nation to fill this void! From the sale of native seeds and plants to emerging educators preaching the importance of locally sourced native plants, the future is bright. As younger generations continue seeing the suffering cast on our ecosystems by these issues, [they are more inspired to be a part of the change to save our natural heritage!](#) There are many [resources](#) for finding native plants that continue to accelerate our revolution to a happier, healthier plant community.

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Edward Lagucki is the director of grounds at a historical English garden estate in Ohio, Lantern Court. He is an ISA-certified arborist. This article reflects on his roles in horticulture and industry trends.



# Growing a Community Through Gardening

Teresa Speight

Fiesta Place Community Garden • Teresa Speight

Now that we have warm weather, conversations about community gardens are being considered in our communities. There are many diverse types of community gardens of all sizes. Choosing how you want one to fit your area is essential. Some people want a well-structured organization, local municipalities run others, and many are solely volunteer-run. No matter how it evolves, there are a few pointers to help ensure success.

1. Create a conversation with interested residents. Discuss and record ideas that encourage connection via outdoor activities. Consider activities that are multigenerational, inclusive of disabilities, and relevant to the demographics of a multicultural community.
2. Identify spaces throughout the community for engaging activities. Whenever possible, these spaces should be walkable, wheelchair accessible, and with handrails when necessary. Gardens should contain notable signage, be sited in well-lit areas, and include safety security features. Activate unused or underused spaces throughout the community. Including multiple spaces within the community encourages residents to gather and participate.
3. Develop a plan of small, manageable steps. Decide what is most important and create sub-committees. Sub-committees can be assigned a specific area of interest to dig deeply to discover what would be required to make each component a reality. Commit to consistent meetings, enabling the project to continue moving towards becoming a reality.
4. Create a publicity campaign to educate and inform other community members to support projects in the master plan. Listen to the responses - positive and negative. Include schools, social groups, and other volunteer entities who might play a role in the garden's success.
5. Find relevant partners and stakeholders who might financially support projects of all sizes with grants, loans, or human capital. These partners can also encourage interest from other business owners, banks, or corporations.
6. Inform local and federal government entities about all projects they may recommend for available funding. Consider partnering with an extension office, garden clubs, Master Gardeners, fraternities, sororities, and more to celebrate each step along the way. Often, these organizations have a broad reach, casting the publicity net everywhere.
7. Realize that projects that bring a community together do not grow overnight. Allow time for the community to grow with the garden. Creating a phased installation allows ongoing interest instead of a single activity.

Following these tips is essential for starting or reinvigorating a community garden. Why not start one today?

[Teri Speight](#) is an author, avid gardener, freelance writer, and Fiesta Place Community Garden Co-chair in District Heights, MD. She is the NGC Urban Gardening and Container Gardening Chairs.



## NATIONAL GARDEN CLUBS' ANNUAL REPORT

View the National Garden Clubs first ever [Annual Report](#). It is a valuable source of information and statistics. Thanks to the NGC Staff for their hard work on this project.



## BILINGUAL BYLINES

*The National Gardener* staff welcomes the new and returning members to our team who will share their knowledge in English and Spanish.

- ✦ Pampa Risso Patrón - International Editor
- ✦ Pilar Medellin - Floral Design
- ✦ Esther Rodríguez - Horticulture
- ✦ Adriana Oviedo - Horticulture/Landscape Design
- ✦ Ana María Gastaldi - Feature Articles



## BYLAWS 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*. Members will vote on the changes at the 2024 Annual Meeting during the NGC Convention in Westminster, Colorado.



## 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.



Garden Time • Piccolotta

## President Brenda's Travels

- ❖ April 10: Florida Federation of GC, Jacksonville, FL
- ❖ April 16: GC of Georgia, Atlanta, GA
- ❖ April 22: Arkansas Federation of GC, Little Rock, AR
- ❖ April 24: South Central Region, Little Rock, AR
- ❖ June 2: NGC Convention, Westminster, CO
- ❖ June 21: Wyoming Federation of GC, Riverton, WY
- ❖ June 28: Montana Federation of GC, Malta, MT

From President Brenda, "I am appreciative of all of the beautiful gifts given to me during my visits to states and regions. I really do not expect gifts during my visits. But, if you feel you need to show your appreciation, I would actually prefer a donation either to the Path of Success or the Plant America Community Grant Fund to be made in my name in lieu of gifts. Thanks for understanding."

## 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

- ❖ April - September 2024 - : [Environmental Schools](#)\*
- ❖ April - July 2024: [Flower Show Schools](#)\*
- ❖ April - September 2024: [Gardening School](#)\*
- ❖ April - August 2024: [Landscape Design School](#)\*
- ❖ April - June 2024: [Multiple Refreshers](#)
- ❖ May - October 2024: [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.



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







Hawaii Island • Gerianne Holzman

*Rest is not the absence of activity but the presence of peace.*

Jo Saxton

## Sitting on the Porch

Gerianne Holzman, Editor

Sitting on the porch, I think about why I garden and how much work it can be. Is it time to get rid of more grass? Do we have the time and energy to move more rocks for a new bed? During this busy time of spring planning and planting, it is essential to take time to rest and replenish. We get so caught up in “needing” to get the seeds planted, the seedlings into the soil, and the containers potted up that we forget to stop and soak in the sense of nature we are enhancing. Yes, as gardeners, we enhance our natural environment. Left alone, for good or bad, the “wilds” would take over our gardens – ornamental and food. We plant fruits, vegetables, flowers, and other ornamentals to beautify and nourish our immediate space or communities. Nature can do this on her own, yet we help her along. Yet, how often do we take the time to stop and just let it all soak in?

When we are down on our knees and contemplating how hard it may be to get back up, perhaps we should stop and listen to the wildlife around us. It might be time to take a break, have a beverage, and listen to the wind as it makes the fresh leaves rustle. As gardeners, we always say, “We do not have enough time in our day during spring.” Remember, those seeds will grow just as well if we do not plant them until tomorrow, but we might not see that new family of robins building their nest on another day.

Why do we garden? Because we want to create something unique and beautiful. Let us remember to take the time and enjoy what we make. Our gardens should be a place of respite. Take a few moments to relax, replenish, and stop. The weeds will be there tomorrow, and we can begin again.

***Rest is not idle, not wasteful. Sometimes rest is the most productive thing you can do for your body and soul.***

Erica Layne

*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.*

# Plant America Month



April 2024

National Garden Clubs, Inc.

