



# The Germinator



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear GOGY Members,

I am honored to step into the role of President and continue the wonderful traditions that make our club so special. Over the years together, we have grown not only beautiful gardens but also lasting friendships. I look forward to working with the Board and our members this year to build on that foundation.

As we move into this new season, I invite each of you to bring your creativity, curiosity, and passion to our projects and meetings. My vision is to celebrate the joy of gardening while expanding opportunities for learning, sharing, and connecting with one another and our community. I believe our collective efforts will keep our club strong and flourishing!!

Speaking of opportunities to learn and celebrate the joys of gardening – registration is now open for our upcoming Winter Seminar on Saturday, February 21st. This is GOGY's second year collaborating with the Friends of Fellows to offer a dynamic group of experts presenting on a variety of new and relevant topics we hope our members and other guests will find interesting and useful. I look forward to seeing you at this very special event and at our meetings throughout the year!!

Pat



**We're Looking for a few Raffle Baskets!  
It's Winter Seminar Time  
which means we need your help creating the  
raffle baskets that support our  
Scholarship Program!  
Contact Pat Murphy to find out  
how you can help!**

## Meetings Schedule

Tuesday, January 6<sup>th</sup>

Austintown Township Park

Stacy Pavillion

**Board Meeting 5:30pm**

*All Members Welcome*

**Membership Meeting 7pm**

*Speaker:*

**MacKenzie Kelso**

**GOGY Scholarship Recipient**

*Guests Welcome*

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## CLUB NEWS

### GOGY Holiday Tree

A Christmas tradition had been established some years ago by Fellows' Riverside Gardens with the annual *Celebration of Trees*, and the Gardeners of Greater Youngstown has participated from the beginning. Members gathered in late November to decorate our entry with dried flowers and other gifts from nature.



L-R Helene Viano, Dan Chambers, Suzanne Murphy, Bruce Brungard, Mike Banks & Tom Arens.

### Germinator Under New Management

Clare Neff will take over as editor of our newsletter with this issue. It has been an honor and pleasure to have informed our members of club activities and written gardening articles while adding thoughtful and humorous content for over twenty years. I thank you for the opportunity.

I hope members support Clare with timely club activity information, supply insight on content and contribute articles from time to time. She would probably welcome some help including members supplying photos of activities and general interest offering an article now and then.

Thank you.

*Dave Campana*



### Winter Seminar 2026

This year's seminar will be Saturday, February 21st at the Byantine Center at the Grove and, once again, we are collaborating with Friends of Fellows Riverside Gardens. This year's topics offer a wide range of information for gardeners. The day begins with registration at 8:30am. As attendees head to the event room for the Continental breakfast, they will pass vendor tables - new to this year's event - with a variety of gardening related items for sale. Once inside the room, a tempting array of raffle baskets will be on display. There will be several opportunities throughout the day to purchase raffle tickets, winners will be announced at the end of the day.

Our first speaker is Mike Madar, Mike and Sandy Madar established the 303 Mushroom Company in 2023 with the intention of sustainably cultivating delicious gourmet mushrooms for the greater Northeast Ohio region. Mike details how the mushrooms are grown indoors under carefully controlled conditions on their farm in Streetsboro, Ohio.

After a short break, Lee Beers steps to the podium for a presentation on a very important topic: Integrated Pest Management. Lee is the Assistant Professor, Extension Educator, Agriculture and Natural Resources for Trumbull County. He has been serving Trumbull County since 2015 and works to help residents improve their gardening, farming, and land use practices.

Our third topic is Plant Propagation, presented by Joseph Tychonievich. Joe studied horticulture, plant breeding, and genetics at the Ohio State University and was the nursery manager at Arrowhead Alpines, a premier rock garden nursery in Fowlerville, Michigan. He is also the editor of Rock Garden Quarterly. Organic Gardening Magazine called him one of a six young horticulturalists who are helping to shape how America gardens.

Floral Design is our final topic, presented by Terry Lanker, chair of the Horticulture Division and coordinator of the Floral Design and Marketing degree program at OSU. Terry leads the operation of the university flower shop and advises the Artistes de Fleur student organization and the Anderson Student Chapter of the American Institute of Floral Designers. She is the author or co-author of several books and has written a monthly column in Florists' Review, presented floral design seminars and hands-on workshops throughout the US, and has served as a member of the Teleflora Educational Design team.

Registration is now open for this full day of gardening information. The fee is just \$45 for GOGY members, \$55 for non-members and includes breakfast pastries, juice & coffee, catered lunch and snacks, door prizes, giveaways and raffle baskets! Be sure to reserve your seat!



# The Germinator

## President's Reception - Christmas Dinner

Baby, it was cold outside, but the A La Carte Catering Hall was filled with warm spirits not entirely due to the comradeship and good cheer inside; there was also the libations brought by our members and guests. And that's how it always is when the Gardeners of Greater Youngstown gather for this annual event, an organizational gift honoring those who gave the most.



Once again, the guitar duo of Penner and Davis provided a mixture of seasonal and cheerful songs that enhanced our happy mood. This was at least the third year in a row P & D performed at the dinner, and it wouldn't be the same without them. And it wouldn't be as satisfying without the delicious entrees provided by the venue. Tom Arens provided a prayer of grace before we dug in.

Outgoing President Clare Neff was the master of ceremonies, relating how she was honored to serve the past two years, and humbled by the assistance of so many members. Although relatively new to our club, her tenure went well beyond expectations. Most notably, she saved our 2025 Winter Seminar when, at the last minute, the venue became unavailable. Clare found a new, less expensive one that will accommodate larger crowds thus increasing the event's profitability.

Awards Chairman Rodney Toth was unable to attend due to wife Kay's disabling accident. We pray for her fast, total recovery. Past President Tom Arens stepped in, presenting awards to the following members, left to right in photo in next column:

Mike Banks – Certificate of Honor for his leadership in numerous Civic Committee projects and serving as our Corresponding Secretary.

Terri Hendricks – Outstanding New Member Award for her participation at our Winter Seminar, Plant Sale and volunteering when needed.

Lisa Nicklash and Birt Underwood – Horticulture Awards for their co-chairing our Horticulture Show and their combined expertise in the gardening arts.



Bruce Brungard – John Schinker Memorial Award (new this year) honoring John's unwavering dedication to our organization. Bruce has served as president and been involved in most of our activities. He has taken over for John as Plant Sale chairman, our most important and technically involved activity.

Mike Beautis – Master Gardener Award for his mastery of horticulture.

Dave Campana – Bill Carney Green/Bronze Award for over two decades of involvement in our newsletter, *The Germinator*.

Clare Neff – (unseen due to taking this photo) - President's Award for dedicated service to that office.

Not present:

Bob Schulick – Heritage Award for, among other activities, his long chairmanship of the Scholarship Committee. (Dr. Robert Voland, our most noted scholarship recipient, was on hand with parents and esteemed members Terry and Kathy Voland.)

Dan Chambers, Heather Randall and Suzanne Murphy – Certificates of Appreciation for important and varied contributions to our organization.

Those not present will receive their awards at the next meeting they attend.



In the final act of the evening, Clare swore in our slate of 2026 officers: L-R: Past President Clare Neff; 2<sup>nd</sup> VP Birt Underwood; Treasurer Terry Voland; Recording Secretary Terri Hendricks; 1<sup>st</sup> VP Lisa Nicklash; and President Pat Murphy. Missing: Corresponding Secretary Mike Banks.

*Those not attending should make a New Years resolution to attend next year.*



# The Germinator

## Cold Winters – A Gardener's Blessing...

Our winters have been relatively mild compared to decades ago, but gardeners shouldn't complain about this year's frosty start. The cold results in a naturally pest-free, nutrient-rich, and well-rested garden in spring, and sets the stage for a robust growing season.

The freezing temps naturally control pests like gypsy moths, and reduces diseases like Stewart's corn wilt. Dormancy is a necessary rest period for plants allowing them to store energy for vigorous spring growth. Many spring-flowering bulbs need a cold period (vernalization) to bloom properly. Freeze/thaw cycles break up compacted soil, improving drainage and aeration. Snow acts as an insulator, protecting roots from extreme cold, and delivers nitrogen and other trace elements as it melts.

Plants become hardened during cold winters by moving water out of their cells making them more resilient. Many weed seeds die during cold winters or become dormant reducing spring competition. Cold periods allow for techniques like winter sowing where seeds germinate naturally in spring.

## ...and a Health Blessing as Well

Cold weather allows us to burn calories and boost metabolism, activating brown fat to stay warm. It strengthens the heart by making it work harder improving cardiovascular fitness. Inflammation is reduced and pain relieved aiding in post-exercise recovery. Brief cold exposure can stimulate the immune system. By lowering the body's core temperature, with sleep coming easier.

There are also benefits to the brain including a boost to mental clarity and alertness. Cold exposure improves mood by triggering endorphins, dopamine and norepinephrine combating seasonal blues. Cold can make us feel more alive and engaged. Skin appearance improves by increasing blood flow to the face making skin appear tighter and more radiant.



While beneficial, extreme cold poses risks, especially for those with heart conditions, as it can strain the heart by raising blood pressure. Always dress appropriately and be cautious with strenuous activity in very cold conditions – like the widow-maker snow shoveling.

## 'Tiz a New Year....Celebrate

*Be always at war with your vices, at peace with your neighbors, and let each new year find you a better person.*

Benjamin Franklin

*Year's end is neither an end nor a beginning but a going on, with all the wisdom that experience can instill in us.*

Hal Borland

*We spend January 1st walking through our lives, room by room, drawing up a list of work to be done, cracks to be patched. Maybe this year, to balance the list, we ought to walk through the rooms of our lives...not looking for flaws, but for potential.*

Ellen Goodman

*New Year's Day: Now is the accepted time to make your annual resolutions. Next week you can begin paving the way to hell with them as usual.*

Mark Twain

*May all your troubles last as long as your resolutions.*

Joey Adams



## We Got Us a Coold Winter





# The Germinator

## Mr. Toth's Opus

Rodney Toth has been one of the most influential and productive members of our organization for over 30 years. His horticulture achievements are legendary and his lead-by-example ethos has inspired many beyond our membership to emulate his example.

Rodney was born in Cleveland, attended Brookfield high school, and attended Youngstown University, graduating with a degree in Music Education and, later, a masters in Education. He taught music at Mineral Ridge High School for 29 years. He also operated a lawn service.

He caught the music bug when his father taught him to play the guitar. Rodney also played the trumpet in school but his musical career and life-long preference was vocals. In addition to teaching, he was choir director and soloist at the Central Christian Church in Hubbard for 38 years. He would often lead the caroling at Dahlia Society Christmas parties. As our club's unofficial chaplain, he led us in prayer at our annual Christmas parties and on other occasions.

Rodney and his lovely wife, Kay, have four daughters, eight grandchildren and a great grandchild. Until a few years ago, they shared a three-acre spread in Hubbard that was a showcase of horticulture achievement hosting open yard tours every Labor Day weekend and on other occasions.

An accomplished nature photographer twice winning Best in Show at The Gardeners of America's annual photography competition. He also took top honors at the annual Mill Creek Park photo competition in the *Plants – Wild and Not* category.

As our long-time club Horticulture Committee chairman, he oversaw the growth of our annual show. He was more often than not the sweepstakes winner. Rodney served as our regional president, and received our Bronze Medal and Master Gardener awards among many others. The Garden Club of Akron awarded his it Beautification Medal.

In addition to the fantastic beds gracing his Liberty property, his propagation of dahlias is what he is best known for in gardening circles. Deceased member Warren Knopp mentored Rodney's skill with the tall, glorious plants. Warren had only one arm but could



outwork two-armed men half his age. He hybridized several dahlia varieties that Rodney showed at several American Dahlia Society shows winning Best Seedling Achievement in both Washington, DC and Akron.

The Toth's annual Labor Day gathering was an event looked forward to well beyond our membership. Kay always made sure there were plenty of refreshments available. She recently suffered a serious injury and we pray for her quick and full recovery.

The 50 or so dahlias themselves made the event worth attending. The tall beauties were staked due to the weight of the flowers. To protect them from the late summer sun, they were shaded with umbrellas. Among the varieties displayed were *Magic Moments*, *Skipley Bonanza* and *Spartacus*, along with Knopp's copyrighted *White Orchid*, *Sara Marie* and *Glenbank Twinkle* possibly among them.

Airplane passengers flying over the property



couldn't help but notice the religious message on the roof of his barn, and 'TOTH' written below in flowers.

One display was 15 ft. 'potpourri pole' that featured Dutchman's pipe, blue sky vine and climbing bean plants. Then there was the gourd arbor where those walking through had to avoid bumping their heads on the heavy fruit. There was also a butterfly garden and numerous beds of colorful flowers and vegetables.

The many trees on the property provided mulch leaves for the beds, and our shoes sunk into the rich soil as we walked.

Rodney and Kay sold their property and moved to a condo a few years ago, but Rodney managed to carve out a veggie garden on the condo property. When one's blood runs green, gardening is an obsession no matter your age. Rodney Toth's opus is a lifetime dedicated to his faith, family, horticulture and good fellowship, a gift to all who know him.

*Thanks, Rodney, for all you've done for us.*



# The Germinator

## JOE ALESSI - *Mister Persistent*

Most of our newer members may be unfamiliar with the contributions Joe made to our organization because he has been inactive for some time. But we believe it is important to know how we've come to be where we are, and Joe is among those who got us there. Now in his nineties, he can look back with pride at a life dedication to family, patriotism, community service, and a broad range of skills and interests.



Why Mr. Persistent? Let's begin with his pursuit of his future wife Patty. She repeatedly rejected his attempts at dating until he entered the Army serving in Korea and Okinawa during the Korean War. Upon returning home, he again wooed her until she said 'yes' to a date. They married within a year and shared a life of love and family for over 60 years until she passed away. Patty was a warm, delightful lady who took an interest in club activities. We all loved and miss her.

Then there is his dedication to our organization. Joe joined in 1999 and served as president from 2004 through 2005. During that time, the editor of the *Germinator* passed away with no one willing to take the helm. In assuming that role, he took computer classes and sought advice from those with more expertise. He revamped the newsletter which remains pretty much what it is today.

Then there is Joe's knack for recruiting new members. Among those he lured to our club was John Schinker. In my case, I read an article about a man who grew 7ft. tall pepper plants and ended up contacting Joe to learn the variety (Lipari). At his insistence, I attended a meeting and ended up joining. When he asked for assistance with the newsletter, I volunteered and have been involved with it since. Many national TGOA newsletter awards followed. He also received many spade and trowel awards for recruiting and retaining members, and our membership grew to over 100 during his presidency and afterward.

Joe wore a number of hats during his working years. He was a meat cutter, a real estate agent and an insurance sales supervisor that required much time away from home. To remedy that situation, he took a position with Youngstown's Risk Management Dept. and became its first Safety Coordinator and wrote its first safety manual. He retired after 20 years.

Never one to let moss grow, Joe as was always busy with a wide variety of interests and skills. He was an American history buff and belonged to an organization dedicated to recreating life of the common soldier during the Revolutionary War. 'Colonel' Alessi led the Mahoning Valley Brigade during reenactments at principle war battle sites. Joe also belonged to the American Mountain Man Assn. recreating fur trapper life in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. For these reenactments, he sewed exact uniform replicas for those events. Patty dressed as Martha Washington during Youngstown's of our nation's bicentennial reenactment.

Joe was awarded our organization's Bronze Medal, the highest recognition, was a Master Gardener most interested in propagation and a certified flower show judge. He was a board member of Jubilee Gardens. He mentored kids at MetroPark's Farm. His other activities included regional newsletter editor, wood carving, painting, pottery and playing the ukulele.

Joe's greatest pride is his large, growing family.



This is a photo taken over 20 years ago of his family which has since grown to 12 grandchildren and an expected 10<sup>th</sup> great grandchild due in May.

Joe believed in leadership by example. One main function is growing the membership and encouraging member involvement in club activities. He believed an organization's newsletter should promote every aspect of its activities because 'a well-informed member is a more cooperative, active member'.

Joe still lives in his long-time home on Youngstown's southwest side although age has limited his activities. His is a selfless life well lived and an example to us all, especially by pouring one's energy into developing skills that serve the better good.



# The Germinator

**Thank you to the Gardeners of Greater Youngstown's Friends for their Civic Fund donations.  
Members are urged to give them a visit.**

**Agnew Lawn & Garden**  
7700 Market St Boardman, Ohio 44512 330.758-114 [www.agnewfarm.com](http://www.agnewfarm.com)

**Amish Market**  
6121 South Ave.  
Boardman, Ohio 44512  
330.248.7034 [www.theamish-market.net](http://www.theamish-market.net)

**Baird Brothers**  
7060 Crory Rd. Canfield, Ohio 44406 330.533.3122 [info@bairdbrothers.com](mailto:info@bairdbrothers.com)

**Blooming Crazy**  
8277 Market St.  
Youngstown, Ohio 44512 330-758-8131 [www.bloomingcrazy-flowers.com](http://www.bloomingcrazy-flowers.com)

**Bluestone Perennials**  
7211 Middle Ridge Rd.  
Madison, Ohio 44057 [www.bluestoneperennials.com](http://www.bluestoneperennials.com)

**Bread Chef**  
800 E Western Reserve Rd  
Youngstown, Ohio 44514  
330-729-9900

**Buckeye Therapeutic Massage**  
545 N. Broad Street Canfield, OH,44406 330.402.7303  
[www.buckeyetherapeuticmassage.net](http://www.buckeyetherapeuticmassage.net)

**Burton Floral & Garden**  
13020 Kinsman R., Burton, OH,44021 [www.burtonfloralandgarden.net](http://www.burtonfloralandgarden.net)

**Colonial Gardens**  
1419 Youngstown-Kingsville Rd. Vienna, Ohio 330-539-5500  
[www.colonialgardensohio.com](http://www.colonialgardensohio.com)

**Marketplace at Creekside Gardens**  
3680 N River Rd NE  
Warren, Ohio 44484 330.856.1641  
[https://www.creekside-gardens.com/](http://www.creekside-gardens.com/)

**Crouse True Value Hardware**  
1178 Market St. North  
Lima, Ohio 44452 330-549-2144 [www.truevaluetrains.com](http://www.truevaluetrains.com)

**Davidson's Restaurant**  
3636 Canfield Rd. Canfield, Ohio 44406 330-793-0030

**Delaquadri Lawn Maintenance**  
1270 Trumbull Ave.  
Girard, Ohio 44420  
330-759-3121  
[www.delaquadrilandscape.com](http://www.delaquadrilandscape.com)

**DJ's Greenhouse**  
1004 East Lake Rd.  
Transfer, Pennsylvania 16154  
724-962-1230 [www.djsgreenhouse.com](http://www.djsgreenhouse.com)

**Edward Jones Salem, John**  
Wise 2380 Southeast Blvd.  
Suite B Salem, Ohio 44460  
877.335.9521

**Elliot's Garden Center**  
1283 W. Western Reserve Rd.  
Youngstown, Ohio 44514 330-758-8889 [www.elliottsgardencenter.com](http://www.elliottsgardencenter.com)

**Frame Depot Gallery**  
1043 Youngstown Warren Rd  
Niles, Ohio 44446 330.652.7865  
[theframedepotgallery.godaddysites.com/](http://theframedepotgallery.godaddysites.com/)

**Gardening-Indoor** 9215  
Market St. North Lima, Ohio  
44452 330-758-0272 [www.gardening-indoors.com](http://www.gardening-indoors.com)

**Gilmore's Greenhouse**  
2774 Virginia Ave SE Warren, Ohio 44484 330.369.4515 [www.gilmoresgreenhouse.com](http://www.gilmoresgreenhouse.com)

**Handel's Homemade Ice Cream Niles**  
5140 Youngstown Warren Rd  
Niles, Ohio 44446 330.505.0865  
[https://handelsicecream.com/](http://handelsicecream.com/)

**Heritage Country Store** 364  
Lisbon St. Canfield, Ohio 44406  
330-533-5551 [www.heritagetcountrystore.com](http://www.heritagetcountrystore.com)

**Home Again Consignment Furniture**  
7689 South Ave. Boardman, Ohio 44512

**L & M Greenhouse**  
43091 Columbiana-Waterford Rd, Columbiana, Ohio 44408  
330.482.3209 [www.lmgreenhouse.com](http://www.lmgreenhouse.com)

**Lowe's Home Improvement** 940  
Niles Cortland Rd SE, Warren, Ohio 44484 330.609.8000

**L'Uva Bella Winery** 6597  
Center Rd Lowellville, Ohio 44436 330.536.6450 [https://luvabellala.com](http://luvabellala.com)

**Outdoor Recreation Equipment**  
5316 Market St. Boardman, Ohio 330-782-2004

**Parks Garden Center**  
9010 Youngstown-Salem Rd. Canfield, Ohio 44406 330-533-7278  
[parksgardencenter@aol.com](mailto:parksgardencenter@aol.com)

**Piccadilly Parlour**  
114 S Broad St,  
Canfield, Ohio 44406  
330.533.4749 [https://piccadillytearoom.com](http://piccadillytearoom.com)

**Petitti Garden Center**  
5509 South Ave. Boardman, Ohio 44512 330-788-0733 [www.petittigardencenter.com](http://www.petittigardencenter.com)

**Dennis Toth**

**Tractor Supply**  
6225 Mahoning Ave.  
Austintown, Ohio 44515  
330-792-8235

**Southside Community Garden**  
Lois Martin-Uscianowski  
Member 330.727.8340

**Village Ace Hardware**  
10395 Main St, New Middletown, Ohio 44443  
330.542.2802

**Village Quilts** 17 W.  
Main Street Canfield, Ohio 44406 330-533-0545 [www.villagequiltscanfield.com](http://villagequiltscanfield.com)

**Whitehouse Fruit Farms**  
9249 Youngstown-Salem Rd. Canfield, Ohio 44406 330-533-4161 [www.whitehousefruitfarm.com](http://whitehousefruitfarm.com)

**Windy Knoll Greenhouse**  
3005 S Range Rd  
Columbiana, Ohio 44408 [www.windyknollgreenhouse.com](http://windyknollgreenhouse.com)

**Youngstown Cityscape**  
250 E Federal St  
Suite 432 Youngstown, Ohio 44503 330-742-4040 [https://youngstowncityscape.org](http://youngstowncityscape.org)



# The Germinator

## GOGY OFFICERS 2026

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## Calendar of Events

January 6, 2026	Board Meeting	5:30PM	Stacey Pavilion	Austintown Park
January 6, 2026	General Meeting	7:00PM	Stacey Pavilion	Austintown Park
February 3, 2026	Board Meeting	5:30PM	Stacey Pavilion	Austintown Park
February 3, 2026	General Meeting	7:00PM	Stacey Pavilion	Austintown Park
February 21, 2026	Winter Seminar 2026	8:30AM	Byzantine Center at the Grove	Shady Run Road
March 3, 2026	Board Meeting	5:30PM	Stacey Pavilion	Austintown Park
March 3, 2026	General Meeting	7:00PM	Stacey Pavilion	Austintown Park
April 7, 2026	Board Meeting	5:30PM	Stacey Pavilion	Austintown Park
April 7, 2026	General Meeting	7:00PM	Stacey Pavilion	Austintown Park
May 5, 2026	Board Meeting	5:30PM	Stacey Pavilion	Austintown Park
May 5, 2026	General Meeting	7:00PM	Stacey Pavilion	Austintown Park
May 6-9, 2026	Spring Plant Sale	10AM-6PM	MASCO Greenhouse	South Avenue

## Please Join Us

The purpose of the Gardeners of Greater Youngstown is to create a better understanding of gardening and to encourage and promote the beautification of our community. In order to meet this endeavor, several civic projects are completed each year.

Members receive a monthly newsletter, "The Germinator," which has timely gardening hints, club news and other local and regional horticultural events.

Members also become members of The Gardeners of America.

Membership is open to residents of the Mahoning Valley and surrounding communities with an interest in gardening.

*To join, contact us at: Gardeners of Greater Youngstown*



% Membership Committee P.O. Box 612

North Jackson, OH 44451

or on our website at [www.gg-yo.org](http://www.gg-yo.org)

