



MAYFLOWER

Garden Club Federation of Massachusetts Newsletter



The Mayflower is an online newsletter, full of clickable internet links that can take you to GCFM resources

The President's Message

Happy Springtime to you all!

Now that we have all thawed out, excitement is building to get back to our gardens, our Club projects and programs. We have paid our "dues" in surviving the big chill of the endless winter, and nature now beckons us to head outside and relish the new growth.

Plant sales will abound in May and followed by flower shows and garden tours into June. There are so many adventures available to us through the garden clubs in GCFM to enjoy. You can log onto the [GCFM website](#) for further information as to what is happening around our state and when.

I am looking forward to the opportunity to visit as many GCFM garden clubs as time will allow. Please consider joining our Annual Meeting in Milford on June 4th; it is a

wonderful opportunity to gather to meet old and new friends and enjoy a lively day of informative presentations. I will look forward to greeting you then!



GCFM 2026 Annual Meeting, June 4
Registration 8:00 AM
Meeting 9:00 - 3:00

Special thanks need to be extended to Kim Edwards for the time and dedication she devoted to our Federation. We all wish her the best.

I am sending you all my best wishes for achieving your expectations with your club's events and projects. If I can be of any assistance to you, please feel free to reach out to me. My job is to make your job easier!

With regards,

Susie

Susie MacPherson
 GCFM President

128 DAYS... OH MY 😊

On the first day of the year...

We celebrate with good Cheer!

On the 15th Day, It was no surprise

Seed catalogs have finally arrived

On the 30th day – Oh the two new gardening books

It's time to take a really good look

On the 45th day Valentines and hearts begin to flutter

Time to clear out all the winter clutter

The 60th Day The winds of March are blowing their gales

Get out the cold box...Plant the kale

The 70th day the seedlings are showing signs of life

Grow lights, heat mats, the no soil soil...

Is it really worth the price?

The 78th day... 'Tis time to sign up, to secure your selected place.

The pricing, the set-up, the hauling, the placing,

The Baskets, and raffles, plant purchased or donations,

Tea-cup, fairy houses and information...

Clean-up too! There's more than enough to do...

Dear Members we are in the race!

The 91st day It's April Fools... OMG did we divide the Iris,

Are the Dahlias in a warmer space?

Pickup the pace... WE ARE NOW IN THIS RACE!

100 days have passed in a flash? Where did the time go?

Have you started to repot, divide the best

of your best.. Tend them, primp them –

Get them ready for their Big Day!

It's on Saturday, the 9th of May!

Rain or Shine... Every Member will be there,

Because together WE really CARE!!!!

Thank you all for being the wonderful Members that you are....

Happy 2026 New Year!

Best, Debbie Taylor-Smith

Stoneham Garden Club Co-President

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GARDEN CLUBS AT WORK



BOXFORD

The Boxford Village Garden Club held its first Art in Bloom on March 18-20 at the Boxford Council on Aging. We had over a dozen participants that created floral impressions of local artwork in this well received event.



Melanie Cullinane

We are very grateful to all those who came to visit us from GCFM Garden Clubs in surrounding towns, and were especially delighted to have a visit from Pat Fleming, of Topsfield Fair Flower Show fame, and our own District Director, Jane Jeffers.



Eleanora Casto, the artist, and Alex Scott, the floral designer

BURLINGTON

The Burlington Garden Club kicked off the new calendar year with a lively virtual gathering that brought members together to celebrate their shared love of gardening. Participants showcased vibrant photos of their gardens, exchanged tried-and-true gardening tips, and sparked thoughtful conversations about what flourished, what struggled, and why. Along the way, members were delighted with glimpses of the wildlife that visits their garden, reminding everyone that a healthy garden nurtures far more than just plants.



February's virtual meeting transported members into the fascinating world of hummingbirds with a captivating presentation by Scott Santino of Mass Audubon. In his engaging talk, *The Magic of Hummingbirds*, Scott explored the remarkable anatomy that allows these tiny birds to hover and dart through the air, introduced the many species found across North America, and shared practical tips for attracting and feeding these dazzling visitors. By the end of the evening, members left inspired—and perhaps already planning ways to welcome hummingbirds into their own gardens.

DANVERS

While our Jr. Gardeners were waiting for spring to arrive their March project was a great learning tool for them. Bee Hotels were on the agenda. They learned that Bee Hotels offer safe nesting spaces for solitary bees, which naturally seek hollow stems or wood cavities. These small structures support pollination by giving bees shelter to rest and lay eggs.

They are made from drilled wooden blocks or bundled reeds. Placement in



Jr. Gardeners with finished Bee Hotels

sunny, dry spots encourages healthy bee activity. Bee Hotels become a valuable addition to any pollinator friendly garden, strengthening ecosystems and supporting vital native species. The girls painted them with bright colors to attract the bees and hoped they had many guests. They learned how important bees really are.

DEDHAM

The Fairbanks Garden Club remained active throughout the winter months focusing on projects that combine local service with seasonal horticultural education. In early December, club members gathered at the Endicott Community Greenhouses for their annual holiday wreath-decorating event. These festive wreaths were donated to several local institutions to help brighten the town of Dedham for the season. This spirit of community support was also central to the November meeting, where members came together to make donations to the Dedham Food Pantry.



Fairbanks Garden Club with finished wreaths

The club also featured two notable presentations held at the historic Endicott Estate and the First Church and Parish in Dedham. In November, Deborah Trickett

Clubs at Work, Cont'd



of *The Captured Garden* provided expert advice during her "Winter Wow" presentation, demonstrating how to create resilient winter containers. In February, Suzie Canale (the "Plant Dr.") offered an insightful talk on "Roots and Shoots of New England's Favorite Houseplants," providing practical tips for maintaining indoor greenery until the spring thaw. All garden club programs are open to the public.

As we transition toward spring, our focus returns to the gardens at the Fairbanks House. Built c. 1637, the Fairbanks House is the oldest timber-frame house in North America. Our club is proud to oversee the preservation of its historic **colonial herb garden, perennial borders, and recently added native plant pollinator garden.**

DENNIS

During the January meeting of the Village Green Club of Dennis, Scholarships were awarded to three well deserving students.



Students are listed from left to right in the picture, Lilia Karchmar, was a Dennis Yarmouth High School student now attending Cornell University with a major in Environment and Sustainability Studies.

Fiona Liu also a Dennis Yarmouth High School graduate and is currently attending University of Massachusetts Amherst

with a major in Biology. Matt Desruisseaux was a graduate of St John Paul II High School now attending University of Maine studying Wildlife Ecology as a major and Criminal Justice as a minor

On February 3rd, many members of the Village Garden Club of Dennis gathered for our second floral design workshop, led by the talented floral designer and presenter, Nancy Costa. Friendship Hall was filled with coffee, sweet treats, lively conversation, and flowers in every direction as participants learned the art of creating elegant crescent line design arrangements. Creativity bloomed, and each design was as unique as its maker! The stunning results were proudly displayed and admired at our general mem-



Nancy Costa teaching at Friendship Hall

bership meeting the following morning — proof that inspiration and a little guidance can produce beautiful results.

FITCHBURG

The Fifteen Annual Laurelwood Scholarship tea was held on January 31st from 11:30 to 2 pm at the Fitchburg Art museum. Each of the nine elegantly decorated tablescape represented a different country. Our members came out in full force to help decorate tables, and prepare delicious scones, savories, and desserts. Behind the scenes, beautiful food trays were set up and served, along with strong hot tea. In the front lobby, tea cozies, scones, and fascinators were on sale. A lovely afternoon was had by all! Monies earned go towards our annual scholarship for a High school graduate continuing studies in the Biology or Agricultural field.



Laurelwood Scholarship Tea

MARBLEHEAD

The Driftwood Garden Club joined other local garden clubs in decorating the King Hooper Mansion, built in 1728 at 8 Hooper Street in Marblehead, as part of the 2025 Marblehead Christmas Walk. This year the DGC was assigned to decorate the Beth Hendricks Room. The gallery, with wood paneling and a deep brick fireplace, was warmed with natural greenery, pinecones, and touches of warm copper to complement the brick-red wall color. All greens and pinecones were sourced from local trees and shrubs in members' homes.

NAUSET

At our February meeting, Susan Nock, Garden Designer, Educator and Writer gave an informational, interactive presentation on succulent containers. She talked about succulents for outdoors in our area and created an indoor succulent design that she raffled off at the end of the presentation. It was an informational and enjoyable meeting.



Susan Nock

Rita-Garvey Art Gallery of Orleans invited NGC to create two outdoor planters and one floral centerpiece for their "Welcome Spring" Floral Imagery Art

Clubs at Work, Cont'd



Exhibition that is running through April 25th. They generously are donating 20% of their proceeds from the Art Sales to the Nauset Garden Club. They frequently support non-profits in our community. We thank them as their donation supports Mini-Grants for local schools, Scholarships and NGC Community Outreach activities.



Lisa Rowe, Cindy Doherty and Nancy Magner collaborated on the creation of this floral centerpiece as well as outdoor containers for the Rita-Garvey Art Exhibition.

NORFOLK

On February 11, 2026, the Garden Club of Norfolk and The Sohoanno Garden Club of Wrentham co-hosted a welcome guest speaker, Christie Dustman, Principal APLD, Certified Landscape Designer, MCH, Massachusetts Certified Horticulturist for a fantastic, engaging lecture and demos on Winter Pruning.



Christine Dustman

NORTHBORO

Let the tool do the work was Jack Russell's message at the Northborough Garden Club's February meeting. A family member from Russell's Garden Center in Wayland, Jack brought a wide variety of tools and explained how to choose the right one for every gardening job. Even the most experienced gardeners among us learned something new. In keeping with the Federation's red, white and blue centennial planting theme, club member Gary Phillips created this colorful flyer. He is devoted to sharing his knowledge and love of native plants. His suggestions for natives of all three colors make a handy reference guide.



READING

On December 11 members enjoyed a delicious luncheon prepared by the hospitality committee. We were then treated to a wonderful floral presentation by Bob Whitney, a floral designer from Springfield. He made 6 holiday floral arrangements which were offered as opportunity drawings at the end. Bob's presentation



Bob Whitney

was very informative and entertaining. He ended with a demonstration on how to make a perfect holiday bow. The Reading Garden Club has selected Michelle Kane to be the recipient of the Floribunda Award. Michelle has devoted 25 years to the club both publicly and behind the scenes. She has been on the Horticulture committee and worked with a team to design, plant, and maintain the



Michelle Kane

gardens at the historic Parker Tavern. At the Tavern Christmas Open House, she led the committee in creating historically accurate arrangements for display. Michelle shared her graphic arts talent

Clubs at Work, Cont'd



with the club by creating flyers and lawn signs for the plant sale, designing plant identification markers for the tavern, and designing many beautiful yearbook covers. We are pleased to honor Michelle with this award.

STONEHAM

Once again, our club donated a tree to Mass Horticultural Society's Festival of Trees. Our nature-inspired butterfly tree included handmade glass butterflies, origami butterflies and framed real butterflies and milkweed flowers that also were given out as gifts. There were 13 handmade and painted butterflies that were turned into a game of guessing. Milkweed pods were converted into gilded flowers, pinwheel flowers of maple seed pods, balls of milkweed seeds, hanging silvered wisteria seeds. We dried leaves all summer and made them into ball ornaments. Many hands and a lot of talent went into this project.



Debbie Taylor-Smith, Co-President and the Exhibit committee: Elaine Banks, Chair, Kathy Boardman and Betty Rosselli

Once again, the Stoneham Garden Club decorated Whip Hill Manor for Christmas and the town's annual Holly Trolley to the Manor and Santa Claus visit. The Stoneham Independent newspaper recognized our Club's wonderful contribution.

The Stoneham Garden Club kicked off the spring 2026 meetings with an impressive presentation by Sheilagh Crunkshank: "Winter Herbs for Health."



Sheilagh Crunkshank

Sadly, Bernadine DeLuzio, our President from 1979-1981, recently passed away. She was a very active member of the Stoneham Garden Club and held many positions in the Federation. As a constant learner, she attended many of the Federation schools, winning many blue ribbons. She went on to become a certified Floral Design Judge, judging the floral designs at the Boston Flower Show. Bernie was on the Garden Study Council, Judges Council, and the Landscape Design Coun-

cil, not to mention all the different positions that she held in the Federation over the years. She lived by a simple philosophy of "I enjoy what I am doing. I get involved. I like people." She will be missed.

TEWKSBURY

Even during the Winter our Club stays busy. Club members celebrated the Holiday season together at our December meeting with a delicious pot-luck meal and a few games of Holiday Bingo. We welcomed the New Year by conducting a Winter Seed Sowing program at our January meeting where Club member, Amelia, instructed us about how to make winter seed sowing containers from gallon water



Club members making winter seed sowing containers

jugs. We followed with 2 popular Winter Native Seed sowing programs for the community and a well-attended community seed share and swap evening that was held in collaboration with the Library to help us think about Spring. Members ex-



Karen with her fairy house creation

pressed their creativity by designing ecologically friendly garden fairy houses to be ready to place in the garden in the Spring. We completed our preparation for the growing season with a presentation by

Clubs at Work, Cont'd



Ryleigh Rivers on Winter pruning essentials. Our Garden Therapy groups helped the seniors at two assisted living facilities enjoy the winter months with seasonal floral projects.

WEST NEWBURY

The West Newbury Garden Club has been busy shoveling snow, removing ice dams and planning the celebration of our 90th Anniversary. The 90th Party planning committee has been hard at work, starting with a survey of the membership to determine the type of celebration that is most desirable. We have chosen to have a dinner at a local restaurant where we will display copies of each of our ninety yearbooks since 1936 and a continuous historical slide show. This has caused us to delve into our archives and have some wonderful walks down memory lane. We have also assembled a club cookbook as a party souvenir.



Native Pussy-willow Bush in Bloom

Lexington Field & Garden Club Celebrates 150 Years



The earliest known photograph of the Lexington Field & Garden Club, 1890's

This year, the Lexington Field and Garden Club (LFGC) celebrates its 150th anniversary. It is older than the Boston Symphony, the Lexington Historical Society, and the Garden Club Federation of Massachusetts. It had its joys and sorrow, its successes and its failures. It still is looking forward and has plans for the future.

As the nation's centennial approached in 1875, Lexington residents became concerned about the town's appearance. Although the town had a free public library, new town hall, great train service to and from Boston, and shops that met the residents' needs, the center of Lexington was a deplorable mess of railroad ties, coal bins, and piles of wood. Some called it a "slough of despond."

The savior was a group of residents who formed an association to clean up the area in front of the Depot, announcing the establishment of the Lexington Field & Garden Club in the *Lexington Minuteman* on 6/31/1876. In 1887, the Club announced that it was willing to assume care of the Common on condition that the town provide \$150/year, with the club contributing \$50/year. Under its authority,

the hay-covered Common, often filled with cows, became a beautiful park.

During WWII, members advocated for and grew Victory Gardens and sent seeds to the Britain and Russian War relief fund. Throughout the years, they also supported the Lexington Historical Society by participating in holiday celebrations at the historic houses. Club members were also known for their floral arrangements and participated in Massachusetts Horticulture and the New England Spring Garden and Flower shows.

Kathy Leva, the retiring LFGC President and Past Middlesex District Director, hopes that in the future the Garden Club will organize workshops for garden club members and the Lexington community; promote floral design, gardening, and good garden practices.

The incoming president, Nancy Trautman, is looking forward to celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Club and working with the members to carry on the Club's mission of civic beautification and the study of good gardening practices.

Learn more about LFGC history [HERE](#)

Paxton Garden Club's Amazing Endeavor - Part 1

“Because we needed a shed, we’re building a community garden instead!”



Stuff in the garage, on the porch, in the house, at other club members' homes... PMAGC club items were everywhere! Don't get us wrong, we are so thankful to have these items but

storing them is a challenge. To solve that problem, club Secretary Julie Dubuque and President, Robin Tasca, decided to propose a shed request to the membership during our Summer Business Meeting. In brainstorming shed ideas (what type and where it would go), we decided we wanted a greenhouse and wouldn't it be awesome to have raised garden beds to grow veggies and annuals for our Floral Fridays summer fundraiser?! With that the Paxton Community Garden & Learning Greenhouse concept was born! Now to get our membership on board lol.



Dedicated PMAGC members pose at the future sight of our Community Garden



PMAGC Members Enthusiastically & Unanimously approving to create a Community Garden

On July 8, 2025, during our Summer Business meeting kicking off our FY25-26 gardening year, the PMAGC Executive Board presented the concept to the membership and WOW what an easy sell! The members LOVED the idea and enthusiastically and



PMAGC Members Ethan Johnson & Chuck Putney flexing their muscles during brush removal

unanimously approved to create a Community Garden & Learning Greenhouse, open a new savings account and appropriated a portion of our June Plant Sale proceeds to get the funding started. Ten members signed up to create a subcommittee to see the project become a reality. From there, we went on a summer road show talking to several town boards & committees to get buy-in, and receiving formal approval and a plot of land from the Select Board in November.



Grateful for storage

Here we are in Spring 2026, and we are well on our way to making this project a reality so we can be growing in 2027.

Oh and what about the shed? Members completely agreed we needed one. We

ended up purchasing a simple 6x10 metal shed and assembled it the day of the tornado that hit Paxton! (Go figure lol) Thankfully it survived that and the 80 inches of snow we got this winter. Huge thanks to Paxton Police & Fire for giving us a small space behind the public safety complex.



PMAGC Shed Manager a Brown Phase Achemon Sphinx

We're Building a Community Garden! See the details on our website: <https://www.paxtongardenclub.com/about-us/join-community-garden>



GCFM 2026 ANNUAL MEETING - JUNE 4

Registration opens at 8:00 am

Meeting from 9:00 am - 3:00 pm

Preparations for the GCFM Annual meeting are well underway. Registration is now open at www.gcfm.org. You may register [Online](#) or via [Mail](#). A block of guest rooms are reserved at \$139 per night. Use this link to book your room: [DoubleTree Hotel in Milford](#). NOTE: You must book your hotel room before May 4, 2026 to receive the group rate.

There will be a floral design workshop on June 3, (time TBD) to make the table centerpieces. If you are interested in participating, please contact: Joan Marie Driscoll at joanarie@gmail.com (No "m" in email)

Donna Donnelly, NGC President, will be attending and address the membership.

Garden Club Projects

"Celebrating our Past, Inspiring our Future" is the title of the morning program at the 2026 Annual Meeting. Garden Club members love to hear about other clubs' projects. They inspire, encourage and motivate gardeners to blossom (pun intended).



Did your garden club develop, start/finish, add to a project in the last year? Are you in the midst of a project to be finished this Spring? If so, we would like to know about it. The GCFM Annual Meeting in June, will invite 6-8 garden clubs from across the state to share their project with the membership.

If chosen, you will present your project with photos in a PowerPoint presentation, and deliver a short summary. For example: planting a garden in your community, a school project, a celebration/memorial garden, a fabulous fundraiser, or something completely different. There will be a Q&A session at the end of the presentations.

For more information and submission details, please contact Lisa Murray at: lmurray17@gmail.com or call 978-302-1063.

Memorials

The GCFM Annual Meeting wishes to recognize your garden club members who passed away in the past year.

If you would like your deceased member to be memorialized, please send a photograph with name, garden club, and date of passing to:

karen.e.brockelbank@gmail.com



Awards



As always, GCFM likes to reward the membership for their hard work, and creativity. The awards committee are hard at work selecting the best of the best in numerous categories, to recognize and celebrate.

Judges Challenge



While you are all enjoying dessert, we will introduce the afternoon presentation. We are showcasing three (3) fabulous flower show judges, and their creative talent. Lisa Pattinson, Chair of Judges Council, will explain all the details, and hint at what is to come. No spoilers from me, you will have to be there to enjoy the show.

Please join us on June 4th, and support GCFM, your garden club and membership.

Apart from our super presentations, there will be plenty of vendors to peruse as well as a fabulous themed basket raffle, among other incredible items.

Linda

For general information about the 2026 Annual Meeting, please contact Linda Thomson-Clem at: lithomson1@verizon.net or call 781 789 7002.

Doris Holt, of the Chelmsford Garden Club is an Honor Award Winner for New England Camera Club Winter Competition



NEW ENGLAND CAMERA CLUB

One snowy morning Doris Holt was looking out the window and saw a Cooper Hawk on a nearby tree. It was watching the birds at the feeders on the deck. She quickly grabbed her camera with a 100-400 mm lens and was able to capture this photo of this magnificent bird.

Doris, of the Chelmsford Garden club, won in the Class B "Monochrome" category for "Coopers Hawk in Snowstorm", scoring 13 out of 15 points.

To learn more about the New England Camera Club, sign up for their newsletter by contacting Arabella Dane , arabellasd@aol.com.



BREAKING NEWS!

New England Garden Clubs Photography Group is partnering with Hunt's Photo Education to strengthen our photographic knowledge and experience!

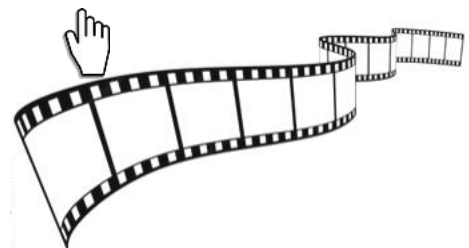
Over the coming months, Hunt's will be offering a series of online classes at discounted prices that will be beneficial to our members and to those looking to improve their photography, whether on a camera or a phone.

If you're just starting out, especially with a DSLR, mirrorless, or camera with some manual control, the Digital Photography Basics classes are a great place to start.

Hunt's

PHOTO EDUCATION

Click [HERE](#) to open New England Camera Club's latest Newsletter and find out more!





DEADLINES/REMINDERS

MAY 31 - ESPOMA GRANT PROGRAM DEADLINE

Espoma Grant Applications are accepted from October 1 through May 31. Applying for the Espoma Plant America Grant is easy. Simply click on the link to the [Espoma Grant Program Application](#), scroll down to find and then complete the form, attach a word.doc file with the project description and/or site drawing and add up to 3 'before' photos, then click 'submit.'



JUN 10 - MAYFLOWER WINTER ISSUE DEADLINE

TEXT: Please try to keep your stories 75 words or less.

PICTURES: Attach image files (usually JPG's) to your email, do not embed them in your document.

CAPTIONS: **Please provide captions for each photo** you submit (describe what is going on in the photograph).

EMAIL: Send your story to GCFMmayflower@gmail.com



JUL 1 - GCFM CIVIC & HISTORICAL GRANTS

Historic Landscape Preservation Grants are given for new or ongoing projects designed to preserve the past in the context of the present. Examples of appropriate projects include (but are not limited to):

- Restoration of landscaping at a historic site
- Creation of an authentic historical garden
- A landscape project associated with an historic property

[Application Form](#)

[Award Information](#)

[Point Scale Information](#)



Apply by mail to Jill Malcolm, 33 Bonney Drive, Holliston, MA 01746

For questions, contact Jill Malcolm: grantchair26@gmail.com



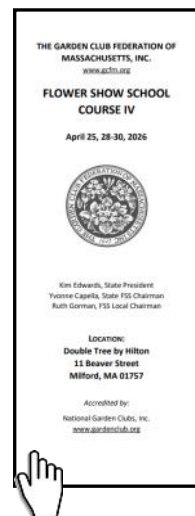
E D U C A T I O N



GCFM FLOWER SHOW SCHOOL COURSE IV - April 25, 28-30, 2026

No refunds after April 1

Jan Griffin - Flower Show Procedure, Claudia Bates - Design, and Jan Griffin - Horticulture
Download the brochure from the GCFM website or by contacting Kathy Hawes @ kmh4383@gmail.com or 781-363-8443.



FUNDAMENTALS OF FLORAL DESIGN II - JUNE 3

DEADLINE TO REGISTER - MAY 25

Email Pat Fleming fleming.3patricia@gmail.com to register





SEED STARTING

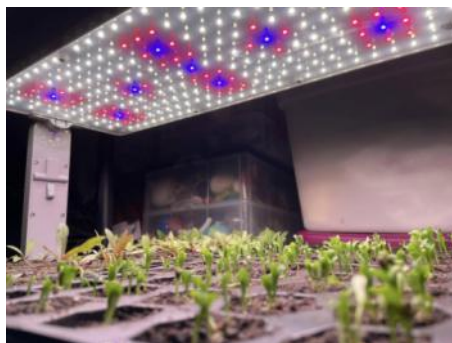
We've all been there: strolling through a garden center, spotting a beautiful plant, and wincing at the price tag. With plant prices rising each season, gardeners are searching for ways to get more garden for less. One of the simplest – and most rewarding – solutions is starting plants from seed. Many of the vibrant flowers and vegetables shared at local garden club plant sales began this way, grown with care by dedicated volunteers.

Stretch Your Gardening Dollar

Starting plants from seed is both economical and rewarding. A single packet of seeds can yield dozens of plants, giving you fresh food and beauty throughout the season. When these plants produce seeds of their own, your savings can continue into future seasons. Seed starting isn't just about money – it's about connection, patience, and watching your garden grow from the very beginning.



Using a photo album is an easy and tidy way to keep your seed packets



Using LED lights can boost seedling growth when natural sunlight is limited.

Timing Is Everything

Proper timing is key to success. Seeds started too early indoors can become root-bound and struggle to thrive. Follow the instructions on the seed packet for best results. Most plants thrive when started indoors four to six weeks before the last frost – usually mid-to-late May in our region. Some plants, like sunflowers, don't tolerate root disturbance and are best sown directly outdoors. Others, such as chamomile, lupine, and echinacea, benefit from a period of cold treatment (stratification) to break dormancy.

Containers and Soil

Gardeners have endless options for containers: traditional seed trays, recycled egg cartons, or even simple Dixie cups. Whatever you choose, ensure proper drainage holes.

Soil blocking is another option. A handheld tool compresses moistened soil into firm blocks, and seeds are planted directly into the cubes. Soil blocks encourage vigorous root development, reduce transplant shock, and allow many seedlings to fit in a small space. Always skip garden soil; use a light, sterile, well-draining seed-starting mix to give young plants the best start.



Tidy, compact, and efficient: seed blockers save space.

Seeds: Your Long-Term Savings

Seeds themselves can be a source of lasting savings. Many garden centers discount seed packets by mid-summer as the growing season winds down. Stored properly in a cool, dry place away from sunlight, most seeds remain viable for several years. Stocking up during seasonal sales is an easy way to save money while building a supply for future gardens.

Care for Healthy Seedlings

Check the germination rate on your seed packet. Low-germination seeds benefit from planting two to three per cell; high-germination seeds need only one. Seedlings can dry out quickly, so keep soil damp but never soggy. Too much moisture can cause damping-off, a fungal problem that kills seedlings. Bottom watering keeps leaves dry while gently moistening the soil.

Light is essential for strong, healthy seedlings. East- or south-facing windows provide natural light, but grow

Horticulture, Cont'd

lights work well when sunlight is limited – even a basic shop light is effective. Once seedlings develop their first true leaves – the first set after the initial sprout – they benefit from regular fertilization. Use a half- to quarter-strength balanced fertilizer every one to two weeks to nourish without burning delicate roots.



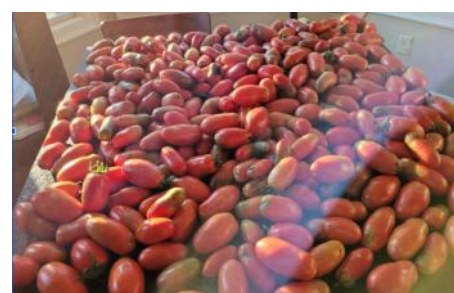
Roomy pots help roots grow strong and transplant without damage.

Hardening Off and Planting Out

Before moving seedlings outdoors permanently, they need time to adjust to the elements. Hardening off gradually acclimates plants to sunlight, temperature changes, and wind. Start in a shaded outdoor location and slowly increase exposure to direct sunlight over seven to ten days. Proper spacing is also important: consider each plant's mature size and growth habit. If plants need support, install trellises, netting, or stakes while seedlings are still small.

A Rewarding Investment

Starting plants from seed isn't just a cost-saving strategy – it's a rewarding way to connect with your garden from the very beginning. With a little planning, proper care, and patience, gardeners can grow a wide variety of vegetables, herbs, and flowers while maximizing their gardening budget. Watching tiny seedlings push through soil and transform into thriving plants – while keeping your wallet happy – is a true win-win.



Seeds sown today can become a garden bounty tomorrow.

Dustin Maclver is a Master Gardener and member of the Haverhill Garden Club who enjoys helping others discover the rewards of gardening.



A tray of thriving seedling being acclimated to outdoor conditions.

Massachusetts: Vegetable Planting Calendar

Planting vegetable seeds or transplants at the correct time is important to getting the most out of your garden. Knowing your first and last frost dates will help you start your vegetable seeds at the right time.

Massachusetts is in USDA plant hardiness zones 5-7.

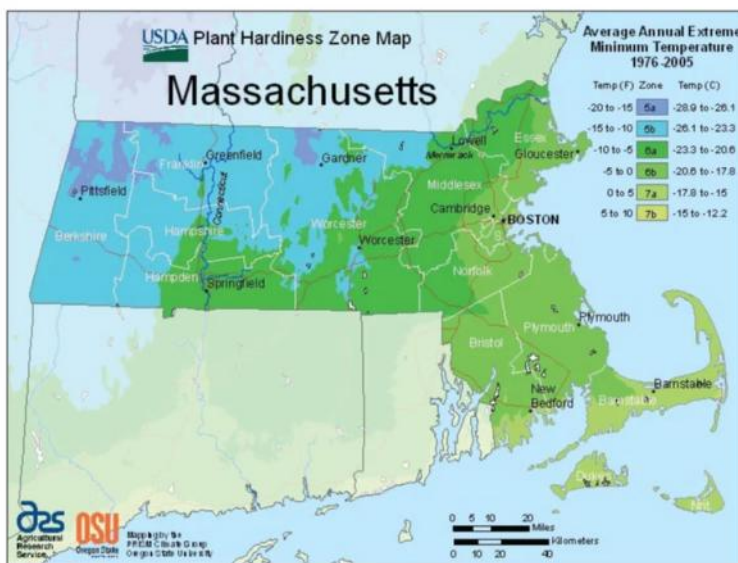
Learning Download: Growing in Massachusetts

Massachusetts Last & First Frost Dates

City	Last Frost Date	First Frost Date
Boston	5/3	10/5
Greenfield	5/26	9/16
Haverhill	5/2	10/6
Hyannis	5/26	9/25
New Bedford	4/20	10/22
Rochester	5/22	9/24
Springfield	4/29	9/29

*Based on statistics there is a 10% chance that frost will occur before or after these dates. Watch your local weather for more accurate dates.

Massachusetts on average has approximately 150 days between the last and first frost. Using the planting schedules below will help you get the most out of your garden.





ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

with Maria Bartlett

The UMass Amherst Pollinator Steward Certification Program

By Marie Giorgetti, Co-chair, Horticulture and Conservation Committee, Framingham Garden Club

The Pollinator Steward Certification Program includes six modules presented in self-paced online modules with a quiz after each module. A score of at least 70% is required before moving on to the next module. A written Habitat Analysis is the final course requirement to receive the certification.



Module 1: Pollination and Pollinators (Ecology focus) Module 1 covers the pollinator process. Anatomical components of flowers involved with pollination are described as well as the floral rewards available to pollinators. Plant-pollinator ecology and conservation is described as well as why biodiversity loss is considered a global problem. Biodiversity building blocks and degradation of pollinator systems are discussed as well as strategies to address these problems.

Module 2: Non-Bee Pollinators (Ecology focus) Module 2 describes non-bee pollinators and pollinator strategies including self-pollination and cross pollination. The evolution of flowers is described as well as flower morphology and pollinator syndromes. Extensive discussions about wasps, moths, flies, butterflies, and specific mammals are presented in relation to pollination.

Module 3, Part 1: All About Bees (Ecology focus) Module 3 describes bee families, their functional societies, types and various traits such as nesting habits, diet, size,

tongue length to floral resources, and conservation implications. Native bees in Massachusetts are described as well as a short discussion of the honey bee.

Module 4: Floral Resource Provisioning (Application focus) Module 4 includes an extensive discussion of floral resource provisioning for garden and landscape design applications. Consideration is given to floral heights, shape, color, and floral rewards as well as to combining of annuals, perennials, shrubs and trees with specific attention to bloom time and range/density of species planted.

Module 5: Nest Site Provisioning (Application focus) Module 5 explores nesting habitats for bees within a home garden in both the soil, cavities within shrubs/trees and artificial habitats including bee hotels. Nesting habitats for wasps are also described.



Module 6: Management (Application focus) Module 6 focuses on management practices using the Habitat Site Evaluation tool. This tool is used to assess vegetation and habitat, climate with hardiness zones and ecoregions, above ground conditions (light, mature plant size, microclimates), below ground conditions (soil, soil composition, and soil drainage/water table) and additional considerations (irrigation,

maintenance and overall functional use). Also discussed are challenges for pollinators functioning in urban areas and strategies to address the challenges. Lawn history is presented as well as pruning principles for small trees and shrubs. Habitat needs for pollinators are discussed again including the avoidance of pesticides. Organic pest management is also discussed.

This program was extremely rich with practical information I could apply to my own garden. For example, since 70% of native bees in Massachusetts are ground dwelling bees, and these bees cannot make it into the ground through mulch, I eliminated mulch from many of my native floral beds. By applying program information directly to my garden, I am able to improve its biodiversity.

UMass Amherst updated 5 lectures from the prior year's course and made them available to Pollinator Steward graduates this year for a small cost. This is a great way to continue to enhance knowledge in the topic areas covered by the program.

Overall, the program is an excellent resource for the home gardener to understand the role of pollinators and their needs so that the home garden can be landscaped to be a refuge for native pollinators.

[Registration for the Summer 2026](#) cohort will open from May 1 - 31. All inclusive cost is \$299.

By Marie Giorgetti
Immediate Past President
Co-chair, Horticulture and Conservation Committee
Framingham Garden Club, Inc
Certified Pollinator Steward 2025





Floral News

MEET THE ARTIST - Trần Vũ Thu-Hằng

A New Mayflower Serial Article Featuring Floral Designers
~ By Karen Brockelbank

I have seen Thu-Hằng's arrangements for the past two years in every flower show I have attended. I caught up with her a few weeks ago and the first thing we talked about was her name, and how to spell it. In Vietnamese, the last name goes first, as in 'family comes first'. Trần is her father's last name, Vũ is her mother's last name. Thu-Hằng (pronounced TWO-HON) means "the moon in mid autumn" and evokes the festival of Tết Trung Thu, an autumn holiday in Vietnam focusing on children parading their lanterns, eating sweets, and adults reciting poetry about the moon.

This February, Thu-Hằng created a [stunning arrangement](#) at the Worcester Art Museum's [Flora in Winter, 2026](#). Her inspiration was "Deep Blue," by Yinka Shonibare (1967). When describing her design, Thu-Hằng commented, "I'm an Asian interpreting an African's artwork who's



Hull Garden Club member Trần Vũ Thu-Hằng in front of her exhibit at the Worcester Art Museum. Her inspiration was *Deep Blue* by Yinka Shonibare (1967).

using material from Europe – isn't the world small? *Flora in Winter* is a global phenomenon." This is her third exhibit at the Flora in Winter.

Thu-Hằng graduated from Washington University in St. Louis as a biology major, and did DNA research at MIT, but after three years switched to teaching. Compared to research, she found greater reward in teaching the nuance of the English language to foreign post-docs.

She shared a childhood story with me that illustrated her love of flowers at a very young age. "I started stealing flowers when I was about seven. My family had two altars in the house, one for Jesus and one for

our ancestors. We always had flowers on the altars. I sometimes made my offerings with marigolds from my neighbor's yard. My father asked one day, 'Where do all these flowers come from?' I had to confess the theft and he kindly explained, 'One's offering has to be pure. Stolen materials would offend the ancestors.'"

Her floral training started in 2014 as her youngest of three headed for college. At her usual yoga class, Thu-Hằng was overheard a discussion about a floral design training program at the Museum of Fine Arts. She applied, and was accepted to the MFA Associates in Floral Design. "When I walked into the



Click [HERE](#) to learn about this arrangement



Floral News

MEET THE ARTIST - Trần Vũ Thu-Hằng

A New Mayflower Serial Article Featuring Floral Designers
(Cont'd)



Leading one of the Art in Bloom tours at the MFA

MFA basement Flower Studio, I thought I was in heaven!" Students learned about floral design and art history for a semester and gave three and a half years of service as volunteer designers for the flowers at the entrances, special events

and led Art in Bloom tours. Thu-Hằng's career as a floral designer was about to begin.

In 2016, as part of many Art in Bloom demonstration for visitors, Thu-Hằng watched one on Ikebana. In her own words, *"I didn't know I was missing this ancient Japanese floral art!"* A friend brought her as a guest to a Sogetsu lesson with Riji Tomoko Tanaka and Thu-Hằng remained with Master Tanaka since. Thu-Hằng is now holds the [3rd Grade Teacher's Diploma in Sogetsu](#) , and speaks to garden clubs about her journey in Ikebana.

In 2019, at a Beth Shalom GC annual meeting dinner, her adjacent dinner companion suggested, "You sound passionate about floral designs, why don't you go to

flower show school?" and told Thu-Hằng she would leave the Flower Show Handbook at the desk for her. When Thu-Hằng went to pick it up, she saw that Barbara May, the woman who sat next to her at dinner the night before, had been one of the co-authors of the Handbook!

Thu-Hằng has completed all her requirements and became an [Accredited NGC Judge](#). She belongs to both the Hull GC (NGC) and Milton GC (GCA) unlike the days before her application to the MFA Associates when she did not belong to any garden club.

In her second exhibit at WAM Flora in Winter, she decided to mention war and peace in her Statement of Intent interpreting the three-quarter armor because



Trần Vũ Thu-Hằng's floral interpretation of a French 3/4 armor at the Worcester Art Museum in 2025



The other side of the arrangement, evoking "war and peace"



Floral News

MEET THE ARTIST - Trần Vũ Thu-Hằng

A New Mayflower Serial Article Featuring Floral Designers
(Cont'd)



Honoring the Boston Marathon with yellow and blue at the MFA

the trunk? Or am I interpreting the power of an elephant?"

Thu-Hằng told me she feels strongly about making flowers and the art of floral design accessible to more people since that has given her the joy of making and the joy of making friends. She's happiest in her "[flow state](#)" at her flower studio in her Hull garage by the ocean overlooking Boston Harbor.

If you go to a GCFM flower show this year, chances are you will see one of Thu-Hằng's wildly creative floral designs.

Thu-Hằng relishes all the design discussions in Dolores Ahern's Study Group meetings. She will have an entry for their Southeast District Flower Show on July 22 at the Heritage Museum in Sandwich, MA .



Teaching a workshop at Quincy High School

she escaped Vietnam as a refugee in 1975. She has seven younger siblings, all of whom live in the U.S. [The Worcester Art Museum](#) was the first museum to list her name correctly, which made her 92 year-old father and 83 year-old mother proud.

When asked, she describes herself as a Maker. "I like [putting together](#) flowers, [words](#), people, and events." When I asked Thu-Hằng to tell me about an interesting challenge, she described her interpretation of the Japanese Buddha at MFA Art in Bloom in 2025, where she focused on the national origin of the statue and chose to use Ikebana techniques and sensibilities to honor Japan's ancient floral design art.

"Interpreting an artwork is like looking at an elephant. Which part of the elephant am I looking at? Is it the tail or



Teaching an Easter workshop at All Saints' in Dorchester, MA

Spring in the Garden at 45 Linnea, by Nancy Reid

Every day in March when the sun is shining and the temperature climbs to 50°, sometimes almost to 60°, I enjoy looking at the bare earth in the gardens to see what's coming up. Of course, there's the usual smattering of little stones New England is famous for but amongst them are also shoots of early daffodils and purple hyacinths. Even if we get a bit more snow, those spring bulbs will han-

dle it and bloom on time as they always do. The growing season is on its way! I just received a report about some perennial mums in a friend's garden that are up already showing lovely new green furled foliage! This is such an exciting time of the year when the earth comes alive again—especially in our gardens.



Daylight Savings Time has arrived

with the sun moving higher in the sky, bidding me to rise earlier each morning. The Vernal Equinox arrived on March 20th this year when the daytime and nighttime hours are equal in length. After that, the sun marches ever higher in our northern hemisphere and we're on to the warmer months we've been waiting for. I've learned after many years that I shouldn't ex-

pect consistently warm weather until the end of May or perhaps early June. But if it arrives sooner than that I won't complain. I've been noticing sheltered gardens in some neighborhoods that are perfect for rushing the season a bit when planting veggies and new perennials. My gardens unfortunately are not in that category so I'll wait until the perfect time for planting.

Right now, daffodils are pushing up, loaded with buds! April officially begins 6 days from now so perhaps I shouldn't be surprised. The healthiest stand of daffys with the largest number of blooms is located in a small trash pile where I throw all plants that won't bloom in my gardens. Several years ago, I dug up a bunch of daffodil bulbs that refused to bloom after many years of hoping they'd succeed, so I tossed them into the refuse pile. Now covered with several years of falling oak leaves, they're situated in the perfect place. So, they're the first to bloom now covered in oak leaves and shade! Who knew?

Also, my beloved peonies are beginning to push up their first red shoots from below. Now is the time to fertilize them with bonemeal around the base of the plant. After they bloom the second dose of bonemeal is applied. I can hardly believe that I ordered another herbaceous peony this year with variegated red and white blooms! What will I have to remove to make space for this beauty? Not sure at this point but I know I'll find a place and it may take 2-3 years to see prolific blooms but it'll be worth the wait.

I've also ordered several annuals to insert amongst my perennials. *Verbena bonariensis* is tops on the list with their tall stems with little lavender pompoms that arch high above the perennials that have bloomed their last. I'm thinking of adding more tall annuals that hope-

Spring in the Garden, Cont'd

fully will be deer proof and even more importantly, rabbit proof. But is anything completely rabbit proof? Apparently, not. Last year our rabbit popula-



tion seemed to explode so I must have a thicket nearby that's the perfect place for raising bunnies. So far, I haven't found a location. Should I keep looking? Unfortunately I'm a softie when it comes to furry little animals so there's no way I'd eradicate their home. My plan of action this year for my clematis and achillea that were wiped out last year is to plant them with an 18-inch chicken wire collar to keep the bunnies from chewing them off and leaving just 2-inch green "sticks" at ground level. Last year my beautiful Samaritan Jo clematis that was three years old and in its glory, was lopped off 2-inches from the ground and that particular rabbit decided after the deed was done that Samaritan Jo was not tasty enough to consume and so left the upper branches dead and still clinging to the tuteur. Yikes! I've learned to expect the unexpected in the garden. But from each unfortunate experience comes a problem-solving session and this year it will be wire sleeves around new plantings, so time will tell. I may also add chicken wire sleeves to other clematis plants that survived last year's onslaught. The sleeves shouldn't be obtrusive

since they'll be surrounded by other perennials with taller foliage. So that's the plan!

I've decided to rest my vegetable garden this year. Last week I raked out the fifteen 4-foot x 4-foot plots separated by 1-foot stone walkways, removing as many acorns and stones as I could. Apparently it was a prolific year for acorns last summer and I'm amazed our "herd" of squirrels didn't either eat them all or stored them in a place they'd probably spend hours trying to remember where they'd put them. Next Spring I'll put time into adding new soil along with lots of compost to hopefully have plants leap out of the ground producing lots of veggies as they did when I first set up that wonderful garden. However, I'm sure there will be more acorns that will still need raking the following Spring as well. Ahh, that's life in the garden—never dull, sometimes challenging, but always rewarding.



Nancy Reid has been gardening since her early twenties. Her own design business in Harvard Square with clients such as The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Laura Ashley Ltd., Horticulture Magazine, and Dutch Gardens among many others, gave her an active and fun life working with color, design, and photog-



raphy. Upon retirement her gardening increased incrementally once she joined the Reading Garden Club where she is an active member and former President. She designs the monthly newsletter, Flower Press and reports on what's happening on the little patch of creation she's been gifted with. She has written a book on gardening in the North East which hopefully will be published this coming Summer or Fall.

April brings more and more birds to our feeders. I hear woodpeckers drilling in the trees and our Carolina Wrens are calling to each other to select mates for the season. When I stop and remain quiet and just look at areas of our garden, birds of all species are moving around looking for nest building materials. Twigs from the last windstorm of winter, stray feathers, leftover dried leaves from small plants I failed to remove last fall are all being snatched up to form the perfect nest. Spring is here at last!

Her Shirley Farm Landscape Project, Part Sixteen - Juliet Silveri

A Weather Station, Allée Alignment, Witch Hazel, and a Cedar Cold Frame

I HAVE WANTED to measure the rainfall to gauge how much water my plants are receiving, and this past year I went beyond getting a rain gauge with the installation of a weather station on my roof. The weather station needs to be on the roof for accurate weather reporting. It also measures wind



Installing the new weather station on the roof

gusts and wind direction. With all these measurements I now will know my own microclimate and the particular type of weather my plants are enjoying. The station displays data via a digital readout panel installed in my kitchen.

My four 'Winter King' green hawthorn (*Crataegus viridis*) trees in their second season produced red berries that provided beauty for me and several meals for the birds. We'll see a flurry of white flowers in the spring.



'Winter King' green hawthorn (*Crataegus viridis*) trees full of berries.

A late fall project included measuring, edging, and mulching consistently sized areas under each tree in the allée of maples, so the areas are lined up and pleasing to the eye when looking down the



Measuring and consistently sizing the mulched areas under the allée of sugar maples

allée. There had been inconsistently sized mulched areas under the trees, giving the whole allée a jumbled uneven look. Metal stakes and stretchy cords were involved, and we made a wooden frame that served as a measuring and marking tool for all the mulched areas, and used it all the way down to the 14th and last maple tree.

In an autumn view of the gardens from the second story window the three witch hazel shrubs are focal points with bright yellow foliage.



A view of the bird and winter garden from a second story window.

Also shown is the witch hazel close up on March 10, 2026, starting to bloom in the snow. Temperatures are unseasonably warm and hit 75 degrees Fahrenheit today (according to my weather station). The pollinator bees are buzzing around the witch hazel.

I had a cold frame built specially for my winter enjoyment, of cedar so it will last outdoors. In it you can see pots of perennial and shrub seeds stratifying. The top lifts off easily to access the seed pots.

In it I planted seeds from my garden, of *penstemon* 'midnight masquerade', and *echinacea* 'kismet raspberry.' The seeds were easy to capture, and I decided to see what would grow from them. Since these are both hybrids, what will the seeds yield? One of the parent plants? It will be interesting to see what grows from these seeds.

Her Shirley Farm, Cont'd



***Hamamelis vernalis* blooms orangey in late winter, the first plant to attract pollinator bees.**

In the cold frame I also planted, from seed packets: 'wild white indigo' or *baptisia alba*, *thalictrum pubescens* 'king of the meadow,' and *aralia racemosa* or American spike-nard, a native shrub to eastern and central

North America, notable for its large leaves and clumps of purple berries for the birds.

The winter that began on November 30 with a deep and lasting snowfall was



The cold frame, for cold sowing, made of cedar with hardware cloth in a removable lid

very cold, but it seems to be waning, looking at the forecast on March 10.

I have written about my plans for a large winding path leaving the upper perennial garden, down to a destination in back. I'm not yet sure what that destination will be. I've learned from designers to not be timid in regards to scale, and there is room here for large trees and shrubs. How about a large shapely bright green conifer and a large silver conifer together, for contrasting color and shape? I have a similar color scheme in my upper perennial garden.

For my future landscaping, I am planning a small greenhouse and a small pond--with the help of a designer. Join me on these creative endeavors—the pond and greenhouse especially promise to be entertaining adventures.



Is Your Club Into Conservation? Get Noticed!

There is a new feature on the Environmental Awareness page for clubs who do conservation work - like Harwich. Just send in a picture of your club at work with a paragraph or two, and your hard work will be posted on the GCFM website in our new **"Spotlight on Garden Club Conservation Efforts"**.

Join clubs like Harwich and send in your stories and photographs of environmental projects such as efforts to eliminate invasive plants and preserve native species. Does your club have programs to educate members and/or the public about pollinators, and organic ways to treat pests? Do you bare-root your plants before potting them up for your yearly Plant Sale? Do you work with a seed library? Are you planting trees on Arbor Day? We want to hear about it! Send in your information to gcfmwebmaster@gmail.com.



A Note From The Editor - Dealing with Pests

After years of using cayenne pepper and other “deer repellents” on beloved plants (that soon became deer food anyway) two years ago I had finally had enough of the game. I had an 8-ft post & wire fence installed around the mowable area on my property. My long-term goal was to be able to plant flowering shrubs and trees, and eventually have an arbor.

I waited an entire year, watching to see if any deer would be able to breach the barrier. The next Spring finally came without a single sighting. Satisfied that no deer were able to navigate the new blockade, I planted rhododendrons, hydrangeas, mountain laurel, magnolia and apple trees - among many other plants the deer would think were absolutely delicious.

(In my excitement I forgot about the groundhogs who soon flossed their teeth with my sunflower stalks. That’s okay -

this year they will go in my raised beds instead.)

A few days ago I was wandering through the garden after the gigantic piles of snow had finally melted. This winter had been hard. I understand that global warming brings extreme weather, but this time I took it personally. I wondered if my baby trees had survived at all. Would there be buds? Would I have flowering crabapple trees this Spring?

And there they were. I squinted my eyes. Little red bumps on willowy branches, signaling not only survival, but these trees were ready to thrive and show off their blooms.

I had won the war. My garden would finally be a sea of Springtime color.



Karen Brockelbank

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A “HOW-TO” FOR SENDING IN YOUR SUBMISSIONS

DEADLINE: The next *Mayflower* Issue deadline for submissions is **June 10.**

TEXT: Please try to keep your stories 75 words or less.

PICTURES: Attach image files (usually JPG’s) to your email, do not embed them in your document.

CAPTIONS: *Please provide captions for each photo you submit.*

SEND IN YOUR NEWSWORTHY ITEMS TO gcfmmayflower@gmail.com.

Blue Star & Gold Star Families Memorial Marker Program

Looking for a great 250th celebration gift to your town and club?

Why not a Blue Star memorial plaque or highway marker? These plaques and highway signs are a good way to honor all who have served in the armed forces.

For help and more information contact:

Joy DiMaggio at GCFMbluestar@gmail.com



Blue Star Memorial Marker in Sudbury

All photographs in this newsletter have been supplied courtesy of each Garden Club submitting the information