Founders Fund 2020

The Founders Fund was established in 1934 in honor of The Garden Club of America's first president, Elizabeth Price Martin. The first award, given in 1936, was for $700. Today the winner receives $30,000, and the two runners-up each receive $10,000. The fund for this prestigious grant continues to grow through generous donations and gifts from GCA member clubs and individuals. These grants can make a significant difference toward the success of a community project.

Collaboration is a key component of the Founders Fund Committee. Each proposal represents a working partnership between a GCA member club and a community program. The Founders Fund zone representatives assist and support the proposing clubs throughout the submission process, culminating in the presentation of proposals to the committee.

At our October 2019 meeting, the twelve voting members of the committee evaluated all proposals and selected the three finalists. Always, the GCA purpose statement played a role in our decision-making process. While this year's finalists are each unique in scope, they all reflect the purpose of the GCA: "to stimulate the knowledge and love of gardening….and to restore, improve, and protect the quality of the environment through educational programs and action in the fields of conservation and civic improvement."

All GCA member clubs will have the opportunity to vote for a winning project. Club presidents will present the finalists to their membership and then report their club's choice by April 1. The winner and runners-up will be announced at the 2020 Annual Meeting in Asheville, North Carolina, in May. We salute and thank each club that submitted a proposal for this year's grant. All are winners and worthy of merit.

Anne French

Anne French, Chairman,
Founders Fund Committee, 2019-2021

The Founders Fund Committee: Back row (standing, L-R): Debbie Murray, Garden Club of Darien, Zone II; Susanne Tobey, Garden Club of Santa Barbara, Zone XII; Lea Fulk, Carolina Foothills Garden Club, Zone VIII; Ruth Furman, Garden Club of Buzzards Bay, Zone I; Gail Clark, Fauquier and Loudoun Garden Club, Zone VII; Lisa McConnell, Garden Club of Cleveland, Zone X; Betsy Holleman, Zone Director Liaison, Garden Lovers of Natchez, Zone IX; Linda Grieve, Des Moines Founders Garden Club, Zone XI; Minnie Ullman, The Providence Garden Club of Pennsylvania, Zone V; Fleur Rueckert, Executive Board Liaison, Fairfield Garden Club, Zone II: Mary Carpenter, Amateur Gardeners Club, Zone VI. Front row (L-R): Margo Dana, Garden Club of Somerset Hills, Zone IV; Becky Scott, Little Rock Garden Club, Zone IX; Anne French, Chairman, River Oaks Garden Club, Zone IX; Mary Anne Burke, Vice Chairman, James River Garden Club, Zone VII; Cindy Mullin (standing), South Side Garden Club of L.I., Zone III

CheerMobile:

What Cheer Flower Farm on the Rhode

What Cheer Flower Farm is literally turning a parking lot into paradise. Located on a brownfield site just two miles from Providence City Hall in Rhode Island, the farm is remediating the land and now grows 30,000 flowers per year outside on its organic fields and in its unheated high tunnels. The farm gives away its crop for social good, donating thousands of bouquets to local nonprofits such as hospitals, hospices, recovery centers, shelters, at-risk youth programs, and senior centers. In 2019 alone, we have directly touched the lives of 7,645 people.

These free flowers bring joyful smiles. But the big surprise has been the unexpected impact: people of all ages yearn to touch, arrange, and draw flowers. Working with flowers, not merely receiving them, satisfies a deep human desire to connect with beauty and nature.

Science shows that flower arranging and art can contribute to wellness. Over the past two years, the farm has piloted a variety of educational programming both on-site and via partner organizations, including:

- senior centers using flowers for drawing classes that can help with dementia;
- teens at a recovery center making prom boutonnieres together;
- vulnerable women's groups—such as battered women and women who have lost loved ones to violence—holding therapeutic flower arranging events;
- children and teens from inner city

Above: The farm is located on former factory land, just two miles from Providence City Hall. We are turning urban blight into a field of good cheer. Photo by Chip Riegel
Top left: Children delight to see our free make-your-own-posy stand at community events. Photo by Shelby Doggett
Middle left: When a peony farm asked us to glean its fields, we were thrilled. However, we found transporting flowers on a hot day via a volunteer's open truck bed is not optimal. Photo by Anne Holland
Bottom left: We donate flowers to hospitals, hospices, recovery centers, shelters, at-risk youth programs, and other targeted communities. However, the farm doesn't own a vehicle, so it can be challenging to get flowers to the people who need them. Photo by Anne Holland

Proposed by: Perennial Planters Garden Club, Zone II

Seconded by: Newport Garden Club, Zone II

communities discovering the excitement and creativity of making their first flower posies; and
- neighbors who speak different languages painting flowers side by side.

However, many groups, including after-school programs, disabled seniors, at-risk teens, shelters, and recovery centers, can't get to the farm, and the farm doesn't own any vehicles. The CheerMobile is critical to the growth of the organization, expanding its outreach and impact.

This colorfully branded van will be fully outfitted with everything needed—from rows of buckets and jam jar vases to art supplies—to transport mass quantities of cut flowers and to bring flower-related programming "on the Rhode." The CheerMobile would sit in a dedicated parking spot, with a sign recognizing donors, next to our Barn-Education Center.

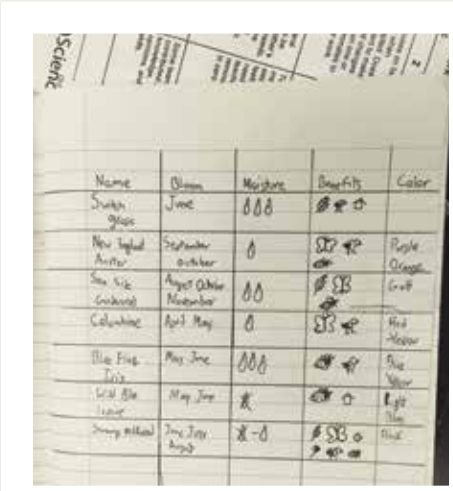
The CheerMobile will also enable the farm to expand its free flower distribution and educational programming through all four seasons. (Currently, we are limited to the flowers we can grow in our outdoor fields and unheated high tunnels.)

The CheerMobile will be used year-round, allowing the farm to gather and share thousands more free flowers that would otherwise go to waste. These include unsold, but still good flowers, that retailers and florists currently throw away and also recycled, "gently used" flowers from weddings and events. In addition, the CheerMobile will

be used for foraging trips to glean leftover flowers from local commercial flower farmers' fields. The farm has explored successful programs in all of these operations.

We have learned that using volunteers' vehicles is not optimal or sustainable, and the CheerMobile would be a godsend. The CheerMobile will allow us to bring thousands more flowers and vastly expanded flower-related programming to vulnerable populations year-round.

Above: The farm harvests 30,000 flowers per year from organic fields on a former factory parking lot for use in educational programs and charitable donations. Photo by Mike Majoros
Top right: Nonprofit programs for seniors use our flowers for arranging and drawing classes to aid Alzheimer's and dementia patients. Photo by Shelby Doggett
Bottom right: Children love creating art from flowers. With the CheerMobile, we could bring our flower art programs to after-school programs. Photo by Shelby Doggett



Name	Bloom	Moisture	Benefits	Color
Swamp Milkweed	June			
New England Aster	September-October			Purple
Sea Side Goldenrod	August-October			Gold
Columbine	April-May			Red-Yellow
Blue Flag Iris	May-June			Blue-Yellow
Wild Blue Lupine	May-June			Light Blue
Swamp Milkweed	June-July			Pink

Growing It Green in Paterson, NJ:

Public School Rain Garden Project

Paterson, New Jersey, with nearly 150,000 residents, is the second most densely populated large city in the US. Almost 90 percent of the 25,000+ school students receive free or reduced-price meals. In 2010, more than 26 percent of the population lived below the federal poverty level versus 10.4 percent statewide.

The city is one of 21 municipalities in New Jersey that has a combined sewer overflow system (CSOS). With just light rainfall, Paterson's CSOS, which combines stormwater runoff in the same pipes as untreated sewage, easily exceeds load capacity, sending huge volumes of untreated sewage directly into the Passaic River. The overflows are truly devastating to the health and quality of life in Paterson and areas downstream on the Passaic.

Great Swamp Watershed Association (GSWA) is currently the facilitator of Paterson SMART (Stormwater Management and Resource Training), which focuses on reducing negative stormwater impacts to the city and the Passaic River through the use of green infrastructure (GI) projects. Public schools in Paterson are leading the charge in stormwater management solutions through the implementation of GI projects like school rain gardens. GSWA and its engineering partner, Rutgers University, have already successfully completed three rain garden projects in Paterson. School resource reports state that the three rain garden

Above: This student's chart indicates which plants they have personally selected. The most popular plants were ordered for installation. In this way students have ownership of the project and understand that through good science their voices can be heard.
Top left: Students work together to select native plants that meet moisture, sunlight, blooming requirements, and wildlife benefit criteria. Having learned about water quality issues in Paterson, they are now in control of determining a solution through proper plant selection.
Right: The Passaic River rises in the Great Swamp and flows over the Paterson Falls, the second highest falls on the East Coast, and continues its course to Newark Bay.

Proposed by: Garden Club of Madison, Zone IV

Seconded by: Garden Club of Morristown, Zone IV

projects completed in 2017-18 have had a huge impact on students' understanding of stormwater management issues and that maintenance of the gardens has been incorporated into each school's curriculum.

GSWA and Rutgers wish to expand this program with the development and installation of two additional rain gardens in Paterson as several more schools have expressed strong interest and commitment to the school board to be part of green infrastructure projects. They plan to start the next phase of the project in fall 2020 and estimate that more than 200 middle school students will be involved.

Students in underserved, urban communities such as Paterson do not normally have access to the unique and impactful science-based programming that GSWA provides. The educational component of the rain garden project is a three-step program providing both in-class and in-the-schoolyard teaching sessions that focus on the need, benefits, design, and plant material selection for the rain gardens, as well as actual planting sessions for the students. It also offers an outdoor experiential learning opportunity, which takes the students to either GSWA's Conservation Management Area in Harding, New Jersey, or the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge in New Vernon. These opportunities provide students with an awareness and understanding of the upstream-downstream connections of the river and expose them to wildlife habitats much different from what they experience in Paterson. It also allows them to interact with professionals in the environmental field, which broadens their understanding of potential career paths.

Students learn the importance of protecting the environment and the value of using green infrastructure projects such as rain gardens to help build healthier, more vibrant, and safer communities for the benefit of their generation and future generations. Studies have proved a connection to nature positively impacts physical, academic, social, and psychological health.

Above: Initial construction of previous school rain gardens, including depaving and excavation, has been done in the summer when schools were not in session. The drainage and permeable surfaces that will hold onto and slowly drain water into the groundwater are installed. The grade has been lowered and the sides sloped to encourage water to gather during active rainfalls. **Left:** Students at Great Swamp Wildlife Refuge learn about how creatures living in the stream can be indicators of good or poor water quality and what human actions can be taken to impact water quality. All photos by Hazel England

Permaculture Sanctuary: *Promoting Trauma Resilience through Regenerative Gardening at Crossnore School and Children's Home in Winston-Salem, NC*

Twin City Garden Club (TCGC) has partnered with Crossnore School and Children's Home to create a permaculture food and sensory forest for developing trauma resiliency. This garden sanctuary, located in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, on a 212-acre urban farm, brings the children it serves and the community together by restoring souls through soil. Crossnore's campus houses 45 foster children and serves over 450 daily through Kingswood alternative public school, outpatient therapeutic services, Youth in Transition, soft skills job placement, and after-school programs. Children and youth interact with the farm every day through Crossnore's holistic curriculum.

TCGC members have a deep connection to the Children's Home, which was established in 1909 and merged with Crossnore School in 2017. Members have volunteered and given financial support, and recently TCGC donated $20,000 to Crossnore's Miracle Grounds Farm. After lengthy planning, in June 2019 TCGC broke ground on a quarter-acre, interactive garden where the children and the community can taste, smell, touch, and hear nature. With Crossnore staff, members have spent countless hours co-designing, co-creating, and working to establish the garden, which aims to be a self-sustaining place where children can heal by experiencing nature.

Through its cutting-edge curriculum, Crossnore's ideal environment supports

Above: Early concept sketch, courtesy of Laurie Durden Designs, Ms Durden, landscape designer and friend of Twin City Garden Club, was captivated by the project and shared her time and expertise in the initial planning. Photo by Laurie Durden

Top left: Twin City Garden Club members are thrilled to present Crossnore School and Children's Home with start-up funds for the Permaculture Sanctuary. Photo by Patrice Williams

Middle left: Twin City Garden Club members enjoy a morning in the permaculture garden among the buckwheat cover crop and pollinators. TCGC's members are committed to an ongoing partnership with Crossnore and its Miracle Grounds Farm, offering hands-on support to ensure maintenance and sustainability of the food and sensory forest. Photo by Courtney Branch

Bottom left: A beautiful sunset frames the grounds of Crossnore as the permaculture garden begins to take shape. Photo by Scottie Neill

Proposed by: Twin City Garden Club, Zone VII

Seconded by: The French Broad River Garden Club Foundation, Zone VII

techniques to gain power over painful pasts through education, art, and soil therapy. The Founders Fund grant will be used to enhance the garden with further plant varieties and soil enrichment for growing nutrient-dense food; install a thoughtful irrigation system incorporating hand-watering, rainwater collection, and a natural stone water feature for interactive play; and, finally, expand outreach for educational and art programs to connect children, families, and community to permaculture principles. The garden will become a model for establishing other self-sustaining gardens in low-income neighborhoods and public schools throughout the city.

A permaculture edible and sensory landscape model incorporates regenerative agriculture from the root zone building up to the tree canopy, each providing needed nutrients for the other. Native paw paw, plum, fig, apple and persimmon trees, blueberries, mulberries, gogi berries, wild strawberries, and various pollinators are examples of plants in the sanctuary.

The food forest will provide a means for children to connect to soil, food, and life cycles, allowing Crossnore therapists to draw metaphors to trauma cycles, develop trauma resilience, and create hope for flourishing futures. If a garden can endure extreme weather cycles and still thrive, then so can the children. The garden sanctuary model mirrors the healing process and a larger community vision of resilience, regeneration, growth, progress, and sustainability, reflecting the GCA's priorities to seed the future and bridge communities. The grant will elevate the garden infrastructure and ensure its impactful and far-reaching effects.

Never Ending Food (www.neverendingfood.org) cites "Four Basic Permaculture Principles: working with nature rather than against it, thoughtful observation rather than thoughtless labor, each element should perform many functions rather than one, and everything is connected to everything else."

Pain Pathways*, February 2019, "Story of the Plate: How One Community is Striving to Decrease Pain and Create a Healthier City through Urban Farming & Food."*

Above: The children from Love Out Loud summer camp were enthusiastic about implementing the "lasagna layering" technique of creating the beds during the initial phase of permaculture planting. Photo by Scottie Neill

Top right: The renovation of the greenhouse on the left will incorporate the soil lab, heat, and educational tools to teach permaculture gardening principles. Compost bins will be conveniently located near the greenhouse. Photo by Scottie Neill

Bottom right: A stone drainage area is designed to channel water from recently aerated grass paths. Crossnore Miracle Grounds coordinator lovingly waters blueberry bushes and edible plantings. Children also enjoy these hands on opportunities to water their plantings. Photo by Scottie Neill