



## GCFP District VI Newsletter

1st Edition, 2026

# Seedlings



### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| • District Calendar  | 1     |
| • Director's Corner  |       |
| • Celebrate America's 250th anniversary  | 2     |
| • Club Happenings  | 3-12  |
| • Keeping Your Poinsettias ALIVE!  | 13    |
| • Grow Plants Without Soil: Exploring Popular Methods  | 14-15 |
| • 9 Ways Plants Can Help Predict a Cold and Snowy Winter According to the Old Farmers' Almanac | 16    |

### District 2025-6 Calendar

- April 17--District Meeting—10 am Perkins in Richland
- April 26-28--GCFP Convention Erie, PA
- August 12-- District Meeting—10 am Perkins in Richland
- Sept 1--Annual District Meeting—

Articles, events and happenings concerning District VI may be submitted to:  
Mary Lou Colussy at  
[lalou46@aol.com](mailto:lalou46@aol.com)  
Next Seedlings  
May, 2026

A special thank you to Nerita Brant, *Seedlings* Proofreader

### Director's Corner

Mary Lou Colussy District VI Director

This has been an unusual time period for me due to the fact I will have to get this newsletter out by January 1<sup>st</sup> instead of February 1<sup>st</sup>. My husband, Art and I will be celebrating a long-awaited cruise for our 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. Australia, New Zealand and the south Pacific here we come!

It seems that our revised date for the district Meeting had to be changed again. When I double-checked to make sure, we were on the calendar for April, I was told that a pinochle group beat us to it! So, we will now have to have our meeting on Friday, April 17<sup>th</sup>. I hope this is not too much of an inconvenience, since we are four months away. I guess we can't complain too much since our room at Perkins is free for the meeting.

On to other things that will be of importance to many of our board members. The 96<sup>th</sup> Annual GCFP Convention *MystERIE by the BAY* is in Erie at the Sheraton Bayfront Erie Hotel. It will begin on April 26<sup>th</sup> and conclude with the Judged Council Luncheon and Program on Tuesday, April 28<sup>th</sup>. You will be able to find more information in the newest edition of the Keystone Gardener coming out in January.

There are a lot of activities that took place in the past months since the previous newsletter including, Evergreen's Tinsel Time, **Winter Wonderland**, Bedford's bi-annual Home **Candles**, **Snow and Mistletoe** tour and Johnstown's **Holiday Home Tour**. Patton's **Christmas Tea** and their work with the Middle School student's and their centerpiece arranging.

I also installed the Patton GC officers for 2026-28 in December and have been asked to install Somerset GC and GC of Johnstown officers when I return on April 13<sup>th</sup>. It will be a busy return for me, but I am up for the challenge.

Happy New Year, one and all!!!



## CELEBRATE AMERICA'S 250th ANNIVERSARY WITH A RED, WHITE, AND BLUE GARDEN

Co-Chairs Marge Eberz and Arlene Reagan Harris  
Norristown Garden Club, XI

### Celebrating Nature through Community Theme Gardens

What could be more patriotic than a garden filled with red, white, and blue flowers? Here are some combinations to consider for a garden in full sun:

#### Patriotic Annual Garden:

Red, white, and blue petunias  
Red and white geraniums with blue Salvia.  
Blue and white ageratums with red Salvia  
Red lantana, white Angelonia, with blue verberna

#### Patriotic Perennial Garden

Red Monarda, white phlox, blue mist flower  
Red Monarda, white coneflower, Blue Hyssop  
Red Monarda, White Cloud Catmint, Blue False Indigo

There are fewer red, white, and blue combinations for a garden in the shade, but here are a few to consider:

Red astilbe, white astilbe, creeping blue phlox  
Red coral bells, white astilbe, blue lobelia

Many other combinations would make a stunning patriotic garden; it all depends on how much space you have. Always remember that for the greatest impact of color, you need to plant in groups of at least seven to nine plants of each color. For example: plant seven red petunias, seven white petunias, seven blue petunias.

To ensure a good, healthy display of flowers, the annuals and perennials need to be planted in good soil. Continuous bloom is dependent upon good maintenance throughout the season, including weeding, fertilizing, and watering on a regular schedule, as well as deadheading flowers for continuous blooms.

### GARDENING FOR BEGINNERS

Roses love lavender.

Tulips don't like lilies.

Sunflowers prefer their space.

Marigolds help keep pests away.

Daisies and coneflowers grow well together.

Lilies and gladiolus don't mix.

Zinnias thrive near basil.

Snapdragons love petunias.

Roses dislike daffodils.

Pansies and violas are great companions.

Lavender repels pests and loves sun.





**Club Activities**

Bedford County Garden Club's  
**2025 Christmas Home Tour**  
*Candles, Snow and  
Mistletoe*

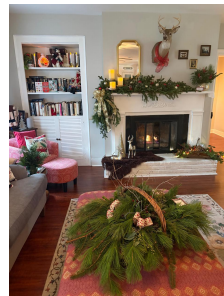
**Christmas at the Museum**

Southern Allegheny Museum of Art designers Cindy Brown and Colleen Brenner with their beautiful table and mantle designs.

**Bedford  
County  
Garden  
Club**



## Bedford's Home tour (cont.)



### A Traditional Christmas

The newly renovated Huxta house looked fabulous with all the festive Christmas designs! Denise Wright, Brenda Massie, Judy Jackson, Dorothy Vensel, Linda Williams, Marilyn Gash, Gwen Douglas, Shirley Koontz, Claire Leichter and Vicki Rurt

### Bedford County Garden Club

### A Candlelight Christmas

The McGill home on Richard Street: designers Dorothy Vensel, Amelia Colyer, Suzette Troutman, Alexis Brittleburn, Pat Greenland, Lynn Baer and Kay Kring, Suzanne Davila, Judy Jackson and Carolyn Frye



The tour concluded at the Café at Homewood Living House in Everett including a wonderful display of refreshments, raffles and camaraderie.



**Club Activities****BLAIR GARDEN CLUB  
Bus Trip - 3/4/2026**

Contact: Emma Kowalski for more information  
814-932-0375

**Blair  
Garden  
Club****Christmas at the Library**

Once again Blair Garden Club made the ornaments and decorated the Christmas tree at Altoona Public Library. This year we focused on gnomes though a few woodland animals joined in. Thanks to everyone who helped with making ornaments and decorating the tree.





**Club Activities**

*Winter Wonderland*  
**Annual Tinsel Time Luncheon**  
Hosted by the  
**Evergreen Garden Club**  
**Thursday, December 4, 2025**

**Proceeds Benefit Scholarship and Community Projects**

**Evergreen  
Garden  
Club**





**Club Activities**

**October, 2025 Garden of the Month winner  
Congratulations to Robert Fisher**



**Indiana  
Garden  
Club**

**Garden of the Month  
Maggie and John Jacobs**





**Club Activities****Home for the Holidays  
Saturday, December 6, 2025**

In a new fundraising event, The Garden Club partnered with the Old Westmont Neighbors' Group Holiday Home Tour. This will replace our long-standing (33 years) Welcome the Holidays fundraiser. They brought back a holiday season favorite with a brand-new element. This year's home tour features five homes that have never been on the tour before. This is paired with a Christmas Market at Westmont Presbyterian Church.

Our club is assisted with tour registration, serving light refreshments and offering an Open House and Holiday Market, which will feature a display of gingerbread houses, holiday tablescapes and holiday centerpieces. Glamour Galore, 50/50 and basket raffle tickets was sold. Sale items included gingerbread houses, painted holiday slates, baked holiday ornaments and gardening gift bags and houseplant watering pots.

**Garden  
Club of  
Johnstown**





## Club Activities

### Youth Group Meets

On Tuesday, November 5<sup>th</sup>, the Cambria Heights Middle School Youth Group gathered in the "Greenhouse" to harvest geraniums for next year. The students cut and pulled the geraniums apart, cleaned them up and trimmed off the roots, if necessary, placed them in brown bags to "cure" for spring. They also pulled apart the milkweed pods to gather the seeds to be planted at their homes. This was an interesting demo lead by Mary Davis with the help of Jan Davis, Cheryl Vescovi and Chris Westover, Youth Coordinator for PGC.



### Patton Garden Club

### Christmas Tea December 7, 2025



Thirty PGC members and their guests came together for an enjoyable afternoon of wonderful music by the Presbyterian Bell Choir and the acoustical guitar melodies of Bruce Schettig for their annual Christmas Teas on Sunday, December 7<sup>th</sup> at La Ferme Rouge. Included were cookies, cakes, meatballs and trays of fruits and vegetables to round out the delicacies, along with flavored teas for their enjoyment. Thanks to Ashley Hayeas and her committee that brought this all together.

**Club Activities****Wreath Sale**

Ended up selling out and had a record year! Your support helps us continue our community projects and seasonal beautification efforts throughout Somerset.



**Somerset  
Garden  
Club**

Thank you to Dr. Wilma Light for the excellent presentation on Ticks and How to Protect Yourself Outdoors. It was both interesting and informative.





**Club Activities****Evergreen Garden Club Tinsel Time Christmas event in Indiana PA.**

Nine members attended from the Weeders and Seeders Garden Club of Ligonier. It was a very fun afternoon with a wonderful meal and raffles galore.



**Weeders &  
Seeders  
Garden  
Club**

Left to right: Julie (neighbor of Sue's), Sue Wolfe , Angela, Diane, Mary Niezelski , Deborah Christopher , Judy Miller Ridgway , Carol and Patti Schildkamp



**Club Activities**

Judy Miller Ridgway won this huge basket of paper goods. They're ended up being about \$100 worth of products in that basket. And it weighed almost 30 lbs.



Patti Schildkamp opened up a box that she purchased and got this cute critter.



**Weeders &  
Seeders  
Garden  
Club**



## Keeping Your Poinsettias ALIVE!

Source: <https://www.gardenloversclub.com/garden-blooms/keeping-your-poinsettias-alive>



During the winter months, many gardeners entertain themselves by bringing the outdoors inside. Among potted plants, poinsettias (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*) are a popular and intriguing variety. They are available in colors ranging from red to white, and combat the dreary conditions outside with the flavor of the tropics.

**Did you know? The large “flowers” of the poinsettia plant aren’t flowers at all. They are specialized leaves, called bracts, used to direct pollinating insects to the plant’s tiny flowers.**

How can you maintain the stunning coloration of your poinsettia plant?

Is it possible to revive the flower once it begins to fade?

Consider the following poinsettia care tips to enjoy the beauty of your plant all winter long.

### 10 Ways to Maintain a Happy, Healthy Poinsettia

**1. Know your plant.** Understanding the origin and habitat of each of your potted plants is essential to their longevity. The poinsettia originated on warm, subtropical mountain slopes near the Pacific Ocean in Mexico. Therefore, proper care involves recreating these environmental conditions in your home.

**2. Keep it warm and cozy.** Temperatures in the poinsettia’s native environment rarely, if ever, near freezing. In fact, temperatures there may exceed 90 degrees Fahrenheit any month of the year. This tells us something important about our plant – it needs warm temperatures in order to thrive.

The indoor temperature of your home should be sufficient for most plants. Avoid placing the poinsettia in drafty areas, such as near doors or under a window. If you must transport your plant during chilly weather, do so in an enclosed portion of your vehicle.

**3. Don’t over water.** Overwatering is the leading cause of house plant death. Allow the soil in the poinsettia’s pot to become dry to the touch before watering thoroughly. Be sure to check the soil daily so that the plant is not left unwatered after the soil becomes dry.



**4. Provide 10 hours of light per day.** Ten hours daily is ideal for the longest possible blooming period.

**5. Once all chance of frost is past, move the plant outside.** Tropical plants enjoy warm weather and sunshine. However, do not immediately place your poinsettia in direct sunlight. Doing so will cause damage to the leaves, which are accustomed to the full shade indoors. First, place the plant in full shade for two weeks. Then, move it to a partially shaded area for an additional two weeks. If you desire a sunny location, you can then move the poinsettia there for the remainder of the season. In locations that remain warm year-round, the poinsettia can thrive when planted directly in the ground.

**6. Prune away.** Poinsettias are a perennial shrub, which, when left to their own devices, can grow 10 to 15 feet tall. In order to keep your potted plant to a manageable size, pinch off new buds that exceed your desired size. Also prune away dead or dying leaves and branches.

**7. Check regularly for bugs.** This step is especially important when you bring your plant inside after the summer growing season. If pests are found, treat the plant with an approved fungicide/insecticide according to the manufacturer’s instructions. If ants or other insects infest the soil, gently remove the plant from its container, remove infected soil, and replace with fresh potting soil.

**8. Fertilize regularly.** Potted plants may exhaust the nutrients found in their limited soil supply. Fertilize regularly according to the manufacturer’s instructions.

**9. Control light cycles to induce blooming.** Poinsettias are photo-period plants, meaning they bloom in response to natural changes in the length of days and nights. To bloom in captivity, this cycle must be artificially recreated.

Two months before you wish to enjoy your plant’s stunning coloration, bring it indoors. Discontinue fertilization and allow it only 8 hours of light per day. During the remaining 16 hours, place the plant in complete darkness – in a closet or under a black plastic bag. Repeat this process for two months before moving the plant to a sunny indoor location.

**10. Exercise caution around children and pets.** Poinsettias produce a thick sap that is known to cause skin reactions in people with latex allergies. Ingesting the leaves can also cause nausea and other symptoms in children or pets.

## Grow Plants Without Soil: Exploring Popular Methods

Source: <https://www.gardenloversclub.com/garden-blooms/plants-without-soil/>



As a plant enthusiast, I am always looking for different methods to grow plants.

Hydroponics, aeroponics, and aquaponics are some of the popular methods that come to mind.

Growing plants without soil is not only environmentally friendly but also space-efficient, making it a great option for urban gardeners or those with limited outdoor space.

Hydroponics is a method of growing plants in water without soil. The plants are grown in a nutrient-rich solution that provides all the necessary nutrients for growth. This method requires a bit of setup, including a water reservoir, a pump, and a growing medium to support the plants. Aeroponics, on the other hand, is a method of growing plants in an air or mist environment. The plants are suspended in the air and misted with a nutrient solution, allowing the roots to absorb the necessary nutrients.

Aquaponics is another method of growing plants without soil that combines hydroponics with aquaculture. Fish are raised in a tank, and their waste is converted into nutrients for the plants to grow. The plants, in turn, purify the water for the fish. This symbiotic relationship creates a closed-loop system that is both sustainable and efficient. These different methods of growing plants without soil offer a range of benefits, including faster growth rates, higher yields, and reduced water usage.

### Hydroponics

One of the most popular methods of growing plants without soil is hydroponics. In hydroponics, plants are grown in a nutrient-rich solution instead of soil. This method is gaining popularity because it is a more efficient way of growing plants, and it allows for greater control over the growing environment.

#### Nutrient Film Technique

The Nutrient Film Technique (NFT) is a popular hydroponic system where a thin film of nutrient-rich water is continuously circulated over the roots of the plants.

The plants are placed in a sloping channel, and the nutrient solution flows over the roots, providing them with the necessary nutrients. This system is easy to set up and maintain, and it is ideal for growing small plants such as lettuce, herbs, and strawberries. (Continues on Page 15)





## Grow Plants Without Soil: Exploring Popular Methods

(Continues from Page 14)

### Deep Water Culture

The Deep Water Culture (DWC) system is another popular hydroponic system where the plants are suspended in a nutrient-rich solution. In this system, the roots of the plants are submerged in the solution, and an air pump provides oxygen to the roots. This system is ideal for growing larger plants such as tomatoes, cucumbers, and peppers. DWC is easy to set up and maintain, and it is an efficient way of growing plants. Hydroponics is a great way to grow plants without soil. With the right setup, you can grow plants faster and with less water than traditional soil-based methods. Additionally, hydroponics allows for greater control over the growing environment, which can result in higher yields and better-quality crops.

### Aeroponics

I have always been fascinated by the idea of growing plants without soil. One of the most innovative methods of soilless gardening is aeroponics.

In this method, plants are grown in an air or mist environment without any soil or other growing media. Instead, the roots of the plants are suspended in the air and are sprayed with nutrient-rich water.

Aeroponics is a highly efficient method of growing plants. Since the roots are not restricted by soil, they can absorb nutrients and water more easily. This allows plants to grow faster and produce higher yields. Additionally, aeroponics uses less water than traditional soil-based gardening, making it a more sustainable option.

Aeroponics systems can be set up in a variety of ways. Some systems use a closed-loop design, where the nutrient-rich water is recirculated through the system. Others use an open-loop design, where the water is constantly replenished. There are also different types of sprayers that can be used, such as high-pressure misters or low-pressure sprayers.

One of the biggest advantages of aeroponics is that it allows for precise control over the growing environment. The nutrient solution can be tailored to the specific needs of the plants, and the temperature, humidity, and light levels can all be adjusted to optimize growth. This makes aeroponics an ideal method for growing high-value crops, such as herbs, leafy greens, and strawberries.

One of my favorite methods to grow plants without soil is through aquaponics. This method combines aquaculture, the farming of aquatic animals, with hydroponics, the growing of plants in water. The result is a sustainable and efficient system that benefits both the

require a bit more setup and maintenance than traditional soil-based gardening, the benefits in terms of efficiency, sustainability, and precision make it a worthwhile investment for any serious gardener.

### Aquaponics

In an aquaponic system, fish are raised in a tank and their waste produces ammonia. This ammonia is then converted by beneficial bacteria into nitrates, which serve as a natural fertilizer for the plants. The plants, in turn, filter the water for the fish, creating a symbiotic relationship.

One of the benefits of aquaponics is that it requires less water than traditional farming methods. The water in the system is recirculated, so there is no need for constant watering. Additionally, the plants grow faster and produce higher yields due to the nutrient-rich water.

There are several types of aquaponic systems, including raft systems, media-based systems, and vertical systems. Each has its own advantages and disadvantages, depending on factors such as space, budget, and the types of plants and fish being grown.

Overall, aquaponics is a fascinating and rewarding way to grow plants without soil. It's a sustainable and efficient method that allows for the production of fresh, healthy food while minimizing waste and environmental impact.

moss, but it may not be as efficient as the other methods.

Ultimately, the best method for growing plants without soil will depend on your individual needs and preferences. Whether you are looking to grow plants indoors or outdoors, on a small or large scale, there is a method out there that will work for you. By considering factors like cost, maintenance, and sustainability, you can make an informed decision about which method to use.

### Conclusion

After researching and experimenting with different methods of growing plants without soil, I have found that each method has its own benefits and drawbacks.

Hydroponics is a great way to grow plants quickly and efficiently, but it requires a lot of upfront investment and maintenance. Aquaponics is a more sustainable option that combines aquaculture and hydroponics, but it can be more complex to set up and maintain.

Aeroponics is a newer method that uses mist to deliver nutrients to the roots of plants, but it can be expensive and requires more technical knowledge to set up.

Finally, geponics is a more traditional method that uses soil alternatives like coconut coir or peat.

## 9 Ways Plants Can Help Predict a Cold and Snowy Winter According to the Old Farmers' Almanac

- **Acorns:** If acorns are falling heavily, a cold winter is incoming.
- **Walnuts:** A large crop of walnuts signals a cold, snowy winter. Thick nutshells can also predict severe winter weather.
- **Berries:** Abundant berry crops signal a cold and snowy winter.
- **Persimmon Seeds:** According to the Old Farmers' Almanac, when a persimmon is cut open, the shape of the seed can help predict the incoming winter's weather. If the seed is shaped like a spoon, the snow will be plentiful.
- **Flowers:** If flowers are holding onto their blooms late in the season or have a second bloom in the fall, they're forecasting a cold winter.
- **Leaves:** If leaves fall early, they're forecasting a mild winter. When they fall late, winter will be severe. If the leaves wither on the branches rather than falling, winter will be extra-cold.
- **Onion Skins:** Thicker onion skins indicate an incoming cold winter.
- **Apple Skins:** Tougher and thicker apple skins indicate a cold winter ahead.
- **Corn Husks:** Thicker and tighter corn husks than usual indicate a cold winter.

