



# *The First Bloom*

GARDEN CLUB  
FEDERATION OF  
PENNSYLVANIA  
District I

A triannual publication of  
GCFP District I  
Winter 2025

# The First Bloom

FEBRUARY 2025

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Cover photo courtesy of Wendy Fox, Uwchlan Garden Club

All District I members are encouraged to submit a gardening article, personal gardening recognition or other pertinent information to share with others.

Editor: [Marilyn Small](#)

**Deadline Dates for Submission:** Spring/Summer Issue June 1  
Fall Issue October 1

Member of National Garden Clubs (NGC), Central Atlantic Region (CAR-SGC),  
and Garden Club Federation of Pennsylvania (GCFP)



Click [HERE](#) for complete article on  
"How Birds Survive in Winter Weather"



### DISTRICT I OFFICERS

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Ellen Barron

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#### RECORDING SECRETARY

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Lorraine Troiano

#### THE COUNTRY GARDENERS

Bonnie Kushnerick

#### COVERED BRIDGE GC

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#### ELVERSON GC

Debbie Wright

#### FOUR SEASONS GC OF

KENNETT SQUARE

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#### RADLEY RUN GARDEN &

SOCIAL CLUB

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#### SPADE & TROWEL CLUB

Meredith Dragish

#### THE GC OF SPRINGFIELD

Louise Sheehan

#### UWCHLAN GC

Terry Miller

#### VILLANOVA GC

Laurie McGrath

#### WAYNE WOODS GC

Anne McCrary





*"Miracles are happening all around us all the time, but only those who developed an attitude of gratitude happen to notice them."* ~ Unknown

## Pam's Points

During this past holiday season, many of the clubs in District I had successful fairs, sales, workshops, community events, and luncheons. I want to highlight one of these events -- The Radley Run Garden Club Luncheon and Fashion Show was a wonderful event with vendors, a fashion show featuring club members as models, a raffle, and a delicious luncheon. This group has continued to raise funds for major scholarships to three local colleges and universities. It was my pleasure to attend this event for the last two years, and I encourage you to attend this year.

I am proud to be the Director of District I, and look forward to the new year filled with amazing programs, GCFP webinars, installations of new officers, and hearing about the needs of our clubs.

Today is sunny but cold with some leftover snow on the ground, and I can see some of my Hellebore flowers peeking out from under the snow and leaves. Although winter is in full swing, I can't help but have

hope for the upcoming spring with its green leaves pushing their way through the ground. However, the winter landscape is beautiful in its own way with the structure of the bare deciduous trees and the green conifers, the red berries on the holly, winterberries, and heavenly bamboo, the ice on my stream and pond, and the tracks of wildlife in the remaining snow. Nature has a way of hibernating, and we should also take time to replenish our strength and energy for the busy spring ahead.

We have much to look forward to:

- \* GCFP District XI Webinar on January 23
- \* GCFP District VII Webinar on February 11
- \* Our February 13 meeting and presentation on "Edible Flowers" (on Zoom)
- \* The Philadelphia Flower Show in early March
- \* The GCFP Convention in King of Prussia in April

and many other fun activities. But for now, I will enjoy sitting by the fire with my blanket, drinking my tea, and looking through books about plants and nature.

*~ Pam*



## DISTRICT I FALL MEEETING

### Thanksgiving Floral Design Challenge

On November 13, District I members gathered for a meeting and the 2nd Annual Floral Design Challenge. Eight teams participated in the challenge. Each team was given a container with oasis and a bundle of grocery store flowers. Supplemental items for arrangements were available for all to use in their designs. Members enjoyed watching the teams work together to assemble their design. A raffle was used to decide the winning entry by having the most tickets.

Congratulations to Pam McKee and Ruth David, Uwchlan Garden Club, for their win.



Pam McKee and Ruth David  
Uwchlan Garden Club



Janet Fassbender and Bonnie  
Kushnerick, Country Gardeners



Mary Wickerham &  
Patricia Beaton, Elverson GC



Meredith Dragish & Katharine  
Briglia, Spade & Trowel



Maryann DeSanto &  
Janet Lewis, GC of Springfield



Louise Vance & Ellen Barron  
Radley Run GC



Mary Ann Hanagan and Linda  
Southerling, Four Seasons GC



Kathy Tauber & Sara Sprouse  
Covered Bridge GC





## HOLIDAY DECORATING

Live materials holiday decorating from some of our members.



Jane Nyiri's Christmas Cactus  
Garden Club of Springfield



Maryann DeSanto's Window Box  
Garden Club of Springfield



Nancy Cuttic's Vignette  
Uwchlan Garden Club



Nancy Cuttic's Outdoor Planter  
Uwchlan Garden Club



Maryhelen Kobylaz's Outdoor Planter  
Garden Club of Springfield



Marilyn Small's Window Box  
Uwchlan Garden Club



Nancy Cuttic's Centerpiece  
Uwchlan Garden Club



Wendy Fox's Christmas Eve Table  
Uwchlan Garden Club



Marilyn Small's Tree  
Uwchlan Garden Club



Muriel  
McDaniel's  
Tree

Radley Run  
Garden Club





## GCFP 96<sup>th</sup> CONVENTION

### A GARDENING REVOLUTION

APRIL 6 - 8, 2025

The Alloy Hotel, King of Prussia

A DoubleTree by Hilton



Hosted by District XI, Karen Wychock, Chair

### REGISTRATION FORM IN THE *KEYSTONE GARDENER* CONVENTION EDITION

or on the [GCFP website](#).

Register early to attend your first-choice events. **Deadline is February 23, 2025.**

\$25 late fee when postmarked between February 23 - March 1, 2025

No registrations or refunds after March 1, 2025

### HOTEL RESERVATION INFORMATION

[The Alloy Hotel](#), 301 W Dekalb Pike, King of Prussia

Room Rate \$180 + 10% tax per room

Includes breakfast for double occupancy

Additional guests subject to a \$10 fee

GROUP CODE: CDTGCF (deadline for group rate is March 21, 2025)

Phone 601-337-1200

GO TO [GCFP WEBSITE](#) FOR HOTEL LINK

Free Parking

Valley Forge National Park Trolley Tours

Renee Tuchi Floral Designer - Dinner Speaker

"LiberTEA Party" with Martha Washington

Judges Council Luncheon & Program - Frances Thrash

Marketplace Vendors

Workshops & Speakers

Installation of GCFP Officers

Convention Raffle Drawing



## PHILADELPHIA America's Garden Capital

Spring will soon be here! It will be an excellent time to start exploring our area's many beautiful gardens. Use the [Garden Capital's Passport](#) to log your garden visits.



## DID YOU KNOW?

### THE FASCINATING PHENOMENON OF FASCIATION!

Also known as crested, fasciation is a malformation of plants commonly presented as elongated, flattened flower heads as if several stems were fused.



Read more about fasciation [HERE](#).

# GCFP 2024 CONVENTION TRASH TO TREASURE

## “Revolutionary Birdhouse”

### Contest Rules

Valley Forge is historically significant for winter encampment (1777-1778), where General George Washington’s Continental Army camped for essential training, transforming the army into an effective fighting force. The soldiers endured extreme cold, hunger, and disease. They had to overcome such challenges that made Valley Forge a symbol of American perseverance and resilience.

Recognizing the sacrifices and determination of the Revolutionary War generation, GCFP 2025 Trash-to-Treasure contest will showcase the design and construction of a functional revolutionary bird-house for the garden, utilizing recycled materials as described below. A patriotic birdhouse design may also be used to celebrate the upcoming semi-quincentennial anniversary (250 years) of America.

**Specifications:**

- 1. Bird house design theme will acknowledge the revolutionary period setting at Valley Forge including log and stone-house architecture and other creative revolutionary themes. Construction materials will primarily include recyclables.
- 2. Dimensions: No larger than 15” x 15” mounting surface. Height limited to 18,”
- 3. Weight: No more than 20 lbs., including mounting surface.
- 4. Materials: All types of repurposed materials including wood, stone, limited metal (for bird safety), glass, other recyclables. Approximately 20% of the design may include functional materials such as glue and paint.
- 5. Entry must include a 3 x 5 card: Front - Title and material list. Back - District, Garden Club, Designer(s) name and mailing address. Entry may be the work of more than one.

**ONLY ONE ENTRY FROM EACH DISTRICT**

Selection method is determined by the district. District entries selected for convention competition must be submitted on Sunday, April 6, from 1-5 PM, at the designated area of the Alloy Hotel. Judging will be at 5:15 PM. Entries are not to be judged under the same standards as a flower show.

**Questions?**

Please contact Trash-to-Treasure Co-Chairs - Naser Chowdhury and Marsha Chowdhury.  
Email: [chowdhnm@gmail.com](mailto:chowdhnm@gmail.com), Phone: 484-432-6386



**SCALE OF POINTS FOR JUDGING**

Conformance (fits within stated dimensions, weight) ..	20 pts
Artistic Concept (creative use of recycled materials) ...	40 pts
Expression (interpretation of theme) .....	20 pts
Execution (workmanship) .....	<u>20 pts</u>
TOTAL .....	100 pts



## NGC SCHOOLS INFO

### Environmental



### Gardening



### Flower Show

Become a Flower Show Judge!



### Landscape Design



For more detailed info and registration

go to <https://gardenclub.org/our-schools>

## Subscribe to *The National Gardener*

The official publication of National Garden Clubs published quarterly. Subscribe [HERE](#)

## NGC's GRANT and PROGRAM INFORMATION

### **Plant America - Landscape for Wildlife**

Have your garden registered as a  
NGC Certified Wildlife Habitat  
More Information [HERE](#)

### **Plant America Community Project Grant**

Helps enhance and beautify our public areas and  
community gardens. April 1 - October 15  
More Information [HERE](#)

### **Plant America, Feed America**

Focused on donating produce that NGC's members have  
harvested from their own gardens.  
More Information [HERE](#)

### **Plant-A-Tree - formerly known as Penny Pines**

New donation process guidelines. [HERE](#)

### **Native Plant and Wildflowers Educational Program** [HERE](#)

Up to \$500 is available to be used toward an educational  
program on the subject of native plants and wildflowers.

### **Plant America - Plant for Pollinators**

Support birds, bees, and other insects.  
Certify your pollinator garden.  
More Information [HERE](#)

### **Natural Disaster Grant**

Apply for garden-related restoration efforts to  
replant parks, and municipal gardens due to  
natural disasters.  
More Information [HERE](#)

### **Youth Pollinator Gardens Grant**

Up to \$200 is available for projects that include  
educational materials on the vital role  
pollinators play in nature and youth involvement  
More Info [HERE](#)  
Youth Pollinator Power Book [HERE](#)

### **Espoma - Organic plant foods and soils**

Applications accepted from  
Oct. 1, 2024, through May 31, 2025  
[Apply HERE](#)

### **Ames Tools - Free garden tools for your club!**

Applications accepted from Jan. 1, 2025, through Mar. 1, 2025

[Apply for garden tools](#) up to a \$250 value for your community garden or garden therapy project.

## 2025 NGC CONVENTION

May 18-21, 2025

The Embassy Suites Hotel  
North Charleston, SC





## CLUB NEWS



### GARDEN CLUB OF BALA CYNWYD - Lorraine Troiano

Garden Club of Bala Cynwyd had a formal tea for our December meeting at Merion Tribute House. The program, "Growing an Herbal Garden," was given by tea sommelier Karen Donnelly of Greenhault Tea. Members enjoyed the tasting of a variety of teas and delicious delicacies.



In November, we had a youth program about owls at Ludington Library. Participants made two adorable owl crafts.

The next general meeting will be held on Thursday, February 6, at Jenkins Arboretum. The program will be "Native Spring Ephemerals."

In May, we are celebrating our 100-year club anniversary with a party at the Historic Harriton House. Our club maintains the perennial garden in front of the historic house.

GCBC will host the 2025 District I Luncheon on September 10, 2025. It will be held at Overbrook Country Club in Radnor, PA. We have a committee coordinating this important event and look forward to seeing you there.



### THE COUNTRY GARDENERS - Bonnie Kushnerick

We had a fun collection of fall programs and activities. We kicked off the year with a program on using our herbs. **Jane Nyiri** and **Lisa Craft**, two local Master Gardeners had lots of fun ideas that we made and tasted. We also had a program by the Xerces Society and learned about the impact of outdoor lighting and how it disturbs the communication of insects, fireflies and migrating birds.

We did a horticulture therapy project with the residents of Fair Acres, making pictures from dried ferns and flowers. In December our club program was to make boxwood kissing balls for ourselves – or to give as gifts.

We also held two fundraising wreath decorating workshops. This was our second year that we partnered with and used the Middletown Library facilities. It was amazing to see the beautiful finished wreaths.

In January we will officially welcome two new members to our club!

We are looking forward to winter/spring activities. We kick off the year with our annual luncheon in January at a favorite Italian restaurant, and have programs planned on trends in sustainable landscape design, the seasons of Peonies, and a guided tour at Jenkins Arboretum to hopefully see the spring ephemerals, and an Ikebana demonstration.

Our spring fundraising event will be a Spring Fling Tea Party on April 10. It will be at Temenos Retreat Center in West Chester featuring a great three-course menu, with some repeat favorite treats from our last tea and a few new items. There will be raffle items, just in time for Mother's Day gifts! Look for the advertisement and link for registration. Our last tea was a sell out!



## COVERED BRIDGE GARDEN CLUB - Kathleen Tauber

We began our season once again by meeting for lunch at the Duportail House in Chesterbrook next to Valley Forge Park. With this being our 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, we celebrated with a number 60 arrangement of cupcakes and a favor for each attendant consisting of a copy of Bulb & Bloom: a Guide to Planting & Visiting Gardens in Pennsylvania, with a festive bow tied to a commemorative pen clipped to it.

Four of us attended the district meeting in November, which included a centerpiece challenge. Two of our members participated as a team -- **Kathy Tauber and Sara Sprouse**.

Our **October** meeting featured a field trip to the Morris Arboretum to see the many beautiful spots, including several large sculptures.



**November's** guest speaker, Deb Stevens from Mostardi's, guided us through a project in creating a harvest pumpkin decorated with artificial leaves, flowers, and succulents that was placed on a platter which was also adorned with similar items. This centerpiece should last through several of the upcoming holidays.

**December's** meeting and luncheon was once again held at the Overbrook Country Club in Villanova, where we enjoyed a delicious and festive affair. In the spirit of the season of giving, attendees were requested to bring gift cards to be donated to a charitable cause.



## FOUR SEASONS GARDEN CLUB - Mary Ann Hanagan

**October Program:** Four Seasons Garden Club had a presentation by Paul Sheetz on "Orchids 101." Paul critiqued members' orchids, and repotted orchids that were in need. Paul also discussed potential problems with the orchids and types of mediums available for repotting their orchids.

**November Program:** Members decorated floral rings with fall flowers. Member **Soraya Goldstein** led this program.

Also in November, Four Seasons, along with Spade and Trowel, decorated Kennett Square's flower containers with winter greenery for the holiday season.

**December Program:** Our members hosted our annual Christmas arrangement fundraiser. We had 34 people sign up to make a Christmas arrangement, with homemade breakfast provided by our members.







- Debbie Wright

December meeting also featured the fun of a make-and-take ornament with live sedums. Many unique and festive ornaments were created by our members.

Every year our club participates in the holiday decorating of historic Hibernia Mansion, the former home of 19<sup>th</sup> century iron-masters. It is now a part of Chester County Department of Parks and Preservation. This year the theme was "Toys You Grew Up With." Members gathered teddy bears and other décor items to decorate and bring the theme to life. The result was a whimsical and fun teddy bear tea party. Hibernia opens to the public for tours of the decorated mansion.



Our club waited until after the holiday hustle and bustle to hold our holiday gathering. We met at Giovanni's in Elverson in early January. Live greens and holly from members' gardens created a festive atmosphere for our year end celebration.



## RADLEY RUN GARDEN and SOCIAL CLUB

- Muriel McDaniel

Fall was such an incredibly busy time for us. In November we celebrated our 50th Anniversary with an afternoon tea at the Mansion House. Members viewed a slide show, which was a retrospective of our 50 years. In November, our members took a break from preparing for our fundraiser to enjoy a trip to Bondsville Mill Park & Gardens in Downingtown. It was a gorgeous day for a tour and hike.

On December 3, our members met at the home of **Gail Smith**, where we prepared centerpieces for the luncheon and fashion show, using greens collected on the country club grounds.

Our 49<sup>th</sup> Annual Luncheon and Fashion Show fundraiser was held on December 5 and was a great success. Although the final numbers are still being tallied, we raised over \$11,000 for scholarships.



On December 6, some of our members attended a meeting and lunch at Brandywine Museum of Art to see the Critter Creations and Christmas decor. The event was hosted by the Landscape Design Council.

Our January meeting was a potluck held at the home of **Pat Kelly**.

Our members are looking forward to spring and a special trip to Shofuso Gardens in Philadelphia's Fairmount Park on March 25.



## GARDEN CLUB OF SPRINGFIELD - Louise Sheehan

Our September meeting opened with a “Mad Hatter” Tea Party. Members were encouraged to decorate a hat which expressed their personalities. Some hats had hobbies, talents, and interests of the members. Prior to the celebration, **District Director Pam Walsh** installed new members, president, vice-president, and secretary.



Two Master Gardeners, one of whom is a member, presented at the October meeting. The topic “Growing and Cooking with Herbs” provided members the opportunity to not only learn how various herbs enhance meals, but they also participated in making foods using herbs. We ended the meeting with a mini-flower show, where members displayed parallel design arrangements which they created.

Floral Designer Barbara Leiby demonstrated how to create a variety of flower arrangements during

the November meeting. Barbara created ten designs, which were raffled off to members and guests.



We ended 2024 with a holiday luncheon at The Springhaven Club in Wallingford. Members participated in a regifting exchange.

Our meetings take place at the Springfield Township Building; however, beginning this month, the building will be closed due to construction which will last for at least 15 months. We were challenged to find a new meeting location and, through the efforts of one of our members, we were able to find two. For the remainder of this season, we will meet two times at the Presbyterian Church and two times at the Environmental Center at Smedley Park, both of which are located in Springfield.



### April 14, 2025

**National Gardening Day** encourages gardeners and would-be gardeners to pick up a shovel, plant some seeds, and kick off a beautiful year of homegrown bounty.

More Info on National Gardening Day

[HERE](#)





## SPADE AND TROWEL CLUB - Meredith Dragish

The Spade & Trowel Club's annual appearance at the Creamery at Kennett Square's Holiday Village Market was our most successful year yet! We sold a variety of holiday arrangements, ornaments, greens and holiday bulbs. Many thanks to all of our wonderful members for their help in creating our offerings and working the sales booth. Special thanks go out to the HVM Committee, **Shannon Hevener, Meredith Dragish, Julie Fellingner and Katharine Briglia** for being amazing organizers, creators, hosts, math wizards and Sign Up Genius masters.



We are striving to keep the Kennett Square community beautiful through our work with the Kennett Collaborative. Through this collaboration, we have planted barrels in the Kennett Square Borough and helped to raise beautification funds with Platt's Greenhouse and the Four Seasons Club with an annual plant sale. **Diane Mateson**, along with her husband, **Anne Coleman**, & **Suzanne Pusey** planted the holiday barrels, creating beautiful, festive planters that adorned the Borough's streets this holiday season.



**Suzanne Pusey and Dede Frederick** led our annual tableside arrangement creation at our December meeting. Members brought greens from their gardens and made 80 beautiful holiday arrangements that were given to patients at Heartland Hospice in Chadds Ford and the Friends Home in Kennett.

This spring, we will be continuing our work with the Chadds Ford Historical Society by planting and maintaining the brand new herb gardens at the Barns-Brinton House. We have been tending the herb gardens at the Barns-Brinton House for over 35 years and are excited to continue the tradition with **Gerrie Lunger** and **Denise Klein** overseeing our involvement.

**Anne Coleman** and **Jill Nigro** have put a new spin on our workshops by utilizing the expertise and knowledge of our members. Each month we will visit a member's home to learn about a variety of topics ranging from terrarium building, tips to overwinter plants, vegetable garden prep, meadow gardening and much more!





## UWCHLAN GARDEN CLUB - Terry Miller

The Uwchlan Garden Club was fortunate to welcome one of its own, **Pam McKee**, as the speaker for the **October** meeting. She offered a wonderfully informative presentation on botanical dyeing and the beautiful artwork that results from the process. Continuing with our learning design types, several members submitted a petite angular design for critique.

Following the **November** Executive Committee Meeting, a "Welcome Reception" was held for 11 new members who joined in the last year. Eight were able to attend. **Pam Walsh** gave a presentation enlightening the group on the different levels of the National Garden Club. The newbies were invited to share about themselves and how they came to the group, and they also talked about their gardening backgrounds. The seasoned members in attendance also shared a bit about themselves. A short video on the history of the [Uwchlan Meetinghouse](#) (our club's historic building meeting place) was shown, and the new members were excited to get involved in the upcoming projects. Taking advantage of that enthusiasm, project opportunities began right after the reception! Several concurrent workshops were held to create items for the upcoming Christmas Fair.

The speaker at **November's** regular meeting was the beloved [Jenny Rose Carey](#), owner of Northview Gardens. She delighted the group with a pictorial and experiential overview of the Chelsea Flower Show. The design of the month was a transparency design.

All hands were on deck the first week of **December** preparing for the annual Christmas Fair on December 7. Machine and hand-tied wreaths were assembled with fresh greens, and designers were available to customize them with picks, ornaments, and bows.

A plethora of indoor and outdoor arrangements, critter ornaments, hanging decorations, antique sleds, baked goods, jams, jellies, and mustard were prepared for the public to purchase.

A Children's Corner was set up for youngsters to make a foam gingerbread man. Income over expenses exceeded \$9,000. The Uwchlan Conservation Trust held a raffle to support the upkeep of the Meeting House; several lovely items and gift certificates were generously donated by local businesses. There was no regular meeting for the month, but members gathered at the Whitford Country Club for a celebratory luncheon on the 13<sup>th</sup>.

Future projects include preparation of an entry for the Philadelphia Flower Show in March and the club's annual Plant Sale in May.



The Uwchlan Garden Club would like to congratulate our President **Terry Miller** for her successful completion of the Flower Show School requirements and achieving Accredited Judge status!





## VILLANOVA GARDEN CLUB - Laurie McGrath

We closed out the calendar year with our annual floral workshop for Meals on Wheels -- always a festive occasion! Twenty-five club members rolled up their sleeves and wielded their clippers to create 30 small, holiday arrangements to be given to the Meals on Wheels meal recipients.

Erica from MoW joined our holiday luncheon and shared the workings of her organization. This event has been held at Appleford in Villanova for several years and is the perfect location for this holiday celebration.



## WAYNE WOODS GARDEN CLUB - Anne McCrary



What a fun fall we've had with Wayne Woods Garden Club! In **October**, members enjoyed a lovely fall field trip to PHS' Meadowbrook Farms. Later that month, we gathered to make arrangements for Meals on Wheels recipients, one of our community service projects.



**November's** meeting featured Bob Mahler, a Japanese-trained bonsai artist and owner of Kifu Bonsai LLC. As he created two lovely bonsai trees before our eyes, he explained the art of bonsai and shared amusing stories of his four years in Japan under the direction of world-renowned bonsai artist Susumo Sudo.



We started the holiday season with a fun hands-on activity. Members created "gift box" holiday floral arrangements at our **December** meeting for their holiday celebrations.

We'll be ringing in the new year with a garden-themed **Bingo Party** for members and their friends.





## SPRING BULBS IN THE WINTER

Nancy Cuttic, Uwchlan Garden Club

A garden club friend was in the garden section of a large home improvement store right before Thanksgiving just as an employee was removing a display of **spring bulbs** to make room for poinsettias. She asked him what would happen to the bulbs, and he replied that they would be thrown away!

It felt like a dagger to the heart to waste all those precious promises of spring. I was fortunate enough to receive some of the bulbs that she procured to share with my neighbors for a **workshop on layering bulbs in a flowerpot** during January.

### POTTING BULBS

One of the easiest things to do with the bulbs is to plant them in a pot of soil, water them, and leave them outdoors in the sun, rain, and snow. They are accustomed to being frozen in the ground and should bloom as if planted in your garden. I had a garden club friend who forgot to plant her bulbs one fall, so she just tossed them all into a large pot and threw dirt over it figuring that she had nothing to lose. To her surprise, the pot bloomed in the spring. It's just that easy.

I gathered my non-gardening neighbors for a planting party. They each brought their 15-inch diameter pot filled halfway with soil. To make planning easier, I sorted the bulbs according to bloom time: early spring, mid-spring, and late spring, as well as according to height.

The directions for the depth to plant the bulbs were on the packages, so we planted them in layers, beginning with the deepest ones. We positioned the **allium** in the center since they are the tallest blooms surrounded by the **tulips, then daffodils and hyacinths**. Filling in each layer with potting soil, we topped them off with some **ranunculus corms** and a little mulch. The pots were placed outside with our fingers crossed for a delightful display when winter ends.

For those whose pots couldn't handle all the bulbs, attendees took home some daffodil bulbs to plant in one small pot and some hyacinths in another small pot. These pots could be left outside or brought indoors to speed up their blooming, which is called forcing.

### FORCING BLUBS

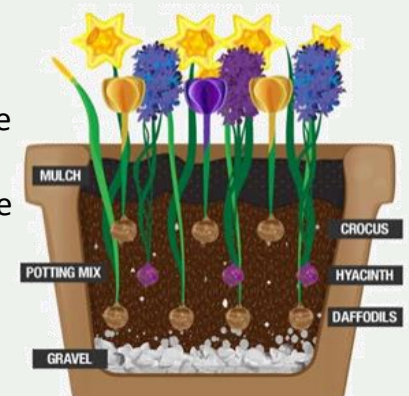


One of my friends wanted to know more about forcing bulbs indoors to add some life and color during the dreary days of winter. I told her that **Paperwhites and amaryllis** are always in my home around Christmas. Since the paperwhites were finished, and the amaryllis were sending off their last shoots, I brought out my hyacinth vases. These are small clear jars with a narrow opening to fit the end of the hyacinth bulb. Fill the bottom with water, and the hyacinth will send out roots, then slowly burst forth a fragrant flower, which brings about a great anticipation of spring.

The other option is to simply plant in a small pot with soil or stones, water them and keep them indoors as you watch them sprout forth. In both cases, pack your patience as it takes time, but it is worth the wait.

### PLANT A CONTAINER FULL OF COLORFUL BULBS

homedepot.com





## COMMITTEE REPORTS



### Awards – Marilyn Small, Uwchlan GC

I hope that clubs submitted awards to recognize your achievements. We'll have to wait for the convention in King of Prussia, April 6-8, for the results. Good Luck to all District I clubs who entered.

If your club did not enter any applications for awards and would like to do so next year, please contact me for information and help. In the meantime, you can look over the [GCFP Awards Manual](#) and other documents and accompanying information on the GCFP Website under "[Awards](#)."

As always, if you have any questions about awards, please contact me [mmsmall@comcast.net](mailto:mmsmall@comcast.net).



**GCFP Awards Page on the  
GCFP Website**  
[pagardenclubs.org](http://pagardenclubs.org)



### Seed Money

Marjorie Stillwell Sears, Old York Road GC, XI

Be sure to apply for "**Seed Money**" for your planting projects. Application deadline is February 15, 2025.

Winners will be announced at the Convention in April.

You can access the fillable Seed Money Application from the GCFP Website under "Awards." [Seed Money Application](#)

**HAPPY IRIS DAY MAY 8TH**



### Horticulture – Sharon Richardson, Uwchlan GC

If you are frustrated that you can't garden in the winter months, the good news is that we are surrounded by learning opportunities and nature activities, too numerous to mention. Many activities are free, some are virtual, and some offer handicap accessibility. For example, you can vicariously travel all over the world to visit gardens with Scott Arboretum's Thursday lectures. Jenkins Arboretum offers free weekly nature walks AND free golf cart walks. I started creating a calendar to list them all and filled a page before completing two gardens!!

Most of the sites have either a "continuing education," "programs," or "events" link – have fun checking them out!

[Ambler Arboretum](#)

[Brandywine Conservancy](#)

[Chanticleer](#) (TBA in February)

[Jenkins Arboretum](#)

[Ladew Gardens](#)

Longwood Gardens:  
[Education](#) and [Exhibits](#)

[Mt. Cuba](#)

[Scott Arboretum](#)

[Welkinweir](#) (TBA)

[Winterthur](#)

For a listing of even MORE garden opportunities, go to [America's Garden Capital](#)

## COMMITTEE REPORTS Continued

### Horticulture Therapy - Bonnie Kushnerick, The Country Gardeners

I hope that your clubs have included a meeting/program in your annual plans to engage with residents in one of the many elder communities. The time spent with the residents always bring smiles to their faces and provides a much needed break from the routine.

I thought I'd share a few ideas, in case you are not sure where to start.

#### Pressed Flower Pictures

Using inexpensive frames and purchased pressed flowers and ferns, the residents arranged them on the card stock. We then sprayed the card stock with spray glue and replaced the flowers, covered with plastic and into the frames. Ta Da!



#### Simple Flower Arrangements

You can find a wide variety of popcorn boxes on Amazon. A plastic solo cup fits easily inside that holds the water, and flowers. Additional decorations with stickers attached to plastic straws adds to the fun.



#### Spring Flowers

We purchased pre-planted spring bulbs and repotted into "soup" cans covered with a piece of fabric and ribbon.

#### Amaryllis can be spring flowers too!

Last year I found some beautiful "cherry blossom" amaryllis on sale in late Jan. We planted them and enjoyed the blooms just in time for Easter and cherry blossom season!





## COMMITTEE REPORTS Continued

### Environmental - Janet Fassbender, The Country Gardeners

#### CHANTICLEER PARTICIPATES IN WATERSHED PROTECTION PROGRAM



chanticleer  
a pleasure garden

[Chanticleer](#), in Wayne, Pennsylvania, is a favorite public garden spot for inspiring visitors of all ages. Chanticleer gardeners also strive to reduce its environmental impact. Solar panels produce 20% of their electricity, and 50,000 gallons of rainwater is collected in cisterns for irrigation. Most paths are made of permeable materials. More and more turf is being replaced with meadows, sedges, ferns, and other native plants as alternatives to lawn.



Bell's Run is a stream that runs through 50 acres of Chanticleer's property. In May 2024, Chanticleer became the first public garden to join the [Darby and Cobbs Creek Community Science \(DCCCS\)](#) Program, which is a joint research project between the Darby Creek Valley Association and [Willistown Conservation Trust](#). In this collaboration, gardeners and volunteers from DCCCS monitor the health of the stream and measure key water quality indicators once per month. Measurements identify healthy areas of the stream that need protection as well as identifying those areas that are in need of restoration.

### PHS Liaison - Sharon Fullerton, GC of Bala Cynwyd and Sin Gogolak, PHS

The 2025 PHS Philadelphia Flower Show, themed *Gardens of Tomorrow*, invites attendees to envision how gardening today can cultivate a healthier planet for the future. From March 1-9, 2025, at the Pennsylvania Convention Center, the show will feature innovative exhibits that blend nature's beauty with human ingenuity.

Tickets are now on sale via the [PHS website](#), and at other local establishments. Members' Preview Day is on February 28, 2025. To avoid the crowds, become a member and join now!



**Volunteers are essential** to the event's success, assisting with guest services, information dissemination, and more. No prior experience is necessary as training is provided, and volunteers can choose roles and shifts that suit their preferences. Benefits **include** complimentary show admission on the day of service, making it a rewarding way to support both the community and the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society's year-round greening initiatives.

If you are interested in attending or volunteering, learn more at [PHSOnline.org](#)

You can also check out the [PHS website](#) for more Flower Show opportunities such as Giving the Gift of the Flower Show, Flowers After Hours -- an after-hours dance party, early morning guided tours, Butterflies Live, and Potting Parties -- container gardening workshop.

## What Flowers Can You Eat?



Find out at the District I  
Meeting and Presentation

**February 13, 2025**

**6:30 p.m.**

On Zoom

Presented by:

**Terry Miller**

**Uwchlan Garden Club**

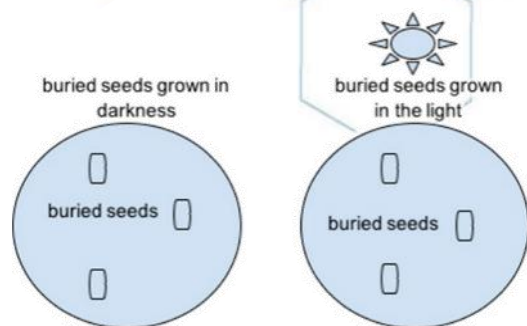
Link will be sent closer to date

## KIDS' CORNER

### SEEDLING SCIENCE EXPERIMENT

Do seeds grow taller in the dark or in the light?

Try this experiment with your children, grandchildren, or youth group, and let them find out the answer for themselves AND see what other different results there are!



Find the experiment details [HERE](#).

University of Notre Dame Center for STEM Education



## GCFP District Webinars

**All are welcome to attend!**

January 23, 2025, 6:30 p.m.

**District XI**

"How to Enter and Volunteer for the Philadelphia Flower Show"

February 11, 2025, 6:30 P.M.

**District VII**

"Divide and Conquer: Dividing, Transplanting, and Overwintering Plants"

March 18, 2025, 6:30 p.m.

**District IV**

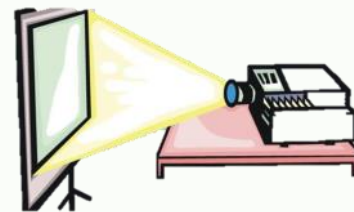
"Moonlight Gardens"

**Get the Zoom link from your  
District Director**

## DISTRICT PROJECTOR

District I owns a projector for use within the district for presentations.

Contact Pam Walsh, District Director  
[pamyoga@aol.com](mailto:pamyoga@aol.com)



## Photo Contest

Would you like to see one of your personal photos showcased on the cover of the next "The First Bloom?" Send your best shot of a "first bloom" from your garden or yard, or a special shot of a seasonal "first bloom" of one of your club's tours or projects.

- \* Keep in mind that the next issue is June 2025; summer "first bloom" shots would be best.
- \* Be sure to take some winter pics for next year's February issue.
- \* Pics must be a vertical size, not horizontal.

Send your photos to Marilyn Small

[mmsmall@comcast.net](mailto:mmsmall@comcast.net).





## PARADISE UNDER GLASS

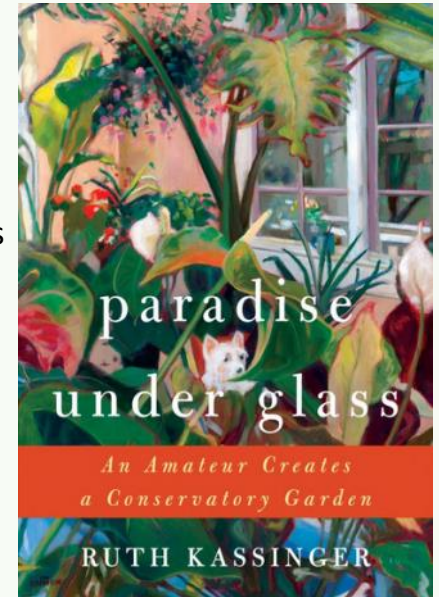
Longwood Gardens' Community Reads 2025 Selection

Sharon Richardson, Uwchlan Garden Club

Each year for the past decade, Longwood Gardens has selected a book for their [Community Reads Program](#). This year's choice is *Paradise Under Glass: The Education of an Indoor Gardener* by Ruth Kassinger. In December, I received a gift from Longwood for District I -- a box of Ruth's book.

Longwood Gardens' 2025 Community Read selection takes you on one woman's journey to create a beautiful indoor garden at her home as a place of learning and sanctuary after an inspiring visit to a public garden conservatory. What a perfect complement to our own journey in creating [Longwood Reimagined/A New Garden Experience](#) ... which includes a stunning new conservatory, the preservation of a historic indoor garden by acclaimed Brazilian landscape architect Roberto Burle Marx, and other memorable experiences. ([Longwood Gardens, 2025](#))

*Paradise Under Glass* is a witty, absorbing memoir about one woman's unlikely desire to build, stock, and tend a small conservatory in her suburban Maryland home. ([Kassinger, 2025](#))



I started 2025 with this book, and I am delighted with my choice. I learned so much about plants, history, conservatories, and plant exploration. The book really resonated with me because I consider myself a relatively new gardener, having come to this hobby as a senior citizen and because I have been fantasizing about creating my own sunroom in our new retirement home.

Coincidentally, last spring, my garden club started a book club. We each take a turn selecting a nature or garden book. Some of us have chosen titles from the Longwood Reads [previous selections](#) (scroll down). I have the box of *Paradise Under Glass* ready for my club. Longwood Gardens also provides [discussion questions](#) for your group.

This box of books will be available on rotation to all District I Garden Clubs who would like to borrow it. Any club president interested in borrowing the books should [e-mail me](#) with the subject line BOOK RESERVATION.

NOTE 1: On March 29, Ruth Kassinger will be speaking at Longwood Gardens. Members of Longwood Gardens may attend in person or virtually. Free [online registration](#).

NOTE 2: You can view Ruth Kassinger's "Conservatory" video [HERE](#). View her "Living Wall" video [HERE](#).

## BIRDING THROUGH THE SEASONS - FEBRUARY

Dan Brauning - [Pennsylvania Game Commission](#)

Winter's grip may be loosening in late February. Resident birds begin to sing during the early warm spells sometimes seen this month. The songs of the Northern Cardinal, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, and Song Sparrow are a welcome call to the coming spring.

In addition to the resident birds' increasing activity, some birds begin to migrate back from the south. Waterfowl, such as geese, Tundra Swans, American Black Ducks, Mallards, Northern Pintails, Canvasbacks, Buffleheads, and Common Mergansers may begin to return to the Commonwealth this month. Tundra swans and snow geese are picking up in numbers as migrants join those that over-wintered along the lower Susquehanna River or at Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area, in Lancaster County. Also, Horned Larks, Eastern Bluebirds, Song Sparrows, and a few robins begin their return to the state in February.



Jacob Dingle/PGC Photo



@connorCharchuk Macaula Library

Red-winged Blackbirds, arriving in droves overnight, can be impressive. One day not a blackbird may be seen or heard and on the next morning, dozens can be seen and heard. The male red-wing's song, a gurgling, metallic "konk-la-ree," can suddenly fill a once quiet marsh or weedy wetland with such noisome melody in late February. Male red-wings arrive first, generally establishing territory before the females arrive a week or two later in March.

Where there are some thawed out spots, the American Woodcock begins its unique nasal "peeent" call and courtship flight sounds, a certain sign that the grip of winter has slackened. You may not think of February as nesting season for birds, but the Great-horned Owl and some Bald Eagles are sitting on eggs by late February, occasionally sitting on eggs through snowstorms.



Friends of Big Bear Valley cam

Like in January, open water and fields provide the best birding anywhere in Pennsylvania. Any persistent wild fruits attract a wide variety of birds as the food stores get thin in late winter.



February 3 is *Feed the Birds Day*.

Read [HERE](#) for more information about feeding the birds.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

Open to the public. Support our fellow clubs.

### GCFP WEBINARS - Link will be sent by DD

Thursday, January 23, 6:30 p.m.

Tuesday, February 11, 6:30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 18, 6:30 p.m.

### DISTRICT I MEETING

Thursday, February 13, 6:30 p.m.

On Zoom Link will be sent closer to date  
"Edible Flowers"

### THE COUNTRY GARDENERS

Spring Fling Tea Party

April 10, 2025, 12-2 p.m.

Join us for a delightful afternoon tea!

Savor a three-course menu

Temenos Retreat Center

1564 Telegraph Road

West Chester, PA

Tickets \$45

Online reservations:

[Country-gardeners.square.site](http://Country-gardeners.square.site)

Beautiful Raffle Items (bring cash)

The Country Gardeners

[countrygardenlima@gmail.com](mailto:countrygardenlima@gmail.com)



### NATIONAL PLANT-A-FLOWER DAY

March 12, 2025

Encourages people to plant a flower  
in honor of the vital role that flowers  
play in our ecosystems, history,  
religion, traditions, and inspiration.



## Keystone Gardener

Official Publication of the Garden Club Federation of Pennsylvania

Get all the latest GCFP news and info at your fingertips: May, July, November.

Check out GCFP's Keystone Gardener online newsletter (KG Online) [HERE](#).

Get the password from your District Director.

### NGC, GCFP, and DISTRICT I 2025 CALENDAR

January 23	District XI Webinar, 6:30 p.m., "Philadelphia Flower Show"
February 11	District VII Webinar, 6:30 p.m. "Divide and Conquer: Dividing, Transplanting, and Overwintering Plants"
February 13	District I Meeting and "Edible Flowers" presentation, 6:30 p.m.
March 18	District IV Webinar, 6:30 p.m., "Moonlight Gardens"
April 6-8	GCFP 95 <sup>th</sup> Convention, the Alloy Hotel, King of Prussia, PA
April 22	<a href="#">Earth Day</a>
April 25	<a href="#">Arbor Day</a>
May 18-21	NGC Convention, The Embassy Suites Hotel, North Charleston, SC
June 9-10	GCFP Board Meeting, Boalsburg, PA
September 10	District I Meeting and Luncheon hosted by Garden Club of Bala Cynwyd

## Have Something to Say??

If you would like to submit an original seasonal gardening article or poem to be published in the next newsletter, send it by the submission deadline date to

Marilyn Small, Editor [mmsmall@comcast.net](mailto:mmsmall@comcast.net)