

BUDS AND BLOOMS

and very chilly weather!

Plant America: Pennsylvania Celebrates Nature and Embraces the Future

From our Director's Desk

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the New Year. I hope everyone's holiday was joy filled and peaceful. We have an exciting few months of meetings and presentations. We have three great programs in the upcoming months. Save the dates for March 09, 2026 (Zoom, hosted by Milford Garden Club), June 08, 2026 in-person, hosted by Allentown Garden Club **at Emmaus Moravian Church in Emmaus, PA**, and September 09, 2026 (in-person, hosted by South Schuylkill Garden Club, location to be announced shortly). There will be more information coming soon.

I also wanted you to know we have some additional programs which will be sent out either as Zoom links or videos. I hope to recruit some members from various clubs to create some videos or provide a Zoom presentation. I just sent one out today on Exhibition Tables by our amazingly talented Chris Leskosky. It was very dynamic. We have so many talented people in our clubs and I think it would be awesome to have programs on Healing Gardens, Table Décor for Valentines and/or a flower arrangement, Awards information, a presentation from a speaker from Mt. Cuba, and something on planters and/or hanging baskets and wreaths. I'm hoping that will help to fight the winter doldrums which I can say I'm currently experiencing. If you have any interest in contributing, please feel free to contact me. If I don't hear from you, I will be asking the presidents to help me locate our stars...and we are filled with stars.

Thank you again for everything you do for the organization.

Regards,

Claire Kukielka, District II/III Director

Director's Report to the GCFP

I am happy to report that District II/III has been very busy. Our clubs have taken field trips such as a tulip tour by the Garden Club of Montrose and a trip to Morris and Scott Arboretum by the Bethlehem Garden Show. Bethlehem went to Shirley Moser's Delightful Dahlias as well as Ott's Exotic Plants. The Reading Garden Club visited Glick's Greenhouse. South Schuylkill Garden Club visited a native Plant Oasis at the property of a Master gardener.

Upper Perkiomen poses a Plant challenge each year to their members. This year's subjects were Mouse Melons and cotton. We participated in a Citizen Science Project through the leadership of our own Diana Rudloff (Upper Perkiomen Garden Club) and a bird count monitored by Janet Hurlbrink (Reading Garden Club). We have had strong leadership when it comes to Conservation and are so proud that Marsha and Naser Chowdhury supervise and administer our Trash to Treasure Program.

There have been four plant sales held by the Reading Garden Club, Allentown Garden Club, Pottstown Garden Club, and Milford Garden Club. There was also a plant/bake sale/garage sale by Parkland Garden Club. We have had three garden tours- Parkland, Milford, and Emmaus Garden Clubs. Upper Perkiomen participated in a Community Garden Open House. Bethlehem Garden Club held a Beautiful Blooms Competition in Bethlehem. Milford Garden Club maintains 24 planters in their village in addition to the gardens and public areas they maintain. Hazleton Garden Club found a unique way to enjoy a member's garden with a private tour of their garden. South Schuylkill Garden Club also participated in two community events.

Director's Report con't: Arbor Day saw the Parkland Garden Club contributing 800+ seedlings to first graders in the Parkland School system as well as a program at the local elementary schools on Arbor Day. Emmaus and Parkland Garden Clubs shared 5 Design Study Classes. The leader was judge emeritus, Ginnie Tietjens- a great example of cooperation between the clubs.

We have hosted two flower shows- Milford and Hazleton. We also hosted two meetings- Montrose in June and Emmaus in the fall. I am also happy to relay that our Allentown Garden Club recently won second prize for their club's exhibit Succulent Savvy. Parkland Garden Club and South Schuylkill Garden Clubs also noted a host of awards from their individual members at various fairs.

Schedules for Committee Chairs and President Reports 2026

Buds and Blooms Newsletter will be at its original schedule. Send suggested articles to Tracy McKay Sabocheck by the schedule below. Include any club announcements you have! Try to keep articles at 200 words. Be focused on a special topic. It may be necessary to have a Part 1 and Part 2 the next issue to fully cover the topic. Exception in size understandable to cover a particular article.

BUDS & BLOOMS Issue	Committee Written Report	Club Presidents Topic
February (Winter) Articles due starting mid January	Awards / Seed Money/Scholarships Conservation Environment/Recycling Citizen Science Education Coordinator Financial Review	Upcoming Plant Sales, Garden Tours, Flower Shows Any deaths
May (Spring) Articles due starting mid April	Life Membership Raffle Awards / Seed Money/Scholarships Hort Enrichment Laurel Awards Blue Star Marker	Upcoming Plant Sales, Garden Tours, Flower Shows, etc. Any deaths
August (Summer) Articles due starting mid July	Conservation Horticulture/Landscaping Youth Activities Habitat for Humanity Awards / Seed Money/Scholarships Bird/Raptors	Upcoming Plant Sales, Garden Tours, Flower Shows, etc. Road Trips Taken Any deaths
November (Fall) Articles due starting mid October	Habitat for Humanity Life Membership Horticulture Enrichment Citizen Scientist > Final report Floral Design Awards / Seed Money/Scholarships	Special activities your club is participating in Recommended speakers Any deaths

Please include your name, title, club directly on your submission for the Buds & Blooms. Saves me figuring out who submitted it and if I ever need to contact you.

Thank you!

Tracy McKay Sabocheck

tracyartemis@icloud.com

610-207-2103 call/text

- ** Education Coordinator – as topics arise
- ** Newsletter – four issues of Buds & Blooms
- ** Chaplain – serves at meetings
- ** Parliamentarian – serves at meetings

Date for District Meetings	Report	Activity
March	Awards Birds/Raptors Horticulture/Landscaping Conservation Horticulture Enrichment	Chaplain – Invocation/Benediction Parliamentarian – position Club President Reports Trash to Treasure
June	Blue Star Marker Citizen Scientist Habitat for Humanity Raffle Youth Activity	Chaplain – Invocation/Benediction Parliamentarian – position Club President Reports District Raffle
September	Awards/Grants/Scholarships Laurel Awards Life Membership Environmental/Recycling	Chaplain – Invocation/Memorial/Benediction Parliamentarian – position Laurel Awards – presentation District Raffle – coordinate Club President Reports



An Amazing Fascinating Program to have invite everyone you know to it!

Title:
Hummingbirds: Jewels of the Air

Contact:
Sandy Lockerman
sandylockerman@yahoo.com or 717-329-8040

Brief Description:

Sandy Lockerman, a licensed bird bander, will discuss the intriguing world of hummingbirds. She will help you to take a look at some of their unique adaptations and migration mysteries. In addition to her ongoing ruby-throat project, she will update you on the documentation efforts being made of western hummingbirds in Pennsylvania.

Brief Bio:

Sandy has been a bird bander for 29 years and spent 16 of those years travelling annually to the large Fort Morgan, Alabama bird banding station where banding hundreds of migrating songbirds and hummingbirds was an everyday occurrence across the Gulf of Mexico. She began researching songbird migration in Pennsylvania at Wildwood Park in Harrisburg where she spent two decades as a full-time environmental educator. She became involved in 1996 with Project OwlNet and the Ned Smith Center where she bands and studies northern saw-whet owls during their autumn migration in northern Dauphin County. The past 35 years, she has been an education volunteer at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary.

Hummingbirds entered her life at Fort Morgan and she began to assist her master bander with his research of the ruby-throated hummingbird and vagrant western hummingbirds in Pennsylvania. With his relocation to New Hampshire, she continues this migration study and documenting of the western hummingbirds seen in Pennsylvania.

Upper Perkiomen Valley GC

In October one of our favorite speakers Karen Campbell presented her timely new program "Rethinking your Garden Clean-up." Using photographs taken on her property, she encouraged the transition to an eco-friendly approach to garden clean-up that supports next year's generation of pollinators and other insects and is less work. Check out her website focusonnatives.com. Our club follows her advice.

In early November, we put our butterfly garden at the Upper Perk Y to bed. The only "cleanup" we did was to pull annual zinnias and tithonia from two small patches in the garden so that we could put down plastic to suppress weeds, reducing work when we plant seeds in May. The seeds of these flowers are a valuable source of winter food for birds, especially the Goldfinches and Song Sparrows that frequent the garden year-round. To preserve this resource, we put the stalks we removed in an adjacent area where the birds can still find the seeds and insects can overwinter in the stems.



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Citizen Scientist from November, 2025: Prepare for Bird Count!

Dear Citizen Scientists,

Bird activity at my feeders is slowly increasing after low numbers this fall. In discussions with fellow local birders, we feel the lack of feeder activity is probably related to the abundance of natural food this year. Despite our moving into a drought again this year, we did have adequate rainfall till August so seeds and berries had a chance to form. Last year berries dried up in the summer.

I love seeing the return of the Juncos and White-throated Sparrows, our winter visitors from the North again. They especially enjoy the cracked corn and millet I scatter on the ground. Warning: The cracked corn can attract flocks of Cowbirds, Starlings and Red-winged Blackbirds, not my favorite feeder birds, so I try to put the corn in protected areas under shrubs.) Has anyone spotted a Fox Sparrow yet? A friend reported two in his yard today.



Above –White-throated and Junco.
Not my photo- internet stock image
but I wish I had a little pond like that.

Fox Sparrow at a friend's pond 11/17

We will begin this year's project in December and go through March. We count on just two consecutive days each month. The count is the highest number of a species seen during the two days. The counts from each day are not added together. Be sure to share interesting observations made during the count days or anytime during the month.

If you know of others in your club or another club who would enjoy counting and contributing to our project, please share this email with them. I can provide more detailed information and answer questions from anyone interested in joining us.

Diana Rudloff, Upper Perk Valley Club
diana.rudloff@outlook.com



Citizen Scientist: Bird Count! Precipitation Count! Into 2026!

Citizen Science Submitted by Diana Rudloff

District II/III conducts two Citizen Science projects. From December through March, we count birds at our feeders for two days each month. From April through October, we track daily precipitation and report monthly.

Project Feederwatch: This is our third year of counting birds for four months during the winter months when feeder activity is at its peak. Last year we recorded 1739 birds and 34 species. The top four birds counted were Juncos, House Finches, White-throated Sparrows and Cardinals. Participants choose just two consecutive days each month and report the highest number of birds by species seen at one time during those two days. Anyone interested in birds is welcome to join from those wanting to learn to identify the common birds in their yards to seasoned birders looking for those not-so-common visitors. It is not too late to join this year's group. Contact diana.rudloff@outlook.com for more information or to join this winter's group.

Precipitation Study – At the end of October we concluded the third year of our precipitation study. Participants find it interesting and helpful to record how much – or how little – rainfall they receive and to compare reports from others in the District. Below is a sample of the data collected. The chart shows the total April through October amounts for the three years of our project. If you would like to view additional detailed results or join the 2026 project, contact diana.rudloff@outlook.com.

Garden Club	Participant	Location	Project to Date '23 - '25		
			2023	2024	2025
Bethlehem	Nancy Wilkin	Bath	31.27	22.18	26.04
Bethlehem	Jim/Susan Brown	Saucon Valley	33.58	25.98	34.31
Emmaus	Kathy Longenecker	Emmaus			27.18
Hazleton	Sandy Visintainer	Drums	37.98	23.93	38.55
Milford	Karen Junior	Milford	37.35	27.60	29.86
Milford	Linda Edgar	Milford	29.15	26.31	26.32
Parkland	Helen Papathanasiou	Orefield	24.99	20.46	27.16
Parkland	Casimir Kukielka	Schnecksville	32.38	27.71	24.78
Reading	Diane Yarger	Sinking Spring	31.30	19.93	28.27
Reading	Janet Hurlbrink	Birdsboro	25.26	18.52	22.06
Reading	Linda Lehman	Alsace Township			42.77
South Schuylkill	Nancy Russial	Schuylkill Haven	30.00	13.45	33.96
South Schuylkill	Jane Kruse	Pottsville	30.95	21.00	27.80
Upper Perk Valley	Diana Rudloff	Pennsburg	29.64	21.56	35.31

Shaded cells indicate the participant was unable to report some months or reported partial months.

Trash to Treasure

Trash to Treasure- Reminder we will be judging the individual club's entries for Trash to Treasure at the March 09, 2026 District II/III meeting on Zoom. While many of the clubs submit an entry each year, for Trash to Treasure, others tend not to submit. I would encourage your club to submit one. For the clubs who have more than one entry you may have to have some kind of internal contest in advance of the March meeting. I have no doubt, District II/III will end up with a great entry which will go on to the state meeting in Erie this year which is April 26-April 28, 2026. **The entry from District II/III must be submitted by April 26, 2026 from 1-5 pm.** Remember, multiple people in your club may work together to create your entry. In order to enter our contest you will need to submit to me by March 05, 2026, so I can get the pictures to Judith Casey, President of Milford Garden club. We will then show the photos online. Each club is allowed one vote and we will vote that day on which entry we believe is the best entry to represent the district. If you wish you may submit 3 pictures that day, a front, side and back view. Please note we will also need a picture of the 3*5 card with the required specifications listed on the card.

TRASH TO TREASURE at the CONVENTION

Chair Carol McConnell, Uwchlan Garden Club, I

MystERIE by the Bay -- "A Boat for Your Book"

Lake Erie often offers a peaceful, sometimes mysterious, beautiful setting—so when the opportunity arises, hop on a boat, relax, and make the most of the day. Bring along a great book—perhaps a mystery set in a garden—and enjoy some quiet reading time on the water.

Your Challenge:

Build a boat using all types of recycled/repurposed materials, dried flowers, glass, stones, wood or metal.

Specifications:

Dimensions: No larger than 15" by 15" mounting surface. Height no taller than 18".

Weight: Less than 20 pounds including mounting surface.

Materials: Any type of repurposed material (plastic, wood, metal, glass and stone) may be used. As much as 20% of the design may be paint and glue, and remember to use dried flowers, not fresh.

Each entry should include a 3" x 5" card.

Front: Title of entry and list of materials.

Back: District, Garden Club, designer(s) name(s), and mailing address.

Entry may be the work of more than one person.

Only One Entry from Each District

Selection method is determined by the District.

District entries must be submitted at the convention by Sunday, April 26, from 1-5 p.m. Judging is at 5:15 p.m.

Not to be judged under the same standards as a flower show.

SCALE OF POINTS FOR JUDGING

Conformance (height, width, weight)	20 points
Artistic Concept (creative use of recycled materials)	50 points
Expression (interpretation of theme)	20 points
Execution (workmanship)	10 points
TOTAL	100 points

Websites & Software

Gardening websites:

- Birds and Blooms - birdsandblooms.com
- Cornell website - vegetables.cornell.edu
- Epic Gardens - epicgardening.com
- Garden Betty - gardenbetty.com
- The Horticult - thehorticult.com
- Master Gardeners - extension.psu.edu
- The National Gardener - gardenclub.org
- National Gardening Association - garden.org
- The Organic Gardener - theorganicgardener.net
- Smithsonian - <https://gardens.sl.edu>
- Tiny Farm blog - tinyfarmblog.com
- You Grow Girl - yougrowgirl.com
- A Way to Garden - awaytogarden.com

Landscape Software:

(A list of freeware for home/yard designs)

- Better Homes and Gardens Plan A Garden
- myGarden Planner
- VegPlotter
- TimberTech Deck Designer
- Lowe's Deck Designer Mobile
- Smart Draw Backyard Design Plan

Bethlehem GC: Interview with Bob and Rae Consigli



As I state in all articles, I am amazed at the talent and generosity of our members which seems to have no bounds. I recently spoke to a friend and member of the Bethlehem Garden Club who also belongs to a historical association that I belong to. This member also helped to found a new historical association in Sante Fe where he and his wife overwinter.



Originally Bob and Rae were living in New York when they went to a plant sale conducted by the Long Island Daylily Society. They were so impressed, they joined the club. This was in the late 1970s. Bill was then invited to become a daylily judge. Naturally, that required classes. Bill trained to be an Exhibition judge. There are two types of Daylily judges- Exhibition and Garden. Exhibition judges examine individual scapes by cultivars (variety and registered daylily) presented in a vase. When judging these lilies, the judge must be cognizant of an extensive list of their characteristics which include but are not limited to size, shape, form, color, height and grooming. There are also rules surrounding the presentation/posing of daylilies. There are three members on each panel of judges. Awards are given to the individual prize winners. They are also given to a best in show. Not surprisingly, judging daylilies share many similarities with judging for a NGC, National Garden Club show.

Bob's judging career included traveling to Massachusetts, New York, and Pennsylvania. Judging generally occurs during spring and summer when daylilies are in bloom. Bob enjoyed the opportunity to continue learning about daylilies as well as the collegial environment he was involved with in respect to working with the other judges. Another awesome feature of being a judge was the opportunity to work with hybridizers and learn even more about the many types of daylilies. In addition to this, Bob and Rae both met a lot of fascinating people. While Rae did not judge, she was an avid grower of daylilies. She also entered many lilies in flower shows. She enjoyed grooming and posing them to display them at their peak. Bob and Rae suggest if you are a daylily enthusiast that you join a local daylily society as well as the American Hemerocallis Society to learn more.



GC of Reading's visit to Glick's Greenhouse Poinsettia Show, Oley, PA

The Succulent Room & Tunnel of Poinsettias with a lot of dried citrus fruit!

Mid-Atlantic Nursery Trade Show 2027 by Kirk Brown

Mid-Atlantic Nursery Trade Show (MANTS for us all...) is the green industry's premiere trade show. During the second week of January in Baltimore MD, it is the place for those working with and around anything related to plants and gardening. See www.mants.com.

I have been professionally collaborating with garden clubs, non-profit horticultural associations, growers, owners, plant breeders, writers, gardeners, nurseries, garden centers, trade groups, and just great green industry friends for more than thirty years. For most of the last twenty years, that meant I have been in Baltimore working from 6:00am until bedtime at midnight for the three days of this exciting, energizing, elaborate, and enthusiastic reunion

Is it really a trade show that members of National Garden Clubs would appreciate? Even though it advertises itself as a Business-to-Business trade fair, MANTS offers opportunities to club members who participate in the business of communicating among, buying from, and bringing together other horticultural professionals. And should I also mention the ability to make the introductions that find speakers, garden tour opportunities, and retail nursery openings? It is a grand green exposition.

Over the recent five-year average, MANTS as an in-person show annually hosts close to 940 exhibiting companies in 1,530+ booths and welcomes over 11,000 paid registrants (including exhibitors). MANTS draws exhibitors and attendees primarily from throughout the United States and Canada, and from Great Britain, Australia, Europe, and Asia as well.

The primary focus of the show has been on the exhibitor and attendee relationship—providing a forum for business and the exchange of knowledge. There is no substitute for what MANTS does best: provide the premier forum for industry members to meet business-to-business and face-to-face. Being a member of National Garden Club has certainly prepared me for belonging to this group as an industry member and partner.

But don't accept my word for all these wonderful opportunities! I asked several friends who have attended at least as many years of MANTS as I to give their opinion of why interested members of NGC should register for attendance:

Cherie Tripp Lejeune (National Garden Club officer at Local, State and National Levels, AI Digital teacher and consultant) As a member of National Garden Club I would add MANTS as a winter destination especially for garden club members, because it is both educational and inspiring. The show highlights the entire plant pipeline—from innovative growers and breeders to the vendors who bring these plants to market. Seeing this process firsthand helped me better understand what we plant, why certain varieties are chosen, and how today's horticultural decisions shape tomorrow's gardens. I love attending.

Becky Heath (Owner of Brent and Becky's Bulbs, Past President of GardenComm) MANTS is a great winter destination for interested members of NGC because of the number of terrific nurseries showing new plants, git and hardgoods businesses with items for retails shops and Garden Centers PLUS the opportunity to reconnect with a huge group of plant lovers from all across the country! MANTS is SO worth the effort.

Peggy Riccio (horticulturist, garden communicator, and owner of pegplant.com, a resource for gardeners in the DC metro area) I would add MANTS as a winter destination for interested members of the NGC for many reasons. The convention center is large, modern, and very accommodating. There are so many green industry booths representing everything from containers to seeds to new plants for the year. You will spend a day learning about new plants and products plus you get a chance to talk with the vendors and pick up catalogs and business cards. MANTS is always in January, in the heart of Baltimore's Inner Harbor so plenty of tourist attractions, museums, good hotels and excellent restaurants.

Denise Schreiber (AKA Mrs. Know It All, a writer, speaker, horticulturist and All America Selections Trial Judge. Book Author of *Eat Your Roses*) "There is so much networking and current information for [anyone who gardens!] If you are in the writing business like me, I picked up two more articles and a possible ongoing column for a third! Go!"

Kathy Jentz (garden book author, speaker, and host of the *GardenDC* podcast, current President GardenComm) "MANTS is THE PLACE to get an early look at the new offerings that may be for sale this year at a local garden center near you. We can all use some flowers and color in these chilly winter days! After visiting MANTS each year, I leave ready and recharged for the coming growing season."

The dates for the 2027 MANTS are January 13-15. Kickstart your year with powerful connections and industry insights. Engage with over 11,000 top professionals and decision-makers while exploring cutting-edge plants, nursery stock, equipment, tools, and landscape innovations that will elevate your own work within National Garden Clubs.

Birds & Raptors Corner

Winter offers a wonderful opportunity to support our local bird populations while sharpening our own observation skills. Below are a few timely resources and ideas to help you nourish birds through the colder months and deepen your appreciation of the species that share our landscapes.

Winter Vegetarian Bird Suet Recipe

When winter temperatures drop, natural food sources such as insects become scarce. Suet provides a high-energy food source that helps birds maintain body heat and stamina. This **vegetarian suet** is an excellent alternative to traditional animal-fat suet and is especially appealing to insect-eating birds.

This lipid-rich treat attracts woodpeckers, wrens, chickadees, nuthatches, and titmice, helping year-round residents prepare for the long winter season. This recipe is inspired by *The Misfit Baker* blog.

Materials:

- 1½ cups shortening (look for palm-oil-free options)
- ¾ cup nut butter (any kind)
- 3½ cups wild bird seed
- 1 cup quick oats
- ½ cup corn meal
- Ice cube tray

Steps:

1. Mix bird seed, oats, and corn meal together in a bowl; set aside.
2. In a separate bowl, melt the shortening and nut butter together, stirring until fully combined.
3. Pour the melted mixture into the dry ingredients and stir well.
4. Spoon the mixture into an ice cube tray.
5. Freeze for one to two hours, then place cubes into your suet feeder.

Note: This recipe is not recommended for outdoor temperatures above 50°F.

Exploring Pennsylvania Birds with Online Checklist

Winter is also a perfect time to become familiar with the birds in our region. One excellent online resource is **Avibase**, which offers a comprehensive checklist of bird species found in Pennsylvania. This interactive database allows you to explore species distributions and learn more about the birds you may see at your feeders or while out walking.

You can access the Pennsylvania bird checklist here:

<https://avibase.bsc-eoc.org/checklist.jsp?region=USpa&list=howardmoore>

Printable Bird Checklist from Penn State Arboretum

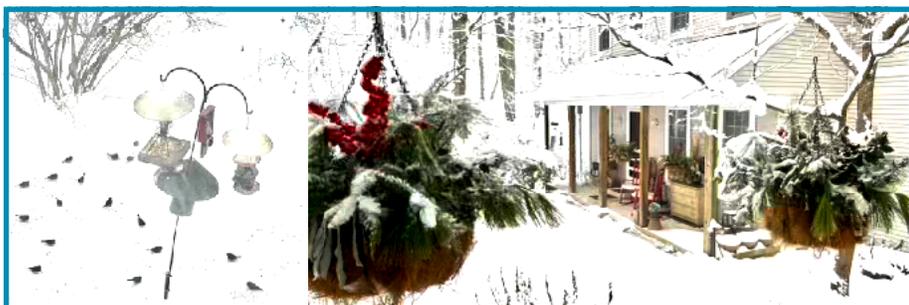
For those who enjoy keeping a written record of sightings, I discovered this bird checklist on recent visit to the **Penn State Arboretum** in State College. It provides a clear, printable bird list specific to our area. This is a wonderful tool to bring along on nature walks, use with children or grandchildren, or keep near your window feeders for easy reference.

Download the printable checklist here:

<https://arboretum.psu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Arboretum-Bird-Checklist.pdf>

By providing nourishing food and taking time to observe and identify birds throughout the winter, we not only help wildlife thrive but also enrich our own connection to the natural world. Happy birding!

Janet Hurlbrink, GC of Reading, President, & District II/III Birds and Raptors Chairperson



Feed the Birds! During our very cold winter we're having! They need as much help as they can. Food: suet, sunflower, regular seed feed, and water supply: heated birdbath does the trick, and places to nest at night like coir of hanging plants/greens decor.