

The First Bloom

GARDEN CLUB FEDERATION OF PENNSYLVANIA

District I



A triannual publication of
GCFP District I
October 2025

The First Bloom

OCTOBER 2025

In This Issue

- 3 District Director's Message
- 4-5 District I Annual Meeting and Luncheon
- 6 NGC Info
- 7-13 Club News
- 14 Feature Article "Spring Bulbs in the Winter"
- 15-17 Committee Reports
- 20 District I Meetings, GCFP Webinars, and Kids' Corner
- 21 Feature Article
- 22 "Birding Through the Seasons" Article
- 23 District I and GCFP Events and Calendar

Cover Photo: 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: Winter Issue -February 1
Summer Issue -June 1
Winter Issue - October 1

Member of National Garden Clubs (NGC) Donna Donnelly, President
Central Atlantic Region (CAR-SGC) Monica Hansen, Director
Garden Club Federation of Pennsylvania (GCFP) Pat Wolanski, President

Click [HERE](#) for a complete article on
"How Bird Diets Change in Fall"



perkypet.com



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THE COUNTRY GARDENERS

Bonnie Kushnerick

COVERED BRIDGE GC

Bridget Lininger

ELVERSON GC

Debbie Wright

FOUR SEASONS GC OF

KENNETT SQUARE

Tina Burke

RADLEY RUN GARDEN &

SOCIAL CLUB

Gail Smith

SPADE & TROWEL CLUB

Meredith Dragish

THE GC OF SPRINGFIELD

Louise Sheehan

UWCHLAN GC

Terry Miller

VILLANOVA GC

Meg Cave

WAYNE WOODS GC

Anne McCrary



“Is not this a true autumn day? Just the still melancholy that I love that makes life and nature harmonize.” ~ George Eliot

Pam's Points

The calendar says it is fall, but the weather sometimes has other ideas!

My gardens are still flush with colors from late blooming anemones, asters, cardinal flowers, monk's hood, salvia, impatiens, and goldenrods. The leaves are beginning to change into beautiful colors before falling to the ground.

Although the time in between seasons fills me with sadness for the loss of summer days at the beach, it also sends hope for the future and thankfulness for nature's bounty. My gardens bring me joy in all seasons. The sound of the waterfalls in our pond, birds chirping and taking baths in the stream, dragonflies, bees and hummingbirds feeding on the flowers allow me to rest, observe, and get away from the other stresses in my life.

I am eternally grateful for the opportunity to garden, to get my hands dirty, and to watch my plants grow and blossom into their full glory. When I go for my daily walk, I try to stay in the moment and enjoy nature, regardless of the season. My hope for all of us is to see the beauty in the little things--the fungus, mushrooms, mosses, and lichen, as well as the towering stately trees and flowing streams.

Now is also the time when I start bringing nature inside. My tropical pond plants are moved into my little greenhouse and put in trays of water to overwinter. I also move several houseplants back inside to avoid the

frost that sometimes surprises me by arriving early. Then I start to find places inside for the new plants I acquired over the summer months. I love the coziness of the chilly nights inside or around a firepit outside and look forward to the changes that fall, and winter provide in my gardens.

Another passion of mine is entering, judging, and/or just attending flower shows. Uwchlan Garden Club had a lovely show on September 17-18. "Beacons" (lighthouses) was the theme, and the designs, botanical arts, and horticulture were exceptional. Many of our own members, as well as a few members from other clubs exhibited.

I encourage our clubs to join us for the District I Longwood Flower Show to be held September 18-20, 2026. We hope that every club in the district will support us by exhibiting and volunteering, and with a sponsorship commitment of \$225 to cover the expenses of the show. More information will be coming soon.

Enjoy,

Pam

DISTRICT I ANNUAL MEETING AND LUNCHEON

Embracing a colorful hydrangea theme, Lorraine Troiano and her committee from the Garden Club of Bala Cynwyd did a remarkable job organizing this year's luncheon. From the beautiful welcome signs and delectable pastries to the elegantly set tables—each complete with a uniquely wrapped favor for each guest—every detail was thoughtfully executed. Ninety-three guests enjoyed a delicious lunch and an engaging presentation on hydrangeas by Mary Tipping from Scott Arboretum, making the event truly memorable.

Contributing to the success of the event, each club donated a lovely centerpiece for the tables, along with a wonderful item for the raffle. Louise Heilig created the beautiful honor design for President Wolanski.

Distinguished guests and speakers included GCFP President Pat Wolanski, First Vice-President Tonya Young, and Second Vice-President Mary Hetrick.



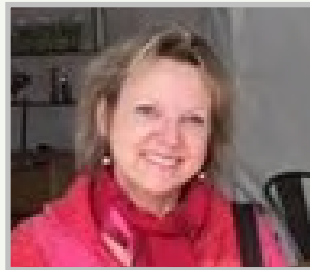
2025 DISTRICT I AWARDS ANNOUNCED AT THE LUNCHEON

FORGET-ME-NOT



Thea Mahard
Uwchlan Garden Club

PERENNIAL BLOOM



Darlene Snyder
Uwchlan Garden Club



DISTRICT DIRECTOR'S SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Nancy Cuttic
Uwchlan Garden Club



Garden Club of Bala Cynwyd

Sharon Fullerton
Garance Prior

The Country Gardeners

Alexandra Brock
Margie Stern
Ann DeHaven
Maria Kotch

Covered Bridge Garden Club

Christine Morrow
Barb Daugherty

Elverson Garden Club

Kathy Duncan
Trudy Moore

Four Seasons Garden Club

Mary Ann Hanagan
Mary Drinker

Spade and Trowel Club

Debbie Ferrell
Denise Klein
Gerrie Lunger

Radley Run Garden & Social Club

Nancy Redeker

The Garden Club of Springfield

Lillian Amadio
Jan Coppola
Sue Simpson

Uwchlan Garden Club

Donna Schenck
Carrie Schreffler
Dolores Knight

Villanova Garden Club

Jane Carton

DISTRICT I NOVEMBER 12 MEETING



All Members are Invited
Design Challenge: Fall Floral Arrangement

10 a.m.

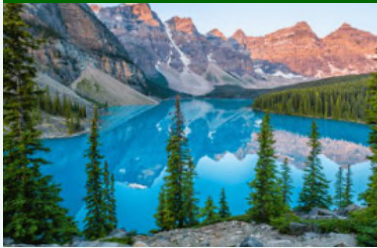
Hosted by: District I and
Uwchlan Garden Club

Uwchlan Meeting House
5 N Village Avenue, Exton

Sign Up by October 29 - Pam Walsh pamyoga@aol.com

NGC SCHOOLS

Environmental



Gardening



Flower Show

Become a Flower Show Judge!



Landscape Design



For more detailed info and registration
go to

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

NGC GRANTS and PROGRAMS

Plant America - Landscape for Wildlife

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



Espoma Grant

Receive Espoma plant food and potting soils to support your club's
projects. - October 1 - May 31 More info [HERE](#)

Ames Tools Grant

Apply for high-quality tools to help your club complete its projects
efficiently. January 1 - March 1. More info [HERE](#)

Plant America, Feed America

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

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](#)

Plant-A-Tree - formerly 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.
More Information [HERE](#)

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



2026 NGC CONVENTION
May 4 - 6, 2026
St. Louis, Missouri



CLUB NEWS



GARDEN CLUB OF BALA CYNWYD - Lorraine Troiano

The Garden Club of Bala Cynwyd was delighted to host the **2025 District I Luncheon** at Overbrook Country Club on September 10, 2025. We were honored to have 94 attendees, including the Executive Officers of the Garden Club Federation of Pennsylvania, the Club Presidents, and members from the 11 clubs that make up District I. We held several workshops over the summer to create individual handmade gifts for all. So many worked together to make the day a success!

Our club created garden easels at a **horticultural workshop** in the spring. They are whimsical and a wonderful addition to any garden. We are fortunate to have **floral design workshops** with member and Master Judge **Louise Heilig**. Color and line have been emphasized. It's fun to create with others!

We are looking forward to the **fall club programs** - Mike Weilbacher, the author of *Wild Philly*, a docent-led visit to the Barnes Museum, an excursion to Chanticleer, and a holiday gnome horticultural workshop. The Youth chairs will have a program on spiders at Ludington Library.

Soon, we will plan for the **2026 State Garden Party**!



THE COUNTRY GARDENERS - Bonnie Kushnerick

Our mission this year is to bring more greenery into our homes and communities—promoting both personal well-being and a healthier environment.

Along with recognition from the district, we also wanted to celebrate several club members whose dedication has significantly contributed to our success. This year, we introduced two new awards:

- **The Sage Award** honors members who consistently volunteer their time and energy to support fundraising, programs, and club activities. Congratulations to **Sandy Coll** and **Kathy Maruzzi**, who each received a symbolic gift—a potted sage plant.
- **The Sunflower Award** celebrates new members who have enthusiastically stepped into roles and taken on project responsibilities. This year, **Eileen Herd**, **Patty Boccella**, and **Margie Stern** were each recognized with a cheerful bouquet of sunflowers.



We kicked off our fall meetings with a hands-on demonstration on **planting autumn containers**. In October, we'll explore the art of Kokedama—a creative way to bring more plants indoors.

In November, we'll partner with the residents at Fair Acres for a **Horticultural Therapy** session, crafting pinecone turkeys and small seasonal hoop holders filled with sensory items to brighten the Thanksgiving-to-holiday season.

To close out the year, our December meeting will feature a festive session on making **Holiday Mocktails** using tea-based beverages—perfect for seasonal gatherings!





FOUR SEASONS GARDEN CLUB - Tina Burke

In May, our club welcomed peony enthusiast Bernie Miller for a captivating presentation. Bernie, who cultivates over 120 varieties of peonies, is an active member of the Mid-Atlantic Peony Society. His presentation was both thorough and informative, offering a fascinating glimpse into his spectacular peony garden.



June's program was a community program held at the Kennett Square Library. Leah Brooks from Mt. Cuba Center delivered an engaging talk on native plants, trees, and shrubs, emphasizing their vital role in supporting bio-diversity. Leah's expertise and enthusiasm drew a strong turnout from both club members and the community.

In July, **Mary Ann Hanagan** led a creative workshop using pressed flowers to design pictures and greeting cards. Members were provided with a wide selection of pressed flowers and encouraged to let their imaginations guide them—resulting in beautiful, handmade floral art.

Our club also hosted the **annual flower arranging workshop** at the Kennett Senior Center. Participants received containers filled with floral foam and flowers generously donated by local sources, and enjoyed creating their own unique arrangements.

Our **Annual Picnic** took place at the charming "Old Stone" house in Cartmel. This lovely historic home, surrounded by peaceful fields and landscaped grounds, provided the perfect setting for a summer celebration.



In September, we held a **nonstandard flower show** titled "Autumn's Edge." Members showcased horticultural specimens they had grown, alongside entries in three creative floral design classes.



WAYNE WOODS GARDEN CLUB - Anne McCrary

We kicked off our 70th year with a lovely **Welcome Back Social**. Members were excited to reconnect with friends, share their summer adventures, and learn about our plans for the coming year. We had fun with a few ice-breaker games --- *what is your gardening superpower?!!!*

Members enjoyed an engaging presentation by our own **Libby Espey**, who shared lovely pictures of her extensive rose garden. Her knowledge and passion for roses were clear as she described her favorite varieties and provided practical advice for growing and caring for roses. We left inspired to add roses to our gardens, and one lucky member took home a beautiful David Austin shrub rose!



On a recent Saturday morning, volunteers gathered to clean up the garden surrounding the **Blue Star Marker**, weeding, spreading fresh mulch, and planting colorful mums to enhance its beauty. The club is honored to tend this symbol of remembrance and community pride. After the work was completed, we enjoyed a shared breakfast together, celebrating our efforts.



Debbie Wright

In June, the Elverson Garden Club heard from Sarah Bach, an EPA Life Scientist. We learned how our daily actions on land influence the health of our rivers and streams.

In July, we had a festive picnic (indoors due to rain!) with many patriotic designs to commemorate the holiday. We continued our educational meetings in August, learning about pollinators and how to create gardens with robust pollinator activity. Our "Bee Nice" design competition echoed the topic by including flowers attractive to pollinators.

The club is now gearing up for our October flower show. **Lisa Cherpanich** and **Wendy Fox** used many examples to educate, encourage, and energize club members to enter the show. Carol **Simonetti** is managing the entries. We are excited to have local schools entering both the horticulture and novice design portions. Show Co-Chair **Vanessa Peterson** helped encourage entries by doing a design presentation about the show at our local high school.



Club members continue volunteer activities at the Dettlerline Hall Gardens. There has been a noticeable improvement under their care! We are also beginning to plan for the holiday season, when we decorate the dining room of Hibernia Mansion, which will be open to the public for tours during December.



We are thrilled to recognize and congratulate **Wendy Fox**, as she is a newly accredited Fower Show Judge.



SPADE AND TROWEL CLUB - Meredith Dragish

Congratulations to our Laurel recipients, **Debbie Ferrell**, **Denise Klein**, and **Gerrie Lunger**!

These women are integral members of the club, and we are thrilled to recognize their contributions.

Debbie Ferrell, **Denise Klein**, **Karen Burns**, and **Meredith Dragish** attended the District I Meeting this September.



A big thank you goes out to **Sunny McGeorge** for creating a beautiful centerpiece for the meeting.



Shannon Hevener, **Meredith Dragish**, **Julie Fellingner**, **Katharine Briglia**, and **Fran Wilson** have started planning for our booth at the Creamery at Kennett Square's Holiday Village Market. This is our largest fundraiser of the year, and our members will be creating holiday ornaments, arrangements, greens, and other festive offerings this fall to help fund our many activities throughout the year. Hope to see all of you at the Holiday Village Market this December.

Beth Vineyard has been hard at work preparing for The Pennsylvania Garden Party this June. She has secured several notable gardens for the tour, including the Barns-Brinton House in Chadds Ford and Wayne Guymon's House. Thanks to Beth for securing such beautiful gardens for the tour!



Radley Run
Garden & Social Club

RADLEY RUN GARDEN and SOCIAL CLUB

- Muriel McDaniel

Our meeting season begins in September, but our board and committee members started planning our big event over the summer.

Our **Annual Luncheon and Fashion Show** is scheduled for December 4. Its purpose is to raise money for scholarships for local students studying horticulture at West Chester University and Williamson College of the Trades. The event, held at Radley Run Country Club, features vendors for shopping, a raffle for themed baskets, fashions by W Boutique, and a hot lunch. Contact Darah Torres at darahp@aol.com for more information. We are limited to 200 guests, and we sell out every year.

Our first meeting was well attended, and everyone was happy to be back together. Our guest speaker was Brian Winslow, Watershed Conservation Director, Brandywine Red Clay Alliance. He introduced us to their mission of Education and Land Preservation. He then spoke about projects, trends, and issues of stream water quality in our local watersheds.

We also had a presentation about growing giant elephant ears by our member M.A. Kowalski. She is justifiably proud of her specimen.



Gail Smith, our president, displayed a sample of the project we will be working on at the next meeting. It is a seasonal flower arrangement on a pumpkin.

On September 16, our members visited a Historic Manor House in Phoenixville. Originally built in 1722, it is being lovingly restored by the owners.

On September 10, a group of our members attended the Annual District Meeting. They are from left, Virginia Crego, Gail Smith, Karen Baldwin, M. A. Kowalski, and Ellen Barron.



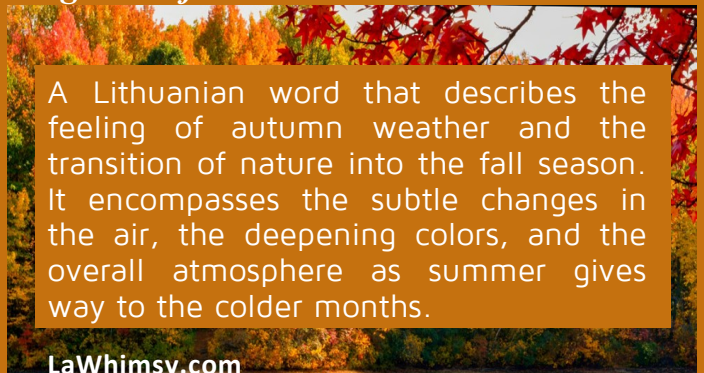
12 PERENNIALS AND SHRUBS TO PRUNE IN OCTOBER Read all about it [HERE](#)



WORD NERD

rudeneja

(v.) *the way nature and/or the weather begins to feel like autumn.*



A Lithuanian word that describes the feeling of autumn weather and the transition of nature into the fall season. It encompasses the subtle changes in the air, the deepening colors, and the overall atmosphere as summer gives way to the colder months.

LaWhimsy.com



GARDEN CLUB OF SPRINGFIELD - Louise Sheehan

Our club wrapped up the season with a delightful tour of **Pam Walsh's garden**—a perfect way to close out the year. We were surrounded by an abundance of beautiful plants, shrubs, trees, and unique decorative touches that added extra charm and inspiration.

In September, we welcomed a presentation by a Delco Master Gardener titled **"The Cutting Garden."** We learned about the various bulbs she uses in her garden, along with tips on planting times and proper care. The meeting concluded with a **mini flower show**, featuring creative entries from many of our talented members.

Looking ahead, the club is excited to launch a new initiative. On October 11, we will be hosting a



Harvest Celebration aimed at educating the community on the wide range of houseplants and garden varieties available. Members will be on hand to share plant care tips and demonstrate techniques. Floral arrangements will be on display, and attendees will gain insight into the elements of floral design.

Raffles, handcrafted items, and baked goods will also be available for purchase. As this is our first time hosting such an event, we're looking forward to the experience—and hoping for great success!

Meanwhile, our newly-formed **Book Club** is currently reading **"Listening to Nature's Voices"** by **Pamela Baxter**, with a group discussion scheduled for October.

District I Meeting and Presentation February on Zoom

Watch for info about a date and speaker
for our February meeting.



UWCHLAN GARDEN CLUB - Terry Miller

Our club had an active summer. We had nine members open their gardens for pop-ups. An email goes out about two days in

advance, and members are invited to stroll through the featured garden and enjoy light refreshments. It is an opportunity to get to know fellow garden club members since time is always limited during a meeting. We also had two field trips, one to a cutting garden and the other to a beautiful pond garden.

We were fortunate to have **Tonya Young** as our speaker in June and **Chris Leskosky** in July. Both spoke on design and imparted information on tips and techniques. There was no August meeting, but we had a picnic instead. The September meeting presenter was Gina Khalifa, who demonstrated "How to Make a Fall Container."

At our meetings, we continue to encourage our members to do a "**Design of the Month**" so they can get familiar with different design styles. We also have a **horticultural lesson** each month.

Sprouts & Seedlings planted a kitchen garden.

Several members helped **Horticulture Therapy** with floral designs at Simpson Meadows Retirement Community.

This year we were able to offer **two \$2,500 Scholarships**, one to a relative of a member, and the other offered to four local high schools.

Our **Community Outreach** crew was busy at the Downingtown Library redoing the three large planters.

UGC recently held a **Flower Show, "Beacons."** The lighthouse theme was intriguing to many, and there were beautiful interpretations in the design categories. There was a plethora of Horticulture entries despite an extremely dry summer, and Botanical Arts boasted several unique and lovely creations.

There were **239 entries** in all. We opened to the public from 10 to 4, and we were delighted that over 40 people came to enjoy the show despite it being held on a Thursday. We had many garden club members attend as well. It was relaxed and not crowded, and next time we are considering a weekend or the inclusion of a weeknight so that people who work during the day may attend.



Becky Zeeger, Carol McConnell, Kate Morrison-Teeter, Darlene Snyder



9 NATIVE SHRUBS THAT FEED BIRDS ALL WINTER



1. WINTERBERRY



2. SERVICEBERRY



3. VIBURNUM



4. ELDERBERRY



5. DOGWOOD



6. BAYBERRY



7. CHOKEBERRY



8. SUMAC



9. JUNIPER



DISTRICT I KNOWS HOW TO PARTY!

Nancy Cuttic, Chair, Pennsylvania Garden Party

GCFP is delighted to have the participation of **five clubs** in our district for President Pat Wolanski's initiative, the Pennsylvania Garden Party, first ever statewide garden tour.

Our **five participating clubs** will feature **25 of the 100 gardens** to be on display in Pennsylvania. See our beautiful district gardens on these dates:

June 20, 2026 - The Garden Club of Bala Cynwyd/Villanova Garden Club AND Springfield Garden Club

June 27, 2026 - Spade & Trowel Club AND Uwchlan Garden Club

Other districts participating in the tour are Districts IV, VI, VII, VIII, X and XI. So, invite some friends to pile in your car to see our District gardens, crossing county lines to see as many fabulous gardens as you can.

A **\$25 ticket** buys a tour booklet and admission for **two days** of garden viewing across the state on Saturday, June 20 and 27, 2026, from 9:30 AM until 4:00 PM. Tickets sales begin on January 6, 2026, either by check or PayPal.

Every garden club in the Federation can earn **\$20 for each \$25 ticket sold**. There is generous prize money to be awarded for clubs with the **highest ticket sales and highest ad revenue**. We need clubs to solicit ads, sell tickets, and join the "Party." See the GCFP website, pagardensclubs.org, for more details.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Horticulture Therapy - Maryann DeSanto, The Garden Club of Springfield

Autumn has arrived, and garden clubs are actively planning their Horticulture Therapy visits. The holiday season offers a perfect opportunity to share our passion for horticulture through festive and meaningful activities.

The **Garden Club of Springfield** will be visiting *Sterling Nursing Home*, bringing fresh floral arrangements adorned with handcrafted scarecrow accents—sure to bring seasonal cheer.

Looking ahead to November, the **Country Gardeners** will visit *Fair Acres*, where they'll present a pinecone turkey craft and a holiday hoop decorated with dried oranges and cinnamon sticks.

Uwchlan Garden Club is preparing for their upcoming visit to *Simpson Meadows Retirement Home*, while the **Garden Club of Bala Cynwyd** continues its beloved Children's Program at *Ludington Library*.

As always, sending holiday cards to the residents we visit is a thoughtful way to remind them they're in our hearts during this special time of year.



GC of Bala Cynwyd Children's Flower Craft - GC of Springfield Fall Arrangement - Uwchlan GC visiting Spring Meadows

COMMITTEE REPORTS Continued

**Awards** – Marilyn Small, Uwchlan GC**Awards Season is Almost Here!**

Deadlines are approaching, with NGC awards due starting December 1, and CAR-SGC and GCFP awards due in January. Be sure to review all relevant awards manuals, and for specific deadline dates, and check the updated GCFP Awards Manual available on the [GCFP website](#).

We're excited to announce two new awards this year:

- * GCFP Club Floral Design Achievement Award (Pg. 15)
- * Special Recognition State Award for Youth Activities (Pg. 19)

Important Reminder:

Every club must have a signed photo release form on file for each member. In addition, any submission with a photo that includes children or non-club members must be accompanied by a signed release. All necessary forms can be found in the "Club Use Forms" section of the "Forms Library" on the [GCFP website](#).

As always, if you have any questions about awards, please contact me mmsmall@comcast.net.

PHS LIAISON - Sharon Fullerton
GC of Bala Cynwyd

The theme for the 2026 Philadelphia Flower Show is

Rooted In Time.

The official Guide will be available online soon and will also be mailed to registered exhibitors. The show runs from February 28 to March 8, 2026, with a special Preview Day for members on February 27.

**Focus of the Theme**

This year's *Rooted in Time* theme promises a fresh and unique look for the exhibits—something not typically seen at the Flower Show. Focusing on native plants and fungi and their role throughout American history, the show will feature their significance both above and below the surface.

Traditionally, judges have required horticultural displays to be neatly finished with top dressing, avoiding any visible soil. But in 2026, expect to see exposed roots intertwined through layers of soil, offering a more organic and grounded aesthetic. Exhibitors may incorporate aged wood, natural textiles, woven fibers, and other sustainable or repurposed materials to bring this theme to life.

Volunteer

PHS is always seeking volunteers—clerks, barrier aides, recorders, and staggers—to help bring the show to life. It's a wonderful opportunity to get involved and enjoy a behind-the-scenes look before the crowds arrive!

Interested? Visit the [PHS website](#) to volunteer.

Workshops and Presentations

PHS has organized a series of workshops and presentations covering both Horticulture and Design. Be sure to check the guide for details on dates, times, locations, and topics.

If you haven't exhibited before, this is a great year to give it a try!

GCFP Awards Page
on the
GCFP Website
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, 2026.

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](#)

COMMITTEE REPORTS Continued

Environmental - Janet Fassbender, The Country Gardeners**Real Health Benefits of Visiting Forests**

A quiet walk in the forest isn't just a relaxing escape—it's actually good for your health. More and more research shows that spending time in nature, especially in forested areas, offers measurable physical and mental health benefits.

Boosts Your Immune System

Forests release natural compounds called *phytoncides*, which have antibacterial and antifungal properties. Trees and plants use these to protect themselves, but they benefit us too. In one study, Japanese researchers found that people who spent three days immersed in a forest environment had higher levels of Natural Killer (NK) cells—a type of white blood cell that helps fight off infections and tumors.

Reduces Stress and Improves Mood

Even just *looking* at trees can lower stress hormone levels, such as cortisol and adrenaline. It can also reduce blood pressure and elevate mood. And it's not just remote forests that help—green spaces in cities and suburbs are just as vital, especially since 85% of Americans live in urban or suburban areas without easy access to wilderness.

Gives Your Brain a Break

Our brains are constantly juggling tasks and information. Time in nature allows the cognitive part of the brain to rest. Watching birds, water, trees, and other natural scenes helps the mind recover from mental fatigue and improves focus afterward.

**Speeds Up Healing**

Hospital patients with views of greenery recover more quickly than those without. Studies have shown they require fewer pain medications, experience fewer post-surgery complications, and have shorter hospital stays.

Supports Children with ADHD

Time outdoors may help reduce symptoms of Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in children. Green play areas and outdoor learning environments are a low-cost, side-effect-free way to complement traditional treatments.

GOURD AND PUMPKIN TRIVIA

AI Overview

Musical Instruments: Dried gourds can be hollowed out, filled with beans, and used as maracas. In Africa, gourd instruments like the Nigerian pumpkin flute are common.

Currency: Historically, gourds were once used as a form of money.

Cure-alls: Pumpkins were once believed to be able to fade freckles and even cure snakebites.

Dewormer: Pumpkin seeds are a natural dewormer for farm animals like goats, according to Chriss Hall of Triple H Farm.

Canoes: Competitors in the Damariscotta Pumpkinfest & Regatta in Maine carve out giant pumpkins and use them as boats in races across the Damariscotta River.

Beauty Products: Pumpkin can be pureed and used as a base for homemade facial masks or hair conditioner, thanks to its high concentration of vitamins A, C, and E, zinc, potassium, and antioxidants.



mymusicalmagic.com



allthatsinteresting.com

COMMITTEE REPORTS Continued

Horticulture – Sharon Richardson, Uwchlan GC**PUTTING DAHLIAS TO BED**

Right now, our dahlias are bursting with color, but if we want to enjoy the same beautiful blooms next year, we need to start planning how to preserve them. Here are some of the most common questions I'm asked:

Do I have to dig them up every year?

Yes—unless you're fortunate enough to live in a microclimate where dahlia tubers can survive the winter. Some gardeners have success mulching in their dahlias, but one harsh winter can wipe them all out. For example, my club president, Terry Miller, has never dug hers out, and even last winter's brutal cold didn't harm them. But for most of us, it's safer to dig them up or treat them as annuals and replant each spring.

How do I know when to dig them out?

Dahlias bloom until the first hard frost. You'll know it's happened when your dahlias lose all their color overnight. Traditionally, I dug mine up right away, but I've since learned that it's better to cut the stems back to about 6" and leave the tubers in the ground for 7–10 days. This allows them to absorb more energy and encourages the formation of "eyes" for next year's growth.

Tip: Because the stems are hollow, cover them with foil or a tarp if rain or snow is expected—otherwise moisture can seep in and damage the tubers.

**What do I do once I've dug them out?**

Lay them out to dry in the sun or indoors—never store them damp, or you'll invite mold. Some gardeners hose off excess soil right away, while others prefer to let it dry and then brush it off. I was taught to dip clumps in a mild Clorox solution, but I've found it unnecessary and too time consuming.

When should I divide my clumps?

That's up to you. If storage space is tight, fall division makes them easier to store and share. Personally, I wait until spring, when new eyes are visible. That way, I only spend time dividing tubers that have survived the winter.

How should I store them?

There are countless methods—wood chips, saw-dust, vermiculite, perlite, peat moss, shredded newspaper, liquor boxes, ice chests...the list goes on. What matters most: keep them dry, in the dark, and at a steady 40–45°F. Over the years I've lost a few tubers to mold, others to drying out, and one year even to hungry critters in the garage—so now I keep mouse traps nearby! Recently I've stopped using peat moss and perlite due to health concerns.

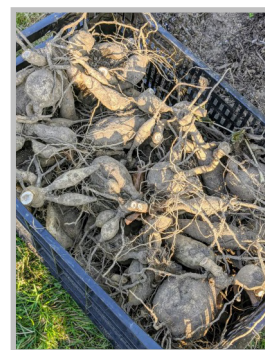
How often should I check them?

Experts recommend monthly check-ins to cull any that are shriveled or moldy. Personally, as a part-time snowbird, I don't look in on mine until March or April—and they've still done just fine.

For more details, I encourage you to visit the American Dahlia Society website for some helpful articles:

- * *Digging, Dividing, and Storing Tubers* [HERE](#)
- * *Putting Your Dahlias Down for a Long Winter's Nap* [HERE](#)

Photos: www.youtube.com/@mygardeninbloom
www.agardenerslifeforthe.wordpress.com
www.themarthablog.com



YOUTH CORNER



**LONGWOOD
GARDENS**

GREEN CAREERS EXPLORATION DAY - November 3

- * Grades 9-12
- * 3-hours
- * Engage directly with Longwood's staff
- * Experience the Gardens
- * Meet career shadowing graduation requirements

More Info [HERE](#)

YOUTH WORKSHOP - November 8 @ 12 noon

- * Ages 10-16
- * Harvest Creations

More Info [HERE](#)

SCOUT PROGRAMS - Sats. & Suns. @ 10:30 a.m.

- * Nature Trail Adventure
- * Tree Discovery
- * Plant Discovery
- * Nature of Happiness

More Info [HERE](#)

FAMILY LEARNING WORKSHOP

Dec. 13 @ 10 a.m. & 12 noon

- * Ages 5-18
- * Cookie Decorating

More Info [HERE](#)

TEEN VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

More Info [HERE](#)



**Morris Arboretum
& Gardens**
UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA

NATURAL CLAY ORNAMENTS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

November 8 @ 1 p.m.

- * Ages 6-11
- More Info [HERE](#)

PRESSED BOTANICAL ORNAMENTS - November 22 @ 1 p.m. Ages 6-11

More Info [HERE](#)



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 February 2026; winter "first bloom" shots would be best.
- * Be sure to take some fall and winter pics for next year's October and winter issues.
- * Pics must be a vertical size, not horizontal.

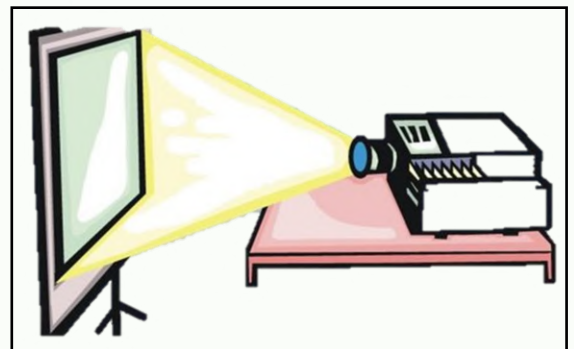
Send your photos to Marilyn Small

mmsmall@comcast.net.

DISTRICT PROJECTOR

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

Contact Pam Walsh, District Director
pamyoga@aol.com



UPCOMING DISTRICT I CLUB EVENTS

Open to the public. Support our fellow clubs.

October 11

Garden Club of Springfield's Harvest Celebration: Harvest Exhibition, Crafts, Horticulture Demo, Bake Sale, Raffles. Old Central School. 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

November 21 at 2 p.m. or 6 p.m. November 22 at 10 a.m. parent & child workshop

Country Gardeners 3rd Annual **Holiday Wreath Decorating Workshop** at Middletown Library. Participants receive a fresh evergreen wreath with their choice of embellishments. \$55
Register at countrygardenlinma@gmail.com

December 4

Radley Run Garden Club's Annual Luncheon and Fashion Show at Radley Run Country Club benefitting scholarships. Contact Darah Torres darahp@aol.com



**NATIONAL
FORGET-ME-NOT DAY**
November 10, 2025

Learn about National Red Rose Day [HERE](#)

**NATIONAL
EAT A RED APPLE DAY**
December 1, 2025



Learn about Eat a Red Apple Day [HERE](#)



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

- November 4 GCFP Floral Design and Horticulture Webinar, 6:30 p.m.
- November 12 District I Meeting and Design Challenge
- November 13 GCFP Leadership Workshop, 1 p.m. on Zoom
- February TBA District I Online Meeting
- April 26-28 GCFP Convention in Erie
- June 8-9 GCFP Board Meeting, Boalsburg
- June TBA Presidents' Luncheon
- June 20 & 27 Pennsylvania Garden Party



**CALLING
ALL
WRITERS**

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