



## GCFP District VI Newsletter

2nd Edition, 2026



# Seedlings



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### Director's Corner

Mary Lou Colussy District VI Director

A reoccurring topic across the state is the recruitment of new members and retention of existing members. It was brought up that most clubs get new members by existing members bringing in their friends, by word of mouth throughout the community and advertising events in local newsletters or other media. Whichever works best for your club, I would encourage you all to keep up the good work! So far, the ebb and flow of the members in our district is pretty constant. The comment across the state seems to be affected by the time of day of the monthly meetings and is food involved. Suggestions were made to alternate meeting times, host a district wide event such as a garden tour, picnic, or road tour.

Another topic was community gardens. This could be in the way of a theme garden, a vegetable garden or maintaining a public space, perhaps at a library or public building. Most clubs maintain a garden of some type, somewhere. We are very proud of our gardens and invite other clubs in the District to check them out.

President Pat Wolanski had an idea last year to have the clubs sponsor Garden Tours. Due to logistics mostly because of our expansive area in our district all of our clubs opted out of this endeavor this year. If you are interested in which clubs are involved this summer on June 20<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>, you can check out which Districts and clubs on the GCFP website.

Last year Blair GC dedicated a Gold Star maker by the Veteran's Hospital in Altoona. On June 3, 2026, the Garden Club of Johnstown will sponsor a Gold Star By-Way Marker at the Cambria County War Memorial in Johnstown.

In conclusion I want to keep the lines of communication open between our district clubs. I believe District VI is the best because we work together and are available to all members when needed.

### District 2025-6 Calendar

- August 12-- District Meeting—10 am Perkins in Richland
- Sept 1--Annual District Meeting—Blair GC; Martinsburg, PA

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

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

## Links of Interest

### DCNR Announces Free Pocket Meadow Kits for Residents | Department of Conservation and Natural Resources| Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

<https://www.pa.gov/agencies/dcnr/newsroom/dcnr-announces-free-pocket-meadow-kits-for-residents>

### Monarch Watch Monarch Waystation Program

<https://share.google/uROJC8JkhSoN5cyst>

### Western PA -- total recycling

Free recycling of electronics.

<https://www.westmorelandcleanways.org/>

## District VI

### Trash to Treasure Entry



Jean Ogburn and

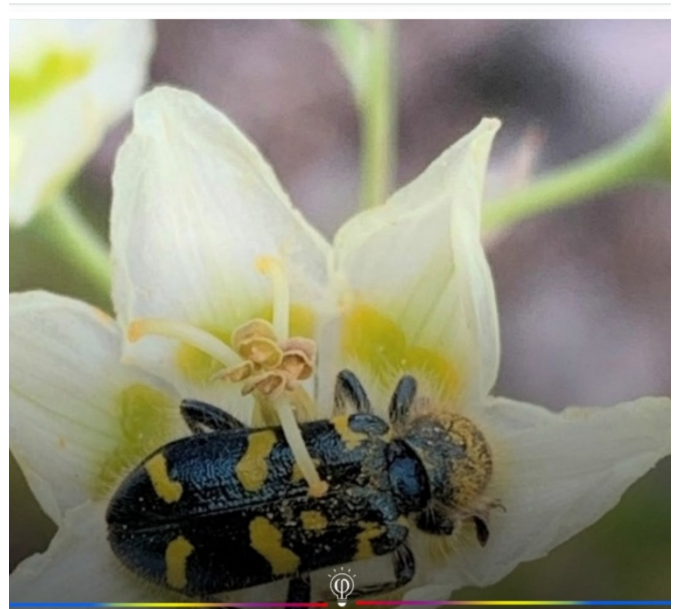
Joyce Pristas

Somerset Garden Club

## Newest Addition to District VI Board



Marcy Cunkelman, past Director, from Evergreen GC installed our newest member of the District Board—Andrea Falchek, from Somerset GC will be the new Assistant Director due to the resignation of Wilma Light, from Weeders and Seeders.



**Magnolia flowers are so ancient they evolved before bees, so beetles became their pollinators.**

## Club Activities

### **Red, White and Bloom! Celebrating America's 250<sup>th</sup> Year!**

Bedford County Garden Club is hosting a Small Standard Flower Show on Wednesday, July 22 at Trinity Lutheran Church in downtown Bedford!

Our theme is a toast to America's 250<sup>th</sup> Birthday! Members will have opportunities to submit horticulture and exhibits in Design and Botanical Arts. Our Bedford County Master Gardners are going to submit 3 different Education Exhibits as well. It is going to be a great show, and we hope you can make it!

# Red, White and Bloom!

## Celebrating America's 250<sup>th</sup> Year

A National Garden Club  
Small Standard Flower Show

**Bedford  
County  
Garden  
Club**



Presented by  
**The Bedford County  
Garden Club**

**Wednesday, July 22, 2026**

**11:30 am to 3:30 pm**

**Trinity Lutheran Church**

**106 W. Penn Street  
Bedford, Pennsylvania**

**814-623-6891**

**Free and Open to the Public**

Member of  
National Garden Clubs, Inc. • Central Atlantic Region of State Garden clubs  
Garden Club Federation of Pennsylvania, District VI

Schedule Reviewed by District VI Schedule Advisor

**Club Activities**

**Blair  
Garden  
Club**

A poster for a plant sale. The background is a dark red color with a pattern of light pink, hand-drawn, intersecting lines. At the bottom, there are illustrations of various flowers and plants in shades of pink, purple, and green. The text is centered in a white rectangular area.

**BLAIR GARDEN  
CLUB  
PLANT SALE**  
*Plants and garden-related items*  
**Friday, May 15, 2026 8am-5pm**  
**ONE DAY ONLY**  
**Jaggard First Methodist Church**  
**1801 Pleasant Valley Blvd**  
**Altoona**  
Proceeds benefit Blair Garden Club area projects  
**FOR INFO CALL: 814-502-0095 or 814-937-1767**



**Club Activities****Highlights of the Past Year at Evergreen GC**

Marcy Cunkelman and Mariann McGee agree to become the co-presidents for Evergreen Garden Club for the next term.

The Evergreen Garden Club had a very successful Tinsel Time Luncheon in December. It was to be the start of a new tradition at the Indiana Country Club. We had our usual clubs' tables of Santa Surprises, Fresh Greens, Kitchen Table, plus 40 Baskets to add your ticket to win if picked and 50/50. The past few years, the vendors were not doing well, and many decided not to come. So, this was the first year without vendors. The Basket Raffle was the star of the day. A club member's daughter and granddaughters came to help with the Basket Raffle. But we also became aware that there was not enough help to be able to pull off Tinsel Time without extra hands. After a very serious discussion, it was decided we would not be able to continue to have Tinsel Time with a roster of only 17 members trying to do everything. Age and health reasons were also part of the decision.

So, we are looking to have a few manageable fundraisers using the less than 2 handfuls core group. We will keep you informed if we decide to have a mini-TT without the luncheon, and offer the club tables and maybe some baskets. It's going to be a year of decisions as to what will happen to the club. But we are still going to continue caring and planting our gardens and doing the arrangements for organizations, plus offer the scholarship(s), since that is our main purpose for fundraising. A few road trips include to the IUP Roof Garden in August and tour of the Master Gardeners Trial Gardens at Blue Spruce Park in September. We might also see if the Chickadee Trail would be active to be able to feed the birds in your hand after the tour and lunch at Blue Spruce Park. Mariann McGee and Marcy Cunkelman will continue as Evergreen Co-Presidents

A few highlights of last year were the excellent program on Lyme disease by Dr Wilma Light. If you can host this program, you will not be disappointed. Club members worked with the Special Needs campers at Camp Orenda at the Lion's Health Camp. Members supplied fresh flowers and greens from their gardens and the campers made arrangement for their special dinner to end the session of camp. Arrangements were used to decorate the tables and campers were able to take home after the special evening. We will be doing this again. It was requested to come back this year.

Evergreen GC will continue to do what we can. Maybe we can pick up 10 new members somewhere to keep on going. If you know anyone, please send our way.

**Evergreen  
Garden  
Club**

## Club Activities

### Installation of 2026-27 GCJ Officers

April 13, 2026



President: Andy Fedore. 1<sup>st</sup> VP Bob Wilkey. 2<sup>nd</sup> VP Shannon Nicoloff. Recording Secretary: Jackie Johnson, Corresponding Secretary: Gloria LaMonica, Assistant Rec Sec: Nancy Rovansek. Treasurers: Club Marlene Roberts, Community Secretary: Sheri Lowry. Membership: Kim Haluska and Maureen Kimlin (absent from photo). Historian: Barb Rushin. Parliamentarian: President's appointment: Jean Livingston The officers were installed by District Director: Mary Lou Colussy

### Garden Club of Johnstown

### Garden Club of Johnstown Bird Feeder Project 2026



Since February was National Bird Feeder Month, members of the Garden Club of Johnstown's youth committee made bird feeders with a group of preschoolers from the Geneva Preschool. After listening to the book entitled *The Little Book of Backyard Birds*, the children learned what birds eat and why it's important to feed birds especially during the cold winter months. They also learned that birds need water. The children were excited and very attentive as they listened to the bird songs of the various birds in the book. The book was a great introduction to backyard birds. After listening to instructions, the children covered cardboard toilet paper rolls with peanut butter using a plastic spoon to spread it. Next, they rolled the cardboard rolls into birdseed. A string of twine was added so the bird-feeders could be hung in a tree at their home. The activity proved to be enjoyable for both the three-year old and four-year old classes

## Club Activities

On **Wednesday, June 3, 2026, at 1 p.m.**, a **Gold Star Marker** will join the current **Blue Star Marker** at the **First Summit Arena-Cambria County War Memorial** with a public ceremony and light refreshments at 1 p.m.

Our GCI biennial flower show on **Friday and Saturday, July 24 and 25**, titled **'America: From Sea to Shining Sea'**, will be presented at the **Westmont Presbyterian Church, 601 Luzerne Street**. We join America in celebrating our **250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!**

A teaser for **Saturday, December 5**, will be our second annual **'Holiday Market and Tour'**, partnering with the **Old Westmont Neighbors' Group** and their **Holiday Home Tour** featuring the **West Hills' century-old homes**. This annual major fundraiser includes raffle tickets, unique **Ways & Means Garden items**, and seasonal centerpieces. Tickets for the tour will be available online via the **Community Foundation of the Alleghenies**.

2025-26 programs included **'Critters in our Lawn'** – Jackie Rytko, CCCD; **Touring Meadowbrook Gardens** and luncheon hosting the **Somerset Garden Club**; **Pruning practices** with Ron McIntosh; creating pole bean teepees with MG Shannon Eckenrode; **'What Ticks You Off'** – Dr. Wilma Light; and hands-on demonstrations of creative table-top **Gingerbread Houses** with Sarah Gayle Simones. Club members presented **Centerpiece Design principles** for members to create items for the **December Holiday Tour Market: Birds and Butterflies, plants, and feeder options**.

### Garden Club of Johnstown

### Installation of 2026-27 IGC Officers



(l to r) Treasurer: Margie Bucci, Secretary: Deb Stumpf, 2<sup>nd</sup> VP: Jacquie Gentile, VP: Tammy Glavich, President: Melissa Kocinski

The ladies were installed by Leeanna Ryba, past president of GCFP at the IGC Christmas party in December, 2025

### Indiana Garden Club

## Club Activities

### Bloom Buddy Program

The Indiana Garden Club is excited to introduce our new Bloom Buddy Program! Bloom Buddies are secret garden club members who exchange kindness throughout the year by sending birthday cards and small gifts to one another. The identities of each Bloom Buddy will remain a mystery until they are revealed at our annual Christmas Party, making the holiday celebration even more special and fun.

We are also thrilled to announce that planning is underway for our first-ever Greenhouse Crawl. Five local greenhouses will be participating in this exciting community event. Participants can pick up a punch card at any participating greenhouse, and those who visit all five locations will be eligible to win a special prize. This is a wonderful opportunity to explore local greenhouses, gather inspiration, and support our local businesses.

Be sure to mark your calendars for **May 15th and 16th**, when we will celebrate our **51st Annual May Mart**. This long-standing community tradition will feature a variety of vendors, food trucks, and nurseries offering plants, garden décor, handmade goods, and delicious food. We look forward to welcoming community members and gardening enthusiasts for another memorable May Mart.

**Indiana  
Garden  
Club**

PLEASE JOIN INDIANA GARDEN CLUB  
FOR

# MAY MART

## GARDEN AND VENDOR EXPO

\$1.00 Admission at the door

**FRIDAY, MAY 15, 2026 10AM- 6PM**  
**SATURDAY, MAY 16, 2026 10AM- 4PM**

S&T Bank Arena 497 East Pike Rd Indiana, Pa

**ORPHAN COURT PLANTS, VENDORS, KIDS'  
CORNER, FOOD TRUCKS, EDUCATIONAL  
DISPLAYS, BASKET RAFFLE, HORTICULTURE**

[www.igcinformation@gmail.com](mailto:www.igcinformation@gmail.com)

**Club Activities**

**PENNDOT Road Clean-up Crew  
Monday, April 13, 2026**



Monica Wojno, Terri Lewis, Mona Weakland, Sandy Owens, Loraine Shedlock, Michele Pawlikowski, Cheryl Vescovi, Roe Eckenrode, and Chris Westover.

Five and a half bags and it took 45 minutes

**Patton  
Garden  
Club**

**Annual Plant Sale in Patton**

Patton GC Plant Sale is Saturday, June 6th -- Rain or Shine  
Come one, come all to the Patton Garden Club Plant Sale is on Saturday, June 6th from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the Fix-It Shop on 5th and Park in Patton.

ALL PROCEEDS GO TO THE PGC SCHOLARSHIP FUND

**PLANT  
SALE**  
Patton Garden Club

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1st Saturday in June  
*Fix-It Shop*

**Club Activities**

**Patton  
Garden  
Club**

**Patton Garden Club****Presents****“Three Ring Circus”**

**A NGC Standard Flower Show  
July 20, 2026**

**OPEN TO THE PUBLIC—from 6-8 PM  
FREE ADMISSION  
La Ferme Rouge  
246 Marina Road  
Patton, PA 16668**

**PA Resource Council****Mary Lou Colussy, Chairman**

Over the years I have talked about recycling, anti-littering, hard to recycle items, environmental protection, climate change, sustainability, and environmental justice.

One item that I would like to spotlight is backyard composting. Are you unsure of what to do with your kitchen, garden, and yard scraps? Would you like natural, homemade compost for your lawn and garden?

Expand your waste reduction efforts by signing up for a Backyard Composting class and turning your organic waste into a valuable resource for your garden offered by PA Resource Council. [prc.org](http://prc.org)

Attendees will learn the benefits and process of composting, plus everything you need to know about setting up and maintaining a compost bin to turn kitchen scraps, yard waste, and more into natural, home-made compost.

Register online below or call our western office at 412-488-7490 x1 to register by phone.

**Club Activities**

**March Somerset Garden Club Meeting**

Creativity, learning, and community — that’s what our March Somerset Garden Club meeting was all about!

Members Jean Ogburn and Joyce Pristas shared their Trash to Treasure creation that will be entered at the district level. This fun Garden Club tradition shows that with a little imagination; anything can become something beautiful. Recycling and reusing truly has endless possibilities!

We were also thrilled to welcome Hannah Bair Hershberger, who spoke about regenerative agriculture and organic farming. Her knowledge sparked great questions and conversation among members.

As spring approaches, we’re gearing up for our annual plant sale and Uptown beautification projects, including fresh designs as Somerset prepares for the @25/250 America 250 celebration.

**Somerset  
Garden  
Club**



**Club Activities**

**Somerset  
Garden  
Club**



**Somerset  
Garden  
Club**

# PLANT SALE

A wide selection of houseplants, herbs, and native plants for every space.  
Your support helps beautify Somerset—one plant at a time!

**MAY 16<sup>TH</sup>**  
9AM- UNTIL SOLD OUT

- 📍 214 Harrison Avenue, Somerset
- 📞 814-619-1938 for more information

*Save the Date*

## It's Bloomin' America

A Patriotic Flower Show

**Pittsburgh Area and Laurel Highlands Judges Councils**

**The Garden Club Federation of Pennsylvania**

**Featuring Local Historical Societies**

**The Lamplighter Ballroom**

**6566 Route 22, Delmont, PA 15626**

**Friday, July 17, 2026**

**Free and open to public 12-3pm**

**National Garden Clubs' Judging of  
Horticulture and Live Floral Designs**

**Club Activities****Weeders & Seeders Garden Club—1<sup>st</sup> quarter**

The 2026 year started off with a Zoom planning meeting in January with all members for a brainstorming session for program, event, field trip, and fundraiser ideas! This was followed by another Zoom in February for the Program Planning Committee to decide which of the wonderful ideas would be selected.

On January 20th, members of Weeders and Seeders in collaboration with Penn State Master Gardeners, presented a winter sowing program for Ligonier's Bethlen Home residents. The program was enjoyed by all who attended. Seeds sown in a total of 18 containers are germinating now and will be planted on the Bethlen Home grounds.

**Weeders &  
Seeders  
Garden  
Club**

On February 3<sup>rd</sup>, Weeders and Seeders member Paula Heming presented a program on terrariums for the seniors at Ligonier Gardens. Each resident prepared their own terrarium to proudly take back to their room. This therapeutic horticulture program was organized by Penn State Master Gardener Deb Christopher with Weeders and Seeders and Penn State Master Gardeners assisting.



## Club Activities

### Installation of W&S Officers

March 17, 2026

Our first meeting was held on March 17<sup>th</sup>. A highlight of the meeting was the installation of the newly elected Officers. Wilma Light, GCFP District VI Officer and Weeders and Seeders member, installed the new Officers - Sue Wolfe, President; Mary Niezelski, Vice President; Lynn Beck, Treasurer; Andrea Kautz, Secretary.



The members celebrated Angela McDonnell's very special birthday.



A delicious St. Patrick's Day buffet was provided, courtesy of the Officers.

Following the buffet, Mary Niezelski and Patti Schildkamp presented two short programs. Mary described a workshop she attended in Boston on "Flower Arranging (No Rules)" and Patti reviewed "Native Seed Stratification using the Refrigerator Cold Moist Method". Native perennial and tree seeds were available for members from the Weeders and Seeders/Penn State Master Gardener seed inventory.

**Weeders &  
Seeders  
Garden  
Club**

## District VI Conservation Water Report

Karlice Makuchan

**Homegrown National Park** is an initiative started by Doug Tallamy that encourages people to create little “national parks” in their back yards to regenerate biodiversity for a healthier planet. By following several steps, including many that you might be doing already, together people could create a 20-million acre “national park” by connecting our eco-friendly private properties to support insects, birds and other wildlife necessary for our survival. **Attracting caterpillars, a high-protein food for birds, is especially important for biodiversity.**

Here are the steps:

1. Reduce the size of your lawn since it is biologically useless.
2. Remove invasive plants because they outcompete native ones.
3. **Plant Keystone Plants for your region--**native plants that support much more life than others. Chief among these keystone plants is **goldenrod**, which supports **110 species of caterpillars** and **42 species of specialist bees**.

**Mt. Cuba Center**, located in Hockessin, Delaware just did a detailed research report on *Solidago* for the Mid-Atlantic Region. The trial lasted 3 years and evaluated **70 different goldenrod species** for their **ornamental and ecological value**.

A perception exists that goldenrods are aggressive or weedy and are therefore not good candidates for the average home landscape. This trial showed that only a handful of the evaluated *Solidago* could be categorized as aggressive, and even these plants can be used to great effect in naturalistic gardens.

### Some highlights from the report.

A. Goldenrod is **highly deer resistant** and one section lists the ones that are best with no deer browsing, like *Solidago odora* (sweet goldenrod) probably because of its distinct anise smell that is off-putting to herbivores.

B. ***Solidago rugosa* ‘Fireworks’** a **wrinkle-leaf goldenrod was the top rated** in the entire study. From the report about it, “a grand finale... show occurs in September and October when sprays of long slender inflorescences explode into glorious bloom.” (Picture included)

C. Some varieties do better **in the shade**.

The complete report is **here...and will be passed around**.

4. **Create pupation sites, otherwise known as “soft landings.”** These are areas planted under trees where caterpillars drop to the ground and pupate along with other beneficial insects.

5. **Hardscape for conservation** by installing **logs and large stones** as pupation sites and hiding places for small creatures, **bubbling water** features for wildlife, **bare ground** for ground-nesting bees, **shelter for pollinators** and **window well covers** to protect wildlife from being trapped.

6. **Reduce nighttime light pollution** to guard against insect decline by using motion sensor security lights and/or yellow LED bulbs.

7. **Reduce or eliminate fertilizers** that are unnecessary for soil rich in organic matter and **pesticides** which kill beneficial insects.

8. **Educate** and network with neighbors.

9. **Get on the Map!** which showcases your commitment to restoring nature and inspires others to take action.

**Homegrown National Park has an official Facebook page, for those on FB.**

Look out for **native plant sales** in your area. **Penguin Court has an online sale** now until April 26 with pickups on May 1 & 2.

**To educate others**, in addition to the presentation we did for our club, Jackie Johnson and I will be doing a workshop at Sandyvale Memorial Gardens in Johnstown on Saturday, May 9 from 10am-12 pm. The PowerPoint presentation will contain more detailed information. At the end, all participants will receive a 12-inch potting soil filled container and will be able to pick 3 native keystone plants to take home.



***Solidago rugosa* ‘Fireworks’**

## Book Report by Lisa Merschiltz



### Planting in a Post-Wild World By Claudia West and Thomas Rainer

Claudia West grew up in East Germany in the 1980s, a gray, polluted world. Textile factories had polluted the streams along with the mining of soft coal and uranium. Chemical warfare on weeds also contributed. This scene began to change in 1989-1990 with the reunification of Germany and Ms. West learned how resilient nature is.

Thomas Rainer grew up in a suburb of Birmingham, Alabama. As a young child he explored the wooded area around his home until his high school years when that area was developed for housing.

The authors came together on this book, representing two different continents and two different experiences with nature. Mr. Rainer's story is one of nature lost while Ms. West's is one of nature regained. This book is an optimistic call to action, creating a new nature that is a hybrid of both the wild and the cultivated that can flourish in our cities and suburbs. They state we need to lose the idea that nature exists apart from us, that the front lines of nature are now in our backyards, median strips, parking lots.

A new way of thinking is evolving, one where we do not need to seek nature in remote forests and mountains, but we can look for it in the midst of our cities and towns. The authors discuss ways of bridging the gap between nature and our own gardens. We need to observe and embrace the wisdom of natural plant communities. This book is a guide for designing resilient plant communities. They state that as population expands and resources become limited, plantings can no longer be ornamental backdrops—they must clean our storm water, provide food for our pollinators, and act as a genetic reservoir for diversity.

### The Peace Garden/Laurel Highlands Landscape Council

Sheila Croushore is investigating the options of hosting a tri-refresher featuring the OhioPyle area.

Educators in this area are abundant and areas of interest include Kentuck Knob, Fallingwater, and Penguin Court of Brandywine Conservancy are within 20 minutes of there.

The Peace Garden/Laurel Highlands Landscape Council members were invited to register for The Indiana GC tour planned for Monday, April 20, at Oak Haven Mushrooms - Blairsville. starting at 6 p.m.

“Gardeners are the only people who willingly go outside to get dirty, sweaty, bitten, and sunburned and call it relaxing.”

## 7 Plants That Prevent Weeds in Your Garden

Source: <https://www.gardenloversclub.com/garden-blooms/plants-that-prevent-weeds>

If you've ever struggled with pesky weeds popping up in your yard, you're not alone. It's a common issue faced by gardeners and homeowners alike, but did you know that certain plants can actually help prevent weed growth?

By integrating these helpful plants, you can minimize the time you spend dealing with unwanted invaders while enhancing the beauty of your landscape.

In this article, we're going to introduce you to seven plants that work wonders in preventing weed growth. From ground covers to larger bushes, these plants help keep your yard looking its best while saving you time and effort.

So, get ready to explore these natural weed suppressors and get one step closer to the ideal outdoor environment you've always wanted.

### 1. Creeping Phlox



Creeping phlox (**Phlox subulata**) is an excellent choice for your yard. It forms a dense mat that prevents weed growth and adds lovely pink, purple, or white flowers during spring. Plant it in well-draining soil and give it plenty of sun. It's drought-tolerant, making it an easy plant to maintain.

### 2. Sweet Woodruff



Sweet woodruff (**Galium odoratum**) is a beautiful ground cover that spreads quickly, suffocating weeds beneath its attractive foliage. Its delicate white flowers can brighten up shady areas of your yard. The sweet vanilla scent makes it a delightful addition to your garden.

### 3. Creeping Mazus



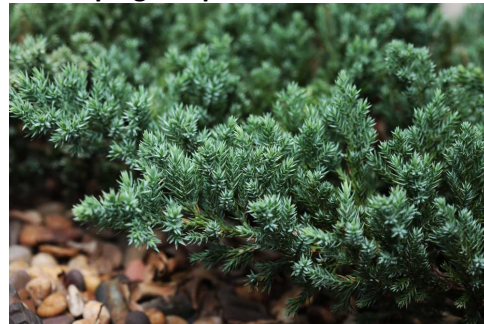
Creeping mazus (**Mazus reptans**) is a low-growing plant that forms a dense carpet, making it difficult for weeds to take root. Its attractive blue or white flowers bloom in spring and early summer. Plant creeping mazus in moist, well-draining soil and provide partial shade for the best results.

### 4. Creeping Thyme



Creeping thyme (**Thymus serpyllum**) is not only a culinary herb but also an excellent ground cover. It forms a dense mat of attractive foliage that smothers weeds, making your yard virtually weed-free. Its fragrant leaves and small purple flowers add beauty to your garden and attract pollinators like bees and butterflies.

### 5. Creeping Juniper



Creeping juniper (**Juniperus horizontalis**) is a versatile evergreen that prevents weed growth by creating a dense ground cover. It's a low-maintenance plant that thrives in various conditions, including dry, rocky soil. Its needle-like foliage provides year-round visual interest in your yard.

(Continues on next page)

## 7 Plants That Prevent Weeds in Your Garden

(continues from previous page)

### 6. Alfalfa



Alfalfa (*Medicago sativa*) is a nutrient-rich plant known for its weed-suppressing abilities. Its deep root system outcompetes weeds for water and nutrients, helping to keep your yard weed-free. Although primarily grown as an agricultural crop, alfalfa can be an effective and attractive addition to your garden.

### 7. Lamb's Ear



Lamb's ear (*Stachys byzantina*) is a soft, velvety ground cover that forms a dense mat to block out weeds. Its silvery-gray foliage adds a unique texture to your garden, and its pink or purple flowers attract pollinators. Plant lamb's ear in well-draining soil and full sun for optimal growth.

### Benefits of Using Weed-Preventing Plants

Using weed-preventing plants in your yard can bring an array of advantages. In this section, we will discuss the benefits of using these plants, including how they are environmentally friendly, low maintenance, and add aesthetic appeal to your yard.

#### Environmentally Friendly

By incorporating weed-preventing plants in your garden, you are opting for an eco-friendlier alternative to chemical-based weed killers. These plants can effectively suppress weed growth while also improving soil quality through nutrient release and reducing soil erosion. As a result, you contribute to a healthier ecosystem, promoting the well-being of other plants and wildlife in your yard.

#### Low Maintenance

The low maintenance aspect of these plants is undoubtedly one of their greatest strengths. Once established, they require minimal attention as they self-sustain and aid in reducing weed growth. They can save you time, effort, and money usually spent on continuous weeding, herbicides, or expensive mulching materials. In addition, the dense ground cover provided by certain weed-suppressing plants can save you water by retaining soil moisture.

#### Aesthetic Appeal

Not only do weed-preventing plants efficiently suppress weed growth, but they can also transform your yard into an inviting and visually appealing space. The variety of colors, textures, and growth patterns these plants offer can enhance the overall look of your garden, bringing an attractive layer of diversity. By choosing the right combinations of weed-preventing plants, you can create a stunning, low-maintenance yard that will be the envy of your neighbors.

## Announcements

- GC of Johnstown Plant Sale—May 11, 2026
- Blair GC Plant Sale—May 15, 2026
- Somerset GC Plant Sale—May 16, 2026
- IGC May Mart – May 15-16 2026
- Patton GC Plant Sale—June 6, 2026
- Pittsburgh Area Judges Council and Laurel Highlands Flower Show—July 17, 2026
- Patton GC Flower Show—July 20, 2026
- Bedford GC Flower Show—July 22, 2026
- GCJ Flower Show—July 25-6, 2026
- **Next District Board Meeting---August 12 – 10am**
- GCFP Convention 2026—Erie, PA –April 26-28, 2026
- GC of Johnstown--Gold Star Memorial Marker Dedication—June 3, 2026
- **District VI Annual Meeting – Sept. 1—Martinsburg, PA**
- GCFP Tri-Refresher, Brandywine Valley, PA -- Sep 13-14
- CAR-SGC Conference," Ohio—The Heart of it All "Cleveland, OH--Oct 19-20

## Birds & Butterflies Report

By Marcy Cunkelman

Migration is moving a little quicker this year. Some things are 2 or more weeks ahead. The extreme weather systems of 80+ degrees have broken many records for new high temperatures set back in the 1800. March was considered the warmest month ever. So, plants are ahead and I am already seeing more different kinds of butterflies this year, compared to the few I saw last year. Now a cold snap will be this week (4/20) with temps in the low 20s. If there are blossoms on your fruit trees and crabapples, lilacs and other trees and shrubs, they will probably get frozen. You may see less fruit if this happens. My serviceberry got nipped when it was out too early when we got temps in the high teens.

Reports are coming in that Hummingbirds have been in PA and continued north, especially along the East coast and from Ohio West. The mountains in PA slow down the Migration in Western PA. Monarchs have been seen out East in PA and again long the coast up to New York. And monarch eggs found already in Ohio. In Kansas, they are already hatching eggs and caterpillars growing. Very early since 2017. In April 2009, I had a female dump over 200 eggs on my barely emerged common milkweed just coming out the soil I gathered up some eggs and brought inside and shared with friends to try to save the eggs since the weather was in the mid-teens. Took almost 3 weeks for the eggs I left on the plants to hatch out. Temperature makes a big difference in how fast the eggs and caterpillar's progress. I was asked by Journey North to report the progress of the eggs, milkweed growth and caterpillars. That was the first year I had 6 generations of egg to adult - early May thru early October. I normally see my first Monarch around 4th of July, and also around Memorial Day. So keep on watching your milkweed for signs of chewing. I'd be interested if you see any early sighting and if you have eggs.

A few links I use to collect current info is [MONARCHWATCH.ORG](http://MONARCHWATCH.ORG) You can track monarchs by sightings and now by radio transmitters. 15 females and 4 males have reached Texas and farther north from being tagged in Mexico. I will send a link, so you might be able to track the radio tagged monarchs using the Bluetooth on your phone. I haven't tried yet, but it needs to be on, to know if a radio-tagged monarch is nearby. I think that would be another of my bucket list to do to have a radio tagged monarch in my yard. [JOURNEYNORTH.ORG](http://JOURNEYNORTH.ORG) is another great citizen's science-based site to report you sighting of Hummers, Monarchs, and other signs of spring, but also track thru the other seasons. Both are free and very easy to use your information and will be used in their reports.

Birds are migrating to their northern nesting sites from enjoying the winter restaurant. I still have a few Juncos and White-throated Sparrows here. They usually leave about the first week of May to Mother's Day. The summer residents are slowly coming back. Some early with the hot weather, and now some delayed with the cold spell this week. The Orioles should be coming back and it's during this cold spell, offering oranges, grapes, pineapple and Natural jellies or jams without corn syrup or preservatives. This will help pull them thru the cold temps. They may also eat the suet cakes for added energy. It's the bug eating birds like the Phoebe or swallows that I worry about if the cold spell lasts too long.

Make sure your nesting boxes are clean. I check to make sure there are no new wasp nests started. I did this 3 times already and had to carefully remove. I have a chickadee nest in my pvc tube nesting box with soft moss and rabbit fur. Last I checked, there were no eggs yet, but box is filling up. Hope they make it since they are great for finding bug and caterpillar to feed their kids.

If you have time on Saturday, May 9th, 2026, that is the GLOBAL BIG DAY. If you have a few minutes to count at your feeders, or bird for 24 hours, this is another citizen's science program. It's easy to do. Here is the link to find out more information. <https://ebird.org/ebird/news/global-big-day-2026> 4/9/226 12:00AM to 12:00pm.

If you have any questions about how to improve your yard to make a better habitat for our birds, butterflies and pollinators, email me [plant4nature.com](mailto:plant4nature.com) and I'll try to help you.

# **Blair Garden Club Petals and Grace**

**District VI Annual Meeting  
Tuesday, September 1, 2026**

**The Bistro at Village Way  
156 Village Way  
Martinsburg, PA 16662**

**Registration 8:30 a.m.**

**Early morning coffee and tea, snack bar upon arrival  
Lunch menu: Wraps, Soup and Salad, Drinks and Dessert  
Cost \$30.00**

**Speaker: Kat Claar**

**[www.fromblossoms.com](http://www.fromblossoms.com)**

**Nine-time presenter at the Philadelphia Flower Show**

**Registration form available after June 1, 2026**