



A Publication of The Five Hills Garden Club
Member of the National Capital Area Garden Clubs, Central Atlantic Region, District III



President's Message

Greetings and Welcome Back! September is a month of transition and renewal, a time when we begin a new season together.

We are fortunate to have a wonderful board that has worked diligently over the summer preparing for the year ahead. I have truly come to appreciate their dedication, enthusiasm, and thoughtful advice as we work together to ensure another successful year for our club.

Our program committee has also been busy planning an exciting lineup of presentations designed to inspire us. This year, we will explore new ideas in floral design, landscaping, and gardening while also learning more about important environmental issues affecting our community. I am looking forward to the creativity and knowledge these programs will bring to our "Garden of Possibilities."

September will be a busy and exciting month. Our first general meeting will be held on September 15th, followed by our fundraiser, the Mad Hatter Tea, on September 19th. Our Ways and Means Committee has been working hard to make this event a success. Carolyn Staska, Val Plisko, and Anne Nelson have dedicated many hours this summer planning every detail. A special thank you goes to Anne Nelson for graciously opening her home as our venue, and to all the members who have volunteered to provide food and support.

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Our last tea was a wonderful success, and this event will be another great opportunity to enjoy camaraderie while helping support our club.

The NCAGC Flower Show will take place September 26th and 27th. This is a wonderful opportunity to see the beautiful floral designs created by members from across the districts. I hope to see some Five Hills designs represented as well!

My final thoughts are about gratitude. I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to our past president, Joy Salpini, for her leadership, guidance, and encouragement as she helped prepare me for this term. She has been incredibly generous in sharing her knowledge and advice about the workings of our outstanding club. *Continued next page ->*

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President's Message continued

A special thank you also goes to Cheryl Freeman for creating our wonderful yearbook and Nancy Peters for taking on the fabulous newsletter. Last, but certainly not least, I want to recognize and thank the patient and talented women who worked so hard putting together this year's programs — Elizabeth Huebner, Willow Prall Martin, Patrice Thacker, and Carolyn Staska. To all of you, your time, creativity, and dedication are truly appreciated.

I look forward to sharing this wonderful year with each of you as we nurture our Garden of Possibilities together. May this be a year filled with creativity, connection, friendship, and many opportunities to celebrate the beauty that surrounds us.

Warmly,
Valerie

Calendar of Events



September 8	Board Meeting – ZOOM
September 15	General Meeting
September 19	Mad Hatter Tea Party Fundraiser
September 24	District III Meeting, Meadowlark Gardens
September 26-27	NCAGC Flower Show Arboretum
September 29	NCAGC Fall Meeting/Luncheon

Programs



Designing the Shade Garden

Louis Ratchford of Merrifield Garden Center loves helping gardeners select the perfect plants to create their dream gardens.

Louis will share creative ideas for designing a beautiful shade garden—creating a woodland oasis filled with interesting textures, colorful blooms, and even the unexpected beauty of rocks and other natural elements. His expertise in design principles, hardscape materials, and plant selection will inspire us to look at shaded areas of our landscapes in a whole new way.

Louis's passion for gardening is infectious!

His enthusiasm often has the entire Merrifield team excited about the nursery's latest additions and possibilities.

Take advantage of his wealth of gardening knowledge. You may leave with some wonderful new ideas—and perhaps a new plant or two for your own garden!

Hospitality

From your Co-Chairs, Stephanie Roche and Elvie Germino Hausken

Thanks to all who have signed up to bring food for our garden club meetings! Close to the meeting day of your signup, you will receive an automated email through SignUp Genius as a reminder to bring food and/or flowers.

In addition, you will be contacted by Host Chairs to coordinate lunch options. Host Chairs will be contacted by Hospitality to determine what is needed as far as paper plates, utensils, napkins, etc.

In general, food provided should feed 25-30 people. Reminder to bring your own coffee/tea mug to meetings.

Thanks for your contributions! We ended the garden club year in June with the luncheon at Nostos. It was enjoyed by all!



A few photos of our members enjoying the installation luncheon in June!

Horticulture and Design

Our goal this year is to have everyone participate in our horticulture and design program at least one time during the year. It is fun and helps other club members learn something new from your participation and experience.

Horticulture

This month you are asked to bring in something that is growing in your garden to help us learn what blooms in September. Please bring your display in a green bottle.

Design

The design topic for this month is simple: include at least three different kind of flowers as you arrange your flowers in a fun and creative way.



Editor's Note

I wanted to thank Ann Carter, our newsletter editor for the past several years, for her hard work and dedication. She produced an engaging and informative newsletter each month. Thank you, Ann!

Nancy Peters



Civic Projects

Blue Star Memorial

Thanks to everyone who helped keep the Blue Star Memorial looking beautiful all summer. We had many compliments about how beautiful it has been this year.

It is a great tribute to our service men and women and your dedication is much appreciated.

Noreen Linnemann

Glyndon Park Fall Clean Up

Please join in during our Fall Clean Up at Glyndon Park. We'll meet on Tuesday, 10/6, at 9:30am. Sign up link below!

[https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30E0945A9AE23A2FD0-65656057-glyndon#/.](https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30E0945A9AE23A2FD0-65656057-glyndon#/)

Lisa Rzepka



Conservation

Birds play an essential role in the functioning of the world's ecosystems, in a way that directly impacts human health, economy and food production, as well as millions of other species. Can you imagine a world without birds? The benefits birds bring us aren't just cultural. A recent study has shown that birds eat 400-500 million tons of insects a year. In China, two-thirds of the diet of House Swift, *Apus nipalensis*, consists of agricultural pests, and in forests across the Americas, Evening Grosbeak, *Hesperiphona vespertine*, becomes a superhero during outbreaks of Spruce Budworm, providing biological control worth \$1,820 per square kilometer. Birds are so efficient that nest boxes have become a pest control practice throughout Europe.

Birds pollinate plants: When we think pollinators, bees and butterflies flutter to mind – but bird pollinators such as hummingbirds and honeyeaters also make a big contribution, especially in high altitudes or hot climates. In South Africa, for instance, nearly a quarter of *Salvia* species are bird-pollinated. Such flowers are lacking in scent, since birds favor sight over smell. Their role as pollinators benefits us directly – around 5% of the plants humans use for food or medicine are pollinated by birds. And when they disappear, the results can be drastic: 31 species of Hawaiian bellflowers appear to have gone extinct along with the birds that pollinated them.

Birds are nature's cleanup crew: The sight of vultures circling overhead may look foreboding, but it is both their speed of arrival (typically within an hour of death), and their thoroughness that makes them so valuable. It could be days before other less efficient scavengers, such as feral dogs or rats, arrive to pick at the remains, allowing deadly diseases such as rabies and tuberculosis to develop and spread. Over its lifetime, a single vulture provides waste disposal services worth around \$11,600. Following the collapse of Asia's vultures, India's feral dog population surged by 5.5 million, spreading rabies and leading to an estimated 47,300 human deaths.

Birds can transform landscapes: Habitats like forests, marshes and grasslands affect people across the whole planet, even those living hundreds of miles away – they store carbon, keep the climate stable, oxygenate the air and transform pollutants into nutrients. But without birds, many of these ecosystems may not exist. Birds maintain the delicate balance between plant and herbivore, predator and prey. A perfect example is the salt marshes of south-eastern USA, where cordgrass thrives, filtering local water and protecting the coast from sea erosion. The Salt Marsh Periwinkle, *Littoraria irrorata*, grazes upon cordgrass with gusto, and were it not for predators such as oystercatchers, curlews and plovers, these tiny snails would devour the entire marsh leaving only mudflats.

Birds keep coral reefs alive: Birds, especially seabirds, play a key role in cycling nutrients and helping to fertilize marine ecosystems such as coral reefs. Seabirds travel hundreds of kilometers to feed out in the ocean – and when they return, they deposit layers of highly pungent guano (seabird droppings) at their colonies. This guano leaches into the ocean and fertilizes nearby communities such as coral reefs. A study on the Chagos Islands shows what happens when this process is disrupted. On islands free of invasive seabird predators, coral reefs thrived, with fish growing larger and faster for their age, compared to rat-infested islands.

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Conservation continued

Birds inspire science: From the technology of flight to the invention of zippers modelled on the barbules of feathers, humans have drawn inspiration from birds for centuries. Some of these advances have been huge: Darwin's studies of finches in the Galápagos proved instrumental in shaping his thoughts on evolution through natural selection. But birds play a more important role than just giving us ideas. Birds are the messengers that tell us about the health of the planet. Birds are widespread and respond quickly to changes in the environment. Because of this, they are our early-warning system for pressing concerns such as climate change.

Eight Actions we can take to protect birds where we live

1. Reduce or eliminate pesticide and herbicide chemicals. You will help keep birds, pets, and your family healthy.
2. Create or protect water sources in your yard. Birds need water to drink and bathe, just like us. Be sure to keep birdbaths clean and change the water every three days when mosquitoes are breeding.
3. Identify the non-native invasive plants in your region, and work to remove them from your yard. They threaten healthy ecosystems.
4. Make your windows visible to birds to prevent collisions. Put up screens, close drapes and blinds when you leave the house, or stick multiple decals on the glass (decals should be 4 inches apart to be effective).
5. Let your yard get a little messy! Leave snags for nesting places and stack downed tree limbs to create a brush pile, which is a great source of cover for birds during bad weather.
6. Close your blinds at night and turn off lights you aren't using. Some birds use constellations to guide them on their annual migrations, and bright lights from windows and skylights can disrupt their steering senses.
7. Plant native plants. Native flora provides birds with food in the form of fruit and seeds and is home to tasty invertebrates such as bugs and spiders.
8. Attract hummingbirds with sugar water, made by combining four parts hot water to one-part white sugar, boiled for one to two minutes. Never use honey, artificial sweeteners, or food coloring. Clean feeders with a solution of one-part white vinegar to four parts water once a week.

Many thanks to the Audubon Society [Audubon.org/SupportBirds](https://www.audubon.org/SupportBirds)
and [BirdLife International https://www.birdlife.org](https://www.birdlife.org)

Elizabeth Huebner

