

Sow and Tell

October, 2025
Volume 65, Issue 2

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

President: Joy Salpini, 703-945-3487
Editor: Ann Carter 703-346-3663, annccarter@verizon.net
fivehillsgardenclub@gmail.com

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear Garden Club Members,

What I love about this time of year is turning on my heated seats when I head out in the morning and rolling down my windows on my way home! Being surrounded by the beauty of autumn and all the changes that take place, reminds me of the ever-changing cycle of nature and the importance of nurturing both our plants and our friendships within the club.

As the crisp air settles in and leaves begin to fall, October invites us to embrace the beauty of fall—both in our gardens and in our community. This season is ideal for planting spring bulbs, dividing perennials, and refreshing your compost pile. Don't forget to mulch your beds to protect roots from winter's chill and consider adding late-blooming asters or ornamental grasses for a final burst of color.

I am excited for all the activities and opportunities we have to enjoy each other in the coming months. Looking forward to an upcoming period filled with inspiring events and chances to connect.

- 🌸 October 14 – Help build and decorate Audrey for our Halloween Parade.

- 🌿 October 15 – Field Trip to Birdsong Pleasure Garden. Stroll the woodland path and enjoy the lovely native gardens and mountain views.
- 🌼 October 19–22 – CAR-SGC Conference. Join fellow garden enthusiasts for workshops, networking, and regional updates.
- 🎃 October 29 – Halloween Parade. Help us bring Audrey to life as we showcase Little Shop of Horrors.

We are fortunate to have the opportunity to attend two NCAGC Schools in person this Fall: Landscape Design, October 27 & 28, and Gardening School, November 17 & 18.

WHAT'S INSIDE

Calendar	2
Program	2
Horticulture	3
Civic	3
Fall Cleanup Tips	3
Flower Show	4
Vienna Halloween Parade	5
Membership	6
NCAGC Schools	6
Homemade Weed Killer	6
Ways and Means	7
Conservation.....	7-9
Club Social.....	10
Day of Design	11

Both will be held at Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church in Fairfax. Later in the newsletter you'll see the schedule of in-person and virtual NCAGC schools. I encourage everyone to try to find time to take a class this year.

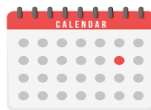
Finally, a heartfelt thank-you to Valerie for graciously monitoring our club email and representing us at the District III meeting

during my absence. Your dedication keeps us thriving.

Wishing you a joyful October filled with golden leaves, garden delights, and shared laughter.

Warmly,
Joy

CALENDAR OF EVENTS



October 14	Board Meeting
October 15	Field Trip to Birdsong Pleasure Garden
October 21	General Meeting**
October 19-22	CAR-SGC Conference, Cambridge, MD
October 29	Vienna Halloween Parade
November 6	Day of Design

****NOTE:** All general meetings at Vienna Presbyterian Church will be held in the Fellowship Hall on the first floor.

OCTOBER 21, 2025 PROGRAM PROTECTING THE STARRY SKY



As founder of the non-profit Dark Sky Friends, the chapter leader of DarkSky NOVA (the Northern Virginia Chapter of DarkSky International), and a DarkSky International advocate, Eileen Kragie is committed to changing the laws and outdoor lighting ordinances and educating people about responsible outdoor light at night. Local outdoor lighting ordinances, legislation and regional master lighting plans are key to solving the rapidly growing problem of light pollution. Eileen will speak on responsible outdoor lighting at night and raising awareness of the harmful impact artificial light at night is having on our lives and our shared environments.

Val Plisko

--



Horticulture – Bring a cutting of a plant or shrub from your yard to share with the club members. Display it in a green bottle and wedge it with foam. Bottles and foam will be available at the meeting if you need some. Cards will be available for you to use to describe your material. Assistance with filling out the card will also be available. (Card example above.) This is an opportunity to share our bounty with each other.

Design – It is the season for mums. Create a design and try to include chrysanthemums in your design. List your materials on a 3X5 card.

If you are shy about making a design, this is a comfortable venue to learn. If you would like some help, please feel free to call Noreen Linnemann.



Noreen Linnemann

CIVIC



Front row: Nancy Walker, Patrice Thacker, Noreen Linnemann and Lisa Rzepka. Second row: Val Plisko, Candace Dibblee and Stephanie Roche. Not pictured, Lucia Bacon.

Thanks to all the helpful hands that came out to perk up Glyndon Garden on September 30th.

Please join us on October 28th at 9:30am when we will undertake some transplanting and prepping the garden for winter

Lisa Rzepka

Fall Cleanup: What to Cut Back, What to Leave, and Why

https://www.gardendesign.com/autumn/fall-garden-cleanup.html?utm_source=article-newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Fall-Cleanup-10-9-25

FLOWER SHOW

“The Art of the Bloom” 2026 FLOWER SHOW SIGN-UPS

SHOW CHAIR -

Deneen Wilson

SCHEDULE- Joy Salpini

STAGING - Andy Bothwell Nancy Walker

HORTICULTURE CHAIR - Elizabeth Huebner

HORT. ENTRIES -

Joy Salpini
Ann Carter

HORT. PLACEMENT-

Noreen Linnemann
Shelia Creswell

DESIGN CHAIR -

Anne Nelson

BOTANIC ARTS -

Valerie Warriner

JUDGES CHAIR -

Val Plisko

CLERKS - Patrice Thacker Lucia Bacon Carolyn Staska

HOSPITALITY -

Carolyn Staska
Lucia Bacon

AWARDS - Julia Smith

PUBLICITY- Cary Fitchner-Vu



DESIGNS:

Creative – Novice

1. Val Plisko
2. Kathy Nebhut
3. Patrice Thacker
4. Joy Salpini

Creative Design

1. Elizabeth Heubner
2. Anne Nelson
3. Andy Bothwell
4. Noreen Linnemann

Grouped Mass

1. Anne Nelson
2. Lucia Bacon
3. Cary Fichtner- Vu
4. Shelia Creswell

Botanical Arts

1. Barbara Tozzi
2. Karen Thompson
3. Lisa Rzepka
4. Elvira Hausken

FIVE HILLS GARDEN CLUB IS PARTICIPATING IN VIENNA HALLOWEEN PARADE!

To help get our name out in the Vienna Community and grow our membership, Five Hills is participating this year in the town's annual Halloween parade. We will carry our banner identifying the club and are asking as many members as possible to take part.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS



**FOR VIENNA
HALLOWEEN
PARADE,
Wednesday,
Oct. 29, 2025
7-9 p.m. Maple
Avenue**

Since 1946, the Town of Vienna has hosted a Halloween parade down Maple Avenue, from Branch Road to Center Street (approximately ½ mile long), rain or shine. Joy Salpini is offering her classic truck to transport members who need to ride in the parade instead of walking. Please prepare with warm clothes, comfortable shoes, and flashlights.



PARADE THEME AND ORGANIZING OURSELVES

This year's parade theme is 'Broadway on Maple', so Five Hills has chosen the Broadway Musical Little Shop of Horrors as ours. The parade organizers have approved our required application to participate.

As a garden club that will mark its 71st year in Vienna, we want to convey our love of flowers, plants and nature, including the man-eating kind ala Audrey II in the musical Little Shop of Horrors. We are asking members to participate by dressing up as deranged, but not too scary, flowers and plants or characters from the musical.

Val Plisko



MEMBERSHIP

Fall is here with beautiful but dry weather. Hopefully the fall foliage is not affected by the lack of rain. We have lost a few members, but also gained an additional member. Lisa Church officially joined in June. Membership is now 42 with 35 regular members, 6 associate members and our fabulous honorary member Barbara Tozzi. Three new ladies joined us at our September meeting. Please welcome MaryAnn Toryano, Illeen Feirmen, and Shari Fishman. The club goal is to increase by 3 new members for year 2025/2026. If you bring a guest to a meeting, please make sure you give me an opportunity to greet them and be ready to introduce them to our club during our meeting.

Now that we are back in person, it's a good time to review the attendance requirements stated in our by-laws. Each member should plan to attend five regular general meetings scheduled throughout the year. Information related to Active or Associate membership is in Article III of your yearbook.

If you have any questions or concerns, please let me know.

Valerie Warriner

NCAGC SCHOOLS

- Flower Show School Course 2** Oct 20-22, 2025 **Gettysburg, Pa (IN PERSON)** Register: Evie Matzke
- Flower Show School Course 3** Ap 27-29, 2026 **Gettysburg, PA (IN PERSON)** Register: Evie Matzke
(Frances Thrash teaching)
- Flower Show School Course 4** Oct 26-28, 2026 **Gettysburg. Pa (IN PERSON)** Register: Evie Matzke
(Frances Thrash teaching)
- Environmental Course 1** Jan 13 - Jan 15, 2026 St. Augustine, FL **(Virtual Course)** Register: Beverly Williams
- Environmental course 3** Mar 16 - Mar 19, 2026 St. Louis, MO **(Virtual)** Register: Jan Conant
- Environmental Course 4** Nov 20 - Nov 21, 2025 Fort Meyers, FL **(Virtual Course)** Register: Judy Francino
- Gardening Course 1** Nov 17 - Nov 18, 2025 **Fairfax, VA (Hybrid Course-either in person or Zoom)** Register: Melanie Dann
- Gardening Course 4** Feb 09 - Feb 11, 2026 New Smyrna Beach, FL **(Virtual Course)** Register: Sally Flanagan
- Landscape Design Course 3** Oct 27 - Oct 28, 2025 **Fairfax, VA (Hybrid Course-either in person or Zoom)**
Register: Jennifer Francois
- Landscape Design Course 4** Oct 28 - Oct 30, 2025 Waltham, MA **(Virtual Course)** Register: Beate Bolen
- Landscape Design Course 4** Feb 23 - Feb 25, 2026 Louisville, OH **(Virtual Course)** Register: Bert Nero

HOMEMADE WEED KILLER

Contributed by Rosemarie Jaksetic

White Vinegar - 1/2 Gallon
Salt - 1/2 Cup
Dish Soap - 1 1/2 teaspoons
Add the mix to a spray bottle and spray the weeds.

WAYS AND MEANS

Five Hills will have an “Upscale Yard Sale” table at the Morning of Design on Thursday, November 6th. This event at Christ Lutheran Church in Fairfax features our own Betty Ann Galway, a former member. Holiday decorations, costume jewelry and plant/flower items are especially welcome. Please don’t bring large items as we only have one table. Roberta is happy to receive items, as well as ideas, at our October meeting.

Looking ahead, we are planning a botanical greeting cards workshop in the spring. The date is to be decided. Materials will be provided, but some of you may want to press flowers and leaves that are pretty now.

Thank you for all your support--it’s what makes Five Hills continue to grow and thrive!

Roberta Lewis and Carolyn Staska

CONSERVATION

“Junk Trees” and the Native

Promoting native plants in Northern Virginia

by Eileen Ellsworth

Take a moment to stand in the scaly shoes of a migrating songbird along the Atlantic Flyway this fall. Passing through Virginia, you will still have a long way to go before reaching your southern wintering grounds. Imagine your relief when, after an entire night of flying, you find a stopover habitat to rest and refuel before the next leg of the journey. And what is your favorite food from the on-site offerings? Berries that grow on native trees and shrubs, all of which are wildlife powerhouses. Despite that, some of the best producers are labeled “junk trees” in today’s gardening and landscaping industries because they aren’t someone’s idea of what a yard tree should look like.

To show how far afield we have drifted in our plant-think, consider the results of this [2022 study by the Center for Conservation Biology](#) (CCB). Researchers working on the eastern shore

of Virginia analyzed the nutritional content of several native plant berries to discover which ones provide the biggest energy boost for migrating birds. Next, they measured levels of berry removal from plants during the fall migration to determine which berries were most preferred. Considerable overlap existed between the most nutritious and the most popular native plant berries, as follows:

The most nutritious native tree berries, starting with the best, were:

1. Sassafras
2. Bayberry
3. Virginia Creeper
4. Pokeweed
5. Devil’s Walking-stick
6. American Beautyberry
7. Hackberry
8. Wild grapes

The most preferred native plant berries, starting with the most popular, were:

1. Sassafras
2. Devil's Walking-stick
3. Pokeweed
4. Virginia Creeper
5. American Beautyberry
6. Bayberry
7. Hackberry
8. American Holly

These plants are not just profuse berry producers. They are classic native understory shrubs and trees that have been disappearing from our landscapes in modern times. White-tailed deer have over-browsed the understory. Non-native invasives outcompete the natives. Plant diseases proliferate as the climate warms. And humans persist in calling some native plants “junk” and discourage their purchase. It is a perfect storm of destructive pressures and wrong thinking. At least the thinking part is something we can reverse along with the behavior that flows from it.

Let us ditch the “junk tree” label and take a closer look at three rock star “*treasure* trees” included in the CCB study.

Sassafras: Sassafras berries were rated #1 in the study for both nutritional value and bird popularity. *Who knew?* Woodpeckers, mocking-



birds, catbirds, flycatchers, phoebes, vireos, wild turkeys, and yellowthroat warblers all enjoy the feast. The tree also provides excellent support for squirrels, rabbits, and other mammals and hosts some very cool moth species such as

the Imperial, Promethea, Cecropia, and lo moths as well as the remarkably handsome Spicebush Swallowtail caterpillar.

Sassafras grows very fast and reaches heights of 30-60 feet in ideal conditions. You'll need to plant more than one if you want berries, as only the female trees produce them. White-tailed deer relentlessly browse the tree, so some fencing is recommended for the first few years. Flower and berry production begins at ten years, and the abundant clusters of yellow flowers in April and May are simply spectacular. The fruit ripens in September, just in time for the fall migrations. The berry's appearance has been likened to a blue-black egg sitting atop a bright red golf tee. Its leaves are just as unique. Three distinct leaf shapes - the mitten, the three-lobe, and the oval - all grow on the same tree and turn bright yellow, orange, and red in the fall. Its wildlife value and unique features say it all.

Devil's walking-stick: The CCB study rated Devil's Walking-stick berries as #5 for nutritional value and #2 in popularity.



Cedar waxwings, wood thrushes, white-throated sparrows, Swanson's thrush, American robins, gray catbirds, northern mockingbirds, rose-breasted grosbeaks, dark-eyed juncos, and various migrating warblers are all avid consumers.

Another fast grower, the tree / shrub reaches heights of 10-30 feet, making it ideal for yards and gardens where larger canopy trees can't fit. It also reproduces quickly by suckering roots and often

forms colonies in open fields, wood margins, and moist woods. You only need to purchase and plant one specimen to set fruit, and berries appear as early as year three or four.

Devil's Walking-stick is a native plant that looks positively exotic. Spot it once and you will never forget it. Prominent thorns grow along the trunk, stems, and leaf stalks (thus, the label "junk"). The thorns give the plant its name while also discouraging most deer browse. Small white or creamy white flowers appear in mid-to-late summer and form showy, fragrant canopies above the huge compound leaves, attracting many pollinators. When dark purple berries appear in the fall, they hang on stalks that have turned a vivid burgundy or lacy red. This plant is just plain crazy beautiful.

American Beautyberry: We mention



this even though it is native further south but not in Northern Virginia, because we would like to warn people not to buy the wrong species by mistake, which happens commonly. The CCB study rates American beautyberry [#6](#) for berry nutrition and [#5](#) for bird popularity. While Sassafras and Devil's Walking-stick rarely appear on landscaping plans, American Beautyberry is a frequent choice and never designated "junk" in anyone's book.

In spring and summer, the plant looks ordinary with unremarkable leaves and inconspicuous flowers. Come the fall, however, the plant transforms itself as tight clusters of bright purple berries ripen along the entire length of the stem.

Those berries last for weeks, but their taste improves as they age and ferment on the stems, making them a fan favorite for migrating birds. American robins, mockingbirds, cardinals, towhees, thrashers, gray catbirds, and finches are known customers among 40 species relying on the tree for late season food.

American Beautyberry also grows fast to reach a mature size of up to about 8 feet. Deer eat it, so fencing is recommended until it is well established.

Here is the warning. When purchasing American Beautyberry, be aware that Asian cultivars are often sold under the name "Beautyberry" and can be confused with the straight native. Only purchase *Callicarpa americana*. Mislabelling is common even then. Devil's Walking-stick (*Aralia spinosa*) also has an invasive look-alike (*Aralia elata*).

When we label a native plant as "junk", it is often because of thorns, poor-quality wood, or aggressive growth and spread. But the label also reflects our severed connection with nature. A "junk" tree or "brush" shrub may or may not please us, but it is a migrating bird's vital food source, an uncommon moth's host plant, and a native bee's essential nectar source. For more suggestions, see the [Plant NOVA Trees website](#).

One person's junk has always been another's treasure. Let's value what matters. This article is from Plant Nova Natives.

Elizabeth Huebner

CLUB SOCIAL AT CANA VINEYARDS AND WINERY

Members of Five Hills, along with some husbands, met for a social gathering at Cana Vineyards and Winery in Middleburg on Sunday, October 5th. It was a perfect fall afternoon with clear sunny skies and great views of the mountains and vines. The group shared food, wine and good times.



A fun day at the vineyard
with Five Hills friends and
family.



Rosemarie Jaksetic, Lura Marshall,
Gail Gile and Anne Nelson



Front row: Elizabeth Huebner, Lura Marshall, Cary Fichtner-Vu,
Barbara Tozzi and Anne Nelson
Second row: Gail Gile, Patrice Thacker, Valerie Warriner and
Rosemarie Jaksetic

*"The tints of autumn . . . a sunset in the leaves."
John Greenleaf Whittier*

THE NCAGC JUDGES COUNCIL &
DISTRICT III PRESENT THE

MORNING OF DESIGN EVENT
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2025



10:00 A.M. - 12:30 P.M.

CHRIST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

3810 MEREDITH DR. (OFF RT. 50)

FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA

\$10 DONATION

FEATURING NGC MASTER JUDGE BETTY ANN GALWAY AND
OTHER EXPERTS

GET INSPIRED BY CREATIVE DESIGN DEMOS AND HELPFUL
TIPS! REFRESHMENTS, SHOPPING,
DOOR PRIZES, OPPORTUNITY TICKETS!
ALL ARE WELCOME TO JOIN THE FUN!

CASH OR CHECK ONLY