

District 4 increased by one club this year and is now comprised of 29 clubs and a Garden Council. Deborah Thompson is District Director and Sue Ellen Bennett is Vice Director.

District 4 has purchased a brick to support Lake Lure restoration. The brick will be inscribed GCNC District 4. A donation has also been made to Asheville Botanical Garden from the District. This money was raised through an action of the centerpieces made by the clubs to decorate our Fall District Meeting.

Some Presidents within the district submitted the following updates for sharing at this annual meeting:

#### *Club of Twenty Gardens*

Will be winding down our year on May 14th at Kaleidium. We will be welcoming 6 new members and celebrating six former Presidents of our club.

This year we have enjoyed supplying flowers for Meals on Wheels or senior services, preparing flowers for gravesites at God's Acre in Old Salem for the Easter Sunrise service and teaching a weekly gardening class at Winston Salem Street School. We have also started the initial planning for our 100th anniversary in April 2028.

#### *Flower Lore Garden Club*

Celebrated the 70th anniversary with two fundraisers and acquired 501(c)3 status under GCNC's umbrella. The fundraisers generated over \$15,000, which will be used by the City of Winston-Salem to install over 200 trees along one boulevard. The Club is thrilled these projects were successful and the wine and dine events were an excellent way for members of various Garden Clubs to socialize.

### *Twin City Garden Club*

Kicked off the year with a celebration of the club's 100th anniversary. We were reminded of the many Winston-Salem beautification projects we have been involved with. Our club continues to support the Crossnore Miracle Grounds Garden in the heart of our city. It serves as an opportunity for the children that live there to dig in the dirt and spend time with nature. The spring welcomed a walk on the Black Walnut Bottom Trail in historic Bethania and a meeting on floral design and the basics of entering a flower show. Attendance was up this year, especially for evening meetings.

### *The Bermuda Run Garden Club*

Just completed phase 2 of the pollinator garden themed "Plant this not that." We added two forthergilla bushes to our pollinator gardens instead of Burning bush. We also planted four American fringe trees instead of Bradford pear trees and two Sunburst Hypericum.

We made 25 golf themed centerpieces for the 20th anniversary of the Crosby scholars golf tournament breakfast of champions. The Crosby scholars golf tournament serves as an important fundraiser, helping provide financial support for high school seniors as they pursue their college education.

We continue our bouquets for seniors, which accompany meals on wheels a Gran's Garden project at Senior Services. We will make close to 800 bouquets this year.

### *Weeds and Seeds Garden Club*

This was an auction year for us so we were able to raise money that we will be donating to RJ Reynolds high school for plantings at various areas and a few projects to help the residents and Crossnore.

### *Evergreen Garden Club*

Will conclude our 2025/2026 year on May 14 with our annual Spring Luncheon. This is a time we gather to celebrate our year and look back on many informative and engaging programs including:

- a private tour of a magnificent rose and sculpture garden in Ennice, NC
- lessons in how to grow and cook with herbs from a local cooking instructor and cookbook author
- lecture on classical landscape architecture and tips for how to design a classical residential garden
- a presentation on how-to take home entertaining to the next level from two of our community's most popular event planners and floral designers,
- a wine tasting with the owner of Hanover Park Vineyard and Winery with a presentation on the rise of NC wine agriculture and why old tobacco land has become so desirable for grape growing in our area,
- an education in the process of becoming a Master Gardener in Forsyth County, and all of the many ongoing learning opportunities for Master Gardeners and the rewarding impact Master Gardeners have on schools, public spaces, and home gardens in our area.

Our community project highlight of the year culminated with our Christmas Luncheon and Auction held at Old Town Club on December 11, where we raised over \$9,000 for two Reynolda Gardens projects, which were voted on by our membership.

- One project focuses on initial plantings of ferns, sedges, and perennials along certain trails in an area in Reynolda Gardens that is slated for future development,
- the other is for the creation of a meadow monarch waystation located in a large circle area of the Reynolda Gardens meadow which is used as a classroom space, this project will create a 6' bed which encircles the classroom space and will be filled with pollinator plants with a wide diversity of various nectar sources, geared towards a long window of providing food, shelter and habitat.

Throughout the year, Evergreen Garden Club (EGC) provided on a monthly basis fresh cut flower arrangements to brighten up the cafeteria and other family shared spaces at the Salvation Army's Center of Hope Family Shelter. EGC also partnered with Moore Elementary School to provide gloves, gardening tools, and soil for the children's educational gardens.

### *Old Salem Garden Club*

Our ongoing beautification/maintenance of the Meditation Garden at Crossnore Communities for Children is a top priority. Some of us were just there putting in begonias to be enjoyed for the next few months.

### *Modern Gardeners Garden Club*

Adopted a new initiative this year, "The Buddy Bench Program". Started by a child and her mother, after she herself had been bullied and felt isolated after a move in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. The objective is to foster kindness, and combat bullying.

Benches were made by the woodworking students at Mt. Airy High School and delivered to three of our local elementary schools. Prior to this, counselors were provided with instructional books to work with the children. Students were then designated as "Kindness Ambassadors". Their job is to promote kindness by either joining students sitting alone on the bench or inviting them to join activities. This practice also helps develop leadership skills with the students. Teachers and counselors are then made aware of students that may be feeling isolated, or to the potential of mental health concerns.

We have overwhelming feedback from teachers and counselors who acknowledge that they themselves need a buddy bench program of their own! And mostly, the teacher from the woodworking class reported that the students who built the benches were extremely proud to have contributed to such a great program. We also have been contacted by other local community service organizations that would like to join our effort.

## Garden Club Council Winston-Salem Forsyth County

This year's theme was Inspiring Connections. It was chosen to transform and urge its members to see and experience things differently.

Following is a recap of the year's accomplishments:

The Garden Club Council proudly boasts over 900+ hours of volunteer hours.

### **Membership.**

Welcomed Late Bloomer Garden Club into the Garden Club Council of Winston-Salem/Forsyth County (Council) making us a Council of 20 garden clubs and 820 members.

### **Grants.**

From September, 2025 to May, 2026, the Council awarded \$53,148 in beautification and protection & preservation grants to nonprofit organizations and organizations who support public land in Forsyth County.

### **Council Initiatives.**

Clean & Green School Judging. With our partnership with Keep Winston-Salem Beautiful (KWSB), the Council provides volunteers to judge public schools on beautification and environmental education programs. Flags, certificates and trees are awarded at the May School Board Meeting.

Flower Bed Judging. Another partnership with KWSB, the Council provides funds for plants/flowers for over 30 flower beds throughout the city, judges the flower beds and gives a monetary award to the top three winners.

Arbor Day. Garden Club Members bagged over 600 Kousa Dogwoods to be delivered to 5th grade classrooms within the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County School System. This initiative supports the 5th grade science curriculum and is an annual event.

### **Fundraisers.**

Our Annual Plant Sale was a great success. Focusing on selling geraniums and ferns, the Council raised over \$6,000 for our community grants program.

On May 13, we hosted our last Council meeting of the year by awarding the organization's two highest honors: Nancy D. Sherk Award For Achievement in Beautification - a club award went to Forest Evening GC and the Wava Howard Award for Lifetime Achievement - individual award going to Leah Crowley. Volunteer Incentives were also awarded.

Garden Club Council of Winston-Salem/Forsyth County hosted the 2026 Winston-Salem Garden Tour, "*In Full Blom – A Tour of Gardens Reimagined, Reinvigorated, and Renewed*" from 10 am to 4pm. The tour featured 10 exceptional private gardens, along with a bonus garden where attendees enjoyed gourmet box lunches from a local deli. More than 1,000 tickets were sold, and over 450 lunches were served throughout the day. Guests also participated in a raffle that sold 175 tickets, with one lucky winner receiving a pair of Elizabeth Locke gold and turquoise earrings valued at more than \$5,000, generously donated by Windsor Jewelers.

The garden tour was made possible by more than 180 volunteer shifts the day of the event, totaling over 500 volunteer hours. More than 800 generous members representing the 20 garden clubs that make up the Council donated their time, energy, and talents to help bring the tour to life.

The garden tour was also supported by 121 local sponsors, including businesses, individuals, and garden clubs. While proceeds are still being finalized, the event was a huge success and is expected to net over \$109,000 for the Council's Community Grants Program. As the Garden Club Council's largest fundraiser, this year's tour was the most successful since the first Winston-Salem Garden Tour in 2016. The tour is a biennial event, with the next tour planned for April 2028. The exact date will be announced at a later time – and is certain to be another unforgettable celebration of gardens, beauty, and community.