
THE NORTH CAROLINA
GARDENER

“Growing Together”

Fall 2025

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Member

National Garden Clubs, Inc.

South Atlantic Region

GCNC

Organized 1925

Federated 1930

Incorporated 1940

Our mission is to provide education, resources, and networking opportunities for its members to promote the love of gardening, floral design, civic and environmental responsibility.

WWW.GARDENCLUBOFNC.ORG

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To submit articles, events and items of interest for submission to The NC Gardener/Website, please fill out this form:

[https://
form.jotform.com/25114520666
3149](https://form.jotform.com/251145206663149)

Submission Guidelines

- Articles submitted as a word document, 500-1000 words, do not imbed images.
- Photos should be high resolution jpg, png, tif format with captions
- Email Subject in include “article for NC Gardener” and Club Name
- Email Body to include District, Garden Club, and submitter name
- Editor reserves the right to edit any article due to space constraints, duplication, clarity and accuracy



President's Message

NGC Symposium Welcome

Welcome, everyone, to our NGC Symposium! Held on October 27-28, 2025 at JC Rauleston Arboretum.

We are honored to have our instructors: Gina Jogan from Florida and Sue Kirkman from Kentucky.

A warm welcome to Linda Howle, SAR Regional Director, accompanied by 11 members from South Carolina.

Special thanks to Debi Harrington from New Mexico, who contributes in many roles for NGC and manages Ames Tools grants. Debi is joined by two members.

Our guests also include Rose Schultz from Arkansas, Gale Thomas from Georgia, and two from Michigan—Kathleen and Mary Jo McElroy.

Mary Vacek, GCNC FS Chairman, and Francis Cain, GCNC Third Vice President, are present to support and observe the program.

Shelli Rochford created the Jot Forms, took lunch orders, and made name tags, ensuring everyone had what they needed. Connie Jo Goodson, FSJC Treasurer, handled the registration process and tracked every financial detail. Joyce Adams, Credentials Chairman, ensured everyone's forms were correct and was responsible for seeing the designs were properly managed. Diane Bauman has taken care of all Horticulture duties, providing essential support in that area.

Special recognition goes to Charles McLendon, GCNC President.

We are pleased to welcome 20 members from North Carolina to this event.

Thanks to all committee members and supporters who helped make this symposium possible.

Looking forward to a wonderful learning experience for everyone in attendance.



FALL BOARD MEETING – SEPTEMBER 8, 2025

MARILYN WRIGHT – FIRST VICE PRESIDENT/ CHAIRMAN OF MEMBERSHIP

Current figures on Garden Club membership are somewhat discouraging:

- **Current members stand at 4317 – a decrease of 155 from Annual Meeting in spring 2025**
- **Current number of clubs has also decreased to 136.**

However, there are two encouraging events:

- **A new club has formed in District 5 with 30 members. “Bonded By Blooms” was sponsored by the Greensboro Council of Garden Clubs. We are delighted to welcome this new group of fellow gardeners**
- **Two clubs – one in District 4 “Forest Garden Club” and one in District 5 “Flower Lovers” have requested Golden Gardener status rather than withdraw from the state. These ladies will only be required to pay annual state dues of \$12 per member, but will retain all rights and privileges of an active garden club. Again, we are delighted the members chose to remain with us.**

Your first Vice President and her Directors are working hard to improve the state membership status. These efforts are taking different forms:

- **GCNC sponsored a workshop for all directors in June of 2025 – providing lodging and a dinner meal. Directors got to know each other, learn the requirements of their job, and receive a handbook. Time was spent devising ways to increase membership. Everyone was engaged and enthusiastic and willing to apply their energies towards a solution**
- **At the workshop, the group designed a rack card for easy reference to the many supported activities of the State Garden Club. The cards have been printed and are now available for display at garden centers, nurseries, local libraries. Hopefully public awareness of the Garden Club of North Carolina and its service to the community at large will be an end product of this activity.**

- **Directors are encouraged to acquaint all clubs in their district about the membership alternative through Golden Gardeners. We need to retain those tried-and-true members so they can continue to offer their fellowship and wisdom to the current members.**

Clubs across North Carolina are beginning to realize the importance of submitting club information to local papers. Clubs which post meeting alerts have witnessed a steady growth in membership. At the suggestion of the district directors and under the guidance of our publicity chairman, Landes Rigby, information is being prepared in brochure-form, explaining the steps for creating a press release and submitting it to the local newspaper.

I extend a challenge to you today. The decrease in membership is everyone's problem. I would like to see the numbers of clubs increase to 150 by the Spring Annual meeting 2026. We need help from all state members to make this happen. The District Directors and myself as First Vice President stand willing and able to help any new potential club move through the process of becoming a federated club. It is our privilege to assist you. We are only 14 clubs away from this goal and presently 2 potential clubs are in planning stages. That means we need 12 new clubs across the state in the next 8 months. But we need your help.

Remember: "COMING together is a beginning; KEEPING together is progress; WORKING together brings about success"



Awards: Suzanne Gurski

All awards are due to the appropriate Chairman by **December 1, 2025 unless stated otherwise**. Exceptions will be specified in the award description.

The GCNC State Awards Category Chairmen will select the 1st, 2nd 3rd and Honorable Mention winners for each award in their category. The winning Award Applications, along with the completed "Tally Form" for each award in the category, must be sent to the State Awards Chairman (me) by January 2, 2026.

Please Note:

Applications for SAR/NGC Awards are made through the GCNC State Awards Chairman (me).

Those applications will be forwarded (electronically) to the NGC/SAR Awards Chairman.

GCNC State Awards Chairman,

Suzanne Gurski,
910-685-5672, SUZANNE@GURSKI.COM
3006 Boverie St, SW
Shallotte, NC 28470

P.S. Sardiswood GC has approved raising their sponsorship of the Eleanor Yates Award (EA-2) to \$50.

2025 GCNC Board of Director Meeting

September 8, 2025—Raleigh, NC

Pictures by Brenda Pollard



Charles McLendon, GCNC



BoD Meeting—2025



Mary Vacek, Flower Show Schools Chairman gives report



Linda McLendon, GCNC President 2023-2025 gives report



Left—Frances Cain, GCNC 3VP
Right— Brenda Pollard, Raulston/Legislation

GCSC Landscape Design Courses

Are you interested in landscape design? Join other garden club members in historic Charleston SC, for an enjoyable course to learn about the principles and theories of landscape design, site planning and garden design in our homes and communities.

The GCSC Landscape Design School program consists of 4 unique courses, that are not sequentially based, and can be taken in any order. For 2025 we will be offering Course 4 at Founders Hall in the Charles Towne Landing State Historic Site, on Tuesday, November 11 to Wednesday, November 12, 2025.

Topics we will cover in this year's program include **Contemporary Trends in Landscape Design, Suburban Residential Design, Water Resources: Design & Conservation, Guidelines for Evaluating Landscape Designs, Community Participation in Landscaping Projects and the Development of Community Gardens.**

In addition, we will be visiting three public gardens in downtown Charleston to conduct on-site evaluations of each garden's design. A Landscape Designer will be present at each site to discuss the principles and elements of good design along with how they have or have not been met.

Additional information is available at the link below:

[Course Information Detail](#)

Prospective students who wish to enroll and reserve a seat should complete the registration form found at this link and mail it along with a check to the indicated post office box.

Best Regards,

Paul Gilson, Chairman

Garden Club of South Carolina Landscape Design School

News from Virginia

VFGC CONVENTION 2026 – APRIL 20-21 IN WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA

Come and help us celebrate all that is VIRGINIA – the 2026 convention promises to be filled with guided Garden Tours of the Colonial Era - including lunch at a historic tavern; a fantastic, invigorating design program, presented by Francine Thomas – New Zealand’s Designer of the year for 2025; opportunities to also celebrate America’s 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution!!! Not to mention seeing old friends and meeting new friends.



“Virginia: Inspiring Past, Bright Future”, the theme for the 2026 convention, will be this and more. Our future will look different at this convention, more than at any other, so plan to come and experience the future, while honoring our past, WHAT COULD BE BETTER THAN DOING THIS IN WILLIAMSBURG?!!

The featured floral designer, Francine Thomas represented New Zealand on stage with a fantastic floral display at the World Flower Show in Ireland; she has travelled throughout New Zealand and all-around Australia, Wales, and Great Britain. In the USA she has demonstrated, taught and judged from Rhode Island to Orlando. Francine won New Zealand Floral Art Designer of the Year for 2025, as well as Australian Designer of the Year 2018 and 2022.

Check the VFGC Website (viriniagardenclubs.org) for registration details.

Why Belong to GCNC?

By Annette Branco, District 9 Director (edited by Sherrie Richmond)

Belonging to the Garden Club of North Carolina, Inc.

For \$1/month/member includes the following:

The Purpose of GCNC is to educate the public on gardening, floral design, environmental responsibility, and civic beautification.

- ◇ Partners with NC Dept. of Transportation for wildflower programs
- ◇ Co-sponsors NC Botanical Garden and helps collect and distribute wildflower seeds
- ◇ Supports JC Raulston Arboretum garden and visitor center
- ◇ Supports 4 public gardens: The Elizabethan, Martha Franck Fragrance, NC Botanical, Daniel Boone Native Garden
- ◇ GCNC lobbied for Yellow Swallowtail Butterfly to be official NC Butterfly
- ◇ Establishes Blue Star and Gold Star Memorials to honor fallen military and their families

GCNC Provides Many Opportunities for our Youth

- ◆ Sponsors Smokey Bear/Woodsy Owl poster contest for youth participation
- ◆ Provides scholarships for college and graduate students studying in agriculture, gardening, and environmental majors: One for \$10,000 and several for \$1,000- \$2,000.
- ◆ Youth clubs actively involve young people in local projects.

GCNC Provides Leadership Opportunities Nationally and Regionally

- ◇ Awards given for club programs and community projects
- ◇ Operates 4 Schools: Flower Show, Landscape Design, Environmental, and Gardening
- ◇ Socialize and learn what other clubs, Districts, and states are doing
- ◇ Automatic member of National Garden Clubs, Inc. (NGC): The largest garden club organization in the world. Numerous international garden clubs are members.
- ◇ Provides selection of speakers for local clubs
- ◇ Supports Wildlife Federation and Habitat for Humanity homes

National Garden Clubs, Inc.

NGC sponsors Plant America and Beautify America initiatives, scholarships, Blue & Gold Star Memorials, Plant-A-Tree, Awards and Grants, Garden School Courses, Merchandise Store for children's books, aprons, tote bags, ribbons for flower shows, pins, stickers & flags, calendars.

Supports: Disaster Funds up to \$5000, scholarships for the study of Horticulture, Floriculture, Landscape Design, Botany, Plant Pathology, Biology, Forestry, Agronomy, Environmental Concerns, City Planning, and Land Management

- NGC provides education, resources, and national networking opportunities for its members to promote the love of gardening, floral design and civic and environmental responsibility. For more info: gardenclub.org
- NGC and GCNC each have websites available to all members as resource
- Provides meetings and workshops throughout the state, with registration
- Applications available for 501(c)3 association with GCNC
- Provides Therapy Programs to bring joy of gardening to Seniors and Special Needs Students
- We are also part of SAR, South Atlantic Region of National Garden Club, which includes KY, NC, SC, VA, and WV. For more info: southatlanticregiongardenclubs.org

Tech Talk: Cultivating Connection with Zoom Meetings

Submitted by Tina Murphrey—tmurphrey@gmail.com

Steel Magnolias Garden Club

Tech Talk: Letting Your Club Email Bloom!

Welcome back, fellow green thumbs, to "Tech Talk," our ongoing adventure into how technology can help your garden club flourish! In our first installment, we explored the benefits of Zoom meetings for staying connected. This time, we'll dig into another essential tool for our club: our dedicated email address and how we navigate privacy considerations.

The Steel Magnolias Garden Club established its Technology Committee to explore how technology could enhance the club's efficiency and communication. One of the early initiatives, was establishing a central club email address. While many free email providers exist, our Tech Committee members had the most experience with Gmail, making it a practical choice for us.

Setting Up Our Club Email: A Step-by-Step Guide

The first crucial step was designating a member responsible for monitoring the club email daily and forwarding important information to the membership as needed. This point person also initially set up the new Gmail account using their contact information.

Creating the email account involved selecting an available and memorable email address. It might take a few tries to find a name that isn't already taken, so be patient and keep trying different variations!

During the setup process, you'll be asked to choose between a personal or business account. Our club opted for a personal account. However, it's worth noting that Google also offers a "Google for Nonprofits" program, which you can explore here:

<https://support.google.com/nonprofits/answer/3367631?hl=en>

Once the club email address and password were created, this information was securely shared with the club's Board of Directors as they are authorized to send club emails.

Tech Talk: Cultivating Connection with Zoom Meetings

Making Our Club Email Work for Us: Practical Tips

Here are some ways we maximize the effectiveness of our club email:

- **Creating a Club Member Contact List:** Gmail makes it easy to organize our member contact information. On the right side of your Gmail inbox, you'll see a grid of nine dots next to your account icon. Clicking this opens a menu of Google Apps, and one of them is "Contacts." On the left side of the Contacts screen, you can create new contacts. We find it helpful to include not only each member's name and email address but also their phone number. Once the data is entered, it is helpful to label the contact as a garden club member. Underneath the photo icon, is a button to add the label. We label our members with the club initials, SMGC.
- **Importing Contacts from a Spreadsheet:** If you already have a list of your members in a spreadsheet (like an Excel or Google Sheets file), you can easily import them into Google Contacts. First, save your spreadsheet as a CSV (Comma Separated Values) file. Then, in Google Contacts, look for the "Import" option on the left-hand side of the screen and follow the prompts. Don't forget to label these imported contacts as well!
- **The Power of Labels:** Why go to the trouble of labeling contacts? Labels are a fantastic shortcut! When you want to send an email to the entire club, you can simply select your club member label instead of individually typing everyone's email address. This saves time and ensures no one is missed.

How We Use Our Club Email:

Our club is committed to being environmentally conscious and reducing paper use whenever possible. Our club email helps us achieve this in several ways:

- **Monthly Meeting Agendas:** The club president sends out the meeting agenda via email before each meeting, allowing members to view it on their phones or print a copy if they prefer.
- **Sharing Club Information:** We use our email to share details about upcoming activities like garden tours, volunteer workdays, community events, and more. With members' permission, we also use it to share updates about members who are unwell or in need of support.
- **Distributing Meeting Minutes:** After each meeting, the club minutes are shared with the membership via email, keeping everyone informed.

Tech Talk: Cultivating Connection with Zoom Meetings

Our Club Email Protocols: Respecting Privacy and Inboxes

The Technology Committee is mindful of our members' inboxes and strives to avoid overwhelming them with emails. To ensure clear and respectful communication, we follow these protocols:

- **Obtaining Consent:** We obtain explicit approval from all club members to use their personal email addresses for club communications. This is typically done through a signature page when members join or renew their membership.
- **Clear Subject Lines:** We always specify the sender in the subject line of each email to avoid confusion and ensure prompt attention. For example: "**From (President's Name): Meeting Agenda.**"
- **Protecting Member Inboxes:** To protect member privacy and keep inboxes tidy, we place the Club email address in the **To** field and all member email addresses in the **BCC** field for group emails. This ensures that when a member replies, the email goes only to the Club address, not the entire membership.
- **Member-Initiated Emails:** When a member needs to send an email to the entire club—such as for a garden work day—they send their request to the Club's email address. Our secretary then **forwards** the email, putting the original sender's name in the **To** field and the rest of the members in the **BCC** field. This simple step ensures the member receives replies directly.

To ensure members have control over their email preferences, every email includes a clear opt-out statement. For instance:

"Please note: If you no longer wish to receive emails from the Steel Magnolias Garden Club, simply reply with the word 'STOP' to this email address. You will then be removed from our mailing list and will receive a final confirmation email. Please allow a few days for this process to complete."

This opt-out statement can be automatically added to every email. You can achieve this by utilizing the email signature feature. This link provides instructions on how to insert a signature in Gmail, and you can place your opt-out statement within this signature:

<https://support.google.com/mail/answer/8395?hl=en&co=GENIE.Platform%3DDesktop>

Tech Talk: Cultivating Connection with Zoom Meetings

Onboarding New Members: When new members join, our club email protocols are explained, and their consent to use their email address for club communications is obtained.

Organizing Incoming Emails with Labels:

Another valuable Gmail feature is the ability to label incoming emails. While not every email needs to be saved, many contain important information worth archiving for future reference. We utilize nested labels to keep things organized. For example, we start with a top-level label for the current year (e.g., "2025"). Underneath this, we create sub-labels for different categories, such as "Agendas," "Minutes," and "New Member Requests." You can even create further sub-categories within these if needed!

To label an email, open it. Look for a row of small icons at the top left of the email. The last icon, represented by three vertical dots, indicates "More" when you hover over it. Click this icon, and you'll see the option "Label as..." A drop-down menu will appear, allowing you to either type in a new label or select an existing one.

We hope this overview of our club email system is helpful! In our next "Tech Talk" installment, we'll dive into the ins and outs of creating a club website. Stay tuned!

Land O' Sky Garden Club—Hendersonville Co-Presidents Anne Lee & Jan Wayne



As Co-Presidents of the Land of Sky Garden Club we wanted to inform you of a communication change with both State and District. As you know, we have a very active club not only with monthly board meetings and club meetings but we have designed and maintain two important gardens in Hendersonville, we hold four 'Fun Thymes' opportunities throughout the year for our members, associates and guests to participate in – just this week we met at a member's flower farm and toured her gardens, arranged flowers and had a picnic lunch.

We host an annual Christmas Bazaar which has become very popular, and all the monies raised go back into our community. Plus, there is the annual summer social in July and Christmas luncheon. All to say, our leaders have their plates full. In addition to all those activities, this year we decided our club must get to a balanced budget, so we undertook that exercise. You should know the primary reasons we did not have a balanced budget was the outgoing state dues and the two \$1000 scholarships we provide to Blue Ridge Community College horticulture students. After months of discussion and looking at all options our membership decided to raise dues to continue our scholarships and stay in state with the caveat that our relationship with the state club be managed by our GCNC and District Liaison Committee.

We are asking that you please include Sallie Carr (genecarr@att.net), Chair of the Liaison Committee, to all emails and expect that all details to be handled by LOSGC to the District and State will come from her and or those on her committee.

Mountain View Gardeners Garden Club—Mount Airy

Mary Planer, President

This is Mount Airy's first garden club and included are the names of the charter members from 1950! An abundance of Mount Airy history and positive improvements were made by these ladies and groups over the years!

Mount Airy's first garden club, Mountain View Gardeners Garden Club, recently celebrated their 75th anniversary at the William Alfred Moore House in Mount Airy with a high tea luncheon. Organized in April 1950, historical Yearbooks and records have been meticulously maintained by Mrs. Betty Wright and were on display for current members to peruse. Catered by President Mary Planer's This-N-That Catering, the ladies enjoyed traditional high tea fare that included a selection of sweet and savory petit fours, hot tea and a selection of beverages.

Special Recognition for Original 1950 Charter Members:

Mrs. Jim Banner, Mrs. Howard Foy, Mrs. Hugh Hennis, Mrs. Dalmer Lewis, Mrs. A.L. Phillips, Mrs. Gene Roundtree, Mrs. Locke Webb, Mrs. Tom Fawcett, Mrs. Ross Francisa, Mrs. W.A. Jackson, Mrs. George Neuwenhuis, Mrs. Fred Preddy, Mrs. W.J. Seigler, Mrs. Joe Fowler, Jr., Mrs. Lester Haynes, Mrs. Claude Johnson, Mrs. Robert Perkins, Mrs. Floyd Rees, Mrs. Bill Taylor and Mrs. Lucien Wrenn, Jr.



-Pictured in 1950's-themed attire are Judy Kirkman, Debra Stoltz, Marie Simmons

Mountain View Gardeners GC - Mount Airy, NC [D4]



-President Mary Planer (right) accepting a donation from Mrs. Betty Wright, as Betty's daughter, Tamra Thomas, (left) looks on



-Group photo:

Seated: Amanda Fretwell, Jenny Cooke, Betty Wright, Debra Stoltz, Mary Planer
Standing: Peggy Rees, Elaine Harbour, Mary Higgs, Joy Barlow, Tamra Thomas, Barbara Oliver, Marie Simmons, Judy Kirkman

Not pictured: Beth Pequeno and Irina Ilyasova

-Mary Planer putting the finishing touches on the exquisite luncheon served on fine china from West Germany and Occupied Japan



Lake Norman Garden Club - Sherrills Ford

Our 2025-26 club year kicked-off with our Annual Plant Sale, held on Saturday, Sept 20th 8-12 pm.

Our club provided over 500 plants, shrubs and trees, garden crafts and treasures for sale to the LKN Community. We also had a bake sale, master gardener table and for the second year our children's activity table in which children were invited to decorate a pot and plant a viola.

This year our club had a entire Native Plant section in the sale, with over 25 different varieties of Native Plants, many started by seed. Our club was very excited as we debuted our new club t-shirts with the front logo and back design done by our own club member, Jenn Daigle.



**LKN Garden Club Annual
Plant Sale**
Saturday, September 20th
8-12 pm
Conner Rec Center
4015 McGee Point Road Terrell

Come early to shop our large selection of perennials, fall annuals, shrubs, indoor plants, native plants and garden treasures.

Cash, Check and Venmo Accepted!

All proceeds go towards local scholarships, grants and beautification projects in our community.

Bring the kids to enjoy delicious treats from our bake sale and children's activity table. A Master Gardener through the NC Extension Office will be available to answer your questions.





Lake Norman GC—Sherrills Ford

Our **September** meeting included an informative presentation by Lisa Tompkins from the Carolina Heritage Native Nursery in Waxhaw, SC.

Our **October** meeting will include a presentation from Brittany Burgin, a 3rd grade teacher at Sherrills Ford Elementary School. Brittany along with the Science teacher, Amanda Curie are starting a Garden Club at the school, and have reached out to us for support both professional advice and financial support.

Updates on Sherrills Ford Library 2500 sq ft garden...

Our club has been approved to expand this garden at Sherrills Ford Library to Phase II by Catawba County and Library system. This will include a 300 ft garden area on the other side of the side-walk of the building. We have scheduled workdays, and plan in place for this fall. We are also looking into signage for both Phase I and Phase II of garden. Below are some recent photos!



Waynesville Garden Club—Waynesville Cherry Stone, President

By Clark Stone

Celebrating North Carolina's Gardening Spirit

Native Plants and Sustainability

Gardening with native plants in North Carolina can help maintain local ecosystems. This summer, member Bobbi Trufant presented a program on Keystone Plants, which are native species such as oak trees and goldenrod that provide essential food and shelter for many local organisms.

In September, the group met with Landscape Designer Melissa Marshall from Lake Junaluska to learn about the native plants present in the gardens there. In October, an Oktoberfest luncheon featuring German food was held, during which some participants dressed in traditional festival attire from Germany.

The heart of NC Gardner magazine lies in its people. Each issue features profiles of local gardeners, from backyard enthusiasts to master gardeners and community garden organizers. Their stories highlight creativity and resilience, whether transforming small urban spaces into pollinator havens or reviving historic gardens with heirloom varieties. These individuals inspire others to dig in and make a difference, one plant at a time.

Upcoming Events and Projects

These events provide opportunities for garden club members to learn, network, and discover new plants and tools that may benefit both civic gardens and private gardens. Work continues in eight civic gardens to promote environmental care and enhance the appearance of Haywood County. The eight gardens include Lake Junaluska Butterfly Garden, Junaluska Elementary, three gardens at Historical Shelton House, Salvation Army Headquarters Garden, Pollinator Garden at the Recreational Center, and Within Reach Garden. Funding from North Carolina garden clubs has supported restoration efforts following damage from Hurricane Helene.

The November meeting will feature Dale Shelton Reece, who won first place at the Dahlia Exhibition at the end of August, presenting information about growing Dahlias.

Waynesville Garden Club



Waynesville Garden Club



***Troutman Garden Club — Troutman
Nancy Ulven, President***

Member of Troutman Garden Club, Troutman, NC—
Welcome Back Tea hosted by club president, Nancy Ulven—
August 2025



Mooreville Garden Club — Mooreville Barbara Besecker, President

Mooreville GC members helped Mooreville Beautification Committee plant 37 large planters on Main Street—October 2025.



Winston-Salem Garden Tour

SAVE THE DATE

Laura Bland, 2026 Garden Tour Chair
wsgardentour@gmail.com

We do have a date now for our 2026 Winston-Salem Garden Tour. It's going to be Saturday, April 25, 2026, from 10am to 4pm at various private gardens in Winston-Salem. We are currently working on marketing, tickets, and all things related. We will send you more information when we have it ready (hopefully before December).



The Garden Club of North Carolina Annual Meeting Planning Committee

Excited about the 2026 Annual Meeting, members of District 5 explored hotels and discussed advantages and disadvantages of each that they visited. In the “Exploring” picture, members from left to right are Kris Clark, District 5 Director, Marian Rabe, Gail Hill, Beverly Cooper, Sherrie Richmond, District 5 Vice-Director, and Jo Ann Lasker. It was a thrilling experience to interact with each other and present ideas for the upcoming May meeting.



“Exploring Options”



Steel Magnolias GC—Zebulon **Gail Domaleski, President**

Blooming Online: Steel Magnolias Garden Club Launches New Website!

Get ready to dig in and explore! The **Steel Magnolias Garden Club** is absolutely thrilled to announce the launch of our brand-new, beautifully redesigned website! We've been busy putting together a vibrant online space that's not only more visually appealing but also significantly easier to navigate, making it simpler than ever for our members and the wider North Carolina gardening community to connect and find the information they need.

What's Growing on Our New Site?

We listened to feedback, and the improvements are focused on delivering a better user experience, whether you're viewing the site on a desktop, tablet, or smartphone. Here are just a few of the fresh features we think you'll love:

- **Sleek, Modern Design:** A cleaner look with stunning photography that truly showcases the beauty of our members gardens and events.
- **Intuitive Navigation:** Finding important club information—like meeting schedules, membership details, and contact forms—is now a breeze thanks to a streamlined menu structure.
- **Dedicated Event Calendar:** Never miss a workshop, garden tour, or club event!
- **Project Showcase:** We now have a dedicated section to highlight the incredible work our members are doing in community gardens, youth club efforts, and local beautification projects.

Visit Us Today!

We invite you to come take a look at our new online home. You can find us at our same web address:

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

The website is a living, breathing project, and we plan to keep adding new content, resources, and photos regularly.

A big thank you to the dedicated technology committee members who have been working diligently behind the scenes to bring this project to fruition. Happy browsing, and happy gardening!

Fayetteville Garden Club 2025-2026

Laurie Cherry, President

Nadia Bryant, a fifth-grader at New Century International Elementary School in Fayetteville, NC won first place for her poster "Rooty Rascals" in the Smokey Bear/Woodsy Owl poster contest for the South Atlantic Region of National Garden Clubs, Inc. Her poster went on to win an Honorable Mention at National Garden Clubs, Inc. She was sponsored by Fayetteville Garden Club District 8.



Pictures from dinner—District 11 Meeting—Willard, NC



Coastal Garden Club — Shallotte
Sherry Jeffries, President

On Thursday October 9th several Garden Club members met in Southport to participate in a self guided tour to Discover The Trees of Southport. It was a lovely fall day activity. Mostly old and majestic Live Oaks circumferences measuring between 144 inches to 216 inches are amazing, especially when you stand next to them! Many of the oaks were 100 years old or more. Also there were other species to observe including Kinko, Eastern Red Cedar and Pecan. Of course lunch followed at Edgewater 122 at the Yacht Basin!

Claudia Perrugi,
Trips/Tours Chair



From left to right: Sherry Jeffries, Landes Rigby, Judy Gregson, Debbie Sparks, Rowena Sewell

Coastal Garden Club — Shallotte
Sherry Jeffries, President

TOUR: Discover The
Trees of Southport.

From
left: Claudia
Perrugi,
Sherry
Jeffries,
Landes Rigby,
Rowena
Sewell



Debbie Sparks,
Judge Gregson,
Landes Rigby,
Rowena Sewell,
Claudia Perrugi

Clinton Garden Club - Clinton
Brenda Edwards, President

The Clinton Garden Club will be holding its 5th annual auction November 4th, 2025. All districts are invited. So come and enjoy the camaraderie and let's have some fun. Auctioneer Billy Vaughan proved to be a delight last year and this year promises to be even better.

If you would like to have lunch with us the amount is \$15.00 and served at the Co-harie Country Club at 11:30 a.m. Reservations are required. Send check for lunch to

Brenda Edwards, President
Clinton Garden Club
2516 Register Sutton Road
Rose Hill, NC 28458

The auction starts at 1:00 p.m. Hope to see you there.



AMARYLLIS BULB SALE FUNDRAISER

The New Hanover Garden Club is conducting this fundraiser in support of the three junior garden clubs that they sponsor.

These are Peruvian amaryllis, grown in the Inca Valley of the Andes mountains. Each bulb will produce one to two stalks with up to four blooms per stalk. Only Southern hemisphere bulbs guarantee Christmas blooms. Care instructions included. Quantities are limited so make your selections today!

Bulbs may be purchased for \$23, each potted in beautiful ceramic pots, or the bulb only for \$15. See details and order via the QR code or at newhanovergardenclub.org. You may have your bulbs delivered or pick them up at the New Hanover County Arboretum (6206 Oleander Drive, Wilmington 28403) on Friday, November 14th, from 10:00 – 3:00 or Friday, December 5th from 10:00 – 3:00.

Thank you for your support!



District 12 News – November 1, 2025

Carolyn Ashbrook, Director

The garden clubs of District 12 held their district meeting with the state officers on October 21st at the Pitt County Arboretum. Each officer brought us up to date on the primary duties of their garden club job position and encouraged members to participate in the programs sponsored by the Garden Club of North Carolina. President, Charles McLendon, stressed the on-going membership challenges and thanked everyone for the work we do as garden club members.

We had 55 registrations for our meeting and were blessed with a beautiful weather day as we enjoyed a tour conducted by Matt Stevens, Pitt County Extension Director. Our members brought storyboards of pictures featuring their club garden projects and accomplishments and several members made fall arrangements for the enjoyment of all those in attendance.

It was a great meeting!

Club News – The Englewood Garden Club

On September 2nd, the Englewood Garden Club members were welcomed back following summer vacation with a program that featured a local speaker, John Williams, owner of Solomon Farms since 1942. John grows herbs ‘n things for medicinal and culinary purposes. He enjoys talking about the many plants found in our yards and woody areas that were used by our ancestors for curing “almost” everything. Many plants that we consider weeds or an aggravating “thing” that keeps coming back fall into this category.

John provided a display of charts showing some of those plants in addition to labeled jars and bottles of those plants that demonstrate how the natural herbs were used.

In November, Englewood members will learn about creating flower arrangements following the Japanese method of Ikebana. Our speaker, Bernice Pitt, is a local garden and plant enthusiast who is always willing to expand our knowledge as we learn something new.

The method of Ikebana emphasizes form and balance using a minimal number of flowers. Learning a new technique and sharing with other gardeners continues to be the goal of the Englewood Garden Club.

Happy Holidays to you and your families.



John Williams, owner of Solomon Farms since 1942.

Botanical Legos: Cultivating Joy, Creativity, and Connection at Any Age

Written by Angela Mason Foster

Washington Garden Club, Second Vice-President

Introduction: A Garden That Never Wilts



Most gardeners know the delight of nurturing plants—watching a seed sprout, tending perennials through the seasons, or arranging fresh flowers for a table. But what if you could capture some of that joy indoors, year-round, with a playful twist? Botanical Lego sets make this possible. These colorful creations allow us to bring the beauty of plants into our homes in a way that is artistic, imaginative, and lasting.

Whether you're a longtime gardener, a parent looking for a creative project, or a grandparent wanting to connect with children, botanical Legos offer more than a pastime. They invite us to revisit childhood play, discover moments of calm, and strengthen bonds across generations.

A Return to Childhood Play

Do you remember the thrill of opening a box of building blocks? The excitement of snapping pieces into place, constructing something entirely your own? Botanical Legos bring back that sense of wonder but with a botanical theme—orchids, succulents, bonsai trees, and roses take shape from small bricks.

For adults of any age, building these sets is an opportunity to rediscover the joy of play. It's a reminder that creativity isn't reserved for childhood. The sets are detailed and sophisticated enough to appeal to grown-ups while still sparking the same imaginative energy we remember from earlier years.

Building Bridges Across Generations

One of the loveliest aspects of botanical Legos is their power to bring people together. Children often enjoy Legos naturally, so involving grandchildren, nieces, nephews, or even neighborhood kids in a project is an easy way to share quality time.

The building process is cooperative: sorting pieces, following instructions, and celebrating small victories as flowers begin to bloom. These activities open space for conversation, patience, and teamwork. They also create lasting memories. A completed set—a vase of Lego roses, for example—becomes more than decoration. It holds the story of time spent together, a keepsake of family connection.

And for those without young children in their lives, building with friends or club members can be equally rewarding. Lego building nights are becoming as popular as puzzle parties, offering relaxed, hands-on fun for adults.

Relaxation and Mindfulness

Many gardeners describe tending plants as a form of therapy. Botanical Lego sets provide a similar calming rhythm indoors. Sorting pieces by color, following step-by-step instructions, and click-

ing bricks together encourages focus and mindfulness.

For anyone who finds traditional meditation difficult, building offers a gentle alternative. Your attention stays rooted in the task at hand. The tactile action of snapping pieces together is satisfying, while the gradual progress encourages patience. With soft music or conversation in the background, the activity becomes a form of relaxation at the end of a busy day.

A Bloom That Never Fades

While fresh flowers eventually wilt, botanical Lego creations bloom forever. Once complete, these sets make eye-catching decorations—succulent trays for bookshelves, orchids for window ledges, or bonsai trees for desks. They brighten spaces without needing water or sunlight.

For those who may not have space, time, or physical energy for a large garden, Lego botanicals provide a creative outlet that celebrates plants in a new way. Some gardeners even enjoy mixing their Lego flowers into real arrangements, creating whimsical displays that spark conversation.

Cognitive Benefits of Building

Beyond their beauty, botanical Legos also exercise the mind. The process of sorting, sequencing, and following directions engages memory and problem-solving skills. Like crosswords or Sudoku, building provides mental stimulation—yet unlike paper puzzles, you end with a tangible work of art.

For adults interested in keeping their minds active, these sets provide just the right challenge. They are structured enough to guide you but flexible enough to spark creative thinking, particularly if you modify designs or combine sets for custom creations.

Social Opportunities in Garden Clubs

Garden clubs are about more than plants—they are about community. Botanical Legos can add a creative dimension to club life. Imagine a workshop where members build small sets together, then share their finished projects at a meeting. The activity is lighthearted, conversation flows easily, and everyone leaves with something beautiful.

Some clubs have even used botanical sets for raffles or silent auctions. Because they appeal to gardeners, collectors, and families alike, they make popular fundraising items. And by including activities that draw in younger members, clubs can spark fresh interest across generations.

Affordable Art and Collectibility

While Lego sets can be an investment, they are affordable compared with many crafts or art hobbies. Small sets begin around \$20, while larger, intricate designs reach \$100. Each provides hours of engagement, followed by a finished piece you can proudly display.

The Botanical Collection also has a collectible appeal. Just as gardeners enjoy adding new perennials to a bed each spring, Lego enthusiasts love completing a series. Roses, orchids, succulents, and bonsai can form a collection that grows over time, a colorful “indoor garden” with no watering required.

Inspiration From the Natural World

One of the joys of building is the way these sets highlight botanical detail. As you construct an orchid or bird-of-paradise from tiny pieces, you begin noticing how petals, stems, and symmetry work in nature.

This close attention often deepens appreciation for living plants. Many gardeners report that working with Lego sets inspires them to look differently at flowers in their own gardens. Displaying the finished projects can also spark conversations about horticulture, art, or conservation with guests and friends.

Tips for Getting Started

1. **Start Small** – Begin with an approachable set such as Lego succulents or roses. They're affordable and can be finished in a single sitting.
2. **Set Up a Workspace** – A well-lit table with trays or bowls for sorting pieces makes the process easier.
3. **Make It Social** – Invite a child, friend, or fellow club member to build alongside you. Even a virtual call can work if family is far away.
4. **Enjoy the Journey** – Don't rush. The process of building is as rewarding as the final display.

Display Proudly – Treat your Lego flowers as art. Place them on shelves, tables, or even mix them with real plants for a whimsical effect.

Stories From Builders

Adults of all ages are discovering how rewarding botanical Legos can be:

- **Ellen, 72:** “I built the bonsai tree with my grandson. We talked about the art of bonsai while working, and now he always checks on it when he visits. It's our project.”
- **George, 55:** “At first I thought Legos were for kids, but once I finished the orchid set I realized how relaxing it was. It's as satisfying as a puzzle, and it brightens my office.”
- **Martha, 68:** “My garden club did a Lego workshop, and it was one of our most fun events. We laughed, shared stories, and each took home something lovely.”

Caroline, 42: “I built the succulent tray as a stress reliever after work. It was the perfect balance of focus and creativity, and now it's a centerpiece on my coffee table.”

These accounts show how botanical Legos transcend age—they provide joy whether you're rediscovering childhood play, creating art for your home, or connecting with family.

Beyond the Garden: Expanding Creativity

Once you've tried botanical sets, you may be tempted to explore Lego's other collections—architecture, art, or nature-inspired models. Each offers new opportunities for creativity. For those who enjoy variety, this hobby can expand as much as any perennial border.

And perhaps, by building flowers together, children or grandchildren may also develop an interest

in real gardening. Lego blossoms can spark curiosity that grows into planting seeds, caring for houseplants, or tending a vegetable patch.

Conclusion: A Garden of Play and Connection

Botanical Lego sets are more than toys. They're opportunities to celebrate creativity, connect with others, and surround ourselves with beauty that never fades. They remind us that play isn't limited to childhood, and that gardens—whether real or imagined—can thrive in every season.

For garden club members and plant lovers, these sets offer a new way to honor the joy of flowers and foliage. Whether you're revisiting childhood memories, bonding with family, or simply enjoying a calming hobby, botanical Legos bring a touch of whimsy and wonder into everyday life.

So next time you put down your trowel, consider picking up a box of colorful bricks. Your most carefree garden may just be the one that blossoms piece by piece on your table.

Angela Mason Foster
Washington Garden Club, Second Vice President

Beaufort County Extension Master Gardener Volunteer - Coordinator
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Picnic on the Pungo

On Saturday, October 11, the Washington Garden Club of Washington, NC (District 12), gathered at the home of longtime member **Jean Hammond** for a delightful autumn event titled *Picnic on the Pungo*. Members enjoyed a fall cookout on Jean's deck overlooking her gardens, koi ponds, and the serene banks of Pungo Creek.

Though a nor'easter swept across the creek that afternoon, gardeners are a determined group—undaunted by blustery winds when there are flowers to admire, sunsets to glimpse, and good company to share. The afternoon proved rainy but beautiful, as the warmth of friendship and laughter far outshone the gray skies.

The menu featured classic cookout fare—hotdogs, hamburgers, slaw, potato salad, and a tempting array of appetizers and desserts. As Jean fondly remarked, *"You can't stop gardeners with a little rain. We bloom wherever we're planted."*

It was a memorable gathering that celebrated not only the beauty of nature but also the enduring fellowship that defines the Washington Garden Club.





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<https://form.jotform.com/251145206663149>

Submission Guidelines:

- Articles length: 500—1000 words, submitted as a Word document, do not imbed images.
- Photos should be high resolution jpg, png or tif format.
- Email Subject in include “article for NC Gardener” and Club Name
- Email Body to include District, Garden Club, and submitter name
- Editor reserves the right to edit any article due to space constraints, duplication, clarity and accuracy.