



This issue:

President's Letter	1-2
Call to Annual Meeting	3
Flower Show	4
Upcoming Events	5
Awards Desk	6-7
Club News	8-10
Judges Credentials	10
Crawford's Corner	11-13
Blue Star News	14
Youth Corner	15-16
Next Issue Deadline	16

President's Message

Greetings Fellow Gardeners!

Winter seems to have passed in the blink of an eye, and with warmer than usual weather in New Jersey there was just a trace of snow for most. My daffodils are popping their heads through the soil wondering where winter has been hiding. As a gardener, I always look forward to spring with the return of color but do appreciate the look of a stark winter landscape with a dusting of white. I think I will have to wait until next year!

December brought a visit to Drumthwacket that was beautifully decorated by seven New Jersey garden clubs. Each room had a different holiday theme with many handmade decorations and tree ornaments. The garden clubs out-did themselves and the decorations were a testament to the creativity and talents of their members.

Congratulations to the Allentown GC, Belvedere GC, GC of Hunterdon Hills, GC of Long Valley, GC of Mountain Lakes, Keyport GC, and the West Trenton GC.



I am happy to announce that two new garden clubs have joined the GCNJ membership. The Upper Saddle River Garden Club in District I has sixty-nine members, while the Garden Club of Salem County in District VIII has four members. No matter the number of members in a club, many or few, we are glad to include it in our ranks.

I have been informed that two New Jersey garden clubs received NGC Plant America Grants. Congratulations are extended to the Point Pleasant Garden Club and the West Trenton Garden Club for recognition of their Plant America projects.

I will be attending the NGC Convention in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, to represent GCNJ from May 2nd to the 4th. NGC conventions are always a welcome opportunity to gather with fellow garden club members from all parts of our country.

I invite you to the GCNJ 97th Annual Meeting to be held on Tuesday, June 6, at the Bridgewater Marriott. Once again, the day will include the presentation of awards and scholarships, boutiques for shopping, luncheon, and the election and installation of new officers. Our day will be capped by a speaker from the Garden Conservancy, a non-profit organization whose mission it is to preserve, share, and celebrate private and public gardens in the United States. I hope you can join us for a special day.

Warm Regards,
Cecelia Millea



“Plant a tree, invest in the future.”



Credit: The Garden Conservancy

THE CALL TO THE 97th ANNUAL MEETING TUESDAY, JUNE 6, 2023

“THE GARDEN: A LIVING MASTERPIECE”

**BRIDGEWATER MARRIOTT HOTEL
700 COMMONS WAY
BRIDGEWATER, NJ 08807**

Dear District Directors, Club Presidents, and Members,

The 97th Annual Meeting of The Garden Club of New Jersey will be held on Tuesday, June 6, 2023, at the Bridgewater Marriott Hotel. We will welcome Immediate Past President of the National Garden Clubs, Mary Warshauer, who will install the slate of officers for the 2023-2025 term.

Registration is \$55 per person with a May 24 deadline and non-refundable after May 28. The registration form is available on the GCNJ website.

Registration at the event begins at 8:00 AM. The morning session will begin at 9:15 AM and luncheon will be at 12:30 PM. The afternoon session will begin at 1:15 PM. The program will be presented by H. Horatio Joyce, PhD of the Garden Conservancy. Dr. Joyce is the Director of the Garden Conservancy's Open Days Program which offers tours of some of America's finest gardens. The Conservancy works to preserve and foster our country's past and future gardening tradition.

A limited number of rooms have been reserved at the hotel for Monday, June 5, 2023, at the rate of \$210 plus tax for a single/double room. The reservation deadline date is May 15, 2023. You may reserve a room by calling the Marriott directly at 908-927-9300 or 1-888-887-7869. Remember to mention The Garden Club of New Jersey event when reserving your room.

Mark your calendar for June 6 and join us for this special day.

Cecelia Millea
President, GCNJ

Jane Bianco and Ellen Preissler
Annual Meeting Co-Chairmen



MARK YOUR CALENDAR! FLOWER SHOW SCHOOL

Course IV

The Garden Club of New Jersey, Inc.

Holly House

130 Ryders Lane, East Brunswick, NJ

Flower Show Procedure via Zoom, April 15, 2023, Exam Follows

Design and Horticulture (at Holly House)

April 19 & 20

Optional Exam April 21, 2023

Go to the Garden Club of New Jersey Website for further information and to obtain a registration form: <https://gardenclubofnewjersey.com/flower-show-school/>

Gail Bassolino, Chairman
cbassolino@aol.com

Teddie Falcone, Registrar
tfalcone52@gmail.com

Upcoming Events



Flower Show School

- Course 4 - **Apr 15 - 20, 2023** East Brunswick, NJ (FSP via Zoom 4/15, Other Subjects 4/19-20)
 - o Flower Show Procedure via Zoom on April 15, 2023 at noon with exam immediately following. Instructor – Barbara May.
 - o Design (Creative/Abstract) will be held on Wednesday, April 19. Instructor - Claudia Bates.
 - o Horticulture (Flowering Branches-Collections and Displays) will be held on Thursday, April 20. Instructor - Cathy Felton.
 - o Exam scheduled for Friday, April 21, 2023.

April 19, May 17 and June 22, 2023 - The Neshanic Garden club will host youth programs from 4 pm – 4:45 pm at the Hillsborough Public Library – 379 Branch Road in Hillsborough. Please call the Children’s Dept of the library to register. All supplies donated by the Garden Club – cost is free. For more information contact Robin Shaw – Publicity Chair, Neshanic Garden Club, 908-874-6465.

April 27, 2023 – The Neshanic Garden Club 12:00 – 4:00 pm will host their Spring Luncheon at Somerville Elks Lodge, 375 Union Ave., Bridgewater, NJ 08807 Special Guest-Speaker Anthony Lund - Bartlett’s Tree Expert “How Drought Conditions & Common Pests affect your Landscape.” For tickets call: Barbara Zielsdorff at 908-229-8148 or BZielsdorff@gmail.com

May 13, 2023 - Garden Club of Essex Fells 66th Annual Plant Sale. From 9:00 am to 1:00 pm at 307 Runnymede Road, Essex Fells, NJ 07021 Event is tented and held rain or shine. Large selection of Annuals, Planted Containers, Horticulture. We also feature local Artisans, Raffle, and Bake Sale. Contact Pat Muzzatti at 973-896-2503 for more information.

June 4, 2023 - The Women Gardeners of Ridgewood presents the 2023 Secret Gardens Tour. The tour will be held on Sunday, from 10 am - 5 pm, rain or shine. Please check our website: womengardenersofridgewood.com or our Facebook and Instagram pages for detailed ticket information or email us at thewomengardenersofridgewood@gmail.com.

June 6, 2023 - The 97th Annual Meeting of The Garden Club of New Jersey will be held on Tuesday, June 6, 2023, at the Bridgewater Marriott Hotel. For more information see the “Call to the Meeting” starting on page 3 above.

June 8, 2023 - The Garden Club of Westfield will be taking a bus trip to NYC - Cloisters Conservatory Garden/Met Museum. Bus leaves from Westfield parking lot across from Lord & Taylor - 630 North Ave. 8:30 am – 7:00 pm. Please contact Phyllis Pappas for more information at 732-261-7369 or npappas121@comcast.net.

June 10, 2023 - The Garden Club of Cranford is holding a “A Peek Beyond the Garden Gate”, A Garden Tour from 1 to 3pm (Rain or Shine). Proceeds from the tour will benefit The Garden Club of Cranford, community-based activities, and the annual Frances Wismer Scholarship. For additional information email: gardenclubofcranford@gmail.com.

June 10, 2023 – Rocky Brook Garden Club will host their “Petals and Palettes” Garden Tour of 8 gardens around Hightstown with local artists painting in the gardens, 10 am – 3 pm. Tickets sold at the ELY House - 164 North Main St., Hightstown. Contact Shirley Olsen at 609-273-2166 for more information.

June 17, 2023 - Karen Nash Memorial Butterfly Garden GC in Washington Borough, Warren County, is having their Green Fest between 10 am and 5 pm held in the center of Washington Boro on Washington Ave and Broad Street. Contact Diana Dove at (908)763-9648 for more information.

FROM THE AWARDS DESK

Awards season is in full swing and our individual clubs in the Garden Club of New Jersey are busy documenting their favorite projects of the year 2022 to submit for award recognition. Based on the many Yearbooks the Awards Committee recently reviewed, our clubs are fully engaged again with their members and communities after a really difficult two Pandemic years.



Some milestones to celebrate... We had 54 Clubs submit Yearbooks this year. We submitted 6 applications to National Garden Club for award consideration. We submitted an Award of Excellence application for Bob Markey's "Squarefoot Gardening for Kids" 501c-3 organization to the National Garden Club.

It has indeed been a busy time for our clubs.

2022-23 Yearbook Awards

Special kudos and a shout out to the following clubs whose 2022-23 Yearbooks received outstanding recognition. Producing a club yearbook is a formidable undertaking. It's an excellent reference point all year for club members to stay in touch with their club's plans, members, and projects. Each club recipient will receive an award certificate which will be distributed at their individual Spring District meetings.

Certificate of Merit with Gold Seal (with a score of 95 or above)

- The Pines Lake Garden Club
- The Women Gardeners of Ridgewood
- Ramsey Area Garden Club
- Maplewood Garden Club
- The Home Garden Club of Morristown
- Country Garden Club Garden Club of Hunterdon Hills
- Garden Club of Long Valley
- Belvidere Garden Club
- Washington Valley Garden Club, Inc.
- Warren Garden Club
- Bridgewater Garden Club, Inc.
- Community Garden Club of Hunterdon County
- The Basking Ridge Club, Inc.
- The Garden Club of Watchung
- The Garden Club of Westfield, Inc.
- Rocky Brook Garden Club

- Garden Club of Metuchen
- West Trenton Garden Club
- Pinelands Garden Club
- Mount Laurel Garden Club
- The Garden Club of Long Beach Island
- Shrewsbury Garden Club
- Navesink Garden Club
- Holly Club of Sea Girt
- The Bayberry Garden Club of Brielle, Inc.
- The Garden Club of Toms River

Certificate of Merit (with a score of 85-94)

- Ringwood Garden Club
- Town & Country Garden Club of the Chathams
- The Garden Club of Essex Fells
- The Garden Club of Montclair
- New Vernon Garden Club
- Rockaway Valley Garden Club
- The Garden Club of Mountain Lakes
- Bound Brook Garden Club
- Bernardsville Garden Club
- The Floraphile Garden Club of Cranford
- The Garden Club of Cranford
- The Rake & Hoe Garden Club of Westfield, NJ
- Woodbridge Garden Club
- Garden Gate Garden Club
- Moorestown Garden Club
- Haddonfield Garden Club
- Allenhurst Garden Club
- The Seaweeders Garden Club of Bay Head & Mantoloking
- The Garden Club of Fair Haven
- Terra Nova Garden Club

Finally, why not start thinking about a Perennial Bloom Award candidate to submit from your club. We all have club members who have given so much of their time, talents, and knowledge over many years. All information needed to submit a candidate and relevant submission dates can be found on the GCNJ website under Perennial Bloom Award.

Congratulations!

Peggy Morrissey

Awards Chair

peggymorrissey67@yahoo.com

Club News

Garden Club of LBI: KIDS CELEBRATE ST. PATRICK'S DAY!



Irish music filled the room and Bells of Ireland danced in the flower arrangements created by the Youth Garden Club of the Garden Club of LBI in their St. Patrick's Day program on March 15. Eight children from third to sixth grade gathered at the Surf City branch of the Ocean County library for the festive event.

The star of the arrangements was the tall, slender Bells of Ireland. The flower is not native to Ireland but has become closely associated with the country because of its lovely green color and is a St. Patrick's Day favorite. The flower is also reported to bring good luck!

The Youth Garden Club is part of the Garden Club's mission to foster good gardening and horticultural practices on LBI and surrounding areas. The Club is chaired by Jeannette Michelson of Barnegat Light, and co-chaired by Ginny Scarlatelli of Loveladies and Margo Bartiromo of Barnegat Light.
(Submitted by Gillian Rozicer)

Garden Club of Long Valley: Pinecone Gnomes and Bottle Snowmen



The GCLV Sprouts, sponsored by the Garden Club of Long Valley, created Pine Cone Gnomes & Recycled Bottle Snowmen as part of their Holiday Take Home Craft Kits.
(Submitted by Maria Birch)

The Neshanic Garden Club: Annual Greens Workshop



Georgette Migliore, a past member, assists participants on the arrangement she prepared.



Debra Freund, Teri Halvorson, and Diana Reinhardt – assist several of the 60 participants who also attended.

The Neshanic Garden Club: Youth Group Fall Project



Project was a leafy swag meant to be used a table centerpiece. It's been over a year since the youth group has met and all were happy to be working side by side!

(Submitted by Robin Shaw)

Karen Nash Memorial Butterfly Garden Club: Annual Washington Green Fest



A Youth Gardener, Aubrianna Bergstresser, is pictured here with Diana Dove, GCNJ Youth Chair and Founder/Youth Chair of the Karen Nash Memorial Butterfly Garden Club.



Smokey Bear presented youth awards to previous local KNMBG Youth GC winners of the Smokey Bear/Woodsy Owl Youth Poster Contest winners.



KN Memorial Butterfly Garden GC Board. KNMBG GC President, Amanda Orenstein, is pictured standing, center, 3rd from right. Tomas Gonzales, KNMBG Garden Designer and KNMBG GC Co. Vice President is pictured second from right.

JUDGES CREDENTIALS

GCNJ JUDGES CREDENTIALS REPORT

Several GCNJ Judges have changed their status.

Following the October 12-13, 2022 Symposium, Gail Bassolino, Teddie Falcone, Mary Lou Phifer, and Linda Scarano Senator became Accredited Life Judges.



Linda Williams became Accredited Master Judge.

Congratulations to all of them!

As of December 31, 2022, Tanya Ashuck decided to drop out. She was a Life Judge and an excellent designer. She will be missed.

Several Master Judges decided to go Emeritus: Carole Iuso, Peggy Koehler, and Barbara Mullin. We will miss their expertise at Shows and Judges Council meetings.

Jane Bersch
GCNJ Judges Credentials Chairman
janebersch@aol.com

CRAWFORD'S CORNER

One 'Belle' of a Plant

Many of our spring blooming perennials fall under the category of spring ephemerals or plants that enter dormancy shortly after they finish blooming and setting seed. For the plant, it is an act of survival, since it rests during the hottest and driest months. For the gardener, spring ephemerals present an interesting design challenge; the yellowing and declining foliage appears distracting in June while the ultimate disappearance of the plant yields holes in the tapestry of the summer garden! Initially, I simply avoided this group of plants entirely. However, with time I better understood how they can enhance the spring garden without becoming problematic. Among the bevy of garden worthy ephemerals from which the gardener can choose, one of my favorites has long been Virginia Bluebells, or *Mertensia virginica* (pictured to the right).



Mertensia is in the Boraginacea or Forget-Me-Not family and contains upwards of 62 species, native to western China, northeastern Russia, and most of North America. It is believed that this genus originated in Asia between 23-25 million years ago and spread into North America via the Bering Land

Bridge. This bridge connected Russia and Alaska between 13,000 and 15,000 years ago – a period following the retreat of the ice sheets and still before the bridge vanished beneath the rising seas. The genus name was originally penned in 1797 by the German botanist and physician, Albrecht Wilhelm Roth (1757-1834), honoring his friend and fellow botanist Franz Carl Mertens (1764-1831). *Mertensia virginica* was undoubtedly the species he was studying since it is the 'type' species upon which all the other species within the genus are evaluated and potentially ascribed to this genus. Interestingly, Roth originally named the plant *Mertensia pulmonarioides*, since the flowers resembled those of another member of the Forget-Me-Not family – *Pulmonaria* or Lungwort. Unbeknownst to Roth, the Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) also saw the similarities with *Pulmonaria* and originally described the plant in 1756 as *Pulmonaria virginica*.



The species epithet refers to the territory of Virginia, which initially stretched from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mississippi River and north into the Northwest Territory! The mycologist Christian Hendrik Persoon (1761-1836) correctly altered the genus name in 1806 but failed to correctly describe the plant. It was not until 1829 that the German naturalist and botanist, Johann Heinrich Friedrich Link (1767-1851) properly described and resolved the name of the plant!

Mertensia virginica is naturally found growing from North Carolina to Ontario and west to Minnesota and Kansas. The rosettes of 4" long, oval and bluish-green leaves appear in late March in central NJ, as seen above mixed with the green foliage of Winter Aconite. The anthocyanin pigments



in the foliage accounts for the purple color, which protects the delicate young leaves from UV light. In early April, stems adorned at the tip with small flower buds appear, initially nestled in the leaves before they rapidly extend to their mature height of 18-24". The stems are clothed with leaves appearing alternately along the stem. As the stem elongates, so does the distance between the flower buds, with the terminal 4-6" of the stem ultimately sporting flowers. The flowers (as seen at left and at the end) are pink in bud, maturing to sky blue upon opening into 1"

long, trumpet-shaped flowers consisting of 5 petals. The change in color from pink to blue is typical to members of the Boraginacea and serves as a signal to pollinators that nectar and pollen is now available. Interestingly, pollinators perceive the color blue far more readily than rosy-pink, a phenomenon the plants exploit to their benefit! Once pollinated, the flower petals drop to the ground, ensuring pollinators do not waste precious time on flowers absent of pollen to be transferred to other flowers. The color change is the result of an increase in pH within the cells of the floral petals and the response of anthocyanin pigments to the changing pH. Interestingly, anthocyanin impacts floral color differently in various plants since in *Hydrangea macrophylla*, it is a lower soil pH that results in a blue floral color. The lower pH allows aluminum, which is often toxic to plants, to become soluble and available for plant absorption. In an effort to neutralize the potentially harmful impact of the aluminum, anthocyanins bind with the aluminum molecules, rendering them harmless and changing the flower color to blue!

Although the flower stems of Virginia Bluebells are rather delicate when newly purchased in containers, in the garden they are impressively strong and proudly display the flowers for close to a month. In June, the foliage rapidly fades to yellow, then light tan before vanishing until the following year. Best grown in light shade, plants will gradually naturalize (as seen at right at Longwood Gardens) in well-drained, yet moist woodland soils and will develop sizable colonies over time. Plants are hardy in zones 3-8.



The key to incorporating them into a garden is to intersperse them with clump forming ferns, sedges, violas and other shade loving perennials. As

these companion plants expand in late spring, they help to conceal the holes left from the declining foliage. At Willowood Arboretum in Morris County, *Mertensia* is planted in meadows near the edge of woodlands or beneath individual trees. Once again, the expanding foliage of summer and

fall blooming grasses and perennials of the meadow readily conceals the declining foliage. They can also be interspersed among deciduous shrubs such as Smooth Hydrangea (*Hydrangea arborescens*) that are often cut to the ground in winter or Bottlebrush Buckeye (*Aesculus parviflora*) whose foliage appears later in the spring. The shrubs allow the flowers to be fully appreciated before their expanding foliage conceals that of the Bluebells. Not only is adding ample numbers of Virginia Bluebells to the garden visually beautiful, it is also ecologically important, since they are a primary source of nectar for native bees in early spring.

Spring ephemerals like *Mertensia virginica* can certainly provide challenges for the gardener who is beginning to learn plant personalities and the art of weaving them together. However, it is well worth learning how to weave Virginia Bluebells and their sky-blue flowers into the garden, since on many levels it is a true 'Belle' of a plant!

Bruce Crawford
Manager of Horticulture, Morris County Park Commission
bcrawford@morrisparks.net



BLUE STAR NEWS



We are excited that it looks like we are nearing completion of our major goal to have a Blue Star marker in EVERY NEW JERSEY county!

Thanks to our partner at the NJ DOT, Lois Johann, a meeting was held with a VFW Commander in Kearny, NJ. They are most eager to bring a Blue Star to their locale and we are eager to help make this happen! The process is underway, and we hope if all goes well, that this marker will be installed by this fall!

Other sites have reached out to us about replanting or upgrading their markers: Sea Girt and Watchung sites will be refurbished and/or replaced in the coming year.

And we finally hope to have dedications for two markers that went in during the "covid era", in Passaic and Cape May Counties.

We will also be working on a new pamphlet that summarizes the history and purpose of the Blue Star markers. It will include an updated map showing all locations of our Blue Stars as well as our first Gold Star marker which was dedicated this past fall in Gloucester County.

Besides Lois Johann, we also want to recognize The Ace Stone Company of Lawrenceville, New Jersey, who has supplied many of the boulders we use to mount our markers. They have been eager and reliable in working with Lois for any of our needs.

As noted many times before, to bring a Blue Star memorial to a site (and to maintain the sites) requires the efforts of many. We are fortunate to have such support from Lois and the NJ DOT Landscape Division, as well as the efforts of individual clubs and the GCNJ.

Joan Cichalski

jjcichalski@comcast.net

732-977-4477

YOUTH CORNER



YOUTH ANNOUNCEMENTS

MAIL by April 24: Youth Clubs are invited to submit one 8X10 photo or photo collage of the club's favorite YOUTH Club activities representing each Youth Club for the Youth Exhibit to be displayed at the June Annual Meeting. MAIL to Diana Dove, 243 Windmill Ct., Phillipsburg, NJ 08865. Attach a 3X5 index card, Front: Club name, sponsor, activity, Back: Youth Leaders' names, contact info.

May 15th: YOUTH CLUB REGISTRATION – All Youth Clubs who plan to meet after May 15th, MUST register for the Membership Year before holding youth meetings. The Youth Club Registration Form and \$20 per club fee, payable to GCNJ, are to be mailed to Sue Berdahl at 72 Beechwood Dr., Shrewsbury, NJ 07702.

June 6 – GCNJ Annual Meeting – Bridgewater Marriott. Youth Chairs & Leaders are encouraged to Pre-register with their sponsoring Garden Club. Visit the Youth Exhibit & Vote Favorite Youth Club Collage or Photo, Top People's Choice winner receives \$50 prize for their Youth Club. Pick up your Free 2X3 foot colorful Pollinator Poster(s) and Smokey Bear items available at the Youth Exhibit table while the supply lasts, first come, first serve.

April 22nd – is EARTH DAY. Engage youth in events connected to protecting the environment. Earth Day is an international event. EARTH DAY RESOURCE: Earth Day: The Official Site - [Earth Day: The Official Site | EARTHDAY.ORG](https://earthday.org)

GCNJ YOUTH CONTEST

Thank you to everyone that submitted an entry for the Smokey Bear/Woodsy Owl Poster contest and the High School Essay contest. Winners will be announced at the June 6, Annual Meeting.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL THE YOUTH CLUBS.....

...who registered for the past year. Please email a summary of your youth activities over the past two years to Diana Dove by May 15th at dianadove13@gmail.com. Youth activities throughout NJ will be featured in the END OF TERM YOUTH REPORT. You may also include a few of your favorite photos. Please make sure that any photos with a person must have a signed photo release.

Diana Dove
GCNJ Youth Chair
dianadove13@gmail.com
(908) 763-9648
[Youth - The Garden Club of New Jersey](#)

Information for the next issue:

April 30th is the deadline for articles for The Summer 2023 News Leaf as well as listings of upcoming club events and online ads.

Send articles and upcoming events to Karen Eardley at k.eardley@live.com

Go to GCNJ website at www.gardenclubofnewjersey.org for more information or check out Facebook for some informative posts: [\(4\) Garden Club of New Jersey | Facebook](#)



Happy Spring!!