

Garden Club of New Jersey

News Leaf

President’s Message

Dear Garden Club of New Jersey Members,

It is hard to believe that in approximately two months, my term as President of The Garden Club of New Jersey will come to an end. It has been an honor to serve as your 51st president and a pleasure to meet so many of you at events throughout the state. Thank you for always welcoming me with such kindness.

In May 2025, I will attend the Garden Club of New Jersey Annual Meeting and the National Garden Clubs’ Annual Convention. These will be my last acts as president, and I’m excited to share the experiences with many of you, particularly, my family, friends, and the GCNJ Board. It will be an exciting and emotional time as I pass the gavel to the very capable Sue Berdahl.

So please join me on May 14th as we celebrate our 100th Anniversary of the GCNJ at our Annual Meeting. The celebration will take place at the beautiful Navesink Country Club and is not to be missed. Please see additional details in this spring issue of News Leaf and be sure to register as soon as possible since seating is limited.

In the meantime, there is much to do over the next couple of months and I look forward to working with your clubs. Additionally, I hope to see many of you at the upcoming District Spring Meetings.

Lastly, please remember to order Club Presidents’ pins for your outgoing presidents. Be sure to order early to ensure that the pins will be mailed and received in time for your meetings. Visit the GCNJ website for more information at www.gardenclubofnewjersey.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/GCNJ-CLUB-PRESIDENTS-PINS-ORDER-FORM.pdf

Many thanks for the opportunity to have served you and the 100 garden clubs of New Jersey for the past two years.

Cheers,
Beverly
Beverly Kazickas
President, GCNJ
2023-2025



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CALL TO THE 100th ANNUAL MEETING THE GARDEN CLUB OF NEW JERSEY

WEDNESDAY, MAY 14, 2025

Navesink Country Club



- The 100th Annual Meeting of GCNJ will be held on Wednesday, May 14, 2025, at Navesink Country Club, 50 Luffburrow Lane, Red Bank, NJ.
- Our theme, *"100th Year Celebration 1925-2025"*, will celebrate The Garden Club of New Jersey's 100th Anniversary.
- We will welcome President Elect of the National Garden Clubs, Donna Donnelly, who will install the slate of officers for the 2025 - 2027 term.
- The \$75.00 per person registration fee includes the meeting and lunch. The deadline to register is May 1st.
- Registration starts at 8:00 a.m. The morning session begins at 9:00 a.m., and the luncheon is at 12:00 p.m. The afternoon session is from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.
- Registration forms were emailed to Club Presidents and are on the GCNJ Website. (Seating is limited)
- The morning session will feature the GCNJ Book of Memory ceremony and the presentation of the GCNJ Awards. There will be an opportunity to purchase Raffle Tickets.
- Lunch is a buffet meal including entree, salad, and dessert, with a Cash Bar available.
- The afternoon session includes a program by speaker Kirk Brown and the installation of officers.
- Please Register by Thursday, May 1, 2025 (registrations will be accepted in the order received until space is filled). The registration fee is non-refundable after May 1st.
- **Book of Memory** Deadline is April 15, 2025, in order to be included at the Annual Meeting. You can find the form at:
<https://www.gardenclubofnewjersey.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/GCNJ-Book-of-Memory-8-24-2021.pdf>
- Dress Code: To meet the Navesink Country Club's requirements, no jeans nor sneakers are permitted.
Appropriate attire for this location is requested of all attendees.



The Garden Club of New Jersey, Inc.

100th Annual Meeting

May 14, 2025

"100th Year Celebration 1925-2025"

Beverly Kazickas, President of the Garden Club of New Jersey,
cordially invites you to attend the GCNJ 100th Annual Meeting.

LOCATION:

Navesink Country Club
50 Luffborrow Lane
Red Bank NJ 07702

TIMES:

8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. Registration
9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Business Meeting
11:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Intermission
12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. Luncheon
1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. Speaker & Installation

Pre-registration is required ... no walk-ins

Registration Deadline May 1, 2025

Non-refundable after May 1, 2025

Raffle Tickets and Bar will be available for cash

INSTRUCTIONS:

Scan QR code or click link, to fill-in info and submit payment ... Email form to judybonnano1@gmail.com. You may also register by mail Print this form, fill-in info and mail with check for \$75 made out to GCNJ.

Mail To Registrar: Judy Bonanno, 11 Samara Drive, Shrewsbury, NJ 07702



PHOTOGRAPHS: Registrant grants consent to the Garden Club of New Jersey to use the name and photograph of same in its publications and/or on its website for educational or informational purposes.

DRESS CODE: In order to meet the Navesink Country Club's requirements, no jeans nor sneakers are permitted. Appropriate attire for this location is requested of all attendees.

<https://www.zeffy.com/ticketing/2025-garden-club-of-new-jersey-annual-meeting-100th-year-celebration>

REGISTRATION FORM (Please print)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Garden Club: _____

District: _____

Don't Delay – Register Today – Seating is Limited

Please Check your credential(s)

GCNJ Officer	<input type="checkbox"/>	Guest	<input type="checkbox"/>
GCNJ Board Member	<input type="checkbox"/>		
NGC Board Member	<input type="checkbox"/>		
CAR Board Member	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Club President	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Delegate	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Alternate Delegate	<input type="checkbox"/>		
GCNJ Life Member	<input type="checkbox"/>		
NGC Life Member	<input type="checkbox"/>		
CAR Life Member	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Meet Your GCNJ Board Member

**Florence Leyssene: GCNJ Judges Council Chair,
Garden Club of Montclair, District II**



I was born and raised in Paris, France. When my husband's job transferred him to Japan, we moved to Tokyo and stayed 5 years. While in Japan, I studied Ikebana, the Japanese art of flower arrangement. Our next move took us to New Jersey where we have lived for the past 39 years. Here in the U.S., I continued my floral education by working as a flower arranger at a local florist.

In 1999, I joined The Garden Club of Montclair, NJ, which is where I realized that NGC Flower Design is quite different from FTD Flower Design!

Over the years I joined the Board of Trustees and became the Chair of Flower Design, Nominating, and Botanical Arts, as well as Vice-Chair of Workshops. In addition to being Flower Show Chair, I served as President of The Garden Club of Montclair for three years.

At the state level, I am an NGC Accredited Master Flower Show Judge and have participated in almost all Flower Show Schools and Symposiums held in New Jersey. For six years I served as Annual Meeting Chair under three GCNJ Presidents and currently continue my six-year tenure as Chair of the GCNJ Judges Council. I am on the Nominating Committee and recently served as Vice-Chair with Mary Warshauer for the 2024 CAR-SGC Convention held in New Jersey. Also, I am serving as Co-Chair with Mary Warshauer for the 2025 GCNJ Annual Meeting with 100th Anniversary Celebration being held at Navesink Country Club on May 14th.

For National Garden Clubs, Inc., I have worked as both Chair and Vice Chair of the Vision of Beauty (VOB) Calendar committee for the past six years. My passion is and always will be Flower Design, getting better at designing, along with a desire to share my knowledge and educate our members in their creative endeavors.

Flower Show School III

June 10th-12th, 2025

We are excited to be offering Flower Show School III in June of this year at Holly House, 126 Log Cabin Road, East Brunswick, NJ. These classes can be taken in any order; taken for credit with the objective of becoming a judge or audited to learn more about Flower Shows, judging, designs, and horticulture. We hope you will consider registering. Registration information is on our website.

Tuesday, June 10th our own Heidi Muschick will instruct in horticulture, specifically judging roses and combination plantings and procedures. The GCNJ members will provide numerous plant material and plantings for your learning experience. The morning is spent learning all about these subjects, then we break for lunch, and then concentrate for two hours on point scoring which is the basis for all judging. Those taking it for credit will do point scoring for credit from 3-5 p.m.

Wednesday, June 11th, Lynn Fronk from Georgia will instruct us on Creative Design and staging and procedures. Again, our members and the instructor will have designs in front of you that will be explained and point scored for your learning experience.

For those taking the exam only, we will meet at 9 a.m. until noon for a written exam on both subjects, on Thursday, June 12th.

Attending these courses is a wonderful journey and learning experience. We hope you will join us, for one day or both days. Please check out our registration for the club special rate. Gail Bassolino is our registrar and may be reached at [**cbassolino@aol.com**](mailto:cbassolino@aol.com) for any registration questions. Teddie Falcone is the Flower Show Chair and may be reached at [**tfalcone52@gmail.com**](mailto:tfalcone52@gmail.com) for questions. Please click on the site below to find your registration information. <https://www.gardenclubofnewjersey.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/GCNJ-FSS-III-25-REGISTRATION-jan-23-2025-with-new-presidents-and-zeffy-link.pdf>



*The Thirty Seventh Symposium of
Garden Club of New Jersey
April 29-30, 2025*

at

THE OLDE MILL INN

225 Route 202

Basking Ridge, New Jersey 07920

Telephone: 908-221-1100



All lectures are open to all Garden Club Members
Refreshers taking the exam will be given preferred front
seating.

Please click on the site below to see the full information.

<https://www.gardenclubofnewjersey.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/GCNJ-SYMPOSIUM-2025-BROCHURE-11.11.24.pdf>

2024-2025 Slate of Officers

Positions to be filled

District 1 Director	Evelyn Pachner, Demarest Garden Club
District 3 Director	Rose Wolverton, Snufftown Garden Club
District 5 Director	Carolyn Seraka, Rake and Hoe Garden Club
District 6 Director	Vacant
District 7 Director	Vacant
First VP	Peggy Morrissey, Seaweeders Garden Club
Corresponding Secretary	Linda Williams, Community Garden Club of Hunterdon County
Recording Secretary	Gail Haaren, Bayberry Garden Club
D1 Nominating	Nikki Chen, Demarest Garden Club
D3 Nominating	Caron Menger, New Vernon Garden Club
D5 Nominating	Deb Murphy, Green Thumb Garden Club
D7 Nominating	Helga Fontus, West Trenton Garden Club
Headquarters & Endowment (H3-year term 2025-2028)	Beverly Kazickas, Demarest Garden Club Jessica Wang, Demarest Garden Club Marina Kerber, Navesink Garden Club

Club Conversation

Hearts Around the Corner

The Bridgewater NJ Garden Club is thrilled to have Patti Cerrato as one of its exceptional flower designers.

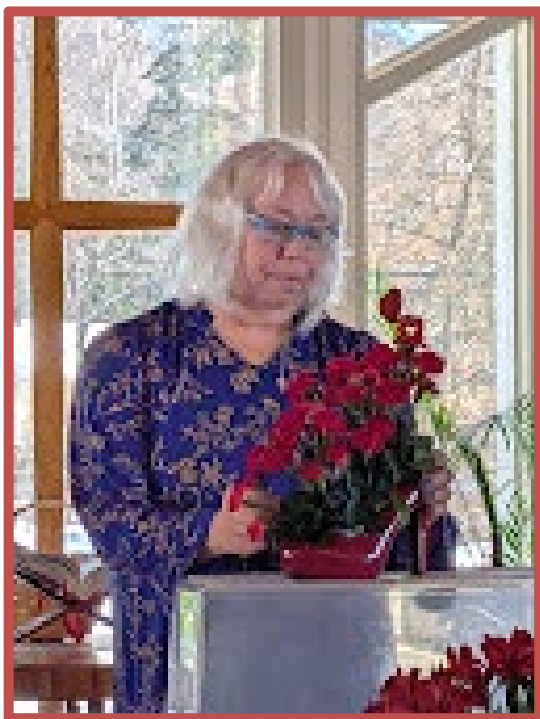
Patti Cerrato presented the program, "Hearts Around the Corner", earlier this year at our general meeting. She demonstrated romantic flower designs which included a topiary made with cut flowers, a design using a base of Valentine heart candy, and our favorite, a design using Patti's recycled red high heeled shoe.

The Bridgewater Garden Club meets on the last Wednesday of the month at Sanctuary + Seed, 1600 Washington Valley Road, Martinsville, NJ. You are welcome to join us.

Bridgewater Garden Club

Robin Shaw

robinshaw@mindspring.com



National Garden Week 2025

Hello GCNJ Club Presidents,

I hope your club will join National Garden Club, Inc. in celebrating **National Garden Week, June 1-7, 2025**. It is the perfect time to get the word out to our communities about the many activities our clubs are involved in.



The Basking Ridge Garden Club has provided an exhibition at the Bernards Township Library for several years. The library provides a highly visible space for the club and asks them to leave the exhibit in place for the entire month of June. What more could we ask for in a dual community effort.

In 2024, the club chose a patriotic theme, highlighting the 911 Memorial, near the Basking Ridge train station and the Blue Star Marker. Approximately five members worked on this club activity with great enthusiasm.

What are **you** doing to celebrate National Garden Week 2025?

Visual items attract attention to what garden clubs are all about and can bring in new members. How about providing a design or small vignette of plants with an information sheet in the library or town hall this year. If you have a flower show or plant sale this spring, advertise National Garden Week on a banner during that event or put a banner in your yard. Wear your Plant America badge every day during National Garden Week and track how many times someone asks you what Plant America means. National Garden Club has Plant America banners for sale at Headquarters in St. Louis. Check out the website for National Garden Club. You may be surprised at the help you may find. Take photographs and send me a short description of what you do this coming year.

Thank you for supporting another NGC project.

Jan Warshauer

CAR-SGC National Garden Week

jwarshauer@aol.com

Club Conversation

Welcome to the LBI Garden Club's Standard Flower Show May 15th, 2025

Cascades of roses.... tiny teacup arrangements...underwater orchids, and the scent and color of flowers are everywhere. It's the Garden Club's Standard Flower Show coming on May 15, 2025, at the beautiful Long Beach Island Foundation of the Arts in Loveladies.

Open to the public and free of charge, the show is sure to dazzle with uniquely styled arrangements created by LBI Garden Club members. Special areas this year will include Botanical Arts, a combined craft and flower division and a non-judged children's flower arrangement division. Lilted violin music will add to the ambiance along with platters of delicacies. The theme is "Hats off to Les Fleurs" and visitors are encouraged to don a chapeau (or even a baseball cap!) to join in this celebration of spring!

Photo by Jeannette Michelson

LBI Garden Club members meet to plan the Standard Flower Show. Left to right, front row: Carol Thim, Julie Eller- Co-Chairs; Joanne Mitchell, Lois Perry; President of LBI Garden Club. Back row, left to right: JoAnne McKee, Cindy McGrath, Co-Chairs; Marge Girardo, Eileen Szperka, Tracey Cameron, Debra Cowles, Peggy Neall, and Nancy Kunz.



Yup! It's that time of year
to register your GCNJ Youth Clubs
(current or brand new)
for 2025.

Copy the registration form on page 13 or make a copy of the form found by
clicking on the site below.

<https://www.gardenclubofnewjersey.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/NEW-GCNJ-YOUTH-REG-FORM.pdf>

Just print it, fill it out, and enclose with
a \$20.00 check payable to GCNJ

Mail to:
Susan Berdahl
72 Beechwood Dr.
Shrewsbury, NJ 07702

ATTENTION ALL GCNJ YOUTH CLUBS!



It's that time of
year to register
your current or
new Youth Club

Let's keep encouraging our youth to get their hands back
in the soil and experience the many benefits of gardening!



GCNJ Youth Club REGISTRATION

To be registered with the state and eligible for any youth awards, this form must be completed and sent to the Youth Chair at the address below by May 15. Please enclose a check payable to GCNJ in the amount of \$20.00 to cover your club's annual Youth Club registration fee.

Name of Youth Club _____

_____ Type of
Club (Junior K-6th, Middle 7-8th, HS 9th-12th) # of Youth Members

_____ # club meetings per/yr.
Association (with a garden club, a school or a local organization)

Name of Sponsoring Club _____ District # _____

Club Interests (please check all that apply to your group)

Gardening _____	Arbor Day _____	Flower Design _____
Protection of Wildlife _____	Civic/School Project _____	Children's Gardens _____
Insect Study _____	School Gardens _____	Annual Youth Contests _____
Garden Therapy _____	Flower Shows _____	Nature Camps _____
Pollinators _____	Bird Study _____	Ecology _____
Three R's _____	Composting _____	National Garden Week _____

Other, please describe

Youth Chair contact information

_____ Youth chair name (please print)

_____ Address _____ City _____ Zip Code _____

_____ Telephone _____ # Email _____

Makes checks payable to GCNJ and mail to:

Susan Berdahl 72 Beechwood Dr.

Shrewsbury, NJ 07702

Drumthwacket does it again—with GCNJ Help!

What a stunning holiday season was presented by the GCNJ at Drumthwacket this year. Six clubs pulled out all the stops with their creativity and hard work to bring the spirit of the holidays to the beautiful governor's mansion. There truly was something for every visitor to enjoy within the seven distinct rooms and many outdoor wreaths. The summer planning meeting kicked off the season and our talented clubs got to work shortly thereafter. This is not just a “holiday” endeavor, it takes months of planning and execution to deliver the beautiful designs that so many come to enjoy during the season. This year, there were six clubs returning from past years and a talented, new participant, The Garden Club of Metuchen, made a wonderful contribution to the spectacular holiday decor.



In the elegant design of the mansions' stunning front door wreath, foyer and glass solarium, the Garden Club of Metuchen brought continuity from the front entrance all the way through to the rear garden. Metuchen works with fresh greens for their annual fundraiser, so it was an easy move to a “Woodland Garden” theme. Inspiration was drawn from the elegant façade, welcoming foyer, and airy solarium for their use of traditional elements, natural materials, and the delight of birds. Their core committee of six conceived the design direction to honor the club's 100th anniversary, while their entire club participated in creating most of the ornaments for the two trees including silhouettes, bird houses, twig stars, and pinecone birds. Elegant magnolia leaves and pinecones, foraged from members' gardens, adorned the stunning welcome wreath and trailed down the grand staircase of the foyer. Except for the wrapping paper (which may be reused), nothing went into the landfill. Fresh plants were adopted by GCM members, expired greens all went in Drumthwacket's compost heap, store-bought ornaments were boxed to show themselves again, and the handmade ornaments were sold at their winter fundraiser.



The **Keyport Garden Club** outdid themselves in the dining room this year. Their theme was Christmas 1924, Joy of the Christmas Season, 100 Years Past. Working with an elegant color scheme of gold, silver, and peach, their spectacular tree commanded attention with its handmade ornaments, birds and tree topper, all created by their members. Two beautiful dioramas regaled in the Art Nouveau style represented their interpretation of The Nativity and a 1924 room, decorated for Christmas. The imposing dining table was anchored with an incredible centerpiece featuring ostrich feathers, Christmas balls, fresh greens, and an art

nouveau ceramic swan. Their design used pearls and dried florals from their own gardens to create continuity throughout the space.

Taking their inspiration from the beautiful blue and white furniture in the parlor, the **Garden Club of Mountain Lakes** chose a classic chinoiserie theme and juxtaposed it with an unexpected pop of fuchsia. Their festive Christmas tree was filled with 80 decoupage ornaments which the members began creating in the late summer. Striped blue and white stockings hung from oversized fuchsia bows adorned the two fireplace mantels. A variety of blue and white containers were used to showcase fresh flowers and holiday greens. Beautiful fuchsia roses, cyclamen, and poinsettias, along with white amaryllis, orchids, and ferns brought an air of freshness and life to the space.

For the music room, the **Allentown Garden Club** began with an apropos musical theme, the Nutcracker Ballet. Their goal was to create a magical experience, capturing the essence of the land of sweets. Their lavish design included large wooden cutouts of Clara with her nutcracker and the mouse king, along with a glittering tree decked out in pink and white. Everywhere the visitors looked, they would see sparkling visions of candies with a nod to music, as in the fireplace mantel design incorporating a violin. There was an abundance of handmade candy topiaries and glistening wreaths in each window. The club promised an over-the-top experience, and they certainly delivered.

The stately library was illuminated this year by the **West Trenton Garden Club**. Keeping with a literary theme, the designers chose to showcase a variety of children's Christmas books. Many classic titles were interpreted throughout the room. The coffee table featured a carnation snowman, complete with green top hat and red scarf as a floral nod to *The Snowman*. Every child's favorite, *The Polar Express*, was brought to life with a toy train atop the desk, accented with white blooms. The ghosts of *A Christmas Carol* were interpreted with bouquets of miniature calla lilies tucked into fluffy tulle skirts. The library's two stately Christmas trees were filled with an assortment of ornaments and accents combining all the stories. There were nutcrackers and ballerinas, handmade pinecone animals, and gold chains from *A Christmas Carol*.

The governor's study was elegantly decorated by the **Belvidere Garden Club**. Their classic design sought to bring attention to the lovely architecture and many historical elements in the space. The committee of four found a special ribbon that served as the anchor for their design sensibility. Their lovely Christmas tree was centered on top of the desk, surrounded by miniature glass vases filled with holiday greens, adhered to the beautiful, bowed window. Each year, this club tries to utilize plant material grown in the members' gardens. This year,



dried cardoon blossoms were painted gold and used throughout the space. Belvidere hoped that the holiday visitors to Drumthwacket found inspiration in their space to take home and try themselves.

The **Warren Garden Club** was charged with setting the stage for the guests' first welcome and last farewell, by creating the wreaths for the entrance gates and the many wreaths that adorned each of the mansion's windows. Their goal was to create wreaths that would be eye-catching not only to the visiting guests, but also to passing motorists. A committee of five designed the large entry gate wreaths while a group of twenty-nine gathered to assemble the bows for the many window wreaths! In keeping with the first lady's goal of minimizing waste, the design team mixed, matched, and sorted their design elements like plaid balls, grinch green sparkle swirls, and crystal twig stems, reclaimed from past years. They then added fresh evergreen plant material gathered from a member's yard to adorn the gate wreaths.



In addition to the multitude of parties hosted by the governor and first lady, Drumthwacket was open to the public at five open houses this year. Each open house allowed 500 guests, so a total of 2500 New Jerseyans shared in the holiday spectacle. There are numerous families that make visiting Drumthwacket an annual Christmas tradition. This year, due to the popularity of the open houses, the website crashed on the day that the reservations opened!

Drumthwacket was, indeed, splendid this year. The participating clubs are recharging now and are looking forward to an even more incredible 2025 holiday season.

Nancy Bigelsen
Drumthwacket Chair
snrbig2@gmail.com





NATURAL DISASTER FUND 2025



How does your club plan to pay for damages to your public projects caused by any of the Natural Disasters plaguing our area? Has flooding been a problem, river or stream overflowing? Drought? Ice or snow? Fire? Excessive heat? Persistent and violent winds?

Grants up to \$500.00 are available through GCNJ's Natural Disaster Fund. All the information is available on the website,

<http://www.gardenclubofnewjersey.org>

In easy steps,

1-click on "Member's login,

2-go to "Club Projects"

3-scroll down to "Natural Disasters Fund Application"

4-hit "Click Here" for application and information.

Remember, one of the Garden Club's goals is to promote civic beauty. What could be more community-minded than to help restore public spaces after a Natural Disaster has struck?

Where do the funds come from? From our clubs up and down New Jersey. "Passing the Jug or Can" to gather members'

Contributions at each meeting is a great help. So is a designated line item in clubs' budgets to be sent yearly.

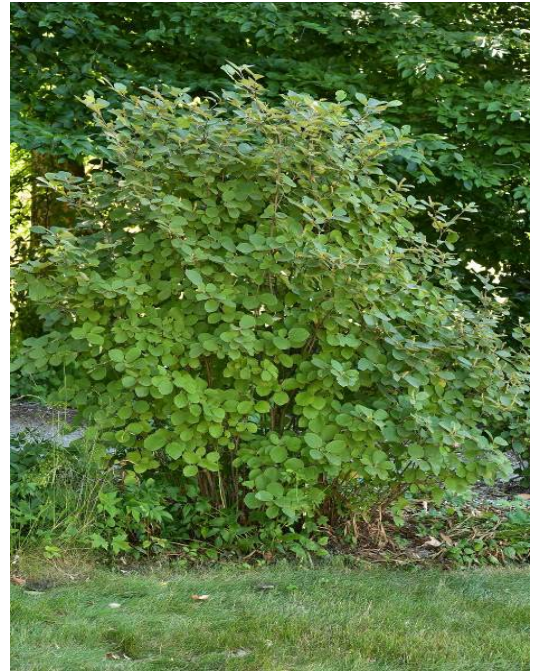
Please make all checks payable to **the Garden Club of New Jersey** with memo stating **Natural Disasters Fund**, then mail to

Margaret Esposito, Chairperson, 16 Running Brook Rd., Bridgewater, NJ 08807

Crawford's Corner

Fothergilla – Plants of Quiet Dignity

The idea of plants working together as team players in a garden may not be a design concept many gardeners consider. However, given the importance of how plants need to work together for a garden to look cohesive, it is clearly a relevant design concept. Unfortunately, this detail is frequently overlooked. Instead of the plants working together, those adorned with golden, blue or variegated foliage often appear to be screaming 'look at me', which is maybe why they were purchased in the first place! Whatever happened to a plant with quiet dignity? A plant that is happy to provide form, flower and foliage in support of its neighboring plants? Fortunately, there are plenty of team players available and one of my favorites is Dwarf Fothergilla or Witch-alder, botanically known as *Fothergilla gardenii* (pictured at right in late June).



If you have yet to meet this wonderful genus, you are probably not alone since its many virtues remain unknown by many gardeners! *Fothergilla* is a member of the Hamamelidaceae or Witch Hazel family and, according to most authorities, the genus consists of only two species. For *Fothergilla gardenii*, the genus and species were described and named in 1774 by the Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778). The genus honors Dr. John Fothergill (1712-1780), a British physician and gardener, who funded William Bartram's famed plant explorations throughout the Eastern U.S. from 1773-1776. The species remembers Dr. Alexander Garden (1730-1791), a Scottish physician and botanist who in 1752 settled in Charleston, South Carolina, and often sent plant specimens and descriptions to Linnaeus. He discovered Dwarf Fothergilla growing near his home at some point prior to 1765. As a side note, Linnaeus also honored Dr. Garden with the genus *Gardenia*!

The second species of this genus is *Fothergilla major* or Large Fothergill. The discovery of the plant is far more clouded than its cousin, although it was known in English gardens by the 1780's. However, it was not properly named and described until 1829 by the British naturalist and artist George Loddiges (1784-1846). As the species epithet and common name imply, Large Fothergill becomes a much larger plant than its smaller cousin. The stout stems are thicker and it grows from 4-15' tall and 6-12' wide. By comparison its cousin only reaches 2-4' tall and 3-4' wide.

One attribute shared by both species is the beautiful, bottle brush like flowers that open from mid-April into May (*Fothergilla gardenii* is pictured below left and in the closing image). The 1½-3" long floral spikes appear at the tips of the branches before the foliage begins to unfurl, allowing the flowers to be enjoyed unobstructed. Once again, the flowers of *Fothergilla major* are somewhat larger on average and are consistently closer



to 3" in length. The plants are monoecious, whereby each flower spike consists of a mix of individual male and female flowers. These flowers are arranged radially around the central stem and are apetalous or lack flower petals. The showy part of the floral spike is the 12-24(32) male flowers and their long white filaments tipped by pale yellow, globe-shaped anthers. Intermingled amongst these male stamens are the white, strap-like stigmas of the female pistils. Together they provide a full and attractive appearance with a sweet, honey-like fragrance that serves to attract numerous pollinators. While in bloom, plants look great in combination with white flowered Daffodils or the White Enkianthus (*Enkianthus perulatus*) with its delicate clouds of white, bell-shaped flowers. Other considerations are the white Variegated Solomon's Seal (*Polygonum odoratum* 'Variegatum') or the white flowers of Spring

Beauty (*Claytonia virginica*). The flowers last for 2-3 weeks and fade from sight as the foliage emerges and proceeds to conceal the developing seed capsules. Just like other members of the Witch Hazel family, the seeds are shot outward in early fall through a process called explosive dehiscence. As the capsule dries, it proceeds to shrink until the pressure on the seeds within causes it to split open and propel the seed several to multiple feet from the parent plant. Although I have grown the plants for years, I have yet to see any seedlings, I am sad to say.

The foliage is also a very attractive attribute for these plants. For Dwarf Fothergilla, the foliage is up to 2" wide by 2½" long with an oblong or obovate shape while, as one might expect, the leaves of *Fothergilla major* are slightly larger. Both species have deeply set veins, giving the foliage a quilted appearance with the apical portion of the margins lightly toothed. In summer, the foliage is an attractive deep green or bluish-green. Come autumn, the show once again begins for both species as the foliage develops into a festive saturnalia of colors. Often a mix of orange, red, yellow and amber can all be seen on a plant at once. *Fothergilla major* is pictured above at Longwood Gardens in mid-October. It is also fun to note how the color patterns change from year to year, adding a touch of the unknown! Come winter, the stems continue the festive show by bearing a zig-zag pattern that is especially enchanting with a light coating of snow.



The difference in the size of the plants is partly a reflection of their native habitat. Dwarf

Fothergilla is native from North Carolina to Florida, appearing primarily in acidic and moist or boggy locations along the Coastal Plain. Suckering in habit and hardy in zones 5-8, Dwarf Fothergilla should be in an area with adequate moisture throughout the summer months. By contrast, Large Fothergilla is more of a clump former, although it can still form substantial colonies over time. It is native to the cooler, mountainous regions of North Carolina, West to Tennessee and south to Georgia and Alabama. As a result of its habitat, it is slightly hardier, growing in zones 4-8. Plants often grow in full sun at elevations of 1500' and above, while in the warmer lower elevations they can be found on the cooler, northern slopes. It is also more tolerant of drier soils although it too appreciates a humus enriched and acidic soil that retains moisture throughout summer. In



nature, the populations of the two species remain distinct and do not overlap. However, when the plants were grown together in nurseries and under cultivation, hybrid seedlings started to appear, botanically known as *Fothergilla x intermedia*. These hybrids proved to be somewhat more easily grown than their parents as well as more vigorous. In all likelihood, it is these hybrids that finally brought this genus into the limelight!

There are two cultivars that have deservedly gained widespread recognition, although there are countless additional selections that are certainly garden worthy. *Fothergilla x intermedia* 'Mount Airy' has become the cross against which most selections are compared (as seen above in fall color). It flowers beautifully in spring and produces glowing fall color, all on a plant reaching 6-8' tall and wide. It has proven to be a very dependable and easily grown plant that, key for its widespread use, is also easy to propagate. Selected during the 1970's by the American horticulturist and Professor Michael Dirr at the Mount Airy Botanic Garden in Cincinnati Ohio, it was formally named and introduced around 1988. It has foliage similar to Large Fothergilla but displays a strong suckering habit similar to its more diminutive parent. It has proven cold hardy to -25 F, and provides excellent spring floral and autumn foliage displays.

Perhaps it should come as no surprise that the second plant of great merit happens to be a sport of Mt. Airy! On January 25, 2005, Gary Handy of



Handy Nursery in Oregon obtained the patent for *Fothergilla x intermedia* 'Blue Shadow'. In addition to the bountiful spikes of white blooms and spectacular fall color, the plant displays a very attractive powder blue dusting to the foliage, as seen above at Willowood Arboretum. The rich blue color nicely lends 'Blue Shadow' for use in a mixed border with attractive herbaceous combinations. For example, it looks great paired with blue and purple flowers, such as the blue flowered Russian Sage (*Perovskia atriplicifolia*) and Balloon Flower (*Platycodon grandiflorus*) or the silver foliage of Lamb's Ears (*Stachys byzantina*). It's one drawback is the appearance of vigorous growing shoots from the base of the plant with green foliage. The instability may occur in plants propagated by tissue culture or may simply be a natural tendency to revert back to the original 'Mt. Airy'. The plant growing at Willowood Arboretum has shown no indication of reverting. For those plants expressing this tendency, cutting the reverting stems back as far as possible to the base of the plant keeps this issue under control.

It may not be something we consider often, but the success of a garden often hinges on plants that perform well as team players. Both species and the various selections of *Fothergilla* are able to multitask well by working nicely with other spring bloomers, creating a great garden backbone throughout the summer and exploding into a blaze of colors come fall. These shrubs may have gone unsung over the past few centuries, but it is now time for these plants of quiet dignity to receive some much-deserved praise!



Bruce Crawford

Manager of Horticulture, Morris County Parks Commission



Upcoming Events

April 29-30, 2025: Flower Show Symposium in Basking Ridge, NJ, at the Olde Mill Inn. See Page 7 for further information.

May 6, 2025: The Bayberry Garden Club of Brielle invites you the luncheon, fashion show and gift auction at Jack Baker's Lobster Shanty for \$50.00. For information contact bayberrygc@gmail.com.

May 14, 2025: GCNJ will hold its Annual Meeting with our 100th Anniversary Celebration at the Navesink Country Club in Middletown, NJ. See Pages 2-3 for further information.

May 15, 2025 Long Beach Island Garden Club will hold a Standard Flower Show at Long Beach Island Foundation of the Arts in Loveladies. The theme is "Hats Off to Les Fleurs". See page 11.

May 19-23, 2025: National Garden Club's Annual Convention in Charleston, S.C.

June 8, 2025: The Women Gardeners of Ridgewood will be celebrating their 100th Anniversary and will host the 2025 Secret Gardens Tour. Additional information regarding time and how to purchase tickets can be found on their website: www.womengardenersofridgewood.com.

June 10-12, 2025: The GCNJ will hold Flower Show School III at Holly House in East Brunswick, NJ. See page 6 for further information.

June 19, 2025: The Garden Club of Westfield will sponsor a bus trip to Longwood Gardens in Kennett Square, PA for \$140. Contact Phyllis Pappas at 732-261-7369 or by email at npappas121@comcast.net.



Information for the next issue

May 1 is the deadline for articles and current club events for the
Summer 2025 News Leaf Issue.

Please send articles and upcoming event information to

Ruth Korn at ruthkorn77@gmail.com

Go to the GCNJ website at
www.gardenclubofnewjersey.org
for more information.