



Mary Warshauer

MARY'S MUSINGS

National Garden Clubs (NGC) continues to share the appreciation and connection to nature and the outdoors. Over the past year, NGC has seen an unparalleled commitment from our members. Resilient

and adaptable as always, we worked together to find new ways to connect during this physically distanced time.

Our theme, PLANT AMERICA, includes all aspects of gardening and horticulture, in addition to water and conservation concerns. We encourage a variety of programs: Blue/Gold Star Memorial plantings, community gardens, victory gardens, refresh waterways, town plantings - the possibilities are endless. Projects in local communities distinguish us from the work of other gardening organizations. Towns, cities, neighborhoods and roadsides across America are all beneficiaries of National Garden Clubs' programs. We continue to offer and award PLANT AMERICA Community Project Grants to new and continuing projects of our local garden clubs. These grants provide financial support to our member clubs and increase NGC's visibility in communities.

Our members and communication are keys to the success of our organization. Together, we forge new avenues for staying connected. Digital communication such as virtual platforms, email and social media provide the ability to learn from, communicate and grow with members from coast to coast. While connecting in person is ideal, virtual platforms prove to be an asset for NGC. The virtual resources that we discovered in the midst of adversity have become the new tools that allow our membership to thrive! The high level of participation confirms that virtual meetings, workshops and programming are effective and will enhance the future of garden clubs. These platforms have opened a threshold of opportunities to reach a wider audience, not only to engage with members that we may not have previously been able to reach but, also, to expand membership.

It is ironic that we are being called to embrace the virtual world, when the heart and soul of our work requires us to put down our devices, roll up our sleeves and embrace nature. Ultimately, as with any healthy garden, balance is the key. We all must think about the future of NGC, its goals and the best way to attain those goals. We must have the willingness to make the changes necessary to reach those goals. Embracing digital technology is one of them. Often, we hear "don't fix it if it's not broken." Well, we are not broken, but we have learned

that there are equally effective ways to bring us together, which we can and will do in tandem with our timeless traditions.

This is our time! Our members' work represents an immense dedication of time and effort in their commitment to the organization and the communities served. Our gardeners' strong love for nature and gardening support fellow NGC members in their endeavors to protect, preserve, and conserve natural resources and beautify environments. Each time our members share their knowledge and talents, NGC has the opportunity to create long-lasting relationships supporting our communities. Garden Clubs across the country work hard to protect and enhance the vitality of our great outdoors. In today's digital era, there are times we need to remind ourselves of the natural joys that are waiting for us right outside our doors. I invite you to "Play Outdoors!" Not work outdoors. Not toil outdoors. But play! Our gardens and outdoor spaces are not just chores to be tended; they are pleasurable gifts for all of us; they are our *Playground of Possibilities!* We often forget how important it is to engage in what makes us happy and to share that enjoyment.

The future of the planet is in the hands of those who care for it today. What better way to ensure the protection of our wonderful world than to begin sowing seeds to spark a child's curiosity. Can you remember your own youthful joy in discovering Roly-Poly bugs, colorful fallen leaves or the smell of freshly mown grass? Our senses reveal the splendor that nature has to offer. Teaching children about gardening and playing outdoors offers the opportunity to plant those little curious seeds that sprout into the excitement to learn and experience more of nature's bounty. As we look to the future, our success is only possible if we first honor our history. If the gardens of America are our legacy, then our history is the roots. Gardens' vibrant blooms represent the promise of the future, but ones we will only reap if we endeavor to sow their seeds together. This has always been the mission of NGC and the story of this great country that we are dedicated to keeping beautiful. Going forward, we will consider the future, set challenging goals, and have the determination to achieve them together. Our shared passion enhances the enjoyment of learning from and interacting with our world.

So, grab your gardening tools, pick up the kids and get to playing outdoors. Take your smartphone with you so that you can snap photos of you and your children playing in the garden and share them with all of us virtually. It is in this interest that I look forward to "playing outdoors" with all of you, as we continue to PLANT AMERICA, together. 🌱