

Golden Gardens

Official Publication of California Garden Clubs, Inc.



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January-February 2026

Vol. 4-18

HAPPY NEW YEAR!



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By Lisa Ayala

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Contest: [Michelle Blomberg](#)

Assistant: [Charlotte Tucker](#)

Youth Poetry Contest: [Lisa Cosand](#)

Youth Pollinator Poster Contest:

[Ashley Smith](#)

Youth Sculpture Contest: [Lisa Cosand](#)

Zoom: [Carol Vallens](#)

CGCI PROJECTS

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See 2025-26 *Yearbook, Manual & Roster*

Golden Gardens

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OFFICIAL CALENDAR

Check the CGCI [Calendar](#) for links to brochures, flyers, registration forms, etc. For schools in other states, check the [NGC website](#). See CGCI Calendar for club, affiliate, associate plant society, and district "special" events which are open to the public.

2026

Jan. 26-28, [CGCI Winter Board Meeting](#), Virtual
Feb. 13, Flower Show School, Course 3 — Flower Show Procedures— Virtual. Sponsor: Southwestern Judges Council.
Feb. 19-21, Flower Show School, Course 3, Poway. Sponsor: Southwestern Judges Council. [Brochure](#)
April 15-16, Flower Show School Symposium, Fresno. Host: Valley Judges Council. Chairman: [Jennifer Waite](#)
May 4-6, NGC Convention, St. Louis, MO
May 11-14, CGCI Convention, Handlery Hotel, San Diego. Host: Palomar District. Chairman: [Diana Drummey](#)
Aug. 31-Sept. 2, CGCI Fall Board Meeting, Harris Ranch, Coalinga. Host: Hermosa Garden Club
Sept. 24-26, Flower Show School, Course 4, Poway. Sponsor: Southwestern Judges Council
Oct. 12-14, PRGC Convention, Thousand Oaks, California. Chairman: [Robin Pokorski](#)



THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Happy New Year, CGCI Members!

As we turn the calendar to 2026, I am filled with a sense of renewal and excitement for the year ahead. January is always a time for reflection in our lives and in our gardens. It provides a moment to set new goals and to plan for what we will plant in our spring gardens. For CGCI, this year promises to be one of noteworthy goals and meaningful connections.

Our work begins in earnest with the Winter Board Meeting, taking place January 26-28, 2026, via Zoom. While we miss the opportunity to see one another in person, the virtual format reduces the cost of attending an in-person meeting while eliminating the difficulty of travelling during the winter months. The official Call to the Board Meeting has been emailed to all board members and is readily available on the [CGCI website](#). I encourage you to register early.

Immediately following our board meeting, I am honored to travel to Stockton for a very special occasion. We will be gathered at the [University of the Pacific's Military and Veteran Student Center](#) for a Blue Star Memorial Dedication. These markers are a solemn and beautiful tribute to the men and women who have served, are serving, or will serve in the United States Armed Forces. Seeing Stockton Garden Club partner with an educational and veteran student center to keep this legacy alive is truly inspiring.

In February, my travels continue as I visit a couple of our districts. I am looking forward to attending the Valley Lode District and Sacramento River Valley District meetings. These visits are the highlight of my term, as they give me the chance to see firsthand the incredible work being done at the local level.

Finally, as we nurture our gardens this year, let us also prepare for a historic national celebration. On July 4, 2026, America will celebrate its 250th birthday. [National Garden Clubs, Inc.](#) (NGC) and [Keep America Beautiful](#) (KAB) have launched a joint initiative – the Blue & Gold Star Memorial Beautification Program. The program supports projects that remove litter, plant flowers and greenery, and beautify Blue Star and Gold Star Memorials nationwide, with a special emphasis on planting *red, white, and blue* flowers to celebrate America's Anniversary on July 4, 2026. The program encourages all club members to participate in activities they would typically do during this historic 250th celebration of America, and now they can also apply for a grant of up to \$1,000 to fund their work. KAB also has a volunteer force you can work with. More detailed information is available on the NGC website. By the way, please note that [Sue Bennett](#) is CGCI's contact for NGC's Plant America/Keep America Beautiful Program.

Thank you for all you do to make California more beautiful. I look forward to seeing many of you on my screen in late January and in person throughout the spring!

Warm regards,

Adele Kelly

2025-2027 President

FEATURED ARTICLE

A GARDENER'S RESOLUTIONS FOR THE NEW YEAR

By John Garaventa, Member of Red Bluff Garden Club



The author's succulent garden entrance

Once again, we have been blessed with a year of life. And the time is at hand for New Year's resolutions. We evaluate our circumstances and strive to make improvements in our lives. Many of us focus on healthier lives, having better diets, losing weight, exercising more, keeping physically fit, learning through education, creating new relationships, changing jobs, and developing new skills.

Some 4,000 years ago, the Babylonians are said to be the first humans to make New Year's resolutions. Later, the Romans had a comparable custom when Julius Caesar established January 1 as the beginning of the new year. The Roman deity, Janus, looked backward into the year past and ahead into the new year with promises of better behavior. Similarly, early Christians reflected on past mistakes and resolved to do better.

We gardeners are no different, pondering past garden misadventures and anticipating horticultural advancements. I have selected three gardening resolutions for the New Year that have been stirring in my mind. You may also benefit from considering and implementing these simple resolutions.

RESOLUTION ONE: TO IMPROVE AND ENHANCE THE GARDEN'S SOIL

Soil is the medium for the various plants in our gardens. Success or failure as a gardener largely depends on your soil's health. Many things can be done to enrich your soil. Introducing organic materials will improve your garden. It isn't

necessary to buy organic additives; some are readily available at no cost other than your industriousness. When you prune your trees and shrubs, add the pruning clippings as a first layer over your soil. If you have access to a woodchipper to reduce the size of the clippings, that's even better since the decomposition time will be significantly reduced. I have a few oak trees on and near my property. Rather than burn or bag the leaves for landfill disposal, I use them as another layer of organic material. Shredding the leaves is preferable; however, I layer the leaves whole. I add other organic ingredients like eggshells for calcium and coffee grounds for nitrogen and acidity; I also add some fruit and vegetable peelings. Granted, it takes discipline to infuse these organic materials, but it is inexpensive and easily done.

Aged cow and chicken manure will add nitrogen and accelerate decomposition, supercharging your soil. These practices will reduce the need to fertilize your plants.

After making this layered cake of organic materials, I like to add an icing of wood chips. This will not only enrich the soil but also lessen the incursion of weeds and provide a solid walking surface.

I might add that your soil composition can be tested. Check with your County's Agricultural Department. You may also purchase home soil test kits. The soil testing will reveal any deficiencies in your garden soil which can be appropriately addressed.

RESOLUTION TWO: ONLY PURCHASE PLANTS THAT ARE COMPATIBLE WITH YOUR USDA PLANT HARDINESS ZONE

How many times have I purchased plants that have caught my attention and are so beautiful in the confines of a protected nursery? Oh, these would be so breathtaking in my garden. Eventually, some of these specimens found their way to my plant cemetery. The lesson is to research before you acquire new plants. Learn as much as you can about them. Know your USDA Plant Hardiness Zone and know each plant's USDA Plant Hardiness Zone. Do not deviate from recommended climates. Doing so will only lead to lost investments and failure.

A plant identifier software program will assist you in your future garden acquisitions. It will recognize the plant and provide information on its mature dimensions, care, and, most importantly, USDA Plant Hardiness Zone. You will learn whether it can withstand the extreme weather in your area. I

Continued on next page

PACIFIC REGION GARDEN CLUBS IS COMING TO CALIFORNIA

By: [Robin Pokorski](#), PRGC 2026 Convention Chairman



Garden club members of the eight western states are coming to visit California! CGCI has invited [Pacific Region Garden Clubs, Inc.](#) (PRGC) to hold its annual convention at The Palm Garden Hotel in Thousand Oaks, California. Just like any party, now that we have invited guests, we need family members to be there to welcome our guests.

Mark your calendars and save the dates of **October 12 – 14, 2026** (with fabulous tours on October 10 and 11) to attend PRGC's 2026 Convention. For more information, check CGCI's [Official Calendar](#).

SHOW OFF YOUR BLUE STAR MARKERS

By [Robin Pokorski](#), Board of Trustees Chairman



A video record of our California Blue and Gold Star Markers is under construction; however, we do not have a picture of all of our markers in California. To be included, all that is needed is a good picture of the marker (current or when originally installed). Once complete, the PowerPoint presentation will be shared with anyone interested, and maybe we can persuade President Adele to show the presentation at convention.

If you want a presentation with just YOUR club and/or district markers, that can be made available with only a note to me. Let's have the best record of all of our Blue Stars that are shining in California.

IMPORTANT UPCOMING DEADLINES

- ♦ [Awards Program](#): Second deadline: **January 10**.
- ♦ Clubs' [Blue Ribbon Certificates of Achievement Forms](#) to District Directors: **January 10** — see fillable form on website under "Awards."
- ♦ [General Liability Insurance](#) renewal: **January 15** to avoid a late fee.
- ♦ [Group Tax Exemption Program](#) renewal: **January 15**.
- ♦ [Smokey Bear/Woodsy Owl Poster Contest](#) entries: Must be received by **January 20**.
- ♦ Last day to register for the CGCI Winter Board Meeting: **January 21**.
- ♦ District Directors to send Blue Ribbon Certificates of Achievement results to Awards Chairman: **February 15**.

A GARDENER'S RESOLUTION (continued from previous page)

am looking at the *Picture This Pro* and the *PlantNet Plant Identifier* software programs. Gardeners may have to pay for worthwhile plant identifier programs.

RESOLUTION THREE: LABELING MY GARDEN PLANTS

I have numerous species of plants in my garden. There are so many, and I don't remember all of them when giving my garden tours. Labeling your plants is relatively easy and inexpensive.

You may use a variety of labeling surfaces like wood, metal, plastic, rock, or glass. This can be an artistic endeavor if you wish to be more creative. My favorite is the aluminum label. It

is easy to emboss with a ballpoint pen. In any event, the result is that you have made a registry of your garden.

I have chosen a mere three resolutions, making achievement more readily attainable. There are many more resolutions to consider:

- Diagramming your garden to create outdoor living rooms;
- Planting a Victory Garden of fruits, nuts, and vegetables that will help you eat and live healthier;
- Evaluating your irrigation system for better water usage;
- Planting more native plants in the garden;
- Sparingly use herbicides and pesticides in the garden; and
- Sharing the joy of gardening with others.

MEMBERSHIP

MEMBERS ONLY SECTION OF THE WEBSITE — A REMINDER

By [Jane McKee](#), Website Advisor

The Members Only Section allows **Presidents** and **Treasurers** of each member organization to have direct access to their personal profile and/or the organization's records. It is password protected. You **DO NOT** need to send a request to the CGCI Webmaster to update/correct your official record.

The President or Treasurer can update their personal contact information. The primary/billing contact (usually the Treasurer) can update the organization's official information (mail or email address, website URL, meeting places, days/times, etc.) at any time. The record is updated immediately upon submission of the online form.

To access the record, go to the login link on the [CGCI website home page](#):

Members Only Login

2026 WINTER BOARD MEETING

Attn: CGCI Board Members

The Call to the 2026 CGCI Winter Board Meeting has been sent! It takes place virtually, **January 26-28, 2026**, via Zoom. To view the details (Tentative Schedule, Agenda, and Registration Form), see [CGCI's Calendar](#) on the website under "January." The deadline to register for the 2026 Winter Board Meeting is **January 21**.



AWARDS PROGRAM

By [Pat Claves](#), Chairman

Now is the time to finalize your award entries and submit them by the second deadline of **January 10**.

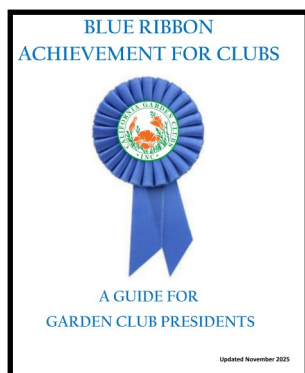
Awards due by January 10:

- ◆ Special Awards (except for Award of Honor)
- ◆ #10 Blue Ribbon Certificate of Achievement— send completed form to your District Director
- ◆ #12 Club Program
- ◆ #13 Club Touring
- ◆ #15 Home Garden Tour
- ◆ #17 Seminar & Workshop
- ◆ #18 Ways & Means
- ◆ #20 Backyard Habitat
- ◆ #24 Horticulture
- ◆ #26 Pollinator Education
- ◆ #27 Unique Backyard Enhancement
- ◆ #37 Flower Arranger of the Year
- ◆ #40 Photography
- ◆ #41 CA Arboreta/Botanical Gardens Photography

Check the Awards Manual on the website under the "[Awards](#)" tab for more information about these awards. CGCI looks forward to receiving your entries.

The Blue Ribbon Achievement for Clubs — A Guide for Garden Club Presidents — has been updated.

[CHECK IT OUT!](#)



New Year's Greeting

Soft rain or stormy day,
already bulbs awaken
sprout slender green spikes
poke through moist, dark soil.
Bright sunshine or chilly fog,
may we cultivate natives
to enhance our gardens,
invite bees, birds, and butterflies.
Let us join in greeting [2026],
dedicate the year to friendship,
good health and happiness.
May our club flourish like
a bright bouquet.

— Louise Moises, December 2024
(Member of El Cerrito Garden Club)

GROUP TAX EXEMPTION PROGRAM

GTEP — LET'S TAKE A QUICK LOOK

By [Cynthia Jackson](#), GTEP Chairman

This article is intended to provide you with a brief, high-level overview of CGCI's Group Tax Exemption Program (GTEP). It will cover the benefits and limitations of the program and is loosely based on some of the questions I have received and discussions I have had. Hopefully, you will know what is required of you and what GTEP can and cannot do for you.

Group exemptions are an administrative convenience for both the taxing authorities and organizations with many affiliated organizations. Subordinates in a group exemption do not have to file, and the IRS/FTB does not have to process separate applications for exemption. Consequently, the subordinates do not receive individual exemption letters from the IRS or the FTB. CGCI issues a letter to them acknowledging inclusion in the group, which is valid as long as they meet the ongoing annual requirements.

The benefit to your club is that you do not have to file (or pay someone else to do it on your behalf) the initial application with the IRS and FTB to obtain individual tax-exempt status. As most, if not all, of you know, CGCI is exempt under 501(c)(3), which allows payers to deduct their contributions to you.

If your club has previously received individual tax-exempt status under another Section of 501(c), then GTEP is not available to you. If your club has already received individual tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(3), then GTEP is not needed.

To qualify for a group exemption, the central organization (i.e., CGCI) and its subordinates (i.e., clubs) must have a defined relationship. Subordinates must be affiliated with the central organization; subject to the central organization's general supervision or control; and exempt under the same paragraph of IRS 501(c).

Currently, there are no new group exemptions being issued by the IRS or FTB.

Your Annual "Must-Do" list:

1. Your club must be a current CGCI member and carry on the mission of CGCI
2. You must be current with the IRS on Form 990/990-N filings
3. You must be current with the FTB on Form 199/199-N filings
4. You must be current with the Registry of Charitable Trust Form CT-1/CT-TR-1
5. You must be current with any required Board of Equalization sales tax filings

As you can see, GTEP does not relieve you of any of the required annual federal or state filings.

6. You must have the same accounting period as CGCI, namely July 1-- June 30
7. You must be current with your GTEP renewal, which is due on January 15 each year

Renewals postmarked after January 15 will be subject to a late fee. Renewals that are not postmarked prior to March 1 will not be accepted. This will result in your removal from the group exemption program and, therefore, loss of your tax-exempt status. You would need to obtain an individual exemption from the IRS and FTB or be subject to income taxes.

Hopefully, this overview has provided you with some new insights into how GTEP works. If not, and you already knew all of this, *congratulations* and here is your gold star.

Resources utilized for this article: [CGCI GTEP Handbook](#). And for anyone wanting to go deeper, these other resources relate to tax exemption in general, as opposed to group exemption: IRS Publications [4573](#) and [557](#); FTB Publication [927](#).

YOUTH CONTESTS

SMOKEY BEAR/WOODSY OWL CONTEST

The **Smokey Bear / Woodsy Owl Poster Contest** is a National Garden Clubs, Inc. contest that California feeds into, and last year a California entry won the national award. It takes an 11x17 inch piece of paper with specific words all spelled correctly. The correct colors that are on the registered logos for Smokey & Woodsy must be used. For details, check the [Youth Contests Manual](#).

[Smokey Bear/Woodsy Owl Poster Contest](#) entries are due to the CGCI Chairman by **January 20, 2026**. Questions? Contact [Michele Blomberg](#), Chairman.



BLUE STAR MEMORIAL NEWS

HOW TO RESTORE A BLUE STAR MARKER



Paint Samples vs. Highway Marker

almost 20 years ago. The directions would still be good if the bronze and blue paint colors specified were still available, but they are not.

If you wish to restore a marker yourself or with the help of a contractor, you will need to know what paint colors to use. The marker must be repainted with the colors in the original design. Sewah Studios does not disclose the colors they use.

In a retail paint store, you pick the color you want from color swatches. It will have a name associated with it. From that information, the store can mix the color for you using the correct base paint and a machine that adds the correct amounts of

While the easy way to restore a marker is to send it to Sewah Studios, it is possible for a 'do it yourself' to make it look bright and shiny again. The directions on the CGCI website were originally published

By [George Unrine](#), Co-Chairman, Southern California & [Maria Krennek](#), Co-Chairman, Northern California

each pigment. In general, each paint manufacturer has its own paint mixing system and its own color palette.

You can also bring in a sample of the color you want to match. The paint store will scan it and tell you the closest color they have in the color palette for each of the paint brands they carry. That can vary from a nearly exact match to nothing close. The results will vary with each brand of paint.

Bringing in a marker to be scanned is no easy task. It has been done with byway markers on a few occasions, but the results eventually became unavailable. On a home improvement television show, they mentioned a portable scanner, smaller than a golf ball, that can perform the task on location. The results are transferred to a phone app. The app has a database of color palettes for about two dozen paint brands and can tell you the closest match for each brand and how close the match is.

The best results were Behr's Aqua Fresco for the blue and Sherwin-Williams Andiron for the bronze. These results as well as good matches for other brands are included in the updated marker restoration directions that can be found in the [Blue Star Memorials Section](#) of the CGCI website.

If you have any questions, we are always here to help.

NEW NGC BLUE & GOLD STAR MEMORIAL BEAUTIFICATION PROGRAM

By [George Unrine](#), Blue Star/Gold Star Memorials Co-Chairman

This program, part of [PLANT AMERICA](#), is a joint initiative with [Keep America Beautiful](#) (KAB). The goal is to support projects that remove litter and plant flowers/greenery to beautify Blue and Gold Star Memorials nationwide. Grants of up to \$1,000 will be available, but the application deadline is fast approaching. Grants will be awarded on **March 5, 2026**.

So, does your club have a marker with a landscape that is overgrown or maybe not landscaped at all? Now is the time to start planning a beautification project and apply for a grant to help with the costs. Guidelines for funding include significant club participation and cannot be used to obtain a new marker or refurbish/remount an existing marker.

Project emphasis should include *red, white and blue* flowers to help celebrate America's 250th Anniversary on July 4, 2026. It will also help if your club can team up with a KAB Chapter in implementing the project. Please note that [Sue Bennett](#) is CGCI's contact for NGC's Plant America/Keep America Beautiful Program.

Below, see the project that Pinole Garden Club did a few years ago. It is an example of the type of projects NGC would like to support.

Put your thinking caps on. More to come after the holidays. For more information, see the [NGC website](#).



Before and after Photos



PENNY PINES PROGRAM

By Terry Sampson, Chairman**PENNY PINES DONATIONS — DECEMBER 2025 REPORT**

Donations to Date: \$28,182.00

H = In Honor
M = In Memory**BAY BRIDGES DISTRICT**

Eden Garden Club
M: Kathy Flowers \$68
H: Linda Hulme \$68

San Leandro Garden Club
M: Caroline Brause \$68

BAY OCEAN DISTRICT

Carolands Garden Club \$68

BUTTES DISTRICT

Lake Oroville Area Garden Club \$68
Paradise Garden Club
H: Paradise Garden Club \$272

CASCADE DISTRICT

Redding Wonderland Garden Club
M: Lisa Meredith \$68

DIABLO FOOTHILLS DISTRICT

Clayton Valley Garden Club
H: Shelly Gusse \$68
H: Chris Santa Maria \$68

GOLDEN FOOTHILLS DISTRICT

Chicago Park Garden Club
M: Gary Lembcke \$68

LUTHER BURBANK DISTRICT

Petaluma Garden Club \$68

MENDO-LAKE DISTRICT

H: Diane Cerutti \$68

ORANGE COUNTY DISTRICT

Del Norte Garden Club \$68

PALMS TO PINES DISTRICT

A Garden Club of Big Bear Valley
H: Dr. Patrick C. Hsieh, M.D. \$68
H: Spencer Kagan \$68
H: Johnny Wells \$68
H: Carol Bliss \$68
H: Cindy Vaughn \$68
H: Laurie & Spencer Kagan \$476
H: Debbie Gray \$68

PALOMAR DISTRICT

Crown Garden Club of Coronado \$136
La Jolla Garden Club
M: Daniel Dameron \$68
Paradise Gardeners \$68
San Diego County Garden Guild \$68

ROADRUNNER DISTRICT

Cactus Wren Garden Club
M: Linda Ham \$68
Hesperia Garden Club
M: Linda Ham \$68
M: Florina (Fanny) Pascual \$68

SACRAMENTO RIVER VALLEY DISTRICT

Clarksburg Garden Club
H: Carole Lawlor \$68
H: Sandra Souza \$68
H: Marcia Goss \$68
Elk Grove Garden Club \$136

River Valley Garden Club

M: Jerome Hoberg \$68
M: John Davis \$68

SAN FERNANDO VALLEY DISTRICT

Burbank Valley Garden Club
H: Nancy Bryant \$68
H: Laura Duran \$68
H: Ingrid Nonnast \$68
Southern California Garden Club
H: Master Sergeant Kerry Beaulieu \$68
H: Karen & Doug Kirk \$68

TOP O' THE STATE DISTRICT

McCloud Garden Club \$204

VALLEY LODGE DISTRICT

Manteca Garden Club
H: Gayle Foster \$68
Oakdale Garden Club \$204
M: Wilhelm Isenberg \$68
Patterson Garden Club
M: Theresa Alves \$68

YOSEMITE GATEWAY DISTRICT

Le Grand Garden Club
M: Tim Hennessey \$68

MISCELLANEOUS

Children of the American Revolution
H: Presidio Hill Society NSCAR \$68

INFORMATION**The Coulter Pine (*Pinus coulteri*)**

According to [Calscape](https://www.calscape.org/), "The Coulter Pine or Big-Cone Pine is a native of the coastal mountains of Southern California and Northern Baja California. Isolated groves are found as far north as the San Francisco Bay Area in Mt. Diablo State Park and Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve. The species is named after Thomas Coulter, an Irish botanist and physician. The size ranges from 30-80 feet tall, and a trunk diameter up to 3 feet. The trunk is vertical and branches horizontal to upcurved. The leaves are needle-like, in bundles of three, waxy pale gray-green, 6-12 inches long and stout, 0.01 inch thick. The outstanding characteristic of this tree is the large, spiny cones which are 8-16 inches long, and weigh 4-10 lbs. when fresh. Coulter Pines produce the largest cones of any pine tree species (people are actually advised to wear hardhats when working in Coulter Pine groves). The large size of the cones has earned them the nickname "widowmakers" among locals. The wood is weak and soft, so that the species is little used other than for firewood. It is also occasionally planted as an ornamental tree in parks and large gardens."

Photo Credit: <https://www.etsy.com>

2025-2027 PRESIDENT'S PROJECT

CULTIVATING THE ROOTS OF SUCCESS

ABRAXAS HIGH SCHOOL GARDEN — ABRAXAS ORCHARD

By [Barbara Weiler](#), Chairman



The Abraxas Garden recently held an open house for the community to showcase the innovative school garden and to promote the expansion of the orchard. Students led tours and were proud to impart their knowledge of nurturing plants and fish in the aquaponics system. They created many products for sale from the garden including salsa, herb mixtures, cookies, essential oils and soaps. The event was well-attended by the community, and many local garden club members showed their support.

A landscape architect has volunteered to create a computerized plan, and a fruit tree expert has come on board to select appropriate trees and to teach proper pruning techniques.

CGCI has raised \$14,150 towards our goal of \$30,000 for the Abraxas Orchard. There is still another \$4,000 available for matching donations from the Youths Friends grant, so your generous donations will be doubled. The [donation form/s](#) are found on the CGCI website under "Projects."

Thank you to all the donors for November-December 2025:

Julie A. West
Dos Valles Garden Club
Hespera Garden Club

Manteca Garden Club
Niguel Shores Garden Club



Photos from the Open House



GENERAL LIABILITY INSURANCE

INSURANCE FOR YOUR CLUB

By [Launa Gould](#), Chairman



Eligible clubs have an opportunity to obtain or renew General Liability Insurance through CGCI. **January 15, 2026** is the deadline to submit the 2026-2027 form and payment of \$1.75 per member with a \$20.00 minimum. An email reminder was sent to club presidents and treasurers in November. The late fee for insurance payments received after January 15 is \$30.00.

Please be aware of the following changes that were approved at the 2025 Fall Board Meeting: The late fee for insurance payments received after January 15 is \$30.00. The charge for Additional Insured Certificate requests have increased to \$45. These changes apply to the February 15, 2026-2027 policy term.

- General Liability will be handled by our new General Liability Insurance Chairman [Tammy Eacker](#).
- Additional Insured Certificates for your venues (if required) are processed by [Launa Gould](#).

All information and forms can be obtained on the website under "Member Benefits / ["General Liability Insurance."](#)

CONSERVATION

RECYCLE, REPURPOSE, REUSE



About ten years ago, I checked out [Seeds Now](#), a seed organization recommended by a California garden club member who was doing a habitat project for her club. I discovered Chocolate Cherry Tomato seeds and thought they would have to be good tomatoes. So, I ordered some seeds, and they grew and were tasty tomatoes. After ordering seeds a couple of

years in a row and paying a shipping charge, I started saving seeds myself, as the Chocolate Cherry Tomato is an heirloom tomato. The next problem was starting the seeds outdoors in my area's cool winters. (My cats prohibit doing this indoors.)

While cleaning up the basement during the pandemic, my husband came across a sheet of hard plastic. With scrap lumber and the plastic sheet, he built a "cold box" for me. I can open

By Anna Frankfurt, Member of El Cerrito Garden Club

the cold box during the day and close it overnight to retain warmth, similar to how the Master Gardeners use hoop houses to grow a massive amount of tomato plants for their annual sale in April. The box is 24" x 34" x 8" and works well for a reasonable number of plants. I plant the seeds in plastic fruit containers from the supermarket and close the lids for warmth and protection from critters.

In 2025, I planted seeds in three stages: on February 9, 17, and 25. The seedlings sprouted on March 3, 6, and 28. By the time of my club's plant sale in April, I had fifteen plants ready for sale. Additionally, since the plants had been outside the whole time, they were well-hardened and ready to be planted in the ground. I also successfully started some bush beans, which grew in just three weeks!

While the growing box may not look glamorous, it really gets the job done. Plus, I was able to reuse materials that would have otherwise ended up in the landfill.

GARDENING

LOVE SEED CATALOGS? PLANT SOME SEEDS

By Rosemary Ecker, NGC Gardening Consultant & Southern California Garden Club Member



Seed catalogs are a wealth of knowledge and help gardeners dream or hope for a bountiful harvest. I wait for catalogs so the latest plant introductions and old standards can be admired. Catalogs are informative, showing

and telling us about the ideal conditions for the growth of our favorite tomatoes, herbs, and colorful posies. The least expensive way to get started often is by growing seeds, or so they say. Start them inside during cooler weather. Growing from seed can be one of the greatest pleasures.

Seeds vary in germination and growth rates. If planting outside, check the average last frost dates for your garden's location. When purchasing seeds, review the date posted on the package as to the recommended season and use date. If you have leftover seed packets from prior seasons, check their viability. It's suggested to wrap a few seeds in a damp paper towel and put them in a plastic sandwich bag. Let it sit in light, not direct sun. In a couple of days, the seeds should sprout. If there were ten seeds and five sprouted, then there was 50% viability. Know

that you will need to plant twice as many seeds as plants desired.

You will need a shallow container or tray, damp soil or starter mix, and seeds. If outside, you will need loose, amended soil in a sunny location protected from critters, insects, slugs, and wind. Direct sowing (outdoors) is planting directly into the garden beds. Indirect sowing takes place indoors in trays or containers. Egg cartons make a good starter container or newspaper cups. Watering from the bottom of the tray allows moisture to wick up to the seed and then beginning roots. Provide light. Some seeds do not need light to germinate. After leaves emerge, then light is a must. A period of 12-14 hours of strong light is recommended. Some gardeners use a light fixture because direct intense sunlight can burn the seedlings.

Thin the seedlings. Removing a few of the seedlings seems painful but try to end up with one seedling that looks strong in the starter tray cup. Tweezers can help with this task.

Before planting permanently, the plants will need to get used to outdoors. This process is called "hardening off." For cool-season

Continued on next page

FROM OUR CLUBS

CHICAGO PARK GARDEN CLUB'S VICTORIAN TEA AFFAIRE

By [Cherie Oliver](#), Chicago Park Garden Club President

Members of Chicago Park Garden Club got an early start on the Christmas season on November 7, 2025 with a special edition of their annual Victorian Tea Affaire. This year's event had a holiday theme, highlighted by a historic vintage fashion show from Yesteryear Sierra, entitled "The American Christmas: 1860 to 1960" which featured authentic period clothing from each decade in that century. The theme was also carried through in printed materials, decorations, and food. The 148 paying guests were joined by special guests: CGCI President Adele Kelly, Second Vice President Nina Blonski, Golden Foothills District Director Erin Angulo, and former CGCI President and former Golden Foothills District Director Sue Bennett. Chicago Park Garden Club Past Presidents Carlotta Wixon-Welker, Ann Wallace, and Nancy Tilman were also in attendance.

The Christmas theme seemed to add extra energy and cheer to the day, as club members plundered their attics for their favorite decorations to dress up the Nevada City Elks Lodge. There were 20 Christmas trees, an army of nutcrackers, and a 12-foot holiday village. Someone wanted to put lights on the Elk's antlers but was dissuaded! Even the food reflected the theme. The sandwiches featured seasonal foods such as turkey and cranberry, and the cookies could have been left out for Santa, who was the special guest star. Even the 150 guests, dressed in their holiday best, seemed to have worn their biggest smiles, too!

Proceeds from the Victorian Tea Affaire allow the club to fund not only its local community activities, such as the Community Meditation Garden and the Junior Arrangers Program, but also other local gardening-based groups such as the North Star House Historical Garden and the Empire Mine Heritage Rose Program. Other funds go to the CGCI President's Project and Golden Foothills District activities. Aside from the financial benefits, the event is a yearly highlight for the local community and a way to involve all garden club members in creating a beautiful, successful event.

Photos: Period-decorated trees to match the vintage attire (1950 and 1960 (with robot))



Models in vintage attire from 1860 to 1960 were joined by Santa and Mrs. Claus!

Front row L-R: "Queen Victoria" c. 1865; Past Club President & CGCI Board Member Carlotta Wixon-Welker; Past Club President "Santa Claus" (Jim Welker); "Mrs. Claus" (Club President Cherie Oliver and owner/narrator of Fashions of Yesteryear Sierra); and "Charles Dickens" (Wally Oliver)



LOVE SEED CATALOGS? PLANT SOME SEEDS (continued from previous page)

vegetables, the outdoor temperature should be consistently 47 degrees or warmer outside. Set seedlings outside in a protected area during the day. Bring in the plants at night for about three days. Once the seedling has four to six leaves, then it can be transplanted carefully to a pot or in the garden plot.

Start with easy-to-grow plants like carrots, beets, vining vegetables, and flowers like sunflowers, cosmos, zinnias, and poppies. Continue to explore seed catalogs and dream of planting success. Happy gardening!

FLORAL DESIGN

OUTDOOR WINTER DESIGN

By Charlotte Rodriguez, Member of Red Bluff Garden Club



The holidays are behind us, and it may be time to put away the Christmas decorations. Now is a good time to create an uplifting winter outdoor container arrangement with various hardy, cold-weather plants.

Your winter arrangement can include live plants and/or gathered plant material. If you have leftover branches, boughs, or other greenery from Christmas arrangements, or if you have access to greenery in your garden or in your neighbors' yards, you have the makings for a beautiful outdoor arrangement. Gather up a number of evergreens, and include pinecones, sticks, moss, eucalyptus, holly, and toyon -- endless possibilities for your arrangement. Magnolia leaves are especially interesting in arrangements with their shiny green leaves and beautiful brown backs. Use your imagination. Don't forget to get sharp, clean clippers and pruning shears, plus your gloves.

I started looking alongside county roads at evergreens that were growing over fences and in ditches, plus scoping out my neighbors' yards to secure my greens. I found a really interesting evergreen, identified by *Picture This* as "Beach sheoak," also known as Horsetail sheoak. Looking closely, the branchlets have long, hair-like needles with brownish coloring on the tips of the needles. This is the male tree; female trees have a small red flower. My other interesting greens were redwood and fragrant red cedar from my lovely neighbors. I gathered my

leftover gum limbs, magnolia leaves, ornamental asparagus cuttings, sticks for some added height, and pinecones. Everything inside and outside the house took on a new meaning; nothing was sacred from confiscation for my project.

When I was ready to create my arrangement, I reviewed the six principles that guide floral arranging: **balance, contrast, dominance, proportion, rhythm, and scale**. I've been learning about the Six Principles of Design in Flower Show School available through Red Bluff Garden Club. Those are good points for me when I critique my arrangement. I may not have them nailed down yet, but practice helps.

I didn't choose a theme or color scheme; I knew I wanted evergreens with some bright spots suggesting brighter days to come. My container is black with pebble-like indentations, about 3 feet tall, and set on a small base. It has weathered the cold temperatures, so I deemed it durable for my project. Containers made of terra cotta, concrete, wood, fiberglass, and plastic all have their pros and cons and must be given careful consideration before being selected.

Besides the six basic principles, another concept I had learned came to mind. You may have heard it -- "thrillers, spillers, and fillers." My thrillers are the cast iron bird in the center and the lights. To be truthful, I didn't begin with the focal point of the bird and lights. As I worked on the design, I saw a stronger focal point was needed, hence the addition of the cast iron bird and lights. I started with the spillers and fillers. I considered my fillers to be evergreens and my collection of accessories and spillers to be beach sheoak. My suggestion is to construct it tight and full in the container so that if something needs to be pulled, there is not an obvious hole. That means being generous with the fillers.

After adding plant components, I stepped back and looked for balance -- top to bottom, side to side. Will it topple over? Then, I checked for contrast. Did I mix light and dark colors? Did I vary tall and short? Did I mix up the plant components? The cast iron bird was beautifully placed. However, I considered rhythm. Did my eye stop at the bird, or did my eye travel around to other features? What was it that attracted my eye? Color? Repetition? The principles don't have to be considered in a certain order; however, it did help me to remember to cover all six tenets.

As I'm still learning the application of principles, I recall I have two last tenets to check: proportion and scale. Scanning my

Continued on the next page

FLORAL DESIGN

BOB GORDON & THE PALOMAR FLORAL DESIGN FORUM

By: Judy Unrine, Student Flower Show Judge

Robert L. Gordon, former CGCI President (2003-2005), regularly presents floral design programs at the Palomar Floral Design Forum in Poway.

Bob often said during his presentations, "This will be my last presentation." But for 33 years, he would return to the Floral Design Forum to give another demonstration of his many skills as a floral designer. At 96 years old (and two weeks until his 97th birthday), he said at the Forum's 33rd year on October 5, 2025, "It is a pleasure to be in this job. I love it." Bob does not let age stop his enthusiasm for life.

Of fresh flowers, Bob said, "They have to be pristine. Roses are wonderful, and the added scent is a bonus." "Texture is another thing," he said. "It is impossible to teach texture." Also, he said, "A designer should not use line material as filler." He went on to tell the audience how to make a bow using 5 yards of material, how to wire a flower calyx using a very hot wire, and how to perform a Christmas trick by placing twinkle lights under sheer cloth. He taught a lot more, but, after all, he was a Professor of Ornamental Horticulture at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo for 25 years.

Regrettably, he said, "The trend in things is that they have gone flat. In the floral industry, there is no design." But he said that we should "play around with trends." He calls it succession.

Bob will be traveling next year, so this really is his last year. We are happy for him, but we will miss him just the same.

To learn more about the Floral Design Forum: [Palomar Floral Design Forum - California Garden Club](#). The next Forum will take place on January 5, 2026. The presenter will be Noel Tribbey, AIFD, a freelance designer and lover of ladders. Noel will create the WOW! Don't miss a great start to the new year.



**George Speers, Pam Null, AIFD CFD,
and Bob Gordon, AIFD
at the Palomar Floral Design Forum
on October 5, 2025**

OUTDOOR WINTER DESIGN (continued from previous page)

arrangement, have I consolidated something in one area that would make a disproportionate component ratio? This would block the rhythm of my design, so I am cognizant of the placement of all components -- "... a pleasing ratio between overall areas and amounts."

Finally, scale. Scale is size. The scale is out of whack if I have placed too many short components with tall components unless that is the effect I want. That was not my goal in this arrangement, as I wanted an overall harmonious effect. I have to add texture as an element that has helped to achieve a harmonious look. The soft, floppy sheoak, amongst the rigid

greens, and the inclusion of the branches of broadleaves all completed the harmony.

As I looked at my arrangement, I thought it was almost finished. However, I kept fussing with it. I want it to be pleasing to the eyes. Overall, I have learned so much just by practicing the principles from Flower Show School, and I feel a great sense of accomplishment.

For me, this project was a visual message that there are wonderful possibilities for the New Year!



NATIONAL GARDEN CLUBS, INC.

“Blooming Beginnings” Flower Show Award

By [Debby Cooper](#), NGC Flower Show Awards Chairman
--From the Fall 2025 Addendum to *The National Gardener*

NGC is offering a unique award opportunity for clubs hosting their first-ever NGC Small Standard or Standard Flower Show — Honoring Excellence in First-Time Flower Shows with a Lasting Legacy.

Flower shows have long served as vibrant celebrations of botanical artistry, horticultural mastery, and community spirit. They foster connections among gardeners, inspire creativity, and bring together people of all backgrounds to appreciate the transformative beauty of flowers. While established shows often receive accolades and recognition, first-time flower shows play a critical yet often underappreciated role: they sow the seeds of new traditions, unite budding horticulturists, and invigorate communities with fresh passion. It is with this in mind that we offer the “Blooming Beginnings” Flower Show Award, a unique honor dedicated to recognizing excellence in first-time garden club flower shows.

The award, embodied in the form of an NGC Path of Success brick paver, will ensure that these pioneers leave a permanent mark—both literally and figuratively—on the garden of collective achievement.

Objective of the Award

- Recognize first-time flower shows for their vision, organization, and impact.
- Encourage other groups to initiate new flower shows, fostering a wider appreciation for horticulture and floral design.

Eligibility

- Open to any NGC Federated Garden Club hosting its FIRST EVER NGC Small Standard or Standard Flower Show. The

Flower Show must be held during the 2025-2027 NGC administration.

- Shows must be open to the public and demonstrate a commitment to community involvement, educational value, and horticultural excellence.

Nominations and Judging Process

Judging will be based on several key criteria, including but not limited to:

- Innovation and Creativity: Originality in show design, theme, and exhibits.
- Educational Value: Demonstration of horticulture and floral design education for attendees.
- Overall Impact: Evidence of positive influence on the local community and potential for future growth.
- Clubs must submit their Flower Shows following the standard Flower Show Achievement Award submission process which is listed on the NGC website. Submit to your state by its deadline. State Flower Show Awards Chairman or Awards Chairman may submit up to three entries to NGC Flower Show Awards Chairman by January 1, 2027.

The Award: Brick Paver

“Blooming Beginnings” Award is the presentation of an NGC Path of Success engraved brick paver, sponsored by the NGC Flower Show Awards Committee. This brick will bear the club’s name, flower show’s name and the year of the award and will be installed on the Path of Success at NGC Headquarters in St. Louis, Missouri. Each quality submission will receive a certificate of recognition for its accomplishment.

See [blooming-beginnings.pdf](#) on the NGC website for the text version of the article.



PACIFIC REGION GARDEN CLUBS, INC.

PRGC has a New Fundraiser!

PRGC Director Tanja Swanson said, “It is with a company called Tru Earth. The company makes laundry strips and a range of environmentally-friendly cleaning products. I have used them for at least the last two years. Once members start ordering the products through the fundraiser page, PRGC will get a percentage of the sale. Try it out!”

Link: <https://tru-earth.sjv.io/PRGC>



ATTACHMENT A

Club Presidents: Please complete the Blue Ribbon Certificate of Achievement form.

The [fillable form](#) can be found on the website under "Awards." If your club scores 100 points or more, please send the form to your District Director by January 10, 2026 to be acknowledged as a Blue Ribbon Club.

#10 BLUE RIBBON CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT

Clubs earning 100 points of a possible 200 points will be awarded a Blue Ribbon Certificate of Achievement and be classified as a Blue Ribbon Club. Partial participation in any category will receive a partial point score. No proof of achievement is required. Send completed score sheet to your District Director. Contact Awards Chairman for email address of your District Director if unknown. Certificates to clubs earning 100+ points.

CLUB: PRINT THIS PAGE AND SUBMIT COMPLETED SCORE SHEET TO YOUR DISTRICT DIRECTOR BY JANUARY 10.

DISTRICT DIRECTOR: SUBMIT NAMES OF ELIGIBLE CLUBS TO AWARDS CHAIRMAN VIA EMAIL BY FEBRUARY 15.

District Points	POINTS	SCORE
Attendance at district meetings	5	_____
President's report/s to director	3	_____
Representation on district board of directors: officer (3); district chairman (2)	5	_____
Financial support for or participation in district projects	5	_____
CGCI Points		
Attendance at CGCI annual convention	4	_____
Representation on CGCI board of directors	3	_____
Financial support for or participation in CGCI President's Project	4	_____
Annual dues paid to CGCI by October 1	5	_____
CGCI Life members: standing (1); new (2)	3	_____
California Consultants Council Members (one or more)	4	_____
Contributions to CGCI project/s: Penny Pines, Honor Book, Blue Star/Gold Star Memorials, etc.	5	_____
NGC/PRGC Points		
Attendance at NGC Schools — Flower Show Schools (1); Environmental (1); Gardening (1);		
Landscape Design (1); Flower Show Symposia (1)	5	_____
Credentials: FS Judge (1). Consultants: Landscape Design (1); Gardening (1); Environmental (1)	4	_____
NGC Life members: standing (1); new (2)	3	_____
Participation in PRGC Director's Project	2	_____
Participation in NGC President's Project/s	2	_____
Club Points		
Increase in club membership (from January 1 to December 31)	5	_____
Submitted award entry for CGCI (5); NGC award (5)	10	_____
Projects:		
Blue Star/Gold Star Memorial Marker installation	5	_____
Blue Star/Gold Star Memorial project (contribution)	3	_____
Civic development project	4	_____
Conservation project	5	_____
Landscape design or roadside development project	5	_____
Flower Show (host/sponsor)	10	_____
Garden therapy project	5	_____
Horticulture (plant exchange/sale, education exhibit, workshop, etc., other than at flower show)	5	_____
Litter control project	5	_____
Tree planting	5	_____
Workshop (other than horticulture)	5	_____
Programs (at club meetings):		
Conservation program	5	_____
Floral design program	5	_____
Horticulture program	5	_____
Landscape design program	5	_____
Historic preservation program or contribution	5	_____
Scholarship/s awarded	8	_____
Tours		
Club sponsor of garden tour	5	_____
Club visit/field trip to garden-related sites	3	_____
Public Relations:		
Newsletter (minimum of 4 issues)	5	_____
Participation in community affairs	5	_____
Publicity (brochures, posters, newspaper, radio, TV, etc.)	5	_____
Yearbook	5	_____
Youth: Sponsor youth garden club or support youth project	5	_____
TOTAL		_____

SCORING GUIDELINES: Give one point for any partial participation/support. CGCI President's Project: Full points if club donates money to a project or actively participates in the project. Full points if club donates to any of CGCI's projects. Full points if one or more members attend any NGC school; they do not have to pass the tests to become judges or consultants. Full points if one or more of your members is an NGC judge or consultant. Full points if the club financially sponsors youth projects or is actively involved in youth clubs/groups.

Club Name: _____