

Golden Gardens

Official Publication of California Garden Clubs, Inc.

September-October 2026

Vol. 2-19

AUTUMN ISSUE



California Garden Clubs, Inc.
a member of
National Garden Clubs, Inc.
and
Pacific Region Garden Clubs, Inc.

Executive Committee:

President: Adele Kelly
1st Vice President: Nina Blonski
2nd Vice President: Maria Krennek
Recording Secretary: Gail Vanderhorst
Corresponding Secretary: Shelley Sparks
Financial Secretary: Launa Gould
Treasurer: George Perko
Parliamentarian: Greg Pokorski

Golden Gardens Staff:

Editor: Patricia Claves
Photographer: Brad Welles
Proofreaders: Judy Bates,
Sue Bennett, Nancy Compton,
Ellyn Meikle, & Julie West
Writers-at-Large: Nancy Compton,
Ellyn Meikle, Shelley Sparks, &
Phil Stanley

www.CaliforniaGardenClubs.com



2025 Flower Arranger of the Year
Robin Hutchings of Shibui Arrangers Guild
"East Meets West"
(Inspired by a Georgia O'Keefe painting)

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Official Calendar.....	2
President's Message.....	2
2026 Fall Board Photos.....	3
Chairmen & Committee Updates	4-9
California Consultants Council.....	10
From Our Clubs & APSs.....	11-14
Pacific Region Garden Clubs, Inc. News.....	15
National Garden Clubs, Inc. News.....	16

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

Oct. 12-14, PRGC Convention, Thousand Oaks, California. Chairman: [Robin Pokorski](#). [Information, Tentative Schedule and Registration](#).

Oct. 27-28, Flower Show School Symposium, Handlery Hotel, San Diego. For more information, contact Flower Show Schools Chairman [Jennifer Waite](#). [Brochure](#).

2027

Jan. 25-27, CGCI Winter Board Meeting, Virtual

April 5-8, PRGC Convention, Portland, OR

May 13-17, NGC 96th Convention, Madison, WI

June 7-10, CGCI 95th Convention, Redding

Golden Gardens

The Official Publication of
California Garden Clubs, Inc.

- Published bimonthly (July-August, September-October, November-December, January-February, March-April, and May-June).
- Distributed electronically—FREE. To subscribe or view past issues, visit: <https://www.californiagardenclubs.com/newsletters>
- Submit articles to the [Editor](#) by the 20th of the month: **December** (for January-February issue); **February** (for March-April issue); **April** (for May-June issue), **June** (July-August issue); **August** (September-October); **October** (November-December issue).



Robin Pokorski. The workshop focused on identifying, cultivating, and creating future leaders for our clubs. Topics included conducting productive meetings, addressing personnel issues, reviewing treasurer reports and budgets, increasing membership, improving publicity, and building strong teams. Following the workshop, we enjoyed a lovely stroll through the Hadley Gardens in Ferndale and a tasty dinner at the Historic Ferndale Inn. My travels continued north to Redding, where I met with Cascade District Director and 2027 CGCI Convention Chairman Judy Paul and her committee members to plan our next convention.

In August, I attended the Organization of Floral Art Designers (OFAD) Seminar in San Francisco, which offered exceptional floral design workshops and programs. The seminar never fails to delight its attendees with beautiful floral works of art.

I am eager to visit additional districts and clubs in the months ahead. Every time we meet, I come away inspired and proud of the extraordinary work you are doing to support our mission. Your passion is the heartbeat of this organization — so please, keep sharing your big wins, creative ideas, and stories with me!

I look forward to seeing many of you at the Pacific Region Garden Clubs, Inc. Convention at The Palm Garden Hotel in Thousand Oaks, October 12-14. Let's make it a fantastic gathering as we learn, reconnect, and have FUN!

Dear CGCI Members,

As summer comes to an end and fall approaches, many of our clubs will restart their meetings and activities. It is one of my favorite times of the year, and after experiencing an unusually hot and muggy summer in San Diego, I will welcome some cooler weather.

In July, I had a weeklong road trip to Northern California. I visited the Humboldt District, which sponsored the Leadership Workshop "Seeding the Future," presented by



(L to R) Second VP Marie Krenek, Humboldt District Director Ellin Beltz, Past President Robin Pokorski, and President Adele Kelly

Happy fall,

Adele Kelly

2025-2027 President

2026 FALL BOARD MEETING AT HARRIS RANCH



GAME NIGHT

ATTENDEES



**PRESIDENTIAL AWARD TO
MEETING CHAIRMAN**

**CHAIRMAN'S
MEETING**



**HOST CLUB MEMBERS
WITH PRESIDENT ADELE**

**CALIFORNIA CONSULTANTS
COUNCIL MEETING**



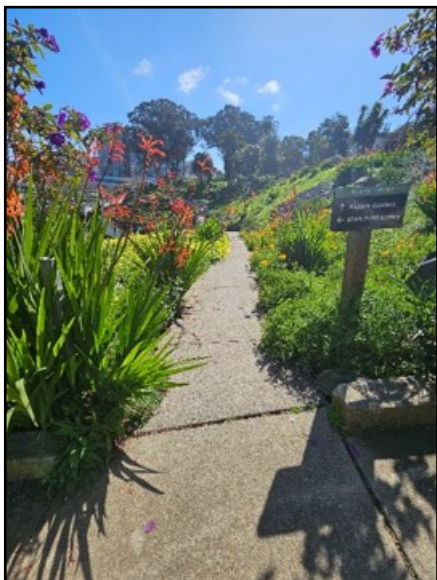
BLACK POINT HISTORIC GARDENS PROJECT CONCLUDES

By [Julie A. West](#), Chairman

A big 'thank you' to the individuals, clubs, and districts that supported the [Black Point Historic Gardens](#) state project from 2021 through 2026! You made a difference with total donations equaling \$12,774.95 that exceeded the \$10,000 goal in the Resolution.

Donations supported recreating the historical strolling garden with propagation materials, plants, planting, garden tools, and compost. In addition, a scientific study of the transformation of an overgrown garden, monitoring the effects of a garden planted with ornamental and native plants on pollinators and wildlife in an urban setting, is being done.

The next time you are in San Francisco, visit this one-acre garden encompassing the hillside overlooking Fort Mason/Aquatic Park, strategically located near Fisherman's Wharf. Black Point Historic Gardens is one of the best places to go in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area for wildflower blooms in spring, with peak bloom typically in May. CGCI is proud of the partnership with Golden Gate National Park Conservancy and the success of the restoration of this historic garden due to the generosity of the donors. THANK YOU!



CGCI needs your assistance!



The Nominating Committee is seeking a candidate to stand for election as Financial Secretary for the 2027-2029 term. Are you familiar with spreadsheets and numbers? If so, or if you know someone in your club or district who is, please contact [Carol Vallens](#), the Chairman of the CGCI Nominating Committee.



"There is a time in late September when the leaves are still green, and the days are still warm, but somehow you know that it is all about to end, as if summer was holding its breath, and when it let it out again, it would be autumn."

-Sharyn McCrumb



SEMPERVIRENS FUND

By Judy Unrine, Chairman



This is the last time I will have the opportunity to talk to you about the 125th year of celebration for the [Sempervirens Fund](#).

Millions of years ago, a remarkable and enduring species emerged and has withstood the test of time, finding refuge along the coast of California: the coast redwoods.

The Sempervirens Fund has been dedicated to the care and protection of Big Basin Redwoods

State Park and the redwoods of the Santa Cruz Mountains for 125 years. Your ongoing support through donations to the redwoods over many years has made you a strong advocate for this cause.

I am very proud of the support we have provided. Through windstorms and fires, you have been there to help restore the redwoods with your generous contributions. Members from all over the state, both north and south, have donated and continue to offer their support.

I would like to thank the clubs, districts, and individuals who donated to \$125 for 125 years. You don't know how much an impact your donations have made:

- Sue Bennett
- Rose Radicchi
- Judy Unrine
- Green Thumb Garden Club of Milpitas
- Lake Oroville Area Garden Club
- Red Bluff Garden Club
- Riviera Garden Club
- San Clemente Garden Club
- South Coast Floral Designers
- Southern California Garden Club
- South Valley Fleurs Garden Club to honor Lonni Polizzi
- Costa Verde District



A certificate and thank you note are sent for each donation. You can also specify "to honor" or "as a memorial."



DONATIONS UPDATE

There is a new donations form for CGCI projects. One form now accommodates either credit card or check. Once the completed form is submitted, a confirmation message will be sent to the donor at the email address listed on the form. To access the form, click on the **DONATION** button on the home page of the CGCI website.

AWARDS

By [Pat Claves](#), Chairman



YOU CAN'T WIN, IF YOU DON'T ENTER!

Please refer to the updated Awards Manual and forms for the 2026 awards year available on the CGCI website under the [“Awards” section](#). Be aware of the two important deadlines: December 1, 2025, and January 10, 2026. Continue to gather information about your projects and take high-resolution photographs to document them. It is recommended that photographs omit people. Please note that yearbooks are now mailed.

The following entries are due by December 1:

- #1. COMMUNITY IMPACT
- #2. BLUE STAR/GOLD STAR MARKER LANDSCAPING
- #3. CIVIC DEVELOPMENT
- #6 MEMORIAL PLANTING
- #11 ACHIEVEMENT FOR A SINGLE EVENT
- #14 GARDEN THERAPY
- #16 MEMBERSHIP PROMOTION
- #22 CONTAINER GARDENING
- #23 EDIBLE GARDENING
- #25 WILDFLOWER
- #29 RAISED BED GARDENING
- FLOWER SHOW AWARDS (PRGC 14 & 15 AND NGC #FS-1 TO FS-16)
- #38 FLORAL DESIGN PROGRAM AWARD
- #50 NEWSLETTERS
- #51 PUBLICATIONS
- #52 SOCIAL MEDIA — FACEBOOK
- #53 WEBSITE
- #54 & #55 YEARBOOKS
- #65 ACTIVITIES FOR YOUTH GARDEN CLUB
- PRGC #21 NATIONAL GARDEN WEEK
- PRGC #22 ARBOR DAY PROGRAM
- ANY NGC AWARD WITH NO CORRESPONDING CGCI AWARD

YOUTH CONTESTS

By [Lisa Cosand](#), Youth Activities Chairman



- **Sculpture Contest, 4-8th grades**, just send 2 pictures, not the full structure. Have fun emptying the recycle bin and see what you can build.
- **Youth Poetry Contest, K-12th grades**. Theme: “Plant America Red, White and Blue to celebrate America’s 250th Birthday.”

- **Pollinator Poster Contest, K-6th grade**. If you need a youth activity for an event, this is a good one to do. You just need a regular-sized paper and crayons or colored pencils. Remember, only one type of pollinator -- no bees and butterflies.
- **Junior Essay Contest, 1-5th grades**. Titled “Celebrating America’s Birthday in the Garden.”
- **Smokey Bear/Woody Owl Poster Contest, 1-5th grades**. These entries must be sponsored by a garden club. Smokey Bear says: “Only you can prevent wildfires!” “Woodsy Owl says: “Lend a hand—care for the land!” Deadline is January 20, 2026.

For more information and to make sure the entry will qualify, see the [Youth Contest Manual](#) on the CGCI website before you start. CGCI eagerly awaits your entries. Submit them now instead of waiting until December 1.

If you have any questions, text me at 818-929-2841.

2025-2027 PRESIDENT'S PROJECT

CULTIVATING THE ROOTS OF SUCCESS

ABRAXAS HIGH SCHOOL GARDEN — ABRAXAS ORCHARD

By Barbara Weiler, Chairman



Thanks to the generosity of our donors, CGCI was able to give another check to the Abraxas High School garden this summer in the amount of \$12,000. This allowed Abraxas to purchase the supplies needed for the students to construct raised beds and potting benches, plus order fruit trees for fall planting when school is back in session.

Students have expressed an interest in growing more herbs to make special seasonings and peanuts to make a savory sauce. The expansion of the orchard has given the students a sense of pride, knowing that groups like CGCI believe in their abilities and the value of their education. Our fundraising will continue through June 2027, and I hope we can help the Abraxas Orchard become all that the students envision.

We are deeply grateful for the generous support from the following donors: Barb Kennedy, Maria and Thomas Krennek, Ellen Meikle, Ferndale Garden Club, Redding Wonderland Garden Club, Riviera Garden Club, Southern California Garden Club, Sunshine Garden Club, Costa Verde District, and Humboldt District. To donate to the CGCI President's Project, see the [CGCI website](#) and look under the "Projects" tab.



President Adele Kelly, Abraxas teacher Bob Lutticken, Chairman Barbara Weiler

CONEJO VALLEY BOTANIC GARDEN PROJECT

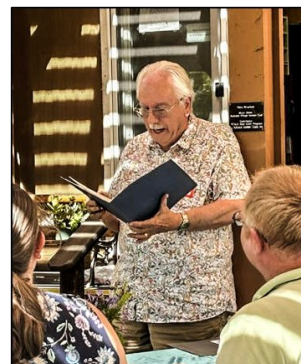
BEVERLY BRUNE HONORED AT CONEJO VALLEY BOTANIC GARDEN



On July 21, 2026, Beverly Brune, who served as the Director of Pacific Region Garden Clubs, Inc. (PRGC) from 2005 to 2007 and as the President of California Garden Clubs, Inc. (CGCI) from 1997 to 1999, was celebrated for her unwavering dedication, commitment, and passion by the [Conejo Valley Botanic Garden](#) (CVBG) in Thousand Oaks, California. In a special ceremony, a bronze plaque was unveiled and placed in the Trail of Trees section of the garden. Beverly served CVBG, an all-volunteer garden, in many capacities, including as President. She now holds the title of President Emerita.

During the ceremony, Greg Pokorski spoke on behalf of CGCI President Adele Kelly. He presented a certificate from CGCI recognizing Beverly as a "Cultivator of Success." Additionally, Greg presented a check from CGCI, signifying the completion of a five-year state project that supported CVBG. Beverly's and Robin Pokorski's CGCI President's Projects supported the garden. Former CGCI President Maryanne Lucas was instrumental in establishing the Kids Adventure Garden at CVBG.

Greg then shared fond memories of Beverly, recalling how he and his wife, Robin, who was also involved with the organization, worked alongside Beverly at CVBG. He also credited his success as parliamentarian to Beverly's emphasis on parliamentary procedure, which played a significant role in the efficient management of CVBG board meetings. Following the tributes and Beverly's response, she, her family, and many others headed to the entrance of the Trail of Trees to view the bronze plaque that had been placed in her honor.



When you visit CVBG, take time to enjoy the garden and include a stroll along the Trail of Trees, which honors Beverly for her dedication to enhancing CVBG. For information about CVBG, visit: <https://www.conejogarden.org/>



PENNY PINES PROGRAM

By Terry Sampson, Chairman**PENNY PINES DONATIONS — AUGUST 2026 REPORT****2026 Donations to Date: \$21,692.00**

H = In Honor

M = In Memory

<u>BAY OCEAN DISTRICT</u>	\$68	H: Juliet Reece	\$68	<u>PALOMAR DISTRICT</u>	
		H: Blackhawk Bloomers		Fallbrook Garden Club	
<u>BUTTES DISTRICT</u>		25-26 Board	\$68	H: Pearl B. Funk	\$68
Friendly Garden Club		H: Terrie Gleeson	\$68	La Jolla Garden Club	
M: Ria Poldervaart	\$68	H: Teresa DiMeglio	\$68	M: Liz Stiel	\$68
Paradise Garden Club		H: Melissa Vogel	\$68	Village Garden Club of La Jolla	\$3,536
M: Larry Williams	\$68	H: Centerpiece Team	\$68	Vista Garden Club	\$476
H: Paradise Garden Club	\$204	Clayton Valley Garden Club			
		H: Shiela Driscoll	\$68	<u>ROADRUNNER DISTRICT</u>	
<u>CASCADE DISTRICT</u>				Hesperia Garden Club	
Redding Wonderland Garden Club		<u>GOLDEN FOOTHILLS DISTRICT</u>		M: John Peterson	\$68
M: Bill Joplin	\$68	M: Ed Dempsey	\$68	<u>SACRAMENTO RIVER VALLEY DISTRICT</u>	
M: Jim Cowee	\$68	M: Jerry Macklen	\$68	Shibui Arrangers Guild	\$68
		H: California Fire Fighters	\$68	Vaca Valley Garden Club	
<u>COSTA VERDE DISTRICT</u>		Association		M: Penelope Ann Oliver	\$68
Long Beach Garden	\$476	Roseville Better Gardens Club		<u>SAN FERNANDO VALLEY DISTRICT</u>	
		M: Larry Lazrus	\$68	Southern California Garden Club	
<u>DIABLO FOOTHILLS DISTRICT</u>		M: Ed Dempsey	\$68	M: Connie Sparks	\$68
Blackhawk Bloomers Garden Club		<u>LUTHER BURBANK DISTRICT</u>			
M: Annemarie Zelvaggio	\$68	Petaluma Garden Club	\$204		
H: John Caruso	\$68				
H: Jay Silva	\$68				

INFORMATION & HOW TO DONATE**Torrey Pine (*Pinus torreyana*)**

The Torrey Pine is the rarest pine in the United States. In California, it grows naturally only in San Diego County and the Channel Islands and is listed as endangered.

In the early 20th century, the wild population of this tree dropped as low as 100. With conservation, the number has grown to about 3,000.

The Torrey Pine grows in dry, sandy environments and requires little water to survive. This tree is often used as an ornamental and can grow fast and tall with better soil and watering.

The Torrey Pine is a habitat and food source for birds, insects, and small mammals.

Height: 25 to 150 feet.

The Mission Statement of California Garden Clubs, Inc.

CGCI promotes gardening, floral design, civic beautification, environmental responsibility, and the exchange of information and ideas.

NGC SCHOOL NEWS

By [Greg Pokorski](#), CGCI Gardening School Chairman



NGC Consultants (those who have successfully completed NGC's Environmental, Gardening or Landscape Design Schools), remember that to maintain your Consultant status, you must take a school course for credit or attend a refresher event at least once by the end of the fifth year following your last course or refresher. And you may refresh for credit as often as once each calendar year. After you have refreshed four times, you become a Master Consultant. A perk of being a Master Consultant is that when you are a Master Consultant in multiple schools, you can receive simultaneous refresher credit for each school by attending one Multiple Refresher event. Another perk of being a Master Consultant is that you become eligible to take Emeritus status (rather than lapsing) if you are unable to attend additional refresher courses or events.

Zoom Refresher opportunities coming up:

Environmental School

Course 1 – September 17-18

Gardening School

Course 1 – September 15-16

Course 3 – September 21-22

Landscape Design School

Course 1 – October 28-30

Tri-Refresher

October 2-3

See the [NGC website](#) for details or contact your CGCI Schools Chairmen (Environmental -- [Cynthia Jackson](#); Gardening -- [Greg Pokorski](#); Landscape Design -- [Alexis Slafer](#)). Please inform your CGCI School Chairman whenever you sign up for any course or event. Clubs and Districts should contact these chairmen to learn about the benefits of conducting an NGC School in your area.

FLOWER SHOW SYMPOSIUM

ATTENTION: FLOWER SHOW JUDGES AND INTERESTED OTHERS

YOU ARE INVITED TO ATTEND the NGC Flower Show Symposium to be held at the Handlery Hotel in San Diego (950 Hotel Circle North, San Diego) from Tuesday, October 27, 2026 to Wednesday, October 28, 2026.



The NGC Flower Show School Instructors will be Pam Braun (Horticulture) from Tennessee and Shirley Tetreault (Design) from Arizona. The horticulture instruction will be on Succulents and Salvia. The design instruction will be on Armature and Spatial Thrust designs. The allied subjects will be "Photography" and "Creating Structures with Reed."

Participants must make hotel reservations directly with the hotel. The CGCI special rate for this event is \$129/night. Parking is \$25/day. Event parking for non-hotel guests is \$5/day. Reservations must be made on or before October 1, 2026 to receive the special rate. Please identify yourself as being with the California Garden Clubs, Inc. Symposium.



Meals are not included in the registration fee and outside food may not be brought into the classroom. Arrangements have been made with the on site restaurant to order lunch for \$20 all inclusive. A menu will be available both mornings, orders will be taken, and lunches will be delivered to the classroom during lunchtime. Attendees should bring: *Handbook for Flower Shows 2017 Revised Edition*. The 2017 Edition (corrected July 2025) should be downloaded from the NCG website. The *Handbook* is located in the Member Section of the [NGC website](#). Important: All judges taking the Point Scoring Exam will be seated in the front rows. Please bring a clipboard and pencils for the exam.

[The registration form](#) (that includes more detailed information) can be found on the [CGCI website](#) under the October calendar tab. The CGCI Symposia Chairmen are [Jennifer Waite](#) and [Jan Goehring](#). The Registrar is [Nina Blonski](#).

CALIFORNIA CONSULTANTS COUNCIL

HAVE YOU USED YOUR NGC CONSULTANT LATELY?

By [Maria Krenek](#), CCC Chairman



In your garden clubs and districts, there are resources in gardening, design, and environmental knowledge and experience. Most of us have learned and done a lot over the years as we garden, read, and listen to those around us as they share their knowledge and experience. However, there are also those, maybe little-known, special individuals who have spent extra time and energy expanding their knowledge through the special schools offered by National Garden Clubs, Inc. through CGCI. They are schooled, tested, and accredited as Gardening, Landscape Design, and Environmental Consultants. They would welcome the opportunity to help in projects that need an expert perspective in selecting plants, design, function, and healthy choices for those special places that we help our garden clubs steward.

The [California Consultants Council](#) (CCC) is a special part of CGCI that brings many of these consultants together to exchange ideas and experiences. The Council meets approximately three times a year, has programs, and recognizes special achievements. Members encourage garden club members to attend schools and garden clubs, and districts to sponsor schools so their members can become Consultants. Members also support the Consultants in maintaining their accreditations and support their project efforts.

The CCC encourages everyone to take advantage of the knowledge and skills it offers. Sometimes it is as simple as finding out who is a Consultant in your local clubs or district. If there is no one to ask locally, is it time you had a school and help create your own local team of Consultants? The CCC can help with that too. Just ask, and connections can be made.

For more information, please check the [CGCI website](#) and/or contact me.



PRGC'S FIREWISE COMMUNITIES WEBINARS

The final webinar takes place on **Monday, September 14, 2026, 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm**. Firewise Webinar #5: Organizing Your Neighbors (Firewise Communities). Joelle Frazier, Diablo Fire Safe Council, and Macy Cornell, Oakland's CABS Firewise Neighborhood.



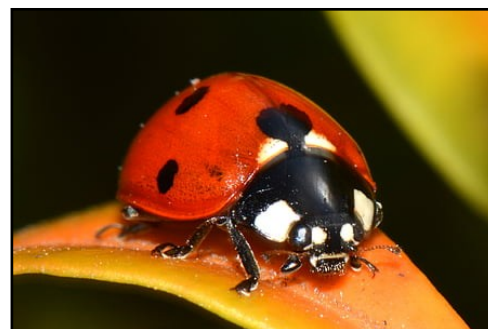
Register here:

https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/Hu32W-2nROmVkZUH_3pPdw



ADVICE FROM A LADYBUG

- Be well-rounded.
- Spot new opportunities.
- Spend time in your garden.
- Enjoy the wonder of nature.
- Don't let the small things bug you.
- Keep family close by.
- Be simply beautiful.



FROM OUR CLUBS & ASSOCIATE PLANT SOCIETIES

HOW TO BE A KINDER, GENTLER WEED DESTROYER

By Maria Orefice, Member of Southern California Garden Club



Oh, those pesky weeds! Or are weeds just the wrong plant in the wrong place? However you feel about weeds, many need to be removed from our garden beds.

For those of us who garden organically and do not want to use chemicals that harm our pollinators and soil, there are more natural and effective DIY methods for removing weeds. Let's look at some natural alternatives to commercial herbicides.

Pull weeds by hand for a bit of exercise: Avoid a trip to the gym -- bend, hinge, lunge your way into a weed-free garden. And burn a few calories while you're at it. While pulling weeds by hand can help control weeds and your waistline, sometimes there are too many with deep roots that need stronger methods.

Try the following recipe:

1 cup of white vinegar*
1 cup of salt or baking soda
1 tablespoon of liquid dish soap

Combine ingredients in a spray bottle or a pour bottle and spray or pour on weeds during the sunniest time of day. I've noticed that most weeds are dead in a day or two. The vinegar solution may not seep into a deep-rooted weed, so multiple treatments may be needed to keep these unwanted plants under control. Make sure to spray directly on the pesty plants because this weed killer cannot discriminate between a much-loved plant versus an unloved plant.

Create a weed blockade: Another method to prevent weeds is to lay down a weed barrier, such as landscape fabric. My experience with these fabrics is that, over time, weeds manage to peek through, so some weeding will be necessary. Recyclable cardboard (Amazon boxes) or newspapers can be used; usually, about three inches helps.

Remember that the best time to kill weeds is when they first sprout. Most young weeds have shallow roots and are easy to pull and discard.

The poor misunderstood weed . . . or is it just another garden plant? You be the judge!

*I often use only white vinegar diluted with a little water and pour it directly on the weeds. Seems to work fine.

POTS: CLAY VERSUS PLASTIC

By Sue Haffner, Member of Fresno Cactus & Succulent Society

Humans have been growing plants in pots for a long time. Terracotta pots date back to the Egypt of the pharaohs, and fragments of those glazed and unglazed pots have helped to date archaeological finds down through the years.

From those early days until the mid-to-late 1800s, all terracotta pots were hand-built or wheel-thrown. In the 1850s, it became possible to mass-produce them. Plastic technology did not appear until the late 1800s and really did not become common in the nursery trade until after World War II.

This leads to a debate among growers: clay or plastic? Both have their advantages and disadvantages. Clay pots have better breathability, allowing better air circulation to the roots; better moisture regulation, and a more aesthetically pleasing appearance. Their disadvantages are in weight, cost, and fragility.



Continued on next page

FROM OUR CLUBS

AN INTRODUCTION TO GROWING JAPANESE IRISES

by Gretchen Lasater, Member of Red Bluff Garden Club

Did you ever imagine that an iris as exotic as *Iris ensata* (otherwise known as the Japanese Iris or simply JI) could be grown very easily in your own backyard? The oohs and ahhs really come forth when people see these beautiful irises in person. The Japanese Iris was hybridized for many centuries as the prized possession of the Japanese aristocracy. Now these irises are readily available from growers and hybridizers here in the US.

The natural habitat (yes, the forbears of these highly cultivated modern JIs do exist in the wild) of JIs is to grow in the moist soil beside streams, ponds, and lakes. My adventure with them began a couple of years ago when I decided on a whim to buy some rhizomes at a regional American Iris Society meeting. I don't think I had ever even seen one!



It was fall, the only time you transplant these irises, and I dug a shallow, recessed bed for the four rhizomes I had bought. I read up on what they need: slightly acidic soil with plenty of amendments. So, I added peat moss, cottonseed meal, and some acidic fertilizer (for azaleas, camellias, blueberries, etc.) to my homemade mix of compost and potting soil. I added extra compost because these irises are heavy feeders and are not prone to rot like bearded irises. I made sure the bed stayed moist, and in the following June, I was rewarded with tall stalks and magnificent, large blooms. These irises have the advantage of extending the bloom season through June.

The next fall, I bought quite a few more cultivars. This time, I tried a slightly different method, same mix of soil, but now in 10-gallon pots. This method uses less water because the pots are kept in a shallow pool with one to two inches of water. These could be moved out of the hot NorCal sun in summer and onto my patio when blooming. Next fall (when I increase my collection again), I am planning a water feature—a fountain surrounded by JIs, with the pots submerged to be level with the ground.

These irises come in shades of purple, pink, blue, and white, and often have extravagant veining. Generally, blooms are large, 5 to 8 in across, and the terminal will host as many as 3 sequential blooms. So, if you grow them, you are in for a real show! Although they prefer cooler habitats, I have found them quite easy to grow with a little protection from the wind and the sun. I encourage you to give them a try.

Photos Source: <https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org>

POTS: CLAY VERSUS PLASTIC (continued from previous page)

Plastic pots are lightweight, cheap, and durable (for the most part). Plastic pots retain moisture, so they don't have to be watered as often, but they also could lead to overwatering. They also retain heat, which could lead to root rot. They may also have a limited lifespan, as plastic can take a beating from years of exposure to our hot summers and intense sun. They can fade, become brittle, and fall to pieces. (Time to repot!)

As growers, we have a wide range of choices. In addition to plastic and traditional clay, we have the offerings of talented potters, both local and statewide. The selection is yours, whatever fits your collection and conditions.

FROM OUR CLUBS

SPEND TIME WITH YOUR PLANTS RATHER THAN YOUR PHONE

By Rosemary Ecker, Member of Southern California Garden Club



Inspiration for these thoughts comes from Shannon Celia, watercolor artist and gardener, who recently commented on this topic in *Edible Magazine*. Research shows that stress, depression, and created drama are more prominent in our society as we have increased our use of social media. Gardening and seed planting appear to improve our attitude, satisfaction, and souls, unlike sifting through someone else's dirt online. "Growing our own food and flowers has no weird ingredients, just a little exercise, fresh air, and pleasure. Gardening slows our pace in a high-speed day. "Gardening takes patience. Plants and people need time to flourish."

"According to a Stanford research study, negative posts go viral faster." Good news about our tomatoes and roses is more likely to generate positive thoughts and is more nutritious. It's so much more fun to share our success and feel good. Gardening helps to stimulate your senses. Can you smell the rosemary in your garden with the roses? Catch the citrus blooming in the air. See the beautiful colors of sunflowers, marigolds, irises, and crape myrtles as spring and summer swing into view. Feel the smoothness of camellia leaves, the fuzzy leaves of scented geraniums, and the spines on some cactus if you are careful.

Time spent outside can be inspirational, like music. "Birdsong can lower cortisol levels and boost mental health for up to eight hours." Plants help purify the air. They can provide shade. Maintaining a garden is rewarding and makes us feel good as it beckons our attention. Do you notice the beautiful hummingbirds at the salvia? All these rewards contrast with a phone screen sucking up our time and dampening our spirits with info overload, dulling our senses. I learned from Shannon's words that doctors in Canada and New Zealand prescribe time in nature as part of the healing process; people working in the earth find joy and purpose. Dutch, Australian, and Scottish studies have found that gardening contributes to positive physical and mental health, which in turn may contribute to

longevity. Gardening inspires us to move. Just think of the walking, bending, lifting, digging, pulling, and thinking that are required in gardening.

Gardening can be social. Inviting a friend over to help you with gardening or to enjoy a cool beverage outside on a spring day while spending time together makes you feel good.

Sing to me, Autumn, with the rustle of your leaves.
Breathe on me your spicy scents that flow within your breeze.
Dance with me, Autumn, your waltz that bends the boughs of trees.
Now tell me all the secrets you've whispered to the seas.
Sleep with me, Autumn, beneath your starlit skies.

Let your yellow harvest moon shimmer in our eyes.
Kiss me, Autumn, with your enchanting spellbound ways
That changes all you touch into crimson golden days.
Love me, Autumn, and behold this love so true
That I'll be waiting faithfully each year to be with you.

—Patricia L. Cisco



FROM OUR CLUBS

A WARNING ABOUT TICKS AND LYME DISEASE

By Christie Kimple, Member of Chicago Park Garden Club

Nobody loves ticks, the little bloodsuckers. But nowadays, 50 years after the discovery of a disease carried by deer ticks infected with bacteria in Lyme, Connecticut, ticks have become more than a nuisance – they are a major health threat. We all need to take them seriously.

Lyme Disease was not found in the Sierra Foothills until the early 1990s, probably spread by ticks carried by birds during cross-country migrations. Our member, Christie Kimple, had a tick bite back in the 1990s, so she was an early case. After a hike near Lake Tahoe, she had flu-like symptoms – although it was summer. She never saw a tick or a bullseye-shaped rash (which appears on about 50% of those infected). But again, the following summer, she had the flu symptoms. Finally, after about two years, she was diagnosed with Lyme Disease. She has suffered from symptoms ever since – nearly 30 years. At our June meeting, she told us all about it. Her message: Be aware, be vigilant, be proactive.

ASAP! These deer ticks are smaller than dog ticks and have a solid, shiny back. The nymph deer tick is the size of a poppy seed and is most dangerous, as it may not be noticed – just brushed off. If bitten and you see the tick, extract it carefully with fine-tip tweezers as close to the skin as possible (do not squeeze); place it in a Ziploc bag with a moist cotton ball; wash the extraction wound with soap and water, then with rubbing alcohol. Bring the tick to the doctor right away for testing and request a preventive dose of the antibiotic doxycycline (200 mg single dose). If you notice a rash, take a photo of it and date it, then go to the doctor as above – ASAP! Remember, you have 48 hours before the infection passes from the skin to the blood, after which it will rapidly spread throughout the body. Unfortunately, most doctors are not ‘Lyme literate’ – you might even meet resistance. But you must be proactive and insist on treatment. Remember, time is of the essence.

Treatment. Also, unfortunately, early lab tests may yield false negatives because antigens have not yet developed. But pay attention and be aware of flu-like symptoms in the summertime (when ticks are out but the flu virus usually is not). These might include fever, chills, aches, rash, irregular heartbeat, joint pain, and even facial paralysis. Get tested again if that first test comes back negative and your symptoms persist. Another possible route to get the info and treatment you need: Go to the Public Health Service website at www.placermosquito.org. Click on the link “Report a Problem” – enter your information and upload a photo of your rash. Its expert evaluation may help you get some help. If tests come out positive, you’ll need a full course of doxycycline for 14 to 28 days. Even if you want to try natural remedies, get the antibiotic too.



***Ixodes pacificus* (Western blacklegged tick)
found in California and along the West Coast
of the United States**

Prevention is best. When you go out, wear protective clothing – long pants, closed-toe shoes, and socks tucked over your pants. Use repellent (like DEET) on your skin and spray your shoes and clothes. After your day in the wild, take a shower to help dislodge any ticks. Then put all your clothing in the dryer, on HOT, for 10 minutes. Look all over your body for ticks and rashes, using a mirror as needed (or a friend!).

Vigilance. Ticks will often ‘hitch a ride’ on the tall grasses and transfer to you as you brush through. They will then climb up your body – they can reach your head in two hours – and they will be looking for a warm, moist niche to lurk in. You may or may not feel them. SO – be vigilant!

Epidemic. Lyme disease is the fastest-growing epidemic in the US. Early treatment is very effective, and most treated people recover completely. But left untreated, it can progress – with chronic, multi-organ damage. Once it gets into your bloodstream, it damages your immune system. Late-stage chronic Lyme disease is debilitating, affecting your daily activities, with symptoms including persistent severe fatigue; brain fog, memory loss, lack of focus; nerve issues, facial palsy, meningitis; heart issues; migraines or severe headaches; sleep deprivation; dizziness and falling; digestive problems. Lack of clear diagnosis and treatment options makes it hard to cope; depression is common. So, take Christie’s advice – and take ticks seriously!

To learn more from the California Department of Public Health: <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Tick-Borne-Diseases.aspx>

Photo source: <https://www.cdc.gov/ticks>

PACIFIC REGION GARDEN CLUBS, INC.

LAST CALL FOR THE 2026 PRGC CONVENTION



By [Greg Pokorski](#), 2026 PRGC Convention Publicity Chairman

Pacific Region Garden Clubs, Inc.'s (PRGC) annual convention is being held in California this year, and it will be here soon.

If you have not already registered, now is the time. **The convention will be held at The Palm Garden Hotel in Thousand Oaks from October 12 to 14, 2026.** Pre-convention tours take place on October 10 (Strathearn Historical Park and Moorpark Teaching Zoo) and October 11 (Ronald Reagan Presidential Library). You can catch the bus in Encino or at the convention hotel.

Convention registration must be received by **September 15** to avoid a late fee. No registrations will be accepted after **September 30**. **Hotel reservations must be made by September 12** in order to receive our group room rate of \$129 per night. Parking is free, and breakfast is included.

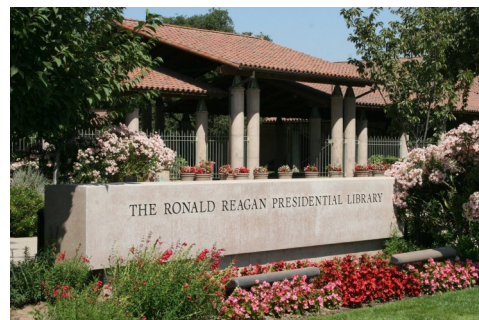
Complete registration information is available on the CGCI and Pacific Region websites, in the May-June 2026 issue of *Golden Gardens* and in the May 2026 issue of *WACONIAH* (the Pacific Region quarterly publication). Detailed tour information is contained in the [July-August issue of Golden Gardens](#).



Strathearn Historical Park



Moorpark Teaching Zoo



Ronald Reagan Presidential Library

Contact Convention Chairman [Robin Pokorski](#) with any questions. Bring your club and district banners to display. Come enjoy *Palm Trees 'n' Ocean Breeze* with fellow garden club members from California, Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Nevada, and Arizona.

ATTENTION NGC CONSULTANTS

Environmental Consultants, Gardening Consultants and Landscape Design Consultants, take note. If you need to refresh this year, or just want to refresh this year (you can refresh for credit in each school as often as once each calendar year), there is a Zoom opportunity coming up.

Cushing Gladiolus Garden Club (a virtual Oklahoma garden club) is collaborating with the Ohio Tri Consultant Council to present a Zoom Tri-Refresher on October 2 & 3, 2026. See the [NGC website](#) for details. Go to the bottom of the home page. Click on [Multiple Refreshers](#) under "Our Schools." And see the [Flier](#).

PACIFIC REGION GARDEN CLUBS, INC. FUNDRAISER

"I Love my Garden Club" Sturdy Bags - \$10

Purchase at the October PRGC convention or contact the PRGC Director at PacRegGardenClubs@gmail.com.



NATIONAL GARDEN CLUBS, INC.

PLANT AMERICA COMMUNITY PROJECT GRANTS PROGRAM



The PLANT AMERICA Community Project Grants Program is sponsored by National Garden Clubs, Inc. for club projects in their respective communities. Projects may also be a joint venture with another organization.

The scope of these projects may include but are not limited to:

- Beautification and/or restoration
- Youth Gardening, Community Gardens
- Landscape projects, tree planting (includes Habitat for Humanity projects)
- A horticulture or environmental education event for the public

GRANT AMOUNT: Up to \$2000.00 is available to be used for direct expenses for 2027 projects.

WHO MAY APPLY: Individual or near garden clubs that are members of National Garden Clubs, Inc. (except up to 10% of funds reserved for non-member groups).

Please note: Applicants who have received a PLANT AMERICA Community Project Grant within the past five years are **not** eligible to apply.

APPLICATION DEADLINE: **October 15, 2026**, midnight CDT/CENTRAL TIME.

- Recipients of grants will be notified in December of 2026, and money will be awarded in January/February of 2027.
- Projects must be completed by February 28, 2028; final reports due by April 1, 2028.



FINAL REPORT: Due within 2 months of project completion or by April 1, 2028.

JUDGING CRITERIA: Applications will be evaluated using the following scale (100 points total):

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits and visibility in community - 35 • Impact and scope of project - 30 • Involvement & participation of club members - 15 • Collaboration with other community groups - 15 • Application form complete and accurate - 5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase of Blue or Gold Star Markers • Private gardens • Competitive flower shows or Scout projects • Salaries, personal benefits or political action programs • Capital campaigns, fundraising efforts, scholarships, or endowments • Lawsuits, litigation, or overhead expenses • Projects completed prior to 2027 |
|---|---|

FUNDING GUIDELINES: Grants will not be provided for:

- Projects in which the club does not actively participate

For General Guidelines, Application and Instructions, Application Definitions, Final Reporting Reminder, and Application, see <https://www.plantamerica.org/apply>.

NGC'S MISSION

Empowering communities through green initiatives, PLANT AMERICA fosters a culture of sustainability and environmental stewardship. By providing grants to support public spaces and community gardens, we aim to educate individuals of all ages about the benefits of gardening and cultivate a sense of pride within neighborhoods.

Grants have been awarded to NGC member clubs since 2017. More than 250 grants have been awarded, totaling more than \$390,000. Grants are awarded in amounts up to \$2,000.