



# MONTANA *Gardens*

Fall has arrived and Nature's beauty is in full display. Traveling to the eight Districts for their meetings has been a real joy. Throughout Montana the reds, oranges and yellows are amazing. The state officers did not drive through torrential rains or any snowy conditions!

The Districts have welcomed us with delicious food and awesome fall season decorations. A round-table format was used this year and club presidents gave reports highlighting activities their clubs are doing and plan to do over the next year. I was thrilled to see that my theme of Communication and Education was being implemented. District Clubs are communicating between each other and sharing projects – exactly what I wanted to happen! Interesting programs have been given and are being planned to educate not only club members but the public as well. Again, this is what I wanted to happen.

Some examples of what clubs in Montana have been doing are garden tours, composting programs, flower shows, container plantings in towns and maintaining local gardens where the community can enjoy the beauty of flowers, shrubs and nature itself.

Pumpkin decorating, autumn arrangements and bake sales are very popular this time of year. Various workshops, from floral design to how to start flower and vegetable seeds indoors, are given. Bulb and plant sales raise money to support other club activities.

The state officers gave informative material to everyone. Jeannie Bennett, MFGC 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, reported about the many grants being offered to help clubs with projects. Second Vice President Cindy Carlton spoke about the Awards and the changes to wording, club sizes and the new application form. Detailed information can be found on our website – [www.mtfgc.org](http://www.mtfgc.org)

I reported to the members about the NGC projects. Brenda Moore, NGC President, has added three new projects to the PLANT AMERICA program.

[PLANT AMERICA, Feed America](#) – Fight food insecurity across the country, as well as planting community gardens.

[Landscape for Wildlife](#) – Educate about landscaping for wildlife; food, shelter, water and space.

[Landscape for Pollinators](#) – Educate about the importance of and planting to support pollinators.

Learn more about these projects on the NGC website: [www.gardenclub.org](http://www.gardenclub.org)

Smokey Bear turns 80 this year. Jennifer Strzelczyk, Smokey Bear/Woodsy Owl Chair, reminded everyone that the Poster Contest deadline is quickly approaching – January 20, 2024. This is a great activity to teach children about forest fires and what they can do to help prevent them. You can order Smokey Bear material at [www.symbols.gov](http://www.symbols.gov) or visit your local U. S. Forest Service office.

Our annual **BOARD MEETING** will be on **February 21, 2024**. This is when business is discussed and issues are brought to the attention of the MFGC Executive Committee. The meeting will be held via ZOOM. The meeting coordinator will send a link to those who register. Executive Committee members, MFGC Chairmen, Club Presidents and District Directors are required to attend. Individual clubs and their members may attend. Business decisions will be presented at the Annual State Convention in June 2024 in Malta, Montana.

I want to encourage everyone to come to the **ANNUAL STATE CONVENTION** on **June 27-29, 2024**. The Malta Garden Club will be hosting the 2024 Convention, and you can expect to have an amazing time! Mark your calendars now so you don't miss this wonderful event, seeing friends and sharing what your club has been doing.

*(continued)*



2023-25 MFGC President Diane Ward

As the holidays get closer, clubs throughout Montana celebrate in many ways. Seasonal arrangements and decorating pumpkins with succulents are popular. Some are sold at fall festivals, holiday craft fairs or made as centerpieces, which can be donated to assisted living and nursing homes for residents to enjoy. There's nothing better than a bake sale. From pies and cakes to delicious cookies, there is something for everyone. These are great fundraisers for clubs.

As 2023 is ending, I want to send all MFGC Garden Clubs a "warm feeling" of accomplishment. Thank you for supporting my theme of Communication and Education. The Montana Federation of Garden Clubs has so many lovely people.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS AND WISHES FOR A BRIGHT NEW YEAR!

*Fondly,*

*Diane*

## Blue and Gold Star Markers

Guess what? Montana has **22 Blue Star Markers** instead of 21, plus Conrad's is pending! The one to be added to our growing list is a Blue Star Highway Marker.

We found a brief history of an extra special Montana Blue Star Highway Marker described in *The Missoulian* on November 11, 2005, written by John Stromnes. Like all old Highway Markers, it is lettered as a tribute to those who served in WWII. Luana Maxwell sent a picture of a beautiful, well-kept area holding this special marker (below). First I got all excited that it was one I didn't have record of! It isn't. My research shows it is at the Ninepipes Museum of Early Montana in Charlo. Rita Peters and Hope Stockwell of the Mission View Garden Club, organized in 1947 in Charlo, were instrumental in getting this Marker to the present location. The relatively rare Marker (only seven existed at that time, according to former chair of the MFGC Blue Star Committee Carol Neil of Missoula) was dedicated on November 11, 2005 at 11:00 a.m. --how fitting!



Re-dedication of the Blue Star Marker in Charlo, MT on 11.11.2005



At that time, the Marker was 51 years old. It had originally been placed in Missoula's Rose Garden in the early 1950s. Missoula replaced it with a new Highway Marker and donated the old one to the Charlo Garden Club due to the cost of purchasing a new one (at that time \$1,000). It was originally destined to be placed in the Charlo Community Park. However, since the Park was not near a major highway like these markers are supposed to be, Hope suggested the Ninepipes Museum along U.S. Hwy 93 about five miles east of Charlo. The Museum Board granted permission to install it on their property because Hwy 93 was scheduled for reconstruction.

We have **five Gold Star Families Markers** which are located in Whitehall, Great Falls, Stevensville, Glendive, and Cascade, plus Havre is planning a dedication in April and Malta's is ordered. Their dedication will be during our 2024 Convention.

Does your town have either type marker? Or a nearby town? Or would a Gold Star Family like to obtain one for a public place? As a garden club, you can help obtain one. It's simple. Just contact me and I'll get you started in the right direction!

~ Kathy Austin, Chairman

## Meet the Vice Presidents

Hello,



I'm *Jeannie Bennett*, a new Montanan having moved to the state with the Air National Guard in 1984. I was born near Philadelphia on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, 1956, and always thought I was pretty darn special for that. I have always loved gardening, working with my mom and my godmother to maintain huge flower beds back home in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. I was lucky enough to visit many formal gardens, like Longwood Gardens and the wonderful Philadelphia flower shows.

I retired from the military in 2000 and have worked and volunteered as a gardener since then. I became a Master Gardener through the Montana Extension Service. This was a great program and it lead me to state certification through the Montana Nursery and Landscape Association. Then I was invited as a speaker at a Great Falls Flower Growers meeting and persuaded to join MFGC. For 12 years I have thoroughly enjoyed flower shows, classes, and garden club friends.

I live in Missoula now and enjoy the Missoula Garden Club. My son and his family are here. I lost my love and gardening partner, Rick, after 30 years in Great Falls, but in Missoula I am lucky to spend several days a week with my delightful 2-year-old granddaughter. Being a garden club officer is very interesting, and I look forward to several more years working throughout the state.

Hello Fellow Gardeners,

My name is *Cindy Carlton*, and I will serve as the Montana Federation of Garden Clubs 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President for the next two years. I was born and raised in Missoula, but I graduated from Montana State with a degree in Microbiology in the late '70s. I know, I know! I did meet my husband in college, and he was in the ROTC program. We returned to Bozeman in 2000, after going where the Army sent us, which was mostly in the southeastern part of the country. During the summer of 2000, two separate neighbors asked me if I wanted to join a garden club. So that September, I joined the Gallatin Empire Garden Club. Subsequently, I served in every possible position, including Sunshine chairperson! I am currently treasurer of GEGC and the Lewis and Clark District #4 Director.

My interest in gardening began at a young age and was influenced by both sets of grandparents. Grandma A loved lilacs and would plant her Easter lilies in the Clinton, MT yard every year. Grandparents C moved into Columbus from the Fishtail/Absarokee area in the '60s, and they would sell their asparagus and raspberries to the local supermarket. Grandpa had a compost pile so hot that the snow wouldn't stick on it in the winter, and he was very proud of his cantaloupe harvest the first year he planted the seeds! My Mom loved flowers, especially roses and peonies. I planted a small flower garden in North Carolina when we were stationed there, and that is when I first encountered Japanese beetles, as they were feasting on my rose bushes.

I am enjoying planning my front yard gardens, and I will be working towards native and pollinator-friendly plantings in the future. I look forward to meeting you and learning from all the experienced gardeners around our great diversified state.





# Community Gardens Attract Kids Aged 2 to 102!

The communities of Glendive and Richey in Dawson County are showing signs of a bright future from the work of little hands and other community gardeners that promote healthy kids, healthy food, and healthy activity.

## Little Growers

Little Growers is a garden club for ages 2-18 that teaches children how to relate to the natural world. The garden is located on the west end of the Dawson County Fairgrounds, which has a fenced area with planting beds, picnic tables, and even a butterfly box.

Activities include building, planting, and maintaining raised vegetable and flower beds. The Little Growers also participate in garden-themed activities such as hatching butterflies and terra cotta pot painting, an annual favorite. The group promotes the county fair; many of the members enter produce and flowers from the garden and projects each year.

The program is developed by hosting various local fundraisers such as succulent pot DIYs and Dessert Raffles while continuing to look for available grant applications.



## Glendive Community Garden



Local nonprofits such as the Glendive Garden Club are instrumental in shaping the vision for the kind of "hub" that will strengthen the gardeners of Dawson County and our food system. Let's keep promoting healthy kids, healthy food, and healthy activity.

Each plot in the community garden is a 20x20 foot area located in Highland Park, West Glendive. Not only do a few of the gardeners have a wealth of fresh produce for themselves, but they also offer to share their cornucopia with the community. Produce is donated to the local food bank, senior center, area churches and neighbors.

For five weeks, every Wednesday during the summer months, from 4 to 6 pm, the abundance of Mother Nature's goodness is shared with the community under the shades of the mature Eyer Park trees. There has been a positive response to this generosity just by word of mouth. The community gardeners enjoy sharing and know they are providing a beneficial nutrient of locally grown food to people who do not have the means and are less fortunate.

This experience encourages gardeners to help provide for the community, and seeing adolescents also participate is inspiring.

## Little Royals Park

Main Street Richey boasts a small pocket park that was created from an abandoned overgrown lot in 2012 by community volunteers and the Richey Booster Club. Richey is a small farming and ranching community that is located in Northern Dawson County, 50 miles North of Glendive.

Through volunteer efforts, fund-raising activities, and the generosity of donations from area businesses, the park has a pavilion, picnic tables, benches, sidewalks, a playground area, and aesthetic landscaping. Maintenance and upkeep of the park is always a burdensome factor. Thanks to the efforts of some youth groups, such as the Richey FFA, 4-H, and even the Junior High Volleyball players, the park is better kept and not overrun by weeds and debris.

Plans for the park are to fund-raise to replace the playground equipment, update the sprinkler and irrigation system, and create more raised beds from old stock water tanks. It is the hope that the raised beds can be an accessible gardening opportunity for the senior citizens in the community with the park being located across the street from the local Senior Center. The raised beds make it easier for older people to grow and tend to flowers and fresh produce. Many seniors are also on fixed incomes, so providing the water and garden area for free is a benefit.

~ Nadean Brown and Marie Lamphier, Community Gardening Co-Chair, and Glendive Garden Club Members

## HOPS



Hops is the plant that gives beer its flavor, aroma, and bitterness. The hops are a green-shaped flower, *Humulus lupulus*. It is a climbing perennial called a bine, not a vine, which is a long, flexible stem of a climbing plant, especially hops. Inside the cone-shaped flowers are tiny yellow pods or glands. These contain lupulin, which gives beer its flavor and aroma. Hops are grown in Germany, New Zealand, and the Czech Republic. In the United States, they are mainly grown in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho.

Many gardeners in Montana have success in growing them, also. They like a moderate climate, rich soil, and lots of sun. Choose a sunny or partially shady spot with good soil and drainage if you want to grow hops in your garden. Plant against a wall or a sturdy trellis or pergola. Hops

are a great choice to hide a structure or fence. Growing hops from rhizomes is the quickest way, but cuttings from another plant will work. You can purchase seeds from Amazon. Remember, they can get 20 feet long.

Beer has been produced for over 5,000 years, one of the oldest produced human drinks. Some argue that the invention of bread and beer caused humanity to develop technology and build a civilization. Today, brewers want lupulin. These are the sticky yellow glands containing the resins that contribute a bitterness that will balance the sweetness of the malt and oils responsible for the aroma and flavor.

There are many types of hops, much like grapes produced for wine. Brewers experiment to get the malt specialty beers you see and taste today. Brewers gather at the Hops Harvest of the Pacific Northwest to find the hops that suit them. They rub the hops with their hands to tease out the aromatic properties they are seeking. IPA (Indian Pale Ale) is an example of pushing hops to their limit. Hazy IPAs are the newest beer with a fruity flavor.

Hops are also used to preserve beer to prevent spoiling during fermentation. In the 1700s, the British learned to add more hops when shipping beer to far-off places. Hops are also touted as a supplement for a variety of problems such as insomnia, menopause, restless legs, breast enlargement, aging, and the list goes on. The FDA does not govern the dietary supplements, and there is no scientific evidence to support these claims. Two separate studies showed that drinking non-alcoholic beer will help you sleep and reduce anxiety. Research is conflicting and limited.

So hop to it, and try Hops in your garden then sit back and enjoy your favorite beer. CHEERS!

~ Cathy Hatch, Butte and Whitehall Garden Club Member



## MFGC's 87th Convention to be held in Malta

Plans are under way for the 2024 MFGC State Convention to be held in Malta on June 27 – 29. Committee chair Kathy Waters and committee members Terry Hotchkiss, Lu Besel, Jane Ereaux, Wilma Mavencamp, Sharon Miller, Dina Maneely, Sue Hungerford and Toni Ziegler have been busy making plans. The highlight of the Convention will be dedication of our Gold Star Memorial on Saturday, June 29<sup>th</sup>. Other plans include a tour of the Bowdoin National Wildlife Refuge's new Pollinator Garden. The Malta Dirt Daubers have partnered with Bowdoin personnel to create a garden planted entirely with wildflowers and plants native to the northern Montana prairie. Of course, there will be a tour of the historic H.G. Robinson House and Gardens. The house is decorated with period furniture and fixtures; and the gardens show off over twenty years of Garden Club diligence and care. We have plans to visit Patty's Greenhouse, and also have a program on making a seed and plant gathering kit to carry in your car for those unexpected opportunities that arise when you visit other gardeners. So pack your bags and make the trip to the HiLine. Malta is ready and willing to make your convention a success!

## We Hear the Conservation

We hear the word 'Conservation'. What does that really mean? Conservation is the careful maintenance and upkeep of a natural resource to prevent it from disappearing.

**Natural Resources:** soil, water, air, plants, animals, energy.

### ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

Type 1 - protects the natural environment to prevent it from deteriorating due to human activities, including unsustainable agriculture, deforestation and fossil fuels.

Type 2 - protects ecosystems & surroundings to safeguard the animals that reside there.

Type 3 - preserves or protects ecosystems in oceans and seas via conscious management to minimize over fishing of natural resources. Research into aquatic plants, creatures, ecosystems functioning has motivated reaction to species extinction, habitat degradation and changes in ecosystem functions focusing on limiting human-caused marine ecosystem degrading, rebuilding damaged ecosystems, protecting vulnerable marine species and ecosystems.

Type 4 – Human conservation strives to enable humans to make appropriate use of nature in hunting, logging or mining. This work is vital for its impact on human health and controlling spread of new diseases and manufacturing medicines that we rely on. Animal habitats in the wild act as a deterrent to keep infectious diseases from spreading from animals to people.

~ Mary Baughn, Conservation Chairman



## Sustainability

National Garden Clubs sponsored a Webinar with Dr. Rachel Meidl, LP.D, CHMM from Rice University Baker's Institute in Houston, Texas in September. View it here—[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P3OxMRok\\_us](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P3OxMRok_us) It was a very thought-provoking discussion. Sustainability is not just recycling, but it includes a circle of connections: Economics, Social Issues, and Environmental concerns. Dr. Rachel Meidl covers the issues of plastics that are plaguing every continent in the world.

She covers the worst issues and how governments including the US are trying to find innovative means of reducing recycling barriers. She also covers how we can address mitigation in our own communities.

Plastics today are made from hundreds of different ingredients, and it is literally impossible at this point in time to break down the chemical components to an end life for each type of plastics. Plastic remains the number one problem in landfills. The United States uses the plastics that it can, recycles some of it and then ships the waste to China for their use which comes back to the United States in the form of toys, gadgets etc. for the American consumer. When China cannot use any more or break down the plastic composition, the waste is sent to other South Asian countries and the same thing happens again. Even though we separate our trash, each state, city, and community has different rules and regulations for disposing of their recyclables, mainly plastics.



Economically we don't have the wherewithal to have end-of-life for plastics although plastics are a vital part of our everyday life and economically make sense in our daily uses whether medically, educationally, or how we grow our plants. Much plastic is used in our gardening supplies and tools. The takeaway is that for plastic, try to use it more than once and pay attention to how often you use plastic. Be aware of your city's regulations. We have a long way to go before we have a true end-of-life solution for plastics.

~ Gail Vanderhorst

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Image #2 by John Cameron, UpSplash



## It's a Win-Win with this Compost

Gardeners know that adding compost to soil is almost always a good thing. Usually compost is a buffer to soils that are overly acidic or alkaline, and compost also adds a bit of nutrition to soil. For decades, municipal water treatment plants have separated waste and either composted that waste to where it smells like the best of fertile, moist soil. And sometimes that waste is desiccated and pelletized to be sold as fertilizer. Milorganite and Osmocote® fertilizers are examples of this process. In Montana many municipalities contract with a travelling yard waste shredder that grinds yard waste into compost, and some of Montana's larger cities add treated water treatment waste to nutritionally fortify the shredded compost. In this process the waste is periodically tested by the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) for pathogens before being added to compost and additionally tested after being incorporated into the compost to see if any pathogens might still be present. That mix of waste and compost is turned and heated to 120 degrees Fahrenheit by adding air or pulling air into a compost furrow to kill any bad bacteria, weed seed, or pathogens. The process takes about two months. So this is a win-win — fertile compost and clean downstream water.



Traveling shredder that grinds yard waste into compost



An air pump that pulls or pushes air into a municipal treated waste and compost mixture to heat the compost to 120 degrees to kill weed seed .

Butte, Montana which is the largest Superfund area in the nation has long used this process to reclaim environmentally damaged areas with dirt and this enhanced compost. Five thousand cubic yards of this compost material is made every year and mostly used in environmental reclamation. Furthermore, the enhanced compost is available to area gardeners at a cost of about \$20 a cubic yard. A standard pickup bed holds about 2 cubic yards (level, not heaped) material.

At the recent Southwestern District Meeting in Butte, Dan Ueland of Western Reclamation, explained how this enhanced compost was made and why and how it was made safe for gardeners. The process in Butte was designed by Pioneer Technical Services. Typically about a 20% addition of compost is used in garden soils. The compost can also be used as an organic top dressing for turf rather than using the usual lawn fertilizers which are metallic salts that can bind up soils.

The main concern of gardeners is that this amended compost can be toxic to plants or soil. Ueland addressed those concerns. To use human and animal waste, as in manure, has long been a practice for gardening and agricultural enrichment as evidenced 3,000 years ago in Chinese literature.

If your municipality offers enhanced compost, consider it for your garden.

**An Endowment Interest Grant in the amount of \$270 was awarded to the Dillon Garden Club during the Southwestern District meeting held in Butte on October 13th, 2023. The grant was for the purchase of cut flowers, plant materials and supplies for their Youth Floral Design Workshop given by the Dillon Garden Club held on August 28, 2023. The designs were entered and exhibited by the Youth at the Beaverhead County Fair for judging by an accredited National Garden Club judging panel.**

# Floral Design

My new position in the Federation is to be the Flower Design Consultant. My duties include:

- Encourage clubs to sponsor flower shows.
- Help novices and support other designers by answering questions on floral design.
- Be a resource for flower show schedule writers by offering advice on design class titles, types and themes.
- Help publicize floral design by promoting floral design and writing articles.

This is a new position created to support clubs and to encourage flower shows.

I have been asked to discuss what NGC regards as a design in the Asian Influence or Manner and compare it to traditional Ikebana or Sogetsu Japanese design. As every first-year design school student learns, American Floral design's genesis was in Ikebana design. Interest in Ikebana occurred with the Occupation of Japan and the number of folks being exposed for the first time to Japanese culture and design. Americans took what they saw in Japan and developed the line-mass design.

Ikebana is created by simple elements that are placed asymmetrically using space and depth to achieve the presentation. The designer uses seasonal plant material. As an example, a design done in July would use plant material available in July. When writing an NGC flower schedule for instance one would not have a design class calling for a Winter arrangement done in the Asian manner in a July flower show. The reason is if one wants to keep in sympathy with Ikebana, the plant material used should be what is available in a garden at the time of the construction of the design. The rules of Ikebana grew out of a culture that prized sense of order and discipline. Cutting the branches in such a way, measuring the branches to always having the right proportion, placing the plant material in a triangle in the kensan (needle holder) and always at an angle, all require thoughtful purpose and planning. The designer is placing the plant material based on three important cornerstones: the asymmetry, the space and the depth, representing the sky, land and humanity. These are almost religious ideas that are not polite to judge. However, the viewer does form an opinion if the rules of the chosen Ikebana school have been followed.



Asian influence



Sogetsu arrangement

Now that we have discussed the general rules of Ikebana, I will confuse you by discussing the more modern school called Sogetsu. Sogetsu is becoming very popular. It does not follow the formalistic placement rules of other Ikebana schools. It is the most avant-garde of the Ikebana schools. A Sogetsu design will have three strong elements, that should be easily identifiable. They are arranged at an angle and not centered in the container. Often the container dominates. Emphasis is placed on negative space. There is no restriction on seasonal plant material as man-made materials often are used. Because the designer is freed from the formalistic and strict rules, followers of Sogetsu do a lot of experimenting. Again, they are not judged as we do an NGC design. They are viewed as artistic expressions, much like one would view an Andy Warhol or Salvador Dali painting.

*(continued)*





A Line Mass Design

An NGC Asian influenced design has many similarities but also great differences. When a designer creates the presentation, we follow the National Garden Club scheme for design. The definition of a design, according to NGC is, "The art or organizing the Elements of Design (**line, form, color, texture, pattern, size, space, light**) found in plant materials and other (optional) components according to the Principles of Design (**balance, contrast, dominance, proportion, scale, rhythm**) in order to attain the attributes of design." (Handbook) These are the rules of an NGC design. An Asian Influenced design is really only a designer's idea on how an Asian design would look. It is an imitation of an ancient style following NGC's scheme for floral design. The purpose is the final result that will be judged.

In conclusion, Ikebana and Sogetsu main attribute is the participation of the designer in the choosing and placement of the plant material. The act of doing the design is a cerebral experience. When strict rules of Ikebana are followed a sense of order and tradition are reinforced. In Sogetsu the expression becomes Avant Garde more abstract than realistic. On a personal basis this Fall at the time my garden was in full bloom, I invited friends who are designers to join with me to do designs from materials found in my garden. We would go along the garden paths choosing interesting line material and blooms. Once gathered we made arrangements. The exercise was for our eyes only. The journey was the purpose. Enjoying nature was the result.

~ Jim Sadler, Floral Design Consultant

## Garden Therapy Musings

It took a significant amount of charm and effort on Diane's behalf to persuade me to fill the position of Garden Therapy Chairman during her Presidency. Having personal reservations as to living up to the full description of the assignment, I will attempt to contribute some thoughts and ideas towards promoting gardening and gardening projects in the Montana Gardens newsletter.

Earlier this year I came across the following statements, "a garden returns 50 times the investment you put into it. Not just for food, but joy, peace and real connection with creation, a spiritual retreat from the noisy world and hurried people". No matter whether you say your garden is but a couple containers or 100 square feet in size, or a number of thousands of square feet, one would be hard pressed to not agree with this statement. Some of us may have become gardeners for very practical reasons like providing wholesome, fresh food for our table and freezer or growing beautiful flowers and vegetables to sell to supplement our income. Some of us grew up with parents and grandparents who gardened and, quite frankly, we just don't know any different. Green thumb or brown thumb, it really doesn't matter. So, beyond the practical reasons, is the real value in the gardening endeavor itself? Is it getting our hands into the dirt or observing a seed or transplant grow to maturity and production, an incredible miracle aided by our input? Despite some backache and occasional blisters, do we not receive a huge amount of joy and satisfaction from a season of gardening? And being out in the yard and gardens, temporarily removed from

the pandemics, world strife, and family and general life stresses, is what contributes significantly to our physical and mental well-being. Plus we are able to take out any frustrations on some weeds or errant quack grass. We can set ourselves apart from this crazy world and the hustle and bustle around us. Often it is peaceful, quiet, fulfilling and very reinvigorating. And, then, of course, are the many great people you meet and have an opportunity to interact with.

If your club has some open time on the agenda this winter, consider a discussion about why each of you participate in gardening. Such an activity may lead to sharing ideas, coming up with new club projects, encouraging fellow members to try new plantings or methods, and, by all means, validating your own investment of time and effort in gardening activities.

~ Fred Frey, Garden Therapy Chairman



# SECRETS OF STARTING PLANTS FROM SEEDS

Starting tomatoes and peppers from seed can be challenging. At the greenhouses, most of the available tomato and pepper plants are hybrids. They are the result of cross-breeding and any seed from the fruit will be unpredictable if saved and planted next year. Heirlooms, on the other hand, always produce the same type of plant as the original. I grow only heirlooms and save seed from my own fruit.



'Mortgage Lifter' beefsteak tomato

My favorite tomatoes are 'Mortgage Lifter', this is a big but early beefsteak tomato that is prolific, and 'Rio Grande', a very large paste tomato which makes great salsa. I always grow one Sweet 100 for the cherry tomatoes that ripen before anything else. Tomatoes have perfect flowers and will fertilize themselves with the help of bees and other pollinators. Plus, I leave a little space between varieties to ensure they don't cross. Plant borage or another pollinator-friendly flower to attract bees to your garden. I grow zinnias and calendula in wide rows incorporated into my garden and save seed from them every fall. My borage seeds itself and I move the small plants to key places. My garden is also isolated enough that I have no neighboring gardens to cross-pollinate.

In past years I have tried starting my tomatoes and peppers in a 4" x 6" flat, then transplanting into small cells after they have their true leaves. Success has been around 50%. Then I tried planting 2-3 seeds into small cells, then thinning to the best plant. The idea behind this was to improve my odds on having viable plants. Success was around 75%. This year I put the seeds on wet paper towel, folded the seeds between the paper layers, then placed in a sandwich bag to retain the moisture. I wrote the name on the bag. After they sprouted, I used my tweezers to very carefully place a sprouted seed in each small cell, being careful to keep the root intact. Success was about 95%! I had the same results with my peppers.

Another investment I made last year was purchasing heat mats to place under my tomato and pepper flats. Since both are heat-loving plants, they thrived. I did not use a thermostat control and had no problem with the flats being too warm. I grow my plants under 4-foot light fixtures. This year I borrowed my husband's LED shop lights and had great success. The trick is to keep the light source a few inches above the plants and raise it as the plants grow. If you hang your light on chains, it's easy to raise and lower them. This keeps the plants from stretching. As they outgrew their cells, I moved them up into 3" pots. From there, they went into my garden in late May after hardening them off. This is done by setting them outside for a few hours the first day (make sure it's warm enough outside), then lengthening their outside time until finally they are hardy enough to survive the move into the garden.



'Rio Grande' paste tomato

I purchased my original heirloom seeds online but seed companies are carrying more heirlooms on their seed racks. Don't be afraid to try something new. You may find a new favorite!

~ Kathy Waters, Master Gardener, Malta Dirt Daubers Garden Club

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## Awards

There have been significant changes to the awards application process:

The designated club sizes for award entry are as follows: A 1-18 B 19-28 C 29+ members  
Club sizes are based on the member list sent to State Treasurer Glenna Waltee when dues were sent.

The application has been updated on the state website and should be "enabled" to be modified regarding spacing for the responses. Still, the application is limited to three pages, front only in total. Most applications are due to me by April 15<sup>th</sup>.

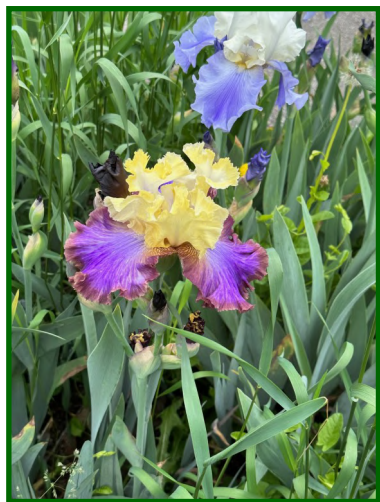
Please read the updated award descriptions for specific requirements. A topical list has been added to aid in the selection of the award that may fit your specific club project. We have raised the monetary values of a few of the awards to help bring money back into your club or to you as the individual applicant. Remember to take many pictures of your projects during the process!

New Award A-20 is sponsored by Linda and Jim Sadler concerning Roses! I would love to see many applications for this award.

~ Cindy Carlton, Awards Chairman



## How About Growing Iris in Montana?



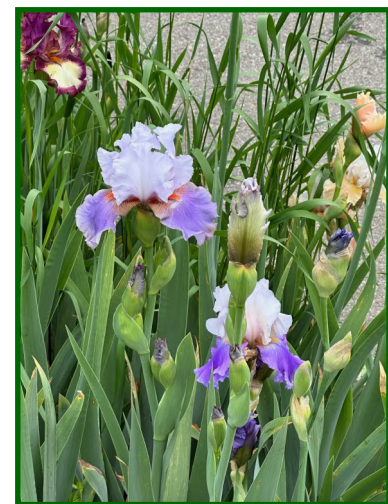
Did you know that you can have iris blooming from March to July in Montana? There can also be a peak bloom in late August and early September.

Iris are divided into two groups: the bulbous group and the rhizomatous group. Many irises in the bulb group bloom early in March and April. They are usually beardless, short in height, and easy to grow. This group lives in regular soil with added bulb fertilizer and likes full sun. Plant them in rock gardens in front of tall plants and with other bulbs like crocus, hyacinths, tulips and narcissus. Some varieties are reticulates, the Junos, and Ziphium (June and July blooming). These bulbs are wrapped in netting, tend to be smaller, and prefer good drainage.

The rhizome group includes all bearded iris and many beardless ones that are all grown by an underground stem running horizontally along the ground called a rhizome. Rhizomatous iris can bloom in Montana from April to July and then in the autumn. The bearded ones like full sun, somewhat dry conditions and average soil. They can grow better with rich soil and phosphate or bulb fertilizer in the soil.

Water preferences vary in Beardless iris. These include Siberian and Japanese iris, (lots of water) and Louisiana iris (moderate water). Most are tall and prefer sun and good soil. Japanese iris like acidic soil. Bearded iris can be short or tall but bloom at different times during the year. Arilbred iris and Spuria iris, hybrids originally from the near East, like it dry with lots of sun. Whatever your growing conditions you should try the different varieties, there are several for every Montana zone.

~ Gary Clark, Horticulture  
Chairman





The upkeep of the Nashua Fire Bell has long been a project of the Gumbo Gals Garden Club of Nashua, Montana.



# CLUB NEWS

and

# PROJECTS



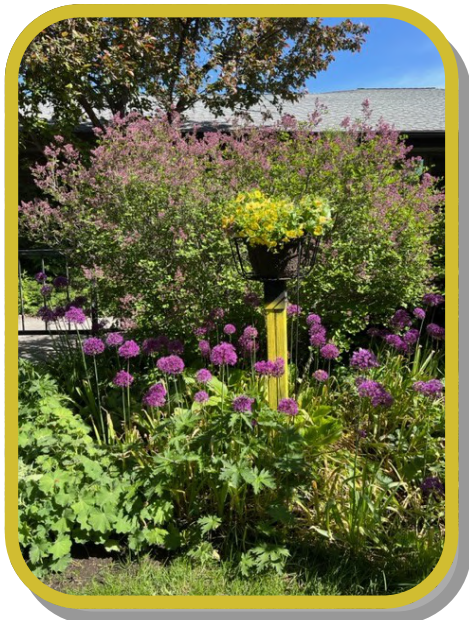
A Blue Star Marker relocated at the new Bozeman Safety Center in 2023



Anaconda Garden Club cleans up and plants at historic guard house next to the Smelter Interpretive State Park. Phase 1: Cleanup, remove garbage, rocks, weeds, soil, add: new soil, plants. Next year perennials.



Gallatin Empire Garden Club members made fruit and vegetable creatures with the Boys and Girls Club kids.



Belgrade Bloomers Garden Club partnered with the Gallatin Rest Home Auxiliary to revitalize the Sensory Garden.



The **Chester Garden Club** has been very busy this fall. We were excited to have our state officers visit as we hosted the District meeting. This meeting was extremely helpful as we work toward our goals and plans for our award entries. At the head table were State President Diane Ward along with Jeannie Bennett and Cindy Carlton, as well as our Director Susan Yurman, pictured to the right.



The members jumped right into plans for a flower show which was held in conjunction with the community Harvest Festival.

There was a good showing of vegetables as well as flowers and plants to fill most categories. Jennifer Hawks designed an entry book that was passed out previously, and qualified judges came over to Chester to judge the entries. Many prestigious awards were attached to the entries and the top award winner was Darlene Skari (pictured on the right).



Immediately after the show, we visited the residents at our local Assisted Living facility. We took little pumpkins and helped those who wanted to make tiny centerpieces. Each resident had one or two helpers with the glue guns and ideas to enhance their project.



We are anxious to begin working on plans and funding for a small gazebo to be placed at the City Park next to the flower garden we maintain each year.



**The Whitehall Garden Club sponsored an Arbor Day Celebration held in the Whitehall Community Center and honoring Whitehall as a Tree City for 30 years. FREE trees were given to the first 30 attendees.**





The **Miles City Garden Club** was active throughout the summer and fall with garden related activities. Members selected a yard of the week from June to September. The club managed the floral booth at the Eastern Montana Fair where local gardeners exhibited an array of beautiful flowers and plants. The Club hosted the Eastern Gateway district meeting on September 27th, and we had a great turnout of members from Glendive and Miles City. The state officers attended, and shared news from the state convention and changes within the organization. The group raised pumpkins to decorate and sell at their annual fall sale which included a soup sale. It's safe to say, the members not only are good gardeners, but some pretty fine cooks too!



The **Butte Garden Club** resumed its "Garden of the Week" program. In a collaboration with the *Montana Standard*, beautiful Butte gardens were recognized, and a significant sign was placed on the given properties with a weekly write-up by the newspaper. This year, gardens from late summer into early autumn were featured.

This two-pronged project recognized the gallant efforts of selected Butte gardeners, and the newspaper's publicity allowed readers to contact the club chair with other gardens that might be considered for the honor. The result was several suggestions that could keep the program running for several more years. These, in turn, could result in gardens featured in the club's annual Garden Tour project. During the tour, the Butte Club gets the contact information of attendees who could become potential club members and who are then informed of all upcoming club events.

The Butte Club invested about \$300 in the creation of a 6x4 foot sign. The cost has easily paid off with new club members and city-wide awareness. Weekly gardeners are photographed next to the sign and receive this picture, along with a copy of the newspaper article. For more information email Kathlene McNamee at [wizardword@msn.com](mailto:wizardword@msn.com).



## Notes, Dates and Links

**"A joyous Christmas blessing to all  
from the Gumbo Gals of Nashua"**

### New Members:

Alicia Myers - Great Falls Flower Growers GC  
Christell Engram-Benson - Great Falls GC  
Aufrey Kross - Great Falls GC  
Paula Zuris - Great Falls GC  
Linda Lodders - Anaconda GC  
Sheri Johnson - Butte GC  
Judy Wickum - Chester GC  
Sue O'Leary - Dearborn GC  
Beverly Devaney - Dearborn GC  
Gale Price - Stevensville GC

**New Life Members:** Donna Hayes, Dearborn GC

**Penny Pines Program:** Glendive Garden Club, \$68

**Judges Council:** Membership Dues \$80

- Images in this issue provided by Jim Sadler, Norm DeNeal, Gary Clark, Phyllis White, NaDean Brown, Luanna Maxwell, and Anaconda, Belgrade, Butte, Chester, Gallatin Empire, Great Falls Flower Growers, Miles City and Nashua Garden Club members.
- Contact Information for Officers, Chairmen, District Directors and others are available in the MFGC website's Member Section. Please send all change of address information to Beverly Geary, Montana Gardens Circulation Editor.
- Please update Club information on the MFGC website by contacting Elaine Wood, mfgweb@gtfalls.com

## MONTANA Gardens

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The Montana Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc. promotes education, resources and networking opportunities for its members and Montana youth to promote the love of gardening, floral design and civic and environmental responsibility.

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Darlene Skari, Copy Editor

Editors reserve the right to edit all submissions for content and length. Submissions are encouraged

Submission Deadlines:

April 15, 2024– Spring  
July 15, 2024 – Summer/Fall  
November 15, 2024– Winter

Montana Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc.  
(MFGC) is a non-profit organization with Federal IRS  
501(c)(3) status. All monetary contributions are  
tax deductible.

Please review the [MT Federation's website](#) for complete details and forms.

January 20, **Smokey Bear Poster Contest**. Smokey is 80 years old! Send to Jennifer Strzelczyk.

February 1, **NGC College Scholarship** Applications due

February 21, **Montana Federation of Garden Clubs Winter Board Meeting** via Zoom. Club presidents, District Directors, State Chairmen and Officers, and Advisory Council members are strongly encouraged to attend. A link to the meeting will be emailed in January.

March 1, **Ames Tools Grant applications** due. See [information](#).

March 30-31, **Landscape Design School** The Thumb R Green Garden Club in Billings will host the Fourth Landscape Design course. This will occur before the growing season begins making it more likely to be a time when gardeners can attend. More information will be available soon, but the Thumb-R-Green members hope you will put the dates on your calendar and make plans to attend.

April 15, **State Awards A, B, C and D**—send to Cindy Carlton. **State Awards E**—send to Susan Andrews. **State Award B-10**, send to Vicky Barbieri. **State Award C-10** Send to Donna Dowell.

May 1, **MFGC Life Member Scholarship** Applications Due

Spring to May 31, **Espoma Grant** applications are due. [Information](#).

June 1, **MFGC Endowment Interest Grant** Applications Due.

June 2-5, **National Garden Clubs Annual Convention** in Denver (Westminster), CO. All garden club members are invited to attend. View details at the [NGC website](#) after February 1.

June 27-29, **MFGC Annual Convention** in Malta (see more information in this issue on page 5). The registration form will appear in the next issue of Montana Gardens. All garden club members are invited to attend.

July 1, **NGC Vision of Beauty Calendar Photos** submissions due.

July 1, **Rocky Mountain Region Awards**, send to Cindy Carlton. The RMR Website is linked [here](#).

September 20-21, **RMR Annual Meeting** in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. All garden club members are invited to attend. See website linked above.

Beverly Geary  
Montana Gardens Circulation Manager  
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Corvallis MT 59282



Greetings from **Great Falls Flower Growers,**

It's been a busy fall, and we'll continue at full speed. We met in September to welcome each other back from a productive and short summer. October came swiftly for this club. The promise of harvesting the last of the summer's bounty was upon us. In October, members made a pumpkin decoration from a "tree cookie" (a slice of a tree) for their October and November celebrations. November's meeting included information about the Flower Show. Christell Engram-Benson, one of our newest members, jump started members with a Botanical Arts project. This "headband" creation pictured on the right was one of the designs in the Botanical Arts section of our District 5 Flower Show. Our big event was the "Holiday Fun" flower show. Judges came from Chinook, Chester, Lewistown, and Whitehall. The three garden clubs in the district participated. The club is already planning for next season. We continue to grow in membership due to our newest members recruiting their friends. It is exciting to welcome new people into our fold. Wishing you all a wonderful holiday season and a prosperous New Year.

