



MONTANA GARDENS



Mary Davis
Member of the Year

Mary has been selected as the recipient of the *Member of the Year Award* from the Montana Federation of Garden Clubs, a well-deserved honor recognizing her outstanding dedication and contributions.

A former State President 2003 -2005, Mary remains an active and vital member of her local garden club Thumb-are-Green. She is truly the heart of our organization, consistently giving her time, talents, and expertise to support its growth and success. She has served on countless state committees, contributing hundreds of volunteer hours to MFGC.

For many years, Mary has chaired local flower shows, leading efforts that have resulted in highly successful events, including recognition with national awards. She also compiles the “Book of Evidence” following each show, producing a detailed and exceptionally well-prepared record of achievements.

Mary generously shares her knowledge by teaching classes on various floral design techniques, always encouraging others to learn and grow. She is continually supportive of club projects, actively participating and contributing wherever needed. In addition, she assists with planning meeting programs and has delivered engaging presentations on a wide range of topics.

Beyond the club, Mary is deeply involved in the Master Gardener program. She coordinates gardening projects for an after-school program, where she teaches children about plants. Her hands-on activities—such as helping students plant tulips in pots and create terrariums—spark enthusiasm and a love of gardening in the next generation.

At every flower show, Mary contributes beautiful designs and an abundance of horticultural entries, further demonstrating her passion and commitment.

Mary is not only an exceptional member but also a mentor and inspiration to us all. We are incredibly fortunate to have her as part of our organization.

Hello Montana Federation of Garden Club Members,

It has been very busy spring and summer for me. From what I hear, most clubs have a lot happening, not to mention family activities, fairs, and gardening.

Spring travels included the National Garden Club convention at our Saint Louis, Missouri Headquarters building. The hotel was a short bus ride from the HQ building and what a great tour it proved to be. Inside we saw extravagant carpeting with state squares, and outside lovely gardens showed past Montana national presidents' dedicated garden spaces. The convention featured a sensational 250th Red, White, and Blue Petite flower show (available at gardenclub.org), business sessions, classes, program meetings and elegant meals filled our time at the hotel. The walk through the Missouri Botanical Garden was quite enjoyable. Montana received two National Awards for outstanding Flower Shows hosted by Billings Thumb R Green Garden Club, and by Stevensville Garden Club in 2025.



Jeannie Bennett
2025-2027 MFGC President

Next, I had the honor of participating in the Gold Star dedication in Billings. It was a beautiful setting and enjoyable event. It is great to see such success when garden clubs work with local Veterans Organizations to keep the sites representative of the purpose of the NGC Veterans recognition program and work together to keep costs low.

Then it was time for the MFGC 89th Convention hosted in Anaconda, MT by the Anaconda Garden Club. Over 80 members enjoyed business briefings and updates from clubs and classes related to garden sustenance and creating floral designs using Leaf (Green) Manipulation techniques. Awards and scholarships were announced and presented. Meals were enjoyed together and the beautiful historic town was toured with special appreciation of the vintage theater. My favorite event was the 75th Anniversary of Montana Life Members where skits and songs had us rolling in the aisles. From the Great Falls Flower Growers Church lady act and the old miner to the Bullhook Blossom rendition of Old MacDonald, it was a fun night. We have great talent across our state.

I expect to thoroughly enjoy my last statewide tour of our districts. An ongoing state program for Flower Shows was discussed at convention by the Judges Council, and we hope we can begin offering the Flower Show School series in 2027. Fund raising to offset the cost of bringing teachers to Montana is underway. Yes, we have some marvelous, accredited Flower Show judges but no one in Montana is certified to teach. More details will be presented at the upcoming district meetings.

Jeannie Bennett

Notes from the 1st Vice President



Cindy Carlton
1st Vice President

Since our Montana State Convention in Anaconda, I have been taking care of my lawn and gardens by weeding and watering. My garden is growing a few tomato varieties, some white pumpkins, zucchini, garlic, and a green pepper. I am slowly expanding my vegetables. And, with the intermittent rain we have received, my flowers are thriving this year.

Jeannie, Liz, and I attended the Rocky Mountain Region convention in Fargo, ND at the end of August. I am excited to learn from this adventure. District meetings will start within a month of our return.

I look back on our convention and I want to sincerely thank the Anaconda Garden Club, Michelle Halberg and members, for hosting our convention and helping make it a success. The Forge Hotel is a wonderful venue. I enjoyed the side trips to the Begonia House, the Stack, and the Washoe Theater. The educational PowerPoint© from Eileen Wood on 'How to Can Your Garden Bounty' was informative and timely considering harvesting our garden produce is just around the corner. It is nice to see our members and visit with everyone during the convention.



Anaconda Garden Club members — convention hosts

Our Awards luncheon was a different format as Phyllis White was able to create a PowerPoint© presentation for the event! See page 5 for the list. We had 13 clubs participate and over 70 applications were submitted to me as the MFGC Awards Chair. Six applications have been sent on to the Rocky Mountain Region. Thank you for participating and bringing recognition to our clubs' and members' projects and participation.

I would like to congratulate Jim Sadler on his nomination as the Western Montana Legend at the 2026 Fair held in Missoula in August. Jim has contributed many hours and years of experience to the fair in the Horticulture Building. Jim is active in the Rose and Dahlia Societies. He so deserves this recognition! I remember walking through the Horticulture Building as a small child and marveling at all the special designs and talent on display in the 1970's. Congratulations, Jim, for all you do for your Missoula Community and your Garden Club Community!

I hope your 4th of July was a huge celebration filled with family, friends, and BBQ for our Nation's 250th birthday.

Notes from the 2nd Vice President

Hello Everyone — Me again. You know, who, what, where, and when?

The two things a club needs is membership and fund raising. The thing that brings that all together is Community Awareness and Recognition.

In Miles City we had an event for Flag day—see the images below. We were out and about with flyers, then we refreshed our Blue Star, cleaned and weeded, and painted. We planted a flag pole and invited the American Legion and VFW and the community. We had a gal sing the National Anthem, a Benediction, and a 21 gun salute with Honor Guard. We had the American Legion raise the flag for us. We ended with taps. To tie that in with fund raising, we have native rocks with veterans honor plaques (names on metal that screw to the rocks) . We place them in the garden and the community walks through and reads and remembers. We charge \$50 for each name on a rock. We made over \$1500 that day.



Liz Smith
2nd Vice President

Take advantage of what you have. Do an awareness fundraising. You can't rely solely on plant sales and bake sales. Spread out and get creative. Try having a wine and cheese tasting party. How about a symphony in the park or a concert? Let your creative juices flow — the sky is the limit.

Did any of you plant a tree this year? "Who" planted it, "what" did you plant, "where" did you plant it , and "when" did you plant it? Please send your info to Liz Smith asap — mtliz50@yahoo.com, or 51 Little Coyote Drive, Miles City, Mt. 59301.

Thank you and God Bless.

Liz

CLUB NEWS

Miles City Garden Club

The highlight this spring was being awarded a Plant America Grant which allowed us to update the Blue Star Memorial garden. In addition, we were able to purchase an American flag, with a donation from the American Legion. As our member Liz Smith wrote above, we had a wonderful ceremony dedicating the flag which is now displayed in the garden. The community was well represented and enjoyed refreshments after the ceremony, which honored our veterans.

We gathered at various gardens in Miles City to plant red, white and blue flowers in honor of the 250th anniversary of the USA!

We hosted a Mother's Day Plant a Pot workshop for youth in our area. They learned about planting and caring for the flowers which they gifted to their moms.

The Yard of the Week is showcasing a different yard every week. The cooler weather has produced a beautiful variety of flowers every week!



2026 MFGC Awards

Anaconda Garden Club

- A-2-C President's Environmental Concerns
- A-9-II President's Youth Activities Award
- A-16 Darlene Skari Public Workshop Award
- B-1 Mae Burke Magill
- C-7 Multimedia (2nd)
- C-3-D Yearbook (2nd in the 40+ category)

Belgrade Bloomers Garden Club

- B-15 Sharing the Garden's Bounty
- C-2-1 Horticulture Award—Using Radio or TV/Media Broadcast

Bullhook Blossoms Garden Club

- A-1 Presidents Community Beautification
- B-1 Mae Burke Magill
- B-6 President's Living Legacy
- B-11-II Esther Hamel Butterfly Award
- B-13 Anaconda Garden club Community Beautification
- C-1 Award of Appreciation
- D-1 Youth Sponsorship
- 12-B President's Club Scrapbook
- A-9-11 Youth Activities (2nd)
- B-12 Mary Lee Award—Cheryl Kuka
- A-11-II Marie Jones Container Gardening
- C-5 Special Award for Artistic Expression—Cheryl Kuka

Chester Garden Club

- B-10-1 Flower Show Award for Highest Percentage of Judges

Dearborn Garden Club

- A-11-2 Marie Jones Container Gardening
- A-12-C President's Club Scrapbook
- A-15 Mary Davis Patriotic Garden
- B-12 Mary Lee Award
- C-7 Multimedia
- C-8-C Yearbook, 29-39 Members

Dillon Garden Club

- A-7 President's Membership (2nd)
- C-11 Life members
- B-10-I Flower Show Education, 3rd highest accredited flower show judges
- C-12 New Members Added, 3rd highest in the state

Gallatin Empire Garden Club

- B-2 Rainbow GC Civic Beautification

Great Falls Garden Club

- B-9 Cathy Atkinson Design, Patty Howse
- C-8-D Yearbook, 40+ members
- A-19 Sherry Corneliusen Dahlia/Gladiolus (3rd)
- B-12 Mary Lee Award
- C-5 Special Award for Artistic Expression

Malta Dirt Daubers

- B-7 **State Chair Leadership, Jennifer Strezelczyk**, Smokey Bear Posters Chair
- C-8-D Yearbook, 19-28 members

Miles City Garden Club

- C-8-C Yearbook, 29-39 members (2nd)

Missoula Garden Club

- A-7 President's Membership, 2nd
- B-10-I Flower Show Education, 2nd highest accredited flower show judges
- C-12 New Members added, 3rd highest in state

Rainbow Garden Club

- A-6-B President's Horticulture Therapy
- A-14 Rose Kopp Special Children
- A-21 Diane Ward Organic Practices, Patty Schlaeger
- C-2-II Horticulture Award, Horticulture Report
- C-5 Special Award for Artistic Expression, Patty Schlaeger
- A-1 President's Community Beautification (2nd)
- A-6-B President's Horticulture Therapy (2nd)
- A-11-II Marie Jones Container Gardening
- C-1 Award of Appreciation
- C-10 Photography (2nd)
- C-11 Life Members (2nd)
- D-1 Youth Club Sponsorship (2nd)

Stevensville Garden Club

- E-6 Design Specialty Flower Show 'Moments in Time'

(continued)

2026 MFGC Awards continued

Thumb-R-Green Garden Club

C-4 2026 MFGC Awards - **Garden Club Member of the Year — Mary Davis**

A-5-II President's Communication Award, Julie Koerber

A-5-II President's Communication Award, club

A-7 President's Membership

A-8-II President's Wildflower and Native Plants

A-11-I Marie Jones Container Gardening

A-17 Norm DeNeal **Gardener of the Year, Sharon Wetsch**

A-19 Sherry Corneliusen Dahlia/Gladiolus

B-3 Dearborn GC Bird Protection and Welfare,
Mary Davis

B-10-2 Flower Show Education, Mary Davis

C-6 Landscape Design

C-10 Photography

C-12 New Members Award

E-1 Standard Flower Show 'Gardening is Golden'

B-3 Dearborn GC Bird protection and Welfare
(2nd)

B-9 Cathy Atkinson Creative Design (2nd)

C-5 Special Award for Artistic Expression (2nd)

C-8-C Yearbook, 29-39 members (2nd)

Smokey Bear and Woodsy Owl 2026 Poster Contest Winners

Presented to Montana's youth in grades 1-5, highlighting wildfire prevention and forest conservation messages through personal artistic expression. This year's participants attend the Malta School system.



Zayla Denny, 3rd grade



Kaylee Tucker, 5th grade



Macy Yellow Earrings, 4th grade

Jennifer Strezelczyk,
Poster Chair

2026 MFGC Annual Meeting Minutes

Montana Federation of Garden Clubs
Eighty-Ninth Convention Meeting Minutes
The Forge Hotel

Anaconda, Montana - June 26-27, 2026

Call to Order: President, Jeannie Bennett, called the 89th Convention for the Montana Federation of Garden Clubs to order at 9:10am on Friday June 26, 2026.

Presentation of Colors: Anaconda Garden Club members Judy Little and Wini Stokke.

Pledge of Allegiance: Jeannie Bennett

Welcome & Garden Club Creed: Jeannie Bennett

Welcome to Anaconda: Tina Hofland, Clerk & Recorder, Deer Lodge County.

Memorial Service: Diane Ward

Introduction of MFGC Officers: Jeannie Bennett

Introduction of Guests from Rocky Mountain Region: Shirley Purcel, Director of Rocky Mtn Region; Pat Smith, President Colorado State Garden Club; Cheryl Maddox, President Chugwater Garden Club.

Introduction of Advisory Council: Jeannie Bennett - Diane Ward, Joyce Hendricks, Phyllis White, Darlene Skari, Mary Davis, Norm DeNeal.

Recognition of Convention Committee: Michelle Halberg, President of Anaconda Garden Club.

Recognition of Garden Club Member of the Year: Cindy Carlton introduced Mary Davis, this year's Recipient.

Presidential Invitation to Bid: President Bennett called for each Club to consider submitting a bid to hold the 2028 Convention; a reminder that RMR will be hosted in Fargo ND this fall.

Preliminary Credentials: Joyce Hendricks, Parliamentarian

Montana State President 1

Former State Presidents 6

State Officers 7

District Directors 5

Club Presidents + proxies 15+2

State Chairman 9

Delegates 21

Guests 3

Voting Members 54

Total MFGC Members Attending 79

Adoption of Convention Rules: Joyce Hendricks

Motion to Adopt Convention Agenda: Elaine Wood made the motion; Lynne Weischedel 2nd.

Appointment of Committee to Approve the 2026 Convention Minutes: Members-Nancy Dold, Elaine Wood, Phyllis White

Appointment of Timekeepers and Pages: Timekeepers-Elaine Wood & Sue O'Leary; Pages- Anaconda Garden Club Hostesses and Page for Shirley Purcell, RMR Director

2025 Convention Approval Committee Report: Cindy Carlton.

2026 Officer Reports:

Jeannie Bennett, President presented Zoom meeting changes, Winter Board schedule Feb. 26, 2027, District Meeting dates beginning in Sept. 2026;

Cindy Carlton, 1st Vice President presented a District Meeting review and attendance at the RMR meeting in Chyenney, WY, and NGC Convention in Charlotte, NC, along with 2 new awards and the addition of monetary awards for 2nd & 3rd place "C" winners;

Liz Smith, 2nd Vice President reported on Membership, Fund Raising and Community Awareness & Recognition.

Treasurer Report: Beverly Geary - On File

2025-2026 Financial Report signed by Anna Brandt and Elaine Wood

Proposed 2026-2027 Budget and a Call for Vote to Approve. Elaine Wood made the Motion for Approval, Glenna Waltee 2nd: Passed Unopposed.

Recess for Lunch

Award Presentation: Jeannie Bennett, Cindy Carlton- On File

Scholarship Presentation:

Shirley Purcel, RMR Director, along with Carol Brady, Chair of MFGC, NGC and Murphy Scholarships announced the NGC winner;

*Jessica Stasinowsky, MSU Junior, winner of the NGC \$4000.00 scholarship

*Beau Milton, UofM Senior, winner of the Murphy \$500.00 scholarship was present and shared his current studies and business that led to his award.

Elaine Wood, Chair of the MFGC Life Members Scholarship

*Beau Milton, UofM Senior, winner of the \$2000.00 Life Members Scholarship

Workshops:

Food Preservation Plan for Your Garden—Elaine Wood, Presenter

Flower Design—(creations of this evening's Table Decorations) Susan Yurman

Life Members Celebration: 75th Anniversary of MFGC's Life Members

Meeting Recessed for Dinner

Day 2 Saturday, June 27, 2026

9:15 AM Business Session resumes

Final Credentials Report: Joyce Hendricks, Parliamentarian, 44 voting members present

Announcements by Michelle Halberg, Convention Chairman

District Director Reports: On File

District 2-Pam Diamond

District 3-Judy Little

District 4-Pat Kisner

District 5-Sue O'Leary, report read by Judy Hess

District 7-Lela Patera, Co-Chairman

District 12-Jody Haidle

Club President Reports: On File

Missoula GC - Pam Diamond

Stevensville GC - Denise Gunterman, Winter President

Stevensville GC - Donna Shaffer, Summer President

Anaconda GC - Michelle Halberg

Dillon GC - Mary Kempf

Whitehall GC - Laura Horn

Belgrade GC - Phyllis White

Gallatin Empire GC - Pat Kisner

Dearborn GC - Donna Hayes

Great Falls GC - Elaine Wood

Gumbo Gals GC - Linda Sibley not present read by Linda Kaveshan

Malta GC - Cassie Griffith

Havre GC - Peggy Perry

Thumb R Green GC - Bob Wicks not present read by Joyce Hendricks

Miles City GC - Anna Brandt

Chester GC - Sue Yurman

Chairperson Reports: On File

Blue Star and Gold Star Memorial - Kathy Austin

MFGC NGC-Murphy Scholarship - Carol Brady

MFGC Flower Show School/Symposium/Credentials - Susan J. Billmeyer

7 Emeritus Master Judges, 13 Master Judges, 4 Life Judges, 10 Accredited Judges, 0 Student Judges

Montana Gardens - Phyllis White

Judges Council - Sue Yurman

Nominating Committee Report: Diane Ward, Chair - On File

Elected: Gary Clark, Norm DeNeal, Pat Kisner, Darlene Skari, Bob Wicks, Lila Flejser, Sue O'Leary, Phyllis White

Election of Recording Secretary: Linda Kaveshan- Membership Vote Called and Passed

Call for any Old Business

Call for any New Business: Jeannie Bennett

Invitation to 2027 MFGC Convention: Co-Chairmen Cindy Carlton and Phyllis White presented digitally. The Convention will be hosted by the Gallatin Empire and Belgrade Bloomers GCs, to take place June 23-25, 2027 in Belgrade. NGC President-elect Gerianne Holzman will attend.

Meeting Recessed

Car Pool and Tours: Guided tours of the Anaconda Area by the Club Members

Dinner: A celebration of America's 250th Birthday

Remarks by Shirley Pursel, RMR Director

Pat Forsman, Anaconda GC led the convention in singing "America the Beautiful"

Courtesy Resolution: Joyce Hendricks - On File

Adjourn: Sine Die

Linda Kaveshan, MFGC Recording Secretary

Minutes Approved by Nancy Dold, Elaine Wood and Phyllis White

MFGC Life Members and Murphy Scholarship Winner

Beau Milton



I grew up on my family's 160-acre ranch outside of Joliet, Montana, where we gardened, raised cattle, put up hay, and managed a large heritage apple orchard. That upbringing taught me early that soil health, water stewardship, and thoughtful management are essential to keeping land productive and communities healthy.

After witnessing the growing divide between our culture, our food systems, and the natural world that supports both, I co-founded Orion Farmstead, a regenerative farm in Ovando that integrates education, permaculture design, and community connection. We produce heritage apple trees and vegetables, host workshops, and share our mission through our podcast, Rooted Rebellion. In parallel, I began operating as a self-employed land management contractor and licensed herbicide applicator, focusing on soil health, integrated pest management, grazing and vegetation management, and ecological resilience across working lands.

With this foundation, I am returning as a non-traditional student to complete my BS in Geoscience at the University of Montana to expand my impact in local food systems and agri-environmental stewardship. My academic focus includes hydrology, soil science, and GIS analysis, allowing me to apply data-driven approaches to land-use planning and restoration.

Receiving the Life Member (\$2,000) and Murphy Scholarships (\$500) will significantly support my ability to maintain strong academic focus while continuing community-based agricultural and conservation work. Thank you for your support!

Editor: The Murphy memorial scholarship is an ongoing family scholarship, (Joyce Jackson-Hawkes from Bozeman is the daughter of Dearborn Garden Club members Arthur and Mabel E. Murphy for whom it was started in 2006). It is maintained in trust, with a very similar criteria for winning as the NGC scholarship.

NATIONAL GARDEN CLUBS, INC. Scholarship Winner

Jessica Stasinowsky, a Junior at Montana State University, from Bozeman, MT is this year's winner of the National Garden Clubs Scholarship for \$4000. She was extremely grateful for the NGC scholarship as it will greatly increase her ability to get her degree.

Jessica grew up on a ranch in Northern CA and has a huge passion for agriculture and the ability to grow up in a community supporting it. The ranch she grew up on was involved in breeding Australian Lowline cattle and Boer goats. They also had a boarding facility for dogs. She has been active in 4H and FFA her entire life. She raised livestock for the county fairs, participating in Parliamentary Procedure, Job Interviews, Extemporaneous speaking, Creed Speaking and Floriculture. She has been involved in agricultural organizations throughout college where she is part of the collegiate FFA, Ag Education Club, an on campus ministry called CRU and Sigma Alpha professional sorority. After graduation, she hopes to work as an agricultural teacher in areas of plant science, CTE including; woodshop, mechanics, and welding, horticulture and potentially German language in order to utilize her college minor of German. Additionally, she has the goal of becoming an FFA advisor at the high school level where she feels she can lead students to not only excel in their particular agricultural interests, but can become student teachers themselves. The 4H and FFA advisors and teachers changed the trajectory of her life and she would like to pass that on as a future educator herself. Outside of her experience as a student, she enjoys trap shooting and sporting clay pigeon, traveling abroad, and having a small business creating floral arrangements for events.





N. DeNeal
Garden Therapy Chair

One of the most memorable examples of how gardening creates a relationship of plants to mental health was introduced to me six years ago by an acquaintance who has a very attractive garden all around her home. While the street view is appealing, it is the backyard that is exceptional. That area is hidden behind a thick hedge of tall delphiniums, and a south solid, tall wood fence that shields it from summer sun. Typically, shade plants dominate there.

The gardener has had difficulty with anxiety and depression for years. Medical prescriptions have helped but had undesirable side effects. So, she abandoned the medications and turned to gardening that offered consistent calmness both to her daily work job at a high end restaurant, and at home alone when an active mind could easily fall into irrational worry. One year at a garden club plant sale, she purchased an Easy Wave® Red Velour' petunia. The flower color reminded her of a stage costume Elvis Presley wore that was a suit of red velvet. So, almost without thought, she named her new prized purchase "Elvis". She could have planted the flower in an area that had a reasonable amount of sunlight, but instead chose the private area that had only shade where she felt most comfortable. That petunia became the focus of her attention, both because of its richness of color, but especially because of the fond memories it evoked. Over time she unwittingly centered her attention on the plant. From a five inch pot the petunia flourished in the shade, and tripled in size while continually providing an abundance of flowers. And though she fertilized the plant, it received no more than other flowers in the garden. The petunia continued to get even larger both in width and height. To someone who first saw the backyard retreat, "Elvis" would quickly attract interest. And to this gardener the summer months forged a deepening bond with conversations of delight and admiration. At night there were often dreams where the flower appeared and seemed to be a person. Before going to work the last thing she would do is say goodbye to the plant, and when returning home, she would straightaway greet her new friend. And meanwhile, the sun-loving flower thrived exuberantly in unlikely shade. Now several years after the plant naturally died in the late Fall, the memory of one petunia lives on in memory.

Relationships are what has moved all life to evolve into new possibilities. While scientists often see this unfolding of complexity over millennia as mere chance events, others, like indigenous peoples who have lived close to their environment, have seen a guided connection of who we are to the creatures, animals and plants, as inseparably linked. While plants do not have a brain as we know it, they do have consciousness that connects to our thoughtfulness. And so as years ago, one plant became a source of calm to an anxious soul, its memory to that gardener still immediately restores an anxious moment to peaceful composure. •

Gail Zarr (May 1941—August 2026)

We lost a good friend, Gail Zarr. She was a long-time member of the Great Falls Flower Growers and participated in many activities. She was elected MFGC treasurer in 2007, a position that requires constant attention. During her tenure, she researched and reorganized the Award funds. She was treasurer for Flower Growers for many years. She had been the bookkeeper for the business she and her husband Ron owned, so she was extremely accurate and could report clearly and professionally. Gail worked with everyone and was always thoughtful and pleasant. She loved working on flower show committees. While flower design wasn't her forte, her organizational skills were a great asset. She was often at the show entry table and greeted everyone with a smile.



Artistic Interpretation When Creating a Floral Design

At many flower shows and design competitions, exhibitors are asked to create a design based on a theme. Yet one of the most common challenges judges and show committees encounter is confusion between depicting a theme and interpreting it.

Recently, while attending the Missoula County Fair Garden Club show, I noticed several entries that appeared to focus on *building a scene* rather than creating an *artistic interpretation*. This is not unusual. In fact, it highlights one of the most important concepts in floral and botanical design: a design is not an illustration. When a class title is announced, it serves as inspiration, not as a script.

What Is Interpretation?

Interpretation involves expressing the feeling, idea, mood, rhythm, or essence of a theme through the elements and principles of design. Rather than asking how can I show this, the designer asks what does this mean to me and how can I communicate that visually?

The Difference Between Illustration and Design

Illustration tells a story directly. Design communicates through artistic relationships. A successful design relies on line, form, color, texture, rhythm, balance, and proportion.

Looking for the Essence

One helpful exercise is to identify three words that capture the essence of a theme. Autumn's Farewell: Transition, Warmth, Reflection. Winds of Change: Movement, Energy, Transformation. Northern Lights: Mystery, Flow, Luminosity.

Trust the Viewer

Interpretation invites viewers to participate. The most memorable designs often leave room for imagination. They suggest rather than explain.

A Goal Worth Pursuing

Garden club design has always balanced horticulture with art. A theme is not a picture to copy. It is an idea to translate into the language of design. That is where artistry begins. •

Jim Sadler, Design Consultant



A mass line design interpreting the class theme "Gold Stars Shining Bright"



"Good Morning" an example of an illustration using predominate components, i.e., the statue, chicken wire and the raised box.

Circle of Green Thumbs Award Winners Members Demonstrating Outstanding Club Support

Judy Little, Anaconda

Barbara Schultz, Dearborn

Georgia Manning, Gallatin Empire

Jeanette Blatter, Great Falls Flower Growers

Ruby Wirtanen, Miles City

Judy Jess, Rainbow

Roberta Fuller, Thumb-R-Green

Lorraine Larson, Bullhook Blossoms in Havre

Carolyn Dillon, Dillon

Maryann Panduro, Glendive

Cheri Brandon, Malta Dirt Daubers

Ryan MacPherson, Missoula

Kimmie Burns, Stevensville

Jayne Dean, Whitehall

Nominations for MFGC 2027-2029 Officers

Diane Ward, Chair

New officers will be nominated and elected in June at the Bozeman/Belgrade convention. The First Vice President Cindy Carlton will have been elected as the President-elect at the February MFGC Board of Directors meeting. She will be installed as President for the 2027-2029 term. The Nominating Committee will nominate Liz Smith to move up and will elect a new Second Vice President. Candidates for Treasurer and Recording Secretary have been identified as the current office holders are qualified and agreed to remain in their office.

The Nominating Committee is concentrating on the office of the Second Vice President. This nominee will learn about the structure and finances of the organization. The duties are outlined in the MFGC Bylaws, available at www.mtfgc.org in the Members Section and are assigned by the President. Travel to each District meeting and the state conventions is expected. They are also encouraged to attend the RMR and NGC annual meetings, if possible. The nominee should have a working knowledge of computer programs and use email. Some expenses are paid by the Federation. It is expected that the person elected will be able and willing to move up the ladder. Serving as a state officer is an honor and very educational. The officers meet people across the state, in the region and nationally.

The Nominating Committee members were elected to serve at the Anaconda convention (see the Minutes on page 7-8). While the committee is officially charged with finding nominees, it is up to the whole membership to help. Members usually do not nominate themselves, but should be encouraged. Folks appreciate it when their talents are acknowledged. Do you have a person in your club or district that has special talents and leadership abilities? A candidate needs not to have experience holding state office but rather, to have demonstrated leadership in a club and/or district. If you have such a candidate, call a member of this committee or me. We will readily interview the person. Contact info — mydoubleheartranch@gmail.com or call me at (406) 565-0222.

Plant More Trees in our Rocky Mountain Region

Award of Excellence for Regions

Trees do so much for each of us. Sure, there is planting and watering, but they give back so much more. If each club plants a few trees each year, we can make a difference. Trees clean our air, provide shade, and some have fruit. They are important for birds and pollinators. We can work together to plant more trees. "Many hands make all work light."

Please work within you club to plant, record and report trees planted between June 2025 to September 30. Record the type of tree, when it was planted, and the name of your club. Photographs, news releases, or any other material pertinent to the project will help make the Book of Evidence complete. **Send the information to Liz Smith by October 1.** She will compile the reports into a state Book of Evidence application and send it to Robbie Kupper, RMR Awards Chair.



2026 RMR Award Winners

- 3-D State Publication—
Montana Federation
of Garden Clubs for
Montana Gardens
- 14-A Landscape Design—Bullhook Blossoms, Planting
flowers at a local library
- 16 Youth Awards for Outstanding achievement with a
youth club project that promotes planting and
growing in an outside area—Bullhook Blossoms,
"The objectives of this program are to teach youth
the fundamentals of gardening for lifelong skills to
live a healthy lifestyle and grow vegetables for
nutritious food for their table."



RMR Director Shirley Pursel

2026 Convention



Tour of the Historic Washoe Theater, Anaconda's Art Deco Gem



Top left:

Stevensville GC wins a NGC Flower Show Award
Thumb R Green GC wins a NGC Flower Show Award
Whitehall GC members

Great Falls Flower Growers accept an award
Hands-on Greens Manipulation Workshop (far left)

1—Treasurer Beverly Geary

2—Recording Secretary Linda Kaveshan

3—Parliamentarian Joyce and Ron Hendricks

2026 Convention Roundup



Notes, Dates and Links

Please submit MFGC Membership dues and rosters to:



Beverly Geary, Treasurer

1891 Sutherland Dr., Corvallis, MT 59828-9679

See her email and phone in the online Directory.

Dues are delinquent after September 1

Notes from the Treasurer's Pen—

Reforest Montana Donations

Whitehall Garden Club	\$ 70
Toole County GC in memory of Cody Joseph Douglas Cannon	\$100
Stevensville GC in memory of Blade Geary	\$ 50

New Life Members

Anaconda GC

Patricia Davis	Michelle Halberg
Val Harrington	Karen Heim
Mary Robertson	Carol Schultz
Wini Stokke	

Bullhook Blossoms GC

Lorraine Larson

Gallatin Empire GC

Pat Kisner

Gumbo Gals GC

Kay Kennedy

Malta Dirt Daubers

Cassandra Griffith Jennifer Strezelczyk

Thumb R Green

Debbi Werholz

A Note from the Editors

Printing and Postage costs have risen sharply.

If you would like to change the method of delivery of Montana Gardens, please contact

**Mary Kemph, Circulation Manager,
mh.kemph@hotmail.com.**

Help MFGC conserve paper and lower costs.

Kudos to the Anaconda Garden Club for hosting a well-organized, educational and rousing convention! Special thanks to Mary Robertson for tech help and Jim Fuller for his photography skills.

~ Montana Gardens Committee



Images in this issue provided by Jeannie Bennett, Jim Fuller, Mary Wambolt, Jennifer Strezelczyk, Jim Sadler, Jody Haidle, Liz Smith, Phyllis White, Cindy Carlton, and Ball Horticulture Company.

Contact information for Officers, Chairmen, District Directors, and Presidents is available in the MFGC website's Member Section. Please send ALL change of address information to Mary Kemph, Montana Gardens Circulation Manager, mh.kemph@hotmail.com

Please update Club information on the MFGC website by contacting Elaine Wood at webmaster@mtfgc.org or mfgweb@gtfalls.com

Big Sky Stars may be sent to the editor with a \$25 donation sent to the treasurer. Use it to congratulate, honor, thank or send a greeting. Thank you for supporting MFGC and this publication.

MFGC's Facebook page can be viewed by the public.
<https://www.facebook.com/MontanaGardens>.

MFGC Facebook Group for garden club members only.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1086355972413385>.

January and February 2027—NGC 2026 Award Applications due

February 26, 2027—MFGC Board of Directors Meeting, 10:00AM via Zoom

April 1, 2027, MFGC Award Applications Due (NOTE date change) covers period from 6.1.2025 to 12.31.2026

May 13-17, NGC Convention, Madison, WI

June 24 and 25, 2027, MFGC 90th Annual Convention, Belgrade

August 2027, RMR Annual Convention, Omaha, NE

MONTANA Gardens

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www.MTFGC.org

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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and Norm DeNeal, denealnorman@gmail.com
Darlene Skari, Copy Editor
Mary Kemph, Circulation Manager

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

MFGC is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization (EIN #81-6010783). Donations are tax deductible as allowed by law. As a tax-exempt organization your donation makes an impact, and we are thankful for your support.



Mary Kempf
Montana Gardens Circulation Mgr.
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Dillon MT 59725



Selection of Winning Entries in the 250th Patriotic Photography Contest



"Fireworks" by Jim Sadler



Gallatin Rest Home, a public area maintained by the Belgrade Garden Club



Jody Haidle, Glendive, Public Area



Whitehall Garden Club

