

**CENTRAL REGION GARDEN CLUBS, INC.
Spring 2026 ISSUE**

Remember "Progress is Possible" and you make it happen.

Dates to Remember

**Indiana State Convention
April 13 -15, 2026
Blue Chip Casino
Michigan City, In**

**Fall Central Region Convention
October 5-6, 2026
More details to follow.**

**National Garden Convention
May 4 - 6, 2026
St. Louis, MO
More details to follow.**

www.ngccentralregion.com



Good Times

Finding Positivity Amid Challenges in Minnesota

While recent times in Minnesota have been difficult, I have chosen to focus on the positive moments. As a Mutual Aid helper, I have been deeply involved in supporting the community, which has been terrifying, challenging and rewarding.

Winter in Minnesota often feels like it drags on endlessly, with Spring taking its time to arrive. February and early March are particularly tough months for us. However, I find hope in this season as March is when I start planting many seedlings indoors. This contrasts with places like Southern Missouri, where crocuses may already be blooming and outdoor planting begins much earlier.

This year, I have already ordered seeds, and some have begun to arrive. I am excited to try the Snail Seed Planting method, which I hope will allow me to raise more plants under my grow lights. Many of these seedlings are destined for the Chaska Library & Community Demonstration Garden, which donates all its produce to the local Food Shelf.

This year, my seedlings will grow in a special room at the library, where they will be part of a demonstration exhibit. This arrangement will also provide caretakers for the plants while I attend several state annual conventions.

Even as some days feel slow, time is also moving quickly, and I sometimes struggle to keep up. I look forward to visiting many of your Annual State Conventions soon. The National Convention in St. Louis, scheduled for May 4th–6th, 2026 is just around the corner. The event will feature a flower show and take place downtown near the iconic St. Louis Arch. It would be wonderful if you could attend.

The National Garden Clubs, Inc (NGC) is encouraging us to adopt the new PLANT AMERICA logo and feature it in state publications and signage. This effort is intended to build a recognizable trademark that benefits all. When approaching other organizations for funding or collaboration, this unified branding will strengthen our position. Although it may take a couple of years to fully establish, I believe this initiative will have a significant and positive impact.

Remember “Progress is Possible” and you make it happen.

Rene` Lynch

Central Region Director

National Garden Club Central Region Schools Chairman

The duties of the Central Region NGC Schools chairman are to submit a list of all current schools offered by the National Garden Clubs. This is sent to the CR newsletter editor and published in the CR newsletter three times a year. It is also posted on the CR website by the website editor.

The list includes any in person or online schools offered in the CR or USA Schools listed are Environmental, Gardening and Landscape Design. Flower Shows are included if a show is in the region. Most flower show schools are in person.

With the advantage of virtual classes via Zoom, many more opportunities are available for CR members. This is especially helpful if some states are not able to recruit chairmen for some schools.

In addition to the school listings a few guidelines are included to help members know where to look on the National Garden Club website for schools. Those interested in a school may register online for the school they want to attend.

Lucy Valitchka
Central Region NGC Schools Chairman

Invasive Species Chairman

The goal of the Invasive Species chair is to provide information on invasive plant and pest species and make members aware of the potential financial and ecological threats of these invasive species.

This is done through written articles in the Central Region Newsletter, informational displays and providing handouts on invasive plants at the Central Region Convention. Also speaking at garden clubs and helping gardeners on how to identify and manage invasive species. The chair can also announce opportunities for local membership to get involved in invasive plant clean-up activities in their area.

Jane Buck
Invasive Species Chairman



**Henry Ford is credited with this statement -
"Coming together is the beginning.
Keeping together is progress.
Working together is success."**

That is a good explanation of what the Garden Clubs of Illinois Members will be doing in the upcoming months. After months of cold weather and few meetings, our clubs will be able to attend their own meetings more often but all of our district and state meetings have been planned.

This is the best part of my job as President; traveling through Illinois to attend all these fun events. Plus I get to witness their projects and activities. Our annual GCI Convention is April 19th -20th in Glen Ellyn, IL. The Convention's theme "Red, White, and Blue Across Illinois - America's 250th Anniversary" will feature presentations of our state awards, life memberships, VIP honors, new officer installations, luncheon, floral design program, raffle, and vendors. Plus enjoy time with our GCI Board and other members.

Director Rene' Lynch will represent Central Region, our guest of honor. As the National Garden Club's Convention is next in May, many GCI members plan to attend and visit St. Louis. Club garden walks and plant sales will be held in late spring. Our biennial State Flower Show in Urbana, July 23-25, is planned as a standard NGC flower show. The theme is "On the Road Again" and will celebrate the 100th anniversary of Route 66. This special highway begins in Illinois and ends in South California.

Writing about celebrations, our organization has 129 clubs on the roster plus over 20 clubs with 100 or more years in anniversaries. In this group, three will start their 100th-year anniversary in 2026. Two new Blue Star markers will be dedicated this summer and add to 153 already in place. Two \$4000 scholarships will be offered to our Illinois college students this year and applications are in progress.

Excitement for the **PLANT AMERICA** program is in full swing in planting our home and community gardens in red, white, and blue. GCI members have a special list of appropriate plants for this on our web site; a GCI member researched a list especially for our Illinois gardens. Also in the planning stage is a Flower Show Symposium late September in Galena. Hoping some of neighboring state members can come! Details later this spring on our web site.

On behalf of the Garden Clubs of Illinois members, we wish our Central Region States' members a glorious season ahead in your gardens filled with joy, sunshine, and a bit of rain. Looking forward to seeing all at the NGC Convention!

**"Flourishing to our 100th anniversary - 2027: PLANT AMERICA"
Diane Greenawalt, President, The Garden Clubs of Illinois, Inc.**

<http://www.gardenclubsofillinois.org>

Federated Garden Clubs of Missouri, Inc.
Theme: PLANT AMERICA: Nature's Beauty in Our Backyards

I am sharing a little history about Federated Garden Clubs of Missouri, Inc.

Federated Garden Clubs of Missouri, Inc. is a member of National Garden Clubs, Inc. (NGC) whose national headquarters is located in St. Louis, Mo. There are 59 affiliated garden clubs with 1389 members in Missouri. FGCM was officially organized on March 30, 1933 in St. Louis by representatives of nine clubs from various sections of Missouri. The state is divided into 8 geographic Districts. FGCM joined NGC in 1937. FGCM was incorporated in 1957.

FGCM Scholarship Committee just met via Zoom this week. We had eight qualified applicants who were awarded funds to assist with their educational expenses. All eight applicants are seeking a degree in Plant Science, Agriculture, and Horticulture areas. One applicant has been sent onto National and one applicant onto Central Region. Many of our local garden clubs award high school students in their local areas. Funding comes from local club donations, Life Memberships, and Award Book. FGCM is fortunate through the generosity of past members in establishing three separate trusts providing funds to aid qualified students. FGCM is dedicated to this very worthwhile program for the future of our youth.

FGCM clubs are very busy planning special events, Blue Star Memorial and Gold Star Families Memorial dedications, planting "Patriot Pots" Red, White and Blue in celebrating our 250th Birthday of the USA!

Happy Spring Gardening!

Tanya Stanley
FGCM President

Shirley Wolf, State President of Garden Clubs of Iowa 2025-2027
Theme "Our Pollinators Still Need Help"

Wow! "Spring of 2026." How fast time flies. Time to get ready for gardening, planting flowers and flower shows! As we enter this vibrant season, remember the crucial role pollinators play in our gardens and local ecosystems. By choosing native plants, and reducing pesticide use, we can we can create a welcoming environment that supports bees, butterflies, and other essential pollinators.

The state flower show will be June 15th in Jefferson at the Wild Rose Casino. It is a petite, Patriotic flower show, "America the Beautiful." It was a change in plans to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the United States of America in a way we know best, design with flowers. I just saw a copy of the National Flower Show in St Louis. It was the same title and a Petite Patriotic.

I must have been doing something right. Next year I will stick with a pollinator theme. As president, I am having a meeting in Fort Dodge with the board on March 11th, to discuss everything going on the rest of this year. In April I will attend all the District meetings. In June is our State meeting. I've organized everything at the Casino in Jefferson and have been preparing for the flower show. I was at the Regional meeting and will be attending the National Meeting in St. Louis in May.

Shirley Wolf
Iowa State President

Central Region Spring 2026 Happy Spring!

There is nothing so inspiring and heart-lifting as a Michigan spring! One day, everything is covered in a blanket of snow, the sky is gray and the birds are shivering at the feeder, and next the sun is shining on plump tree and flower buds and emerald-green grass, while new growth is bursting through the ground as the warmth erases those long winter days.

The MGC Awards program has received a facelift over the winter, with newly updated rules and award opportunities, including more Youth and Senior activity recognition in addition to the many other awards offered to celebrate new and ongoing club activities.

The MGC Scholarship program has a long history of supporting Michigan College students through well-deserved and necessary funding to achieve their educational goals and eventually become the stewards of our Environment, public gardens and food production. This spring, MGC announced \$1,500. Scholarship Awards to 16 Michigan students.

Gardening with Purpose donations from last year have been tabulated and I'm so proud to announce that every District reported donations in 2025, totaling 33,305.95 lbs. of produce and nonperishable food in addition to cash donations of \$2,475. We continue to report donations and encourage members to plant an extra row of summer produce to donate as well.

Members and non-members alike are fortunate that MGC continues to provide education through NGC Schools. Environmental School will kick off the 2026 "Spring of Education" on April 6-7 with Course #3 at the fantastic Kellogg Biological Station in Hickory Corners. Gardening School #3 follows on April 17-18, in Sawyer, MI and we're excited to announce Landscape Design School begins Course #1 of a new series on April 23-24, in Traverse City. Visit the MGC website for brochures and Registration information on these fantastic opportunities.

As Michigan Garden Clubs, Inc. prepares for our annual Conference, to be held in Ann Arbor, June 7-8, members and clubs are making plans to enter exhibits in our state Flower Show to be held in conjunction with the conference. There are opportunities for individuals and groups to enter in horticulture, design, artistic crafts and educational divisions.

I am excited for the Spring Leadership events planned in Districts 1, 4, 6, and 3A, and the many Flower Shows, Garden Walks, Anniversary Celebrations and other events planned for the next few months, across the state. I look forward to making new friends and seeing old friends as I make my way around beautiful Michigan and I look forward to seeing many of you in St Louis, MO for the National Garden Clubs Convention on May 4-6, 2026.

Until next time...Happy Gardening!

**Lisa Robinson
Michigan State President**

<https://www.ngccentralregion.com/>

Garlic Mustard

There have been some exciting new developments in the control of the invasive plant, Garlic Mustard. A new promising biological control method has come about in the form of an insect. The weevil called *Ceutorhynchus scrobicollis* feeds on the root crown of Garlic Mustard plants, stopping the flow of nutrients and water from the roots to the rest of the plant. This causes the plant to produce fewer seeds or die before any seeds are produced.

C. scrobicollis lives for 1 year and produces only 1 batch of offspring. Native vegetation should not be negatively impacted because the weevil only feeds on Garlic Mustard.

This control method is still in the experimental stage. Watch for updates on this Garlic Mustard munching insect. Check out the website at end of article about the Garlic Mustard Aphids.



Garlic mustard, *Alliaria petiolata*, remains an important, noticeable springtime invasive in our region of the Midwest. I remember walking through a public park viewing the spring wildflowers and finding it along the trail. My friend and I pulled as much as we could and disposed of it. The ground was moist so we had no trouble pulling the weed, but if you don't get the roots, it will come right back.

Garlic mustard is a non-native species originating from Europe and parts of Asia. It is believed that garlic mustard was introduced for medicinal purposes and food. So why is garlic mustard a threat?

- Can rapidly take over our native forests
- Forms dense colonies that shade out native wildflowers and tree seedlings
- Can totally dominate a forest floor within 5-7 years of its introduction
- Seeds become viable within a few days of flowering, allowing for rapid germination
- Has two periods of germination: one in mid-spring and the other in late summer
- Seed remains viable for up to 7 years in the soil

Garlic mustard is a biennial: It emerges in spring as basal rosette of leaves that stay green and continue to grow through the winter. Plants produce flowers and seeds in the second year of growth. One way to identify it by its height: no native wildflower reaches 4 feet tall like the garlic mustard does!

The garlic odor when the leaves of the plants have been crushed is a way to identify the plant. In the second year, the leaves are simple, alternate and largely toothed. Most are heart shaped but some toward the top of the stalk can be more triangular. Leaves reach up to 3 inches wide and it is at this time that the stalk can reach up to 4 feet tall.

Clusters of white, small flowers form at the tops of the stalks. The flowers bloom from late April or early May through early June. Seeds are the sole means of reproduction for garlic mustard. Seeds come in a long green pod, that turns light brown/tan when plant dies. Each plant contains hundreds of oblong, black seeds.

Control Methods for Garlic Mustard.

Control strategies must be applied for eight or more years until the garlic mustard seed bank is depleted. Methods may vary over time, especially in woodlands. Areas should be monitored each spring to promptly detect new invasions and prevent reoccurrence. Mark areas where plants were found to aid in future monitoring.

- **A European aphid** (*Lipaphis alliariae*) that is only known to eat invasive garlic mustard has recently been found in the Midwest. If you see garlic mustard with curled leaves or aphids, help researchers studying this insect by sending in a report. Because the aphids may help control invasive garlic mustard plants, they are working with citizen scientists to map their distribution.
- **Hand pulling.** For smaller infestations or where large groups of people are involved, hand pulling or digging garlic mustard can be effective. Once flowering has begun, all plants must be bagged. Garlic mustard seeds can still ripen after plants are uprooted!
- **Cutting plants** a few inches above the soil surface just after the flower stalks have elongated but before the flowers have opened can be effective in preventing seed production and may kill garlic mustard plants. However, some plants may send out new flower stalks that require additional cutting. Monitor the site regularly.
- **Use herbicides** only when necessary. **ALWAYS read the entire herbicide label carefully, following all mixing and application instructions.** Wear recommended protective gear and clothing.

Another method for spot-killing patches of newly germinated seedlings in spring is to “**flame**” them with a propane weed torch. Flames quickly kill tender seedlings, usually without permanently damaging nearby perennial plants. Use the weed torch cautiously, and only when conditions are wet.

ALWAYS contact your local fire control agency prior to using this method. Burning permits may be Needed. **Clean shoes**, pockets, pants cuffs and equipment thoroughly after walking or working in infested areas. Garlic mustard seeds are tiny and are often carried off in clothing, shoes and mud. **Survey your area** for green garlic mustard plants. Plants can be spotted any time they are not covered by fallen leaves or snow.

Websites

<https://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov/terrestrial/plants/garlic-mustard>

https://extension.illinois.edu/sites/default/files/garlic_mustard_managers_infosheet.pdf

https://indiananativeplants.org/wp-content/uploads/Garlic-mustard-aphids-flyer_Page_1.jpg



Jane Buck
Invasive Plants

Below are photos of garlic mustard first year growth (left), blooming, and second year seed.

Go Native

April showers bring verdant pastures and bright skies, budding trees, and the welcome promise of true spring but also umbrellas and rain boots. We hope that your sky is bright and clear. I am so excited to think of the spring ephemerals in bloom. I try to visit a nature preserve near my home each year to find native plants while enjoying a hike. These are just a few of the native plants that I find on my hike in the preserve.

- virginia bluebells
- Bloodroot-we always struggle finding the right time to see them bloom.
- Red Trillium
- Spring Beauty
- trout lily
- Dutchman's Breeches

These hardworking native spring ephemerals put on a show while most other plants are still sleeping underground. Go check out the area and see what you can find. If you do not know the plant, there are good cell phone apps that let you identify plants. Educate yourself, find out how you can have some of these plants in your garden.

Moving on to things blooming, are you thinking of Red, White, and Blue plantings for America's 250th Anniversary. How about blue salvia, red and white geraniums, common plants and easy to find. These plants will be our local garden club's go to plants for planting in our civic project areas.

While promoting the red, white, and blue plantings, I have not forgotten my theme **Plant America with Natives**. I am increasing the President's Project Grant from fifty dollars (\$50) to one hundred dollars (\$100) for 2026-2027 and my hope is our clubs take advantage of this increase to also increase planting natives.

Another opportunity for monetary awards is available from the Central Region. NGC Central Region Unified Project is to recognize clubs for progress on new projects during 2025-2027. The information and application are in the December CR Newsletter.

I have been busy presenting my PowerPoint program **Go Native: 7 Reasons to Plant Natives** to our clubs. Again, encouraging utilizing native plants in civic projects as well as individual gardens. Our 94th Annual Convention is April 14th -15th, and our Northwest District has a great lineup of speakers as well as a hike in The Dunes National Park. We will be hearing from a horticulturalist and garden writer, a member of Save the Dunes Council, an award-winning photographer, a certified Herbalist and Lavender Farm owner, and a Master Gardener that will show us rare and unusual plants for an artful garden. I am looking forward to all the speakers. I know I will come away with innovative ideas for my garden; **fulfilling part of our mission statement: promoting interest and education in horticulture, landscaping.**

We are fortunate that our convention is an "in person" because the attendees get more out of the experience, rather than being in front of a monitor.

Until next time,

Wanda Zahrt

Indiana State President

The Garden Club of Indiana, Inc.

Wisconsin Garden Club Federation Notes: “Looking to the past to plan our future.”



My apologies for missing news from Wisconsin in the last newsletter. Besides settling into my term as WGCF President, I was busy writing our state newsletter (Wisconsin Gardens) following the loss of our editor and working with our Futures Committee (FC) on planning how to recruit, retain and develop new leadership for the state. I was also closing out a 58-year working career with a December retirement from 40+ hour work weeks practicing architecture and energy management. I am the first male President in 80 years and only the second in WGCF's 98-year history. So, while I was a bit busy last Fall, that does not excuse me for not reaching out to our garden club friends in Wisconsin's neighboring states.

Like many states, Wisconsin has seen a significant decrease in membership; from over 3,500 members in the 60-70s to currently hovering around 1,000 members. As suggested by my theme and my focus on growing membership, WGCF is looking at a previously completed strategic plan that has faltered and needs updating to confirm relevancy. That process has seen the FC working hard at completing the current survey of our membership and developing recommendations, from and ratified by them, for future WGCF Presidents to implement. Only by reaching out to the membership and obtaining their input and buy-in to “their plan” can we hope to resiliently enter the next 100 years.

While WGCF's focus is on state-centric issues, a key component of membership is the understanding that garden club membership is part of a larger entity with more resources and experience to draw from. Within the state we hear “what does the District and/or the State do for us at the garden club level?”. Taken to the next level, we also hear “what does Central Region and/or NGC do for us?” Gail Fox, the Programs Chair for one of our Northern GCs, best answers this question as follows: “by being involved with something much larger than we are, with the same goals/aspirations, we can accomplish much more than any individual or small group could dream to on their own”. To paraphrase Gail, to be more successful in some of the programs we undertake, we may need the assistance of others from outside our comfort zone to achieve something larger than we could achieve on our own. The membership structure in NGC has established (member, garden club, district, state, regional, and national) provides the individual member/garden club with a rich variety of possible funding, experience, contact, and recognition resources that expands what it is that we can achieve!

One of the great benefits of attending a State, Regional or National convention that one receives is the opportunity to meet new people with similar interests and issues to yours. Often, while you face problems like theirs, your approaches to resolution of that problem can be significantly different. In addition to making new friends, you learn how others deal with the same issues that you face. This learning provides you with fresh perspectives/insights on how to better resolve an issue and maybe improve the end results. In the end, everyone gains from the interaction. Again, to paraphrase Gail, meeting and getting to know garden club members from other areas of the state, region and nation allows us to expand our available resources to better achieve our local efforts.

I hope to see you all at the CRGC 26 Convention (date to be yet determined) hosted by Michigan Garden Clubs, Inc in the Fall. And I hope to meet you all at the NGC 27 Convention in Madison (May 13-17, 2027) where our very own Gerianne Holzman will be inducted as NGC National President!

Thank you.
Joe Powelka
Wisconsin State President

Endangered Species Chairman

Piping Plover, a small sand-colored shorebird that nests on beaches and mudflats, known for its distinctive single breast band, orange legs and short bill, encounters numerous challenges that threaten their survival.

Their habitat is on sandy beaches and shorelines of large water like the Great Lakes, Atlantic Coast, and Missouri River system, and winters on coasts and mudflats.

According to Karl Schneider at the Indianapolis Star, 'The Great Lakes population has been listed as endangered since 1986. The Great Lakes population's bands are even more visible than those on other piping plovers because every year researchers tag new bands on hatchlings to denote when and where they hatched, according to Bird conservancy group Audubon. They will wear the bands for the rest of their lives. The piping plover lives around five years.'

These shorebirds forage for food by running in short bursts, then pause to peck at food sometimes shuffling one foot to startle prey. Their diet consists of insects, marine worms, and small crustaceans.

The nesting of the Piping Plover consists of the birds building a shallow scrape on the sand, often marked with pebbles. Chicks are able to walk and feed themselves shortly after hatching. The male often takes over care of the young after the female leaves.

Predators like foxes, raccoons, and cats are attracted to beaches by human activities, leading to increased predation on eggs, chicks, and adults. Climate change also poses a significant threat by altering coastal ecologies and affecting food availability. Conservation efforts are crucial to protect these endangered birds and ensure their survival.

According to Karl Schneider, a 2005 plan by the conservation team set a goal of at least 150 breeding pairs surviving five consecutive years for the birds to be taken off the endangered species list. The plan also says the federal government should develop long-term funding and management agreements to ensure the population remains protected. While Indiana does not have a project focused on piping plovers, the DNR Wildlife Research Supervisor Theresa Bordenkecher says the agency is considering starting one in the future. The conservation efforts now include closing off nesting areas, using fences, public awareness campaigns and habitat restoration.

Phyllis Grzeskowiak Endangered Species Chairman

Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*)



Birds and Butterflies Chairman by Marian McNabb

I am working on a brochure to hand out to interested parties about the Central Region birds, and bees, and butterflies.

If any of the states have a contact for me, I'd enjoy having it; they can contact me at gwmnm@lowatelecom.net.

I feed the birds suet and sunflower seeds. When the orioles arrive they get a lot of grape jelly and oranges. When the Humming birds arrive, they have feeders too. We do have a real variety of birds at our feeders.

The butterflies have a lot to choose from; the first thing to bloom are dandelions along with butterflies, and the bees are extremely happy. I do plant a lot of zinnias, and Tithonia aka Mexican Sunflowers.

Plan your area for both the birds and butterflies; they are enjoyable to watch. I am looking forward to spring.

