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## President Message

Greetings Fellow Garden Club Members,

I am honored to have been elected the 50th President of the Garden Club of New Jersey at the virtual Annual Meeting on June 10th. I look forward to working with you as we slowly return to in-person meetings and events while emerging from the Covid-19 pandemic. I hope that you will invite me to join you at a meeting of your garden club so that we may connect and share our common interests in nature, gardening, horticulture, floral design and, of course, our environment.

The theme I have chosen for my presidency is "Plant Trees: Nature's Unsung Heroes." Trees are invaluable to humans, wildlife and the health of our planet. It is estimated that from 1990 to 2016, the world lost 502,000 square miles of forest (an area the size of South Africa). Trees are being destroyed at an alarming rate to commercial agriculture, wildfires, logging and urbanization. I ask you to join me and the Garden Club of New Jersey in conserving, protecting and planting trees for future generations. To help in this effort, during my term as President, GCNJ will award six \$1000 grants to affiliated garden clubs that sponsor a project focusing on the planting of trees. An application for these grants will soon be available on our website.

As we move forward, it is my hope that we will, not only plant together, but also learn together, protect our environment together and once again, meet together to achieve our common goals. Garden clubs can make a difference!

Warm Regards,  
Cecelia Millea  
GCNJ President  
[cmillea@msn.com](mailto:cmillea@msn.com)



"Plant a tree, invest in the future."

## "Plant Trees: Nature's Unsung Heroes"

**"We as garden club members have a front row seat to the beauty and wonders of nature. My appreciation of nature has deep roots, which were greatly influenced by many happy hours as a child spent in the woods near my home. This experience fostered my love of trees and an awareness of their importance."**

Cecelia Millea, part of her acceptance speech as GCNJ Club president.

Trees serve us well by absorbing pollutants, trapping airborne dust particles and significantly reducing erosion by retaining water in their systems and subsequently releasing it into the air. Trees cool the air and provide habitat and food sources for our native birds and insects, not to mention the soothing nature, beauty and enjoyment they provide to all communities. Did you know that one large tree produces enough oxygen to support up to four individuals?

Trees that have evolved in this region are much better suited to grow here than non-native species as they require less water, less fertilizer and have an important ecological role to play. Please help to plant more native trees and benefit our future generations! Seize this opportunity to educate others, unite our local communities towards this goal, and contribute to environmental awareness. Let's plant trees and invest in our future!

If you are interested in applying for a grant where your club will focus on native trees, a sample application will be posted on our website [gardenclubofnewjersey.com](http://gardenclubofnewjersey.com) under the Awards section. Applications are due by February 15, 2022. Please send 3 copies to Peggy Morrissey [peggymorrissey67@yahoo.com](mailto:peggymorrissey67@yahoo.com), Awards Chair.

Awards will be announced and presented at the GCNJ Annual Meeting in June of 2022 and 2023. The District Directors will forward this information to all local Garden Club Presidents.

Thank you and please contact me with any questions you may have.

Teddie Falcone  
President's Project Chair  
[tfalcone52@gmail.com](mailto:tfalcone52@gmail.com)



## 95th Annual Meeting “Find Shelter Under the Trees”



The 95th Annual Meeting of the Garden Club of New Jersey was held on June 10, 2021. For the first time in the history of GCNJ, the Annual Meeting was a hybrid meeting with a small group of officers installed in-person at a location in Morristown, NJ, while all others joined virtually.

The title of the event was “Find Shelter Under the Trees” to align with incoming President Cecelia Millea’s theme, “Plant Trees: Nature’s Unsung Heroes,” and the speaker’s mission of preserving the worldwide tree canopy.

In addition to required business, and installation of officers, there were two special presentations that took place at this event. Mary Warshauer, National Garden Clubs Inc. newly installed President, was presented with a resolution honoring her induction as President of our national organization and a \$2,500 check from the Garden Club of New Jersey to NGC’s Plant America Fund.



Bruce Crawford, former Rutgers Gardens Director, and friend of GCNJ, was awarded the National Garden Club’s Award of Excellence to a non-member. We were very pleased to see Bruce acknowledged with this prestigious award. Only three are awarded by NGC annually to non-members from across the country.

The keynote speaker for this Annual Meeting was Dr. Margaret Lowman, also known as “Canopy Meg.” She is a world-renowned arborist whose interesting and inspiring presentation informed us about her mission to explore and protect the tree canopy in forests around the globe. Her presentation may be viewed on the GCNJ website.

The execution of this Annual Meeting presented numerous challenges and required innovative planning. We entered uncharted waters and had to think “out of the box” to ensure that the voting for officers took place electronically, and all required business was conducted including the installation of officers by National Garden Club, Inc. President, Mary Warshauer. Social distancing measures were required to comply with the restrictions of the Covid-19 pandemic. The virtual Annual Meeting was a success, and many thanks are extended to all who participated in its planning. We will return to an in-person Annual Meeting at the Bridgewater Marriott on Thursday, June 9, 2022.

Cecelia Millea  
Annual Meeting Chair



## Flower Show Inquiry

As GCNJ Judges Credentials Chairman, I want to encourage the Garden Clubs of GCNJ, to consider staging a Small Standards Flower Show or a Horticulture Specialty Flower Show, this fall or next spring. There are judges who not only need judging credits prior to the October 2022 Symposium, but some also need exhibiting credits. Please consider allowing a garden club member outside your club to enter a Show that you stage.

A Show would be an opportunity to display some of the results of the days spent in our gardens, as we have been Planting American and Playing Outdoors. A Small Standard Flower Show requires only a minimum of 3 classes of Design with 4 exhibits in each class. Additional classes may be included, but there can be no more than 19 exhibits. Only 5 Horticulture classes with a total of 20 exhibits are needed.

Since we have been very busy in our gardens this past year, perhaps a Horticulture Specialty Flower Show would appeal to your members. This requires a minimum of 10 Horticulture Classes with at least 40 exhibits total, and 2 exhibits of Education, Garden and/or Youth.

A Show is the perfect outlet for our creativity and a way to showcase all the gardening results of Plant America. I kindly request you contact me if you plan a flower show. This would be greatly appreciated.

There are GCNJ Master Judges who will be happy to assist you in the staging and planning of any of these Shows. I look forward to hearing from you.

Jane Bersch  
[Janebersch@aol.com](mailto:Janebersch@aol.com)  
GCNJ Judges Credentials Chairman



# Upcoming Events



**September 21-September 24, 2021** - NGC Fall Board Meeting in St. Louis, MO.

**September 23, 2021** - The Women Gardeners of Ridgewood is having a community educational event on Thursday, September 23rd. Our speaker is Ellen Ecker Ogden, an award winning kitchen garden designer from Vermont. She is the author of *The Complete Kitchen Garden*, *The Vermont Cheese Book*, *The Vermont Country Store Cookbook* and her latest, *The New Heirloom Garden*.

Additional details and ticket purchase information will be available shortly on our website, [Events - The Women Gardeners \(womengardenersofridgewood.com\)](https://www.womengardenersofridgewood.com)

**September 27, 2021** - Board Meeting of GCNJ at Holly House.

**October 9, 2021** - Blue Star Memorial Re-Dedication - Community Garden Club of Hunterdon.

**October 15, 2021** – Plant America Community Project Grants must be submitted by.

**May 15-21 2022** - NGC Annual Convention 2022 in Orlando, FL.

**June 9, 2022** - GCNJ Annual Meeting.

**October 12, 2022** - GCNJ Symposium.





## From the Awards Desk

Many kudos and congratulations to the following New Jersey Garden Clubs for their award-winning projects during 2020-21. It was a year of many new and different **challenges!!** The creativity and resilience of these clubs allowed them to continue their commitments to their members and communities. The Garden Club of New Jersey is proud of their accomplishments on the National and Regional levels as well as the State level!!



### **The GCNJ Club award recipients are as follows:**

#### **Garden Club of Essex Fells:**

- National Award: Tommy Donnan Certificate of Merit for an Outstanding Publication
- Central Atlantic Region of State Garden Clubs Environmental Concern Award, Large Club (Second Place)
- Pines Lake Garden Club Trophy
- Moorestown Garden Club Trophy

#### **The Garden Club of Montclair:**

- National Award for Floral Design Program, First Place
- National Award for an Outstanding 2020-21 Yearbook (100-299 members) First Place
- The Myra Brooks Garden Therapy Trophy
- Demarest Garden Club Yearbook Award, Large Club

#### **Rockaway Valley Garden Club:**

- Framed Citation: Alyce Ann Myers
- Basking Ridge Garden Club Trophy
- The Garden Club of Long Beach Island Award

#### **The Garden Club of Mount Tabor:**

- Certificate of Commendation, Central Atlantic Region Yearbook Award (30-44 members) First Place
- Demarest Garden Club Yearbook Award, Medium Club

#### **Garden Club of Mountain Lakes:**

- The Holly Club of Sea Girt Trophy

#### **Belvidere Garden Club:**

- Smoke Rise Garden Club Garden Therapy Trophy, Garden Club of New Jersey Award
- Bernardsville Garden Club Trophy
- GCNJ Special Award

#### **Country Garden Club:**

- Central Atlantic Region of State Garden Clubs Civil Development and Improvement Award, First Place, Small Club
- Hanover Garden Club Trophy

**Karen Nash Memorial Butterfly Garden G.C.:**

- National Garden Club, Inc. Certificate of Merit:
  - o First Place and Overall Winner, The Mary Louise Michael Award, to Diana Dove (Youth Leadership Award)
- National Garden Club, Inc. Certificate of Appreciation Award:
  - o Judy McClanahan, Youth Leadership Award
- Central Atlantic Region of State Gardens, Inc. Smokey Bear/Woodsy
  - o Owl Poster Contest, First Place Grade Three Winner: Emily White
- The Garden Club of Long Beach Youth Award
  - o Aubrianna Bergstresser, Grade 2, Smokey Bear/Woodsy Owl Poster Contest
  - o Fiona DeBoo, Grade 4, Smokey Bear/Woodsy Owl Poster Contest
  - o Conner Wood, Grade 5, Smokey Bear/Woodsy Owl Poster Contest

**Garden Club of Long Valley:**

- Central Atlantic Region of State Garden Clubs, Inc.  
Environmental Concern Award, First Place, Medium Club

**Neshanic Garden Club:**

- Central Atlantic Region of State Garden Clubs, Inc.
  - o Flower Show Schedule Award, Second Place, Medium Club
- The Edison Garden Club Trophy
- Pinelands Garden Club Civic Beautification Trophy

**Warren Garden Club:**

- Central Atlantic Region of State Garden Clubs, Inc.
  - o Jean Ladson Outstanding Achievement Award, First Place, Medium Club
- East Orange Silver Trophy
- The Woodbridge Garden Club Trophy
- GCNJ Special Award

**The Basking Ridge Garden Club:**

- Wyckoff Garden Club Trophy
- Lillian C. Koelsch Trophy

**Garden Club of Watchung:**

- Demarest Garden Club Yearbook Award, Small club

**Terra Nova Garden Club:**

- Central Atlantic Region of State Garden Clubs, Inc.
  - o Smokey Bear/Woodsy Owl Poster Contest, First Place Grade One winner: Arianna Sherry

**Moorestown Garden Club:**

- Central Atlantic Region of State Garden Clubs, Inc.
  - o Flower Show Schedule Award. Third Place,
  - o Small Standard Flower Show, Large Club
- Garden Club of New Jersey Continuing Project Award of \$100
- The Community Garden Club of Hunterdon County Silver Trophy
- GCNJ Special Award

**West Trenton Garden Club:**

- National Garden Clubs, Inc. Yearbook Award, First Place (tie) (45-69 members)

**Garden Club of Fair Haven:**

- Central Atlantic Region of State Garden Clubs, Inc.
  - o Flower Show Schedule Award, First Place, Medium Club
- The Garden Club of Westfield Trophy

**The Garden Club of Long Beach Island:**

- Central Atlantic Region of State Garden Clubs, Inc.,
  - o Publicity Press Book, Third Place, Large Club
- National Garden Club, Inc. Poetry Contest, Catherine Miller, Grade 4
- National Garden Club, Inc. Poetry Contest, Bailey DeMarsico, Grade 5
- National Garden Club, Inc. Poetry Contest, Emmy Slaven, Grade 6, First Place

**Navesink Garden Club:**

- The Marguerite & Vincent T. Mulligan Garden Therapy

**Seaweeders Garden Club of Bay Head & Mantoloking:**

- National Garden Clubs, Inc. Certificate of Merit for First Place and Overall Winner, Water Conservation/Single Club
- National Garden Clubs, Inc. Certificate of Commendation for First Place, Historic Decoration/Single Club
- National Garden Clubs, Inc. Certificate of Appreciation, The Kellogg Civic Achievement Award
- National Garden Clubs, Inc. Certificate of Appreciation, The Lucile Droege Mauntel Conservation Award
- The Garden Club of Toms River Trophy

**Shrewsbury Garden Club:**

- Membership Award for Highest Increase in Members

**Garden Club of Spring Lake:**

- Central Atlantic Region of State Garden Clubs, Inc.
  - o The Perennial Bloom Award for Garden Club of New Jersey
    - Presented to Joan Baker
- Medford Lakes Garden Club Silver Trophy for a Native Garden
- Green Thumb Garden Club of Cranford Publications Trophy

**Fairview Garden Club of Lakewood :**

- Central Atlantic Region of State Garden Clubs, Inc.
  - o High School Essay Region Winner: Rachel L. Dispoto

**Again congratulations to all!**





## 2021-2022

**September 15, 2021:** Four copies of Club Yearbooks for the year 2021-22 are due.

**November 15, 2021:** All Club submissions for National Award consideration are due. Applications, awards names and instructions are located on the NGC website under AWARDS.

**February 15, 2022:** All Club submissions for GCNJ Awards are due. Applications, the Awards booklet and instructions are located on the GCNJ website under AWARDS.

All Yearbooks and National and GCNJ Award applications should be sent to  
**Peggy Morrissey**  
142 Osborne Avenue  
Bay Head, NJ 08742

**LOOKING FORWARD TO A GREAT 2021-22 YEAR!!**

Peggy Morrissey  
Awards Chair  
[peggymorrissey67@yahoo.com](mailto:peggymorrissey67@yahoo.com)

# Scholarships

As selected by our Scholarship Committee, \$24,000 in scholarships have been awarded to nine deserving students for the 2021-2022 academic year.



Students graduating from high school this year were presented with the Adella L. Wotherspoon Scholarship, the Ruth Paul Memorial Scholarship, and Garden Club of New Jersey Former President's Scholarship.

For the Presidents Scholarship, undergraduate students were presented with the Garden Club of New Jersey Scholarships, and current Graduate students received the Adella L. Wotherspoon Scholarships and Ruth Paul Memorial Scholarship. One of our undergraduate students has also received the National Garden Clubs, Inc. Scholarship for this year.

Rutgers University has selected two students to receive the Garden Club of New Jersey scholarships as well. They are the Elizabeth P. Merriam Scholarship and the Dr. Charles H. Connors Scholarship. Rutgers has awarded one student with the tuition-based Florence S. McNeil Landscape Architect Scholarship.

Students' majors are horticulture/floral design, environmental science, sustainability policy and economics, marine science pertaining to underwater plant life, environmental management, and landscape architecture. Their focus was sustainability and how plastics affect the environment as well as landscaping in urban areas for better health. Additionally, they paid particular attention to education and the importance of ocean flora, which indicates that our students are ready to improve our communities and the world.

Students were present at our Annual Meeting and Garden Club of New Jersey members were able to hear a little about each one and see their photos. A booklet with students' essays used for their scholarship applications is being prepared for GCNJ members to enjoy at a future meeting. These students have successfully pursued their academic and community goals throughout the Covid 19 Pandemic for almost two years.

We congratulate them and wish them well for the future ... they are **our future!**

Thank you to all local GCNJ member garden clubs who made donations to our Scholarship Fund over the past two years. If your garden club wishes to honor a member of your club or just make a general contribution, please send your check in the name of Garden Club of New Jersey, Inc. to Patricia Polunas, Scholarship Chair, 135 Laurelwood Road, Brick, NJ 08724.

Patricia Polunas  
Scholarship Chair  
[scholarshipsgcnj@gmail.com](mailto:scholarshipsgcnj@gmail.com)

## Rake and Hoe Juniors Donate Fairy Houses to Claire Brownell Garden



**Juniors with houses L. to R.:** Alissa Stumpf, Sophia Poeschl, Riley Dupuis, Melissa Morabito, Arline Bound



At their May meeting, the junior members of the Rake & Hoe Garden Club of Westfield built fairy houses, using all-natural materials, and decorated them with fresh and dried plant material. These houses, together with houses made by adult members of Rake & Hoe Garden Club, were placed in the Clare Brownell Memorial Wildflower Garden. The Garden is in a wooded area behind the Westfield Historical Society's Reeve House and is a perfect setting for these beautiful, handcrafted houses. Although the houses were installed as part of a recent fundraiser event at the Reeve House, they will remain there for the public to enjoy and provide inspiration for visitors to try their hand at building their own fairy houses. The Reeve House, located at 314 Mountain Avenue Westfield, is the headquarters of the Westfield Historical Association. For more information, call Beth Siano (908-233-4150) or visit the club's website, ([rakeandhoe.org](http://rakeandhoe.org)) or Facebook page.



## Good News

The Karen Nash Memorial Butterfly Garden Club (KNMBG) has been selected by "Gardening Know How" as one of 20 gardens across the country to highlight for 2021 and for which KNMBG has received a \$1,000 Garden Grant. Their progress

in the garden will be featured along with others on "Gardening Know How's" national website and blog. This Garden Club is also excited to be celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of gardening with children and Garden Club of New Jersey is very proud of their achievements.

Diana Dove  
Environmental Youth Chair  
[Dianadove13@gmail.com](mailto:Dianadove13@gmail.com)



# CRAWFORD'S CORNER

## A Delicious Plant for the Garden!

Common names are often very misleading. For gardeners, having a plant named in a known language is far more comfortable than trying to pronounce, no less understand a name that is in Greek or Latin. Yet, these common names can get one into trouble! For example, the plant commonly and rather intriguingly known as Pineapple Lily produces neither a Pineapple nor is it even in the Lily Family! However, it is certainly easier to pronounce than its botanical name of *Eucomis comosa* and even with its intriguing common name, it is rarely seen in New Jersey Gardens.

Pineapple Lily is native to regions of Southern Africa and is actually a member of the Asparagaceae or Asparagus family. The genus consists of 12 species, all native to moist meadows and grassy areas found along or near streams.

The genus name of *Eucomis* was crafted in 1788 by the French botanist and magistrate Charles Louis L'Hertier De Brutelle (1746-1800), who decided this group of plants were not a member of the genus *Fritillaria*, as Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) had originally thought. The name comes from the Greek *Eu* meaning good and *Kome* meaning hair; the good head of hair is a reference to the tuft of foliage that is perched atop some of the flower stalks, as pictured at right on a floral bud of *Eucomis* 'Glow Sticks'.



Pineapple Lilies develop from true bulbs, which are layers of modified leaves, much as you see in an onion bulb when it is sliced in half. *Eucomis* are zone 7 hardy and will typically endure a southern NJ winter, but not northern New Jersey. Unwittingly, I planted some in a protected and shady location many years back and they dependably returned for many years. My mistake was planting them in the shade; the plants need full sun in order for the foliage to resist flopping and for the flowers to develop. In the sun, the deep green strap-like foliage grows to 24"

long by 3" wide at the base and ultimately develops a stiffly arching, fountain-like shape. In mid to late July a central flower spike stretches upwards to 24" tall, with greenish white, star-shaped flowers clustered around the upper 6-12" of the stem; a structure collectively called a cylindrical raceme. Each flower features 6 tepals and anthers, surrounding a prominent central pistil. If the outer whirl of sepals (leafy bracts) and the inner whirl of true petals look virtually identical, they are termed tepals. The anthers are affixed to ½" long and rather thick filaments that dramatically project outward from the flower, giving it a 3-dimensional and lacy effect as seen above in the image of *Eucomis* 'Glow Sticks'. Each flower is ½-¾" in diameter and, for those



racemes where the crown of foliage appears on the top of the stem, each raceme truly resembles a pineapple! The flowers are followed by purple fruits, allowing the structure to remain attractive well into September.

The green foliated species is certainly attractive, but the deep burgundy foliated form called 'Sparkling Burgundy' has the bonus of purple foliage (pictured at right). An introduction from Tony Avent and Plant Delights Nursery in 1997, the foliage is initially a very dark burgundy (as seen below in the container), transitioning to a purplish green as it nears flowering. As is typical for the genus, this selection prefers full sun in moisture retentive soils. The plants are vigorous, readily reaching 18-24" tall and slightly wider. I have noticed that the foliage of this selection can become floppy if provided with too much fertilizer. The emerging flower stalk is once again a deep dusky red, providing a nice backdrop for the pink blushed, green flowers that once again stretch to 24" tall. The green foliated forms look great worked in with a more calming green or chartreuse companion plantings. However, 'Sparkling Burgundy', with its rich burgundy color, needs stronger companions that feature oranges, reds or bold pinks.



Eucomis 'Glow Sticks' is another form I have become familiar with only of late. The plant is a release from Terra Nova® Nurseries and features glowing chartreuse foliage (pictured at left) with attractive light yellow flowers from July into August. The golden foliage has less chlorophyll, which in turn reduces the vigor of the plants and explains the more demure height of 12-15" and the 18" width. Unlike many plants with golden foliage, it does best in full sun and the foliage is very sturdy, resisting the tendency to flop or collapse late in the season.

Another attractive species is *Eucomis bicolor*, primarily native to the South African country of KwaZulu-Natal. Named and described in 1878 by the English Botanist John Gilbert Baker (1834-1920), the species epithet refers to the two colored flowers, featuring 6 light green tepals bordered by an attractive purple margin as seen in the image at left and at the end of the article. The leaves of the coma also features an attractive purple margin, as do the filaments of the anthers, giving the flower a very dramatic appearance. The purple markings are also repeated as elongated dots along the flower raceme and on the back of the foliage. Interestingly, when the flowers transition to seed come late summer, the flower structure and color remains intact, providing an extended period of interest.



Typical of plants from South Africa, they prefer moister summers and drier winters, which is unfortunately the opposite of New Jersey weather most seasons. Consequently, if they are to be grown outside as perennials in southern and central NJ, they require soils that are well-drained



and enriched with organic matter. Plant the bulbs 5-6" deep and if you garden in central NJ, add additional mulch in autumn to insulate the bulb from periods of deep cold. The plants can also benefit from being planted amongst a ground cover like Cranesbill, *Geranium sanguineum* var. *striatum*, since the foliage is retained throughout the winter and helps to insulate the soil. The low foliage and pink flowers of the Cranesbill will also complement the *Eucomis* during the growing season. For those gardening in northern New Jersey, consider growing them in containers (as pictured to the left at Greenwood Gardens). Plant the tops of the bulbs either at or 1-2" below the soil line in spring or early summer in a 10-12" pot. Following a

heavy frost bring the pots indoors, storing them in a cool dark room or garage that remains between 40-55°F. The frosted foliage should be removed and the soil allowed to dry and remain dry throughout the winter. Start to water the pots again in late March and bring outdoors when nighttime temperatures remain near or above freezing. *Eucomis bicolor* appears to like a warmer winter enclosure of 50° F and to go outside after the danger of frost. It is important to place the bulbs in an ample sized container to allow the roots adequate room to spread. The larger container also prevents dramatic fluctuations in soil moisture during the growing season and appears to enhance bulb health while overwintering.

Pineapple Lily may not provide much culinary appeal, but it does add a generous and delicious serving of visual appeal to the Garden. Unbeknownst by many, this delectable plant needs to catch the fancy of many more gardeners! Has it yet been able to catch yours?

Bruce Crawford  
State Program Leader in Home  
and Public Horticulture (NJAES)  
[bcrawf@njaes.rutgers.edu](mailto:bcrawf@njaes.rutgers.edu)

*Bruce Crawford is the Rutgers State Program Leader for Home and Public Horticulture. He is a part-time lecturer in Landscape Architecture at the Rutgers School of Environmental and Biological Sciences and regularly participates in the Rutgers Office of Continuing Professional Education Program. He was also past President of the Garden State Gardens Consortium.*



# BLUE STAR NEWS

## Lessons from Planting in a Pandemic



It was like winning the lottery! A grant request submitted to the National Garden Club's Plant America program, had been awarded to the Community Garden Club of Hunterdon County (CGCHC). As soon as spring arrived, work would begin on a new landscape plan at the Blue Star Memorial site in Cushetunk Rest Area, on Highway 22 in Whitehouse, NJ. The Club's membership was excited. Plant lists were made. Design plans drafted. New garden gloves were purchased.

But even before the check or spring could arrive, gardening, a hallmark of the Garden State, came to a screeching halt. COVID 19 struck with a vengeance. Businesses closed. Our Club's new project stopped. Individuals quarantined. It was a total shutdown. The year was 2020, the year of the deadly virus.

Plant purchases were not possible; nurseries and garden centers were closed. Even on-line or mail orders were not possible as there were no employees in warehouses, drivers in trucks, or representatives in customer service. It was like losing everything!

The year 2020 was a year to stop and rethink and renew the creative sense. Faced with the limitations of the virus and the necessary restrictions put in place, how could we proceed with our great plan to install a pollinator friendly environment at the Blue Star? The purchasing power of the grant money seemed void. Should we just try to return the check? Give up? Quit?

NO!! Quitting was not an option. The National Garden Club had entrusted us with their support, and we always try to be up for a challenge. Our mantra became: Let's work with what we have, do what we can and celebrate what we accomplish.

Some of the initial prep work could be done by one or two people with rototillers, edgers and mowers. A member, her husband and their equipment, set to work. The site was cleared of old plants and weeds. Soil turned and amended. But, the Blue Star sign set in the middle of the planting area needed refurbishing. That had to wait until County facilities reopened and employees returned to work. That meant no planting could happen until the sign was done.



In the meantime, we tried to appreciate Zoom, as we met to discuss refining the plans and plants. Communications became vitally important, and attempts were made to keep members informed of the status and the progress. Again, we faced a limitation: a significant number of members did not have internet or computer access. Something more was needed. Our newsletter editor stepped up and created a 'virus version' of the newsletter. It was brief but informative and kept the club linked together and asking questions and getting information about the project.

One member lives in Pennsylvania and in mid-June, she set out to check with nurseries in her area to see if they had any of our desired plants. Fortunately, we wanted five blue star plants (*Amsonia Tabernaemontana*), and they had five such plants. We wanted a *Viburnum Brandywine* for the bright red and blue berries in the Summer and bright red foliage in the Fall. They had one. We were on the hunt for a blue flowering *Buddleia* shrub; they only had a white. Oh well. White was still in the color scheme so all were purchased, and the work could begin. Members were giddy with joy! A planting date was set with all the mandated virus restrictions in place: out-of-doors, masking, social distancing, and for those not comfortable or able to join the work, a member with outstanding photography skills bridged the gap.

Prior to the workday, two team members visited the recently reopened Hionis Garden Center, located in the immediate area, and found a warm, enthusiastic welcome. The site plan we had drawn, plant lists, requirements and the overall objective were shared and met with great encouragement and support for doing this beautification in the community. Owner Tim Hionis took us through the greenhouses and taught us a great deal about being a wholesale nursery.

Garden Clubs like CGCHC were not the only ones impacted by the virus and the shutdowns. Many, if not most garden centers, were forced to adjust the plant orders they had submitted months before the virus struck. The question and dilemma they faced was an economic one: would they be overstocked with a full load of costly plant materials or would they, with a full inventory, be facing heavy decline in the number of purchasing customers because of the mandated isolations. This center (Hionis Garden Center), aided by their suppliers, reduced the order sizes.

We wanted perennials but by this time, the perennials were nearly gone. They had annuals, and we needed to move ahead. Decision: Work with what we have (or can get). The color scheme now became the leading factor. What was red, white, and/or blue in either annual or perennial, flowering or botanical? The Hionis Garden Center generously donated plants in the right colors. We knew we would return to replant in the spring, but this start would let the community know something incredibly positive was happening. The Hionis truck, loaded with dark red salvia, white and red mums, Elijah blue grass clumps, and stately red *Celosia*, delivered to the plant site. Club members arrived and the work began.

In addition to the plant material, dozens of spring bulbs were placed throughout to bring a spring surprise of color, newness and pride back to the Blue Star and surrounding community.

Due to the generosity of Hionis, remaining plants were placed at a second Blue Star Marker on Highway 31 and 78, where the marker had also been refurbished by Hunterdon County. Another bit of excitement at the original site was the planting of three new dogwood trees and removal of two dead ones at no cost, by the County Department of Roads and Bridges.

Because of the community assistance from the County and Hionis, as well as approval from Plant America, an additional site has been added for plantings. The White House Cemetery on Highway 22, owned by Daughters of the American Revolution Old Whitehouse, General Frelinghuysen, Colonel Lowrey Chapter, will be planted this fall with spring bulbs on the terrace facing the highway. Further plantings at the Blue Stars will continue as appropriate through the summer and bulbs in the fall, all leading to an October 9 rededication of the Memorial, and a celebration of what we accomplish.



Starting at The Shoppes at the Farm (on Highway 22 east, across from the Blue Star), the public is invited to join in honoring veterans and patriots of military conflicts from the Revolution in the 1700's thru the Middle East conflicts of today. Short presentations will include a bit of history on the Blue Star, comments from dignitaries and officials as well as acknowledgements of appreciation. Attendees will then be escorted across to the Memorial by a bagpiper for patriotic music, placement of flags in memory of personal veterans, the laying of memorial wreath, and light refreshments.

Events begin at 10:30 A.M. and are expected to end by noon. Further information or answers to questions may be directed to CGCHC President, Beverly Fusco, at 484-538-6405. RSVP's are greatly appreciated.

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Marg Peterson  
[margpeterson@comcast.net](mailto:margpeterson@comcast.net)

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### ***Information for the next issue:***

***October 1 is the deadline for articles for the Winter News Leaf as well as listings of upcoming club events and online ads.***

Send articles and upcoming events to Karen Eardley at [k.eardley@live.com](mailto:k.eardley@live.com)



Go to GCNJ website at [www.gardenclubofnewjersey.org](http://www.gardenclubofnewjersey.org) for more information or check out Facebook for some informative posts:

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**Happy Fall and Stay Safe!**