

THE GARDEN GATE

FGCNYS District IV Newsletter

Winter 2026

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America250

Celebrating the Semi-quincentennial
Of the signing of the Declaration of Independence
July 4, 2026



Flowers are coming up red, white and blue, in patterns of stars and stripes!

Greetings! I hope that you all had a wonderful holiday season, and that you are staying warm this winter. While we may have winter interest in our yards & gardens at this time, the most beautiful part of this cold season in my opinion is watching the antics of wildlife, in particular the birds and squirrels. I am an avid bird feeder, and have established a huge back yard bird sanctuary. My cats also love to watch from the windows.

Some Thoughts
from District IV's
Director

There are two items of importance to bring to your attention with this addition of our Newsletter. First, **the District does hope to have another bus trip (a day trip)**. Stay tuned for details. **If you have thoughts on someplace you would like to go, or would like to be involved in the planning, please contact me.** *I am hoping to have our first meeting in mid-February.*

Secondly, last November, we had about 30 members gather for our **3rd annual District Roundtable**

meeting. A number of ideas for programs were exchanged, as usually happens when a bunch of us get together. But importantly, a number of other topics were on the table for discussion and many ideas / suggestions / recommendations were generated (I typed up a four page list of them). To move forward, we now have to decide what to do with all of this information. To that end. Our officers will be discussing how best to combine the input we received and narrow down a couple of items we can try to implement this coming year.

Among the top ideas are the following:

- 1) Streamline the awards process at the District Wide meeting.
- 2) Learn more about available awards, applications and timeline for applications.
- 3) Change the structure / format of the District Wide meetings.
- 4) New members: recruiting, mentoring, retaining.
- 5) Some nifty ideas for workshops, speakers, and youth outreach / programs.

The Garden Gate

Charlanne McDonough, Editor

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District IV Officers

Mary Lou Baker, Director

Annette Newcomb, Assistant Director

Sue VanOmmeren, Recording Secretary

Sharon Meyer, Treasurer

Barbara Millington, Corresponding Secretary

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I will communicate with the Club Presidents as we move forward with any proposed changes, and they will communicate same to you. It will be our goal to have something substantive to share at our **Spring District Wide Meeting and Luncheon, which will be on Monday, May 4th (Save the Date)**. Any major changes that involve changing our By-laws will need to be processed accordingly! But other changes not impacted by our By-laws might well be initiated at our May meeting.

Lastly, the FGCNYS has set **June 14-16 for the Annual FGCNYS Convention this year, again to be the Crowne Plaza Desmond Hotel in Albany**. No further details are available at this time, but your Club Presidents will keep you in the loop.

Looking forward to another busy year with the wonderful people who make our District shine!

Stay warm and cozy,
Mary Lou

Club News

The Ballston Spa House and Garden Club

After a busy summer, we resumed our monthly fall meetings with a fascinating presentation by certified arborist and “big tree hunter” Fred Breglia. Fred shared his passion and deep knowledge of the largest trees and oldest forests in New York State and beyond, engaging us all with stories from the field.

At our November meeting, we held a club direction and feedback session, inviting members to share their thoughts on programs, outings, fundraisers, and committees—what they would like to see more of and what might be scaled back. The discussion was lively and thoughtful, and the input proved very helpful to the leadership team.

Several members attended the District’s Fall Meeting and Luncheon, where they enjoyed a presentation by Joe Bruchac, the well-known author and Native American storyteller. His talk highlighted the

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enduring and sustainable traditions of Native American gardening which was both informative and inspiring.

Our philanthropic efforts continued with a winter clothing drive in support of the Ballston Spa community while a small dedicated group of members created beautiful holiday wreaths and garden pots for the Ballston Spa Library. In early December,



club



members also participated in the Ballston Spa Veterans Memorial Wreath-Laying Ceremony, paying tribute to fallen veterans. The Horticulture Therapy Committee had great fun helping several residents of Doubleday Woods make boxwood trees for the holidays using floral foam, boxwood clippings, holiday coffee mugs and seasonal decorations.

Later in the month, the club gathered for our annual holiday party at a member’s home, enjoying homemade appetizers, warm hospitality, and a festive cookie exchange.

We kicked off the new year with our popular Cabin Fever lunch at a local restaurant, where members enjoyed excellent



food and wonderful company. Later in January, we traveled to Faddegon’s Nursery to soak in the warmth and greenery of their expansive greenhouse.

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One of their gardeners joined us to showcase new plant varieties, pet-friendly plants, and practical tips for houseplant care and maintenance.

Looking ahead, February and March bring a couple of educational programs to our club. In February, Jess Luse from Cornell Cooperative Extension will present “The Plant Benefits of Pruning Trees and Shrubs.” In March, we will hold a hands-on workshop, “Taking the Best Smartphone Photos Possible,” led by Mike Kane, a seasoned newspaper reporter and photographer.

On Earth Day, we will once again visit the Saratoga Tree Farm to help sort and package tree saplings for their spring sale an activity we always look forward to and truly enjoy.

This April, we will hold the club’s installation banquet at the Ballston Spa Country Club, where we will pass the leadership baton to a new team.

Ballston Spa will host the District’s Spring Meeting and Luncheon in May, and we look forward to sharing our program, “Move Well, Garden Well,” with attendees. Later in the month we will hold our annual Geranium Plus Sale, one of our key fundraisers of the year.

Finally, we extend our sincere thanks to the Program Planning Committee for their outstanding work in creating an engaging, educational, and enjoyable schedule throughout the year.

- Kathy Kane, President

Schuylerville Garden Club

November 2025

The club enjoyed a wonderful exhibit at the Chapman Museum in Glens Falls with an interesting talk from their Education Coordinator, Rebecca Tommel. She spoke on the significance of how

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certain “unusual” foods brought a social elegance to the Victorian table. Having a melon displayed on the table (a plant that did not naturally come from local gardens) was really exotic and made the hostess a very special person. This led to Victorian gardeners designing walled gardens that sheltered the winds so more tropical plants could flourish.

Unfortunately during the autumn, a member, Debbie Gaylord, passed away. Debbie loved line dancing, gardening, and animals. She often helped in the Children’s Garden as part of our Partnership Project with Hudson Crossing Park. She entered both designs and horticulture in our Flower Shows, as well as in the Schaghticoke Fair. She will be missed.

December 2025

This year two kissing balls were hung at the main entrance of Town Hall and eighteen wreaths adorned doors all over downtown Schuylerville. The Annual Gift Exchange and Luncheon was held at the Wishing Well restaurant despite a snowstorm that lasted all day. Most members drove out to attend and luckily, they were all safe. The traditional Elf Prizes and gift exchange were well received.



January 2026

An ecological landscape designer, Kate Brittenham, from Front Stoop Gardens in Troy, gave a presentation to the club and encouraged the members to think about their total garden layout to choose

native plants in planned “groves” and pathways. By choosing an understory tree and surrounding it with appropriate shrubs and small native plants, an



environment can be created that is more beneficial for insects and wildlife than just planting a tree in the middle of the yard. This is true native

landscaping that eliminates large lawns and creates integrated native garden areas.

February 2026

The club continues with Part II of “Schuylerville Garden Club - Through the Decades”, presented by our own former club presidents, Evelyn Rybaltowski and Leona Brownell. This time we are in the 1980s to the present. Plans are for a slide show and possible tea party. The presentation will show how the club has taken on local projects and community objectives from the 1980s to the present day. Many scrapbooks, photos, club minutes, Flower Show schedules, and yearbooks in our historical collection were researched to create this program. Costumes and white gloves will be encouraged.

Early plans for the July Flower Show, “America the Beautiful”, will be discussed.

March 2026

The winter “picnic” ends the formal year for Schuylerville. Members bring in a dish to share and provide their own table appointments. This year a special video, “Lunch in the Garden” created by Denise Maurer, a Master Gardener from Cornell Cooperative Extension of Rensselaer County, will accompany the picnic. The video will feature how to pre-chill and “wake up” bulbs, branches, and stems for indoor blooms.

The Program committee will present the activities and programs planned for 2026-2027 and distribute the new yearbook. Lots of fun ahead!

- Carol English, Correspondent

Glenville Hills Garden Club of Saratoga County

Our annual autumn project, “Putting our town gardens to bed” took place in mid-October. Faithful member volunteers rallied to clip, weed, trim and remove debris from our much-appreciated gardens at the Galway Post Office, Galway Village Park, Food Pantry, EMS and Galway Central School.



Later in the month, members enjoyed a slide presentation on the benefits of cultivating native plants in our gardens. Benefits include supporting pollinators, gardens requiring less maintenance and removing carbon dioxide from the air. Some examples of native plants are purple coneflower, milkweed, lupine, butterfly weed, mountain laurel, ninebark, rudbeckia and serviceberry.

Member Donna Zelanko led a workshop on creating Holiday Geen Decorations in November. Following the program, Tari Lee Muth and her volunteers



decorated the Gazebo in Galway’s Village Park with evergreen garlands and cheerful red bows.

In early December, members laid wreaths at six sites in the Galway area. With the help of Cub scouts, veterans, students, our mayor and patriotic citizens of the community, we were able to pay our respects

to those who served by Honoring, Remembering and Teaching what their sacrifices meant to the citizens of the United States.



Our festive December holiday party was held at Nancy and Ralph Caparulo's tastefully decorated home. Members and guests enjoyed culinary creations at our appetizer buffet and dessert tables.

To warm us up a bit with thoughts of spring, our January guest speaker, Jesse Walter, owner of Beyond Your Garden will talk to us about "Achieving Exquisite Garden Design".

In February, our Potluck Luncheon at member Mari Fettke's home will precede a discussion for the 75th anniversary plan to celebrate our club's origin. Sue VanOmmeren will brainstorm ideas with club members.

Our March program on "Making a Flower Press for Home or Travel" by member presenter Jules Constantine will demonstrate techniques to assemble a simple but beautiful flower press. She will also teach us how to press the flowers and use them in various projects.

Our club's annual luncheon in April at the Cock 'n Bull will be a celebration of the past year. Outgoing officers will be recognized and incoming officers will be installed.

- Lenore Lanka, Correspondent



Lake George Community Garden Club

This fall, member, Theresa Rescorl presented a program on how to plan and organize a successful plant sale. From wintering-over plants potted in the fall to encouraging members to pot plants at least two weeks prior to the sale and deliver plants properly labeled was discussed at length. Theresa reminded us many helping hands make a day of happy buyers and return customers for years to come.

Another fall project was cleaning up the gardens at the Chapman Museum. The volunteers, armed with electric trimmers, shovels, and hoes tackled the gardens with thoughts of how beautiful the gardens will look this spring.



Member, Kathleen Gusek gave a presentation at her home on growing and caring for amaryllis bulbs. What a splash of color around the holiday time and beyond.

In November the members decorated beautiful wreaths to adorn doorways of municipalities around



Lake George and participated in the Prospect School Festival of Trees, donating a decorated 4 foot Christmas tree and holiday arrangements.

Our club ended the year with a Holiday Luncheon at the Log Jam Restaurant. Members enjoyed a social hour, delicious food and a chance to pick up something off the re-gifting table.



January brought snow and thoughts about what to do with leftover Christmas cards. The members came up with creative ways to recycle cards to make useful treasurers for all year long.

Later in January we had a wonderful speaker about seeds. We learned how to explore the first phase of a plant's life: A seed!

The members were given a plastic container, soil, and instructions on how to start seeds at home.

Future programs include Instillation of Officers in February, Shannon McPheeters, from 4-H will present a slide show entitled "Get the Word Out About Birds" in March and in April, Maureen Stoddard from Warren County Soil and Water Conservation, will present a program entitled "Benefits and Limitations of Residential Trees, Landscape Decisions with Conservation in Mind".

- Greta DiAntonio, 1st VP
and Charlie McDonough

Heritage Garden Club

The District Wide Meeting and Luncheon was hosted



by the Heritage Garden Club this fall at the Holiday Inn in Saratoga Springs. In preparation for the event, the membership got to work on various committees,

creating centerpieces, items to sell, and room set up. As a result, the day was filled with club members eager to see one another again and shop! HGC was the first club to sponsor a Club Vendor Table. The tables were filled with fall and holiday items made by the members. That corner of the room was a hit and the price was right! Also, Renne Rosch's daughter printed a beautiful sign welcoming the district members at the registration table. Everyone loved our speaker, Joe Bruchac, author, storyteller and musical performer. Joe told amazing stories about Native Americans and the three sisters - squash, beans and corn. The music had our toes tapping.



The program at the regular meeting in October was presented by Cass Scarone from Pitney Meadows Community Farm, entitled "What a community farm does for the community". Cass informed us how the farm educates gardeners in the area, provides individuals raised beds to plant, grow and harvest and packs boxes of vegetables to sell and donate to local food banks.

Garden Therapy was held at Woodlawn Commons in November and December. The First project was making fall arrangements to take back to their rooms. The December project was decorating small trees with lots of bling and bobbles to enjoy throughout the season. Their creativity was sparkling!



- Charlie McDonough, Editor

District IV Calendar of Events

2026 DISTRICT IV CALENDAR

April 13	Heritage GC: Luncheon at the Hideaway, Saratoga Lake Golf Club, 12 pm. Tim Healy, of the Posie Peddler, will present "What Is Old Is New Again" (\$38)
April 17-22	Flower Show School, Course 3, Cornell Cooperative Extension Albany County, 24 Martin Road, Voorheesville, NY 12186
April 24	District IV Board Meeting, Knights of Columbus, Saratoga Springs, 9:30 am (refreshments: Heritage GC)
May 4 (Mon)	District IV Spring Meeting and Luncheon, Holiday Inn, Saratoga Springs, 9 am (hosted by Ballston Spa H&GC)
May 4-6	NGC National Convention, Hilton St. Louis at the Ballpark, St Louis, MO
May 9	Schuylerville GC, Garden Plants, Books, Gloves Sale, Fort Hardy Park, Schuylerville, 9 am-12 pm
May 25	Glenville Hills GC Pie Sale, Galway Village Park, 9am-12pm
May 30	Heritage GC Herb, Perennial Plant & Garden Decor Sale, Italian American Center, 247 Grand Ave, Saratoga Springs, 9 am to sold-out
June 6	Glenville Hills Plant Sale, Dockstader Pavilion, 5078 Sacandaga Rd, Galway, 9am-12pm
June 6	Lake George CGC Plant Sale, Shepherd Park, Lake George, 9 am-12 pm
June 13	Ballston Spa H&GC Perennial Plant Sale Plus, 89 Hyde Boulevard, Ballston Spa, 9am-3pm
June 14-16	FGCNYS Annual Convention, Crowne Plaza Albany at The Desmond, Albany, NY
July 11-12	Schuylerville GC Standard NGC Flower Show, Saratoga Town Hall, 12 Spring Street, Schuylerville, July 11: 1-5pm, July 12: 12-4pm
Summer	District Bus Trip (date, time, and location TBA)
Sept 25	District IV Board Meeting, Knights of Columbus, Saratoga Springs, 9:30 am (refreshments: Schuylerville GC)
Oct 5 (Mon)	District IV Fall Meeting and Luncheon, location TBA, 9 am (hosted by Glenville Hills GC)
Oct 6-8	Flower Show School, Course 4, Cornell Cooperative Extension Albany County, 24 Martin Road, Voorheesville, NY 12186
Oct 19-20	CAR-SGC Conference, Holiday Inn Cleveland, Independence, Ohio (optional bus trip-10/21)
Nov 13	District IV Roundtable, Knights of Columbus, Saratoga Springs, 9:30 am