



Winter, 2025

www.towncountrygardenclub.com
Vol. 4, Issue 8

The Hidden Gem



Town & Country Garden Club of Libertyville
celebrates 73 years of serving the greater
Libertyville area with civic plantings, scholarship
awards, local charitable donations and our
Hidden Gems Garden Walk.

Stillness is the flower of Winter. All hope waits beneath a
blanket of white." — Unknown

If you're like me, you're too busy in summer and fall to enjoy
your garden. There is always something to do, and even
taking five minutes to sit and take in the beauty may seem
like a luxury. But now, we have the peace and stillness of winter to soak up the texture and
colors of our garden, even when it is under a blanket of snow.

It's also a time of reflection, and what a year our club has had! The planting of the Library
Pollinator Garden, a successful Garden Walk that allowed us to significantly increase our
community donations and scholarships, beautiful seasonal containers and community
gardens, multiple flower show awards, five talented new members, and Oh Yes – we were
awarded, for the second year in a row, the Garden Club of the Year for medium size clubs.

We wouldn't have this success if it weren't for our members working together to support our
community activities and having fun doing it. Thank you so much for your engagement and
support this past year. Happy Holidays to you and your families!
Warm regards and I'll see you in March,

Sue Hazelwood

In this issue:

- Magnificent Flower Show
- Holiday Civic Containers
- Memorial Tree Update
- Community Donations
- Garden Dreaming
- Eco-Friendly Gifts
- Meet a Member: Annie Cochran
- Native of Month
- Perennial of Month
- NGC/GCI News
- Upcoming Events

Magnificent Blooms: Our December Flower Show

2

At our December Garden Club meeting, we capped off the year with a festive celebration of our year-long “Mug of the Month” flower-arranging project. More than 30 members brought creative mug arrangements, each displayed anonymously for blind judging by the members across five categories. Laughter, friendly competition, and plenty of inspiration filled the room as members admired one another’s designs. Paired with good food, great company, and a warm holiday spirit, it was a delightful program and a wonderful way to wrap up the year.



Best Use of Color: Laura LeVert



Most Original: Carol Braunschweig



Most Festive: Jennifer Rielly



Best Use of Mug: Paula Lubenow



Most Elegant: Lucille Dauria

Civic Container Gardens: Holiday Team

3



Memorial Tree Update

4

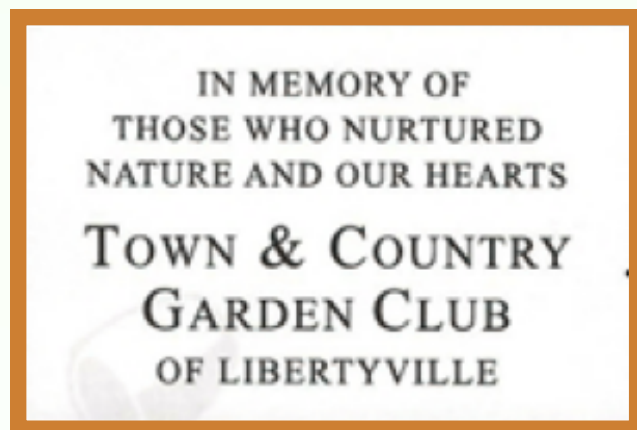
by Sue Hazelwood

It was a beautiful November day when Risé Barkhoff and I met with David Thornborough, Supt. of Public Works to pick our Memorial Tree and site at Butler Lake. So many great choices, but we chose the Kentucky coffeetree which is native to Illinois.

As you can see, “X” marks the spot – a great location close to the new children’s playground on the north side of Butler Lake. It’s also close to a path which will make our plaque visible to passersby.

The Kentucky coffee tree can grow up to 60-70 feet tall. It is known for its very large, doubly compound leaves, and for its unique, scaly bark and oval-shaped crown. The Arbor Day Foundation highlights its following features: “Drought-resistant. Tolerant of pollution. Adaptable to a variety of soils. With its reputation as a tough species, the Kentucky coffeetree is an excellent choice for parks, golf courses, and other large areas. The tree’s picturesque profile stands out in all seasons....”

This tree will be a tribute to honor the memory of our club members who have dedicated their time and talents to beautify Libertyville. Our tree was planted the Friday after Thanksgiving. More to come on when we will celebrate our memorial. The bronze plaque will include the following inscription:



2025 Community Donations

by Sue Hazelwood, President

In 2025, the Town & Country Garden Club of Libertyville donated \$4,750 to our community, including donations to:

- John R. Lewis Middle School Garden Program
- Care Garden at the Chapel Libertyville
- Roberti Community House Garden Program
- African American Museum Community Garden
- Libertyville Township Food Pantry
- Stephanie Greene Scholarship for Horticulture Students – awarded to Delaney Hackett

Thank you to the community for attending our Hidden Gems Garden Walk in June which allowed us to provide financial support for the horticulture scholarship and community garden programs.



AAM Community Garden



Libertyville Township Food Pantry



John Lewis Middle School Garden



Roberti Community House Garden



Chapel Care Garden

Winter Garden Dreaming

6

by Laura Edwards, U of I Master Gardener

Having just experienced our first snowfall of the approaching winter, our gardens are enjoying their quiet time. After the Holidays, gardeners start to think about and plan for spring. We often start by looking at what plants are new for 2026. Proven Winners' list of new plants for 2026 is often a good place to start our search.

Proven Winner's is introducing Astilbe 'Dark Side of the Moon' and Blackhaws Big Bluestem. Astilbe 'Dark side of the Moon' is sure to be a favorite because of its interesting dark foliage and purple flowers. It can grow in full sun or shade.



Blackhaws Big Bluestem is the Perennial Plant of the Year for 2026. Blackhaws reaches a height of five feet and a width of two feet. Its near-black coloration and strong,



upright growth habit create a dramatic presence in fall gardens. The dark green leaves emerge in spring, gradually transitioning to reddish-purple tips as summer progresses. It was a standout in the Chicago Botanic Garden's ornamental grass trial.

Other 2026 varieties include 'Maestro Gold' Hyssop (Agastache hybrid) and 'Maestro Coral' Hyssop, combines striking color with outstanding resilience. These versatile plants are l



ow maintenance, thrive in hot, dry conditions, and both varieties provide a showy color display that is very attractive to pollinators.

Supertunia Cool Jazz is a new supertunia variety for next year. It is a vigorous grower that does not require deadheading. Looking for something new in containers or hanging baskets? Bidens ferulifolia 'Campfire Red Ember' and Jamesbrittenia 'Safari Lava Flow' will brighten your summer days.



It is always fun to explore the new varieties of plants that the nurseries offer. Enjoy the Holidays and take time in January to peruse the offerings for our 2026 gardens!

Conservation Corner: Eco Friendly Gifts

Ann Baker, NGC Environmental Consultant

Five Great Gifts for Anyone Reducing Plastics & Single-Use Products

1. Reusable “Paper” Towels

Soft, absorbent cotton or bamboo towels that wash easily and replace rolls of disposable paper towels. Great for kitchens, cleaning, and everyday spills

2. Beeswax Food Wraps

A natural alternative to plastic wrap—perfect for covering bowls, wrapping sandwiches, or storing produce. They’re washable, reusable, and compostable.

3. Silicone or Stainless-Steel Food Storage Bags

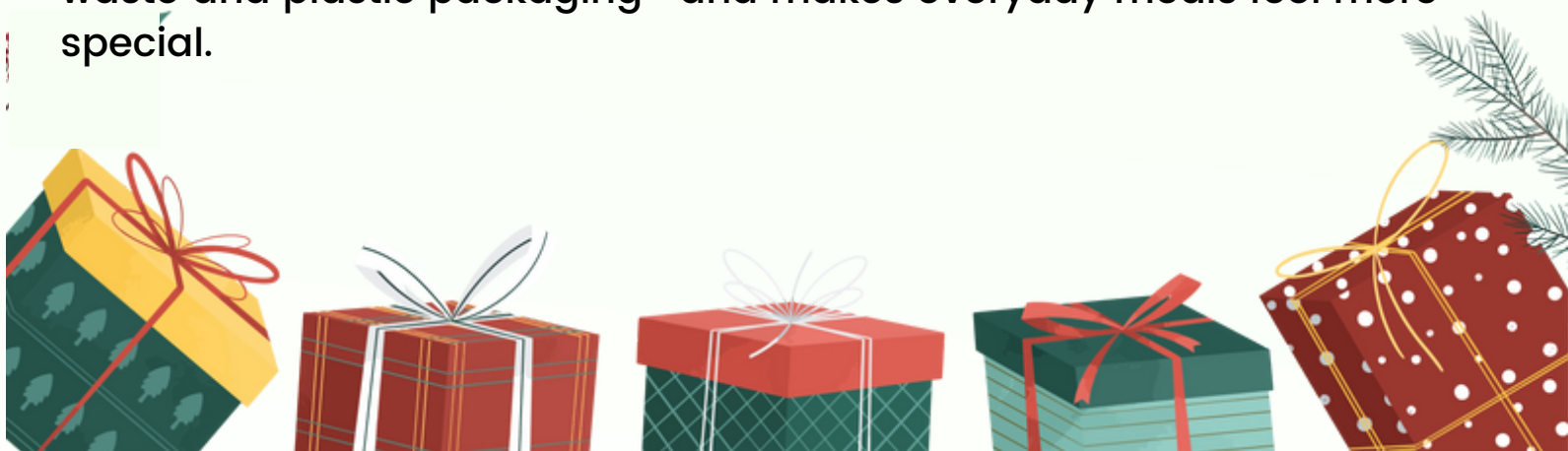
These sturdy reusable bags replace single-use zip-top bags. Ideal for snacks, freezer storage, leftovers, and travel.

4. A Reusable On-the-Go Kit

Include items like a stainless-steel water bottle, bamboo utensils, metal straw, and a cloth napkin. Perfect for work, picnics, and reducing waste while out and about.

5. Cloth Napkins & Unpaper Household Linens

A set of washable napkins or “unpaper” towels reduces both paper waste and plastic packaging—and makes everyday meals feel more special.



Meet a Member: Annie Cochran

8

I grew up on a farm in Wisconsin, the second oldest of seven children. Our family lived on the same dairy farm where my father was born. The house was made of field stone, with walls at least 18 inches thick. Like most kids who grow up on farms, we had plenty of places to play and explore, along with lots of chores. I have three sisters, and when given a choice of jobs, I always preferred working in our enormous garden instead of the kitchen. I became a master gardener in 2011 and continue to volunteer at Chicago Botanic Garden every year. I've learned so much in my time spent there but it's the beauty of the garden and the peace of being out in nature that I love.



I'm sure my love of gardening was passed down to me by generations of farmers in our family. My parents instilled in us a kinship with nature and a love of the outdoors.

My husband and I live in Libertyville on a wooded acre. We are surrounded by Oaks, Maples, Elms and Lindens. We transplanted some sapling sugar maples from the Maple Ledge farm where I grew up. There's a few winding trails woven among the trees, and in between are hostas, astilbes, oak leaf hydrangeas and ferns. A trip to Scotland years ago inspired us to plant an understory of ferns - mostly ostrich ferns, that gently spread and thrive in the shade.

I'm sure that my favorite plants would be ferns. They love the shade, are easy to grow and transplant, and have this amazing fresh forest scent. Another positive attribute is that the deer and rabbits don't like them.



I'm so grateful and glad to belong to our Garden Club that cares about our community and the environment. I learn something new at every meeting. I appreciate the spirit of camaraderie with other gardeners who want to turn our yards into small national parks.

As far as gardening tips go, my mother always said it best: whenever I'd be overwhelmed with garden tasks and chores, she would always say: "Just take one plant at a time."

Perennial of the Month: Barrenwort

9

One of the best shade perennials, barrenwort (*Epimedium* spp.) is a real garden workhorse. This hardy groundcover offers both colorful foliage and flowers. It's also highly drought-resistant, making it an ideal choice for shady locations with dry soil. Depending on the variety you grow and your region, the plants may also remain evergreen through the winter. Barrenwort spreads slowly, gradually carpeting your garden with color.

Epimedium is hardy and adaptable, thriving in zones four through eight. It tolerates cold winters, and can survive in a variety of soil, though it doesn't like wet feet.



Native of the Month: Ostrich Fern

Matteuccia struthiopteris
Sensitive Fern family (Onocleaceae)

This fern produces very tall fronds, between 2-4 feet in height, forming a roundish clump. It has a striking, tropical effect as a mass planting in the garden, where it can form a large colony if conditions are right – they thrive in moist to wet soils, from sun to full shade, and are excellent for rain gardens.

The tightly coiled new fronds that appear in spring are called fiddleheads, and are a popular spring delicacy especially in the northeast United States. They are prepared and taste similar to asparagus. Interested in eating the fiddleheads? First, make sure to correctly identify the plant – some varieties are toxic. Second, harvest less than 20% of the emergent fronds in a colony and only from mature plants.



Ann Baker completed Sessions 1 - 3 of the NGC Gardening Certification classes in 2025. She encourages all to take advantage of the Zoom classes offered this winter to begin certification in Gardening, Environment, or Landscape Design. The classes are taught by experts in each subjects: college professors, field professionals, and Master Gardeners. **Courses DO NOT need to be completed in order!**

Sign up now (click link):

[Environment 4: Virtual March 16-19, St. Louis, MO](#)

[Gardening 2: Virtual, Jan 27-28, Ohio](#)

[Landscape Design 1, Virtual, Sedona, AZ, Jan 30-Jan 31](#)

Save the Date

2026 NGC Convention
May 4, 2026 - May 6, 2026

St. Louis, MO

[Click here to read the
Fall, 2025 edition of
The National Gardener](#)



District IX 47th Annual Meeting and Luncheon
Garden Clubs of Illinois

"Pollinators-Beyond the Bee"

Tuesday, March 10, 2026
10 AM- 3 PM
Cotillion Banquets
360 S Creekside Drive
Palatine, IL



All are welcome!
Please contact Beth Ligenza if you would like to register.
eligenz@gmail.com

Upcoming Events



June 27th, 2025

Mark your calendars!

Five exceptional gardens

Meet the gardeners and be inspired by unique designs and specimens.

Online tickets Available. Village Hall sales open 6/2.
Members receive tickets 6/3.

Farmer's Market sales June 4, 11, and 25th

"Webinar: Turn That Patch Into a Plan" workshop led by Zoe and Heather Evans

Hosted by Wild Ones and Plan it Wild

Date: Tuesday, December 9th, 2025

Time: 5:00 p.m. CT / 6:00 p.m. ET

Designing with native plants isn't just about what you grow, it's about how you shape your space. In this hands-on workshop, Learn the process of creating a cohesive yard plan that supports your lifestyle and biodiversity.

REGISTER



2025 Garden Learning Series

Session 11 –Vermicomposting

Presenter: SWALCO

**December 10 – Virtual
6:00 to 7:30 p.m.**

Learn how to make compost with worms! You will learn the basics of composting, and how to use worms to create compost at home without the need for a lot of space. See the various vermiculture bins, what to feed the worms, how to harvest the vermicompost and ways to use it.

REGISTER