



THE HIDDEN GEM

1 June, 2026

President's Message

"It was June, and the world smelled of roses. The sunshine was like powdered gold over the grassy hillside."

I want to acknowledge all our members for your passion and dedication to our club and for being honored as the Garden Club of the Year (Medium Size Clubs) for the third year in a row. What an honor to win that award and additional awards for our gardens, newsletter, club achievement, horticulture and Mug of the Month!

Our Hidden Gems Garden Walk, it's coming up fast. I've seen the pictures of the five gardens and they look very diverse and beautiful - something for everyone.

The Garden Walk is a key element of our club and our activities. The proceeds allow us to commit to our Civic plantings and projects, our scholarship and book donations among others. It also allows us to have an interesting year of programs and activities. It is the key event of the year for the club and your support is valued.

Thanks in advance for volunteering at each garden to help welcome and guide our attendees.

Sue Hazelwood, President, TCGC

Town & Country Garden Club of Libertyville celebrates 74 years of serving the greater Libertyville area with civic plantings, scholarship awards, local charitable donations and our Hidden Gems Garden Walk.

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- Civic Plantings/Activities
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TICKETS

[Hidden Gems Garden Walk](#)



The Hidden Gem newsletter is published eight times/year as a .pdf. Join our mailing list [HERE](#).

Submissions are from Club members; contact us at towncountrygardenclub5@gmail.com regarding an upcoming event listing or with membership inquiries.

Editors: Ann Baker, Laura Edwards, Janet Lichtenberger, Sally Steele

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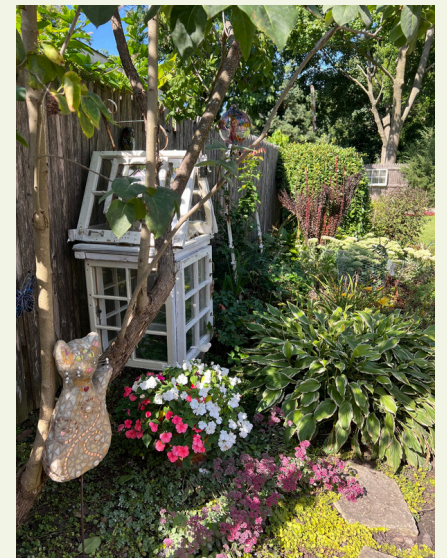
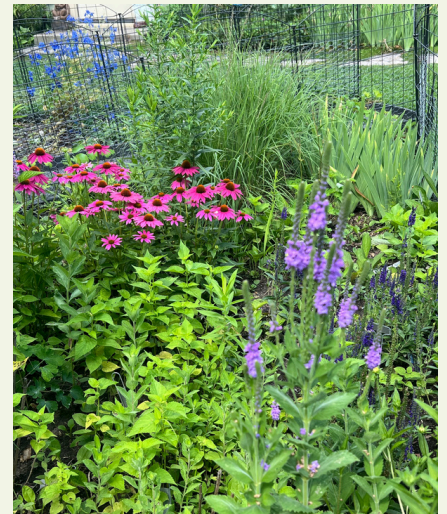
HIDDEN GEMS GARDEN WALK

Excitement is blooming as members of the Town & Country Garden Club of Libertyville prepare for the 14th Annual Hidden Gems Garden Walk on Saturday, June 27, 2026, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. This beloved community event is truly a club-wide effort, with members planning, organizing, promoting, and preparing to host an inspiring collection of gardens. Every detail reflects the teamwork and dedication that make the Garden Walk such a special annual tradition. Proceeds from the Walk fund our Scholarships (See the [2026 Winners](#)), civic plantings and activities (See the [2026 containers and crews](#)), and programs.

This year's self-guided tour features five remarkable gardens, including a native planting inspired by Dr. Doug Tallamy's Homegrown National Park movement, creative use of art in the landscape, gardens on both compact and expansive properties, a unique water feature incorporated into a home entrance, and a dramatic terraced hillside leading to a pergola with sweeping views across Lake County.

Representatives from Wild Ones will share information about native plants and habitat gardening, while select gardens will also feature nature-inspired artists and vendors. Take a break with lunch in downtown Libertyville.

Tickets are \$20, and available online at towncountrygardenclub.com; in person beginning June 1 at the [Libertyville Village Hall](#); from members; at the [Farmers Market](#) on June 4, 11, and 25 (able on the Milwaukee Avenue sidewalk); day-of Walk at 740 Oak Spring Lane for \$25.



CIVIC PLANTINGS

Our Civic Teams, led by Annie Cochran, Civics Chair, have been busy all around Libertyville - enjoy these photos of our North Cook Pollinator Garden container gardens, Butterfly Garden, and Blue Star Garden Memorial Day wreath. The National Garden Clubs (NGC) is leading a massive initiative urging members to plant red, white, and blue patriotic gardens. This campaign honors America's 250th anniversary. Our team responded beautifully!

Photographers: Risé Barkhoff, Annie Cochran, Jeanne Curtin, Sue Hazelwood, Paula Lubenow, Ann Baker



CIVIC PLANTINGS

Pictures of our work crews, Senior Planting, and Arbor Day Tree Walk.

Photos by Risé Barkhoff, Annie Cochran, Paula Lubenow, Sally Steele



SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

BY MICHELLE SHELDON, SCHOLARSHIP CHAIR

\$2,000 : We are pleased to announce that this year's recipient of the Stephanie H. Green Memorial Scholarship is Zoe Zwiefelhofer, a Gurnee resident and graduating senior from Warren Township High School. Zoe will be attending the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, where she plans to study Earth, Society, and Environmental Sustainability along with Political Science.



In the spirit of Stephanie Greene's legacy, her commitment to education, environmental stewardship, and sharing knowledge with others, Zoe's application stood out for its thoughtful connection between community engagement and environmental policy. Her work and aspirations reflect the very values this scholarship was created to support.



\$1,000 to go to Edwin Santamaria. A Round Lake Beach resident, currently getting his associate degree in Horticulture from CLC and looking to earn a landscape architecture degree from University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

His genuine growth and commitment to horticulture through real-world experience. His focus on sustainable design and creating meaningful outdoor spaces for communities embodies the spirit of Stephanie Greene's legacy using education and experience to make a lasting, positive impact.

\$500 to go to Danielle Hewitt. A Mundelein resident, currently a rising senior at Purdue University majoring in Landscape Architecture and Spanish.

She has already gained hands-on professional experience. Danielle has demonstrated a strong alignment between her education and future career in landscape architecture. Her commitment to sustainable design, ecological restoration, and deep plant knowledge embodies the spirit of Stephanie Greene's legacy of using education and experience to make a lasting environmental impact.



HORTICULTURE

THE CHELSEA CHOP

BY ANN BAKER, NGC GARDENING CONSULTANT

The “Chelsea Chop” is a late-spring pruning technique used to keep tall perennials shorter, bushier, and less likely to flop. The name comes from the famous RHS Chelsea Flower Show, which takes place in late May – about the same time gardeners traditionally make the cut. Their gardeners use it to maximize bloom timing for the show.

In Illinois gardens, the Chelsea Chop is usually done from late May into early June, depending on spring weather. It’s simple: use hand pruners or garden shears to cut back the top one-third to one-half of selected perennials. Best practice is to make cuts just above a set of leaves or leaf nodes. This encourages side shoots to develop, creating fuller plants with sturdier stems and more flowers later in summer. Bloom time is often delayed by a week or two, which can actually extend seasonal color in the garden.

This technique works especially well on late-summer and fall bloomers that tend to become tall or floppy in our gardens. I have used it with asters, phlox, coneflowers,, sedum, joe-pye weed, native sunflowers, and native monarda.

For a natural, extended bloom time, try cutting back only half the stems or only the front portion of a plant. I only cut back half of my joe pye weed, which staggers the blooms nicely. Avoid using the Chelsea Chop on woody shrubs, annuals, or single-stemmed plants like liatris or oriental poppies - you will cut off the year’s flower.



CONSERVATION CORNER

BY ANNE STRANBERG, CONSERVATION CHAIR

The Peat Moss Debate

Once a staple in potting mixes and seed-starting trays, peat moss is now at the center of an environmental debate. Peat moss is partially decomposed plant material harvested from peat bogs—wetland ecosystems that develop slowly over thousands of years. Because it holds moisture well while still allowing air around roots, gardeners have long valued it for improving soil texture, starting seeds, and keeping containers from drying out too quickly. It is also lightweight, sterile, and naturally acidic, making it useful for acid-loving plants.

However, the concern is how peat moss is harvested. Since peat forms extremely slowly—often less than an inch in decades—it is considered by many to be a nonrenewable resource on a human timescale. Concerns include:

Carbon emissions

- Peatlands store enormous amounts of carbon accumulated over thousands of years.
- When peat bogs are drained and harvested, stored carbon is released as carbon dioxide, contributing to climate change.
- Globally, peatlands are among the largest natural carbon sinks.

Habitat destruction

- Peat bogs support specialized plants, insects, birds, and microorganisms.
- Harvesting destroys or fragments these ecosystems, threatening biodiversity.
- Some bog habitats take centuries or millennia to recover.

Slow regeneration

- Peat forms extremely slowly — often about 1 mm per year.
- Industrial extraction removes peat far faster than it can naturally regenerate, making it effectively nonrenewable on human timescales.

Water system impacts

- Peatlands help regulate water flow and filter water naturally.
- Draining bogs can increase flooding risk, reduce water quality, and alter local hydrology.

Loss of wildfire resistance

- Healthy wet peatlands resist fire.
- Drained peatlands can dry out and become highly flammable, producing long-lasting underground fires that release massive smoke and greenhouse gases.

Gardeners today are encouraged to use peat moss thoughtfully and sparingly. Alternatives such as coconut coir, compost, leaf mold, or finely shredded pine bark can often provide similar benefits with less environmental impact. If using peat, look for products harvested under certified restoration practices and avoid unnecessary overuse in garden beds.

MEMBER OF THE MONTH: ANN BAKER

I grew up in Merrillville, IN - my dad died when I was eight, so it was just my mom and two brothers. Mom grew up on a farm and we were required to GET OUTSIDE and help with the garden and lawn. Despite loathing my roles as weeder, grass trimmer, and general dogsbody, I fell in love with gardening and learned a lot.



I attended Purdue University, and received a B.S. in Nursing. Lucky for me, as I was dreaming of my perfect man - scruffy beard, flannel shirt, overalls, a hint of southern accent - I found him leading our church music ministry. Barry still plays guitar and I sing wherever we attend church. We started life in Lafayette, and I attended graduate school for a M.S. in Family Studies, Educational Counseling. I worked as a Psych Nurse with adolescents and their families, teaching them communication and problem solving skills. We had our daughter Amy in Lafayette, then Kayla and Chris after we moved to Battle Creek, MI. We now have five grandchildren (baby Zoe not pictured!) and our son is getting married in July.

We moved with Barry's career from MI to Naperville; back to Battle Creek; to Jonesboro, AR; Libertyville; Miami; and now Clearwater Beach and Libertyville. I got a M.A. in Religious Education and taught Religious Studies at Carmel Catholic H.S. At age 46, in Miami, I started running. Barry and I tried triathlons, enjoying the three sports, and I reached my goal of becoming an Ironman in 2012 (2.4 mi swim, 112 mi bike, 26.2 run). We visited Maui in April to complete our quest to run a half marathon in every state.

Everywhere we moved I had a garden, and in each garden my mother shared our heritage peonies, my favorite flower. I love trying new plants - especially natives - and creating a peaceful, natural space for my family and friends to enjoy. I love learning, and completed NGC Consultant training in Landscape Design, Environment, and Gardening.

I. Love. Garden Club. All of it - the marvelous women, our friendships, our projects, and the education. My garden is full of flowers, shrubs, and design that I learned through

TCGC. My heart is full when I see my club friends blessing the community with creativity and hardwork in our containers and gardens and scholarships and garden walk and more!

My favorite gardening tip is to walk the garden often - daily if possible. First, this gives you a moment to ENJOY the beauty of your work and second, to scan for problems (insects, damage, disease) and intervene asap.

Maui, 4/26/26



NATIVE OF THE MONTH: SAND COREOPSIS⁹

Sand, or lanceleaf, coreopsis (*Coreopsis lanceolata*) is a cheerful native wildflower known for its bright yellow, daisy-like blooms. Native to much of eastern and central North America, it naturally grows in prairies, open woodlands, and along roadsides. This hardy perennial thrives in full sun and prefers dry to medium, well-drained soil, tolerating heat, drought, and poor soils once established. Plants typically grow 1-2 feet tall and spread gradually by seed and short rhizomes, forming loose clumps over time. Blooming from late spring into early summer, it attracts bees, butterflies, and other pollinators and is valued for its easy care and naturalized garden appeal.



PERENNIAL OF THE MONTH: PEONY



Peonies are long-lived perennials prized for their lush, fragrant blooms in late spring and early summer. Native to Asia, Europe, and western North America, they have been cultivated for centuries and are often associated with prosperity, romance, honor, and healing traditions. In China, peonies were once considered the “king of flowers” and symbolized wealth and nobility. These hardy plants thrive in full sun, though they appreciate

afternoon shade in hotter climates. Peonies prefer rich, well-drained soil and benefit from consistent watering during dry periods, especially while becoming established. Apply fertilizer just as the new red or green shoots begin poking through the soil and reach about 2 to 6 inches in height and give a second lighter feeding after blooming. With proper care, peonies can bloom beautifully for decades.



The Garden Clubs of Illinois 2026 Summer Meeting

Hosted by District II
Monday, July 13, 2026
8:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Naperville Settlement
523 South Webster, Naperville,
IL

Where Are the Stars?
Guest speaker: Valorie Blaine
[Click for info/registration](#)

June 5 "Landscaping Within"

Sponsored by GCI LANDSCAPE Design Council
Panfish Park and the Glen Ellyn Police Department
65 S. Park Boulevard, Glen Ellyn, Illinois
10 a.m. Check In - Optional "Walk in the Park!"
Located behind the Police Department.
Take a walk and check out an urban nature setting.
11 a.m. Lecture followed by a live demonstration of
Landscapes the Ohara way. E-Ling will create
several arrangements that will be raffled off to
some lucky attendees.
Tea and Cookies will be served
[Click HERE for info/registration](#)

On the Road Again

A National Garden Clubs, Inc. Standard Flower Show

Presented by
Garden Clubs of Illinois, Inc.
at
Lincoln Square Mall
300 S. Broadway Avenue, Urbana, IL 61801

July 23-25, 2026



Admission is free and open to the public
4-8 pm, Friday July 24
and
8 am-Noon, Saturday July 25

Member of
National Garden Clubs, Inc.
Central Region

2026 Fall Central Region Convention Oct. 5th & 6th

ZOOM

Set up your watch parties
as we wait for details of
presentations



Hidden Gems Garden Walk

Saturday, June 27th, 2026

Five exceptional gardens
Meet the gardeners and be inspired by
unique designs and specimens.

Online tickets Available [HERE](#).

Village Hall sales open 6/1.

Members receive tickets 6/3.

Farmers Market Thursday sales June 4, 11, and 25th



2026 Garden Learning Series

June 10th, 6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.,

Virtual

Northern Illinois Trees

Lake County Extension Master Gardener

Kim Hartmann

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Grayslake in Bloom

Community Garden Walk

Saturday, July 18, 2026

10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.



A Walk in "The Shire"

Lincolnshire Garden Club Garden Walk

Saturday, July 18, 2026

10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

