MONTANA GARDENS

Jeannie Bennett
2025-2027 MFGC President

Fall is certainly my favorite season. It goes back to how much I loved starting school every year with new notebooks, new schedule and hope to do better. With the recent change to our meeting schedule in Montana it is like a new school year as we take our turn to visit the state garden clubs, district by district.

We traveled around 3,000 miles on a beautiful journey as Fall hit. Each meeting was its own unique event. On September 13th, we enjoyed Amy Grisak teaching us about bees. Amy is a member of the Rainbow Garden Club, a local but well-published garden and outdoor enthusiast. Look for her byline in a variety of garden and hiking magazines.

Next in Glasgow we met and dined in their Pioneer Museum. It took us back decades while dining and meeting surrounded by the restored townsite. We learned how to make impressive painted stone designs and crystal flowers from the local dinosaur fossil expert, Katie Busch. The generous speaker brought crystals for us to use in our own designs to make crystal flowers and demonstrated painting techniques we could follow on our stones.

In Miles City we learned the importance of Seed Stratification with techniques and tips from Brenda Johnstone, a highly effective grower who uses dormant season and the cold to get seeds going for spring planting. In Billings we participated in an enlightening fair board update for the club regarding future uses of fair buildings and outdoor spaces for gardens and shows. Next, we enjoyed the Bozeman area District 4 meeting at the familiar Bridger Canyon Fire Station. We enjoyed MSU extension horticulturist Abi Saeed in a Montana Ag Live type of Q&A where participants in the meeting wrote questions about gardening on cards and Abi with district member Mary Kech answered and taught us what to do. Abi took extra questions to the following day's PBS MT Ag Live show. She mentioned the Federation, and our sponsorship of the show, when she finished the excellent questions the district members gave her.

In Hamilton, the Stevensville Garden Club hosted the district meeting in a MT treasure, The Daly Mansion. The flower show schedule required designs that were in character and compatible with the décor of this beautiful mansion. The live flower designs by District 2 members fit in perfectly with the home. It was a joyful event.

In Anaconda we enjoyed speaker, Gary Swant, presenting "Planting for Birds as Pollinators." The accomplished author taught how to keep feathered friends safe and enjoyable by planting the right gardens for the pollinators. Finally in Chester, MT we visited their new Plant America project, an incredible Gazebo, with benches and new plantings in progress in the community park where they have nurtured the flower gardens for years.

Everywhere we went we met new people, visited old friends, and learned new things. In Anaconda, we will have a traditional 3-night, 2-day convention beginning Thursday June 25th and closing Saturday night June 27th, 2026 . We have terrific rates from our hotel, The Forge, great tours, varied meals, and interesting educational opportunities. In addition to celebrating the 250th Birthday of the United States, we will also celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the Montana Life Members group, and the fun will include 1950's themed activity.

As I close, please accept my wishes for a smooth winter with good moisture to make sure we can grow everything we need to paint the Rocky Mountain Region Red, White, and Blue for the celebrations in 2026.

Jeannie Bennett

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Notes from the 1st Vice President

Cindy Carlton

The MFGC district travel is behind us and it was nice to see everyone. We appreciate all the clubs' hospitality and effort to make these meetings happen. Now winter is approaching fast! I am relying on a few more sunny days to finish prepping my yard for the winter months. I will plant my garlic cloves and a few more bulbs in the next few days.

My club will be participating in a bazaar the beginning of November. It reminds me of the years we had a table at the Bozeman Senior Center Fall Festival. Our table was filled with gardening books, vases, gloves, etc. and eventually we transitioned into the decorated pumpkins! We are decorating fairy houses and painted rocks as our fundraiser these days. In mid-November, we will help a local nonprofit with their table arrangements at a gala fundraiser! There will be pictures. Let the creativity overflow!

Here is a reminder to update your club's webpage. I just printed mine and will bring it to the next meeting for suggestions and a refresh.

Happy Thanksgiving!

I am including the **250th Patriotic Photography Contest** divisions and rules in anticipation of the event next spring. This is a state-wide photo contest. Entries may be used in MFGC publications and on social media. Monetary awards sponsored by the MFGC Endowment Fund and private donors will be presented — First place $50, Second place $25, Third place $15.

The six divisions are as follows:

- Container(s) - garden club member
- Garden(s) - garden club member or club
- Floral Designs - Traditional or Creative by a club member
- Arrangement (A) - created by a garden club member
- Arrangement (B) - created by a youth 10-16 years old
- Public Areas - any area (such as Blue and Gold Star marker plantings, libraries, parks, etc.)

The following rules will be applied:

- Open to garden club members only, with the exception of Arrangement (B) for youth
- No artificial flowers or wreaths
- To interpret the theme, plant material and patriotism should be apparent in the photo
- No people in the photo, please
- Picture may be taken anywhere
- You, as the photographer, do not have to own or have planted the container or gardens
- Applicant (photographer) has to have taken the picture
- One entry per division per member

Borago Officinalis by Jeannie Bennett

Open the Google Application form at https://bit.ly/4oIpHEc or use the QR code to the right. (Aim your cell phone camera at the image, and a link will show at the bottom of the view finder. Press it, and the form will open. Fill in the form and press "submit.") Then email the image you wish to enter to cdcarlton@hotmail.com by May 1, 2026.

The Application link is also available on the MFGC website.

https://www.mtfgc.org

Notes from the 2nd Vice President

Liz Smith

Hello Everyone! Me again. Yes I want to talk about Membership and how to recruit. First, I want to tell you I had a blast visiting through the state seeing old gardening friends and making new ones. Each district meeting we attended made us feel welcome and like we were old friends. It was great spreading the word about increasing membership. Sharing ideas is a great way to try new things.

You know all the Who-What-Where-When stuff that I like to talk about. I am just going to remind you of a few things that we talked about at your meetings.

•Post flyers every two or three months at your grocery stores, bank bulletin boards, and libraries.

•When you have a plant sale or rummage sale, make sure your club name and a contact number is taped somewhere on the item.

•Invite the public to a meeting with a speaker.

•Put a want ad in the paper or on the radio.

•ALL fund raisers should have an area for recruiting. I have to tell you about what I saw at the Southwestern District #3 meeting. The banner pictured on the left greeted us at the registration table. It is made out of a nylon-type material and is very lightweight. The stand is plastic and also very lightweight. It's so very portable and easy to move around to different events. It has everything — as in Who, What, Where, an email address, a Facebook group invite, standing events and pictures. Anaconda's story is told right on canvas for everyone to see. The club had it made online by Vistaprint.

Until next time!

Rocky Mountain Region Award Winners

The **Bullhook Blossoms Garden** Club members of Havre won many prestigious awards at the annual RMR meeting held in Cheyenne on August 23, 2025. Find the complete list here: https://sites.google.com/site/rockymtngardenclubs/awards?authuser=0

Award 1C Colorado Award: Garden Therapy. Providing a service to a group of people. Their Care and Share Project making 14 Halloween floral arrangements and given to a neighbor or patient in a group home won 1st place.

Award 3A Montana Awards—Writing Yearbook, 1st place.

Award 3E Montana Award—Writing Articles for publication by a magazine or newspaper. Karen Vosen, Bullhook Blossoms published an article in the Harve Daily News about the Gold Star Dedication, 1st Place.

Award 10 (a,d,e) Civic Development. Since 2010, the club has been maintaining the flower beds at the Hill County Courthouse. They work with the Courthouse lawn crew and provide funds to purchase flowers, etc. The County Commissioners recognized them for their contributions through a formal proclamation, 1st Place.

Award 11 Conservation and Environmental Concerns. Marilyn Granell and members went to a cabin in the Bear Paw Mountain to capture the Wildflowers in bloom. Marilyn shared the common and scientific names of each flower, 1st Place

Award 14 Landscape Design. The Club has adopted the Aminat Wilson Iris Memorial Flower in Veteran's Park. They maintain and add flowers as needed, 1st Place.
In addition, **Mary Baughn** won for four pictures she entered in the 2025 RMR Photography Contest.

A note from President Jeannie—Our Rocky Mountain Region has published their revised handbook. It gives every detail that we need to know about our region though it might not be evident how well we fit together. For that insight, please view or download The Rambler, our Region newsletter. There is a link to it on our website.

Montana Life Members

Elaine Wood, MFGC Life Member Chair

In 1951 in Billings, the Garden Club Convention was held and Mrs. R. J. (Evelyn) Mooney of Butte, urged the Federation to begin a Life Members group and to follow National Guidelines. She had been a National Garden Club President at the age of 52. Several garden clubbers paid their $25 and Life Members was begun.

A breakfast with 10 members present was held in 1952 and in 1953 the idea of raising funds for a scholarship program began. Several breakfasts were held at convention, they had secret pals and discussed putting the money into bonds. The correspondence concerned whether Life Members could have bylaws. The National Parliamentarian said we legally could not have our own since we are a part of a parent organization and we would have to have a separate IRS 501 c (3) number, so we have guidelines.

With that as back-ground I would like to let you all know that MFGC Life Members has considered itself to be a group of like-minded people supporting education and having fun while doing so.

We will be celebrating our 75th, Diamond, anniversary at the 2026 convention in Anaconda. Holding to the idea of fun, I encourage every Life Member who attends to come dressed as if it were the 50's. Poodle Skirts, T-shirts and jeans, pony tails, slicked hair, you get the idea.

So let's have fun!!

Blue and Gold Star Markers

Kathy Austin, Chair

Does your town have either a Blue Star or Gold Star Families marker? As a garden club, you can help obtain one. It's simple. Just contact me and I'll get you started in the right direction!

Bet you had already planned to plant red, white and blue flowers, annual or perennial, around your Blue Star or Gold Star Memorial for America's 250th anniversary.

Then NGC has a deal for you! They have set aside $100,000 of Plant America grant money to be applied to "paint America red, white and blue." Get your planting plan estimate figured out.

Applications can be submitted as soon as the form drops. President Jeannie will send out the NGC information approximately January.

Let's show extra pride in your Stars!

National Garden Week June 7 to 13, 2026

Kerry Hovland, Chair

To promote the love of gardening, floral design, civic and environmental responsibility. National Garden Clubs organizes community gardening projects, provides educational programs, and produces a quarterly publication, the National Gardener.

Blue and Gold Star Memorials, Plant America, and Plant a Tree are just a few of the projects NGC promotes. NGC is the largest volunteer gardening organization in the world, with 8 geographic regions in the United States. Montana is one of 8 states in the Rocky Mountain Region and has 23 federated garden clubs. Here are some ideas for your club to celebrate:

- Plan an educational program and/or workshop at your local library, public garden or garden center.
- Sponsor a hands-on "How Do You Select Flowers/Shrubs for Your Garden" workshop at an area nursery.
- Plan a garden tour. This is a great time to share your knowledge of growing while sharing ideas.
- Beautify a manageable blighted area or enhance an existing garden.

Smokey Bear and Woodsy Owl Poster Contest

Jennifer Strzelczyk, Chair

Hello! Just a reminder that this years Smokey Bear/ Woodsy Owl Poster Contest is fast approaching! **This year all posters must be turned in to me by February 14, 2026.** The National Garden Club Website has a list of all of the rules and regulations for this contest. Go to www.gardenclub.org and click on projects and then on youth and scholarships. There will be a Smokey Bear/ Woodsy Owl link with all of the current contest information. Please contact me at my email: stdjes37@shsu.edu or jenstrzelczyk@gmail.com if you have any questions, or text my cell phone at 406-399-1914. Please mail posters to me at PO Box 1254 Malta, MT 59538.

Read on for Patty Schlaeger's story below of how she approached a small, rural school and helped the first graders make posters for the contest. We had a winner from that school last year! You can help spread contest information, too!

FIRST GRADERS ENTER THE SMOKEY BEAR AND WOODSY OWL POSTER CONTEST

Rainbow Garden Club's Poster Chairman Patty Schlaeger was introduced to first grade teacher Josh Carlson at the Centerville Elementary School just outside of Great Falls, Montana last October. She was dropping off some Smokey Bear coloring books for the fire prevention week programs and mentioned to Carlson the garden clubs are sponsoring a Smokey Bear poster contest. He asked if his whole class could take part, and after she affirmed they could, plans were made for Schlaeger to visit the class and help them prepare their posters to enter in the MFGC contest.

The local Forest Service Office supplied rulers, pencils, coloring books, story books, erasers and frisbees and Schlaeger made up a special packet with one of each item and put the name of each first grade student on these gift bags to present to them individually.

Schlaeger arrived in November and gave the class an introduction to both Smokey Bear (who they all knew) and Woodsy Owl (who they didn't). She drew a picture of Smokey and Woodsy on the chalkboard, then proceeded to help them come up with ideas to sketch for a poster using either Smokey or Woodsy. Schlaeger was very impressed at the writing ability and the comprehensive ideas exhibited by the entire class. This first grade class has three special needs students who were very excited to be working on the posters with their classmates. After two more sessions with the children, their posters were completed in January and submitted to the MFGC state chairman Jennifer Strzelczyk.

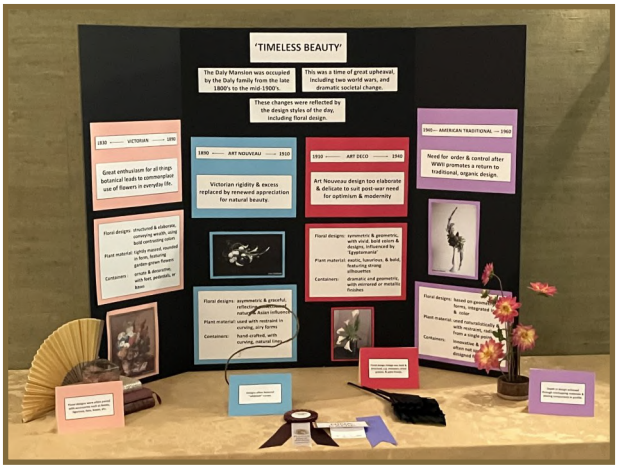
When Schlaeger learned one little girl was a winner of the Montana state contest for her age group, she contacted the state "Smokey Bear" and "Woodsy Owl" characters to have them present certificates to all the first graders at a special school assembly. Aspyn's poster appears to the right.

2025 NGC Standard Flower Shows Across Montana

Jim Sadler, State Design Consultant

Montana Federation of Garden Clubs has been blessed with a variety of flower shows over the past year. The Stevensville Garden Club did an NGC Design Specialty show staged at the 24,000 square foot Georgian-Revival style home called the Daly Mansion in Hamilton on September 30th. As a design specialty show no horticultural exhibits were allowed. The theme of the show was "Moment in Time". The exhibits were staged throughout the house. An interesting feature of the show was that the exhibitors could choose design types from Victorian designs (1830- 1890), Art Nouveau (1890-1910 Art Deco (1920-1940), or American Traditional (1930-1960). The Design Excellence Award and Tri-Color Award were given to Cheryl Carroll for her exhibit "Black-tie Performance," an Art Deco design, pictured on above. The Educational Award was given to Nina Eadie for her display titled "Timeless Beauty," pictured on the right.

The Daly Mansion in Hamilton



District 5, which included the Great Falls Flower Growers Garden Club, Dearborn Garden Club, and Rainbow Garden Club co-sponsored a flower show. The show was held at the Do Bar Hall. It was a small standard patriotic flower show called "Where Eagles Fly" on June 11 and 12, 2005. The show committee had planned to use spring bulbs as the featured flowers for the show. They became worried as the Daffodils and Tulips in the area had all passed their peak before the show. One member, Patty Howse, was farsighted and refrigerated her Daffodils and Tulips and thus was able to bring them to the show. The show, while small, was supported by the three clubs, which all reported that they enjoyed the fellowship and the show. The Designer's Choice award was given to Patty Howse, Botanical Arts-Artistic Crafts award to Kerry Hovland, and the Elfin Award to Cheryl Hagestad.

The Thumb-R-Green Garden Club had a standard show called "Gardening is Golden" on August 29, 2025. It was held in the Yesteryear Antique Mall downtown, Billings. The event was well attended. It is considered one of the events to attend in August in downtown Billings. As a standard show, the classes were filled with NGC awards of Design Excellence, Designers' Choice, Petite and Horticultural, and the educational exhibit was informative and well-received. The Design Excellence Award and the Designer's Choice award were given to Mary Davis for her design "Exciting" a Framed Spatial Design, pictured left. A Petite Award for the design "Glorious Sun" was given to Mary Davis, the second Petite Award was given to Elaine Allard for "Kindred Kin", Award of Horticulture Excellence, Hibiscus by Marion Grummett. Education Top Exhibitor Award by Connie Snyder for the display "When the Blue Turns to Gold," A history of the Blue and Gold Star memorials.

In addition to these outstanding events, the Montana Federation of Garden Clubs continued to foster creativity and camaraderie among its members through a variety of engaging programs and workshops throughout the year. Club members shared their expertise in floral design, horticulture, and educational displays, inspiring both longtime gardeners and newcomers alike. The enthusiastic participation and dedication shown at each gathering truly highlighted the Federation's commitment to promoting gardening excellence and community spirit across Montana.

The Garden in Winter

Darcy Neal, Horticulture Chair

Although Fall signals the end of the growing season, the garden is never far from a grower's mind. There are quite a few tasks that can be taken care of during the off-season.

Tool inventory and repair is first on my list. I make sure all repairs are done along with any sharpening that is needed. Starting early ensures that needed parts can be ordered and delivered prior to the beginning of a new season. I also make my list of replacements and new tools needed to lighten the workload.

Winter is a great time to take inventory of plants within the landscape that need to be replaced. It's a very good time to reach out to your local Nursery to start the process of ordering replacements or getting on their list to have the work done. The off-season is also the time to take inventory of your garden seed stock. The dangerous stack of seed catalogues has gotten many generations through a long Winter. They're a great place to begin researching new varieties and making your seed Wish List. I even enjoy taking this time of the year to draw/plan out my garden plots, so I know exactly what I'm planting and when to start my seeds.

Pruning can also be done during the Winter. I prefer to rejuvenate overgrown deciduous shrubs while they are dormant. I also like to prune my Spring Snow Crab during late Winter or early Spring. My objective is usually to make thinning cuts and remove any material infected with Fireblight. I personally can see the branching structure better without the leaves, helping me to make the right cut. I have also been known to cut back perennials that weren't cleaned up during Fall at this time.

Part of Horticulture during the Winter is enjoying the landscape. Although every season is beautiful, many people struggle during the winter. This can be because of many reasons including: the lack of leaves and bright flowers, less time spent outdoors, less physical activity (unless it is a hard Winter with a lot of shoveling), and fewer hours of sunshine. A great way to combat the Winter Blues is to have plenty of plant material with Winter interest. Ornamental grasses, Hydrangeas, dogwoods, upright sedum, evergreens, & roses with rose hips are a few common plants used for this purpose.

In closing, I personally believe Winter is the time to prep for the upcoming season, enjoy the slower pace, and take the time to research & plan for any disease or pest problems within your landscape. Gardening doesn't have to end with the season ending frost or the arrival of Winter, it just takes a little more creativity to use the down time to ensure a smoother upcoming growing season. I wish everyone the best of luck developing their gardening skills over the Winter season!

Montana, Region and National Award Updates

State, Region and National awards are presented to garden clubs, groups of garden clubs (Districts), and individuals for outstanding achievements that further garden club goals and objectives. Why are awards presented?

- Competition brings excellence. When we compete against others, we try harder.
- Projects inspire team spirit. It encourages members to do more.
- Winners receive recognition from others and recognition creates pride.
- Awards inspire others to pursue worthwhile projects.
- Awards bring awareness of the club as an asset to the community.
- An active award-winning club attracts new members.

The Awards Committee includes Cindy Carlton—Chair and State Awards, Liz Smith and Anna Brandt—Rocky Mountain Region Awards, and Jeannie Bennett—National Garden Clubs Awards.

Montana Award Applications should be sent to Cindy Carlton, 125 Rocky Creek Rd., Bozeman, MT 59715 by **April 15.** There are several updates and three new awards this year. The new awards are:

A-21 Diane Ward Organic Practices Award (NEW) Certificate and $25.00 given for the most outstanding project or educational activity emphasizing and/or employing the use of organic materials and methods in gardening. Please include a short description of the project with 2-3 pictures.

B-15 Sharing the Gardens Bounty (NEW) Certificate and $25.00 to a club in each membership category (A,B,C). Montana's food security is an ongoing problem. This award recognizes clubs that donate garden produce to a local food bank or any other organization that helps fight hunger and promotes nutrition (school, senior center, day-care, senior housing, nursing home, etc.). Describe the type and weight of donated food and items other than pro-duce donated (plants, seeds, etc.). Identify the organization that benefited, and the type of garden where the food was grown (private, community and /or school). Must include pictures. This award is sponsored by the Belgrade Bloomers Garden Club

B-16 GFFG Native Plants and Native Garden Award. (NEW) Certificate and $25 will be given to one club or individual club member who has grown a Montana native garden area. This area may be an entire yard or a garden bed. Include pictures and a short narrative about the garden. A list of the native plants (common or botanical name) is requested. Pictures should be taken within the preceding 12 months. This award is sponsored by the Great Falls Flower Growers to honor member Kerry Hovland and her native plant projects.

Anna Brandt and Liz Smith are honored to be asked to assist with the **Regional Awards** this year. **They are due on July 1**, and can be sent to Liz Smith, 51 Little Coyote Drive, Miles City Mt. 59301 mtliz50@yahoo.com, or Anna Brandt, 2820 Wilson, C4, Miles City, Mt. 59301. granna.mae7@gmail.com. There is no bigger thrill on awards day than being told you won. You can't win unless you enter. We will look forward to choosing you as the next award winner.

Please send National Garden Clubs Award applications to Jeannie Bennett by January 1, 2026.

Healing Through Plants

~ N. DeNeal, Garden Therapy Chair

Healing is accomplished through many media. For some it is through a therapist, friend, horse, or a dog. It even happens through plants. Living in Butte, I know this through the Butte Rescue Mission. Founded in 1976, the Mission over the years truly has rebuilt and restored lives thrown out of whack through alcohol, drugs, and sexual slavery. The Mission staff who do this are deeply passionate and further energized by what they experience as a divine command. In the last six years the Mission reorganized and under new leadership has become something that kept its central ideals but now with a 21st century operation. It has tripled the infrastructure of buildings, staff, and clientele. An annual banquet this early October raised $50,000 with 600 attendees hunched over QR codes on their cell phones vying on auction offerings. The Mission has embedded itself as the conscience of Butte, and moved its operation to the east end of Platinum Street, a metaphorical end of the road for a clientele with a reward greater than that of a precious metal.

Misty Johnston, was the first employee hired by the new Director in these new facilities. No gardener was she. Eventually, she oversaw all the programs the Mission provided. One of her duties was to inspect the private rooms of the clients. When inspecting Katie's room, everything was clean and orderly. Thus a thumbs up. Afterwards, Katie retrieved the six plants out of her locker and returned them to the window table. Somehow Misty uncovered the subterfuge, and a part of Misty's journey evolved to being a black thumb to a garden advocate. Today, in all of the women's dorms, the window tables have been replaced by cubby holes filled with plants. Earlier Katie hid her plants because they were not allowed. But to Katie, her houseplants were her friends that she loved, and she realized that her friends in turn loved her. On some level most gardeners experience this same realization. The male clients come to know this differently. They take care of growing outside vegetables, and some flowers, in the gardens, raised beds and the greenhouse at the site. They too experience the relationship of caring for plants, and the plants in turn heal their broken lives. A further reward is gained in eating their potatoes, cucumbers, and myriad other vegetables at their meals.

However, the Mission's gardening experience goes back to the 1970's. Paul Maloy, Sr. on his own, started a vegetable and flower garden at the back of a former Mission location. For him, plants were his healing therapy and passion. Day after day he'd bring in containers of water for the plants...an arduous task but well worth the effort for Paul. Eventually, Paul passed away, but his family remembered the relationship that plants had in bringing happiness and healing. So early this year, they dedicated a new greenhouse at the new Mission location to honor Paul, Sr. On the day of the greenhouse dedication, a Catholic priest blessed the structure and Timi Guire, a Mission volunteer noted that the greenhouse would help those staying at the Mission. "It's a small but meaningful thing for them to choose something to grow. I think it helps visualize the recovery process. It helps you to see that something can start as something, but can grow into something different by the end of the day".

Rescue Mission employee Kayla tends to her houseplants.

The District Directors
Introduce Their Clubs

SOUTHWESTERN DISTRICT #3

Judy Little, District #3 Director

My name is Judy Little. I am pleased to be the next District Director for the Southwestern District. I've always enjoyed gardening so when moving to Anaconda from Sacramento twenty-five years ago, I was excited to join the Anaconda Garden Club. As you can imagine, gardening here is very different from California so, after losing some of my plants the first winter, I joined the Master Gardener Program which enabled me to know the ins and outs of gardening in MT. I find no greater joy than taking a weedy, uninteresting plot of land and turning it into something beautiful which is what I've tried to do with the grounds of the Victorian home we bought in Anaconda. I am looking forward to making new friends as I visit the clubs in my district while increasing my gardening knowledge in the process.

The garden clubs in the Southwestern District are looking forward to a busy year.

The **BUTTE GARDEN CLUB's President Norm DeNeal**, announced that it has had the largest increase of new members of any garden club this new fiscal year with 41 members. The meetings are on the last Wednesday of the month beginning at 6:00pm with attendance averaging 30-50 attendees. The meetings are two hours long beginning with a 5-10 minute business meeting followed by 2-4 educational programs. The Butte Garden Club will be dedicating the Blue, Gold, and Green Star plaques this fall. During spring and summer of this past summer, 12 "Garden of the Week" gardens were featured in the Montana Standard and on the club's Facebook page, "Gardening in Butte, Montana" which has over 700 viewers. The club looks forward to hosting the 2026 Southwestern District meeting with a theme of "Fall into Autumn".

The **DILLON GARDERN CLUB's President Mary Kemph**, shared that they meet the 4th Monday of the month at 6pm with a membership of 24. The club continues to sponsor two annual events: Youth Floral Design workshop for kids prior to heading up the Floriculture and Horticulture Departments at the county fair; and the Arts and Crafts Fair where vendors purchase booth spaces. December is busy with Bannack's Annual Wreath Walk and Dillon's Festival of Trees where a donated tree is decorated and auctioned off to benefit the local non-profits. Dillon has many more spring and summer events such as the national seed swap day, local garden tour and the annual $500 scholarship to a UofM, Western student in memory of Doris Richard.

The **WHITEHALL GARDEN CLUB** meets at 9:30am on the 1st Wednesday of each month with refreshments followed by a business meeting with **President Kathy Ross** presiding. Members collaborate on local projects including the upkeep of historical gardens and town beautification. Special projects include an annual Arbor Day Celebration where a limited number of trees are given away, and educational tables are set up to raise awareness of the benefit of trees. Flower barrels at the Fire Station and the gardens at the Blue Star and Gold Star markers in the Native Plant Garden are maintained along with selling Christmas trees and sponsoring a $1,000 scholarship given to a qualifying high school graduate. Members also take on the large task of sponsoring and organizing the Floriculture Department at the Jefferson County Fair.

The **ANACONDA GARDEN CLUB** has been very busy with the help of 38 members under the leadership of **Michelle Halberg**. Meetings are held the last Thursday of the month. The club continues two annual fundraising events: the plant sale along with the sale of memorial begonias displayed in the Begonia House at Washoe Park and the Holiday Bazaar and Luncheon with crafts and cookies "by the pound". Members plant and maintain four gardens within the

(continued)

community along with the Begonia House. This year for the first time, the club along with the Copper Village Art Center offered two workshops for youth where art and gardening came together in a variety of ways. Three deserving high school graduates were awarded the annual scholarships totaling $2,000 and the annual "Copper Shovel" award for the best garden with curb appeal was selected at the annual picnic. The Anaconda Garden Club hosted the Southwestern District meeting in October and looks forward to hosting the Montana State Convention in June 2026.

LEWIS AND CLARK DISTRICT #4

Pat Kisner, District #4 Director

As the new District Director of Lewis and Clark #4, I have 3 priorities:
1) promoting increased communication and sharing of ideas between the three garden clubs 2) focusing on how to increase interest and participation in garden clubs in our area and 3) fostering more scholarship applications. I am very honored and excited to serve my District in this capacity!

I am also serving as president of the **Gallatin Empire Garden Club** this year. We have several projects this fall. In November, we will be selling Fairy Garden Pots (pictured below) and painted rocks at the Heritage Christian School Christmas Bazaar in Bozeman as our fundraiser for the year. We were asked by Warriors and Quiet Waters to make live floral centerpieces for their Gala on November 14, so we are very busy preparing for that. In December we will provide wreaths to approximately 17 businesses in Bozeman that support our community with their missions. Our Christmas luncheon is also in December where we eat, visit and be merry! We're looking forward to a busy 2026.

Phyllis White is the Belgrade Bloomers Garden Club president. The club is only a dozen years old, but they have made an impact with 22 members who serve the state organization and work on community projects in Belgrade and Bozeman. We have two projects, one of which is planting and maintaining the Gallatin Rest Home sensory garden, which the Bozeman club helped to develop in 2007 by raising over $20,000. We also have a large raised garden bed constructed for pollinator education in the Lewis and Clark Park beside the new Belgrade library. We're also considering a group project to maintain the native plants around the library. In the past, we have grown pumpkins and succulents and sold them for our fundraising project. We are very lucky to have many members who provide educational programs for our monthly meetings, which are open to the public. We tour gardens during the summer, and we have a public Facebook page.

Succulents given away at the Lewis and Clark District Meeting

(continued)

The **Townsend Garden Club is fortunate to have Marilyn Lane continue as the club president**. She's the glue and historian for the 78-year-old club. Unfortunately, the membership has dwindled, and the town residents have turned to other activities. The club is using their remaining funds for scholarships to local high school students to further their education in agriculture-related subjects.

CENTRAL DISTRICT #5

Sue O'Leary,
District #5 Director

District 5 members met for our District meeting in September at the Do Bar Hall in Great Falls. There were 23 members in attendance. All three clubs were represented—Dearborn Garden Club, Great Falls Flower Growers, and Rainbow Garden Club. Jeannie Bennett, President of MFGC, as well as Cindy Carlson, 1st Vice for MFGC, were also in attendance. Our theme was all about bees. Lois Rumney from the Dearborn Garden club shared an inspirational poem about bees. Kathy Austin, MFGC Blue Star and Gold Star Memorials Chair gave a brief report about the upcoming events for these memorial placements throughout the state. Reports were given by the presidents from each club. **Dearborn's President Donna Hayes** updated us on their continuing projects, such as the flower barrels that decorate the city of Cascade in the summer and winter and the Joe's Trail project. Happily, there is a new sprinkler system that requires less watering work. **Great Falls Flower Growers President Elaine Wood** reported on the Butterfly Garden in Paris Gibson Square, Tourists Garden and the Library Garden. **Rainbow Garden Club President Vanetta Nagamori** reported on the sidewalk garden at the Cascade County Court House. The Life Member group hold an annual Holiday Style Show and Luncheon to raise funds for high school seniors. his event is very popular with all three clubs. All these projects make the county bloom. Each club has many other unmentioned projects which will beautify and educate the public.

EASTERN GATEWAY DISTRICT #12

Lynne Weischedel,
District #12 Director

District #12 has two clubs—Glendive and Miles City Garden Clubs. **Lynne Weischedel** has been a long time-member of the Miles City Garden Club, with a three year break while she served in Iraq. Her gardening began as a child working with her dad and grandmother in their gardens.

The **Glendive Garden Club** is very active with 22 members. Our new officer team for 2025-27 includes **Jody Haidle, President,** Sherry Corneliusen, Vice-President, Jan Pust, Secretary, and Diane Leath, Treasurer.

We have informative programs and guest speakers at each meeting. Guest speakers have included programs on growing tomatoes, making potting soil cubes for starting plants in the spring, composting, starting seeds and hardening them off, seed bombs, herb gardening, and our annual craft event in September, where participants make glass stackable trees or decoupage flower pots.

We also enjoyed decoupaging at a separate gathering to create drip trays from recycled glass trays.

Our community service projects include planting the Bell Street bridge planter, the Glendive Welcome Sign, Veteran's Memorial Blue and Gold Star flower bed, the dinosaur bed in the EPIC parking lot, the county library planters, and the club's Priscilla Hudson flower bed near the swimming pool. Each member signs up to take care of one of these beds throughout the summer. They will deadhead, pull weeds, and fertilize every two weeks.

(continued)

The succulent decorated pumpkin sale is held in October at the community Junkapalooza and Harvest Festival. We decorate the pumpkins raised by family friends and members at our October meeting. Our other fundraiser, held in June, included a plant and bake sale. The pumpkins and the plant and bake sale are our two fundraisers.

We enjoy visiting each other's yards, not only when the host has a meeting at her home, but during our "Bloomer Tour" held before our summer picnic. A committee organized 2 or 3 yards to visit and we travel between member's yards. We all enjoy this tour so much!

Anna Brandt is the president of the Miles City Garden Club. Our mission is to "promote the love of gardening, to share this enthusiasm by serving our community, to provide educational opportunities, and to enjoy the fellowship of our members." Our members are busy year-round. We host an annual "membership tea" which attracts residents for the educational presentations and great food. We award Yard of the Week recognition, help with judging FFA floriculture, and give propagation, gardening, and tool-care workshops. We're very proud to help clean up and decorate at the Fair floral booth, maintain the Blue Star Memorial and perennial garden, freshen and plant at the Baptist church, Fairground planters, Post Office, Otium Brewery, Eagles Manner and the Miles City Community College planter, among other public service events.

Quilted fund raiser

We usually have a spring plant sale, a raffle, a fall soup sale, and earn some money as the Eastern Montana Fair Floral superintendent. We worked hard at the fair again this year with decorating, welcoming "fair goers," and helping with judging. One of the best floral displays ever! We use the proceeds to award two $500 scholarships to local college students that are freshmen or sophomores enrolled in horticulture, agriculture or floriculture.

We enjoy visiting and touring some of our own area gardens. It's always fun learning about different tips and techniques. In addition to cleaning up our own yards and gardens this fall, we have been busy with work in several of our area gardens. It will be fun to see everything come to life in the spring!

Our members have been very involved with the state Federation over the years. We hosted the state convention and welcomed the National Garden Clubs President Gay Austin in 2019. Our members have served in various positions, including state Recording Secretary, and now, Liz Smith is the MFGC 2nd Vice President.

The Gardens will highlight the other Districts - Western, Northern, Yellowstone and Hi-Line. - and their Directors in the next issue.

THANK YOU ALL

For 6 years I was kept busy working for you and with my Executive Board to make the Federation of Montana Garden Clubs, Inc. a great organization dedicating programs, grants, education and communication for our members throughout the state.

This year I was in the audience at my District Meeting. I didn't have to sit at a "head table," and it felt wonderful to sit with the great ladies in the Southwestern District #3! This fall I was not in the car with the Officers traveling throughout Montana. That was one of the best experiences during my service, and one that I miss.

I want to thank you all for giving me the opportunity to serve as your State President and to represent Montana at the Region and National Conventions. My District presented me with the plaque pictured above. It is such a beautiful gift, and I will cherish it always. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Best Wishes for a warm and joyous Holiday Season with your friends and family.

Diane Ward, MFGC President 2023-2025

ENDOWMENT GRANTS

Glenna Waltee, Cindy Carlton and Beverly Geary serve on the Endowment Committee. This year they awarded three grants to wonderful projects.

Miles City received $1,000 to enhance community education and outreach through the purchase of a portable high-quality projector, a reliable laptop computer, and a one-year Microsoft Office 365 subscription.

Cindy Carlton and Phyllis White, co-chairs of the MFGC 250th Patriotic Photography Contest, received $500 to help cover costs and award monetary prizes to the first, second and third place winners in each photographic category.

Missoula Garden Club won $500 to help purchase an Epson projector and a portable screen to use for speakers, virtual meetings, events, or streaming.

Leading with Purpose and Heart

As we near the year's end, it's a natural time to pause, reflect, and look ahead. In every nonprofit organization—especially one rooted in the beauty of gardens and community—leadership is about more than setting agendas or completing projects. It's about nurturing growth: in our goals, in our gardens, and in one another.

Goal setting gives us direction, much like a gardener plans where to plant each seed. When we set clear, meaningful goals for our clubs and our federation, we prepare the soil for success. Let's take time this winter to dream, plan, and define what we hope to cultivate in the coming year—whether it's new community projects, youth engagement, or simply bringing more beauty into our towns. Take some time to gather together to look at your club's projects—are they achieving the goals you want? Is there a new area of interest that can be incorporated? Are there new ideas or technologies that could better meet the needs of your members? When our goals are clear and grounded in service, our results will flourish.

At the same time, let's **return to nature**—to the quiet wisdom it offers. Nature reminds us that growth takes patience, rest is part of the cycle, and even the smallest act of care can make a lasting impact. A winter garden may appear still, but beneath the surface, life is preparing for spring. As leaders, we too can use this season for reflection, learning, and renewal.

And as we celebrate the holidays, may we also remember to **look out for our neighbors.** Leadership in a garden organization extends beyond club meetings and flower shows; it lives in kindness, inclusion, and generosity. A shared plant or food from your garden, a handwritten note, or a simple "how are you?" can brighten someone's winter day. We highly recommend the new book *The Serviceberry, Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World* by Robin Wall Kimmerer, author of *Braiding Sweetgrass*. It is an inspiring vision for how to orient our lives around gratitude, reciprocity, and community.

This season, may we lead with purpose and heart—rooted in gratitude for the year behind us, and hopeful for all that will bloom in the year ahead.

Phyllis White and Norm DeNeal,

Co-Editors

Notes, Dates and Links

Please submit MFGC Membership dues and rosters to:

Beverly Geary, Treasurer

1891 Sutherland Dr., Corvallis, MT 59828-9679

See her email and phone in the online Directory.

Notes from the Treasurer's Pen—

Reforest Montana Donations:

Miles City Garden Club—In memory of the club's deceased members

Rainbow Garden Club

In Memory of Gary Schlaeger

In Memory of Ray Jakubowski

In Memory of William C. Austin

New Club Members:

Miles City Garden Club—Sarah Maisel and Fidele Dent

Saco Garden Club—Joey Newby

Endowment Grants Awarded:

Miles City Garden Club

MFGC Photo Contest - Belgrade Bloomers and Gallatin Empire Clubs

Missoula Garden Club

MONTANA *Gardens*

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www.MTFGC.org

The Montana Federation of Garden Clubs. Inc. promotes education, resources and networking opportunities for its members and Montana youth to promote the love of gardening, floral design and civic and environmental responsibility.

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Darlene Skari, Copy Editor
Mary Kemph, Circulation Manager
Editors reserve the right to edit all submissions for content and length. Submissions are encouraged
Submission Deadlines:
April 15, 2026 — Spring
July 15, 2026 – Summer/Fall
November 1, 2026 – Winter

MFGC is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization (EIN #81-6010783). Donations are tax deductible as allowed by law. As a tax-exempt organization your donation makes an impact, and we are thankful for your support.

Images in this issue provided by Jim Sadler, Cindy Carlton, Liz Smith, Jennifer Strezelczek, Butte Rescue Mission, Norm DeNeal, Phyllis White, Judy Little, Sue O'Leary, Pat Kisner, Diane Ward, Jody Haidle, Lynne Weischedel, and Upsplash.

Contact information for Officers, Chairmen, District Directors, and Presidents is now available in the MFGC website's Member Section. Please send ALL change of address information to Mary Kemph, Montana Gardens Circulation Manager, mh.kemph@hotmail.com

Please update Club information on the MFGC website by contacting Elaine Wood at webmaster@mtfgc.org or mfgweb@gtfalls.com

Big Sky Stars may be sent to the editor with a $25 donation sent to the treasurer. Use it to congratulate, honor, thank or send a holiday greeting. Thank you for supporting MFGC. Thank you for supporting this publication.

MFGC has a Facebook page that can be viewed by the public. https://www.facebook.com/MontanaGardens.

We also have a MFGC Facebook Group for garden club members only. https://www.facebook.com/groups/1086355972413385.

The Video Library list has been updated by Bob Wicks, Video Chair. Look for it in the member section of the website and contact him for information on how to borrow one for your next club meeting.

Important Dates:

January 1, 2026—NGC Award Applications Due to Jeannie Bennett

February 14, 2026—Smokey Bear and Woodsy Owl Poster Contest entries due.

February 27, 2026, 9:00 am, MFGC Board of Directors Meeting via Zoom

April 15, 2026—MFGC State Award Applications due to Cindy Carlton

May 1, 2026—250th United States Anniversary Photo Contest Entries due to Cindy Carlton, see Google form on page 2 or https://bit.ly/4olpHEc

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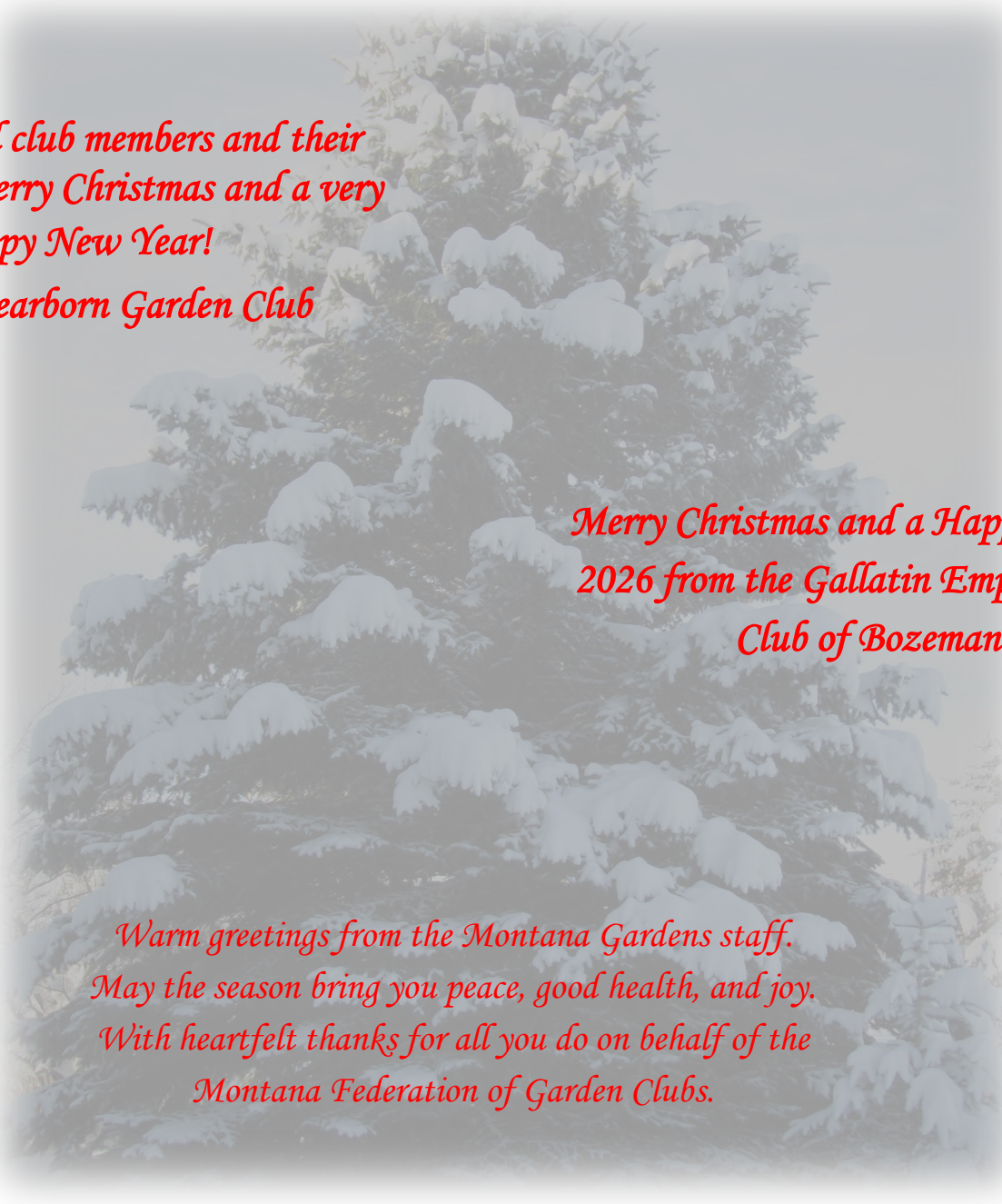

Wishing all club members and their families a Merry Christmas and a very happy New Year!

from the Dearborn Garden Club

Merry Christmas and a Happy, Healthy 2026 from the Gallatin Empire Garden Club of Bozeman!

Warm greetings from the Montana Gardens staff.
May the season bring you peace, good health, and joy.
With heartfelt thanks for all you do on behalf of the Montana Federation of Garden Clubs.