



Nebraska Garden News

Cultivating the Good Life

Volume 67– 2 Summer 2026 Issue

Member: Rocky Mountain Region, Inc.
National Garden Clubs, Inc.



Hello, everyone!

Lots going on to share with my fellow gardeners today—"Project 250" is going strong across Nebraska—Keep planting red, white and blue baskets, buckets and landscape areas in your communities. Many of you are also installing Memorial Trees to honor your fallen members. Thank you for participating in my personal project to dedicate 250

new trees across Nebraska this year.

I hope to hear from each club. The count is nearing 125 new trees planted in the Home of Arbor Day.

Keep up the good work, my friends! I hope to hear from all of you during our Nation's 250th birthday.

Sincerely,

Rod, FGNC President

(308) 289-3891

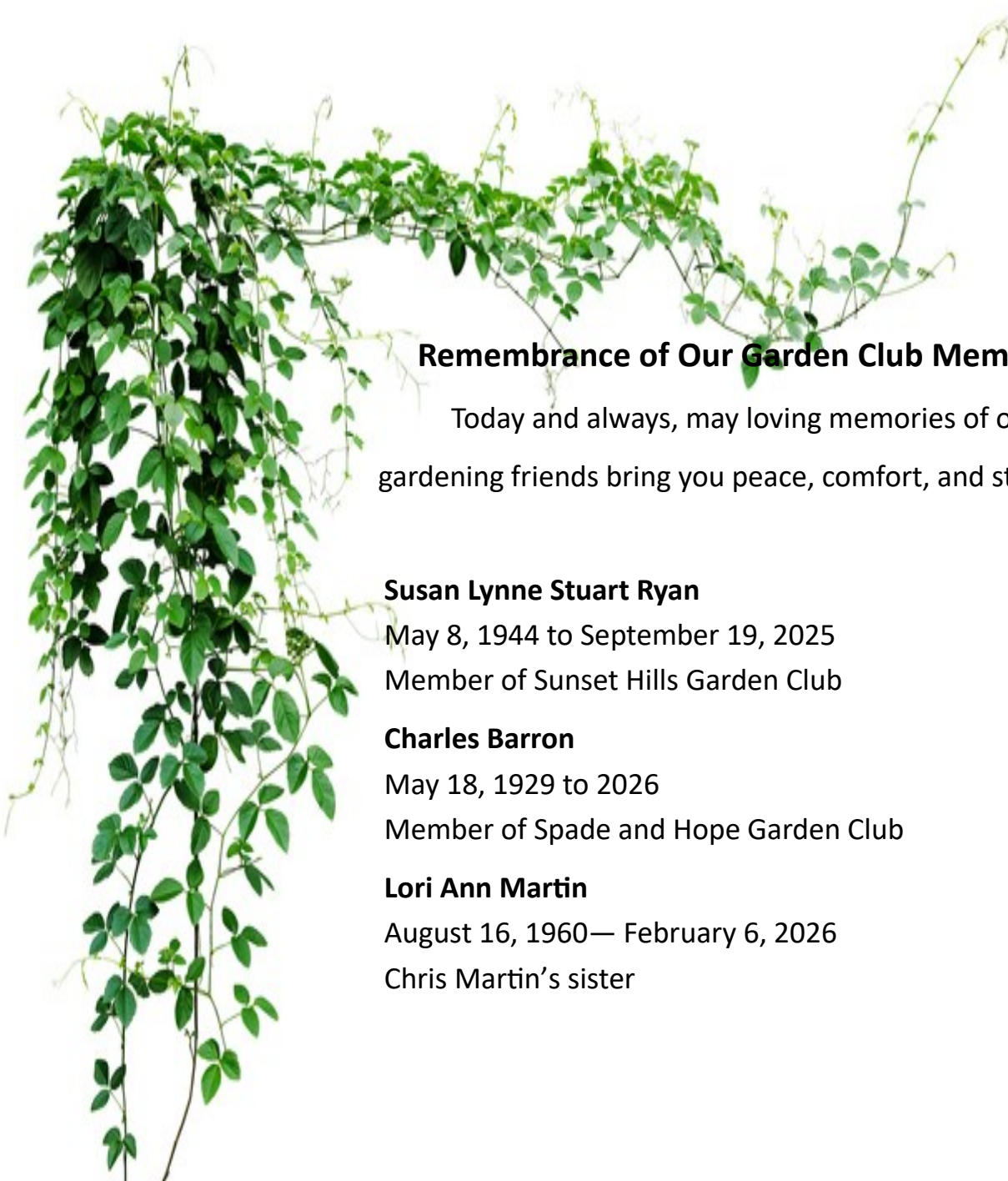
If you love to write or have topic ideas, we would love to include the article and explore your topic suggestions in the newsletter. If you have articles from other sources, we need the sources' approval to reprint the article. We welcome your input. The Editors

NEBRASKA GARDEN NEWS Official publication of The Federated Garden Clubs of Nebraska, Inc. Published at Omaha, Nebraska, on a quarterly basis. <u>Deadline for Copy</u> <u>15th Feb, May, Aug and Nov</u> NGC Headquarters 401Magnolia Ave, St.Louis MO 63110 National Garden Clubs, Inc. 2025-2027 President Donna Donnelly Rocky Mountain Region, Inc. 2025—2027 Director Shirley Pursel Federated Garden Clubs of Nebraska, Inc. 2025-2027 President Rod Ruzanic 827 West A St. 308-289-3891 Ogallala, NE 69153 ruzanicrod@gmail.com Editors Jim Rouch : jim@rouchpartners.com, 402-651-5569 Donna Rouch: donna@rouchpartners.com, 402-696-0906 E-mail Circulation Robbie Kupper 315 East 6th Street Ogallala, NE 69153 fgcninc@gmail.com	Dates to Remember DEADLINE FOR THE FALL ISSUE August 15, 2026 Any Chair, member or Club President may send a report, article or announcement that seems timely! <u>Up Coming Events:</u> Eastern District Meeting Saturday June 27th from 9:30 am — 2:00 pm at the Morton James Public Library 923 1st Corso in Nebraska City, NE. RMR Convention August 21-22, 2026 in Fargo, North Dakota FGCN, Inc. Award Application to Chris Martin 2026 TBA January 1, 2026 Scholarship Applications are due to Lorraine Patrick June, 2027 FGCN Annual Meeting, Mahoney State Park, Ashland, NE NGC Fall Board Meeting September 17, 2026 (Virtual) NGC Spring Annual Meeting, Madison, WI, May 13-17, 2027
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Mission Statement

The mission of the Federated Garden Clubs of Nebraska is: to plant seeds of interest in gardening, landscaping, flower shows, environmental issues, community beautification, charitable activities and to cultivate those seeds through sponsored schools, correspondence and sharing of knowledge for the good life of Nebraska



Remembrance of Our Garden Club Members

Today and always, may loving memories of our
gardening friends bring you peace, comfort, and strength.

Susan Lynne Stuart Ryan

May 8, 1944 to September 19, 2025

Member of Sunset Hills Garden Club

Charles Barron

May 18, 1929 to 2026

Member of Spade and Hope Garden Club

Lori Ann Martin

August 16, 1960— February 6, 2026

Chris Martin's sister



Summer Gardening

Nicole Stoner, Gage County Extension Agent

Gardening is so much fun! I really enjoy working in the garden and especially the wonderful harvest. However, when my plants have problems with production or growth, it is very disappointing. We often face a number of challenges in the garden.

Poor Pollination

Poor pollination occurs many years when temperatures rise quickly. Even though our plants are producing, tomatoes are not ripening and in some cases, flowers develop but just turn brown and no fruit appears from that. When temperatures are consistently hot, tomatoes may develop but they don't turn red. According to Purdue University, the pigments responsible for the red color in our tomatoes are not produced when temperatures exceed 85 degrees. So, when we see long stretches of very hot weather, tomatoes will not ripen. Also, at temperatures above 94 degrees, pollen becomes sterile, causing them to flower and not produce fruits. Give plants time and with a little cooler weather they will begin to develop and ripen.



Squash Bugs and Squash Vine Borer

This is the time of year to watch out for squash bugs and squash vine borer found affecting cucumbers, zucchini, and the other cucurbits in the garden. Scout for eggs of squash bugs now to kill them before they emerge to reduce the population. The copper-colored eggs are laid in groups on the underside of the leaves. For squash vine borer, wrap the base of the plant in aluminum foil to stop the females from laying the eggs on your plant. You can also spray the plants with sevin, eight or bifenthrin, for organic options you can use diatomaceous earth and pyrethrins to manage both insects. Also, remember to follow the PHI or Pre-Harvest Interval to know how long to wait from pesticide application to harvest.



Blossom End Rot

Blossom end rot appears as a rotten spot on the bottom portion of the fruit that is not attached to the plant. Blossom end rot is caused by a calcium deficiency, but the calcium is sufficient in the soil just not available to the plant due to uneven irrigation or rainfall. Adding calcium to the soil will not reduce the occurrence. Blossom end rot can occur in tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, zucchini, and other crops, but is most common in tomatoes.



The best management practice for blossom end rot is mulching and maintaining proper irrigation throughout the growing season, it should fade as the season progresses.

Garden Care

Garden care is important as we move through the season. Make sure that your garden is kept watered. Most vegetable plants need around an inch of water per week, so if rainfall isn't present you will need to water the plants. Drip irrigation or soaker hoses are best to avoid disease issues in the garden. If you do use overhead irrigation, like sprinklers, just be sure to water early in the day to allow the plants to dry before nightfall to reduce the chance of disease development. Mulch should be applied around your crops to prevent weeds and to reduce the spread of diseases from water splashing off bare soil onto plants. Organic mulches like straw, wood chips or grass clippings can be used. Make sure that any grass clippings used are from a lawn that was not treated with herbicides this growing season. Cardboard is no longer recommended around plants, it can stop water from moving into the soil and cause other problems for plant growth.

**Reference to commercial products or trade names does not imply endorsement by Nebraska Extension or bias against those not mentioned.*

If you have any further questions or would like your tree inspected to know if it may survive the storm damage, please contact Nicole Stoner at (402)223-1384, nstoner2@unl.edu, visit the Gage County Extension website at www.gage.unl.edu, or like my facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/NicoleStonerHorticulture>

Bird Snipits

By Marlene Mahoney

When I was growing up, playing outside, camping and hiking were fun parts of life. I remember all the caterpillars, moths and bugs I found and squashed. Also, as a gardener I squashed or removed many of these pests eating my plants. Well here's the rub. I wasn't thinking of the birds. If we care about birds, we need to garden for caterpillars from an article I read. Bird parents are very busy delivering food to their babies. Soft, squishy caterpillars are digestible by baby birds and provide the right proteins, lipids, and carotenes for good nutrition and growth. A baby nest survival till flight (depending on the number of chicks) may require as many as 9,000 juicy caterpillars, moth larvae and other insects. Gardeners are aware from their yards the decrease in bird populations so if we care about healthy birds, we need to continue gardening for caterpillars moths and bugs. A single native tree can support hundreds of different moths and caterpillar larvae. Also, variety gardens provide the same luscious baby bird food. The birds thank us.



Recently I visited the Rowe Crane Sanctuary in Kearney where

thousands of Cranes visit Nebraska each year. Our State Federated Garden Club meeting was there. I learned so much about the cranes and their migration. One thing that impressed me the most was about the changing habitat of the Platt River for the Cranes. I never realized how changing habitat areas are so important to our fine feathered friends. The drought years have diminished the mountain run off for our Platt River basin causing foliage, trees and brush growth on sand bars in the river thus changing the habitat for the birds in a dangerous way. The off season work often requires heavy graders



and Bobcat machines to remove the sand bar growth and maintain the open sandbar habitat conducive for continued safe Crane migration. Many thanks to the State, Sanctuary staff, and the Audubon societies who are devoted to this endeavor.

Bald Eagles: Majestic Symbols of American Wildlife

By Donna Rouch



Bald Eagles have distinctive features and plumage. Striking white head and tail, with contrasting dark brown body. Their yellow beak, eyes and feet provide vivid accents against plumage. Bald Eagles achieve full plumage maturity around five years which signals adulthood. Their weight is 6.5 to 14 pounds with females being 25% heavier. Wingspan is large at 6-7.5 feet.

Bald Eagles eyes are the sharpest in the animal kingdom. They have 4-8 times better than a human with acuity 20/5. The vision is based on specialized anatomical features with high densities of cone cells and two foveae (focus) in each eye (humans have only one). Bald Eagles center of focus allows them to see both forward and to the sides simultaneously which gives them a 340 degrees field of view. To protect their eyes from water they have nictitating membranes (“third eye”) or (“natural goggles”). This thin translucent membrane, layer sweeps horizontally like windshield wipers. Bald Eagles are able to see small details from extreme distances three miles away. They can also see ultraviolet light which helps them track urine trails of small rodents.

Bald Eagles are highly devoted to their nests. Each year they add new sticks and lining with moss or feathers resulting in some of the largest nests in the animal kingdom. Their nests can reach over a ton in weight and are built on large sturdy tree limbs.



Eagles mate for life. Only if one dies, does the remaining Bald Eagle seek another mate. Courtship flights are dramatic. The two Bald Eagles will lock talons in mid-air, tumble, spiraling toward the ground before letting go at the last second. Also, during mating season a female eagle may carry a stick high in the air and drop it. The male then dives to catch the stick before it hits the ground and returns it to her. Demonstrating he is capable of catching an eaglet before it falls to its death.



Females lay 1 to 3 eggs per season with both parents incubating



them for approximately 35 days. Eaglets hatch blind and helpless. Both eagles raise the young and provide them with food and protection. Their large wings used as umbrellas protect them from the sun's heat and rains. Feathers start to occur around 3 weeks with fledging typically occurring between 10-12 weeks after hatching. When it is time for hesitant fledglings to leave the nest the parents will lure the young bird out by flying by with food but not giving it to them or they will start removing the soft parts of the nest.

Bald Eagles are apex predators. Primary food source (70-90%) is fish such as salmon, trout, and catfish. They also feed on waterfowl, and small mammals, occasionally reptiles. Bald Eagles store fresh kill in a specialized pouch called a crop which can hold 2 pounds of fresh kill. Bald Eagles generally do not eat carrion. They soar and glide over waterways to locate prey from high above and dive at high speeds up to 100 mph to capture fish near the water's surface. They have ratchet toes, a specialized tendon mechanism allows their toes to lock in



place, ensuring they do not lose the prey. Talons are 1.5 to over 2 inches in length with females longer. Rear talons (Hallux) 2 inches in length are used for piercings. Grip pressure 300 to 1,000 pounds per square inch (PSI), which is ten times stronger than human grip. They also employ cooperated hunting, where one eagle flushes prey toward the other eagle.

The Bald Eagles are revered as a divine messenger to the Creator due to its ability ride the storm winds higher than any other bird. Native American culture views the Bald Eagle as one of the most sacred living beings. Eagles symbolize ultimate strength, courage, wisdom, and the ultimate connection between heaven and earth.

In summary, the Bald Eagle symbolizes **freedom and independence** because its uniquely native to North America and its wide-ranging flight and remote habitat represent liberty; **strength and power** by inherent fierce hunting ability, reflects supreme authority resilience, and survival; **vision and clarity** by renowned long-distance eyesight, the eagle is a metaphor for stepping back to view life from a broader, more objective perspective; and **divine connection** by native americans who see the Bald Eagle as a sacred messenger, bridging the physical world with the Creator.

Bald Eagle in our backyard, Branson, MO The eagle lives three houses to the east and across the lake. It is unusual that he lives here rather than with the rest of the eagles farther east and north.



DOWN THE GARDEN PATH

BY Gwen DeWitt Garden Consultant

One of our friends is Gwen DeWitt, past Texas Garden Clubs, Inc. president. Gwen is also a columnist for a local newspaper, with a recurring feature entitled “Down the Garden Path.” Gwen has given us permission to republish excerpts from her columns that we believe may be of interest to FGCN Members. The remarks below are from her June 2026 column.

My latest botanical crush has all the elements of a good mystery novel filled with earnest researchers, break-ins and double dealing. A nursery I order from recently sent an article on a mysterious small shrub, *Synsepalum dulcificum*, commonly known as the Miracle Berry. The shrub and its small red berries will, like magic, temporarily change your taste perceptions. After swirling the slightly sweet pulp in your mouth for a few seconds you can bite into a lemon slice, and it will taste sweet. The lemon hasn't suddenly become sweet – the berry changes your perception with the effect lasting up to 90 minutes. The article referenced vinegar tasting like apple juice after the use of the sweet pulp of Miracle Berry.

The tropical plant comes to us from the Gold Coast of West Africa, where it's called agbayun and it has been a part of the local food culture for centuries. The Yoruba people use it in fermented palm wine and acidic corn bread to make it palatable. French explorers documented this phenomenon in 1725. It remained a horticultural curiosity as the berry didn't ship well and was difficult to cultivate outside of its native range.

The fodder for a good mystery novel begins in the 1960s and '70s, when a small group of intrepid American researchers and entrepreneurs thought the berry's active compound (glycoprotein) could be used to replace artificial sweeteners. They called the compound miraculin.

Bob Harvey, the main researcher, along with several partners developed a new company, raising money to establish plantations in Jamaica and Puerto Rico to grow enough shrubs for commercial production of the berries. They came within weeks of launching a national product line when in 1974 they received a letter from the FDA ordering an immediate halt to all interstate shipments of their products. The company collapsed and went into bankruptcy.

The intrigue comes in the weeks before the letter – a mysterious late-night break-in at the company headquarters followed by an anonymous article in a Jamaican newspaper which trashed the company's products leading to its collapse. The researchers and scientists who worked closely with the berry isolating the active compound maintain there was no basis for the ban.

In 1985, an article by Nathaniel Tripp for Horticulture magazine found that the FDA's own contact had told Harvey the product could legally go to market. Which brings us to the possible shenanigans. The ban came just as their product was about to become a serious competitor to the sugar and artificial sweetener industries!

The nursery I order from received a letter in 2025 from Stephen Dennis, whose father was a horticulturalist for Miraculin. His father figured out how to grow the berry commercially in greenhouses and on tropical farms. Stephen sent the nursery a fifty-year-old packet of Miraculin chewable tablets, one of the few still in existence, along with a magazine article documenting the mysterious rise and fall of the venture. The berry's seemingly magical ability to alter sour things turning them sweet intrigues garden writers and articles continue to appear in magazines like Fine Gardening, Horticulture, and Martha Stewart's blog.

There are several nurseries in South Florida growing the plant commercially. Miracle Fruit Farm grows them with 99 percent going toward oncology patients. Chemo and radiation commonly cause a metallic, off-putting taste that makes food nearly inedible, creating a serious problem with nutrition for patients. Miracle berry's glycoprotein can mask those flavors, making meals appetizing. The farm works with approximately 44 oncology hospitals and outpatient clinics across the country. For patients interested in their products, the farm ships freeze dried tablets through their website, oncology pharmacies, clinics and even Amazon.

Needless to say, a Miracle Berry shrub is now in a container in the garden. It has tiny white blooms and one red berry. I eagerly look forward to harvesting and trying out the fruit. Will keep you updated on my new adventure raising these magical berries!

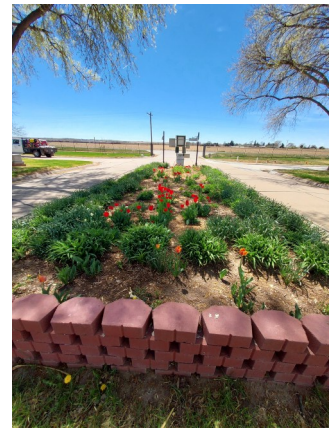
Happy Gardening!



Ogallala Garden Club Annual Report

By Robbie Kupper

Spring has sprung for the Ogallala Garden Club! One of the Ogallala Garden Club's projects is maintaining the flower bed at the entrance to the Ogallala Cemetery. A couple of years ago, we planted tulips and daffodils, and the tulips are now blooming. Last year, we bought and planted a memorial tree at the entrance. We had a plaque made stating "donated by the Ogallala Garden Club." We so enjoy maintaining the flowerbed. This is a favorite place for people to go for a walk, as it is so peaceful. Below are several pictures of the flowerbed and also of the tree. We from the Ogallala Garden Club wish you all a happy Spring!



The Ogallala Garden Club held its annual Plant Sale on May 16 and 17th. It was quite successful. We hold this plant sale every year as a money project for a scholarship program. We award a scholarship each year to a graduating high school senior or a first-year college student. They must be enrolled in a horticulture-related program: agriculture education, horticulture, floriculture, landscape design, botany, biology, plant pathology/science, forestry, agronomy, environmental concerns, environmental conservation, habitat or forest/system ecology, land management or related areas, entomology, health and nutrition. Also, they must be resident of Keith County. Also eligible are students from counties adjacent to Keith County, in which a resident of that county is a member of the Ogallala Garden Club.



All members were on hand to help with the plant sale, and we raised over \$500, which will help fund future scholarship awards, reinforcing our community's growth and support. We are very fortunate that our community supports this effort, and many businesses donated plants and soil for us to sell. We are so very grateful to them. The Club had the parents of two previous scholarship award winners come to show and both donated money in appreciation to the club.

Ogallala Garden Club

By Marcia Crofutt

Todd Whitney, Nebraska Extension Educator from North Platte, gave a presentation on Soybeans at the Ogallala Garden Club April 6th meeting at the Katherine Lute Library in Ogallala. Todd talked about the insects that can damage soybeans. He also talked about the uses for soybeans in livestock feed and food products for people. Soybean oil is one of the more common uses in the kitchen. Todd also gave us an idea for another lesson on growing and cooking young soybeans, called edamame. They are highly nutritious. I will encourage each member to try to grow at least a couple plants somewhere in their gardens this summer. And we can talk about recipes in the fall.



Looking for a grass rabbits and deer don't like? Try Hakonechloa, commonly called Japanese Forest Grass. It comes in three colors but I think this color, "All Gold" is the most striking! And its cascading growth is also eye catching! Unfortunately, it is a little pricy at \$25 a quart size.

Donna Rouch

2026 FGCN Annual Meeting

By Jim Rouch

The 92nd Federated Garden Club of Nebraska Annual Meeting was Friday evening, June 5th and Saturday June 6th, 2026. The Life Member Banquet was held at Cunningham's on the Lake in Kearney, NE on Friday evening. Chris Martin, Friend, welcomed the attendees and Heather Rohm, Sidney, gave the invocation. It was a fun, informal event in a very nice, newer venue that many of us had never been to before.

Saturday's meeting began at 8:30 am at the Public Room of Rowe Sanctuary Place on the Platte. The initial agenda item was an excellent talk and audio-visual presentation by Marcos Stoltzfus, Director of the Sanctuary which is operated by the National Audubon Society. The Sanctuary is a 3,000-acre wildlife refuge along the Platte River in Buffalo County NE, famous for hosting hundreds of thousands of migrating Sandhills Cranes each spring. It is a world-renowned birding destination. It was a great program.

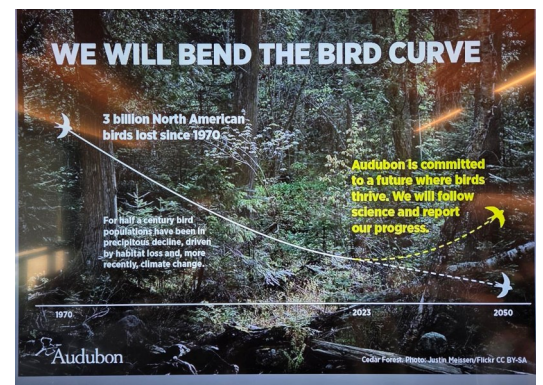


Keep in Touch!

- ✉ amanda.hegg@audubon.org
- f Rowe Sanctuary
- 📷 @rowesanctuary
- 🔗 <https://www.audubon.org/rowe>

Check out Kearney's Native Landscape Program!

Nebraska Native Landscaping Guide →





After Mr. Stoltzfus finished his presentation and a lengthy Q&A session, the business meeting was called to order by FGCN President Rod Ruzanic. There were usual officers' reports, club presidents' reports, follow-up of old business and several items of new business. Detailed minutes of the business meeting are included in the final pages of this newsletter.

After the business meeting, Marlene Mahoney conducted the Silver March, which was followed by the awards luncheon. Chris Martin and Julie Lester conducted the awards program which included a related photo contest slide show presentation. President Rod Ruzanic formally presented the FGCN 2026 Scholarship winner, Grant Nielsen, with his award and related check, after which Mr. Nielsen made a few remarks of thanks.



At the end of the meeting, Chris Martin, FGCN Eastern District Director, extended an invitation to attend the 93rd FGCN Annual Meeting which will be held at Mahoney State Park, Ashland, NE in June 2027.

BLUE STAR MEMORIAL OF WELFLEET, NEBRASKA

By Mary Carlson

The Wellfleet Blue Star Memorial was one of the first Blue Star memorials dedicated in Nebraska (October 15, 1967). The dedication program was recently found in the Wellfleet Museum. For many years, it was referred to as the second one in Nebraska - the Plattsmouth Blue Star Memorial dedicated on September 10, 1950 being the first. However, it was discovered in the Omaha Durham Museum archives that the Mandan Park Blue Star Memorial in Omaha was actually the second, dedicated on November 13, 1952.

The Wellfleet memorial located on Nebraska Highway 83 was damaged by a snowplow and was not repairable. The memorial was replaced in May 2014 at a new location, the roadside park on the west side of Hwy 83 just North of Wellfleet. The damaged memorial was placed in the Lincoln County Historical Museum in North Platte where it is located today.

The space around the new Wellfleet memorial in the park was landscaped by Jean Tobiasson who had just finished a landscaping course. Jean chose plants to give year-round interest and selected them based on drought tolerance since there was no watering system at the park.

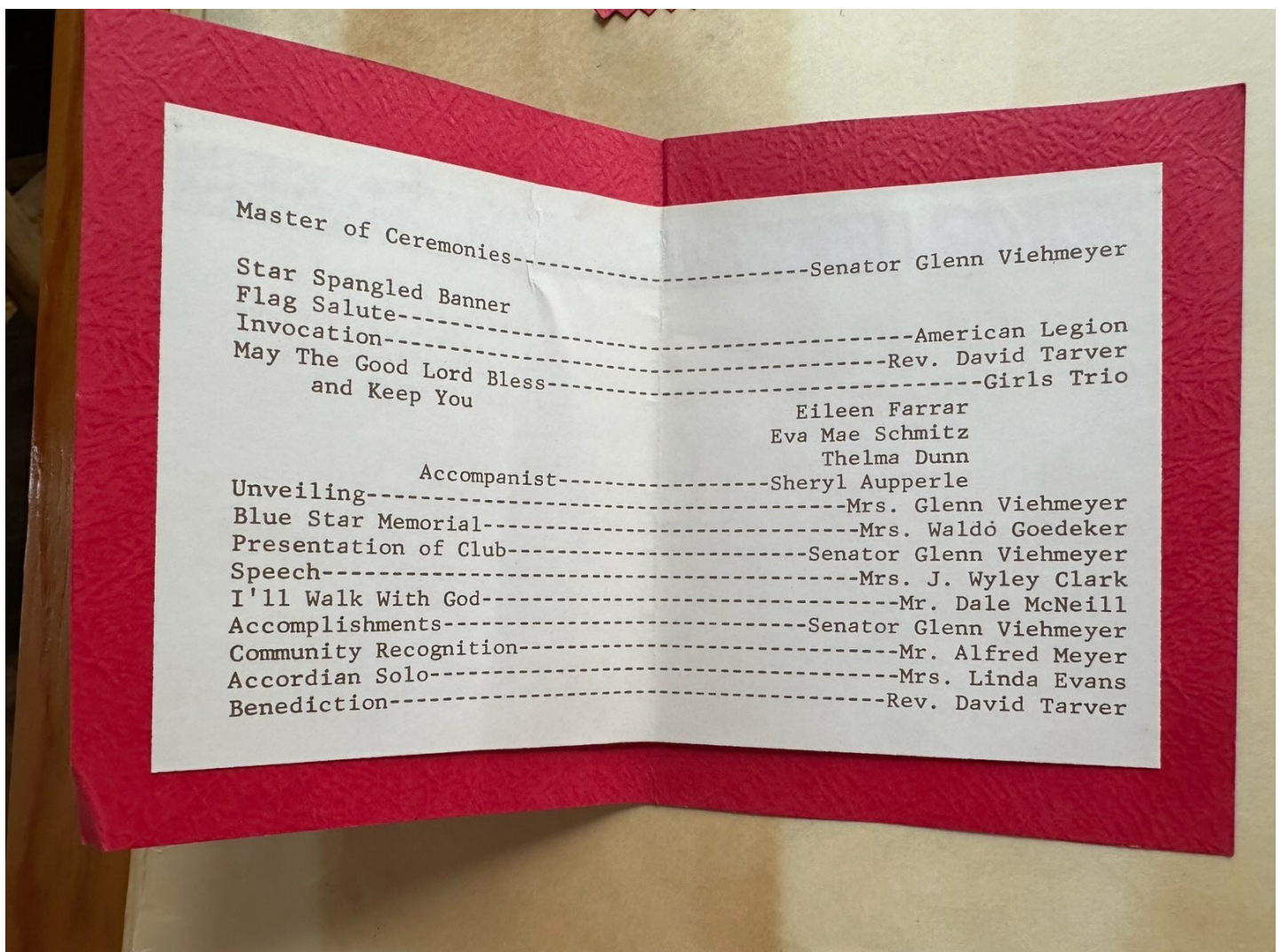
Plants chosen included Karl Foerster grass for the border which have seed heads for winter interest; Goldsturm Rudbeckia for color and seed heads; Russian sage to be placed in the middle for its height and flowers; and Walkers low catmint for the front to give color. This was the beginning of the landscaping. Two Stella d'oro daylilies were later donated and added. Country Gardeners Garden Club assisted with the plantings. Since summers in Nebraska can have periods of dry weather, even with drought resistant plants, a watering system was necessary.



Jean and her husband worked on inventing a watering system that could carry water from their house to the park. This involved placing a fifty-five-gallon barrel in their vehicle, filling it at their house and transporting it to the park. Two 2x4's were placed in their SUV and the barrel cradled between.

A pumping system was needed to make watering easier. The Tobiassons bought a transfer pump from Menards and hooked it to a car battery, and the result pumped 5.5 gallons of water per minute. The car battery and pump were placed in the back of their vehicle. The set up consists of a short hose connecting the barrel to a connector on the pump. The pump is connected to the car battery. There is an on-off switch between the connector on the pump and the car battery. The pump has two sides, each connected by a hose, one is intake and the other output. The output is connected to the watering hose which delivers water to the plants.

Program for the October 15, 1967 Dedication



Gardening Gloves for Sale

Help Support the Federated Garden Clubs of Nebraska, Inc.



The Federated Garden Clubs of Nebraska, Inc. is selling Atlas 370 Gardening Gloves. All proceeds help support Federated Garden Clubs of Nebraska, Inc. projects.

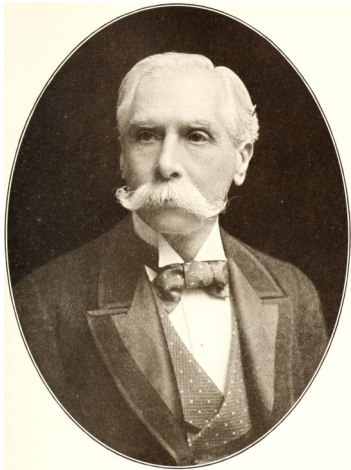
Glove sizes are medium and large only. The cost is \$8.00 per pair or 2 pairs for \$15.00. The color choices are green, pink, purple and orange.

If you are interested, please send a check with your size and color preference to the following address:

Lorraine Patrick
3716 Schuemann Dr.
Bellevue, NE 68123

If you would like to call and place your order, the phone number is: (402) 502-2548.

Thank you for your support.



Quote of the Day

"The glory of gardening: hands in the dirt, head in the sun, heart with nature."

Alfred Austin
Poet Laureate

Who Am I?

1. My home is in the ground but sometimes I reside elsewhere.
2. I dress in yellow and black.
3. I have a unique ability to shake things loose by using special muscle vibrations.
4. My wings beat incredibly fast—between 130 and 200 times per second.
5. I am from the Bombus genus.

see page 25 for the answer.

Awards Chair Report

By Chris Martin, Chairman

The youth awards were due in January and February, and all recipients have received their state and regional awards. We had students from Ogallala participate in the Smokey Bear Contest, and students from Plattsmouth who participated in the Poetry Contest. One student represented NE as an RMR finalist in the Smokey Bear Contest, and several students from Plattsmouth also received national recognition for their winning poetry submissions.

This year, there were only two submissions for Awards in the area of Yearbook and Blue Star Memorials. No other submissions were received.

The photography contest included 5 people from three clubs: Friendly Federated, Soil Sisters and Misters, and Sunset Hills. There were three categories: Anything Red, Textures, and Trees. Each person could submit two pictures in each category. A slideshow will be presented to acknowledge those who submitted entries.

Cash awards close to \$1000 were awarded this year.

We will be discussing a new idea to hopefully motivate clubs to participate.

Chris Martin

Awards Chair

FRIENDLY FEDERATED GARDEN CLUB

June 2026

By Chris Martin

2025 was a very interesting year for the Friendly Federated Garden Club members. Our club was organized 61 years ago by a group of men and women interested in learning about flowers and gardening, united by a common interest.

The Garden Club worked on a variety of projects this year and accomplished many of its goals. From January through March, we planned the projects we would undertake, composed our yearbook, and worked on the scrapbook detailing our accomplishments. We continued to meet either via Zoom or by phone. Our projects continued: making birthday cards, saving pop tabs, saving plastic bags for plarn, and donating to the backpack walk. We also had dinner to celebrate our birthday, toured gardens in Lincoln and Friend, and went to Powell's Garden in Kansas City. At Christmas, we went to Lauritzen Gardens to see their displays and to the Lincoln Children's Zoo to see their zoo lights.

A Tree City U.S. A. award was presented to the City of Friend in April. During the Annual Community Forestry Recognition Program, the City of Friend was honored for its 42 years of commitment to managing and enhancing community tree resources. Members of the Garden Club were instrumental in preparing our town to apply for this honor. In April, we also celebrated Arbor Day by planting a Red Oak tree at Friend Park to honor the Friend Historical Society. One Garden Club member is on the Tree City U.S.A. Board.

From December 1, 2025, through January 9, 2026, the 41st Annual Christmas Tree Festival was held with the Gilbert Library. The 25 trees and displays were beautifully decorated and viewed by the citizens in Friend. The Tree of Remembrance displayed over 180 ornaments.

FGCN Eastern District Director's Report 2026

The Eastern District of the FGCN has 5 Garden Clubs and one At-large member. Our District includes **Elkhorn Valley Garden Club**, **Friendly Federated Garden Club**, **Plattsmouth Garden Club**, **Sunset Hills Garden Club**, **Tree City Garden Club**, and 1 **at-large** member. About 80 total members. Our Officers are: **Chris Martin**, District Director; Assistant Director is vacant; Julie Lester, Secretary; and Cheryl Wirth, Treasurer.

We have held 2 Zoom board meetings to plan for the Eastern District Annual Meeting on **June 27, 2026, at the Morton Library in Nebraska City**. Board meetings over zoom are much better for attendance and no travel!

Each club has responsibilities for the District Annual Meeting on a rotating basis. This year, Nebraska City and Friendly Federated are our hosts. They find the location, set a menu, find a caterer, and take care of registration and name tags. **Sunset Hills will set** our theme: They will decorate and make the head table centerpiece. **Elkhorn Valley** will take care of our Ways & Means sales tables. **Plattsmouth Garden Club** has set up speaker and will also have an activity. And, our **at-large member, Marlene Mahoney** will do the Memorial Service.

Each of the Eastern District's Clubs have been busy in a variety of things:

Elkhorn Valley Garden Club meets at the Elkhorn Library. They always have a successful plant exchange

Friendly Federated Garden Club in conjunction with The Gilbert Library holds a Christmas Tree Festival, have an Arbor Day Tree Planting, and tour Christmas lights in Lincoln and Friend.

Plattsmouth Garden Club has a seed swap, holds a fall plant sale, and has a Christmas party making donations.

Sunset Hills Garden Club continues to increase membership. They start their year in March with a banquet and planning meeting. They have had excellent programs on roses, native plants, Blue Star Memorials, and seed saving.

Tree City Garden Club has increased and maintained membership at between 12 and 14 members. They have a plant swap and help maintain the park in town.

As you can see, the Eastern District keeps themselves very busy.

Chris Martin

FGCN Eastern District Director

Omaha Sunset Hills Garden Club Spring 2026

The Sunset Hills Garden Club has had a whirlwind of change this past year.

A long time member left the club, leaving two open officer positions and several meeting cancellations.

Club activities included a lovely meeting at a members' house with a presentation on floral arranging. We were able to cut fresh flowers from her bountiful yard, and each member was able to take a vase of fresh flowers home.

In September we enjoyed a meeting by the Missouri River. We spent time outdoors together while walking among the gardens planted by the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum. There are native perennials to view throughout the new Heartland of America Park. I enjoyed all the trees and the native plants, especially noting how the bees loved the mountain mint.

In October I presented on "Helping to Protect our Pollinators." We enjoyed snacks and our fellow gardeners' company.

In November we had Master Gardener, Kathy Baker provide an informative power point presentation on "Adaptive Gardening." A statement that sticks with me from the presentation is that "gardening does not allow one to be mentally old." For this last meeting of 2025 we enjoyed the company of our Garden Club members "Friendsgiving" potluck at St Andrews Episcopal Church.

After our winter hiatus we met in March at Taxis Restaurant for our first meeting of 2026. While we enjoyed dinner together, we made plans and approved our 2026 meeting schedule.

Our April meeting at St Andrew's Episcopal Church was enjoyed by all. We had Jennifer Hopwood from the Xerces Society provide a power point presentation on "Spring Cleanup to Protect the Pollinators." We then enjoyed snacks and the companionship of our fellow gardeners.

We are happy to welcome 3 new members and currently have 22 members.

Soil Sisters and Mistery Garden Club - Kearney

Alice Hemsath, Soil Sisters and Mistery President

We meet the third Tuesday of each month generally at 11:30 am at the Kearney Public Library if we aren't off on a tour. In January we have a Holiday Party. In February we went to Creek's Benk Nursery and Greenhouse in Overton. It is an interesting and amazing place.

Programs have included updates on the plant designs for Harmon Park with Kendra Larkin from Kearney Parks and Rec, Soil and Plant Preparation with Elizabeth Extrom from the Extension office, and Native Plants with Amanda Hegg from Rowe Sanctuary. We will have a program on Herbs with Sara Steinbrink from Steinbrinks Nursery in October. In July we will visit one of our member's gardens. Other tours will take us to the Apple orchard north of Kearney and possibly a tour of CSS Potato Farm south of town.

We host a spring and fall Plant Giveaway at Harmon Park in Kearney. We also conduct the Open Class Plant and Flower Exhibits and the Buffalo County Fair in August. In September we are invited to lunch at the Frank Museum on the UNK campus. We volunteer at the museum at least once a month to monitor the plants and the landscape as needed. This year so far we have replaced 3 rose bushes. This

year in December we are going to decorate a tree at the Trails and Rails Museum. We currently have 34 members.



The George W. Frank House



Harmon Park



Trails and Rails Museum



Steinbrinks Nursery

Plattsmouth Garden Club Annual Report May/June 2026

By Patty Coleman

The Plattsmouth Garden Club (PGC) currently has a total of 40 members (8 family and 24 individuals). We were fortunate to welcome 3 new members this year! We continue to be an active club and are always thinking of new projects and events to keep members involved with PGC activities. Furthermore, our social media presence continues to grow with a robust Facebook following of 552 friends.

The Plattsmouth Garden Club kicked off the new year in January 2026 with an election of officers at Milano's Italian Restaurant in Plattsmouth. The current Plattsmouth Garden Club Officers are: Patty Coleman, President, Karin Forrest, Vice-President, Max Muller, Treasurer, and Lorraine Patrick, Secretary. At the end of January 2026, PGC member Yolanda Jasso organized a successful Seed Swap at the Plattsmouth Public Library which was well received.

The Plattsmouth Garden Club (PGC) hosted many special speakers in 2025-2026 on the subjects of making Teacup Fairy Gardens, Composting, Making Homemade Pasta Using Garden Herbs, Succulent Thievery Among Us, Bluebirds Across Nebraska, and more.

Two grants were received this year. One grant that was received was the Plant America Grant from National Garden Clubs, Inc. This grant request was in conjunction with Keep Cass County Beautiful (KCCB). The Plattsmouth Garden Club used their portion to purchase solar lighting for the Blue Star and Gold Star Memorials in Plattsmouth as well as standing wreaths which will be displayed on special holiday weekends. We also purchased a shrub with the funds. The second grant was obtained from the Plattsmouth Community Foundation for the addition of "Badges of Honor" which were placed on the white railings in the Veterans Memorial Garden. The Badges of Honor represent the different branches of the Armed Forces, as well as the local Police, Fire, Rescue Squad, and Sheriff. Additionally, several "Dig and Dream Weed Pulls" were scheduled this past spring and 64 pollinator plants from Nebraska Monarchs were planted on May 19, 2026. Maintaining the Veterans Memorial Garden is a labor of love and The Plattsmouth Garden Club is very proud of it.



Photo On the Right: Pasta Making Workshop March 2026



Photo On the Left: Badges of Honor Project at the Veterans Memorial Garden at Garfield Park, Plattsmouth, NE Fall/Winter 2025

Additionally, the Plattsmouth Garden Club organized its annual Fall Plant Sale and Flower Show September 5-6, 2025, and its Spring Plant Sale in May 2026. We offered 4 different forms of payment for the plant sales this year and all of them were used. In addition to offering cash and check, we offered a credit card payment option as well as Venmo.



The Fall plant sale proceeds totaled over \$700.00 and The Spring Plant Sale in May 2026 was a record with a spike in over 60% in sales. The Plattsmouth Garden Club is grateful to have a strong supportive community!

We must not forget that Sharon Muller took the lead in visiting schools in Plattsmouth to encourage students to enter the annual FGNC Youth Poetry Contest. Congratulations goes to two students Asher S. and Elena P. Asher received 1st place for 8th grade and was also the overall winner. Elena placed 2nd place in the 7th grade division. Thank you, Sharon, for your hard work every year.

We will end our very busy year with a Fall 2026 Plant Sale followed by a fun and relaxing Christmas Party. Some of the Plattsmouth Garden Club's traditions include a potluck, gift exchange, cash donations to the Plattsmouth Food Bank and unwrapped gifts for Prestige Care residents.

Patty Coleman, PGC President

Sidney Garden Club

By Heather Rohm

Good morning Chris, Here's what the Sidney Garden Club has been up to so far. We went to South Ward Elementary to help the preschool kids plant their Mother's Day marigolds in March. April we did our seed swap at the Sidney Public Library. In May we cleaned the Library gardens and we also co-hosted the Plant Swap with the Sidney Living Memorial Gardens. Can't wait to see you in June. Heather Rohm



Who Am I? It is a bumblebee.

2025-2026 TREE CITY GARDEN CLUB REPORT

By Cheryl Wirth

June, 2025 Historical Kregel Windmill Factory, in Nebraska City, was the site for the June, 2025 meeting of Tree City Garden Club (TCGC). Ruth and Andy Lagerstrom hosted. In the business part of the meeting, it was relayed that a founding member, Jeannie Messing, wanted to offer members hostas dug from her yard. Any leftovers can be taken to the upcoming district meeting, June 21st. Review of several Garden Walks in the area were also relayed. After business was finished, members were



Kregel Windmill Factory

able to tour the historical factory, as well as enjoy a delicious dessert, and learn fun facts about trees, in honor of the CWS currently being played in Omaha, Ne.

July, 2025: Members of TCGC met at the home of Vonna Grooman for the July, 2025 meeting. A review of the June District Garden Club Meeting, held in Elkhorn, Ne., was relayed to members by Cheryl Wirth, and Rosie Pfeiffer, who attended.

A \$10 donation, from the club, was given to Laura Liesemeyer, for the Young Gardeners

Open Class at the 2025 Otoe County Fair to be held this month.

After the business meeting, Brianna Graham, representing a local contingent trying to improve Riverview Park in Nebraska City, spoke to members. Teaming up with the State Forestry Service, and the NE. Statewide Arboretum, the group plans to tackle an invasive tree problem (eg.



Tree of Heaven) within the park. Once resolved, the group is hopeful that tree seedlings or other plants can be donated to reforest and re-landscape the park, making it a more viable area of recreation for the community. Brianna was asked by the club to keep in contact with us, the improvement timeline, as our club members might want to donate money and/or plant and tree specimens that would do well in a shady predominant environment.

To end the meeting, members toured Vonna's lovely yard full of daylilies and other flowers in abundant bloom.

August, 2025: Hosted by Rosie Pfeiffer: Members met at the Union Orchard Apple Market, and enjoyed coffee and pastries while attending the business meeting. Afterwards members toured Rosie's pretty backyard, complete with container plantings, and beautiful blooming hydrangeas.

September, 2025: Hosted by Dan Kostka: Eight Members of TCGC attended the meeting, where an update of the club's Nuckoll Square Corner was relayed and noted that other than some weeding needing to be performed recently, the area still looked in good shape, overall. Margo Blobaum noted the Old Freighters Museum, in town,

has been undergoing a new landscape project that is in full swing, and encouraged any members, who might be able to help plant in the coming next Saturday, were encouraged to do so. Following the business meeting, members viewed Dan's paw paw and persimmon tree grove on his property, and were treated to a paw paw creme brulee, as well as individual fresh tastings of the two fruits.

October, 2025: Members met at the home of Carol Lanning where, after a short business meeting, they enjoyed a lovely dessert and coffee, and toured Carol's yard, full of native and pollinator plants in the midst of a private woods setting on a beautiful cool Fall day.

November, 2025: Cheryl Wirth hosted the garden club at her home, where, during the business meeting, \$75.00 was submitted to Rosie Pfeiffer, to be divided equally among three "Garden of the Month" recipients awarded in 2025, and featured in the local News-Press.

After the business meeting, a You-Tube video was shown, giving information on perennials that can be overwintered in containers, while members enjoyed coffee and desserts.

December, 2025: Members met at the Keeping Room Cafe for a Christmas luncheon in downtown Nebraska City. No business meeting ensued, but after the lunch, members interested in making fresh Christmas wreaths and centerpieces, to take home, went to Grimms Nursery, Nebraska City, in order to participate in doing just that.

January, 2026: In spite of inclement weather, four members of TCGC met at the Union Orchard Apple Market for a brief business meeting, while enjoying coffee and donuts.

Grimms Nursery



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It was decided to change meeting days from the third Tuesday of the month back to the third Thursday of the month. The gathering concluded with a program on Ten Gardening Hacks to Make Your Gardening Experience Easier.

February, 2026: Garden Club met at the home of Vonna Grooman, who served a lovely brunch during our business meeting. Afterward, several members stayed and were able to design their own greeting cards, to take home, with a variety of floral and decorative appliques and adhesives

March, 2026: Members gathered at the Union Orchard Apple Market for a business meeting with coffee and donuts, Here, Pres Cheryl Wirth conjectured that our club will most likely be responsible to host the 2026 Dist II Garden Club Meeting probably sometime in June. Though she hadn't had any communication from district officers, as of yet, possible dates and venues were discussed. Cheryl hoped that more concrete info would be coming at the next month meeting. The meeting was concluded with a program on "Five New Annuals to try in 2026."

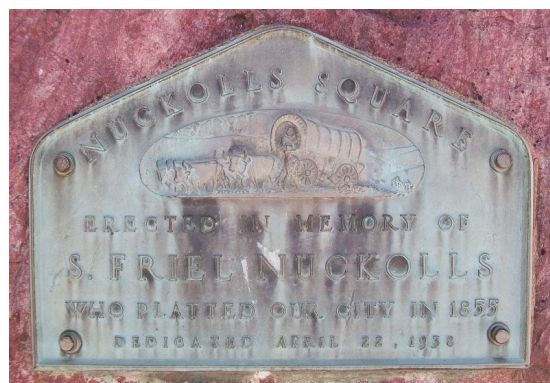
April, 2026: Members met at the Union Orchard Apple Market, with Rosie Pfeiffer hosting.

In the business meeting, Pres Cheryl Wirth confirmed we would host the 2025 Dist. II Garden Club Meeting at the Morton James Public Library, on Saturday, June 27th. Further info will be available after a zoom meeting between club officers coming up soon.

Parks Dept Officials will be contacted regarding application of Preen, re-cardboarding, and remulching the Nuckolls Square Corner Project. Club volunteers will be needed on a date to be determined by all involved.

To end the meeting, an informative program on Asiatic Lilies was given. Rosie had some lilies she offered to any member willing to dig them up in her yard. Although Fall is considered the best time to divide lilies every 3-4 years, 2 members took Rosie up on her offer, and to their surprise, the lilies bloomed shortly after planting them in their respective yards.

Thanks, Rosie!



S. Friel Nuckolls plaque commemorating the planner of Nebraska city.

May, 2026: Old Freighters Museum was the meeting site for members in May. Margo Blobaum hosted. Rolls and coffee were served in the business meeting. Pres. Cheryl Wirth thanked Jeanette Eilers, Vonna Grooman, Ruth Lagerstrom, Joyce Reich, and Kay Shenefelt for working with her, recently, on the Nuckolls Square Corner Project.

Besides the club members installing fresh cardboard and mulch, the city applied Preen, trimmed Evergreens, and plans to keep tabs on necessity for pesticide application due to bagworms this summer.

After the business meeting, members toured inside and outside renovated grounds of the historic Old Freighters Museum, after a presentation by Margo where members learned, most importantly, that this historic operation was the precursor of the famous Pony Express.

June, 2026: Members met at the home of Jeanette Eilers for a business meeting, with brunch, as well as a plant swap with the backdrop of a pretty yard filled with blooming daylilies, hydrangeas, and hostas.

This sums up the 2025-2026 year in review for our club. Thanks to all who attended and participated in all that they were able in making this another successful year. We will always be grateful for past and current members with whom we have shared ideas, work, and comradery, as it seems we learn new and interesting things every month. May the learning continue!



Elkhorn Report

By Louise Speef

Our first meeting of the year was in March. We discussed meeting ideas and locations.

Also times and days that worked better for our members. We changed times of meetings to make it easier for some and it has worked well.

In April we wanted to visit the new large greenhouse in Waterloo. It's easy to drive to and the owner gives us personal care so that most of us left carrying our favorite plants out the door. Then we went to the Waterloo Library to have snacks and have our meeting.

Then in May, we toured the iris collection in Eugene Mahoney Park in Ashland. The Sass family from Bennington was noted for their collection over the years years. The varieties were very well maintained and identified. The variety of iris received awards and were well known.

Having our district meetings is always in June which is National Garden Week. Since our club hosted it at Bethany church in Elkhorn it took a lot of planning to have a successful meeting. Scott Evans was our guest and spoke on peonies and gave excellent ideas on where to plant, when to cut off after blooming etc.

Our July meeting was cancelled because people did not want to be in the heat. But it was emphasized to use the website of the Nebraska clubs. The address is www.federatedgardenclubsofnebraskalnc.com to know the happenings which will keep you informed.

In the month of September, we took a tour of the 100 year old Sunken Gardens in Lincoln. Every inch is exciting to look at because it was continuing beauty wherever you look. Every inch was covered with something beautiful. We had a tour guide explaining the past and future plans for them.

On October 17 Lauritzen Gardens had a free admission from 9 - 5 p.m. So most of our members came. It was crowded but it let up later. The hardest part was getting a parking spot. It did rain about the time people were leaving. Fall colors added a beautiful touch.

November is our craft month and we decided to design our own painted linen tote bags with handles. Marla found garden paint designs to choose from. We had to wait several days before the colors dried but it was worth waiting. They could be used as gifts also.

This year we had a pot luck dinner at Marla Tillotson's house. The streets were slippery but most made it. We had our usual gift exchange choosing by shape or wrapping paper. We had relaxed conversation to end 2025.

Louise Speer
President



Sunken Gardens in Lincoln, NE