

THE GARDENZETTE



The newsletter of the Rock Spring Garden Club, Arlington, VA www.rockspringgardenclub.com

Rock Spring Garden Club is a member of the National Garden Clubs Inc., Central Atlantic Region, National Capital Area Garden Club, Inc., District III; and Southern Atlantic Region, Virginia Federated Garden Clubs, Inc., Piedmont District



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OFFICERS

PRESIDENT

Cheryl Atkinson

VICE PRESIDENT

Maryam Zolecki

SECRETARY

Chris Day

TREASURER

Joan Hession

GARDENZETTE EDITOR

Pat Getz

General Meeting

November 20, 2025 – 10:00 am

Little Falls Presbyterian Church

Lower Level Friendship Hall

6025 Little Falls Road

Arlington, VA 22207

Hydroponics for Beginners

Want to enjoy some fresh herbs and vegetables that you can grow indoors in the winter? Joe Larsen, a Master Gardener, will lead us in exploring the world of hydroponics, a soil-free method of growing plants using mineral nutrient solutions in water.

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President's Message

By Cheryl Atkinson

November is a beautiful, and busy, month—the beauty of fall colors along with all the cleanup tasks as perennials die back and leaves blanket our beds and lawns. It's also the beginning of the holiday season with the joys it brings along with long “to do” lists!

Our **Harvest Fundraiser**, just around the corner, is a November highlight, and I hope everyone will take part, whether by donating lovely floral arrangements, helping with set up and staffing the event, or just coming out to support the effort. It's one of our biggest events of the year, and the funds we raise help to support our community projects, scholarships, and beautification efforts. Plus, it's a fun way to spend time together and celebrate the fruits of our labor (literally!).

As Thanksgiving approaches, I want to say how thankful I am for each of you. Your energy, creativity, and love for gardening and floral design keep our club growing strong all year long. Wishing you all a happy November and a very joyful Thanksgiving.

Year to Date Budget Report

Beginning Balance: \$18,844.43

Revenue: \$437.50

Expenses: \$685.67

Net: \$(248.17)

Ending Balance: \$18,596.26

Next Board Meeting

(note: no December meeting)

Thursday January 8, 2026

at 4:30 pm

Ways and Means

By Sheila Moore

Our November 20 general meeting is our last before Christmas, and Ways and Means needs your help! If you have any lovely little gifts that we might sell, please bring them in. Someone else might love them as a hostess gift, thank you, or little remembrance. They do not have to relate to gardening. And, of course you know, that if they do not sell, you are welcome to reclaim them. If they are not reclaimed they will go to the Hospice Thrift Shop.

Show: Design of the Month

Creative Reflective

By Kate Abrahams

November's floral design assignment is a Creative Reflective Design. NGC Judge Arlene Stewart demonstrated this design type during last month's program. Her design using a reflective mirror tile covered container and shiny blue washi tape wrapped around basket reed created dominant reflective elements. Arlene's and other reflective designs are pictured below. Reflective elements should be incorporated into a unified design where the plant material is secondary to the reflective components. Since it is a creative design, remember to welcome empty space, striking color, interesting placement of the components. Staging mirrors in front or under a design is not allowed to substitute for reflective elements within the design itself. The **NGC Handbook of Flower Shows** (2017 edition) p. 75 describes this design as "A Creative Design containing reflective materials giving back images of light to the viewer. The reflective materials are an integral part of the overall design." Thank you for experimenting with a new design type!





Annual Gift Drive for Mary Marshall Residents

By Joan Hession

For the past 5 years we have supported the residents of Mary Marshall Senior Living Residences with gifts of socks, caps, gloves and personal care products during the holiday season. We will be collecting again this year from December 1 to December 15.

Items needed:

1. Socks: all types of male and female, mostly medium and large sizes: athletic and crew socks, trouser socks, warm weight walking socks, diabetic cotton socks, slipper socks with safety grips on the soles.
2. Personal Products: body wash, shampoo and conditioner - preferred is the large containers which contain combinations of the products.
3. Caps and gloves: Large-sized gloves (not mittens) and caps that cover the ears.

There are three ways you can participate:

1. Drop off your gifts at Joan Hession's house. There will be a large box under cover on the front porch.
2. You can bring them to the Holiday Tea at the home of Sharon Siems on December 11 at 2:00. There will be boxes in which to place your donations. Divina Alston, Executive Director at Mary Marshall, and TJ, the Life Enrichment Coordinator, will be at the Tea. They transport the donations back to Mary Marshall and match the items to specific residents.
3. Mail your gifts directly from a vendor (e.g. , Amazon, Walmart, Target) to:
Divina Alston, Executive Director
Mary Marshall Residences
2000 5th Street South
Arlington, VA 22204
*** If you select this option, it is critical that the name of Divina Alston be the Addressee as the facility receives many packages each day.

Senior Outreach By Joan Hession



As you can see, the front entrance garden at Mary Marshall Senior Living Residence is thriving. This beautiful bed was installed in October 2023 using funds from a bequest of one of our members, Georga Shaw.

As we begin our new year, our first meeting with the residents was on Oct. 9th. We prepared for our Fall planting by removing the annuals from the upper deck window boxes and raised planter and adding Espoma soil to the boxes. At our meeting with the residents, we not only introduced ourselves, but also discussed the importance of plants and trees. We had pansies for residents to plant in not only individual cups, but also the upper deck window boxes and raised garden cart. 11 residents enjoyed taking their pansy cups to their rooms.



Garden Therapy

By Pat Getz

The Garden Therapy Committee met on October 9 at Glebe Elementary School for our monthly program with the preschoolers. Our theme was pumpkins. First, Kate Abrahams read the book "Seed, Sprout, Pumpkin Pie!" which illustrated all the stages in a pumpkin's lifecycle from seed planting to a delicious pumpkin pie. The children were very interested, many telling us about their jack o' lanterns, roasted pumpkin seed snacks, and love of pumpkin pie. Next Margi Melnick led

the children in a song about pumpkins and autumn; Margi supplied them with pumpkins to hold during the singing. We then moved on to the hands-on project, making floral designs inside hollowed out pumpkins. Susan Scotti, Mary Garnett and Pat Getz were on hand to help with the project. The children loved making their designs, which were finished off by adding Halloween stickers and stick figures of ghosts, witches, and black cats. The students were excited to have a decoration to take home with them and excited for the upcoming Halloween holiday.



Youth Activities

By Joyce Fall

Nothing says fall like pumpkins and flowers! The Youth Activities Committee recently spent a lively afternoon with second graders at Tuckahoe Elementary School, teaching them how to make pumpkin flower arrangements. With bright blooms, small pumpkins, and lots of laughter, each child created a beautiful fall centerpiece to take home. The members (Lea Alice Parker, Lynda Martin, Debbie Czarniecki, Mary Garnett, and Joyce Fall) were delighted to share the joy of flowers and a little autumn magic with the next generation of gardeners.



Note: The Youth Activities Committee just received a grant of \$300 from the VFGC to be used for our annual Mother's Day project in May. We have 70+ second graders who make floral designs to take home to their mothers during this program, and the grant will be a great help in purchasing the flowers and other supplies needed. Many thanks to Maryam Zolecki for putting in our application.

PHOTO GALLERY

From the October General Meeting



Arlene Stewart demonstrated several design types



**New member Debbie Czarniecki
with Janis Gunel, Jo Ella Samp, Maryam Zolecki**

Creative Parallel Designs





From Renee Bayes

Cotton plant in North Carolina



Camellias



From George Ruppert

His magnificent Christmas Cactus is ready for the holidays



From Pat Getz

White Sands National Park, New Mexico



Saguaro National Park, Arizona



It's Harvest Fundraiser Time!

By Janet Nuzum

If it's November, then it's time for our annual pre-Thanksgiving fundraiser! This year, it will take place on **Tuesday, Nov. 25 from 3:30 – 6:30 pm at Little Falls Presbyterian Church** (where we hold our general meetings). It is the primary way we raise funds to support our operating expenses, so we rely on everyone to contribute to its success. It also is a great way to promote awareness of the club to friends, neighbors, and newcomers.

If you have not yet committed to **donate one or two floral designs** – a pumpkin design or any design appropriate for the season – please consider doing so and inform Janet Nuzum. We are not yet at our target of 70 designs to sell, so we can use some more lovely donations. As usual, your design donation will count toward the annual club requirements for floral designs. If you are uncertain of what kind of floral design is appropriate, just imagine what would make a lovely centerpiece for a Thanksgiving table, entry table, or hostess gift. Our designs are especially geared to the Thanksgiving holidays.

Join us the Sunday before, on Nov. 23 between 1:00 and 4:00 pm, for a floral design prep party at the home of Kate Abrahams. Bring your own container and flowers; we will provide oasis. Please let Kate and Janet know if you plan to attend so we have a good head-count. This is a great opportunity to get inspired by other club members, and learn how to make an attractive pumpkin floral design or other fall-themed arrangement. A tip sheet prepared last year by our pumpkin design experts follows this article.

Perhaps most important, one task that we request everyone to help us with, regardless of whether you donate a design or can help on the day of the fundraiser itself, is to help us **promote the event and recruit customers**. Please spread the word among your neighbors, friends, work colleagues, fellow volunteers, local businesses, PTAs, places of worship, everywhere where potential customers may be found. In addition to pumpkin designs and fall-inspired designs, we will be offering several varieties of amaryllis that we have potted and nurtured so they have already started to grow. Two electronic versions of the flyer are attached at the end of this article. If you want hard copies of the flyer or a postcard-sized version of the flyer to hand out, contact Janet Nuzum. Your personal promotion efforts are worth their weight in gold!

Finally, we could still use a few more **volunteers to help onsite** on the day of the sale itself. If you can spare a few hours on the afternoon of Tuesday, Nov. 25, please contact Janet Nuzum. We will be setting up from 1:00 – 3:00, and the fundraiser will be open to the public from 3:30 – 6:30, with cleanup hopefully concluding at 7:00 pm.

THANK YOU in advance for everything you are doing to help with this annual fundraiser. Our success will reflect the outstanding talents of our members and contribute greatly to the beauty of the Thanksgiving holidays for many families!

Pumpkin Care and Preparation

1. Purchase medium to small size pumpkins; the large pumpkins are too heavy. The pumpkins come in various colors---not just orange---shapes and varieties.
2. After purchasing your pumpkins, keep them in a dry, cool, and dark area---such as a basement or garage, which is best for longevity. Store them on cardboard---not directly on the concrete floor.
3. Cut and clean your pumpkin the day before you plan to design. This time frame will give your pumpkin time to dry out, which will cut down on bacterial growth. Some designers coat the inside of pumpkin with a thin layer of Vaseline to help the pumpkin stay fresh longer. Some designers mix one part bleach to a ten-part water solution in a large container and let pumpkins bathe in the solution for two minutes. Remove pumpkins and let them air dry. The bleach soak also helps prevent mold and decay. **(Neither of us do this step)**
4. Soak your cut oasis no longer than 10-15 minutes. Longer soaking will cause the oasis to disintegrate when flower stems are inserted. Let the oasis gently absorb the water. Don't push oasis down into the water. ******if you choose to use chicken wire instead of oasis, you will need to use a firm waterproof container for your arrangement.**
5. Choose a plastic or any type of clean waterproof container that will fit into your pumpkin. The container should rise a small amount above the pumpkin rim. A heavy duty Ziplock bag can also serve as a container. Never place oasis inside pumpkin without a container. Placing a container inside the pumpkin will prevent any moisture build-up, which causes bacteria and leads to early pumpkin rot.

Flowers to Consider for Longevity

Carnations, chrysanthemums, alstroemeria, cockscomb, succulents, dried pods, zinnias, Asiatic lilies, solidago, orchids, thistles, lisianthus, Queen Anne's Lace, sedums, billy balls, dusty miller, proteas and other tropical plants---just to name a few---are excellent choices for flowers that will last a long time.

Hydrangeas often tend to wilt, and roses do not last long.

--Flowers may be purchased at florists, farmers markets, most grocery stores, or your own backyard--

Trader Joe's on Rt 7 and Wegmans grocery stores have fresh flower selections daily and their prices are very affordable.

Conditioning Flowers and Greens

Proper preparation of cut flowers and greens helps to promote longevity and extend freshness

1. When purchasing flowers, stay away from drooping floral heads and yellowing leaves. Greens can be purchased but shop your own garden. Spend your money on the flowers, not the greens.
2. After your purchase, strip all leaves from the bottom of flower stems or greens---any foliage that will be below the water line should be removed. Foliage below the water line will cause bacteria to form, which will lead to shortening the life of your flowers.
3. Recut stems with a clean angle cut (sharp knife or floral scissors) without leaving jagged edges (that could lead to decay). An angled cut will allow a larger surface area for water absorption and prevents the ends of your stems from sitting flat in the container blocking water absorption.
4. Place flowers and greens into a clean bucket or other container of approximately 4-8 inches of fresh tepid water. Mix 1 package of floral food into the bucket of water. Floral food can be found at stores where flowers are purchased. The floral food helps extend the life of fresh flowers and greens by providing essential nutrients, regulating the water's pH level to assist with water uptake, and inhibiting bacterial growth which can block the stems and prevent the flowers and greens from properly hydrating. Place the bucket in a cool, dry area. Give the flowers/greens at least 4 hours to hydrate, ideally overnight. This allows the flowers and greens to "drink".
5. Do not keep flowers in a refrigerator. A household refrigerator is kept much colder than a florist cooler. Also in a household refrigerator, most flowers are sensitive to ethylene gas, a gas that fruits and vegetables emit. Ethylene gas accelerates the aging process of fresh flowers, causing the flowers to wilt prematurely, drop petals and lose color, leading to a reduced vase life and overall quality.
6. You may need to use florist tape, either clear or green, to stabilize your container. Some designers prefer to "green up" first, and then place flowers/fillers. Others prefer to place flowers first, then greens. There is no right or wrong way. Using an odd number of flowers---1-3-5---makes the arrangement look more balanced. Remember that your mechanics (Oasis, container, chicken wire, etc.) should not be seen. A "collar" or some other design element will hide your mechanics and is helpful to give your design a completed look.
7. Make your design more interesting and creative by adding uncut fruits, vegetables, dried pods, succulents, pinecones, feathers, etc. Think about different textures.
8. After your design is finished, you should lightly mist your arrangement with a solution called Crowning Glory, being very careful not to spray non-floral elements. This product can assist with the longevity of your flowers. Crowning Glory can be purchased online or at any wholesale flower company and usually at our Ways and Means table.

HARVEST FUNDRAISER



TUESDAY, 11/25/2025
3:30PM-6:30PM



ROCK SPRING GARDEN CLUB

FLORAL DESIGNS-AMARYLLIS BULBS

PUMPKIN FLORAL DESIGNS AND HOLIDAY GIFTS

Little Falls Presbyterian Church

6025 Little Falls Road, Arlington

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