

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



Volume 64, Number 6

February 2026

OFFICERS

PRESIDENT

Cheryl Atkinson

VICE PRESIDENT

Maryam Zolecki

SECRETARY

Chris Day

TREASURER

Joan Hession

GARDENZETTE EDITOR

Pat Getz

General Meeting

February 19, 2026 – 10:00 am

Little Falls Presbyterian Church

First Floor Chapel

6025 Little Falls Road

Arlington, VA 22207

Get Your Tools Ready for Spring Gardening

Our program this month will be a hands-on workshop. We will sit around tables while our presenter, Leigh Kitcher, discusses and show us how to sharpen, clean and de-rust our pruners or other gardening tools. She will provide the necessary supplies, so please participate by bringing one or two of your favorite hand-held tools. Leigh is a lifelong gardener who is pleased to share her expertise with gardening lovers. Her program should be interesting and fun-filled, and it will certainly allow us to jump into Spring chores with a distinct advantage.

CONTENTS

President's Message	2
Budget Report	2
Board Meeting	2
Show	3
Garden Therapy	4
4-H Award	5
Liaison Report	5
Membership	7
Photo Tips	8



President's Message**By Cheryl Atkinson**

Looking out the window, it's hard to believe I'm in Virginia rather than Alaska or Norway, or someplace where snow, ice, and single-digit temperatures are 'normal.' My shrubs are shivering in the wind, and as beautiful as snow can be, I'm over it for this year! I hope you all have been safe, warm and remained upright during our recent weather events. Thinking of Spring (which is essential to one's mental health this time of year), take a look at your favorite gardening tools to see if they need some maintenance to get them ready for use when Spring arrives. Our program for February will focus on how to clean, sharpen and eliminate rust on tools. What better way to focus on longer days, warmer temperatures and seeing new shoots and swelling bulbs in the garden. Due to renovations at Little Falls Presbyterian Church being behind schedule, we will be meeting again in the Chapel rather than Friendship Hall, our usual meeting venue. It's disappointing that due to space constraints we will again not be able to have design or horticulture exhibits, Ways and Means items for sale, or lunch following the program. Elevator access to the Chapel (level 1) is located immediately on your right as you come in through our usual entryway.

**Year to Date Budget Report**

Beginning Balance: \$22,015.75

Revenue: \$344.02

Expenses: \$591.98

Net: (\$247.96)

Ending Balance: \$21,767.79

Next Board Meeting

Thursday March 5, 2026

at 4:30 pm

Hosted by Kate Abrahams

Show: Design of the Month

By Kate Abrahams

Many thanks to the Rock Spring members who created designs and sent photos during January! The church renovation is behind schedule, so again this month we will not be able to display floral designs or horticulture due to limited space and ask that you send a photo of your design to Kate Abrahams. Kate will share the photos with fellow judges who can provide feedback to designers about achieving the design type parameters. Designers will get credit and some instructive comments. This month's challenge is a National Garden Club design type called a "Creative Cascade." It may remind you of bridal bouquets that use long stems to pour downward and create a waterfall effect. The design is elevated by a tall container, or other structure with the plant material positioned to fall down or "cascade" in one direction. Rhythm is created by positioning colorful blooms or other components along the line and into the cascade, so the eye follows the line downward. The line of the design should flow easily in one direction and not be stalled by too much bulk on top. Tulips and calla lilies work well in cascade designs. Here are some examples in the photos. The direction of the cascade is up to you and the amount of plant material is also your choice. Since it is a creative design, you may use dried plant materials or man-made materials that you like. Anything goes as long as you have a cascading downward line through the design. The line doesn't have to be straight as the *Handbook* description below makes clear. You can see some cascades use a lot of plant materials and others are more sparse and airy. The visual weight of the supportive container or other device should not overpower the design. The *Handbook for Flower Shows* (HB p. 73) describes the Cascade Design Type as "A design with an emphasis on a downward rhythmic movement. The downward lines may be curved, straight,

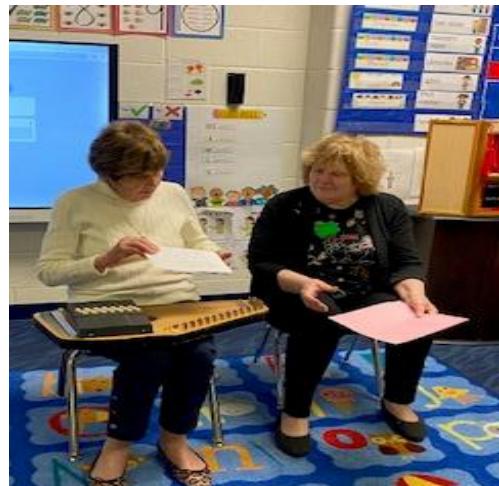
zigzag, interrupted or may be a combination. The design is supported by a container or other device. A minimum of components may extend upward." Have fun trying out this design type!



Garden Therapy

By Mary Garnett

The theme for Garden Therapy's January program for preschoolers at Glebe Elementary School was birds in winter. Margi Melnick led off with a song, "Feeding the Birds" sung to the tune of "Row, Row, Row Your Boat", accompanying it with her autoharp. Next, Pat Getz read selections from the book "Snow Birds" by Kristen Hall as Mary Garnett played associated bird calls using an app from the Cornell Ornithology Department, and Kate Abrahams and Joyce McKenzie displayed pictures of the birds. Susan Scotti displayed birds' nests she had collected, and told the children about how birds keep warm in winter. Following the presentations, the children created artworks by selecting large bird stickers they liked and pasting and drawing backgrounds for them. Lastly, assisted by their teacher, Ms Donna, her aides, and new RSGC member Joyce McKenzie and the others, they rolled pine cones prefilled with Crisco in birdseed to create little birdfeeders. These they took home to hang where they could watch birds coming to feed.



Helen McMahon Receives Virginia 4-H 2026 Friend of 4-H award

By Dianne Simmons

The garden club's partnership with 4-H began with Helen McMahon three years ago when she became aware that 4-H was involved in Arlington schools. Helen's connection with 4-H began after her sister Mikell passed away in 2021. In settling her farm estate, she received considerable assistance from a resident whose family was involved in the 4-H mission to foster the learning, care, and love of animals and the environment among children. To honor her sister's dream and wishes and memory, Helen established an endowment in her sister's name to support 4-H youth programming in Clarke County. The 4-H connection also led to the garden club providing 4 scholarships annually to send 4 Arlington children to camp for a week at the Front Royal 4-H camp, one of 5 in our state.

Helen was the recipient of the 2026 Friend of Virginia 4-H award given to honor individuals, families, and organizations who make a lasting impact on Virginia 4-H. The event on January 22 was held at the Science

Museum in Richmond. Virginia 4-H programs are overseen by Virginia Tech.

I had the privilege of accompanying Helen to the event along with her friends from Williamsburg. In her remarks Helen emphasized the remarkable way that life forges connections between people and cultivates learning and involvement in community—and our community. This is what we foster in our club. Congratulations Helen!



Liaison Report

By Maryam Zolecki

Every month, the liaison section of the newsletter will keep you informed about dates and events happening related to garden club activities, as well as some other events related to gardening, floral design, and horticulture. Please email Maryam to share events for publication. Here is what's happening in the new year.

- Green Spring Gardens is hosting a field Trip to the Philadelphia Flower Show. The Philadelphia Flower Show is the nation's largest and longest-running horticultural event and it features stunning displays by some of the world's premier floral and landscape designers. The trip

includes a motor coach and admission. The March 2nd trip departs Green Spring at 10 a.m. and returns at 10 p.m. The March 4th trip departs at 8 a.m. and returns at 8 p.m. \$179 per person. Bring a lunch or enjoy the atmosphere and food at the Reading Terminal Market located across the street. Click [here](#) for more information.

- Save the date for the 39th annual **Lahr Native Plant Symposium**, coming up on **Saturday, March 28, 2026** from **9:00am-4:00pm** held at the **U.S. National Arboretum in Washington, DC**! This all-day event features a slate of expert speakers who will touch on a variety of topics. To join for an engaging day of presentations and conversation and to delve into the world of native plants, visit the registration [link](#) for the full list of speakers and to secure your seat tickets. Your ticket includes a provided lunch with gluten free and vegan options available. Additionally, the **Friends of the National Arboretum Native Plant Sale** will happen concurrently outside the Symposium from **8:00am-1:00pm**! Come early to the Symposium or leave time during the lunch hour to shop.
- NCAGC will hold its Spring State Meeting on **Tuesday, April 14, 2026** at the US Arboretum. The meeting will include the Awards Presentation and Paige Canfield of Summer B Designs will be the program focusing on Sustainable Floral Arrangements involving many raffles of designs to kick off NCAGC's 75th Anniversary year of celebration!
- The Garden Club of Virginia's Historic Garden Week is **April 18-25, 2026** and this year, it coincides with our nation's 250th anniversary offering many properties linked to early Virginians who helped shape American history. Stunning floral arrangements, created by talented GCV members, focus on flowers and plants native to Virginia, adding another element of inspiration to the showcased sites. Use this link to learn more: [2026 tour schedule](#). Tickets may be purchased beginning 2/16/2026 at 10am using this link: [2026 tour tickets & Little Oak Spring ticket](#).
- District III of National Capital Area Garden Clubs, Inc. will be sponsoring a flower show on **April 25-26, 2026** at Green Hedges School in Vienna, VA. For more information and to exhibit, reach out to General Chair, Kate Abrahams.
- The Arlington VA250 Committee has announced plans for Arlington HistoryFest 250, a free, one-day outdoor festival commemorating the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution. It will be held on **Saturday, May 9, 2026, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.** at Kenmore Middle School.
- Every Spring, FROGS sponsors a Spring Garden Day event at Green Spring Gardens, and this year it is scheduled for **Saturday, May 16, 2026**.
- Rock Spring Garden Club's Flower Show, Chorus for Country - Celebrating Early Patriotic Songs, is slated for **May 21, 2026**. Plan to be a part of it both as an exhibitor and a volunteer! The flower show will celebrate America's 250th anniversary, and it should be a wonderful and fun show.
- Save-the-Date: **June 2, 2026** - NCAGC 75th Anniversary Conference at Congressional Country Club, Potomac, MD with more information coming January 2026.
- **NGC Schools** - Visit the link (<https://gardenclub.org/our-schools>) and click on "learn more" and then "find a course" for each of the respective schools: Flower Show, Gardening, Landscape Design, and Environmental. There are a number of virtual options that are convenient and cost effective.

Membership

By Maryam Zolecki

So far this club year, we have seen wonderful growth in our membership with several talented and creative folks joining and rejoining us. It is hard to believe, but membership renewal season is upon us, and I do hope all of you choose to rejoin in order to keep our membership strong. Membership renewal forms and payment are due by March 31, 2026, and it is very important that we receive forms and dues from you by the due date since a number of important next steps are dependent on this (e.g., dues paid out to district and state organizations, committee assignments, etc.). Also, please complete your renewal forms fully and add any notes you think are important for consideration of committee assignments and other responsibilities (host duties, willingness to be a chair, etc.). To ease the renewal process for **Emeritus** members, you will automatically be considered a renewed member, and please let me know if you prefer otherwise or have any changes in information (e.g., address, email. etc.). Thanks to everyone in advance for your timely renewals, and do not hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Outlined below are options for renewal, and if something else works better for you, just let me know. There are two easy ways to submit your renewal application:

1. Complete a **paper** copy and return to Maryam Zolecki either in person, via email or by postal mail. Paper copies will be available at the February and March general meetings, in *The Gardenzette* ([click here for renewal form](#)), or via email.
2. Complete an **online** copy (very easy and convenient) by clicking on this link: [**Renewal Form**](#).

And, there are three easy ways to submit your dues payment of \$65 with your application:

1. By check made out to Rock Spring Garden Club
2. By cash
3. By credit card (with step-by-step directions below) at this link: [Credit Card Link](#)
 - a. Put your cursor over the above underlined “Credit Card Link” phrase and left click
 - b. Left click on the link that pops up
 - c. Choose an amount (the default amount is already \$65) and click continue
 - d. Enter your email, first name, and last name, and change your state (Virginia is default), if applicable
 - e. Then, under the “summary” section, click on the dropdown box labeled “17.00% (\$11.05)” and click “Other”
 - f. Enter “0” (as in zero dollars) for your choice in the contribution box
 - g. Enter your credit card information and click donate

**JANUARY GENERAL MEETING
HANDOUT – from our guest speaker
Laura Hatcher**

Garden Photography Made Simple

www.laurahatcherphotography.com

Light

- **Golden Hour** - period shortly after sunrise or before sunset; diffused by the atmosphere, characterized by soft, warm, reddish light that is ideal for photography.
- **Blue Hour** - Unique window of twilight before sunrise or after sunset, characterized by soft, cool blue-toned light and deep blue sky.
- **Clouds** - produce soft diffused light, may need to introduce color or light; use a reflector to bounce light; convert image to BW.
- **Harsh Sun** - expect shadows, use paper or white umbrella to diffuse light; find/create shade. • **Direction of Light** - use front, side and back lighting.

Composition

How a photographer arranges visual elements in the frame or image

- **Rule of Thirds** - compositional guideline in art and



photography

that suggests dividing a frame into nine equal parts by two horizontal and two vertical lines, then placing the main subject or focal points along those lines or at the intersection points.

- **Depth** - create layers in your image, place objects in foreground, middle ground and or/background; reflections also create depth.
- **Framing** - framing the subject using something in the environment, e.g. taking a picture of a person or thing looking through a fence or interesting frame. Using tree branches/leaves to frame the scenery.
- **Viewpoint & angles** - trying different angles, up high, down low; create unique perspective. • **Leading lines** - using something in the environment to draw the viewer's eye into the picture, e.g. train tracks, path, fence line, architecture, etc.
- **Negative Space** - using empty space in an image like a plain wall or sky to emphasize or create a mood around the subject.

- **Filling the Frame** - the subject occupies the entire frame.
- **Reflections & Shadows** - use water, mirrors, windows to produce reflections; find interesting shadows in nature or the home as the light changes through out the day.
- **Silhouettes** - placing the subject in front of a light source to darken them.

Flower Photography Tips	Landscape Photography Tips
Try different angles Use an unobstructed background Try 'Portrait Mode' on cell phone Shallow depth of field on a real camera Get close	Use wide angle Look for depth: foreground, middle, background Add a person or object for scale Level horizon Use different compositions and a tripod

Editing: crop, straighten, adjust saturation, brightness, warmth; use an App: Snapseed or filter www.laurahatcherphotography.com