

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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Cheryl Atkinson

VICE PRESIDENT

Maryam Zolecki

SECRETARY

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GARDENZETTE EDITOR

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General Meeting
January 15, 2026 – 10:00 am
Little Falls Presbyterian Church
Second Floor Chapel
6025 Little Falls Road
Arlington, VA 22207

Taking Better Photos of Flowers and Landscapes



Our Flower Show in May will include Photography as a section of Botanical Arts. Learn from a professional photographer, Laura Hatcher, how to capture an image that might be a blue-ribbon winner.



President's Message

By Cheryl Atkinson

As the new year begins, our gardens may be resting under winter's chill but plans and possibilities for the year ahead are already beginning to take root. This is the season of reflection and anticipation—time to enjoy garden catalogs and mull over ideas about what to do in our gardens in the months ahead. January is also a wonderful time to reconnect with one another and think about club activities ahead, in particular, the upcoming Flower Show, *Chorus for the Country*, in May. This month's program focuses on garden photography, which will be included in the Flower Show as part of the Botanical Arts section. Professional photographer Laura Hatcher will help us learn how to take better photos of flowers and landscapes—skills that will be helpful for documenting our own gardens as well as for competition in the Flower Show. Please remember that we will be meeting in the church chapel on the second floor due to renovations to Friendship Hall, our usual meeting space. Come in through our usual entrance; the elevator to the second floor is located in the entryway. Due to the change of venue, there will be no floral design or horticultural displays, and no refreshments will be served. Best wishes for a happy, healthy, and hope-filled New Year.

Year to Date Budget Report

Beginning Balance: \$22,646.57
Revenue: \$250.16
Expenses: \$880.98
Net: (\$630.82)
Ending Balance: \$22,015.75

Next Board Meeting

Thursday February 5, 2026
at 4:30 pm
Hosted by Chris Day

Show

By Kate Abrahams

There is no monthly design assignment for January because Friendship Hall is closed during the RSGC meeting date. However if you would like to make a design and send a photo to me, I will give credit for it. It will be a designer's choice design, so anything goes, except artificial flowers! Please identify the type of design, e.g., a petite design, grouped mass, etc. A few members have not submitted any designs so far this year; please remember you are required to submit two designs each club year. Please contact me with any questions. Thank you!

Youth Activities

by Pat Getz

Our committee met with 12 Tuckahoe Elementary School second graders to build holiday trees to bring home with them on December 9th. We started by asking the children to name winter holidays. They were well versed, citing Christmas, New Years, Kwanzaa, Hanukkah, and even Winter Solstice. We then spent a few minutes explaining the project and then stepped back and let the children create their holiday masterpieces. The construction of the trees started with clear plastic jars filled with oasis. The children first decorated the jars with markers and stickers, then built a tree using greens that committee members supplied from their yards, including boxwood, yew, pine, and other sturdy greens. The students were given bells, foam stickers in holiday shapes, and sparkly pipe cleaners to decorate the trees. The pipe cleaners were the favorite because they could easily be bent into any shape desired, including bows, circles, stars, lightning bolts, and other creative shapes. The children had great fun with this project as did the committee members who participated: Ginger Ackerman, Joyce Fall, Mary Garnett, Pat Getz, Lynda Martin, Lea Alice Parker, and Liddy Schwartz.



November Senior Outreach

By Mary Kudless

Pumpkin Floral Designs With Mary Marshall Residents

Our Senior Outreach Committee experienced not one, but two, fun and rewarding events leading up to creating pumpkin floral designs with the Seniors. The first was the “prep party” at Mary’s home where Joan Hession surprised her Club colleagues by bringing and expertly wielding her electric powered jigsaw. None of us had ever seen that tool in action to carry out that well known RSGC task of opening up and cleaning out pumpkins. Joan did a fast and marvelous job and no OSHA reports were filed in the process! Sharon Siems brought a wonderful array of flowers and Joan brought boxwood green cuttings and we all prepped the plant materials and oasis for the next day. Sheila Moore also kindly helped us out by prepping a half dozen of the pie-sized pumpkins at home to get the overall task done. In the end we had one large and 13 pie pumpkins prepped and ready for the residents, the next day. We traveled over to Mary Marshall upon the conclusion of our November Club meeting. 13 Seniors excitedly attended our program. The program began with a little quiz on “pumpkin and squash facts”, a hands-on experience with touching and naming squash types, and a viewing of a wonderful design demonstrated by Sharon. The residents were very animated about the colors and types of flowers they wished to work with, and were pleased to decide whether to take their designs to their rooms or to leave them in the day room for the community’s enjoyment. They enjoyed some homemade pumpkin bread when their creative work was done. One very heartwarming moment that reinforced the value of this project was when one of the gentlemen, Tim, upon finishing his design, took a closer look at it, announced for all to hear: “This IS beautiful!” Many thanks to Joan, Sheila, Jody, Imelda, Julie Wadsworth, and Sharon for your participation, and thanks to the residents whose enthusiasm and wish to have fun and make something of beauty, a gift to us all.



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 me to share events for publication. Here is what's happening in the new year.

- 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](#).
- 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.

NexTrex Recycling Challenge

By Maryam Zolecki

In November 2025, we reached our NexTrex Recycling Challenge goal, and earned ourselves a bench. As a reminder, for the past couple of years, we have been participating in the NexTrex Recycling Challenge program where we ask club members to collect their soft film plastics and packaging for recycling. The bench was gifted to Little Falls Presbyterian Church, and this way it will not only serve as a thank you to our wonderful monthly host, but also to our members who supported and contributed the program.

We plan to continue participating in the program beginning in January 2026. The program parameters have changed a bit in this go around, but our process for collecting and submitting entries remains the same. As a general rule, acceptable items include most plastic bags from the grocery store used to store food and package food, ice bags, plastic shipping envelopes, Ziploc bags, bubble wrap, wood pellet bags, salt bags, and cereal box liners (link for more information:

<https://nextrex.com/view/educate#materials1>.

Submitting your bag donations is easy: take your bags to a local grocery store (e.g., Giant, Harris Teeter, Safeway), take a picture of your recycling in/on/next to the recycling bin available at the store, and email/text the picture to Maryam Zolecki. Reaching our Trex Recycling Challenge goal was so exciting—let's keep the momentum going!

Flower Show

By Maryam Zolecki

Our club will host a flower show on Thursday, May 21, 2026, which will be held at our usual location at Little Falls Presbyterian Church. To coincide with America's 250th anniversary, the flower show theme will be a patriotic one celebrating and highlighting the early patriotic songs that galvanized the fight for freedom. The flower show is aptly titled **Chorus for the Country**. Schedule Chair Kate Abrahams has written an inspiring, creative, and delightful schedule (to access the schedule, [click here](#)).

To make the flower show a success, we truly need everyone's help. One way of helping is to **be an exhibitor**. The schedule will include divisions in horticulture, design, education, and photography, and we will need everyone's participation to make the show a success. All of our club members are talented gardeners, and with that, I am certain that each of us can bring in at least two horticulture specimens (remember to bring it in a white bottle, so start collecting those now!). If you are uncertain as to what section your horticulture specimen falls under, do not worry as you will have assistance when dropping them off. Just bring them in! The design division will include a petite section in addition to standard size designs. And, once you get the schedule, take a look at the photography division and start looking for opportunities to snap those pictures. And finally, the education division will focus on highlighting our country's military history. The chair for each division is listed, and please feel free to start reaching out to them to ask any questions and secure your spot!

We also will need **volunteers** to make sure everything runs as smoothly as possible on the day of the flower show. Particular help is needed in the hospitality area as we will need folks greeting and taking count as visitors arrive, and to assist Hospitality Chair Janet Gunel in feeding our judges. Please consider signing up for a short shift and/or a food item to help out in this area. At our last flower show, the volunteers had a great time hanging out and enjoying an impromptu potluck during the down times. Clerking is also a great way to be in the mix and learn a bit more about how a flower show operates. As we get closer to the flower show, there will be more information coming your way both at the general meetings as well as in the newsletter. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me. The flower show committee is very excited and is working hard, and with everyone's help and enthusiasm, we are sure to have a successful and beautiful flower show!



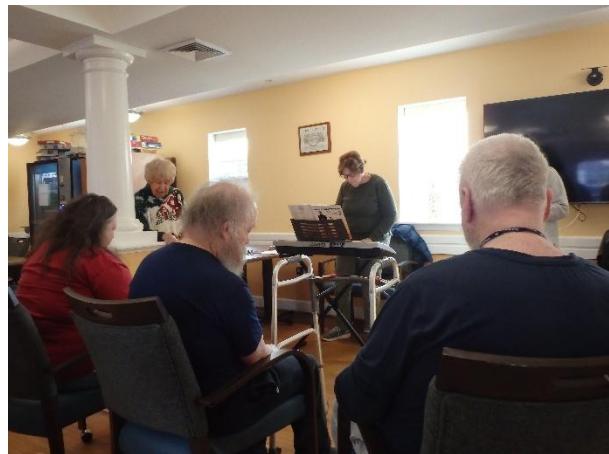
Sunrise over the Outer Banks of North Carolina

December Senior Outreach

By Joan Hession



The sachets for the Mary Marshall Christmas trees filled the air with holiday scents. Imelda Rowe and Jody Goulden led the project and gathered items for the sachets. They dried herbs and orange peels, collected pine and spruce needles, and also had cinnamon sticks and lavender. The sachets were filled by the residents with all these wonderful smelling items. Cinnamon sugar cookies and peppermints gave the residents a taste of the holidays. Sachets with sugar plums and cookies were also shared with the residents.



Carol Froehlich joined us and led the singing on Debbie Hollander's portable piano. The music made the event joyfully special. We sang ourselves out the door with "We Wish You a Merry Christmas".

THANK YOU!

We received 10 boxes of Christmas gifts for residents. The Mary Marshall Executive Director, Davinia Alston, attended our December Holiday Tea and was able to carry all your donations back to Living Residences. The socks and personal products brightened the holidays for all.

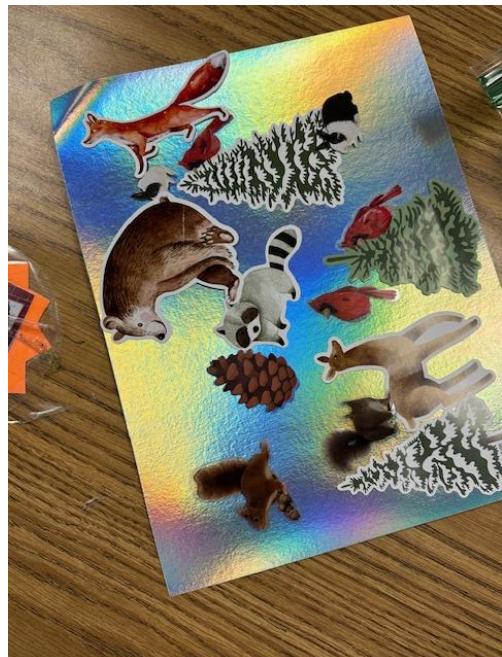
Garden Therapy

By Kate Abrahams

In December, RSGC's Garden Therapy Committee visited Miss Donna's preschool classroom at Glebe Elementary to talk about evergreens and conifers. The date we visited was later than the usual second Thursday of the month due to scheduling conflicts. Susan Scotti, Mary Garnett, Mary Sliwa and Kate Abrahams showed the children examples of broadleaf and needled evergreens and an assortment of pinecones. Mary Sliwa read a picture book titled "Little Pine" about a tree that grows from a dropped seed into a seedling and eventually into a giant tree in the forest. The mature pine tree is able to help many animals and birds survive the winter with its strong branches supporting the snow and creating shelter below.

After the story, we sang a song about a Teeny Tiny Pine Tree sung to the tune of the " Itsy Bitsy Spider" and then a rousing chorus of Jingle Bells with real jingle bells to shake. Kate used photos to explain what a "one horse open sleigh" was and how the bells attached to the horse's harness made a jingle sound when traveling in the forest. The 11 preschoolers then sat at their two tables to work on a forest scene project with stickers of various animals, evergreens, and birds and iridescent sheets of paper. They are very skilled at peeling and applying stickers and enjoyed seeing all the different types of animals and trees in their forest pictures. The pictures were stowed in individually labeled paper bags to take home. Many thanks to the Committee members for contributing to a fun program! A big welcome to both Lea Alice Parker and Joyce McKenzie, the newest members of the Garden Therapy

team. The January program will focus on birds in the wintertime.



Membership

By Maryam Zolecki

Our club is very fortunate and delighted to welcome three new members at the January general meeting. Be sure to introduce yourself to them.

Vicky Schoenberger initially became an RSGC member in fall 2012, and we are so pleased to have her returning to us. Vicky was born in Bogota, Colombia before her family moved to Florida where she grew up. She moved to Washington, DC for work after college, and after a stint in St. Louis for a few years, came back to the area and settled for good in Falls Church. We are very happy to welcome Vicky back to our midst.

Laurie Grant is a landscape designer by training, and even though she has not practiced since 1994 after running her own landscape design company, she considers herself a lifelong gardener and her husband lovingly refers to her as the "crazy plant lady." She moved to Arlington in 1981 with her husband where they raised their three children. Laurie is a new grandmother, with two of her children having had their babies in November within days of each other! Laurie is retired from the NIH as of June 2024, and she enjoys hiking, birding, and reading. We are very glad to have her and her talents joining the club.

Our other newest member is **Joyce McKenzie**. Joyce was born in Toronto, Canada, and worked for the Royal Bank of Canada for ten years and has college credits from Newbury College in visual merchandising and design (history of costume, perspective drawing). She eventually moved to Boston and married her husband who was a professional National Hockey League player and who also played in the newly established World Hockey League. She spent summers in Provincetown, Cape Cod where she studied artists Henry Henshe and Wallace Bassford. Over the next six years, they moved to Philadelphia, Vancouver, BC, Saint Paul, MN, and Hartford, CT with her favorite location being beautiful Vancouver where she learned to downhill snow ski and took Chinese cooking classes. In 1979, she moved back to the Boston area where they participated as celebrity chefs for numerous March of Dimes charity events. A creative endeavor was starting up 'Sincerely Yours,' a small gift basket business out of their home which eventually opened the door to a career brokering gourmet food and confections to retail giants, as well as doing public relations at trade shows in San Francisco, Chicago, New York, and Boston. As fate would have it, an opportunity knocked on her door again to work in corporate travel in a sales and account management capacity, and for the next ten years, she worked for Thomas Cook Travel, Rosenbluth International, and American Express, which opened up many opportunities for domestic and international travel. In 2003, Joyce moved to Virginia to be near her daughter and began working as a real estate agent until her retirement in spring 2023, and she currently lives in Arlington having forwent a move to Florida after her grandson was born. Joyce is also a member of Falls Church Garden Club, Azalea Society Northern Virginia Chapter, AARP Ethels, and Encore.

Photo Gallery

From the December Holiday Tea









