

# The Digest

THIRD DISTRICT FEDERATED GARDEN CLUBS OF NYS, INC.



NOVEMBER 2020

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## From the Director



### Greetings of the Season!

What a difficult and unsettling year this has been. The Covid-19 pandemic has forced lock-downs, quarantines, and social distancing. It has spurred global conversations about how to contain it and national conversations about its effect on minorities and people of color. Its treatment and the approaches to controlling its spread have highlighted just how easily our health care system can become overloaded. Overlaying all this has been the deeply divisive presidential campaign. There have been times when I just felt like pulling

the blankets over my head and not coming out until sometime in 2022!

Recently, though, I saw a posting on Facebook from one of my distant cousins. I don't know her well. She's younger than I am and I didn't see her much while she was growing up. Her father, my cousin, was in the Army and so she grew up as an Army brat at bases around the world. But she now has kids and grandkids of her own and has settled down in Missouri. She was bemoaning all the negative attitudes that adults were taking when they discussed the denial of a 'normal' Halloween to children. Why, she asked, continue to complain about not being allowed to go trick-or-treating or to a costume party? Instead, create new traditions or put new twists on the old ones.

This is an approach that can be applied to almost any holiday or life event. It becomes a choice of clinging to the negative or embracing the opportunity to create and nurture something new. Rather than regretting the inability to have 20 or so of your nearest and dearest over for Thanksgiving, allow yourself to breathe an inward sigh of relief that you don't have to bake six pies as well as the turkey and multiple side dishes. Bring out the good china and know that you and your significant other (and maybe one or two others) will be able to finish the dishes on Thanksgiving night rather than the next day. Scrap your traditional "we've always had this dish" and try out some new ones. In other words, make some new traditions and give thanks for the opportunity to do so. Have a Zoom or Facetime session with the people who can't show up at your house and give thanks for the ability to use technology to keep in touch with your loved ones. Next year, give thought to merging some of your new traditions from this year with your more traditional ones.

*(continued on page 2)*

## CLUBS IN DISTRICT III

### District Three Clubs, by County

**Albany:** Blue Creek, Guilderland, Helderview

**Columbia:** Germantown, The Garden Club of Kinderhook

**Dutchess:** Tioronda

**Greene-Schoharie:** Athens Community, Clematis, Schoharie Valley

**Rensselaer:** Greenbush

**Schenectady:** Garden Explorers, Country Garden Club of Clifton Park, Glen Oaks, H. Gilbert Harlow, Hugh Plat, Western Hills

**Ulster:** Community Garden Club of Marlborough, New Paltz, Saugerties Society of Little Gardens, Shawangunk, Ulster



(from pg. 1)

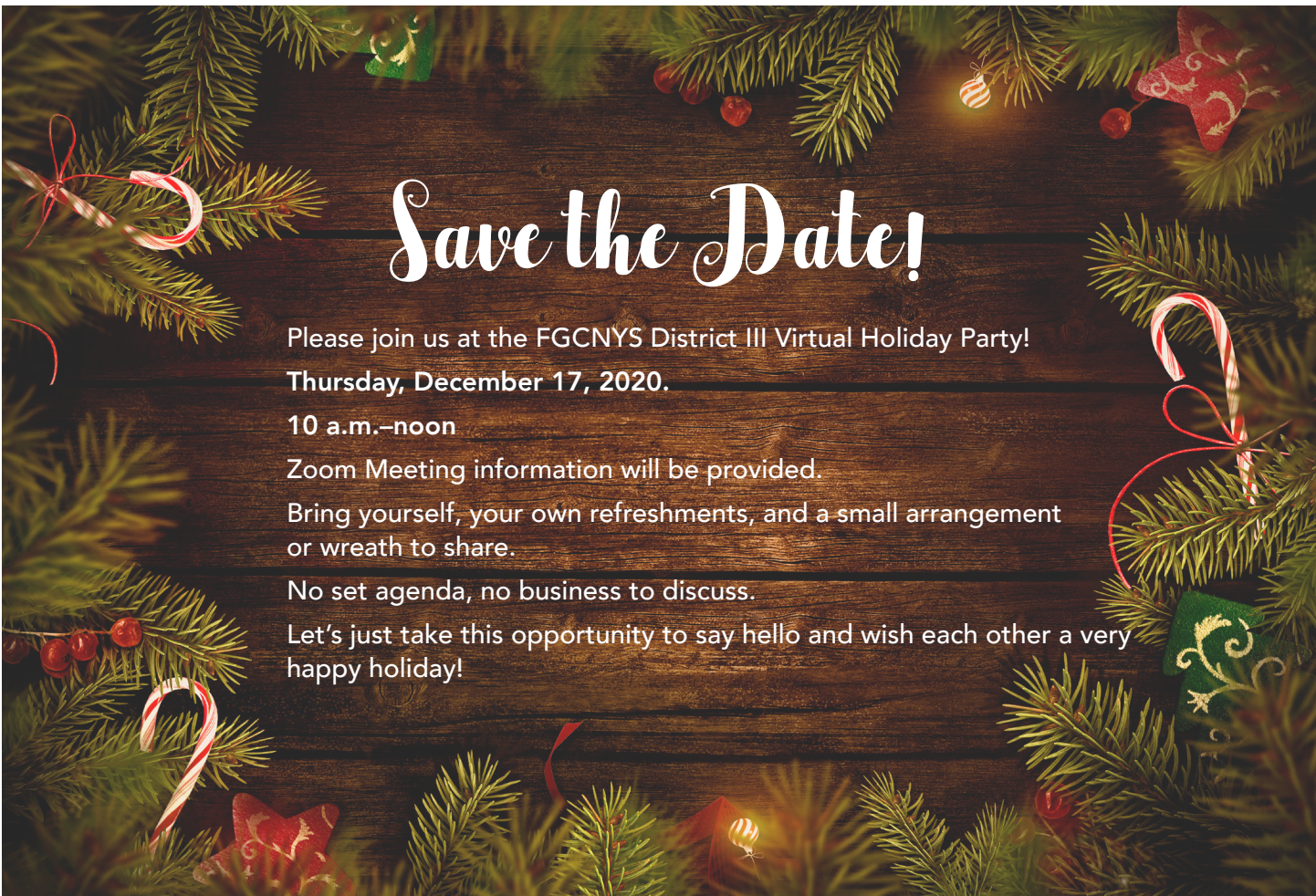
When you stop and think about it, isn't this what we as gardeners try to do each year in our gardens? We look at what we have always done and dream about what we could do. Do you really want red, white, and blue petunias in the annual bed again this year or would you dare to use those gorgeous dusky-peach bicolored petunias instead? Do you really like the broken-down old stone wall that constantly needs repair or would you rather replace it with a new maintenance-free brick wall? Is that over-grown invasive non-native Rose of Sharon in the corner by the garage there because you really love it or just because it has been there since you moved in?

If we are willing to take the 'change is good' approach to our gardens, we should take the same approach to our club meetings. We can regret not being able to meet fully in person but we shouldn't use that as an excuse to simply not meet. Instead, try meeting virtually using one of the online platforms. (Remember, you can reserve one of the two FGCNYS Zoom meeting spaces.) Using one of these online platforms will allow you to have business meetings and have speakers. It's new, it's different, but it gets your club members together. If a virtual platform isn't working for all of your members, try a teleconference instead. Everyone can dial into a conference bridge and you can do the business meeting and many of the speaker's presentations that way. And, as with virtual

online meetings, you can have a social period. (FGCNYS has a teleconference bridge that you can use.) Or do a hybrid meeting: you can link Zoom and Facebook attendees together on the Zoom platform. And if none of these appeal, consider breaking your members up into small groups and have each smaller group do a small conference call with each member on that call talking about some aspect of their garden that they are particularly proud of or that they need help with. Our members love to share information. Small group membership could change monthly until everyone has had a chance to talk with all of the other members of the club. Share pictures of your gardens – yes, even in the winter. Find a way to stay connected with all the members of a club. It will help everyone. And don't forget to bring your own refreshments!

I look forward to seeing each and every one of you in the coming year. Please have a safe and healthy Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanza, and New Year. And don't be afraid to start some new traditions!

Best regards,  
Beth Walker  
Director, District III





# IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO STEP UP AND VOLUNTEER!

by Beth Walker, Director, District III

## *Imagine:*

- A gardening group dedicated to the following three principles: Beautification, Preservation, and Conservation;
- An organization committed to global improvement through programs that increase access to freshwater for people in Latin America and South Sudan and for the Navajo community in New Mexico;
- An organization that sponsors and runs educational programs in landscape, horticulture, gardening, and flower shows;
- An organization that helps replant America following devastating floods, hurricanes, and wildfires;
- An organization dedicated to honoring the men and women of the Armed Forces of America with 3,085 Blue Star markers across the country and one soon to be installed in France;
- An organization with almost 179,000 members in the United States and another 654 international affiliates.

### **Sounds like an impressive organization. And it is.**

With 5,602 clubs, National Garden Clubs, Inc. (NGC) is a powerhouse composed of individuals throughout the country, all of whom share the same dedication to those three principles of Beautification, Preservation, and Conservation. It is organized quite simply. Members meet in their local club. The clubs are organized by districts within each state. We, for example, are in District III of the Federated Garden Clubs of New York State and there are 10 districts total in our state. Federated Garden Clubs of New York State is a member of NGC and is also a member of the Central Atlantic Region of NGC.

### **Know what is even more impressive?**

With the exception of some paid staff at the State, Regional, and National level and the necessary business resources, everything is done by volunteers!

That's right. People like you and me who enjoy meeting and working with other people who care about our gardens, the environment, and outreach. People just like us. People who may be working, raising kids, spoiling grandkids, settling into retirement, traveling, doing all the myriad of things that we do in this wonderful adventure of life. Busy people. People who have recognized that what our clubs and our state organizations and our national organization are doing is important.

I am hearing from club presidents and seeing first hand a lack of volunteers in our clubs. I'm not assigning blame. We all lead busy lives. But without people willing to step into club positions such as committee chairs or elected officers, clubs will fall on hard times when current leaders move, age out, or even get burned-out.

In addition to the issues created for clubs without volunteers in committee chairman roles or elected position, it becomes a problem at the district level. Under the current state by-laws, someone must have been a committee chairman or elected official in their club and served on the district board for one term before they can be eligible for District Director.

District III will be voting for its new officers for the term 2021–2023 in a mailing to club presidents in December. That slate will not include a nominee for District Director because there are very few people who meet the requirements.

I've asked each of District III's current committee chairmen to reach out to a club member to invite them to become a co-chair for the next term. This should provide a handful of people who will meet the necessary requirements for the slate for 2023–2025. If a current committee chairman reaches out to you and asks you to work with them, please consider saying yes. It can be a lot of fun.

I'll be sending out a listing of our current chairman shortly and you should feel free to get in touch with them if you are interested in a particular committee. I will also be putting out the guidelines issued by the state on what the committees should be doing so that everyone has an idea of what the responsibilities would be.

In the meantime, please consider stepping up for your club positions and looking at the possibilities at the district level. Club members are the roots of our organization and strong roots are needed to be sure that our clubs, FGCNYS, and NGC continue to grow and blossom.

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to get in touch with me at [eawalker2@gmail.com](mailto:eawalker2@gmail.com) or 845-663-0219.

## GERMANTOWN GARDEN CLUB

COLUMBIA COUNTY

by Fran Bufi

Because of COVID-19, the Germantown Garden Club has had, as have most other organizations, to cancel club meetings, events, and programs. The first meeting for 2020 was held in February and welcomed two new members. As March approached, it became clear that our month's meeting could not take place. What followed was the cancellation of meetings for all the remaining months. However, we were able to accomplish a few things that kept our membership engaged. In June, a few members were able to tour The Churchtown Dairy. Only the outdoor gardens were available. We kept our social distancing priorities and wore masks. In June, as we do every year, we created arrangements for the Germantown High School graduation ceremony. We were able to award the annual \$500 scholarship. In July, we entered a phase that allowed members who chose to attend our annual luncheon, outdoors of course, at a local restaurant. We followed the state guidelines.

The Germantown Garden Club has had some form of flower show each year since it was formed in 1928. With the COVID-19 pandemic, we thought this was not a possibility for 2020. However, with the encouragement of flower show judges Barbara Campbell and Beth Walker, a virtual flower show titled 'Pandemic Posies' was planned. Member Gloria Cestero-Hurd handled the registrations expertly. Because this was a virtual show and our first, we held only a Horticulture Division with three sections and nine classes. Thirty-six entries were judged. The 'Best In Show' award-winner was Triona Fritsch. Other first-place winners were: Rita Edwards, Fran Bufi, Irene Clum, Gloria Cestero-Hurd, Elke Crane, and Mimi Brauch. To see some of the entries go to the Germantown Garden Club's Facebook page or use this link:

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?vanity=germantowngardenclub&set=a.3045445075682043>



*Virtual Flower Show: Best In Show Winner: Triona Fritsch—our newest garden club member—for her entry *Cobaea scandens alba*.*



*Our 2019 Flower Show's theme was "The Wonderful World of Gardening." We were awarded a First Place for our Schedule and an Honorable Mention for our Show.*

### PROUD TO EARN AWARDS

Our club submitted a number of projects for consideration of recognition to the Third District and to the Federated Garden Clubs of New York State, Inc. Due to COVID-19, the annual Third District and Federated Garden Clubs of NYS's fall meetings had to be canceled and the awards could not be presented to the clubs in person. Instead, the awards for 2019 were forwarded by mail.

By the way, if a club receives a first place for a certain award, that submission, if applicable, will be forwarded to National Garden Clubs for judging. We have our fingers crossed!

**The awards received by the Germantown Garden Club's projects/events for 2019 were:**

#### **Federated Garden Clubs of NYS:**

2019 Citation—Standard Flower Show: Honorable Mention

2019 Schedule Citation: Standard Flower Show, Public Building—FIRST PLACE

2019 Yearbook Citation—FIRST PLACE

2019 Pressbook Award—FIRST PLACE

#### **National Garden Clubs:**

Certificate in Appreciation of Award Participation for:  
Newsletter: *The Garden Rake*

## GUILDERLAND GARDEN CLUB

ALBANY COUNTY

by Michele Santoli

November certainly arrived here quickly! It has been blustery with its winds and cold temperatures. However, that hasn't stopped us here at the Guilderland Garden Club.

Our gardens at the Mynderse-Frederick and Schoolcraft Houses are ready for the winter. The faithful Wednesday crew has been hard at work preparing all the beds.

We have had many outdoor meetings. In August, members demonstrated how we could use dried flowers in so many ways. They add a nice touch to arrangements, wreaths, and even wall displays. The pavilions at the town park offered us an expansive space surrounded by nature to conduct our September and October meetings. We had a huge "plant swap" which allowed many members to go home with new treasures for home and garden. Jean Dearstyne excited us with the "Rings of Hope" project. It proved to be a way for members to share hope around the Guilderland community by decorating wreaths in their style and presenting them to organizations, stores, individuals, etc. to spread peace, thanks, and joy to others.

We also had a brainstorming session to discuss the problem of not having our Holiday Open House. Every December, the Mynderse-

Frederick House has been opened to the public to enjoy. It was always decorated with a theme and we served homemade goodies and offered many decorations, arrangements, and wreaths for purchase. As you realize, this has had to be canceled. After much discussion, an alternative was reached. It was decided that we would have a Holiday Craft Sale at the site but in the garage. So, on December 5, from 2-5 pm, we will be offering holiday wreaths, ornaments, bows, garden stones, and other small items for sale. Hopefully, this will provide enough revenue so that we can still contribute to a local charity as we have in the past.

Member Maureen McNamara presented over 30 floral arrangements to the Altamont Food Bank. They were a pretty addition to the Thanksgiving meals that were presented to many families.

The year 2020 will be a year to remember for many reasons. The Guilderland Garden Club will certainly remember it. Even though it was difficult for many of us, we have found that it has made us a closer-knit group. We hope that 2021 will arrive and bring less stressful times for us all.



Top: Member Maureen McNamara (right) with her 30 arrangements presented to the Altamont Food Bank, with Judy Seery, Director, Altamont Food Bank (left).

Center: Jean Dearstyne explaining THE RING OF HOPE.

Right: Completed RING OF HOPE.



## NEW PALTZ GARDEN CLUB

ULSTER COUNTY

*by Margaret McDowell*

The New Paltz Garden Club has been dealing with the COVID-19 precautions as safely as possible. We had two in-person member meetings in June and September and will plan another in-person Holiday workshop this month.

In June, we met at a local diner after our outdoor meeting was rained out. That meeting was a 'meet and greet,' catch-up meeting—our first since the previous year. In September, we visited Mohonk for a guided tour of the Greenhouse and Gardens. Over the summer, one of our members, Sandra Cranswick, sponsored a Virtual Garden Show/ Flower Show. Pictures of members' gardens were sent in and shared by email with all. Sandra was our judge.

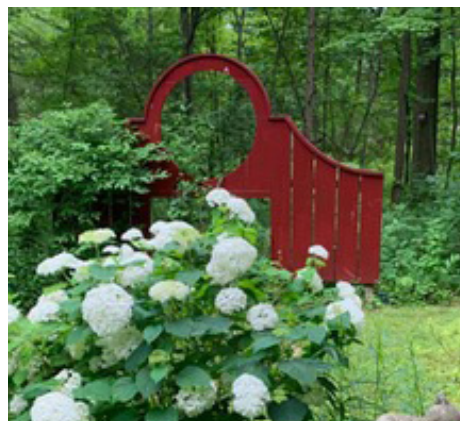
We have given our Annual Scholarship to a New Paltz HS student going on to college with an interest in Nature Sciences. We contributed \$500 to a local nonprofit for their food pantry to help families in this difficult time. Our members did the shopping.

Our October meeting was held via Zoom. The meeting dealt with the effects of climate change and possible solutions. It was hosted by Dr. Andres Frank from SUNY New Paltz.

We held a successful Fall Plant Sale in October with members and landscapers contributing sale items. It was good weather with many community members and visitors attending.

At our November member meeting, we are planning to assemble "Holiday Snow Trolls." In mid-December, we are hoping to have a Holiday Party at a local restaurant, following COVID precautions.

Our Community Gardens (3) have been maintained and looked beautiful through the Spring, Summer, and Fall. At this point, we are unsure of the future of the Thruway planters as in a few weeks a toll booth-less system will be in place. We look forward to next year where perhaps the COVID restrictions will be lifted.



*Various views from members gardens where shared and judged at our club's Virtual Garden/Flower Show.*

## THE GARDEN CLUB OF KINDERHOOK

COLUMBIA COUNTY

by Cynthia Bogardus

As the worldwide pandemic continues, the board of directors of the Garden Club of Kinderhook has made the necessary decision to cancel all meetings and events through March 2021. Adhering to the spirit of the club, the board and club members have sought creative ways to remain connected.

In both May and September, club members submitted photos of their gardens and houseplants, which were organized into collages and distributed electronically. Though not a competition, the collages established a pictorial framework identifying horticultural gems that could be displayed in future flower shows. More importantly, the collaboration brought a welcome focus on natural beauty during these very difficult times. This successful endeavor will be repeated during the holiday season when club members will be asked to share photos of their holiday-themed decorations.

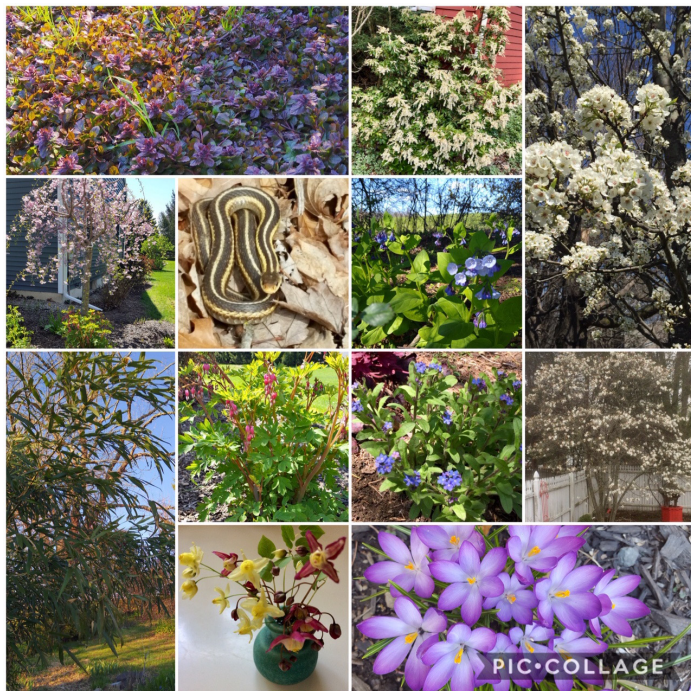
One seasonal tradition which will be maintained this year is the club's donation of a wreath for the ceremony marking the birthday of President Martin Van Buren, a native of Kinderhook. The event will take place on December 5 at the Reformed Church Cemetery on Albany Avenue in Kinderhook. The public is welcome.

Although the club will be unable to hold its annual festive boxwood workshop gathering, members will still be able to purchase boxwood for use in decorating their homes. Member Eileen McHugh Szepessy has graciously agreed to coordinate orders for boxwood and safely distribute the greens to members. There are sure to be some wonderful creations.

The board of directors and members of the Garden Club of Kinderhook extend warm wishes to our fellow gardeners for safe and healthy holidays!

*Top: A colorful collage from May with contributions from Cindy VanAlstyne, Sandy Wooding, Wendy Spielmann, Betsy Seeley, Paula Pugliese, and Kathy Biggs.*

*Bottom: Scenes from a past boxwood workshop featuring Barbara Irvine, Carol Finkelstein, Sandy Wooding, Kendra Kalsber, Sandi VanAlstyne, Vicki Smith, and Eileen McHugh Szepessy, who will be coordinating this year's boxwood purchases.*



## TIORONDA GARDEN CLUB

DUTCHESS COUNTY

by Gary Barrack

The Tioronda Garden Club conducted a Fall Mum Sale as an alternative to their Autumn Wine Festival, which had to be canceled due to Covid-19 restrictions. Club President Carol Demicco planned the event which required prepaid orders and delivery made directly to the purchaser's vehicle with minimal contact. A total of 216 mums were sold which exceeded all expectations both in terms of numbers sold and profit realized.

On October 14, the club visited the Orange County Arboretum in Montgomery NY. It was a warm sunny autumn day with over 20 members enjoying the beautiful gardens and colorful fall foliage. The November meeting will feature a "Thanksgiving Workshop –Hands-on Demonstration: New and Interesting Ways to Arrange Flowers" presented by Club President Carol Demicco. Finally, the garden club year will end with a wreath decorating workshop and celebration at the December meeting.

As the holiday season approaches, the civic beautification committee will coordinate decorating the Howland Cultural Center, home of the Tioronda Garden Club and the historic Madam Brett Homestead. Also, members will prepare over 75 wreaths for the lampposts in the Beacon business district.



*Top and bottom: The Orange County Arboretum was the perfect setting for club members to enjoy the beautiful gardens and colorful foliage. And the weather could not have been better.*



*Left: Members assist in the highly successful Fall Mum Sale on September 19, including a future garden club member, granddaughter of former President Debbie Scofield.*



## HUGH PLAT GARDEN CLUB

SCHENECTADY COUNTY

by MaryAnn DeFonce

Each year, the Hugh Plat Garden Club decorates the Schenectady County Historical Buildings in the Stockade section of Schenectady, and the Mabee Farm House buildings on the banks of the Mohawk River. We have mentioned these two locations many times in our Digest entries. We decorate in September with fall displays, and then in late November for the Society's FESTIVAL OF TREES which will be held this year from December 5 through December 29. The Mabee Farm and the Historical Society both have on-going programs throughout the winter at which our handiwork will be on display.

The Covid-19 Pandemic has thrown Hugh Plat a curve ball this year, as our entire membership is comprised of SPECTACULAR SENIORS! We have all been doing our best to keep low profiles, wear our masks, wash our hands, and stay safe. Half of our members are avoiding contact with even small groups, so we are doing virtual workshops, each of us doing our part to work on projects at home. Members who participated in gathering items for and decorating fall displays used their best social distancing skills.

It is very important to our membership that even in these trying times we SHOW UP, and do a great job for the Historical Society. They have been our community commitment since the inception of Hugh Plat Garden Club. We feel that our theme for this year, STARLIGHT AND SNOWFLAKES, will be the perfect backdrop to brighten their winter activities.



Above top: the Mabee Farm House in the Fall. Above bottom: another view of the Mabee Farm House in winter.

Left above: The Schenectady County Historical Society building in the Stockade section of Schenectady. Left bottom: Their Festival of Trees runs from December 5–29 this year.



## WORLD GARDENING CHECKS HAVE BEEN SENT!

Water for Sudan has been working with local primary health care centers to get running water in 10 clinics that did not have any functioning wells and to distribute soap and other necessary items as these people, too, are fighting the coronavirus.

Our latest well is in the village of Hai Jadit in Wau, South Sudan. The Chief is Aleu Ngor Aguer. It's the 345th well dug. GPS: 7.733900,28.000328

Our contribution to Dig Deep provided clean water systems to three families.



*The Digest Online* is published quarterly in February, May, August, and November. Deadlines for submissions are the 15th of the month before each issue (January, April, July, and October).

Please send news of your club's activities, events, and plans—it's a great way to share what you are doing with other clubs. Unlike print newsletters, there is no prohibitive cost factor for using color, so send in your photos. Articles on various gardening and flower arranging topics are especially welcome.

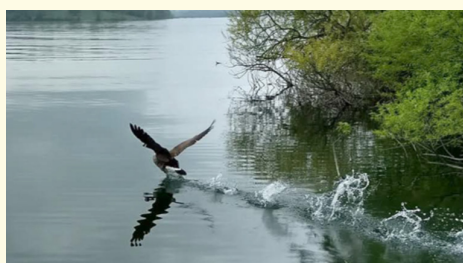
Material for *The Digest* should be sent to Karin Janson via email at [kjanson@aol.com](mailto:kjanson@aol.com).

To access *The Digest*, go to the State website—[fgcnys.com](http://fgcnys.com)—select District III on the home page and then select *Digest Online*.

## HOW TO CONNECT WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

National Garden Clubs can provide you and your clubs with more information to help you both achieve a green thumb. They can connect you with people, plants, and programs that provide inspiration and valuable resources.

Many schools are taking place around the country by ZOOM. You can sit in your pj's and take courses. Go to the NGC website for all schools and locations at [gardenclub.org](http://gardenclub.org)



## WHERE HAVE ALL THE BIRDS GONE?

by Carolyn Braverman, President, Federated Garden Clubs of Maryland, Inc.

Research efforts by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology revealed that nearly 3 billion birds in North America have vanished since 1970. That is more than one in four birds. According to Cornell Lab of Ornithology conservation scientist, Ken Rosenberg, lead author of *Decline of the North American Avifauna*, "these bird losses are a strong signal that our human-altered landscapes are losing their ability to support bird life. And that is an indicator of a coming collapse of the overall environment."

And us, what can we do? Here are several ways we can help. Many of us are aware of initiatives such as keeping cats indoors, reducing lawn area, planting native plant species, avoiding pesticides. But did you know that if we choose shade-grown coffee, we will encourage coffee farmers to conserve and maintain forests instead of destroying them by converting them to coffee plantations? We can reduce our use of throw-away plastic bags, bottles, and utensils. And lastly, we can be citizen-scientists by participating in eBird, Feeder Watch, or Christmas Bird Count projects.

Read more here: <https://www.gardenclub.org/blog/where-have-all-birds-gone>

