



NOVEMBER 2025

COMPOST HEAP

An Official Publication of Rumson Garden Club



RGC ladies and friends planting Sea Bright's Shrewsbury Riverfront Park (#P4P!)

DON'T STOP READING UNTIL YOU GET THIS MONTH'S MEMBER TIPS!

**We look forward to seeing you at our
November Membership Meeting!**

5:30 p.m. Cocktails and Business Meeting

Tuesday, November 18, 2025

at RCC Riverhouse

RSVP TO NOVEMBER MEETING [HERE](#)

Schedule:

2:30 p.m. Floral Design Challenge

3:45 - 4:00 p.m. Passing

4:15 p.m. Judging

5:30 p.m. Cocktails and Business Meeting

(*pls bring check for \$30 made out to RGC or make payment [here](#))

NOVEMBER SPEAKER

Holiday Trends & Festive Inspirations

Join us for an evening of sips and nibbles with gracious tips and exciting ideas from **Laura Zeitlin of Sage Home and Floral** and our **one-and-only Peekka Tildesley of Politely Peekka** as they demonstrate elegance, beauty, and the how-to for your gracious holiday entertaining.



You won't want to miss this evening that promises to delight! Tuesday, November 18, at 5:30pm at the Rumson CC Riverhouse!

NOVEMBER SCHEDULE

STAGING: AMY MCCOOEY, LAURA WALLACH

FLORAL DESIGN PASSERS: LOUISA RENN, MISSY FALKENBERG

FLORAL DESIGN CLERKS: ULANA JOSLIN, JANE ORR

FLORAL DESIGN JUDGES: LUCY KALIAN, TAPHY HARCSAR

*Please take a moment to download, print, and fill out your entry cards prior to dropping off your entries. If you need entry cards or have questions, contact our Staging Chairs: **Laura Haaren** (lahaaren1118@verizon.net) or **Lisa Atallah** (lisa3atallah@gmail.com)*

NOVEMBER SCHEDULE

FLORAL DESIGN

Team Challenge Design*

“Autumn is a second spring when every leaf is a flower.” – Albert Camus

Class 1

(10) Members and (10) Novice Members

Floral Duets - Create **one** design using only the floral, fauna, and accessories provided. Teams of 2 members each - one member and one novice member - will be chosen at random.

Designers will have 2 hours to complete a design at the Riverhouse. Exhibits will be staged on the Riverhouse’s 42” high wooden bar with lip. A 26” high white cloth backdrop and a staging space of 24” width x 18” depth are provided to each team. Viewed and judged from three sides.

- On November 18 at 2:30 pm at the Riverhouse, teams will be randomly selected; Designers must be present to be placed on a team.
- Entry cards with each flower’s common and botanical name will be provided. **NO** outside flowers or accessories are permitted. Exhibitors may use any, or all, of the material provided.
- A 12” x 12” piece of chicken wire will be provided to each team. Exhibitors should bring their own clippers. No additional tools or mechanics allowed.
- Each exhibitor may bring a container. Each team will decide which one of their two possible containers to use in the design.

Pre-registration is required by Friday, November 14.

Class consultant, Mary Jane O’Hare, ohare.maryjane@gmail.com.

Participants are limited to the first ten members and the first ten novice members to register.

The cost is \$10 per person payable upon registering.

* A Challenge Class is defined in the FS & JG, Book 5, p. 5.

November brings thoughts of festive times and family gatherings, perfect timing for our meeting this month! As we celebrate together at the Riverhouse with passed hors d'oeuvres and cocktails, we will be entertained by our own Peek a Tildsley and Laura Zeitlin of Sage Home.

Before our meeting we will have a floral design challenge pairing novice and regular floral design members to create a beautiful arrangement. If you are a regular floral member and have not signed up - we need you! The great news is we have had a fantastic response from all of our novice members.

This past month we saw RGC members heading to the NJ Committee Luncheon, planting a garden in Sea Bright at the Shrewsbury Riverfront Park, hosting a new member luncheon, and viewing a presentation about turning your lawn into a meadow.

Looking forward we have our annual Christmas Greens workshop December 5th & 6th. Mark your calendars and bring your friends to this fun event!

Keep growing,
Heather

Clematis seed heads in
the Vine Garden at
Arnold Arboretum of
Harvard in Boston



IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER:

(See Committee Reports for full details)

Nov. 13, 11am-2pm, virtual, GCA Garden History & Design Conference (Garden History & Design)

Nov. 24, 6:30pm, Brookdale Community College, Climate Resilience in New Jersey (Conservation)

Dec. 5 & 6, Christmas Greens!!

Dec. 10, NYC trip to GCA Headquarters (Visiting Gardens)

Jan. 6, 5:30pm, Robynn O'Neill's home, *Dark Sacred Sky* documentary (Conservation)

Apr. 7&8, 2026, 10am-4pm, Grounds for Sculpture, Hamilton Township, NJ - Zone IV Meeting

FLORAL DESIGN:

October's "Flowers Taking Flight" Floral Challenge was a soaring success! On display were many interesting bird varieties depicted using floral material according to the designer's own vision. For Class 1 (regular), the crowd's and judge's favorite was Betsy Ford and her striking "quetzal!" Betsy was named this year's Elizabeth Dimock Knapp Trophy overall winner for Best Interpretive Floral Design. First place in Class 2 (novice), and second place overall for the EDK Trophy, was Amy McCooley with her beautifully designed "hummingbird". Ladies (and birds), congratulations with well-deserved wins!

Thank you to all the participants for displaying your creativity and skill. The GCA judges were extremely impressed and awarded a Judges Commendation to the entire group of exhibitors. Congratulations everyone! Photos of all the designs are posted on the RGC Instagram account for continued viewing and the complete list of exhibitors and their placement are available, as always, in the RGC meeting minutes.

NOVEMBER SHOW UPDATE -

The Floral Design November Novice-Regular Partnership Challenge is almost here! **Registration deadline is Friday, November 14.** Contact Mary Jane at ohare.maryjane@gmail.com to sign up.

***** If you are exhibiting, remember to arrive at the RCC Riverhouse by 2:20 pm on Tuesday, November 18 for team selection at 2:30 pm and the start of the competition. Don't forget to bring your clippers! *****

IMPORTANT! Vases WILL be provided for each team, so participants need only bring clippers to the competition. ALL other flowers and supplies, including the container, will be provided to each team. \$10 per person will go toward the cost of materials. Bring cash or check (payable to Rumson Garden Club) to the Show.

Below is a list of everyone who has already signed up for the November partnership challenge. If you exhibit as a regular member and have not yet signed up, please consider doing so. We need you! Every attempt will be made to let all interested members enter, even if it means having a novice-novice team or two. We don't have GCA judges, so we can be a little more flexible. 😊

IF you cannot attend, please let Mary Jane know asap. Thank you so much!

Novice

1. Alex Smith
2. Stehanie Hoitt
3. Laura Wallach
4. Mary Ann McDonald
5. Maria Kolansick
6. Ulana Joslin
7. Amy McCooley
8. Nancy Bach
9. Judie Oppenheim
10. Machiko Maki
11. Gail van Winkle (waitlist)
12. Heather Robinson (waitlist)
13. Jane Orr (waitlist)

Regular

1. Mary Jane O'Hare
2. Betsy Ford
3. Elaine Eadon
4. Barbara Batting
5. Cathy Smith
6. Peekka Tildesley
7. Stella Ryan
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.

FLORAL DESIGN: CONT.**JANUARY SHOW NEWS -**

This year's pressed arts challenge is slated for the January Show at Bingham Hall. **If you haven't already done so, pre-register with Bonnie Torcivia at bltorcivia@gmail.com by Tuesday, January 13, 2026.** The cost of the acrylic frame and special glue needed for the challenge is \$10.

UPDATE to the January SCHEDULE - The pressed flower class schedule will be changing to read:

Class 1 (5) Entries

Love in Bloom – Create a heart shaped design out of pressed plant material. Only plant material and glue may be placed between the frame of two pieces of acrylic plexiglass. Exhibits will be displayed lying flat on a 30” high table with a dark green tablecloth. Viewed from above.

Class 2 (5) Entries

Novice. Same as above.

Class 3 (5) Entries

Petal Painting – Create a landscape “painting” using pressed plant material. Only plant material and glue may be placed between the frame of two pieces of acrylic plexiglass. Designs will be displayed on a 30” high table with dark green tablecloth resting on an 8” tall black easel with black matting background. Viewed from the front.

Class 4 (5) Entries

Novice. Same as above.

TIPS - LEARN to design and garden from the Pros!!! -

- *Flowershowjunkie* is on Instagram. Liz Wozencraft, Garden Club of Houston and a GCA floral design judge, has an Instagram account called *flowershowjunkie*, where photos of fabulous floral design work from flower shows across the country are displayed. When available, Liz posts accompanying flower show entry cards with the judges' comments listed... a great way to see what impresses the judges or areas for improvement. For any garden club member wanting to see what other floral designers are creating AND to see from a judge's point of view, follow *flowershowjunkie*! One day soon, you may even glimpse floral design photos from a RGC show.
- *By Design Magazine* – For floral designers and botanical artists, reading GCA's *By Design Magazine* is a must – each issue packed with a ton of good information, pictures, and how-to's! There are two ways to receive the publication. First, you can go to the GCA website, gcamerica.org, log- in, select the “Read, Watch, Share, Shop” tab, highlight & open the publication of interest including current and old issues of *By Design*. Second, if you want *By Design Magazine* to automatically come directly to your email inbox, go to your GCA member profile under your name, select “My Profile”, then “Manage Notifications”, select the publication(s) you want, check “Save Profile.”
- “*A Way To Garden*” Newsletter - Sign up for an excellent newsletter straight to your email inbox from “*A Way to Garden*” by Margaret Roach, gardening columnist for the New York Times. Search Awaytogarden.com, add your email to the subscribe box and you'll be treated to weekly free emails containing all kinds of interesting blogs, articles and podcast summaries from Margaret and her expert gardening friends.

HORTICULTURE:

"Horties" are taking a back seat for the next few months. However that doesn't mean we aren't dreaming of spring and quietly propagating. There are a few things we can be doing now:

- Grab an amaryllis bulb to enter in the January show. They are readily available in local garden centers. Keep it stored in a cool dry place until after Thanksgiving. Most amaryllis bulbs are timed to bloom around Christmas so delaying the planting to have it ready in January is crucial. Good Luck!
- Plant bulbs for April and May shows. Daffodils and Alliums are easy, deer proof and will do well in containers.
- Do some winter sowing of native seeds. A milk jug with some soil and some seeds can be left outside until spring.
- Cuttings of houseplants can be propagated in water near a bright window. The cuttings can be used for the Kokedama workshop at 1663 Market at Sickles Farm on February 17th at 11 am.

Please contact Heather Robinson heatheramyrobinson@gmail.com or Maya Speelmans mayaelisabeth@gmail.com if you have any native plants from the propagation workshop in June or a plant that was propagated by you that would qualify and that you would like to enter into the plant exchange at the Zone IV show on April 8th. Please refer to the schedule [HERE](#).

CHRISTMAS GREENS:

Christmas Greens Workshop is fast approaching! Teresa and Cynthia have been very busy gathering all things Christmas to make lovely wreaths and arrangements! It is time to start thinking about how you would like to contribute to a successful workshop!

We will need all sorts of greens, large and small to make arrangements and wreaths. Please start identifying the greens in your yards that you would like to donate! Greens can be dropped off at Bingham Hall on Friday, December 5th (front side of building, left side). If you see the shorter, stubbier pinecones on your walks think of Christmas Greens and pick them up! Any sort of interesting plant material or seed pod could make for an exciting addition to a wreath or arrangement!

On Friday, December 5th we will start getting busy! We will have a wiring workshop of Christmas ornaments and pinecones, and we will start our mason jar arrangements....most likely mid-morning. Friday afternoon when the wreaths arrive, we will tag and attach the pipe cleaner hangers with the aid of young volunteers! We need to set up our wreath and arrangement material. Somewhere in this activity we will put down the dreaded, but much needed paper to protect the floors at Bingham Hall.

On Saturday, December 6th we will get even busier! We will finish up any mason jar arrangements and decorate the wreaths! Finished wreaths and arrangements will then be delivered by volunteers, a quick cleanup and we are finished!

It sounds so easy on paper, but honestly, we need everyone's help in making Christmas Greens a success!

As we get closer to this fun event, we will fine tune the times for the wiring workshop and set-up so stay tuned!

PHOTOGRAPHY:

PHOTOGRAPHY

January 20th

Celebrating our history

Class 1 A historical artifact, architecture, and/or home at least over 200 years old in **color**.

Class 2 Novice. Same as Class 1.

Class 3 A historical artifact, architecture, and/or home at least over 200 years old in **black and white**.

Class 4 Novice. Same as Class 3.

All entries must be submitted by January 10th to Gail Van Winkle's -51 Lippincott Rd., Little Silver. Follow mounting rules in the By-Laws. Because this is NOT a GCA show we can offer up to at least 5 entries per class. Please keep the photos to 8 x10 Contact Gail at gailfvw@gmail.com to reserve a spot today.



And enjoy the presentation from our wonderful October speaker Thomas Hedges [HERE](#). Thomas also suggested this video about taking beautiful photos of flowers using your phone [HERE](#).

CONSERVATION:

Climate Resilience in New Jersey

Please join us at a presentation on climate resilience hosted by Brookdale Community College in collaboration with the Jersey Shore Chapter of the NJ Sierra Club (in the Twin Lights Rooms, Student Life Center, via Parking Lot #7) on **November 24, 2025 at 6:30 p.m.**

Speaker: Nick Angarone, New Jersey's Chief Resilience Officer and Manager of DEP's Office of Climate Resilience. Mr. Angarone will talk about his work on climate resilience; specifically New Jersey's challenges as a northeastern state with disproportionate climate risks such as sea level rise, flooding, water and air quality degradation, wildfires, biodiversity loss, and urban heat islands. Included will be comments and insights specifically targeting the Monmouth County area. Regulatory solutions, hazard prevention, mitigation, and remediation/recovery efforts (including via blue acres) will be discussed. Nick Angarone is New Jersey's Chief Resilience Officer and Manager of DEP's Office of Climate Resilience. He coordinates statewide resilience policy and serves as Vice-Chair of the Interagency Council on Climate Resilience. He also leads and directs the development of the Statewide Climate Change Resilience Strategy, and provides technical guidance and support to local governments in their efforts to address the impacts of climate change.

Please RSVP to sheilaehrenberg@gmail.com.

SAVE THE DATE:

January 6, 2026 at 5:30 p.m. at Robynn O'Neill's home for a showing of the documentary *Dark Sacred Sky* (Office of Sustainability at Princeton University). The documentary focuses on the importance of the night sky and the impact of light pollution.

NJ COMMITTEE:



The tables were set at Canoe Brook CC on November 5th to welcome Zone IV members, including these RGC ladies, who enjoyed the luncheon, lecture and festive boutique in support of scholarships for Rutgers Environmental students.

NEW MEMBERS:



And the table was set at Susan Sorokolit's home on November 6th as she and Taphy hosted a New Member luncheon. Peeka Tildesley spoke about committee opportunities and a wonderful time was had by all!

GARDEN HISTORY & DESIGN:

Still time to register for The GCA's Garden History & Design Virtual Conference November 13, 2025, 11 am - 2 pm ET

<https://www.gcamerica.org/members:calendar/ereventdetails/id/596>

The GCA's Garden History & Design Conference will be on November 13. It is a virtual conference which runs from 11-2pm. There will be six presentations with beautiful photos and 'live' tours of stunning places. Presenters include Thomas Woltz, designer and architect of places like Middleton Place, Filoli Gardens, and Memorial Park; Warrie Price, founder of the Battery Conservancy in New York; all the way through to owners of historic gardens; the director of the Smithsonian Archives of American Gardens, and ending with the Rutherford family who have been cultivating melons on their farm for over 100 years.

RGC ON AMAZON!:

RGC's Amazon shop is up and running! Access it through the RGC website, click the product below, or click [here](#) to start shopping! Future shopping suggestions welcome!

THIS MONTH'S FEATURED PRODUCT

Find just what you need to get ready for the pressed flower challenge in January!



RGC ladies enjoying the October Pressed Flower Workshop

RGC ON INSTAGRAM!:

Please send Pari photos of any events, workshops, or any special plants you encounter, including pictures from your garden or others.

Text Pari Harrison @ 732 915-3051

Art That Blooms Festival – November 14-16

Free event with many floral exhibits and demonstrations. Bucks County (PA) Community College. Review Heather's October 27th membership email for the complete show schedule. Barbara B. and Louisa R. are attending on the 16th if anyone wants to join us.

The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society offers floral design workshops open to the public to for exhibitors, and non-exhibitors alike, to help prepare for a big flower show like the Philadelphia Flower Show. The workshops are free, but pre-registration is required. Participants **DO NOT** need to be exhibiting at the Flower Show to attend the workshops. All floral designers of any skill level are welcome to learn. To pre-register, go to - <https://tickets.phsonline.org/events>.

Floral Design Workshops sponsored by the PHS -

December 6 (10 am – 12 noon)

January 10 (10 am – 12 noon)

January 17 (10 am – 12 noon)

All workshops will be held at:

PHS Town Hall

100 N. 20th Street

Philadelphia, PA 19103



A NOTE FROM THE BIRD LADY:

It is this time of year when our yards look the worse for wear. With all the storms and fierce winds things look a bit dilapidated and we feel the urge to tidy up a bit. Hold on a minute. Have you heard of "chop and drop"?

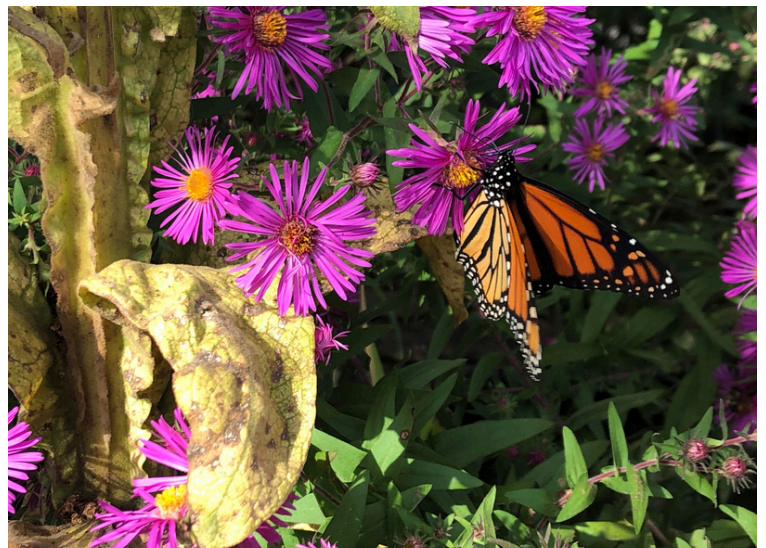
You must have heard that so many insects like to hibernate in hollow stems and need leaf litter to hide under. So, instead of removing everything from your beds try "chop and drop." It is easiest to start with plants that have flopped over, creating an untidy mess. You start by cutting at the top of the plant, dropping all the plant parts down onto the soil. The parts will lie there decomposing over the winter; the hollow stems will provide the living quarters; the leaves will be like a warm blanket; and the birds will find the seed heads. And soon, with maybe a little light weeding as you go along, you will find that your yard will look rather good. If you, or most likely your spouse, prefer a tidier garden you can do this method in a more out of the way area. This will certainly lighten your winter die back chores. You could take your dog out with you to keep you company, but she will probably prefer to dig.

So, you are now providing a useful habitat for the pollinators and wildlife.

You could sprinkle wood chips over it all if you think it needed to be hidden. But really, no one will look over your fence and wonder if they should turn you in to the plant police in your area. After all, who looks at our gardens during the winter months.

In the spring you may want to rake it all away, after hibernation is over, of course, and add the mulched product to your compost pile.

A satisfying project. The wildlife will thank you and so will your back and knees.



Haiku

Messy looking yards
A big urge to tidy up,
Don't, let it all lie



Louis Renn shares this interesting article about day care, kids, and the benefits of playing in dirt!

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/oct/29/soil-sandpit-children-dirty-biodiversity-finnish-nurseries-research-microbes-bacteria-aoe>

And **Cathy Smith** recommends this new book from recent RGC speaker, Jeff Quattrone, *Iconic Jersey Tomatoes, An American Folk life and Foodway*

<https://shorturl.at/WBy5I>



IN ANTICIPATION OF CHRISTMAS GREENS, ENJOY THIS QUICK READ HIGHLIGHTING GCA'S SUPPORT OF SAVING OUR HOLLY AND EVERGREENS.

<https://www.gcamerica.org/members/news/get?id=1677>



***PART 2: ENJOY MORE OF OUR RGC HISTORY!
FROM RGC'S 2014 100TH ANNIVERSARY VIDEO***