



FEBRUARY 2026

COMPOST HEAP

An Official Publication of Rumson Garden Club



Happy Valentine's Day!

Enjoy the winter break! See you all at the next membership meeting in the **Spring!**

For those of you attending the
Container Garden Workshop,
see you on

Tuesday, February 17, 2026

11:00 a.m.

Bingham Hall

“Kokedama”

Japanese for moss ball.

We will create our own kokedama with participants' own plants.

Materials and instructions will be provided.

A worksheet will be sent ahead of the workshop with recommendations of suitable plant material.

February is upon us and, wow, winter is really making its presence known this year! Luckily we have garden club to keep us busy!

Our January open meeting was a great success. I loved seeing the botanical arts hearts & landscapes, our amazing photography and a robust hort show. Our speaker Richard McCoy shared his experience transitioning from traditional landscape practices to his regenerative approach. A video of his presentation is coming soon! Also the books he mentioned in his presentation are now on our RGC shop page [here](#).

It's the time of year to approve grant funding for both the GCA Founders Fund and the NJ Committee Growing Fund. We need your input to cast our club's vote so look for more information on pages 5 & 8.

We have lots of ways to gather together over the next month, starting with our kokedama workshop on the 17th. Then join us for more from conservation, floral, visiting gardens and GCA virtual events. I hope to see you there!

Keep growing!
Heather



**Brrr - even my rhododendron is cold!
This is called thermonasty, an adaptive protective mechanism when
temperatures are below freezing.**

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER:

- Feb. 10, 11am-4pm, GCA Floral Conference (Virtual / Register through GCA website)
- Feb. 11, 12pm, New Members luncheon, home of Taphy Haresar (New Members)
- Feb. 17, 11am, Container Garden workshop (Hort)
- Feb. 23, 6:30pm, Habitat Conservation talk, Brookdale CC (Conservation)
- Mar 4, 8am, Philadelphia Flower Show Road Trip (Visiting Gardens)
- March 10, 11am, Parallel Design workshop, Borough Hall Courthouse (Floral)
- Apr. 7&8, 10am-4pm, Zone IV Meeting, Grounds for Sculpture, Hamilton Township, NJ
- Apr. 7&8, Philadelphia overnight Road Trip (Visiting Gardens)
- Jun. 18, Rutgers Univ. Rain Garden Road Trip (Visiting Gardens)

FLORAL DESIGN:

LOVIN' THOSE PRESSED FLOWERS!

Congratulations to all participants and winners of the January pressed flower challenge. Bonnie Torcivia coordinated everything for floral design and we really appreciate all of her efforts. All participants should be proud of their beautiful designs plus learning a new way to display their love of flowers!

NEXT UP FOR MARCH - PARALLEL DESIGN

Please join the floral design team for a demonstration workshop on how to create a floral design arrangement using a parallel line style of design. The free workshop is in preparation of our April Show which will require use of parallel design for the floral challenge classes.

What: Workshop featuring Parallel Design

When: Tuesday, March 10

Where: Court House at BOROUGH HALL

Time: 11:00 am - 12:30 pm

RSVP to Louisa at louisarenn@gmail.com or via text at 732-859-4418.

ZONE IV SHOW UPDATE - DESIGNERS WANTED!

Barbara Batting will be representing RGC in floral design for the Zone IV Show at Grounds for Sculpture on April 7 & 8. She will be entering Class 1 in Floral Design with her floral interpretation of one of the sculptures found in the GFS collection. The Show's program can be located via [this link](#) or on the GCA website.

Normally, each club is only allotted one entry per club. However as of February 5th, there are several openings and the floral chairs are looking for additional people to enter. This is a great opportunity for Rumson designers to shine! Currently, there is one space left in Class 2, Class 3, and Class 4. Please let Heather know if you are interested in showing ASAP so we can facilitate your registration.

Here are photos of the hanging frame for Class 2 and the ballerina dress form for Class 3 which may be helpful.



HORT:

The Horticulture committee will be busy making Kokedama “moss ball” planters on February 17 at 11 AM. The workshop is fully subscribed but if you are interested contact Betsy Ford at betsyford72@gmail.com to be put on the waitlist.

Please contact Maya at mayaelisabeth@gmail.com if you have any propagated plants that would be eligible for the Plant Exchange at the Zone IV show on April 7th and 8th.

Right now it seems as if we will never see the ground again but by the next issue of the Heap hopefully there will be daffodils blooming and native plants peaking out from the soil. Enjoy the catalogues that promise beautiful flowers this summer.

<https://brentandbeckysbulbs.com/>

<https://www.dutchbulbs.com/>

CONSERVATION:

Habitat Conservation for Endangered Species in NJ, Brookdale Community College, February 23, 2026 at 6:30 p.m.

Speaker: William Pitts, Senior Zoologist with NJ DEP Fish & Wildlife’s Endangered & Nongame Species Program

New tools and technologies are being applied to habitat conservation in New Jersey, to help endangered species such as the kestrel (our smallest falcon), the bog turtle, and the tiger salamander. The eDNA project (uses samples collected from the environment to assess the presence of species), modeling of habitat suitability, and other tools are enriching the reach of our state’s wildlife biologists to study and protect the breeding and survivorship of endangered species. Kindly email Sheila (sheilaehrenberg@gmail.com) or Lisa (lisabitterly@comcast.net) if you plan to attend.

Kindly note that the showing of the documentary Dark Sacred Sky (Office of Sustainability at Princeton University) has been postponed from February 19 to Monday, April 13. The documentary focuses on the importance of the night sky and the impact of light pollution. It demonstrates environmental damage and why darkness matters.

NJ COMMITTEE:

The NJ Committee of the GCA was founded in 1987 by our own Millicent Mercer Johnsen. The 'Growing Fund' provides Zone IV clubs with grant money to fund projects within the State. As you know, most recently the Rumson Garden Club was awarded a grant to supply native plants and labels to the Rutgers demonstration Rain Garden.

The three proposals presented this year are as follows:

1. Summit: Seeks funds (\$3,000) to augment the Freeman Medal Collection at Reeves-Reed Arboretum.
2. Princeton: Seeks funding (\$7,500) for 2,500 native herbaceous plants and 25 large trees + shrubs to restore riparian area in the Billy Johnson Mountain Lakes Nature Preserve.
3. Madison: Seeks funding (\$4,300) to replant the Mountain Laurel Allee at the Cross Estate Gardens in Bernardsville.

Happily, the NJ Committee is able to fund all three projects, so as a club we can endorse all three. You can request a copy of the proposals at 6amzc4@gmail.com. If you have an objection to any of the proposals, please let me know so that we can record your response. Our club vote is due in April.

VISITING GARDENS:

"Rooted : Origins of American Gardening" the 2026 Philadelphia Flower Show theme explores personal stories and heritage behind gardening, coinciding with the US semiquincentennial celebrations. RGC is organizing carpools NOW to attend the show Wednesday, March 4. Cars would leave at 8am for arrival at 10am to the Show. After viewing the show and finishing shopping we'll take a walk across the street to the famous Reading Terminal where we will have lots of choices for a cafe lunch. Arrival back approximately 4pm.

Save the Date: Please mark your calendar for April 7-8 and email me of your interest to join. We will explore Downtown Philadelphia where the new Calder Gardens opened in 2025, The Morris Arboretum of the University of PA, and Chanticleer Gardens on the Mainline.

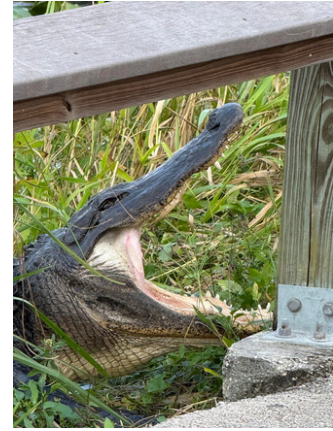
Philadelphia proudly considers itself "America's Garden Capital" boasting the highest concentration of public gardens, arboreta and historic landscapes in the USA with over a 300 year history! The largest landscaped urban park in the world lies within Philadelphia borders. A one night stay at The Logan Hotel will put us within walking distance to the art museums and biking trails along the famed BoatHouse Row on the Schuylkill River.

We have chosen June 18 for an all day private tour of the Rutgers University Rain Garden, in New Brunswick. The day will start with the Rain Garden and take in 3 other garden offerings. And how does a wonderful picnic lunch sound as we gather to exchange the horticultural discoveries that we have made!

Hope you can join! Please email me for any inquiries and reservations robbynoneill@gmail.com

2026 GCA CONSERVATION CONFERENCE:

Click [HERE](#) to learn all about the Everglades, the first National Park designated for biodiversity. Visit the Everglades! And when you do, don't forget to include the Fairchild Botanic Gardens as well as other “Things to Do” mentioned [HERE](#). Support your local “clean water” organizations and [“Advocate for Nature Today”!](#)



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!

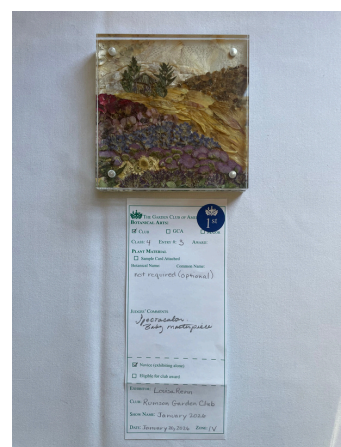
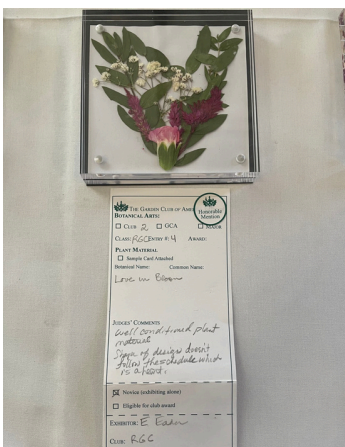
Keep all your **Valentine's bouquets**
fresh with
THIS MONTH'S FEATURED
PRODUCT:



RGC ON INSTAGRAM!:

Don't forget to check out the Rumsongardenclub Instagram for the latest happenings! And please send Pari Harrison photos of any events, workshops, or any special plants you encounter, including pictures from your garden or others.

Text Pari Harrison @ 732-915-3051



Please review the three GCA Founder's Fund Proposals - [HERE](#). Summaries of them are below. Then, cast your vote [HERE!](#) We would like to have a vote from every member. Thank you!

I. Appalachian Spring

Proposed by: Kanawha Garden Club, Zone VII

Seconded by: The Garden Club of Alexandria, Zone VII

Charleston, West Virginia's Appalachian Spring project envisions a historic transformation of its small community by planting 1,000 flowering trees along its streets, riverbanks, and parks over the course of two to three years. Charleston's Capital Connector project will transform the city's riverfront with the creation of a multi-use trail and river park. The spring spectacle of the flowering of hundreds of trees along both sides of the three-mile stretch of the Kanawha River will be the crown jewel of this project. A Founders Fund grant would seed the critical financial support for this consequential endeavor of environmental reclamation and cultural rejuvenation.

II. Community Greening

Proposed by: The Grass River Garden Club, Zone VIII

Seconded by: The Garden Club of Palm Beach, Zone VIII

The Grass River Garden Club in Delray Beach, FL, participated in the first major Community Greening installation—a tree grove planted in a distressed area that needed shade. Native fruit trees were selected to provide free fruit to surrounding residents, and nine years later, the grove continues to serve as both a food resource and a source of shade. CG also initiated a Youth Team program that provides training and paid work opportunities for students to learn how to grow, plant, and maintain trees. Relationships have been established with schools throughout the area, and groups of students routinely arrive by bus to complete community service hours working at the nursery. A Founders Fund grant for a motorized tree trolley, storage facility, and watering truck will assist volunteers and the Youth Team in their mission to grow, distribute, and maintain free trees in long-neglected areas in need of remediation.

III. Garden of Hope

Proposed by: New Orleans Town Gardeners, Inc., Zone IX

Seconded by: Garden Study Club of New Orleans, Zone IX

The Garden of Hope represents the outdoor component of Walker's Imaginarium, bringing joy of nature, healing, exploration, learning, and fun to patients and families at Manning Family Children's. Grant funding will be used for garden design, preparation, and installation, with a budget of \$40,000. The Garden of Hope will complement the existing natural landscape of lush native plants, mature live oaks, walkable paths, and stormwater retention ponds spanning the hospital's unique and beautiful 17-acre campus. The garden will add an educational enrichment aspect to the campus, as well as teaching opportunities for environmental responsibility, conservation, sustainability, and healthy eating.

It is the middle of January. Usually, it is cold and wintry so that we routinely get out our heavy jackets and sweaters but this time we have a fierce unwelcome visitor to contend with that has kept us indoors and invaded our yards and gardens. Unwelcome that is to adults but to the delight of the kids and winter sports fanatics. The Polar Vortex. It has brought with it many inches of snow and deep-freezing temperatures that are going to last for two weeks or more. It is wrecking havoc with our travel, food and fuel supplies.

It is also wrecking havoc in our gardens. Hydrangeas who, unfortunately for them, had chosen to keep their leaves now find them brown and ragged, bracing against the gusting winds. Ornamental grasses that we planted for cover and seed heads for the birds are gamely battling the flurries, though they have kindly turned a beautiful golden color that glows against the snow. Our magnolias, looking frazzled, are far from their old home range. And there are the fig trees, trying desperately to hunker down against the chill. Many of these trees were brought in as cuttings from warmer, gentler climates than ours, by Greek and Italian immigrants at a time when the agricultural checks at Ellis Island were not very thorough.

The freezing weather has turned the reeds on the islands from their luscious shades of green to bronze, and since they are heavy with snow they are about to break down and eventually float in clumps down the river. It is solidly frozen now, looking soft and white, reminiscent of a bridal veil, but when it melts seagulls will hitch a ride on those rafts of reeds. Snow shoveling has been made treacherous with random hills and valleys along our pathways, just lying in wait to twist an ankle or wrist. The dogs are hesitant to do their business, treading carefully on slippery patches. And a motley assortment of birds is squabbling at the feeders. Among them woodpeckers, sparrows, finches, wrens, cardinals, and an unexpected arrival of a pair of juncos.

All around are a wide variety of footprints left by deer, birds, and other wild animals, all hoping desperately for food buried under the snow or with leaves hanging dismally from trees and shrubs. The sky now alternates between metallic grey clouds streaked with soft purple to clear icy blue. On some nights, the stars amass themselves for a brilliant show, bright and shining in a midnight blue sky.

But we cross our fingers as we sit in our cozy armchairs and hope that everything will make a comeback. That the daffodils will appear. The rose bushes survive and all the lovely spring blossoms that we yearn to see make it through this fierce weather.

We must convince ourselves that our plants are stronger than the Polar Vortex.

Jan Glass. Bird Lady January 2026

Janbglass13@gmail.



PART 4: ENJOY MORE OF OUR RGC HISTORY! FROM RGC'S 2014 100TH ANNIVERSARY VIDEO



[And click here to learn what's
behind the GCA logo!](#)



Check out the [Winter 2026 AHS LIVE series!](#) From virtual talks hosted by leading horticulturists to behind-the-scenes tours of gardens in the south, topics include plants for the winter garden, prairie restoration, designing with fragrant flowers, and more! And in celebration of America's 250th anniversary, five virtual programs showcase landscapes and horticultural traditions that are unique to the United States.