

Gather on the River

*with the Birds and the Bees
and the Flowers and the Trees*

The Garden Club of Georgia, Inc.

97th Annual Convention

April 29-30, 2025

Augusta Riverfront Marriott

Azalea District cordially invites you to join us to learn more about the birds and the bees and the flowers and the trees. On the day you arrive vendors will be set up for you to have a fun shopping experience before gathering for a luncheon to enjoy a delicious meal and hear about the beginning of the Augusta National Golf Club and Trees from our keynote speaker. Next we have two breakout sessions where you will learn more about the birds & the flowers to entertain dinner guests. Immediately following you can tour the Morris Museum of Art where you can enjoy the art displays and also visit the gift shop. You can also travel down to the end of Riverwalk and see the Bonnie McClain Perennial Garden which is sponsored and maintained by clubs of the Augusta Council. A third option will be to enjoy a Designers' Challenge! That evening we will have district photos, a cash bar, and a fine evening dinner as you have a brief glimpse of some rare spider lilies on the river. Then our world-famous Awards Event will take place. Following the Business Meeting on Wednesday morning we will conclude the convention with our installation luncheon and speaker presenting the photographic beauty of the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge.

Tuesday's Keynote speaker at the luncheon is Stan Byrdy, author, journalist & Augusta historian. Byrdy's work has appeared on CNN, ESPN, The Weather Channel, PBS and ABC affiliates nationwide. When he came to Augusta in 1985 as a sports anchor he became involved with the Master's Golf Tournament and in 2005 authored "The Augusta National Golf Club" and he will tell us how The Club came about from Berckman's Nursery. His latest offering "The Brilliance of Berckmans" is set for release in 2025 and hopefully will be for sale at Convention.

In the afternoon two breakout sessions will be offered. The first session will feature Vera Stewart, a nationally recognized TV personality, two-time cookbook author, and entrepreneur whose career in the food and hospitality industries spans four decades. Vera graduated from the University of Georgia with a degree in Home Economics Education in 1974. Launching her career in the 1980's, she has become a household name with ventures that included a bakery and café, and a national mail order business for her signature cakes and casseroles. She currently has the syndicated "The VeryVera Show" in its 13th season, the "VeryVera Cooking Camp" which has completed its 21st year, and "VERA," a multi-scoped hospitality service for patrons of the Masters tournament. With a passion for Southern dishes passed down through generations, her manifold business endeavors have inspired people all over the nation to create memories in the kitchen. Vera's philosophy is based on a winning attitude and passion for perfection. Vera will have her two cookbooks for sale.

Immediately following Vera, the second session will feature Glen and Gail Hendry. Glen serves on the board of directors for the South Carolina Bluebird Society (SCBS), is a life-time member since 2010, and heads up the Trails Committee. Glen and Gail monitor the Hitchcock Woods Trails in Aiken, SC which consists of 86 bluebird nest boxes and 12 screech owl boxes. Glen does the statistical reporting for the SCBS, including supplying the data to the Cornell Nest Watch program. Glen received a B.S. in Geology in 1976 from The Pennsylvania State University. He met his wife in an underground uranium mine in New Mexico where Gail was a miner (drilling, pacing dynamite, and blasting the rocks). Gail received her RN from Augusta College in 1994. Both are retired now (but working harder than ever!!)

The speaker at the Awards Banquet is Owen Navaree. Owen graduated from Augusta University with a bachelor's degree in biology. He started his botanical career at the Augusta National nursery pruning their famous azalea bushes in the summer of 2021. He began working at Phinzy Center for Water Sciences in May of 2023 as a researcher working to study and restore the Rocky Spider Shoal Lilies in the Savannah River. He got his passion for wildlife from hunting and fishing in the Augusta area with his family

Wednesday's luncheon speaker is Mark Albertin. Mark was born in Waukesha, Wisconsin. He moved south to Georgia in 1986 and has loved his transplanted home as if it were his birthplace. Mark has had a camera around his neck since he was a teenager, eventually starting his own darkroom. He has an associate's degree in printing and publishing and since 1999 had focused on documentary films, many of which have aired on PBS or screened at film festivals across the country. His first book, containing photographs around Georgia and South Carolina called, "Along the Fall Line" was released in January 2024. He will be speaking on the Okefenokee Wildlife Refuge which is the topic of his 2nd book due out in April-May 2025