



Redbud Reporter

Summer 2026

From Your District Director

I was listening to a popular song of my childhood, "Those Lazy, Hazy, Crazy Days of Summer" by Nat King Cole. He sang about making sandwiches, drinking soda, spending time at the beach, and going to the drive-in. Those activities were definitely part of my youth, but I was also fortunate to spend many Sunday afternoons riding with my family to visit my Pop and Ma in Roanoke, Alabama. They had a good-sized farm where my brothers, sisters, and cousins roamed, played and explored. This photo is of my brother, sister and cousins on my grandmother's yard.



Ma was a gardener ahead of her time in that she didn't have a standard front and side grass lawn but a yard full of flowers and plants that could survive during the South's hottest summer heat. She definitely was a friend to pollinators. We picked strawberries, figs, apples, corn, tomatoes, and beans. Fresh watermelon was enjoyed in the back yard, and I can still picture the jars of honey with honeycombs from their bee hives sitting on the table that we poured onto her homemade yeast rolls. My mouth is watering just thinking about it! Sweet memories and magical times with family.

I wish I could say I spend plenty of time running around and working in my yard. My energy level just doesn't quite match up with the energy of my youth. I do continue making sweet memories and participating in magical times. I'm looking forward to attending the Blue Star Marker Dedication at The Carter Center on Tuesday, June 30th at 10 am. The Dunwoody Garden Club will also sponsor a dedication of a Blue Star Memorial By-Way Marker at Brook Run Park on Thursday, July 2nd at 5:30 pm. Two special occasions for us to show support for those who sacrifice daily to keep our Nation free.

Members of the Moonflower Garden Club will host our Redbud District Summer Board Meeting in Barnesville, GA at the Barnesville/Lamar County Public Library on Wednesday, August 12th at 10:30 am. At our Winter Board meeting we made the decision to delay holding our Annual Standard Flower Show one year to investigate ways to raise funds for this wonderful event. We encourage our

Redbud members to share ideas in the upcoming months and look forward to sponsoring the flower show in September 2027.

Our Redbud District 65th Annual Meeting will be on Thursday, October 8th in Avondale Estates at the American Legion Post 66, 30 Covington Road, Avondale Estates, GA. Hosting our meeting are the members of Avon Garden Club and Avondale Estates Garden Club. Our theme is “Red, White and Blue – Pollinators Need You!” Our guest speaker will be Becky Griffin, who is a well-known Champion of

Pollinators and UGA Coordinator of the Great Southeast Pollinator Census.

I enjoy hearing from our clubs and reading about their fun activities and events that have recently taken place. This is your district. Our Officers and Board members are open to hearing your ideas and answering your questions about how we can help you.

Wishing you a sweet summer with magical memories.

Bonnie Dudley
Redbud District Director

Redbud Members Attend National Garden Club Convention

The National Garden Club (NGC) Annual Convention was held May 4-6, 2026 in St. Louis, Missouri. Redbud members of the NGC Board attending were GCG President Diane Hunter, 2nd Vice President Gale D. Thomas and Symposium Chairman Lynn Fronk. Also in attendance, along with several other GCG members from other districts, were GCG Education Co-Chairman Marilyn McDonnell and Moonflower Garden Club member Annette Jones.

On the first night, seven of the GCG members joined together for an impromptu dinner. After a long 30-minute walk to a “nearby” restaurant, the group enjoyed a moment of fellowship, laughter, and great food. That set the tone for the Convention as GCG members sat together at programs and meals while meeting, engaging, and sharing ideas with non-GCG attendees also seated at their tables.

Designers Club members and GCG flower show judges Lynn, Maidee Spencer, and Gale entered designs (Maidee’s were delivered by Diane) into the NGC Petite Flower Show. Gale received three

ribbons: First, Second, and Third Place on her three designs; Maidee received two Third Place Ribbons; and Lynn received an Honorable Mention. Diane and Gale also served as judges for the flower show.

GCG members attended the NGC Business Meeting and the Awards Program together. Additionally, members attended the various sessions, several presented by staff from the Missouri Botanical Gardens. Redbud and other GCG members also enjoyed scheduled tours of the Missouri Botanical Gardens and the NGC Headquarters (located next door to the Gardens).

During the Award Program recognizing clubs and states for their 2025 work, Redbud clubs were recognized. Conyers Garden Club received a First Place for its Garden Therapy project. Lullwater Garden Club received four Certificates of Appreciation in the following categories: Blue Star/Gold Star Landscaping; Conservation Activities; Native Plants and Wildlife Venue; and Publications.

Also receiving Certificates of Appreciation for Publications were The Redbud District and Avondale Estates Garden Club. The Redbud District received a Flower Show Achievement Award for the “Cruisin’ with Daisy” Flower Show. A complete listing of all NGC Award winners can be found on the NGC website:

<https://gardenclub.org/sites/default/files/2026-05/ngc-top-award-winners-2026.pdf>

The business meeting ended with the annual “Call to Convention”. The NGC 2027 Convention Committee presented a hilarious invitation as the Wisconsin members, dressed in cow costumes, gave their Call to Convention 2027. Of course, the GCG crew had to have a picture taken with the “cows”.

After a two-day convention filled with meetings, presentations, a flower show, and tours, those attending the Convention arrived home safely and tired. All were energized with great ideas for the 2026-2027 club year.



Above: GCG Convention attendees with the Wisconsin Call to Convention “cows” (not pictured Marilyn McDonnell).

Top, right: Diane Hunter located the GCG paver on the NGC “Path of Success”.

Bottom, right: Diane Hunter and Gale Thomas meet Smokey the Bear.

Flower Show School, Course I

Want to become a Flower Show Judge? Or maybe you just want to learn more about flower shows, design or horticulture. Well, this is your opportunity!! There are 4 courses required to become an NGC Accredited Flower Show Judge, typically offered every 4 months.

~Course I: August 16-19, 2026~

Bellmere Garden House, Johns Creek, GA

Fee for the Full 4-day Course to become a judge: \$155.00 (includes lunch)
 Registration for informational purposes: either design or horticulture:
 One day audit: \$75 (includes lunch).
 Flower Show Procedure audit: \$25.00, 2 hours, Sunday August 16, 2026
 Non-NGC/GCG members, add \$10.00 to above fees



Anna Burns will discuss traditional line, line-mass and mass designs and how to critique them.

David Robson will teach us about Hostas and Zinnias and how to judge them.



For more information, contact:
 Joy Zaidan, Local School Chairman
 770-493-8475; Joyzaidan4986@gmail.com
 Gale Thomas, Registrar, Co-Chair
 404-790-7101; galedthomas@gmail.com

Congratulations to GCG Award Winners

Redbud District

- 1st place, Flower Show Schedule (AW 23)
- 1st place, District Standard Flower Show (AW 30)
- 1st place, Newsletter (AW 37)
- 1st place, Flower Show Staging (AW 45)
- 1st place, Website (AW 53)

DeKalb Federation

- 1st place, Garden Club Council (AW 31)
- 3rd place, Newsletter (AW 37)
- 1st place, Gardens for the Challenged (AW 40)
- 2nd place, Website (AW 53)

Avon Garden Club (medium club)

- 2nd place, Yearbook (AW 16, clubs 45-69 members)
- 1st place, Member Participation Program (AW 33)
- 1st place, Litter/Recycle/Reclamation (AW 43)
- 3rd place, National Garden Club Week (AW 56)

Avondale Estates Garden Club (large club)

- 2nd place, Special Achievement (AW 7)
- 1st place, Yearbook (AW 16, clubs 70-99 members)
- 1st place, Electronic Scrapbook (AW 25-2)
- 2nd place, Karen Liebert, Poem, written for children by adult (AW 26B)
- 1st place, Newsletter (AW 37)
- 1st place, DVD/CD/Flash/PowerPoint Program (AW 47)
- 1st place, Website (AW 53)
- 3rd place, Social Media (AW 53)
- 2nd place, National Garden Club Week (AW 56)
- 1st place, Garden Week in Georgia (AW 60)

Conyers Garden Club (small club)

- 1st place, Special Achievement (AW 7)
- 1st place, Garden Therapy (AW 10)
- 1st place, Yearbook (AW 16, clubs under 20 members)
- 2nd place, Gale Thomas, Poem written for adults by adult (AW 26A)
- 1st place, Susan Turner, Poem, written for children by adult (AW 26B)
- 2nd place, Member Participation Program (AW 33)
- 1st place, Gardens for Challenged (AW 40)
- 1st place, Herb (AW 41)
- 1st place, Public Relations (AW 46)
- 2nd place, DVD/CD/Flash/PowerPoint Program (AW 47)
- 2nd place, Holiday Decorations (AW 49)
- 2nd place, National Garden Club Week (AW 56)

Covington Garden Club (medium club)

3rd place, Member Participation Program (AW 33)

The Designers Garden Club (medium club)

3rd place, Special Achievement (AW 7)

2nd place, Yearbook (AW 16, clubs 20-29 members)

Green Thumb Garden Club (medium club)

2nd place, Horticulture (AW 19)

3rd place, Carey Elder (AW 26)

2nd place, Member Participation Program (AW 33)

3rd place, Newsletter (AW 37)

3rd place, Butterfly Conservation (AW 51)

HM, National Garden Club Week (AW 56)

Lullwater Garden Club (medium club)

1st place, Birds (AW 4)

1st place, Conservation Project (AW 8)

1st place, Native Plant (AW 11)

2nd place, Newsletter (AW 37)

1st place, Marker Award (AW 39)

3rd place, Holiday Decorations (AW 49)

HM, Butterfly Conservation (AW 51)

2nd place, Website (AW 53)

Mountain Mums Garden Club (medium club)

1st place, Garden Therapy (AW 10)

2nd place, Newsletter (AW 37)

Satsuki Garden Club (medium club)

3rd place, Newsletter (AW 37)

1st place, Holiday Decorations (AW 49)

2nd place, Butterfly Conservation (AW 51)

Smoke Rise Garden Club (medium club)

3rd place, Yearbook (AW 16, clubs 30-44 members)

Smoke Rise Morning Glories Garden Club (medium club)

1st place, Yearbook (AW 16, clubs 20-29 members)

Spade and Trowel Garden Club (medium club)

HM, Cemetery (AW 12)

3rd place, School Grounds Improvement (AW 38)

Stonecrest Garden Club (medium club)

2nd place, School Grounds Improvement (AW 38)

2nd place, National Garden Club Week (AW 56)

Interesting in Growing Membership for Your Clubs?

by Quill Duncan 4th VP Membership

Now that I have your attention let's look at some ideas that clubs across our state and nation are doing to increase membership. Most clubs are not meeting in the summer so now is a good time to do some brainstorming on how to add some spark to September and October meetings.

- **Hold an Open House!** Some clubs put out an invitation on Facebook or Instagram or the local newspaper and invite people to attend to learn what garden club is all about. For this gathering, serve light refreshments and have your leadership or Redbud leadership give a brief overview of garden club. The Thomaston Garden Club held their open house in a boutique in Thomaston, and it was a great success and fun. Younger people were attracted to the setting and to the garden club story and they joined.
- **“Bring A Friend, Make a Friend!** “Invite friends from church or other organizations where you belong for the September meeting. This is how most people join garden club and once there, be warm and welcoming to the visitors. Invite them back!
- **Adjustable Meeting times!** A club in Arizona realized that younger potential members were working but were still interested in garden club activities. They voted to hold an evening meeting every other month for those who prefer that time and morning meetings on the alternate months. Older members were offered rides to the evening meetings and that club has bloomed. Some clubs meet via Zoom in Winter Months of January and February. Other clubs meet in the evening part of the year with daylight savings time to attract those who are working.
- **Business Meetings via Zoom!** Ok, sounds heretical but some people are not interested in business meetings. They want to hear interesting speakers and socialize and eat. Clubs have decided to hold that short business meeting via Zoom monthly, and anyone can join in, but it does not take up general meeting time.
- **Sign-up Sheets at garden events!** Take advantage of a membership tool that was recently used at the Strawberry Festival in Reynolds, GA in Taylor County in April. A garden club had a table with signup sheets available to people to sign in with their name, phone and email if they were interested in garden club. This resulted in five pages of names from the surrounding communities. The Camellia Co-Director followed up with all those names, and we will see what grows. It was suggested that this be regular practice at events and have sheets printed and ask people to clearly print their names and info as it was a challenge to read some of those entries! There are many events every fall across Georgia with plant sales and festivals. Try this!
- **Publicize what you do!** You have programs and projects that are meaningful to your community. Tell about it and that will attract people who share those causes.
- **Make it Fun!** Don't forget to cherish Nature and those special friendships and laugh!

The Carter Center Blue Star Marker

On June 30, 2026, a Blue Star Marker was dedicated on the grounds of The Carter Presidential Center in Atlanta. This is only the 2nd Blue Star Marker installed at a Presidential Library. The marker was sponsored by The Garden Club of Georgia, Inc. in cooperation with Laurel, Azalea, Oleander, Camellia, Magnolia, Dogwood and Redbud Districts and The Carter Presidential Center. Over 250 people attended the event. We were honored that our own Deen Day Sanders, who is Honorary Life President of GCG and NGC, was in attendance.

GCG Blue & Gold Star Memorial Marker Program Chairman Jan Thiese opened the ceremony. She was followed by remarks from GCG President Diane Hunter and National Garden Clubs President Donna Donnelly. GCG Chaplain Juanita Barron gave the invocation.

The Presentation of Colors by the DeKalb County Fire Rescue Honor Guard was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Susan Turner. GCG 1st Vice-President Bess Hartley then sang the National Anthem. What a beautiful voice she has!

The Keynote Speaker was Josh Carter, grandson of President Jimmy Carter. Josh is the director of the VEO-IBD (Very Early Onset Inflammatory Bowel Disease) Foundation and speaks often on the life principles learned from his parents and grandparents. He spoke about his grandfather's naval experience and regard for the armed services.

Former GCG President and Azalea District Blue Star Marker Chairman Peggy Tucker explained the history of the Blue Marker. Josh Carter and his two sons unveiled the marker while surrounded by NGC President Donna Donnelly, GCG officers and committee chairmen, and District Directors. Floral tributes were provided by the Dogwood District including a red, white and blue live wreath for the

marker. Immediately following the unveiling of the wreath, a member of the color guard gave a moving solo performance of "Amazing Grace" on the bagpipes. Short videos of this and the presentation of colors can be found on the [DeKalb Federation Facebook page](#).

This was a very moving ceremony, particularly coming just days before the 250th anniversary of our nation! A very fitting tribute to the men and women who serve and protect our country.



DeKalb Federation Sponsors Basic Floral Design Class

A Basic Floral Design I course, sponsored by The DeKalb Federation of Garden Clubs, was recently held. The course, which was organized and taught by Gale Thomas, was held at Smoke Rise Baptist Church.

The GCG Basic Floral Design I course had been offered in several other parts of the state in recent years, even as close as Conyers. However, many DeKalb Federation members who indicated they wanted to take the class were unwilling to make that drive (and anyone who has driven on I-20 can understand why). Unfortunately, we had been unable to find an Atlanta facility that was not prohibitively expensive. But that's where Smoke Rise member Victoria Crosby stepped in! Not only did she find us a great space, she found a FREE one!

The class involved watching a pre-requisite set of videos, following by five 4-hour classes. The topic of the classes, which were held once every 2 weeks were: Line and Line Mass Design; Mass Design; Creative and Petite Designs; Table Designs; and Botanical Arts (Wreath and Fruit/Vegetable Designs). The Botanical Arts class was taught by Michelle Culberson, with Gale assisting.

Thirteen people enrolled in this session of the class. Each member brought their own flowers and containers to class, where they assembled two designs each session. Each design was presented to the class, where it was critiqued by the instructor. This part of the class was called "Appreciation", which was a very apropos term, as Gale was always very positive in her comments. It was also very instructional to see the different designs created by other members of the class.

Some members of the class had obviously had plenty of experience creating floral designs. Then there were the others of us! Smoke Rise Morning Glories member Kim Fair describes her first class:

"I signed up for the Basic Flower Design Class somewhat out of curiosity and because my friend Vickie was interested.

Today was the first class. I think perhaps Mercury was in retrograde – or this is not for me.

I left my cutting tools on the kitchen counter. I chose flowers that fade quickly. I tried to use a bonsai pot (correct dimensions) but the metal tape I used did not plug up the holes. Turns out Mexican petunia wilts quickly. Who knew?



The lovely, perfectly sized vase I bought at FODAC proceeded to shed its "paint" once I put water in it.

The notebook I brought (I am sure I purchased at a discount) was the weirdest experience – writing on it felt like writing on rubber. Pencil was impossible, pen required concentration.

But it was so much fun! Gale is a great teacher and I can't wait for the next class. Life is an adventure."

Now look at photos below of Kim's designs from the 4th and 5th classes of the course:



Her first class was obviously an anomaly – but it's also amazing how much you can learn in this class!

Smoke Rise Baptist has indicated that they are willing to let us use their facility for another session of this course in the fall. So if you are either a novice wanting to learn the basics of floral design OR an

experienced designer wanting tips on how to create award winning designs for flower shows, be sure to sign up! Either way, you will learn a lot and have a lot of fun!



News from the Clubs

Avondale Estates Secret Gardens Tour Draws Hundreds

About 300 visitors explored the five gardens on the Avondale Estates Garden Club’s biennial Secret Gardens of Avondale Tour on June 6. The tour took visitors to private gardens around the city, each inspiring novice and seasoned gardeners alike. Entering the different gardens opened the door to a different landscaped garden, with intricate pathways that enticed visitors to pause and smell the flowering perennials, native plants and pollinators, and admire a wide range of flowering trees. The gardens all featured cozy seating and outdoor dining areas, creating lovely verdant outdoor living spaces.

Proceeds from the tour will help support many environmental and educational grants and scholarships for Georgia students, local school and therapeutic gardening, roadside beautification, municipal tree plantings, and other efforts.



Conyers Celebrates National Garden Week

The Conyers Garden Club (CGC) held its annual National Garden Week (NGW) Celebration on June 9, 2026 at the Rockdale County Extension Office. This year’s topic was “Working with Native Plants in Your Garden.”

The program started with the new Mayor of Conyers, Connie Alsobrook, presenting the garden club with a proclamation declaring NGW in Conyers. Mayor Alsobrooke shared that she was also a gardener and, as she was very interested in the program’s topic, she was planning to remain to hear the presentation. After the proclamation was presented to CGC Co-Presidents Ellen Hegwood and Kathy Williams, CGC 1st. Vice President Jessica Warren introduced the program speakers.



The program was presented by Victoria Hull, Spalding County Agriculture & Natural Resources Agent, and Andrew Carroll of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. The two gave an engaging presentation which included great examples of Georgia native plants and ideas for substituting natives for other commonly used perennials, shrubs, and trees. They gave practical tips on how gardeners can begin to incorporate native species into their home gardens. Ms. Hull and Mr. Carroll shared their combined expertise on native plants and shared their efforts to transform part of their community garden into a native

pollinator garden. The presentation appeared to inspire those present, including the Mayor, as many questions were asked about various plants and challenges faced by the home gardeners. Additionally, Ms. Hill and Mr. Carroll gave information about sources for native plants and seeds.



Present for the program were 16 Rockdale County Master Gardeners and other guests, 12 GCG members, the Mayor and her assistant, a Board of Commissioner staff member, and 2 youth. Native plant seed packs were provided by the Extension Office and distributed to all in attendance. After the program, refreshments were served and attendees enjoyed several moments of socializing and sharing gardening experiences. A patriotic-themed gift bag was raffled off to one lucky attendee.



Conyers Garden Club Plants Red, White, and Blue

On Tuesday, April 21st, The Conyers Garden Club used their spring workday at the Light House Children's Butterfly Garden to fulfill the Garden Club of Georgia's charge to "Plant Red, White, and Blue". Plants selected for the project were delphiniums, dianthus, petunias, vincas, salvias, and spike speedwells. The plants were purchased using funds from a previous Rotary Club donation.

The designated planting area for this project was the space between the driveway curb and the garden's large butterfly bench. The workday began with the members cleaning up the area by relocating daylilies to a dedicated daylily bed and weeding out the undesirables. After the area was cleaned out, the purchased plants were laid out in their designated spot and the nine club members present teamed up to dig holes and plant them. Additional plants, lantana and delphinium, were also added in the garden's center island.

Club members enjoyed the fellowship of the planting activity, laughing and talking, as they worked. Members were pleased with the day's work and the garden had a bright and cheerful red, white and blue curb-appeal makeover.



Conyers Garden Club Holds a Garden Therapy Hat Project

The Conyers Garden Club had a busy week in April. The week started with a Monday April 20th Garden Therapy workday at the Olivia Haydel Senior Center. Nine CGC members set up workstations for the 20 senior center members participating in the garden therapy session. On each table were metal hats to be decorated as wall hangings. Artificial flowers and ribbon bows were placed on tables along the walls of the room. Glue guns and floral wire were also strategically placed around the room for easy access from each table.

Participants "shopped" for decorative components and used the selected components to decorate their hats. GCG members encouraged and supported the seniors in their work. There was plenty of laughter and fellowship as the seniors enjoyed this unique garden therapy activity. Additional laughter and

praise for creativity occurred as many of the seniors showcased their decorative hats by placing them on their heads. Photos were taken of each participant as she completed her hat. What a great way to start the week!



Dunwoody Garden Club Dedicates Blue Star Marker

On July 2, the Dunwoody Garden Club dedicated a Blue Star By-Way Marker at Brook Run Park in Dunwoody. Part of the NGC Blue Star Marker program, By-Way Markers are placed in parks, historic sites and other civic locations.

Dunwoody Garden Club President Patsy Newton (right) welcomed attendees and explained the history of the club’s project. In a moving ceremony, the Mount Vernon Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution Presented the Colors. Dunwoody Chief of Police Mike Carlson then led the Pledge of Allegiance.



Veterans Memorial where Dunwoody Mayor Lynn Deutsch unveiled the marker. A beautiful live red, white and blue wreath, created by Dunwoody Garden Club members Norma Jones and Ann Wright, was placed beside the marker.



Neither the heat (over 100 degree heat index!) nor sprinkles of rain could dampen the spirit of the event. It was a moving tribute to the men and women who protect and defend our country and was especially significant coming just 2 days before our 250th anniversary. Congratulations and thanks to Dunwoody Garden Club for their patriotic pride!

DeKalb Federation of Garden Clubs President Sandy Reed introduced GCG, Redbud District and DeKalb Federation officers in attendance, including GCG President Diane Hunter, who spoke on the dedication of our nation’s servicemen and women. She also described the history of the Blue Star Marker program, which was started in 1944. Betty Dworschak, Past President of Dunwoody Garden Club, recognized special guests, including Dunwoody elected officials.



Dunwoody Garden Club member Debbie Tuck and her husband led the audience in singing “America the Beautiful”. Attendees then walked down to the

Mountain Mums Garden Club Celebrates Leadership and Achievement

The Mountain Mums Garden Club recently celebrated a successful year of service, education, and gardening excellence during its officer installation meeting.

Outgoing President Sally Young proudly announced that the club received ten awards from the DeKalb Federation of Garden Clubs and The Garden Club of Georgia, recognizing the outstanding projects, programs, and community service efforts completed throughout the year.

As part of the installation ceremony, Sally expressed her appreciation to the current board members and committee chairs with special gifts, including creative “Hen & Chick in a Cork” succulent arrangements. She also honored the incoming officers with flower-themed gifts chosen to represent the unique responsibilities and qualities of each position.

The rose, known as the “Queen of Flowers,” was presented to the Co-Presidents, symbolizing leadership, grace, and dedication. The iris, representing wisdom, hope, and valor, was given to the Vice President. The Recording Secretary received a pansy, a flower associated with remembrance and thoughtful record-keeping. A sweet pea, symbolizing communication and outreach, was presented to the Corresponding Secretary. The Treasurer received a yellow daffodil representing the careful guarding of the “gold” of the club funds, while the gladiolus, signifying strength, integrity, and adherence to rules, honored the Parliamentarian.

The 2026-2027 officers installed were Co-Presidents Lynn Malone and Cheri Schneider; Vice President Kate Graham; Recording Secretary Ann Purr; Corresponding Secretary Connie Henry; Treasurer Lisa Armistead; and Parliamentarian Pat Baumann.

The Mountain Mums Garden Club looks forward to another year of friendship, gardening education, civic involvement, and beautification projects throughout the year.



Outgoing President Sally Young (far left) presents garden-themed gifts to Incoming Officers: (left to right) Co-Presidents Lynn Malone and Cheri Schneider; Vice President Kate Graham; Recording Secretary Ann Purr; Corresponding Secretary Connie Henry, and Treasurer Lisa Armistead. Missing Parliamentarian Pat Baumann.

Mountain Mums Garden Club Celebrates Garden Week in Georgia

As part of Garden Week in Georgia, the Mountain Mums Garden Club gathered on April 24 for a “Sip and Stroll” at the beautiful Waterfall Home of Susan and Joel Gilbert in Smoke Rise.

The evening offered guests the sights and sounds of nature at its most refreshing. More than a typical garden tour, it was a special time to relax and enjoy fellowship with friends. Guests meandered along winding paths surrounded by lush greenery and the soothing sound of the cascading waterfall, with something beautiful to admire around every corner.

The food was just as memorable as the scenery. Joel delighted everyone by preparing shrimp, andouille sausage, and onions on his Teppanyaki grill. Members contributed a tempting assortment of appetizers, while Susan surprised guests with gourmet grilled cheese sandwiches that quickly became a crowd favorite.

With drinks in hand, members and guests exchanged gardening tips and enjoyed the simple pleasure of being outdoors together. The easygoing atmosphere made it effortless to connect, proving garden clubs are as much about friendships as they are about flowers.

The Gilberts’ Waterfall Home provided a breathtaking backdrop that perfectly captured the spirit of Garden Week in Georgia, sponsored by The Garden Club of Georgia. The statewide celebration promotes a love of gardening and horticulture, encourages environmental stewardship and conservation, and supports civic beautification and community pride.

By evening’s end, it was clear the Sip and Stroll was more than just an event — it was a memorable gathering that reminded everyone that sometimes the best way to grow is to slow down and step outside.



Members of the Mountain Mums Garden Club gather for an evening of fellowship, food, and garden inspiration during the club’s “Sip and Stroll” at the Waterfall Home of Susan and Joel Gilbert in Smoke Rise as part of Garden Week in Georgia.

Garden Therapy: Smoke Rise Morning Glories and the Georgia Regional Hospital-Atlanta

In 2018 The DeKalb Federation of Garden Clubs embraced a new garden therapy project at the Georgia Regional Hospital – Atlanta’s Decatur campus. For the last eight years, we have provided grants and horticultural advice to the staff at the hospital. It all began with a Sensory Garden and then it expanded to include a large vegetable garden and multiple gardens across the large campus.

The hospital serves full-time residents and part-time patients with a wide variety of therapies. There now is a work program for the patients who are assigned to the vegetable garden. They work every morning and receive payment for their labor that can be banked for when they are released from the hospital.



The Morning Glories are involved because the hospital’s Art Therapy Coordinator Mary Cochran is a member of the club. Morning Glories members Gwinnett Master Gardener Bonnie Pennington and DeKalb Master Gardener Quill Duncan make site visits to the hospital, meet with staff and advise them on best gardening practices. We also write GCG Garden Therapy grant applications to fund their many projects on the campus. It just so happens that Redbud Co-Director Glenndolyn Hallman is also the chairman of Garden Therapy for GCG. And of course, she is a Smoke Rise Morning Glories member too!

In June Bonnie and Quill met Mary and visited the large sunny vegetable garden by the hospital gym. The garden features strawberries, blueberries, figs, mint, okra, corn, carrots, chives, sweet peas, sweet potatoes, radishes, squash and cucumbers. The garden has large overscale rudbeckia plants, zinnias, sunflowers and many other annual flowers to tempt the pollinators for the crops. This year they have a muscadine vine bearing grapes on a bamboo trellis devised by a former patient. The organic vegetables and fruits that are harvested are cooked and savored by the patients and the staff. Staff donate vegetable starts and seeds and enjoy visiting the garden to check on the progress. The photos show their early summer bounty!

One area of the hospital is the Skilled Nursing Unit and for that garden therapy they have brightly colored containers filled with annuals to brighten the atrium space for the patients who are confined to specialty medical chairs.

Gardens can lift spirits anywhere! Happy Gardening this summer, Redbuds!

