

The North Carolina Gardener

Special Holiday 2026 Edition
“Growing Together”

Official publication of the Garden Club of North Carolina, INC
Member National Garden Clubs, Inc. South Atlantic Region (SAR)
Holiday 2026-Vol. 95 . No 1.

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Holiday 2026-Vol. 95. No. 1

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On our cover: Happy Holidays from the Hillsborough Garden Club! The Hillsborough Garden Club celebrated the beauty of the holiday season with a hands-on introduction to the timeless art of Della Robbia wreath making! Inspired by the traditional decorations of Colonial Williamsburg, these distinctive wreaths combine fresh magnolia leaves and evergreen foliage with colorful fruits, berries, pinecones, and other natural elements to create a lush, abundant design. Rich in texture and old-fashioned charm, Della Robbia wreaths celebrate the natural bounty of the season and make a beautiful statement on a front door or a thoughtful holiday gift.

Gardener Quarterly Newsletter Schedule:

Issue	Submission Deadline	Publish Date
Spring (Apr-Jun)	March 1	April 1
Summer (Jul-Sep)	June 1	Jul 1
Fall (Oct-Dec)	September 1	October 1
Winter (Jan-Mar)	December 1	January 1

Our mission is to provide education, resources, and networking opportunities for our members and to promote the love of gardening, floral design, civic and environmental responsibility.

From the desk of our First Vice President, Marilyn Wright



I am counting many blessings this year. Among those blessings are the wonderful members who make up the Garden Club of North Carolina. When I have called and asked for your service during the 2027 - 2029 tenure., you have said "yes" and did so gladly. For your willingness to serve the Garden Club and work with me during my time as your President, I am deeply grateful. I look forward to our two years of service and know our time together will form close friendships.

TRIPS:

* Philadelphia Flower show March 6-9 2028
* Christmas in Williamsburg December 6-9 2027

The first of December we will send out emails blast for trip sign-up. The deposits for each trip will be $250. We will collect deposits from December 7 - January 5. We must have 34 members committed for each trip to meet our projected costs. - in other words, we must fill up the bus. Each trip will be under $1000. We are in the processing of completing meals and tour arrangements.

Full payment for the Williamsburg trip will be in April 2027 and full payment for the Philadelphia trip will be in July 2027.

I wish you glad tidings and good cheer this holiday season. Hope to see you at the annual meeting May 23 - 25 2027 in Wilmington.

Marilyn Wright - First Vice President /President-elect

Editor's Note
Landes Rigby Coastal Garden Club D11



Doesn't it seem like the Holidays came too fast again this year ?!
Here we go decorating our homes, planning holiday feasts, creating and shopping for the perfect gifts and engaging with our local communities. In reading through the submissions for this special Holiday issue, I was reminded of the term "hostess with the mostest" by the Steel Magnolias Club. I think this phrase applies to our members across the state who excel at hosting and entertaining guests, ensuring they feel welcome and well-cared for during gatherings. This phrase implies a level of charm and attention the makes our events memorable. I hope you find some inspiration in these pages and make plans to attend Garden Club sponsored events in your area to help support them and celebrate the spirit of the Season!

I learned much of my hostessing "chops" from my Mother who loved this time of year creating memorable floral table centerpirece and fireplace mantle designs. I have fond memories of the first year she created the Williamsburg fruit centerpiece shown below and wish I had saved her wooden centerpiece form!

May you cherish special memories of the past while creating new ones in the moments of today!

Happy Holidays!







Here's a list of some of the Holiday events happening across North Carolina in December & beyond. For mor detailed information please see flyers.

December 3rd-4th: "Deck the Halls in Bloom"

NGC Small-Standard Flower Show

Presented by the New Hanover GC, D11

December 5th-6th: William Alfred Moore Holiday House Tour

Presented by Modern Gardeners GC Mt Airy D4

December 12th: Anderson Creek GC D8 Holiday Tour of Homes & Lights

December 14: Jingle Bell Bazaar

Coastal Garden Club, Shallotte D11

April 5th-6th & October 25th-26th: Landscape Design School

JC Raulston Arboretum, Raleigh

May 23-25 Garden Club of North Carolina Annual Meeting

Wilmington

Save the Date: “Deck the Halls in Bloom” Flower Show presented by the New Hanover Garden Club D11 December 3-4th

“Deck the Halls in Bloom”



An NGC Small-Standard Flower Show

Presented by the New Hanover Garden Club
Member Of: National Garden Clubs, Inc.
South Atlantic Region
The Garden Club of NC, Inc., District 11

Thursday, December 3rd, 2026, 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM
Friday, December 4th, 2026, 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM

NHC Arboretum
6206 Oleander Drive
Wilmington, North Carolina 28403
(910)798-7660 Open and Free to the Public

Save the Date: Tour the William Alfred Moore House, Modern Gardeners Garden Club, Mount Airy D4 December 5th-6th

The William Alfred Moore House is located at 301 Moore Avenue in beautiful Mount Airy, North Carolina. It was built in 1860 and is the oldest structure that remains in our town. It is known for its Gothic Revival and Italianate styles. For decades, Modern Gardners Garden Club has had the privilege of decorating different rooms of this beautiful Antebellum home to prepare for The Mount Airy Restoration Foundation's Holiday Tour of Homes. Make plans to see this home and 10 other beautiful places in Mount Airy, NC December 5 & 6, 2026.







Save the Date: 1st Holiday Tour of Homes, December 12th Anderson Creek Garden Club D8



Save the Date: Club Jingle Bell Bazaar December 14th Coastal Garden D11



Coastal Garden Clubs' 2nd Annual

Jingle Bell Bazaar

When: Monday December 12/14/2026

Time: 9:30-12:00 includes Holiday Brunch

Place: Shallotte Presbyterian Fellowship Hall

Who: Members & Guests

What: all inclusive member mini fundraiser!

Sale format:

Items <$20 **Raffle**

Tickets 1/$2, 3/$5, 10/$10

Items >$20 **Live Auction**

Grow it, Arrange it, Craft it, Bake it, Recycle it...Sell it!

Items for sale may include jewelry, home and garden décor items, baked goods, handcrafted gifts and more!

Purchases can be made by cash, check (made out to Coastal Garden Club) or by credit card

Fun, Festive attire encouraged!

Save the date: Landscape Design School 2027 Announcement Submitted by Sandra Anastasio

I am so excited to share that there will be two opportunities to attend Landscape Design School in 2027!

I have reserved the JC Raulston Arboretum for both classes. Course 3 will be held on Monday, April 5th and Tuesday, 6th, 2027 and Course 4 on Monday, October 25th and Tuesday, 26th.

Be sure to save the dates on your calendars and the registration form for Course 3 will be ready in January of 2027.

Sandy Anastasio

The Garden Club of North Carolina, Inc

Landscape Design School Chair



Festive & Fun Holiday Activities Across the State!
Decorating ideas, recipes & more



Holiday Centerpiece
Submitted by Leah Crowley

Hillsborough Garden Club D9
submitted by Tammy Dorfman

Della Robbia Wreaths for Christmas Cheer & Cookie Swap

The Hillsborough Garden Club celebrated the beauty of the holiday season with a hands-on introduction to the timeless art of Della Robbia wreath making! Inspired by the traditional decorations of Colonial Williamsburg, these distinctive wreaths combine fresh magnolia leaves and evergreen foliage with colorful fruits, berries, pinecones, and other natural elements to create a lush, abundant design. Rich in texture and old-fashioned charm, Della Robbia wreaths celebrate the natural bounty of the season and make a beautiful statement on a front door or a thoughtful holiday gift. Talented HGC member Alice Moore guided us in creating our own festive arrangements. Wreath forms were provided and members are asked to bring bags of fruit and magnolia leaves and other greenery to share, along with their favorite cookies for our annual holiday cookie swap. It was a morning of creativity, friendship, and Christmas cheer!

Hillsborough Garden Club D9



Alice Moore shares her wreath making talent!



A hands-on workshop!

Hillsborough Garden Club D9

A Holiday Tradition Rooted in Garden Beauty and Friendship

Nothing says the holidays quite like fresh greenery, natural garden treasures, and a little creativity shared among friends! Each year, Hillsborough Garden Club members come together to bring a festive touch to the Hillsborough Visitors Center, Burwell School, and Museum, carrying on a tradition that has become a special part of our town's holiday season.

Using natural materials gathered from our own gardens, members create beautiful, seasonal decorations with cedar and pine branches, pinecones, dried hydrangeas, berry-laden branches, dried okra seed pods, and all sorts of other garden treasures.



A festive touch with dried orange slices



Forged greenery from our gardens

Hillsborough Garden Club D9

Members come together to hang and embellish garland and wreaths, dress up planters, and decorate porches and entryways, transforming these special places into welcoming holiday destinations just in time for Hillsborough's annual holiday parade.

It's a wonderful tradition that celebrates the beauty of the season, the creativity of our members, and the joy of working together to make our town a little more festive.



One of several planters around town

Hillsborough Garden Club D9



We'll go to all heights!



Teamwork



Our Lead Elf

Steel Magnolias Garden Club D10
Southern Hospitality in Full Bloom:
A Steel Magnolias Holiday Tradition

Submitted by Tina Murphey

When it comes to holiday cheer, nobody cultivates a warmer welcome than Brenda Avants. For many years, Brenda has faithfully opened her home to host the Steel Magnolias Garden Club's annual Christmas party, earning her a reputation as the quintessential Southern hostess. Step across her threshold, and you are instantly wrapped in the magic of the season. Every room is meticulously curated with stunning, botanical-forward holiday decorations, and the air is always sweet with the aromas of a truly delicious holiday feast. Brenda's unparalleled hostessing prowess doesn't just display festive flair—it brings our club together in joyful celebration, making her home the true heart of our holiday season.



A classic Southern holiday welcome! Brenda's home shines bright with crisp spotlighting, elegant porch rail garlands, and traditional window wreaths complete with festive red bows.

Steel Magnolias Garden Club D10
Southern Hospitality in Full Bloom:
A Steel Magnolias Holiday Tradition



“Digging" into the holiday spirit! Brenda brings a playful, garden-inspired touch to this garden shed porch with an outside tree cleverly adorned with pristine white gardening gloves, miniature watering cans, trowels, and bright poinsettias.







Brenda features a tree in each of her bedrooms as well as the den, dining room, front porch, back porch and garden shed, proving she is indeed the hostess with the mostess.

Steel Magnolias Garden Club D10 Southern Hospitality in Full Bloom: A Steel Magnolias Holiday Tradition



Brenda’s gracious hospitality and beautiful attention to detail make our holiday parties a highlight of the year for the club.



Easy Holiday Recipes
Submitted by Tina Murphey Steel Magnolias Garden Club

Rosemary Douna is the kind of instinctive, generous cook who turns simple ingredients into pure celebration. Whether she is “hostessing” a meeting or contributing to our seasonal socials, her dishes are always the first to vanish. These three tried-and-true favorites capture her signature warmth, effortless prep, and timeless crowd-pleasing appeal.

1. Old-Fashioned Southern Tea Cakes

Tender, lightly sweet, and nostalgic butter cookies that hold their shape beautifully for a crowd.

Prep time: 15 minutes | **Cook time:** 10 minutes | **Yield:** About 30 cookies

Ingredients:

- 1 cups (4 sticks) unsalted butter, softened
- 2.5 cups granulated sugar
- 3 large eggs, at room temperature
- ½ tablespoon vanilla extract
- 4 cups self rising flour

Instructions:

Cream: Beat butter and sugar together until light and fluffy (about 5 minutes), then add eggs one at a time with the vanilla.

Combine: Slowly mix dry ingredients into the wet mixture until a soft, workable dough forms.

Chill: Divide dough, wrap, and chill or freeze for 30 minutes.

Roll & Cut: Roll out to ¼-inch thick on a lightly floured surface and cut with a 2-to-3-inch round cutter.

Bake: Bake on parchment-lined sheets at 350°F for 9–10 minutes until edges are barely golden. Dust with sugar while warm.

2. No-Bake Orange Coconut Snowballs

A bright, citrusy, vintage 5-ingredient treat that requires zero oven time and chills to perfection.

Prep time: 20 minutes | **Chill time:** 2+ hours | **Yield:** About 48–50 balls

Ingredients:

- 11 oz box vanilla wafers (finely crushed)
- 2 to 3 cups confectioners' (powdered) sugar
- 6 oz can frozen orange juice concentrate, thawed and undiluted
- ¼ cup unsalted butter, softened (or melted)
- 2 to 3 cups sweetened flaked coconut (for rolling)

Instructions:

Crush: Pulse vanilla wafers in a food processor until fine crumbs.

Mix: Combine cookie crumbs, powdered sugar, and pecans in a large bowl. Stir in thawed orange juice concentrate and softened butter until a sticky dough forms.

Scoop: Use a 1-inch cookie scoop or spoon to roll into bite-sized balls.

Coat: Roll each ball generously in flaked coconut.

Chill: Refrigerate for at least 2 hours (or overnight) to firm up before serving chilled.

3. Classic Creamy Dill Shrimp Salad

A cool, high-impact seafood favorite that can be prepped ahead and served on croissants, crackers, or in endive leaves.

Prep time: 20 minutes | **Cook time:** 3 minutes | **Yield:** 10–12 servings

Ingredients:

- 2 lbs cooked, peeled, and deveined small-to-medium shrimp (chopped bite-size)
- 3 stalks celery, finely minced
- ¼ cup finely minced red onion or green onions
- 1 cup good-quality mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill (plus extra for garnish)
- 1 teaspoon white wine vinegar or a pinch of Old Bay seasoning
- Kosher salt and freshly cracked black pepper to taste

Instructions:

Poach & Shock: If starting with raw shrimp, simmer 2–3 minutes in salted, lemony water, then immediately plunge into an ice bath. Drain and chop.

Whisk Dressing: In a large bowl, whisk mayonnaise, lemon juice, Dijon, vinegar (or Old Bay), salt, and pepper until smooth.

Toss: Fold in the chilled shrimp, minced celery, and red/green onion.

Marinate: Cover and refrigerate for at least 30–60 minutes so the flavors meld.

Anderson Creek Garden Club D8



Welcoming the Holidays with Grateful Hearts: 2026 Update

Submitted to the Garden Club of North Carolina

This fall, Anderson Creek Garden Club has much to celebrate and appreciate. Our members and community partners have shared their enthusiasm for gardening while strengthening connections across Harnett County.

Growing Community Beauty: Azalea Planting Projects

With support from the WRAL Azalea Celebration Grant, we received more than 150 azaleas and expanded our plantings to eight projects throughout Harnett County. These plantings have added lasting beauty to senior centers, ACC Veterans parks, Patriot Hall community center, BBQ church community park, and the Ernest Simmons VFW building. We sincerely thank Harnett County Parks and Recreation and Naturalist Paul Hart, the Anderson Creek Senior Center, the Cape Fear Hospital Healing Garden, Anderson Creek Club landscaping committee and the Harnett County Cooperative Extension Service. Their support, alongside the contributions of our members and partner organizations, made these projects possible.

October Highlights

- Our October meeting brought 30 people together for a fall floral design session with the Western Harnett FFA Garden

Club youth. It was a meaningful opportunity to share our interest in flowers and design with the next generation.

- Members worked together on a roadside cleanup, helping keep our adopted highway corridor clean and welcoming.
- The October 1 District Meeting offered a welcome opportunity to connect with fellow garden club members from Scotland, Harnett, and Cumberland counties, share ideas, and support one another.
- We look forward to welcoming a Girl Scout troop through our planned fall youth garden club activities. Tammy Godwin and Rosa are coordinating this effort in partnership with Parks and Recreation.

Learning and Growing Together

Some of our members are thankful for the opportunity to attend both Landscape Design School and Flower Show School this fall. We look forward to continuing to learn and hope more members will be able to join us for future courses.

Another Garden to Grow in Our Community

We are delighted to have been invited to design another garden in the Anderson Creek community. We have submitted a landscaping plan, with funding expected in 2027 and installation planned for next spring with support from the local community development association. This will be the third landscaping project our club has been invited to help with. Each opportunity gives us another chance to learn together and bring more beauty to the community we call home.

Several members also took time to enjoy the beauty of nature through hiking and camping at Pilot Mountain and Hanging Rock State Parks.

Looking Forward to the Season Ahead

- **November 6** – Members look forward to visiting the Duke Gardens Mum Festival.
- **November 7** – We will welcome visitors to our Anderson Creek Garden Club table at the Fall Festival at Carvers Creek State Park (10:00 a.m.–3:30 p.m.). Some members will also attend a veterans park dedication.
- **November 11** – Members will join in honoring those who have served at the Cross Creek Briarwood Garden Club Blue Star Memorial dedication.
- **November 19** – We are pleased to welcome Byron Wortham of Holly's Nest Wildlife Rescue & Rehabilitation to our general meeting. He will discuss wildlife rescue and rehabilitation, with a possible opportunity for a wildlife release.
- **December 12** – Planning is underway for our Holiday Tour of Homes. We thank those who have volunteered their homes and welcome additional participants.
- **Gold Star Memorial** – Fundraising for our Gold Star Memorial is nearing completion, and we are preparing to place the order.

Anderson Creek Garden Club D8



We look forward to the installation and dedication of this meaningful memorial.

As we celebrate our club's second anniversary in November, we extend our sincere thanks to the members and community partners whose friendship and support make our work possible. Together, we remain committed to horticulture education, youth engagement, civic beautification, and honoring those who have served. We warmly welcome your continued involvement and look forward to sharing the holiday season and another year of learning, service, and connection.

With warm regards and sincere appreciation,

Janelle D. Babbs Nesbit

President, Anderson Creek Garden Club

District 8 Vice Director, Garden Club of North Carolina

Anderson Creek Garden Club D8



Anderson Creek Senior Center Breaks Ground on new ¼ walking path and Azalea Garden



Anderson Creek Club & Western Harnett Youth FFA Garden Club Fall Floral Design

Raleigh Garden Club D10
Submitted by Marilyn Wright



News from Amy Jo Edwards Raleigh Garden Club

Planting Raleigh's Future

Raleigh Launches New Native Plant Policy and Plant Raleigh Guide
NEWS Published 10/15/2026Updated 10/15/2026

Raleigh Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources is excited to announce two new resources that support a resilient urban ecosystem.

Native and Invasive Plant Use Policy

The City has adopted a **Native and Invasive Plant Use Policy,** which encourages the use of plants native to our region and prevents the planting of invasive species on City property. These steps help support native pollinators, improve ecosystem health, and ensure Raleigh's landscapes thrive for future generations.

Plant Raleigh – The City of Raleigh's Guide to Native Plants

In addition, the city has released **Plant Raleigh – The City of Raleigh's Guide to Native Plants**, a user-friendly list featuring nearly three hundred plants from grasses to perennials and shrubs to trees. The species included grow well in our local environment based on the expertise and experience of our horticulture staff. The guide highlights each plant's needs and benefits, making it easier for residents, partners, and landscape professionals to choose species that are well suited to specific site conditions, and reflect North Carolina's natural plant diversity. Together, these tools help Raleigh continue its journey toward healthier green spaces and a more resilient urban ecosystem.

One small step for our Native Plants. One giant step for North Carolina's native ecosystem and the future of our children and grandchildren.

Blue Bird Trail Tales
Submitted by Christine Irvine

Tales from the 2026 Bluebird Trail

Written by Ann May

Article submitted to GCNC with permission from the author, she is a member of Two Green Thumbs Garden Club in Knightdale, NC. Her three bird photos are attached to the Jot form. I have two additional photos… one of a native fern unfurling, and a native cranefly orchid, if you wish.

Little did I know that raising my hand to help clean bluebird boxes would lead to eighteen weeks of eagerly anticipating Friday morning surveys of ten nesting boxes. Seven boxes are located along the gravel trail at Knightdale Environmental Park, while three more sit near the retention pond behind Lowe's Home Improvement.

From April 17 through August 8, Bobbi Elson and I had the privilege of watching Eastern bluebirds, Carolina wrens, and Carolina chickadees build nests, lay eggs, and raise their young. During the season, we recorded three bluebird clutches, one Carolina wren clutch, and one Carolina chickadee clutch. Four nest boxes successfully fledged a total of nine bluebirds, five wrens, and five chickadees. All nesting data have been submitted to the North Carolina Bluebird Society, which tracks statewide nesting activity.

Each species displayed its own distinctive nest-building style. Bluebirds used pine needles, small leaves, and fine grasses. Carolina chickadees packed their boxes with fresh green moss so tightly that, when removed, the nest resembled a sturdy green container with a shallow depression at the top. Carolina wrens built tall nests with an off-center entrance. Every nest was fascinating in its own way.

One of the season's most surprising discoveries was a second Carolina wren nest tucked inside an empty dog waste bag dispenser near the park's trailhead. During our first inspection, we noticed a small snakeskin woven into the nest—a behavior believed to help deter predators. Apparently, it worked. The following week, eggs appeared, and before long, the nest produced healthy fledglings.

Week after week, the Environmental Park offered botanical surprises as well. Among our native plant discoveries were Adder's Tongue and Common Grape Ferns, named for their distinctive spore stalks, as well as Pipevine. Summer brought Deer Tongue Grass, Cutleaf Grape Fern, native Impatiens, Sensitive Fern, American Wintergreen, and the spectacular blooms of Cranefly Orchids.

From nesting birds to hidden native treasures, each visit revealed something new—a reminder that Mother Nature is always doing what she does best. When we slow down to observe, many wonders await us!

Blue Bird Trail Tales
Submitted by Christine Irvine



Bluebird Babies day 1



Fledglings

Carolina Chickadees



A Legacy in Bloom: Dottie Martin and North Carolina's Highway Wildflowers

by Angela Mason Foster, Washington Garden Club D12

Travel almost anywhere in North Carolina during the warmer months and you are likely to encounter one of the state's most beautiful roadside traditions: sweeps of wildflowers blooming along highways and medians. Golden sunflowers, coneflowers, coreopsis and other colorful species brighten stretches of roadway that might otherwise be little more than pavement and grass.

Much of the credit for that familiar sight belongs to former North Carolina First Lady **Dorothy "Dottie" McAulay Martin**, who died September 28 at age 89 in Davidson. Martin served as First Lady from 1985 to 1993 while her husband, James G. "Jim" Martin, was governor. During those years, she supported numerous causes involving children, families, education, substance abuse prevention and child welfare. One of her most visible legacies, however, began with a simple idea inspired by something she read.

According to the North Carolina Department of Transportation, Martin read an article in *The Wall Street Journal* about wildflower beds planted along highways in Texas. She wondered why North Carolina could not do something similar. That idea helped inspire the state's Wildflower Program in 1985, when 12 acres were initially sown. From that modest beginning, the program grew into a statewide highway beautification effort that continues more than four decades later.

Today, Roadside Environmental personnel in all 14 of North Carolina's highway divisions install and maintain wildflower beds along state roads. The program includes annuals, perennials and North Carolina native wildflowers. Species used along state roadsides have included clasping coneflower, bur-marigold, common sunflower and Maximilian sunflower.

The program provides more than roadside color. Wildflowers offer nectar and pollen for bees, butterflies, moths and other pollinators while creating pockets of habitat along heavily traveled corridors. They also help shape the impression visitors receive as they travel through North Carolina. A highway bordered by flowers communicates care, beauty and pride of place.

The connection between the Wildflower Program and garden clubs is especially meaningful to members of the Washington Garden Club. The Garden Club of North Carolina serves as the lead sponsor of the program, with additional support from organizations including North Carolina State University and the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

A Legacy in Bloom: Dottie Martin and North Carolina's Highway Wildflowers

That partnership reflects an important principle of the garden club movement: gardening extends beyond our own yards. Gardeners beautify public spaces, support wildlife, preserve native plants and encourage communities to value the landscapes around them. Dottie Martin's vision fits naturally within that tradition.

Her appreciation for flowers was part of a broader love of the outdoors, home and family. Those who knew her remembered a woman who loved her garden, the beach, the mountains, sailing in the Virgin Islands, reading a good book and spending time at her home on Lake Norman. She enjoyed Carolina Panthers football, laughter and the simple pleasure of raking a pile of leaves for children to jump into. Family and friends also remembered her ability to make people feel welcome, whether they were relatives, longtime friends or strangers meeting her for the first time.

The more personal details of her life reveal a woman who was both gracious and down to earth. She did not care for eggs, and she strongly disliked snakes. Those small details add warmth to the story of a public figure who was remembered not only as First Lady, but also as a devoted wife, mother, grandmother and friend.

Born January 21, 1937, in Charlotte, Martin attended Queens College and later became a life member of the institution's Board of Trustees. She also served as a director of Barium Springs Orphanage. Her commitment to children and families remained an important theme throughout her public life.

As First Lady, Martin became actively involved in issues involving education, substance abuse, spouse abuse, child abuse and child welfare. She used the visibility of her position to support efforts that improved lives across the state. Following her death, Gov. Josh Stein ordered flags at state facilities lowered to half-staff in her honor, recognizing her years of service to North Carolina.

Among all of those contributions, the Wildflower Program remains especially visible because it is woven directly into the landscape. Thousands of people encounter its results every day, often without knowing the story behind the flowers.

Her family's request following her death makes that legacy even more meaningful. Rather than simply asking for traditional floral tributes, the family encouraged those wishing to honor her life to consider making a tax-deductible contribution to the State of North Carolina earmarked for the Wildflower Program. Their message was both simple and fitting: help keep the flowers growing.

For gardeners, there is something especially meaningful in that idea. A flower may bloom for only a season, while the act of planting can influence a landscape for decades. Dottie Martin helped plant such an idea in 1985, and North Carolina continues to see the results every year.

A Legacy in Bloom: Dottie Martin and North Carolina's Highway Wildflowers

The next time you see wildflowers growing along a North Carolina highway, take a moment to remember the woman whose vision helped place them there. For those of us who love gardens, flowers and the natural beauty of our state, that is a fitting way to remember Dottie Martin.



NC DOT Wildflower Program, Western NC – Photo by Angela Mason Foster

District 4 Newsletter
Submitted by Deborah Thompson

News from District 4

With proceeds from the 2025 district meeting, donations were made to Asheville Botanical Garden, New River and Lake Lure.

On a recent visit to Asheville, I visited Lake Lure and Asheville Botanical Garden to see first-hand the progress that had been made in recovery since Hurricane Helene.

The donation to Lake Lure from the District was designated to the "buy a brick" campaign. After waking the path for a bit, the brick was found! Attached is a picture of the brick from district 4 and other pictures of the recovery of the garden at Lake Lure.

Respectfully submitted,

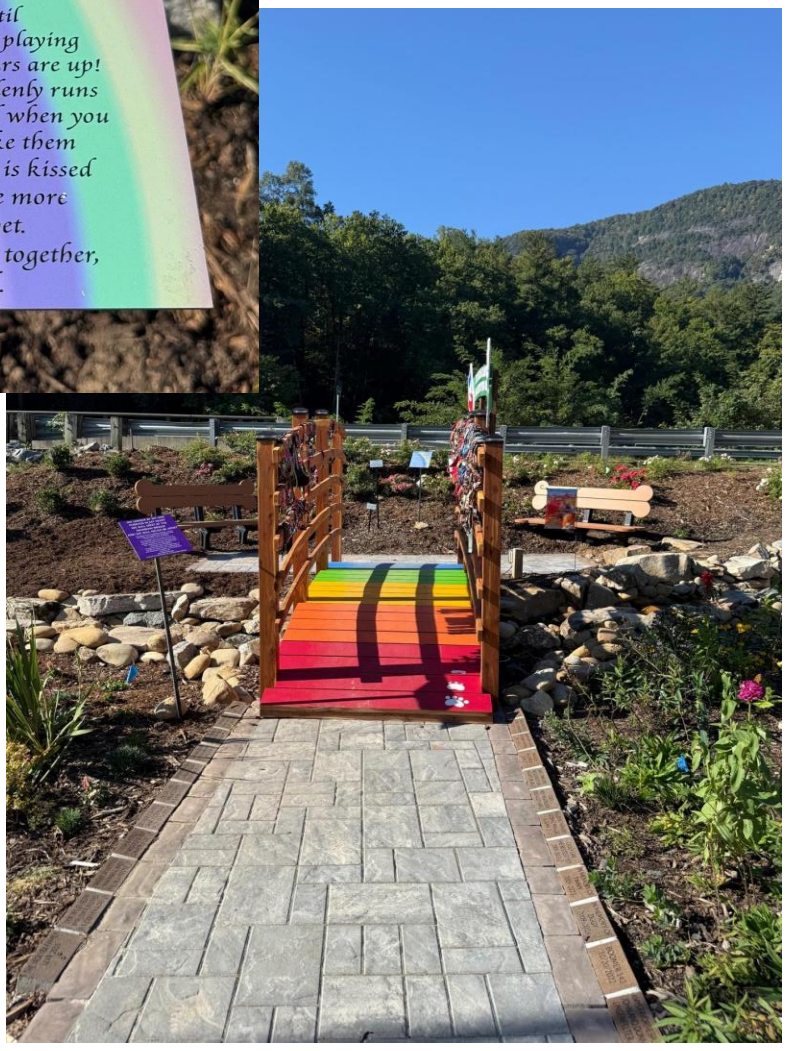
Deborah Thompson

District 4 Director



D4 Lake Lure and the Asheville Botanical Center





D4 Lake Lure and the Asheville Botanical Center









GUILFORD COUNTY VETERANS MEMORIAL

Submitted by Paula Hartman

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Contact: Beverly Cooper (Garden Club)

November 13, 2026 336-312-0313

Brian Sowers (Veterans Memorial)

336-207-0601

Blue Star and Gold Star Markers Dedicated at Guilford County Veterans Memorial

GREENSBORO, N.C. — Two new markers at the Guilford County Veterans Memorial in Country Park offer lasting tributes to military service and the families who bear its greatest loss. Provided by the Greensboro Council of Garden Clubs, the Blue Star and Gold Star byway markers were officially dedicated during the Memorial's November 8 Veterans Day program.

Paula Hartman, Blue/Gold Star Memorial Markers Chair for The Garden Club of North Carolina, led the dedication. The ceremony emphasized the importance of remembering those who defend our country and recognizing the enduring sacrifice of families whose loved ones died in military service. "These markers will stand as a reminder that we will never forget what our servicemen and women have done or are doing in defense of our country," said Hartman.

The Blue Star marker honors all who have served, are serving, or will serve in the United States Armed Forces. The dedication recalled the many ways Americans remember their service—from the Pledge of Allegiance to the sound of Reveille and the final notes of Taps—and called on visitors to carry that remembrance into everyday life.

The Gold Star marker honors families whose loved ones made the ultimate sacrifice. Its dedication emphasized "honor, hope and healing," recognizing both the lifelong impact of loss and the comfort families can find through remembrance, understanding and support.

---MORE---

GUILFORD COUNTY
VETERANS MEMORIAL

The Council's remarks also traced the markers' connection to the service flags displayed by military families. A blue star represents a family member serving in the Armed Forces; a gold star signifies a service member who has died. The National Garden Clubs' Blue Star program grew from a tribute to those who served in World War II into a nationwide effort honoring military service across generations. Smaller byway markers bring that recognition into community spaces such as parks and historic grounds.

The installation builds on the Greensboro Council of Garden Clubs' partnership with the Memorial to create and maintain beautiful grounds that provide a welcoming place for remembrance and reflection.

"These markers remind us that military service touches entire families," said Susan Danielsen of the Guilford County Veterans Memorial. "We are grateful to the Greensboro Council of Garden Clubs for helping us honor those who serve and recognize the families who carry the profound loss of someone who gave their life for our country."

Visitors are encouraged to see the new markers and explore the Memorial's engraved bricks, military displays and interactive kiosks, which share veterans' stories and military history.

For more information, visit gcveteransmemorial.org.

# # # #

Submitted by Marily Wright

NEWS FROM DISTRICT 8
CROSSCREEK-BRIARWOOD GARDEN CLUB HOST A VERY SUCCESSFUL VETERANS DAY CEREMONY

The event honored the recent Blue Star Memorial presentation by the garden club. Historic Fayetteville Independent Light Infantry presented the colors in their traditional uniforms. Penny Maxwell, president of Crosscreek-Briarwood led the audience in pledge of allegiance.





Sybil West , event organizer, introduced the key note speaker, Col(ret) Edna W. Cummings, U. S. Army.

Curious geese (below, background left)walked over to observe the events.





Penny Maxwell, garden club president, is flanked by veterans from the ceremony as they stand in front of the Blue Star Memorial.



Blue Star and Gold Star Memorials are a project of the National Garden Club and the Garden Club of North Carolina.

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Our mission is to provide education, resources, and networking opportunities for our members and to promote the love of gardening, floral design, civic and environmental responsibility.