



January 2026 Newsletter





President's Message



From Darla Oathout

(photo of Camellia blooming in Darla's garden)

Happy New Year, Garden Club Members!

Mother Nature seems to be intent on keeping us guessing with warm days followed by cold ones. My pansies and violas shiver one day and smile the next as the sunshine warms their pretty faces.

Over the past few weeks, I've been working on the required President's report for the Garden Club of South Carolina and the East Low Country district outlining our club's activities, programs, and events for the January 2025-December 2025 timeline.

As I listed the month-by-month Club activities, I found myself delightfully astounded by all that we have accomplished, learned and enjoyed. Monthly speakers, field trips, volunteering, crafting and fund raising are all made meaningful by you, our members who make this Club engaging and successful.

In the months ahead, your committees will continue to offer exciting and special events, field trips, thoughtfully planned programs and opportunities to volunteer for our community projects.

See you on January 28th for our first 2026 meeting,



What's the Buzz



Upcoming Programs & Field Trips

Program & Events Committee (Andrea Tomko & Ruth Hurley, Co-Chairs)

DECEMBER PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

We had a wonderful time at the annual Holiday Party! The room was beautifully decorated, both with holiday décor brought in by our decorating committee and beautiful tablescapes from our members. This year's themes were traditional, elegant, natural, contemporary, coastal, and country. Each table depicted their themes very creatively. The food and drink were spectacular, as was the company of our members and guests. It was a festive and fun time! See photos below of all six spectacular tablescapes.





JANUARY 16TH FLORAL WORKSHOP HIGHLIGHTS

We had a fun afternoon creating a naturalist winter landscape floral design. Kathy helped us create a textured and layered design with a variety of greens (Acacia, Feather and Gunnli Eucalyptus, Silver Dusty Miller, Bunny Tail Grass) and white flowers (Queen Annes Lace, Larkspur, Chrysanthemum Disbud, Alstroemeria and Ranunculus) along with branches, pussy willow and some dried white flowers. It was interesting to see everyone's own interpretation and style. Another example of the learning experiences and benefits of being a garden club member! Don't miss out on our future activities.

See the wonderful creations from club members below.





JANUARY PROGRAM

Our January meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 28th at 1 PM. We will have a presentation from Katie Dickson, Director of Horticulture at Boone Hall Plantation, who will speak about "Appreciating the Winter Landscape".

Past president and fellow member Kathy Murphy will speak about the fritillary butterfly.

We will also have Jean McDonald, Director of the East Lowcountry District, speak about the upcoming ECLD meeting on March 11th. In addition, member Kim Rossi will speak about the Council of Garden Clubs of Greater Charleston.

In keeping with the Garden Club of South Carolina's state president's theme on butterflies, we are asking for members to present on a specific Lowcountry butterfly for our March and April meetings. If you would like to present in either of those months, please click the link below to sign up:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0944ADAD2FA6F4C52-57381332-show#/>

OTHER PROGRAMS

Confused about how to prepare your landscape and garden for the growing season? Tuesday, February 17, 2026, and Sign up for "Pruning Your Landscape Plants" Workshop to be held at Hidden Ponds Nursery, specifically for our club members! The workshop will be held mostly outdoors and will be from 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM. Click the link below to sign up:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0944ADAD2FA6F4C52-61498253-pruning#/>

It's not too late to sign up for A Beautiful Table Affair to be held on Friday, February 13th!!! There is ONE opening available on Table 2. Let's complete this table so we have a great representation of our club for this fun event sponsored by the Council of Garden Clubs of Greater Charleston. There will be silent auctions, door prizes, and vendor shopping. Tickets are \$35.00, and the information will be made available soon on how to purchase tickets. Ruth and Darla are organizing those who have signed up to choose a theme and start planning our table design. Click the link below to sign up:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0944ADAD2FA6F4C52-60696755-abeautiful#/>

SAVE THESE UPCOMING DATES FOR CLUB EVENTS:

- Monday, February 9th: Respite Care program
- Friday, February 13th: A Beautiful Table Affair, St. James Center, James Island
- Tuesday, February 17th: 10:00-11:30 a.m.: Pruning Workshop at Hidden Ponds Nursery in Awendaw
- Saturday, February 21st: 9:30 a.m. -12:00 p.m.: Wando Library Spring cleanup day
- Wednesday, February 25th: 1:00p.m.: Monthly meeting: David Manger from Roots and Shoots nursery
- Wednesday, March 11th: East Lowcountry District Meeting
- Wednesday, March 18th: Field trip to Magnolia Plantation to enjoy the Spring azalea bloom: Cost is the price of admission. BYO lunch or purchase onsite. If you have joined the American Horticultural Society, your admission is free!
- Friday, March 20th: Annual Charleston Garden Club House and Garden Tour
- Wednesday, March 25th: Monthly meeting: Sustainable Pest Management in the Home Vegetable Garden by Anthony Keinath from Clemson University.
- Thursday, April 23rd: Garden Club of South Carolina State Meeting Riverbanks Zoo and Garden Magnolia Room, Columbia, SC
Registration and Continental Breakfast 8:30 AM, meeting at 10 AM

Please contact the Andrea Tomko or Ruth Hurley with any feedback or thoughts for field trips or programs



Committee Updates

Awards, Grants, and Flower Shows (Kathy Murphy, Committee Chair)

We encourage you to attend the East Lowcountry District (ELCD) Annual Meeting on Monday, March 11 at 9 am held at Saint James Event Center, 1890 Camp Road, Charleston, SC.

This year the meeting is hosted by Alhambra Garden Club (located here in Mount Pleasant) and the Magnolia Garden Club. As you recall, we hosted last year. Your attendance supports the ELCD and the Clubs that work so hard to plan and run this event.

This is an annual opportunity to meet members from other clubs as well as officers from ELCD and the State Garden Club Boards.

It is also time for Annual Awards. Our Club has won awards every year since the inception of our Club. It is a moment for Clubs to be recognized for their work. There is an award for clubs with the highest attendance at this meeting each year!

Lunch, raffles, silent auctions, shopping, and fun.

Sign up at the January meeting so we know you are attending. You can give your registration form with a \$40 check or cash to Kathy Murphy or mail in your registration and payment.

See the attached is the registration form for more information.

[https://d.docs.live.net/e4b6964df9fc3d64/Desktop/Invitation and Registration-2\(1\).pdf](https://d.docs.live.net/e4b6964df9fc3d64/Desktop/Invitation_and_Registration-2(1).pdf)

[Invitation_and_Registration-2\(1\).pdf](https://d.docs.live.net/e4b6964df9fc3d64/Desktop/Invitation_and_Registration-2(1).pdf)



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Club Business Updates - (Joan D'Agostino, Bylaws Chair Communications (Maryanne Skalak, Communications Chair)

If you're new or haven't already, please sign up to become a member of the Palmetto Garden Club of Mt. Pleasant Facebook page:

[Palmetto Garden Club of Mount Pleasant | Facebook](#)



Community Outreach (Tracy Doyle, Committee Chair)

The Wando Library Beautification Project is waking up! The plants are ready for spring and we are too!

Mark your Calendars for Saturday **February 21st we will have our Annual Spring Garden Clean-Up from 9:30am - 12 pm.** We hope to have a good turnout with a lot of helping hands for this annual event! Bring gloves and any garden tools you think will help, such as pruning shears, rakes and hand shovels.

Home Depot gave us new **lightweight collapsible hoses!** It's so much easier to reach the new garden path for watering. The hoses allow us to access the path from either side to reach the entire garden. Home Depot has continued to support our ventures with donations that have made our Beautification Project possible. Please consider working with them when you have a project in the future.

Thank you all for your efforts to create this wonderful resource for all to enjoy!

Tracy Doyle



Respite Care

Ginny Holmes, Lisa Hone, Deborah Millet Deanna Pandolfi and I will be sharing a Valentine Day's wreath project with the attendees of Respite Care Charleston program at All Saint's Church in Mt. Pleasant.

If anyone would like to join us on **February 9th, we will meet by 10:30** at All Saint's Church on Rt. 17 to set up. We then spend from 11:00 to 11:45 doing the craft with our friends. We must be out of the room by 12:00 as the members are served lunch.

This worthwhile respite care program usually has about 12 woman and men attending our workshops. They live at home with their relatives and come to this half-day program for a social outlet. This gives their relatives a break from their caregiver roles.

Lisa recently met an Associate Director of RCC. She knew about our club and was most thankful for the volunteer work our club has provided. She said that our projects have been 'fabulous' and all the members love them. Hearing this makes all the time we have spent on respite care over the last year and a half very much worth it.

Pam Somers



Membership Committee (Chairs: Wendy Ferlisi and Mary Ellen Frey)

Our club is currently at full capacity with 50 members!!



Community Events

UPCOMING COMMUNITY EVENTS

- Saturday, January 24 - NEW START TIME IS 9:00 AM
Lowcountry Field Trip: Medicinal Plants Along the Sullivan's Island Nature Trail
Join us on Saturday, January 24 from 9 to 11 am for a walk along the Sullivan's Island Nature Trail with herbalist extraordinaire April Punsalan.
[South Carolina Native Plant Society](#)
- Tuesdays and Thursdays, January 29th – February 26th, 2026, 2 PM – 5 PM Docent Class: A Journey Through Lowcountry Horticulture; Members: \$395 // non-members: \$495. This popular program is your chance to dive deep into the unique gardens and landscapes that define our region. More information at: 2026 LOWCOUNTRY DOCENT CLASS | CHS Hort
- Sunday, February 1st, 2 PM - 4 PM at Belle Hall Clubhouse Veranda, 652 Belle Hall Parkway Mount Pleasant SC. A special workshop led by homeowner Michelle Stress, who will share her seven-year journey transforming her neighborhood landscape into a thriving native-plant habitat. More information at Growing Greener Together: Bringing Nature Back to Your Neighborhood | CHS Hort
- Monday, February 9th, 5:30 PM – 7 PM at MUSC Drug Discovery Building, 70 President St, Charleston, SC: Cultivating Minds Series: Rick Darke: The Wild Garden in the 21st Century. Explore the evolution of wild gardening with Rick Darke as he traces the movement from William Robinson to today's regenerative landscapes. More information at Cultivating Minds Series: Rick Darke: The Wild Garden in the 21st Century | CHS Hort
- Thursday, February 12th, 10:30 AM - 11:30 AM at Brookgreen Gardens: Native Plant Garden Design. This presentation will cover the fundamental science and skills

needed to take an ecological and sustainable approach to home gardening and landscaping. More information at [Native Plant Garden Design | Brookgreen](#)

- Sunday, February 15th, 2 PM - 4 PM at Belle Hall Clubhouse Veranda, 625 Belle Hall Parkway, Mount Pleasant: Growing Greener Together Initiative – Giving Life to Stormwater Ponds, led by Zack Snipes of Shoreline Restoration Group. This talk will cover the common misconceptions about retention ponds, ways to educate your neighbors, and how to bring nature back and create living environments. More information at [Growing Greener Together: Giving Life to Stormwater Ponds | CHS Hort](#)
- Friday, March 6th, 10 AM - 11:30 AM at Brookgreen Gardens: Container Gardening Workshop. Learn how to create a thriving garden in any space. This hands-on workshop introduces participants to the art and science of container gardening, which is perfect for patios, balconies, or small outdoor areas. More information at [Container Garden Workshop | Brookgreen](#)
- Tuesday, March 31st, 10:30 AM - 11:30 AM at Brookgreen Gardens: The World of Hibiscus. Gullah Geechee farmer Alissia Matthews will discuss different species of hibiscus - including roselle, cotton, and okra – and their importance to Gullah Geechee culture. More information at [The World of Hibiscus | Brookgreen](#)

VIRTUAL CLASSES THROUGH AMERICAN HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

- Friday, February 6th, 2 PM - 3 PM, Virtual. AHS LIVE: Designing with Fragrant Flowers and Aromatic Foliage; Christopher Barrett Sheridan, The Flower Sommelier; \$15 AHS members/\$20 non-members. More information at [AHS LIVE: Designing with Fragrant Flowers and Aromatic Foliage - American Horticultural Society](#)
- Thursday, February 19th, 7 PM - 8 PM, Virtual. AHS LIVE: Soils and Plant Nutrition; Gretchen Renshaw, horticulturist and director, Manhattan Beach Botanical Garden; \$15 AHS members/\$20 non-members o More information at [AHS LIVE: Soils and Plant Nutrition - American Horticultural Society](#)
- Friday, February 27, 2026, from 2 PM - 3 PM, Virtual. AHS LIVE: Gardens Illustrated: The New Beautiful; Stephanie Mahon, Editor of Gardens Illustrated, a multi-award-winning garden editor, writer, and author; \$15 AHS members/\$20 non-members. More information at [AHS LIVE: Gardens Illustrated: The New Beautiful - American Horticultural Society](#)



Master Gardener Corner (Ellen Massar-Bourscheid)

I hope your holidays were peaceful and you and your garden are healthy in the New Year!

It is cold today and will be for a couple more weeks. I'm happy that I have a little green house to start seeds and overwinter some tropical and temperature sensitive plants. Even if you don't have a greenhouse, there are some easy and simple ways to start seeds. Knowing when our last Spring frost is expected is your first step. Ours here in the low country per the Farmer's Almanac is March 21. Starting seeds indoors or direct sow in your garden is often based on the timetable of our first Fall and last Spring frost.

I also have a small hydroponic garden that I use to start seeds; it is a quick start method, and I have successfully transplanted plugs into the garden or pots to mature. I have an Aerogarden, which is no longer made, but there are other brands out there. If you have the space for it, it can be a great way to kick off your growing season or have fresh lettuce available year-round.

We are about 8 weeks from our last frost date, so look at seed packets and give them a shot. Many will have time to germinate and develop for planting this Spring. Start small and be kind to yourself. Not every seed will germinate, and not every season is a smashing success. Marigolds, lettuce, and celosia are super easy if you want to enjoy a quick reward. Lettuce and cilantro don't like the heat and are also easy to direct sow when the time is right.

Over the holidays we visited with our daughter and her wife who just purchased a home in Portland, OR. Believe it or not, it is also rated as a 9a planting zone, but the heat index is definitely NOT the same! I helped clear out some of their overgrown landscape and pruned some of their trees, several of which had never been attended to and had poorly formed limbs and some disease. It reminded me how important it can be to manage tree growth early on to prevent the worst problems in a mature tree.

I've included a picture of my peppermint camellia, just because! It blooms at Christmas and is visible from my kitchen window. I didn't plant this camellia (estimated 50 years old) and the builder had pruned it to the ground during renovation such that I wasn't even sure it was a camellia. It is planted too close to the house and walkway and requires annual pruning, which it didn't receive last year. It will be the first shrub on my list for pruning in 2026! Another thing to get to in January and February!



Pruning flowering shrubs is best right after they bloom, so that you don't remove next year's blossoms. That is true for most flowering shrubs and trees. Clean sharp bypass pruners are my go-to for most pruning chores. I have a bottle of rubbing alcohol in my toolbox which I use to clean tools in between plants. Pole pruners, electric pruners, hand saws, and chain saws are also used, but we're going to keep it simple for now.

December and January pruning is limited to undesired and storm damaged limbs of shade trees. Birch, dogwood, elm, maple, and styrax are considered bleeder trees and should be pruned during the coldest weather using the Branch Collar Method.

[Pruning Trees & Shrubs, General Pruning Techniques](#)

Late January – February is when much of my pruning happens. Think Valentine's Day and you won't have to look it up next year! The resource below is great but beware, pruning is like cutting your own bangs; we often don't know when to stop! Remember the three Ds--dead, diseased, and deformed --are first, then your aesthetic sensibilities. Consider deformed to include pruning any member that rubs against or will rub against another. Also branches grow longer and thicker in the direction they are already growing. It is much easier to snip a branch before it blocks your walkway, drive, or brushes against your house.

[Pruning Calendar](#)

Simple pruning with a bypass pruner is easy and a great way to get comfortable with the process and observe the results. Shrubs like roses prefer a hard prune; grasses and butterfly bush can be cut down to the ground, and others a cleanup and removing suckers is all that you should expect to do on a regular basis. In general, most plants don't respond well if you cut back more than a third. There are a few things in my yard that were planted years ago and require regular pruning mostly because they are not the right plant for the space. I hope to remove them in time! (Please don't tell my husband!)

[Five best seed starter kits](#)

[The eight best bypass pruners](#)



january

BIRTH FLOWER

admiration

deep love

affection

purity

luck

gratitude



Member Birthdays

Kathy Murphy 1/5

Laura Paul 1/17

Vita Shoemaker 1/29

Patti Taylor 1/29





Sunshine Committee (Vita Shoemaker)

****Change in Committee Chair****

Vita Shoemaker has agreed to chair this committee beginning January 2026.

Heartfelt thanks to Lisa Hone, who started and chaired this committee from its inception.

If you know a club member who has experienced a loss or is ill, please contact

Vita Shoemaker vvshoe@aol.com.

A card representing our club can be sent or arrangements for meal delivery and rides can be coordinated through Sign Up Genius.



Links we Love  (Ctrl + Click)

[Charleston Horticultural Society chsHORT](#)

Check out the many events, lectures, and other resources offered!

[Roots and Shoots](#)

Plant Availability - Stock updated bi-weekly

Sign up for their free newsletter to stay informed of sales and special events

[Rita's Roots](#)

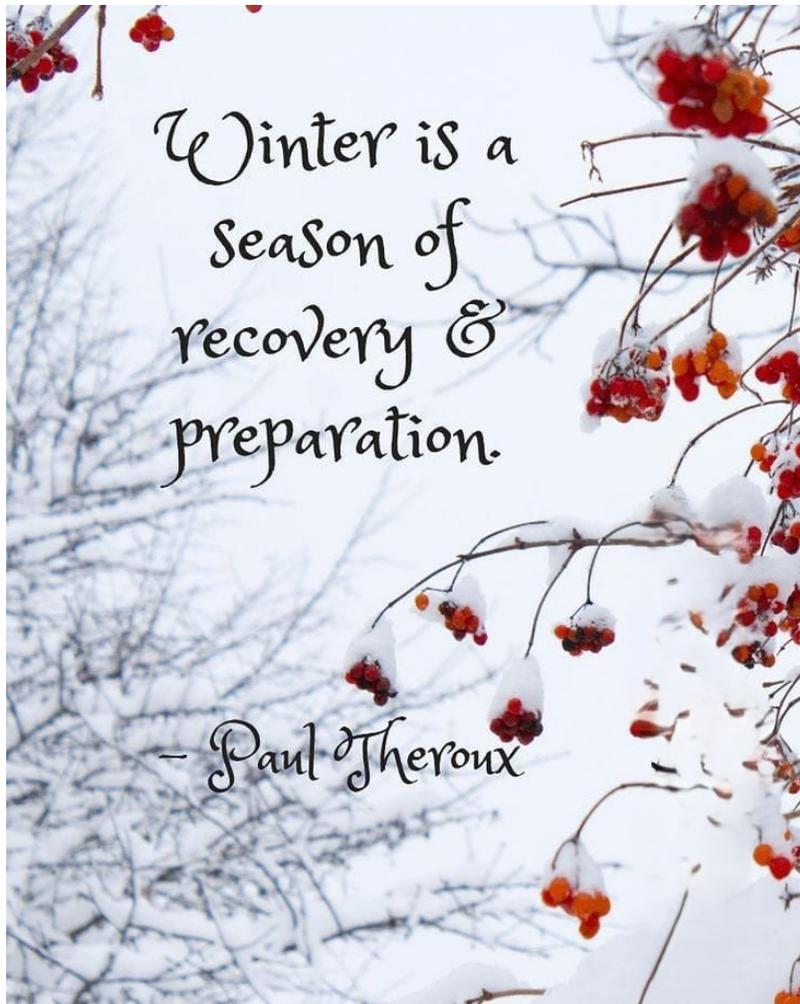
Check out their online sales.

www.floretflowers.com/

Check out their annual seed sale and other helpful tips.

[South Carolina Native Plant Society](#)

Send your favorite gardening newsletter, Facebook, or Instagram sources to Maryanne Skalak at mskalak28@hotmail.com and it will be posted here.




Where **friendships** take root
and garden skills bloom.

The purpose of the Palmetto Garden Club of Mount Pleasant is to beautify gardens within our community by educating our members regarding horticulture, gardening, floral design, and native plants.