



Ringwood Garden Club Newsletter

January 2026

President's Message

Happy New Year 2026!

I hope that all of you have enjoyed a wonderful holiday season and that this new year will bring you joy, peace, good health, and fun times in the garden!

Reflecting on our club it brings joy to me seeing our years of growing friendships, sharing gardening tips and tricks, gathered club meetings, workshops, volunteer efforts that have made the Ringwood Garden Club one very special group where you can feel warmly welcomed.

Our annual holiday gathering was interrupted by Mother Nature on two occasions. I am determined to still plan a time for a winter gathering, so hold on to your gifts! Stay tuned for an announcement of a new date sometime in February or early March. I think our times celebrating each other are so very important and meaningful.

At the holiday open house at Skylands Manor, the club decorated the Ladies Parlor. Elegantly featured, the room received many compliments from visitors touring the event.

Moving into 2026 we can anticipate interactive, informative, and creative workshops prepared for our membership. Certainly, do not miss attending the upcoming meetings, there is so much to enjoy!

Above all, we welcome all your ideas for future programs, outings in the communities, special fun party gatherings, and local volunteer opportunities. All our time together continues to strengthen the bond of this great garden club.

Wishing each member all the best as we journey through the year together!

Best to all,

Pam



1973-2023



*Wishing our friends, a very Happy January birthday
and a year filled with best wishes and happiness.*

Gerry Shuman 1/3

Gerry Manzi 1/17

Christine Liptak 1/21



EVERY GARDEN (CLUB) NEEDS SUNSHINE!

If any of you know of a club member who has become ill, lost a loved one, or needs our aid, please contact our **Sunshine Chairperson, Karen Vieth**, cell: 973-800-4933 or karenvieth@icloud.com This will enable Karen to take the appropriate steps to let our members know their fellow club members care and are thinking of them.

GENERAL MEETING

January 20, 2026 6PM

Ringwood Library

Designing a Winter Swag

Presenter: Renate Gudat, MG

Celebrate the textures of the season by crafting a beautiful swag from dried plant materials, guided by the creative touch of Renate. Using elements such as grass plumes, lavender, hydrangeas, baptisia, seed heads and pods, members will arrange their materials into a stunning botanical accent.

Supplies: Scissors, Glue gun, Ribbon to complement the design of your swag.

Hospitality Corner

Sweet or Savory: Jean Stark

Beverage: Christine Liptak

Floral: Theresa McCabe

Holiday Open House at Skylands Manor A Wonderful Holiday



A huge shout out to our garden club members who participated in the November workshop leading to the decoration of the Ladies Parlor in Skylands this year.

Our decorating team of Karen Vieth, Gerry Shuman, Christel DeSimone, Pam Tokarczuk, Marilyn Fedele, Jenelle Piene, Carol Wrede & Karen McNierney-Eskholme. Helping hands were provided by Mark McNierney-Eskholme, Carl Vieth, Ed Shuman & Dan Tokarczuk.

Several members, Karen Vieth, Carol Wrede, Christel De Simone, Gerry Shuman, & Pam Tokarczuk provided special touches from their homes to accent the Ladies Parlor.

A special thank you to our docents: Renate Gudat, Gerry Shuman, Barbara Sanford, Christine Liptak, Christel DeSimone, Kathie Hetherington, Pam Tokarczuk.

And to the take down team of Christel DeSimone, Gerry & Ed Shuman, Karen & Carl Vieth, Karen & Mark McNierney-Eskholme, and Pam & Dan Tokarczuk.

Deb Manfredonia, a member of Ringwood Garden Club, is the Chairperson responsible for coordinating the Annual Holiday Open House. A huge and successful task in planning and working with many garden groups and the botanical gardens throughout the year which culminate in one spectacular event!

Here are a few highlights of the Ladies Parlor for you to enjoy.





🌿 2026 Holiday Open House Theme: *A Botanical Holiday*

We're excited to announce this year's theme for the Holiday Open House—**A Botanical Holiday**! The Garden Club will have the honor of designing **The Study** this year, and we can't wait to see your creativity bloom.

Looking for a Chair: If you're interested in leading this festive project, please let me know!

Your **Ideas Needed:** The months fly by quickly, so start thinking about your botanical-inspired concepts now. We'll dive deeper into planning at our **February meeting**.

Newsletter Photos



Each month it is nice to show pictures taken by our members. If you have any digital photos to share you can email or text them to Pam. Need some ideas? Our members have shared photos of flowers, plants, displays, centerpieces from their home or travels.



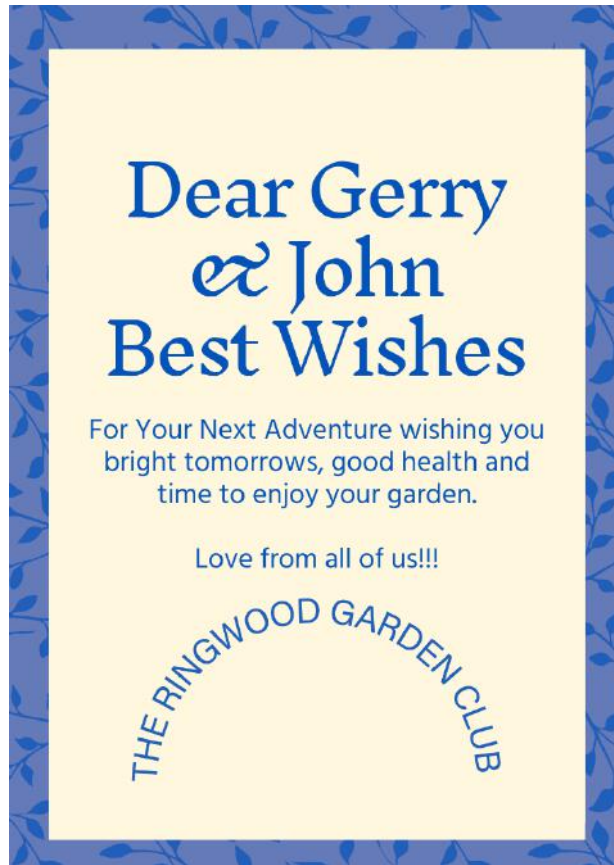
...a calmness of nature

views from Pam's home

There is something magical looking out the window from your house and discovering those first flurries gently falling to the ground. When the snow builds up outside our houses it envelops us in a warm cocoon. The time has come to put on your warm slippers, a cozy blanket, and curl up with some hot chocolate.

“Congratulations to Deb Manfredonia on welcoming a new grandbaby to her family at the end of December! Wishing you countless joyful and memorable moments ahead.”





You may be moving away, but our friendships will remain strong. Wishing you all the happiness in the world as you settle into your new home!

Our garden club has been truly blessed by your generous participation, volunteering, and committee involvement over the past 26 years. We celebrate you and treasure the friendship we've shared.

With love and warmest wishes,

Joan, Christel, Ceazonia, Paula, Marilyn, Renate, Kathie, Christine, Anet, Deblyn, Theresa, Karen E, Jane, Karla, Barbara, Janice, Gerry S, MaryJo, Jean, Pam, Karen V, Betty, Marsha, Jennelle, and Carol.

Home, Gardening and Living info and more:



[Tend a real winter garden this year - New Jersey Conservation Foundation](#) (Link)

Tend a real winter garden this year



Nov 20, 2025

By Alison Mitchell, Executive Director, New Jersey Conservation Foundation

As the last maples drop their leaves and frost arrives, the fall clean-up begins. Those with lawns rake, blow, bag, and drag to create the tidy, bare winter landscape we've been taught to equate with "good gardening."

Kazys Varnelis, President of the Native Plant Society of New Jersey, argues that the practice of stripping our yards down to the soil is ecologically harmful, and only recently became the norm. The habit was born of gas-powered leaf blowers and post-war suburbia's focus on neat lawns. "It's not normal to have a landscape without leaves in the fall – the season is literally named for them," Varnelis notes. "Bare, scraped-clean yards aren't natural. And frankly, they're not beautiful. A garden full of colorful leaves, seed heads, and winter structure is far more interesting."

Many pollinators and other beneficial insects survive winter's cold by sheltering under leaf litter, either as adults, eggs, nymphs, larvae, or cocoons. Species that pollinate crops, eat pests, and fuel entire food webs all rely on a soft, insulating layer of moist fallen leaves to survive winter.

Scientists have documented steep declines in insects across the globe in what some are calling an "insect apocalypse." Varnelis sees the signs: "I'm in my fifties, and I can vividly remember long drives where the windshield was covered in insects. Now it's spotless. That should terrify us. Insects have been here for hundreds of millions of years."

It's not just about leaves. Seed heads and stems that remain through the winter support a wide range of wildlife. Many native bees nest in hollow or pithy stems of plants like elderberry, sumac, and goldenrod. Birds forage on seed heads all winter long. "We love our feeder birds, but feeders train birds to depend on us. Native seed heads are what they've evolved with," Varnelis says. "Leaving them standing through winter is one of the easiest ways to support bird populations."

Even fallen sticks play a role. Branches help activate the fungal networks in soil, allowing trees and native plants to absorb nutrients and withstand drought. "There's nothing better you can do for your soil than leave the leaves and the sticks," Varnelis emphasizes.

The obstacles, he says, are aesthetics and grassy lawns. Thick layers of leaves can lead to brown patches on lawns, and people have been conditioned to see tidy, barren yards as attractive. But leading landscape designers around the world are moving toward naturalistic design, which celebrates winter texture, structure, and seasonality rather than erasing it. "People say leaves and seed heads look messy but compared to what?" he says. "We just need to recalibrate our sense of what a healthy landscape looks like."

Roofs, gutters, and paved driveways will always need clearing. Yet even landscapers motivated to keep lawns green and vibrant can redistribute fallen leaves into garden beds and add natural, nutrient-rich mulch into the environment. Don't make the mistake of heaping mulch or leaves up against tree trunks in your yard, as their roots need to breathe! Keeping a contained leaf mulch composting area can be a practical solution for storing excess leaves while they decompose into useful organic humus.

We can all stop exporting our leaves to the curb and start using them to enrich soil, support our wild neighbors, and restore our yards. And if we can adjust our idea of an attractive lawn to align with the eyes of Mother Nature, we'll see a beautiful winter garden when we look outside.

Visit <https://npsnj.org/> to learn more about New Jersey's native plants, and visit <https://www.jerseyyards.org/create-a-jersey-friendly-yard/> to learn about building an environmentally friendly yard.

To learn more about how you can help preserve New Jersey's natural resources, visit the New Jersey Conservation Foundation at www.njconservation.org or reach out to us at info@njconservation.org.

From: Charlie Nardozzi is a Regional Emmy® award winning, nationally recognized garden writer, speaker, radio, and television personality. He has worked for more than 30 years bringing expert gardening information to home gardeners through radio, television, talks, tours, on-line, and the printed page. Charlie delights in making gardening information simple, easy, fun and accessible to everyone.

Now that you've put away all your holiday decorations, what are you going to do with those holiday gift plants still adorning your house? Like many gifts, some are worth saving and others are better regifted. So let's go through the list of holiday gift plants and I'll tell you what I think you should do with them.

Some plants require special growing conditions to look beautiful at the holidays. These include poinsettia, azaleas, and hydrangeas. These plants are great to enjoy while you can, but should be composted once they start looking ratty. The azaleas and hydrangeas are varieties not hardy in our area and the poinsettia need a special dark treatment for months to get the bracts to turn color again in December.

Other holidays plants, such as kalanchoe and bromeliads, are difficult to get to flower again in most homes, but the foliage is attractive, so keep these as beautiful foliage plants year round. The keepers are amaryllis, Christmas cactus and cyclamen. With little care you can get these to flower again next year. Give Christmas cactus cool conditions and dark nights in fall to stimulate flower bud initiation. Place amaryllis bulbs in a part sun location and fertilize and water them all spring and summer. Cut back the foliage in fall and let the bulb dry out in a dark basement for 6 weeks. Bring it into a warm, bright room, water and let it grow. Cut back cyclamen leaves to the ground in late spring and let it dry out and go dormant for 2 to 3 months in summer. In fall, start watering and it will send up new growth.