

THE

Garden Club of Dearborn

March 2026

NEWSLETTER

President's Corner



Top o' the morning to ya!



Rose Wiggle

Everything is starting to turn from brown to green and not just because of St. Patrick's Day as March 20th marks the Spring Equinox for 2026 and I dare say we are more than happy to see it coming. It marks the beginning of warmer weather and longer sunny days.

As we spring forward this month – it's time to wake up your sleepy gardens! Start checking your tools and planning your spring beds. Soon we will be planting, potting, shopping and making excuses on why we do need to buy that one more plant!!

Unfortunately, our March speaker - Gail Morrell was unable to join us due to illness, but thankfully Club member Marlene Bankwitz saved the day by presenting "Gardens of the World". She showed a series of stunning gardens that Marlene and husband/Club member Keith photographed while on their global travels. We can't thank her enough for stepping in at the last minute and giving a fantastic and informative presentation.

April showers not only bring May flowers but also brings another wonderful speaker Kim Gucwa has set up for the Club. Remember that old Irish saying: "A best friend is like a four-leaf clover, hard to find and lucky to have" – well here's hoping to see you at the April meeting – so please come join us and make a new Best Friend!

BOARD MEETING

April 1, 2026
10:00 a.m.
McFadden Ross House

Upcoming Events

MGC Spring Leaders Mtg.
District 1
April 22 – 9:30 – 2:00 pm
St. Michael's Conf. Center
Redford, MI
\$35 Includes Lunch
Registration Required

March Birthdays:

9 Otto Baumgart
13 Mary Ellen Matigian
14 Sandra Paynter
17 Terri Bungee
20 Jennie Somers
29 Judy Polcyn
29 Sharon Snider
31 Mariya Fogarasi

April Birthdays:

13 Jean Burns
15 Marlene Bankwitz
13 Marybeth Lynch Verga

Editor:

Mariya Fogarasi

Chief Photographer:

Otto Baumgart

www.gardenclubdearborn.org

Next General Meeting

April 13, 2026 – 11:00 am
First Presbyterian Church Dearborn
600 N Brady Rd, Dearborn, MI 48124

Speaker: Naim Edwards – Director at Michigan State University Ext. Detroit Partnership for Food, Learning & Innovation. Naim will present: "Food, Forests & New Perspectives on Edible Landscaping."

Hosts: Marlene Bankwitz, Shawn Tambeau,
Carole Hogg & Joanne Zatek

Checks for the Michigan Garden Clubs District 1 Spring Conference are due now! Please join in and enjoy the 2026 Spring Leadership Meeting hosted by Livonia Garden Clubs on Wednesday, April 22, 9:30am-2:30pm, at Stefan's Banquets (St. Michael's Cultural Center), 26355 W. Chicago Road in Redford. Under the motto "Watch Your Garden Grow", there will be two speakers, lunch, vendors, and door prizes. Please bring your check for \$35 to Laurine Griffin by March 24 (Laurine will turn in one check for our entire club). We already know that Laurine's mailbox is always open 😊

District 1 Director Karen Block is inviting everyone to submit a favorite garden photo (see our Garden Club email of March 9) so a slideshow of beautiful gardens can play throughout the event to celebrate creativity and inspiration.



If anyone thought we were going to stay in one location for our presentation this month, simply gazing out the windows of the First Presbyterian Church in Dearborn, they were mistaken when Marlene Bankwitz

surprised us and took us on vacation around the world to countless countries and beautiful gardens. Thirty-five members, including two guests, all turned into armchair travelers and delighted in the sights and colors, not to mention enjoy the variety of facts she relayed. While no one can quite compete with Marlene and Keith, who set a travel goal for themselves in retirement and have visited 103 countries and territories, all seven continents, and all Seven Wonders of the Modern World (can you name them?!), I think we all felt we had just disembarked from a supersonic jet whisking us around the globe – this without a passport or any required visas, either!

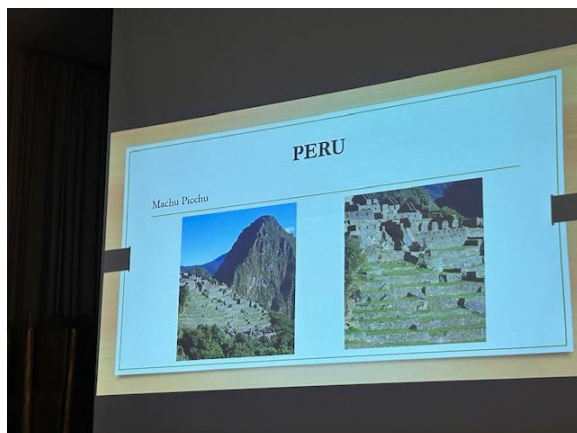


Many thanks to Linda Stechison and Marie Komnenic for providing tasty cakes and more as we traveled the world. Our guests were Katie Sanfilippo and David Haynes. To mention just a few of our destinations, Marlene started out in Braga, Portugal at the Sanctuary of Bom Jesus do Monte, a UNESCO World Heritage site and pilgrimage destination featuring a monumental Baroque staircase with over 570 granite steps which pilgrims sometimes ascend on their knees. The seashell on the slide signifies its location on the Portuguese Way of the St. James pilgrimage; these shells served as markers for illiterate pilgrims in past ages and can

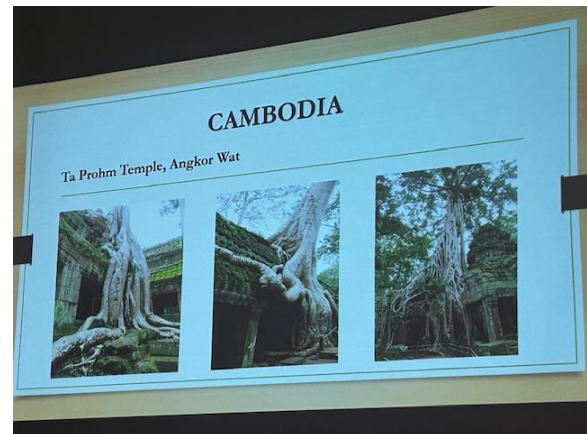
be found on fences, buildings, just about anywhere throughout Europe.



The gardens of Machu Picchu in Peru show us terraces where the Incas planted crops on the steep slopes of the Andes using no earth moving equipment (amazing!), the oldest ones dating back to 2000 BCE. We also saw Lake Titicaca and the Uros Reed Islands, 70 manmade islands in the lake, the world's highest.



In Riga, Latvia's capital city, we saw the University Botanical Gardens with 270 dahlia varieties (and a poster advertising a nearby store, "Cats & Flowers") which Marlene and Keith found.



The gardens in Cambodia featured the world-famous Ta Prohm Temple at Angkor Wat in Siem Riep, part of a massive 12th-century complex and recognized as the world's largest religious monument. This temple, where the jungle literally grows right through the middle, was featured in the movie "Tomb Raider".



Not pictured here were many more gardens, altogether over thirty, each one worthy of praise and wonder. Particularly interesting, I felt, was the Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden in Cape Town set against the slope of Table Mountain, founded in 1913 and the world's first botanical garden with the idea of featuring native plants. Additionally, Iceland – which one would not expect to view as any garden site with its rocky conditions, surprised us with lupines

everywhere and hydroponic greenhouses allowing the island to grow almost all of its own vegetables. Thank you, Marlene, for stepping in at the last moment and sharing your world tour with us! Thank you, Marlene and Keith, for traveling the world and capturing so many beautiful photos for this show.

Great thanks also go to our tech-savvy member, Ron Wiggle, who was working silently and efficiently before and after the presentation to connect cords, make sure laptop photos would appear on the screen, test the microphone volume, and ensure that everyone would enjoy a good show. Thank you, Ron, for providing this invaluable service!

For info: the new Seven Wonders of the Modern World, announced in 2007 following a global poll, are the Great Wall of China, Petra, the Colosseum, Chichen Itzá, Machu Picchu, the Taj Mahal, and Christ the Redeemer. These landmarks were selected for their architectural, cultural, and historical significance, representing engineering marvels across different continents.



Our club lost its tiniest and most unusual member last month when Shawn Tambeau's beloved constant companion, Shay Shay, passed away of congestive heart failure. A chihuahua mix and a bundle of joy, Shawn and Shay Shay had adopted each other from Fido & Fluffy's Rescue in Armada, Michigan in April 2015 when she was not quite two years old. Both became regulars in our club and Shay Shay was loved by all, especially by her owner of eleven years and also by Keith and Marlene Bankwitz who could be found holding her at our meetings. Our hearts go out to Shawn for this loss, one which anyone who has ever lost a beloved pet can understand.

Shawn was presented with a beautiful pink arrangement by Linda Johnson (most appropriately as pink was and is the favorite color of both Shawn and Shay Shay) and given a round of heartfelt and loving emotion from everyone. We hope that memories and photos and so much more can carry you through this very sad time, Shawn. We are sorrowing with you. ("Shay Shay" means "thank you in Mandarin Chinese, the correct spelling would be Xiao Xiao). Many thanks to Paulette Baumgart for zeroing in on this lovely photo of Shawn and Shay Shay at our February meeting.



Happy birthday, Otto Baumgart! Anyone celebrating a birthday right on one of our exact meeting dates must be cheered, and especially when it's our club photographer! Everyone sang to Otto who was all smiles and wearing his traditional Spam cap. The smiles grew even larger when he opened his gift which was, of course.....a can of Spam! Congratulations Otto, the Club values and appreciates your work for us and we hope you had a wonderful birthday, too.



we are very fortunate to have you, Terri, for your strong school connections. Thank you for all the time and effort you give to this program!



Linda Johnson donated two of her beautiful creations, all St. Patrick Day themed, for this month's raffle and Kim Kovacs-Gucwa provided two more donations. Winners were Christine Berryman, Nanette Fisher, Kim, and Sherri Kammer. If you have raffle donations for us – even gently used and loved but no longer needed items around the house which you feel members would like – please let our raffle chair, Judy Polcyn know. Many thanks to all those who buy the raffle tickets, too.

Our Vice President of External Affairs Terri Bungee has ordered trinkets for all participants in the Smokey Bear Woodsy Owl program this year. Posters shown in the January newsletter all advanced to the state level where we had four winners, two 2nd place prizes (these winners are each awarded a \$25 VISA card) and two 3rd place prizes. None of our posters advanced to the national level this year. Terri will visit the schools to give out the awards and trinkets –



The annual Riverkeeper Dinner, sponsored by Friends of the Detroit River, takes place on Saturday, April 11 at the Wyandotte Boat Club this year. Come along and help us sell raffle tickets, enjoy dinner and a silent auction, and support their efforts. Laurine Griffin's husband, Don, was one of the co-founders and those of us who go always have a good time. Tickets are \$65, please go to www.DETROITRIVER.ORG/EVENTS for more info or call 734-288-3889.



Last summer when club members visited the Al Hadiqa, the Arab American heritage garden on top of their Michigan Avenue museum, we were warmly received and invited to participate in future events. As a result, ten of us, accompanied by a few friends, attended and enjoyed the Seed Swap on March 5. Advertised with the words: "Join us to cultivate connections and swap seeds. Bring your curiosity, trade your favorites, and connect with fellow growers who believe in nurturing both plants and community", the event was exactly that.

We were greeted warmly when we arrived. We shared a table with Tio, a volunteer with the JOY project in northwestern Detroit, who was proudly displaying jars of cayenne and fish peppers, black African and multi-colored sorghum, a bird house gourd, and foxtail millet. They all sounded so exotic to me. Tio showed us how the gourds are pierced and hollowed for bird houses and she was a fun table companion. The Centennial library's new seed library had a table as did the Gateway Farm Hub and the Garden Juju & Collective (ecological landscaping and organic farming consultation), both in Plymouth, along with a few others. Sue Suchyta, editor of the Times Herald, walked around gathering info for her story. Donna Kolojeskie, known for her expertise on the importance and impact of native gardening, had seeds to share as well and gave me a small packet of wild bergamot (bee balm). Donna has given lectures at the Centennial and is well-known in the community for her work.

Of the ten members who participated, Katrina Harris was definitely our star! Several attendees came up and told her they follow her instagram account! Seed packets were placed on

tables - one for flowers, one for vegetables - and everyone was welcome to leave their own and take others. Katrina, who also studied Arabic in college, had bilingual labels for everything (cabbage, lettuce, broccoli, cauliflower, peppers, lettuce, tomatoes, to mention some), most impressive.



Everyone mingled and walked around and it was really so much fun, very casual, little children were making colorful (and messy!) vegetable block prints, tea, coffee, and water were provided. After sundown, La Pita donated the delicious Iftar dinner and many families enjoyed this together.

Michelle Mikulec brought marigold seeds as well as milkweed pods which were quickly swept up. Janet Damian's various pumpkin variety seeds were also very popular. Diane Rebori, at our table, answered questions about our packets. Shawn Tambeau brought seeds but in her own words "was too busy visiting and having fun to bag them!". Carol Chrzastek printed up copies of our program for the remainder of this year and my museum contact, Shatha Najim, asked me to scan and send it so she can post it for the museum's members. Claudia Meyer brought a box of the U of M Interpretive Environmental Center seed swap. Even those of us who didn't bring any seeds had a good time and were able to take home one or two small packets.

Rose Wiggle, Marlene & Keith Bankwitz, Katrina & Jimmy Harris, Shawn Tambeau, Michelle Mikulec, Diane Rebori, Claudia Meyer (who brought her husband, Ed) and I all took the museum up on their invitation and were glad we did. The official Al-Hadiqa opening for this year will be on Saturday, June 6th from 12-5pm with food, music, and a guided workshop led by their community partner, Metro Swaps. It's free and open to all. Additionally, the "Rooftop Rendezvous" takes place every Friday through October 2nd from 5-7pm with music and games amidst native flowers and vegetation of the Arab world. Al-Hadiqa is so beautiful and the hosts are always so welcoming- I would urge all of us to visit at one time or another!

MEMBERS' PAGE

Please send anything you feel might be of interest to the editor.

Katrina Harris will teach a dried bean cooking class with demonstration on May 2, from 1-3 pm at the Leanna Hicks Inkster Public Library (2500 Hamlin Dr, 48141).

The class will include:

- General nutrition overview
- Soaking, cooking, and preparing beans
- Three cooking techniques
- Printed instructions and recipes
- Samples of at least one prepared dish
- Dried beans to bring home for cooking

Mariya Fogarasi visited the Franklin Park Conservatory's "Blooms & Butterflies" in the Pacific Island Water Garden where exotic butterflies glide through bright nectar flowers. The stunning Dale Chihuly pieces on display here in Columbus, Ohio are the largest Chihuly collection in a botanical garden worldwide.

