



The Garden Path

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Anne Skalka <i>President</i>	Lorrain Persiani <i>Immediate Past President</i>
Linda Reasoner <i>Vice President</i>	Maggie Kramer <i>Club Parliamentarian</i>
Rick Lazarick <i>Treasurer</i>	Jeff Tryon <i>Newsletter Editor</i>
Karen Lewandowski <i>Recording Secretary</i>	Lynn Grillo <i>Newsletter Design</i>
Iliana Okum <i>Corresponding Secretary</i>	

President's Letter

Anne Skalka | June 2025

Dear Garden Club Members,

This month arrived in full bloom, bringing with it the vibrant colors, longer days, and the joy of seeing our gardens thrive as well as the anticipation of June flowers. It's a time when all the planning and planting of earlier months come to life, rewarding us with beauty and bounty.

I hope you've had the chance to enjoy the fruits of your labor—whether it's a thriving vegetable patch, cheerful flower beds, or simply a peaceful corner to sit and admire nature's work.

This month is the installation of officers and marks the end of our club year. We'll celebrate the Garden State by showcasing "Farm Fresh," our salute to all things grown in New Jersey. We will also honor the anniversaries for members that have had 5, 10, and 15 years with us. Don't forget to bring your place settings as well for our annual design competition! Our themes this year are: Vintage Charm, Tropical Paradise, Modern Minimalist, and Fairy Tale Fantasy.

As always, thank you for your enthusiasm, creativity, and camaraderie. Your dedication is what makes our club so special. Let's continue to grow together — one plant, one project, and one friendship at a time.

Wishing you sunshine, soft rains, and many blooms.

Warmly,

Anne Skalka

President, West Trenton Garden Club

May 2025 Meeting Minutes

Karen Lewandowski

President's Report

The West Trenton Garden Club meeting of May 5, 2025 was called to order at 6:35 pm by President [Anne Skalka](#). She welcomed one guest attending the meeting.

Secretary's Report

The minutes of the regular April meeting were printed in the Newsletter. Hearing no additions of corrections, the minutes were filed as reported.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer, [Rick Lazarick](#), reported a current balance of \$14,938.88. An income of \$9,860.25 included revenue from the Flower Sale, the Scholarship Breakfast, Dues collected so far, and 50/50s. There was \$440.91 in expenses. Rick is still collecting dues from members, which currently number 62.

Correspondence

[Iliana Okum](#) reported that [David Chmielewski](#) is back in the hospital and we should keep him in our thoughts and prayers. Also, Eileen Keenan is currently in hospice.

Announcements

[Anne Skalka](#) acknowledged all May birthdays.

Committee Reports

Field Trips

[Lynn Grillo](#) reported that a great time was had by all who attended the Holland Ridge Tulip Farm outing on April 24. The next trip planned will take place on Saturday, May 10, to the Burpee Spring Open at Fordhook Farm in Doylestown, PA. It is free and self-guided. Carpooling will begin at Lynn's house at 9:00 am so participants can be at the event by 10:00 am.

Scholarship Breakfast

[Linda Reasoner](#) reported that the breakfast made \$2,368.00 for the Scholarship Fund so far. There may be additional food expenses. There were 30 raffle baskets donated, from which we made \$952.00. They were all very nice. Linda thanked everyone for their help and support.

Flower Sale

[Elle Belcheff](#) thanked everyone for purchasing flowers and helping at the sale. Over \$8,000 worth of flowers were sold. She brought in the orphans to sell and to use as prizes for the Bingo event taking place later in the evening.

Nominations

[Victoria Rivera-Cruz](#) will be installed as the new Corresponding Secretary, replacing Iliana Okum, at the June meeting.

May 2025 Meeting Minutes

Karen Lewandowski

Budget

Rick Lazarick presented the recommended 2025-26 Income and Expense Budgets to the general membership. He discussed why he added more money to certain line items, and which ones should have amounts reduced. The final budget will be voted on at the June meeting.

June Meeting

There was some confusion as to what members were supposed to bring to the year-end June meeting. After some discussion, it was decided that attendees should bring a place setting and flower arrangement based on one of the themes which were announced. The Newsletter will provide the details. A sign-up sheet was passed around for members to bring either an appetizer or dessert. There will be a “Jersey Fresh Auction” taking place as well, and members are asked to bring a \$5 item from a farmer’s market (produce, flowers, etc.) or something from your own garden or homemade.

Birmingham Park

George McElrath announced that Friday, May 9 at 1:00 will be the date for park clean-up in preparation for the Saturday, May 17 mulch delivery. Volunteers are needed for both dates.

Garden Tour

Since the Flower Show is not going to take place this year, **Anne Skalka** has decided she will move forward with the Garden Tour in the Fall on September 27 and 28. It will take place within the club, and a sign-up sheet was passed around for interested members to register their garden.

- **Anne Skalka** thanked the Hospitality Committee for providing the evening’s refreshments.
- A 50/50 winner was picked.
- With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 7:16 pm. A Garden Bingo game is planned as the evening’s program, hosted by **Lynn Grillo** and **Iliana Okum**.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Lewandowski, Recording Secretary



Photo by Mary Corrigan

Happy Birthday | Don't Forget! | Calendar

June 2025

Happy Birthday!

- Nancy and Helga Fontus – June 1

Don't Forget!

Flowers for Ewing Library

Jeff Tryon

Hospitality Committee

President Anne Skalka (Chair), Ida Cahill, Heidi Furman, Linda Gerasimowicz, Diane Sanchez, and Ginny Sari. Volunteers will be needed for setup.

Newsletter Deadline

Submit all info to Jeff Tryon by the 15th of the month via email at: wtgcnewsletter@gmail.com

All Members

- Please bring an appetizer or dessert, a place setting including a small flower arrangement, and a Jersey Fresh auction item for the June Installation Celebration. Don't forget a drink container!
- Please sign up to help at our Birmingham Park this summer! Contact Rick Lazarick or George McElrath.

Mark Your Calendar

June 1–7

National Garden Week

June 2, 6:00 PM, Hollowbrook CC

WTGC Monthly Meeting

Program: "WTGC Year-End Bash and Jersey Fresh Auction!"

Chair: President, Anne Skalka.

June 11, 10:00 AM Holly House

GCNJ Judges Council

June 14, Flag Day

June 15, Father's Day

June 23–29, 10:00 AM Holly House

National Pollinator Week.

June 23, 10:00 AM Holly House

GCNJ State Board Meeting

Alternate Date, June 30



WTGC visits Fordhook Farm (see pgs 10 – 12)

June Program: Year End Bash and Jersey Fresh Auction!

Monday, June 2 | 6:00 PM

Don't forget to bring:

1



An hors d'oeuvre or dessert to share at the buffet

2



Place setting, a small flower arrangement for contest, and a drink container

3



Item for Jersey-Fresh Auction (minimum value \$5)

Date & Time

- Monday, June 3, 2024
- Starts at 6:00 PM (note earlier time than usual)

Location

- Hollowbrook Community Center,
320 Hollowbrook Drive, Ewing, NJ

Evening Schedule

1. Buffet & Social Hour

- We will enjoy an hors d'oeuvre and dessert buffet.
- Please bring a dish to share—sweet or savory.

2. Place Setting Competition

- Set and decorate your own place using one of these themes:
 - *Vintage Charm*
 - *Modern Minimalist*
 - *Tropical Paradise*
 - *Fairy Tale Fantasy*
- Include a small flower arrangement in your display.
- Prizes will be awarded for the best in each category.
- You'll use your own place setting during the buffet.
- Don't forget to bring a drink container or water bottle.

3. Officer Installation

- We will recognize and install our new club officers for the coming year.

4. Jersey Fresh Auction

- Bring a Jersey Fresh item with a minimum value of \$5.
- Ideas include:
 - *Fresh produce, flowers, honey, jam, or baked goods*
 - *Something homemade using local ingredients*
 - *Items can be from your garden or a farmers' market*
- It's a fun way to celebrate local flavors & support the club!

Reminders

- Guests are not permitted at the June meeting.
- Your participation makes this event special—thank you!

Drenched and Delayed

What Heavy Rain Means for Our Gardens | by Lynn Grillo

This spring has brought an unusually heavy stretch of rain to New Jersey, and gardeners are seeing the impact. Seeds are slow to sprout, seedlings are vanishing, and even mature shrubs like hydrangeas and peonies are struggling. Understanding how excess moisture affects different plants can help us take action—and save the season.

What's Going Wrong?

Heavy rain can disrupt the earliest stages of growth:

- **Seed Washout:** Rain may displace seeds, burying them too deep to germinate.
- **Soil Compaction:** Waterlogged soil compacts as it dries, forming a hard crust that tiny shoots can't break through.
- **Root Rot & Fungal Diseases:** Poor drainage promotes fungal problems like damping-off in seedlings and root rot in older plants.
- **Oxygen Starvation:** Roots need air as much as water. Saturated soil suffocates them.

Prolonged rainfall also leaches nutrients like nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium, leading to yellowing leaves and stunted growth—even when plants look well-watered.

Mature Plants Feel It Too

Well-established flowering plants—roses, hydrangeas, peonies, and azaleas—might not die from too much rain, but they can still suffer:

- **Root Stress:** Long-term saturation can lead to dieback or poor flowering.
- **Fungal Leaf Spots:** Roses are especially prone to black spot and mildew in humid, wet weather.
- **Floppy Blooms:** Rain-soaked peonies and hydrangeas become heavy and collapse without support.
- **Nutrient Deficiency:** Even deep-rooted plants lose access to key nutrients in soggy soils.

If your flowering shrubs are looking lackluster, it's not just your imagination—excessive water changes how they grow and bloom.

Recovery Tips for a Wet Season

Whether you're growing tomatoes or tending hydrangeas, these strategies can help your garden recover:

- **Improve Drainage:** Add compost to lighten soil. In very wet areas, raised beds or berms make a big difference.
- **Stake Tall Bloomers:** Use peony rings or bamboo supports early in the season.
- **Prune for Airflow:** Remove dense or damaged growth to allow leaves to dry quickly.
- **Feed Gently:** Once soil dries, replenish nutrients with an organic, slow-release fertilizer.
- **Mulch Mindfully:** Apply mulch 2–3 inches deep, but keep it away from plant stems and crowns to prevent rot.

Need to replant? You're not alone. A surprising number of gardeners are having to reseed or restart parts of their gardens after a rainy spring.

Final Thought

While rain is a gift from nature, too much at once can throw even the most seasoned gardener for a loop. With a few smart adjustments—and a dose of patience—your garden can bounce back from a soggy start and bloom beautifully this summer.

Sources:

[How Too Much Rain Affects Your Garden – Penn State Extension](#)

[Dealing with Heavy Rains – University of Florida IFAS](#)

[How to Deal with a Wet Year in the Vegetable Garden – Cornell CALS](#)

[Plant Problems Related to Excessive Rain – NC State Extension](#)



WTGC History | *The Induction of Officers in the Past*

By Anne Chmielewski

The month of June has always been a very special time for the members of the West Trenton Garden Club. At our June meeting, we gather to celebrate our friendship. It is our opportunity to honor current officers, and officially install newly-elected officers. All activities and business of the club year come to a close as we eagerly prepare to step into our gardens for the summer. The formalities of the evening are truly inspirational. Colorful tables are set up by the June Hospitality Committee. Members bring their own unique place settings. The celebration takes on an air of elegance and creativity as each person offsets their place setting with a flower arrangement of their own design. To the delight of all, there is a long table filled with 'pot-luck' food for every taste. Members provide sweet, savory, and personal favorites. While we embrace these traditional elements, the years have provided new and special changes.

Opening the pages of the West Trenton Garden Club archive, we see a history of white gloves, hats, and formal gowns. The June meeting was an elegant affair. Through the years, a more relaxed approach was ushered in. Members were encouraged to design and wear their own special hats. The June Hospitality Committee members would judge the hats and award a small prize for the most unique creation. Competition could get very heated! Eventually, it was decided that there would be an award for different categories, so more people

could get a prize. Categories included the most elegant, the best use of plant material, or even avant-garde. Over time, the hat judging gave way to our current place setting competition. There were also guidelines for the celebration beverage — punch bowls were set up at either end of the large table. The committee had a punch

recipe that was followed year after year. The recipe included a version of sherbet and soda. As the years passed, a white elephant exchange was added to the evening's festivities. The members were asked to bring in a new or gently used item that could be "raffled" off. The activity was a small fundraiser which added a lively element to the evening. Everyone had the opportunity to go home with something.

This year members are encouraged to bring in something relating to our Garden State. This "Jersey Fresh" theme could include items relating to birds, pollinators, dried or fresh flowers, desserts, fresh produce, plants, decorative pots, photos, and herbs... this is an opportunity to use your imagination!

Our final tradition is the installation of officers and the adoption of the budget. These are official actions that are essential parts of the June meeting. Throughout the years, the ceremony for the installation was always formal and inspiring. The installation theme and ceremony are different year by year, because it is written with each honored officer in mind. This year we will once again present a meaningful installation ceremony showing our gratitude and support for our respected leaders.



First officers and Board, 1953

WTGC History | Club Induction Photo Retrospective

By Linda Reasoner



Anne Chmielewski 2001-2002; Alicia Harney (Magee); 1999-2001; Grace Starret 1970-1971 & 1997-1999.

er County Messenger, Thursday, July 2, 1

Garden Club Installs New Officers



Mrs. Robert A. Starrett, center, is the new president of the West Trenton Garden Club. Mrs. Starrett installed as president by Mrs. George N. Epley, and succeeds Mrs. Russell G. Bush, right.

JUNE INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS CEREMONY AT ANNUAL COVERED DISH SUPPER



oAnn Clarke, Mary Ann Losi, Christine Ischinger, Anne Chmielewski, Ginger Young, Pat Bowker

1987

Dinner + Installation
To wear and show a
hat decorated with
fresh or dried materials.
June 1987



1998



New Club President 1967



Mrs. Donald Donah, right, new president of the West Trenton Garden Club, is pictured above with the group's past president, Mrs. Richard Smith, left, at recent installation ceremonies. Other new officers of the group include: Mrs. Lee Nowinski, vice president; Mrs. John Fedorchak, recording secretary; Mrs. Robert Steele, corresponding secretary; Mrs. William Solbert, treasurer; Mrs. Joseph Navro, Mrs. Douglas Koch, Mrs. Robin Good, Mrs. Clayton, members of the board of officers.



WTGC Fordhook Farms Field Trip

May 10

On May 10, five WTGC members—Mary Corrigan, Helga Fontus, Lynn Grillo, Iliana Okum, and Linda Reasoner—along with four guests, enjoyed a delightful field trip to historic Burpee Fordhook Farm in Doylestown, PA. This 61-acre site, purchased by W. Atlee Burpee in 1888, remains a vibrant location for Burpee's plant trials, ornamental gardens, and tree collections. Our group explored several of the farm's unique gardens,

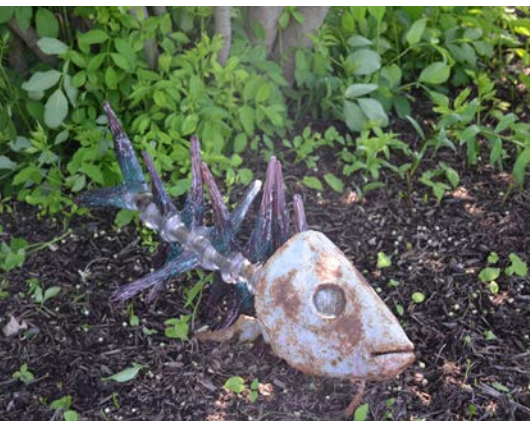
including the Kitchen Garden (filled with edibles), the Happiness Garden (showcasing perennials and whimsical sculptures), the Spirit Garden (a fascinating stumpery), and the Sky Garden Conifer Collection (featuring rare and unusual conifers). After a morning of garden inspiration, we wrapped up the day with a relaxing lunch and a quick stroll through the garden center at Terrain. It was a beautiful outing filled with flowers, fresh air, and friendship.



Members and friends of the West Trenton Garden Club at the entrance to Fordhook Farms

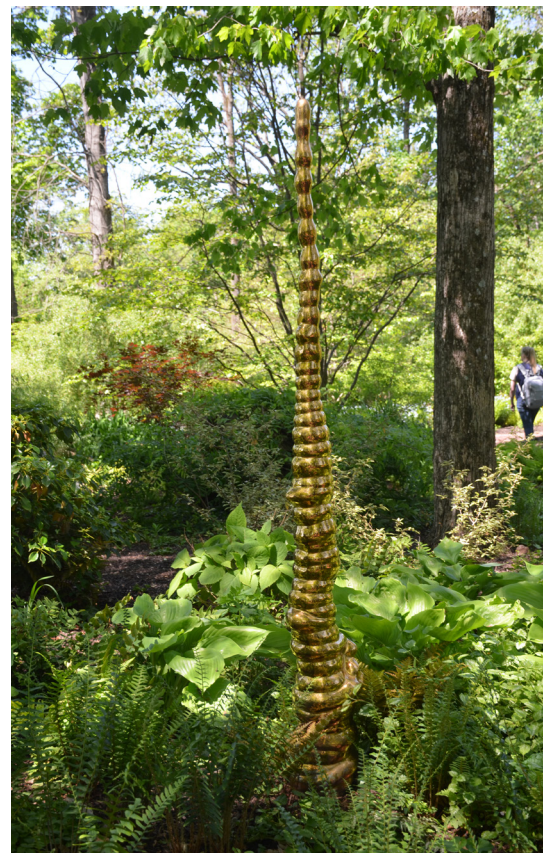
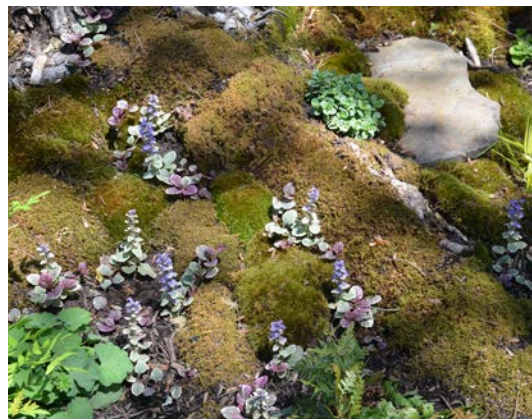
Gallery | *The Happiness Garden – Perennials & Sculpture*

May 10 WTGC Field Trip to Fordhook Farms | Photos by Mary Corrigan



Gallery | *The Spirit Garden (Stumpery)*

May 10 WTGC Field Trip to Fordhook Farms | Photos by Mary Corrigan



Gallery | Plant Bingo!

May 5, 2025 | Congratulations to our winners! Photos by Elle Belcheff



Gallery | May at Birmingham Park

May 11, photos by George McElrath

