



# The *Garden* Path

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# President's Letter

Anne Skalka | February 2026

Dear Garden Club Members,

As we begin a new month, I am reminded that every seed we plant carries with it a promise—and a bit of hope. Our theme, “*Plant Hope*,” reflects not only what we do in our gardens, but also how we nurture our community through creativity, teamwork, and service.

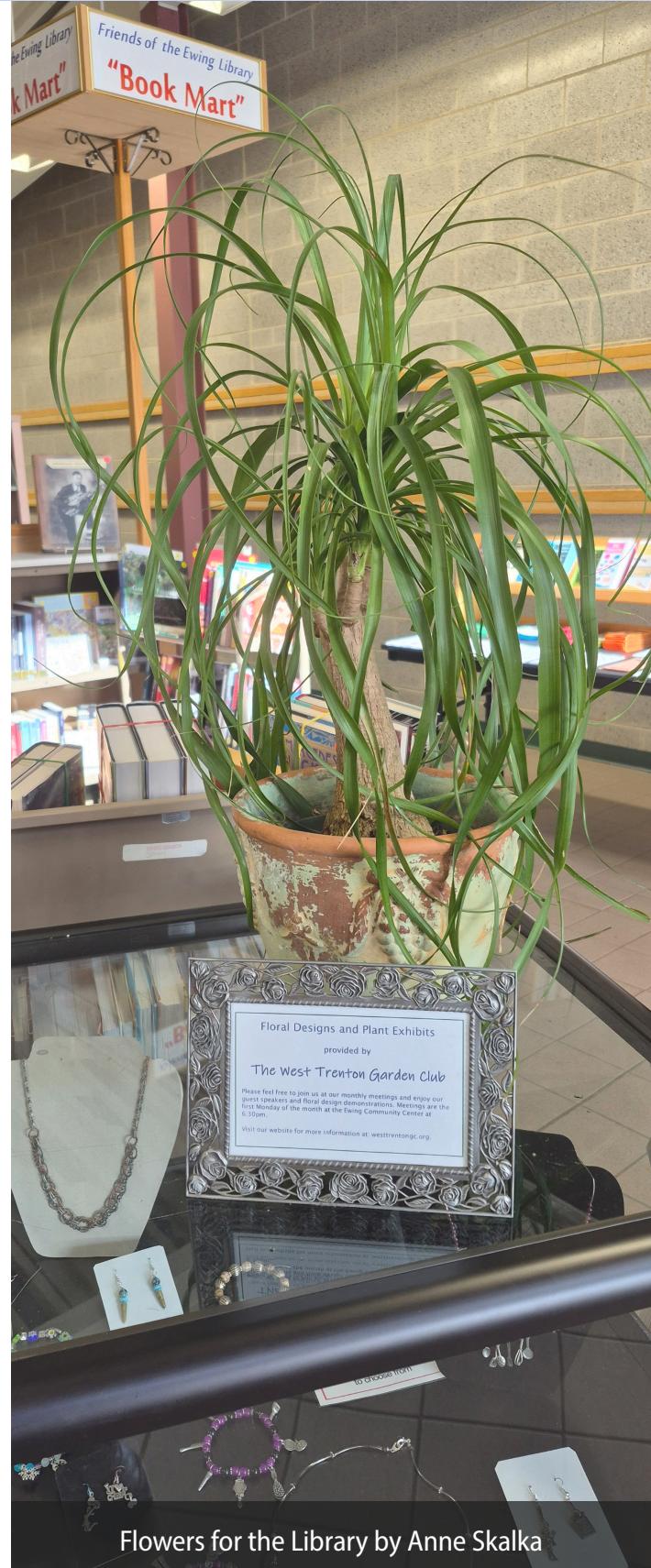
I am proud to share wonderful news that truly embodies this spirit: our club was awarded *1st Place at Morven for the mantle that WTGC designed!* This recognition is a testament to your hard work and talent. Each contribution—whether planning, designing, or supporting — helped make this possible. Together, we planted an idea and watched it flourish into something exceptional.

Gardening teaches us patience, resilience, and optimism, and this honor reminds us of what we can accomplish when we work together. As we move forward this month, I encourage you to continue planting seeds of hope — through our projects, our friendships, and our shared love of gardening.

Thank you for all that you do to make our club vibrant and inspiring. May this month bring renewed energy, fresh inspiration, and many reasons to celebrate.

Warmly,  
Anne Skalka

*President, West Trenton Garden Club*



# Happy Birthday | Don't Forget! | Calendar

February 2026

## Happy Birthday!

- Paula Fisher - January 10
- Jeff Tryon - January 11
- Barbara Bernhard - January 18
- Kevin Fair - January 23
- Linda Gerasimowicz - January 30
- Harry Gamble - February 1
- Fredricka Billups - February 2
- Camille Rainiero - February 23

## Don't Forget!

### Flowers for Ewing Library

Anne Chmielewski

### Hospitality Committee

Anne Skalka (Chair), Elle Belcheff, Vernon Clash, Susan Cirullo, Ingrid Fair, Kevin Fair, and Rick Lazarick.

### Newsletter Deadline

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

## Mark Your Calendar

### February 2, WTGC Monthly Meeting | 6:30 PM

Hollowbrook Community Center. Program: "Easy Care Perennials for your Garden." See Page 4 for details.

### February 28 - March 8

Philadelphia Flower Show. Pennsylvania Convention Center, Philadelphia PA.  
<https://phsonline.org/the-flower-show>



# Program | Easy Care Perennials for Your Garden

Jeffrey Van Pelt, February 2, 2026



We have all been in a garden center looking for plants when we see one that wins us over. After reading the glowing description on the tag we buy it, bring it home, and plant it, only to find that it wasn't suited for our growing conditions. We feel the pain as we watch our hopes and dreams slowly die. This lecture is designed to show case perennials that thrive in most garden conditions with little care. *Jeffrey Van Pelt* will be highlighting perennials that you may not know or have not considered as well as the garden workhorses.

*Jeffrey Van Pelt* was the long-time supervisor of horticulture for the Somerset County Park Commission, known for his expertise in roses and sustainable gardening, particularly at the Van Der Goot Rose Garden in Colonial Park. Though he has since retired from the position, he continues to share his knowledge through presentations.

# Philadelphia Flower Show

February 28–March 8 at the Pennsylvania Convention Center

The 2026 PHS Philadelphia Flower Show will take place February 28–March 8 at the Pennsylvania Convention Center. Titled “Rooted: Origins of American Gardening,” the show was announced by the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS) on January 14 at the Union Trust building, commemorating the historic site of the first Philadelphia Flower Show in 1829.

This location honors the city’s role as the birthplace of America’s first Flower Show as the nation approaches its 250th anniversary. In the spirit of the 250th celebrations, this year’s Flower Show honors the people, places, and traditions that have shaped gardening, from cherished family memories to time-honored practices that continue to inspire today.

“‘Rooted: Origins of American Gardening’ reflects the heart of PHS’ mission connecting people and plants to transform lives and communities,” said Matt Rader, president of the PHS. “Every plant and garden tells a story. The Flower Show celebrates those stories while serving as a fundraiser to support PHS’s year-round work in the Philadelphia region to create green spaces, expand access to fresh food, and foster neighborhood resilience and community health. Just as gardens grow from strong roots, so does the impact we can have together in our community.”

The PHS will debut a reimagined layout supported by a new wayfinding framework that helps guests easily navigate the Show through five core experiences: SEE, SHOP, MAKE, LEARN, and PLAY. PHS will continue to utilize its primary exhibition spaces for the Show’s gardens, exhibits, and experiences. The Marketplace shopping destination will move to a new street-level home directly below the main exhibition space, giving vendors a highly visible location enhanced with floral moments and seating areas that invite guests to linger and explore.

For a list of exhibitors and special programs, visit [pennhort.org](http://pennhort.org).



# Happenings

## Upcoming Events

### Scholarship Breakfast

Our annual Scholarship breakfast is scheduled for Saturday March 7, 2026, from 9am - 11am.

- The breakfast tickets will be available at the February meeting for members to pick up.
- Ticket money will be due back by the meeting on March 2nd (earlier return would be appreciated)

We will be accepting new items to make up our raffle baskets until the March meeting. Please do not bring baskets or items on the day of the breakfast because the committee has to arrange and label the baskets ahead of time.

Thank you  
Linda Reasoner  
[lindar75@verizon.net](mailto:lindar75@verizon.net)



Details on our Website:

### 250 USA Semiquincentennial

WTGC is proud to be planning a family-friendly community event at Birmingham Park in honor of this historic milestone. We're working in conjunction with Mercer 250, Trenton 250, and Ewing 250 to create an afternoon full of fun, reflection, and patriotic spirit.

While the details are still coming together, you can expect something special on Friday, July 3rd, right where Bear Tavern Road meets West Upper Ferry Road. This quiet corner of Ewing holds a fascinating story: it's the very spot where General George Washington and his troops split their forces during the daring march to Trenton in 1776. A reenactor in uniform will bring that story to life with vivid, family-friendly storytelling throughout the afternoon.



Friday July 3, 2026  
12:00 pm - 3:00 pm  
Birmingham Park  
Corner of Bear Tavern Road & W. Upper Ferry Road

Step back in time at Birmingham Park! Picture General Washington and his troops marching up Bear Tavern Road on a bitterly cold December morning in 1776. They split their forces, with one half marching down Sullivan Way and the other half to Upper Ferry Road on their way to attack Trenton.

Details on our Website:

# Drumthwacket

WTGC Celebrates History at Drumthwacket Holiday Open House



## The Drumthwacket Foundation

This past December, the West Trenton Garden Club proudly participated in the annual Drumthwacket Holiday Open House, a beloved seasonal tradition at the New Jersey Governor's Mansion. Each year, member clubs of the Garden Club of New Jersey are invited to decorate the public rooms of the historic home, delighting visitors with creative displays that reflect both the beauty of the season and the heritage of our state.

This year's theme honored the upcoming 250th anniversary of the United States, and WTGC was selected to decorate the elegant Music Room with the theme "The Battle of Trenton."

The focal point of our design was a striking 4-foot replica of The Battle Monument, the iconic column in downtown Trenton marking the location of General George Washington's artillery during the pivotal 1776 battle. Surrounding this were carefully arranged vignettes that told the story of the event and the era.

The mantel was lined with thirteen tall candles, each symbolizing one of the original colonies. A historically inspired scene of the Hessian surrender, a map of the battle, and a pewter place setting evoked the setting of 18th-century Trenton. Completing the room was a Christmas tree adorned with handmade, natural ornaments, reminiscent of decorations used in the 1800s.

Guests enjoyed self-guided tours accompanied by live piano music in the Music Room, with docents on hand to share details about each display. WTGC's historically grounded and visually rich interpretation was well received by visitors, many of whom paused to take in the thoughtful craftsmanship.

A huge thank-you goes to our talented decorating team for their creativity and dedication: Lorraine Persiani, Iliana Okum, Monique Bonnier, Lynn Aspinwall, Linda Geiger, Susan Chrystal, and Camille Rainiero.

Enjoy the photo gallery (next page) for a closer look at how we celebrated both the holiday season and a proud moment in New Jersey's Revolutionary War history.

# Gallery | Drumthwacket

Photos courtesy of Drumthwacket & WTGC



# Morven | Morven Festival of Trees

WTGC Takes First Place at Morven's Festival of Trees

# MORVEN

## MUSEUM & GARDEN



The West Trenton Garden Club is thrilled to announce that our mantel design, *To Everything There is a Season*, earned First Place in the Mantel category at the 20th annual Morven Festival of Trees! This beloved holiday tradition, held at Morven Museum & Garden in Princeton, brings together local clubs, organizations, and designers to create festive displays that light up the museum galleries from mid-November through early January.

Our entry told a story of nature's gentle passage through time. A sculpted tree trunk rises from the left of the mantel and arcs gracefully across its full width, with each section reflecting a different season—spring's buds, summer's growth, autumn's brilliance, and winter's hush. Nestled inside the fireplace is a glowing scene inspired by the sun, moon, and stars, along with an open book turned to a page explaining why leaves change color in the fall—a perfect blend of wonder and learning.

We were honored to be the sole mantel winner in a field of beautiful and imaginative displays.

Special recognition also goes to the top entries in the Tree category:

- *Contemporary Garden Club of Princeton* – Midnight Winter Conservatory (1st Place)
- *Mount Laurel Garden Club* – Family Game Night (2nd Place)
- *Stony Brook Garden Club* – Petals & Wings: 20 Years in Bloom – A Tribute to Pollinators (3rd Place)

As you enjoy the photos (next page), we hope you'll take a moment to reflect on the beauty of each season and the quiet joy found in the turning of time. Thank you to all who supported and celebrated this wonderful event with us—we're already dreaming about next year!

# Gallery | Morven Festival of Trees

Photos courtesy of Morven Museum & WTGC

## FESTIVAL of TREES Best Mantel

West Trenton  
Garden Club

1<sup>st</sup>

