

# BLUE RIDGE DIGEST

Blue Ridge District Virginia Federation of Garden Clubs

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I was very happy to see so many at our Fall District Meeting; our program was fun and we learned so much. I strongly believe in the Blue Ridge District, and I love the Garden Club members.

It was so uplifting to see the camaraderie and the joy of people talking to each other, catching up, and making new friends. Garden clubs are so wonderful for the friends we make and the things we learn. It's a place where we make great friendships that help us celebrate the good times and help us through the not-so-good times. It is worrying about and trying to make the environment better. Planting seeds to increase pollinators, taking care of our birds and caring about our earth. We also value the past and want to restore Historic Gardens. We care about the future...giving Grants to those who wish to grow and learn about growing things and making beautiful designs. To make the world a better place.

So far we have already had one Flower Show this summer by the Southside Garden Club in Blacksburg. Sugar Loaf Garden Club plans a Flower Show in the Spring, and the Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs plans a Flower Show probably in March. We are busy people!!

We do plan to be involved in the Blue Star Memorial ceremony in Dublin, along with the Southwest District in December of this year.

Our new Chairman are just getting their feet wet; for others it is old hat. So much to do and look forward to.

I hope to get to know more of you this year and listen to your projects and help to spread the word of what the District is all about. We do so many good things and people don't always know what we do. So my hope is to increase participation and spread the joy of belonging to a garden club. We should all spread the joy.

Tracy Tuttle

## November 2025 ISSUE

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

#### 2025

- Nov. 3-4 VFGC Symposium
- Nov. 11 Honeybee Outreach Program
- Dec. 1 Awards Deadline-must be received by District Chairman

#### 2026

- Mar. 25 BRD Board Meeting
- Apr. 20 & 21 VFGC Convention - Williamsburg, VA
- Apr. 23 Blue Ridge District Spring Meeting—Roanoke



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Artwork from  
public domain  
websites and  
personal photos.

## WEBSITES

### National Garden Clubs Inc.

<https://gardenclub.org>

### Virginia Federation of Garden Clubs Inc.

<https://viriniagardenclubs.org>

**Newsletter Deadlines:** August 1  
 send info to: November 1  
[shirle4858@gmail.com](mailto:shirle4858@gmail.com) February 1  
 540-989-3137 May 1  
 Free to members with email  
 Subscription if mailed - \$8/yr. or \$16/2 yr.

## CLUB NEWS

**Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs** is hosting "**Holiday House 2025**" on December 4th. Please call 540-343-4519 or email [rcgc3640@gmail.com](mailto:rcgc3640@gmail.com) for an order form. Forms will be mailed in early November.

Send in your pre-paid order form and drive by to pick up your order on Thursday, December 4th. You don't even have to get out of your car!

Items for sale include fresh mixed greenery, magnolia greenery, Amaryllis bulbs (both waxed and bare), cookie plates, fudge, Brunswick stew, cheese balls, spiced nuts, wreaths, garland and more.

Get a start on your gift giving and holiday entertaining!

**Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs** is once again participating in the United Way **Fashions for Evergreens** at Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center November 23-January 1.

The committee is working hard to design their "Secret Fairy Garden" Tree. Any money in support of their tree will be donated for the United Way of Blue Ridge supporting area charities. If BRD members, friends and neighbors vote for their tree it will have a huge impact on the cause and for the tree to win the contest. Stop by and enjoy the festive holiday spirit and for the "The Secret Fairy Garden" located in Peacock Alley at the Hotel Roanoke. Or you can vote ON-LINE. They will provide a link on social media. Let's make the RCGC TREE #1.

Members of the **Belmont Garden Club** in Bedford, Va gathered at the home of Shirley Grant, President, on September 26 for an afternoon of flower arranging.



The ladies made 12 centerpieces that were used at their first Fashion Show and Luncheon held on Saturday, September 27. The club co-chaired this event with the **Blue Ridge Garden Club** which also provided flower arrangements. All of the arrangements added a beautiful touch to the table decor and those attending the event were given the opportunity to purchase an arrangement. There were over 100 in attendance and proceeds for this event go to funding civic and club activities.



Belmont & Blue Ridge Garden Clubs' Fashion Show and Luncheon

The **Brae and Beck Garden Club** got into the fall spirit by planting colorful mums in front of the Fincastle library. Now visitors are greeted by bright pops of color as the butterfly bush, lantanas and cone-flowers take a winter break.



The club also tidied up the Monarch Waystation, weeding and thinning out plants.

On September 3, the **Southside Garden Club** was pleased to present an NGC Horticulture Specialty Flower Show at the Montgomery-Floyd Public Library in Blacksburg, VA.

The theme of the show was *Jewels in the Garden*, and the "jewels" from their gardens were abundant and on beautiful display for the occasion. Nine of the thirteen club members exhibited Horticultural specimens, totaling 115 entries in all, across seven Sections and twenty-one Classes.

In addition to the Horticulture, two teams of club members created two very informative Educational Exhibits for the show: "The Spotted Lantern Fly in Virginia" and "Supporting Native Pollinators with Native Host Plants".

And club members also contributed much appreciated help and support in the areas of hospitality and greeting the public during the show's open hours.

Happily, the open hours were very well attended, and it was especially gratifying to find that so many of the attendees were eager to engage in conversation about the plants and exhibits in addition to enjoying just looking at them.

Given the scope of the entries, Southside is especially appreciative of, and thankful for, the care, diligence, time, energy and expertise with which the judges carried out their work for our show.

Thanks to them and also to the staff of the Montgomery-Floyd Public Library for their always generous help and support in this, and every, Southside project. Good partners, indeed!



## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Please let us know  
when new members  
join your club  
during the year.



## IN MEMORY

### **ANITA HINSON**

2005-2007 Blue Ridge District President

### **JOANNE BOLLING**

Blue Ridge Garden Club

(Please send death notifications  
to the BRD Editor)

## GARDEN THERAPY

I must admit that I feel like a student in a new class attempting my first assignment. After six years, serving three administrations as Conservation and Environmental Education Chair, I am trying Garden Therapy Chair for Tracy Tuttle's term. Here goes. . . .

There seems to be therapy for a multitude of needs from physical to psychological and everything between. As gardeners we have our own designation-garden therapy. Studies published in Science Direct show that "gardening increases an individual's life satisfaction, vigor, mental health wellbeing, positive attitude, sense of community and cognitive function."

Additionally "reductions in stress, anger, fatigue, depression and anxiety symptoms have been documented." With this impressive list of attributes, I'm happy to explore applications with you, members of Blue Ridge District garden clubs.

I often think of garden therapy as something we do with and for others. After a bit more thought I believe we are the primary recipients of the many benefits offered. Since the active growing season is waning, perhaps we can encourage ourselves during the coming months. A few suggestions include: making pine cone bird feeders with peanut butter and bird seed, plant an amaryllis bulb, propagate house plants to share, make greeting cards using pressed flowers, study how to prune your shrubs, create a mosaic using seeds and a variety of dried beans, or try growing new plants from kitchen waste. For a calming therapy session, practice meditation using plant based essential oils or fragrances or listen to classical music while browsing gardening books or magazines.

In recent reading, I also learned that garden therapy promotes a sense of interest in the future.

So time spent this winter designing our dream gardens could prove very therapeutic. When you're ready for a break, consider sharing what you or your club is doing for garden therapy, I'd love to compile a list of our district's activities. (martha.flora@yahoo.com)

Thanks for your time and interest,

Martha Flora, Garden Therapy

## LITTER PREVENTION and RECYCLING

Greetings fellow gardeners from your new VFGC Litter Prevention and Recycling Coordinator. My name is Christy Boone and I have been recycling glass, plastic and paper for years, but I never recycled plastic film before I found out about the Trex project. As I drive around my town and county I see the beautiful green grass, trees and foliage everywhere without a piece of litter in sight and it makes me proud to know that I make a difference. Just this morning I was speaking with my daughter who is on a boat in the middle of the Pacific Ocean scuba diving and she said there was plastic floating on the ocean and as far down as 20 feet below where the fish swim. Fish ingest the plastic and it is not good!

You can make a difference also by recycling your plastic film for The Trex Community Recycling Project and even earn your club some money with an award from VFGC. My club, the Blue Ridge Garden club in Bedford, has earned three Trex (composite wood and plastic) benches. We placed them in The Bedford Urban Gardens, the library garden, and the town cemetery. So to get started go to [nextrex.com](http://nextrex.com). If you have any questions feel free to call me at (540) 816-8895.



## SUPPORT OUR POLLINATORS

According to the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, Bees, especially native, wild bees, are the most important insect pollinators, joined by beetles, flies, moths, butterflies, birds, bats and other mammals. Ideally, they are supported by a diverse native plant community. Positive weather conditions are vital, too. Local reporting in Southwest Virginia indicates that in 2025, migrating pollinators were delayed due to higher-than-normal temperatures during spring and early summer.

Bees, butterflies, and even hummingbirds

were delayed this year. Much supportive plant life was also impaired or even killed by the hot dry weather. We won't know the damage done to our landscapes for years.

Control of the weather is pretty much beyond the control of home gardeners. Beyond supporting reasonable climate control initiatives and watering our gardens when necessary to supplement Mother Nature, our efforts are mostly in the area of supporting our pollinators. There is much we can do in that area.

1. Plant native species to provide the specific food and habitats that pollinators in Southwest Virginia need. For early spring, plant red columbine, wild geranium, and Virginia Bluebells for crucial early season nectar and pollen. For summer, try bee balm, butterfly weed, purple coneflower and milkweed. Goldenrod and asters are vital to sustain pollinators in the fall.
2. Avoid pesticides that threaten many pollinators.
3. Provide nesting sites so pollinators have places to nest and overwinter. If possible, leave some areas of your yard undisturbed all year. Don't remove all brush and other plant material when your growing season is over. They provide important shelter for many pollinators over the winter.
4. Provide supplemental food for birds, especially during early spring and late fall and winter.
5. Place accessible water sources in your yard, especially during dry spells. We can also support conservation programs created by various not-for-profits and governmental agencies. In our area, particularly along interstates and major highways, the Virginia Department of Transportation's Wildflower and Pollinator Habitat Program is creating and habitats along roadsides. This includes replacing grass with wildflowers in road medians.

Pass these tips along to your friends and neighbors to spread the word:

Support Pollination.

Mary Olson, Chairman  
Bees, Butterflies and Pollinators

## PLANTING TREES AND SAVING FORESTS

For many years, National Garden Clubs, Inc. and the USDA Forest Service have maintained a partnership sustaining our national forests through the **Plant-A-Tree** program. Plant-A-Tree, formerly known as Penny Pines, is a reforestation and forest education program.

Your garden club can participate by contributing to this meaningful conservation project. All contributions help the Forest Service to plant trees across the national forest system where reforestation is needed most—the places most impacted by wildfires, flooding, drought, and other forest disturbances.

As some of you may already be familiar with this program when it was called Penny Pines, the new name "**Plant-A-Tree**" better reflects the program's mission and will help us reach a wider audience. Additionally, we are also making changes to the donation process to make it more accessible and user-friendly. Even if you are already familiar with the original Penny Pines program, please read through the changes below.

**1. DONATION AMOUNT** Previously, we required donations in increments of \$68.00. **Donors can now contribute any amount, starting from as little as \$50.00** to as large as \$10,000.00. This change provides greater flexibility for donors and enables a wider range of people to participate in the program.

**2. CERTIFICATES IMPORTANT UPDATE:** DIGITAL CERTIFICATES ONLY – As of May 31, 2025, NGC no longer mails certificates and has fully transitioned to a digital format. An email address is required with each donation to receive a tax receipt and a link to a **customizable digital certificate**. Donors can opt to make a certificate in honor or in memory of someone if desired, however we no longer need to collect this information. We assure you that your privacy and personal information will be handled with the utmost care and security.

**3. DONATING TO SPECIFIED FORESTS**  
When donating, you may choose to have your donation go to where it's most needed or you may select a National Forest; however, the Forest Service reserves the right to utilize funds based on need  
If you specify a National Forest where

there is no tree planting need, then the donation may be used for planting trees on another forest. Please note, individual plantings will not be identified per donor (ex: if you donate to a forest, you would be unable to locate specific tree that you helped donate).

Once again, we want to extend our heartfelt thanks for your support and dedication to our reforestation efforts. Your contributions make a real and lasting impact, and we are honored to have you as part of our garden club community and are grateful for your partnership in this important work.

**States, regions, districts, clubs, and/or individuals may participate in this program. Please note, a \$50.00 minimum is required with each donation.**

Shirley Grant, BRD Chairman  
Information from NGC website

## YOUR INVITATION

to the fantastic

### Honey Bee Outreach Program!



Join Journeyman Beekeeper Vasilia McCrady from Heritage Apiary as we learn about honey bees, life inside the hive and how our pollinators play a critical role in our daily lives.

See the observation hive while we explore how bees work and socialize. Learn each bee's role to sustain a healthy colony.

**BUZZZZ** on over to the  
**Roanoke Council Garden Center**

**Tuesday, November 11**

**10:00 a.m.**

**3640 Colonial Ave.**

***Free and Open to the Public***

**Sponsored by Westchester Garden Club**

**WE'LL SEE YOU SOON!**

## BEYOND MUMS

When leaves begin to turn, the days shorten and temperatures drop, my thoughts turn to mums for color. They are available in local nurseries and local garden shops. Max Eber in "Horticulture" magazine lists ten alternatives to use instead of mums. Some, like asters and black-eyed susans are familiar while toad lilies and ironweeds are more exotic.

The ten alternatives to mums are native asters, tickseed, perennial sunflowers, turtleheads, fall anemones, dahlias, black-eyed susans, golden rods, toad lilies, and ironweed.

Native asters are second to mums in popularity and their cold hardiness and ease of care. "Asters are known for their soft colors of purple, blue, pink, and white and their support of pollinators."

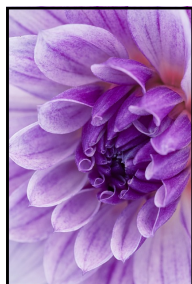
Tickseeds or *coreopsis* are familiar, but most varieties bloom in summer. Two exceptions known as swamp tickseed that bloom in autumn. They are native to boggy forests and meadows of the Southeast where they enjoy moist sun and full to part sun. They have bright yellow flowers which may bloom until November in some locations.

Varieties of perennial sunflower are native to many regions of North America. Most grow from 3 to 8 feet and are sun lovers. In late summer they are covered in golden yellow blooms until frost. It adapts to moist or dry soil and their seeds feed the birds into winter.

Less familiar, turtleheads are related to snapdragons and fox gloves that thrive in moist woodlands. They grow 2 to 3 feet high with late blooming spires of white snapdragon-like blooms.

An old-fashioned choice is a colony of fall anemones which bloom in late summer and autumn. Colony forming *Anemone japonica* may reach 4 feet with airy wands topped with 2-3 inch single blossoms. Newer hybrids are more compact and sturdy growing only 18 to 24 inches tall.

Dahlias are a cousin of mums with an equally varied range of plant size, bloom color and shapes. Dahlias lack cold tolerance so can be grown as annuals or dug at frost and wintered dormant.



Black-eyed susans can bloom until late fall depending on the locale. Their flowers are golden on healthy, low-maintenance plants which are very com-

mon in Southwest Virginia.

Goldenrod is another late season bloomer. It has a tendency to grow vigorously, but there are new hybrids which are more compact and even be grown in pots. They can take full sun or partial shade and average to dry soil.

Toad lilies are native to Taiwan and Japan's Ryuku islands with foliage similar to Solomon's Seal and orchid-like flowers. It blooms from late summer to midfall.

Ironweed is another less well known alternative to mums. It belongs in the lily family, but the native Veronica falls in the same family as mums and asters. They bloom late with clusters of small puffy purple flowers that pollinators love. Full sun and lean soil prompt the strongest stems.

These alternatives to mums offer the opportunity to spice thing up, but will be unlikely to replace the popularity of mums.

Gail Trussell, Horticulture Chairman

## THE NATIONAL GARDENER



Do you receive *The National Gardener*? It is the official publication of National Garden Clubs and is published quarterly. The 2025 Summer Issue has 52 pages of wonderful articles and photos.

You can go to this site to subscribe to the newsletter or browse published issues: <https://gardenclub.org/national-gardener>

If you subscribe, *The National Gardener* will delivered to you via email to your Inbox. I just received my Fall issue.

Be sure to check out all the other information on their website too.- their store, schools, projects, etc.

## LET'S PROTECT OUR BLUE RIDGE

Our Blue Ridge District's theme for 2025-2026 is *Sowing Seeds Today to Make Our Children Smile Tomorrow*. One way we can help future generations grin from ear to ear is by doing all we can now to protect our Blue Ridge.

Our stretch of Blue Ridge Mountains is essential to our community's well-being. Just think about it. Within our neck of the woods, we have a national treasure. Our blue mountains are ancient and sacred, having served as a spiritual home for human beings for thousands of years. They also stand as a profound public statement of our community's ongoing preservation efforts.

Somehow, despite all the threats, we have kept it blue and beautiful. We should be proud of this, but that's not all. Our mountain range is still free and accessible in areas like the Blue Ridge Parkway, and it is becoming an economic driver because of this. These public spaces offer recreation, discovery and renewal for citizens and visitors alike. People in search of homes seek our mountain views. Travelers from all over the world come to witness them.

Our clubs have already taken some measures to preserve our precious treasure. Just to highlight a few, our Pollinator Education initiative equips us to encourage bees, birds, butterflies and beetles that sustain our mountain and valley flora. Our Conservation/Environmental Education leaders keep us up to date about threats to our mountainous area and ways to address them. We even have an updated Plant a Tree agenda that reminds us that our mountains and valleys need protective tree canopies and less erosion, and we still offer warnings about wildfires through our Youth Art Contests related to Smokey the Bear and Woodsy Owl.

Yet, the threats that we already know too much about still persist. We need to be vigilant as we tackle concerns that Friends of Blue Ridge have detailed and explained: habitat loss and fragmentation, our forest's health, climate change, pollution, our large human footprint, increased insect outbreaks, and the ecological impacts that stem from them ([www.friendsofblueridge.org](http://www.friendsofblueridge.org)).

Our clubs cannot address all of these daunting concerns alone, but we can reach out to those who do. Perhaps we can work with local elected leaders, partner with protection

groups, and talk with developers about their mountain preservation efforts. We need to voice our concerns.



Charlie Williams, an attorney within Gentry and Locke and who works on environmental cases, believes caring citizens like us are somewhat misguided. Instead of waiting for federal and state legislation to solve our problems, maybe we need to connect with our local Boards of Supervisors or City Councils instead:

Land use, abuse and protection is an issue often misunderstood. In our area of the country, the Blue Ridge, we currently recognize substantial threats to our environment but generally expect others from the state or federal government to intervene and protect us. Then we are disappointed when, because of bureaucratic and governmental limitations or partisan political objectives, the threats materialize and it's too late.

In reality, some of the most protective measures can come from careful local planning and the enactment of local ordinances that address the will of the local people. In Virginia, all local governments have powers authorized by statute to conduct local planning, to impose rational land use restrictions, and to require soil and water protections. However, often these powers are overlooked, allowing those who create the threats to take advantage of under-regulated development, particularly in rural communities.

Those who favor protecting a local environment like our Blue Ridge Mountains can start with a board of supervisors or city council, which can be a much simpler process than expecting any increased protection from Congress or our General Assembly.

We can do this. Interested garden clubs in our district could appoint a member or committee to reach out to these elected officials to let them know of our desires. And/or, we could co-create at the district level a form letter for local, elected board and council officials. Clubs could copy or amend it as they see fit and then send the letters forward.

In addition, clubs and members could

reach out to other planning groups like our Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission, which engages in local planning that extends beyond county lines. Maybe we could get a district garden club representative on this powerful action group who could champion our Blue Ridge protection agenda. We could even see if our Blue Ridge Land Conservancy could use our help. They are currently protecting 21,000 acres of land in our area, much of it mountainous like House Rock in Franklin County. They even have educational programs like River Days, where youth learn about water quality and watersheds with a focus on the Roanoke and New Rivers. We could support these innovative educational opportunities. Yet another approach might be to reach out to local builders and developers. What are their strategies for protecting our one-of-a-kind economic asset? Georgia Anne Snyder Falkinham, a builder, developer and life-long gardener, respects our Blue Ridge and sees its value:

I have been a builder and developer for 40 years. I put in a lot of thought before developing a raw piece of land. I work closely with engineers and landscape architects to place roads and open spaces on properties. I have even used horses to bring trees out and clear property as opposed to heavy equipment that might destroy the roots of especially large oaks that have shallow roots. I like to make sure that the lands to be developed have nice views of mountains or farms if possible. We live in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Why not make the effort to enjoy them?

Let's talk with developers as they try to do their part to preserve our mountain range. Hunter Naff, a member of the Blue Ridge Land Conservancy, grew up in this area and has hunted and hiked within our mountains for decades. He appreciates our Blue Ridge:

Our stretch of the Blue Ridge mountains through southwest Virginia offers incredible year-round beauty and plentiful opportunities for recreation. It is no wonder surrounding towns and cities have focused on the Blue Ridge mountains as an economic driver. For all those reasons and more, it is important that we do what we can to conserve our Blue Ridge so that locals and visitors alike are able to enjoy them for generations to come.

Let's let local boards, conservancy organizations, and developers know that we support them in protecting our Blue Ridge now and forever. Surely, our children will smile.

Beatrice Bailey, Chairman  
Conservation/ Environmental Committee

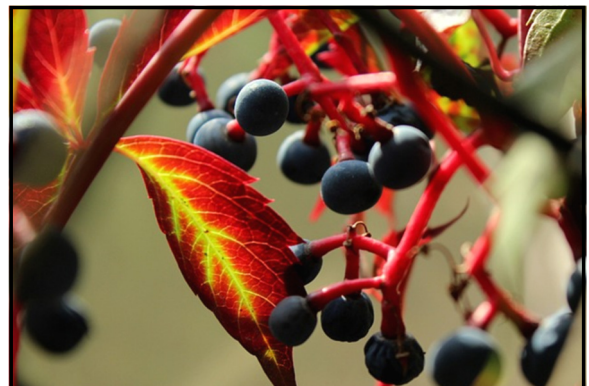
## Fruit Trivia

(Ten Interesting facts about Fruits)

1. Fruits are categorized by their unique features. There are 21 categories according to Fruit Botany. Berries and Drupes are two of these.
2. To a botanist, a berry is a simple fruit that is produced from the ovary of a single flower and has fleshy pulp and multiple seeds. A drupe is a fleshy fruit with a hard stony pit that encloses the seed.
3. Almonds, pecans and walnuts are a fruit (botanically drupes).
4. Examples of true berries are blueberries, cranberries, currants, elderberries, gooseberries and grapes.
5. Peaches, plums, cherries and apricots are drupes.
6. Botanically a tomato is a berry because of multiple seeds.
7. Olives, dates and coconuts are drupes.
8. Strawberries, raspberries and blackberries are not true berries but are aggregate fruits – another category of fruit.
9. Some drupes are not edible by humans – American Beautyberry, Dogwood, Holly, Osage Orange.
10. Some drupes are toxic – Pokeweed and Yew are two.

Inspired by: "Is it a Berry or Drupe" Horticulture, Fall, 2025  
Multiple websites

Glynis Hopkins, Chairman  
Community and Edible Gardening



## AWARDS

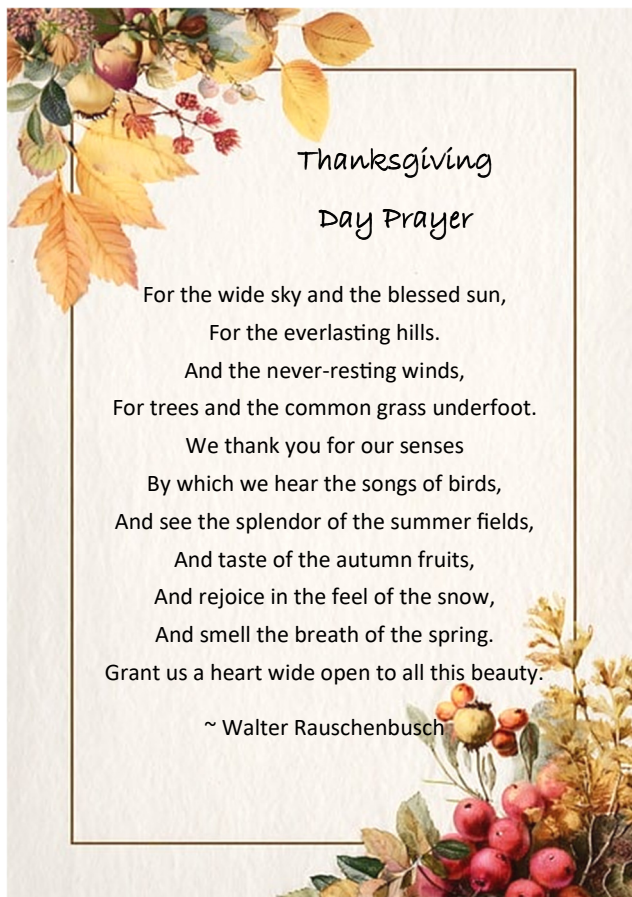
Your club members have done all of the hard work so now is the time to apply for your award(s)!

Visit [www.viriniagardenclubs.org](http://www.viriniagardenclubs.org) then click on the *VFGC Awards Contacts*, then the *Clubs Step by Step Guide to Awards*. This site provides great directions on submitting your applications to me prior to the December 1st deadline. There you will also find a complete list of all awards offered by the Blue Ridge District with the updates that have occurred during the year.

I look forward to receiving your numerous applications!

Sharon Jones-O'Connell, Chairman  
BRD Awards (2025-2027)  
540-253-4383  
toddie1904@aol.com

DEADLINE: December 1



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