



# GARDEN CLUB OF VIRGINIA

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HISTORIC GARDEN WEEK

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Contact: Karen Cauthen Ellsworth, State Director  
[Karen@VAGardenWeek.org](mailto:Karen@VAGardenWeek.org), 804-644-7776 or (cell) 804-937-6206  
[www.vagardenweek.org](http://www.vagardenweek.org)  
Facebook: Historic Garden Week in Virginia  
Instagram: @historicgardenweek  
Hashtags: #GCV, #GCVirginia, #HGW

## **The Path Forward** **Historic Garden Week 2021 will take place April 17-24**

(RICHMOND, VA) – “Gardens are symbols of hope and renewal. They express creativity and provide an opportunity for reflection. During these trying times, many of us are enjoying more time spent in our gardens,” says Missy Buckingham, President of the Garden Club of Virginia (GCV). The non-profit recently celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. “Expect to see more gardens open during Historic Garden Week in 2021,” she hints.

Like so many other spring events, the organization’s most popular public program had to be cancelled due to the global pandemic. “It has been cancelled only once before - during World War II,” notes Tricia Garner, the event’s State Chair. “With this unprecedented decision came a lot of uncertainty. We’ve been so touched and impressed with the amazing support of our sponsors, advertisers, volunteers and homeowners, all of whom are critical to making this springtime tradition a reality,” Garner continues. “As soon as it became apparent we needed to cancel, we started planning how to make the 2021 tours a safe and enjoyable experience for everyone involved.”

For one week in April, visitors tour inspired private landscapes, public gardens and historic sites across Virginia and enjoy the Commonwealth at the peak of springtime blooming. An estimated 2,200 floral arrangements created by GCV members enhance tour properties. Historic Garden Week 2021 will include 30 unique tours organized and hosted by 48 member clubs located from the foothills of the Shenandoah Valley all the way to the beaches of Tidewater. Throughout Central Virginia and almost to North Carolina, the full range of Virginia’s landscape is showcased through the tours hosted by member clubs.

“In commemoration of the GCV Centennial, we updated our first economic impact study of the nation’s only statewide house and garden tour,” says Lynn McCashin, GCV Executive Director. “While we couldn’t go all the way back to the first tours in 1929, we have reliable data indicating that the cumulative impact over the last fifty years is an impressive \$518 million. It’s the largest ongoing volunteer effort in Virginia that promotes so many of our communities, both large and small. We felt that an economic impact study would help validate that work.”

The inspiration for Historic Garden Week dates to 1927 when a flower show organized by Garden Club of Virginia volunteers raised \$7,000 to save trees at Monticello. The first tours took place two years later. Proceeds from tours have continued to fund the restoration and preservation of the Commonwealth's significant historic public gardens ever since.

"Tour proceeds continue to keep Virginia beautiful," said Betsy Worthington, Chairman of the Restoration Committee, which oversees the selection and management of GCV's restoration and preservation projects. "When Historic Garden Week was cancelled due to COVID-19, we focused on projects underway, in particular, the carriage turnaround at Poplar Forest and the Reveley Garden at The College of William & Mary, as well as supporting gardens we've already restored. Once a project becomes a restoration garden, it stays in our system," Worthington explains. "With over 50 active restoration sites across the state, we've got plenty to keep us busy," she points out.

In addition to funding the restoration of historic public gardens, Historic Garden Week funds a fellowship program in landscape architecture and a recently completed five-year Centennial project with Virginia State Parks, which the GCV helped to found in the 1930s. "The Garden Club of Virginia allocated \$500,000 of tour proceeds, enabling 54 grants to state parks. Wildflower walks, natural children's play areas and pollinator gardens are just a few projects made possible through this collaboration," McCashin shares.

The Garden Club of Virginia is celebrating its Centennial this year. "Having reached this milestone for our organization in these uncertain times has positioned us to focus, plan and prepare for the challenges of the future," Missy Buckingham says. "We have channeled our energies to seek new ways to continue to make our work both meaningful and lasting."

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*The Garden Club of Virginia celebrates the beauty of the land, conserves the gifts of nature and challenges future generations to build on this heritage.*