



**NEW MEMBER  
HANDBOOK**

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## **Welcome to the Branford Garden Club!**

The Branford Garden Club (BGC) consists of a diverse group of enthusiastic women and men who share a passion for sustainable gardening, floral design, conservation, and community beautification. The Club offers informative presentations by quality speakers, free advice from experienced Master Gardeners, floral design workshops by National Council Master Judges, and continuous education on a broad range of topics. Members are encouraged to grow in knowledge and capability, participate in the programs that support our Mission, and become a valued member of our supportive community.

Our Club is the largest in the State of Connecticut. It is an award-winning civic organization due to the talent, creativity, and energy of its members. Each member takes an active role in community beautification and at least one other committee.

This handbook provides everything you need to know about being a member. A separate handbook for programs, activities, who's in charge of what, and the fiscal year calendar, is produced separately and distributed at the September meeting. Materials may also be found on our website [branfordgardenclub.org](http://branfordgardenclub.org).

We are very glad you have joined us. We look forward to getting to know you, doing projects, and having fun together, and helping you take advantage of all that the Club offers.

## **Helpful things to know right away**

New members join as Active members, and after five years may choose Associate member status. Associates are relieved of active member volunteering (see by laws).

Our welcome aboard gift to you is a free apron which we wear whenever we work in public spaces or attend public events. The Branford Garden Club logo-imprinted apron is distinctive, recognizable, and handy! BGC logo-imprinted caps are also available for purchase through the Membership Chair.

The Membership Chair will order your name badge. Wear it to all meetings and when we are in public on “official” activities. There is a lost badge replacement fee.

You will receive a Programs & Activities Handbook that holds all the information you need to focus on your interests, engage in programs, help with events, identify who’s in charge of what, and find membership contact information. The books are produced annually, made available at the September membership meetings.

The Membership Pictorial Directory is available online accessible through our website and through an app for your mobiles. It is easy to download and print. See the Online Membership Directory app downloading and use instructions in the back of this booklet. Access through our website requires your username and password, also found in the use instructions.

Become familiar with our website, [branfordgardenclub.org](http://branfordgardenclub.org), including access to the Membership Directory, By-laws, Sign Up Genius, and more.

Paper signup lists are available at meetings. Signup Genius online lets everyone see who has signed up, which slots are still open, and sends helpful email reminders a couple of days before your commitment. Your participation is what makes all we do successful.

Member communication is through eblasts as needed. *Scattered Seeds* is our monthly newsletter, which you are encouraged to read to be aware of who's doing what and what's coming up when.

[branfordgardenclub@gmail.com](mailto:branfordgardenclub@gmail.com) is our admin and public contact email. It is monitored. Use personal emails to contact members directly. Add this to your contact list to prevent BGC communications going to your spam/junk.

Take advantage of new member orientation when it is offered. It's a quick start introduction to team leaders and the variety of activities and committees waiting to welcome you.

New members are entitled to one free flower design class. Be sure to sign up!

You are welcome to bring a friend as your guest to a membership meeting. Please advise the Membership Chair who will facilitate introductions. The Membership Chair also processes all applications for new members. The application form is available from her, and it is also downloadable at [branfordgardenclub.org](http://branfordgardenclub.org).

You are welcome to jump into action as soon as you are ready. There's a short-form description of committees later in this handbook. Feel free to reach out to the Chair, otherwise you will be contacted according to your preferences.

## Expectations of Active Members

While new members choose day or evening programs for their primary participation, everyone is welcome to participate in both. Enjoy as many of the speakers as you can.

### Daytime & Evening Active Members

Civic Beautification is the most visible contribution we make to our town. The public expects expertise and great results. This requires participation from as many members as possible.



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*“I have found, through years of practice, that people garden in order to make something grow; to interact with nature; to share, to find sanctuary, to heal, to honor the earth, to leave a mark.”*

Julie Moir Messervy

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Daytime active members are expected to volunteer to help tend our community flower gardens—Alta Newton Garden @ Harrison House, and The Mae McCabe Lily Garden on the Green, and help with planting, watering/fertilizing baskets on the Green.

The Evening Committee active members are responsible for the maintenance of the Veteran’s Memorial Garden at the flagpole on the Green.

Each active member is expected to serve on at least one committee each year. Committees are wonderful opportunities to try new things and get to know people well.

There are usually fundraising events each year. For a major event everyone is expected to buy two tickets as well as volunteer to help. Every four years we decide whether to organize a flower show as an educational tool for the community and a fundraiser for the club. ALL members are expected to contribute in some capacity. Members are expected to purchase two tickets as an equitable means of financial support.

## **Membership Meetings**

Both day and evening membership meetings, and the Board Meeting, are held at the Joe Trapasso Community House, 46 Church Street, Branford.

**Daytime membership meetings** are held on the first Thursday of the month, noon – 2:00 pm. Exceptions are no meetings in January, July, and August. June is the Annual Meeting (usually held elsewhere), and December is the holiday social gathering (also held elsewhere). All meetings are open so that members may include guests.

### **Daytime Hospitality**

A lunch of finger sandwiches and salads is served at noon, followed by a short business meeting and the program speaker.

**It is your responsibility to check the Hostess and Committee lists in the monthly Programs & Activities booklet to see when you are scheduled to contribute towards the luncheon.** Plan to provide 40+ portions. NOTE: If you cannot fulfill your commitment, or find a member to switch with you must arrange to deliver \$25.00 to either a designated hostess

for the month or to the Hospitality Chair one week prior to the meeting. If you do not, there may not be sufficient food for the luncheon.

We are committed to conservation best practices, so we do not serve drinks in Styrofoam cups. Everyone should bring their own cup. Thank you!

Look for the designated **Signup table** where there are event lists and volunteer lists which need your participation. Often there will be a signup list for upcoming tours – do join the fun! Usually, the Membership Chair and Treasurer are available to help with questions and collect fees including credit card payments.

Evening membership meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month, at 6:30 pm. Hospitality is planned on a rotating basis. The Evening Committee Liaison person will update those present on what transpired at the Board Meeting, what's coming up, etc. The speaker begins around 6:45 - 7:00pm. The program topics are selected to appeal to everyone—speakers, demonstrations, field trips and civic projects.

## **Dues and Payments**

**Dues** must be paid on or before the Annual Meeting in June. Payment of dues entitles participation in both the daytime and evening groups. Prompt payment of dues is courteous and supportive of hardworking volunteers. Non-payment and no response to attempts to communicate, could result in exclusion from the membership directory and ultimately suspension from membership. Fees are:

Daytime/Evening Active Membership: \$50; Associate Membership: \$55  
Exemptions: 40+ year membership and Honorary/ lifetime members.

**Payments** may be in cash, check or credit card. All checks are made payable to Branford Garden Club. Checks are collected at meetings or may be mailed to the home of the current Treasurer. Typically, the Assistant Treasurer can process credit cards at meetings and events.

*Design fees* – payment is due when you sign up for the class (unless it is your complimentary class). If you cancel *before* materials are purchased, you may be eligible for a refund. Otherwise, once materials are purchased, there are no refunds if you are unable to attend.

*Tour fees* – payment is due when you sign up. Commitments are made for tickets, transportation, meal reservations and more, based on the number of people signing up. There are no refunds if you are unable to attend. You may find a substitute for your seat.

## **Membership Appreciation**

To ensure everyone can attend our Club-sponsored socials and workshops the ticket price is kept affordable with the Club supplementing the difference. Every member is entitled to one free design workshop.

## **Governance/Committees**

**The Executive Board of Officers** consists of the President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Corresponding Secretary and Recording Secretary. The term is two years. Additionally, the most recent past President serves as a consultant, to ensure continuity between terms.

**Board Meetings** are held at 9:30 am on the last Thursday of each month, except June, July, and December.

**The Standing Committees** As for all leadership roles, participation is voluntary or by invitation. Terms are expected to be two years coinciding with the Officer terms, otherwise typically changing at the end of a program year.



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*“However big or small your garden is, if you allow nature to touch your spirit, gardening will bring returns of peace, satisfaction, and well-being for as long as you continue to wander the garden path.”*

Norman Hansen



Regular reporting is essential for the programs that most directly carry out the Club’s core mission and for those functions that communicate the activities and business of Club membership. Attendance at monthly Board meetings by these core Committee Chairs, and the Officers, are expected to ensure strong governance of Club business and policy. The individuals filling these leader-

ship roles are listed in the Programs & Activities booklet, along with full descriptions of their responsibilities. A brief description follows here.

- **Civic Beautification** – participation is an expectation of membership. It includes upkeep of public gardens, baskets on the Green, daffodil bulb planting, and holiday season wreath making and decorating of town buildings.
- **Conservation** concentrates on small steps each of us can take to help make a sustainable environment.
- **Design** educates and practices creative floral design.
- **Garden therapy** uses plants to enhance physical, mental and social health of the elderly and incapacitated individuals.
- **Membership** processes new members, maintains records, and publicizes membership contact information.
- **Online tools** Constant Contact, Facebook, website, Signup Genius, and more. Anyone with aptitude is encouraged to join the team.
- **Publications** Templates in Word. Need photo management ability. Writers welcome.
- **Publicity** Online, media, print, social, we cover the bases.
- **Sunshine & Cheer** Phone calls, send cards & flowers.
- **Tours** Trips to flower and garden shows, tours of spectacular public gardens, popup day trips.
- **Youth Committee** Members work with children and youth to nurture an interest in plants, gardening, and conservation efforts.

## **Ad Hoc Committees**

There are many valued projects which, by their nature, require little or no discussion at monthly Board meetings, except at those points during the year when the projects are active. Project Chairs are asked to attend the Board meeting(s) when their project becomes active so that organization, communication, and publicity occur with the best results.

- **Annual Meeting** This is in June, usually at Pine Orchard Yacht Club.
- **Archives** Materials pertaining to the history of the Club are permanently preserved in the History Room at Blackstone Library.
- **Awards – National and Federated** All Club projects that meet FGCTT guidelines are eligible for an award. They have to be identified and written up.
- **Awards – Community Gardens** Residential and commercial gardens in Branford are evaluated for excellence, photographed, presented, and honored at a membership luncheon meeting.
- **Branford Festival** the Club is represented at the festival. Display is up to the Chair.
- **Notecards** A team produces quality notecards that are sold to members and the public as a fundraiser.
- **Photography** Various members cover events and meetings to record activities.
- **Pie Fall Festival** Club fundraiser held during Scarecrows on the Green.
- **Print Publications** Communication tools. Resources for members. Word experience needed. Writers appreciated.
- **Scarecrows on the Green** A fall fundraiser where dozens of colorful scarecrows are displayed.

## Special Achievements

The Club and individual members have been recognized with Honorary and Lifetime members included in local, state, and national organizations. Details are listed in the Programs & Activities Handbook.



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*“Flowers always make people better, happier  
and more helpful; they are sunshine, food,  
and medicine to the mind.”*

*Luther Burbank*

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## Affiliations and Memberships

1929 - Charter Member of **The Federated Garden Clubs of Connecticut, Inc.** 5 North Main Street, Wallingford, CT 06492.

[www.ctgardenclubs.org](http://www.ctgardenclubs.org)

Email: [fgcctoffice@gmail.com](mailto:fgcctoffice@gmail.com)

### **For Continuing Education (thru FGCCT):**

Environmental Studies School ~ Flower Show School

Gardening School ~ Landscape Design School

See [www.ctgardenclubs.org](http://www.ctgardenclubs.org) for scheduled class dates.

**National Garden Clubs, Inc.** [www.gardenclub.org](http://www.gardenclub.org).

**BGC is a Member Of:**

Branford Land Trust, Inc. (Life Member)

Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station Associates

Connecticut Arboretum

Connecticut Audubon Society

Connecticut Forest and Park Association

Menunkatuck Chapter of National Audubon Society

The Nature Conservancy

The New England Garden Clubs, Inc. [www.ngcner.org](http://www.ngcner.org)

The Garden Conservancy

## **Community Connections**

**Branford Community Gardens (BCG)** BGC shares the Annual Plant Sale on the Green with BCG, and helps to raise money for their *Seed, Weed and Feed* program.

**Blackstone Memorial Library** – BGC donated the large roman planters at the steps to the entrance, and Friends of the Library share the cost of annual plantings and Christmas decorations.

**Branford Arts & Cultural Alliance (BACA)** On numerous occasions BGC and BACA have combined volunteers and creativity to jointly fund raise and create access to art and beauty for the public to enjoy.

**Branford Community Center** the Community Center has agreed to be the host site for two Standard Flower Shows, virtually allowing exclusive use of the building for an entire weekend.

**VanWilgen's Garden Center** has extended enormous generosity to BGC over the years, in so many ways, for which the Club is sincerely grateful. Of special note is twice every year they provide use of their farm tractor and buckboard so that BGC members can ride the town parade route on Memorial Day and Veteran's Day.

BGC has representation on the **Town Green Committee**.



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*“Gardening is an exercise in  
optimism. Sometimes, it is a triumph  
of hope over experience.”*

Marina Schinz

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## Membership Directory

Use of the Membership Directory is greatly encouraged.

It can be accessed online and through a mobile app.

Access is restricted to members only.

New members should refer to hard-copy versions of the Handbooks for detailed instructions. See page 15 in this New Member Handbook, or page 6 of the Programs & Activities Handbook.

If you need help, you may contact either Marybeth Ciarlelli or Ann Freeman.

To download the directory onto your table or smart phone:

- Download the free mobile app by searching **Online Member Directory** at your app store. You need your password.
- Refer to the detailed instructions on this same page in the hard-copy booklet, to continue from here.

## **Mission**



**Club flower - Petunia**

### **The Mission of the Club is**

To stimulate the knowledge and love of gardening,  
conservation, horticulture, and floral design.

To encourage and promote civic beautification.

To aid and support conservation efforts.

This booklet is intended for the private use of  
Branford Garden Club members only.  
Any commercial use of the information  
contained herein is strictly prohibited.

August 2023