

District VII

Marilyn Ellis, GCI District Director

Anna-Jo Garden Club

Anna-Jo Garden Club maintains two large properties: the Anna-Jo Garden Park and the Anna City Park. This year, we donated a tree to the local elementary school for Arbor Day and helped plant it. In May, we had our spring plant sale and partnered with a boy scout troop to spread mulch in the Anna-Jo Park. In June, we made bouquets for local businesses for National Garden Week. The Annabelle Festival was when we sold our hydrangeas and also gave some pointers on landscaping with Annabelles. On June 20, we held our annual garden walk where we gave out our two scholarships, had tours, dedicated the Housman Garden, and enjoyed live harp music. We also announced that our garden was declared a Certified Wildlife Habitat. July had everyone planning for the fair. We gave the best in show award at the Union County Fair in August. In September, we had our fall plant sale and also participated in a trash blast to clean up litter on the first mile of the Cache River. Pumpkin Town is a display of scary fall vignettes in the city park for the month of October, so of course we had to enter one, and it was lit at night. During both plant sales, the garden walk and during the Annabelle Festival there were children's activities. Looking ahead, in November, we plan to enter the Veteran's Day parade, and in December we will decorate a Christmas tree for Gumdrop Drive in the Anna City Park.

Carbondale Garden Study Club

Carbondale Garden Study Club started the year with a garden clean-up workday at our Turley Park pollinator garden. Even though the water has been off all year in the park, we managed to plant additional native perennials and grasses, and followed up late with some favorite annuals. Several of us lugged many gallon jugs of water to keep the baby plants alive in between rain. We have held workdays every Friday morning from May through October to weed and deadhead. We work closely with the city to maintain this garden, although bindweed continues to be a major issue, so if anyone has any suggestions for eradicating this weed, please do let me know! Our program topics this year have included: growing native plants in containers, the Homegrown National Parks initiative, all about owls, and we shared our favorite gardening tips and tools. We have also learned about the new Green Earth Stan Harris Prairie and the SIU Fish Hatchery, with programs and tours of both. We have already started planning the 2025 spring District VII Meeting we are hosting in Carbondale.

Du Quoin Garden Club

Du Quoin Garden Club was honored to install and dedicate the second Gold Star Memorial By-Way Marker in Southern Illinois to honor the families of our fallen heroes in late September. The club hosted Du Quoin High School seniors during their fall

District VII

Marilyn Ellis, GCI District Director

community service day to achieve hours for graduation by cleaning, weeding, and trimming up the community gardens in preparation for the holiday season. Flags were placed at the community gardens for Veterans Day, to honor veterans for their service to our country. The annual fall cookout and bonfire was a time for members to gather together and fellowship with each other and reflect on the events of 2024. Preparing for the Christmas holiday season, the club decorated the community gardens and Croessmann Square to accent the holiday decorations throughout the city of Du Quoin. The last project of the year were donations made to local agencies to benefit the needs of others in the community. December brought members together for an evening of food, fun, and fellowship to conclude the 2024 gardening year, with planning in January/February for 2025.

Eldorado Garden Study Club

Eldorado Garden Study Club's fall agenda has been full and fun! In September, members gathered flowers and greenery and participated in a lesson entitled "Bouquets from Blooms and Branches." Everyone left with a beautiful fall arrangement for their home. Growing, maintaining and sharing Hostas was October's program, along with a plant and seed sharing activity. The November meeting was held at Nature's Nest, a local business, where the owner presented a program on decorating our homes for the holidays. Flags and patriotic wreaths were placed along the Avenue of Honor to celebrate Veterans Day and honor all who have served in the military. December was a busy month with the group making fresh greenery wreaths and swags to sell at the local "Dickens Christmas" event. The club's annual Christmas lunch was held at a local restaurant to close out the year. Officers were installed and club members signed up for committees for 2025. January and February will be planning months for 2025.

Evergreen Garden Club of Carbondale

Evergreen Garden Club of Carbondale recently held another successful yard and plant sale, our annual event to raise funds for yearly expenses. We continue our stewardship of the Japanese garden adjacent to the Carbondale Public Library. This includes mulching the entire garden and planting mums. We also plant, maintain, and seasonally decorate the urns at Woodlawn Memorial Cemetery. We enjoyed a program this year about Food Works, which includes a mobile market that provides fresh food for area food deserts. They promote sustainable agriculture practice and offer a variety of educational opportunities for farmers. Another speaker taught us about the history and current farming practices at Autumn Ridge Farm. This couple raises hemp, microgreens, and a mixture of vegetables and heritage swine on their 160 acre farm

District VII

Marilyn Ellis, GCI District Director

originally purchased by the young man's grandfather. Our final program of the year was about growing and propagating succulents followed by our annual winter luncheon with the installation of officers for 2025.

Garden Gate Club of Benton

Garden Gate Club of Benton was represented at both the District VII Fall and Spring Meetings and the GCI Annual Conference in Springfield. For the first time, members were invited to vote as delegates for state officers. One of our outings was to the Rend Lake Visitor's Center pollinator garden where we learned about beneficial insects. A local Eagle Scout presented a program describing his Eagle Scout project which included building two nesting structures to benefit insects. This year we were fortunate to visit Longshadow in Pomona, IL. They create a variety of beautiful dry cast limestone planters and distribute them around the world. Benton is fortunate to have several Longshadow planters at various locations. In July, we toured the Farmhouse Harvest Lavender Farm where the owner shared information about some of the challenges of raising lavender, when to harvest, and products she sells and makes and her plans for expansion of the farm in the future. Our August meeting was held at Twin Oaks. Our speaker taught us the many benefits of the dandelion. Our Malkovich Park Project is undergoing renovation, so our garden club has big plans for spring planting of the newly renovated park. Our November meeting was held at the Rend Lake Visitor's Center with a presentation by the high school EDGE Group, a class of students who focus on entrepreneurship and will be introducing the businesses they have started while in the program. We are also proud to report that our garden club's vice president, Pam Appleton, was named the 2024 State of Illinois Outstanding Master Gardener for 2024.

Marion Garden Club

Marion Garden Club has enjoyed many programs presented by club members this year. One was "Taking Care of Your Garden Tools" and another "Managing Forest Lands". We made a nice donation to the local Lighthouse Shelter and to the Ministerial Alliance Food Pantry. After a tour and dinner at Walker's Bluff, we will close the year with a pot luck luncheon in December. However, our club continues to meet throughout the winter, with programs on "Propagating Plants and Starting Seeds", "Reclaiming a Local Cemetery", and photos from a member's trip to Down Under.

Metropolis Garden Club

Metropolis Garden Club has 24 members and most recently hosted the District VII semi-annual Fall Meeting. We held our annual plant sale at our April meeting. We also wrapped trees for distribution to area third graders during April.

District VII

Marilyn Ellis, GCI District Director

In May, we welcomed District Director Marilyn Ellis to our meeting where we discussed plans for this meeting. Anne Parmley gave a preview of the presentation she's giving today. As usual, our meeting included a social half-hour with refreshments before the meeting, reports on horticulture and conservation, committee reports, and so on. Later in May, we visited a gardenia garden near Metropolis owned by Richard Monkman. He later joined the Metropolis Garden Club as a member.

June's field trip took us to Murray State University's Doran Arboretum. The mission of the Doran Arboretum is to provide and display a collection of both local and introduced plants, with an emphasis on native trees, shrubs, and flowers of historic significance to the western Kentucky region. More than 13 acres are dedicated to this living-learning laboratory. If you haven't been here, it's worth the trip. There are picnic tables available.

In July, our Garden Therapy committee met with nursing home residents to make Fourth of July decorations for their room doors.

Our civic beautification efforts for the summer included: planting around the Blue Star Marker at the I-24 Metropolis exit, planting vincas at the Metropolis Public Library, the Veterans Park, and in the Massac County Courthouse iron pot, and maintaining a small pollinator garden designed for monarch butterflies at the Cache River Wetlands Center. We also watered the pollinator garden at the Metropolis Public Library and our other plantings.

Our September and October meetings were consumed with plans for the Garden Clubs of Illinois District VII meeting.

Invitations: The Massac County Historical Society's Tour of Homes is back. It will be on Sunday, December 1, from 1 to 4 p.m. Tickets are available at the Elijah P. Curtis House, 405 Market Street, for \$7. Decorating this historic home is one of our club's annual projects.

Pinckneyville Garden Club

Pinckneyville Garden Club, established in 2024, has been busy planting and updating the town's four welcome signs. On Arbor Day, we planted six trees in honor and memory of friends and family. Our City Council approved our Blue and Gold Star Memorial Markers. We received two \$500 donations for the memorials. A special thanks to District VII for their \$200 contribution and to the Pinckneyville Jr High Student Council for raising \$1,020.63 through their "change war"! And, we just finished our first float to

District VII

Marilyn Ellis, GCI District Director

participate in our town's 102-year-old Mardi Gras tradition, which we believe will blossom into a tradition for our club.

Town & Country Garden Club

Town & Country Garden Club is celebrating its 50th year, and plans on being around another 50 years. The club participated in the volunteer organization's trunk or treat that was well attended. We reviewed our bylaws and constitution this year, which was helpful in educating new members and reminders for all members. Fall centerpieces were delivered to the Benton Rehab and Long Term Care Center for their dining room tables. We have ordered 1,680 bags of pecans to sell. This is our annual fundraiser that helps us to have a presence in the community as well as providing revenue for our many projects. We will have our annual Christmas party and will provide Christmas cards for residents of three long term care facilities in Benton with a gift and candy cane, hand delivered to each resident by garden club members. Programs this year have included various ways to compost, what when, and how to prune, floral arranging, and native plants. Town & Country Gardeners' goal for next year is to continue to have a positive impact on the community. Winter will find us making plans for 2025, looking forward to healed bodies and spirits for all with the Spring blossoms.