

# Conservation Watch

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## Conservation Projects Across the Country

There is a new enthusiasm for protecting the environment in America today and, as in years past, Garden Club of America members are leading the way. Across the country many clubs have adopted projects to conserve or restore our natural resources or to educate young and old about how to live sustainably or how to reconnect to nature. The greatest strength of our organization is that individual clubs can connect with a national network of like-minded people to share ideas and spread our love and knowledge of the natural world broadly. So, we are devoting this entire issue to outstanding conservation projects from around the country. We hope you will discover ideas that have been successful elsewhere and apply them to your own piece of the Earth.

“To cherish what remains of the earth and to foster its  
renewal is our only legitimate hope of survival.”  
Wendell Berry, 2008 recipient of the GCA Cynthia Pratt Laughlin Medal

*Claire Caudill, G.C. of Houston (Zone IX)  
GCA Conservation Committee Chair*

### **Piscataqua (NH) Garden Club’s project chosen by Representative Elise Wellington of Zone I (MA, NH, VT, and ME).**

#### **New England Edible Garden Tour**

In August of 2008, The Piscataqua Garden Club, along with the non-profit organization, Slow Food Seacoast, sponsored the Seacoast area’s first Edible Garden Tour. The tour was one part of the club’s study of the foods we eat – what we eat, how it was grown, where it came from, and how it gets to our table. The mission of the educational garden tour was: to connect home and community vegetable gardeners; to share ideas for sustaining ourselves through growing good food; and to encourage good gardening practices.



The tour was a one day event and included ten gardens in the Portsmouth, New Hampshire area: five private gardens, a preschool garden, three community gardens, and the Victory Garden at Strawberry Banke Museum. Each

garden showcased an educational demonstration ranging from making compost tea, growing and using horseradish, using red plastic mulch to improve tomato growth, creating a pond for irrigation by diverting runoff and storm water, building different trellises or 'tuteurs' for vegetables, raising heritage breed chickens, growing heirloom varieties of vegetables, and using solar energy for a greenhouse. Most gardens also included the opportunity to taste samples of the food being grown. One inventive gardener, also a PGC member, offered homemade mozzarella to go with her heirloom tomatoes and fresh basil! The gardener growing horseradish offered different types of horseradish dips and sauces. Another, who teaches courses about raw food, shared some of his recipes. The landscape curator at Strawberry Banke offered tastes of a gorgeous salad composed entirely of edible plants and flowers grow, organically of course, on the museum grounds!

The tour included something for everyone and attracted visitors of all ages from all over New England. The comment heard most often was, "This is the BEST garden tour I've ever been on! I learned something in every garden." Everyone involved learned something important about the food they eat. Visitors were inspired and many determined to have their own Edible Gardens at home next summer.

*Beth Hume, Conservation Committee Chair  
Piscataqua (NH) G.C. – Zone I*

## **Zone II (CT and RI) Rep Frances Trafton offers a project from Ridgefield Garden Club (CT).**

### **Children's Teaching Garden Thrills Area Youngsters**

The Woodcock Nature Center borders the towns of Ridgefield and Wilton, Connecticut. Frances Ashforth from the Ridgefield Garden Club and her gardening friend Billie Sue Hollingsworth from the Federated Garden Club of Wilton decided to help Henryk Teraszkiewicz, Director of Woodcock, in creating a children's teaching garden. With the help of both garden clubs and a few local donors, a rustic, 20' x 20' cedar-posted, deer-proof garden was constructed. It contains eight large raised beds that each has a theme. In one bed common kitchen herbs reside next to more unusual medicinal herbs, such as the "Toothache Plant." One bed is a native *three sisters* garden, growing the three sisters of corn, beans and squash. Both hummingbird and butterfly beds are included as well. Other beds contain plants divided from plantings in Frances' and Billie Sue's own gardens, as well as many unusual annuals grown from seed. Summer campers and fall school field trip students have enjoyed the garden. Everyone was thrilled at the first hummingbird sighting! This garden has provided a wonderful outlet for many. Of note is the fact that the garden was watered this summer by a special needs student who loves to help at the nature center. The Woodcock Nature Center is now a lovely place for all to enjoy.

*Frances Ashforth, Conservation Committee Co-Chair  
Ridgefield (CT) G.C. – Zone II*

### **What are the Three Sisters?**

The Three Sisters include corn, beans, and squash. As part of the circle of life, these New World crops rely upon each other for survival. According to Iroquois — who chant "you who sustain us" to the trio — the Three Sisters hold a spiritual, ceremonial, and celebratory place in the garden. Not only are the Three Sisters rich in mythological, cultural, and botanical history, they belong together nutritionally. Corn, beans, and squash complement each other: corn for grain and carbohydrate, beans for protein, and squash for vitamin A.

(from ecoliteracy.org)



### **Nancy Howard representing Zone III (NY) chooses the Garden Club of Orange and Dutchess Counties.**

#### **Green Calendar – Just in Time for Holiday Gift-Giving!**

“Bring your own garment bag to the cleaners.” “Send your used Crocs for recycling.” “Order tap water in a restaurant instead of bottled.” These are some of the green tips the Garden Club of Orange & Dutchess Counties Conservation Committee shares with its members each month. The tips are manageable ways we can adapt our behavior, provoke discussion and generate more ideas. Monthly tips evolved into a **2009 Green Tips Calendar**, containing 365 green ideas and an inspirational quote for each month. The Club was hosting the Zone III Meeting in September 2008. The idea of giving each attendee a calendar in their gift bag led to soliciting photos of other clubs’ projects from Zone III for the calendar. The GCA New York Committee generously underwrote the cost of the first printing of the calendar.

Members spent many hours researching and collecting green tips, organizing them by appropriate time of the year, collecting and *photoshopping* pictures, proofing, and so on. The calendar was then complete - just in time for the zone meeting! The committee learned an incredible amount about “living green” - and how to create a calendar. After working together with the other clubs in our zone, members have been excited to hear the “buzz” the calendar created. Imagine if each GCA member bought a calendar and incorporated the tips into her life. The result would be real change!

Now in its second printing, the club members are pleased to share the Green Calendar with you. It’s a great holiday or hostess gift, and a great tool for discussion with children and grandchildren – and their teachers. The calendars are \$15 each. Profits will be used for the club’s next conservation project. To order, please email Beth Stradar Santiago at [estradar@nsglaw.com](mailto:estradar@nsglaw.com).

*Beth Stradar Santiago, Conservation Chair  
G.C. of Orange & Dutchess Counties – Zone III*





Calendar Cover – Photo of Mt. Taurus Quarry, Cold Spring, NY. 1938 GCA Founder’s Fund Award Winner, G.C. of Orange & Dutchess Counties

**Zone IV (NJ) Rep Sophie Glovier nominates Summit Garden Club.**

**Briant Pond Park Gets a “Make-Over”**

Our club’s Conservation Committee hosted the April, 2008 Summit Garden Club meeting, featuring our main speaker, Betty Ann Kelly, Environmental Specialist for Union County, New Jersey’s Dept. of Parks & Community Renewal. Betty Ann’s presentation was a thorough description of the economic and practical problems involved with invasive plants. She included information on how to get rid of the main problem invasives of New Jersey. The attendees then walked to nearby Briant Pond Park and, under Betty Ann’s guidance, removed invasive plants, did general weeding and cleaning up, and then replanted with several native saplings supplied by Union County. Our goal is to continue to work with the county to beautify the park.

In addition, the garden club has hired Kathleen Galop, an historic preservation consultant, to write a grant application to nominate Briant Pond Park to the State and National Registers of Historic Places. The Summit Garden Club received funding from the New Jersey Committee of GCA, which it used, along with its own funds, to hire Ms. Galop. Several of the garden club members sit on the board of the Briant Park Olmstead Conservancy, which has hired Faye Harwell, landscape architect from Wash. D.C., to design a landscape master plan for the park. (The park



*Summit club members hard at work on park clean-up.*

is a 1930 design by the Olmstead Brothers Architecture Design firm.) We are all working together to maintain, beautify and improve Briant Pond Park for our community.

*Gail Scudellari, Conservation Committee Co-Chair  
Summit (NJ) Garden Club – Zone IV*

**Suzanne Roth, Rep for Zone V (Pennsylvania and Delaware) brings us the project from the Four Counties (PA) G.C.**

**Mount Pleasant Viewshed Restoration Project**

Since November of 1999, Four Counties Garden Club has been working to restore the original view and surrounding gardens of Mount Pleasant Mansion in Fairmount Park, Philadelphia. This historic house was built c.1761 and declared a National Historic Landmark in 1974. Today, Mount Pleasant, a colonial masterpiece, is considered one of the greatest American houses of its type. The work to restore the original view from the house down to the Schuylkill River has involved clearing invasive tree shrubs and replacing them with low growing native plants that would have grown on the banks of the river at the time Mt. Pleasant was built. The Club's focus is not only to check on the health of these native plants, but also to make sure that the general area of the viewshed is maintained. The view from the house to the river is still obstructed by an untouched portion of land near the river where invasive trees and shrubs have flourished. Clearing this area will be costly and funding is always a challenge. However, we are determined to continue with this project, and bring the original gardens and view back to this grand country estate.



*Mount Pleasant Mansion*

*Dencie Brooke, Conservation Committee Chair  
Four Counties G.C. – Zone V*

[Note: “viewshed” – the natural environment that is visible from one or more viewing points.  
Merriam-Webster Dictionary]

**Brenda Moorman, Zone Rep for Zone VI (District of Columbia and Maryland) nominated the Trowel Garden Club's project.**

**Teaching Gardening and Environmental Responsibility at D.C. Public School**

The Trowel Club of Washington, D.C. has adopted public school Horace Mann Elementary's gardening and environmental studies program as one of its conservation projects. This program strives to give students opportunities to make direct connections to the natural world, as well as to learn the value of healthy nutrition through organic and sustainable gardening. Students, teachers, parents, and volunteers work side by side in several on-site perennial, vegetable, and herb gardens. School-grown herbs and vegetables are sold to parents at an after-school garden market and to a local chef for use at a neighborhood restaurant. Garden club members help with the maintenance of the garden, assist in planning planting workshops for different grade levels, and share plants from their own gardens. This month the club will also hear how the

chef uses cooking and tasting demonstrations with the children to help them make the garden-to-table connection. This horticulture and conservation project has been a fun focus for all those involved.

*Amy Jagodnik, Conservation  
Trowel Club (Washington, D.C.) – Zone VI*



Horace Mann student Marco Shaik won first prize in the DC School Garden Photo Contest with this flowering trumpet vine photo.

### **Lynda Strickler of Zone VII (VA, WV, NC, and KY) announces the project done by the Garden Club of Norfolk (VA).**

#### **Exceptional Recycling Effort**

In April of 2008, during Earth Week, the Garden Club of Norfolk's Conservation Committee undertook a massive electronics-recycling project in partnership with the City of Norfolk. Club members passed out over 1300 fliers to four different schools and contacted the *Go Green Club* of a local high school where weekly announcements were made about the event. The garden club provided manpower throughout the week, with Saturday being the big day for drop-off of items. The program accepted anything that could be plugged into the wall, except large kitchen and laundry appliances.

Keep Norfolk Beautiful and the Garden Club of Norfolk collected over 61,000 pounds – or two and a half tractor-trailer loads – of material! This included televisions and computers containing lead and mercury that would have otherwise gone into landfills or contaminated the earth's waters. The electronics were then packed onto wooden pallets, wrapped, and taken to a source where they are stripped of all valuable materials that can then be re-used. The hazardous materials were disposed of properly. The Garden Club of Norfolk received a thank-you letter from Keep Norfolk Beautiful on behalf of the city and its citizens for a job well done!



*Melanie Wills shows us the rewards of the club's efforts.*

*Melanie Wills and Jane Cole, Conservation Committee Co-Chairs  
G.C. of Norfolk (VA) – Zone VII*



## **Zone VIII (FL, GA, SC, and AL) Rep Susan Caven offers varied projects by the Grass River Garden Club (FL).**

### **Florida Club Fights Bugs and Developers!**

In an effort to kill no-see-ums (see below) the Commissioners of Ocean Ridge, Florida in 2006 decided to spray the entire community at 6 PM once a week with a truck that sent the chemical Anvil 2+2 into everyone's back yard and into the mangroves. Residents, many of them Grass River Garden Club members, became concerned about the noxious fumes and decided to take action. It was a tough and long battle but we finally won by perseverance! Sadly, it reminded us of the 60' and 70's, with the massive spraying of DDT.

The Grass River Garden Club gave money, and a foundation matched the funds, to hire a lawyer. We sent a petition to the commissioners with about 50 signatures, but it did no good. We spoke to the Mayor, EPA, state and local health, agriculture, and pesticide officials - still to no avail. We printed up post cards that were signed by every resident that we knew who was in favor of stopping the spraying. Still no luck. Last spring, a new Commissioner was elected who was opposed to the spraying. When the budget hearings rolled around, he suggested cutting expenses by eliminating spraying to balance a tight budget. It passed! We also suspected the Commissioners wanted to get rid of this persistent group, the garden club, because they knew we were not going away!



Typical Briny Breezes home.

The club demonstrated its persistence on a different kind of environmental challenge that same year when developers proposed bulldozing the sleepy hamlet of Briny Breezes, a trailer park community, to erect three 20-story condominiums, a hotel and time-share apartments. Members of the garden club, led by former Congressman Tom Evans, joined a broad consortium of environmentalists and neighbors who managed to force the developers to cancel the project. As Margaret Mead said: "Never believe that a few caring people can't change the world. For, indeed, that's all who ever have."

[Common name: no-see-ums, biting midges.

Scientific name: *Culicoides* spp. (Insecta: Diptera: Ceratopogonidae)]

*Laura Evans and Margie FitzSimons, Conservation Committee Co-Chairs  
Carolyn Patton, Conservation Committee Member  
Conservation Committee, Grass River G.C. – Zone VIII*

## **Zone Rep Ruth Flournoy chooses the Laurel (MS) G.C. to represent Zone IX (Texas, Louisiana, Tennessee, Arkansas, and Mississippi).**

### **Removing Invasives Leads to a Future Educational Center**

The DeSoto National Forest is a mere six miles from the city limits of Laurel, Mississippi. This forest is a treasure trove of pristine plant material and abundant wildlife. But it was under attack. Threatened by cogongrass, one of the most invasive weeds in the country, the 378,000-acre forest faced a serious problem and limited resources. The Laurel Garden Club joined forces with the forest staff to fight this invasive. Local nurseries were warned about the invasive plant. Garden club members were trained to recognize cogongrass. A GCA Partners for Plants project equipped club members and volunteers with handheld GPS monitors to map stands of

cogongrass for removal by the National Forest Service. Wildflowers were then planted to cover areas scarred by Hurricane Katrina. The Zone IX Horticulture Restoration Fund contributed funds.

The partnership between the Laurel Garden Club and the DeSoto National Forest has now led to future plans for an educational walking trail and outdoor classroom. The garden club hired a consultant to create a master plan for a trail, pavilion, and interpretive stations in the forest. The Laurel Garden Club has allocated significant funding for this project. The Chickasawhay Interpretive Center will be both educational and recreational. Students will learn about ecosystems, the environment, and their role as future stewards of our forests. A long future of collaboration between the club and the National Forest will benefit generations to come.

*Nan Thames, Conservation Committee Co-Chair  
Laurel (MS) G.C. – Zone IX*

*A Forest Ranger and a child view the future site of  
the Interpretive Trail.*



### **Sue Klein, Rep. for Zone X (Ohio, Michigan, and Indiana) nominates the project of the Garden Club of Cincinnati (OH).**

#### **Bulb Planting at Habitat for Humanity Homes**

During November of 2007, the Garden Club of Cincinnati embarked on a project to plant daffodil bulbs at fifteen recently constructed Habitat for Humanity homes in the inner city. Over the course of three weekends, teams of garden club members planted 50 to 60 daffodil bulbs at each of the new homes. Each of the homeowners had given their consent to have the



bulbs planted and were telephoned in advance to let them know when we would arrive to dig and to plant. At every home, appreciative homeowners and their children met us and watched our gardening with great interest. The interaction with these families made our project all the more rewarding and we were sharing the joys of gardening with new homeowners!

All of the homes had minimal landscaping, with only a few shrubs to soften the foundation. We hoped that the addition of spring-flowering bulbs would not only add to the beauty of these homes' front yards and neighborhoods, but would also add to the well-earned pride that the owners felt in their homes. This past spring we returned to see if, in



spite of the rocky soil, the bulbs had flowered. To our great satisfaction, they had. They've added color and life to the lawns of these new homes in our urban landscape.

*Alison Zimmerman, President  
G.C. of Cincinnati (OH) – Zone X*

**Colles Larkin, Zone Representative for Zone XI (Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, and Missouri) suggests the Ladue (MO) Garden Club's project.**

**Invasives Out, Natives In**

The Ladue (MO) Garden Club fulfills the conservation portion of the GCA purpose statement of improving the environment through its efforts at Rodes Park. This small triangle "pocket park," is, in fact, the only park in Ladue. Deer Creek, part of the Des Peres River watershed which empties into the Mississippi River, meanders through the Park.

In an ongoing project, club members cleared the invasive honeysuckle which infested the park, and in its stead planted Missouri natives such as river birch, witch hazel, serviceberry, river willow and deciduous hollies, to name a few. In addition, to give the park some "pop" a variety of flowering perennials were planted. Boulders and benches by the creek were added as well. A former "runaway" hill was terraced ending its erosive slide. Through educational programs, the group learned what to use as replacement plants for bush honeysuckle. The club's actions stopped the erosion of creek beds and hillsides through plantings, correct mulching, and gentle landscaping. As a result, the civic improvement of our drive-by, formerly anonymous park turned it into a place of beauty for our residents to enjoy.



*Rodes Park with bench supplied by Ladue G.C.  
with proceeds from a native plant sale.*

*Kim Scherrer, Past President  
Ladue (MO) Garden Club - Zone XI*

**Heidi Ho Conjugacion, Zone XII (Hawaii, Arizona, New Mexico, California, Colorado, Oregon, and Washington) Rep, brings us a project from the Woodside-Atherton (CA) Garden Club.**

**Award Winning Community Garden**

The Woodside-Atherton Garden Club (WAGC) started the Woodside Library Native Plant Garden in 1970. California native and Mediterranean plants adorn the one-acre plot and demonstrate to the public how a water-conserving, pollinator-friendly garden can achieve beautiful and sustainable results. WAGC members tend the garden and rigorously prevent the incursion of invasive plants on periodic workdays throughout the year. The recent addition of rough-edged gravel from a local quarry has proven invaluable as a clay soil amendment and as a surprisingly effective top dressing, allowing the soil to absorb our scarce rainwater. Cautious



Woodside Library Native Plant Garden

irrigation using targeted micro-sprinklers provides any needed water boost with a minimum of water waste. WAGC was honored at the 2008 GCA Annual Meeting with the GCA National Award for Public Relations. Many visitors, including school children and gardeners of all ages, come to see how native plants can create a water-wise, yet pleasing landscape.

Carol Spieker and Terry Miller, Conservation Committee Co-Chairs  
Woodside-Atherton (CA) Garden Club – Zone XII

## Book Reviews

### **Bottlemania: How Water Went on Sale and Why We Bought It**

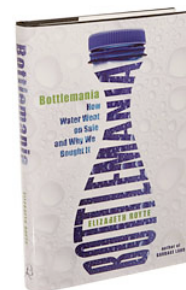
by Elizabeth Royte

In 2006, eight billion gallons of bottled water were sold in the U.S., an \$11 billion dollar business. The bottled water industry spent \$158 million on advertising in this country alone. In *Bottlemania*, Elizabeth Royte looks at the water wars: between bottled water and tap water; between big corporations and local water interests; between consumers who say they want the convenience, cleanliness and status of bottled water and environmentalists who liken buying bottled water to driving a Hummer. Bottled water produces tons of plastic bottles to dispose of, racks up huge transportation fees, and leaves behind a significant carbon footprint.

Ms. Royte surmises that the worldwide scarcity of water will accelerate with global warming, population growth, drought, and increased pollution and development. She writes, “Water experts predict shortages will pit communities and states against each other, . . . the rich against the poor, cities against villages, corporations against individuals, and humans against other creatures that compete with us for water.”

The author discusses the growing reaction against bottled water and promotes the use of refillable water bottles filled with tap water. While she discusses the various types of contamination that may affect our water, she still reminds us that this is a country where “more than 89% of tap water meets or exceeds federal health and safety regulations, regularly wins in blind taste tests against name-brand waters, and costs 240–10,000 times less than bottled water.” And, we are also reminded, that more than a billion people worldwide lack sufficient access to safe water.

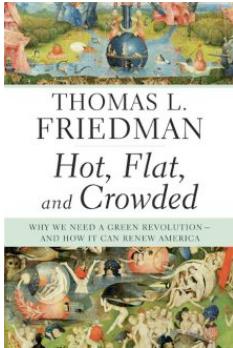
Editor



## **Hot, Flat, and Crowded: Why We Need a Green Revolution and How It Can Renew America**

by Thomas L. Friedman

Pulitzer Prize winner and New York Times reporter Tom Friedman calls for a green revolution to revitalize our economy, restore the world's view of our country, and, to save the world's ecosystems and, ultimately, the long term survival of the human race. He contends that the world is increasingly becoming "hot, flat and crowded" due to global warming, the rise of the middle classes all over the world, and rapid population growth. The convergence of these conditions is tightening energy supplies, intensifying the extinction of plants and animals, deepening energy poverty, strengthening petro-dictatorship, and accelerating climate change.



Friedman believes the best hope for our nation and our world is to undertake a green revolution to address the challenges. "Right now we are having a green hallucination, not a green revolution," he states. We offer our children a green vision without the resources to make it happen. He suggests higher efficiency standards, tougher regulations, and an ethic of conservation that will turn the vision into a reality. He tells us that we have the good fortune of living in a time of enormous prosperity and technological innovation. We need to redefine green and rediscover America by meeting the challenges of energy, climate, conservation, and preservation.

*Sophie Glovier, G.C. of Princeton  
Zone IV Conservation/NAL Representative*

### **Quote for Fall**

"Destroying a tropical rain forest and other species-rich ecosystems for profit is 'like burning all the paintings of the Louvre to cook dinner.' "

Famed entomologist Edward O. Wilson in *Hot, Flat, and Crowded* by Thomas Friedman



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*Elva Busch, Editor*

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