

over the picket fence



Winter, 2025-2026 December, January, February The Mason County Garden Club Quarterly Newsletter (Since 1926-our 100th year)

www.masoncountygardenclub.org

Member: Michigan Garden Clubs, Inc
Central Region and National Garden Clubs, Inc
Club No. 140 – District 5



Officers for 2026



Past President, Sharon Morman, presents to President, Gail Burkhart her President's Pin.

President, Gail Burkhart; 1st V.P., Gloria Merchant; 2nd V.P., Dawn Rollenhagen;
Secretary, Randee Smith; Treasurer, Sue Ann Hanson; Directors, Sandy Luxford;
Gale Martin (Not pictured, Dianne Miller); Membership Chair, Judy Olson;
Past President, Sharon Morman



December

- 1 Kim AnDyke
- 2 Lori Longmore
- 7 Mary Reeds-Mortensen
- 12 Debra Purtee
- 21 Bobbi Clingan
- 22 Linda Burns

January

- 4 Sharon Morman
- 6 Jackie Christensen
- 7 Gwen Jackson
- 9 Mary Margaret Scanlon

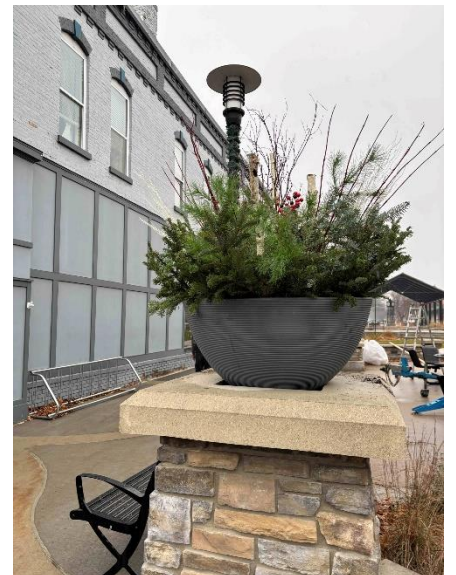
February

- 2 April Quinsberry-Alvarado
- 13 Elsa Witt

Look What We Did!

On November 24 & 25, several Mason County Garden Club members gathered together to collect greens at Nicklesons Needlefast Farm. The following day, they gathered again to fill 40 large pots with greens, Birch branches, dried hydrangeas and extra sparkly accents. The ladies worked hard during occasional inclement weather conditions. Yet, when finished the pots looked beautiful for the Christmas and New Year holidays.

A BIG thank you goes out to all who helped! You helped make Ludington shine for the holiday season!
Submitted by Christine Schulte





Good Friends, Good Food and Great Season:

The end of year Holiday Luncheon was a delight on Thursday, December 11 at the United Methodist Church in Ludington. Between the potluck, installation of our 2026 officers, Holiday raffle and decorated tables, we all had a wonderful time. Our Holiday Raffle raised \$425 and will be split between the Orioles Giving Tree and the COVE organizations. Many tables were hosted by our members!



Gloria Merchant



Maureen McGowan



Julie Tews and Sue Ann Hanson



Dawn Rollenhagen



Gale Martin



Kevin Butterfield



Potluck, Christmas Raffle Bags, Special Recognitions



Dessert Table



Plenty of good food



Lets eat!



Raffle Items



Raffle Items



Pinecone Ornaments created by Sue Joslin, Sue Ann Hanson, Julie Tews and Chris Schulte were given as gifts to members.



Sharon presents a Christmas tree she made to Rhonda for her dedication to collecting money for Plant-a-tree. (Formerly known as Penny Pines).

Certificates Presented for Length of Service



Diane Nemitz...Thirty-Five Years



Gloria Merchant...Twenty Years



Gail Burkhart....10 years

Installation of Officers

Outgoing Executive Officers



Sharon Morman, Sue Ann Hanson, Sandi Luxford, Judy Olson, Randee Smith, Sue Joslin, Dawn Rollenhagen, Gale Martin, Gloria Merchant (Not pictured: Deb Tennant)

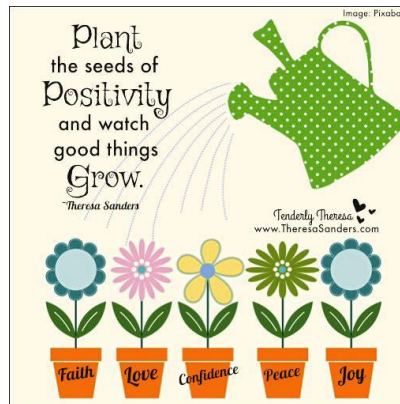
Sharon Morman Installs The 2026 Executive Officers



Gail Burkhart, Gloria Merchant, Dawn Rollenhagen, Randee Smith, Sue Ann Hanson, Sandi Luxford, Gail Martin, Judy Olson (Not pictured: Dianne Miller)

Cups of Cheer

The Cups of Cheer committee meets every third Wednesday at 1 p.m. at the Ludington Senior Center. The cups are distributed to the Medilodge, Oakview, Ludington Woods and other extended care facilities. Here are some pictures of the committee members making arrangements in November and December.





Upcoming Mason County Garden Club Events:

January:

Thursday, January 22, 2026 – 12 noon – Winter Luncheon – Place to be announced.

February:

Thursday, February 26, 2026 – 12 noon – Winter Luncheon – Place to be announced



Recipes From Our Members:

Cheese Spread

- 1 (8 ounce package) of cream cheese, softened
- 1/4 cup French dressing. I used Catalina dressing.
- 1 1/2 cups sour cream or plain Greek yogurt. I used a combo.
- 8 ounces shredded cheddar cheese
- 2 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 1/2 tsp. onion powder
- 1 Tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 1 (1 oz.) packet ranch seasoning

Combine cream cheese, dressing, and sour cream/yogurt. Add remaining ingredients and blend until smooth. Chill for several hours or overnight to let flavors develop. (Submitted by Deb Gundersen)



New Years, 2026

New Years Resolutions for Garden Club Members:

- I will attend all meetings if possible.
- I will be an attentive listener during meetings and at all programs.
- I will share my thoughts and ideas during meetings.
- I will accept a chair position or officer nomination if asked.
- I will be an active participant in all committees I have selected.
- I will notify the committee chair if I will not be available for a meeting or event.
- I will find a replacement if I am not able to attend the meeting I am to assist the refreshment committee.
- I will try to get to know every member of the club.
- I will encourage new members to join.
- I will pay my dues by December 31.

Holiday Season Helpful Hints

- If your hands get covered in sap while making your wreath, mayonnaise removes it easily and quickly! Rub a dollop of it on your hands for a minute or two, rinse, then wash. It's all gone!!!!
- Empty egg cartons are excellent for storing holiday ornaments. They can be stacked neatly inside a larger bin and will keep your ornaments safe while in storage.
- Use plastic-coated paper clips to hang your ornaments. The paper clips are stronger and easy to use, and best of all, they won't scratch the ornaments, so you can leave them attached when you pack the ornaments away at the end of each season.
- Cut an empty toilet paper tube lengthwise and wrap it around a roll of wrapping paper. Cinch it up and secure the sleeve with a piece of tape. Next time you use the wrapping, you may rip the sleeve when removing it, but your wrapping paper will remain intact.
- Make shoveling snow easier by first coating your metal shovel with car wax. Then the snow and ice will slide right off of the shovel after each scoop.
- Make a list. Don't try to keep everything you have to do in your head. Create a written list of Holiday To-Do's, and check off each task as it is completed.
- Schedule some quiet time for yourself and your family to enjoy the true meaning of the season.



Here are eight New Year's Resolutions every gardener should consider as you start planning your garden for next year:

- 1) **Reduce Footprint:** From limiting chemicals in the garden to using eco-friendly equipment, there are many ways to reduce your environmental footprint outdoors. Instead of reaching automatically for an herbicide, why not use a manual weeding tool instead?
- 2) **Save Water:** Did you know that the average household uses 40 percent of its water usage in the garden, and much of that water is wasted? This year, make it a goal to save more of this precious resource.
- 3) **Attract Pollinators:** Welcome birds, bees, butterflies and other pollinators into your garden. Avoid using chemicals in the garden, and plant herbs and flowers to attract these important garden visitors. Consider poppies, sunflowers, lavenders, herbs and other flowering plants, which are beloved by many pollinators. Native plants are particularly good at attracting helpful pollinators to your garden.
- 4) **Grow Edibles ... And Share the Harvest:** Nothing tastes better than homegrown food, and you can't beat the health benefits of freshly picked vegetables and fruits. Growing your own edibles lets you know exactly where your food originated. That's a good thing with some of the recent food security issues we've been facing. Another tip: when you involve your children in the kitchen gardens, it will help ensure they enjoy eating these foods later in the dining room. Kids who grow their own foods tend to love snacking from the garden. Have a large surplus? Be sure to share some of that harvest with those in need.
- 5) **Save Work:** Make a pledge to work smarter in the garden, not harder. Instead of running back and forth for tools, bring them with you! Carry a plastic tub to carry your gardening essentials, and sometimes a note pad, cell phone or sunscreen. You can reduce those weeds from popping up later in the garden by mulching well early in the season. Instead of watering everything by hand, set up drip lines and soaker hoses that save money and time.
- 6) **Select Easy-Care Plants:** One way to make it easier on yourself this year is by picking plants that thrive in your area and require less work. For example, drought-tolerant yarrow couldn't be easier to grow in a sandy garden. Ask your local gardening center or master gardeners for easy-care plant recommendations for your area. Avoid invasive plants that will cause future problems. And consider native plants that flourish in your region and support your local ecosystem.
- 7) **Compost:** The first step to having a healthy garden is building healthy soil. By composting your yard and kitchen waste you'll save this trash from going to the landfills, while creating one of the best soil amendment products you can find.
- 8) **Have Fun:** No matter what you decide to grow in your garden, make a promise to yourself to have fun. Don't be so concerned with horticultural perfection that you forget how much you love gardening. Even if you only remember this one resolution, you'll be off to a good start.

New year

Let 2026 be about
love and laughter.
Let it be about hope
and happiness. Let it
be about
relationships and
togetherness. Let it
be about kindness
and gratitude.

Thoughtfultable.com



Ten things you can do in 2026 to make every day Earth Day:

- 1) Do not buy bottled water. Carry your own refillable container.
- 2) Do not accept stores' plastic bags. Carry your own fabric bags.
- 3) Change incandescent light bulbs to compact fluorescent or LED light bulbs.
- 4) Check labels. Buy and use recycled paper for printing, toilet tissue, facial tissue, paper towels, etc.
- 5) Take your name off junk and catalog mailing lists.
- 6) Do not idle your car engine over one minute unless at a light. Idling wastes gas and pollutes the air.
- 7) Bring your own cup, plate and utensils to meetings, potlucks, etc to avoid using plastic and styrofoam.
- 8) Stop recreational balloon and lantern launches. They end up in lakes and waterways where birds and aquatic life ingest them and die.
- 9) Do not eat meat or poultry from Cafes (Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations). The United Nations states these meat industries generate more greenhouse gases than all the cars and trucks combined.
- 10) Support "Made in the USA " including local, state and national businesses.



Stop Throwing These Away — Birds Need Them in Winter

Some everyday kitchen scraps can help birds survive freezing weather. But only when used the right way. Here's a simple, safe guide to what helps — and how to offer it responsibly during winter in the U.S. and Canada. GUIDE: 4 Kitchen Scraps Winter Birds Can Actually Use .Feeding birds in winter isn't just a kindness. In extreme cold, it can be a lifeline.

1) Crushed Eggshells — Calcium Support

Birds, especially females, need calcium to keep their bones strong and form healthy bodies during breeding season.

How to use safely:

- Rinse shells thoroughly
- Bake for 10 minutes at 250°F to kill bacteria
- Crush very finely (no sharp pieces)
- Mix into seed or scatter lightly on the ground

Helps: robins, blue jays, cardinals, chickadees

2) Apples (Without Seeds) — Quick Winter Energy. Cold weather forces birds to burn calories nonstop just to stay warm. Fruit sugars provide fast, accessible energy.

Important note: Apple seeds contain compounds that can be harmful in large amounts. The solution is simple.

How to use safely:

- Remove seeds and core
- Cut apple flesh or peels into chunks
- Place on feeders or under trees

Helps: waxwings, robins, thrushes, woodpeckers.

3) Orange Peels — A Reusable Feeder Base (Not Food). Birds don't rely on citrus peels as food. But the peels can be reused as temporary holders for better foods.

How to use them:

- Scoop out the peel
- Fill with suet, seed, or an unsalted peanut butter mix
- Hang briefly or place on a branch
- Remove once empty to prevent mold

Helps: chickadees, nuthatches, woodpeckers

⚠️ Useful as a feeder cup, not as food itself

4) Unsalted Nuts — High-Fat Winter Fuel Plain nuts are packed with calories birds need to survive cold nights.

How to use safely:

- Use only raw or dry-roasted, unsalted nuts
- Crush lightly
- Offer in feeders or scatter sparingly

Helps: jays, woodpeckers, nuthatches

(And yes — squirrels will show up too.)

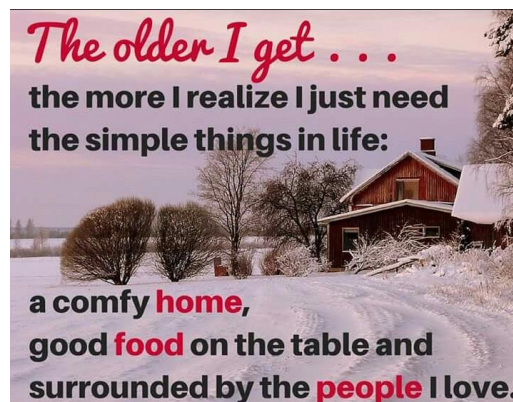
✓ Excellent winter food when unsalted and unseasoned

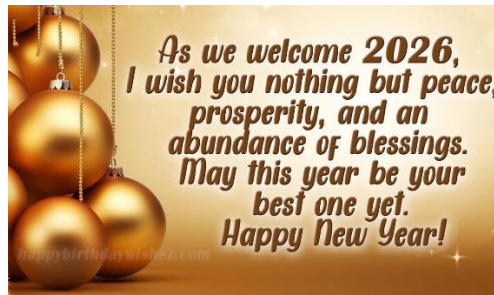
Why This Works

In winter, birds need:

- fat
- quick sugars
- protein
- calcium
- fresh, unfrozen water

Many of these essentials are already in your kitchen. They're just mislabeled as "trash." Small actions. Real impact. Especially when temperatures drop below freezing.





I hope you have enjoyed this Winter edition of “over the picket fence.” Thank you to those of you who contributed articles for the newsletter. Please continue to help me with future newsletters by submitting ideas, articles, recipes and suggestions. I want to be able to continue with the newsletter, as I feel it is important to be able to communicate in this way and you can be a big part in helping me do so. Stay safe. Healthy and warm. Hope to see you next year. **Yours In Gardening....Diane D.**

For More Information, Check Out:

MCGC: www.masoncountygardenclub.org

NGC: www.gardenclub.org

MGC: www.migardenclubs.org

Also check us out on our Facebook Page at Mason County Garden Club

Club Collect

Keep us, O God, ever mindful of nature’s generous bounty. May we always bear in mind it is ours to trust, to protect, to nurture and to enjoy.

Mrs. C.C. Caswell