



THE BOSTON COMMITTEE

The Garden Club of America

THE BOSTON COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER
May 11, 2026 • Volume II • Issue Number 2

The Boston Committee is an Area Committee of the Garden Club of America. We are celebrating over 36 years of horticultural initiatives to enhance the City of Boston

WHAT'S GOOD!

Friends,

As I think about land, plants and ecosystems, I think about the good work that's being done to protect our precious natural resources and I am grateful. At the recent GCA Annual Meeting in New York City, I was inspired to hear messages of determination and resolve from our wonderful honorees and scholars. Todd Forest of the New York Botanical Garden advised: *"We must garden as if our lives depend on it."* Said medalist Jennifer Morris of the Nature Conservancy, *"Loving Nature is not enough. We must stand up for her."* Native Plant Trust's Dr. Lea Johnson in her recent "State of Conservation" address reminded us: *"Conservation is a team sport."*

As we think about the green and verdant future we are working to create, it is important to remember: We are gardening athletes. We are a team. We can do this!

All hands in—GREEN ON 3...!

— Georgia

THE BOSTON COMMITTEE MISSION:

- Support the design and beautification of parks and green spaces
- Encourage civic achievement in horticulture and conservation
- Educate the public on horticultural practices and environmental issues

GCA 2026 NAL Conference: "Get in Gear-Act for the Planet" from Carolyn Thayer Ross, Chestnut Hill GC

For more than 100 years, GCA has been committed to conservation and a healthy planet. The National Affairs and Legislation Conference in Washington, D.C. is held annually to educate and train GCA club members to advocate for the environment, wildlife, and human health.

At the March 2026 conference, themed "Get in Gear-Act for the Planet," 300 delegates from across the country met to hear from environmental experts, scientists, and legislators about threats to clean air, clean water, and human health. State and local action has never been more important to face the challenges to foundational environmental laws like the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Endangered Species Act, and the dismantling of environmental protection regulations by the current administration and congress.

There were several presentations from GCA club members who led nonpartisan local and regional action to save and protect environmental resources, including two Georgia club members whose 'cocktail party advocacy' helped to rally community action and fundraising to protect the Okefenokee swamp from devastating mining incursions. Sometimes small actions can make a profound difference.

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that has.
—Margaret Mead



WHAT'S GOOD!



NAL: “Get in Gear-Act for the Planet” *continued*

Senators and Congressional leaders from both sides of the aisle addressed the conference on Capitol Hill day, followed by a day of delegates’ visits to legislators offices to advocate for defending America’s bedrock environmental laws and agencies against rollbacks and funding and staff cuts. Delegates were armed with Legislative Priorities and prepared talking points based on the GCA’s nine position papers, with emphasis on protecting and promoting healthy ecosystems, freshwater habitats, and reducing and protecting against PFAs contamination.

Walking the halls of Congress with like minded, well prepared GCA club members is empowering and fun. Paid congressional lobbyists can be seen everywhere on Capitol Hill; a reminder of how important it is for all of us to stand up and speak out. Legislators need to hear from us all— our voices are more important than ever. The GCA is well respected and well received in Washington and has an excellent reputation for promoting nonpartisan, science based positions. Our Massachusetts and other New England delegations have a strong record of action to protect the environment. NAL delegates left the conference with the knowledge that now is the time for all of us to act and together, we *all* can make a difference.

SENATOR EDWARD MARKEY MEETS WITH ZONE I DELEGATES

Seated in center is contributor
Carolyn Thayer Ross, NAL Chair 2023-
2025, Chestnut Hill GC; to her left is
Phyllis Pollack,
Zone I NAL Rep, Worcester GC

prepared GCA club members is empowering and fun. Paid congressional lobbyists can be seen everywhere on Capitol Hill; a reminder of how important it is for all of us to stand up and speak out. Legislators need to hear from us all— our voices are more important than ever. The GCA is well respected and well received in Washington and has an excellent reputation for promoting nonpartisan, science based positions. Our Massachusetts and other New England delegations have a strong record of action to protect the environment. NAL delegates left the conference with the knowledge that now is the time for all of us to act and together, we *all* can make a difference.

PARTICIPATE and ADVOCATE! *Getting Involved at the State Level*

Find out who your Senate and House state representatives are. Remind elected officials that they represent and are accountable to their constituents:

FindMyLegislator: malegislature.gov

- Understand how a bill moves through the General Court of Massachusetts (state legislature) and becomes a law: mass.gov/doc/the-legislative-process-how-a-bill-becomes-a-law
- Know where a bill is in the legislative process, know when and whom to contact
When a bill is in committee, know who is on the committee and ask for their support
- When a bill has passed the committee, it is time to start calling and emailing your representatives
- When a bill is on the Governor’s desk, call, write, and email to encourage the Governor to sign the bill into law

Getting Involved in Cities and Towns

Understand your community’s local government structure and reach out accordingly:

- Attend town meetings or city council meetings, telephone and meet local leaders
- Be informed about local issues, run for office yourself!
- Collaborate and encourage others to participate, partner with local nonprofits and schools, participate in civic improvement activities
- Understand your role. Whom do you represent—yourself, your club, the GCA, or another organization?
- Use GCA Calls to Action to seek support, solicit ideas for legislative or policy priorities from community, Club and GCA Conservation chairs

WHAT'S GOOD!



NATIVE PLANTINGS IN A BOSTON ROOFTOP GARDEN

created by
Stephanie Fletcher

Native Plants for Urban Gardens From Stephanie Fletcher

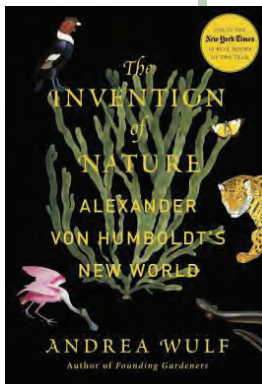
The Esplanade Association's 2026 Annual Meeting featured Stephanie Fletcher, Certified Field Naturalist and Pollinator Steward as keynote speaker. Fletcher studies biodiversity on the Charles River Esplanade. An avid gardener, she converted her city roof deck to native plants.

Stephanie's Top Ten Native Plants for Boston Urban gardens

- **Common Golden Alexanders (*Zizia aurea*)** – pollinator plant
A rare bee in New England can only survive on pollen from it
- **Red Columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*)** – keystone plant: a native species that plays a crucial role in its ecosystem, providing essential resources (like food and habitat) for a wide variety of wildlife including hummingbirds
- **Lanceleaf Coreopsis (*Coreopsis lanceolata*)** —keystone plant
- **Foxglove Beardtongue (*Penstemon digitalis*)** or **Hairy Beardtongue (*Penstemon hirsutus*)** Nectar maker, visited by bees, moths and butterflies
- **Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*),** or **Brown-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia triloba*)** – keystone plant
- **Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*),** or
- **Pale Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea pallida*)** – great for pollinators
- **Pearly Everlasting (*Anaphalis margaritacea*)** – host plant for American and Painted Lady butterflies
- **New England Aster (*Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*)** – keystone plant, may require staking, host plant for Pearl Crescent butterfly. Other native asters will do well in planters and are also considered keystone plants
- **Wrinkle Leaf Goldenrod (*Solidago rugosa*),** or **Wreath Goldenrod (*Solidago caesia*)** – keystone plant, some bee or moth species can only survive with these
- **Smooth Hydrangea (*Hydrangea arborescens*)** – Shrub, host plant for hydrangea sphinx moth, pollinators love it

A Note on Seeds: Ownership & Responsibility From Abby Coffin, GCA Vice President, Horticultural Judge, Chestnut Hill GC

Seeds were historically shared and improved collectively. Today, intellectual property law, contractual agreements, and biological systems can restrict saving and replanting. These mechanisms shift control and may limit community stewardship of genetic resources. The question is not whether innovation should exist, but whether concentrated ownership serves biodiversity, resilience, and long-term food security. Genetic diversity thrives in systems of distributed stewardship. Our purchasing choices, seed-saving practices, and support of regional seed networks shape the future of plant diversity.



Abby's Top 10 Favorite Hort Books

To Speak for the Trees | Diana Beresford-Kroeger

The Triumph of Seeds | Thor Hanson • *The Plant Hunter* | Cassandra Quave

Oak: The Frame of Civilization | Logan, William

The Botany of Desire | Michael Pollan • *The Invention of Nature* | Andrea Wulf

Finding the Mother Tree | Suzanne Simard

The Hidden Life of Trees | Peter Wohlleben

The Seed Garden: The Art and Practice of Seed Saving | edited by Lee Buttala and Shanyn Siegel

Minneapolis: Seed Savers Exchange, 2015.

WHAT'S GOOD!

From the Charles River Conservancy: The most successful plants from the Floating Wetland project

When the Charles River Conservancy began the floating wetland project in 2020, we planted 47 native plant species knowing that some would flourish and others might fail. As part of our research, we created a four-tier ranking system.

The plant species on this list (see graphic on left) were the most successful—both hardy and abundant. If you kayak to the floating wetland in a few weeks, you should be able to see them all.

Learn more about the wetland's project on our website: thecharles.org/floating-wetlands/

—Pablo Brenes Coto,
Park Resilience Project Manager



Swamp Rose
(*Rosa palustris*)

Notable Features: perennial; herbaceous; purple flower with yellow center
Wildlife: attracts pollinators; larval host for butterflies
Bloom Period: June-September
Fun Fact: the flower is said to look like a monkey's face, hence the name



Arrow Arum
(*Petlandra virginica*)

Notable Features: perennial; herbaceous; large, white/light-pink flower with red center
Wildlife: nectar source for hummingbirds
Bloom Period: July-September
Fun Fact: there are around 1,500 mallow species



Swamp Rose-Mallow
(*Hibiscus moscheutos*)

Notable Features: perennial; herbaceous; showy, purple flower with 3 petals and a yellow center
Wildlife: nectar source for hummingbirds; food for aquatic rodents
Bloom Period: May-August
Fun Fact: powdered iris root was used in perfumes



Several Veined Sweet Flag
(*Acorus americanus*)

Notable Features: perennial; herbaceous; large, white/light-pink flower with red center
Wildlife: nectar source for hummingbirds
Bloom Period: July-September
Fun Fact: there are around 1,500 mallow species



Mountain Holly
(*Ilex mucronata*)

Notable Features: perennial; woodyshrub; small red berries
Wildlife: larval host for moths; attracts butterflies
Bloom Period: May-June
Fun Fact: The moth that it hosts can have a 3.5 inch wingspan



SoftRush
(*Juncus effusus*)

Notable Features: perennial; grass-like; scaly, green/brown flowers in clusters
Wildlife: attracts birds; food source for muskrats
Bloom Period: March-September
Fun Fact: birds can make shelter among their stems



Soft-Stem Bulrush
(*Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani*)

Notable Features: perennial; grass-like; drooping clusters of orange-brown, scaled nutlets
Wildlife: nesting for waterbirds; food source for muskrats
Bloom Period: April-May
Fun Fact: it was used in Native American wigwams to cover walls



Tussock Sedge
(*Carex strica*)

Notable Features: perennial; grass-like; cluster of brown seed capsules in spike formation at tip
Wildlife: food source for various mammals and birds; larval host for butterflies
Bloom Period: May-June
Fun Fact: it possesses both male and female reproductive organs



Hard-Stem Bulrush
(*Schoenoplectus acutus*)

Notable Features: perennial; grass-like; reddish-brown spikelets in clusters
Wildlife: helps in establishment of other plants
Bloom Period: April-May
Fun Fact: it is commonly used to reduce erosion



Lurid Sedge
(*Carex lurida*)

Notable Features: perennial; grass-like; small, yellow or green "spikelets"
Wildlife: attracts birds; insects feed on foliage
Bloom Period: May-June
Fun Fact: it is also commonly known as sallow sedge



Common Buttonbush
(*Cephalanthus occidentalis*)

Notable Features: perennial; shrub; white/pink flowers similar to a pin cushion
Wildlife: larval host for moths; attracts pollinators
Bloom Period: June-September
Fun Fact: it's considered a "honey plant"



Chairmaker's Bulrush
(*Schoenoplectus Americanus*)

Notable Features: perennial; grass-like; few thin leaves with clusters
Wildlife: food source for rodents and snow geese
Bloom Period: April-May
Fun Fact: it has historically been used to make baskets by Native Americans

WANT A DEEPER DIVE ON THE RIVER WETLANDS PROJECT?
A DISCUSSION with CRC:
Global Lessons, Local Waters: Floating Wetlands for Urban Resilience
Tuesday, May 12, 2026, 5pm-7pm
Register at: thecharles.org

WHAT'S GOOD!

“Propagation Stories”

From Carrie Waterman and Peggy Rusnock

This interview is excerpted from a Zone 1 Horticulture gathering with Carrie Waterman, former GCA Horticulture Chair, Noanett GC and Peggy Rusnock, Zone 1 Horticultural Rep, Milton GC hosted at the Blue Hills Trailside Museum in March.

Peggy Rusnock: How did you get interested in propagating plants?

Carrie Waterman: My interest in plants started in childhood. My parents were both avid gardeners and propagators—especially vegetables and fruits. My mother took courses at the Arnold Arboretum on grafting fruit trees and we had quite a few heirloom varieties in our garden. When I had my own garden, it was natural for me to continue the tradition. Also, it was much cheaper to procure seeds than to buy plants. I became a customer of the New England Wild Flower Society (now the Native Plant Trust) and found an economical way to fill my big new beds.

PR: What propagation success are you most proud of?

CW: I am very proud of a couple of trees in my yard that I grew from seed—a sweet birch that my grandkids love to gnaw on and a katsura tree, *Cercidiphyllum japonicum*, that now stands 25' tall in my front yard. The seed came from my alma mater, from a GCA member who was a graduate of the same school.

PR: Anything else you'd like to share about your propagation journey?

CW: Encourage the young people in your life to propagate plants. Last year my 6-year-old granddaughter collected seeds of our native red columbine, *Aquilegia canadensis*, sprinkled them on top of potting soil and watered. Four months later she had a nice pot of young columbine plants to enter in the MHS New England Fall Flower Show and she won the Becket Lang Award—the highest honor in the Junior Horticulture Competition. We wanted all the adult visitors to the show to know that if a 6-year-old can do it, they can too!

Carrie's Top 10 native woody and perennial plants to propagate from seed

Agastache foeniculum

Antennaria neglecta

Aquilegia canadensis

Any member of the Asteraceae, the daisy family:

Doellingeria umbellata, *Eurybia macrophylla*, *Eurybia spectabilis*, *Eutrochium* sps., *Liatris novae-angliae*, *Solidago* sps., *Symphotrichum* sps., *Betula lenta*

Cephalanthus occidentalis

Monarda fistulosa

Penstemon hirsutus

Pycnanthemum sps.

Native *Quercus* sps.



CARRIE'S KATSURA

Katsura,
Cercidiphyllum japonicum,
that now stands 25'
tall was started
from seed
11 years ago



WHAT'S GOOD!

Local High School Students Collaborate with a GCA Club: From Cambridge Plant & Garden Club



For the fifth consecutive year, Cambridge Plant & GC has collaborated with Cambridge Rindge & Latin High School to organize a native plant sale. Student groups created the ordering technology and produced marketing materials, while CP&GC managed the sale, selected and purchased the plants.

CP&GC's partnership with the students has been fruitful: the students provide technological know-how, creative publications that reach their peers and physical labor. Garden club members (and associates) provide horticultural expertise, funding, and money management as well as a space for order preparation and distribution, recycled materials for plant packaging and labor.

While this collaboration is about getting more native plants out into the world each year, the most rewarding accomplishment has been raising awareness of the importance of native plants to create vibrant, resilient regional ecosystems. We are working with CRLS students to create a pollinator-friendly native plant garden at the high school. Proceeds from the plant sale go towards this effort.

In five years, we have delivered many thousands of native plants to the Cambridge community and beyond.

Mount Auburn Cemetery Warmly Welcomes The Boston Committee Board

Mount Auburn Cemetery hosted the Boston Committee Board meeting on a beautiful spring day on April 14, 2026 held at Story Chapel, designed in 1896 by Willard Sears. After completing the board meeting, we toured the Asa Gray Garden with Ronnit Bendavid-Val, Vice President of Horticulture & Landscape.

Thanks to fruitful relationships with our non-profit partners, our board meetings have become site visits to some of greater Boston's storied public gardens. Boston Committee thanks all of our partners for their support and generosity.

"Oak trees (Quercus) have long held a special place in my heart. I find the potential of an acorn to be staggering. To stand in the presence of a centuries-old tree is equally impressive. Oaks remind me that some plants exist on a very different temporal scale from ours, and that they are silent witnesses to great change." —Uli Lorimer, Director of Horticulture, Native Plant Trust

SORTING AND PACKAGING NATIVE PLANTS

*bringing students
and others together
to support a healthier
ecosystem*

MOUNT AUBURN CEMETERY'S STORY CHAPEL and ASA GRAY GARDEN and Boston Committee Board members

