

New England Grden Clubs, Inc.
10th Annual Virtual Business Meeting

Friday, October 9, 2026

Good morning,

Here we are, celebrating 250 years plus of our history, using 21st Century tools.

In a few minutes, each of the six Presidents whose Federations make up New England Garden Clubs, Incorporated, will share with you what their members, collectively, well over 20,000, created in the last twelve months. Our New England States have been recognized as a Region since before Vermont and Maine were granted statehood.

While we have many different climactic zones and growing conditions, and some of us have salt water borders while others portage canoes, we suffer with the same best common crop- rock. Largely because we had to find ways to work with rock or around rock or through rock, we also developed Yankee ingenuity.

Our shared love/hate relationships with tourists is something else again.

You'll hear common themes in those six Presidents' reports.

You'll also hear how utterly individual each Federation is.

Here we are, virtually.

Did you know the Central Region just finished its first totally virtual Annual Meeting last week? They had a slightly greater attendance than their in person meeting a year ago.

We'll blend this more muted virtual meeting with what I hope will be a slightly riotous, certainly jam packed in person Annual Meeting next week in Killington. I do hope you're coming to both.

Seven years ago, most of us weren't as familiar with virtual meetings as we are today. Then, many of us felt both as excited and terrified trying Zoom as we would have were we anticipating walking a high wire across Niagara Falls.

We still have a balancing act, haven't we?

We know Clubs trapped in tradition, repeating repeating, "This is the way we've always done it," aren't balancing well.

As more and more clubs celebrate significant anniversaries, we're often amused by some of our clubs' former traditions. That's fair. Most of us no longer drag out the silver polish the week before our Awards Meetings. But we know it's important, not quaint, to recognize our members' achievements.

It's also true that some clubs, CT's Pomperaug Valley Garden Club comes to mind, are stunned to unearth, for example, exact lists of every item and at what expense members of the club sent overseas weekly to members of the armed forces during World War II.

This balancing act is what I want to investigate a bit today.

Some see a chasm between tradition and technology. I think they're misidentifying the quandary.

I think the intent which established many of our traditions is the exact same as today's.

I think the question was and is how to nurture current relationships and attract new members in this rapidly changing world. How do we bring in new members? Where are our new leaders? These aren't questions about either tradition or technology. The answers are neither historical nor contemporaneous.

Let me insert here I attended all the virtual and in person meetings at the Federation, Region, and National levels to which I was invited, plus a few I crashed. I loved the Flower Shows I visited (I'll let the Presidents describe them), pored over the scholarship applications (we need to do more or do differently to get the word out about scholarships in many areas), tried and continue to try to connect and stay connected with as many of you as I could.

My trusty Outback and I clocked many miles. In Maine, there were **two** navy blue Subarus with large red Plant America magnets slapped on their rear hatch doors parked outside the venue, Susan Miner's and mine.

In 2025, hydrangeas and zinnias thrived wherever I went. This year, the lupines- oh my, the lupines on 89 and 91 and in Maine..

And everyone's dahlias, this year's dahlias. Glorious.

Not listing the meetings individually does Not take from any of these events its importance. At any of them I learned a lot, shared suggestions, enjoyed meeting our members, and extolled NGC's 4 established schools, only available in 2 of our Federations.

That is not a balancing act. That's the job, a very real job, I've been doing my best to do well.

There are those who say it's a traditional not a twenty-first century job.

That's not my experience of it. Six Federation Presidents and I get together virtually almost monthly, usually without an Agenda. We hear each other's weather reports, offer support when it's needed, cheer accomplishments rather a lot, Kathleen cheering especially.

I actively foster closer relationships among the Presidents.

Occasionally, I have done the same for members of their Boards.

For example, when I heard at one Federation's Annual Meeting their Treasurer had some financial niceties to research, and I knew another Federation's Treasurer's recently addressed similar concerns, I made an introduction, and shared with each the other's contact information. Then I bowed out, and let them talk.

I have encouraged other emerging groups in NEGC to Zoom, and I've scheduled and run meetings so they could develop as groups.

Most of our members are immured in their clubs. To those who step out and step up, at the club level, at the Federation tier, especially those of you who accept positions at NEGC, I thank you. I am grateful for what I see you do. Don't forget **you** have peers in nearby clubs, peers in nearby Federations with separate but similar concerns, and solutions.

There's a specific person I wish to thank...

You're muted, or I'd ask you to applaud Norma Jean Macauto, today's Zoom Administrator, and the CT Federation's 2nd Vice President, who was not in the least intimidated by NEGC's pathetic outdated excuse for a website.

"Oh," she said, "I can design a new website while that's still showing. It'll be parallel to what you see. I can insert changes section by section, behind the scenes. No problem." Ingenuity galore.

Huge problem changing day by day...

Balance. And fostering relationships...

One last bit.

Do you know how you learn to walk a tightrope?-

You don't start with Niagara Falls. You start with something six inches to a foot from the ground. Balance has nothing to do with height. It has to do with centering yourself.

How do we follow my theme "**We Grow Gardens & Gardeners?**"

How do we bridge the chasm? By centering ourselves neither on tradition or technology, but on our Mission, and nurturing relationships among people passionate about that Mission .

While I'm seven months away from handing off this position let me take this opportunity to thank you for the privilege of serving NEGC these 2 years.