

District V

Pam Baker, GCI District Director

The Collinsville Garden Club Several members of the Collinsville Garden Club are the dedicated caretakers of the D.D. Collins House garden. During the 2025 season, the garden produced 248 pounds of produce, which was donated to the Collinsville Food Pantry. As is our usual tradition, the club decorated the D.D. Collins House in Collinsville for the annual Holiday Parade and visits with Santa. We had our annual Christmas party at the historic Blum House in Collinsville in December and, in lieu of a gift exchange, members had the option of donating to the Collinsville Food Pantry or Kahok Strong, which is an organization which helps local families in need. In January, we were invited by O'Fallon Garden Club to attend a presentation by a very knowledgeable volunteer from Cahokia Mounds, which is a World Heritage Site. February started off with a field trip to the Pere Marquette Visitors Center for a presentation by Scott Isringhausen and then caravanning along the Mississippi for eagle watching. In early February, Lakeview Garden Club invited us to a presentation of photos of flora and fauna taken by Erick and Karen Larsen on their trips to Costa Rica and Africa. We are preparing for our spring plant sale and starting to contact organizations for donations of trees for Arbor Day.

The **Edwardsville Garden Club** has an exciting year ahead. The Program and Yearbook Committee has scheduled several engaging speakers and field trips. In alignment with the 250th anniversary of the United States and the Garden Club of Illinois, Inc.'s vision, we are planting our memorial gardens in red, white, and blue.

We are also continuing to revitalize the Madison County Historical Society garden. Furthermore, we are designing and planting a pharmacy garden for Southern Illinois University Edwardsville and have recently been asked to collaborate on their native plant garden as well.

Our other initiatives include working with the Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois to help them earn badges and expanding our online presence through the diligent work of our Publicity Committee. We are also preparing for our upcoming plant sales and have established a new committee dedicated to pollinators. Finally, the Edwardsville Garden Club is proud to be hosting the District V Fall Meeting this October. It is spectacular to see all of these plans in one place, and I look forward to a wonderful year.

Lakeview Garden Club The Lakeview Garden Club presented monetary 4-H awards to Grace Mason for the Impact of Pollinators exhibit and to Gabriella Nelson for the Entomology exhibit. District V Garden Club of Illinois and Collinsville Garden Club also presented 4-H awards to members in Madison and St. Clair Counties.

Members attended the District V Presidents Council meeting at the Moose Lodge in Swansea hosted by St. Clair County Garden Club honoring our president, Susanne Richter. The special guest was Garden Clubs of Illinois, Inc. President Diane

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Greenawalt. The speaker was Nathan Johanning, commercial agriculture educator with the University of Illinois Extension, who gave an informative presentation on pumpkins and gourds. A gardener's showcase displayed members' exhibits in the scarecrow and pumpkin-decorating contest.

In October, the Collinsville Garden Club hosted our meeting, and Debbie Rathert of the 1820 Col. Benjamin Stephenson House in Edwardsville gave a fascinating presentation on antique gardening. In November, member Amy Kusmierczak presented "Wonders of Costa Rica," detailing its beauty from her visit there.

We gathered at a member's beautifully decorated home for our annual Christmas dinner. Our club selects a charity each December, and in 2025, we brought sheets, blankets, pillows, and money to donate to the local chapter of Sleep in Heavenly Peace, an organization that builds beds for children in need so that no kid sleeps on the floor. Also at that meeting, we had the opportunity to review and reminisce about our club's history books.

Our January meeting focused on plans for the year, including learning more about butterflies, installing new officers, tours, education, and our annual plant sale in May. In February, the Larsons, world-traveling photographers, will give a presentation on the birds and flowers of Costa Rica. Lakeview Garden Club is donating a garden-themed basket to Maryville Elementary PTA for their silent auction, which will be held on March 14.

The **O'Fallon Garden Club** is eagerly preparing for the spring. In early March, we will begin our Monday and Thursday workdays at our 1.5 acre community garden. This includes amending the soil in our 70 raised beds. Our early vegetables such as lettuce and cabbage are being planted in early March. As in past years, the harvested vegetables are donated to the O'Fallon Food Pantry. The annuals and perennials for our 15 landscape beds and herb garden have been selected and ordered for planting in May. Our apiary, which consists of five beehives, will be opened in early March. Last year, we harvested over 300 pounds of honey. Our winter fundraiser (a large garage sale) is scheduled for March and we are planning our plant sale for May. We continue to host educational programs by guest speakers at our monthly membership meetings. As in past years, we will be hosting garden tours of the community garden and providing gardening instruction to groups such as the Boy Scouts.

The **Silver Creek Garden club** continues to have interesting tours and meetings. In November, our club had a speaker who is an herbalist. She informed the club of her method of growing herbs and spoke of preserving them and using them in different ways. We also have our Arbor Day in November. This year we planted a service berry

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tree at the north edge of Freeburg. It is a native tree. In December, our club had its Christmas party and meal. We use the theme of "The Holly and the Ivy" from the song, decorating the tables with live holly and ivy cut from our members' yards. This year, as usual, we gave a large donation to each of our three area food pantries that we donate to monthly. This year, we also donated to a toy drive that helps to fill local children's needs. In January, we held our silent auction and had our second annual potluck. Our second annual tea was held in February with delicious tea and tea party foods. We used a valentine theme. We have welcomed five new members into our club in the last four months.