



## Grosse Pointe Garden Center, Inc.

### 2026 Annual Trial Gardens Competition

#### 2026 Guidelines: *250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our Nation*

##### Installation, Maintenance and Theme Requirements:

**Theme and requirements:** GPF&G selected the 2026 theme, *250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our Nation*. There are **four plant requirements:** 1) a rose bush, 2) an ornamental grass, 3) a native plant, 4) a variety of annuals. And **three "other" requirements:** 1) a path (any type), 2) a water source, and 3) American flag. The primary colors should be red - white - blue, in keeping with the patriotic theme. Our judges will look for all of these elements in your designs and plant lists.

**Garden accessories and hardscape:** The required elements in your design should be creative garden and serve to enhance your design, not be the focus of, or overwhelm your design. Keep them in proportion to your plot size and shape. Your plant choices and creative plantings of varying colors, heights, and textures of flowers and foliage should be an important focus of your design.

**Plot Maintenance:** Each garden club is responsible for weeding, deadheading, watering, and maintaining their plots including the sedum borders and the immediate surrounding areas. You may lightly trim your sedum border if it has overgrown too much into your plot or on the walkway.

**Pesticides:** The Trial Gardens are **pesticide-free!** Organic products such as repellents for rabbits, etc., even if all-natural, must be approved by the Garden Center before use. Also, please apply approved products during early morning or evening hours when others are not around. Even organic substances can be toxic, irritating, and/or dangerous. This is a public garden attractive to children; the herb society, victory garden, and WM chef harvest and use the produce in cooking. Be a responsible gardener.

**Watering:** Clubs are responsible for making sure their plots, especially pots and containers, are receiving enough water. Don't depend entirely on the sprinkler system during dry, hot weather spells. Also, be aware of possible over watering during an extended rainy period. Two water spigots with attached hoses are available in the gardens for additional hand watering. Please notify us of any issues/problems you notice with the sprinklers and/or garden hoses or nozzles.

**Design Installation:** Normally held the two weeks prior to Memorial Day. This year, installation begins the week of **May 11 to May 15** and continues **May 18 to May 22**. We would like to have all the gardens substantially installed before Memorial Day, May 25, in time for the War Memorial's outdoor celebration. If needed, installations may be completed **May 26 to May 29**.

- ◆ Please be aware of possible overnight frosts in mid-May and plant accordingly.
- ◆ You will be notified in advance when the gardens may be closed for War Memorial events.
- ◆ Once your design is planted **and** your description handed in, it should not be changed.
- ◆ If a club suffers plant loss, only the affected plants or sections may be replaced with the same or similar plants in keeping with your original design. Please feel free to contact us if you are having plant issues.

**Fall Clean-Up:** Dates will be announced at the Awards Tea on September 16, but is usually latter half of October. All plant materials, weeds, mulches, accessories, and hardscapes are to be removed from your plot. Be considerate to the club that will rotate into your plot next year by leaving a tidy bed.

### Judging:

- The gardens will be judged the last full week over three months: **June 22-26, July 27-31, and August 24-28.**
- Three judges were selected by the Garden Center's Trial Gardens co-chairs:
  - ◆ **Helen Bai** - chair of Beautification Committee for Grosse Pointe Shores and landscape designer.
  - ◆ **Barry Burton** - project manager for city of Detroit General Services: entails green space renovations including parks, parkways, boulevards, freeway beautification.
  - ◆ **Sandra Richards** - former head of Macomb County MSU Extension Master Gardener program.
- The judges use a point system comprising four main categories: Theme Interpretation, Construction and Design Elements, Horticultural Elements, and Maintenance. A sample evaluation/judging sheet is available at [gpgardencenter.org/trial-gardens](http://gpgardencenter.org/trial-gardens).
- Evaluation is given to the overall design, spatial awareness, architecture, sun-shade appropriateness of plants, design relevance to theme, and design compatibility with the plot size and shape.
- Judges are looking for interesting and unique design elements of plant textures, heights, and color combinations used to convey your interpretation of the theme, i.e. demonstrating your creativity and knowledge of the plants used in your design.
- Hardscape and accessories used in your design will be judged on the relevance to and enhancement of the theme, including the spatial appropriateness to your design, plot size, and plot shape.

### Descriptions, Labels, and Plant Lists:

- Write a **description** of your design interpretation on one side only of an 8.5" x 11" page. Describe to the judges and visitors what you are trying to convey in your design with your plant selections and accessories/hardscapes. Graphics may be included.
- **Labels:** There is no minimum or maximum number of labels required. Clubs are responsible for providing their own labels. Labels are to have numbers only, which correspond with your numbered plant list, and placed accordingly in your plot.
- Create a **numbered list of plants**, on one side only, of an 8.5" x 11" page. It is helpful to visitors and the judges to label as many plants as you can, especially unusual, exotic, and/or new variety plants. **Required plants** must be listed with an asterisk or other identifier for the judges. Please include both botanical and common names. The corresponding numbered plant labels should be placed among the appropriate plant sections in your plot. Plant lists provide a valuable and fun teaching tool for visitors, so it is worth the extra effort to identify your plants.
- **Deadline to submit** both your description page and plant list page is **Friday, June 5.**
  - ◆ Both pages will be laminated back to back to be hung in your plot for judges and visitors to read.
  - ◆ Please submit your pages either by email to [amgregory@outlook.com](mailto:amgregory@outlook.com), or drop off at the War Memorial main desk in the Art Wing, be sure and indicate that it is for the Garden Center mail slot. Or slide under the Garden Center's office door, located in back of the main desk, in the Art Wing.
- **Note:** the judges are emailed copies of both your descriptions and plant lists to peruse before they begin their first judging in June.