

Nova Scotia Association of Garden Clubs

Guidelines for Planning and Hosting an Annual Convention

(Updated: September 29, 2014)

Table of Contents

- 1. Introduction 3
- 2. To Host or Not to Host 3
- 3. Host Committee 3
 - Committee Make-Up 3
 - Committee Meetings 4
 - Committee Reporting 5
 - Volunteers for Convention Week-End 5
- 4. Finances 5
- 5. Fundraising/Donations..... 6
 - Door Prizes 6
- 6. Publicity and Promotion 7
- 7. Venue 7
 - Space Requirements 7
 - Facility 8
 - Decorations and Set-Up 8
- 8. Meals..... 8
- 9. Program..... 8
 - Speakers 9
 - Entertainment 9
 - Tours 9
- 10. Registration 10
 - Registration Form 10
 - Registration Logistics 10
 - Registration Table 10
 - Registration Bags 11
- 11. Competitions and Contests..... 11
 - Floral Competition 11
- 12. Vendors 11
- 13. Role of NSAGC..... 12

1. Introduction

The Annual Nova Scotia Association of Garden Clubs (NSAGC) Convention rotates through the seven districts in the province. Usually a Garden Club or Society assumes the responsibility as Host club for the convention and solicits support from other clubs in that district. However, the Convention may also be hosted at the District level with support from the clubs.

The Host has the responsibility of putting on the convention as they see fit, including selecting a Theme for the Convention.

This document offers guidelines and suggestions for planning and hosting the convention, based on the experiences of past conventions. The forms that accompany this document are provided in PDF as well as Word/Excel formats so that they can be used without having to be re-typed.

2. To Host or Not to Host

If a club is interested in hosting the convention, there are a few very basic questions that must be answered before submitting a bid to host:

- How strong is your club?
- Do you have enough members who would be dedicated to the task of running a convention and who will be available for meetings, tasks and able to attend the convention?
- Would it be more advantageous to have another club help co-host?

The club President should send a letter to the other clubs within the district informing them of your intentions of bidding for the convention and asking them for their support. This will give each club the opportunity to discuss this at their meeting and everyone will have a chance to voice their opinion. As a result their commitment will be deeper and more founded.

If you have the support you need, let your District Director know of your intentions to bid for the convention and the year you wish to host. The District Director will forward your request on to the NSAGC Board for their deliberation and decision. The District Director will then advise the club of the Board's decision.

3. Host Committee

Committee Make-Up

- The convention committee should be set up as soon as the Host has been selected for the upcoming event.
- The Host will take on the leadership role and set-up the convention committee as per the suggested outline below for the Executive and Standing committees. It is assumed that the Convention Chair is a member of all Standing committees.
- The committee should include a liaison person to keep all the other clubs in the district informed of your progress.

- The District Director should be included on the Convention committee, with the main purpose of acting as liaison between the committee and the NSAGC Board. The District Director could also be assigned a specific position on the Executive or Standing Committees.
- The Chair should send an email to all clubs in the district requesting they select one or two representatives to sit on the convention committee.
- Specific duties or roles should be assigned to committee members.
- As many people from different clubs in the district as possible should be involved and assigned different tasks.
- It is essential that the Chair and Vice Chair work as a team.
- The Chair and Vice Chair should closely monitor the progress of each assignment and not let an issue drag on too long.
- The Chair and Vice Chair should maintain communications with everyone.
- If the Standing committees need help, other committee members could be used in dual duty positions. Don't overburden anyone with a too much work. Break jobs down into smaller tasks and assign people and timelines as required.
- The suggested make-up of the Executive and Standing committees is as follows. The number of people required for each committee should be proportional to the size of the task. The following numbers are only a guideline.

Executive: Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer. The structure can also have two equal Co-Chairs, instead of a Chair and Vice Chair.

<u>Standing Committees</u>	<u>Number of People</u>
Venue	2 minimum for contract signing, and one as liaison
Food	1 chair (if this is not covered by the Venue committee)
Registrar	1
Registration	1 chair, committee of 4 (2 on the registration desk at any given time)
Fundraising/Donations	2 committee members and as many as required to do canvassing;
Program/Quiz	1 or 2
Entertainment/Emcee	1 or 2
AV chair	1 responsible for acquiring the AV and monitoring it during event
Tours (if any)	2 if guided tours; 1 as liaison with site participants if self-guided tours
Publicity/Promotion	1 or 2
Vendor Registration	1 chair and as many as required for set-up/tear down the vendor area
Venue Set-up	1 chair and as many as required for decorating and display set up
Floral Competition	1 chair

Committee Meetings

- It is essential to spend a lot of time planning.
- Once the Executive committee has been selected and all Standing committee positions filled, the Convention Chair should schedule an Executive committee meeting to go over all the details of planning a convention and the responsibilities of each position.
- Once the Executive committee has met, the Chair should schedule a meeting that includes all the district representatives. This will bring the district representatives/clubs up to speed on the convention plans and let them know what assisting roles the clubs in the district can provide.

- Once all the Standing committee positions have been allocated, then a second and third meeting should be scheduled as soon as reasonably possible, to get all the major points covered and assigned:
 - venue/convention site;
 - accommodations; if at a hotel, blocking rooms (if available);
 - meals and/or snacks (cost), banquet meal menu (cost);
 - theme;
 - set up bank account;
 - set up a budget to fit activities;
 - refund policy (if any);
 - the floral competition;
 - tours (if any); and
 - quiz (if any).
- The convention committee should meet as often as necessary to get things started, then at least once a month to maintain control of everyone's progress. As the convention date nears the frequency of meetings will increase to ensure all loose ends have been tied up.

Committee Reporting

- Communications between committee members is essential. The Convention Chair will receive a progress report from each committee chair at each meeting. If the chair is not able to attend, a report should be provided either by phone or email. It is important that all convention committee members and club representatives are kept informed of the convention progress by attending the meetings and/or reading the minutes provided by the secretary. Club representatives can report back to their respective clubs.
- The Convention Committee will approach the NSAGC Board with any unforeseen circumstances prior to the Convention.
- The Convention Chair will prepare a final report for the next Board of Directors meeting following the convention and pass along any suggestions and lessons learned that they may have to offer for the next Host. These lessons learned should be added to the Lessons Learned document of the Convention section of the Board Members Handbook.

Volunteers for Convention Week-End

- In addition to the committees that planned the convention, there may be a need for additional volunteers during the convention. The Sample Volunteers form lists the tasks that may need to be done throughout the weekend, the times and the people who are responsible for making sure that the tasks are completed.

4. Finances

- NSAGC will provide a \$1000 loan if required by the Host to cover convention expenses before registration monies become available. This is a loan and must be repaid. The NSAGC does not extend grants to fund special speakers or other convention expenses.
- Any profit generated by the Annual Convention shall remain with the Convention Committee and any deficit shall also be their responsibility.

- The Convention Committee shall attempt to run the Convention on a breakeven basis. The registration fee should reflect actual cost and not be set unduly high in an attempt to make excessive profit.
- The Treasurer should open up a bank account for the convention in the name of the NSAGC Convention 20yy, with co-signors for the deposits and expenditures.
- A budget should be prepared as soon as possible after establishing costs of the facilities and meals (see Sample Budget).
- The budget should be monitored closely and on the agenda of all committee meetings.
- Any NSAGC guest will be funded by the NSAGC board.

5. Fundraising/Donations

- Fundraising is an excellent way to cover convention costs. The Fundraising/Donations Committee will work on funding sources based on the budget and will also procure other items required such as door prizes, items for the registration bags, etc.
- The NSAGC profile (available in the Board Members Handbook) may be presented to potential sponsors, along with a covering letter (on NSAGC letterhead) from the Host describing the event and the need for assistance (given that you are a non-profit organization). (See Sample Sponsorship Letter).
- The more donations you are able to get, the less you will have to purchase. Suggestions for fundraising are as follows:
 - Businesses may sponsor an event or coffee break;
 - Vendors tables may be offered to local business people for a fee;
 - Have a silent auction of donated items during the convention;
 - Sell 50/50 tickets throughout the convention;
 - Raffle for a major door prize at the convention;
 - Approach banks for giveaway items for the tote bag;
 - Approach businesses (particularly those who may benefit such as garden centres and related businesses) for donations, gift certificates, door prizes, or tote bag items.
 - Approach grocery stores for giveaway items or to sponsor the coffee break/snacks;
 - Approach the local Chamber of Commerce for giveaway items;
 - Approach major business outlets (all businesses in a small town setting);
 - Approach local businesses for discounts or advertising in the program for a fee;
 - Approach government departments and Health Authorities for grants; and
 - Approach government officials to advertise in the convention program for a fee.
- Sponsors and donors should be acknowledged for their contributions in the convention program, in a newspaper story, by putting the donor's name on the door prizes, etc.

Door Prizes

- If you are planning on having door prizes, have as many of the items donated as possible. Then the only cost is wrapping supplies.
- Prizes should be drawn a day or two prior to the convention, and the winners and prizes recorded on a list.
- On the day of the convention, two volunteers should be responsible for handing out the prizes as names are drawn.

6. Publicity and Promotion

- Publicity is very important to the success of the convention.
- The first priority is to inform members of NSAGC of the convention dates, location, program highlights, registration form with costs, and directions to the convention.
- NSAGC will offer space to promote the Annual Convention program and registration form in its newsletter and also on its web site and Facebook page. The program and registration form should be drawn up as early as possible, so they can be included in the NSAGC newsletter and on the website by mid-January.
- The program and registration form should be sent to the District Directors, so they can forward these along to the clubs.
- Publicity directed at the general public needs to be done quite early in order to get information into national publications. Local and regional newspapers, radio, TV, community and local business flyers, and gardening magazines should also be approached. Magazines could include Gardens East, SaltScapes, and Canadian Gardening.
- Ensure that there is proper signage to the venues and other scheduled events. There are a number of Convention signs which are handed down from convention to convention and that can be used during the convention. Make sure, if you are hosting the next convention, to pick them up at the end of the day. It is best if you can pass these signs on to the next host once you are finished with them at the convention.
- NSAGC has a Convention Banner which is a wall quilt that was created in the Eastern District in 2009. This is to be displayed during convention, with your club or district on it and should be passed on to the next host during the closing ceremonies.

7. Venue

Space Requirements

- The venue should be able to accommodate all the necessary functions/events that are going to take place during the convention.
- Usually one main centre will be used to house the opening night event, the Annual General Meeting (AGM), all the presentations/guest speakers and the banquet. As a guideline, recent conventions have had approximately 200 guests with about 75% attending the banquet..
- The committee should also ensure there is enough tables/space for all the required displays/events:
 - Yearbooks;
 - Floral Contest;
 - Photo Contest;
 - Club Banners; and
 - Vendors (optional).
- Ensure the vendors are located away from the main workshops.
- The AGM requires that there is a podium, microphone, and a table for members of the NSAGC Executive. NSAGC will take care of the Annual Meeting agenda and any paperwork required.
- The banquet usually has a head table to accommodate the Convention Chair, Vice Chair, NSAGC President, Awards Chair and the guest speaker. If there is not going to be a head table at the banquet, these people should be seated at tables near the front in order to have easy access to the podium.

Facility

- The facility should be wheelchair accessible and, if on multiple floors, have an elevator.
- Check with the facility about rules regarding placement of signs and the use of wall space.
- The facility needs to provide security for the convention area.
- Negotiate with the facility for the best room rates and any extras they will throw in.
- There should be a good sound system available.

Decorations and Set-Up

- It is optional to decorate the venue, but if it is decided to do so the decorations should follow the theme of the convention.
- When possible, plan to set up the day or night before the convention starts.

8. Meals

- Do not underestimate the amount of food. Work closely with the caterer to have an ample supply on hand.
- Most establishments will not allow outside food to be brought in, so all the food and beverages must be purchased from the venue. As a result, there will be a 15% gratuity and then HST added to that amount.
- Make sure to arrange for vegetarian options and any other food considerations, such as allergies.
- All meals (vendor and attendees) should be the responsibility of the one person who is responsible for ordering them.
-
- Last minute additions to lunch and banquet meals can be a huge problem. Set a deadline for these meals and make it absolutely clear on the registration form that after that date additional meals are not available.

9. Program

- The convention Program is the committee's choice, with the exception that there must be a one hour AGM on Saturday morning at 8:45 or 9:00.
- The Program committee, working in conjunction with the Convention committee, will draft a preliminary program. If desired it can follow previous convention programs in regards to timing of events and speakers(see Sample Program).
- As soon as guest speakers and events are confirmed the final program should be created and circulated for inclusion in the fall newsletter and on the NSAGC website and Facebook page. If this deadline cannot be met, then the program should be available in early January for the spring issue of the newsletter.
- The finalized program should be sent to the District Directors for distribution to clubs.
- The program should offer a variety of events, such as guest speaker presentations, plant sale, tours, or possibly a workshop. Opening ceremonies on Friday night could have entertainment or a guest speaker. Chamber music (live or recorded) could be provided during the banquet.
- Activities may be conducted during the registration period on Friday which could consist of things such as: a slide show of gardens; a demonstration workshop; and a tour of gardens or a local nursery.

- Speaker profiles could be included in the program.
- The program needs to include time for the NSAGC President's opening and closing remarks.
- The program needs to include time for announcements of the winners of:
 - Photo Contest;
 - Outstanding Members Awards;
 - Door prizes; and
 - Any other awards or prizes.

Speakers

- A "professional" program is not necessary. Many local gardeners make excellent speakers.
- The Program Committee should check on available speakers, contact them early and follow up with a letter or email.
- If possible, provide and test laptops and projectors and let speakers know the software they may provide their presentations in. This will avoid AV issues during the presentations.
- Ask speakers to provide their presentations prior to the convention if possible so that they can be loaded and tested on the laptops. Otherwise, ask speakers to bring their presentations on CDs or thumb drives to be loaded onto the convention laptops.
- Speakers should also be contacted as the convention draws nearer to reconfirm that the topic on the program is what they are planning on delivering.
- Check with each presenter to see what is required in the way of audio visual equipment. Some venues do not have any equipment available except for microphones and therefore equipment may have to be rented at a cost.
- Check to see if speakers need handouts duplicated, which will have an associated cost.
- Make sure the speakers know their time allotment and allow a few minutes for set up and introduction plus a few questions at the end and a thank-you. A 20-minute talk should be scheduled for 30 minutes to allow the program to stay on time.
- Each speaker should have a committee member assigned to introduce them, keep them on time, thank them at the end, and give them any payment. If you have 2 speakers at the same time, you will need a person assigned to each speaker.

Entertainment

- The Entertainment Chair will work with the convention committee to outline appropriate entertainment, keeping in mind the budget allocated.
- The Chair will then contact the entertainer(s) outlining the date and time and to determine their cost. This information will be taken back to the convention committee for approval.
- After approval, the Chair should send a letter or email to the entertainer outlining the time, date, cost, sound equipment requirements, and who is responsible to provide the equipment. This should be in writing and very clear between the entertainer and the Chair. If not, it can cause frustration and extra expense at the time of the convention.
- Closer to the convention, the Chair will re-confirm availability.
- The Chair is responsible for getting the cheques from the Treasurer and ensuring the entertainer(s) are paid.

Tours

- Tours are often arranged for Friday afternoon during registration and Sunday morning.
- The tour(s) could be guided or self-guided.

- If busing is required, ensure numbers are confirmed through the registration form, provide a guide, set up a schedule for the bus, and ensure that there is a ticket in the registration kit.
- Set up a deadline for finalizing the tours so that they can be included on the registration form.
- It will be less work during the registration process if tours do not have limits to the number of people able to participate in them.

10. Registration

Registration Form

- The registration form should be drawn up as soon as fees are known. You may use the previous year's form as a guide (see Sample Registration Form).
- The registration form should include all of the necessary details before it is published. Once people start to register, it is very difficult to change the form.
- The form should include the option to indicate food allergies or other conditions.
- The registration form must indicate a deadline for registrations and a date after which late fees will be charged.
- The registration form should indicate that post-dated cheques will not be accepted.
- The form should indicate that registrants will not be notified when their form is received – no news is good news.
- The form should be made available on the website and Facebook page and sent to the newsletter editor by early January.

Registration Logistics

- The Registrar will be responsible for the tracking of delegates and guests attending the convention. It will be from these numbers that you will have the counts for each of the activities (Friday night meet/greet, lunch on Saturday, Banquet, bus tours, etc.).
- The Registrar and Treasurer can be the same person. However, both of these jobs are substantial and it may be wiser to have two people. They will have to work closely together to ensure that the delegates are registered correctly and have sent the correct funds for their chosen options.
- If the Registrar is tracking by computer he/she may also be the best person to electronically create the name tags.
- Some factors that will affect the number of delegates attending will be: the program content; the date (should not conflict with the Apple Blossom Festival held the last weekend in May); the distance required to travel; cost of accommodations; whether venue is an all-inclusive hotel site or not; and the registration fee for the convention.
- Once the program has been circulated, then the committee can expect registrations to begin as early as February, with most coming in March and April.

Registration Table

- The Registration Chair will draw up a schedule for the registration desk so it will be staffed in accordance with the program hours.
- There should be an information desk close to or as part of the registration desk that is open during the busy hours of the convention.
- The Registrar may ask the Registration Chair to put the meal tickets in the nametag sleeves and assemble nametags in alphabetic order for convenience.
- All necessary materials should be readily available for the registration desk, such as:

- Registration list (Registrar will provide);
- Name tags (Registrar will provide);
- Banquet ticket (Registrar will provide or note it on the name tag);
- Registration bags (Fundraising/Donation Chair will provide);
- Garden tour maps and bus ticket (if required); and
- Any other items deemed necessary.

Registration Bags

- Decide on what kind of tote bags are going to be provided (bought or made).
- Form a team to stuff the bags.
- A suggested list of materials that could go in the registration bags include:
 - The program;
 - Tour map (if applicable);
 - Note pads, pens or pencils;
 - Business trinkets;
 - Business advertising flyers;
 - Homemade recipe's for garden problems;
 - Medicinal plant remedies/recipes;
 - Seed packets;
 - Tourism or chamber of commerce pins;
 - Coffee mug (use the one from Pictou as an example);
 - Herbal tea packets;
 - Fertilizer sample (sea boost); and
 - "How To" pamphlets.

11. Competitions and Contests

The Convention Committee is responsible for setting the criteria for the floral competition, contests, quizzes, etc. and supplying prizes to the winners. Donated merchandise is excellent for the prizes.

Floral Competition

- If it is decided to hold a Floral Competition as part of the convention, a theme will need to be determined along with the categories. The description for the Floral Competition must be written as "designs", not arrangements or compositions.
- The Floral Competition Chair will be responsible for:
 - Setting up the display area for entries;
 - Providing a voting method for all to vote;
 - Providing cards for clubs and individuals to mark their entry(s); and
 - Arranging for prizes for the winners.

12. Vendors

- Vendors at the convention are a great way to showcase local businesses and artists. Many vendors, if asked, will provide a door prize.

- A vendor list could be determined by the Convention Committee with input from the supporting clubs. Possible vendors could be located on last years' list of vendors. Other vendors could come from the local area.
- Avoiding duplication of product should be kept in mind.
- A vendor registration form will be required and can be adapted from the previous convention (see Sample Vendor Form).
- Vendors must be made aware of the times that they are expected to be open, logistics around setting up their booths, and the amount of space they will be allocated.
- Build in time for shopping by participants around meals and breaks.
- Vendors should be charged a fee that includes lunch and coffee. Vendors' lunch may be served after the delegates lunch while the vendors are not selling. Door prizes from vendors should be optional or included as a monetary value in the vendor fee as they are not able to claim prizes as expenses for income tax purposes.

13. Role of NSAGC

During the convention, members of the NSAGC Executive and Board are responsible for:

- Conducting the AGM;
- Presenting the "Awards" at the banquet;
- Closing remarks by the NSAGC President
- Conducting the Photo Contest;
- Looking after yearbook certificates; and
- Looking after Tags & Seals.