

NSAGC
Guidelines
for Starting
a New
Garden
Club

June 1

2009

NSAGC Guidelines for Starting a New Garden Club
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Guidelines on Starting a Garden Club

1.0 Introduction

Are you in need of helpful advice on one, many, or all aspects of gardening? Would you like to meet some fellow enthusiasts? Join the club! Gardening clubs, or horticultural societies, are sprinkled like seedlings throughout the Province and are as varied in nature as the gardens that enhance the landscape and as unique as each individual who helps to shape them. If you do not yet enjoy the benefits of a club in your community, here are some easy guidelines for starting one. If you already belong to such a group, you may find ideas for keeping it fresh and attracting new members.

Many of us have been enticed into the multi-faceted world of horticulture by a simple ad in the local newspaper "A meeting will be held to see if there is any interest in starting a local garden club".

A group of people attended this initial meeting, clearly signifying that, indeed, there was interest. A start-up committee was formed and soon the formal club was on its way. The initial seed germinated a club that now boasts a membership of nearly 75.

Specific Steps in Starting a Club

1. Advertise. Procure a free, centrally-located meeting room and advertise a meeting in the local paper, by posters, free public service announcements, etc., to see if there is enough interest to form a club. You could invite a member from a society in a neighbouring community as a resource.

2. The next thing to establish: are there enough people in your area who are actually interested in meeting on a regular basis in some sort of organized way to share information and ideas on gardening? This can be determined either by a number of individuals talking about forming a group in some informal way or just a few individuals organizing a public meeting to assess the support for forming such a group.

3. Once there is support to form a garden club, the next thing to do is choose a name for the new group and establish a meeting place and standard date and time to meet, such as the second Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. Many clubs set up a calling or e-mail committee to remind their members of an upcoming meeting and to inform them of the educational program for the evening. The new club should consider establishing a club constitution which defines the club's objectives, the management structure, and responsibilities of the executive and committee chairpersons. An example of a sample constitution is attached as Annex A to this document.

4. The club can meet as informally as it wishes; but, a club should at least establish what the main aims of the group should be. Educating their own members and community involvement are two aims clubs should aspire to. The garden club should establish an executive made up of at least a president, a vice-president, secretary, and a treasurer. In setting up a club bank account, you should have at least two signing officers, the treasurer and another member, and not from the same family.

- 5.** Garden clubs can have a number of committees. The most common ones are program, calling, refreshments, projects, and fundraising.
- 6.** A new Garden club should concentrate first on educating its members in all facets of gardening. It should limit the business portion of their meetings to allow plenty of time for a gardening program and a social time for members to discuss what they have just learned. Some members feel more at ease asking questions in a small, intimate group over refreshments rather than standing up at a meeting in front of the whole group.
- 7.** Garden clubs establish their own dues structure. At first, most clubs will operate solely on the money from dues until they arrange some fundraising events. Initially, what projects or events the club undertakes will be determined by club dues available.
- 8.** Many clubs are involved in community gardening projects, gardens at schools, hospitals, public meeting places and parks. New clubs will be pressured into taking on many community projects; but, it is probably the best idea for a new club to take on just a few short-term projects in the early years. Expand as your group grows, not only in number of members but also in experience.
- 9.** There is strength in numbers, and new clubs that get established should look at joining a provincial group known as the Nova Scotia Association of Garden Clubs (NSAGC). The advantages of joining this group are many; but, the first initial benefit is being able to meet with other garden clubs in the Province to exchange information and ideas. A district meeting of all garden clubs in your local area brings together gardeners that have similar soil and growing conditions, as well as sharing sources of gardening materials in their region. In addition, the NSAGC is a registered organization under the Registry of Joint Stock Companies under the Province of Nova Scotia and has an approved Memorandum of Association. This Memorandum of Association defines the objectives, structure and by-laws of the Association, which should be reviewed by any organization starting to form a new gardening club. A copy of this Memorandum of Association is available from the Secretary of the NSAGC.
- 10.** Encourage attendance at meetings by offering door prizes, refreshments and interesting programs. Pursue group discounts at nurseries. (This is available through NSAGC membership). Organize bulk orders in the winter, a spring and fall bulb order, a spring order on garden supplies such as peat moss, soils, grass seed, etc., and occasional specialty bulk orders like grow mix, chrysanthemums or bedding plants. Offer information on the activities of specialty groups (rose growers, Ikebana, organic growers) and disseminate news of trips and conferences.
- 11.** Check out the NSAGC web site at NSAGC.com for links to other member garden clubs' web sites for ideas on formation of a new club.
- 12.** Be sure to establish excellent speakers for club meetings and especially the first meeting. Excellent speakers can be found on the NSAGC web site or by contacting other clubs in the Province. Once you have established a meeting place, advertise about your special speaker presentations to attract prospective new members. Make sure to advertise well in advance of the meeting to capture new recruits.

13. Once the new club is established, it is important to have your Program Committee do some long-term planning (one year in advance) to organize for specific guest speakers. Otherwise, the speakers you would like to have may not be available when you want them. Long-term planning is most beneficial to the success of your club and the maintenance of a dedicated and enthusiastic membership.

14. When planning your programs, well-rounded programs will provide a wide variety of topics and activities. There should, indeed, be something for everyone over the course of the year. Like biological diversity in the natural environment, so too, does the health of a horticultural society depend upon variation. Strive to appeal to both male and female, young and old, novice and master. For example, succession planting with vegetables, perennials for every setting, how to prune trees, garden photography, wetlands, rock gardens, ponds and composting are topics of interest to most gardeners.

Most meetings should consist of a short, informative business session followed by the main feature. Expense or availability may prohibit having many speakers; but, videos, slide shows and films can fill the gap. Museums, the National Film Board, provincial ministries of food and agriculture, botanical gardens and individual club members have proven to be good sources. Venture away from the norm from time to time and have a meeting in a park, visit a conservation area, partake in a guided tour of a greenhouse or nursery. Tour each other's gardens followed by a club picnic in a park or local garden or beach area.

15, Foster the sharing of interests and expertise. Members soon learn whom they can go to with a question about aphids or zucchinis. Who gardens indoors? Who built a retaining wall? Information can be shared through a club newsletter, questions at meetings, a notice board, and talks or workshops by members on individual areas of expertise. Gather information and resources. A list of local garden centers and places of interest would be appreciated by members. Make other resource lists such as field trip destinations, good speakers or gardening books available at the local library.

16. Share the workload. A club will go stale if the executive does not change regularly. Take turns doing a big job, such as service on the executive for a year or two, and then pitching in in little ways at other times. Donate a door prize, bake some squares, stacking the chairs.

17. Contact NSAGC for Assistance. As soon as the members are serious about starting a club and wish to join NSAGC, they should contact the NSAGC Secretary and/or the Treasurer for specific instructions and assistance. Contact information for these persons can be found on the NSAGC website at NSAGC.com under the page "Executives".

18. Draft the Constitution for the new garden club. The sample constitution for a new garden club is located in Annex A attached.

Annex A to NSAGC Guidelines

For Starting a Garden Club

June 1, 2009

SAMPLE

Constitution for New Garden Club

SAMPLE

NEW GARDEN CLUB CONSTITUTION

ARTICLE 1. IDENTITY

1.1 NAME

The name of this organization is XXXXX Garden Club

1.2 NSAGC MEMBERSHIP

To further the objectives of the membership of the XXXX Garden Club, this Club shall maintain membership in the Nova Scotia Association of Garden Clubs (NSAGC), and shall pay annual membership dues as required by the NSSGC and approved by the membership.

ARTICLE 2. CLUB OBJECTIVES

The Club Objectives are to promote and encourage:

1. club members' gardening as a principal objective, enhancing each member's gardening abilities through the exchange of gardening information amongst the membership and by presenting special training programs within the Club and for other interested parties;
2. community gardening and beautification. A general interest in gardening and beautification projects within the communities in which the club members live;
3. environmental awareness. Responsible use of the Earth's resources as they pertain to gardening while recognizing the Earth's environmental sensitivities; and
4. competitions. Member participation in garden-related competitions including club shows, rallies, fairs, provincial agriculture shows, and NSAGC events.

ARTICLE 3. DEFINITIONS

3.1 For the purpose of this Constitution, the following definitions shall have the meanings as described herein:

1. "Quorum" shall mean the lesser of 50% of the membership, or ten (10) members plus at least half of the Officers;
2. "Proper Notice" shall mean a phone around is conducted with confirmation received from at least a quorum in not less than 48 hours prior to the meeting; and
3. "Annual Dues" shall be paid once per fiscal year by each member. Honorary Life Members shall be exempt. The amount shall be established at the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

ARTICLE 4. MEMBERSHIP

4.1 Membership shall be open to anyone interested in supporting the club objectives and who pays the annual dues. In addition, the Club may recognize as members those persons, who by virtue of their contributions over time, have been elected Honorary Life Members.

ARTICLE 5. CLUB EXECUTIVE POSITIONS/OFFICERS

5.1 The Executive positions of the club shall be as follows:

President

Vice-President

Secretary

Treasurer

Immediate Past President

The person filling an executive position shall be deemed an Officer of the Club.

5.2 The period of time in office for each Officer shall normally be two (2) years. To provide continuity, elections for the President and Vice-President shall be held in odd-numbered years and for the Treasurer and Secretary in even-numbered years. All shall be elected by a simple majority vote. The position of Immediate Past President shall be filled automatically by the outgoing President, unless the person is unable or unwilling to perform the function. In this case, the position may either remain vacant or be filled by any other retired president at the pleasure of the membership.

5.3 Only in the event of failure to obtain another suitable candidate may an incumbent of any position be permitted to retain that position beyond the basic period. In any event, all positions shall only be filled by formal elections and voting.

5.4 Guidelines for the functions of the Club Executive Positions are contained in Appendix A to this Constitution.

ARTICLE 6. STANDING COMMITTEES

6.1 Standing Committees shall be formed for each year as follows:

Constitution

Programs

Publicity

Year Book

Lunch

Sick and Visiting

Phone

Nominating

Audit

Bursary

6.2 Guidelines for the Standing Committees are contained in Appendix B to this Constitution.

ARTICLE 7. FINANCIAL

7.1 The XXXXX Garden Club is operated as a not-for-profit organization. It shall not, however, operate at a deficit.

7.2 Fiscal Year – The fiscal year for the XXXXX Garden Club shall be from the Annual General Meeting, the date to be determined by the Club, of the current year until the Annual General Meeting in the following year.

7.3 Financial Control

7.3.1 Bank Account: The majority of the Club's financial assets shall be kept in a bank account under the full control and visibility of the Club's Officers and membership.

7.3.2 Transaction Control: The Club's account shall require at least two signatures by Club Officers (signatories) for any duly authorized transaction.

7.3.3. Signatories: None of the signatories to the Club's account can be related by birth or marriage.

7.3.4 Cash Floats: Small cash floats may be kept by both the Treasurer and the Secretary. These accounts may be "topped up" by a simple motion at any monthly meeting. The limit for these floats shall be set at the AGM.

7.4 Spending Limitations/Authority

7.4.1 General: Except for special events, spending limitations for any event or expenditure shall be established at the AGM.

7.4.2 President's Spending Authority: The President shall have the authority to incur expenses for items not otherwise covered herein, providing the President has the concurrence of a majority of the Executive. These expenditures shall be ratified at the monthly meeting immediately following the expenditure. The per-item limit of such expenditures shall be set at the AGM.

7.4.3 Prize Donations: Specific gardening prizes may be established and sponsored by the Club for gardening show winning entries. The limit for such prizes shall be set at the AGM.

7.4.4 Memorial Donations: The limit for memorial donations for members and immediate family members shall be set at the AGM.

7.4.5 Special Speakers: Transportation expenses of a guest speaker may be partially defrayed. The limit for this payment shall be set at the AGM.

7.4.6 Exhibition Prizes: Prizes shall be awarded for winning flower and vegetable entries at the XXXXX Exhibition. The limit for each prize shall be set at the AGM.

7.4.7 Special Events: The above limits notwithstanding, spending limits for any special event may be determined at a monthly meeting preceding the event.

7.4.8 Memorial Bursary: An annual bursary of \$250.00 shall be awarded alternately to a deserving student from either a high school or a regional high school who enters a post-secondary program in horticultural-related studies.

7.5 Audit of Accounts: The accounts of the XXXXX Garden Club shall be audited annually by the Audit Committee prior to the Annual General Meeting.

ARTICLE 8. MEETINGS

8.1 Annual General Meeting: The Annual General Meeting (AGM), the date of which shall be determined by the Club, and shall immediately following the regular monthly meeting.

8.1.1 AGM Order of Business: The Order of Business for the AGM shall normally be as follows:

- Minutes of Previous Meeting
- Business Arising from the Minutes
- Officers' Reports
- Committee Year-end Reports
- Review of Constitution
- Nominations
- Election of Officers
- Encumbering of Committees
- Review/Set Spending Limits as Per Articles 3.1 (3), 7.3, and 7.4
- Any Other Business
- Meeting Adjourned

8.2 Monthly Meetings: Monthly meetings are normally held on the third Wednesday of each month. The President and/or Vice-President shall have the authority to cancel monthly meetings due to inclement weather or other events beyond club control. When such action is taken, the membership shall be advised via the phone committee.

8.2.1. Order of Business: The Order of Business for monthly meetings shall normally be as follows:

- Roll Call
- Minutes of Previous Monthly Meeting

Business Arising from the Minutes
Correspondence
Treasurer's Report
Committee Reports
Old Business
New Business
Meeting Adjournment
Monthly Program Activity

8.2.2 At the discretion of the Club Executive, the Order of Business may be amended for any particular monthly meeting. A roll call would still be conducted and members given the opportunity to bring forth any items they feel could not wait until the next regular monthly meeting.

8.3 Executive Meetings: Executive Meetings may be held at the discretion of the Executive; but, proper notice shall be given. At such meetings, at least the President, the Secretary, and the Treasurer must be present. In the event that any one or more of these persons is unavailable, then the Vice-President and one other officer must be present. The proceedings of any executive meeting shall be reported to the membership at the next monthly meeting.

8.4 Voting: A quorum shall be required to execute decisions of significance to the Club. A simple majority vote is required to pass any motion. In the event of a tied vote, the Chairperson shall cast the deciding vote in accordance with Rules of Order at Article 8.5

ARTICLE 8.5. RULES OF ORDER

8.5 Rules of Order: The Rules of Order used shall be *Parliamentary Procedure at a Glance*, New Edition by O. Garfield Jones.

ARTICLE 9. CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT

9.1 The Constitution shall be reviewed on an annual basis by the Club, and any proposed amendments shall be dealt with at the AGM.

ARTICLE 10. DISPUTES

10.1 Any dispute that arises that cannot be handled in a normal fashion shall be resolved in a fair and equitable manner by the Executive and shall be reported to the membership at either the monthly meeting or at the AGM as deemed appropriate by the President.

ARTICLE 11. CLUB ASSETS

11.1 Non-financial club assets, such as books, photos, show materials, and memorabilia may be stored as agreed upon by the club membership.

ARTICLE 12. CLUB VIABILITY

12.1 In the event a quorum cannot be gathered for four consecutive monthly meetings, the Officers of the Club are empowered to determine club viability.

12.2 If the viability is in question, the encumbered Executive shall retain their positions until such time as:

- (i) the membership and activity of the Club indicate that the Club is once again viable, as determined by the successful convening of an AGM; or
- (ii) it is determined by the Executive that it is improbable that the Club can be made viable. In this case, Article 12.4 shall be executed.

12.3 During any period where the Club's viability is in question, the encumbered Executive shall take all appropriate measures to safeguard all club assets.

12.4 Dissolution: If it is determined that the Club is no longer viable, the encumbered Executive shall:

- (i) resolve any outstanding debts;
- (ii) determine a fair distribution of the Club's assets in accordance with the objectives of the Club as laid out in Article 2; and
- (iii) advise the NSAGC of the dissolution, including distribution details for any tangible assets.

ARTICLE 13. REPORTS AND RETURNS

13.1 In recognition of our membership in the NSAGC, the XXXXX Garden Club shall be obligated to provide an historical annual report of the Club's activities. A copy of this report shall be sent to the NSAGC Historian. The Chairperson of the Year Book Committee shall be responsible for dispersal of this report.

APPENDIX A TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE XXXXX GARDEN CLUB

GUIDELINES FOR BRANCH EXECUTIVE

GENERAL

By accepting election to a Club Officer position, an individual has indicated a willingness to serve. Duties should, where possible, be assigned on the basis of capability and availability.

All Club Officers should encourage membership in the Club and be sensitive to suggestions from the membership.

The responsibilities below are not inclusive and are provided as a guide only.

PRESIDENT

The President is the Club's Chief Executive Officer and will set the tone of club activities. Although responsible for seeing that all the tasks are performed, the President should avoid getting personally involved in their completion. Specific duties are outlined below.

VICE-PRESIDENT

The Vice-President understudies the President and must be prepared to act in the absence of the President. He/she may be asked by the President to conduct unique tasks and to serve as a committee chairperson. The Vice-President should consider the position as preparation for the role of President. More detailed terms of reference are outlined below.

SECRETARY

The Secretary is responsible for control of club correspondence and records. In addition to the specific tasks outlined below, the Secretary maintains the Club's general database.

TREASURER

The Treasurer is responsible for controlling and reporting club financial activities. Specific duties are outlined below. He/she may be asked to serve as a committee chairperson or complete other discrete tasks.

IMMEDIATE PAST-PRESIDENT

The Past-President provides vital continuity, giving advice on previous club activities and identifying the background for policy decisions. The Past-President shall act as the Chairperson for the Nominating Committee and shall prepare a nominating report at the AGM.

EXECUTIVE TERMS OF REFERENCE

PRESIDENT

The President is responsible for seeing that all tasks are performed. In general, the President:

1. maintains contact with the Nova Scotia Association of Garden Clubs for matters of policy and items of general interest;
2. monitors all activities with the Club and acts to correct any weaknesses or problems that arise;
3. delegates responsibilities appropriately and equitably among club officers;
4. monitors and guides the activities of all club officers;
5. ensures continuity is maintained by constant briefing of the Vice-President;
6. calls, prepares agenda for and chairs executive committee and general meetings;
7. seeks out and encourages members to volunteer as executive or committee members;

VICE-PRESIDENT

In general, the Vice-President:

1. maintains close contact with the President and all the Executive and Chairpersons;
2. should be aware of all club activities underway or contemplated and ensure they are in keeping with the Club Objectives, alerting the President if there is a conflict with the Club's Constitution or the NSAGC;
3. must be prepared to fill in for the President at any time, to ensure the smooth functioning of the Club;
4. is expected to act as chair of one or more of the standing committees; and
5. identifies potential executive or committee candidates.

SECRETARY

The Secretary is responsible to the Club's President for the administration of the Club. In general, the Secretary:

1. records and handles all incoming and outgoing club correspondence;
2. records and maintains the minutes of all club meetings;

3. maintains an updated list of all branch members;
4. in conjunction with the relevant committee chairpersons, prepares and submits any required reports to the NSAGC;
5. orders branch stationary and supplies;
6. maintains an inventory of all club assets, including their location;
7. identifies potential executive or committee candidates.

TREASURER

The Treasurer is responsible to the Club President for the financial management of the Club. In general, the Treasurer:

1. supplies to the Secretary the names of those members whose dues are in arrears;
2. prepares budget/financial reports for approval at the appropriate meeting;
3. receives membership fees and other income, issues receipts and membership cards;
4. pays membership fees to the NSAGC;
5. pays all approved expenses or disbursements incurred by the Club;
6. maintains custody of branch funds and keeps accurate financial records;
7. in conjunction with the audit committee chairperson, ensures the conduct of an annual audit; and
8. identifies potential executive or committee candidates.

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

The Immediate Past President should be available to inform the President and Vice-President on historical decisions and advise them on matters concerning the Club's best interest. In general, the Immediate Past President should:

1. maintain close contact with the President and all the Executive;
2. provide assistance or advice to new members of club committees;
3. be prepared to fill in for the President and Vice-President in their absences;
4. not act as chair of any of the standing committees for at least two years following the termination of his or her term of office; and

5. perform as the chairperson for the Nominating Committee and prepare the nominating committee report at the AGM in November of each year.

**APPENDIX B TO THE CONSTITUTION
THE XXXXX GARDEN CLUB**

GUIDELINES FOR STANDING COMMITTEES

6.2.1 CONSTITUTION

As per Article 9 of the Constitution, the Constitution Committee is to conduct an annual review of the Club's Constitution. Results of the review and recommendations are to be prepared in time for the AGM.

6.2.2 PROGRAMS

For each monthly meeting with the exception for November, the Programs Committee is responsible for organizing an informative presentation or activity in keeping with the Club's objectives. The activities need not immediately precede or follow the regular meeting, but should take into consideration members' ability to attend. Presentations/activities should be planned well enough in advance to allow for appropriate publicity and member preparation. Close liaison with the Publicity and Phone Committees is required.

6.2.3 PUBLICITY

The Publicity Committee is responsible for informing the general public as well as members of all club events. Close liaison with the Program Committee (or Special Event Coordinator) is required. Notice of upcoming events, provided in time to allow for proper member preparation and follow-up reports of the events should be provided. Local media and flyers posted in local outlets, where permitted, should be used. Whenever possible, photographs are to be taken, both for publicity of activities and also for inclusion in the Club's yearbook.

6.2.4. YEARBOOK

The Yearbook Committee is responsible for preparation of the annual Yearbook in keeping with the requirements and guidelines provided by the NSAGC. All members are encouraged to submit photographs with attached captions and write-ups where appropriate, of their gardening activities.

6.2.5 LUNCH

The Lunch Committee is responsible for arranging a modest snack for each monthly meeting. All members are expected to contribute equally in providing sandwiches/sweets when called upon.

6.2.6 SICK & VISITING

The Sick & Visiting Committee is responsible for advising the Club of members who are indisposed, either at home or in hospital. Visits to such members are encouraged, the interests of the individual always being of foremost importance.

6.1.7 PHONE

The Phone Committee is responsible for alerting all members of upcoming events or changes to planned activities. Close liaison with the Program Committee (or Special Event Coordinator) is essential to permit adequate notification.

6.1.8 NOMINATING

The Nominating Committee is responsible for canvassing the membership to identify members who wish to stand for election to the Club Executive in accordance with Article 5 of the Constitution. The Nominating Committee will conduct the annual election of officers in accordance with Article 5.2. The Past Chairperson shall act as the Chairperson for the Nominating Committee Meetings.

6.1.9 AUDIT

The Audit Committee shall ensure the Club's financial records are audited in accordance with Article 7.5 of the Constitution. Additionally, the Audit Committee may be called upon by the President to conduct an audit of any of the Club's activities.

6.1.10 BURSARY COMMITTEE

The Bursary Committee is responsible for informing the high school that they are to be recipients of that year's memorial bursary. They shall select the winning candidate from the applications submitted and present the winner at the annual graduation ceremony. Upon confirmation of acceptance and enrollment in a post-secondary institution, the Club's Treasurer will issue a cheque to the recipient.