

JUST FOR THE JOY OF IT!
The Benefits of Being a Member of TGOA/MGCA
by Honey Barnekoff

Local clubs are the heart and vitality of our organization. It is at the local level that the most significant ongoing education in gardening occurs, that community beautification of great value is done, that personal friendships and camaraderie are developed. Much quality information comes to us through the association we have with fellow members on the local level. "Running with a good crowd" brings many benefits!

But there is a new and entirely different dimension of value associated with membership in a national gardening organization like The Gardeners of America/Men's Garden Clubs of America. Here, too, much quality gardening knowledge and information is available. Networking and the strong friendships built on our love of gardening and related interests are invaluable. In addition to the charismatic importance of being a part of something larger than oneself, the national organization provides many unique services and benefits. Let's review some of them:

Membership in the American Horticultural Society –

- Membership in the American Horticultural Society is available to TGOA/MGCA members for an additional \$35 for two years or \$45 for three years. Simply indicate on your TGOA/MGCA membership form that you wish to add this membership and AHS will bill you directly. (A membership outside our organization is \$35 a year). That will include entry to more than 200 botanical gardens and arboreta in the US and beyond our borders at no or reduced entry fee, and in some of those gardens, a discount in their garden shops.
- A subscription to *The American Gardener*, which is a bimonthly publication of the AHS, with timely, informative and entertaining articles on gardening throughout our country.
- A seed sharing program is available in which one may obtain many kinds of seeds at no cost (requested donations fund the interns who run the program).

AHS maintains an 800 number through which members may ask horticultural questions or via their website.

AHS offers many tours and educational programs to its members.

River Farm, on the banks of the Potomac, is the home of the American Horticultural Society and is open to the public and to members. River Farm was owned by George Washington, father of our country.

- **TGOA/MGCA national newsletter** will be sent to each member, bringing news of what is happening in other clubs and at headquarters. It is an important communication tool. This newsletter will also be posted on our website.

National Programs sponsored and promoted by TGOA/MGCA include-

- **Youth Gardening.** This program emphasizes the responsibility we have for passing on our love for gardening and our knowledge and enthusiasm to our young people. This is, in a way, our responsibility. It also builds a cadre of future members for our clubs.

- **Gardening From the Heart** is a program that places emphasis on helping disadvantaged gardeners in the community enjoy the joy and therapy of gardening. This is a community service with special benefits to not only the recipients but also to the local club and its participating members.

- **Big Pumpkin and Giant Sunflower Contests** provide a wonderful competitive and fun way to promote horticulture, particularly to our young people. This project is sure to get media attention for both the "super growers" and the local sponsoring club. It is often coordinated with a club's Youth Gardening project.

- **The Photography Contest** is not only a great opportunity for members to enjoy sharing their art and technical capability with a national audience, but also provides the national organization with valuable material for use in a number of ways. The Photography Committee produces a video from the hundreds of slides submitted; the Calendar Committee selects pictures to use in its annual publication. These photographs will also be used in *The American Gardener* where appropriate.

There is a Discount Program in which several national retailers provide a discount to our members. These include Thompson and Morgan Seed Co., Gardeners Supply/Dutch Bulbs, and Enterprise Car Rentals. Please check the website, under the members' only designation, or an issue of the *Gardener* magazine for details. You can soon earn back the cost of your membership by the use of these discounts.

Some clubs have also set up discounts with local retailers for their members' benefit. Please check with your local club officers to see if this benefit is available in your area.

- **The Awards Program** recognizes clubs and individual members for exemplary service and contributions to, not only TGOA/MGCA, but also to their local clubs and communities. These include both standard awards recommended by the Awards Committee based on nominations from local clubs and special Presidential Citations for unique national service.

- **The Calendar**, a highly valued annual color publication, uses some of the most outstanding art from the Photography Contest. Our calendars are used by clubs

for local public relations, as special gifts, for fund raising, for new-member recognition and in many other ways.

•**The Lending Library**, housed at the National Headquarters in Johnston, Iowa, contains an extensive assortment of literature, which members may borrow for only the cost of return postage. A list of all literature and books is available on the web site or from the headquarters.

•**The Audio/Visual Library** contains a great variety of garden and horticulture-oriented slide programs with audiocassettes and VCR programs. These can be found on our website.

•**The Website** brings more national attention to TGOA/MGCA and provides tremendous amounts of information about clubs, meeting plans and projects as well as broad gardening information and even Question and Answer pages for members as well as the general public. There are three web addresses for your use:

- <http://www.tgoa-mgca.org>
- <http://www.gardenersofamerica.org>
- <http://www.gardenersofamerica.com>

•**Club Organizing Brochures** are available for help to clubs who want to sponsor a new club in a neighboring community and to groups who want to organize a club themselves. Building a new club is a precious gift to others--if you know that your club is valuable to your members and your community, then think how important a new club would be to others!

•**Club Officer and Organization Aids** are available from National and on the website. These include job descriptions for each officer, suggestions for writing a local newsletter, program ideas for use at the local level, public relations and publicity suggestions and help in building membership in clubs.

•**Scholarships** of significant dollar value are awarded annually to outstanding and needy students majoring in horticulture or floriculture at accredited college and universities. Application information is available from National.

•**Judging Schools** are provided to encourage members to become accredited judges for vegetable and flower shows.

•**The National Convention** is held annually in cities of member clubs. Many members find it an excellent opportunity to view various sections of our country. It is a wonderful time to meet with fellow gardeners from throughout America to conduct the business of the organization, participate in seminars and workshops, tour public and private gardens, hear lectures by eminent authorities on horticultural subjects, view the new photography entries, elect new officers and present annual awards. Also as you travel to or from a convention, you can plan your route to include some of the many reciprocal gardens and arboreta available

through the American Horticultural Society – you'll have recouped your AHS membership dues in no time at all!

- The Regional Organizations** provide help and leadership on a closer level. The country is divided into 15 regions with officers elected by their local clubs. Each region has, depending on size, one or more National Directors.

- Regional Meetings** are held at least annually and are another opportunity for developing gardening friends and colleagues and sharing both club and gardening information.

- TGOA/MGCA provides a 501c3 umbrella** designation for the benefit of your club or region. While it does not provide an individual benefit of membership, the umbrella is invaluable to your club and region and is available for just a little paperwork on an annual basis.

- Leadership.** Last is the opportunity to serve others on any of the three levels-- local, regional, or national-- to utilize your knowledge, expertise, experience and enthusiasm to further gardening in any of its many facets. Here is YOUR chance to return some of the gifts bestowed on you, to share your love of gardening with others and to make life-long friendships.

Use your national organization. Contact the national office in Johnston; we will help.

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