

# The Fun and Value in Sponsoring a New Club

**S**ponsoring and helping build a new garden club affiliated with “The Gardeners of America/Men's Garden Clubs of America” can be a gratifying and fun experience for your club or region! This might be a Men’s Garden Club or a unique garden club with some other descriptive name—no matter, **your club will perform a great favor to a group in some nearby community** (or perhaps in your own city) if you help and encourage them to organize a new garden club.

You know the value of your club to not only your members, but also to your community. Clubs affiliated with TGOA/MGCA almost always provide both...

- personal opportunity for growth in gardening knowledge and enthusiasm , and also
- direct and indirect community beautification...

...so it is a “win-win” for members and the community.

**And you are guaranteed an enjoyable experience in sponsoring/organizing a new club.**

This Manual will provide some guidance on how sponsoring a new club might be done most efficiently and expeditiously. You may have other and better techniques; good, but look at these and let National know your suggestions for additions, modifications and improvements. This needs to be a dynamic procedure with input from TGOA/MGCA Clubs from all over America, particularly those who have direct experience in building new clubs.

*Lets get moving!!!*

*Not only do more communities need a dynamic new garden club,  
but our national organization (TGOA/MGCA) will be strengthened, and  
we all benefit.*

## Name

**I**t is important to realize that the name of the national organization can be confusing to those not familiar with the organization. In order to reflect the growing diversity of gardening and of our members, the Men’s Garden Clubs of America changed its corporate name in 1992 to “The Gardeners of America, Inc.” with two divisions: “The Gardeners of America” and “Men’s Garden Clubs of America”. It is recommended that consistency in name use be exercised, and that the national name be “The Gardeners of America/Men's Garden Clubs of America” or “TGOA/MGCA” for short. The name of both divisions should be in equal type size and character. While most local clubs in the country use the name “Men’s Garden Club”, many other descriptive names are used and all are welcome and are important affiliates of TGOA/MGCA.

The group organizing a new club should carefully consider and select an appropriate name. Many clubs use the name “Men’s Garden Club” even though they have female members.

# Getting Started

## Enthusiasm In the Local Club or Region

**E**nthusiasm is a necessary ingredient in sponsoring a new TGOA/MGCA garden club.

- Find a “spark plug”, or a group of enthusiastic members, who has club experience and knows the value of the friendships and gardening knowledge it provides. This person or group will find it gratifying to make time to help sponsor and build a new club.
- Contact National for club building material including the following material:
  - the new Manual “How to Organize a Men’s Garden Club or a Gardeners of America Club Affiliated with Gardeners of America, Inc.”. This Manual is written specifically for a group wanting to organize their own club, but it includes much of the material and know-how necessary for you to be the sponsor of the new club. Included in this Manual is a Petition, Charter Member form, material order form, sample news releases, etc.
  - copies of various tri-folds and other literature promoting TGOA/MGC

## Finding the Nucleus

**T**here are many ways to find that special nucleus of local gardeners and would-be gardeners on which the new club can be built. This will probably involve a lot of telephone calling and perhaps personal one-on-one contacts. **Get as large a list of names** of prospects as possible by doing the following:

- Contact people you already know in the target community.
- Call a County Extension Agent—ask who manages the Master Gardener course.
- Talk to the head of the Master Gardener group if it is so organized—make sure it is understood that this proposed new Garden Club is not intended to compete with the Master Gardeners, but will supplement and compliment their efforts.
- Solicit encouragement and names from local retail garden shops, nurseries, etc. (This is a great way for them to insure that their business grows and prospers!)
- Ask the Garden Editor of the local paper for advice—and for space in his/her column for explanation and promotion.
- Talk with leaders in existing garden clubs; many women’s gardens clubs are particularly enthusiastic about the idea of a “Men’s Garden Club”.
- Obtain from National a list of Members-at-large who live in your area.
- Make follow-up calls to those whose names evolve from the above contacts—the list can grow geometrically!

*Get names, names, names!*

# What Do You Say On The Telephone

**O**bviously, there are many approaches and ways to initiate the calls. Below is a suggested dialogue known to work well—

- “My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I’m a long time, active member of the \_\_\_\_\_ Garden Club in \_\_\_\_\_ [my community]. We are talking to a number of men (people) in \_\_\_\_\_ [your city or community] about building a new \_\_\_\_\_ Garden Club here. We know our club has been not only good for its members over the years, but it has been good for \_\_\_\_\_ [my community] and we think the same would be true in \_\_\_\_\_ [your city or community] also. We understand you are a gardener (or a landscape architect, or a garden shop owner or a nursery manager, etc.) and also have broad community interests. We need your advice and counsel on how we should proceed and find men (or persons) interested in considering this. Our club is affiliated with the national organization called \_\_\_\_\_ (here you might say Men’s Garden Clubs of America if you are approaching what you think will primarily or initially be a men’s club, or say The Gardeners of America). I hope this is something you will be interested in . May I have your mailing address (and fax number, and EMail address, if available) so that we might communicate back with you. And what we would like to do is arrange a “dutch” lunch (or supper) so that some of us here in \_\_\_\_\_ can come for an Exploratory Meeting with a group in \_\_\_\_\_ and share more with you about Men’s Garden Clubs (or Gardeners of America Clubs), what we do, what other clubs do around the country, etc. Where is a good location for this? Which restaurant do you suggest for a “dutch” lunch where we can spend another half hour or so talking and sharing? And can you give me names and telephone numbers of other men (or persons) who might be interested in learning about this nation-wide garden club movement?”
- It is important to get advice and feed back from the prospect, and give him/her an opportunity to ask questions and make suggestions.
- Make good notes on the conversation, particularly document the names and telephone numbers of any new potential members mentioned.
- If the prospect wants additional written information, offer to mail, fax or EMail further information [see the sample solicitation letter on Page 6].

*Be warm and enthusiastic about the value of  
this unique garden club  
opportunity!*

## Preparing For the First Group Exploratory Meeting

**A**fter making a few calls, particularly to the County Extension Agent and maybe to some Master Gardeners and others who know to be interested in gardening, do the following:

- Call or Fax National for a kit of items to help in organizing a new club. This should include the Manual “How to Organize a Men’s Garden Club or a Gardener’s of America Club Affiliated with The Gardeners of America/Men’s Garden Clubs of America”, a copy of the new Generic Bylaws, other promotional literature available, multiple copies of recent issues of the TGOA/MGCA *Newsletter*, etc.
- Arrange with a centrally located restaurant for the agreed-upon “dutch” lunch or supper and Exploratory Meeting; talk with the manager to make sure there will be some privacy for a group discussion during or after the meal and that it is OK to stay for 30-45 minutes after the meal. Specify the time, date and approximately number of expected attendees.
- Find a two or three fellow Club members or Regional officers to attend and help with the Exploratory Meeting
- Put together a brief but enthusiastic presentation, perhaps using overheads or handouts (see suggestions on Pages 8, 9, 10 and 11 )
- Prepare a list of all the prospects contacted or those suggested with telephone numbers and perhaps other vital information (see blank form on Page 12)
- Arrive early to greet prospects as they come in, introduce your club members, etc.
- Make a presentation that enthusiastically tells—
  - 1) The story of TGOA/MGCA, how it is organized and the service it performs,
  - 2) The Regional organization and the camaraderie and value of joint participation in its annual convention and other meetings.
  - 3) The activities of existing clubs and their value to members and the community
- Distribute the National literature, publications, etc.
- Be alert to the local leadership as it develops and encourage the group to consider how they would like to proceed. Hopefully a suggestion will be made by one of them to pick up the ball and arrange a follow-up meeting to which they will invite many more potential members.
- Encourage the local group to take charge while assuring them that you and your sponsoring group will be available for advice, consultation, etc. and volunteer to come and meet with them again if they want you.
- Give the leader a prepared copy of all the names and telephone numbers of prospects previously contacted.
- Leave them to continue their planning independently.

*Hopefully you have found the nucleus of a new club  
and  
planted the seed!*

# Follow Up

**U**se your discretion in following up; don't be too pushy, but be available.

- Send a “thank you” note or make a telephone call to some of the prospects, particularly the ones who appear to be the potential leaders.
- Make sure the potential leaders know that you and your sponsoring Club or Region are ready and willing to help them in any way to get organized.
- Remind them to use the TGOA/MGCA Manual “How to Organize a ...”
- Encourage them to consider electing officers, preparing bylaws, etc. when they are ready
- Remind them that after they are organized, they will want to apply for their Charter from TGOA/MGCA and submit the names of and dues from their Charter Members.
- Offer—or more than offer—state the importance of members from your Sponsoring Club and also Regional and perhaps National officers attending their Charter Night meeting.
- Advise the National President of your activity in sponsoring this new club and their organizational activity. Give him the name and address of the potential leaders and ask him to send a letter of encouragement—this will be considered a great compliment and will be appreciated by the new club leaders--and will be an indication of the efficiency and camaraderie of National.

*Make sure the prospective members of the new club know their sponsors  
are genuinely interested  
in  
the new club's success !*

# Sample Solicitation Letter

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BLUE RIDGE REGION

## Men's GARDEN Clubs of America

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[Date]

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

As a long term member of the \_\_\_\_\_ Men's Garden Club and a strong believer in both the personal and the community value of this organization, and as current \_\_\_\_\_[office] of the \_\_\_\_\_[region or club name] of the Men's Garden Clubs of America, please let me try to interest you in forming a club in your area.

My experience in \_\_\_\_\_[my club name] and my observation in \_\_\_\_\_[another club in the region] (the two leading clubs of the \_\_\_\_\_ Region), are that the MGC (or The Gardeners of America) provides an opportunity for men (and women—many clubs have female as well as male members) who have a special and keen interest in gardening, horticulture, and community beautification, cleanliness and green-space to meet and work together to further these interests. And it seems to be particularly important for men to have the opportunity for this type study, work and camaraderie.

As an example, but surely not a standard or goal, the \_\_\_\_\_ MGC's program this past year has included the following activity—

- Monthly Programs on topics of gardening, horticulture and beautification were held.
- Annual Family Picnic was enjoyed by members, spouses and guests.
- MGC Plant Sale of over 1000 plants was completed. This is the primary source of funds for community tree planting and other beautification projects by the MGC.
- etc.
- etc. ( list the types of things of value your club does for both its members and the community)

**If a program similar to this is of interest to you and of potential value to your community**, then we need to get down to work on a plan. There is information available from Men's Garden Clubs of America including a manual on forming a new club. National charter fee for a new club is \$20. National dues are \$15 per member; this includes a subscription to the bi-monthly TGOA/MGCA *Newsletter* plus many program and project opportunities. But, I think, the most important aspect of a MGC is the local activity—educational programs, community beautification projects and good fellowship in gardening.

Where to we go from here? Let us know your opinion and suggestions on how we can help.

Very sincerely,

[signed]

**Your name – Title or Position in Club or Region  
Address  
Telephone Number – Fax Number – EMail address**

A  
Men's Garden Club  
can be good for you  
and your community !

Σ Education

Σ Community  
Beautification

Σ Camaraderie  
...and a lot of fun

# National:

Men's Garden Clubs of  
America

(MGCA)

The Gardeners of America  
(TOGA)

Formed

1932

Headquarters

Johnston, Iowa

Number of clubs

\*65

Members

\*3800

Men and

Women

\* In year 2006

**Programs** –  
**Education**

- **Community Beautification**
- **Environment Improvement  
through Growing Things**

**Regional:**

**Number of Regions in US**

**17**

**Ours: Blue Ridge**

**Spartanburg \*156**

**\*in year 2006**

**Club Support  
Programs**

**Projects  
Membership**

# Annual Weekend Conference

## Technical Presentations

## Business

## Sharing and Fellowship

### Local: An Example of One Club's Activity

- γ Monthly Programs on topics of gardening, horticulture and beautification are held.
- γ Annual Family Picnic is enjoyed by members, spouses and guests.
- γ Cottage Industry Plant Propagation. Growth for later MGC sale by many members.
- γ MGC Plant Sale of over 1000 plants was completed. This is the primary source of funds for community tree planting and other beautification projects by the MGC.
- γ Realtors Spring Plant Sale used the MGC as its source of over 1200 dogwood and crapemyrtle.
- γ 24th Annual Rose Show was held with over 400 blooms displayed at Westgate Mall
- γ Landscape Judging of community businesses and institutions. With Chamber of Commerce 30 years
- γ I-85 Landscape Planting of 6,000 trees / shrubs. Designed by the MGC; MGC was catalyst; SC DOT implemented.

γ North Pine / US-176 Landscape Planting of 120 new redmaple on N. Pine just completed in Dec. Completely financed by the MGC.

γ Hatcher Gardens continues to be supported and enhanced by the MGC.

γ Litter Pick-Up on North Pine is conducted by the MGC multiple times per year.

γ Community Flower Beds. 12 in Spartanburg, are planted and maintained by the MGC.

