

"HOW TO SPREAD THE WORD"

NEWSLETTER MANUAL

An Aid in Producing Effective Newsletters

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HOW TO SPREAD THE WORD

INTRODUCTION

So with an organization of the stature of The Gardeners of America/Men's Garden Clubs of America, one of the primary means of promoting our message, providing education, recording our history is by publishing the word. Among the local clubs this is accomplished by means of a newsletter. By this means we announce our meetings and our programs, promote special projects, sales, and shows. Often there are notes concerning our member's activities and medical conditions, birthdays, etc., record of our officers, articles concerning our successes and those of a more technical vein on the ways of gardening.

The big question is how to effectively present the printed word so that members will read the material. How do we bridge the gap between the postman and the wastebasket?

The purpose of this manual is to offer guidelines and viewpoints in effectively producing club newsletters. Hopefully, it will be of help to both current editors and those newly agreeing to take up the task. It is also intended as a vehicle to encourage those clubs, which do not have newsletters to implement such publications.

This is the sixth edition of this manual. The first edition was produced by Charlie Stahl of the Men's Garden Club of Toledo, who for many years served as chairman of the MGCA Bulletin Committee. The second edition was written by Watson B. Smith of the Men's Garden Club of Syracuse, NY. who served as chairman of the MGCA Bulletin Committee for one year. The third edition was presented by Bert Konzal, Valley of the Sun Gardeners, who served as chairman of the TGOA/MGCA Bulletin Committee for four years. We have extracted material liberally from the first, second, and third editions and are deeply grateful for Mr. Stahl's, Mr. Smith's and Mr. Konzal's efforts in editing the first, second and third editions respectively. The fourth and fifth editions were edited by Clyde Wooten of the Men's Garden Club of Colorado Springs, who was chairman of the TGOA/MGCA Newsletter Committee for ten years from 1993 to 2003. The sixth edition is presented by Howard Matz of the Littleton Garden Club of Littleton, CO who has served as Chairman of the TGOA/MGCA Newsletter Committee since 2004.

TGOA/MGCA Newsletter Committee
Howard Matz, Chairman

THE NEED FOR A NEWSLETTER

A club or any organization of any size needs a newsletter as a way for the group and its members to stay in touch and share information. But to be successful the newsletter must have meaningful content, be attractive, informative and have good eye appeal. There is probably no better way to get the organization's message before its members.

A newsletter should be a running record of the club's plans, activities and accomplishments. It should serve members in the following ways:

INFORM - What important events are taking place, will take place or have taken place? Summarize past programs, announce new events and programs, and note the election of new officers and appointment of committees.

EDUCATE - Provide members with timely information concerning gardening, possibly new techniques, new equipment and new cultivars. One of our club's functions is to provide education.

PROMOTE - An excellent vehicle for advertising club meetings, programs, and special events such as: work projects, plant sales, region meetings and events and national conventions.

ENTERTAIN - This may include humorous articles, jokes, cartoons, poems, quotes and puzzles. The inclusion of recipes would be of interest to our female members.

HISTORY - Have a sense of history in composing a newsletter. Your newsletters may become historical documents in writing club histories. An accurate recording of who, what, when, where, and dates is important.

WHO IS THE AUDIENCE?

Make sure you are aware to whom you are writing. Not only are you writing for your own club members and possibly their families, but also there are the prospective members who might join your club. You may be writing for the entire membership of TOGA/MGCA and possibly the general public.

Sometimes articles from local club newsletters are used in the TGOA/MGCA Newsletter or may even reach the public domain; thus, items like private jokes and reference to local people or places without identification will cause confusion.

WHAT DOES AN EDITOR DO?

In theory, an editor has only a portion of the responsibility in producing a newsletter. According to a dictionary definition, the function of an editor is to assemble and prepare material for publication. More frequently than not, the editor of a small publication such as a local club newsletter, can find himself or herself being the news gatherer and writer. In addition to the normal editing tasks of determining the contents of the publication, making corrections (spelling and grammar), and improvements (clear, concise, coherent) in the articles become part of this job. Hopefully, a typist can be found to produce the final set-up and others to do the printing (possibly a professional printer), stapling, folding, addressing, and mailing. It is expecting a great deal to have a volunteer editor handle all of the operations. Other volunteers from a club should be recruited, if a quality newsletter is to be published.

A new editor should save himself or herself from possible grief by making sure their duties and responsibilities are clearly understood by the officers, directors, and themselves. For example,

- Is the editor able to solicit articles or use only those submitted?
- Can the editor refuse to use an article, even one from an officer, which is submitted after the deadline?
- Can the editor change any of the contents of an article?
- Is the editor to be the last person to review material before printing?
- Working on a newsletter should be an enjoyable experience, not a burden. No one person should be expected to handle the entire operation. The editor should encourage

members to become writers for the newsletter, i.e., announcements, gardening experiences, trips, etc. An editor is not required to be a writer, but rather an assembler of written material and putting it into a context suitable for the newsletter.

DESIGN FORMAT

The format refers to the size and shape of the newsletter. In TGOA/MGCA they are produced in a vast variety of formats from a single page printed on one side up to many more pages in number. Most of our newsletters are printed on standard 8½" x 11" size sheets. Others are printed on legal size paper (8½" x 14"), which is sometimes folded, permitting one sheet of paper to produce four pages. There are also some odd sizes. On occasion a club member may be in the printing business and can thus offer a myriad of assistance in designing a format. Some newsletters are printed on colored paper (blue, green, yellow, etc.) The type of paper should be considered. To save paper and money, use one, which is of sufficient weight (opaqueness) to permit printing on both sides, or use recycled paper to save the environment.

Many editors treat newsletters like personal or business letters using just one wide column of type per page. This is a mistake! Studies have shown that most readers prefer shorter lines of type as in the manner of a newspaper for less eyestrain. Thus on an 8½" x 11" page, the columns should be no wider than three and one-half inches. This provides for a one-half-inch margin on both sides of the page, plus one-half inch between the two columns.

NAMEPLATE

This is the letterhead (incorrectly called the masthead) and one of the most important features of the publication. It attracts the readers' attention and should be a design sufficiently unique to distinguish it from other newsletters. Choose a good name for your newsletter, which is oriented to the world of gardening. Be imaginative! Also, the name of your club should be prominently displayed and the fact that the club is affiliated with TGOA/MGCA. Use the appropriate TGOA/MGCA logo. Equally important parts of

the nameplate are your club's location by city and state and the month and year for each publication. There should be a sequence of numbering - volume for each year plus a number for each issue during the year.

Once established, a nameplate should remain the same and dominate the cover page either across the top or down one side. The nameplates of some clubs do both. Other clubs devote the entire cover sheet to the nameplate with considerable graphics. One club includes a poem on the title page.

WHAT A NEWSLETTER SHOULD CONTAIN!

COVER PAGE - Upcoming meeting - The most important function of a TGOA/MGCA newsletter is to inform and remind members of upcoming meetings. This notice should be the first item on the cover page and should be rendered in a clear and concise manner.

- **TIME:** Date, day of the week, time of day.
- **LOCARION:** Name of building, city and address, possibly directions for getting there, even a map.
- **FEATURES:** Name of speaker, title (if any), where the speaker is from and any other pertinent data, including the subject of the program. Include other meeting activities of importance.
- **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:** This is a good introductory article, affording an opportunity for the club leader to promote activities and policies, and to thank workers for their efforts. It is a place for recruiting committee personnel and other workers. As with all articles, it should be edited for spelling, grammar, clarity and conciseness, but never should the wording be changed in any manner, which would distort the meaning of the message.

FOLLOWING PAGES

MASTHEAD - Name and address and possibly telephone number of your organization, name, address and telephone numbers of your president, vice presidents, secretary and others you may want to identify. This item should be located at some point in the body of the newsletter - preferably the second page. It is a most important bit of information, not only for club members, but also for others outside the club, and should not be omitted regardless of the size of the club. Frequency of publication and subscription rate should be shown.

BRIEF CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS - This is another informative item that is beneficial to club members as well as prospective members. It should include dates of a few upcoming meetings of club events, special events and gardening events outside club activities that would be of interest to club members. Include dates of region meetings and events.

PERSONAL NEWS - Members should be informed of events affecting other club members. Include information on club membership such as:

- Notices of deceased members or spouses
- Those ill at home, or in hospitals
- Births of babies affecting members
- Anniversaries and birthdays
- Individual accomplishments, successes, awards, promotions and recognition
- New members, include address and telephone number

CLUB NEWS - This is an area to disperse news of club activities:

- Minutes of past meeting
- Club financial report
- Successes of club picnics, Christmas parties, garden tours, plant sales, club projects
- Reports on community projects
- Officer slates for upcoming year election
- Biographies of club members, especially those deserving club recognition

REGION NEWS-This section keeps members up to date on Region meetings and activities. If written in an interesting manner, it could whet member's appetites to attend these events. Items that may be included are:

- Reports on Region meetings
- Reports on Region workshops
- Reports on Region projects
- Reports from National Conventions, Directors' meetings, National and Region elections, etc.

Remember, a member not attending a meeting can keep up with club, and region activities through articles appearing the newsletter. Avoid negative reporting of events, which have occurred. Excuses, sob stories, criticism of Region and National are not appropriate.

TECHNICAL SECTION - This is the section devoted to gardening and the subject matter is almost limitless. There is so much that has been written on gardening and horticulture that can be used, and a vast number of ways in which to write about the focus of our clubs. Consider having a club member write a monthly column or rotate it among a group of members. Short articles are preferred. Subjects may range from:

- (1) Ways to being better gardeners,
- (2) How to perform certain tasks,
- (3) Things to do during the current month,
- (4) New cultivar,
- (5) New equipment,
- (6) Review articles,
- (7) Conservation,
- (8) Pests,
- (9) Diseases, and,
- (10) Ways to combat them, etc.

Sometimes articles or portions thereof are quoted or used directly and in their entirety from another publication; however, there is a word of caution to be considered in direct use of material, which has been published under copyright law. Check the masthead of the publication for this determination. Government publications are not copyrighted and may be used freely

The copyright law as revised in 1976 (Public Law 94-553) recognized the principles of "fair use" as a limitation on the exclusive rights of copyright owners. Factors determining what is "fair" include the following:

- 1) The purpose and character of the use including whether such use is of a commercial nature or is for non-profit educational purposes.
- 2) The amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the Copyrighted work as a whole; and,
- 3) The effort of the use upon the potential market for the use of the copyrighted work.

If you feel you have a problem with infringement and wish to use copyrighted material you can contact the publisher or author to secure permission. In general, however, there should be no problem in using copyrighted material with discretion in our newsletters of very limited distribution. Always give proper credit to the author and publisher when using copyrighted materials. If possible, re-type the material using the same typewriter or computer font that is used to prepare the newsletter. Avoid cutting and pasting the article into the body of your newsletter.

Taken from The Elements of Editing - A Modern Guide for Editors & Journalists by Arthur Plotnik, Macmillan Publishing Co., 1982.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND ARTICLES

Consider some of the following:

- 1) Articles from other TGOA/MGCA local club newsletters. Develop a newsletter exchange with other clubs. Mail other clubs your newsletter on a regular basis requesting a copy of theirs in return.
- 2) Governmental gardening publications; USDA, State land-grant colleges, experiment stations, local cooperative extension offices.

3) Articles from members who have expertise in growing certain flowers and vegetables, even interviews!

4) Researched articles by the editor or club members using books and articles from several sources.

5) Gardening books and magazines, and publications from libraries.

6) Newspaper articles.

Editors should continually be alert for articles and ideas for use in their newsletters and encourage members to do the same!

GRAPHIC ILLUSTRATIONS - The use of photographs, drawings, cartoons, clip art and diagrams (including maps) is encouraged. There is the familiar adage that a picture (one of good quality) is worth a thousand words. An otherwise ordinary newsletter can become lively and interesting with the addition of a few good photographs.

GOOD PHOTOGRAPHS

- Tell a story! Readers should not have to study the photo to get its meaning
- Are uncluttered and have high contrast between black and white
- Have sharp focus

You can have posed pictures and candid action shots. If a photograph does not exactly meet your needs, consider cropping (cutting out) the unwanted portions.

Whether you decide to use photocopy or offset printing for producing your newsletter, you should be able to use photographs, drawings, clip art, etc.

ADVERTISING - Publishing a newsletter is frequently one of the biggest expenses of a club. One way to help defray the cost is to allocate a page or more to advertisements sold to local businesses. You cannot charge a substantial

amount because circulation is minimal, but it is a course of revenue to consider. Many clubs do have advertising. The problems are finding someone to sell advertising and to collect the fees.

HEADLINES - Headlines written with catchy wording can catch the eye of a reader and are the responsibility of the editor. Because headlines only contain a few words, some editors have the mistaken idea that they are easy to write. You must be concise and informative in those few words in order to give your readers an accurate picture of what the accompanying story is about. Too often headline writers include no news about the article or else give the wrong impression of the story.

There are two major kinds of headlines: label and sentence. Label headlines often are one or two words long and mention a topic but usually not any news. Examples are "President's Message," "Meeting," or "Around the Bramblebush." Reserve label headlines for headings of columns. Use sentence headlines to introduce the contents of a news story.

A good headline should attract the interest of the reader and then the story can fill them in on the details.

STYLE - Style may be defined as the manner in which the written material is composed and presented. It should always be done in a consistent fashion. There are stylebooks available at most bookstores. These give rules and examples of the usage of words and phrases, punctuation, capitalization, abbreviation, etc.

The editor should check all stories to make sure they are grammatically consistent, examine for proper capitalization, punctuation, and abbreviations. Correct spelling is all-important and misspelled words can detract from an otherwise quality newsletter. Always keep a dictionary nearby. It is possible to have electronic typewriters, word processors, or computers with built-in spelling capabilities.

Sometimes an editor may encounter a writer who will complain if you touch his story in any manner (even punctuation), because you will ruin his style - by this he usually means the form or tone of the story. An editor should appreciate that writing takes a certain amount of emotional

energy and that some authors attach more importance to the choice of words than is necessary. In any case, a good article should have qualities of unity, coherence, and emphasis sometimes referred to as the UCE of writing.

Listed below are some examples of rules, which an editor should consider using:

- Never capitalize the seasons of the year; for example, summer, spring, autumn, winter
- Capitalize titles when they precede a proper name. For example, President Oscar Q. Davis
- Never capitalize titles or phrases of identification when they follow a proper name, i.e., Stanley Jones, commissioner of parks and gardens.
- Capitalize north, south, east, and west to designate a particular section of the United States, but not to indicate direction. For example: He took a trip through the South to visit his family in Alabama. He turned south on Fifth Street, then west to Wilshire.
- Avoid abbreviations with the exception of such abbreviations as have become commonly accepted to the readers. For example: TGOA for The Gardeners of America, Inc., MGCA for Men's Garden Clubs of America, Inc. If you desire to use abbreviations not commonly used, spell out the subject first, immediately followed by the abbreviation in parenthesis, i.e. University of Arkansas (U of A).
- Spell out ordinary numbers up to and including nine. Use figures for numbers 10 and over. For example: The four clubs have recruited more than 90 members.
- Use short, crisp sentences and short, dynamic paragraphs. Paragraphs generally should not exceed six typewritten lines.
- Be accurate! Remember smooth, clever writing is no substitute for accurate writing.

METHODS OF REPRODUCTION

There are several methods of reproducing material for publication to choose from and the decision will undoubtedly come down to the facility available at the lowest cost. The choice is between photocopy, offset, computer and laser printing.

For the small club with limited circulation of their newsletter, photocopy is highly acceptable. This method reproduces clip art and diagrams successfully, but not the best photographs. Photographic facilities are readily available at many printing shops at moderate prices.

Offset printing has become increasingly popular in recent years and there are now many "quick printing" shops. It is the best method we can use. It is highly versatile and can easily reproduce photographs, clip art, or anything that can be taped flat to a piece of paper. It is the ideal method for publishing two to five hundred copies. As cost will always be a factor, it might pay to investigate vocational high schools, community colleges, and county cooperative extension offices for offset equipment. Offset printing is a refinement of the principle that grease (ink) and water do not mix. Thus, ink only adheres to the image on your offset printing plate (actually a cylinder) and the non-image areas are wet. Instead of the ink being transferred directly from the plate to your paper, it is first transferred to an intermediate rubber-blanketed cylinder, which then offsets the image onto the paper. This intermediate step creates a clearer image than if the metal plate touched the paper directly.

There are three kinds of offset printing plates: paper, plastic, and metal. For paper offset printing plates you type, write, or draw illustrations directly on them. If you have only line art and type (no photos) in your newsletter, photosensitive plastic printing plates (Itek process) may be used. The type and artwork are projected directly onto the plastic plate without the use of a photographic negative.

LAYOUT

"Eye appeal means buy appeal" is the byword of appeal in the newspaper business. While we are not in the business of selling more newspapers, we are in the business of selling our local clubs and TGOA/MGCA. A newsletter with an attractive layout is much more likely to be picked up and read than one lacking a harmonious appearance. The best-written and edited newsletter, if poorly designed, will fail to communicate in the expected manner.

Simplicity is the key to good newsletter design. Attractive, easy-to-read pages will give a big boost in getting your message across better than busy, cluttered pages. Neatness is a significant part of simplicity. All typing errors should be removed and care should be given to making sure columns and headlines are straight and that the margins are consistent. White space (blank space) is important and effective and frequently more important than a cluster of artwork. Pages will be more eye-catching if you leave at least ½" margin on the top, bottom, and sides of each page.

Consistency may be considered as another important factor in giving good appearance. If you type your newsletter, use only one typewriter. With offset printing, editors sometimes paste-up articles taken directly from various periodicals. This practice, unless handled with great care, can be a serious detraction. The change in style and size of type causes disharmony. Avoid cutting and pasting!

Other practices to consider in producing an effective layout are the following:

Placement of articles and stories in a manner, which follows good logic.

- (1) Meeting notices;
- (2) President's message;
- (3) Calendar of upcoming events;
- (4) Masthead;
- (5) Personal news;
- (6) Club news;
- (7) Region news;
- (8) Technical section;
- (9) Entertainment" etc.

Some key principles to good layout are:

EMPHASIS - Major items should be given primary emphasis. Do not overlay minor stories.

HARMONY - If you use pictures or illustrations, spread them out rather than having them bunched together.

CONTRAST - Use bold type for headlines. Consider placing important items in boxes, the use of lines between columns and stories.

BALANCE - Locate illustrations, photographs, and headlines in such a manner that the page does not seem to lean one-way or the other.

Brighten your pages with clip art. Consider buying clip art books, which contain drawings on a variety of topics. To produce headlines with large size lettering, use plastic letter guides, cutout letters, or letters that rub-off from an acetate sheet, or computer generated headlines. Computers can produce graphics, drawings and layouts of great quality.

The most sophisticated and most expensive system is one in which the pages are photographed by camera producing negatives which are then transferred to metal plates. Reproduction of excellent photographs is accomplished by this method.

DISTRIBUTION

Ideally, newsletters should be mailed so that members receive them at least one week prior to the next meeting. Depending upon the size of your circulation you can consider the following ways to mail your publication:

First Class Mail is the most expensive way. First class mail is given priority handling by the Postal Service. And if a newsletter cannot be delivered, it will be returned to the sender or forwarded for a period of one year after a change of address has been filed.

Second Class is the cheapest way to mail but is only available to newspapers and periodicals, which are authorized by virtue of certain rules of commercial status. They must be set in type or printed by offset.

Third Class Special Bulk Rates for authorized non-profit organizations is only slightly more expensive than second class and is the service to use if you qualify. To qualify you must have a mailing of at least 200 copies of identical newsletters and file an application with the Postal Service with documentation to show that you are a non-profit organization (TGOA/MGCA clubs qualify). There is a yearly fee and the rate depends on the method of sorting. You may use pre-cancelled third class stamps, or for a one-time only fee receive a permit number impression to be placed on each mailed item. You must bundle and label all mail by zip code and include a statement of mailing with each mailing. Also appreciate the fact that third class mail may not receive prompt service particularly when there is a large volume of first class mail between the 28th of one month and the 5th of the next month

Third Class Bulk Rate for Authorized Non-Profit Organizations can be used if you mail at least 200 identical letter size pieces. A permit is required.

Third Class Bulk Rate - Regular can be used if you mail at least 200 identical letter size pieces. A permit is required to use this classification.

Gummed labels are the method to use in addressing newsletters for mailing. This requires the typing of names, addresses, and zip codes on a master sheet, which is then photocopied onto gum stock sheets. These are scored so that you pull off the labels and stick them on the newsletters. A more efficient system is to put the names and addresses in a computer where changes readily can be made in updating address changes and members. Labels can be printed automatically on label stock.

NEWSLETTER EVALUATION PROGRAM

The TGOA/MGCA Newsletter Evaluation program is designed to help the local clubs/regions and their editors in producing effective newsletters. It has been in place for many years.

Each club editor may select any three (3) issues of the club newsletter and send eight (8) copies of each issue to the TGOA/MGCA National Newsletter Committee Chairman by December 31st of each year. The newsletters selected must have been published within that current year.

Each region editor may select any issue of the region newsletter and send eight (8) copies of each issue to the TGOA/MGCA National Newsletter Committee Chairman by December 31st of each year. The newsletter selected must have been published within that current year.

The Chairman of the Committee shall separate the newsletters received into three classes depending on the club size as follows:

- Class A: 101 or more members
- Class B: 51-100 club members
- Class C: 50 or less club members

The Club size will be determined by the year-end TGOA/MGCA Club Membership report for the calendar year preceding the convention.

The chairman will send one copy of each newsletter received to each member of the TGOA/MGCA Club Newsletter Committee for evaluation, using the following standards:

STANDARDS FOR NEWSLETTER EVALUATIONS

COVER PAGE (Point value 1-25)

The cover page should be attractive and eye-catching with an appropriate nameplate. It should have simplicity and be easy to read. Announcement of the upcoming meeting should be well presented. The President's Message should appear here and be clear and concise.

LAYOUT (Point value 1-25)

There should be a consistent sequence of articles. Pages should contain at least two columns for easier reading. Only one form of type should

be used. Good headlines for the articles and stories should be noted. Principles of emphasis, harmony, contrast, and balance should prevail.

STYLE (Point value 1-25)

Correct spelling, good grammar, along with proper punctuation, capitalization, and abbreviations should be judged. Articles should have qualities of unity, coherence, and emphasis.

CONTENTS (Point value 1-25)

Coverage of club events is adequately covered. There should be articles concerning gardening and horticulture timely to the season. Consideration should be given to the fact that an article is an original composition rather than one extracted from another publication. If extracted, proper recognition of the author is given. The use of articles extracted from other publications is encouraged, as long as copyrights are not infringed upon. The use of illustrations should be noted in the scoring.

In the scoring, 25 points in each category is the highest and one point is the lowest. Note: At this time, insofar as possible, the manner of reproduction is not considered in the evaluation of the newsletter. The evaluator will use the prescribed evaluation form and submit it to the committee chairman, who will average the scores for each newsletter. The newsletter with the highest averaged score is determined the winner.

AWARDS

Newsletter awards and certificates are presented at each TGOA/MGCA National Convention.

Please send one (1) copy of each newsletter to the national office since it is an ideal way for the staff to keep track of the activities of the various clubs. Sometimes items are extracted from the club or region newsletter and used in the TGOA/MGCA Newsletter. Also, please send one copy of each newsletter to the TGOA/MGCA Newsletter Chairman, Howard Matz, 2306 Bedford Lane, Colorado Springs, CO 80909-1304.

**ALL CLUBS ARE ENCOURAGED
TO PARTICIPATE IN THE
NEWSLETTER EVALUATION
PROGRAM!**

(Even if you do not receive a plaque, you will receive a Certificate for your efforts.)

Take pride in your work and be recognized for it.

***WE NEED YOU
TO MAKE THINGS HAPPEN!***

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