The sun rises out of a vast, sparkling lake. It sets behind some of the world’s most spectacular skyscrapers. In between and all around are some of the country’s most amazing public and private gardens. That’s why I can’t wait to show off Chicago—my city—to the members of GWA: The Association for Garden Communicators for the 70th annual Conference & Expo, August 13 through 16.

Navy Pier, focus of the 70th annual GWA Conference & Expo, extends half a mile out into Lake Michigan.

Chicago has gardens for miles. This conference will be different than traditional GWA gatherings, because Chicago is not like most of the cities we’ve visited. For one thing, it’s a whole lot bigger—a metropolitan area of 10 million people that covers an area 70 by 100 miles. We won’t be able to see it all, but your days will be more than full of gardens, photo opportunities, networking, story ideas and learning.

DOWNTOWN FOCUS
This conference will be downtown, based at Navy Pier, a convention center and amusement arcade that extends half a mile out into Lake Michigan, with wide-open water and skyline views. From our centrally located hotel, you’ll be able to walk to dozens of lively restaurants and nightspots. Our tours will concentrate on urban locations within reach of reasonable bus or shuttle rides. Transportation to Chicago couldn’t be easier: Non-stops are available to O’Hare and Midway airports from most other North American cities.

For the first time, GWA will partner with another conference, the Independent Garden Centers Show, which is held at Navy Pier at the same time. Everyone attending the GWA conference will have full access to the largest trade show for garden retailers in North America.

— Continued on page 3
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S MESSAGE  MARIA UNGARO

Give Thanks

As Thanksgiving and the holiday season approach, I would like to take some time to extend my deepest gratitude to each of the GWA members, partners and sponsors. GWA is so much more than just an association. It is a community in the truest sense, and I am honored to serve as Executive Director to this group of talented individuals.

I am proud to lead an organization comprised of a range of confident, hardworking individuals across all career levels who work together to create opportunities for success. Our organization was created to empower one another and to lend the skills and expertise needed to thrive in this industry. I see that happening at each and every one of our events and initiatives.

Not only have we helped facilitate professional skills and relationships, GWA has also fostered many lifelong friendships. I am lucky to have met so many of you.

In addition to thanking each of our members, I’d like to extend a special thank you to our Board and Committee Members. GWA would not be where it is today without your hard work, dedication and time commitments to making this organization the best it can be. Last but not least, I invite you to think of any students who are looking to their futures. If you believe they would benefit from one of our GWA scholarships, please tell them to apply on our website.

We wish all of our members, sponsors and partners a Happy Thanksgiving and a wonderful holiday season, and we look forward to a bright New Year with GWA.

Maria

Join the American Horticultural Society

The American Horticultural Society (AHS) is a national membership organization that supports sustainable and earth-friendly gardening.

Member benefits include:
• Six issues of The American Gardener magazine
• Opportunity to participate in the annual AHS Seed Exchange program
• Access to members-only area of website
• Free admission and other discounts at 300 public gardens and arboretums

www.ahsgardening.org/join

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Partnering with the IGC Show will help us keep the conference relatively affordable for GWA members, while retaining our own education sessions and trade show. However, it means major changes from the schedule and arrangements we’re used to. For example, this conference will run from Monday through Thursday, not the customary Friday through Monday.

COME EARLY, STAY LATE
Plan to come a day or two early and visit world-class museums, such as the Art Institute of Chicago or the Field Museum, take in a Cubs game, see a play or visit gardens a short walk or cab ride away. We’ll tell you more about plans for the conference in upcoming issues of On the QT. For right now, I’d like to tell you a bit about my city.

Chicago’s defining glory is its lakefront. Of the city’s 28 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline, 26 miles are public parkland with 31 beaches. How many cities keep nearly all their most valuable real estate free and open to the public?

Still, it’s hardly pristine shoreline. The original dunes and marshes are long gone, and the parks we see today are atop landfill. But then nearly everything about Chicago, a great industrial city that burst into being in the middle of a swamp, is an engineering feat of one kind or another.

In the 1830s, when Chicago was a crude, fur-trading outpost with a couple of hundred inhabitants, they adopted the motto “Urbs in Horto,” meaning “City in a Garden.”

Within a hundred years, the ragged hamlet grew into a factory-powered colossus of more than 3 million people. Still, throughout its history and through many fights and setbacks, Chicago has strived to live up to its motto.

FIRST IN FOREST PRESERVES
Industrial millionaires and social activists pushed for a great park system, with parks laid out by Frederick Law Olmsted and Daniel Burnham. Even as it sprawled out into the surrounding prairie in the early 1900s, Chicago became the first American city to set aside a green necklace of forest preserves. Their architect, Jens Jensen, who also designed the city’s boulevard system, was one of the early pioneering champions of native plants.

Chicago continues to create gardens, including Millennium Park and the new Maggie Daley Park among glittering skyscrapers, green roofs and community gardens in the neighborhoods, and more than a mile of new downtown riverwalk where you can sit in green spaces and watch kayakers on what was once a scummy industrial canal.

Come see my city. Mark your calendar now for Monday, August 13, through Thursday, August 16, 2018, and watch On the QT for more details on this very special 70th anniversary Conference and Expo.

Beth Botts is chair of the local organizing committee for #GWA2018.
The Conference and Expo in Buffalo was AMAZING! You may be reading this in November and feel like our time together in Buffalo was a long time ago, but it was early September as I write this and I’m still feeling the high from hearing the wonderful presentations, seeing the adorable matchbook-sized gardens and meeting the gardeners there.

Buffalo, a relatively large city, welcomed GWA as a small town would. The headline in the newspaper recognized the importance of our presence there. A big thank you goes out to Sally Cunningham and her team for preparing Buffalo for our visit, and to our staff at Kellen for pulling it all together.

We are now focusing on #GWA2018, which will be held at Navy Pier in downtown Chicago, August 13-16. We won’t be staying in the ‘burbs and won’t have long bus rides to get into the city! All that the big city of Chicago has to offer will be right outside your door.

Plus, our GWA conference will overlap and be next to IGC, the conference for Independent Garden Centers. We are invited to their concerts, which ought to be fun, and to their presentations. There will be a day when we will also have access to their trade show, as well. So in addition to the city sites, private gardens, parks and our fabulous educational programs, there will be many opportunities for new story ideas and prospects for networking. Mark your calendars to save the dates.

DUES INCREASE
The Board looked closely at our budget and voted to raise our dues; there has not been an increase since 2012. Beginning in 2018, the annuals dues will be $105. If a one-time payment creates a hardship, arrangements can be made to pay installments of $30 per quarter. Just contact the staff at Kellen.

When I consider the number of doors that are opened to us free of charge, such as public gardens and national trade shows, and the amount of savings we realize as return on investment by being GWA members, we have amazing benefits. Also, remember that for each new member who puts your name on the Membership Application saying that you are the person who encouraged them to join, $20 is deducted from your membership dues.

The Board had a long discussion about the Award Programs and voted to change some of the old rules. Entering your own work in the competition will NO LONGER keep you from becoming a judge. YAY! However, you won’t be able to judge the entries that are in the same category as yours. If your work is being considered for a Gold Medal, you also will not be able to judge that part of the competition. This change will open the door for many of you to enter your works. I look forward to seeing them all.

Few details are available at the moment, but the Board voted to accept the invitation and proposal to have our 2019 Conference and Expo in Salt Lake City, Utah! Gardeners in that area are so creative in plant selection and water conservation, while creating beautiful garden designs. I’ve never been to that area and I’m looking forward to it.

POST YOUR MUG
In this age where technology rules, nothing quite takes the place of networking and meeting someone face-to-face. Speaking of faces, if your picture is not with your membership information on the GWA website, please add one. It’s a great way for people to remember who you are. Many of us have trouble remembering names after only one short meeting, but we usually remember the faces. It’s important for us to remember each other.

Remember to thank our sponsors and vendors by writing or talking about their products that you have used successfully. Let them know that you have shared that information. Send them a clipping or link to the article, blog or other mention in the media. They need us and we need them. Together we can improve the efficiency, successes and enjoyment of our citizen gardeners as they tend their soil.

Whether you are a GWA newbie or a seasoned professional, there are so many ways to get involved while increasing your own opportunities by networking with other GWA members. Volunteer for one of the committees, your thoughts and ideas are valuable. Contact your National or Regional Directors and volunteer to help with an upcoming Regional or Connect Meeting—a great way to get to know more members in your region. Attend as many Regional and Connect Meetings as possible or attend one of the larger gatherings in horticulture, such as MANTS, Cultivate’18, New England Grows or Farwest.

In closing, all of us are very busy people, many with full-time jobs and many who live in places that are more remote than others. Technology can help us stay in touch, which is what I hope you will do. We want to help answer any questions you may have and learn about topics you’d like have us address. We are a diverse group but we are your family, so don’t be a stranger.

MELISSA CAUGHEY
How to Speak Chicken
Storey Publishing • 144 pages, $16.95
To be published, November 2017

Backyard chickens are more popular than ever, and their keepers are eager for a glimpse into their minds. In How to Speak Chicken, Melissa Caughey shares her insights and observation of her flock, how they sense the world, communicate impending danger and establish pecking order, along with scientific facts and entertaining tidbits.

LISA ELDRED STEINKOPF
Houseplants: The Complete Guide to Choosing, Growing and Caring for Indoor Plants
Cool Springs Press • 272 pages, $30
To be published November 2017

Lisa Eldred Steinkopf’s book contains a detailed list of more than 125 houseplants, with information, such as where, when and how to plant; growing tips; care and propagation; companion planting and design; specific species recommendations; bloom period; seasonal color and more.
My experience at the 2017 Garden Writers Association Conference and Expo in Buffalo, New York, was a phenomenal immersion into the world of public horticulture and garden writing.

From the moment I got to the registration desk, I felt a strong sense of acceptance, enthusiasm and encouragement from everyone that I met! As a student, the experience was priceless. I’m honored to have been in Buffalo with so many people that I now admire and aspire to be like. I vividly remember the sense of gratitude and excitement I had when so many members gave me words of advice for my professional development.

**PROGRAM APPROVAL**

I greatly enjoyed the pre-conference writing class given by Mary-Kate Mackey. I thought it was exceptional and very worthwhile; I would take it again. All the speakers were wonderful and provided the audience with great insight into their specialized areas in the horticulture industry.

I also enjoyed Mark Tuner’s talk “Good Pictures in Bad Conditions” and the keynote speaker Dr. Robin Wall Kimmerer’s tear-jerking speech about natural resource conservation and the infinite wisdom of native peoples.

**LEADERSHIP CONTINUITY**

I was also very pleased to see the passing of the torch from existing president to the incoming president of the GWA at the award ceremony. The host committee members did a wonderful job leading the tours across Buffalo to the many different garden and park locations. The amount of history in the city of Buffalo was astounding. It seemed famous landscape architects had their hands all over the place.

My overall impression of the GWA is one of prestige and magnitude in the horticultural industry. I will be recommending the scholarship opportunity to my friends and encouraging them to become GWA members. I had such a great time and met so many new friends that I’m anticipating attending the conference again in this decade.

Isaac Luhrs, a student at the University of Tennessee, received one of three scholarships to attend #GWA2017.

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**SAVE THE DATE!**

GWA Annual Conference & Expo at IGC Show ’18

Chicago, IL | August 13-16
Urban Farms Continue to Grow in Indy

On a busy street that serves as one of the south side gateways to downtown Indianapolis sits South Circle Farm on 1.5 acres. Hundreds—if not thousands—of commuters driving from the southern suburbs to downtown Indianapolis pass by it daily. On a fall Sunday afternoon, if the roof of nearby Lucas Oil Stadium is open, workers at the farm can probably hear the roar of the crowds gathered to watch NFL football featuring the hometown Indianapolis Colts.

Across the street from the farm there is an aged neighborhood, waiting patiently, hopefully, for its chance to be transformed. Maybe that will happen sooner rather than later. After all, just a few blocks up the street, the mother and daughter team from the HGTV show Good Bones has started to flip a few houses.

The area to the west of the farm might be described optimistically as “industrial.” Recycling is one of the predominant industries, with a few trucking companies thrown in to complete the picture of an area paved over with old asphalt, concrete and gray limestone rock.

CHALLENGED NEIGHBORHOODS

This location seems like an improbable place to put a farm, but the owners of the land, the non-profit Gennesaret Free Clinic, which serves the healthcare needs of homeless and low-income residents of Indianapolis, wanted the land and adjoining historical building to be used in an environmentally responsible way.

I’ve driven by South Circle Farm at least once a week and from afar have watched as the farm has grown from its beginnings in 2010. First came the rows of vegetables, announcing to passersby that this unused parcel of land was going to be a farm. In subsequent seasons, they added low tunnels to extend the harvest in early spring and late fall. This past summer, high tunnels appeared, protecting tomato plants that will produce fruit long after my own tomato plants have withered away.

Many industries in the area put up tall, chain-link fences to keep others out. There is no such fence at South Circle Farm. Instead, a low, white farm fence surrounds it, which invokes Robert Frost, “good fences make good neighbors.” The farm is open to visitors and it offers programs for children and adults. For a suggested donation of $2, visitors can go on a self-guided tour or call ahead to schedule a guided tour. A new sign out front proudly proclaims a church whose members volunteer there.

PROGRAMS FOR KIDS AND ADULTS

Under a large pavilion, the farm hosts weekly classes for “Kids Grow Green,” which is taught in cooperation with a neighborhood center that hosts numerous programs for area children and senior citizens. Each week through the growing season, “Kids Grow Green” brings neighborhood children to the farm where they are taught how to grow and eat vegetables. At the end of the season, the farm hosts the kids and their parents for a harvest celebration, which includes a meal the kids prepare and share with their parents.

Just 10 minutes north and west of the center of Indianapolis is another urban farm, a non-profit named Fitness Farm. It sits in the middle of a predominately residential area, not far from the Indianapolis Museum of Art, on a parcel of land donated by Dr. Cory SerVaas, former publisher of The Saturday Evening Post, and her family.

Fitness Farm devotes approximately 20,000 square feet of its 22 acres to growing vegeta-
Produce from urban farms can be found in many farmers markets.

Comp. The rest of the land is used to host various events, including a summer day camp for local at-risk children who have issues with their weight. Students use the recreational facilities to become more active and learn to grow and eat vegetables from the farm.

MORE THAN A FARM

Neighbors, too, are invited to use the walking trails, tennis courts and basketball goals on the property as well as buy some produce. Fitness Farm, like many urban farms, sells produce on site and at local farmers markets.

Is urban farming on small parcels of land inside the city limits the next big thing? It's hard to know, as there are no recent statistics on how many small urban farms exist within city limits—at least in Indianapolis.

But there are enough of them to prompt several of the Indianapolis-area urban farmers to come together to form IndyGrown, a cooperative network of urban farms throughout the area. Members, including both South Circle Farm and Fitness Farm, are committed to organic, regenerative farming practices.

Purdue University’s Cooperative Extension Service also supports urban farmers by offering a certificate program in urban agriculture. Instructors combine online learning, classroom lectures and field trips to teach urban agriculture to anyone interested in urban farming on any size farm.

I hope urban farming is the next big thing. Many urban farmers do more than grow vegetables to sell. They also reach out to the community at large and offer opportunities for others to learn how to grow their own food and for everyone to learn how to cook and eat fresh vegetables.

Carol Michel is an award-winning, freelance writer with a degree in horticulture from Purdue University. She is the author of Potted and Pruned: Living a Gardening Life and blogs about gardening regularly at www.maydreamsgardens.com.

I would like to thank the NextGen Scholarship committee for choosing me as one of the recipients of this year’s scholarship to attend the national conference. I am grateful, inspired and humbled. I was committed to going this year and willing to pay out of pocket. Given my student loans, my desire to be an entrepreneur and the worthwhile temporary jobs I’ve held since graduating from college in 2016, this scholarship certainly helps any financial uncertainties I may experience.

Having attended conferences mostly geared to scientists and farmers in the past, the camaraderie felt at the GWA Conference and Expo blew those other conferences out of the water. Fellow attendees inspired me to believe that I could be a writer. More than that, several people sincerely offered to help me in whatever way they could.

FAMILY-LIKE FEEL

Unlike other conferences I’ve attended that had more of an uptight feel, #GWA2017 attendees made me feel like part of their large family. This experience of a lifetime opened my eyes and heart to so much, such as career opportunities I had not considered, how much fun garden writers have when they get together, reawakening my love for ornamental plants and beautiful gardens—which I had put aside after taking woody and herbaceous plants in college—and all the people who shared their career stories with me, served to assist my inner writer.

I met Kirk Brown the first day of the conference. He was eager to meet me and introduce me to people like Teresa Speight and Bill Johnson. From people like Teresa, I learned more about their entry into this world of garden writing. One thing I took away from the conference was the importance of developing horticultural skills in some way. To begin with, learn plant names—a very impactful skill to have that Robin Wall Kimmerer emphasized—as it gives us the opportunity to teach people who have been distant from nature.

SUSTAINABLE PARKING LOTS

When the keynote speaker, Kevin Gaughan of Buffalo, gave his address, I was all ears as he discussed the challenges and victories his city has experienced. I briefly was able to speak to him and he offered me a few words of wisdom. Another person I was thrilled to have learned from was Buffalo landscape designer Dave Majewski, who showed me two of his parking lots redesigned to capture runoff water into rain gardens. What interested me most was learning how Majewski made fungally diverse, high quality compost that he said was a growing business for him.

Whenever I go back to Buffalo I’ll pay him a visit. Also, I’ll be sure to check out Frank Lloyd Wright’s Graycliff, as I thoroughly enjoyed the Martin House. Buffalo itself as a city could not be a better location to have experienced my first GWA event. I look forward to having fun and connecting with members in my region and across the country before we all meet again in Chicago next year.

Aaryn Wilson, who holds a bachelor degree in plant science from the University of Minnesota, was one of three scholarship recipients to attend #GWA2017.
2018 GWA Foundation Scholarship Applications Open

ASHLEY HODAK SULLIVAN

- The 2018 scholarship application deadline is Friday, December 15, 2017. To apply and learn more, please visit www.gardenwriters.org/scholarships.
- For questions, please contact Ashley Hodak Sullivan, GWA Foundation Executive Director, or call 212-297-2198.

In recent years, more than $100,000 has been awarded to outstanding students.
Chanticleer Awards Scholarship to Museum Horticulturist

The Chanticleer Foundation Board of Directors has selected Gwyn Rager as the latest recipient of the Chanticleer Scholarship in Professional Development. Rager, a horticulturist at the Indianapolis Museum of Art at Newfields, will attend the “Art of Gardening at Great Dixter” Symposium in East Sussex, England, to study garden design and maintenance. Following the symposium, she will visit gardens throughout the UK and Europe. Her scholarship also supported participation in a four-day garden design workshop presented by Chanticleer and led by British garden designer Annie Guilfoyle this past July.

The Chanticleer Scholarship in Professional Development promotes creativity and leadership by providing professional development opportunities for public garden staff. Established in 2008, the scholarship has supported 47 public garden professionals from gardens of all types and sizes. It has two core components: Academic study to improve leadership skills and support of travel to meet with leaders to build on that academic experience.

PPA Names New President, Directors

Marking a new fiscal year, the Perennial Plant Association has installed four new board members and a new president.

Janet Draper has been chosen to lead the organization through a time of transition as longstanding executive director and organization co-founder Steven Still retires this fall and the association turns the reins over to a management firm.

Draper has been a member of PPA for nearly three decades, serving as its Mid-Atlantic Director for six years, organizer of the annual Mid-Atlantic Region Symposium for six years and co-chair of the 2015 National Symposium in Baltimore. Her diverse background includes work in nursery production, garden center retail, landscape maintenance and, for the last 20 years, as head horticulturist of the Mary Livingston Ripley Garden at the Smithsonian Gardens in Washington, D.C. Her peers describe her as one of the industry’s most knowledgeable, personable and passionate leaders.

Holly Scoggins, associate professor at Virginia Tech College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, joins the PPA board as President-Elect. She currently teaches courses in ornamental plant production, herbaceous landscape plants, greenhouse management, and public gardens maintenance and management.

Patty Steinhauser joins the PPA board as Great Lakes Region Director. She is co-owner and vice-president of Stonehouse Nursery, a wholesale propagator and grower in southwest Michigan.

Robert Bowden has been named the new Southern Region Director of PPA. He has served as the director of the Harry P. Leu Botanical Gardens in Orlando, Florida, for the last 24 years.

KELLEN TO MANAGE PPA

The Perennial Plant Association’s Board of Directors has hired Kellen Company, the same company that manages GWA, to manage PPA.

Kellen’s Washington, D.C., office will serve as PPA’s headquarters, and Shawn Swearingen is the new PPA executive director. Swearingen has been with Kellen for six years as account executive, government affairs manager and in other posts.

Indianapolis Museum’s Properties Get New Moniker

The Indianapolis Museum of Art’s Board of Directors has renamed all of its properties Newfields, a Place of Nature and the Arts. Newfields includes the 50-acre gardens and grounds, the American Country Estate Oldfields and the 100-acre Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park, which is adjacent to the museum. It also covers the Miller House and Garden in Columbus, Indiana. Oldfields and the Miller House and Garden are on the National Register of Historic Landmarks.

REGION IV CHEVAL FORCE OPP

In October, Brent Heath presented “Bulb Design: Potentials & Possibilities for the Green Industry Professional,” in Louisville, Kentucky.


REGION VI JACQUELINE SOULE

Nicholas Staddon manned the Village Nurseries plant display at the ASLA National Conference and Trade Show at the LA Convention Center in October. Then on to California garden club presentations: November 1, San Clemente Garden Club; November 9, the Garden Group of Long Beach and the Tustin Garden Club; and November 13, the Los Angeles Garden Club.

Debra Prinzing emceed the floral presentations at “Bouquets of the Heart,” a benefit luncheon to raise funds for The Bloom Project in Portland, Oregon, October 27. On November 5, she will speak on “Slow Flowers” at the New England Farmer-Florist Connection in Plymouth, Massachusetts. On November 6-7, she will co-present “Artisanal Flowers,” a lecture and design workshop at the Desert Botanical Garden in Phoenix, Arizona.

Jacqueline Soule will speak at three southern Arizona garden clubs, seven different area libraries, and at the Western National Parks Association bookstore. If you will be in the area, contact her for dates and details.
What do local food and school gardening mean to Vermont’s largest school district? The Burlington School Food Project is a food service and Farm to School program that connects students and their families with whole, fresh and local foods, school gardens and is an integral department of Vermont’s Burlington School District. The program defines a product as local when it is grown or processed within the state of Vermont or at one of their many school-based gardens. The majority of their vegetable purchases are ultra-local, which is defined as a 30-mile radius. The Burlington school system is so committed to local food and garden-based learning that it has hired Sarah Heusner as food education manager, and Christine Gall as garden education coordinator.

Christine currently divides her time between the Burlington School Food Project and KidsGardening, a national nonprofit based in Burlington, dedicated to creating opportunities for every child to learn through the garden. After earning a B.A. in history at Haverford College, Christine dove headfirst into the world of garden and food-based learning. She spent time working for a variety of educational farms in both New York and Vermont, including Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture, the Merck Forest and Farmland Center and Shelburne Farms, before transitioning to educating within a school setting and as a Food Corp member.

DIRTY HANDS
It’s arguably the first hot day of May, the growing season in Burlington, with temperatures soaring into the low 90s and bright sunlight shining down on a group of 40 or so sixth graders collected on a quarter-acre plot of land nestled behind Lyman C. Hunt Middle School. Perched on picnic tables, the students listen as Christine explains what their class will be doing in the school district’s largest production garden. Within moments, the youth spring to action. Armed with shovels and rakes, they turn over long rows of cover crop, revealing dark soil and the occasional earthworm.

Over the course of the day, more than 200 students pitch together to transform the dormant, weed-ridden space into a fully tilled and compost-rich garden ready for planting. That task will be completed by a group of visiting Burlington High School students participating in a two-week, year-end studies course called Burlington Farming: Growing the Future.

Across the district, every school is similarly readying their garden for the growing season. Many of these schools have Outdoor or Garden Committees of invested teachers and parents dedicated to organizing garden celebrations and planning summer maintenance schedules.

FOOD FIGHTERS
From kindergarten classes to a specialized food science course offered at the high school,
Christine Gall is the garden education coordinator for Burlington School Food Project.

students have a chance to engage in a variety of garden-based learning opportunities throughout the year. Christine likes to emphasize to the kids that “Any youth who participates in any sort of garden maintenance project can be said to have contributed to the school district’s own food system.” Much of the produce from these school gardens is used by cafeteria staff in meals that are delicious and readily eaten by the kids. There is also a Food Fighters afterschool program, where Christine spends many hours of their weekly meetings preparing meals at the local food shelf.

FORK IN THE ROAD FOOD TRUCK
The Fork in the Road food truck grew out of Burlington School Food Project’s hands-on gardening and cooking programs, and Christine helps manage this program.

Student employees earn wages while processing fresh ingredients from local farms and the school gardens, preparing complex dishes—everything from samosas to pesto pulled pork sandwiches—working weekly vending and catering events as well as maintaining school gardens throughout the district. Youth also attend special team days, which include food safety trainings, resume writing workshops, mock interviews and visits to local businesses where they learn the ins and outs of the service industry.

The food truck is integrated into academic classes such as business and culinary arts at Burlington High School, and students receive mentoring from the local restaurant community. This amazing program not only teaches relevant skills, teamwork and workplace professionalism, it also increases confidence and changes lives.

BY THE NUMBERS
Burlington School Food Project offers breakfast and after school supper in the district’s nine schools. Five schools also receive lunch at no cost.

A typical school year food costs are roughly $1.1 million, with 11 percent direct to local producers and growers. The local total exceeds 30 percent when fluid milk is included. Meal service is offered 177 days during the calendar school year, and an additional 39 days during summer months. And local foods are served daily.

IMPACT FOR KIDS AND COMMUNITY
Since 2005, the education experts at KidsGardening have been tracking the impact of youth gardening by interviewing their grantees across the United States. Some highlights of the positive changes noted in the youth who participated in these garden programs:

- 70 percent of educators noted improvements in nutritional attitudes
- 82 percent saw an increased sense of community spirit
- 80 percent noted increased social skills
- 75 percent saw an increase in leadership skills
- 91 percent saw improved environmental attitudes

For more about the Burlington School Food Project, please visit burlingtonschoolfoodproject.org; for more on the impact of garden-based learning, visit KidsGardening.org or read Christine’s blog.

Maree Gaetani is currently Partnership and Outreach at KidsGardening, a national nonprofit that is dedicated to getting kids learning through the garden. Prior to this position, she was director of good works and garden relations at Gardener’s Supply. She’s been actively involved promoting gardening as an agent for social, environmental and community change since 2001. Member of GWA since 2001.

October 2017 marked the one-year anniversary of active marketing for GardenZeus—an innovative, online resource for the California gardener. Gardeners enter their zip codes and access customized growing information for vegetables, herbs and drought tolerant perennials as well as a series of blogs focused on California’s unique growing conditions. Ann Clary is co-founder of the site and Christy Wilhelmi is an advisor.

Elzer-Peters devotes new website to freelancers
Katie Elzer-Peters has launched Make Me A Freelancer: How to Run Your Business Without Ruining Your Life, a website and blog devoted to making it easier for freelancers to have successful, profitable businesses without sacrificing quality of life. Katie shares tips and tools for self-employed freelancers, including the free guide “8 Ways to Ensure Quality Time Off,” something she has struggled with and conquered. She started the site after experiencing many stumbling blocks along the way to building her 10 year business and watching her friends and colleagues struggle.

Prinzing produces Slow Flowers insert
Former GWA President Debra Prinzing has joined Florists’ Review, the leading floral industry trade magazine, as contributing editor. Beginning with the August issue, she’ll produce a regular, 16-page insert for the monthly publication called Slow Flowers Journal. Her website features related online content and highlights from the print edition.

Tova Roseman continues to interview people, such as Diane Blazek, for her podcasts. She says she learns something new every time. While she can’t share an exact schedule at this point in time, she encourages people to check them out.
Armed with a master’s degree in Urban Horticulture from the University of Washington—not to mention being a bonafide King County (Washington) Master Gardener and a Seattle gardening personality, who for years wrote a weekly newspaper column and appeared on the local NPR radio station—Marty Wingate knows how to diagnose dead plants.

And now, after penning her 10th murder mystery and being named a USA Today Best-selling Author, you could say that Marty also solves mysteries about dead characters.

The threads connecting these different chapters of her life tie together Marty’s skill for storytelling, her Anglophile tendencies and her love for all things botanical. She leads garden tours to England, Scotland and Ireland and is a member of the Royal Horticultural Society. In addition to being a longtime GWA member, she is a member of Mystery Writers of America, Sisters in Crime and the Crime Writers Association.

“WHO-DONE-IT” GARDENING BOOKS INTRIGUED MARTY

How did this popular garden writer, who has authored five garden titles and whose byline continues to appear in Country Gardens, American Gardener and other publications, become a successful mystery writer? So many self-employed garden communicators are interested in diversifying their careers into “crossover” platforms such as culinary, travel, health and wellness or floral (that would be me). And yet, why not fiction?

Marty explained, “I enjoy reading mysteries but I don’t necessarily like crime and thriller books (although Ian Rankin’s books are an exception). I do enjoy mysteries where character, scene and storyline are very important and the body is perhaps hidden.”

She said that her own move into mysteries began with a friend’s suggestion. “She kept saying, ‘You should write a garden murder mystery.’ My friend isn’t a writer, but she’s a big reader. There are all sorts of themed mysteries—dog mysteries, cat mysteries; even series about coffee shops and scrapbooking—so I finally thought, ‘What better theme could there be than garden mysteries?’”

ON BECOMING A MYSTERY NOVELIST

According to Marty, “I started getting ideas about a protagonist who is a gardener. I wanted her to be an American gardener because that’s what I knew, but I wanted the story set in England, which is where I love to go. From that, storylines and characters just seemed to appear.”

With the concept of her first book already developed, Marty ventured into the unknown world of fiction in 2011, attending the Pacific Northwest Writers Association summer conference. “My goal was to meet with agents. Each attendee was able to pitch two literary agents. I found an agent interested in my ideas. But equally important, I found my writing group.”

Marty credits her fellow writing group members for helping her develop a successful first manuscript that earned accolades from her editor. “I’ve stayed in my writing group. It’s like having a tableful of extra editors. And along with friends who read my early manuscripts, having that feedback is necessary.”

Through a series of events (the unfortunate death of said agent, followed by a second agent stepping in to adopt her clients, including Marty), Random House’s Alibi imprint committed to publishing the first three books in “The Potting Shed” series. In 2014, The Garden Plot, the first book of the series that features Pru Parke, a middle-aged American gardener transplanted from Texas to England, came out. Murder has a way of finding Pru—wherever she gardens. The sixth title in this series, Best Laid Plants, was just released October 17.

After her stories about Pru were well under-way, Marty’s editor suggested she dream up a new protagonist to engage the birding crowd. Julia Lanchester, a bird lover who runs a tourist office in a Suffolk village, was born. She is part of the “Birds of a Feather” series, with three books out and a fourth (Farewell, My Cuckoo), scheduled for April 2018 publication. Marty’s books are available on tablets and smart readers: fans have downloaded more than 120,000 books in just four years.

Marty explains that her two series are considered traditional or “cozy” mysteries, a subgenre in which the protagonist is often an amateur sleuth rather than a detective or police inspector.
Marty agrees that her horticulture background is an essential part of her narratives. “I love writing about gardens and about plants. I always have correct gardening information. Other than that, I can make up everything else.” She infuses elements of history into “The Potting Shed” series: Roman ruins buried in a London backyard or a modern-day connection to a 19th century plant explorer. In “Birds of a Feather,” plants, nature and bird watching are woven into each story.

THE THIRD ACT
Mary-Kate describes Marty’s mystery writing career as a third act. “She’s got her garden writing. Her garden touring combines with a love of England and all things British, which gives her books authenticity. And now, in hindsight, it’s easy to see how Marty’s first two acts led her to the third. It seems like everything she did in garden writing was training to get to these mysteries.”

“It’s great fun to do the research,” Marty said. That research often takes place during free moments before or after one of the garden tours she leads, often with her husband Leighton Wingate, a copy editor and journalist who’s become an expert on British pubs. “People are amazingly helpful when I’m researching an upcoming mystery. From a behind-the-scenes tour of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh to watching a rehearsal for an outdoor production of A Midsummer Night’s Dream, I always get lots of suggestions for who the next victim should be,” she confided with a chuckle.

Marty’s life is full of her characters and their stories. She credits a ritualistic habit of writing every single day for much of her success. She typically spends each afternoon at her local library, either drafting a new chapter or revising and editing.

Learn more about Marty Wingate’s two mystery series at Marty’s page on Random House’s site.

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Jan Johnson
Jo Ellen Meyers Sharp

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Eva Monheim
Lynn Steiner

SIX MEMBERS
Brie Arthur

TWELVE MEMBERS
Bill Johnson
Louise Clark
Kate Copesy
Sally Cunningham

TWO ALLIED MEMBERS
Kirk Ryan Brown
Teresa Watkins

Helping Us Grow! Thanks to these GWA members for helping to grow the organization.

Former GWA President Debra Prinzing is a Seattle-based fan of murder mysteries, who has downloaded all of Marty Wingate’s books on her digital reader. Debra is the founder and creative director of Slowflowers.com.
Former U.S. Vice President Al Gore likes to refer to one of economist Rudi Dornbusch’s favorite sayings: “In economics, things take longer to happen than you think they will, and then they happen faster than you thought they would.”

This quote resonated with me after meeting Tommy Romano of Infinite Harvest the night before attending Al Gore’s Climate Reality Project’s three-day training in Denver, Colorado, earlier this year. A local resident had invited 15 of us to meet Romano for dinner to learn about his vertically stacked hydroponic farm in a Lakewood warehouse, three miles from downtown Denver.

VERTICAL FARMS: HOW THEY WORK

In 2009, Romano, who has a background in aerospace engineering, saw that LED and renewable-energy technologies had advanced sufficiently to make vertical farms viable, and he put together a business plan. He spent two years researching, building his own systems and testing them in an off-grid, self-contained vertical farm. The proof of concept worked. In 2014, he outfitted a 5,400-square-foot warehouse with a closed-loop vertical farm system.

“The space that we have here is producing about 26 acres equivalent of farmland annually,” said Romano. His growing towers are on average 10 tiers high and up to 18 feet tall. He grows densely packed leafy greens, micro greens and herbs using city water that is pushed through reverse osmosis and UV filtration. A mix of nutrients is added to the water that flows toward the plant roots. The water is recycled and used again. This recirculating system supports water conservation because water is added only to replenish what has evaporated. According to the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Infinite Harvest uses over 90 percent less water than conventional farming. Online, the department also states that Infinite Harvest’s “proprietary LED lighting systems reduce energy consumption more than 50 percent, compared to industry-standard, hydroponic lighting.”

There is an air-monitoring system that checks humidity, airflow and temperature. The plant seeds are organic and pesticides are never used. Entrance to the warehouse is through a double set of doors in order to protect plants from pests. Tommy Romano’s produce is delivered within a 50-mile radius the same day it’s harvested, reducing transportation-related carbon pollution.

The World Bank estimates that exploding population growth will require us to produce 50 percent more food—using fewer resources—by 2050.
The trend toward increasing population growth, coupled with less arable land, has increased global interest in hydroponics, as well as other indoor methods of delivering water to plants such as aeroponics and aquaponics. Aeroponics is a system of growing plants in an air/mist environment in which roots are misted with nutrient-rich water every few minutes. Medicinals made from plant roots, such as cone-flowers (Echinacea spp.) are easily and more quickly grown in an aeroponic system, because unlike a soil-based plant, a portion of the root can be regularly harvested without destroying the plant. Aquaponic systems include fish, such as tilapia, whose waste fertilizes plants. In turn, the plants filter and clean the water.

**SMALL FARM IN A BOX**

The World Bank estimates that we will need to produce at least 50 percent more food by 2050 to feed a projected population of more than 9.5 billion. Companies looking at future food needs have started manufacturing prefabricated modular systems or retrofitting used shipping containers with built-in hydroponic systems.

Freight Farms, based in Boston, Massachusetts, builds hydroponic growing systems inside 40 x 8 x 9.5-foot shipping containers. Stony Brook University on Long Island, New York, has one of these containers placed outside its Roth Quad cafeteria. The farm, known as the Leafy Green Machine, is run by students and all greens grown are served in the cafeteria.

Within the container, high efficiency red and blue LED light strips hang near the vertical growing towers. The dangling strips can be placed close to the plants because they do not cause leaf burn. All the interior conditions, such as lighting, temperature, humidity and carbon dioxide levels, can be controlled remotely with a smartphone application. Perry Tucciarone, operations manager for Roth and overseer of the Freight Farm said, “It runs on minimal electricity of about 160 kWh and uses under 10 gallons of water a day.” Each shipping container can hold up to 4,500 plants.

**STILL A BALANCING ACT**

There are some limits to these newer systems. Growing grain crops, such as wheat, sorghum and corn, is not yet feasible with these types of hydroponic systems. Large commercial operations have very high startup costs. Extra training in engineering and computer control systems is also costly for growers. And since electricity is of utmost importance, a power failure without a back-up generator could quickly ruin crops.

Yet, there’s huge potential for these modern systems to cut food waste, help drought-stricken areas (especially in Africa and the Middle East) and provide growing urban populations with pesticide-free, locally grown fresh produce all year round.

**RESOURCES**

- Simply Hydroponic
  [www.simplyhydro.com/whatis](http://www.simplyhydro.com/whatis)
- USDA
- The Water Network
  [https://thewaternetwork.com](http://https://thewaternetwork.com)
- Infinite Harvest
  [www.infinite-harvest.com](http://www.infinite-harvest.com)
- Freight Farms
  [www.freightfarms.com](http://www.freightfarms.com)

Dency Kane is a garden photographer for books, magazines and advertising, as well as a volunteer Climate Reality Leader trained by former Vice President Al Gore. You can reach her at dencykane@photographer.net or 631-423-3479.
For more than 20 years, GWA and GWA Foundation have been proud to support our Plant a Row for the Hungry Program. The idea is simple: Plant an extra row of produce each year and donate your surplus to local food banks, soup kitchens and service organizations to help feed America’s hungry.

Ever thought about starting your own Plant a Row for the Hungry Program? Now is the time to start planning. Here are some steps to begin your own local PAR committee:

**STEP 1: Enlist a Network**
Recruit volunteer participants. Volunteers can include master gardeners, garden clubs, food pantry volunteers or just local gardeners wanting to support their community.

**STEP 2: Plan Your Campaign**
To begin planning, set a coordination session 10 to 12 weeks before the planting season. Ask the food bank representative to describe the need for produce and what garden produce is wanted. Coordinate planting and goals with volunteers.

With a plan in place, now the real work begins. Here’s how a typical PAR campaign looks:

- **When planting season opens:**
  - Create an attention-getting launch for the campaign and give away “starter kits.
  - Publicize the need to Plant A Row.
  - Ask extension services, community gardens, churches, schools, garden clubs, businesses and even food banks to start Plant A Row gardens.

- **As harvest season advances:**
  - Organize gleaning opportunities from home gardeners, orchards and truck farms. Have them donate produce directly to qualified food distribution agencies. Get receipts for your donors!
  - Call your food distribution agency partners weekly to ask for donation reports.
  - Celebrate and publicize the donations.
  - Announce a final harvest date for your campaign.

**STEP 3: Publicize Your Campaign**
Publicity is the key to success. The first move is to publicize everything you do. Share your stories with local media and your social networks. Use the official PAR logo or even request your own logo, specially branded for your local committee. Request your logo and let GWA Foundation know about your committee’s activities by emailing info@gardenwriters.org.

**STEP 4: Celebrate the Harvest**
Starting at midseason, enlist the media in building to the harvest party and cut-off date for recording donations. As the garden season peaks, the weekly totals will climb dramatically, so don’t give up on reporting the totals. It takes a newspaper, radio or TV host very little space to report climbing totals. Then, wrap up the campaign at the cut-off date with a harvest party.

To get started today, please call us at 877-492-2727. Learn more about starting your PAR committee. GWA Foundation has PAR materials available to committees, including brochures, row markers and custom logos to denote your PAR gardens. For questions or additional information, contact us at 877-492-2727.