

Youngstown Garden Club focused on future, staying true to its core

BY CARROLL ANN SIMON

Second Vice President
Youngstown Garden Club

Special interest clubs, such as sailing clubs, ski clubs, photo clubs, astronomy clubs and garden clubs, have struggled in recent years to find ways to attract new members without abandoning their core values and purpose. Societal trends such as competing priorities for family activities and limited free time have had their effect on how people, especially parents, choose to spend their leisure time.

Membership numbers are in decline generally, yet the work of these clubs is often vitally important to ensuring vibrant communities and improving quality of life. The Youngstown Garden Club is not alone in facing this challenge.

The Youngstown Garden Club has been serving its community since 1957 with a mission of stimulating knowledge, protecting the environment, encouraging civic beautification and providing charitable contributions through scholarships and donations. These are timeless goals, at least



as important today as when they were first conceived by a group of Youngstown women adamant about instilling a passion for gardening in others, not only for the beauty and ecological importance of it, but for the ways in which doing it contributes to the development of the "whole person."

The old adage, "There is nothing new under the sun," has been especially true as our leadership and members explore ways to better connect with our commu-

nity while keeping our mission front and center. We remain convinced that it's not necessarily what we're doing, but how we do it and how we present ourselves to the public that needs to be improved. It's important to stress that we are not reinventing the club; we are reenergizing it while "sticking to our knitting."

In planning our 2023-24 programs and events, we threw everything we had routinely been doing over the past several years up in the air and asked

ourselves: What should we do more of? What should we do less of? How can we revise what we do to be more relevant and to attract and serve a greater number of people?

The result of our planning exercise was not necessarily to do more, or to give up programs and events that had been successful in the past, but rather to inject new energy into them, expand our partnerships and pump up our marketing efforts to reach more people.

Examples of this are our 2023-24 speaker series; our reimagined annual plant sale, now rebranded as "Plant-O-Rama"; and a new holiday event, which will open the Ontario House, aka The Stone Jug, up to public tours of its second and third floors lavishly decorated for the season.

Club leadership is certain that the key to its sustainability is to attract parents and children while encouraging them to have an ongoing relationship with us, whether that is through membership, volunteerism or participation in programs and events. "Plant-O-Rama" begins at 9 a.m. and ends at 2 p.m.

test of this theory.

While selling perennials and herbs is at the center of the event on June 3 at the Youngstown Village Center, the plant sale will be wrapped around with a variety of family-friendly activities and amenities, including food provided by the Youngstown Marketside, music provided by Bob and Andrea, a garden-themed scavenger hunt in the Youngstown Free Library facilitated by Director Sonora Miller, face-painting by Lewiston-Porter Middle School students, a flower-arranging demonstration, soil testing and much, much more. "Plant-O-Rama" begins at 9 a.m. and ends at 2 p.m.

For more information on "Plant-O-Rama," call Colleen Summerville at 716-531-6701. To stay up to date on our programs and events, visit our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/youngstowntgardenclub/. For those who would like to communicate with us about becoming a member or anything else, email us at youngstowntgardenclub@gmail.com.

MEMORIAL S-A-L-E



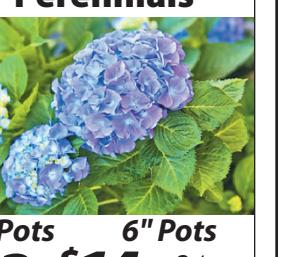
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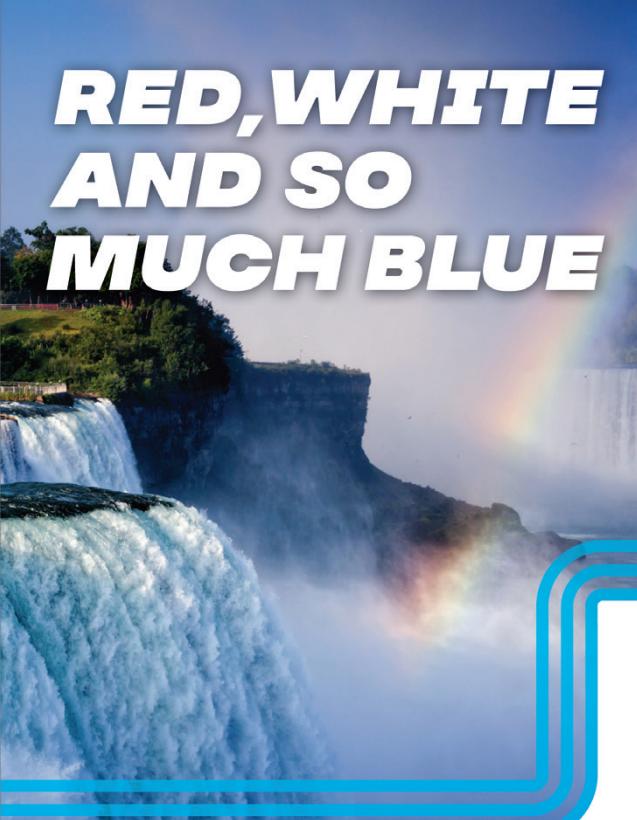
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Memorial Day weekend is a time to reflect on the words of President John F. Kennedy, who said, "As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words but to live by them."

The sacrifice of our courageous veterans

helped build the country we call home.

There's no better place to spend the holiday weekend than in America's first state park.



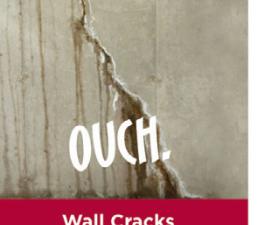
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