

March 2026

Columbia Underground



COLUMBIA GARDEN CLUB

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President's Message

March is a transitional weather month, and it may come in as a Lion. This is the time of year when I like to walk around my garden beds and see new life pop out of the ground or buds swelling on trees. Nature is awakening from a deep sleep which never gets old. Watching the daffodils get taller is always a hopeful sign of better things to come!

Just as the outdoors is waking up, indoor activities for the club are ramping up. Our speaker this month is Brenda McGavock, Clinical Psychologist, Master Gardener, and former president of Heart of Missouri Master Gardeners. She will demonstrate the implementation of willow fencing and its history of both living and non-living willow fencing. I have no doubt Brenda will deliver a compelling presentation.

Several of us will be traveling to Arizona in the last week of March for the Bloomin' Bus Tour's Arizona Desert Adventure. We will have plenty to talk about in April and maybe some photos! This month I am asking club members to focus on April's activities which include the plant sale, those that are attending the 93rd Annual FGCM State Convention in Independence, MO, and Art in Bloom. And more volunteers at the Food Bank are encouraged. The time does go by quickly for such a worthy cause with ample conversation and laughter. Please consider participating in this community activity.

Try to get outdoors for some fresh air, healthy movement, and longer days. Daylight Saving Time begins Sunday, March 8th. As always, happy gardening!

Donna

"Spring makes its own statement, so loud and clear that the gardener seems to be only one of his instruments, not the composer." — Geoffrey Charlesworth

February Minutes

CGC met on February 9, 2026. Donna Puleo introduced our guest speaker Debi Kelly, Field Specialist in Horticulture and State Extension Master Gardener Coordinator Boone County Extension. Debi presented a very informative program about how and when to do pruning.

Following the program Donna Puleo called the meeting to order. We had 25 members and 2 guests in attendance. Our guests were Elaine Bezold (our speaker in January that plans to join CGC) and her friend Heather Ripcse. Those recognized with February birthdays were Lana Baker, Lynda Blades, Cindy Deegan, Julie Deering, Jill Felker and Linda Houston.

Inspiration was provided by Darlene Rasberry and given by Leigh Speichinger. Betty Connelly noted her name was misspelled in the January minutes, this will be corrected. Mary Nesladek gave the treasurers report with a balance of \$11,603.61 as of January 31, 2026. Mary also reported we received a letter from the DBRL. Our 2025 book donation was "Grow A New Garden, by Rebecca Searle ", given in memory of Linda Rubin and Virginia Itschner.

Committee Reports:

*Garden Tours: Karen Blackmore reported we are still on track for our garden tours on May 11, 2026. Members who have volunteered to have their gardens on tour are: Pam Weagley, Nicole Kilgore, Maggie Sherburne, Jane Jacobs and Diana Cooksey. It was suggested that we all wear red, white and blue hats.

*Flower Show: Marie Pasley reported the committee met in January and worked on the schedule. The show will be on July 18, 2026 at the Columbia Public Library (DBRL). The theme will be "Celebrate the USA" (Red, White and Blue). More information will be shared at our meeting next month.

*Plant Sale: Linda Antal asked that everyone start thinking about starting seeds, noting any plants members provide are 100% profit. The sale is April 25, 2026.

*Food Bank: Marie Pasley reported we are continuing to volunteer at the Food Bank on the 4th Tuesday of each month from 12:30-2:30.

*Treasurer Audit: Alice Havard reported the books were audited and in good order.

New Business:

*NGC Environmental School: Donna Puleo reported Course 3, Air & More, is March 16-19, Zoom in the afternoon.

*District Business: Betty Connelly asked for volunteers to be chairs on district committees. Karen Blackmore volunteered to chair Blue Star Memorial and Donna Puleo volunteered to chair Birds and Butterflies.

*Spring and Fall Central Meetings: Betty Connelly reported the Spring Central Meeting will be May 14, 2026 in Eldon and the Fall Central Meeting will be September 3, 2026 in Ashland.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Linneman



Seed Starting Potting Soil Recipe contributed by Marie Pasley

If you are planning to start some seeds for plants for the plant sale, you might want to try making some of this potting soil mix. Floret is a family run flower farm and seed company. They did some research with how different potting mixes affect the health of seedlings. They did trials using just potting soil, potting soil with fertilizer added and potting soil with their special blend of minerals and compost. Here is a photo that shows the difference in the seedlings. The left photo is the special mix, the middle is potting soil and fertilizer and the right one is just potting soil. All seeds were started on the same day and watered the same way.



Floret's Potting Soil Recipe

One BALE OF PRO-MIX BX POTTING SOIL (3.8 CUBIC FEET)

One 5 - GALLON BUCKET OF HIGH-QUALITY, SCREENED COMPOST

6 CUPS BONEMEAL

3 CUPS KELP MEAL

2¼ CUPS BLOOD MEAL

Mix all ingredients well, making sure everything is evenly distributed.

“Spring is nature’s way of saying, ‘Let’s party!’” –
Robin Williams

Keystone Native Plants information from National Wildlife Federation and MoBot

The term “keystone” plant, popularized by Douglas W. Tallamy, refers to the critical piece of a stone arch that holds it together. Without it, the arch collapses. In a similar way, our food web, without its foundational elements (many of which are insects), will be in danger of collapsing.

Keystone plants are native plants critical to the food web and necessary for many wildlife species to complete their life cycle. Without keystone plants in the landscape, butterflies, native bees, and birds will not thrive. 96% of our terrestrial birds rely on insects supported by keystone plants.

The keystone plants are native plant superstars. They provide the highest level of resources for the species that support the food web. Of special importance are caterpillars and specialist bees. 14% of native plants support 90% of our caterpillars. These are keystone plants. This month I will focus on Keystone Native Trees for our area.

White Oak *quercus alba* 436 caterpillar species use this as a host plant

White Oak is a large deciduous Missouri native tree. It grows to 50-80' tall in cultivation and taller (to 100') in the wild. Pyramidal when young, but matures into a substantial tree with a wide-spreading, rounded crown. Insignificant yellowish-green flowers appear in spring shortly after the leaves emerge. Fruits are oval acorns. Leaves (4-9" long) have 7 to 9 deep rounded lobes. Leaves emerge pinkish in spring, but mature to dark green. Variable fall color ranges from uninteresting browns to quality shades of dark red.



American Plum *prunus americana* 340 caterpillar species use this as a host plant

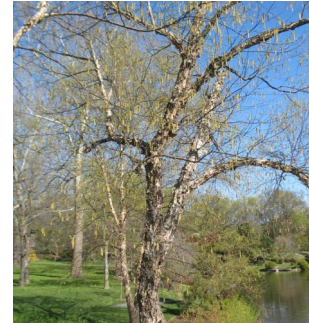
Prunus americana is a Missouri native, small, deciduous, single trunk tree or multi-stemmed shrub. As a tree, it typically grows to 15-25' tall with a broad, spreading crown. As a shrub, it suckers freely and can form large colonies. 2-5 flowered clusters of 5-petaled white flowers (1" diameter) appear in March before the foliage. Flowers are unpleasantly aromatic. Flowers are followed by edible, round, red plums (1" diameter) with bright yellow pulp which ripen in early summer. This species is usually grown for ornamental value and not for fruit production, however. Toothed, oblong to ovate leaves are 3-4" long and turn yellow to red in autumn. Branches and twigs are an attractive dark reddish-brown and sometimes have thorny lateral branchlets. Attracts birds.



Keystone Native Plants (continued)

River Birch *Betula nigra* 284 caterpillar species use this as a host plant

River birch, is a vigorous, fast-growing, medium-sized, Missouri native deciduous tree. In cultivation, it can be trained as either a single trunk or multi-trunked tree. As a single trunk tree, it develops a pyramidal habit when young, but matures to a more rounded shape typically growing 40-70' tall. Multi-trunked trees form a more irregular crown and are generally considered to be the superior growth habit for this species. Salmon-pink to red-dish brown bark exfoliates to reveal lighter inner bark. Leathery, diamond-shaped, medium to dark green leaves with doubly toothed margins turn yellow in fall. Flowers are green and brown catkins. Attracts birds.



Sugar Maple *Acer saccharum* 238 caterpillar species use this as a host plant

Sugar maple is a deciduous, Missouri native tree which will typically grow 40' to 80' tall (sometimes to 100') with a dense, rounded crown. This tree is a main component of the Eastern U.S. hardwood forest and is one of the trees which is most responsible for giving New England its reputation for spectacular fall color. Medium green leaves (3-6" wide with 3-5 lobes) turn yellow-orange in autumn, sometimes with considerable color variations. Fruit is the familiar two-winged samara. Sugar maples are long-lived trees which grow relatively slowly (somewhat faster in the first 35 years).



Prairie crabapple *Malus ioensis* 162 caterpillar species use this as a host plant

A miniature apple tree in most respects, prairie crabapple grows to 35 ft. with a dense, irregular form. A sometimes spiny shrub or small tree, with spreading branches and broad, open crown. Exfoliating bark reveals silvery-gray inner bark. The large, white or pink, flowers grow in clusters that cover the tree. A yellow-green, apple-like berry is not ornamental by crabapple standards. This is the crabapple of the eastern prairie region in the upper Mississippi Valley. Numerous species of birds, including bobwhites and pheasants, and squirrels, rabbits, and other mammals consume the fruit.



March Meeting

The next meeting of Columbia Garden Club will be Monday, March 9th at 1:00 at Trinity Presbyterian Church. Brenda McGavock will be giving the program “Willow Fencing”. Our hospitality hosts will be Karen Blackmore and Rita Gerke.

Upcoming Events

March 11-4:00-Grow Native! Webinar: Native Fruits to Diversify Your Farm and Garden

March 15-1:30-Mason Jar Succulent Planters Class—Four Oaks Farm

March 18-6:00-The Science of Compost: How to Create “Super Soil” - Columbia Public Library

March 28-10:00-2:00-Jefferson City Native Plant Sale – Runge Conservation Nature Center

Trees in The Garden

By D.H. Lawrence

Ah in the thunder air
how still the trees are!

And the lime-tree, lovely and tall, every
leaf silent hardly loses even a last breath
of perfume.

And the ghostly, creamy coloured little
tree of leaves white, ivory white among the
rambling greens, how evanescent, varie-
gated elder, she hesitates on the green
grass as if, in another moment, she would
disappear with all her grace of foam!

And the larch that is only a column, it goes
up too tall to see: and the balsam-pines
that are blue with the grey-blue blueness
of things from the sea, and the young cop-
per beech, its leaves red-rosy at the ends
how still they are together, they stand so
still in the thunder air, all strangers to one
another as the green grass glows upwards,
strangers in the garden.



Columbia Garden Club

President: Donna Puleo

1st VP: Darlene Rasberry

2nd VP: Linda Antal

Secretary: Diane Linneman

Treasurer: Mary Nesladek

Parliamentarian: Alice Havard

Columbia Garden Club meets the second Mon-
day of each month at 1:00 at Trinity Presbyteri-
an Church

Website:

<https://www.kewpie.net/colgrdnclub/cgc.html>

Facebook: Columbia Garden Club

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