

CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMS: AN OVERVIEW



Continuing education has always been a part of NGC's mission, and it has evolved over the organization's long history. Many workshops, forums, symposium, and committees eventually led to the development of comprehensive courses of study in four areas: flower show, landscape design, gardening, and environmental. NGC promotes lifelong learning in these areas under two related approaches: Schools that offer foundation courses in each of the study areas and Consultants Councils for those who successfully complete a School's courses. In effect, the Schools program is the gateway to the Consultants Councils and lifelong learning among garden club members. (You can read about the development of NGC's continuing education programs in *Fulfilling the Dream: The Story of National Garden Clubs, Inc., 1929-2004* by Mary Leffler Cochran, at www.gardenclub.org/publications)

THE FOUR SCHOOLS

NGC provides continuing education under the umbrella of Four Schools.

Flower Show School (FSS), est. 1943

Gardening School (GS), est. 1977

Landscape Design School (LDS), est. 1958

Environmental School (ES), est. 1993

Course content is established by NGC, and four sequenced courses comprise a series for each of the Schools. Courses are open to anyone, but students who are not members of a NGC garden club may not apply for Consultant status. Courses are typically offered by state garden club federations (or by their clubs, districts, and councils), and may be conducted in-person or virtually via Zoom. Students may register for courses offered anywhere in the U.S., and students' records are kept with their State Schools Chair. NGC and its regional and state affiliates maintain records of garden club members' successful completion of courses, whether taken within-state or out-of-state, whether in-person or virtually via Zoom.

FSS studies horticulture, design and flower show procedures with the primary purpose of training those wishing to become Flower Show Judges. Each of the four sequential courses in the series are typically scheduled over 2-3 days.

LDS, GS and ES—often referred to as the Tri-Schools—provide continuing education about the land, water, air and earth, horticulture, and good land use practices. Each of the four courses in these Schools consists of ten hours of instruction, and the subject matter overlaps and complements the curricula of each Schools. Open-book exams are offered for those who want to become NGC Accredited Consultants with a Consultants Council.

NCAGC Schools Chairs

Flower Show School Chair: Robin Hammer, rjlhammer@gmail.com

Landscape Design School Chair: TBD

Gardening School Chair: TBD

Environmental School Chair: Anne Kiehl, kiehlruth@verizon.net

THE COUNCILS

Consultants Councils are state organizations that provide programs to further the education of club members beyond the fundamental courses offered by the Schools program. States may have separate Councils for each study area, or combine two or more study areas into one Council. Council members may attend programs presented by professionals in their area of interest, tour public and private gardens, or attend workshops to study focused subjects. Councils also may provide services to garden clubs in their state, e.g., presenting programs, judging garden and landscape projects, or they may engage in community service projects. They also play an important role in supporting their state's Schools' Chairs in planning and conducting courses.

Students successfully completing three FSS courses may join the Council of Accredited Flower Show Judges (Judges Council) as Student Judges. Accredited Judges successfully complete all four courses and additional activities (e.g., judging and exhibiting in flower shows) within a seven year period. Accredited Judges “refresh” by completing additional requirements within three years of becoming an Accredited Judge and every three years thereafter. Accredited Judges that complete additional requirements may become Accredited Life Judges and Accredited Master Judges.

Students who successfully pass two LDS, GS or ES courses may become Provisional Consultants in that Consultants Council. Garden club members successfully completing all four courses in a School become Accredited Consultants, provided they completed the four courses by the end of the seventh calendar year after completing the first course. Consultants “refresh” by the end of the fifth calendar year following the date of the last course they completed (e.g., attending all lectures for a course in the School but no exam is required) and every five years thereafter. Consultants who complete four “refreshers” become Master Consultants.

NCAGC Consultant Council Chairs

JUDGES COUNCIL CHAIR: Justine Harris

LDS COUNCIL PRESIDENT: Robin Hammer

GARDENING & ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANTS COUNCIL: Co-Presidents Connie Richards-Gardening, Patsie Uchello-Environmental