



Grosse Pointe Garden Center, Inc.

2025 Annual Trial Gardens Competition

2025 Guidelines: *A Cottage Garden*

General, Maintenance, and Requirements:

- **Requirements:** Grand Marais listed five requirements to be incorporated into your design: colorful perennials, colorful annuals, at least one herb, a bush or shrub, and at least one fruit or vegetable. See theme description for details. Judges will look for all five elements in your design.
- **Garden accessories/hardscape:** creative garden accessories and/or hardscapes should serve to enhance your design, not be the focus of or overwhelm your design. They should be in proportion with your plot size, shape, and your design aiding in your interpretation and expression of the theme. Interesting and creative plantings of varying colors, heights, and textures should be the main focus of your design.
- **Plot Maintenance:** Each garden club is responsible for trimming the ivy border, weeding, deadheading, and keeping up the immediate area surrounding your plot.
- **Pesticides:** The Trial Gardens are pesticide-free! Organic products such as repellents for rabbits, etc. even if all-natural, must be approved by the Garden Center before use. Also, please apply approved products during early morning or evening hours when others are not around. Even organic substances can be toxic, irritating, and/or dangerous. This is a public garden attractive to children; the herb society and WM chef harvest and use the herbs in cooking. Be a responsible gardener.
- **Watering:** Clubs are responsible for making sure their plots, especially pots and containers, are receiving enough water. Don't depend entirely on the sprinkler system during dry, hot weather spells. Also, be aware of possible over watering during an extended rainy period. The water spigots with attached hoses are available for use in the Trial Gardens Please notify us of any issues/problems with the sprinklers or garden hoses.
- **Design Installation:** Normally held the two weeks before Memorial Day. This year, installation begins the week of May 12 to May 16 and continues May 19 to May 23, and if needed, May 27 to May 30. Please be aware of possible overnight frosts in mid-May and plan accordingly. Once your design is planted **and** your description handed in, it should not be changed. If a club suffers plant loss, only the affected plants or sections may be replaced with the same or similar plants in keeping with your original design. Feel free to contact us if you are having plant issues.
- **Labels:** There is no minimum or maximum number of labels required. Each club initially was provided with 15 metal plant labels for reuse each year. Clubs are responsible for replacements and/or additional labels, to be similar in size and appearance to the originals. Labels are to have numbers only, which correspond with your numbered plant list (see below under Plant List). Please place an asterisk or otherwise identify the **required** plants on your list for the judges to identify.
- **Fall Clean-Up:** Dates will be announced at Awards Tea, usually later in October. All plant materials, weeds, mulches, accessories, and hardscapes are to be removed from your plot. Please be sure the ivy is trimmed. Be considerate to the club that will rotate into your plot next year by leaving a tidy bed.

Judging:

- The gardens will be judged the last full week over three months: **June 23-27, July 28-August 1, and August 25-29.**
- Three judges were selected by the Garden Center's Trial Gardens co-chairs:
 - **Helen Bai** - chair of Beautification Committee for Grosse Pointe Shores and landscape designer.
 - **Paul Graebert** - former manager of English Gardens, Kelly Road store.
 - **Sandra Richards** - former head of Macomb County MSU Extension Master Gardener program.
- The judges use a point system comprising four main categories: Theme interpretation, Construction and Design Elements, Horticultural Elements, and Maintenance. (See handout)
- Evaluation is given to the overall design, spatial awareness, architecture, sun-shade appropriateness, relevance to theme, and compatibility with the plot size, etc.
- Judges are looking for interesting and unique design elements of plant textures, heights, and color combinations used to convey your interpretation of the theme, i.e. demonstrating your creativity and knowledge of the plants selected in your design.
- Hardscape and accessories used in your design will be judged on the relevance to and enhancement of the theme including the spatial appropriateness to your design, plot size, and plot shape.

Descriptions and Plant Lists:

- Write a **description** of your design interpretation on one side only of an 8.5" x 11" page. Describe to judges and visitors the thoughts behind your plant selections and accessories/hardscapes, and what you are trying to convey in your design of "A Cottage Garden."
- Create a **numbered list of plants** on one side only of an 8.5" x 11" page. It is helpful to visitors and the judges to label as many plants as you can. Please be sure and label the required plants as well as any unusual, exotic, and/or new variety plants. You should include both botanical and common names. The corresponding numbered plant labels should be placed among the appropriate plants in your plot. Be sure and point out all the **required plants** with an asterisk or other marker for the judges! Plant lists provide a valuable and fun teaching tool for visitors, so it is worth the extra effort to identify your plants.
- **Deadline to submit** both your description page and plant list page is **Friday, June 6.**
 - Both pages will be laminated back to back to be hung in your plot for judges and visitors to read.
 - Please submit your pages either by email to amgregory@outlook.com, or drop off at the War Memorial main desk in the Art Wing, be sure and indicate that it is for the Garden Center mail slot. Or slide under the Garden Center's office door.
- Note: judges always request and are emailed copies of both your descriptions and plant lists to peruse before they begin judging in June.