

All the Dirt, and More

Volume 4, Issue 4

Winter 2025

Newsletter of the Hillsborough Garden Club

Della Robbia Wreaths for Christmas Cheer and Cookie Swap

What is a della Robbia style wreath? The name refers to an artistic style done by Italian sculptor Luca della Robbia (1400-1482). His artwork incorporated various fruits, like oranges, apples, pears and grapes. This fruit motif found



its way into live arrangements, such as garland and wreaths. These crea-

tions became known as "della Robbia".

This style made its way into the US in the early 1900s. By 1940, people flocked to Williamsburg, VA, to see the Christmas decorations which used fresh fruit in their evergreen wreaths

On December 11, HGC members will try their hand at making a special della Robbia style arrangements for their homes. Talented HGC member



Alice Moore will guide us in making beautiful della Robbia wreaths in the style of Williamsburg. Always lovely, these wreaths will be a beautiful decoration or gift for a special friend.

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Calendar of Events

Social Time at 9:30 am, Meeting at 10 am
Location at Hillsborough UMC unless otherwise stated

Thursday, Dec. 11

Program: Della Robbia Wreaths and Cookie Swap

Presenter: Alice Moore

Talented HGC member Alice Moore will guide us in making beautiful Della Robbia wreaths in the style of Williamsburg. Wreath forms will be provided. Please bring bags of fruit and magnolia leaves to share. And bring your favorite cookies to swap.

Tuesday, Jan. 8

Program: Discovering the Natural Wonders of the Wild South

Presenter: Georgann Eubanks

Georgann Eubanks, a Carrboro author, has

spent her career in the natural landscapes that shape the South. Her most recent project, [The Fabulous Ordinary: Discovering the Natural Wonders of the Wild South](#), encourages readers to protect the delicate environments that define our landscapes.

Thursday, Feb. 12

Program: Plant That Tree the Right Way!

Presenter: Jesse Breden, ISA Certified Arborist, and Owner, Knotty by Nature Trees and Natives

Have you wanted to plant a special tree in your yard but didn't know how to give it a good start? Jesse Breden, certified tree arborist, will give us instructions on the why and how of proper tree planting. With his expert guidance, you'll be able to keep your trees healthy, strong, and thriving.

Della Robbia Wreaths cont.

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The club will provide the wreath forms. Club members need to bring bags of fruit and magnolia leaves to share.

We will have our annual **Christmas Cookie Exchange** at the end of the meeting. Please bring

- ◆ **2-3 dozen** of your favorite holiday treats to share,

- ◆ **a serving spoon/spatula** and

- ◆ **a storage container** to take yours home.

Please include a **small note card** with:

- ◆ your name,
- ◆ the name of your cookie and
- ◆ anything special you'd like to share about your cookie...ex: gluten

free, grandma's recipe, etc.

Bringing these items will help the Cookie Exchange run more smoothly. Participation is voluntary.



Holiday Decorating

As we prepare for our upcoming holiday decorating at the Burwell School and the Visitors Center, we welcome contributions of natural materials and supplies. Your donations help us create beautiful, festive displays for the community.

Donations Needed Thanksgiving week-end- before decorating

Burlap bags or solid burlap-type material scraps (for wrapping pots)

Branches of greenery about 2 feet long

Magnolia leaves
Contact Liz Goodwin (see sidebar) if you have items for her project.

Donations Needed the Dec. 1-4

Small baskets for the Burwell bench

Greenery: pine, cedar, magnolia leaves, cryptomeria, etc.

Holly or other greenery with berries

Osage oranges, pine cones

Grasses

Lily pods, money plant pods

Yarrow, teasel, eucalyptus

Hydrangeas and other dried flowers

Sage, rosemary, and other herb cuttings

White birch, twisted dogwood, and other interesting sticks for containers

Greenery may be left at the Burwell School behind the small out building.

Decorating Schedule

Thursday, December 4:
9:30–11:30 am

Friday, December 5:
9:30 am–finish (followed by cleanup; any leftovers will be composted)

Volunteer Guidelines for Decorating Days

Please sign up here to volunteer!

<https://shorturl.at/GktvN>

- Dress in layers and wear garden gloves
- Bring labeled clippers and/or scissors
- Wire or zip ties if you have them

Site Managers for Volunteers Check-in

Burwell School:

Carol Ann Pastore
267-261-3446
cpfirefly@hotmail.com

Visitors Center:

Liz Goodwin
919-452-7318;
wlgdurhan@nc.rr.com

Holiday Decorating

Chairperson:

Adrienne Scurtu
919-949-4889
ainboulder@gmail.com

Decorating planters will also take place at the museum, the Chamber of Commerce, and on the Candlelight Tour signs.

Grant Recipients



More than \$6,000 was awarded to four organizations in Orange County this month by the Hillsborough Garden Club (HGC). As part of its ongoing philanthropy effort to support organizations that promote education and protect and conserve our natural resources, the grant program will enable:

Backyard Butterflies, Inc., to upgrade and expand its native plant production capacity with the addition of an enclosed area to protect plants from deer pressure. Backyard Butterflies donates native and pollinator plants to numerous organizations via their plant grant program.

Friends of the Passmore Center to purchase a potting bench, pots, soil, and other related equipment to enhance its gardening programming at the Passmore Center and its back patio. It will enable better accessibility for wheelchair users and individuals with back pain.

Orange County Library System to enhance its seed

distribution program; expand the Learning Garden planting area at the Main Library, and purchase tools, soil amendments and supplies for services in this area; and create 10 Green Literacy bags/kits for use by parents and schools.

Hillsborough Historic Commission to raise and plant an educational herb bed next to the Burwell School's brick schoolhouse; and add other landscaping.

"Our biannual plant sales and garden tours help the Club raise funds that we then give back to the community in support of gardening, conservation, and educational programs," said Club President Tammy Dorfman, in making the announcement. "We are proud to support this Fall's grant recipients and look forward to the contributions they will make to the community."

Since the inception of the grant award program in 2023, the HGC has awarded \$16,277 to local organizations, comprising twelve grant

awards to nine different community non-profit or service organizations. The projects that were funded address education about the environment, beautification, food insecurity, or conservation of natural resources. All grant recipients serve Hillsborough and northern Orange County.

The application process for the next round of grants will open in February 2026. More information can be found at [Welcome | Hillsborough Garden Club NC](https://www.hillsboroughgardenclubnc.org).



Nesting and Overwintering Habitats

Providing native and keystone plants is crucial to helping pollinators survive. These insects also need suitable shelter for nesting and living through the winter. Beneficial insects build small nests beneath the soil or in stems or wood. Others look for shelter that provides protection for predators and the elements.

What are the primary habitat features of these pollinators and other insects?

- ◆ Stems and branches
- ◆ Leaf litter
- ◆ Undisturbed ground
- ◆ Dead wood
- ◆ Brush and rock piles

These are objects that we don't like to leave lying around our yards, but they help attract and support a wide diversity of bees and beneficial insects.

The most important factor influencing the presence of pollinators is the availability of nesting and overwintering habitat. Traditional landscaping does not leave enough natural materials on the ground to support these crucial insects.

Artificial habitats have found their way in some parks and yards, but

they are not as good as the natural habitats. Bee hotels or blocks mimic the natural, but they break down and cause disease and parasite issues.



Save the Stems

In your flower garden, leave the stems and seed pods over the winter. Cut the stems at a variety of heights above the ground—8-24". This creates opportunities of a variety of diameters in the stems. The tops of the plants can be bundled and placed in a sheltered place for more nesting sites.

Leave the Leaves

Many butterflies and other insects use leaf litter for winter protection. Research has shown that a thin layer of leaves will not kill grass, but actually



decomposes and provides valuable nutrients to lawns.

If leaving the leaves isn't an option, then spread them over flower and vegetable beds. They will suppress weeds, retain moisture and build up the soil. Raking or blowing the leaves is really preferred to shredding or mowing them. If you choose to move the leaves, wait until late spring to allow for the emergence of butterflies, queen bumble bees and other wildlife.

Rethink Mulch

Different types of mulch can benefit nesting and overwintering. Avoid using plastic mulch, landscape fabric or colored wood chips. Better options for flower gardens are compost, leaf litter and plant debris. If using bark or wood mulch, lay on a light layer rather than a thick one. Heavy mulch is better for walking paths.

Build a Brush Pile

Dead standing trees and fallen logs provide lots of resources for insects: moist spots, peeling bark and hollow spaces. Consider "planting a log" in the back corner. Hardwood



Ground Nesting Bee



Brush Pile

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Read the article from which this information comes by going to the website of the Xerces Society for the Invertebrate Conservation.

<https://xerces.org/publications/factsheets/nesting-overwintering-habitat>

Nesting and Overwintering Cont.

logs with the bark still attached works best. Lay a log horizontally on the ground with one end buried a few inches in the soil. This helps to maintain moisture. Place smaller branches or rocks along the edges of the log for more cover for insects.

Build a Rock Pile or Wall

Use rocks of different sizes and types. Choose a dry wall construction method. Air spaces are needed in the pile or wall. To make the pile more attractive, plant wildflowers around the perimeter.

Provide a Water Source

All pollinators and in-

sects need water. Shallow bird baths or bowls provide water for bees and other insects. Watch the water feeder to prevent mosquitoes. Don't worry about dirt or organic matter. Insects can use the minerals that are not found in pollen or nectar.



Rodeo Round-Up

The Hillsborough Garden Club will be hosting a "Rodeo Round-Up" of plant donations from members, running from December 2025 through the end of March 2026. Please consider sharing a favorite perennial or special plant from your garden to help stock

our April Plant Sale Fundraiser.

To schedule a pickup, simply text or email Kerri Wahl with your availability and location at 919-812-5941 or wahlmaggie8@gmail.com, and she'll round up her posse and mosey on over to pick up your plants. As a thank-you for your

generosity, each participating member will receive a Rodeo Round-Up T-shirt designed especially for this event.

If you have any questions, please reach out to Kerri or Tammy. Yee-haw and happy gardening!



"Every gardener knows under the cloak of winter lies a miracle—a seed waiting to sprout, a bulb opening to light, a bud straining to unfurl. And the anticipation nurtures our dream."

Barbara Winkler

"And don't think the garden loses its ecstasy in winter. It's quiet, but the roots are down there riotous. — Rumi"

"Aside from the garden of Eden, man's great temptation took place when he first received his seed catalog."

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Hillsborough Garden Club

President: Tammy Dorfman
Vice President: Bonnie Maddux
Secretary: Adrienne Scurtu
Treasurer: Kristen Compton
Newsletter Editor: Lynn Odom

Club Motto: To preserve what is good. To grow what is good. To display what is good.

Conservation Pledge: I pledge to protect and conserve the natural resources of the planet Earth and promise to promote education, so that we may become better caretakers of our air, water, forest, land, and wildlife.

Affiliate of the Garden Club of North Carolina, Inc. and National Garden Club, Inc.



www.hillsboroughgardenclubnc.org

Club Members can access Member Portal: est1925

Tinsel & Traditions Home Tour

December 6, 2025 3–8 PM



Step inside Hillsborough's history with this reimagined take on the beloved Candlelight Home Tours by the Hillsborough Visitors Center. Visit six homes, each representing a different time period, all within the town's historic district.

Please note: All tour stops are private residences with limited accessibility. Most feature only the first floor and may require walking up a few front steps.

Ticketed event — \$25 per person; kids 12 & under free.

Ticket sales end at 7 pm on December 6.

Check-in at the Alexander Dickson House before beginning your tour. (150 E. King Street)

Special thanks to the Hillsborough Garden Club for providing festive outdoor decorations.

<https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/tinsel-and-traditions-home-tour>

Here's the link for volunteering:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0B45A5A723A3FFC61-59882927-hillsborough#/>