



# How To Start A New Garden Club

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## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Ideas on How to Start a Garden Club .....	3
Determine Local Interest.....	3
Organize the Club .....	3
Club Committees .....	4
Club Meetings.....	5
Club Membership Fees .....	5
What is NSAGC?.....	6
The Benefits of Joining NSAGC .....	6
Keep Your Club Going!.....	7
Optional Start-Up Activities .....	8
Memorandum of Association and By-laws.....	8
Registry of Joint Stock Companies.....	8
Appendix A – Sample Letter to Setup a Club Bank Account.....	9
Appendix B – Sample Letter to Change Signing Authorities.....	10

## Introduction

Are you in need of helpful advice on one, many, or all aspects of gardening? Would you like to meet fellow garden enthusiasts? Join the club! Garden clubs, or horticultural societies, are found throughout the Province and are as varied in nature as the gardens that enhance the landscape and as unique as each individual who helps to shape them. If you do not yet enjoy the benefits of a club in your community, here are some easy guidelines for starting one. If you already belong to a club, you may find ideas for keeping it fresh and attracting new members. And, remember, the Nova Scotia Association of Garden Clubs (NSAGC) is ready to help!

## Ideas on How to Start a Garden Club

### *Determine Local Interest*

- Contact the NSAGC District Director in your area for assistance. Contact information for the Directors can be found on the NSAGC web site.
- Find a free, centrally-located meeting room and advertise a meeting in the local paper, by posters, by free public service announcements, etc., to see if there is interest to form a club. You could invite a member from a club in a neighboring community or the District Director for your area as a resource.
- At the meeting, decide if there is a sufficient number of people in your area who are interested in meeting on a regular basis in some sort of organized way to share information and ideas on gardening.

### *Organize the Club*

- Once it has been decided to form a garden club, choose a name for the new group.
- Establish a meeting place and standard date and time to meet, such as the second Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m.
- Establish what the main focus of the group should be. Educating their own members and community involvement are two typical goals of garden clubs.
- Establish an executive made up of at least a President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer.
- Set up a club bank account. There should be at least two signing officers and ideally three to cover vacations, etc. - the treasurer and another member or two, and not from the same family. There will be a nominal charge to set up the account and a charge for ordering cheques. Appendix A contains a form letter that can be completed and taken to the bank when the account is setup.

## ***Club Committees***

Garden clubs can have as few or as many committees as are needed to support their activities. Committees can consist of one member or many. Clubs can start off with just a few committees required to function and then add others as the need arises. The following are committees that clubs might consider putting in place.

**Executive Committee** – Is made up of the President, Past-President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and other committee chairs. This committee provides direction for the club.

**Program Committee** – Seeks out speakers for your meetings, arranges any equipment that the speaker might require and introduces and thanks the speakers. The Committee should do some long-term planning (up to one year in advance) to organize for specific guest speakers in order to ensure that the speakers you would like to have are available when you want them.

**Refreshments/Social Committee** – Looks after refreshments during the social part of the club meetings.

**Membership Committee** - Usually one person who signs up new members, maybe greets people at the door, gives out tickets for door prizes, has a sign-up sheet at the meetings to record attendance, collects the dues, and updates member information.

**Members-At-Large Committee** - Members who attend executive meetings and fill in when and where needed.

**Plant Sale Committee** – Organizes and runs plant sales, which clubs often put on to raise funds for their activities.

**Garden Committee(s)** – Organizes members to work in gardens that the club maintains.

**Publicity Committee** - Sends notices to the local newspapers and community papers to advertise information on upcoming meetings, speakers and events. This committee would also typically update the club Facebook page or web site and submit articles about club activities to the NSAGC newsletter.

**Yearbook Committee** - If the club keeps a yearbook, this committee would update it on a yearly basis and make sure that it is taken to the district meetings and NSAGC conventions.

**Flower Show Committee** - If the club hosts flower shows a committee is required to organize and run the show.

**Special Events Committee** – Could arrange for club bus tours, special workshops, or events your club wants to participate in like the NSAGC District Meeting.

**Nominating Committee** - Usually the past-president is responsible for finding replacements when members of the Executive Committee resign.

### ***Club Meetings***

- A new garden club should consider focusing on gardening at the meetings. Most meetings consist of a short, informative business session followed by a social and the main feature/speaker.
- Encourage attendance at meetings by offering door prizes, refreshments and interesting programs.
- Take advantage of the group discounts offered at nurseries which are available through NSAGC membership. Organize bulk orders in the winter, a spring and fall bulb order, a spring order on garden supplies such as peat moss, soils, grass seed, etc., and occasional specialty bulk orders like grow mix, chrysanthemums or bedding plants.
- Offer information on the activities of specialty groups (rose growers, Ikebana, organic growers) and circulate or distribute news of trips and conferences available to members.
- Check out the NSAGC web site for links to other member garden clubs' web sites for ideas on how others club work and what they offer to their members.
- Establish excellent speakers for club meetings that cover a wide range of topics and ensure that there is something for everyone over the course of the year. Excellent speakers can be found by contacting other clubs and the District Director for your club's area.
- Expense or availability may prohibit having many speakers however videos, slide shows and films can fill the gap. Museums, the National Film Board, provincial ministries of food and agriculture, botanical gardens and individual club members have proven to be good sources.
- Venture away from the norm from time to time and have a meeting in a park, visit a conservation area, arrange for a guided tour of a greenhouse or nursery. Tour each other's gardens and maybe follow with a club picnic in a park or local garden or beach area.
- Dedicate a meeting to a Q&A session instead of having a speaker. This will give members an opportunity to share their knowledge and learn from one another.

### ***Club Membership Fees***

- Garden clubs typically charge an annual fee to each of the members. The fee is set by the individual clubs and ranges from \$5 up to \$20 depending on the financial needs of the club.
- At first, most clubs will operate solely on the money from fees until they arrange some fundraising events. Initially, what projects or events the club undertakes will be determined by club fees available.

- Of the club membership fee, \$4 is submitted annually to NSAGC for each member of the club. This low per member fee is used by NSAGC to provide insurance for your club activities, a plant for each member every year, a quarterly newsletter and many other benefits as outlined in the Benefits of Joining NSAGC section of this document

## **What is NSAGC?**

NSAGC is the coordinating body for organized gardening groups in the province. It is made up of garden clubs and horticultural societies, as well as affiliate clubs, from all areas of Nova Scotia. Garden clubs and horticultural societies are groups with general garden interests. Affiliate clubs are specialty plant or garden groups. The main objective of the NSAGC is to promote the general landscape beautification of the Province of Nova Scotia, by promoting community beautification and encouraging the formation of horticultural groups (garden clubs) which will share interest in all phases of home gardening and ornamental horticulture in their areas.

The NSAGC is guided by an elected board of directors, whose members come from the different districts of Nova Scotia. The district representative, also known as the District Director, serves as the link between the individual clubs and the NSAGC board. The districts of the NSAGC are Cape Breton, Eastern, Central, Halifax, Valley, Western and the South Shore. Within each district, local clubs provide the outlet for budding gardeners, amateurs and professionals alike. There are over fifty-five local garden clubs, horticultural societies and affiliate clubs throughout the province.

The NSAGC is a registered organization under the Registry of Joint Stock Companies under the Province of Nova Scotia and has an approved Memorandum of Association and By-laws. The Memorandum of Association and By-laws define the objectives and structure of the Association. A copy of these documents is available from the Secretary of the NSAGC.

## ***The Benefits of Joining NSAGC***

The advantages of joining NSAGC are many. The primary benefit is being able to meet with other garden clubs in the Province to exchange information and ideas. The NSAGC provides the following additional benefits to their membership:

- Discounts at nurseries and greenhouses across the province.
- Our own quarterly newsletter, *The Scotia Gardener*.
- Our web site ([www.nsagc.com](http://www.nsagc.com)) and Facebook group.
- Free advertising for your club's plant sale and events on the web site and in the newsletter.
- Information that is sent out to many other gardeners in other clubs via the District Director.
- Free plants from the NSAGC.

- The NSAGC Annual Convention which includes guest speakers, meals/banquets, contests, tours, and socialization with other garden people from across the province.
- Participation in the NSAGC Annual General Meeting.
- An annual district meeting of all garden clubs in your local area that brings together gardeners that have similar soil and growing conditions, as well as sharing sources of gardening materials in your region.
- A membership card for each member so that you can receive discounts at greenhouses and nurseries in the province
- Belonging to a province-wide organization with the District Director as the local representative.
- Insurance coverage for club functions.
- Vendors come to you at functions!
- The NSAGC logo is available for your club, which gives credibility to your local club as belonging to a larger organization.
- List of speakers in the district is available for your club.
- Garden tours to other clubs members' gardens
- Plant and seed swaps.
- Businesses you know have an opportunity to advertise in our newsletter, The Scotia Gardener, for very low rates.
- Access to information, such as available money from local municipalities and governments for activities and garden projects.
- Contests that provide incentive, fun, and promote gardening and gardening photography in your area.
- A history of your club activities is kept in the NSAGC archives.
- Help to become a better gardener by learning more about plants through lectures and hands-on demonstrations.
- Being part of a group of people with similar interests and making friends.
- The opportunity to give back to your community by working on a community project.

## Keep Your Club Going!

- Foster the sharing of interests and expertise. Members soon learn whom they can go to with a question about aphids or zucchinis, or who gardens indoors, who built a retaining wall, etc.
- Information can be shared through a club newsletter, questions at meetings, a notice board, and talks or workshops by members on individual areas of expertise.
- Gather information and resources. A list of local garden centers and places of interest would be appreciated by members. Make other resource lists such as field trip destinations, good speakers or gardening books available at the local library.

- Share the workload. Take turns doing a big job, such as serving on the Executive Committee or chairing a Committee. Pitch in in little ways at other times (donate a door prize, bake for the social part of the meeting, stack the chairs, etc.).
- Change the Executive. A club will go stale if the executive does not change regularly. Consider making the Executive positions two-year terms. As the Executive changes, it will be necessary to change the signing authorities on the bank account. Appendix B contains a sample letter to take to the bank. Any one of the remaining signing officers will be required to visit the branch to sign new documentation reflecting the changes requested in this letter, as well as the new signing officer(s). Two pieces of identification will be required from the new signing officer(s).
- *Have fun!!*

## Optional Start-Up Activities

### *Memorandum of Association and By-laws*

Although not required by NSAGC, the new club may consider establishing a Memorandum of Association and By-laws. These provide a framework for how the club will function. They define the club's objectives, the management structure, and responsibilities of the executive and committee chairpersons. A sample Memorandum of Association and By-laws may be found under the Societies Section of the Registry of Joint Stocks Companies web site - [www.novascotia.ca/sns/access/business/registry-joint-stock-companies/forms-information.asp](http://www.novascotia.ca/sns/access/business/registry-joint-stock-companies/forms-information.asp).

### *Registry of Joint Stock Companies*

NSAGC is registered with the Registry of Joint Stock Companies, but it does not require that clubs be registered.

There are a couple of benefits to a club of being registered with Joint Stocks:

- The club is able to “legally operate” with a legal status as a not-for-profit in the Province of Nova Scotia.
- If a club wishes to apply for government funding without NSAGC involvement, often there is the requirement that the club be registered with Joint Stocks.

The initial setup and annual requirements by the Registry of Joint Stocks, as well as forms required, may be found under the Societies Section of their web site:

[www.novascotia.ca/sns/access/business/registry-joint-stock-companies/forms-information.asp](http://www.novascotia.ca/sns/access/business/registry-joint-stock-companies/forms-information.asp).

# Appendix A – Sample Letter to Setup a Club Bank Account

**(Must be on Official Letterhead of Club or NSAGC)**

**DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**ATTN:** NAME OF BANK  
**Re:** NAME OF GARDEN CLUB

To Whom It May Concern:

I hereby authorize an account to be opened under the name of

\_\_\_\_\_  
**NAME OF GARDEN CLUB**

As of \_\_\_\_\_, the signing officers on this account shall be as follows:  
**DATE**

_____ <b>NAME</b>	_____ <b>POSITION</b>
_____ <b>NAME</b>	_____ <b>POSITION</b>
_____ <b>NAME</b>	_____ <b>POSITION</b>

Signing authority will require \_\_\_\_\_ to sign.  
**(Indicate: Any 2 to sign, or ALL to sign, or 1 to sign, etc.)**

Thank you,

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Title:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**(President, Secretary or Treasurer)**

## Appendix B – Sample Letter to Change Signing Authorities

(Preferable that it be on Official Letterhead of Club or NSAGC)

DATE

Attn: NAME OF BANK

Re: NAME OF GARDEN CLUB

I hereby authorize the following changes in signing authorities on the account of NAME OF GARDEN CLUB & ACCOUNT NUMBER (if known).

Please be advised that the following individuals will no longer have signing authority:

NAME

NAME

NAME

Etc.

As of DATE, the signing officers on this account will be as follows:

NAME – POSITION

NAME – POSITION

NAME – POSITION

Signing authority will require \_\_\_\_\_ to sign.  
(Indicate: Any 2 to sign, or ALL to sign, or 1 to sign, etc.)

Thank you,

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
(President, Secretary or Treasurer)