

GARDEN WALK

Budget: _____

Members: 18

GARDEN WALK Overview and Timeline

The Garden Walk is The Friendly Garden Club's major fundraiser. Traditionally it is an annual even held on the third Thursday of July. Each member of The Club is expected to purchase a set number of advanced tickets, help raise community awareness of and attendance at the walk and be available to (at minimum) work a 3 ½ hour shift on the day of the walk. In addition, each member is expected to supply several dozen homemade cookies for Walk refreshments.

The Walk itself is planned and executed by the Garden Walk Committee. This committee usually consists of more than a dozen Club members. Each committee member either volunteers for or is assigned a functional role. (To see a short summary of the key activities of each role, go to the Club's website, select the "Policy and Procedures" menu and then the "Forms" link adjacent to the "Garden Walk" link.) Detailed instructions for each role are available on the website under the "Best Practices" menu. Committee meets monthly with the exception of December, February, and March. Subcommittees meet as needed

For each Walk, the committee recruits a set of sponsors from the business community. Sponsorships are traditionally \$100, but also may take the form of a \$100 credit off a bill. Traditionally, the committee designs and prints posters and save-the-date cards (or equivalent) for marketing purposes. It also designs and prints the ticket for the Walk. Other committee responsibilities include correspondence, education, gifts for the garden owners, distribution/ticket sales management, publicity, signage/transportation, coordinating/hostessing at the gardens, and refreshments.

The Club is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, so committee members should not pay sales tax on items purchased for the Walk. To obtain our tax exempt number, contact the Garden Walk Chair. Committee members seeking expense reimbursement need to fill out an expense voucher (available on the Club website from "Forms" menu.) Completed vouchers with attached receipts should be submitted to the Garden Walk Chair for approval. The Chair obtains any other necessary approvals before submitting them to the Club Treasurer for payment.

GARDEN WALK CALENDAR OVERVIEW

September: The new set of gardens are locked down with confirmed responses from the selected garden owners. The Walk chair convenes the new Garden Walk Committee, and committee members sign up for specific roles. If a Vice-Chair has not yet been recruited, one is recruited from the Walk committee members; this person will become the Walk Committee Chair in the next year. The general location of the Walk, its tag line, ticket prices and hours, and refreshment center location are locked down so that publicity can meet its earliest deadlines. If a demo will be included on the Walk, agreement on what/when/where also need to be locked down so the information is readily available to publicity and the Design committee. Sponsor recruitment, which should have begun in July/August for plant nurseries, continues for the next several months as needed.

October: Garden owners are sent letters confirming their selection for the walk or, alternatively, they are sent letters of regret. At this time, Garden owners should also be told the date and location of the Meet-and-Greet meeting, which ideally is held by late October or early November, along with receiving the Garden Owners Questionnaire, which will provide much of the information needed for ticket design. All logistics required for publicity and marketing material design should be locked down at this time.

November: Marketing material and ticket design begin. Sponsor recruitment and publicity continue. The Meet-and-Greet with garden owners is held if it didn't occur in October.

December: Enjoy your holidays and don't think about the Garden Walk!

January/February: Early drafts of the marketing materials and ticket design may be circulated for Committee review. Sponsorship should be locked down by the end of February so design of the marketing materials can be completed in March. Publicity continues. Gifts for the garden owners should be ordered if not done earlier.

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March: Marketing materials and ticket design are completed, proofed, and sent to the printer.

April: Marketing materials and the tickets are picked up from the printer and passed on to Distribution. Garden Coordinator recruitment begins and, if coordinators are in place by the April Club meeting, sign-up sheets are put out for members to sign up to hostess on the day of the Walk. Signups for working Refreshments are also put out at this time.

Distribution begins to Club members: tickets are available for purchase and posters and save-the-date cards are available to members wishing to post them.

May: Distribution of marketing materials to sponsors begins. Signups for Hostess continue. Any member who has not signed up for Hostess duty by the end of the Club meeting in May will be assigned a garden and shift to work. Arrangements for cookie storage are announced and publicized in the Club newsletter. All members should have purchased their tickets by May Club meeting. Garden coordinators contact their garden owners to answer questions and arrange to meet face-to-face in June.

June: Distribution of tickets to sponsors begins except for sponsors who may have requested earlier distribution. Signage reviews the Walk route to determine what signs are needed where and if any additional signs need to be ordered. Signage also distributes "Buy Here" signs to ticket sellers.

By mid-June at the latest, each garden coordinator meets with their garden owners to discuss logistics for the day of the Walk, discuss special plants that need to be labeled, and assess the garden's safety and agree on any remediation that is needed. Hostess coordinators meet with the Hostess subcommittee chair to review their responsibilities and pick up the supplies they will need at the gardens. The logistics for the Garden Preview, including any Preview reception, are finalized. Traditionally, this Preview has been held on the Sunday before the Walk.

Details are finalized for all Walk displays, including those for flower arranging, other targeted education (such as pollination, invasives, etc.), membership/future garden recruitment, and any other club-related topics. If any demos are planned for the walk, details also need to be finalized for those.

By mid-June, the Walk chair forms a garden search committee to look for potential gardens for the upcoming Walk. The search committee should be made up of current year committee members, the current Garden Walk Chair, and the Chair for the upcoming Walk. A Club member who is also a Landscape Design consultant should be included in this committee. Ideally someone on the Search team acts as photographer so that a wealth of photos are available for upcoming marketing and publicity efforts. This activity may continue into August.

July: Garden coordinators do a final review of the gardens before the Garden Preview and, if not done earlier, provide each garden owner with their tickets and a poster. The Garden Preview is held, gifts are presented to the garden owners, and publicity photos are taken.

If advance permission is required for putting up signage in particular locations, that is done. Distribution provides the Club Treasurer with tickets. The day before the Walk, directional signs and banners may be placed in selected locations. If prior arrangements have been made for early access to the refreshment center, drop-offs of cookies and other refreshment supplies can be done.

The morning before the Walk opens, coordinators meet with the Treasurer to receive their tickets and cash boxes and to pick up refreshments for their gardens. Members can also drop off cookies until an hour before the Walk begins. Signage placement must be finished before the Walk begins.

During the Walk, the Treasurer circulates to collect excess money and provide additional change where needed. Additional publicity photos should be taken at this time, including ones of the visiting crowds as well as the refreshments and displays.

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Immediately after the Walk closes, the coordinators pack up and meet with the Treasurer to turn over their money and leftover tickets. Then they return their supplies to the Hostess chair along with their visitor counts. The following day, the GW chair, the Finance chair, and the Treasurer triple-count the money and finalize the income tallies from ticket sales.

Thank you notes are sent by the Walk chair to garden owners within a week of the Walk. If it has not already appeared, the publicity chair will post a "Thank You" ad in the Record Eagle.

August: Each subcommittee chair prepares a final report by early August. The Chair works with the Club Treasurer and the Hostess Coordinator to finalize and summarize Walk income, expenditures, and attendance. The Chair prepares a final Walk report and works with the Finance committee to establish targets for fund raising and expenditures for the coming year.

The Walk chair convenes a final Garden Walk Committee meeting to review the year's activity and make recommendations for what to continue and how to improve logistics for the upcoming year. Walk committee signups should occur at the August club meeting.

Sponsor recruitment for the upcoming year begins before the Nurseries close for the season. The Garden Search team continues to search for gardens.

September/October: Our submission for a Garden Walk award is prepared and mailed per instructions from The Michigan Consultants Council on behalf of the Michigan Garden Club.