October 2026

South Schuylkill Garden Club

Third Tuesday of the month at 6:30 PM

First United Church of Christ, Schuylkill Haven

www.southschuylkillgardenclub.com

www. facebook.com/soschuylkillgardenclub.com

Cultivating the Community Newsletter

Dear Fellow Gardeners,

Even though it's fall, there's still plenty to do in the garden!

In October, I would cut back all the dead plants in the yard—Black-Eyed Susan, echinacea, etc. But, I'm being more particular about **what plants I cut back** and will be leaving many untouched. Leaving spent growth (as long as it's not diseased) in the yard during the winter provides shelter and food, in the form of seeds, for birds, insects, and small mammals.

The leaves are still falling and need to be dealt with. I'll keep pushing them into the garden beds so they can act as mulch, I will also **compost** leaves during the winter months. I often run out of "brown" material for our compost by the end of winter, so I like to stockpile some in the fall.

After a season of heavy use, it's time to clean and sharpen the garden tools. There's a specific tool designed for this task, and plenty of **great videos** on YouTube show how to do it. I like doing this in the fall so everything is sharp and clean when I'm ready for midwinter fruit tree pruning and shaping.

I'm also going to give the garden closet, shelf, and storage bin a good scrub and clean-out. Over the season, the closet and shelf get coated with dirt and debris, and just becomes a real hot mess. I have a tendency, after a few hours of working in the yard, to just toss tools and supplies in the closet instead of putting them back in their proper place. It'll be nice to start next season with everything spic and span!

If you can, use a manual prong aerator on the lawn. With this tool, you walk around the yard using your foot to push the spikes into the soil. **Aerating** helps break up the thatch (the layer of dead plant material that sits between the grass and the soil), and the holes allow more water to reach the roots.

Normally, September is a great time to plant lots of cool-weather loving plants and I did plant some last month

I am going to cut back overgrown bushes. Every year butterfly bush overtakes the garden. I try to wait as long as possible before cutting it back, since I don't want to remove any pollinator-attracting blooms, but the blooms are gone now, so it's time to seize the moment. I'm just doing a light trim since this isn't the ideal time of year to prune it, though I don't really worry about harming this plant—it's practically indestructible.

Please find the SSGC 2026 schedule of events listed below:

- October 17: Canal Day (Pine Grove)
- October 20: Meeting
- November 17: Meeting
- December 2: Christmas party

Club Monthly Meeting Past
September 15, 2026

Program: ***"Daffodil Lady"***

Jackie Dievert, Master Gardener with PSU and, affectionately called the Daffodil Lady, spoke on daffodils and worm composting.

Refreshments: Thank you, Patti Schuettler, Jane Yeasted, Nancy Russial and Sue Williams for the refreshments.

Club Monthly Meeting

October 20, 2026

Program: ***"Plaster Leaf Casting"***

SSGC's **Kim Morgan** will show us how to do leaf casting with plaster of Paris, a simple and creative process that allows you to create beautiful 3D leaf decorations.

Refreshments: Regina Freiler, JoAnne Mercuri, Pat McKinney

Participants are encouraged to bring fresh leaves, 4-5 inches or smaller.

Oct 17 Autumn Stroll, along Union Canal in Pine Grove

We will be doing this all over again for the Autum Stroll. We will need baked goods for the stand and we will sell jams and jellies along with anything left over from Haven Borough Day. A sign-up sheet for helping at the stand will be circulated shortly.

District 2/3 Meeting
September 9, 2026

I wanted to send a sincere thank you to everyone who helped make the District 2/3 Annual Meeting such a success. Your hard work and support were greatly appreciated.

Schuylkill Haven Borough Day

Haven Borough Day was certainly a wet one with a nor'easter coming up the coast.

I want to extend a sincere thank you to all who participated in selling the jams, jellies, dried floral arrangements, and baked goods. The downpour took its toll around noon, making tear-down necessary at that point to salvage the day.

Thank you again to the brave souls who endured the weather!

Dried Flower Bunches: The flowers for Borough Day were gathered and dried, and then arranged at Kathy's home on September 23.

A special thank you to Kathy for providing the facility that made our efforts go so seamlessly.

- **Railroad Station Decoration:** As one final note, we decorated the Railroad Station for our space at Borough Day on Friday, **September 18.**

PSU Master Gardeners Series

The Penn State Master Gardeners invites the South Schuylkill Garden Club to a series of free information sessions at Cressona Agway, 22 S. Second Street, Cressona.
The sessions are held on the second Saturday of each month from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM.

Here are the upcoming topics:

October 10- Preparing Your Garden for Winter with Kitty Murray
November 14 - Bonsai with Nick Watt

The sessions are free and open to the public.
Hope to see some of our members there!

Plant Sale

Although the plant sale seems to be far off since it is not until May of 2027, it is never too soon to start

planning. Please take a look at your gardens and tag plants that will make good candidates for the sale.

For the next 5 or so weeks, it is a great time to look at your gardens and transplant items to better growing areas. While doing this now, it might also be a good time to transplant some of those plants into pots and place them in a protective area for next spring's plant sale. That way, you will not have to dig them up in the spring.

Native plants are always in great demand. I have attached Jeanne's list to help you identify those natives.

Jeanne Z's Garden

Please find below a list of native flowering plants provided by Jeanne Z. Jeanne is hoping that members will consider growing and sharing these natives for our upcoming plant sale.

Natives

Asters:

- New England
- Smooth
- Sky blue
- Big Leaf
- Heath
- Crooked Stem
- Calico
- Heart Leaved
- White Woodland
- Stores

Weed:

- Butterfly
- Common
- Whorled Milk
- Showy Milk

Lily:

- Carmassi
- Turks Cap

Cone Flower

Black Eyed Susan

Bergamot:

- Monarda Punctata or Dotted Mint
- Monarda Fistulosa
- Marada Didyma

Pen Stemson

Cup Plant

Senna

Goldenrod:

- Stiff
- Ohio
- Showy
- Blue Stem
- Anis Scented
- Zigzag

Tall Blue Larkspur

Baptisia or False Indigo

Coreopsis:

- Stiff
- Lance leaf
- Rose

Phlox

Bottle Gentian

Amsonia

Joe Pye Weed

Cardinal flower

Blue Lobelia

Iris:

- Wild
- Blue flag
- Virginia

Iron Weed

Obedient Plant

Black Cohosh

Goat beard

Columbine

Gild Ginger (USA)

Foam flower

Mayapple

Wild Geranium or cranesbill

Jacobs Ladder

Bleeding Heart (Native)

Fern:

- Cinnamon
- Ostrich
- Maiden Hair
- Lady

Helenium

Turtle head

Jack in the Pulpit

Swamp Rose Mallow

Rose Campion

Wood Poppy

Oat Grass

Filipendula Rubra or Queen of the Meadow

Nurseries

Prairie Nursery

Prairienursery.com

800476945

Add color to Fall Gardens and pots.

With October just around the corner, now is the perfect time to freshen up your garden and pots for the autumn season. Here are a few great plant and vegetable options to add vibrant color and texture to your outdoor space this fall:

- **Pansies**: A go-to for bright orange, purple, and yellow blooms. Planted in the fall, they will return ready to bloom again in the spring.
- **Sedum 'Autumn Joy'**: This perennial transitions from green to pink during the summer, landing on a rich maroon by mid-to-late September.
- **Garden Chrysanthemums & Asters**: Both offer effortless, returning annual color. Mums bring deep orange, rust, bronze, yellow, pink, purple, or white tones, while asters dress the garden in brilliant purple.
- **Firecracker Plant (Cuphea) & Firecracker Bush**: Easy-care, heat-tolerant options with striking red-orange tubular flowers that attract hummingbirds and butterflies.
- **Reblooming Azaleas:** Varieties like Encore and Perfecto Mundo bloom in spring and perform a repeat show straight through the first frost.
- **Fall Plantings & Grasses**: Lantana, fountain grass, coral bells, globe amaranth, and calibrachoa all provide an instant burst of seasonal color.
- **Ornamental Vegetables**: Rainbow chard, miniature red, orange, and purple peppers, along with ornamental cabbage and kale, add wonderful texture and hold their color until temperatures drop well below freezing.

I hope these ideas help to inspire your fall gardening!

Excerpts taken from Lancaster Farming

Jessica Damiano