

Membership... What Does it Mean?

All of us interact daily with friends, neighbors, and co-workers who are not members of a garden club. What a wonderful opportunity to talk-up "Garden Club". What we say to them, how we say it, and the impression we give of our club in conversations all go a long way toward getting that particular person to think about joining. Keep in mind that we're responsible for getting new members to join our individual garden clubs. In the eyes of the community, we are The Garden Club of Georgia, Inc. and membership means YOU and me!

How To Get New Members

How can you get new members in your club? Easy, just ask someone. All they can do is either say "yes" or "no thanks".

Below we have listed some other ideas:

- Ask someone to visit a club meeting as your guest.
- Get your club involved in community affairs.
- Publish information about your club along with the name and telephone number of a contact person willing to answer questions about the club and the advantages of membership.
- Have "The Garden Club of Georgia, Inc." literature and club membership information available for pick up at local nurseries, florists, libraries, etc.
- Have a "Membership Table" with a sign-up book and all the literature and club membership information at your standard flower show and/or any of your garden club's activities.
- When anyone shows interest, follow up by contacting them and sending them a notice of meetings.
- And the most important: **Make them feel wanted as a member.**

Membership Growth

Garden Club activity has its tradition in civic involvement. Members benefit singularly from opportunities for leadership and personal development. Share your talents and resources by serving on club committees and working on projects. Club meeting programs keep members abreast of current events. Sharing common interests and aspirations is one of the main satisfactions of membership. Support your club and its objective freely. Cherish your membership in your club.

New Members Orientation Session

Periodically, invite new members and sponsors to a gathering to become more acquainted with the club in a warm, informal and friendly atmosphere. This may be held in a member's home with perhaps a dessert being served.

Invite those members to help with this orientation who can give information and answer questions on the local, state and national level. Consider inviting any inactive members to this meeting.

After introductions are made, ask the members to tell about The Garden Club of Georgia, Inc. and your garden club. Talk about club meetings, club bylaws, service activities and membership privileges and responsibilities. Leave time for the new members to ask questions and share some of what they would like to learn. Listen to the suggestions they may have for projects, programs, etc.

Make Them Feel Welcome and a Part of the Club

Have you ever been invited to a club or some type of gathering and no one came by and welcomed you? This is a good way NOT to attract new members.

A prospective member attending a garden club meeting should walk away feeling as though they are already a part of the garden club. Introduce the prospective member to others during the club's hospitality time. Then, after the meeting let them ask questions about the club.

Once they have joined, make them part of the club. A good "ice-breaking" activity for the new member is to be the Greeter at the club meetings. This presents an excellent opportunity to get to know everyone. Also, invite the new member to a club function that has high visibility and interaction with other members. This includes social functions, service activities, district and state meetings.

Membership Attendance

Members who attend meetings cannot help but be involved and committed to the club.

To encourage good club attendance, leaders are challenged to provide interesting and exciting meetings where members feel welcome and have fun!

In promoting active attendance efforts should be directed at using: a) incentives for attendees, b) an active fellowship committee and c) good follow-up of absentees.

a) Incentive for Attendance

Interesting and informative programs act as magnets in drawing members to club meetings. Enthusiasm for these programs can be created by the president and program chairman. Programs should be publicized in advance at meetings and local newspapers. Talk about future programs in a way that will peak interest. Attendance contests can serve the dual objective of having fun and boosting attendance.

b) Fellowship

Good fellowship is one primary reason members join your club. Appoint a Fellowship Committee. This committee should strive to develop friendships among club attendees in an atmosphere of fun. An active fellowship committee will encourage active interchange between members before, during and after each meeting and will discourage the development of "cliques" within a club.

c) Follow-up of absentees

The club should establish a good mechanism for contacting members who do not attend club meetings. Ideally, if a member misses two meetings in a row, they should be contacted. Access to attendance records and club attendance policies are important to know before contact is made. Your call should be caring in tone and designed to let them know they were missed and are needed by your club. Your objective is to get them back and keep them as participating members of the club.

Why Is Attendance Important?

Attendance is important to the club because:

- A member who attends contributes to the club.
- It helps develop better fellowship at club meetings
- It makes it easier to get good programs and justifies more easily a speaker giving time and effort.
- A speaker will always give a better performance to a large audience and when the spirit of good fellowship prevails.
- It facilitates the recruiting of new members.
- Good attendance is a sign of club strength.
- It helps conduct successful club projects.
- It builds the club image.
- It provides greater opportunity for input by a greater number of members.

Attendance is important to individual members:

- Fellowship opportunities are provided.
- A respite from busy business schedule is offered.
- Occasions for leadership roles are ready.
- Opportunities for personal growth through self expression are available.
- Club activities and operations are better understood.
- Opportunities to be of service to others and make a difference in the community.
- Lifelong friendships are often developed.

Member Maintenance and Retention

Current club members are valuable assets. A good organization will nurture these assets and draw-out their potential. A club's efforts should be directed at keeping losses to a minimum although a certain number of losses are unavoidable (death, transfer to another community, etc.).

Your efforts will be directed at keeping losses to a minimum and will be: a) to give attention to member's financial obligations, b) to make a personal contact/visit to an inactive members, and c) to think "replacement" if loss is unavoidable.

Here are some helpful hints on these efforts:

a) Every member should understand their obligation as to club dues and where their dues are spent. Certain amounts must go to pay National and State dues. Internal operations must pay for such things as sending officers to district and state meetings, community projects and other activities as provided by your club's bylaws.

b) Always make a personal contact with the member before deleting from the roster. Most people are interested in supporting their organization and will respond positively to people who care.

c) Develop a mind set to think "replacement" if the loss of a member is unavoidable. This idea of active replacement should be adopted as a strategy of the club's board of directors as early as possible.

Recognition of Growth!

Recognize your members for their contributions to membership growth! Pin a flower on their lapel! Let them know you care and appreciate their hard work.

Six Easy Steps To Keep Existing Members

1. Have interesting and varied programs. Keep your meetings lively, educational and entertaining.
2. Make everyone feel welcome.
3. Contact absentees and encourage them to attend and participate.
4. Make everyone feel needed and useful by involving them in club activities.
5. Survey all members as to types of programs they would like to have and follow up by providing such programs.
6. MAKE GARDEN CLUB FUN!!

Accentuate the Positive Eliminate the Negative

- The first big DO is eliminate the negative!
- DO congratulate members for a job well done.
- DO NOT complain at meetings. For example: If the food service is bad work behind the scenes to get it corrected.
- DO NOT ignore new members and guests. Make them feel welcomed. Treat new members and guests as you would like to be treated.
- DO start your meeting on time. If you always start late members will get in the habit of coming in late or not at all.
- DO use a printed agenda. Club members will find this will help to start and end the meeting on time.
- DO have a program and announce the program ahead of time.
- DO appoint a committee to contact absent members to remind them of upcoming events and to tell them that they were missed.
- DO ask each member to bring a guest. If the guest sees a good program with good fellowship, they might just beat you to the punch and ask how to join the fun!

For additional information contact:

The Garden Club of Georgia, Inc.
2450 South Milledge Avenue
Athens, Georgia 30602-5817
(706) 227-5369 • FAX: (706) 227-5370
e-mail: gcga@uga.edu
web site: www.uga.edu/gardenclub

Membership Development Guide



The Garden Club of Georgia, Inc.