

MARKETING

While the Garden Club of Virginia handles national and regional marketing through the Historic Garden Week office, **it is your responsibility to market your tour on a local level.** The HGW Marketing Meeting provides necessary tools to get you started.

- Include your Publicity and Social Media Chairs.
- Learn what HGW markets on regional and national levels. •
Create a media plan especially for your tour.
- Follow up on local partners and/or create new ones in support of your tour.
These include Advance Ticket locations, local restoration sites, Advertisers, hotels, Convention and Visitor Bureaus and/or your local Department of Economic Development.
- Attend the HGW Marketing Meeting in November.

You will receive lots of good information as well as a clear delineation of responsibility in terms of marketing HGW on a local, regional, state and national levels.

Secure as many free calendar listings in your community as possible – this includes newspapers, magazines, TV stations and online listings. Customize the State press release and send it out either in the mail or electronically as soon as possible to ensure that all of your local media has the updated information for your tour. Plan on following up with both a phone call and another letter closer to HGW. Your initial contact with local media should take place in the fall. Follow up over the winter and plan on sending another press release in March. The trick to getting press is to be pleasantly persistent.

Radio stations love ticket giveaways and it is a great way to get free publicity for your tour. Choose a radio station that is appropriate to your audience, of course. Often, they will agree to interview someone from your club in conjunction with your tour. The GCV secures public radio sponsorship and coverage for most of the state. If you have an opportunity with a public radio station, coordinate with Karen to ensure it's not redundant.

If someone in your club has a good relationship with a local TV station, you may be able to secure a Public Service Announcement (PSA). Television stations are required to air a certain amount of free advertisements in support of local non-profit organizations. If you start well in advance, develop a contact and keep calling, there is a good likelihood that you can secure free TV time to promote your tour.

Many local television stations have shows where reporters interview someone about an upcoming event as well. In Richmond, there is "Virginia This Morning" and "12

About Town.” These are free and might ensure several minutes of exposure, but the time slots must be secured well in advance (months, not weeks in advance of your tour). The news and weather departments of both TV and radio stations will often conduct live interviews during HGW too. If there are several tours in one market area it may be effective to work together to get a slot. If you are able to secure either a PSA or a local interview and need help putting together materials or preparing for an interview, contact Karen.

VTC LISTING

We have a long-standing and active relationship with the Virginia Tourism Corporation. The HGW office will promote tours in conjunction with this state agency. You don't need to do a thing.

NATIONAL AND REGIONAL MARKETING THROUGH THE HGW OFFICE

SENDING OUT A PRESS RELEASE

The GCV maintains a media list, which is mostly editors and writers of regional and national magazines as well as well-known bloggers. **The state materials will promote all tours but won't contain specific information about your tour.** If you have a property/garden on your tour that is worthy of national attention, please let Karen know early so that it can be pitched specifically.

Your local newspaper, targeted radio and television and online community guides (Richmond.com or visitlynchburg.org, for example) should receive a customized version of the provided press release. Editors receive dozens of requests via email daily. Very few people take the time to make a personal call or follow up with a written note in the business community. You will be amazed at the attention you are likely to get! As always, it is important to thank radio stations, newspapers and local TV stations for any PR you receive from them.

Historic Garden Week is hard to explain to people unfamiliar with the scope of this venerable, statewide event. We've created what we call, Historic Garden Week “by the numbers” as an effective way to show off the breadth of the event. A digital version is located on the website, www.vagardenweek.org, in the Pressroom section.

SAMPLE TALKING POINTS FOR MEDIA LETTERS

We are your liaisons to the most beautiful homes and gardens in Virginia and are available to help set up interviews or photo shoots. Every year we feature over 100

properties (most of which are private and open exclusively in support of Historic Garden Week). The properties are different each year. So, this annual event is a unique story each and every year. Nearly 26,000 visitors attend HGW annually. They travel from all over the world.

Early leaders in conservation issues and environmental concerns, Garden Club of Virginia members advocated for maintaining the beauty of Goshen Pass and the wilderness of the Great Dismal Swamp. We promoted the elimination of billboard blight. We lobby about the importance of clean air and water, support conservation projects along rivers and waterways, and educate about relevant topics, like using native plants in the landscape.

Historic Garden Week represents the coordinated efforts of nearly 3,400 volunteers, along with the generosity of over 100 private homeowners. Our horticultural programming and annual flower shows inspire one of the event's greatest attractions, the world-class floral arrangements created by members. We estimate that over 1,000 will decorate the featured properties this year.

A century-old, the Garden Club of Virginia has changed the landscape of our state, completing nearly 50 major restorations at beloved historic gardens, landscapes and sites, including Monticello, Mt. Vernon and the Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens. Tour proceeds fund the restoration and preservation of Virginia's historic gardens and landscapes.