



Social Media

GCV Social Media Policy

The Garden Club of Virginia's (GCV) intent is to use social media as a means for two-way communication to engage audiences and help reach organizational goals. The GCV plans to provide a sustained presence with social media and to be considered at the forefront of its use among nonprofits in Virginia. The GCV's focus will be on the effective use of social media with an emphasis on it as part of overall public relations strategy with measurable results.

Those using social media on the GCV's behalf will be identified by the GCV's leadership. They will be trained and held to a high standard emphasizing personal responsibility, good judgment, productivity, and ethical and legal standards (ie – issues of copyright and confidentiality). At the same time, they will also adhere to the GCV's philosophy of the use of social media that is authentic, builds a sense of community and brings value to all.

As with all work activities, the use of social media should be relevant to the user's job, should strive toward the goals of the department and the overall goals of the GCV and should fit in with the user's time management plan for completing work responsibilities. Those using social media during work hours will limit activity to GCV-related communication.

Social Media Activities for HGW: Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest

Posting the Garden's Wall or Tagging Garden Club of Virginia reserves the right to remove any posts that are not closely aligned with the GCV's mission or are in direct competition with the GCV. The Executive Director and Communications Coordinator have the responsibility to make that determination.

Sponsors

Regarding sponsorship agreements, sponsors may send the GCV's Communications Coordinator items to be considered for the GCV's social media communications. Again, the Communications Coordinator reserves the right to decline to use items if they are not closely aligned with the GCV's mission or are in direct competition to GCV activities. The GCV also reserves the right to consider the most appropriate platform/s (i.e. – Twitter may be more appropriate than Facebook.) The GCV may also suggest alternative strategies that may be more closely aligned with the GCV's mission.

While we prefer that sponsors work through the GCV Communications Coordinator, if sponsors do post to the GCV's wall or tag the GCV, the Garden Club of Virginia reserves the right to remove such posts, based on the criteria outlined above.

Social Media and Historic Garden Week

Social media is a great way to market your tour to an audience outside of your community for free. On the HGW State level, we use Facebook and Instagram. Both platforms are great social media channels to use to spread the word about your tour. If you are lucky enough to have someone in your club that is savvy with this internet-based technology, by all means, put her on your committee! We highly encourage you to identify a 2023 Social Media Chair to manage your tour's Facebook and Instagram page(s). You can have one member manage Facebook and another member manage Instagram if that works best for your tour. All login credentials should be shared with the incoming 2023 Social Media Chair.

Be smart about your social media approach.

- Develop a plan upfront and don't wait until the last minute to start marketing your tour on different sites.
- Use photographs with your posts to create interest. They are critical to maximizing this type of marketing effort. When possible, tag the statewide Historic Garden Week Facebook page and also link to our website. Also tag participating vendors, sponsors and "friends" of your tour.
- Don't forget to properly give credit to the photographer or club.
- Any cross-communication with other social media users will increase traffic and exposure.
- Attend the Marketing Meeting in November to learn more about this important way to get the word out about your tours.

Purpose of Social Media Use in Support of Historic Garden Week

To engage followers with meaningful information and images while maintaining a constant presence throughout the year. Ultimately, to increase ticket sales leading up to HGW. The purpose of a detailed social media plan is to ensure the content and frequency of posts achieves our goals and is perceived positively by our fans and followers.

Social Media Research and Conclusions

HGW Facebook

- 14,289 followers (a/o 11/14/22)
- While "two posts a day" is an industry best practice, according to our research, accounts with less than 10,000 followers should post less frequently.
- While weekends are typically more successful times for posting, HGW interaction was consistent throughout the week with very little fluctuation
- Implementing Stories into your social media plan is recommend to vary your content, reach new views and keep the audience engaged with your feed.

HGW Instagram

- 5,096 followers (a/o 11/14/22)
- Reaction to posts that look like ads is significantly lower than original, more organic content that is not “designed.”
- During HGW we posted 1-2 times/day.
- Photos of arrangements or tour photos had double to triple the response than designed promos of the event.
- According to industry leaders – frequency is less important with this platform, but visual images are very important.
- The capability to engage followers with stories and videos is well-received and generates two to three times as much interest as a static post.
- Consistency is the goal – choose a schedule and stick with it.
- Stories and reels are becoming increasingly popular and viewership much higher

Social Media Handles

- For Facebook Historic Garden Week in Virginia
- For Instagram @historicgardenweek
- The use of hashtags has been effective and should continue - **#GCV**
#GCVirginia #HGW #VirginiansForHistoricGardenWeekLovers
#historicgardenweek, #gcvirginia and #hgw23 #restoration #preservation
#conservation

Suggested Post Frequency for Both Platforms

- June through January – 2 times per week
 - Focus on sharing dates for HGW and for specific tours (hold-the-date)
 - General announcements - when the website is updated and when ticketing goes live which will be February 6, 2023. Each tour will have its own individual ticketing link. Be sure to use this on your social media posts beginning in February.
- Mid-March up to April 14 – no more than 5 times a week
 - Promote Guidebook and where it is available throughout state
 - On the state level, each tour receives their own “social media day” – these are featured on weekdays in alpha order. Refer to the social media schedule shared at the Marketing Meeting.
 - Weekends are reserved for statewide publicity
 - Posts follow our template: information and photos taken from Google Drive
 - Tour Chairs/Social Media Chairs can submit special programming/events not included in the *Guidebook* for inclusion
- After HGW thru May – back to once a day

Tips for Smaller Markets

Wonderful opportunities for cross marketing exist in smaller markets where the audience for HGW is an obvious and defined section of the community population.

- Join a Business/Civic Association for a year to communicate directly with the people who are invested in the success of their community.
- Meet with the local Chamber of Commerce or a town manager/mayor and ask them to include your tour on their website. Provide a “web-friendly” image of your tour along with a link to the HGW website with your tour dates and ticket information.
- Be sure to hang HGW posters on community message boards in your local post offices, churches, schools, popular coffee shops or farmers markets.
- Also, if your tour is located in close proximity to a designated GCV restoration garden, ask the Board of Directors or Executive Director of that property to include an advertisement for your tour through website advertising or through their member’s newsletter.
- Neighborhood associations, Country Clubs, Farmers Markets, Private Schools and Churches often have newsletters and websites and will possibly write about a special event.

Guiding Principles

- Are compatible with the GCV’s core mission, vision, and values
- Offer opportunities to educate the public
- Are within the scope of what the GCV can do regarding time and resources
- Are not in direct competition with GCV
- Enable the GCV to maintain its independence and autonomy, remaining non-political

Guidelines

- For HGW, we encourage tours to have a Facebook page and Instagram page
- We encourage all GCV members to “LIKE” the GCV page and HGW page and post on their wall if they have something to share about their club.
- HGW and GCV’s Facebook pages will “LIKE” club’s Facebook pages and club pages are encouraged to “LIKE” the GCV and HGW pages back. The same applies to Instagram.
- If club members use their own personal profile to promote HGW or any GCV activity, we ask that the author identify themselves as connected to the GCV and the event.

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HGW Social Media (Facebook and Instagram) Guidelines and Best Practices

Historic Garden Week dates back to 1929. It is the signature fundraiser and intellectual property of the Garden Club of Virginia. Annual participation in Historic Garden Week is a membership requirement of this nearly century-old non-profit organization. The GCV is composed of 48 independent member clubs across Virginia, and nearly 3,500 members. The relationship of clubs to this statewide event is as hosts. The social media accounts that support Historic Garden Week have a similar relationship.

GCV members managing social media accounts for local tours (as opposed to club accounts), should follow the GCV Social Media policies, as outlined in the Insider’s Guide. These accounts are overseen by the Garden Club of Virginia, which reserves the right to remove any posts that are not aligned with the GCV’s mission or are in direct competition with the GCV.

The GCV Executive Director and Communications Coordinator have the responsibility to make that determination. In regard to Historic Garden Week, the State Director and Marketing & Program Coordinator would also be involved in removing an inappropriate post.

Sponsor Guidelines

- As a reminder, photos of flower arrangements are our #1 most popular type of post. In our experience, thank yous for sponsors generate significantly less interaction than other types of content, but are important.
- Don't forget to tag your sponsor to ensure that the business supporting your tour sees your acknowledgement of their help.
- Sample acknowledgment of tour sponsorship on local tour social media accounts: The Augusta Garden Club thanks XXX (list sponsor names) for supporting Historic Garden Week in Staunton. Unless logos have been promised, they are not necessary and should be avoided on social media.
- Do not promote businesses that are not sponsors of your tour - for example, pop up shops or farmers' markets. These types of posts have been, and will be, removed and archived by the HGW social media chair.
- Posts should be professional in nature as well as content. Giving a "shout out" to your hair salon by posting a photo of a flower arrangement in their place of business, for example, is not appropriate. Carefully consider the type of content promoted on social media as it is a reflection of the Garden Club of Virginia and Historic Garden Week.
- Please post personal content on your personal Instagram and/or Facebook page. Family trips, cocktail parties, etc. are not appropriate content for posts for GCV/HGW social media.
- Make sure that all text is correctly spelled. We are all human and it's easy to make an error. Double checking before posting is critical, especially when providing a link such as a website or ticketing link.
- Photo/video credit - With posts being shared and reposted often, it's important to give recognition to the photographer and more importantly, ask permission prior to using their images for social media.

How to Use and Install Instagram

If you are creating a social media account such as Instagram, we encourage you to follow the HGW account naming protocol.

Historic Garden Week in Virginia is the "umbrella" event. The Instagram username is also referred to as your Instagram "handle." For purposes of social media and consistency, the name of your Instagram "handle" should match the assigned Gmail address for your tour. For example:

- Historicgardenweekwilliamsburg or historicgardenweekpetersburg

Tours are named after the geographic location of the place where the tour is located. Tours are not named after hosting clubs. Hosting clubs are acknowledged and celebrated in the Guidebook and on our website, on local brochures and print materials.

Most names of tours are traditional and logical. The Williamsburg tour, for example, is hosted by the Williamsburg Garden Club; the Warrenton tour is hosted by the Warrenton Garden Club. The Old Town Alexandria tour is hosted by both The Garden Club of Alexandria and The Hunting Creek Garden Club. Its name refers to the location where the tour traditionally takes place, which is Old Town Alexandria.

It is important to follow the naming protocol established on a state level and with your sister tours so that future tours can build an established friend/follower group. Note, there is a 30 character limit when creating your username/handle.

Instagram Bio

We recommend that your tour Instagram account mirror the verbiage on the state level Instagram page:

Sponsored by the Garden Club of Virginia, Historic Garden Week is the only statewide house & garden tour in the nation. Tickets available at: vagardenweek.org

You also have the opportunity to share your tour dates in the bio section, but keep in mind that there is a 150 character limit.

For example: Ashland tour: Saturday, April 15, 2023

Profile Image

The state Instagram profile photo incorporates both the Historic Garden Week and the Garden Club of Virginia logos because Historic Garden Week is sponsored by the Garden Club of Virginia.

Individual tour profile photos have been created and are available for you to use. Again, this creates consistency in our branding. Please contact terri@vagardenweek.org if you do not have a copy of your personalized tour logo.

*In celebration of the 90th anniversary of Historic Garden Week in 2023, we will provide an individual tour logo incorporating our 90th branding. We encourage you to use this on both of your social media platforms.



Additional Instagram Information

Looking at Instagram as a whole, the most consistent engagement can be found Monday through Friday. Put thought into when users are most likely to be on their phones. Try posting between 7 - 9 a.m.; 11 a.m. - 1 p.m. when many people may be taking a lunch break and scrolling through Instagram, or after work hours in the evening. Engagement becomes lower every day before 6 a.m. and after 9 p.m. but compared to other platforms, Instagram does have scattered points of engagement on weekends and evenings.

Instructions for Linking your Tour Facebook and Instagram Pages

To link your Instagram account to your tour's Facebook Page, you first need to be an administrator of that Page on Facebook.

To link the Instagram account to a Facebook Page:

1. Start from Instagram. Go to your profile and tap  which is the Menu button.
2. Tap  Settings.
3. Scroll down and tap **Linked Accounts**, then select **Facebook**.

If you haven't already, enter your Facebook login information.

For questions regarding Social Media, contact

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