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MAY 2026

SARATOGA

Spotlight



**Meet Gloria Citti -
The Beautiful Blossom of the
Valley of Hearts Delight**

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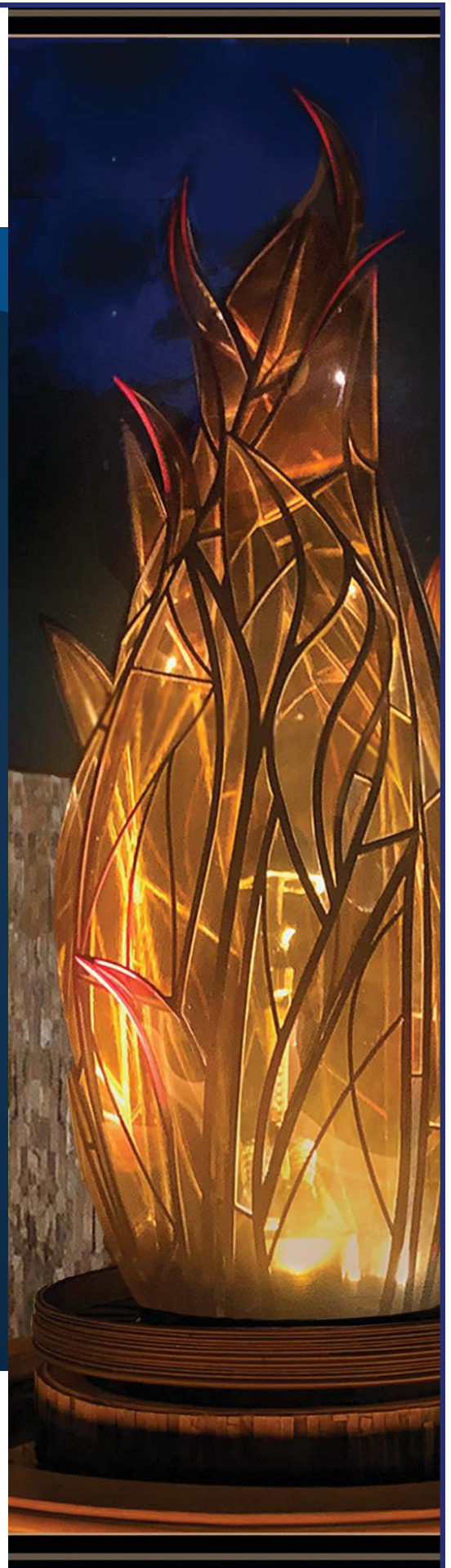
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SARATOGA

Spotlight

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January 8	February
February 8	March
March 8	April
April 8	May
May 8	June
June 8	July
July 8	August
August 8	September
September 8	October
October 8	November
November 8	December

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**We regret that the last month's issue (March) had a spelling error.
 The correct spelling of the family name is Scalora.**



Meet Gloria Citti - The Beautiful Blossom of the Valley of Hearts Delight

Submitted by Carol Gerwitz



“I never met a flower I didn’t like,” states Citti’s Florist’s co-founder, Gloria Citti, with a smile. Her agrarian childhood on her family’s ranch on what is now Central Expressway instilled in Gloria a love of the soil and what it produces, particularly flowers. Gloria was given a small garden plot of her own, which she surrounded with decorative rocks and filled with flowers, a harbinger of things to come for this pioneering woman.

Abutting the then three lanes of Highway 101 in the 1930’s, the family ranch was a self-sustaining operation (“except for beef”) with five homes for family and workers. Gloria’s Italian immigrant father grew green onions (which were hand-wrapped in raffia into half-dozen bunches) and string beans to sell commercially. Gloria and her two brothers, one older, one younger, were kept busy on the ranch. Gloria gathered eggs, and she fed the rabbits, which the family raised for food, not pets. “No pets on the ranch,” declares Gloria. The family also had 400 head of hogs, and Gloria was delighted when there were newborn piglets. “No picking them up,” she stresses. “They were not pets.”

After attending Santa Clara High School, Gloria pursued art and business administration through night classes at San Jose



State, the only woman in her program. It was during these years that she built a life with her husband, Fedele, whom she met through family friends when she was 16. Gloria’s passion for flowers served as a creative anchor; she happily arranged bouquets for friends and family. Eventually this hobby blossomed into a professional ambition, and she sought out formal training to launch a career in the floral industry. Leaving her two small sons in her mother’s care, three days a week she attended classes in floral retail at San Francisco City College.

In 1962 Gloria and Fedele launched Citti’s Florist, a beloved Santa Clara County business to this day. The first store was at the corner of El Camino Real and Pomeroy and was 20’ x 100’. Fedele and Gary shared responsibility for their two flower stands. Younger brother Christopher swept the shop floors and did other small-boy chores, all the while observing his mother designing flowers so that by the time he reached age 10 he started floral designing. Daughter Adrianna’s favorite memories are accompanying her father to the flower market in San Francisco to buy fresh flowers, arriving there at 2 a.m.

Citti’s Florist expanded to 9 locations at one time. Having the right location was a huge factor in the key to success, and prime spots were at busy corners. The Citti children were sometimes sent out to conduct traffic counts on potential

corner locations. Another factor was the Citti's hard work—the shops were open from 7 to 7 seven days a week. One should not overlook Gloria's pioneering spirit as she fearlessly launched a business within a landscape dominated by men, providing inspiration for her daughter and granddaughter. Gloria's talent for floral design was not unnoticed: she was one of five women from around the world whom FTD asked to design bouquets for their catalogues.

Gloria acknowledges and appreciates the extremely kind and helpful people and customers through the years, and she says, "I was at the right place at the right time." Throughout her life Gloria has been a dedicated philanthropist, generously giving her time to many charitable organizations. She was on many boards for different florist organizations. She helped launch Daffodil Days for the American Cancer Society and founded Agnews Awareness Day when Agnews was a state hospital serving individuals with mental and physical challenges. Gloria was also deeply involved in her children's schools, numerous Catholic parishes, and Santa Clara University where she served as past president of the Catala Club and was a longtime member of the Board of Fellows.

This vibrant woman (turning 93 in May) continues to be an avid gardener and, although she loves all things floral, she states that her favorite flowers are lilies of the valley (her birth month flower) and gardenias. She belongs to a book club, and she prefers actual books to e-books. Her current read is "The Agony and The Ecstasy," by Irving Stone.

Gloria is an adventurer and has traveled to many countries and stepped foot on every continent except Antarctica. "I love to travel the world and am very interested in all cultures, but my favorite is my parents' homeland, Italy. As the child of Northern Italian immigrants who cherished both Italy and the United States, I feel deeply connected to both. I still have



family in Italy, and I truly enjoy visiting and spending time with them."

Gloria's family is the center of her life, and all of her children, four beautiful grandchildren, and one beautiful great grandchild live near enough so that she can spend time with at least one family member each day. Gloria finds great joy in cooking, and her family delights in her vibrant

presentations of traditional dishes from her ancestral home in Tuscany. The family enjoys playing games together. A favorite game is tombola, Italian bingo. She admits to playing poker with her cousins, first for pennies, then nickels, then quarters. "I learned math," she quipped.

Gloria's three children now own the Citti's Florist. Gary leads the corporate office; Christopher manages floral design operations, and Adrianna oversees sales and marketing. The family business has now welcomed its third generation into the fold, with one of Gloria's grandsons working at the Hamilton Avenue store.

The Citti's have been involved in charities throughout the county. Gary is a Rotarian and is a past club president, district governor and west coast membership chair. Chris' focus is the arts--the symphony, opera, ballet, and Arts & Flowers at the De Saisset. Adrianna dedicates time to mental health charities, especially the Valley Monte League. The Citti family continues to make financial and floral contributions. In 2023 they donated all floral decorations for the Veterans Gala.

Says Gloria, "After all these years, one thing I know for certain is how important it is to care for one another. Life feels a little lighter when we take the time to know our neighbors...A kind word, a helping hand, or even just a smile can mean more than we realize. So my wish is that we look out for each other, stay connected and remember that none of us is meant to go through life alone."





MAYOR'S CORNER - CELEBRATING ARBOR DAY AND OUR COMMITMENT TO TREES

By Mayor Chuck Page

April is a noteworthy time to reflect on the natural beauty that makes our community special. As spring brings new growth and color to Saratoga and we commemorate Arbor Day, it is a natural moment to recognize the important role that trees play in our daily lives.

Trees are more than just part of our landscape. They are essential to our well-being. They improve air quality, produce oxygen, provide shade, reduce urban heat, and support local wildlife. Mature trees, in particular, offer significant environmental benefits and help define the character of our neighborhoods. They also contribute to property values and create the sense of place that makes Saratoga so unique and livable.

I am proud to share that our City has once again been recognized as a 2025 Tree City USA by the Arbor Day Foundation for the 19th year in a row. This year's recognition is especially meaningful as it marks the 50th anniversary of this national program. This designation reflects Saratoga's ongoing commitment to responsible tree management, environmental stewardship, and the maintenance of a healthy, sustainable tree canopy. It also reflects the dedicated work of City staff, who continue to plant, maintain, and protect trees throughout our community, as well as the City Council's support in establishing policies that prioritize these efforts.

At the same time, we recognize that thoughtful tree management must also account for public safety. Recent updates to the City's tree regulations, which took effect on March 6, 2026, are designed to better protect homes and neighborhoods from wildfire risk.

These updates reflect evolving state defensible space guidelines, particularly within the first five feet of a home where ignition risk is highest. Homeowners may remove trees in this immediate zone, provided a non-flammable area is established and maintained.

To streamline fire safety efforts, these specific removals no longer require public notification or are subject to appeal. However, a City permit is still required before removing any protected tree. In areas designated as the Wildland-Urban Interface, tree replacement requirements for development projects have also been reduced to help limit "ladder fuels" that can contribute to wildfire spread.

These changes are intended to help residents take proactive steps to protect their homes while preserving Saratoga's urban canopy over the long term.

It is important to emphasize that tree removal should always be done responsibly and in accordance with City regulations. Illegal tree removal undermines the very benefits we all

rely on. When trees are removed without proper review or replacement, we lose valuable canopy, reduce air quality, and diminish the environmental health of our community. Over time, these losses add up, making neighborhoods hotter, less resilient, and less supportive of local ecosystems. The impacts extend beyond a single property and affect neighbors, wildlife, and our community as a whole.

Protecting our trees is a shared responsibility. By following City regulations, obtaining the proper permits, and working with qualified professionals, residents can help ensure that Saratoga's natural assets are preserved for future generations. If you witness what you think may be an unpermitted tree removal, please call 408-868-1214 or 408-868-1276. More than 25 years ago, Saratoga's arborist told me that if we don't manage our urban canopy, we will lose it forever. Don't let that happen. Every tree makes a difference.

Thank you for your continued commitment to caring for our environment and for helping Saratoga remain a beautiful place to call home.



SANTA CLARA COUNTY SUPERVISOR'S CORNER - IMPLEMENTING GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AT THE COUNTY

Provided by Margaret Abe-Koga

Dear Friends,

Do you use generative AI? It feels like everyone is. Santa Clara County wants to harness the productivity and the ability to do more, too. The Board of Supervisors voted unanimously last month to advance a proposal brought by Board President Otto Lee and me. It directs county staff to survey how departments use AI tools and how the county can build a responsible and ethical framework for guidelines. It also asks staff to engage the community and workers in the survey.

The directive is the first in the Bay Area to launch a comprehensive survey and policy framework that addresses privacy, training and a wide range of operational issues -- all while including workers and the community in the process. The scale of Santa Clara County, which includes the state's second-largest public hospital system, could provide a model for other jurisdictions on how to implement Gen AI in the absence of federal and state models.

This work arrives at a critical moment. Budget season is upon us, and the county faces a tight budget cycle. Every department is being asked to do more with less, and our workforce is carrying a tremendous load to keep services

going. AI can help reduce backlogs and repetitive tasks, allowing staff to focus on the parts of their jobs that require human judgment, public-facing expertise and deep analysis.

While the nature of work has always included some shifts in job roles, AI in the County is not intended to displace employees. Its purpose is to alleviate workloads that often prevent humans from doing the things they do best. If certain positions shift over time, the county needs a clear process to transition employees into roles that require skills that humans are uniquely suited to do, such as public-facing work.

As part of this work, we outlined several guiding principles:

- Maintain meaningful human-in-the-loop oversight for significant AI-supported decisions that affect residents and employees.
- Continuously monitor and evaluate AI systems to maintain alignment with county values.
- Establish prohibited uses, including the use of generative AI for budgetary, disciplinary, hiring or benefit-determination recommendations.

- Note uses of generative AI in county-produced content by citing the tool, date and human reviewer.

I am grateful to our labor partners: SEIU 521, the South Bay Labor Council, CEMA, and Working Partnerships USA whose feedback shaped this proposal, and to members of the tech community who expressed to me their support for the use of AI – and for clear guardrails.

Staff have 60 days to complete their study and 90 days to return with policy recommendations.

And now, your part in government: I strongly encourage you and your neighbors to participate in the county's Budget Workshops, May 11–13 from 1:30 to 5 PM. You may attend in person at 70 W. Hedding Street, San Jose, watch on YouTube, or comment via Zoom.





MEDICARE DRUG COVERAGE FOR 2026

By Lucille Maravilla

There have been changes to Medicare's 2026 drug coverage. I have received calls regarding what is different this year. The changes show up both in the Medicare Part D drug plans and the drug formularies for Medicare Advantage plans.

The 2022 Inflation Reduction Act redesigned the Part D benefit to provide more generous drug coverage, capping out-of-pocket spending for covered drugs at \$2,100. Once someone spends this amount for the deductible, copays, and coinsurance, they pay \$0 for covered Part D drugs for the rest of the calendar year. Monthly premiums are not included in the \$2,100 maximum.

Insulin copays are a 30-day supply that are capped at \$35. You don't pay a deductible for insulin. A 3-month supply costs no more than \$105.

Medicare Part B already fully covers some vaccines, including flu shots, pneumonia vaccines, hepatitis B inoculations, and coronavirus vaccines (initial shots as well as boosters). But other vaccines, including the expensive shingles vaccines, are covered under Medicare Part D prescription drug plans and there is no cost sharing.

Because of the Inflation Reduction Act and the \$2,100 cost cap, Part D plans are picking up a larger share of the costs. So, the plans want to ensure that they pay only when it is appropriate. I am seeing that many drug plan formularies no longer include certain medications that were always covered in the past and that costs for

many drugs still included have been raised. If your prescription drug isn't covered, contact your doctor to see if another covered medication can replace it. If there is no alternative that will work for you, your doctor can appeal. If the appeal is won, the drug plan must authorize or provide the drug within 72 hours (24 hours for an expedited appeal). The drug plan must cover the drug for the remainder of the calendar year. You may be reimbursed for out-of-pocket costs while the medication was denied. If your appeal is based on an exception, you may need to submit a new request at the start of the next plan year.

Prior authorization may be required for select drugs. Some of the reasons for the requirement include: the availability of a lower cost alternative drug for the situation; Medicare Part A or Part B should cover the drug, not Part D; the prescribed drug is not for a medically accepted reason (Part D generally doesn't cover a drug for an off-label use, unless it's medically necessary, which may not be easy to prove.) Other reasons for the authorization can include: drugs with special monitoring requirements; certain dosages or forms of a medication; controlled substances; drugs that may interact with other drugs.

One plan may require prior authorization for a certain medication, and another does not. Every drug plan has its own procedure and form. The prescriber or the drug plan member can submit the request. Being proactive can help prevent some of these problems. An experienced Medicare agent can guide you.

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WEST VALLEY COLLEGE OPENS A NEW CHAPTER IN STUDENT ACCESS AND SUCCESS

By Jennifer Taylor-Mendoza, Ph.D. President, West Valley College

Dear Neighbor,

West Valley College celebrated a major milestone in the spring semester with the grand opening of the Wang and Qu Family Learning Resource Commons, expanding access, innovation, and student success. The new facility represents a strong investment in how students learn, create, and connect — bringing together advanced technology, academic support, and collaborative spaces. The March 24 celebration featured a ribbon-cutting ceremony, author event, and guided tours, drawing some 200 attendees.

“The grand opening was a great success!” said WVC Director of Library and Learning Support Services, Joanna Messer. “Sharing the transformation of the Learning Resource Commons and recognizing the hard work and commitment from our teams was immensely gratifying.”

The 59,134-square-foot facility provides hands-on experience to help students build marketable skills in digital media, television, and music production. It features a digital media center, TV and recording studios, makerspace, library, writing and tutoring centers and collaborative learning spaces designed to support student success beyond graduation.

Aimee Phan headlined a book signing event. The author of *The Lost Queen* and *The Reeducation of Cherry Truong*, Phan teaches at the California College of the Arts.

Looking ahead, West Valley will also expand public access to resources by introducing a free Community Borrower library card for state residents 18 and older with valid ID. New services such as free printing for students will further support affordability and success.

The Learning Resource Commons is named in honor of Silicon Valley philanthropists Arthur Wang and Christina Qu in recognition of the family’s longstanding support of the West Valley-Mission Community College District, including an endowment established for future LRC needs.

“Equipped with leading technology and collaborative spaces, the new Wang and Qu Family Learning Resource Commons is another way West Valley College supports students to succeed and thrive academically and in their lives beyond campus,” said WVC President Jennifer Taylor-Mendoza.

In Community,

Jennifer Taylor-Mendoza, Ph.D.
President | West Valley College

W | West Valley College

Summer Sessions | June 1 & June 15

Fall Semester | August 29-December 18



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The Language of FLOWERS:

HOW VICTORIANS COMMUNICATED WITH BLOOMS

By Rose Alexander

People have thought of flowers as having different meanings for millennia. In Ottoman Constantinople, the practice of *sélam*, or giving flowers as gifts in order to convey a message, is said to have begun what we now call floriography. Assigning coded meanings to flowers experienced a surge of popularity in Victorian England, coinciding with an increased interest in botany in the 19th century. They could even be used to communicate different statements based on how they were worn – for example, a “yes” or a “no” depending on which side of the chest they were pinned to. In modern times, flowers are associated with different months and even days, especially when it comes to different birthdays.

So the next time you want to give someone a bouquet, have a look at what you might be communicating!

- **Black or dark rose:** Death, grief
- **Bluebell:** Humility
- **Crocus:** Cheerfulness
- **Daisy:** Innocence, loyalty, purity
- **Daylily:** Flirtation
- **Forsythia:** Anticipation
- **Garlic:** Strength, courage
- **Gardenia:** Secret love
- **Geranium:** Stupidity
- **Holly:** Defense, domestic happiness
- **Iris:** Faith, hope
- **Ivy:** Fidelity, wedded love
- **Lilac:** Old love
- **Marigold:** Cruelty, grief, jealousy
- **Monkshood:** Beware, warning
- **Moss:** Charity, maternal love
- **Nasturtium:** Victory, conquest
- **Petunia:** Resentment, anger
- **Pink rose:** Affection, happiness
- **Purple hyacinth:** Apology
- **Red rose:** Romantic love
- **Rosemary:** Remembrance
- **Snapdragon:** Deception
- **Sweetpea:** Farewell
- **Violet:** Modesty
- **White rose:** Virtue
- **Yellow rose:** Friendship

Source: Iowa State University - Yard & Garden, interflora.co.uk

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UNDERSTANDING MEDI-CAL: HOW IT CAN HELP WITH LONG-TERM CARE

By Lisa Bryant

For many families, planning for long-term nursing home care is one of life's most stressful challenges. Nursing home costs in the Bay Area can run around \$20,000 per month, and without proper planning, these bills can quickly overwhelm savings. Fortunately, Medi-Cal, California's state healthcare program, can help cover long-term nursing home and skilled rehabilitation care for as long as your loved one qualifies.

It's a common misconception that Medicare pays for nursing home care. In reality, Medicare only provides limited coverage: it begins after three days of prior hospitalization, covers the first 20 days of a skilled nursing facility stay in full, and then requires a co-payment from days 21–100 depending on supplemental insurance. After day 100, or if your loved one is no longer making measurable medical progress, Medicare stops paying, and families are responsible for the full cost.

This is where Medi-Cal planning becomes essential. Medi-Cal is a resource-based program, meaning applicants must meet certain financial eligibility requirements. With the right legal planning, most people can qualify for benefits without exhausting all of their assets. Medi-Cal divides resources into "exempt" and "non-exempt" assets, which are detailed on the California Advocates for Nursing Home Reform website (www.canhr.org). However, navigating these rules often requires the assistance of an experienced attorney to maximize eligibility.

There are several legal planning strategies that can help protect your assets while qualifying for Medi-Cal. These include gifting assets

to family members, creating Third-Party Special Needs Trusts, and using Irrevocable Trusts. For married couples, court orders can increase the spousal resource allowance and direct income to the spouse who remains at home, rather than the nursing home.

It's important to understand Medi-Cal recovery. After a recipient passes away, the state may seek repayment for benefits received. For many, the family home is the primary asset and may be subject to a voluntary lien. However, with proper planning, recovery can often be minimized or completely avoided — especially when planning is done while the recipient is still alive, unless they are survived by a spouse or a disabled child.

The good news is that it's never too late to consider Medi-Cal planning. Even if your loved one is already in a nursing home, proper planning can help reduce or eliminate the burden of expensive nursing home bills. For those over age 65 without long-term care insurance, it's wise to explore how Medi-Cal can provide security and peace of mind.

Bryant Estate Planning & Elder Law offers a no-cost consultation to help you understand your options and create a Medi-Cal plan tailored to your family's needs. Visit BryantElderLaw.com or call (408) 286-2122 to schedule your complimentary consultation.

This article is provided for general informational purposes only and is not intended as legal advice. Because laws and individual circumstances vary, please consult a qualified attorney regarding your specific situation.

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International Museum Day:

A World of Discovery

Submitted by Miranda Dow

Every year on May 18th, people around the globe celebrate International Museum Day. It's a day dedicated to recognizing museums not just as buildings full of old things, but as vibrant centers of culture, education, and community.

Established in 1977 by the International Council of Museums, this special day was created to raise awareness about the role museums play in the development of society. Since its start, the celebration has grown immensely; today, tens of thousands of museums in over 150 countries participate, offering special events, workshops and often free admission to the public.

WHY IT MATTERS

Museums are like time machines and windows into the future all at once. Whether you are interested in ancient dinosaurs, sparkling gemstones, space exploration, or modern paintings, there is a museum for everyone. They provide a unique space where:

1. **Students** can see history come to life beyond the textbook.
2. **Families** can explore and learn together through interactive exhibits.
3. **Artists and Scientists** can find inspiration for the next big idea.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

You don't have to be an expert to enjoy International Museum Day! Here are a few ways to get involved:

- **Visit a Local Museum:** Check your local galleries, science centers, or historical sites for special "open door" events.
- **Go Virtual:** Many world-famous museums, like the Louvre or the Smithsonian, offer incredible digital tours you can take from your couch!
- **Share Your Story:** Post a photo of your favorite museum memory on social media using the hashtag *#InternationalMuseumDay*.

Museums are the keepers of our collective memory. This May 18th, take a moment to step inside one and discover a story you've never heard before.

Sources:

Awareness Days: awarenessdays.com

National Today: nationaltoday.com

International Council of Museums (ICOM): icom.museum/en

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO): unesco.org/en



HANDMADE WITH HEART

Pressed Flower Coasters

By Erin Roelke

Pressed flower coasters make thoughtful gifts for nearly any occasion. I recently gifted these to our wedding guests as a special handmade keepsake to take home. The coasters are fun to make, and it's a wonderful way to preserve the vibrant colors and shapes of petals in a functional, beautiful piece of art.



What You'll Need:

- » Silicone coaster molds
- » Resin and hardener (typically sold as a kit)
- » Disposable cups and mixing sticks
- » Dried pressed flowers (can be purchased at the craft store)
- » Tweezers
- » Gloves and safety glasses
- » Newspaper or drop cloths (to protect your workspace)

Instructions:

1. Prepare Your Workspace: Resin can be messy, so start by laying down a drop cloth or old newspapers on a flat surface. Make sure you are in a well-ventilated area and put on your safety glasses and gloves before you begin. Wipe down the silicone molds to remove dirt or dust.
2. Plan Your Design: Before mixing the resin, arrange your dried flowers on the table to get a general sense of your floral design for each coaster. This is the fun part where you come up with your own designs!
3. Mix and Pour Resin: Following the instructions in your resin kit, pour the resin and hardener into a disposable cup. Stir slowly and thoroughly to avoid creating too many air bubbles. I typically stirred for about 5 minutes. Carefully pour the first layer of resin into the molds, filling them about halfway.
4. Set the Flowers: Use your tweezers to gently press the flowers into the resin layer, just enough to adhere them to the surface without submerging them. If any air bubbles appear around the petals, you can pop them with a toothpick or gently blow on them. I often kept the bubbles because I liked the way they looked. Let the first coat of resin cure for about 4-6 hours to keep the flowers in place.
5. The Final Layer: Mix and pour the final batch of resin over the top until the mold is full. Let the coasters sit undisturbed on a level surface.
6. Cure and Enjoy: Check your resin kit for the recommended curing time (usually 24 hours). Once they are completely hard to the touch, gently pop them out of the silicone mold.

IT'S TIME TO WAKE UP YOUR GARDEN



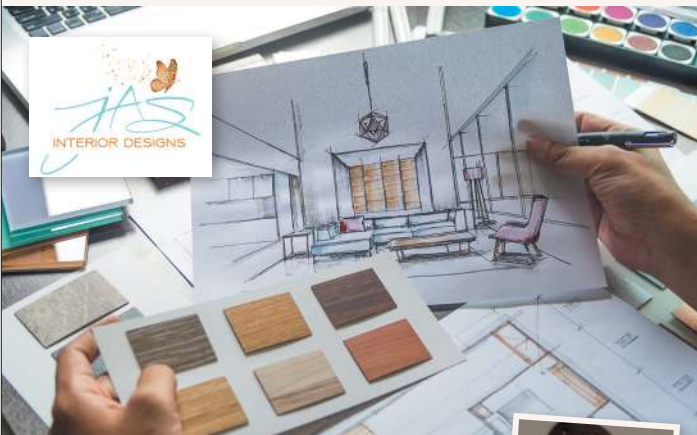
By Rose Alexander

Leave Those Leaves!

Don't rake up those leftover leaves right away! Last fall's leaf litter is an essential habitat for tons of beneficial insects like ladybugs, butterflies, and some species of bee. In general, garden cleanup should wait until daytime temperatures reach at least the mid-50s so you don't disturb them before they've left their shelter for the season. If you can leave the fall leaves alone completely over the winter, so much the better. A thin layer insulates your garden with natural mulch and provides nutrients as the leaves break down. When you do eventually rake them, use a softer plastic rake rather than a hard metal one to avoid damage.

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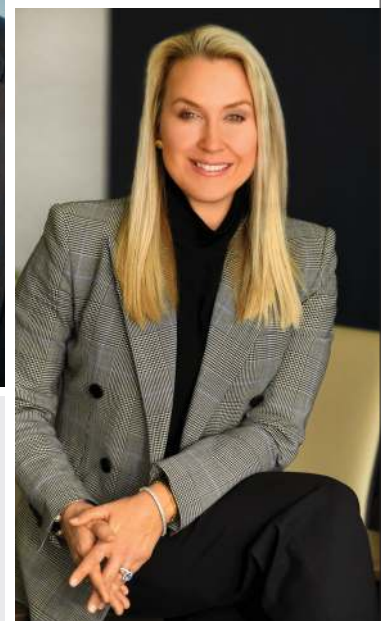


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Check for Damage

Winter can be hard on our non-plant garden fixtures. Last year I found an unpleasant surprise—raccoons had chewed right through the string of lights I'd left in the lilac bush! Be sure to check any trellises, planters, retaining walls, ornaments, and hardscaping for damage. Spring is also a good time to have your gutters cleaned and double-check if any fence boards, deck slats, or other wood elements need replacing.

Re-Start Your Water System

Once you're no longer in danger of a frost, it's safe to turn on your outdoor hose, start up your irrigation system, and set out your rain barrel. I like to keep mine indoors over the winter, along with the hose sprayer nozzle, which can crack if water is allowed to freeze inside it.

Prune and Cut Back

Summer-flowering flowers and shrubs bloom on new growth from the current season, so they're best pruned early in the spring, or even in winter while they're still dormant. Clipped hedges like boxwood can also be pruned now, which will help them grow consistently and maintain their shape. Try to keep the top branches a little narrower so they don't cut off light to the lower ones. If a plant blooms repeatedly throughout the year, you can prune it now to remove stems that sustained winter damage, or cut it back if it's become overgrown.

Conversely, if a flowering shrub blooms on old wood, like most varieties of hydrangea, pruning in spring means you're cutting off new buds. I like to leave old hydrangea blooms

to provide visual interest over the winter since they don't fall off on their own but dry out to a pretty brownish-gold. To remove these in spring, cut the stems back at a 45-degree angle just above a large bud. This is called a heading cut.

As a rule, spring bloomers such as lilacs should be pruned immediately after they finish blooming.

Prepare Soil for Planting

Every three to five years, it's a good idea to test your garden soil's acidity and natural nutrient content so you know how and how much to fertilize it. You may find you've been doing too *much* fertilizing, or the wrong kind, which is a common trap. You can have this done professionally, or home test kits are available at garden centers.

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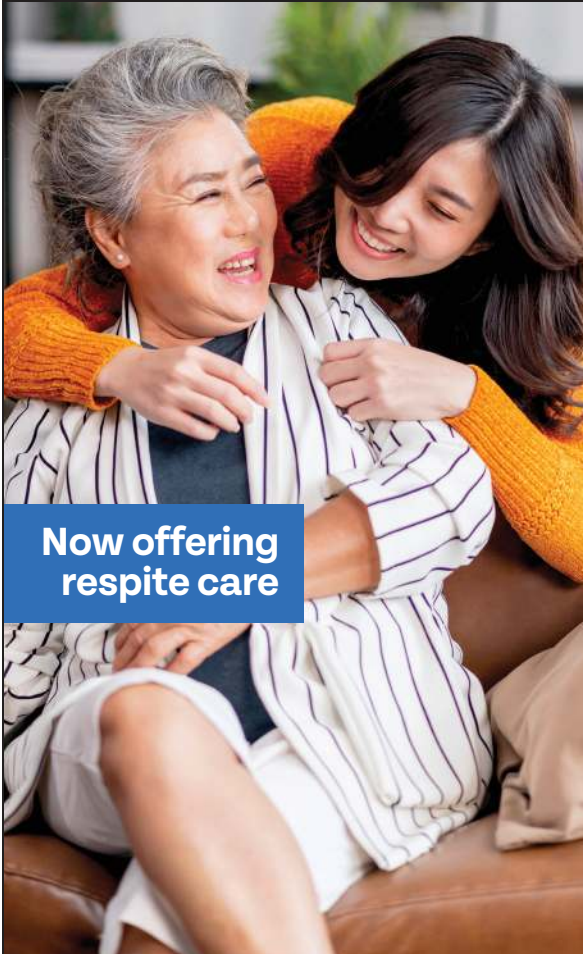
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