

THE PUBLICITY and PUBLIC RELATIONS HANDBOOK

Guidance on PUBLICITY AND PUBLIC RELATIONS For Clubs



The Gardeners of America *Men's Garden Clubs of America*



Gardening Education and Excellence in Horticulture since 1932

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THE PUBLICITY and PUBLIC RELATIONS HANDBOOK

❖ Publicity builds Public Relations.

❖ Public Relations builds Publicity.

*And they both strengthen your local club
and The Gardeners of America/Men's Garden Clubs of America!*

This handbook attempts to give you ideas and inspiration in both areas.

Publicity

Every club should have a Publicity Chair who will work to—

- Build *personal relationships* with the media! This is rule number one! Meet and get to know the editor, reporters, news anchors, etc; meet them face to face and solicit their ideas and suggestions on how to share your clubs activities with them. Without this, emails and letters can too easily be tossed into the trash.
- Invite media persons to visit a club meeting, or a club picnic, or a club work session. And, where appropriate, ask one to present a program.
- Invite a local weather reporter to make a live or recorded report during a club meeting.
- Discuss needs, deadlines, interests, etc. with the "Assignment Desk" persons or "Public Service Director" at local radio and TV stations.
- Think of what the *public really wants to know* of your activity; and try for a "warm and fuzzy" approach to your submissions that will make them 'news worthy' and 'interesting'.
- Pitch stories in the direction of current "trends" in the news--make them up-to-date and modern.
- Write, or encourage members to write, letters-to-the-editor on subjects related to club activity, or on topics of value to the readers and the community.
- Ask someone in an organization that has benefited from a club activity (i.e., the city, a school, a playground, etc.) to write a thank-you letter-to-the-editor.

News Releases or Press Releases

- Submit information on standard, re-occurring meetings. Most local newspapers publish a weekly schedule of regular meetings, usually on Sunday.
- Strengthen the above with special Press Releases of special events. These might include--
 - Special meetings, speakers, programs of interest to not only members but the public
 - New officer elections
 - Horticulture or community enhancement awards or recognition given to a club member.
 - Projects, particularly those that enhance the community and effect citizens.
- Develop a standard News Release or Press Release form and format--
 - Use standard 8 ½ x 11" paper, type on one side only and double space the body
- Develop a "spiffy" heading which includes--
- Club name using the special font or name logo for the club.
 - The club logo if available (if not available, find a designer to develop one).
 - Just below, to the right, put your (or submitter's) name, address, telephone and fax number, email address and date written.
 - To the left, put date submitted and date for release (usually "For Immediate Release")

- Type a possible headline or two to describe the story (optional).
- Pre-write for *your use only*, one sentence stating what you want the reader/listener to know, do or change. Then write the release.
- Include these fundamentals—
 - **WHO** is the person or organization of concern
 - **WHAT** has happened of importance, or will happen
 - **WHEN** did it happen, or will it happen
 - **WERE** did it happen, or will it happen
 - **WHY** it happened—and **WHY** the reader might be interested
- Incorporate--
 - An unusual fact
 - An interesting idea
 - A thought provoker
 - A challenging statement
 - A curiosity or interest arouse
- Understand that the first two sentences are the most important--the reader/listener will decide in about 20 second to continue or not.
- Consider these suggestions--
 - Use double space format.
 - Limit to one page if possible.
 - Add ###, centered, at end of story.
 - Don't be afraid to start a sentence with "And, But, Or, So, or Then". Use prepositions (on, at, in, to) and relative pronouns (which, that, as) as you would in normal conversation. Be sure it is clear what you are referring to when you say "this" or "that".
 - Use contractions when not needed for emphasis. Example: "Here's a new idea!" instead of "Here is a new idea!"
 - Place titles before the names, unless they are extremely long. Example: Extension Farm Economist, Frank Burns, or Club President, Bill Smith.
 - Use attributions at the beginning of a sentence only, not in the middle. Example: "Jones reports the situation is serious." Never, " 'The situation is serious', says Jones. 'but not disastrous' ". Mention a person's name often in a story. Your listeners cannot look back to see who is saying what. This also applies to news articles.
 - Use dots and dashes occasionally. There is no rule. Just use them when they help the reading of the story. Particularly for audio stories, give "on air" readers a chance to breath, or change voice tone.
 - Round out numbers whenever possible. Write numbers from one to ten, but exceptions include: 3 a.m., \$2.50, 6 percent. Use numerals from 11 to 999. Write out numbers above one thousand. Do not start a news story with numerals; rather spell out the number in that case.
 - Be careful with abbreviations: never abbreviate names of states, countries, days, or months except when the state is used with a zip code or a month used with a date. Example: Spartanburg, SC 29307 Don't use symbols such as " \$, % " instead write them out. If you do use abbreviations for organizations, use periods--for example, U.S.D.A. However, for The Gardeners of America/Men's Garden Clubs of America, we commonly use TGOA/MGCA.
 - Use transitional words, i.e. "furthermore, however, nevertheless, moreover, also, but, and then", liberally at the beginning of a sentence.
 - Avoid hyphenated words at the end of a line.
- Test your writing by reading aloud what you have written or having someone else read it aloud. It should sound natural—like talk, not like reading.

- Send the release by email or fax to *specific persons*, not just to the organization. If it involves an event, also send to the *calendar listing* person.
- Consider “pasting” the text into the *body* of the email rather than as an “attachment”; some recipients prefer this method as being safer.
- Follow up with a telephone call, asking questions such as the following--
 - Was the release received?
 - Can we provide additional information? Pictures? Etc?
 - How can we make the release of greater interest, for now or the future?
 - Is there another person in your organization to whom I should send the release?
 - Are there problems with the story?
Be brief, but seek guidance.
- Create a scrapbook or folder of your published stories, pictures and other documents. These would be welcome additions to the club historical records, and a wonderful guide to the person who succeeds you.

Your club’s health and growth will, to a large extent,
depend on the kind of public image
you and your Publicity Committee
are able to properly promote.

“Don’t hide your club’s light under a bushel”

A Sample Press Release Follows--

--SAMPLE--

Press Release

Spartanburg Men's Garden Club

Contact: Henry Pittman, 656 Perrin Drive, Spartanburg, SC 29307-2456

Phone: 579-0532 Fax: 579-8440 Email: E Henrypittm@juno.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 25, 2001

Prestigious national landscape award to Milliken & Co.

Milliken and Co. has received another recognition for its outstanding landscape.

At the July national convention of The Gardeners of America/Men's Garden Clubs of America; in Minneapolis, the prestigious Business Landscape Award was given to Milliken & Co.. The plaque was presented to Mr. Roger Milliken in a meeting today by Tom Bartram and Henry Pittman of the Spartanburg Men's Garden Club.

In accepting the award Mr. Milliken said, "Tree's truly are the answer," referring to a bumper sticker that adorns his car with the same message. "Trees give us beauty, shade, help conserve energy, and now the Wall Street Journal reports that it was likely the huge canopy of trees surrounding the White House, that protected it and thwarted terrorist attempts to locate it from the air," added Milliken.

The award was given, "In recognition of the efforts made to contribute to the beauty and quality of our national environment. This year's recipient decidedly has done just that in the beautiful landscaping of its national headquarters. This 600 acre former peach orchard has open vistas of grassy fields, groves and avenues of trees, classic statuary, fifteen beautiful fountains and six ponds."

In addition, the presentation cited the arboretum and said "It consists of over 300 acres of trees, in groups or singles". It went on to state, "Some 500 different cultivars of trees and shrubs, many rare to this part of the world, enhance these grounds. This headquarters, unlike many other companies, is not off limits to the public. In fact, the state highway department constructed a special off-street parking area parallel to the adjacent highway for motorists to be able to visit these gorgeous grounds."

The local club, composed of some 100 men and women members, is proud of having nominated Milliken for this award. Former President Tom Bartram said, "It's most fitting for this company to get another 'thank you' for its great contribution to our community."

###

Public Relations

As stated above—
Good Public Relations will provide good Publicity
—and strengthen your club
as well as strengthen TGOA/MGCA.

- Identify strengths of your club such as—
 - What have you done for your community recently?
 - What have you done over the years?
 - What are you “famous for” in your community?
 - Are you a large and influential club, or small and influential? Or neither?
 - Do you have men and women members, or only one sex?
 - Is your reputation based on a long history of community service, or more recent activity?
 - Do you have, or have you had, members who are well known, community leaders?

Find ways to build on all of these strengths!
- Encourage your newsletter editor to properly stress the club’s activities that benefit the community.
- Develop a strong and cooperative relation with community “movers and shakers” such as—
 - The mayor and other city, county and state leaders
 - Chamber of Commerce officers and members
 - Business, college, school, ag extension service leaders, etc.
- Include the above leaders on your “News Letter” mailing list and invite them to club activities.
- Consider a “Corporate Member” category for developing ‘business partners’—and possibly for strengthening your club treasury.
- Develop a member email list for instant communication to members.

But be sure to *protect* members by sending messages so their addresses are not shown to all recipients, i.e., as “blind copies”, etc.
- Encourage your President to submit an annual “State of the Club” letter to all members, prospective members, community leaders, etc stating the accomplishments during the year. Brag, but be honest.
- Submit Press Releases as often as there is club activity of real community interest.

See the above “Publicity” section.
- Encourage your club to work with other local groups for community beautification and benefit--
 - Local botanical gardens and parks
 - Other garden clubs
 - Colleges, schools and youth groups
- Assist Master Gardener classes, local garden shops, landscapers, etc. in--
 - Promoting green space values
 - Teaching good horticultural practices
 - Providing valuable garden advice to customers

--and thereby promoting your club
- Organize horticulture courses for the community, alone or with the Ag Extension Agents, Master Gardeners, other garden clubs, schools, etc.
- Help the Chamber of Commerce develop a ‘landscape evaluation’ program for their members where club members conduct standardized surveys that are both instructive and constructive.
- Develop unique, identifying symbols for your club, such as--
 - A logo
 - A unique font for your club’s name. Use it consistently on all printed material so it becomes somewhat of a ‘logo’ identifying the club.

- Include these unique symbols on stationery, website and other publications
- Create computer-generated stationery with the logo and standard font for club name, and include club officers in a text column on the left. Make it available for easy digital email distribution for officers and committees to use.
 - Personalize with an individual's name, title and address (i.e. the president's) at the bottom
- Attract a local professional Public Relations organization to work with you in your PR efforts.
- Build a club WebSite that includes some of the following--
 - The club logo, unique font for club name, etc
 - Club officers with contact telephone numbers (and email addresses if approved).
 - Club meeting time and place, and the typical program types.
 - Membership information: How to join, Membership chair, dues, etc.
 - Details on TGOA/MGCA's partnership with American Horticultural Society and the 'perks' it provides, including the quality magazine, *The American Gardener*.
 - List of current and past club activities, including a recent list from the president's "State of the Club" letter.

Remember, to be really effective, WebSites must be--

- Attractive ● Accurate and ● Up to date.
- Seek qualified club leaders who are well known and respected in the community—this is not essential, but valuable.
- Keep your members, and the community, informed of club activities and accomplishments.
- Find multiple ways to use our partnership with American Horticultural Society to advantage--
 - Promote the quality of *The American Gardener* magazine.
 - Encourage qualified members to write and submit articles to the magazine.
- Promote building new clubs in your area and your Region. This can be a great way to enhance your club's image locally and nationally.
- Encourage club members to get involved with TGOA/MGCA. This will broaden experience and perspective—and strengthen National.
- Tie in with other local organizations in community projects of value

Pictures

Always indicate what is being exhibited in the pictures. Give the name of persons in the small group reading left to right, first row (back), second row, etc. Always give credit to the person taking the picture.

- Black and white pictures are preferred! The print should be as large as possible.
- Three or four people make a good group, unless a larger group is a must.
- Keep the background as plain as possible.
- The picture should say something. Show an activity!
- Focus attention on one thing.
- The caption of a picture should be written or typed on a sheet of paper, pasted or taped to the bottom of the picture, or on the back of it. Never write on the back of the picture, it may show in the picture during the printing process.
- It is best to have the picture to the editor the day after the event.

Advertisements, Flyers and Brochures

- Advertisements. Many newspapers offer at least one free ad annually to 501(c)3 qualified community service organizations.
 - All clubs should have this valuable federal tax exemption service which is available through TGOA/MGCA.
 - Flyers. A computer-generated flyer (or a more professionally printed one) can be valuable for advertising club activities of community interest.
 - Brochures. A computer generated bi-fold or tri-fold brochure (or a more professionally generated and printed one) can be valuable in member recruiting as well as in public relations.
 - The title page might include club name, logo, etc and state in bold font, “We need you...”, or other appropriate eye-catching term.
 - The brochure might include—
 - A brief history of the club
 - A list of club objectives
 - A list of club projects and accomplishments
 - Current officers
 - A membership application form with dues information, etc.
 - ..or other important information to serve a particular club need.
 - Formats and Templates for some of the above are available--
 - in Microsoft Word (Click: File + New)
 - On the Internet at...<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/templates/FX100595491033.aspx>
-

WebSite Links

Additional information of value on these subjects can be found on these WebSites--

Portland Oregon Visitors Association

http://www.travelportland.com/members/pdfs/publicity_handbook.pdf

We Shine Foundation

<http://www.wesharefoundation.org/serv-polish.htm>

US Synchronized Swimming

http://www.usasynchro.org/athletes/marketing_kit/mediarelations.htm

CFMS Publicity Manual

<http://www.cfmsinc.org/manuals/publicitymanual/manual-11a.pdf>

Amazon Books

<http://www.amazon.com/s?ie=UTF8&keywords=Publicity&rh=n%3A1000%2Ck%3APublicity&page=7>

Key Club Manual

<http://cnhkeyclub.org/0607gbook/publicity%20guide.pdf>

Publicity Handbook—Yale and Cowthers

http://www.bestwebbuys.com/The_Publicity_Handbook-ISBN_0844232424.html?isrc=b-grt-homebiz

Sertoma International—Media Guidelines

http://www.sertoma.org/MemberServices/PR-Marketing/Media_Guidelines_01_05.doc

Civitan Public Relations

<http://www.civitan.org/P3.pdf>

THE PUBLICITY CHAIRMAN

HANDBOOK



**THE GARDENERS OF AMERICA
MEN'S GARDEN CLUBS OF AMERICA
5560 MERLE HAY ROAD
P.O. BOX 241
JOHNSTON, IA 50131-0241
Phone (515) 278-0295 Fax (515) 278-6245**

GUIDELINES FOR THE PUBLICITY CHAIRMAN

YOUR POSITION IS HIGHLY IMPORTANT!

You are one of the people who can be of the greatest assistance to the growth of your club. You can be of vital help to the Membership Chairman:

By releasing publicity about each coming club meeting. Your news story should help to arouse the interest of non-member gardeners in the community. You should always include an invitation to them to attend.

You are the person who can assist in maintaining the enthusiasm of the officers and committee chairman:

By releasing publicity about election of officers, outstanding work by committee members, the club volunteering for a community gardening activity. Members involved like to have **their** own friends and neighbors know the good work they are doing. Always use names, lots of them.

And you are the person who can assist in developing membership pride in **your** club and its activities:

By releasing publicity of club honors, club use of funds, scholarships, or other donations, youth involvement, Gardening From The Heart, plant sales, gardening demonstrations and seminars. All of this news gives your club community recognition and acceptance. All of this makes members proud to be a member.

If the event is important enough or unique enough be sure to send the news release to the TGOA/MGCA Office, too. It just might be printed in **The Gardener** or the **Newsletter**.

Sounds like a heavy load, doesn't it? But, actually, it all boils down to the regular release of club news to the newspapers, radio, and TV stations in your community.

Above all, don't get discouraged if some of your releases aren't used. Maybe another local event overshadowed your club news. It happens. Just keep at it and you will be well rewarded . . . and so will your club.

A FEW SUGGESTIONS TO MAKE YOUR WORK EASIER ... AND MUCH MORE SUCCESSFUL

Work closely with the officers and chairmen. It is their responsibility to keep you informed and to provide you with the important facts: names, dates, reasons, extent, and importance.

Develop a calendar of coming events so you are well prepared with publicity articles at the "right" times. Your club president can assist you by making his planning calendar available to you. For example, he can tell you the dates for election and/or installation of officers, the dates of the regional and national meetings or conventions, dates of the plant sale, club meetings, garden walks, and garden seminars, etc.

Contact the local news media . . . get to know the name of the specific person who will be handling your garden club releases. Meeting them in person is best, but if time will not permit, a few phone conversations will pave your way to increased news coverage.

What follows are the "nuts and bolts" guidelines of good publicity releases. It is not fatal if you don't follow all of the rules, but if you do, you will make the work of the newspeople so much easier and make it much more likely for them to use your releases.

GUIDELINES FOR THE PREPARATION OF RELEASES

Remember all information you give out should be **accurate, complete, brief, and timely**. You will eventually develop a talent for discriminating between routine club affairs and **newsworthy** events. Both are your concern!

To be complete, the article should contain the five W's:

| | |
|--------------|--|
| WHO | is the person or organization concerned? |
| WHAT | tell what happened! |
| WHEN | is the time it happened or will happen? |
| WHERE | name the place |
| WHY | tell why, or how it all happened! |

Know your aim. Before writing a word of copy, write in ONE sentence what you want the listener to do, to know, or to change. What is the reason for your story or announcement?

Get the immediate attention of the reader or listener with:

- An unusual fact, an interesting idea, a thought provoker, a challenging statement, a curiosity arouser, or an interest arouser!

- The first two sentences of your story are the most important! The first twenty seconds "hook" the listener or reader. In most cases, the five W's are contained in the lead or first paragraph.

Use short, simple sentences with short simple words. Use few technical terms. Leave out those extra descriptive words; saves reading time and space.

Don't be afraid to start a sentence with "And, But, Or, So, or Then". Use prepositions (on, at, in, to) and relative pronouns (which, that, as) as you would in normal conversation. Be sure it is clear what you are referring to when you say "this" or "that".

When not needed for emphasis, use contractions. Example: "Here's a new idea!" instead of "Here is a new idea!"

Place titles before the names, unless they are extremely long. Example: Extension Farm Economist, Frank Burns, or Club President, Bill Smith.

Attributions should be at the beginning of a sentence, not in the middle. Example: "Jones reports the situation is serious." Never, "The situation is serious, says Jones."

Mention a person's name often in a story. Your listeners can not look back to see who is saying what. This also applies to news articles.

Use dots and dashes freely. There is no rule. Just use them when they help the reading of the story. Give "on air" readers a chance to breath, or change his voice tone.

Round out numbers whenever possible. Write numbers from one to ten exceptions include: 3 a.m., \$2.50, 6 percent. Use numbers from 11 to 999. Write out numbers above one thousand. Do not start a news story with figures, rather spell out the number in that case.

Use of abbreviations: never abbreviate names of states, countries, days, or months except when the state is used with a zip code or a month used with a date. Example: Van Wert, OH 45891. Don't use symbols such as " \$, % " instead write them out. If you do use abbreviations for organizations, use periods.

For example, U.S.D.A. However, for the The Gardeners of America, Inc., we commonly use TGOA/MGCA.

Use transitional words, i.e. "furthermore, however, never the less, moreover, also, but, and then", liberally at the beginning of a sentence.

It is best not to hyphenate words at the end of a line.

Test your writing by reading aloud that which you have written or having someone else read it aloud. It should sound like they are saying it, not reading it!

THE "MECHANICS" OF A GOOD ARTICLE

1. Use 8 1/2" x 11" white, unlined paper.
2. Write only on one side of the paper.
3. Put two or three words that will identify your story, i.e., "The Gardeners of America"
4. In the upper right hand corner of the first page, put **your name, your address, telephone number, and date** story is written.
5. In the upper left hand corner, give release date of article.
6. Start writing your story about one-fourth to one-third of the way down from the top of the page.
7. **Type** your news article.
8. Only double spaced articles are acceptable. Some may require triple spacing.
9. Hold paragraphs to eight or ten lines.
10. Do not carry your sentences from one page to another. Try not to carry paragraphs, but if it does continue to another page make sure there are at least two lines on each page.
11. When story is ended, mark below the last line ### or -30-
12. If you take the article to the newsroom in person, fold it in half, top to bottom, writing on the outside. If the story is mailed, fold in thirds, bottom to top. Use a number 10 envelope.

WHEN TO DELIVER THE ARTICLE TO THE NEWS MEDIA

When you first visit with the editor, determine the deadline that they have set for the newspaper. This is also true with the radio or TV news director. The time of day the story is delivered can also make a difference . . . and this again can be determined on your first visit. Some editors also request a telephone call before.

PICTURES

Always indicate what is being exhibited in the pictures. Give the name of persons in the small group reading left to right, first row (back), second row, etc. Always give credit to the person taking the picture.

1. Black and white pictures are preferred! **The Gardener** will take colored prints but prefers good, glossy black and white.
2. The print should be as large as possible.
3. Three or four people make a good group, unless a larger group is a must.
4. Keep the background as plain as possible.
5. The picture should say something. Show an activity!
6. Focus attention on one thing.
7. The caption of a picture should be written or typed on a sheet of paper, pasted or taped to the bottom of the picture, or on the back of it. Never write on the back of the picture, it may show in the picture during the printing process.
8. It is best to have the picture to the editor the day after the event.

Good luck! And good writing!

You might want to keep a scrapbook of your published stories. It would be a welcome addition to the club historical records, and a wonderful guide to the person who succeeds you.

Additional suggested reading:

"Helps for Organization Publicity Chairman" by Wilbur Peterson.