

Society AGMs & Visits: As your District Director, I've had the pleasure of visiting several Society AGMs to install their boards this year, Dutton-Dunwich, Tillsonburg, London, London-Fanshawe, and Strathroy-Caradoc; and am a member of 6 of our Societies. I've also helped a number of Societies navigate the changes to their Constitution and Bylaws to comply with ONCA (Ontario Non-Profit Corporations Act). Issues come up all the time, reach out to me if your Society needs some guidance. Please invite the District board to your events, we'd love to come.

Elections: I've been informed that some of our Society elections have been improperly held. If your board is not elected properly, every Officer & Director holds the position illegally. As such, they may not be a legal signing authority on your bank account. It's important to follow the proper procedures. Sheets are on the side table on how to hold elections.

Youth: Only 2 Societies in our District have youth groups. If yours isn't one of them, please consider starting one. Children love to plant seeds and dig in the dirt, let's nurture that and get them interested in gardening! The youth of today are the gardeners - and members - of tomorrow.

- All youth group leaders working with children need to have a **Vulnerable Sector Police Check** done annually. No exceptions. It's for the protection of your youth, your youth leaders, your Society and the OHA. Child predators are everywhere, and you don't want to inadvertently give them access to your kids. If a youth leader refuses to get a police check, you don't want that person anywhere near your children! Protect your kids!!
- The police check certification numbers for each youth leader must be recorded on the Annual Reports to OHA.

Awards: District 10 Societies are missing out on many of the awards that the OHA are offering. It's free money, check out what your Society may want to apply for and follow the criteria.

Scammers: are getting smarter and sneakier. For example, they've been contacting people who have logins to GardenOntario.org, telling them their login has expired and they need to create a new one. FYI: GardenOntario logins do not expire. Spam emails look like it's coming from someone you know. CHECK the email carefully, it may look to be close, but something will be not quite right. Spelling mistakes is another clue. Delete the email, and delete them permanently out of your trash. NEVER reply, or you'll be the next victim. If you think it may be legit, contact the person directly and ask them.

District 10 Annual Meeting 2024 – On April 27, Woodstock Horticultural Society hosted the District 10's Annual Meeting. It was an amazing day! 146 people from across all 20 Societies were in attendance. The theme was "**New Growth From Old Roots**". Flower Show had 78 exhibits in the Horticultural Division, 36 in the Design Division, 19 in Photography, and 12 Special Exhibits. Darren Heimbecker, from Whistling Gardens, gave an interesting presentation on Peonies. Rose Odell, OHA Former President and Master Gardener, created lovely floral designs and shared some valuable tips. **To Woodstock Society, thank you! Well done!**

The District's Fall Executive Workshop 2024 was hosted by West Lorne Horticultural Society on Oct 26, 2024; with 19 Societies represented and 63 attendees. Vicki Simkovic, from the Ontario Invasive Plants Council (OIPC), gave a virtual presentation on **Promoting Invasive-Free Gardening in Ontario**. Vicki gave us permission to share her presentation with our Societies: [GMI District 10 Fall Executive Workshop October 26th 2024](#) For a networking exercise, the attendees were divided into small groups. Each group was given 10 discussion prompts on how their Society operated, ie: fundraising, how they handle different situations that arise in a Society, youth ideas, etc. This collaborative exercise was very well received with lots of innovative ideas being shared. Societies were asked to create and bring a table arrangement, the criteria was "Eerie and Elegant", and several were donated as door prizes. **It was an interesting and fun day, thank you to West Lorne Society! You did a great job!**

Schedules: The District AM hosting is based on a rotating schedule among the Societies, and the Workshop hosting is on a volunteer basis. In 2025, the Annual Meeting will be hosted by Stratford on April 26, and the Workshop by Strathroy-Caradoc on October 26. In 2026, the AGM will be hosted by St. Thomas Hort Society. If you're not sure of when your Society will be hosting, check the AGM Hosting schedule. We're looking to have a volunteer Society to host the Workshop in 2026.

Finances: I am sad to inform you that a discrepancy was discovered in our bank statement in December 2024. The District board have been following the guidance of the OHA, and the Elgin OPP have been fully apprised of the situation. As this is an active police investigation, I am not at liberty to share more. The District will be completely transparent once the investigation has been concluded.

Society Fees: 19 Societies have now submitted their 2024 Society fees to the District. Four were made in early 2025 and will show on the financial statement for next year. Thank you! Invoices for 2025 will be sent out in June @\$1 per member. To pay your fees: by etransfer to District10eft@gmail.com include "Your Society name's 2025 Annual Fees" in the message area. Cheques to be made payable to **District 10 Thames Valley**, put "Your Society Name 2025 Annual Fees" in the descriptor line. Details of where to mail it will be on the invoice.

SAVE THE DATE! The 2025 OHA Annual Meeting will be held on Saturday, July 19, 2025. It will be a virtual meeting, using WebEx (similar to Zoom, so any member of your Society will be able to participate using a computer, tablet, or smartphone). It's imperative that we have a quorum of Societies attend this meeting, so please join in. Designate who will be your voting attendees, or fill out the proxy form. Let your voices be heard! [2025 Annual General Meeting » GardenOntario](#).

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce Schlegel
District 10 Director