



STEP UP
with GCA Conservation and NAL Committees
2016-2017

Introducing Step Up

Climate change is one of the issues that will define the 21st century, and how we address this issue will historically define us. Our actions today will impact future generations in the centuries to come.

This year we are asking GCA Club Members to Step Up to climate change. Even the smallest steps can have an impact on the future habitability of the planet. We are asking you to help educate and activate your club members to respond to the changes in the environment.

Climate change covers many issues. As gardeners we need to learn about how climate change will affect plants and their pollinators, growing zones, water quality, soil erosion and local weather. As citizens, parents and grandparents we will want to explore what climate change will mean to our food supply, the economy, national security and human health.

What Can We Do? Small Steps and Big Steps

We can take small Steps acting individually as a member of a GCA club, or we can take bigger Steps when we inspire our clubs to collective action. Drawing from our clubs and other likeminded organizations, the GCA Conservation and NAL Committees have gathered a range of Steps that we hope will prompt you to participate. It is up to each club to find a Step that connects with their members' interests and community needs. Our Committees' Zone Representatives and Vice Chairmen are eager to provide support.

Please Step Up and then share your stories on the Conservation Showcase. This is an opportunity for us to learn from each other and to share in the 'advantages of association by means of educational meetings, conferences, correspondence and publications, and to restore, improve and protect the quality of the environment through educational programs and action...', a guiding principle of our GCA mission.

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STEP UP WITH YOUR CLUB



Hold a Green Meeting

- Plan a general club meeting with every utensil, plate, and napkin being reusable, compostable or biodegradable.
- Use recycled materials for decorations.
- Carpool.
- Provide organic food. Have members bring their own coffee cups.

There are many Zero Waste event guides available on the internet.



Assess Your Carbon Footprint

Have a presentation, which can be done in a few minutes, and teach each member to calculate his or her own footprint. Ask members to participate. Then calculate your club total and average.

<https://www3.epa.gov/carbon-footprint-calculator/>

<http://www.nature.org/greenliving/carboncalculator/>



Step Up with Another GCA Committee

Pair up with Flower Show, Horticulture, Photography, Awards or Civic Projects Committee.

With the Flower Show Committee

- Plan a Flower Show Educational or Conservation Exhibit.
- Plan an exhibit and find a school or local museum to send it to after the show.
- Consider designing a competitive class.

See who had already stepped up:

<https://www.gcamerica.org/index.cfm/members/showcases/details?id=428>

<https://www.gcamerica.org/index.cfm/members/showcases/details?id=414>

With the Horticulture Committee

- Research the history of your regional hardiness zone.
- Promote local rain gardens and pollinator gardens.
- Hold a “How to Compost” workshop.
- Become a Citizen Scientist and start a Phenology Project. Phenology is the study of cyclic and seasonal natural phenomena, especially in relation to climate and plant and animal life.
- Focus on local nurseries. Are they promoting native plants? Are they aware of suppliers using neonicotinoids which are harmful to pollinators? Do they sell fossil-fuel based pesticides and herbicides? Do they sell organic fertilizers? Discuss how climate change relates to using these products.
- Distribute a recommended local nursery list and promote healthy growers.
- Ask a nursery to conduct a native plant workshop.
- For more ideas: <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/citscitoolkit/climatechange/projects/find/projects-climate-change>

With the Photography Committee

- Host a film night.
- Tour and photograph a beautiful pollinator garden or park. Identify the pollinators from the photos.
- Co-sponsor a program on photographers who are helping to visualize climate change issues, for example:

<http://www.chrisjordan.com/gallery/rtn/#silent-spring>

<http://conservationmagazine.org/2014/01/art-makes-environmental-change-real/>

With the **Awards Committee**, find a worthy recipient in your club or community for the Conservation and Civic Improvement Awards and Commendations. Talk to your Awards Committee Zone Representative.



Step Up with Another GCA Club



Plan a Field Trip

Explore something locally and follow up about what was learned and how your members changed their behavior.

- Where is your watershed, or a local estuary or wetland? Bike, boat, or hike to view it.
- Where does your water come from? Visit a water treatment plant.
- Where does your garbage go? Visit your waste and recycling plant.
- How is methane captured and used to produce energy? Find examples of methane capture for energy use at recycling centers, farms, or processing plants.
- Where can you buy native plants? Visit nurseries and botanical gardens.



Partner with a Park

- Join the efforts of a neighborhood association or local tree planting group.
- Start a Partners for Plants project: <https://www.gcamerica.org/index.cfm/members/partners-for-plants>
- Volunteer:

<https://www.volunteer.gov/>

<https://www.nps.gov/getinvolved/volunteer.gov/>



Hold a Mini-NAL Meeting

Select a GCA Position Paper topic, schedule speakers or a panel: <https://www.gcamerica.org/index.cfm/members/publications/details/id/27>

See who has already stepped up:

<https://www.gcamerica.org/index.cfm/members/showcases/details?id=461>



Discuss a Book

Read a book to explore an area of interest. Suggestions are:

The Invention of Nature by Andrea Wulf

Vegetable Literacy by Deborah Madison

The Sixth Extinction by Elizabeth Kolbert

The Ripple Effect by Alex Prud'Homme

The Soil will Save Us by Kristin Ohlson

Here is a list: <https://www.gcamerica.org/index.cfm/members/main.getprotectedfile?contentpageresource/consnalbooks&videos.pdf>



Feature a Movie Night

A favorite has been *Chasing Ice*, <https://itunes.apple.com/us/movie/chasing-ice/id635631576>

Here is a terrific media guide posted on the Program Committee page under “low cost and no cost programs”:

<https://www.gcamerica.org/index.cfm/members/main.getprotectedfile?contentpageresource/Media%20Guide%20-%20rev%202.2016.pdf>



Plan a Luncheon or Evening Event for Club Members and Guests

- Ask a member in your club or community who has installed solar panels or built a LEED certified home to speak to your club about the process and results.
- Invite an architect or city planner to talk about city planning issues in your town...transportation, parking lots, pedestrian zones, bike paths, or community recycling.
- Have a viewing of the film *Chasing Ice* or choose from the fantastic Media Guide from the Program Committee: <https://www.gcamerica.org/index.cfm/members/main.getprotectedfile?contentpageresource/Media%20Guide%20-%20rev%202.2016.pdf>
- Promote vegetarian food, provide recipes, invite a chef or have a cooking class.



STEP UP WITH YOUR COMMUNITY



Involvement with a Work Project

Partners for Plants is perfect for this.

See who has already stepped up:

<https://www.gcamerica.org/index.cfm/members/showcases/details?id=316>

<https://www.gcamerica.org/index.cfm/members/showcases/details?id=373>



Promote Healthy Food

- Promote buying locally and get involved with a farmers market.
- Visit a local organic grower.
- Study and promote reducing food waste.
- Host a speaker on building your own vegetable garden.
- Investigate how reducing meat consumption affects our environment.



Partner with Another Organization

Many regional and national organizations have programs, speakers and strategies to address climate change.

Visit them and ask what ideas and resources they can share with you.

Suggestions: National Parks Conservation Association, Audubon, Nature Conservancy

See who has already stepped up:

<https://www.gcamerica.org/index.cfm/members/showcases/details?id=419>

<https://www.gcamerica.org/index.cfm/members/showcases/details?id=388>

<https://www.gcamerica.org/index.cfm/members/showcases/details?id=377>

<https://www.gcamerica.org/index.cfm/members/showcases/details?id=361>



Step Up with Local Government

Investigate: How Green is Our Town?

- Meet with your town administrator and ask if he or she has any projects in mind that would reduce energy that you could help research or facilitate. Other areas of focus: land use and planning, green buildings, transportation, water and green infrastructure. Here is an excellent reference: <http://www.sustainablecitiesinstitute.org>
- Is there a local farmers' market or community garden? Do they use native plantings? Where can more trees be planted?
- Discuss Net Metering Laws, selling back renewable electricity to a utility, in your state.
- Discuss local and state positions on renewable energy. Investigate if your state has a renewable portfolio standard and if not, why not?
- Discuss and promote solar renewable energy in your region.



Work with a School or Youth Group

See who has already stepped up:

<https://www.gcamerica.org/index.cfm/members/showcases/details?id=253>

<https://www.gcamerica.org/index.cfm/members/showcases/details?id=453>

<https://www.gcamerica.org/index.cfm/members/showcases/details?id=359>



Educate the Community with a Symposium

Host a day with local water authorities, the local forester, green building designers and suppliers, or organic gardeners and nurseries. Consider hosting a Fuel Efficient Car Show, see bedford2020.org

See who has already stepped up:

<https://www.gcamerica.org/index.cfm/members/showcases/details?id=460>

<https://www.gcamerica.org/index.cfm/members/showcases/details?id=457>

This organization was created as a result of a one day summit hosted by two GCA clubs: www.beford2020.org



Learn About Legislation That Relates to Your Region



STEP UP AT HOME

Shop locally and buy organic products.

Turn off the lights which should no longer be using incandescent bulbs.

Educate yourself about ingredients in household products and cosmetics: www.EWG.org.

Put the shopping bags back in your car so you have them when you need them.

Unplug chargers when not in use.

Pedal, walk, and consider purchasing an electric or hybrid vehicle.

STEP UP IN THE GARDEN

Study your natural environment.

Take a step back, and think about the health of your garden.

Enrich your soil and mulch.

Plan a goal with at least 20% percent of plants to be natives and pollinator plants.

Use organic products and shop at local nurseries.

Plant more vegetables, herbs, fruit, and trees.