



Michigan Garden Club Annual Conference  
"Gardening The Great Escape"  
June 8-9, 2022  
Crowne Plaza Hotel, Lansing, MI

**WRAP UP OF  
PROGRAM SPEAKERS  
PROGRAM PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS  
PROGRAM BOOKS**

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## Introduction

At the first meeting several decisions need to be made and these decisions will follow through for the full planning process.

Hopefully, all the evaluations from the previous conference have been tallied and broken out by Question and Response (4: Strongly Agree to 0: No Opinion). All Comments about what was particularly liked about the conference are broken out. Suggestions to consider in the future and Recommended topics and Speakers for future Conferences. All this information needs to be discussed before making up Conference Program.

Key into the comments on "I especially liked and suggestions for improvement". If you get 100 people saying the Food needs to be improved...listen to them because that's important. If people don't like the food they are less likely to pay a higher registration fee for another so, continental breakfast and buffet, However, if the food can fit the Theme somehow, and is created just for your conference...what a bonus and something to promote!

Once this discussion is had it is time to begin.

**(1) *Creating a Theme:*** The Theme becomes your mission statement.

When the Conference logo is created, does it illustrate the Theme, is it clean and simple to work with. As an example, the logo created for 2022 conference has 2 bees for District 2B, a Gate to invite people to Escape through. Include the Date(s), Place and City, State.

**(2) *Determining the Budget for Speakers:*** Check previous year's budget. Get information from your Conference Treasurer about their analysis of the previous year's budget and are there areas that can be improved, i.e., too much budgeted on Speaker Fees or not enough budget for Speaker Expenses.

**(3) *Diversity of Interests and Importance:*** Is it time to deeper into subjects. Have Pollinators been discussed in various ways in prior conferences, but there might still be more indepth topics to cover. Maybe is the time to bring in protection of Michigan's waterways and lakes. Just something to think about.

**(4) *2022 Conference had 4 1-hour sessions:*** that were accredited by the Master Gardeners Office. An agenda of the program was sent to the Master Gardeners Director to find approval for how many credits could be recorded by Master Gardeners.

**(5) Communication with Speakers:** Work backwards from your Conference Date.

- a. Six months before Conference have contracts signed and returned
- b. Send out letters of inquiry 3 months prior to contracts. This will let you know who is available/not available. Expectations of fees, etc. Remember the first of June is a very, very busy time for gardeners and getting speakers may often difficult.
- c. Stay in touch with your speakers.
- d. Many times, speakers also would like to be vendors. Don't forget to ask.

**(6) Know your Facility and seating capacities:** this was something that 2022 totally forgot about. We did not know what to plan for because of Covid. For example, the Wednesday Evening "Cocktails in the Garden" event it was anticipated that only maybe 40 people would show up. However, we had 125 people attend. This was due to a couple of things.

- a. **Promotion of the Event:** No written materials were ever sent out to the members concerning the conference. Everything was done by email and Constant Contact. Once promotional ads were created and sent out about every 7-10 days registration started picking up after each mailing.
- b. **Adding the Invitation to Bring a Guest:** The event was a perfect way for a member to introduce a friend to the joy of being an MGC member.

Fortunately, the event was held at a venue where if plans changed, they were able to accommodate us. We went from 40 anticipated to 125 attendees. We planned on a beautiful summer evening and got 6 hours of continuous rain. Without missing a beat we went from outdoors to an indoor auditorium.

- c. **That was Wednesday evening event:** The Thursday all-day conference was another thing. We had selected a facility that could handle our hoped for 150-200 attendees.
  - i. **Panic set in:** We had set our Registration deadline for May 16. By May 9<sup>th</sup> we only had 62 registrations. We would be paying for 150 showing up one way or another. So, we sent out an Extended Deadline to May 23<sup>rd</sup> promotion. Registrations started coming in. We received 172 and had to close the Conference before the May 23<sup>rd</sup> deadline as we couldn't handle any more.

A meeting with the conference facility was made immediately to let them know what we had and how can we up all of our requests. This allowed them to have enough staff and food, etc. on hand.

- ii. Breakout Session:* We had 6 breakout sessions. The Ballroom was to be broken down into 3 rooms with X number of tables in each section holding X number of participants. We wound up with 1 speaker getting 86 attendees and other speaker getting 38 and the 3<sup>rd</sup> speaker getting 40. If we had set limits on the breakouts all 3 breakouts would have been better disbursed. As it was we had to have theater seating put in the largest attended event. The same was true for the second set of Breakout sessions. The numbers were 62, 26 and 66.

Here again, working with the Conference facility is important.

### **Forms and Letter Used for Speakers:**

All the Letters and Forms are located in the 2022 Speaker Folder on Sharepoint.

The Treasure will have so much information that will need to be watched carefully. This pertains especially to when to indicated filled breakouts and you've reached the conference capacity.

## **CONFERENCE PROGRAM BOOK**

As the sole designer/content provider for the 2022 Conference Book, I will put forth my experience. Fortunately, I had an excellent Advertising Director.

**Get Help:** A Conference Program Book Committee needs to be created with 1) Chair, 2) Advertising Director, and 3) Editor. The 3 of you need to meet on a regular basis. The Chair will do the input of copy. Just because you are inputting copy does not mean you are reading copy! This comes from an old dissertation typist. Work out with your Advertising Director and Editor how you would like to set up the Program book. Do you want to put the ads interspersed throughout the book or at the end. Do you want to have articles in the book that go along with your theme. Is this an Installation Program Book, how much copy has to be included or can it be put on to the internet? This saves printing costs, but it also makes for easier use to the reader.

The Editor will be in charge of proof reading, making sure that all email requests are entered, layout is consistent to pre-planned design, checking to make sure addresses, phones, maps, all and especially names are correctly spelled. All the details that can easily slip by.

The Advertising Director will be in charge of all the ads being sent in from the various clubs in the District. The ads can be from the Club itself or solicited from vendors in the area or state. The director will be responsible for getting the contract and payment from the advertiser and filing the forms in the Sharepoint file. Here again, the Editor is to proof the ads and double check the phones, addresses, websites, etc.

Once your content and design decisions are put together, get an estimate of your page size, and page count and take it to 3 printers for costs. I had asked for prices for 150 and 200 books. In the end I got 25 extra books.

**Set a Time Frame:**

Set dates for when the Ads have to be in,  
When the ads need to be to the Chair and  
When the Editor needs to get proofs back to the Chair to prepare for the Printer.  
Aim to have the complete book back from the printer a week before the Conference or whenever the committee who is stuffing the goodie bags needs to have them.  
TIMING IS EVERYTHING! (Although, I gave myself a couple of extra days on each end of deadlines because...somebody will have a problem, and because nice matters especially under stress.)

**Conference Agendas:**

This is a question to be determined near the end of the time period. Conference Agendas can change at the last minute and you may want to not include it in the book but put it into a separate handout with the last minute updates. We were fortunate in that we only had one switch in Breakout session rooms (but covered by putting Breakout sessions on the back of the name tags). All things can be worked around.

**LAST REMARKS**

Always remember to send Thank yous to Speakers,  
Always ask if you can reproduce presentations on the website for after the conference  
Get evaluations from Speakers to rate your performance  
Timely correspondence  
Facilities  
Payments  
Suggestions for Improvement