



*Celebrate!*  
*National Garden Week*

*June 6-12, 2010*

*Montana Federation of  
Garden Clubs  
[www.mtfgc.org](http://www.mtfgc.org)*

*The World Around Us  
Love It - Beautify It - Protect It*

*National Garden Clubs, Inc.  
"A Force for Good"*

## National Garden Week Originated in Montana

National Garden Week was first celebrated nationally in 1923. The idea of a national garden week was thought of by many in earlier years, but in every earlier case the idea was promoted by companies who hoped the event would increase sales. Nevertheless, wisdom and altruism prevailed when Alma Margaret Higgins, who had no commercial motive, with the four most influential leaders of Woman's Clubs and Garden Clubs in Butte, Montana, boldly persuaded President Warren Harding to sign the proclamation dedicating the first full week in June to be National Garden Week.



Alma Higgins was credited with beginning National Garden Week as a result of her efforts to beautify Butte in the 1920's



National Garden Week was a major event in Butte from the 1920's though the early '60's

Higgins was a Deer Lodge, Montana native. She moved to Butte in late October of 1920. At this time Butte still had a reputation of not being able to grow a single blade of grass as a result of extensive soil, water, and air pollution from mineral processing and smelting in Butte. Higgins sought to reverse that perception. One of her ideas was to have a Garden Week in Butte to promote city beautification. That effort took off in 1922 with Alma organizing a large array of window displays in the business district that showed examples of fine gardens in Butte. Those gardens had been cultivated a few years after the deadly mineral processing had been moved to Anaconda in 1893. Higgins further promoted her Garden Week with newspaper articles and radio addresses.

Higgins would eventually be recognized as Montana's premier pioneer gardener. She was responsible for giving Montana its State Tree, the Ponderosa Pine, planting the White House living Christmas tree, promoting forest conservation at a time when conservation was largely considered a frivolous idea, and she was partly responsible for establishing the School of Forestry at the University of Montana. Also, she established and maintained many exceptional gardens in and near Butte.

A one hour documentary on this exceptional woman will be presented at the 2010 Montana Federation of Garden Clubs' Convention to be held in Butte, a city with an incomparable history.



Higgins (far right) worked with the most influential garden club and woman's club leaders in Butte to begin a Garden Week in Butte in 1922. The next year these women persuaded President Harding to make Butte's example a national event



Mrs. Warder Irwin (Alma Margaret) Higgins in 1923, the year she initiated National Garden Week through a presidential proclamation.



One of the many garden window displays that appeared in Butte businesses. Here were photos of some of Higgins' flower designs and her educational branch exhibits.