**Press Release**

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***CONTACT: Susan Smathers, President***

Late Bloomers Garden Club of Jacksonville
904-382-3110

Fljrmiss71@gmail.com

**CARLTON WARD, Jr. AWARDED HONORARY MEMBERSHIP IN THE GARDEN CLUB OF AMERICA**

[**Carlton Ward, Jr.**](https://carltonward.com/), conservationist, award-winning photographer and film-maker, is one of seven distinguished persons who have been awarded an honorary membership by the [Garden Club of America](https://www.gcamerica.org/) for 2022.

State, national and international conservation and environmental advocates rallied to Carlton Ward’s nomination by Jacksonville’s [Late Bloomers Garden Club](http://www.latebloomersjax.org), including the National Geographic Society, The Nature Conservancy of Florida and the International League of Conservation Photographers.

Acknowledging last spring’s remarkable legislative outcome, wherein the state legislature unanimously passed the Florida Wildlife Corridor Act, Alex Moen, of National Geographic, said the law “secures conservation for the iconic Florida panther and for wildlife writ large, creating the framework for a lasting conservation legacy”.

Temperince Morgan, of The Nature Conservancy of Florida went further, in saying, “Carlton played a pivotal role in helping bring back from the brink, a nearly extinct species in the Eastern United States”.

The GCA noted, “An eighth-generation Floridian descended from a pioneer ranching family, Mr. Ward’s work on PBS and in [*National Geographic*](https://www.nationalgeographic.org/find-explorers/carlton-ward-jr)*, Smithsonian* and *Nature Conservancy* magazines helped galvanize the state’s farmers, ranchers, environmental groups and coastal communities to become part of an environmental solution, connecting nearly 8 million acres to protect biodiversity and wildlife corridors in Florida’s heartland”.

Susan Smathers, president of Late Bloomers Garden Club in Jacksonville,said “Carlton Ward, Jr., is Florida’s 21st century successor to Marjorie Stoneman Douglas. What Douglas did with her pen, leading to the establishment of Everglades National Park, Ward has done with his camera, leading the crusade to establish the [Florida Wildlife Corridor](https://floridawildlifecorridor.org/), which will be critical to Florida’s environment and wildlife for centuries to come”.

Smathers also noted that in the 105 years since the GCA began awarding Honorary Memberships, only 6 Floridians have been so honored. One of the earliest honorees was Ninah Cummer, who not only masterminded the creation of her family’s Riverside Avenue gardens (still in existence at the Cummer

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Museum of Art & Gardens) but also focused on establishing city parks, including Memorial Park, for public access to garden environments.

Founded in 1913, the GCA is a nonprofit national organization recognized for its leadership in horticulture, conservation, creative arts, historic preservation, and environmental protection. Its mission is to bring its 200 member clubs together to cultivate a bond among people, plants, and the environment. The GCA member clubs consist of almost 18,000 club members who devote energy and expertise to projects in their communities and across the United States.

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**About Late Bloomers Garden Club**:
[Late Bloomers Garden Club](https://latebloomersjax.org/)**,** founded in 1990, is a member of [The Garden Club of America](http://www.gcamerica.org/), and [Garden Club of Jacksonville](https://www.gardenclubjax.org/) and contributes to the community through its civic projects and grants.