

# Our Flower and Our Colors

## The Lily of the Valley and Continental Blue and Buff

We all know that the official NJSFWC flower is the lily of the valley, and the official colors are Continental blue and buff.

But how were they chosen?

In November 1894, Margaret Tufts Yardley, a member of the Woman's Club of Orange, the oldest club in New Jersey, invited women from all 35 New Jersey clubs to meet for "acquaintance and mutual helpfulness." At Union Hall in Orange, 150 clubwomen gathered and created the New Jersey State Federation of Women's Clubs.



Lily of the Valley  
(*Convallaria majalis*)

Mrs. Yardley wanted the Lily of the Valley to be the Federation flower. Its fragrant white blooms are often associated with traditional feminine values such as love, motherhood, and purity. Although Christian legend said its flowers formed from

Eve's tears as she left Eden, to Victorians the bloom signaled the arrival of spring and meant "return to happiness." However, a few clubs suggested other flowers, so it was decided to hold a vote. In May the winner was announced: Lily of the Valley, 29 to 6.



The Order of the Lily  
recognizes Honor  
Roll members for  
continued service.

Bowls of Lily of the Valley are often displayed at Federation events, but it's a flower best admired from a distance. Every single part of the innocent-looking Lily of the Valley is poisonous — the white blooms, the red berries, the stems, the leaves, and even the water in the vase!

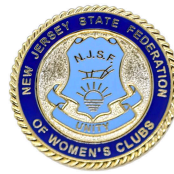
Mrs. Yardley and the Federation's nine-member board began meeting monthly at her home. They planned their first convention, to be held in Newark in October 1895. The ladies wanted to sport a distinguishing badge at the convention, so Mrs. Brooks of the Monday Afternoon Club of Passaic came up with a design based on the state coat of arms. A shield with a plough, a rising sun, the word Unity, and the letters NJSF, done on a pale blue enamel – cost not to exceed sixty cents – was accepted at the February meeting.

Next, Mrs. Yardley turned to choosing Federation colors. Everyone liked blue, but at the May meeting Mrs. Yardley, an active member of the Colonial Dames of America and the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), persuaded them to adopt both blue and buff, the colors of George Washington's uniform. At the 1895 convention, they wore a buff ribbon with New Jersey printed in blue; the pin was ready by next year.

Washington, always aware of the importance of appropriate dress, had chosen his Continental Army colors thoughtfully.



The first NJSFWC pin.



The pin was modified in  
1914 to include  
Continental blue and buff.



George Washington's uniform,  
now at the Smithsonian.

Blue traditionally stands for loyalty. Buff is the light tan color of tough undyed buffalo leather, which for centuries soldiers wore as protection – a buffer against injury. And tan with dark blue was much safer to wear than the bright red uniforms of the British.

Martha Washington's grandson, George Custis, said Washington deliberately chose "the ancient Whig colors of England." The American revolutionaries were British until 1776, and they were Whigs, not Tories. Whigs opposed the abuses of the crown, supporting religious liberty, constitutional monarchy rather than the divine right of kings, representative government, the protection of property, and the rights of man.

Today, Continental Buff and Blue and the Lily of the Valley give NJSFWC two striking symbols. The beautiful but poisonous flower resembles a woman with all the feminine virtues and the strength to defend them. The colors stand for basic principles of human rights, tolerance and good government.

Together, Continental Buff and Blue with the Lily of the Valley remind clubwomen of the ideals of the NJSFWC.

### Margaret Tufts Yardley (1844-1928)

Margaret Tufts Yardley, the first President of NJSFWC, served from 1894-1896. Mrs. Yardley, who raised five children, was known for her pleasant smile, her skill in argument and her wide human sympathies. A lifelong philanthropist, she thought all women should help their less fortunate sisters. A member of the Board of Managers at the Columbia Exposition in Chicago in 1893, she won a gold medal for her two-volume collection of the works of 270 New Jersey women writers. She was also President of the Orange Orphans Society, helped to start the first homeopathic hospital of the Oranges, pioneered improvements to New Jersey child labor laws, and was a founder of the Essex County Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Mrs. Yardley remained active in civic work in East Orange well into her eighties. In 1929, the Margaret Yardley Fellowship Fund was established at the NJSFWC convention; it is still awarded today.



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