

Waltham Garden Club History 1941 - 2022



Yearbooks

History of the Waltham Garden Club

Waltham, Massachusetts

1941 – 2022

Introduction

In 2021, the Waltham Garden Club recognized the need to preserve its history. The club has been in existence for eighty years and now was the time to accomplish this task. Committee members looked at photographs, scrapbooks, newspaper clippings, and artifacts, and organized everything for easy access. Newspaper clippings from the Waltham News Tribune, the city's daily newspaper, chronicled much of our history.

This history is divided into decades that correlate to the scrapbooks and other available sources. The intent is to archive the history of the club, scrapbooks, photographs, and yearbooks at the Waltham Public Library.

The Waltham Garden Club has a lot of accomplishments to be proud of these last eight decades. Communication and technology have advanced and enabled the club to reinvent itself along the way. Moving forward, things will continually change, and the Waltham Garden Club will change with it.

Thanks to the men and women who established this organization, for they are true pathfinders, and we thank them for their vision and love of gardening.

People of Importance in the Early Years:

- Mrs. Conrad Jensen, co-founder and organizer for a few of the large Harvest and Flower Shows to support our troops. Lived at 35 Barbara Road.
- Mr. George Dickey, co-founder and organizer for a few of the large Harvest and Flower Shows to support our troops. Lived at 475 South Street.
- Dr. Irving Fraim, co-founder. Lived at 73 Clark Lane.
- Mrs. Leola Fraim - co-founder. Married to Irving Fraim. Lived at 73 Clark Lane.
- Mrs. Gertrude Sanderson - Lived at 111 Lincoln Street.
- Mrs. Stephen Casey - Casey Estate - Lived at 560 Lincoln Street.
- Mrs. Ronald Lyman - Lyman Estate – Lived at 185 Lyman Street.

Places of Importance in the Early Years:

- Lyman Estate – 185 Lyman Street - 37-acre parcel. Home of Theodore Lyman. He was the great-grandfather of Ronald Lyman.
- Gore Estate – 52 Gore Street - 45-acre parcel. Home of Christopher Gore, eighth Governor of Massachusetts, 1808-1810.
- Casey Estate – (Casey Estates Development now) - Lincoln Street - 40-acre parcel. Home of Mrs. Stephen Casey.
- Prospect Hill Park – 314 Totten Pond Road – 273 acres of trails and picnic areas.

The Beginnings

1941 - 1949

In November 1941, to promote gardening in the city, a group was formed. It was called the **Waltham Better Gardeners**, because there already was another group called Waltham Garden Club. The first official meeting of our club was held later in the month at the State College Field Station on Beaver Street (later renamed the University of Massachusetts-Waltham Field Station and as of March 2022 owned by Waltham). Mrs. Conrad Jensen and Mr. George Dickey helped coordinate these early sessions. They were both master gardeners and were well respected in the community.

Right from the very start these people were serious about the mission of the club. They wanted to impart knowledge to members so their own personal gardens would flourish. Many meetings were held at the Field Station, which was a primary location in the state for the study of agriculture and horticulture. On occasion, club meetings were held at the more centrally located Waltham Public Library, which provided greater access.

The first few meetings had presenters focused on topics such as the general care of plants, propagating plants and shrubs from cuttings, and the use of chemicals and fertilizers. The networking and caliber of presenters they had were from the State College Field Station, Massachusetts Horticultural Society, State Conservation Committee, and the Arnold Arboretum. Along with all these people, members themselves would often share the spotlight, hosting tours of their own

gardens, sharing their own expertise with others, as well as providing an incredible visual model of what can be done.

In 1943, the group changed its name to the **Waltham Better Gardens Club**. The late 1940's saw the club publishing its first yearbook, pamphlet sized and consisting of eight pages, including a title page, listing of officers and chairpersons, and upcoming programming.

Eventually the yearbooks listed club member names as well. A few of the early yearbooks' covers were hand decorated.

Highlights (1941-1949):

Victory Gardens

The federal government directed communities across the country to grow fresh vegetables and fruits to help feed the nation. Seeds were sold everywhere, and all homeowners were given instructions on how to have successful gardens. These were known as "Victory Gardens" and within two years they supplied over 40% of the needs of those living and working in the states. The reason the government asked for support was so much food was being sent overseas to feed the men and women actively engaged in the war effort.

Supporting the War Effort - Harvest and Flower Shows

Almost immediately after starting the club, they moved forward with a plan to host a flower show. Mrs. Conrad Jensen and Mr. George Dickey were designated Co-Chairs for the First Civic Flower Show. It was held at North Junior High School (Waltham City Hall Annex) in the fall of 1942. In addition, Mr. Albert Gray, head of the Waltham USO Citizens' Committee

became instrumental in spearheading the cause as well. These individuals maximized the potential of club members and galvanized Waltham citizens. This was a monumental undertaking and they delivered tenfold.

The show format was an exhibition. Long tables were set up in the auditorium for people to walk alongside. The stage became a menagerie of greens from floor to ceiling. All entries were exhibited by category and were judged accordingly with prizes awarded for first place, second place, third place, and award of merit.

The club worked with the city's Victory Garden Committee, which proved to be quite beneficial, as collectively they organized the first large scale flower and garden show the city had ever had. The show was renamed Victory Harvest and Flower Show. The co-chairs remained the same and the profits went to the Waltham Community Fund War Relief Agencies. The exhibit site was moved to the Hovey Memorial Institute on 545 Main Street, not too far from Waltham City Hall. Greater emphasis was now placed on gardens and canning produce over flowers.

An editorial appeared in the Waltham News Tribune leading up to the event saying: *"The show next Monday should be visited by every resident, young and old. It will serve as an excellent preparatory lesson for new year's gardening efforts. And everyone who has successfully cultivated a Victory Garden this year should feel duty bound to place an exhibit in the show, which is a worthwhile effort on the part of the Better Gardens Club to promote home gardening in Waltham."*

In 1943, the second show had 2,000 people enjoying the program. It was bigger and better. This truly showed the level of support for troops overseas and dedication to the cause of feeding Americans here at home. The large Victory Harvest and Flower Show continued for a few more years.

Home Front Advice

In 1944, the club began a joint venture with the Waltham News Tribune by authoring articles for weekly publication. The column was entitled *Home Front Advice by the Waltham Better Gardeners Club*. The statement below was issued announcing this new feature in the editorial section: *“The Waltham Better Gardeners will present a series of articles prepared by club members in the Waltham News Tribune weekly, starting Saturday. All articles are based on information given by qualified lecturers at club meetings or obtained from Instructive pamphlets distributed by the United States Department of Agriculture or the Massachusetts State College and the Massachusetts Horticultural Society. ... The Better Gardeners emphasize that a garden club is part of home defense and feel it is the duty of the club to devote its program to that end. They believe any information which can be given to promote successful food production and beautiful flowers and shrubs will make a healthier and happier home.”* The topics covered were widespread and informative as seen in clippings found in the early scrapbooks.

Reforestation at Prospect Hill Park

In 1945, the civic committee of the Waltham Better Gardens Club met at City Hall to discuss a reforestation project in the Worcester Pines section of Prospect Hill Park. In the past, the area had been hard hit by a few hurricanes that caused

significant damage. This project came under the jurisdiction of the State Conservation Department.

On a sunny afternoon in April 1945, 1,000 four-year-old trees were planted: 500 Norway spruce, 200 red pine and 300 white pine trees. The club was helped by Waltham's Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and the Boys' Club. The local paper published these kind words about the park: *"There is ample supporting evidence to the belief that Prospect Hill Park can become one of the finest outdoor recreation sites in eastern Massachusetts. Its natural terrain, many winding paths, and vantage points for looking over the large portion of the countryside are exceptional assets."*

Golden Gardening Years

1950 - 1959

With World War II ending and the world settling into peacetime, the club also transitioned its focus. It went from being an organization with the responsibility of helping support the war effort to being a place to go for pleasure and enjoyment. The club had similar programming and community outreach service projects but on a lesser scale.

The central focus remained gardening and members continued to hear experts lecture on various gardening topics. Meetings were still held at the University of Massachusetts Field Station during this time, and the faculty continued as knowledgeable presenters at club meetings.

The core members were a dynamic group who served the club well. They were Mrs. Conrad Jensen, Mr. George Dickey, Dr. Irving Fraim, Mrs. Leola Fraim, Mrs. Steven Casey, and Mrs. Gertrude Sanderson. They were civic minded and provided lots of opportunities and outreach for others. The emphasis remained on giving members sufficient background knowledge to be successful gardeners themselves. Not only did this group organize four large flower shows, but they also had seven flower exhibitions. These exhibitions were held at the Waltham Public Library, a central location for all. In addition, they landscaped the Murphy General Hospital and Metropolitan State Hospital (Trapelo Road). These government institutions were a part of the fabric of the city. The patients were very appreciative of the club's support.

Highlights (1950-1959):

Highway Beautification - Route 128

Route 128 opened in 1951 with a section running through Waltham. The club held a fundraiser to support the beautification of a section along the highway. Four of the oldest and most beautiful gardens and houses in the city were opened for tours to support this project. The club worked in conjunction with the State Public Works Department.

4-H Garden Club

George Erikson, an agent of the Middlesex County Extension Service at the Waltham Field Station, urged members of the Club to become leaders in giving the youth in the city the opportunity to do 4-H Club work in gardening. Any boy or girl in Grades 7-12 was eligible to participate and a program was initiated.

Flower Shows Blossom

During the 1950s, emphasis continued to be placed on doing floral arrangements, exhibitions, and flower shows. Mrs. Gertrude Sanderson graciously opened her home and gardens at 111 Lincoln Street. Club members decorated her house with Colonial floral arrangements and wore colonial costumes. The club also hosted a Flower Arrangement Display at the Lyman Estate, 185 Lyman Street, in conjunction with other local garden clubs from Wayland, Weston, Arlington, Lexington, and Newton. Over 400 guests were received by members dressed in period costumes.

Field Trips

Club members took a guided tour of Arnold Arboretum in Jamaica Plain where they viewed 5000 kinds of plants. Another excursion was to the downtown area in Hingham, MA, to view many storefronts with potted flowers galore, hanging flowers, and tubs of flowers lining the sidewalks. An additional outing was to the Gardens at Crane Estate at Castle Hill, which had beautifully landscaped gardens that were immaculately groomed. Other trips were made to Prospect Hill, Waltham, and Garden in the Woods, Framingham, in addition to lots of visits to one another's homes to share their knowledge.

Mrs. Casey, Mrs. Sanderson, and Dr. & Mrs. Fraim were often hosting garden tours of their backyards. In May 1951 and May 1952, members and the public enjoyed tours to their estates and home. A picture of the committee admiring Mrs. Fraim's garden appeared on the front page of the Waltham News Tribune.

Flower Power 1960 - 1969

The club continued providing quality programming for members. The cornerstone remained the monthly general meetings. During this time, different hands-on craft workshops were offered to members and invited guests. Topics began to evolve from the central theme of gardening to including workshops on flower arrangement too. A few members would be sponsored by the club to attend State Federation programs and classes on flower arranging. And in turn these members would share things they learned and put on a “mini workshop” at an upcoming meeting.

During this decade, the club celebrated two milestones, their 20th and 25th Anniversaries, in 1961 and 1966 respectively. Mrs. Evelyn Dickey prepared highlights of the club’s history and stated: *“The Waltham Better Gardens Club has a record to be proud of, its horticultural achievement, in contributing to charitable, civic and conservation projects. We have all shared in the club’s accomplishments and have made enduring friendships.”*

During this time, Mrs. Leola Frain achieved both local and national prominence as a well-known propagator of daylilies and daffodils. She was awarded the Governor John Volpe silver bowl for her daylily and daffodil entries in the Massachusetts State Flower Show and received mention in the Time-Life Gardening book series for her work. She also undertook an arduous flight to Japan and Honolulu to learn more on bonsai and tropical plants, which she shared with club members.

Highlights (1960-1969):

Flower Shows Continue to Thrive

The club hosted several flower shows during this time period, including an annual Christmas Open House at the Lyman Estate (“The Vale”). In preparation for the shows, flower workshops were given for the advanced arrangers and one for the less experienced arrangers. There were Flower Exhibitions held at the public library as well. Members began to compete at the different flower shows held in Boston and Worcester. It was a fun outlet for members to share their creative talents and learn from each other.

Here Comes the Judge(s)

Club members, Cathy Cannon and Peggy Hawes, became Nationally Accredited Flower Show Judges, which was quite an achievement. As Accredited Master Judges these two women judged some of the State Federated flower shows. Cathy and Peggy were artistically talented and dedicated to the enhancement of flowers for the enjoyment they bring to all.

Appreciating the Planet

1970 - 1979

During the seventies, the club continued to evolve, and the focus shifted to being concerned about the environment. For the first time ever, our country celebrated Earth Day on April 22, 1970. In July of that same year, the Environmental Protection Agency was established, which regulated and enforced legislation against pollution. The club became mindful and began doing their part to address environmental issues around the city.

The club began its tradition of planting flowers around the city for the enjoyment of all. Other projects included flower plantings at the new outdoor pool at the Gaebler Children's Center (Trapelo Road, demolished 2011) and planting and maintaining flower containers outside the main entrance to Waltham Hospital (Hope Ave). The tubs looked beautiful and were a comfort to many as they entered and left the building. This became a year-round project, which continued into the 21st century!

In addition, Garden Therapy was beginning to flourish. Club members would go to the Fuller Home (South St; demolished) and a few of the hospitals and engage men and women in simple gardening activities with flowers, plants, pots, and spades. Sometimes these activities would be outdoors as well. Gardening provides a sense of calmness and inner peace for many, which is why so many of us spend time in our yards raking, weeding, and planting. Club members were enabling these people to feel the same satisfaction.

In 1975-1976, the group's name was changed to the **Waltham Garden Club**, as it has been known since.

Highlights (1970-1979):

Club Library

Lorraine Harte and Marie Palmiotto began the club library, which started small but within a few short years had grown to over fifty books. Titles of available books to request were listed in yearbooks, and at meetings, the club librarian would bring a few books, say a few words, and members could take them home to read at their leisure. It became a tremendous resource and was well received.

Newsletter is Born

At the suggestion of former Club President Cathy Cannon, the club in 1973 began writing its own newsletter called "The Grapevine." It was a one-two page publication mailed home to all members on a monthly basis.

Arbor Day

On Arbor Day the club planted trees at various locations, including Gore Place, Linden Street triangle, North Branch Library, and under Mayor Clark's window at City Hall.

Trips to Flower Shows

The club no longer hosted flower shows but began attending as a group the Massachusetts Horticultural Society's spring flower shows in Boston. In later years other flower shows around New England were attended by members. An entire dreary winter day would be spent enjoying the scenes and scents of the tropical and lush displays at these shows!

Networking 1980 - 1989

The club became a social network as they hosted Potluck Suppers to encourage getting to know one another. Another night, a Springtime Stroll was held at Gore Place where members and guests toured the main walk and the formal gardens. The group was informed about the restoration projects taking place on the grounds. The club was an important outlet where people could socialize and cultivate friendships that lasted for years. Members enjoyed one another's company.

At one of the monthly meetings, the club had a once in a lifetime program, "Christmas at the White House" featuring Mrs. Dorothy Temple. She was the former Chief Floral Designer for the White House in Washington, D.C. Mrs. Temple held that position for four years during the Reagan years. Before her appointment, she had served under the Nixon, Ford, and Carter presidencies as a consultant. Upon her retirement, Mrs. Temple went around the country speaking to groups about her extraordinary career. She did a delightful presentation showing photos of the many celebratory functions she hosted at the White House.

It was during this time that the Waltham Garden Club expanded their horizons. Civic projects were still an incremental component to the role the club was taking in the city. Under the leadership of President Nancy Mullaney, the club pursued a more challenging project for Arbor Day. The club worked with the Waltham School Department and a local contractor, Roy MacDowell Jr., owner of the MacDowell Company. His company specialized in masonry landscape construction and

funded the project. Thus, ten White Spruce trees were planted on the edge of the Waltham High School parking lot, just as you get to the top of the hill in front of the school. These trees were planted to honor kindergarten students from the ten public and private elementary schools in the district. These kindergarteners would become the Class of 2000. These trees still stand today.

Highlights (1980-1989):

Waltham's Centennial Anniversary

The club worked with the City of Waltham in 1984 to commemorate this occasion and decided to hold a holiday exhibit, "Celebrate" at Waltham City Hall. The community was invited to pay a small admission fee and enjoy the holiday evergreens placed throughout the historic building. In addition, in the foyer the club held a craft fair for the public to explore and shop. Funds raised would be used to beautify a small parcel of land in the city. The club worked with the city on a few possible sites. People attending the show could select their top choice.

Civic Beautification Keeps Growing

Spearheaded by members Phyllis Miele, Jill Brackett-Steppe, and Louise Theriault, the club planted bulbs and perennials at the Paine Estate, Gore Place, Gore Street, and at Mt. Feake Cemetery, a tradition that continued for many years.

Flower Show

The club hosted a flower show "History Blooming at Home" with arrangements interpreting or representing Waltham's historic areas.

Notoriety

Mrs. Leola Fraim was recognized for her work by the American Hemerocallis Society with many awards, and in 1988 a variety of daylily was named in her honor. The 'Leola Fraim' daylily is cream yellow with lavender highlights. Petal edges are ruffled and fringed. The flower has been described as looking like a colossal daffodil. In 1986, a Hosta was named in her honor, which won the American Hosta Society's prestigious President's Exhibitor Trophy in 1992.

Gardening for Fun

In April, the club participated at the Sheepshearing Festival on the grounds of Gore Place, which started in 1987. Every year they would host an exhibit that was friendly and engaging. Community members could drop by and pick up free seeds for their gardens. At the suggestion of Phyllis Miele, activities for young children were included, such as planting sunflower seeds and coloring pictures.

Going Green 1990 - 1999

The Waltham Garden Club continued to be a welcoming community, as it had something for everyone. During this time one initiative that the club actively developed was a *Proposal for Civic Beautification of Neighborhood Playgrounds*. Club President Laura Cannon-Ordile and her committee laid the groundwork and got approval for the planting of tulips, daffodils, and narcissi at Cedarwood Playground. Plans were in place to do similar work at other playgrounds with maintenance done by club members.

Another project that members were encouraged to pursue was composting. At one of the general meetings using the guide, *Tips from Louise Theriault's Kitchen Composting*, people were encouraged to compost in their own yard, using a 3' by 4' area not near a water source or wetlands to deposit kitchen scraps, grass clippings, weeds, leaves, and spoiled crops, and then mix in a little dirt. Leave it for a year and then use it in your flower beds. At one point the City of Waltham offered composting bins to all its citizens.

Under the leadership of Club President, Lela Chiavaras, a "Green Guide" booklet was developed to inform citizens of Waltham of the many open spaces available for walks to connect with nature in the truest sense. In time the Waltham Land Trust, another environmentally concerned non-profit, was interested in working on this project alongside the Waltham Garden Club. Around this time members and the citizens became more aware of our responsibility to take care of our environment and protect our "green spaces" around the city.

Highlights (1990-1999):

Tea Parties

As part of the Waltham Historic Days, the Club began hosting an annual Tea Party at Gore Place. Club members created Federal and Victorian floral arrangements for all to enjoy. A wonderfully talented couple, the Laskos, would entertain and educate the membership and their guests to “Romance of the Tea,” “Romance of the Rose,” “Hats, Hats, Hats,” and “Wedding & Courtship Traditions,” to name just a few.

Plant Auctions

As a fundraising source, the club held a plant auction of member’s plants, rootings, saplings, and cuttings from their own gardens. The event was very well received and successfully raised funds for the club, with members vying for many coveted plants from the gardens of Lynn Lord, Phyllis Miele, and Ida Toro. This event continued for many years before being replaced by the club’s annual spring Plant Sale.

Annual Holiday Celebration

To assist with funding, the club hosted an annual Holiday Celebration at the city-owned Robert Treat Paine Estate (Stonehurst). Featuring regionally famous presenters and a delicious smorgasbord of savory treats, the event was a sell-out every time! Club members worked like mad elves decorating all the rooms of the estate and creating floral arrangements in line with the presenter’s theme.

The 21st Century 2000 - 2009

The new century saw the club embrace many new community focused initiatives, as well as a major internal one. The club became a favorite local TV feature on the Waltham Cable Access Channel 8 Barbara Peterson's "*Homes and Gardens Show*."

Administratively, the club added two new positions (2nd Vice President and 3rd Vice President) to the Executive Board. This allowed members to gain experience as they "moved up the ranks" to becoming club President. The inaugural group was Mary Gorman, Joyce Gianfelice, Alexis Shaw, and Noreen Cooke.

Leadership of the club's "Gardening for Fun" exhibit at the annual Gore Place Sheepshearing Festival was passed from Phyllis Miele to Kathy Montesanti. New features included a Flower Photo Opp (created by Kathy & her husband Frank) and a Potato Patch (initiated by Joyce Gianfelice, Carol Jefferies, and Cynthia Sin) for the little ones to enjoy, complete with mini rakes, shovels, wheelbarrows, mulch, and, of course, spuds!

Several new projects were so well received, they became ongoing events:

- **Holiday City Hall Decorating** - At a request from Waltham Mayor Jeannette McCarthy, club member Gail Drakos organized members to decorate Waltham City Hall for the annual tree lighting celebration. Members

created ornaments and put-up wreaths, garland, swags and trees everywhere, creating a holiday sparkle to put onlookers in a festive mood.

- **Library Gardens** - A wonderful partnership began when the club worked alongside the Waltham Public Library on a beautification project to landscape the front of the property with perennial gardens. Members Cathy Cannon, Lela Chiavaras, Esther Seeley, and John O'Toole were instrumental in planning and creating the gardens and window boxes that complement the Federalist period architecture of the building.
- **Extra Happenings** – President Mary Gorman came up with the idea for bus trips to distant areas of gardening interest. Some of the more memorable outings were a tour of the Rehoboth Winery, organized by Joyce Gianfelice; a luncheon at Pickity Place in Mason, New Hampshire, organized by Alexis Shaw; and best of all – a “Day in Provence” at the Stockbridge Lavender Farm, organized by Noreen Cooke.
- **Prom Centerpiece Workshops** - Member Nancy D'Ercole suggested we help the Senior Class at Waltham High School make centerpieces for their prom night. Courtney Ogg-Mancuso would host a workshop before the prom where club members and seniors would come together and assemble the centerpieces that Courtney designed. This is a wonderful intergenerational project that continues today.

- **Annual Plant Sale** - The brainchild of Noreen Cooke and Cathy Gallagher, the club established an annual spring Plant Sale to raise money for the club's Scholarship Fund. The plant sale featured plants and saplings from members' own gardens. A bake sale was suggested by Barbara Higgins, and she enlisted a few of the other great cooks in the club to make their specialties. Hungry consumers satisfied their sweet tooth with Barbara's brownies, Florence Mirabito's pistachio cannoli's, Barbara Burgess' blueberry cake, and Cathy Cannon's lavender shortbread cookies. And for years, Angie Emberley made sure all the goodies were individually packaged and decorative.
- **Memorial Garden at Bright School** - Former City Clerk, Russ Malone, approached club members about helping to spruce up the landscape at the former Bright School (now City of the Waltham Archives and Records Center on Grove Street). Cathy Gallagher and Noreen Cooke headed up a large group of dedicated volunteers, and the site was prepared for planting with many perennial plants and shrubs. A memorial marker was installed at the garden dedication, and club members maintain and enhance the garden on a yearly basis.

Highlights (2000-2009):

65th Anniversary Celebration

To commemorate the occasion, the club donated 65 "Leola Fraim" Hosta plants to the City of Waltham, which were named for a charter member of the club and is considered one of the

best white-edged Hostas. As part of the planting project, a lovely old fountain was uncovered at the corner of Main and Moody Streets on Waltham Common, where the Hostas were planted and have prospered ever since!

Historic Waltham Days Parade

In 2005 the club participated in the Historic Waltham Days parade, with a float - “Waltham Garden Club - Watch Us Grow.” Because of the exorbitant costs of floral materials, club President Alexis Shaw came up with the idea of club members “loaning” their plants to decorate the float. Also Courtney Ogg-Mancuso and Cathy Gallagher created a four-foot-tall Waltham Watch of fresh flowers for the float, which was so spectacular, it was requested to spend a few days at City Hall, the Chateau Restaurant, and the Waltham Museum.

Library Garden Tour

Once the local cable TV channel broadcast a tour of the library grounds, a lot of community interest was expressed, so as part of the 2004 Historic Waltham Days events, Alexis Shaw and Lela Chiavaras created a very popular, self-guided tour of the gardens, listing the location, Latin and Common Names for all the annuals, perennials, shrubs, and trees located on the grounds. It also won a Certificate of Merit – Publications from the Garden Club Federation of Massachusetts.

Library Display

The Waltham Public Library offered the club an opportunity to showcase their good works in one of the first-floor display cases. Every Spring the club comes up with an exciting and stimulating display for all the library patrons to enjoy.

Books in Bloom

Lela Chiavaras, Cathy Cannon, Noreen Cooke, Courtney Ogg-Mancuso, and Esther Seeley participated on the committee for this inaugural event at Waltham Public Library in 2005. Over 25 club members (including many past and present presidents) presented floral interpretations of their favorite books for the community to enjoy.

Museum of Fine Arts “Art in Bloom”

The club was privileged to participate in this event in 2000, 2001, and 2004. Courtney Ogg-Mancuso, Dorothy Jean Brown, and Erika Bourne represented the club with gorgeous floral arrangements to interpret art objects in the museum (silver centerpiece, stone tomb marker, and amphora).

100th Anniversary of the Forest Service Poster Contest

In 2005 the Department of Agriculture’s Forest Service and the National Garden Clubs Inc. hosted a poster contest for children to commemorate Smokey the Bear or Woodsy the Owl. There were over 500 entries from the children of Waltham! Judges were (then State Representative) Peter Koutoujian and well-known local realtor Angie Doucette-Coleman, who selected first grader Dayna Walsh as the winner. Dayna went on to place first in the state and in the New England region.

Growing Gardening

2010 - 2019

The club continued to define itself and offered programming that stimulated and engaged members, as well as supported civic and community obligations. Around 2010, the club created its first website, which was designed for members and the community to learn about the programs and happenings of the club. Information on how to join was made available. People could directly send correspondence to the Waltham Garden Club email account. This was an incredible communication tool for members and for community outreach. Laura Cooper coordinated this endeavor and still maintains our website.

President Nance D'Ercole spearheaded a project to develop new, more efficient templates for the annual yearbook and the monthly newsletter. It was also Nance's vision to find a more appealing and accessible location for monthly club meetings.

The club was approached by the Massachusetts Horticultural Society to participate in their annual Festival of Trees event. Members Cathy Gallagher and Noreen Cooke organized club members in decorating themed trees for this two-week long holiday program at the Garden at Elm Bank, which continues today.

Highlights (2010-2019):

70th Anniversary Celebration

Under the leadership of President Bernice King, a combined Holiday Demonstration and 70th Anniversary Celebration was held at the historic Robert Treat Paine Estate in 2011, featuring

Bill Graham, a well-known florist, demonstrating floral trends over the past seventy years.

Diamond Jubilee - Make and Take Mixer

The first event celebrating our 75th year in 2016 was a special evening mixer at the American Legion Hall. For the “make and take” part, members brought flowers from home to add to the greens and containers that were made available. It was truly a fun concept, and everyone left very pleased with their individualized arrangements.

75th Anniversary Celebration Tea

This anniversary tea was held in the Carriage House at Gore Place, where everyone enjoyed the delicious savories and sweets. Meg Muckenhoupt delighted members with a history of food in New England. The final fun aspect of the evening was to "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?" based on the table decorations. All the tables had glassware, plates, linens, and centerpieces uniquely designed as clues for the intended guest at each table.

State Library of Massachusetts - Capital Blooms

Club members Lela Chiavaras, Mary Kopsiaftis, and Alexis Shaw represented the club in 2012 with their floral interpretations of treasures from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Library collection (book bindings poster, Haitian Medal, and an original Audubon painting). Participants were acknowledged by the State Senate for their contributions and received personalized proclamations.

Books in Bloom Popular Again

Club members and people in the community were invited to select a book and create a flower arrangement that they felt would help to complement the story line. Books and flowers were displayed throughout the Waltham Public Library.

Waltham 135th Anniversary Parade

In 2019 the club worked collaboratively on a four-season theme - Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter - for our parade float. Four trellises were set up on a large flatbed truck and each decorated accordingly. About fifteen members rode on or escorted the float. The club received a trophy for Most Originality.

Museum of Fine Arts “Art in Bloom”

The club was again invited to participate in this prestigious event in 2015. Courtney Ogg-Mancuso and Joyce Gianfelice represented the club with their floral interpretation of a glass sculpture.

Vietnam Veterans Moving Wall

The Vietnam Veterans Moving Wall was showcased on the grounds of Gore Place in 2016. Over 5,000 visitors came to pay their respects and honor the valiant men and women who served and made the ultimate sacrifice. Joseph Giordano Jr., Chair of the Veterans Service Committee for the City of Waltham, acknowledged "the donation of planters by the Waltham Garden Club to decorate the Main Tent and to especially thank Alexis Shaw and Angie Emberley who volunteered their time."

Life Today

2020 - Present (2022)

Not since the 1940's has anything impacted the operation of the Waltham Garden Club like COVID-19 did in February 2020. Everything came to a standstill. The leadership had a real challenge to run the club through the pandemic. In-person meetings were out of the question. Everyone turned to a new technology, Zoom, allowing members to speak and see each other in real time from their home computers. The club persevered and both Executive Board and general meetings became "Zoom" meetings. To support the technology a new position was created: IT Coordinator. Past President Jane Gibbons graciously volunteered.

Club President Mary Ellen Donovan and the Executive Board utilized Google Drive Shared Folders, which allows board members to concurrently access and update club folders and files. Under the leadership of Laura Cooper, the club's website was upgraded and re-designed with new sections and information provided by the board and other members. The website contains links to join club membership, scholarship information, gardening tips and resources, and a link to the club's social media page. Members can post pictures and write comments in Facebook in response to what others posted.

In Fall 2021, monthly general meetings resumed in person with members having to adhere to city-wide social protocol. Face mask wearing became mandatory. The Carriage House at Gore Place became the new home for club meetings. This beautiful location rekindles a past partnership between the club and this historic estate in Waltham.

Highlights (2020-2022):

Grapevine Newsletter

Greater emphasis was placed on the importance of the Grapevine Newsletter. It became a lifeline to members, because in-person meetings were against pandemic protocol. A team approach evolved with Nance D’Ercole, Nancy Eyster-Smith, and Mary Ellen Donovan, each taking a prominent role in its monthly publication. Featured articles, Member Spotlight, and the Growing Guru appear each month. It won the Margaret K. Bell Newsletter Award – Large Club from the Garden Club Federation of Massachusetts in 2022.

Around Waltham Walks

Club members met outdoors for some “Around Waltham” walks and historical tours of the grounds of the Lyman Estate, Paine Estate, Prospect Hill Park, Mt. Feake Cemetery, and the Piety Corner Neighborhood. More such events were requested in a member survey.

Compiling the History of the Waltham Garden Club

A committee (President Mary Ellen Donovan (Chair), Marie McKenzie, Past Presidents Noreen Cooke and Alexis Shaw) assembled to begin the process of writing the club’s history. The committee reached out for assistance to the Waltham Public Library, the Waltham Historical Society, and older club members for guidance and input. The goal was to archive the club’s history and to preserve important documents of the Waltham Garden Club, which will be housed in the “Waltham Room” at the Waltham Public Library.

Awards and Recognitions

The Waltham Garden Club has been recognized for its many accomplishments by earning these awards and recognitions for programming, community involvement, publications, and special events.

GCFM = The Garden Club Federation of Massachusetts

- 1962 **Governor John Volpe silver bowl** to Leola Fraim for her daylily and daffodil entries in the Massachusetts State Flower Show
- 1969 **National Garden Clubs, Inc. Certificate of Merit** in recognition of 50th anniversary
- 1976 **GCFM Distinguished Service – Publication – Yearbook**
- 1976 **GCFM Garden Therapy Award**
- 1977 **GCFM Bay State Flower Show Award**
- 1980 **GCFM Distinguished Service – Publication – Yearbook**
- 1980 **GCFM Evelyn D. Cronin Horticulture Award**
- 1985 **GCFM Historic Preservation Award**
- 1987 **GCFM Continuing Civic Projects**
- 1988 **GCFM Arbor Day Award** from President Diane J. Bullock
- 1988 **GCFM Club of Distinction Award** from President Diane J. Bullock
- 1989 **GCFM Club of Distinction Award** from President Diane J. Bullock
- 1989 **GCFM Special Achievement Certificate** from President Diane J. Bullock

- 1990 **GCFM Mary F. Brewer Roadside Beautification Award** for planting of 5000 spring bulbs on Gore Street islands, Waltham
- 1991 **GCFM East Middlesex Membership Award** for largest percent of increase in new members
- 1991 **GCFM Club of Distinction Award** from President Helen Freidberg
- 1994 **GCFM Club of Distinction Award** from President Barbara May
- 1996 **GCFM Distinguished Service - Publication** for Memorial Book to Stella Yurkus, documenting Waltham Garden Club's activities in the Paine Estate gardens from 1979 to 1992.
- 1996 **Mass State Legislature Citation** for 55 years of Garden Club work, sponsored by State Senator Warren Tolman
- 1996 **GCFM Certificate of Merit – Publicity/Public Relations Award** for “Gardening for Fun” exhibit at Gore Place Sheepshearing Festival
- 1996 **GCFM Helen Friedberg Award for a Single Program** for “All Around Roses,” a program celebrating the 55th Anniversary of the Waltham Garden Club
- 1997 **GCFM Distinguished Service Youth Activities Award** for the “Gardening for Fun” Gore Place Sheepshearing Festival exhibit
- 1998 **GCFM Presidential Citation Certificate** to Phyllis Miele in recognition of distinguished service
- 1999 **GCFM Helen Friedberg Award for a Single Program**
- 2001 **GCFM Helen Friedberg Award for a Single Program** in Horticulture for program titled “Seed

Collection, Drying, Cleaning, and Storing” written and presented by Lynn Lord

- 2004 **Blue Ribbon New England Rose Society** 64th Spring Rose Show to Lynn Lord - Queen of Arrangements Ribbon and a Gold Medal Certificate for her traditional line mass designs
- 2005 **GCFM Mitzi Belitsky Youth Activities Award** - Certificate of Merit and Silver Vase for “Gardening for Fun,” Gore Place Sheepshearing Festival exhibit
- 2005 **GCFM Certificate of Merit - Publication** for guide used for the 2004 Historic Waltham Days Library Gardens
- 2005 **Certificate of Merit** - Smokey the Bear and Woodsy the Owl Poster Contest of US Forest Service and National Garden Clubs Inc. The Waltham Garden Club sponsored winning entry for Grade 1 Dayna Walsh (First Place at the State Level and for the New England Region)
- 2005 **Vietnam Veterans Moving Memorial Wall Committee** plaque with enlarged 33 cent USA stamp
- 2006 **City of Waltham Official Resolution** recognizing Waltham Garden Club 65th anniversary
- 2006 **Massachusetts House of Representatives Resolution** recognizing Waltham Garden Club 65th anniversary
- 2012 **The Novice Award - Massachusetts Horticultural Society**, Class: Roots - Boston Flower and Garden Show to Doris Sheils for an amazing photograph
- 2017 **GCFM Certificate for 75th Anniversary**
- 2019 **Trophy for Most Originality** for Waltham Garden Club’s four seasons float in Waltham’s 135th Anniversary Parade
- 2022 **GCFM Margaret K. Bell Newsletter Award – Large Club** for monthly Grapevine newsletter

**Special Thanks to the
Waltham Garden Club
Members
Who Worked on This Project**

Mary Ellen Donovan, President

Noreen Cooke

Nancy Eyster-Smith

Marie McKenzie

Alexis Shaw

June 2022