

Member Spotlight: Trish Leipold



When Trish Leipold first attended a Wolfeboro Garden Club meeting, she was new to town and simply checking it out, hoping to learn about gardening—but like many people in a room full of strangers, she didn't immediately feel connected. It took the encouragement of a new friend, Hume Gile, a Life member of the Club, to bring her back.

That second visit made all the difference. Trish has now been a member since 2002, and that early experience shaped something she carries with her to this day: a commitment to making sure new members feel welcome.

Trish didn't grow up thinking she'd become a gardener. Raised in Binghamton, New York, she was introduced to gardening through her father's vegetable garden, but it didn't take hold for her until later in life.

She went on to earn an MS degree in nutrition science from Cornell and married her husband Bob, a now-retired physician. Together they built a life that took them from Barrington, New Hampshire, to rural Maine, and eventually to Wolfeboro, where they've lived for more than 30 years while raising their two daughters.

It wasn't until they purchased a large parcel of land in Wolfeboro that gardening—real gardening—took root. While living in Maine, she had tried her hand at vegetable gardening, but found the effort outweighed the yield. Instead, she was drawn to something wilder.

Trish describes herself as a decorative gardener, but her true focus is ecological. She favors native perennials, shrubs, and trees, and has spent years managing her land with wildlife in mind—removing invasive plants and replacing them with species that belong. That work isn't always easy. She admits that taking out burning bush—beloved for its brilliant fall color—was a tough decision, and an even harder sell to Bob. But science, and a commitment to doing what's right for the land, won out.

Her connection to nature extends beyond gardening. Trish and Bob are bird hunters and lifetime members of the Ruffed Grouse Society, a conservation organization dedicated to preserving habitat for grouse and other wildlife. Often accompanied by their English pointer, they hunt ruffed grouse—her favorite bird, admired for both the challenge of the hunt and, as she notes with a smile, “the tenders are delicious.”

Over the years, Trish became deeply involved in the Wolfeboro Garden Club, serving as Treasurer, Vice President, President, and Past President. She also chaired the Ways & Means

Committee and played a key role in shaping some of the Club's most visible contributions to the community. Among her proudest accomplishments is spearheading the development of the Bean Park Gardens—including the Waters Edge Garden, the Rain Garden, and the Hallock Memorial Garden. These projects were a true collaboration between the Club, the Bean family, and the Town, and remain a lasting gift to the community.

She also witnessed—and helped guide—the evolution of the Club's fundraising efforts. What was once a single, high-pressure fundraiser known as the Holly Berry Fair has grown into today's highly successful wreath project. She still remembers the stress of relying on one day of sales, including a year when a major snowstorm threatened everything. The Club adapted, persevered, and ultimately found a better way forward. Today, the wreath sale has grown from 100 wreaths in its first year to nearly 500 annually.

Trish carries with her an appreciation for the Club's deeper history. In its earliest years during the 1930s, members collected milkweed floss to support the war effort, using it as a substitute for kapok in life jackets—a reminder that even small, local efforts can connect to something much larger.

Now in her 70s, Trish's approach to gardening has shifted. She still loves being outdoors, but she's learned to adapt—accepting help, tolerating more weeds, and embracing “volunteer” plants that once might have been pulled without hesitation. Her philosophy has evolved toward something both practical and ecological: less control, more coexistence. She encourages gardeners to leave their gardens standing through the fall and into late spring, allowing insects and wildlife to make use of the habitat. Where people prefer neat and tidy, nature prefers and thrives with chaos.

For those just starting out, Trish offers straightforward advice: learn about native plants, understand your site conditions, and give new plantings the water and time they need—especially in the first two years. And for new Garden Club members, her advice is just as clear: get involved. Join a committee. Serve on the board. Be part of a garden team. That's how connections are made and friendships are built—the very thing that brought her back after that first meeting.

After more than two decades with the Wolfeboro Garden Club, Trish continues to value what drew her in—and kept her there: education, community, and a shared love of the outdoors.

Her favorite season is still spring, when the landscape wakes up in fresh color after a long New Hampshire winter. In many ways, her story mirrors the garden itself—rooted in patience, shaped by change, and always growing.