



Welcome to **Bloom On, Manatee!**

In celebration of Manatee Heritage Month, the Manatee River Garden Club invites you to dive into a whimsical look back at our 90-year legacy of local beautification. From our very first 1920s plantings along the Bradenton riverbanks to the iconic causeways and historic restorations we care for today, our green thumbs have been hard at work. Just like our county's famous gentle giants, we've spent nine decades grazing, growing, and nurturing the local landscape. Join us as we honor our deep roots, celebrate our flourishing history, and look forward to many more years of keeping Manatee County beautiful!"

BLOOM ON, MANATEE! ***Roots of the Past, Blossoms for the Future***

DIVISION I – DESIGN: “AN AGE OF CONFIDENCE”

Eligible for the Award of Design Excellence.

In 1929, a visionary group of women gathered to form the [Manatee River Garden Club](#), stepping forward with a bold confidence to shape the future of their community. This division celebrates their foundational mission to nurture and encourage the beautification of Bradenton and Manatee County, inviting today's designers to interpret nine decades of local pride through creative floral artistry.

Section A: “Vintage Classic” (1920s – 1950s)

Eligible for the Designer's Choice Award.

Class 1: “All Roads Lead to Manatee” – As visitors began to discover Bradenton, members beautified the entrances to the city. In 1932, Washingtonian palms were planted along Manatee Avenue from Bradenton to Manatee Cemetery Park. **A Parallel Design.**

Class 2: “Sharing our Bounty” – During the war years, the Club turned its focus toward “Defense.” With the area's abundance of fruits and vegetables, the Garden Club helped to establish canning kitchens. Over 40,000 jars of food were processed, winning an award from National Garden Clubs. **A Transparency Design.** (Traditional or Creative Style).

Class 3: “Our Corner of Lewis Park” – In 1954, our clubhouse was built on the grounds of Lewis Park. The establishment and maintenance of gardens around the clubhouse became an important project which continues today. **A Design Featuring Angle(s).** (Traditional or Creative Style).

Section B: “Mid-Century Modern” (1960s – 1990s)

Eligible for the Petite Award.

Class 4: “Reach for the Stars” – In 1966, the newly built planetarium allowed residents to share the excitement of the race to the moon. The Bishop Museum has been a proud recipient of many grants for beautification from the Garden Club. **A Spatial Thrust Design.** (Petite scale).

Class 5: “Golden Glow” – In 1979, Manatee River Garden Club celebrated its 50th anniversary and was presented awards from the General Telephone Company and the Downtown Beautification Association for its plantings around the Manatee Chamber of Commerce building. **A Reflective Design.** (Petite scale).

Class 6: “The Crosley in Bloom” – In 1996, a generous donation from the Elizabeth Eaton Beautification Charitable Trust Fund allowed for landscaping of Manatee County’s newly acquired Crosley Mansion. Manatee River Garden Club staged a spectacular flower show at the estate in 1999. **A Creative Design.** (Petite scale).

Section C: “Post Modern” (Looking to the Future)

All materials will be provided to the exhibitors by the Flower Show Committee at the time of staging.

Class 7: “The Unknown Quantity” – Just as the future remains an exciting mystery, this class presents an unmapped horizon for our designers. Exhibitors must step into the unknown, using identical, surprise elements to shape a vision of tomorrow's floral artistry. **A Challenge Design.**

DIVISION II – HORTICULTURE:

“THE EATON LEGACY: ENDURING LANDSCAPES”

Eligible for the Award of Horticultural Excellence.

Through the visionary generosity of the Elizabeth Eaton Charitable Trust Foundation, the [Manatee River Garden Club](#) has left an indelible green footprint across our region. This division invites exhibitors to showcase the exceptional flora, structured foliage, and creative plantings that mirror the very museums, preserves, and historic sanctuaries nurtured by these transformative civic grants.

- **Section A: The Peaceful Path at Peace Presbyterian Church** (Cut Tropical Foliage)
- **Section B: Women’s Resource Center** (Cut Flowers or Bracts from Perennials)
- **Section C: Manatee County Agricultural Museum** (Flowering Plants – Container Grown/Mounted)
- **Section D: Robinson & Emerson Point Preserves** (Foliage Plants – Container Grown)
- **Section E: Palma Sola Botanical Park** (Cactus – Container Grown for Foliage)
- **Section F: Florida Maritime Museum** (Succulents other than Cacti – Container Grown for Foliage)
- **Section G: Florida Railroad Museum** (Bromeliads – Container Grown or Mounted)
- **Section H: Manatee County Historical Village** (Arboreal - Cut Woody Branches)
- **Section I: Poling Gardens** (Combination Plantings: Succulent Planters, Non-Succulent Planters, and Terrariums)

DIVISION III – EDUCATIONAL DIVISION:

"THE GREEN THREAD OF CONSERVATION"

Eligible for the Educational Top Exhibitor Award.

In addition to beautification, early goals of the Manatee River Garden Club included the conservation and preservation of natural resources. The study of wildflowers was a very popular topic at early meetings, and the prevention of wildfires in Manatee County was a very real, historic concern.

- **Exhibit 1: "Wildflowers of the Suncoast"** – *An instructional display highlighting native Florida wildflowers, their role in the local ecosystem, and historical conservation efforts to protect them.*
- **Exhibit 2: "Smokey Bear & Woodsy Owl Youth Poster Contest"** – *An exhibition showcasing local youth entries from the [National Garden Clubs poster contest](#), educating the community on wildfire prevention and forestry conservation.*

DIVISION IV – BOTANICAL ARTS: "CAPTURED AND CRAFTED"

Section A: Photography – "Blossoms of the Present"

Eligible for the Botanical Arts Photography Award.

Exhibitors in this section look through a contemporary lens to capture the vibrant, living world around us—celebrating the thriving birdlife, native wildflowers, and coastal waters preserved through the club's enduring support of Felts Audubon Preserve, the Florida Maritime Museum, and Manatee County's precious natural sanctuaries.

Class 1: Wild Blooms – A picture of a Wildflower

Class 2: Blooms on Wings – A picture of a Bird

Class 3: Finding the Blooms – A picture of a Pollinators

Class 4: Beside the Blooms – A picture showing Docks, Piers, and/or Pilings

Section B: Artistic Crafts – "Roots of the Past"

Eligible for the Botanical Arts Artistic Crafts Award.

Exhibitors in this section look back to look forward, transforming natural and preserved plant materials into timeless, hand-crafted artifacts that celebrate the deep historical roots and early traditions of Manatee County.

Class 1: "Seeds of Tradition" – *A box decorated using nature's bounty (seeds, corn, beans, pods, nuts, leaves, etc.). Not to exceed 12 inches in any direction.*

Class 2: "Fan-tastic Fronds" – *Air conditioning did not become widely popular in Manatee County until the 1950s and 1960s. Prior to modern cooling, hand-woven fans provided relief from the fierce Florida humidity. **A hand-crafted Palmetto Palm Fan.***

Class 3: "Murderous Millinery" – *In the late 1800s, global fashion dictated that women's hats be decorated with authentic feathers, hunting Everglades birds to near extinction. This devastating craze spurred a massive uproar from early conservationists, leading directly to the formation of the [Audubon Society of Florida](#) and the passage of the landmark Lacey Act. **A decorated hat.***