

# SHERIDAN ROAD

MAY 2016



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## WEEDING AWAY

*Fresh from celebrating its 80th year, The Winnetka Weeders Garden Club embraces tradition, education, and fellowship with the community.*

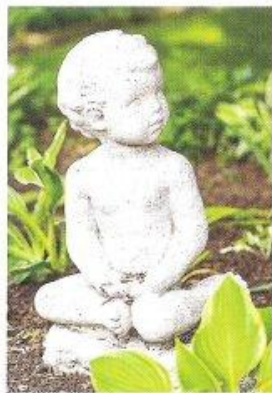
WORDS BY WENDY FRANZEN / PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBIN SUBAR

**T**he Winnetka Weeders Garden Club is unlike most modern day gardening clubs. Forget ideas of stuffiness and formality. From its original gathering on June 24, 1935 when seven women met to share ideas about gardening to the meetings held today, this club of all-inclusive gardening enthusiasts has maintained its focus on education, beautification, and branching out to the community in service, all while enjoying each other's company. The membership is multi-generational, made-up of new residents of Winnetka with young families as well as snowbirds who have been members for decades. They are tied together through their shared love of gardening and community, meeting once a month to discuss projects, exchange tips, explore gardens, and hone their collective gardening skills.

Weeders former President Beth Dustman, now in her 9th year of membership, speaks reverentially about the projects her predecessors took on. One shining example is Centennial Park, the southernmost park on Winnetka's pristine lakefront, where residents stroll through the park and along the beach with dogs and children in tow. Though it is now maintained by the city's park district, it was the Weeders who came in decades ago and transformed what was once open land into the beautifully landscaped, tree and berm screened gem that it is today.

The modern day Winnetka Weeders have continued the tradition of taking pockets of the community to beautify and maintain. One of the main projects of the current club is planting, watering, weeding, and maintaining the Hosta Garden at

Winnetka's Train Station Park and the Reading Garden at the Winnetka Library. Their service commitment to the library, however, extends far beyond digging in the dirt. Another beloved project is "Readers and Weeders," where club members partner with library staff to educate community children and instill within them a love of gardening and nature. Participants, most ages 5th grade and under, take part in projects such as making book marks, pressing flowers, creating bird feeders, and planting fall bulbs in the library garden. When students return to the library in spring and see their emerging bulbs, enthusiasm abounds. The Winnetka Weeders of the 1930's, who also developed and taught educational programs for school children, would be proud.



Members of the club commit to two turns of service a year, which can include work in either the gardens or at the library, but they also take time to learn from each other and enjoy one another's personal gardens. A lovely tradition known as "sip and see" brings the group together informally to tour a fellow member's yard when it reaches a beautiful transition or bursts into full summer bloom. Summer also brings the club's Garden Walk, held biennially for members, friends, and family. Here they have the opportunity to stroll through private Winnetka gardens,

often hidden gems of the community. And when fall turns to winter and snow blankets the landscape they've lovingly tended throughout the year, they come together to share holiday tablescapes and tea and reflect on the season.

For more information about The Winnetka Weeders Garden Club, please visit [www.winnetkaweeders.org](http://www.winnetkaweeders.org)