

WINNETKA KENILWORTH LIVING

SEPTEMBER 2025



WINNETKA WEEDERS:

90 YEARS OF DIGGING
IN AND GIVING BACK

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Photo by Carolyn Soling - Soling Photography

ROOTS AND RESILIENCE:

How the Winnetka Weeders Cultivated a Community

By Paul Clements

Photos Courtesy of Carol Callahan and the Winnetka Weeders

In a village known for its manicured lawns and grand estates, Robyn Lindblad tends something a little different. From her nicely updated 100-year-old home a block from the Winnetka Public Library and the Metra station, she cultivates a garden — and a way of life — rooted in resourcefulness, humor, and community spirit. For 22 years, Lindblad has been a steady hand and a warm voice in the Winnetka Weeders Garden Club, an organization that this year marks its 90th anniversary. Founded in 1935 by seven women determined not to become “just another social club,” the Weeders have built a legacy of civic improvement, hands-on gardening, and friendships that grow as reliably as the perennials they plant. Lindblad embodies that legacy: a genuine, civic-minded neighbor who has become a gardening and environmental expert without ever losing her approachable charm.

“What’s kept me here all these years is the people,” Lindblad said. “You come for the gardening, but you stay because of the friendships, laughter and giving back to the community.”

This year’s 90th anniversary is more than a milestone; it’s a reminder of how deeply the Winnetka Weeders have shaped the village’s public spaces and civic spirit. In its earliest days, the club’s projects reflected the frugality and purpose of the Depression era, from planting trees for Arbor Day to contributing to the Lincoln Memorial Garden in Springfield. During World War II, members joined the nationwide effort to grow Victory Gardens, bringing the community together to conserve resources and supplement food supplies. By the mid 1950s, the Weeders had taken on the design and care of the gardens at the new Winnetka Public Library, establishing a partnership that continues today. Throughout, they nurtured a culture of hands-on service and humor — qualities that remain central to the club’s identity.

“The women who started this club had a sense of humor about themselves,” Lindblad said. “They wanted to dig in the dirt and get things done, not just sit around for tea.”



Garden by Robyn Lindblad | Design by Scott Freres Red Spade Environments

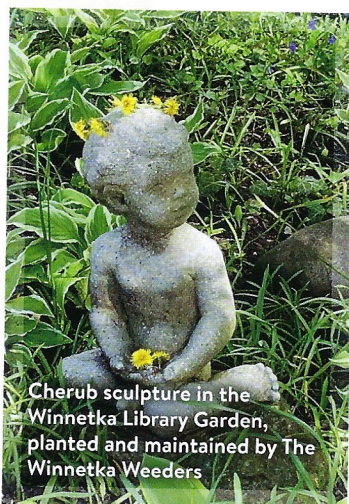
What has always set the Weeders apart is their personality. The club thrives on a sense of humor that makes even the most labor-intensive projects enjoyable, and on a welcoming spirit that embraces gardeners of all skill levels. It’s a place where friendships grow alongside the flowers, where members trade tips and plant divisions, share recipes, and gather for “Sip & See” garden visits and creative table-scape events. Meetings and projects blend hands-on learning with social connection, offering everything from composting workshops to floral design demonstrations. For many of the club’s 43 dedicated members, the appeal is as much about the camaraderie as the gardening itself — a multi-generational exchange of ideas, traditions, and support that keeps the club vibrant year after year. While remaining committed to the origins of the 7 founding members principals, “A desire to know and practice gardening.”

Step into Lindblad’s garden and it’s clear her choices are as thoughtful as they are beautiful. Designed with pollinators in mind, it’s a haven for bees and butterflies, anchored by drought-tolerant natives and resilient prairie

grasses that can handle Midwest summers. Milkweed, goldenrod, asters, and other local perennials provide bursts of seasonal color while supporting the ecosystem, and carefully placed hostas and ferns add texture in the shadier corners. Every plant has a purpose, whether it’s feeding pollinators, withstanding heat, or thriving in the specific microclimates around her century-old home. The result is a space that feels natural and inviting, yet subtly orchestrated to flourish in this environment.

“My garden is a reflection of many principles I learned from the Weeders,” she said. “It’s an ongoing commitment to cultivate a community of plants that grow well together.”

Lindblad approaches her garden the way an artist approaches a canvas, layering color, texture, and form to create something both intentional and alive. She calls it “planned chaos” — a natural look that comes from careful balance, repeating patterns, and knowing when to edit plants that throw the design off. She favors native species that



Cherub sculpture in the Winnetka Library Garden, planted and maintained by The Winnetka Weeders



Community Garden Tour

can withstand changing weather patterns and require fewer resources, and she believes in being smart about what you buy, matching plants to the right conditions rather than forcing them to adapt. For her, gardening is as much about patience as it is about skill; it's trial and error, learning from others, and sharing what you've discovered. She attributes much of what she has learned about gardening from fellow member's tips and the programs she has attended the past 22 years.

"Gardens are never perfect," she said. "But they're always evolving."

Lindblad's influence can be seen in some of the club's most visible and enduring projects. At the Winnetka Public Library's Memorial Garden, she has been a steward carrying on the legacy of the club's long-standing commitment to maintain and enhance the grounds. This includes supporting the Weeders & Readers program she and other members launched in 2011 — a combination of storytime, nature-based crafts, and outdoor exploration designed to connect children with the natural world from an early age. Lindblad is most excited about their upcoming toddler program on September 8th @ 10am at the Winnetka Library celebrating Monarchs and the Weeder's 90th anniversary.

"Seeing kids light up when they plant a seed or read a garden-themed book makes it all worthwhile," she said.

Across the street from the Winnetka Public Library, the Weeders also care for the gardens surrounding the Winnetka Metra station. The hosta garden, a once-overgrown triangle of land choked with invasive buckthorn, was transformed through the collective efforts of Weeders who dug, divided, and replanted hostas from their own yards. Lindblad contributed plants from her mother's Michigan garden, helping establish a low-maintenance, shade-loving landscape that now serves as a model of resourcefulness and beauty. Once maintained by the village, this area was adopted by the club as part of a cooperative arrangement that allowed the Park District to focus on other public areas. In earlier years, members could be found "deadheading" the daylilies that lined the walkways, ensuring a tidy and inviting appearance for daily commuters. Over time, the Weeders continue to reimagine the plantings, incorporating more unusual hostas and other hardy perennials that thrive in the challenging, high-traffic environment.

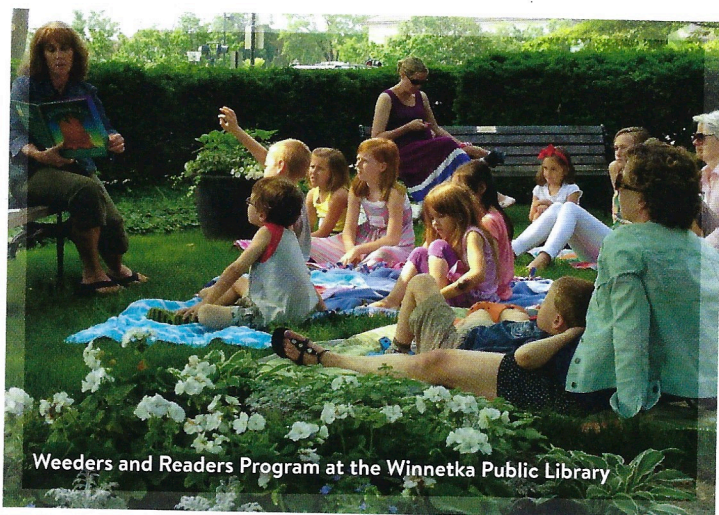
"We wanted something resilient and welcoming," Lindblad said. "Those gardens are the first thing people see when they arrive in Winnetka."

When Lindblad first joined the Weeders in the early 2000s, she was a young mother with three children under the age of five. The monthly Tuesday meetings were three-hour affairs, and serving in a leadership role meant finding a babysitter so she could attend. Alongside the meetings came hands-on commitments: every member was expected to log at least two hours of service in the club's gardens and contribute food for luncheons or special gatherings.

"Back then you didn't mess around with the treats," she said with a laugh. "Presentation counted, and people noticed." Even now, she says, the expectations are clear — you show up, pitch in, and bring something of yourself to the work.

Over time, the structure has evolved to fit the realities of modern life. Meetings are shorter, schedules more flexible, and projects are organized to accommodate members who are balancing work, family, and other commitments. But the essence remains the

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Weeders and Readers Program at the Winnetka Public Library



Kate Higgins, owner of Wellyhaus in Hubbard Woods, leads a class for the Weeders on flower arranging

same: time spent together in service of something that benefits the entire community. Whether it's planning a new planting for the library garden, walking the hosta beds to see what needs dividing, or brainstorming programs that will appeal to all ages, the meetings are a mix of business, education, and connection. For Lindblad, that blend is what keeps the club relevant and enjoyable. "Cultivating a community of gardeners of all ages"

"We work hard, but we always make time to laugh," she said. "That's what makes it special."

As the Winnetka Weeders celebrate their 90th anniversary, Robyn Lindblad stands at the confluence of legacy and living tradition. Her garden, suffused with native prairie grasses, pollinator-friendly blooms, and layered textures, mirrors her philosophy: beauty that is sustainable, thoughtful, and ever-evolving. She and club President Christie Baker, bring to the Weeders a leadership style that's collaborative, humble, and practical — rooted in shared effort without pretense. In a world where so much is curated for impact, their affable expertise, genuine warmth, and resourceful spirit are reminders that true community grows from modest ambition and steady care.

"Being a Winnetka Weeder has been a wonderful experience," said Christie Baker, the club's president. "I have learned from our educational programs, but even more so from the wisdom of fellow members. We are a multi-generational group whose passion and dedication have left a lasting mark on the community. As President during our 90th year, I am humbled to honor our rich history and the many projects that have enriched both our story and Winnetka's."

Winnetka Weeders Garden Club

Website: winnetkaweeders.org

Instagram: @winnetkaweedersgardenclub

Facebook: Winnetka Weeders Garden Club on Facebook

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Pumpkin centerpiece class



Farm to Table Tablescape

"I have worked with Joel Harris for a number of years for my family's P&C needs. He works extremely hard and really knows his stuff. Last year, I had a large claim stemming from a drain that backed up, and the process could not have gone smoother. Our house was fully repaired within a few months which was incredible. I sleep well at night knowing that our needs are fully covered. There's really no reason to work with anyone else." - Peter S.



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