



History

of

*Shaler Garden Club
Shaler, PA*

1921-2021

SHALER GARDEN CLUB HISTORY

In September 1921, a meeting sponsored by the Garden Club of Allegheny County was called at Braun School in Glenshaw (Shaler) to interest the women of Shaler Township in Herbert Hoover's program of conserving food, particularly growing vegetables in home gardens and home canning. The late Mrs. W.L. Davis attended and, shortly thereafter, invited the women in the community to a meeting at her home. Ten women attended and formed the Shaler Township branch of the Woman's National Farm and Garden Association.

The club's first civic project in the years 1922-24 were spent planting the grounds of the B&O Railroad Station.

Shaler Township Garden Club held its first fall fair in September 1924, and its delegate, the late Mrs. C. J. Ross, attended the National Farm and Garden Convention in Washington, D.C., in 1925. The Fall Fair was a big undertaking, and served as a club fundraiser. It later changed into the Country Fair and was held at various locations.

By 1927, the club was recognized as an outstanding unit, and received newspaper publicity.

In 1933, members formed a committee to educate children in horticulture. A plot of ground and seeds were provided for the children and members supervised the planting and caring for the plants. This project was carried on for many years, with the children exhibiting the results in the club Fall Fair.

In 1935, the Flower Guild was organized and functioned as an "every member participation project" for many years. From June to September, club members provided flowers and made bouquets for patients at Children's Hospital. This was discontinued due to the facility's concerns about introducing bacteria in the water vases. Later in 1994, the bouquets brightened the trays of patients at Kane Regional Center in Ross.

The Library Committee is another active group. For years, the club provided fresh cut flowers to Glenshaw Public Library and Shaler North Hills Library. Club members started decorating Shaler North Hills Library for Christmas in 1945-46 (Currently, the exterior decorations are sponsored by the Friends of the Library and installed by Township staff.) The garden club still decorates several Christmas trees in the library: one with traditional ornaments, another with gingerbread ornaments and one with ornaments fashioned from natural materials, the latter two being made by creative club members.

The first yearbook was published in 1934.

Shaler Garden Club became a charter member of the Pittsburgh Garden Center in 1935 and was active in the annual garden market at the center, working with other Pennsylvania

Division of the Woman's National Farm and Garden Association branches, with proceeds used for scholarships.

In 1937-1938, members donated shrubs and man hours for planting the B&O railroad station. In 1938, the club collected \$150.00 from the community to help with maintenance, and held a Christmas greens sale at the station to raise funds. The Civic Committee headed the beautification of the property in front of the Mount Royal Shopping Center. Thirty crabapple trees were planted and a 400 foot flower bed was planted.

Other early on-going projects were horticultural therapy at Allegheny General Hospital and Woodville State Hospital. Efforts to help others also included the collection of pennies at each meeting for "Pennies for Friendship", an international project of the Associated County Women of the World.

In 1948, two dogwood trees were planted on Route 8 in memory of two local servicemen.

The first public plant sale was mentioned in 1953. In 1954, a plant sale at the Mount Royal Shopping Center had a net profit of \$67.59.

In the 1957-58 club year, Mildred Klintworth was named the Pennsylvania Gardener of the Year. Club colors of green and white, along with a club flower, the geranium, were chosen in 1957.

Member Elizabeth Miller was elected national president of Farm and Garden in 1959-60. She was the first president from Pennsylvania.

In 1963, the club started working on the eroding bank of ground owned by Shaler School District, which is between the high school (now middle school) on Mt. Royal Blvd. and the shopping center. Profit from this year's plant sale was \$141.00.

The club became a member of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy in 1965. The plant sale netted \$267.10.

In 1966-67, the club planted trees along the driveway to the municipal building and two bus stops. Trees were planted at the Shaler North Hills Library, Braun and Rogers Schools in 1968-69. Plant sale netted \$376.65. The club won first place for its cover of its yearbook.

In 1971, the 50th anniversary celebration was held at the Pittsburgh Athletic Association. (Note: A copy of Elizabeth Miller's write up for the golden anniversary, as well as her speech for the Bicentennial Program held on March 23, 1976, are held in the archives by the History and Technology Chair.)

In 1980, the club joined the Garden Club Federation.

In 1986, the 65th anniversary was celebrated at the Pittsburgh Civic Garden Center.

In 1994, the Flower Guild began providing flowers for John Kane Regional Center patients. A \$500 scholarship was awarded to a high school student interested in ecology and the environment.

In 1996, the 75th anniversary was observed at Pines Tavern. Members were once again involved with school ecology clubs and garden therapy for patients at Outlook Point Personal Care Home. Members participated in the installation of the memorial sign at Fall Run Park and planted flowers from their gardens for the May 18 celebration. Arbor Day was observed by presenting 225 tree seedlings for three kindergartens.

For many years, the club hosted a February Tea at the library, in conjunction with the book club at that time. The annual meeting used to be held in January, but after several cancellations due to snow, was moved to December in 1995, and served as an end of year holiday party.

In August 1995, we held our first (in a very long time) flower show, entitled "Books in Bloom" at the Shaler North Hills Library. It was lots of work, but a success, which led us to partner with Ingomar and Greybrooke garden clubs in 1997 to present another flower show, "Holiday Happenings", at St. Paul's Church.

In 1997, the yearbook received first place award.

In 1998, members began planting and maintaining a hillside at Shaler North Hills Library, a project which continues, along with the beds surrounding the perimeter. This was the last year for the scholarship award due to the difficulty finding interested students. Members voted to withdraw from the Garden Club Federation.

In 2000, the club participated in the Y2-Care program for middle school students and the community. The club provided 225 trees for three area kindergartens for Arbor Day. Members participated in the planting of flowers along Mt. Royal Blvd., in conjunction with the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, and planting and clean-up at the school gardens and library. Christmas trees were decorated at the library and members planted the area around the sign at the Church of Our Saviour, the club's meeting place.

In 2001, the 80th anniversary was celebrated at a tea luncheon at the Whitehouse Inn in Shaler. This was the first year for all six area kindergartens to receive trees (400) for Arbor Day.

In May 2001, members contributed fragrant perennials such as lemon balm, honeysuckle, lilies of the valley and more from their gardens to beautify and scent the air in flower boxes

outside of Pittsburgh Vision Services. This United Way funded agency provides help with daily life and other educational programs for visually impaired people.

In 2002, the club rejoined the Garden Club Federation, District IX.

In 2005, Fritz Mitnick was presented with the National Award of Honor, the Federation's highest recognition. She won at the District, state and central region to qualify for the award. In 2006, member Shelley Nilson received this same prestigious award at the National level.

Shaler Garden Club supports the following organizations financially through memberships: Horticultural Society of Western Pennsylvania, Audubon Society of Western PA, Northern Area Environmental Council, Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens, SNIP (Shaler Neighborhood Improvement Program), and Western Pennsylvania Conservancy.

Ongoing projects are the annual plant sale, flower guild project of bouquets for Kane Regional Center patients, library hillside planting and maintenance, and Christmas tree decorating at the library. A popular annual event is the Solstice Supper, which is hosted at a member's home. Members dress in garden party attire and bring a dish to share.

In 2007- 2008, our club discontinued the Flower Guild, because Kane at McIntyre wanted club members to deliver the flower arrangements directly to patient's room, as they did not have sufficient volunteers to perform this function.

The club hosted the Federation's District IX annual meeting Sept. 19, 2007 at Wildwood Country Club. "Gardening for the Fun of It" featured lunch, awards and talks by gardening experts, Doug Oster and Jessica Wallister.

In 2007, our club had 33 members and no nominees for president for the 2008-2009 term. The board discussed disbanding the club and distributing the monies in the treasury to other organizations. Not wishing for the club to dissolve, two previous presidents, Shelley Nilson and Kathy McHugh, stepped forward and served again as co-presidents (non-consecutive terms).

The first "Art and Flowers" garden tour, which showcases five beautiful area gardens, began in 2007. An art show of local artists was held in conjunction with the garden tour. In 2009, the art show was discontinued, and the event was renamed the "Shaler Great Gardens Tour". All proceeds from the tour benefit the Shaler North Hills Library. The goal of the tour is to inspire gardeners in the community with the love of gardening, along with the "Shaler Great Gardens Contest", first held in 2012, which gives local gardeners recognition for their artistry and hard work. The first place winner is given the opportunity to be on the tour in the following year. Winners are announced at our club's open membership meeting in July, held at the library, and receive a small prize.

In 2008, a Blue Star Marker was installed at the Shaler Middle School on Mt. Royal Blvd., dedicated on Veterans Day, followed by a luncheon with community veterans and local dignitaries.

In 2010, Lee Leaver Award was presented to Judy Brandt for her work in the community, and a Civic Business Award was presented to Z Florist for his generous support of SGC.

In June 2011, the club celebrated our 90th anniversary with a luncheon, a presentation on the history of the club by one of the current presidents, and a speaker on roses. (Note: A copy of Judy Schiffbauer's speech is held in archives by the History and Technology Chair). The 90th anniversary event was held at Wildwood Country Club and was attended by members of many District IX clubs, as well as our own members.

In 2012, the Civic and Conservation committee assisted in the design and installation of a 70 foot long bed in front of the Shaler North Hills Library. The installation of trees and shrubs was done by Best Feeds at a cost of \$5,000, paid for by the library, with proceeds from the garden tours. Garden club members filled in with perennials.

In 2014, the club debated a proposal to withdraw from the Garden Club Federation of Pennsylvania and related garden club affiliations. The club members voted to remain affiliated, in order to be covered by insurance, particularly for our plant sales and garden tours, and to enjoy the benefits of friendships and exchange of ideas with other clubs.

The first Fairy House Workshop was held at the Shaler North Hills Library in June 2012. Children, ages 4-8, were invited to construct fairy houses with natural materials provided by club members. The aim of the project is to draw children into the gardens and hopefully interest them in the magic of gardening. The project has been popular with children since its inception.

The Shaler Garden Club website, shalergardenclub.org, was established on October 30, 2013, and was activated in January 2014. The first web page was developed using Yahoo Web Design and Hosting, at a cost of \$56.79 for one year. The primary goal for the website is to share information about what our club does with the community, to promote fundraisers and to attract new members to our club. It also aims to educate the public about conservation, green methods, seasonal gardening tips, attracting pollinators, advocacy for community or environmental projects, etc.

In 2014, a proposal to limit the size of club membership to 69 members (keeping within the "medium size" club category for award submissions) was debated. The club voted not to limit the size of membership, in order welcome all interested gardeners in the community and to maintain a steady influx of new leadership, as difficulty locating nominees for presidents persisted in 2014-2015. This necessitated the amendment of the bylaws to

allow one of the previous presidents to serve a second consecutive term. Members also voted yes to granting “active membership to those who participate in at least 3 meetings/activities per calendar year. Inactive members will be dropped the following year.”

In 2015, our website domain changed to shalergardenclub.com, and is maintained with professional help from Bill Ferianc of Holly Ridge Web Design.

In 2016-17, the club continued such projects as the plant sale, Arbor Day (distributing potted coneflowers to all Shaler kindergarteners), the Fairy House Workshop, decorating Christmas trees at the library, the Shaler Garden Tour and Great Gardens Contest, and maintaining the gardens at the library. The club did not hold the horticultural therapy program at Hampton Fields, in which residents vote with pennies for flower arrangements made by members, because of renovations and construction at the facility.

The 2017 Plant Sale offered perennials from member’s gardens, herbs, vegetables, houseplants, potted arrangements and bulbs, flea market, bake sale and basket auction, but has expanded to include face painting and activities for children. The profits from the 2017 Plant Sale were \$4,208.80.

In 2018, our club won the prestigious Governor’s Trophy, which was received at the 2019 state convention in Altoona. The first “Creative Succulent Workshop” was held at the Shaler Library March 9, 2018 for the public. Our project for Hampton Fields senior residents involved Autumn wreath-making, with wreaths donated to the residents. This same year, we received a Plant America Grant, which was used to makeover the library hillside garden into a “Pollinator Friendly Garden”, certified by the Penn State Extension Master Gardener Program.

Club members designed a garden-themed golf hole for the library fundraiser, “Caddy Stacks” in 2019. Earth Day was celebrated by distributing flower seed packets and Earth Day flyers to Shaler kindergarteners. COVID 19 pandemic brought plans to a screeching halt in 2020. Members gathered on ZOOM for meetings and planned the club’s 100th anniversary, celebrated at Wildwood Country Club on October 14, 2021. Plans are underway to dedicate a bronze statue to the Shaler Library, in celebration of our Centennial.