

HISTORY

The Wayland Garden Club was founded in 1922 by Mrs. Hazen Clement and was one of the earliest established in Massachusetts during the garden club movement that began at the turn of the century. Mrs. Clement was intensely interested in flowers and had a lovely garden at her Plain Road home. Many of the 22 charter members were summer residents of Wayland (population 1,935 in 1920) who were attracted by the town's rural, unspoiled atmosphere. In fact, for many years, the Club's meetings were scheduled from May to October, the summer growing months. Club activities included regular meetings, flower shows and tours of gardens in fairly distant places such as Shrewsbury, Duxbury and Brookline.

In 1927, the Wayland Garden Club joined the Garden Club Federation of Massachusetts, which was formed that year. The Federation required its member clubs to keep written records and to have formal annual meetings. Hence, our books of minutes begin with a meeting on May 19, 1927 at the home of Mrs. J. Sidney Stone, the first recorded President, with 17 members present. The records show a civic and social concern on the part of its members that continues to this day. In 1928, the Club voted to supply weekly flowers to the library (Miss Margaret Wheeler, the town librarian, was a charter member). About 1930, the Club began sending Flower Mission Baskets of fruits and vegetables to the Robert Gould Shaw House in Boston. A member would meet the 10:20 train each week to deliver the basket to the conductor. This custom continued until 1951, when a change in train schedule ended this practice.

During World War II, the members provided Christmas and Easter decorations for Camp Devens in Ayer. In the 1940s and '50s, the Club made monthly flower arrangements and holiday decorations for a nearby veterans' hospital and retirement home. Garden therapy and community service programs continue today through workshops at the Wayland Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, Traditions of Wayland and the Council on Aging.

Civic beautification and conservation have always been a high priority for the Club. Our records show numerous donations over the years, such as a \$4 appropriation to buy paint for the town post office in 1941 and \$250 to buy foundation plantings at the town building in 1957. In 1971, the Club guided Wayland to become the first town in the state to take over the State Recycling Program and also successfully lobbied to have several of Wayland's roads designated "Scenic Roads." However, the Club's most significant efforts to beautify the town were the creation of the Sanctuary and improvements to the Mill Pond skating area.

The Sanctuary is the Club's name for the land and pond area that lies between the two entrances to the Town Building. In the 1950s, the Club raised more than \$5,000 to turn these two acres of muddy swamp into a wildlife sanctuary and wetlands arboretum. Dredging began in 1961, and the planting of nearly 400 trees and shrubs began the following year. The Club's award-winning project preceded the State Wetlands Protection Act, but the interests protected under the state law are really the same as the Club's original forward-looking intentions, particularly provision of wildlife habitat. The maintenance of the sanctuary and creation of scenic vistas and trails - within the state wetlands law parameters - continues to be an important priority for the Club.

The Mill Pond dredging project was undertaken in 1974-75. The pond was filled with weeds and sludge and was no longer a desirable skating area. Garden Club members worked hard to get the town to approve funds for dredging the pond. Members later installed lights and a shed at the pond.

Over the years, the Club has continued to support a wide variety of Town groups and projects. In 1995, the Club contributed \$2000 towards the Town's purchase of the Paine estate, so that the bulk of the land would remain undeveloped. Members of the Wayland Garden Club have coordinated with members of the Wayland Business Association and the Woodridge Garden Club in beautifying Town land in trafficked areas. The heater piece planted by the Club in 1996 received special recognition from the Federation. The Club has also dedicated memorial funds in memory of deceased members of the Club to maintain and develop the herbal garden at the Grout-Heard House each growing season. For several years, the Club, along with the Woodridge Garden Club, has decorated the Grout-Heard House in early December to start the Christmas season. Many members attend the special "preview open house" of the four downstairs rooms on the day before the historic house is open to the public.

We can look back on our accomplishments with pride. The members have shared their passion for conservation, horticulture and artistic use of plant material with both the membership and the larger community.

Our annual plant swap is one way that we share our successes. Each year a pair of members makes an arrangement for the Museum of Fine Art's "Art in Bloom" celebration, an exciting use of our creative talent. In 2000, we began an "Arts and Arrangements" program for public enjoyment at the Wayland Public Library, sometimes featuring art work from Wayland Public School pupils for all to enjoy.

In May, 2003, the Club held a judged flower show, "A Cultivated Taste," featuring 10 classes of flower designs, horticulture, juniors' education exhibitions, and artistic compositions representing features of Wayland. In keeping with the Flower Show's location at Traditions of Wayland, the Show featured customs and traditions of our Commonwealth.

Woodridge and Wayland Garden Clubs served Wayland as partners in various projects. The annual Christmas decoration at the Grout-Heard House Museum was a shared project, with each club decorating two of the four rooms in alternate years. Woodridge members specialized in crafting beautiful decorations which were then auctioned off among their members, much to everyone's delight. Both clubs created separate entries for the MFA Art in Bloom. In 2009, we were pleased to have many former members of the disbanded Woodridge Garden Club become members of our club.

We collaborate with other garden and horticultural groups in the community, such as the Wayland Civic Beautification Committee and the Sudbury Valley Trustees. We donate flower arrangements to the Wayland Public Library weekly, and decorate the public buildings in town with seasonal greens every December. We have been recognized by the Massachusetts Legislature and by the Massachusetts Federation of Garden Clubs for 80 years of vitality. The Club looks forward to many more years of education, service, and leadership.