

Chapel Hill Garden Club

Organized 1931



Club History
1931 – 2017

History of the Chapel Hill Garden Club

For over eighty-five years, the Chapel Hill Garden Club (CHGC) has brought together talented women and men who share a love of gardening. Through this common interest, members have enjoyed meetings, lectures, field trips, floral design classes, and various social events such as our annual Holiday Tea and Spring Picnic. These activities in turn fostered a unique fellowship and provided opportunities for lasting friendships. As stated in our Constitution, "The objective of the Club shall be to educate its members in horticulture, floral design, landscape design, and sound environmental practice, and to encourage public and civic beautification and sound environmental practice through gardening." Over the decades the activities and projects have changed with the times, but sharing the love of gardening, dedication to community, and abundant friendships remains the same.

The Chapel Hill Garden Club began as the Garden Department of the Chapel Hill Community Club in 1928. In 1930, the Garden Department broke away from the Community Club to join the newly formed Garden Club of North Carolina. In January 1931, leaders of the Garden Department drew up and adopted a constitution and formed a new club, now known as the Chapel Hill Garden Club. The first President of the club was Josephine Pritchard.

There were forty-three charter members including well-known botanists, Dr. W. C. Coker and Dr. H. Roland Totten. In 1942, membership reached over one hundred

and fluctuated from seventy-five to one hundred until the eighties, when it remained over one hundred. By 1996, the Chapel Hill Garden Club reached one hundred fifty members, five of whom were certified flower show judges.

In the mid-nineties we began recognizing members who have belonged for twenty years as “Perennial” members and honoring those who have belonged for thirty years as “Life Members.” The Club pays the annual dues for its treasured “Life Members.”

The Club has held meetings at a variety of locations over the years including Davie Hall on the UNC Chapel Hill campus, University Presbyterian Church, University Baptist Church, the Episcopal Parish House, the Pharmacy Building on Church Street, and the Community Church. In 1976, the Totten Center was built on the grounds of the NC Botanical Garden, using seed money from the estate of Dr. H. Roland and Mrs. Addie Totten in addition to local contributions. It was so named to honor and remember the generous contributions of the Totten’s.

The Club meetings were then held exclusively at the Totten Center until 2010, when the newly built Education Center was opened, which included the Reeves Auditorium. Complete with a nearby kitchen and state-of-the-art audiovisual equipment, Reeves Auditorium became the permanent space for CHGC meetings and activities.

Garden tours have long been a part of our tradition, and fulfill our objective to encourage civic beautification. As early as 1933, the Club joined with the Agricultural Extension Agency to present an event known as The

Dogwood Festival. Activities included programs on UNC's Chapel Hill campus, folk plays and concerts, demonstrations and booths on Franklin Street, plant sales and the opening of members' gardens to the public. The club continued the activity of garden viewing during the thirties and forties, awarding blue and red ribbons for the best gardens. Various garden tours, open to the public, were organized in the 50's and 60's as well.

Garden visiting was resumed in 1996 when the Club established a biennial event, which continues to this day. The first *Chapel Hill Spring Garden Tour*, as it was then called, featured nine gardens in the historic district. Over 1,400 guests attended and profits from the tour allowed the club to make a record gift of \$11,000 to the NC Botanical Garden. The newly renamed *Chapel Hill Garden Tour* is currently our major fundraiser and allows us to make bountiful contributions to the NC Botanical Garden, our major beneficiary. To date, tour profits have made possible monetary gifts to the NCBG of over \$210,000. Additionally, the proceeds provide funding for a variety of community service projects throughout both the off year and the tour year.

Previously, other fundraising efforts focused on plant sales, including an annual spring plant sale to the public, with members supplying plants from their own gardens. This sale was well organized by 1941 and continued until 1979, when it became a project of the Garden Club Council of Chapel Hill. The annual Geranium Sale began in 1984 and was discontinued in 1996. A Fall Perennial Sale was held for years at Ephesus Road Elementary School. Members donated bulbs, houseplants, dried flowers and perennials of all kinds. This sale ended in the

early 90's. Bulb sales to members in various years have also contributed to the Club treasury.

Another fundraiser was the publication and sale of a pamphlet entitled *Trees, Flowers, Shrubs, Best for Chapel Hill Area*. While raising some money, this also fulfilled the Club's objective to "encourage the beautification of grounds and gardens in the community." It was updated and revised in 1963, 1973, 1981 and 1996. When the copies sold out a few years later, it was decided not to reprint due to the new common resource available – the Internet.

Both Flower and Plant Society shows are an important part of the history of our Club. Beginning in 1953, Narcissus Society shows were held at the Morehead Building. Subsequent shows were held as a joint effort with the Daffodil Society, which took them over in 1970. Our first flower show was held in 1938 at the Carolina Inn. From then until the 60's a show was held about every other year in various local venues. In 1989 there was a show at the Fearington Barn, and later in 1992 a show named "The Sky's the Limit" was held at the Morehead Planetarium. In 2001, "Spring Tonic" was held at the Horace Williams House. In 2014, a festival of fresh floral arrangements interpreted fine local art in collaboration with FRANK Art Gallery. In 2017, the Club held a well-attended show in the Bell Seminar Room at the NCBG Visitor Center, entitled "Articulture." With many members talented in the art of floral design as well as judging, there has been a renewed interest in this area, from flowers in a mug at the March meeting, to traditional and modern design.

Hand in hand with conducting flower shows, our membership has shown a healthy and vibrant interest in flower arranging. Workshops have been held periodically for decades and continue to be a popular choice today. In the thirties and forties, arrangements were brought to the meetings and awards were presented. Invited guest speakers at Club meetings often instruct and demonstrate the principles and techniques of design. Members have used these talents to provide arrangements through the years for various community needs, including the University Infirmary, Memorial Hospital, the public library and the Veteran's Hospital in Durham. The Friendship Bouquet created during the annual Fall Coffee using blooms from members' gardens has been donated to nursing homes and other public spaces such as The Ronald McDonald House.

The study of horticulture including soil preparation, plant selection and garden design has always been of great interest, with monthly meetings frequently featuring speakers on the topic. Additionally, plant specimens and seeds from members' gardens have been brought to meetings for display, discussion or exchange. Field trips to nurseries or unique gardens have provided education and inspiration. The SEEDS program at a local elementary school have involved instructing future gardeners how to plant and harvest vegetables and culminated in a "salad day" to enjoy the harvest.

In fact many community service projects undertaken by the Club involve horticulture. For many years, we have presented garden tools to new residents of Habitat for Humanity homes, planted and maintained three planters in downtown Chapel Hill, and planted and maintained the entrances to Freedom House and The Stratford with

seasonal flowers. A recent and ambitious project has members overseeing the landscaping and plantings in a 350-square-foot area for a Hummingbird Garden at the Chapel Hill Ronald McDonald House.

Our Club has enjoyed a special relationship with the North Carolina Botanical Garden for decades. Our meetings and workshops are held there on a complementary basis and our records and supplies are stored onsite. The Garden has been a featured stop on our Chapel Hill Garden Tour and their staff has graciously assisted with ticket sales and tour publicity. In 2016, Director Damon Waitt presented the Club with a framed copy of an historic map of notable gardens and plants in North Carolina, dating back to 1937. It hangs in the foyer of the Reeves Auditorium and nearby is a plaque naming the space *The Chapel Hill Garden Club Foyer*. Both gestures were made in recognition of the Club's substantial contributions over the years. This mutually beneficial relationship is one we value and appreciate as it presents us the opportunity to grow and prosper with our friends at this local treasure.

Our many meetings, workshops and activities have enabled our membership to focus on and learn about our common passion – gardening. Through our service projects, we used what we have learned to demonstrate our love for Chapel Hill and our community. In coming together to learn and serve we nurtured not only plants and projects, but also created fellowship and friendships, which continue to thrive and flourish.

Club History updated August 2017 by Gail Norwood. Edited by Christine Ellestad, Margy King, Peggy Pratt and Jane Lamm.

Chapel Hill Garden Club Past Presidents

Ms. Charlotte Thomann	2015—2017
Mrs. Betty Jean	2014—2015
Mrs. Christine Ellestad	2013—2014
Mrs. Stepheny Houghtlin	2010—2013
Ms. Ty Elliott	2008—2010
Ms. Carol Candler	2008—2010
Mrs. Darlene Pomroy	2006—2008
Mrs. Gus St. John §	2005—2006
Mrs. Linda Curcio	2003—2005
Mrs. Vicki Scott	2001—2003
Ms. Heidi Sawyer-Clark	2000—2001
Ms. Mary Harley Kruter	1998—2000
Mrs. James Freedman §	1997—1998
Ms. Gail Norwood	1995—1997
Mrs. H.W. Hoyt §	1993—1995

Mrs. Henry Haslach §	1990—1993
Mrs. William Holton	1989—1990
Mrs. Mahlon Easterling	1988—1989
Mrs. John Gatzy §	1987—1988
Mrs. Robert Welshmer§	1986—1987
Mrs. Clarence Smith §	1985—1986
Mrs. John Lund§	1984—1985
Mrs. Clarence Smith §	1983—1984
Mrs. Robert Rugh §	1981—1983
Mrs. E. Phillips Heath §	1979—1981
Mrs. Everett Wilson §	1977—1979
Mrs. Ralph M. Watkins §	1975—1977
Mrs. William F. Ross §	1973—1975
Mrs. H.S. McGinty §	1971—1973
Mrs. George P. Hager, Jr.	1969—1971
Mrs. George M. Dillingham §	1967—1969
Mrs. D. Franklin Milam §	1965—1967
Mrs. H.S. Willis §	1963—1965
Mrs. Pearson H. Stewart §	1961—1963
Mrs. R.L. Hardison §	1959—1961
Mrs. H.R. Totten §	1957—1959
Mrs. Carl H. Pegg §	1955—1957
Mrs. C.S. Logsdon §	1953—1955
Mrs. Noel Houston §	1951—1953
Mrs. Thomas D. Rose §	1949—1951
Mrs. Guy B. Phillips §	1947—1949
Mrs. Frank J. Montrose §	1945—1947
Mrs. J.A. Warren §	1943—1945
Mrs. Roy M. Homewood §	1941—1943
Mrs. W.C. Coker §	1939—1941
Mrs. Collier Cobb §	1937—1939
Mrs. F.H. Edminster §	1935—1937
Mrs. Richmond P. Bond §	1934—1935
Mrs. George Butler §	1933—1934
Miss Josephine Pritchard §	1931—1933

§ - Deceased



Above: Josephine Pritchard's garden, 1933.
Cover photo: Josephine Pritchard in her garden, 1933.

Josephine was the first President of the CHGC, 1931-1933.