

Redding Garden Club - History Update - 2009 - 2011

June 2009 brought our Annual Luncheon. President Sharon Epstein honored some of our very special members: Dorothee Funk, who has been a dedicated member for many years, was bestowed a much deserved "Honorary Membership" in our Club. Marianna Kaufmann, Lynn Ruffing and Ruth Moran were named "Mighty Oaks" for their diligent work in Civic Beautification, and Liz Hallinan was given the title of "Flowering Dogwood" for revitalizing our bulb sales and updating our scholarship program.

2009 – 2011 Ruth Moran and Lynn Ruffing were co-presidents

The Luncheon also brought the installation of Ruth Moran and Lynn Ruffing as the new co-presidents (club by-laws were changed to allow a co-presidency).

Our New Member Wine and Cheese gathering was held at the home of Membership Chairman Andie Heery.

June also brought Redding Garden Club and New Pond Farm together for a second time (the Board had voted to do it every 3 years), to host "For the Love of Gardening," a garden tour of eight private Redding gardens. All of the gardens were well received and included the gardens of Sharon Coates and Nancy Kaye; 130 tickets were sold.

As June was coming to a close, we saw the passing of two very special members. First, Jackie Bahr, who was a great friend and inspiration to all of us. No matter how sick she was, her smile always lit up the room. Then Mary Mugavero, an Honorary member, a great friend and an inspiration to all of us. A garden book was donated to the Mark Twain Library in Jackie's name. A committee was formed to decide on a fitting tribute for Mary Mugavero.

In October, the Telephone Committee was disbanded. We are now going forward into the Internet Age. The bylaws were amended, and all notifications will be made by email rather than by phone or mail unless necessary.

The Redding Garden Club was a big winner of four awards in The Federated Garden Clubs of CT Awards ceremony: 1. The prestigious Pauline B. Tyler award for working towards passage of a state bill that would have included deer population management and ultimately led to a reduction in cases of Lyme disease. 2. The award for Civic Creativity, which is awarded to a club for an outstanding creative project in the area of civic responsibility: We now maintain 19 public gardens or planters and developed a system of teams and notebooks for each garden. 3. A Certificate of Merit was awarded for the membership brochure designed by Sharon Epstein and Debora DeCarlo Rosa. 4. A certificate of Individual Achievement went to Jill Kotch for her work in supporting local environmental and conservation issues. Jill is creator of "Saving Natural Redding;" she arranged for a group (along with the Redding Conservation Commission) to clean up part

of Saugatuck Falls, one of our town's natural areas, and replant the area with native plants.

November brought another successful Fall Luncheon and Holiday Boutique with Patty Angione as the speaker. Dorothee Funk, Jill Kotch, Ruth Moran and Catherine Streit represented the RGC at the Wilton Garden Club in Georgetown with their table display, "A Feast for the Eyes."

Dorothee received a First Place and Design Excellence Award in her individual category. Jill, Ruth, and Catherine won Third Place and the People's Choice Award.

In February 2010, the RGC Newsletter went digital; members can now read it online or download with loads of colored photos.

In March and April, in order to provide information to the public, we started the Sunday Seminars where we offered three free lectures and demos: 1. "Pruning Techniques," presented by professionals from Glen Gate Property Care of Wilton. 2. "Power Tools, Safety and Know How of Power Equipment for the Gardener," by Bethel Power Equipment. 3. "How Does Your Garden Grow?" presented by a panel of Master Gardeners, educating the public about growing vegetables, herbs, and perennials.

For Youth, Lynn Ruffing, Flo Vannoni, and Lynn Grant participated in an exhibit for the Big Science Fair at RES. The theme, "Do You Dig Dirt," demonstrated types of soil, soil testing, and what is found in soil.

To celebrate the 40th Anniversary of Earth Day we joined the Nature Conservancy's campaign to clean up the Saugatuck River watershed in an area known as "the Glen."

As Spring was in full swing, the RGC continued with its many projects. It was decided that one of the memorials for Betty Hill (she started the RGC in 1964) should be a yearly donation to the Parade Path to provide seasonal change of plants for the basket at the Well, plus a plaque. The memorial for Mary Mugavero is a bird bath carved out of a rock, with a plaque at the Parade Path, located at the right of the Town Hall on the Green.

At the Plant Sale, Catherine Streit enticed 14 young people into the Club's Young Gardener contest as part of our new initiative, "Plant Again in 2010."

A Memorial Day Parade Wreath was donated for use in front of the Old Town House. We will reuse the straw wreath every year with fresh decorations created by Catherine Streit.

The Scholarship Committee chose Matthew Kaufmann and Zachary Smith as the recipients of \$500 each for their studies in environmental science and conservation.

The June Luncheon is a time to recognize members who have made notable contributions to the club throughout the year. Mary Ellen Quick received our Sprouting Acorn Award for outstanding new member. We awarded the Golden Spade Award to 4 members for their willingness to “dig in” and take on new challenges. They were Sally Pfeifer, Sarah Cummings, Flo Vannoni, and Sharon Epstein. The Flowering Dogwood Award was given to Lynn Hyson for her outstanding work on our newsletter. Jill Kotch received our Mighty Oak Award. She has reached out not only to the Club, but to the Community as well, sharing her talents and knowledge. Catherine Streit received the Club Treasure Award in recognition of her leadership skills and many outstanding talents in the area of Youth and the Boutique. This year, Ruth and Lynn created the Pearls of Wisdom Award, which was given to Johanne Kurz and Dorothee Funk for their many years of service, guidance and historical knowledge to the club.

During September 2010, in conjunction with the Youth Gardening contest, Catherine Streit conducted tours of the 14 contestant’s gardens with a panel of judges. Many photos were taken and every child received an award consisting of a ribbon, certificates, or monetary prize. All of the children are planning to garden again.

In July, Jill Kotch, a long time member, moved to Rhode Island. She said that it was only two hours away and promised to remain a member and continue on the Conservation committee. We gathered at Susan Green’s home for a “we are going to miss you very much party.” The guests were encouraged to wear a hat decorated to reflect Jill’s various interests. They were also asked to express their thoughts of Jill’s lasting footprint on Redding. A gift scrapbook was compiled by Catherine Streit. Several children’s books were donated to the Mark Twain Library by the 50 guests that attended the party, and a gift certificate was given to Jill for her new garden in Rhode Island.

October brought a treat with a joint meeting with the Easton Garden Club. The speaker was Sidney Eddison, recipient of the National Garden Club Award of Excellence. Her theme was “The Passage of Time in the Garden,” which showcased the development of her stunning gardens in Newtown over the past 50 years.

Next came the 2010 FGCCT Awards luncheon, and we blew our own horn at having received six awards. The club’s website, under the direction of Sharon Epstein, was given two awards: the National first prize, and the New England Award for Publicity (accompanied by a silver bowl and a Certificate of merit from the FGCCT). In addition, we received a Certificate of Achievement for our Garden Therapy program and another for our Club History brochure compiled by Johanne Kurz. A Special Certificate was given to our Club for its Garden Tour, held in partnership with New Pond Farm.

2011 brought big changes. In February, the members voted to approve the proposed change in the club’s by-laws regarding membership requirements. The new rule reads: “Article 111 Sec. 1A Prospective members may join: A) After attending a garden club meeting as a guest, paying a guest fee and receiving an orientation packet; or B) After

having a personal orientation by the membership chairperson or a designated Board member and receiving an orientation packet to the Redding Garden Club. There upon membership fee is due.”

As Spring approached, a RGC Banner was purchased to use at special meetings and off-site functions. In memory of Fran Stodolink, who was President 1994 to 1995, a book, “Secret to Great Soil,” was donated in her name to the Mark Twain Library.

In March, we had an excellent turnout for our free Sunday Seminar, “Get the Scoop on Gardening.” It was on organic gardening for kids and also included the entire family. Catherine Streit, Flo Vannoni, and Jen Weibel each presented a topic on organic gardening. Also, four students from the Victory Garden contest sat on a panel answering questions about their garden project.

We also received rave reviews on our exhibits for Youth at the RES Big Science Fair, “Take a Closer Look.” The exhibits were also set up for our members to see at our April general meeting. Lynn Hyson, Alice Smith and Flo Vannoni participated in this event.

The RGC Scholarship Committee awarded two scholarships of \$500 each to Kiera Conlon and Katie Cieri.

At the RGC Annual Luncheon, co-presidents Ruth Moran and Lynn Ruffing used a tape measure to symbolically see if they measured up to the goals set by the bylaws of the garden club. They sure did!!

The year-end awards were given to the following members: Sprouting Acorn Award to Esther Johnston, Golden Spade Award to Nancy Tse, Flowering Dogwood Award to Catherine Streit, Mighty Oak Award to Sharon Epstein. Joanne Moyler our hospitality chair, received a corsage for her work as an “unsung hero.” Johanne Kurz received an award for her steadfast and dedicated service, and gift cards were presented to husbands David Streit, Ken Kurz and Bob Moran for their continuous help at RGC functions.

We thank all of those who have helped to make the Redding Garden Club what it is today, and look forward to a bright future.

Johanne Kurz, Redding Garden Club Historian