

THE PATH OF GCD – 1929 to 2019

- 1929 Organized to stimulate knowledge and love of gardening, to aid in the protection of native plants and birds, and to encourage civic planting.
- 1930 The First Annual Meeting held on Nov. 18, 1930.
- 1932 GCD joined Federated Garden Clubs of Connecticut.
- 1936 The Garden Clubs of Greenwich and Fairfield proposed our club for membership in the Garden Club of America.
- 1937 Establishment of Garden Center Library in Darien Library.
- 1942 The Garden Club of Darien Inc. became a member of the Garden Club of America.
- 1941-45 War years -- organization meeting, Harvest Show to benefit Red Cross, decorations for Naval Radio Station at Noroton Heights, Community Victory Gardens jointly with DCA Community Cannery.
- 1946 Establishment of Penny Tree Fund.
- 1954 25th Anniversary -- 200 dogwood trees planted along High School Road, Old Kings Highway South, Tokeneke Road, at Town Hall, War Memorial Grounds, and at Norwalk and Stamford hospitals.
- 1957 Designed and planted courtyard at new Darien Library.
- 1959 GCD and DCA spearheaded the setting aside for open space of 62 acres of town owned property and the acquisition of 11 acres adjoining the Leonard Tract (now known as Woodland Park.)
- 1963 GCD and DCA worked together to have the town acquire 26.5 acres to augment 14.6 acres held by Darien Parklands Association.
- 1965 Donation to Darien Historical Society for a future herb garden at Bates-Scofield Homestead to be designed and planted.
- 1967 Initiated a Certificate of Merit, which continued until the town's Beautification Commission was established in 1970.
- 1971 We published, "The Rising Tide of Waste", started recycling with the

result that the town established permanent receptacles for recyclables at the town dump. For two years we wrote a biweekly column, "Conservation Comments" in the Darien Review. Published "Walking Guide to Woodland Park" to coordinate with grade school program.

1975 GCD persuaded town to establish community gardens at Cherry Lawn. Funds for these activities were raised by boutiques, flower shows, and a show commemorating "Fifty Blooming Years."

1980-85 Our members served on GCA committees and National Board. Hortotherapy program at convalescent home was established. Participated on NY committee, which maintains a garden in Central Park.

1988 Continued to participate in "Autumn in the Atrium," GCA Flower Show in NY. Petal Perfect published.

1989-91 Continued all activities. Held joint meeting with New Canaan Garden Club and DCA Garden Club.

1992 First Serendipity Party with auction to raise funds for Delegate's Fund. Celebrated 50-year anniversary of GCA membership.

1993 Flower Show, "Regatta" at Noroton Yacht Club.

1994 In-Club Shrub Sale. Created a native wildflower meadow at the Darien Nature Center. Donated two garden benches to Darien.

1995 The first annual Tree and Shrub Sale. In-Club Flower Show at Darien Historical Society. Publication of Vintage Recipes. Donation of plantings to Beautification Commission and to Town of Darien. Donation of Children's Garden to Nature Center.

1996 Egret Award from Darien Nature Center. The highest award for service to the center itself and the community in general.

1997 Continued Civic Activities: Flower show, "Treasured Islands" at Noroton Yacht Club in May. Tree and Shrub Sale. Proceeds from show and many trees donated to landscaping five Darien elementary schools. "Grass Without Chemicals" brochure published and distributed at Environmental Fair.

1998 Continued all Activities. Purchased and planted large trees at the five Darien elementary schools. Tree and shrub sale with perennials. Christmas workshop in lieu of tea. Gave major funds to GCA- for participation in Washington DC, National Botanical Garden's outdoor classroom and butterfly garden to be presented in 2000 and for scholarships.

1999 Continued all Activities. Moved the Memorial Herb Garden at the Darien Historical Society from its lower bed location to four raised-beds by the front door.

2000 FLOWERWORKS! flower show turned the Town Hall gym into a floral art gallery and generated funds for an outdoor classroom to be built at the new Darien Nature Center. Petal Perfect was reprinted.

2001 Continued all Activities. Decided to have all members focus on our civic activities. Everyone will be required to serve on either the Herb Garden committee or the Darien Mediplex committee. Turned the maintenance of the plantings at the entrance to Tilley Pond Park back to the Town of Darien.

2002 The Club established a partnership with the Darien Historical Society to contribute matching funds to restore the Memorial Herb Garden and beautify the grounds of the Bates-Scofield Homestead. The town's historic cemeteries were photographed by the Conservation Committee as part of a plan to preserve and conserve these historic monuments and grounds.

2003 Club voted to approve by-laws change including increasing active category of membership from 60 to 70 members and amended residency requirements to include neighboring towns that do not have a GCA club. Conservation Committee published brochure describing history and location of local cemeteries. Planning commenced for Zone II meeting to be hosted by GCD in June 2004.

2004 Club's main focus was preparing and planning to host the Zone II Annual Meeting which had 100% club participation. Boxwood topiaries were created at a Christmas workshop and distributed to families through Person to Person, a local church organization. Hotel toiletries were collected for Meals-on Wheels.

2005 President's Choice in July was a trip to Stone Crop Gardens in Cold Spring, New York. We had a topiary workshop where members learned to begin various shapes. We made 180 cheerful baskets of greens and red ribbons that were distributed to Meals-on-Wheels. Our Conservation Committee worked hard on educating our community on the importance of environmentally friendly golf courses. Members planted a garden at the Darien Senior Center and added annuals at the bus stop by the train station. We started a colonial garden with the Darien Historical Society.

2006 President's Choice in July was a visit to Stone Barns in Pocantico Hills, New York. We began a pilot program of teaching 1st graders how to plant bulbs,

which coordinated with their science curriculum. We made 180 arrangements that were distributed to Meals-on-Wheels. Hotel toiletries were collected for Person to Person and Meals-on-Wheels. The colonial garden we started with the Darien Historical Society last year was very successful and is continuing this year. Our Conservation Committee continues its work on educating our community on the importance of environmentally friendly golf courses. Our Club researched and financed a major new wall planting at our Town Hall.

2007 Horticulture and Flower Arranging had an active year with great participation in local and zone flower shows. Several members honored us as they were awarded the following: The Zone 11 Gavel Award, The Katherine Pitney Award, the Elizabeth Platt Corning Medal and the Louise Agee Wrinkle Horticulture Award for Propagation. Conservation began an anti-idling campaign educating school parents about the harmful effects of leaving a car running while waiting for children. We revised our by-laws to reflect the times (email is added to our communication process) and our practices. Our dues were also increased for the first time in over ten years.

Community service projects reached out to first graders with our bulb forcing program (three of five elementary schools have been served), to the elderly and homebound with our greens workshop and toiletry collections and to the homeless with holiday arrangements for the Norwalk shelter and mittens and scarves collected at the holiday tea. We continue to serve our community monthly with our Pleasure through Plants program and at the Darien Historical Society's Herb Garden. We have begun to plan for our flower show "September Serenade" to be held in September 2008.

2008 The activities of flower arranging and horticulture revolved around the schedule for September Serenade to be held in September of 2008. We held competitions and workshops to prepare our membership to enter a design inspired by a painting, a challenge class, a succulent wreath, and plantings of peppers and dahlias. Our provisional class created a fabulous secret garden at the side door of the Darien Community Association, the site of September Serenade. A needlepoint rug was stitched by twelve members to be raffled off at September Serenade. Proceeds from our flower show will be contributed to the Weed Beach Restoration Project. Conservation continued with its anti-idling campaign. Our committee to provide hostess bags for the GCA 2009 annual meeting in Providence was hard at work finalizing this project. We were active in the community with bulb forcing for first graders and holiday services to the Darien Senior Center and Elderhouse in Norwalk, and the herb garden was reconfigured to allow for the building of the barn addition on the grounds of the Darien Historical Society.

2009 September Serenade started our year with a burst of flowers and enthusiasm. It was truly a beautiful show. In December we created approx 350

small arrangements for Meals programs for seniors in Stamford and Norwalk. It took lots of hard work by many members. We had great programs and great participation in our workshops all year long.

2010 The Garden Club funded a sprinkler system at the Darien Historical Society Memorial Herb Garden. We provided 275 arrangements for Christmas to Catholic Charities of Stamford Meals program. In addition, we decorated the new Darien Library for the holidays. We held an in-club cocktail party and flower show as a fundraiser for the Holidays. With the proceeds of the event we funded an Adopt-A-Spot garden through the town's Beautification Committee near the Ledge Road entry to I-95. Throughout the year there was great participation and enthusiasm by Club members in our Pleasure thru Plants project. We ended the year with a wonderful Visiting Gardens trip to Chanticleer and Hotels Farm in the Philadelphia area.

2011 The Garden Club had a full year of photography, flower arranging and horticultural workshops, and a joint meeting with the DCA garden group and the GC of New Canaan. We had one program open to the public that was held at the library and the speaker was Douglas W. Bellamy. In December we made Christmas arrangements for the Catholic Charities to deliver with their Stamford Meals Program. The herb garden at the Darien Historical Society is beautiful and well cared for as ever, and our Pleasure thru Plants program continues to be source of enjoyment for our elderly friends. We decorated the Darien Library for Christmas with new decorations fitting for the new library. We held a cocktail party at the Historical Society, invited friends, and sold flower arrangements- raising \$6,000. to further our civic programs. We also continue to support organizations in Darien that are aimed at preserving nature.

2012 The Garden Club of Darien had another successful year, full of wonderful lectures, workshops, new plants to grow, and beautiful flower arrangements. Many of our members participated in Flower Shows with horticultural entries with great success. Our photograph entries are growing and we will be working on increasing our flower arrangement entries by making a line item in our budget to help with entry costs. In-club competitions continue to show great success with many entries. Our Conservation Service has worked hard for the past few years helping with the Weed Beach project. It was completed with the Garden Club sponsoring and planning the plantings that are at the new entry island, the trees, and planting the entryway line to Weed Beach. All are native plants. This was done with funds from our Flower Show in 2008. Our Community Service projects continue with Pleasure thru Plans, the Darien Historical Society Herb Garden, Christmas decorations for the Darien Library, providing Catholic Charities with approximately 300 small Christmas arrangements for their meal delivery program, and Adopt a Garden with the Darien Beautification Commission, and monetary donations to organizations in town that have a similar mission as that of the Garden Club of America. We have begun plans for our next Flower Show, ,entitled "Bird Song", that will be held at the Darien Community Association the first weekend in October, 2013.

2013 In honor of its' 70 year association with the Garden Club of America as of December 2013, and the GCA's 100th Anniversary, the Garden Club of Darien planned a membership trip to the Grolier Club in NYC to view GCA's rare book collection, and tour and lunch at GCA headquarters. This past year the Club completed and continued its multi-year restoration project, in conjunction with Town of Darien reconstruction efforts, at Darien's Weed Beach. Hurricane Sandy's unexpected visit in the fall of 2013 necessitated some further attention and repairs. Our overriding focus this year has been the preparation and planning for a flower show, "Bird Song", in October. The time and dedication of the members beginning with the show co-chairs- has been remarkable. Many planning meetings involved the entire flower show committee as well as smaller individual meetings have kept the members very busy. Indeed, in addition to Floral Design Classes, 36 Horticultural Classes, 4 Photography Classes, 5 Botanical Arts Classes, there will be a Conservation Exhibit focused on the Weed Beach project with its emphasis on native plantings and an Education sanctuary at the Darien Community Association. Handmade fairy houses created by GCD members and others using only natural materials delighted both young and old visitors.

Garden Club of Darien continued its active horticultural, conservation, floral design, and photography programs and workshops throughout the year with an emphasis on competitions at monthly membership meetings in preparation for the October flower show. We also assembled and delivered hundreds of Christmas greens decorations at Stamford charities, maintained our beautiful Herb Garden at the Darien Historical Society, conducted numerous floral design workshops as part of our Pleasure thru Plants program for the elderly residents in Darien and Norwalk, and has a number of excellent speakers in every area of our endeavors. All in all, it has been a busy, productive, and fun year.

2014 A very successful flower show in October, 2013, which generated many awards and great acclaim throughout garden club communities, was followed the rest of the year by a full schedule in all areas of the Club. Members participated enthusiastically in interesting and creative workshops, competitions at monthly programs, and in local and zone Flower Shows. Interest in photography continues to grow and members have participated strongly in monthly competitions. The Board voted at the May Board Meeting to allot \$38,000. of "Bird Song" profits to a project at Cherry Lawn Park, and \$7,500. to the Darien Historical Society for cleanup and replanting of the east side of the Society's grounds. Both projects substantially enhance the two important Town of Darien treasures and continue the longstanding historic relationship of GCD with both entities.

2015 We enjoyed a busy year full of accomplishments and participation by many of our members. Birdsong monies were employed to plant gardens, trees and bulbs at Cherry Lawn Park and the Historical Society. All committees arranged programs full of workshops, get-togethers and in-club competitions to continue our ongoing focus on learning from others. Members brought gift card donations to the annual Christmas Tea to benefit Darien's needy citizens—the beginning of a new

tradition. Many members entered outside Flower Show competitions in all disciplines and we have added several members to the GCA Judging Program. The year's Program schedule was excellent and there were many opportunities to visit outside gardens on all organized trips.

2016 Positive momentum continues for our Club as we've completed another year replete with accomplishments. Our highlights: two hundred Christmas arrangements were produced and delivered to senior centers and to those in need; 1500 daffodil bulbs were planted at Cherry Lawn Park to augment the plantings and gardens installed in 2015; \$2,000. of gift cards were collected at the Christmas Tea and donated to the Town of Darien to help those in need for Christmas food and presents; The Darien Historical Garden is in superb shape; Our donated Weed Beach plantings continue to thrive; Pleasure thru Plants has added additional sessions at senior centers in our area due to tremendous interest in our program. In addition to these community service achievements, our Club membership is at an all-time high, and we have a record number of new provisionals joining our club. Club participation in horticulture, floral design, and photography is extremely strong and numerous Club members won awards in GCA shows during the year. Monarch butterflies have been nurtured and released and workshops in every discipline abound. Our annual meeting in June had over 90 attendees- most of our membership- and everyone is volunteering and helping. Our Club is continuing a tradition of community service, education, and camaraderie.

2017 The GCD continued strong this year with many active and enthusiastic members doing good work. We had a record number of provisionals with a class of 16, who are all competing and learning and working toward becoming full members. 2017 marks our 75th Anniversary as a GCA club which we commemorated with a fundraiser and cocktail celebration. We completed a survey of the membership giving us great ideas and ways to grow and strengthen in the future. Members attended Shirley Meniece, NAL, and the Annual Meeting bringing new and exciting ideas back to the club. Our Conservation and Hort committees worked together to make bat houses to sell to the membership to increase the depleted bat population, in keeping with the GCA goals of protecting pollinators. We had a great program with all disciplines represented including a farm to table story that included a delicious lunch for the club. We converted our newsletter and email to a new program which enabled improved and streamlined communication. Our club began contemplating ideas and concepts to prepare for a flower show. At our Christmas Tea we again collected over \$2,000. for Darien social services, and our Pleasure Through Plants teams entertained seniors in two locations every month. Members are happy and continuing with all the areas of the club with healthy and strong participation.

2018 The GCD continues to thrive after commemorating its 75th Year as a GCA club with a fundraiser raising critical funds to prepare for a flower show entitled

Persephone which will take place in May, 2019. Many committees are busy at work preparing the schedule and programming for the flower show. The garden at the Darien Historical Society had a complete overhaul with the garden organized with new signage and the addition of many cultivars. An educational brochure was produced for the public. We held parties and a tea in the garden to celebrate the new garden. The conservation committee made important steps in working with the town to further the conservation efforts in Darien. We had an excellent program with wonderful speakers in all areas. There were wonderful educational workshops and competitions throughout the year in all disciplines. We are graduating 11 provisionals and welcoming 5 new provisionals. We continued our programs Pleasure through Plants and our Christmas Greens workshop where we created 300 arrangements and collected gift cards for social services. We took field trips and visited the NYBG together. Members continue to participate enthusiastically in all areas and the club is thriving.

2019 Club members were active in all areas while enthusiastically planning and staging a very successful GCA spring flower show, *Persephone*. The club sponsored the movie *Toxic Puzzle* and a discussion with Dr. Paul Cox, open to the public. The GCD continued to serve the community through Pleasure through Plants, the Memorial Herb Garden, Cherry Lawn, and a new education program with middle school aged children through the Aspire Program in Norwalk, CT. Over 400 centerpieces were created for seniors at the Greens Workshop and members donated \$1,500 in gift certificates for Darien Social Services. The members voted to change the by-laws to enable the club to sponsor conservation efforts that align with the GCA Position Papers. The club then sponsored BYOB Darien and the Pollinator Pathway. A new conservation award was created to honor Carolyn Schoonmaker.