

St. George Garden Club History

<h2>1921</h2>	<p>In 1921 the St. George Garden Club was established by local residents with a growing commitment to improving the private and public properties in the agriculturally based community of St. George and the "Township" of South Dumfries</p> <p>The South Dumfries Public Library provided a large collection of books on horticulture and despite the libraries severe decline of new titles between the two World Wars, the towns' people utilized the resources that were available. Beautification projects began in earnest around the public buildings and the Garden Club continued in these efforts where a city parks department would normally fill this role.</p>
<h2>1940's</h2>	<p>Fundraising - for these initiatives were often the result from small sales of annuals. They eventually grew to large well-planned events that were of great benefit, with donated plantings made available for sale. The funds provided the future investments continue to provide resources to this day.</p>
<h2>1950's</h2>	<p>Tree Planting – The garden club volunteers recognized the importance of tree planting and as the community grew so did the club's efforts in ensuring that streets were all planted out with trees and new subdivisions received trees for individual properties and for the establishment of parks.</p> <p>By the early 1950's the garden club had planted trees on all the major streets I St. George and 70 years later similar projects can still be highlighted. In later years the Garden Club was involved in the efforts of planting red maples along the concession roads of South Dumfries and participated in projects such as "Seeds to Trees" to inspire youth in these interests. Honouring members through the planting of memorial trees has become a tradition as well as the honouring of our community heroes through the maintenance of the cenotaph and the planting of heritage apple trees at the Adelaide Hoodless Hunter Homestead.</p>
<h2>Youth Gardeners</h2>	<p>The garden club has been working with youth gardeners since the early 90's with recognition from the Ontario Horticultural Association (OHA). The work with the youth gardeners was intermittent, but in 2015 a small group of home schooled students formed the latest group. Then in 2018 we introduced a "Sunflower Growing Contest". There were winners for the largest head and tallest plant. In 2019 a group of ladies from the club will be visiting the St. George German's school with some horticulture based sessions. We have been told that there will be 46 students in grade 4 during 2019-2020 school year.</p>
<h2>OHA Recognition</h2>	<p>Several members have been recognized by the OHA for their contribution including Peggy Tolhurst and Ruby Johnson and Hank Hedges. However, it is the efforts of all the member who have shared their enthusiasm with the projects, including the Adopt-a-Road, street plantings, school beautification and the lily garden which are deserving of much praise</p>
<h2>Joseph B.. Smith Lily Gardens</h2>	<p>A major project of the St. George Garden Club was the maintenance of the renowned Joseph B. Smith Lily Gardens. The garden is a memorial to This gentleman who was a lily hybridizer in the village. Joseph Smith had farmed locally and on his retirement he pursued his passion on his smaller property in St. George. He planted his whole garden in lilies (he was now feeding the soul) and he was challenged to produce a species that was a first in North America. Others caught his passion. In 1990 the garden club appealed to the township for a public spot for a lily garden. The only available area was a cattail marsh which had been a dump for the construction trades. The township improved the drainage from the area and club member worked evenings to cleanout lumber, concrete, stones, paint cans, etc. and with rototilling</p>

	<p>they were able to cultivate about 8" of soil</p> <p>Starting that year, we eventually built 35 – 6" raised beds each 8 feet square arranged like an expanded checker board with 4 foot paths throughout. The beds were filled with garden soil, thus giving us a foot of arable soil.</p>
2012	<p>In 2012 the property adjacent to the lily gardens was the County water pumping station, and they were concerned about any weed control products that might be used. So the garden club contact the St. George Lions Club who had property at the west end of St. George for soccer fields. We were given permission to grow our lilies in that area and we had 3 21 foot beds that were 6 feet wide. However there were challenges at this location. There was no source of water for watering, and we encountered several thefts of bulbs each Fall.</p>
2015	<p>Back in 2015 Jan Masters became President, and she wanted to improve the garden club. The membership had dropped to around 50 people, the meetings at that time were held in the Lawn Bowling Clubhouse. After much thought, the meetings were moved to the St. George Fire Hall meeting room, which offered lots of street level parking and a nice bright venue.</p> <p>Vice President Shirley Steedman took on the role of Membership Recruitment and started the process of increasing membership. Jan also began the idea of having a garden party at her farm, and this was the highlight of the year</p>
2016	<p>In 2016 the County of Brant gave us permission to move the Lily Gardens into a bed in the front lawn of the South Dumfries Community Centre at 7 Gaukel Street, St. George. Roy Steedman the co-ordinator, designed a circular bed with pie shaped areas allowing easier weeding. This garden has worked out very well, however we are now finding challenges with the lily beetle....so will inter-plant some day lilies to provide colour through-out the summer.</p> <p>Shirley Steedman co-ordinated the Main Street Planters and Barbara Baumgart co-ordinated the Plant Sale. Memberships totalled 90 members; 5 life members; we youth gardeners and 8 associate members</p>
2017	<p>Shirley Steedman was now president, and the attendance had grown to 85 members. Meetings were improved by keeping them fun. Members were asked to wear their name tags so we could learn all the new names. We started to have social events through the summer. Early July was a Strawberry social at "The Steedmans" and in August the Garden Party. Gayle Smithers co-ordinated the Main Street Planters. Years ago the garden club would sell lily bulbs at AppleFest, but we decided to sell tulip bulbs, which was very popular and we were also able to recruit some new members as well. Memberships totalled 114 plus 5 life members, 9 youth gardeners and 1 associate member.</p>
2018	<p>2018 was very busy. St. George along with Lynden and Glen Morris, hosted the District 6 AGM in April. It was a busy time, but the upper hall at the arena look so lovely. Glen Morris lead the idea of a mini Flower Show and Lynden organized the food...St. George handled everything in between.... Unfortunately we had an ice storm that day, but even with the weather challenges it was a huge success.</p> <p>Ruth Gillespie & Jan Masters co-ordinated the Plant Sale. The Spring was very cold and wet and most gardeners had not gotten out todig perennials....so our proceeds were down, but there was the addition of new signage for the tables to better mark the areas of plants.</p> <p>Ruth Gillespie and Jan Masters also co-ordinated the Main Street Planters....they were the best we had ever seen. They also decorated the planters for Winter with evergreen trees, cedar, dried hydrangeas and lights.</p> <p>The club continued to grow and at the end of 2018 we had a membership roll of over 102 members included in this total was 13 life members and 12 Youth gardeners</p>

2019

This year the plant sale was co-ordinated by a committee headed up by Shirley Steedman. This group had some new ideas. Although we had another wet cold Spring....the net proceeds were up.

The Spring speakers were: Catherine McGill on "How to garden when getting older"; Olwyn Mitton who spoke on Hydrangeas and extending your living space outdoors; and Kari Bishop who spoke on the family Bee Business.