
The History of the North York Horticultural Society

by Judy Hernandez

1924 – 2004

Toronto in 1924 had a fraction of its current population and printed horticultural information was a fraction of what it is today. Widespread interest in home gardening was just starting, so the stage was set for the development of horticultural societies to spread the knowledge that home gardeners needed. Also, city and town beautification became an important item to many civic minded individuals. The North York Horticultural Society was founded in 1924 to address both issues.

The man who showed the foresight and civic awareness to start the NYHS was Frederick J. Goode (1873–1941). Records indicate that in 1890 he worked for John Patrick Crichton-Stuart, the 3rd Marquess of Bute at Cardiff Castle in Wales. The records also state that Goode planned and designed the gardens and grounds of the Castle before immigrating to Canada with his family around 1901. He worked for the City of Toronto Parks Department and eventually advanced to the post of Superintendent. Around 1918, he left the department to become a partner in a florist business.

Sometime in 1924, Goode and some unknown friends formed the North York Township Horticultural Society, with an aim to beautify the township and spread horticultural knowledge. From 1924 to 1960 membership cost the grand sum of \$1. The fee was raised to \$2 “

From the early days, children were an important part of the NYHS. In the 1920s a Junior Society was formed for youngsters aged 9–17. Membership cost 25¢, and 28 new members were enrolled in May 1928. Over the years, the age range changed and the numbers fluctuated. For twelve years (1947–1959), the society owned a plot of land on Olive Avenue, three blocks east of Yonge St. Here the Junior Society learned the rudiments of gardening by tending their plots. In 1962, the juniors numbered 38; in 1967, membership was 50 with five names on the waiting list. However, by June 1981, junior membership had dropped to 13, and the group was eventually disbanded.

In the past, members participated in photography contests, and in 1961, the society even had a contest for a crest or emblem. Participation in the latter contest was poor, and no suitable logo was chosen. It took another 41 years before we finally acquired a logo for the society, namely, Kay Nickson’s pansy design.

In 1982, the society initiated an agreement with York cemetery to rent out allotment gardens to members, for a \$10 refundable deposit. The society no longer has these gardens, and citizens can now rent allotments in North York for a non-refundable \$53 fee.

NYHS activities have included garden tours of members' gardens and out-of-town bus trips. These bus excursions went as far afield as Ottawa at tulip time. Monthly meetings have covered the gamut of horticultural topics by experts. One notable guest speaker was H. B. Dunnington-Grubb in July 1960. He spoke of Toronto's need for the botanical garden that he and others were planning for Meadowvale, just west of Toronto. That plan, however, never materialized. At one time, the annual flower show was a major two-day event, and in some years, after the show the flowers were donated to shut-ins or the local hospital. In past years, each annual flower show had a theme. For the 1966 show, the theme was of a French café. The following year was Canada's centennial year, and the show reflected that theme.

Public service has been a hallmark of the NYHS since its inception. Community projects have included plantings of trees and flower beds for Bloorview Children's Hospital, the CNIB, Carefree Lodge, St. John's Convalescent Hospital, the North York Public Library, and along Yonge St. The society once decorated the northern part of Avenue Road with hanging baskets, planted in cooperation with the local business association. Also, in past years, members raised funds for the Canadian Cancer Society in springtime by selling daffodils in Fairview Mall. For years at Christmas time, the society has been bringing colour and cheer to Meals on Wheels recipients in the form of gifts of plants.

For eighty years, dedicated generations of NYHS volunteers have been helping gardeners grow. These members have shared seeds, plants, and gardening knowledge with members and non-members alike. This generosity has kept the society alive for years, and that is no mean feat. Indeed, the venerable Mother Teresa once said, "To keep a lamp burning, we have to keep putting oil in it." For nine decades, NYHS members have been faithfully doing just that.



The History of the North York Horticultural Society

By Joan Shean

2005 – 2019

The North York Horticultural Society continues to grow and our neighbourhood continues to evolve. We have condominiums and apartments lining our streets, and townhouses with smaller areas of land. People need to adapt their homes to smaller or vertical gardens. Balcony gardens have become common to see high above the streets. Community gardens are available if you do not have any available space. The North York Garden Club has been working with the community for years to keep gardening a part of our environment.

We worked with The Parkview Community Gardens and designed and planted two of the entrance gardens at 44 Parkview Avenue. A great place to introduce children to the benefits of gardening. Everyone is welcome to help or just stroll.

In 2008 we started a photography competition at the request of our members. In the months that we do not have flower shows we can still enjoy the photos our members have taken.

In 2010 North York Horticultural Society decided by the majority of members to make the name change to North York Garden Club. This new name clearly explains who we are, this will be our operating name. We will continue to be legally registered and conduct our formal business as the North York Horticultural Society.

Our flower shows have continued to be a favourite of our members and at our annual shows held in the community centre we invite the public to view a colourful, creative show of flowers, vegetables, and plants.

Our club is fortunate to have many talented gardeners who share their knowledge with us. We have workshops, displays and speakers showing how to make our presentation at the Flower Shows a great success. Our flower show committee leaders over the years have been Betty Taylor, Joan Lester, Tom Nickson, Janet Love, Gloria Broks. Our members exhibit at Canada Blooms, OHA Annual Convention, Canadian National Exhibition, Get a Jump on Spring, District 5 AGM and any other events that come along. Over the years many 1st have been awarded to Diane Wilton, Pat Cappelli, Gloria Broks, Soo-Ling Huang and many more.

The North York Great Front Gardens Contest was launched with co-sponsor Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation. The competition was to recognize gardeners who make our neighbourhoods look beautiful. Residents were asked to nominate the best front yard garden in North York. An awards ceremony took place in September to present the winners with a sign to display on their property. Categories included:

Residential-Environmental, Residential-Traditional
Multi-Residential–Condominium/Apartment
Non-Residential–Schools, Community Gardens, Pollinator Gardens etc.
Letting our neighbours know we appreciate the work they put into their gardens.
2011-2016

Garden Tours, Conventions, Flower Shows, Plant Sales, Competitions, Volunteering,
Workshops, Photo Contests, Newsletters, Pot Luck Dinner, Entertainment, Speakers,

Our mission is to promote the love of gardening to our members and the public through
meetings, guest speakers, flowers shows, plant sales and community outreach
activities.

As long as we continue to have wonderful members who volunteer their time and
knowledge we will continue to move forward, create and maintain new traditions for the
North York Garden Club to share.

Join Us, Learn, Enjoy, Have Fun!

NORTH YORK GARDEN CLUB
Established in 1924 as North York Horticultural Society
Member of the Ontario Horticultural Association, District 5