

The Garden Club of Amherst Celebrates 100 years of Growing

Civic Engagement and Town Beautification

In 1916, according to the history of the first 50 years, "it was decided that the Club's usefulness should reach beyond its membership, and many projects were started. Plans for home gardens were made into a small book that was distributed locally, plant exchanges and sales were begun, garden books were given to the town library, and a garden survey of Amherst was made in order to stimulate public interest in home gardens."

From that beginning 100 years of civic involvement has grown. Besides maintaining the Eighteenth Century Garden and developing informative materials about town trees, the Garden Club of Amherst makes gifts and contributions to numerous organizations. This is made possible because of the money raised by the annual plant sale. The club has been described as "a group of interesting people with a common interest in gardens who work hard to raise money to give away."

Many years of projects

1917 Victory Gardens

During World War I, Garden Club members encouraged school children to grow Victory Gardens and gave out awards for well-grown vegetables. Howard Atkins, who would later found Atkins Farms, won a prize for his sweet corn. On July 10, 1917 the club gave an elaborate party on the common to benefit the Red Cross.

1921 Clean up

A ravine on South Pleasant Street near what is now Amherst Farmers Supply had become a casual dump. Club members cleaned it up and planted shrubs and ground covers to discourage further dumping.

1926 Sweetser Park

With \$100 from the club, \$500 from founding member Elizabeth Tyler, and a town match, Sweetser Park was graded and planted from plans made by Professor Walter Harrison of the Massachusetts Agricultural College (now UMass).

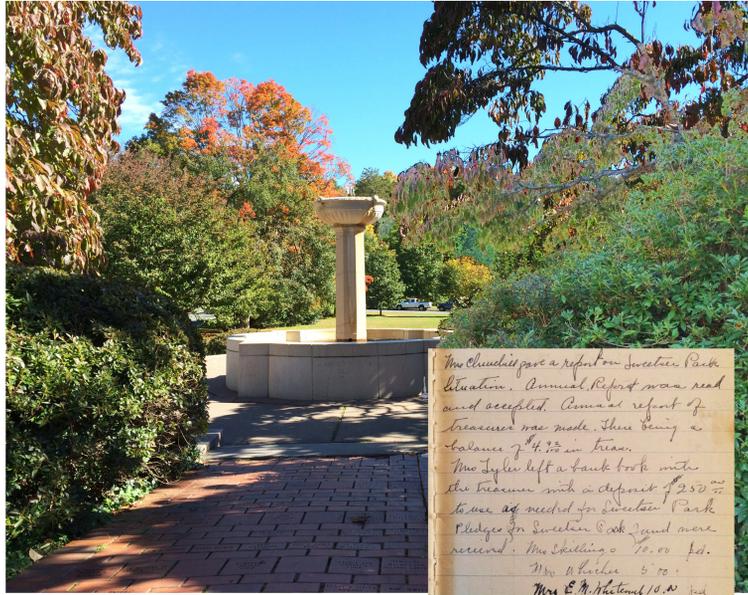
1936 Flower Festival

The Garden Section of the Woman's Club collaborated with club members on an elaborate flower festival at the Lord Jeffrey Inn. Displays of plants, flowers, flower arrangements, and tea table arrangements complemented fortune telling, card games, street dancing, and many other activities.

1940s World War II

Club members maintained vegetable gardens at Westover Air Force Base. After the war they provided flower arrangements for patients and to brighten the chapel and other public spaces at the Veterans Hospital in Leeds.

Reportedly, vegetable seeds sent overseas by garden clubs via the Federation helped produce many tons of food for our allies. After the war the club received a certificate of "Distinguished War Service."



Sweetser Park
Beautiful Sweetser Park (above) received half of its original funding from Garden Club members, as noted in this excerpt (right) from 1926 annual meeting minutes.

The Churchills gave a report on Sweetser Park. Annual Report was read and accepted. Annual report of Treasurer was made, there being a balance of \$4.00 in treas. Mrs. Tyler left a bank book with the balance of \$250.00 to be used as needed for Sweetser Park. Pledge for Sweetser Park fund more received. Mrs. Skilling 10.00 pd. Mrs. E. M. Nelson 10.00 pd. Mrs. J. E. Perry 10.00 pd. A motion was made and carried that the Sweetser Park Investigating Committee be made a permanent committee. Its president...

Where the Money Goes

UMass Scholarships

As part of its 75th Anniversary in 1990, the club established an annual scholarship for a student studying some aspect of horticulture at the University of Massachusetts. This is supported by a special fund and by plant sale proceeds.

Recipients of Garden Club of Amherst funds over the years

Public Libraries:

Beginning with early member Mabelle Churchill's donation of garden books to the Jones Library, the Garden Club has provided support each year to several public and school libraries to purchase garden books. Currently the club gives to the Jones Library and its branches, and makes donations to libraries in towns where members reside, including Belchertown, Hadley, Leverett, Montague, Pelham, and Shutesbury.

ABC Houses

Amherst Historical Society
The Arcadia Wildflower Preserve
The Arnold Arboretum
Berkshire Garden Center
David Kinsey Garden

Garden Club member Carol Pope created this tranquil study garden, located behind the Jones Library, in memory of her husband.

Durfee Conservatory, UMass

Friendship Garden at the National Arboretum in Washington, D.C.

Groff Park

The Hitchcock Center for the Environment

The Kestrel Trust

Janet Dakin (member 1942-1994) founded the Kestrel Trust which the Garden Club continues to support.

Nasami Farm

Nursery of the New England Wild Flower Society

The Nature Conservancy

The New England Wild Flower Society

Town of Amherst

Donations of trees to the high school and police station

Waugh Arboretum, UMass

Named in honor of Frank Waugh, founder of the Department of Landscape Architecture and husband of Alice Waugh (member 1919-1947)



(above): Leverett Library gardening books purchased with club donations.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.

(right): Newspaper clipping about Mabelle Churchill's gift to the Jones Library.



1950s

The club sponsored holiday decorating contests, awarding one prize to a 10-year-old, Richard Dowd.

Members competed for awards, including this silver bowl won by Sylvia Thompson in 1953 for flower arranging, in the Western Massachusetts Flower Show in West Springfield, Three-County Fairs in Northampton, and at local Grange fairs.

1968

The club donated funds to the Mill River Conservation Area for new steps and railings.

1969

The Skillings family gifted a path from Red Gate Lane to the Junior High School. Club members Janet Dakin, Peggy Craig, Martha Livingston, and Sally Wagner plotted the path, weeded, and enriched it with laurel plants provided by the club.

1972

The club funded a three-year Dutch Elm Disease treatment of the Grayson Elm, giving this venerable tree, which still graces Sunset Avenue, a new lease on life. (See photo of this tree on "Founding, Early History and Members" panel).

1972

Tree planting at the grave of William Smith Clark at UMass.

1974

The Loki Blair Memorial Garden was designed and established by club members at the Bangs center. In 1989 it had to be moved due to construction, and is now reestablished at the Munson Memorial Library in South Amherst.

1976-78

Club members redesigned the landscape around the Jones Library under the direction of Patsy Bischoff; years later, daffodils from that planting were divided and sold as a fund-raiser for the library.

1982

A club donation of \$750 to the town's nursery for street trees contributed to the 1985 designation of Amherst as a "Tree City of America."

1984

With the approval of the Design Review Board and the Historical Society, the club purchased ten large concrete planters for the west side of the Town Common. Club members fill these with spring bulbs, summer flowers, fall chrysanthemums, and winter greens.

1990

The Amherst Police Department appreciated a substantial donation to landscape the new police station with Zerkova trees.

1994

The original planters on the Town Common began deteriorating and the town purchased new ones—nine smaller planters arranged in groups of three. (See photo at right).

2009

The Town of Amherst celebrated its 250th birthday and local groups planted thousands of daffodils. The Garden Club held a special fall plant sale to raise money for bulbs and has continued to support this project, which now has planted 50,000 bulbs around town. The selected varieties include "Thalia" (shown on 2009 program in far right column of this panel), "Goble," and "Camelet."

2015

100th Anniversary celebration of the Garden Club of Amherst

To mark this milestone eight club members opened their gardens on June 27th for the annual garden tour that benefits the Amherst Historical Society. More than 250 people visited, raising over \$5,000 for the Historical Society. The club also arranged a public lecture for the community; on June 28th, Roger Swain, former host of the PBS "Victory Garden" show, spoke on "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Gardening" to a large and appreciative audience.



Daffodils

Denise Gagnon (inset, above), coordinates the Garden Club's involvement with the Daffodil Project, which continues to brighten the Town Common and many other places in town each spring.



Horticulture

Kate rows (above), celery cans (right), and cold frames (above right) are some examples of horticultural practices in member's gardens in the mid 1960s. Today's focus is more on perennials, but members also grow annuals, vegetables, wildlife and butterfly gardens, many native plants, or all of these.



Flower Shows and Memorials

(near right): program for 1936 Flower Festival;

(center): notes about 1955 flower show in Springfield;

(far right): photo of 1985 flower festival at Grace Church and announcement of 1934 flower show held with the Amherst Women's Club; (below): 1974 detail of the Loki Blair Memorial Garden, now at the Munson Library.

(far right): photo of 1985 flower festival at Grace Church and announcement of 1934 flower show held with the Amherst Women's Club; (below): 1974 detail of the Loki Blair Memorial Garden, now at the Munson Library.

(far right): photo of 1985 flower festival at Grace Church and announcement of 1934 flower show held with the Amherst Women's Club; (below): 1974 detail of the Loki Blair Memorial Garden, now at the Munson Library.

(far right): photo of 1985 flower festival at Grace Church and announcement of 1934 flower show held with the Amherst Women's Club; (below): 1974 detail of the Loki Blair Memorial Garden, now at the Munson Library.

(far right): photo of 1985 flower festival at Grace Church and announcement of 1934 flower show held with the Amherst Women's Club; (below): 1974 detail of the Loki Blair Memorial Garden, now at the Munson Library.

(far right): photo of 1985 flower festival at Grace Church and announcement of 1934 flower show held with the Amherst Women's Club; (below): 1974 detail of the Loki Blair Memorial Garden, now at the Munson Library.

(far right): photo of 1985 flower festival at Grace Church and announcement of 1934 flower show held with the Amherst Women's Club; (below): 1974 detail of the Loki Blair Memorial Garden, now at the Munson Library.

(far right): photo of 1985 flower festival at Grace Church and announcement of 1934 flower show held with the Amherst Women's Club; (below): 1974 detail of the Loki Blair Memorial Garden, now at the Munson Library.

(far right): photo of 1985 flower festival at Grace Church and announcement of 1934 flower show held with the Amherst Women's Club; (below): 1974 detail of the Loki Blair Memorial Garden, now at the Munson Library.

(far right): photo of 1985 flower festival at Grace Church and announcement of 1934 flower show held with the Amherst Women's Club; (below): 1974 detail of the Loki Blair Memorial Garden, now at the Munson Library.

(far right): photo of 1985 flower festival at Grace Church and announcement of 1934 flower show held with the Amherst Women's Club; (below): 1974 detail of the Loki Blair Memorial Garden, now at the Munson Library.

(far right): photo of 1985 flower festival at Grace Church and announcement of 1934 flower show held with the Amherst Women's Club; (below): 1974 detail of the Loki Blair Memorial Garden, now at the Munson Library.

(far right): photo of 1985 flower festival at Grace Church and announcement of 1934 flower show held with the Amherst Women's Club; (below): 1974 detail of the Loki Blair Memorial Garden, now at the Munson Library.

(far right): photo of 1985 flower festival at Grace Church and announcement of 1934 flower show held with the Amherst Women's Club; (below): 1974 detail of the Loki Blair Memorial Garden, now at the Munson Library.

(far right): photo of 1985 flower festival at Grace Church and announcement of 1934 flower show held with the Amherst Women's Club; (below): 1974 detail of the Loki Blair Memorial Garden, now at the Munson Library.

(far right): photo of 1985 flower festival at Grace Church and announcement of 1934 flower show held with the Amherst Women's Club; (below): 1974 detail of the Loki Blair Memorial Garden, now at the Munson Library.

(far right): photo of 1985 flower festival at Grace Church and announcement of 1934 flower show held with the Amherst Women's Club; (below): 1974 detail of the Loki Blair Memorial Garden, now at the Munson Library.

(far right): photo of 1985 flower festival at Grace Church and announcement of 1934 flower show held with the Amherst Women's Club; (below): 1974 detail of the Loki Blair Memorial Garden, now at the Munson Library.

(far right): photo of 1985 flower festival at Grace Church and announcement of 1934 flower show held with the Amherst Women's Club; (below): 1974 detail of the Loki Blair Memorial Garden, now at the Munson Library.

(far right): photo of 1985 flower festival at Grace Church and announcement of 1934 flower show held with the Amherst Women's Club; (below): 1974 detail of the Loki Blair Memorial Garden, now at the Munson Library.

(far right): photo of 1985 flower festival at Grace Church and announcement of 1934 flower show held with the Amherst Women's Club; (below): 1974 detail of the Loki Blair Memorial Garden, now at the Munson Library.

(far right): photo of 1985 flower festival at Grace Church and announcement of 1934 flower show held with the Amherst Women's Club; (below): 1974 detail of the Loki Blair Memorial Garden, now at the Munson Library.

(far right): photo of 1985 flower festival at Grace Church and announcement of 1934 flower show held with the Amherst Women's Club; (below): 1974 detail of the Loki Blair Memorial Garden, now at the Munson Library.

(far right): photo of 1985 flower festival at Grace Church and announcement of 1934 flower show held with the Amherst Women's Club; (below): 1974 detail of the Loki Blair Memorial Garden, now at the Munson Library.

(far right): photo of 1985 flower festival at Grace Church and announcement of 1934 flower show held with the Amherst Women's Club; (below): 1974 detail of the Loki Blair Memorial Garden, now at the Munson Library.

(far right): photo of 1985 flower festival at Grace Church and announcement of 1934 flower show held with the Amherst Women's Club; (below): 1974 detail of the Loki Blair Memorial Garden, now at the Munson Library.

(far right): photo of 1985 flower festival at Grace Church and announcement of 1934 flower show held with the Amherst Women's Club; (below): 1974 detail of the Loki Blair Memorial Garden, now at the Munson Library.

(far right): photo of 1985 flower festival at Grace Church and announcement of 1934 flower show held with the Amherst Women's Club; (below): 1974 detail of the Loki Blair Memorial Garden, now at the Munson Library.

(far right): photo of 1985 flower festival at Grace Church and announcement of 1934 flower show held with the Amherst Women's Club; (below): 1974 detail of