

History of the Rochester Garden & Flower Club

RG&FC history was begun by Laverne Theel, and was updated by Pat Friederichs in 2006, two of the many members who have passed away and whose memories and accomplishments we honor. This history was once again updated in December 2017 by Peggy Marchesani.

The Rochester Garden and Flower Club was organized in March 1929 with Dr. E. H. Ryneerson as president, Mrs. Higgins, vice president and J.P. Dibble, secretary-treasurer. Ben Dunn was chairman of the organization committee.

The club's first official meeting was held on April 9, 1929 in the junior assembly of the Rochester High School. The first speaker was Leon Snyder of the Shannon Nursery of Charles City, Iowa, who spoke on flowers and gardening.

Subsequent meetings were held in the community room at City Hall. In 1936 the location was changed to the South Hall of the Mayo Civic Auditorium where meetings continued to be held until 1982. The First Minnesota Savings Bank was used from 1982-1992. From 1992-2002 the meetings were held at the Southeast Service Cooperative. In 2002 a new state-of-the-art Horticulture Technology facility was completed at Rochester Community and Technology College (RCTC). In recognition of the common interests and potential for collaboration between the RCTC Horticulture Department and RG&FC, beginning in 2003 the Club's meetings have been held at RCTC, in the Heinz Center, 1926 Collegeview Drive SE. The relationship between the Horticulture Department and RG&FC continues to grow and compliment both organizations.

In 1939 the first plant sale and auction took place as a fund raiser to finance club projects and has continued every year since. The annual plant sale remains the primary source of funds for various club activities.

From 1965 to 1969 our club held tours of various homes decorated for Christmas in several themes. Among them were An English Christmas, Religious Christmas, Blue Christmas, Old Fashioned Christmas, Farm, Western, German, Gold and paper Christmas. After these tours, members enjoyed a pot luck supper at the R.E.A. building. Although these tours have been discontinued, our club continues the tradition of the Christmas party each year. Photos from this event and many other club activities are posted on the RG&FC Facebook® page.

RG&FC is involved in garden projects across the community. We plant and maintain:

- flower beds at the History Center of Olmsted County
- flower beds and planters at the Olmsted County Fair Grounds at Graham Park,
- the gardens at the Soldiers Field Veteran's Memorial,
- the large sidewalk planters at the Rochester YMCA,
- a garden at the RCTC S.M.A.R.T.* Garden that has evolved from a rose garden to a rose and flower garden.

Each year since 1968, RG&FC has sponsored a flower arranging workshop and flower show at the Olmsted County Fair.

RG&FC provides scholarships for RCTC students interested in a career in Horticulture.

The club sponsors an annual garden tour open to the public, based at the RCTC outdoor horticulture classroom - The S.M.A.R.T.* Garden - to attract community members to this valuable community gardening resource. Proceeds from some of our past summer tours were donated to Habitat for Humanity for landscaping, and members did all the planning and planting. The club has a collection of plants and shrubs to provide for Habitat for Humanity homes.

The RG&FC provides a horticulture library for our members, and publishes the "*Trumpet Vine*" newsletter. In 2003 the club inaugurated a club web site, and continues to expand it for both public relations and for private, members-only information. A Facebook® page has been in use since 2015.

RG&FC monthly meetings provide educational and entertaining programs for both the members and the public eight months each year. Upcoming programs are published in the ***Rochester Post-Bulletin*** and ***The Northern Gardener*** magazine. In addition, the club sponsors educational tours for members during the summer to visit gardens and garden centers and nurseries.

Although most of our activities take place in summer, we are also quite busy during other times of the year. From 1982 to the present our club has been responsible for helping the Olmsted County Historical Society decorate a room for their fundraising Christmas tours of the Historic Mayowood mansion. Some years we have also participated in tree decorating for the Festival of Trees benefit for Hiawatha Homes Foundation.

The Rochester Garden and Flower Club is affiliated with the Minnesota State Horticultural Society (MSHS), and currently has approximately 150 members. In 2014 MSHS recognized the RG&FC as the state “**Garden Club of the Year**”. In 2015 they honored our club for the community “**Garden of the Year**” for the Soldier’s Field Veterans Memorial Garden.

In 2017 the City of Rochester recognized the Rochester Garden & Flower Club’s Annual Garden Tour as one of the community’s top three arts activities for their “**People’s Choice Award.**”

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* S.M.A.R.T. Garden is an acronym for the RCTC Horticulture Department’s outdoor classroom. It stands for Sustainable - Medicinal - Artistic - Resourceful - Thematic.