

# Oshawa Horticultural Society



## Issue #5 –The Sexy 60s and Swinging 70s

*We continue our journey that began with the rebirth of the Oshawa Horticultural Society on 23<sup>rd</sup> of February 1931. This journey is part of our ongoing 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations.*

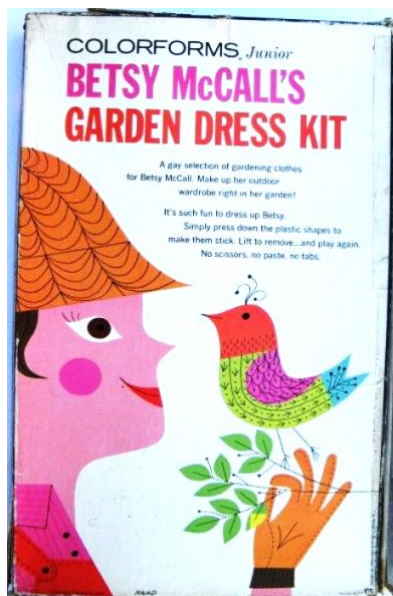
By the 1960s, Gardening was becoming a very big part of family life and activities. Gardens were a way of expressing yourself, celebrating your home, and enjoying good fun and leisure time with your family while getting some exercise.

## Prosperity Continues – Growth Begins

In the 1960s, Oshawa's population was growing as was the building of new homes and subdivisions that brought new dimensions to home ownership. While subdivisions brought housing stock that tended to be more uniform and similar in design and style, gardening provided a way of making your home look different and more beautiful. This is likely when the concept of "curb appeal" first came in and homeowners became more conscious of how their homes appeared to others.

Between 1960 and the end of the 70s, the population of Oshawa almost doubled from 77,000 to just over 140,000. As interest in gardening became more prominent, membership in the Oshawa Horticultural Society took off. In 1961 membership was 216 and a Junior Garden Club for ages 8-16 was established with another 74 members. By the mid 60s, membership in the OHS was over 380 and the Junior Garden Club grew to over 80 members.

This was a real reflection of the growth in popularity of home gardening and the inclusion of all members of the family. The Junior Garden Club had its sessions at the Children's Arena and was likely promoted by the City of Oshawa in conjunction with its recreation programs. It was obvious too, that the relationship of the OHS with the City of Oshawa was beginning to mature and change.



## The Oshawa Horticultural Society also begins to Change

In 1974 the name of the OHS was changed to The Oshawa Garden Club. It is interesting to note that I had some difficulty finding a record of the reason for that change but what I did find was a reference to the desire to make the organization of interest to a broader range of community members, especially those who were becoming new homeowners and discovering gardening as an interest. Unlike earlier OHS members, the newer members were less likely to have grown up around horticulture and farming pursuits and interests. Perhaps horticulture was seen as too stogey a name and gardening a homier and more welcoming name.

It is interesting to note that they had already named their junior horticultural group a “Gardening” Club. In addition, popular magazines now spoke of homes and gardens and less about agriculture and growing food. As well, there was a trend to bring the indoors out, and the outdoors in. This was a big part of what was seen as the mid-century modernist movement in home design.

Even the New York Times was dedicating more space to articles on house plants tropical exotics and that was also beginning to be reflected in OGC floral competitions and training for junior gardeners. 1967 saw Expo 67 and the influence of people like Buckminster Fuller and his geodesic dome as well as Frank Lloyd Wright and his style of architecture that brought new lines and design elements to private homes. Much of



this would grow to be reflected in modern garden and landscaping design and to create ever newer interests for gardeners.

The OHS continued to be involved in civic beautification initiatives such as the planting of bulbs, flowers and shrubs on local traffic islands, civic boulevard trees, and civic gardens around some public and community buildings. However, by the end of the 1970s, the City of Oshawa would create its own Parks Department and pay for civic beautification through its own budgets.

By the 1970s, this call for a shift in the focus of what was now the Oshawa Garden Club to special community projects that encouraged home gardening and that would eventually lead to the Communities in Bloom and other similar initiatives down the road. Even by the late 60s, members were involved in the judging of over 700 home gardens in the Lake Vista area of Oshawa. In the 1970s, the OGC became involved in the early stages of the development of the Oshawa Valley Botanical Gardens in partnership with local service clubs and the City of Oshawa, notably the Oshawa Kinsmen Club.



Children's Arena rises from the ashes of the previous arena.

1960s

The Junior Garden Club meets at Children's Arena  
Work begins with Kinsmen Club on the Botanical Gardens  
This eventually leads to the Peony Gardens  
and Day Lily Gardens and much, much, more.

### The 1960s and 70s were a time of Community Outreach for the OHS

Attracting new members had always been a challenge for the OHS and during this period of its history, the executive was looking more at their image and attractiveness to the broader population.

## Oshawa Horticultural Society on the Road



During these changing times, it was very common for small groups and even busloads of club members to travel to the meetings of other local clubs on a regular basis and to also host members from other clubs, in return.

Bus trips to learn about public gardens and trips to nature spots in Ontario and elsewhere, were even more popular and common. In 1961 there were 74 OHS members who travelled to Ottawa for the Tulip Festival, another 74 that went to Hamilton to the Botanical Gardens and in October, 3 busloads made the trip to Muskoka to see the fall colours. In other years there were trips to

Rochester and Niagara Falls, the Royal Winter Fair, as well as a Spring Flower Show at Casa Loma.

And it wasn't all one-way. In July of 1962, 6 busloads from District 3 from the Kingston area visited Oshawa beginning with lunch at Lakeview Park, a drive past of GM's South Plant, a tour of the Parkwood gardens followed by shopping at the new Oshawa Shopping Centre. The day was topped off with a trip back to Parkwood for a visit to the illuminated gardens. It must have been quite the day.

70s Fashions even have influence today as shown below by OGC members attending an OHA Conference in Kingston, 2018.



**OHS Presidents  
in the 60s**

59-61 Lloyd Johnston  
60-62 Archie Whitmee  
63-64 William Frost  
65-66 Duncan MacMillan  
67-70 George Robins

**OGC Presidents  
in the 70s**

71-72 Merlin Slute (OHS)  
73-75 Donald Fox\*  
76-77 Bea Duchemin  
78-79 Phillip Lake  
\*Donald Fox was President of  
both the OHS and the OGC

# Oshawa Garden Club

## NEWS OF THE DAY

1968

### M McIntyre Hood

former President of the Oshawa Horticultural Society, published his book, Oshawa, a Centennial Project.

In it, he celebrates the history of the OHS in making Oshawa a beautiful city with streets full of trees and many civic beautification projects.

He was President of the Society from 1955-57.

Thanks to Ann Couch for the loan of her copy of his book.

30

### KINSMEN BOTANICAL GARDENS

The Oshawa Garden Club will be working with the City of Oshawa to assist in the development of the Kinsmen Botanical Gardens adjacent to the Children's Arena.

City of Oshawa staff will now take over the long-standing civic tree planting initiative from the Oshawa Garden Club as well as civic garden planting and maintenance throughout the City of Oshawa.

30



*JUNE 1974*

**IRIS BLOOM IN THE SPRING**

In spite of the rainy weather, Saturday, the Oshawa Garden Club sponsored a very successful iris showing at the East Mall.

King St. E. Pictured above, Miss Irene Pawson, co-chairman of the show, admires a large apricot specimen submitted by Evelyn Bennet, for which she won first prize. Mrs. Fred Scott was also awarded a prize for her Siberian specimen (a small iris).

Times Staff Photo

*CIRCA 1975*

C

## Club veterans honored

The Oshawa Garden Club recently held a tribute night to honor some of the senior club members. Presenting awards was Christine Gill to members (front from left) Rose Domenic, Emily Flute, Merle Flute, Ruth Tink, Edna Silvers (and back from left) Joe Domenic, Evelyn Bennett and Les Booth.



## AT TREE PLANTING CEREMONY

# Garden Club Past Presidents Honored

The Oshawa Garden Club recently held a tree planting ceremony honoring the 18 past presidents from 1931 to 1976.

President Mrs. David Duchemin paid tribute to those who had the foresight and interest to re-organize the Horticultural Society now known as Oshawa Garden Club.

With the co-operation of the local parks department, 18 large trees, including various

types of maple, locusts and mountain ash, were planted at Centennial Park. Participating in the planting ceremony were: Gordon Bunker, president from 1931 to 1935; F. T. Lamble, president 1950 to 1952; Archie Whitmee 1953-54; Mrs. Thimas Fairbrother, 1955-57; M. MacIntyre Hood, 1958-61; Lloyd Johnston, 1959-61; Merlin Slute, 1971-72 and immediate past president Donald Fox.

Names of deceased

presidents were read by secretary Mrs. Charles Silver. They are: A. L. Bouckley, William Alchin, Marshall Coakwell, Stanley Gales, Percy Carter, William Frost, Duncan MacMillan, Richard Branton, Fred Kirby, Leslie Guy and George Robbins. Members of the families of the deceased presidents were present for the ceremony.

John Lloyd, of Lloyd Greenhouses, presented each

president with a certificate "for outstanding work done in horticulture."

Certificates were also presented to Mark Atkins and Eric Atkins, who for many years were outstanding growers of bedding plants in the city.

Mayor Jim Potticary spoke briefly and brought greetings from the city. Ald. Bruce McArthur brought greetings from city council.

Pat Kennedy, Herb Bathe, Richard Tucker and Noel Hutchinson of the parks department were also present. Mrs. Duchemin thanked them for their efforts and co-operation in selecting and transporting the trees to their destination. Each president placed soil around the trees which were dedicated by Mrs. Thomas Fairbrother.

Lloyd Johnston presented a corsage and gift to Mrs. Duchemin on behalf of the past presidents.

A social time followed the ceremony when group members were served refreshments by the staff of Hillsdale Manor.



OSHAWA GARDEN Club recently held a tree-planting ceremony at Hillsdale Manor in honor of 18 past presidents

of the club. In photo above Gordon Bunker, first president of the reorganized club in 1937, places the first

spade of dirt during the ceremony.

1976

Honouring 18 Past Presidents  
Centennial Park  
Hillsdale Manor



Details of the event are contained in the article. This was 45 years after the start of the Oshawa Horticultural Society. Now, 45 years after that, our current President, Judy Jaeger, is shown in front of the tree that was planted that day in 1976. The lower 2021 photo shows some of the 18 trees honouring the first 18 OHS/OGC Presidents and how they make Centennial Park such a beautiful place today. Our club has done a great deal over the years to make Oshawa beautiful place for all to enjoy.

Stay with me as we continue to explore the very interesting history of our club over the past 9 decades. Please feel free to share your feedback and family history as it relates to our stories through [info@OshawaGardenClub.ca](mailto:info@OshawaGardenClub.ca) Merle Cole

# Oshawa Garden Club

