

# CLERMONT GARDEN CLUB HISTORY

(for web site)

1st Draft 12/31/2023

## ESTABLISHING THE CLERMONT GARDEN CLUB

The Clermont Garden Club (CGC) has a long and interesting past. It was considered in 1926 when a Clermont Heights group called the Community Association was organized to promote city beautification. Mr. Daetwyler, Orlando horticulturist and nurseryman, attended their meeting and explained the operation of a modern garden club.

The Civic Department of the Clermont Woman's Cub actually organized the first garden club in 1931. Mary Snodgrass (Priebe) was elected president and members included the Floyd Roes, the H. C. Browns, the Fred Kreiders, and several other couples, as well as Mrs. Louise Montford (Arnett). They met regularly until they disbanded in 1942.

In 1948 CGC was re-organized under the leadership of Mrs. Amy (Mimi) Newald (Maynard), District VII Director, Florida Federation of Garden Clubs and became a member of the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs in 1949. They also became a member of the Lake County Council of Federated Garden Clubs.

When CGC had a sizable membership they organized as many as ten "Circles" which were smaller groups within the Club with 10-20 members in each Circle, including a Men's Circle and an Evening Circle. By 2015 membership had declined so the "Circles" were disbanded and CGC became "one club".

## GARDEN CENTER ESTABLISHED AND UPDATED

In 1953 CGC was incorporated and leased three lots on Center Lake from the City of Clermont for a future garden center. The property was transferred to CGC in 2016. After many years of planning and fund-raising the Mildred Amateis Garden Center was built by Pointer-Harder Construction Co. Inc. at 849 West Avenue. The world-famous sculptor, Edmund Amateis, who came to Clermont from Brewster, NY, in 1953 and his wife, Mildred, acquired a great interest in CGC. His contributions of support resulted in the Garden Center being built in 1969 and it was named in memory of his wife.

**NOTE - INSERT BEFORE AND AFTER PICTURES OF GARDEN CENTER WHICH WERE IN THE MARCH 2023 NEWSLETTER** The outside of the original Garden Center and surrounding grounds were in the style of a Japanese house and gardens and the gazebo was added in 2001. In 2019 the kitchen was renovated with the removal of the retro green stove, the addition of white cabinets and countertops, and a new refrigerator. An additional restroom was added and the storage room was updated. In 2023 it was necessary to update the entrance doors because of their heavy use by renters which changed the building's look to a more modern-day style. The original jalousie windows were also replaced by picture windows.

## GARDEN CENTER GROUNDS

When the Garden Center was built grass and some shrubs and trees were planted but only basic landscaping was done. It wasn't until the year 2000 that members undertook the major project of installing sidewalks, a sprinkler system, and fully landscaping the grounds. **NOTE - INSERT 1 OR 2 PICTURES OF SIDEWALKS, ETC. BEING INSTALLED WHICH WAS IN APRIL 2023 NEWSLETTER** In 2010 a rose garden was dedicated in memory of Polly Duncan, club member for over 50 years who served as Parliamentarian, Club President, and District VII Director; in 2018 members contributed funds for the creation of a butterfly garden to honor long-time member Greta Kennan; and in 2019 a native plant garden was added to the back

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part of the CGC property. **NOTE - ADD PICTURE OF BIRDHOUSE FROM APRIL 2023 NEWSLETTER** In addition in 2022 members installed a purple martin birdhouse close to the location where there had been one originally.

## **CGC MEMBERS HAVE BEEN PRESIDENT OF THE FLORIDA FEDERATION OF GARDEN CLUBS (FFGC)**

Two members of CGC who are former members of the Sandspurs Circle have served in top positions for FFGC. **Carolyn Schaag** served as FFGC President from 1999-2001 and **Arlene Rand** served from 2015-2017. Each had previously served two-year terms as FFGC's 3rd, 2nd, and 1st Vice President, as well as District VII Director, CGC President, and numerous other FFGC positions.

## **CGC ACTIVITIES**

Since the organization of the club CGC has held monthly business meetings (September-May) which include speakers on horticulture, botany, floral design, landscape design, and environmental awareness through the conservation of natural resources, civic beautification, and preservation.

Field trips to nurseries and other places of interest are also provided throughout the program year. Some of the recurring activities started in the 1930s and many been added since then.

Major activities include:

- Flower Shows - shows featuring horticulture and floral design. The first three were held by the Clermont Woman's Club and CGC continued the tradition;
- Yard of the Month - selecting a yard to be featured in newspapers and on social media;
- Plant Sales - sale of plants grown by club members;
- Garden Walk - event which allows the public to visit the beautiful gardens of local residents;
- Spring Garden Festival - featuring garden-related vendors;
- Fun with Flowers - workshops which are available to members and the public;
- Arbor Day Celebration - giving away seedlings provided by the City of Clermont and planting a tree at an Assisted Living facility;
- Minneola Place Projects - providing flower arrangements and updating the landscaping at an Assisted Living facility.