

The Founding of the Raleigh Garden Club

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Written September, 2019

“Back in 1924, so the story goes, a young reporter for The Raleigh Times, Miss Susan Iden, wrote such stimulating articles about the beauties of growing things, and published such interesting pictures of gardens she knew, that a demand was created for some sort of get-together of gardeners.”



1 Susan Iden

Susan’s column was titled: “Over the Garden Wall.”

Early in 1925, the Mrs. V. M. Hicks, Chairman of the Civics Department of the Woman’s Club of Raleigh issued an invitation to the flower lovers to meet on March 13th. The invitation was an announcement in The Raleigh Times.

“That date was a Friday – and it proved to be a most inauspicious one, because the meeting didn’t get off to a good start. The speaker was most enthusiastic about VEGETABLE. More than one attendee who just wanted to learn the “know-how” of getting the best plants for window boxes, or borders, or a garden on a small scale got discouraged and slipped out of the meeting. But those who stayed formed the enthusiastic group which founded The Raleigh Garden Club.”

--Quoted from The History of The Raleigh Garden Club 1925-55 by Frances Park Wood Adickes (Mrs. T. W. Adickes)

Early Mission of the Club

The aim of the club, as reported in the first-year history by Susan Iden, was:

Beautify Raleigh. “... the Raleigh organization putting service to the community first in its aims and feeling that that service could best be attained by extending its opportunities and advantages to all who are real dirt gardeners.”

--From the first-year history by Susan Iden

Five years later, as reported in Susan Iden’s Five-Year History, the mission was partly inspired:

Hundreds of people from all parts of the country visit the wonderful azalea gardens up the river from Charleston every spring when the japonicas and azaleas are in bloom. While Raleigh, perhaps, can never hope to rival the Charleston gardens, there is no reason why the Garden Club, working in co-operation with the City Park Commission, should not do much to make

Raleigh a city of such beauty that tourists passing through this part of the country would make it a point to visit Raleigh to see its beautiful gardens and parks and shady streets.

In the short period of five years The Raleigh Garden Club has become one of the chief civic forces of Raleigh.

The First Year of the Garden Club

The first year of the Raleigh Garden Club, extending from the organization meeting on March 13, 1925, to June of 1926, was a year largely of getting established. They needed to learn the needs of the community and of the individual gardeners, get acquainted with each other and with the gardens of some of the members, and build up membership. The Club began with 23 Founding or charter members and grew to 59 that first year.

The first membership slogan was: "Every member a gardener, and every gardener a member."

"The fact that the interest of the club survived all of the uninteresting detail of working out and adopting a constitution and by-laws speaks for the vital place which the club made for itself early in its history in the life of the community. It was only necessary to announce that the club had been organized to start the enrollment of members, a roll which has continued to grow since the organization of the club, no limit being set as had been done in some clubs, the Raleigh organization putting service to the community first in its aims and feeling that that service could best be attained by extending its opportunities and advantages to all who are real dirt gardeners.

During that first year the club had no set program, but covered a wide range of subjects in the discussions at club meetings, speakers from the club and specialists in the city speaking from time to time. Regular meetings were held, sometimes at the Woman's Club and sometimes at the homes and gardens of members. During this first year the club continued under the auspices of the Civics Department of the Woman's Club by which it was organized.

Dues of the club were set at \$1, with no initiation fee. Officers for the year were: Mrs. Clarence Shore, president; Mrs. Hubert Royster, vice-chairman; Mrs. Samuel Lawrence, secretary, and Mrs. Albert Baumann, treasurer, these last two being elected in place of Mrs. J.A. Ellis, who was elected secretary-treasurer and who resigned shortly after the organization meeting.

-- From the First-Year History by Susan Iden

The second president was Miss Isabel Busbee, 1926-27. Membership increased from 59 to 109 members.

Charter members

Miss Elizabeth Dorth

Mrs. Harold Glascock

Mrs. J. T. Emanuel	Miss May V. Johnson
Mrs. J.C. Allison	Mrs. H.J. Stockard
Mrs. Gavin Dortch	Mrs. H.H. Brimley
Mrs. Broaddus Wilson	Mrs. Henry Lindeman
Mrs. Clarence Shore	Mrs. Louis Mahler
Mrs. J.A. Ellis	Mrs. H. C. Evans
Mrs. J. A. Ellis	Mrs. H. C. Evans
Mrs. R. L. McMillan	Mrs. Nat Heywood
Mr.s John V. Strange	Mrs Willis Briggs
Mrs. W.W. Shay	Mrs. Harry Towles Davis
Miss Susan Iden	

Susan Iden, reporter and photographer of The Raleigh Times, and the founder of the Club, captured the experience of fellowship in the Club, which persists to this day. "There is nothing quite so contagious as gardening enthusiasm, and stimulated by the publicity and a spirit of friendly rivalry, ... the Club has been unlimited in its field of service, helping, stimulating, encouraging, and inspiring new gardeners; affording forums for discussion of common garden problems; drawing all gardeners closer together in ties of friendship and mutual interest."

[The Founding story as reported in the news in 1925](#)

Organization Meeting

March 13, 1925

(Transcribed From A Report of the Meeting in The Raleigh Times, March 14, 1925)

If there is one thing that a gardener likes to do better than garden, it is to talk over garden problems and joys and experiences with another gardener. When the invitation was given for all who are interested in gardens to attend a group meeting of the Civics Department of the Woman's Club they came with ready enthusiasm. Out of such a group a garden club was bound to grow and an organization was started on the spot with Mrs. Clarence Shore, chairman; Mrs. Hubert Royster, vice-

chairman; and Mrs. J. A. Ellis, secretary-treasurer. The organization will be perfected and meetings arranged for at regular intervals, probably every two weeks.

Although the Garden Club is an outgrowth of the Civics Department of the Woman's Club, of which Mrs. V.M. Hicks is chairman, it is by no means confined to members of the club and all who are interested in gardening and making more beautiful home surroundings, and in a bigger way a more beautiful city, are invited to join the club.

"Please let's organize and get to work right away," one woman said at the meeting. "I want to start a garden and I don't know the first thing to do. I need some help."

And that is to be one of the big objects of the club, for no gardener, no matter how experienced, gets beyond the point of needing to share experiences of other gardeners and those who are amateurs at the job should be able to find valuable help in such a group.

The buzz of conversation that made any formal meeting difficult and the lack of stiffness of formality in the meeting Friday spoke of the congeniality and common interest of such a group. Many experiences were contributed and advice given that will be of help at this season in the gardens.

Following are some of the suggestions that were made to be worked out in the Garden Club:

That the club take up for study at the proper season special flowers and ask those who have had good success in that special line of flowers growing to give the club a talk on their experiences, what to do and what not to do.

A garden library will be found helpful and members will be asked to bring to the club or pass around the books or magazines that they have found helpful.

Garden tours to see the various gardens of the city when they are at their best was one of the most popular suggestions as another thing a gardener delights to do is show his garden. Following the meeting there might be general visits by the club to see some garden then blooming its prettiest, or the general invitation might be given through the newspapers for the public to visit the gardens on Sunday afternoons. Often people in the city have been heart to express the wish that they might see the gardens of people who were strangers to them but they did not feel free to intrude. If they had only known it the gardeners would have been proud of the visit.

The Garden Club, it is expected will also give a big boost to the Spring and Fall plant exchanges and flower shows of the Civics Department of the Woman's Club.

Hundreds of people from all parts of the country visit the wonderful azalea gardens up the river from Charleston every spring when the japonicas and azaleas are in bloom. While Raleigh, perhaps, can never hope to rival the Charleston gardens, there is no reason why the Garden Club, working in co-operation with the City Park Commission, should not do much to make Raleigh a city of such beauty that tourists passing through this part of the country would make it a point to visit Raleigh to see its beautiful gardens and parks and shady streets.

All over the country there is a fever of gardening and a number of towns in the State already have enthusiastic garden clubs. Eventually the Raleigh Garden Club will probably be affiliated with the National Garden Club of America, though which much helpful information and literature might be

obtained. A committee composed of Miss May Johnson and Miss Isabel Busbee was appointed to report on the requirements for affiliation.

Present at this first meeting were: Mesdames Harold Glascock, H.J. Stockard, J.A. Ellis, J.C. Allison, Harry Lindeman, John V. Strange, Broadus Wilson, R.L. McMillan, W.W. Shay, J.T. Emanuel, H.H. Brinley, H.C. Evans, Gaven H. Dortch, Louis Mahler, Clarence Shore, Willis Briggs, Nat Heywar, Harry Towles Davis, and Misses Elizabeth Dortch, May V. Johnson and Susan Iden.

In the absence of Mrs. Hicks, chairman of the Civics Department, who had called the meeting for a round table discussion of garden problems, Miss Susan Iden, presided at the meeting.

The Raleigh Garden Club

A Five-Year History by Susan Iden (Except transcribed on founding story)

1925-1930

If a black cat scurries across your path in your garden, or if the new moon peeps down on you through the branches of the trees, have no fear; if you forget to step backward over the trail of a snake along the garden walk and to make a cross mark and walk around it, take heart, for The Raleigh Garden Club has banished ill luck and put to rout all of the gods of ill omen, for it was born on Friday, the thirteenth, and a more healthy, thriving youngster was never born in the city.

It was on Friday, March 13, 1925, that the Raleigh Garden Club was organized, an offspring of the Civics Department of the Raleigh Woman's Club. Mrs. V. M. Hicks, chairman of the Civics Department, had called a meeting for a discussion of garden problems, and so keen was the interest among the members of the group which attended the meeting that the club was organized on the spot.

A number of things had contributed to the enthusiasm in gardening. Several years before a small group of gardeners had had a little club of their own, where they had talked over their garden joys and problems, but it had not survived long. Spring and Fall flower shows and plant exchanges of the Civics Department of the Women's Club had done much to stimulate interest in gardening in the city, and during 1924, a year prior to the organization of the club, your historian publishing a series of articles and pictures of Raleigh gardens in The Raleigh Times, had found much lively enthusiasm manifested. There is nothing quite so contagious as gardening enthusiasm, and stimulated by the publicity and a spirit of friendly rivalry, the city was ripe for the organization of the club when the time came.

In the short period of five years The Raleigh Garden Club has become one of the chief civic forces of Raleigh. With its membership open to all who have gardens and are interested in the aims and objects of the organization, the club has been unlimited in its field of service, helping, stimulating, encouraging and inspiring new gardeners; affording forums for discussion of common garden problems; drawing all

gardeners closer together in ties of friendship and mutual interest; and ?? the city effectively in the support given to community enterprises of planning and beautification of streets and highways and parks, as well as contributing largely to the general beauty of the city in the ?? of many gardens.