

Olympia Garden Club Celebrates 100th years in 2024!!

The Olympia Garden Club (OGC) was formed in 1924 as the Olympia Flower Society by the first President, Mr. J. M Hitt, who was the Washington State Librarian. Meetings were held in members' homes until the membership became too large. Then they met in various locations in the Olympia area. Current meetings include time for socializing, plant purchases, and horticulture displays prior to the business portion and a program. In addition to discussions of developing and maintaining gardens, and flower arranging, programs have included topics such as anti-littering, recycling, and conservation

In 1938, the Olympia Flower Society joined the Washington State Federation of Garden Clubs (WSFGC) and became part of the Capitol District, (now called the Black Hill's District of Garden Clubs). In 1945, the Olympia Flower Society changed its name to the Olympia Garden Club. From 1938 well into the 1940's, the club supported a Girl Scout project called Little House. In 1943 and 1944 they had an active USO and War Time Committee. In the 1950's OGC started the annual Christmas Show (now called **Merrie Makings**) fundraiser. During the Christmas season members sell fresh green wreaths, centerpieces and cemetery pillows to raise money for grants and scholarships. The scholarship program has evolved from one college scholarship a year to currently making a donation toward the WSFGC scholarship fund. Educational Grants are awarded to Thurston County teachers to be used in projects promoting gardening, horticulture, and environmental science.

In 1959 the club began providing weekly flower arrangements at the Olympia Public Library. In 1960 OGC members were working in association with local 4-H Clubs sponsored by Washington State University. 1969 found them working with local schools and churches on a public campaign addressing the problem of littering, which was later expanded to recycling aluminum cans.

In 1973 OGC partnered with the Olympia Parks Department to establish the Washington Memorial Garden at Priest Point Park (now called Squaxin Park). They began sponsoring an annual **Arbor Day Celebration** at the Park in 1977 during which they participate in the planting of a tree. They also offer

the service of adding names to the memorial kiosk to honor any member or group of the community (living or deceased). In the early 2000's the club planted the hanging flower baskets in downtown Olympia. One summer they arranged for Roosevelt School to have a composting bin and worked with the students to maintain it. They worked with GRuB (Garden Raised Bounty) in their public garden, and helped maintain the gardens at the Young Women's Christian Association. The club has always been active in **District Flower Shows** and the **Thurston County Fair** where members enter their creative designs and horticulture samples. Their **Secret Garden Tours** began in 2015. These are self-guided tours to five or six spectacular gardens in the Olympia Area. The public can buy tickets and will learn where the gardens are when, on the day of the tour, tickets are exchanged for a brochure with garden descriptions, addresses, and maps to gardens.

Their current projects include: **Penny Pines;** Money is collected at meetings and used to sponsor the planting of trees, usually in honor of a member of the garden club or the general community. **Nex Trex Plastic Recycling Project;** In cooperation with Trex Bench Company, members collect plastic material that is suitable to be recycled. When the required amount is collected the club earns a bench made of the recycled material. They've earned two benches which they donated to a public school and a hospital. Since October, 2023 OGC is cooperating with the Olympia Lions Club by dropping plastic off at the Thurston County Food bank and scheduling volunteers to help sort plastic there. **Plum Street Tiny Home Village;** In 2022 OGC began a project at this village for people transitioning from homeless situations to more stable lives. Club members reinforced planters at the village, rehabilitated the soil and planted a variety of flowers, plants, and a few vegetables. They provided residents with tools, gloves and literature so they could maintain the planting beds. In December the club spreads a little Christmas Cheer by providing warm hats, gloves, socks, snack food and drink items to fill Christmas Stockings that members create for each resident.

Member Garden Tours: Summer fun includes visiting the gardens of members who open their gardens for other members/guests to tour. It's a great way to get new garden ideas while socializing with other club members. It has become one of their most "looked-forward-to" events.

On **July 18, 2024** the Olympia Garden Club held their official **100 Year Celebration at The Bergford Farm & Garden**. It was a very festive affair featuring a Power Point Slide Show of the club's history, catered hors d'oeuvres, wine bar, pink champagne cake, live background music, and plenty of time to stroll through the beautiful gardens and visit with other members and guests. During 2024, the club will continue to honor the 100 years of gardening, flower arranging, and service to the community and will look forward to beginning the next 100 years!