

# Ashland

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*The Voice of Your Community*

## Ashland Garden Club: Beautifying the Town for 25 Years

BY CYNTHIA WHITTY

The Ashland Garden Club (AGC) is more than just tea parties. The club does some serious work each year to beautify the town.

In recognition of its many town projects, AGC was officially recognized this fall by the Board of Selectmen (BOS) for its 25 years of service. The BOS designated Sept. 20, "Ashland Garden Club Day."

"The work of the Garden Club can be found town-wide, from the downtown area to the Community Center. Their efforts significantly contribute to the betterment of Ashland," Michael Herbert, town manager, said.

At its anniversary celebration lunch in early September, AGC members and guests reviewed the club's beginnings in 1992 and its many accomplishments and projects, such as planting and maintain-



Garden club members and friends reminisce at the club's anniversary celebration held this past fall.

*(Photo/supplied)*

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### GARDEN CLUB

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ing numerous pots and beds around town, holding garden tours, learning programs, demos and field trips, in addition to luncheons and socials.

Dave Foster, an original member, said he was happy that the club was recognized.

"The town should be very proud. There are quite a few sites around town that the club maintains. I appreciate everyone who keeps it going," Foster said. Though he is no longer a garden club member, as a member of the town facilities department, he helps the club whenever he can, like installing water spigots for town plantings.

In an interview, Foster recalled the club's "humble" beginnings. "Rick Ghilani [a well-known former Selectman and Ashland firefighter] was the inspiration for the club," Foster said. "He was my mentor. I joined Ghilani in planting and watering flowers in a few

planters around town. When he passed away [in 1991], I realized I couldn't do the work alone."

Foster put an ad in the paper to recruit volunteers. Mary DeSalvo and Marlies Plaggenborg answered the call. Twenty-five years later the club is stronger than ever with around 30 members.

"What started the garden club were people with passion and a desire to learn," Plaggenborg, who is still a member, said. "There are very strong connections, deep friendships that have developed among members."

Chris Gatti is one of the newest members. A certified Master Gardener, Gatti joined for five or six years in 2002 and, when her work schedule permitted, re-joined in 2016. "I love gardening and connecting with the community," she said. She helps maintain the downtown Clock Tower garden on Main Street and the club's Facebook page.

Also a Master Gardener, Lois Bennett, in her third year as AGC president, joined the garden club in 2009 when she moved to Ashland. "I was always a gardener but finally took the Master Gardening program in 2009 and learned



Ashland Garden Club President Lois Bennett and founding member David Foster are proud of the club's many projects from the past 25 years. *(Photo/supplied)*

a lot," she said. "A benefit of joining AGC is to broaden your gardening knowledge by learning from other members. We hold a number of 'make and takes,' field trips and demos. There are also socials at each other's gardens, wine in the garden and a 'welcome spring' Yankee swap.

### Intergenerational Program and Pollinator Garden

"Our newest project this year was to collaborate with the Rec-

reation Department to install a pollinator garden behind the Community Center," Bennett said. "Seniors and youngsters helped build and plant the garden, which was filled with plants attractive to bees, butterflies and other pollinators. The project was paid for by a Garden Club

Federation of Massachusetts grant. This endeavor was part of the Senior Center and Rec Department's efforts to provide intergenerational projects and programming for the public."

The next AGC program will be a Holiday Wreath-Making Workshop on Saturday, Dec. 9, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the library. Participants must register in advance by sending a \$45 check to Ashland Garden Club, P.O. Box 43, Ashland, MA 01721. In the spring, AGC will hold a seminar on roses and its annual plant sale, the club's main fundraiser, which is always held on the Saturday before Mother's Day.

In addition to Bennett, garden club officers are Chris Hall, vice president, and Gretchen Bravacos, treasurer. Meetings are held most months on Saturdays in the library.

For more information, email [info@ashlandgardenclub.org](mailto:info@ashlandgardenclub.org) or visit [www.ashlandgardenclub.org](http://www.ashlandgardenclub.org).