



CHAPTER SEVEN 1990-2000

IN ACCORDANCE WITH OUR OUTREACH OBJECTIVE

December 20, 1990 –

Berkeley Garden Club Membership Meeting.

“Berkeley Garden Club’s Christmas meeting was a gala affair greatly enjoyed by all. It was well-attended, and began with a delicious luncheon catered by Party Experience.

The theme for the day was ‘From Bazaars Around the World.’ And the tables were each decorated by a different club member with objects she had collected on trips abroad. Members who have costumes from other countries wore them, and it was a colorful display.

After lunch, Mrs. Claus paid us a visit, following which we had a chance to browse through the ‘Bazaar’ which contained collections of many diverse subjects including fabrics, prints, paper weights, etc., and even a collection of witches. The afternoon was great fun and a good way to welcome Christmas.” -*Jean Brown*

As noted previously, the Club had added a segment to the general meeting dedicated to historical events of interest. In the April 1991 minutes it was revealed that this segment covered an item from 1941.

“Helen Johnson brought a clipping from *The Berkeley Voice* on activities 50 years ago. At that time, Earthworms and Berkeley Garden Club were making flower arrangements to sell at Gumps in San Francisco.”

Some points of interest in the 1991-92 year included a presentation by member Phil Stanley prior to his becoming a member of the Club. Historian, Leonora Strohmaier, reports:

“The October program was unique. Dr. Phillip Stanley from the department of Classics at San Francisco State gave a detailed slide lecture on the history and archeology of the gardens of Pompeii. Research has enabled them to reconstruct the actual way things looked back 2000 years ago.”

In that year, as usual, the Club had its hand in many and varied conservation projects through the year.

“The Conservation Committee with Marian Reeve as the chairman had a budget of \$400 plus \$200 from our silent auction [which raised over \$1000 to be spent on conservation and scholarships]. This was donated to the following causes: Audubon Canyon Ranch, Golden Gate Audubon for Wetlands Project, The Nature Conservatory of California, Citizens for East Shore Parks, Greenbelt Alliance, Mono Lake Committee, Save Mt. Diablo Interpretive Center, Planning and Conservation League Foundation, Regional Parks Botanic Garden and Save San Francisco Bay Association.”

Study Groups that year were Bonsai, Floriculture, Flower Arrangement, Herbs and Spices, Kitchen Gardens, Succulents and Geraniums and the new group, Nature Walks.

Attached to Betty Heath’s Historian’s Report for 1992-93 was a handwritten flyer pertaining to the April Garden Tour. The cost of the tour that year was \$27 which included a tour of the Korbel Winery and Rose Garden in Guerneville, luncheon of some fabulous sounding Greek specialties at the Russian River Vineyard Restaurant, a tour of the Burbank Gardens in Santa Rosa and self-guided tour of the Carriage House. Once absorbed in a garden or point of interest, it is often difficult to move the tour group along to the next event. The flyer reminded participants that departures for each event were to be “SHARP; no tarrying, please!”

Excerpts from the Historian’s Report summarized the key projects and the lectures at each general meeting.

“The Civic Beautification Committee is working with the City of Berkeley. Mr. Morris Fruitman, Director of Parks and Recreation, came to the April meeting to discuss plans for the cooperative effort of improving and enlarging the parks. Alison Pinchuk and George Perko and other members have been concentrating on the Rose Garden with excellent results.

Our September program was an excellent beginning. Joe Lam, chairman of Earth Island Institute, showed slides and explained the Berkeley-Borneo Reforestation Project.

“In October, Elizabeth Millet, Past President of the Chrysanthemum Society brought us up-to-date on ‘Chrysanthemums Today.’ With some beautiful examples.

In November, our long-time friend, Wayne Roderick (Retired Director of East Bay Regional Parks Botanical Garden) showed that making Holiday Decorations was fun, interesting and he offered new ideas for making your own arrangements from material at hand.

Judy Alder, volunteer with Mt. Diablo Interpretive Center, in January presented a beautiful slide show of Mt. Diablo and brought us up-to-date on the conservation plans to save the native plants and animals.

‘Cultivation of Bonsai’ was the subject of the excellent February program given by Ruben Guzman, past president of the East Bay Bonsai Association.

The May meeting was a slide show of the ‘Gardens of Europe’ with a history of the gardens presented by the horticulturist Vice President of Heather Farms.”

The Historian gives special thanks to Treasurer Arlene Riasanovsky; Financial Secretary Evelyn Humphrey and Audit & Budget Chairman George Perko who “controlled our spending while seeing that there were plenty of funds so that Conservation projects, excellent programs, and good times were all a big success.”

Jettye Fern Grant entertained and informed the Club with her Garden Notes for years. Many of us had the pleasure of seeing her garden in San Ramon during this period. Every square inch of dirt was planted. She had raised beds all along one side with ornamentals and vegetables sharing the same beds. Opium poppies of uncommon colors with double and triple petals bloomed in profusion all season. (Growing these poppies was a gift she shared with Roberta Ghertner.) She, like many members of the Club, treated her garden as a laboratory of a sort, experimenting with different ideas as they struck her; simply trying things to see what would happen. The love of the process of gardening is apparent in this flyer that she prepared for the Club.

POST-MORTEM ON A SUMMER GARDEN

Best Producer: Anything planted near the back door where it gets fed coming and going.

Heaviest Yield: Tomatoes – several varieties, all slightly flawed with occasional green, corky spots and fibrous texture due to environmental damage.

Largest Product: An Early Girl tomato that was 16 inches in circumference, and weighed twenty ounces. (Not counting the zucchini I forgot to pick until it was big as a melon!)

Greatest Disappointment: Yellowed, burned leaves affected by too much chlorine in the tap water.

Biggest Surprise: A few limestone lettuce seeds dropped by accident into a small drift of semi-shaded gravel produced a continuous supply of lettuce all summer long.

Grow-easy Flowers: Day-Lilies that bloom and bloom no matter what!

SOME THINGS TO TRY AGAIN

A new mix for foliar feedings: One quarter pound Miracle Grow Plant Food, one-half cup fish emulsion, and one-quarter cup SuperThrive mixed together in a foliar feeder. I also put in one-quarter cup Epsom Salts, and not a plant complained.

Kinky Hose: If your coiled hose kinks when you try to stretch it out again, try grasping the hose near the faucet, and play it out with the nozzle trailing; when you reach the farthest extension, you won't have a kink. And when making a hose connection, remember: LEFTY/LOOSELY . . . RIGHTY/TIGHTLY.

Cheapest bug-killers: Wild birds fed with chicken scratch at \$6.50 for 50 pounds.

Whiteflies: An initial infestation was destroyed with tomato and vegetable dust. No more came. But continued applications of the dust preventing powdery mildew and other problems that may have been threatening.

Season Extender: When lower branches of tomato plants drooped during the summer, the growing tips turned up, but the middle of the branch was near the ground. A shovel of planting mix applied at the lowest point, and covered by a small rock, completed contact with the earth. A little water and liquid fertilizer stimulated growth of roots at this point, and a new plant for fall tomatoes was on the way.

Pole Beans and peas: Dry day-lily canes make excellent temporary training stalks for pole beans and peas. They bend easily and lead the new vining tips to the permanent support system.

Planting beds: To remake a planting bed quickly, insert a spading fork into the soil, rock it back and forth to loosen the dirt, but don't turn it.

When all the soil is loose enough for air and water to penetrate, sprinkle lightly with agricultural lime and an all-purpose fertilizer. Water that in once or twice. When dry enough, rake the surface and PLANT.

The 1994-95 year was summarized by Historian, Freda Essex. She noted that the programs for that year were “Bulbs that Don’t Need Watering.” This was followed by a presentation by Judith Redman, partner of the Full Belly Farm who spoke on “organic product deliveries to your door.” Dr. Robert Raabe was invited back in November to speak on “Sick Plants Their Care and Remedy.” Also that year was a program on the many aspects of Chinese herbs presented by Jan Vargas from the University of California Botanical Garden, and in April, Robert Chase, the agriculture Biologist for the Contra Costa County Department of Agriculture, spoke on Strategies in Biological Pest Control.

This is an excellent place to remark on the superb job consistently preformed by the Program Committee year after year. Even during times of war, they have been able to book charismatic speakers of state-of-the-art technologies, latest trends and of the Club’s general interest. In the 90s, the agricultural community had become involved in finding alternative ways of pest control and organic and sustainable farming and we see that the Program Committee found just the right speakers to keep the Club informed.

The Bylaws were amended early the next year (1995). It was voted to delete the office of Second Vice President (which had been established to plan the programs for the year) making the Program Chairman an appointed not an elected office.

“December, Freda Essex writes, “was our holiday luncheon. Pat Oliphant was the Program Chair for the day. Pat’s daughter, Janet, entertained us with her friend singing beautiful Christmas songs. Our new member Phil Stanley did an excellent job as Santa Claus. He added greatly to our Christmas Spirit.”

Marian Reeve and Geraldine Scalzo, Chairpersons for the Conservation Committee, continued promoting the protection of native birds and plants. A portion of their report follows:

“In accordance with one of the objectives of the Berkeley Garden Club, namely ‘... to aid in the protection of native trees, plants and birds ...’ the Conservation Committee submits the following allocation of funds, along with a brief statement of the special work of each organization.” [as follows:]

ORGANIZATION	AMOUNT
Audubon Canyon Ranch	\$ 25
Golden Gate Audubon Society (wetlands preservation)	50
California Nature Conservatory (ricelands-to-wetlands)	50
Citizens for East Shore Parks	75
Mono Lake Committee	50
Save Mt. Diablo	100
Regional Parks Foundation (interpretive programs)	100
Greenbelt Alliance	50
Save San Francisco Bay (Bay restoration project)	<u>100</u>
	\$ 600

The Conservation Committee carefully researches organizations being considered in order to select those which would best be served by the Club's contributions. At first contributions were made to one or two projects a year but soon, it was decided that contributions should be a budgeted item to allow for more involvement. At present, the Committee is allotted \$710 which is typically divided among about ten organizations.

The BGC has been active in the California Garden Clubs, Inc for many years. In fact, it is likely that the BGC was one of the earliest members. The three charter clubs in the district in 1931 had expanded to 16 by 1935. During that time, the district was huge, encompassing the counties of Santa Cruz, San Mateo, San Francisco, Santa Clara, Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Monterey, and San Benito. Various locales have broken off during the decades to settle into the current configuration, with the BGC, a member of the Bay Bridges District. The Club regularly attends their meetings and functions, and receives the newsletter, the *Bay Bridges Hummer*. The November, 1995 issue featured an article provided by Berkeley Garden Club's own Leonora Strohmaier. She said:

"The beauty and abundance of plants we use in our gardens is breath taking. Our pleasure and curiosity is [always found] in human nature. Plants have been gathered and cultivated by very early cultures. Plant hunters accompanied the great explorers and brought back new plants to use, study, and enjoy. The sciences of botany and horticulture were [eventually] established. These stud-

ies of the plants became confused and complicated with different languages and dialects in different parts of the world.

“So in 1753 a Swedish botanist, Carl Linnaeus, proposed a strict binomial (two names) system of describing and naming plants in a Latinized form. This system is now universally accepted by scientists and horticulturalists. In this binomial system, a plant is identified by a noun, the genus name, and an adjective, the species name. This is the basic rule. ... Cultivars are a subdivision of species names and they are the names which are frequently used in the gardening world and the nursery trade.”

In this same newsletter, member garden clubs were urged to collect cancelled postage stamps for the Save the Bald Eagle Foundation. Berkeley Garden Club complied and began passing a collection basket at each general meeting along with the baskets for Penny Pines and Sempervirens.

The June Installment refreshments were changed in 1995 from tea and cakes to an “Ice Cream Social,” a change which was embraced heartily. That year the garden tour, a trip to Filoli Gardens, was enjoyed by many.

Reading this history up to this point may cause one to assume that the Club’s general meetings were executed without a hitch. George Perko dispels that assumption in this one short paragraph pertaining to 1997:

“To my knowledge, my presidency holds the record for the most speakers who could not attend at the last minute – three cases in one year. This presents a great last-minute challenge for the whole club – how do we quickly scrounge up a program? We came up with some creative solutions. [First was] a videotape of Audrey Hepburn’s ‘Great Gardens of the World,’ then there was Nancy Baxter’s ability to track down a flower arranger from out of thin air, etc. And, finally, there was my ‘secret weapon:’ Phil Stanley! After all, who can forget the time he ran home at noon to find our projector and slides from our trip to Bulgaria and within an hour, voila! ‘The Gardens of Bulgaria.’ And the program really worked! Well, just in case the worst case ever happens again and we need a speaker in an emergency, at least we have slides for ‘The Gardens of Syria!’”

In the minutes of that year, it was noted that “The speaker for January meeting failed to come. The bright side is the Club saved \$50 for speaker fee!” There have surely been some bumps in the road along the way but you can’t say they were not handled with aplomb.

In 1998, Alice Waters made a return visit to speak to the Club. She came, in part, to encourage the Club to become involved with an exciting, new program at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Junior High School in Berkeley known as The Edible Schoolyard Project. In this “seed to table” project, school children farm a one-acre organic garden, harvest the produce, and prepare and eat the bounty. The “children learn about the connection between what they eat and where it comes from, with the goal of fostering environmental stewardship and revolutionizing the school lunch program.”³ Member Alison Zaremba had already begun volunteering at the school the summer before Alice Waters spoke to the Club. The children enrolled in the program worked four hours a day for six weeks: two hours in the garden and two in the kitchen. Other BGC members joined the project for stints of time and one member, Julie Grant, will be remembered for constructing a giant teepee, upon which a variety of beans grew all summer long. Esther Cook is still the Kitchen Manager and Teacher for the project and is a wonderful woman, according to Alison.

In the 90s, five members were honored with Penny Pines plantations: Roberta Ghertner, Evelyn Humphrey, Claudine Read, Jettye Fern Grant and Marian Reeve. (For the complete list of recipients over the years, see the appendix.) Civic Beautification projects included the Berkeley Rose Garden, and in 1996 the name of the committee was changed from Civic Beautification to Civic Involvement. The Club became involved in a project for Chaparral House. Also, some of the Club’s most active current members joined in the 90s.

Alison Zaremba, in her President’s Report, says the following about 1999:

“As we begin the 68th year of the Berkeley Garden Club, our very active membership of 79 is still focused on the original objectives of the Club, as it was written in the thirties. At our monthly general meetings, which are open to the public, invited speakers deliver presentations in their areas of gardening expertise. In addition, our own master gardeners deliver 15 minute talks on areas of interest to the Club, such as propagation, pest management, prun-

ing, etc. Our library of 400 gardening books is open to the membership for perusal or check-out. The Exchange Table is busy selling plants, cuttings, seeds, bulbs and other garden-related items donated by the membership. And our Display Table is covered with specimens provided by one of our seven “study groups,” as much as possible in coordination with our speaker. For example, last month we had a presentation on “Edible Ornamentals” and the Kitchen Gardens study group displayed some of their summer harvest. Finally our club flower arrangers always provide us with lovely decorations for our meeting room.

Conservation, Scholarships, Civic Beautification and Community Outreach are other areas of prime interest for many of our members. In addition to Sempervirens, Penny Pines and The Bald Eagle Fund, our Conservation Committee distributes funds to ten local, state and national organizations deemed to be doing special conservation work which deserves our support. Locally, our membership actively volunteers at the Edible Schoolyard Project [at Martin Luther King Elementary School], the Marin Circle Project, and this year with the East Bay branch of the California Native Plants Society. In addition, we actively support gardening education through scholarship funds made available to students in the Horticulture Department at Merritt College in Oakland.

Our enthusiastic membership is looking forward to all the good things for the new year!

And for the new century!”



*Spring
Plant Sale
Volunteers
-Mona Reeva*

Study Groups (continued on page 100)



Bonsai



Floral Design



-Above photos by Delcye Bailey-Smith