



History 1930 - 2021

1930 – Founding

On April 5, 1930, Mrs. H.B. Burnet, president of the Indiana Federation of Art Clubs, called a meeting of all of the garden clubs in Indiana who were connected with the art club. The purpose of that meeting was to create a state organization of garden clubs. Thirty-one persons voted to create the Garden Club of Indiana that day in the central gallery of the John Herron Art Museum.

The group was mostly inactive for the first two years, but on March 3, 1932, once again at the Herron Art Gallery, the group became independent of the art club and changed its name to the Indiana Federation of Garden Clubs. This allowed them to become affiliated with the National Council of State Garden Club Federations (now known as National Garden Clubs, Inc. (NGC)). Dues were 10 cents per member and there were 17 clubs who were charter members. By 1941 there were 85 clubs with over 3000 members.

1935 – New Name and Official Seal

On May 24, 1935, in Richmond, Indiana, at the 4th Annual Convention, the name was changed to The Garden Club of Indiana, Inc. (TGCI), the state was divided into districts, and the official seal (the one we still have today) was designed.

Communication has always been important. The first publication of the organization was *The Garden Spray*, dated June 1, 1933, which came out 6 times a year and was published for 3 years. In February 1939 *Indiana Gardens and Homes* was published monthly at a cost of 25 cents a year. The name changed again in 1940 when it became *Indiana Gardens*, published 10 times a year. The current *Indiana Gardens* is bi-monthly and went online in 2011.

1935 – Environment and Conservation Priorities

The environment and conservation have been at the forefront of TGCI's interests from the beginning. In 1935 the organization helped sponsor a bill in the Indiana legislature to regulate billboards along highways. In 1946 the state president encouraged members to beautify Indiana highways by planting native trees and shrubs. In 1948 TGCI helped with a project to save 1452 acres of semi-virgin timber along Sugar Creek near Crawfordsville. TGCI joined the fight against further dredging of Burns Harbor in 1950 and became part of the "Save the Dunes" movement, which didn't see results until President Ford signed the Dunes Expansion Bill in 1976. A statewide bird sanctuary project, which established sanctuaries all over the state, encouraged members to provide water, food and shelter for birds and won national recognition in 1951. The 1950's also saw us chanting, "Don't be a litterbug," and protesting the indiscriminate use of chemical sprays.

Active interest in conservation and the environment continued. In 1963 TGCI held its first Conservation Conference and continues to do so, although it now occurs every other year. Rebranded as the September Seminar, in alternate

years a Wildflower Workshop is held. The TGCI Land Trust committee has worked with The Nature Conservancy since the 1970's to protect Indiana lands and restore the environment. In 1976 we helped purchase Hemlock Bluff. This was followed by helping to preserve Big Walnut Valley, the Manitou Islands Wetlands, the Berns-Meyer Nature Preserve, the German Methodist Cemetery Prairie, the Wabash watershed and the Indiana brown bat. More recently TGCI has purchased bison for the prairie at Kankakee Sands Nature Preserve as well as supplied funds for a butterfly trail at that site. In 2020 we partnered with the Central Indiana Land Trust to purchase trees for the recently acquired acreage adjacent to Meltzer Woods—the oldest original stand of timber in Indiana.

1938 – First Flower Judging School

Educational programs have changed over the years to reflect changing interests and concerns. Prior to the 7th Annual Convention in May 1938, the first flower judging school was held. Since then schools have been added in landscape design, environmental studies and gardening. In 1953 a dedication was held for a greenhouse built at the Indiana Girls' School. TGCI raised \$9,000 to help give them “contact with something that would help them to know the true value of working with that which is beautiful.” In recognition of this achievement, NGC awarded Indiana the Bronze Seal Award.

The appreciation and nurturing of plants have been part of the organization from the beginning. In the 1930's members enjoyed visiting gardens around the state such as the garden and studio of T.C. Steele in Brown County. In 1942 members from all 100 clubs were encouraged to “choose the plant they want, prove it and keep records on it. In that way we can determine what plants grow best in the various parts of the state.” In 1957 Purdue Professor E.R. Honeywell sponsored an annual award to be given to a member of TGCI who exhibits outstanding achievement in the field of horticulture.

1940's – Support for the War Effort

World War II provided opportunities for TGCI members to contribute to the war effort. The organization sponsored garden shows with competitive exhibits of vegetables, fruits and flowers and gave instruction on the canning and dehydration of garden produce. However, TGCI Horticulture Chair Mrs. Paul Weatherwax reminded everyone to “keep the gold of our marigolds along with the gold of our carrots; and [that] the delight we find in our rose bed is as necessary as the vitamins of our tomatoes.” Members also worked on projects such as assisting with the landscaping at Ft. Benjamin Harrison and Camp Atterbury.

1940 – Blue Star Memorial Project Launched in Indiana

In 1949 the Indiana Legislature voted to participate in the Blue Star Memorial Project, and because it was a project of the National Garden Clubs, Inc., TGCI assumed the organization and promotion of placing the markers in Indiana. The Blue Star symbolizes the star on the service flag, a tribute to those who defended the United States in WW II. In 1951 the memorial was extended to include all men and women who served, were serving, or would serve in the Armed Forces. The first Blue Star marker in Indiana was dedicated in Richmond in 1950, and Indiana currently has over 55 Blue Star Markers. The first Gold Star Marker (honoring those who have fallen in the service of their country) was dedicated in Hammond in 2021.

TGCI has been associated with and supported the National Garden Clubs (with its variety of name changes) since 1930. In 1996 NGC representatives proposed sponsoring a butterfly garden on a portion of the 3 acre National Garden site at the U.S. Botanic Garden Conservatory in Washington D.C. By 1997 the plan was approved, and TGCI raised funds to purchase pavers and a bench in the NGC butterfly garden. When the 2009-2011 NGC president's theme was chosen as “Go for the Gold,” garden clubs across the state planted 20,000 yellow daffodil bulbs. TGCI has also supported Central Region's projects of sending seeds and garden implements to Brazil as well as contributions to victims of Hurricane Camille and more recent hurricanes.

1958 – Scholarships Launched

Since 1958 TGCI has awarded \$300,000 in scholarships to students who major in horticulture, landscape architecture or a related field at Purdue, Ball State, and occasionally Indiana University. Several of these students have gone on to win Central Region and NGC scholarships as well.

2016 – Indiana Bicentennial

TGCI has also celebrated important historical events in Indiana history. TGCI celebrated the bicentennial of Indiana's statehood in 2016. Clubs around the state planted their community flower beds in the state flag colors of blue and gold and encouraged members of the community to do likewise, even asking nurseries to increase their blue and gold plant offerings. In addition, a Blue Star Memorial was placed at the VA Hospital in Indianapolis. TGCI won an Award of Excellence from NGC for our efforts.

2020 – 100th Anniversary of Women's Suffrage

In celebration of another historic event, arrangements were made before the onslaught of COVID-19 to celebrate 2020 as the 100th Anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment in both Indiana and the U.S. Donning masks and practicing physical distancing, garden club members planted their communities in the suffragist's colors of purple, yellow, and white to celebrate, even during a pandemic.

It is fitting to close with a statement found at the end of the pamphlet from which much of the material for this history was taken: *The First Fifty Years* (with updates):

During the first [ninety years], we have endeavored to fulfill the objectives of the [National Garden Clubs], and The Garden Club of Indiana. May the accomplishments of the past lead us onward to even greater achievements to the betterment of our communities, our state, our nation and the world.

Prepared. 2021. Material provided in part by: The First Fifty Years. Mrs. Frank (Ruth) Krulce. Assisted by: Mrs. Donald (Gerry) St. Peters and Mrs. Robert D. (Sally) Murphy.