

B a c k g r o u n d e r

Lynn Valley Garden Club

The Lynn Valley Garden Club started in 1943 during the Second World War with food supply a priority. The federal government encouraged people to “Dig for Victory.”

In the early years, parlor shows that included the whole family, were the focus of club activities. Contests were held for the best vegetables or prettiest flower arrangement.

Club members used to have garden parties at the estate of Beatrice Summerfield, whose stately Edwardian style home in Lynn Valley included expansive gardens located in the 1400-block of Dempsey Road.

One of the most famous club members was Mollie Nye, whose father was given 160 acres in Lynn Valley as a military grant for service in the Boer War. Nye taught school in North Vancouver for 40 years and lived all her life in the same house her father built in 1913 at 940 Lynn Valley Rd. (The Mollie Nye House, moved from its original site, is now owned by the municipality and used for community purposes.) Mollie Nye had a beautiful flower garden containing many heritage perennials, shrubs, fruit bushes and a large collection of rhododendrons. She grew vegetables including Jerusalem Artichokes and a renowned delicious rhubarb. Nye was a life-long Lynn Valley Garden Club member and former president of the club.

Lynn Valley garden plots in the first half of the 20th century were characterized by tree stumps, often more than 3.7 metres (12 feet) in diameter. Large tree stumps can still be found in Lynn Valley yards although with the accessibility of stump grinding machines, their numbers have greatly diminished.

The Lynn Valley Garden Club thrived for about 40 years. Then in 1980, membership declined. At the time, there was a large surge of new people moving to Lynn Valley. The garden club, made up mainly of long-time residents, closed. Its records were given to North Vancouver Archives. Two determined original club members, Ruth Howard and Anne Walton, continued giving good gardening advice and kept in touch with former club members. The women decided to re-form the garden club in 1989. It has been going strong ever since.

Current membership is 150 with no wait list. Yearly membership dues are \$20. Guest admission: \$5. The club usually meets the third Thursday of every month, except in July and August, and has a Members' Garden tour in July that involves visits to about five gardens throughout North Vancouver, culminating with a relaxing group lunch at the last garden.

Each club meeting has a "Bright Spot" session, where members show and discuss interesting or unique plants from their gardens. As well, there is a members' question period where the expertise of the membership is solicited to answer timely gardening questions from the audience like: “When do I pick my kiwi?” and “Does anyone know what this plant is?” Each month a guest speaker is invited, usually a plant specialist from the Lower Mainland, who gives a presentation or workshop. Recent topics have included “Downsizing your Garden,” “The Edible Garden project in North Vancouver” and “Great plant picks.” _

The garden club hosts a plant sale every May, which is popular with local residents because of the good prices and great quality of plants and veggies, and because many plants provided by members are heritage plants from long-established gardens. Some of the funds raised at the plant sale are donated to local plant/garden-related projects, and the BC Council of Garden Clubs for horticulture scholarships.

Field trips take place to out-of-town nurseries, garden centres, and garden shows.
The garden club also has a Christmas gathering that involves creating beautiful festive decorations out of the greenery from our gardens (and delicious homemade treats).