

Historical Note: How Does Your Garden Grow?

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Reviewing the FWC archives at the Bentley Library, I discovered that the present Garden Sections have reason to celebrate a combined 125 years of FWC history. The first garden section was established in April 1923, shortly after Mrs. Nina Burton organized the FWC in October 1921. Dues were 25 cents per member and the new section was called, "The Garden Section." It was the sixth section of the FWC to be formed. Participation grew from 40 in 1929 to 69 in 1940. Due to the large membership, various campus locations were selected for the meetings. Professors from the Departments of Landscape Architecture and Natural Science as well as local garden groups gave the programs. Very popular at the time was FWC involvement in the area Flower and Garden Shows. Many of the members were graduates of the natural sciences and delighted in sharing their knowledge as well as exchanging new gardening ideas.

World War II was still on. Food was rationed and there was a great urgency to produce your own fruits and vegetables. Many FWC members recall a government program. "The Victory Garden," asking Americans either individually or in groups to grow their own produce and, I am certain, many of our FWC members did pitch in to this aspect of the war effort. Sadly in 1942, due to poor attendance and relocation of members, it was decided to

suspend meetings “for the duration.” The Garden section was reorganized in April 1947, and voted to limit membership to a manageable group of 25. Also members felt the need to get back to the soil and wanted the group to be known as “Dirt Gardeners.” Obviously this was not enthusiastically received and the organization retained the original name, “The Garden Section.” One of their major achievements was the development of the Christmas Terraria project in 1950, known today as the Holiday Greens project. Through it, the Garden Section continues to bring great joy and cheer annually to the elderly and infirm.

Two additional gardening sections developed in 1947: Garden Amateurs II, an evening group accommodating the rapid growth from the original sections. By the mid 1970s the Green Thumbs, Garden Amateurs III and the Newcomers Gardeners were created. However, in the late 70s and 80s these sections dissolved and the remaining members rejoined the three gardening sections, as we know them today, the Garden Section and Garden Amateurs I and II. All three groups provide a great variety of stimulating programs, field trips and community services.

Over the years, sharing knowledge and new concepts has not diminished. Given their desire to plant a beautiful and peaceful oasis FWC gardeners are endowed with a special passion to get down and dig! So tell me, how does your garden grow?