

GULFPORT GARDEN & BIRD CLUB

The Gulfport Garden & Bird Club was organized in 1941 with 60 members. (The first Garden Club in the U.S. was organized in the Lumpkin House in Athens, Georgia, in January, 1891.)

On May 22, 1941, the following officers were elected:

President	-	Mrs. E. K. Tamm
Vice President	-	Mrs. F. Walker
Secretary	-	Mrs. R. Fredericks
Treasurer	-	Mrs. F. Walker

The members voted to meet twice a month from October thru May. This ruling has since been changed, and we now meet once a month, the first Friday. The aim of the Club was to make Gulfport one of the most beautiful towns of the West Coast, and the members certainly succeeded, because on Sept. 2, 1941 an editorial in the St. Petersburg Times acclaimed Gulfport as a model for all cities and towns.

On July 6, 1941, the Club charter, made by Charles Hull, was presented to Pres. Tamm by Mayor Andrew Gibson.

A formal opening of the beautification program took place Feb. 11, 1942, with a parade led by the 30 piece Disston Jr. High School Band, from the Community Club (now Scout Hall) down 54th Street to the waterfront, over to Beach Blvd., and up to Lakeview Ave. (now Gulfport Blvd.), where the members cleared areas and planted flowers and shrubs.

A yard and garden contest with 160 entrants was held in June, 1941. The town was divided into 5 districts and prizes were awarded.

On Dec. 27, 1942, over 1000 petunia plants were set out along Beach Blvd.

At the meeting Nov. 28, 1943, there was even a real, live turkey on display!! The first flower show was held April 21 and 22, 1944. This became a yearly project until 1962, when a destructive frost destroyed many trees, shrubs and flowers in Central Florida.

On Feb. 6, 1970, a Mock Wedding was presented. This was such a tremendous success that the presentation was made before the Senior Citizens' Club the following Monday, February 9th.

On July 4, 1972, at the Fourth Festivities in the Community Club, our Garden Club had a display of plants and flowers supervised by Mrs. Naomi Clymer.

On April 6, 1973, a most enjoyable Past President's Night was held. Each Past President gave a resume of events during his or her term of office.

On January 18, 1974 (the 3rd Friday) Arbor Day was celebrated with a Tree Planting Ceremony on the lot just North of the Gulfport Library. Mayor Jay P. Clymer officially dedicated the tree and pamphlets from Tallahassee regarding Arbor Day were distributed. The ceremony was well attended with civic leaders, representatives from the Gulfport clubs and organizations, and many other interested citizens.

The Gulfport Library has always co-operated with the Garden Club and maintained a special section for books pertaining to gardening. It has

always been a custom of the Garden Club to honor deceased members by placing a book in the library dedicated to the deceased members. The Club has given the library well over 100 books.

The Garden Club is a civic minded club and over the years has contributed to many worthwhile organizations, including the Suncoast Seabird Sanctuary, the Children's Hospital, The Police Athletic League, the Marine Laboratory, the Audubon Society, Good Will, etc. Flowers and shrubs have been donated to beautify the corner of 18th Ave. South and 49th St., and for the area around the Dr. Eslin Memorial Fountain at Hoyt Field. Money has been donated to have trees planted along the beach, and the Club has paid for the planters near the Casino.

Over the years, there have been boat rides to study birds and gather shells, trips to gardens, including Sunken Gardens, Busch Gardens, Weekie Wachee, Homosassa Springs, Cypress Gardens, pot luck suppers, beach parties, Christmas parties, victory gardens, birthday dinners, spring concerts and teas, and impressive city, county and state speakers.

Our Past Presidents are as follows:

1. Mrs. E. K. Tamm - 1941-42
2. Mr. A. K. Franklin - 1942-44
3. Mr. F. C. Parker - 1944-45
4. Mr. Fred Bainton - 1945-47
5. Mrs. Nicholas Cherkasoff - 1947-49
6. Mr. Harry T. Barnes - 1949-50
7. Mrs. J. Underwood - 1950-52
8. Miss Estelle Nesbitt - 1952-54
9. Mr. Howard B. Blewett - 1954-55
10. Mrs. Lawrence Stutz - 1955-57
11. Mrs. J. M. Underwood - 1957-58
12. Mrs. Leon A. Bellefeuille - 1958-59
13. Dr. Harold W. Moore - 1959-61
14. Mr. L. R. Yeager - 1961-62
15. Mrs. Eric T. Gehlen - 1962-64
16. Mr. George H. Turner - 1964-66
17. Mr. Stephen Kappel - 1966-68
18. Mrs. Foster G. Fowler - 1968-70
19. Mrs. Jay P. Clymer - 1970-72
20. Mrs. Edwin F. Findsen - 1972-74
21. Mr. Dexter Brown - 1974-76
22. Mr. Bennett Hammond - 1976

Our Club colors are blue and yellow; our Club bird, the Cardinal, and our Club flower, the hibiscus. The Florida state bird is the mockingbird, the state flower, the orange blossom, the state song "Old Folks at Home", and the state tree, the Sabal Palm.

Our Club objective is "To stimulate the study of plant and bird life, to foster an interest in gardens, to work for the conservation of natural beauty and bird life, and to promote plans for the beautification of Gulfport."

This is a very brief summary of the efforts of our dedicated, loyal people, who have contributed their time, talent and civic pride to the Gulfport Garden and Bird Club and to the City of Gulfport.