

# The Litchfield Garden Club Restores Wild Flower Garden Monument

In 1913, Litchfield Garden Club member May White and her brother, honorary member Alain C. White, purchased multiple farms surrounding their family's summer estate and created the White Memorial Foundation as a nature preserve.

The WMF leased a 150-acre site to the LGC in 1922 "for the creation and maintenance of a wild garden, containing trees, shrubs and flowers native to Connecticut and to Litchfield County in particular," according to the lease agreement. The tract of land became the Litchfield Wild Flower Preservation Garden.



Professor Henry S. Munro, a retired professor from Columbia University's School of Mines and Engineering and an honorary club member, became the first chairman of the club's Wild Garden Committee. He devoted the last 10 years of his life to developing the garden, which boasted more than 500 flowering plants, numerous native trees and large colonies of shrubs at the time of his death in 1933.

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, the garden club held numerous fundraisers to benefit the project, organized and led garden trips for school children and held student essay and poster contests. Many visitors have enjoyed walks through the garden; club flower shows were held near the upper entrance on Old South Road; and picnics were hosted by the LGC.

In 1946, White Memorial began to dismantle the Wild Flower Preservation Garden and a new lease was signed for a smaller tract of land. The garden club, unable to continue the expenses of maintaining the site, turned down a lease renewal and transferred any remaining funds to the newly organized Litchfield Wild Garden Association and eventually into a town fund.

The monument dedicated to the Wild Flower Preservation Garden was a gift from the Safford family, in memory of a family member who was a lover of wildflowers.

The plaque on the stone reads, "The kiss of the sun for pardon, the song of the birds for mirth, you are nearer God's heart in a garden, than anywhere else on earth. A plea for the wildflowers; site of the 1925 Litchfield Garden Club Wild Flower Preservation Garden, leading the way in the National Conservation Movement."

In 2015, the LGC Projects Committee, led by Victoria Sansing, began the painstaking process of relocating the obscured monument from its original site to a more visible area on the corner of Old South Road and Gallows Lane. The four-year project culminated with the June ceremony.

