

History of Orcas Island Garden Club 1958-1962
by Vida Meredith

Read at the OIGC meeting in August 1962

On May 23, 1958, 22 Orcas Islanders organized the island's first Garden Club. Mrs. Karl Moran was chosen as Organization Chairman, Mrs. Robert Gropper was elected president, and Mrs. Moran, Secretary-Treasurer. The 4th Friday of each month was chosen as the meeting date. This has since been changed to the last Wednesday of each month. Action was immediately taken to affiliate with Washington State Garden Clubs.

Then, and now, the purpose of the club is to promote interest in gardening, and the furtherance of interest in civic beauty, conservation, and roadside beauty.

We have visited other Garden Clubs on San Juan, Lopez and Shaw and entertained these clubs, sharing ideas on gardening. We have judged Christmas displays on Orcas. From all these things we've had fun as well as profit.

We have grown from 22 members to 38, losing some and gaining new ones. We've had 5 presidents, Gladys Gropper, Emma Maas, Violet Boede, Mary Ross, and Mary Moran, as well as good officers and good committees.

We have made entries in all the Historical Parades, very good ones. One year our little decorated and flower-laden donkey was also entered in the Friday Harbor Fair Parade, and won a trophy. Our trophies are on display in the waiting room of the Medical Center.

The chief project of the Club has been the landscaping and beautification of the Medical Building grounds, under the leadership of Thelma Kile, and several faithful workers. We planted, we scratched, we weeded, we watered. We set out shrubs, plants, and trees. We grew weary and discouraged. We tried to give it back to the Medical Board, but they refused to take it. It was finally decided we could find no better project, so took a fresh start.

Now, we fought against unsightly road signs, with the Power Co. about the dead bushes, trees, and weeds they left along the highways after being killed by their sprays. They hated to see us coming, but we're still in there, fighting.

We have had outside speakers, programs on gardening, with experts giving demonstrations. The members gave a Silver Tea, with a book report by Bea Cook, to raise funds to hire a worker to mow grass and do heavier work that we couldn't do.

If you have a chance to look at the clippings and pictures in the Orcas Garden Club History Book, you can trace our progress, especially in the Before and After pictures of the Medical Building grounds.

(note) After this history was read, it was announced that our club was first prize winner in the District Beautification Contest, for which we had used our project of Beautification of the Medical Building grounds. A check for \$100 was received.

V.M. (Vita Meredith)