



1930



HORTULUS  
*Through the Decades*

2010



# HORTULUS HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

## *Celebrating 80 Years of Digging, Designing and Doing!*

### 1930's:

Paraphrasing our renowned founder, Beezie Brownell: She inherited a garden behind her house on Park Ave. In the spring of 1928, after the tulips had finished, she assiduously weeded out "a lot of wild carrot seedlings" and left two "impressive large leafed specimens", only to discover from her mother (Dr. Hyde, a "wise woman and dirt gardener") that she had "pulled up the larkspur seedlings and left two handsome Mullen weeds". Beezie went to her friend, Em Lanier, and decided to start a garden club. (They "could have joined the already established Greenwich Garden Club...but 'heavens no'... **they** were a lot of old, stuffy women." Beezie and Em did not want to accept anyone over the age of 35!) Their esteemed, older friend, Alice G.B. Lockwood, gave the dictum, "the name for your organization should be Hortulus, which in case, children, you know no Latin, means little garden and, mind you, there is to be no THE before and no CLUB after, just Hortulus." With 31 original members, Hortulus started in 1930, and became a member of the GCA in 1936.



*Founding Member, Beezie Brownell*

### 1940's:

In the 1940's, our emphasis was on civic efforts, both national and international. In 1941, we cosponsored the Blossom Ball which raised \$5000 for the British War Relief. When our country entered the war, Hortulus went all out in support of our soldiers. Among other projects, Hortulus members grew Victory Gardens, bought monthly U.S. war bonds, and, when Mrs. Kingsley was President ('42-'45), canned almost 3000 qts. of vegetables, 1000 qts. of fruits, and put up 2000 jars of jellies and jams! After WW II was over, our civic efforts became more local. Our founder, Beezie Brownell noted: "We had a truckload of dogwoods come from the South, and we planted them along Riversville Road, and we planted them along North Street, wherever we wanted to plant them. I think the town was very relieved to have someone do it, so they didn't have to. And then we cleaned up (the grounds of the Greenwich Railroad) station", (photo below right). and maintained it for several years. Besides growing, showing, having fun---Hortulae won 4 Fenwicks in the '40's AND the 1<sup>st</sup> Auxiliary class (labeled 'junior' membership) was established in 1949.



### 1950's

Conservation was a very important issue during this decade. Articles about conservation lectures, exhibits and tours were written and received national interest. Hortulus was recognized nationally in 1952 for what was regarded as the largest Yew Tree on the East Coast. It had been planted in the Christ Church Cemetery 100 years before and neglected until Hortulus properly pruned it 100 years later. From 1953-1955, Hortulus planted trees up and down Greenwich Avenue. In 1956, the first Annual Daffodil Show was held in Greenwich, with entries arriving from across the country! "Ageless Art" was our fundraiser in 1957, an exhibition of fine art from many Greenwich collections. The beneficiary of "Paintings for Plantings" was the Audubon Society.



### 1960's

During this decade, civic projects were a main focus of Hortulus involvement. Members campaigned against litter and became involved in issues affecting the visual appeal and preservation of our town. Armstrong Court Housing Development Gardens were founded in 1964. Hortulus oversaw the clearing of the land and the planting of vegetables and flowers. Residents took an active role in this project and its bounty.

In 1966, Hortulus was given the prestigious Sears and Roebuck Seed Award for the Armstrong Court Gardens project. The citation applauded "the most outstanding civic beautification project in the state of Connecticut".

Other civic projects funded by Hortulus included the following:

\*1966- Hortulus funded the replication of a 17th century fence and driveway at the Historical Society's Bush-Holley House.

\*1967- \$10,000 raised at the "Monte Carlo I" fundraiser benefitted the Greenwich Library, the Merry-Go-Round Mews and the Byram River Gorge.

\*1968- Hortulus presented the Greenwich Garden Education Center with a check for a new entrance.

\*1969- \$13,000 raised from "Monte Carlo II" was dedicated to the Mews, Greenwich Town Home and the YWCA.

Hortulus was the co-host for the GCA's Annual Meeting of 1968. 175 clubs sent 500 delegates and the honored guest was First Lady, Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson.



*Gardens in bloom at Armstrong Court*



*Receiving the Sears and Roebuck Award*



*Monte Carlo Night raises funds for Civic Projects in Greenwich.*

## 1970's

Besides continuing to 'grow and show', during the 1970's, Hortulus members accomplished notable civic and conservation projects.

In the early 70's, Hortulus initiated a planting program to beautify the grounds of the Mews, the Greenwich residence for the elderly, whose construction was funded by Hortulus member Nan Rockefeller. For almost 4 decades, Hortulus has continued this civic project with volunteer hours and funds. On the occasion of our country's bicentennial, Hortulus landscaped an 18<sup>th</sup> century colonial garden at the historic Putnam Cottage, which received much recognition, including the GCA Zone II Historic Preservation Award and Federated Garden Clubs of CT awards.

In 1978, our Energy House was inspired by Anne Bucknall and built and furnished by Mesdames Hagen, Cragin, Jennings and Platt. A brochure was written by Livvy Floren. This educational, electrified miniature model was displayed in 11 states in 1 year and was seen by over 100,000 people. It was awarded the GCA Zone II Conservation Award and the Federated Garden Clubs of CT Certificate of Achievement.



## Hortulus members visit White House

Mrs. George Bush welcomed members of Hortulus Garden Club recently for tea in the private dining room of the White House. Afterwards, she led the group through the Bush's living quarters sharing historical anecdotes about each room as they went.



Mrs. George Bush, left, welcomes Mrs. Edward C. Schenck, chairman of Hortulus visiting gardeners committee, to tea at the White House.

## 1980's

Notable Hortulus events of the 1980's commenced with *Hortulus Huzza*, our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. Held in June at the Greenhouse/Stable complex of Migi Serrell, it included a Friday evening cocktail party, followed by a 2 day public flower show plus greenhouse sale, stitchery boutique, and conservation walk. Well over 1,000 people attended the triumphant celebration, the talk of the town.

In 1985, Hortulus Harvest (our annual small club flower show) held its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary show in Havemeyer Park on Greenwich Avenue. It was the 1<sup>st</sup> time the event was open to participation by the public. Unfortunately, Hortulus Harvest turned into Hortulus Hurricane as Hurricane Gloria forced an early dismantling of the exhibition on day 2. The following year, Hortulus Harvest was held again at Havemeyer Park and was highly successful.

Visiting Gardens' highlights in the '80's included an extraordinary trip to France to tour private chateaux and gardens in the Loire valley, arranged by member, Nancy Lane. And, in the spring of '89, Mrs. George Bush (Barbara) welcomed 21 members of Hortulus for tea and a private tour of the White House. Thanks to Hortulus member, Diane Schmults, this was the highlight of a 3 day trip to D.C.

## 1990's

During the 1990's, creative and special venues for Hortulus flower shows and civic fund raisers included the November, 1993 "Impressions: Art and Flowers" show at the newly renovated Bruce Museum. The schedule complemented the museum's special exhibit of local Impressionist Art. A conservation exhibit focused on the Mianus River, a subject often depicted by local Impressionist painters. And in May, 1996, agreeing that flowers bring out the poet in all of us, Hortulus held a very successful benefit party and flower show at St. Mary Parish Center on Greenwich Avenue, entitled "Much Ado About May."

With funds raised, Hortulus members continued to bring joy and their talents to many civic and conservation projects, such as helping Nathaniel Witherell residents make festive Christmas boxwood tree arrangements (an annual activity which members continue to this day), contributing to the new horticulture building at the Garden Education Center, and helping to produce a pamphlet on clean water which was mailed to all Greenwich residents.

In 1997, traveling abroad once again, and led by the founder of the English gardening school, Rosemary Alexander, members toured the very best of English private gardens, including Prince Charles' estate "Highgrove" in Gloucestershire.

A sad note closed the century for Hortulus. In February, 1999, we lost the last of our 30 original members with the passing of Beezie Brownell, at age 94. Hortulus would never be quite the same!



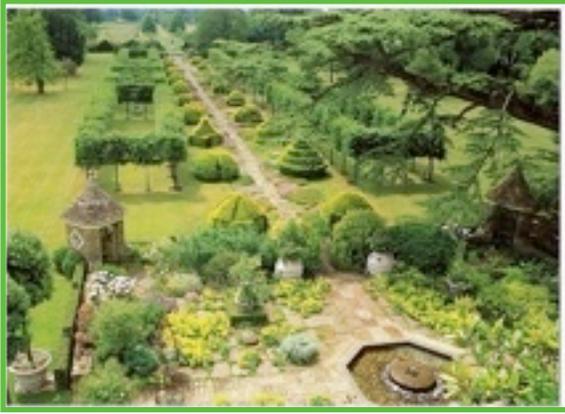
*Flower arrangements interpret works of art at the 1993 flower show "Impressions: Art and Flowers" held at the Bruce Museum.*



*"Much Ado About May" 1996 flower show held at St. Mary's on Greenwich Avenue*



*Hortulus members continue to bring joy and their talents to many civic projects, assisting residents of Nathaniel Witherell in a Boxwood Christmas Tree workshop and holiday party!*



*Traveling abroad once again, in 1997, and led by the founder of the English gardening school, Rosemary Alexander, members toured the very best of English private gardens, including Prince Charles' estate "Highgrove" in Gloucestershire. (seen above left)*



*At the close of the century, Hortulus lost the last of our 30 original members with the passing of Beezie Brownell in February 1999. Seen above are Nan Rockefeller and Beezie Brownell, most likely cooking up some new ideas for the club at a cocktail buffet party "Huzza for Beezie", a celebration of Beezie's birthday.*





**2000 - 2010**

Continuing in the Hortulus tradition of unusual and creative venues for flower show fundraisers, "Double Exposure", chaired by Diane Jennings and Mary Jones, was held at the new ice rink of the Greenwich Boys and Girls Club, 17 days after the 9/11/01 terrorist attack. Consideration was given to canceling the event, but after a vote was taken, it was decided to forge ahead in true Hortulus style!



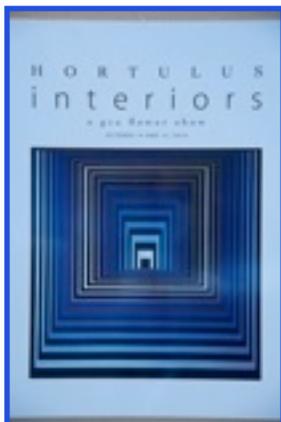
"In Style" in 2005, was Hortulus' flower show held at Richards clothing store on Greenwich Avenue. Chaired by Wendy Serrell and Christina Vanderlip, it was well received by the public, raising in excess of \$98,000 for our civic funds.

In 2006, the 1<sup>st</sup> Hortulus newsletter, "Hortulus Highlights" replaced the monthly minutes. The following year, Hortulus' Auxiliary developed the website [www.hortulus.org](http://www.hortulus.org), bringing us into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



Hortulus replaced the Gazebo in the Rose Garden of Bruce Park. Hortulus originally donated it to the Town in 1988 and it is a popular town focal point. Pictured at its dedication are member and state Rep. Livvy Floren R-149 and other members and children front and center with Colleen Hempleman on her right and on her left, Christina Vanderlip.

In October 2010, Hortulus hosted "interiors", a flower show, at Christ Church Parish Hall. Chaired by Pam Reimers and Beth Ryder, the event was a tremendous success. Highlights included a festive preview party with an incredible silent auction, fabulous boutique and raffle, and of course, spectacular photography, conservation, horticulture and flower arranging entries!



*Hortulus acknowledges the efforts of Cathy Finn, Mary Helen Holzschuh, Mary Jones, Suzy Breck and Kathy Strickland for this publication, chronicling highlights of the past 80 years!*

