NAPLES GARDEN CLUB™

A Brief History

The first 60 years...

This history is the work of many who worked diligently to recreate the story of an organization that has been much admired for 60 years.

This reveals the reasons.

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We are grateful to those members of long standing who were willing and able to dig deep into their memories to provide a richer flavor to this story. In particular we thank Dolly Ross, Anne Levy Knox, Lorna Craig, Loretta Sturgis and Helen Stephens.

This History of the Naples Garden Club is dedicated,

with enormous thanks, to the club's founding members.

Their efforts have resulted in pleasure for so many for so long.

Mrs. R. T. Benson
Mrs. J. Clain
Mrs. F. A. Clayton
Mrs. George E. Cowden
Mr. & Mrs. George B. Davis
Mrs. Edgar Eberhard
Mr & Mrs Francis Griswold
Mrs. Harry Johnson
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Mrs. Harry B. Smith
Mrs. Arthur Stewart
Mrs. J. H. Summerlin
Mr. & Mrs. Lloyd Uhl
Mrs. Henry M. Watkins
Mrs. Arthur Wilson
Mr. Arthur Wilson

1950s

Dwight D. Eisenhower had just been elected president, Elvis Presley was dominating the airways, Marilyn Monroe was shimmying across the silver screen and Lucille Ball was cavorting on television "sets" throughout the country when thirty men and women met in November, 1953 to form Naples Garden Club. Naples had become a city in 1949 but had only 1,465 full time residents. Port Royal and other residential subdivisions were just beginning. The Port Royal Club would not open until 1959 when undeveloped lots in Port Royal were selling for $7,500-$12,000. Contributions were being solicited for a local hospital that would open in 1956 on land donated by Henry Watkins, owner of the Naples Beach Hotel. Under the "Naples Plan" citizens had funded civic improvements, mosquito control, a water system and beautification projects; it funded the building of Cambier Park (on land also donated by Henry Watkins), named for city engineer William Cambier and Lowdermilk Park, named for the much loved city manager, Fred Lowdermilk. Fred Lowdermilk had created a nursery in Cambier Park from which he distributed a flowering tree to each Naples family every spring. These, and the trees he planted throughout the city, especially the hardwood mahogany and majestic banyans along Gordon Drive, are his rich legacy. Today the City of Naples is designated a "Tree City USA" and owns and maintains over 23,000 trees.

At Naples Garden Club's second meeting on December 2,1953 its constitution and bylaws were approved and the dues established at $3.00. Julius "Junkie" Fleischmann (heir to the yeast and distillery fortune whose interests included publishing, hotels, theatrical productions, the Ballet Russe in Monte Carlo, and yachting) was restoring the masterful tropical gardens created by famed botanist Henry Nehrling and agreed to let the club hold a festival at its grand opening as the Caribbean Gardens (located "just north of Naples"). The club raised $500 to landscape the new school (now Gulfview Middle School) and later made Mr. Fleischmann a life member. It held its annual meetings at the Caribbean Gardens for many years.

The first house tour and flower show were held together in February, 1955. Cash prizes were given to flower show winners; home owners on the house tour were given memberships. These activities were so successful that the club voted to make them annual events. By the end of its first year the club had 70 members and $1,091.96 in its treasury.

In 1957 Mrs. Julia Morton, famed botanist from the University of Miami, spoke to a large audience at the high school at an event jointly sponsored by NGC and the

Caribbean Gardens. Other important speakers came from the University of Florida at Gainesville and Miami. In 1959 NGC publicly endorsed the creation of the Big Cypress Nature Center-now the Conservancy of SW Florida), adjacent to the Caribbean Gardens, and also endorsed the western entrance to Everglades National Park.

The first yearbook was published in 1957 and has been published ever since. Throughout the 50s members served on the city's landscaping committees, contributed to the Junior Chamber's "service clubs" sign project that was championed by member, Joel Kuperberg, who would later cofound the Conservancy. It worked diligently to eradicate litter on the highways, beaches and parks, a great problem at the time, by educating the public.

Workshops were offered to increase the number and quality of the floral designs entered into the flower show and the practice of an annual "herb" lunch was initiated at which all the dishes contained a dominant herb and the recipes were shared with all who attended.

NGC joined the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs in 1955 but resigned in 1956 citing the differences in growing conditions and climate with the rest of the state.

Pink Cuban Tabebuia NGC planted in memory of Julius Fleischmann at the Central Avenue Library after his death in 1968.

1960s

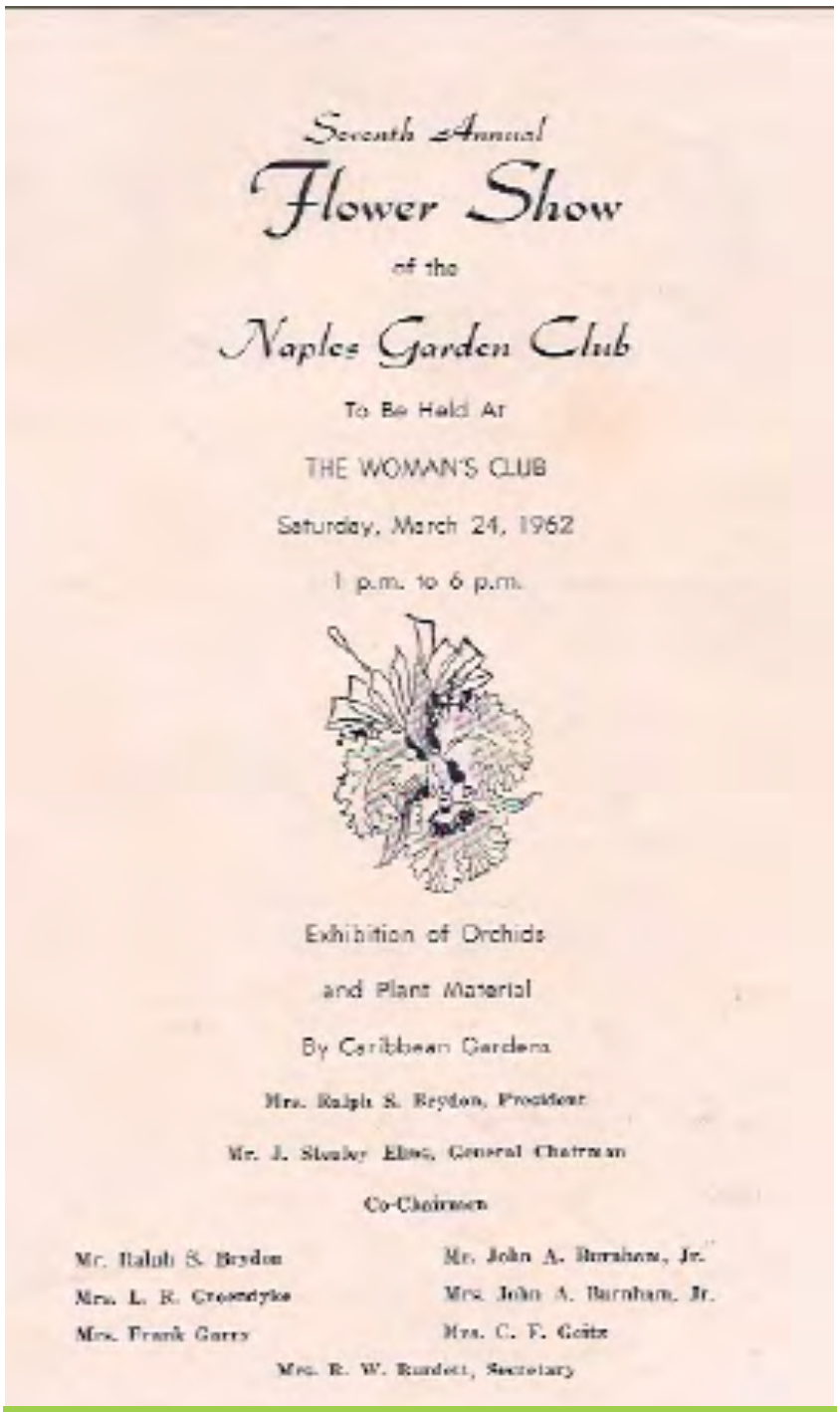
Hurricane Donna struck Naples on Sept. 10,1960, destroying much of the city but paradoxically spurring its growth--$30 million in insurance money flooded the town of 15,000. The Norris family underwrote the rebuilding of the Naples Pier (the city council had decided not to renew its insurance on the pier that year) and NGC accepted the responsibility for landscaping it.

Naples Pier entrance circa 1960s

Large infrastructure projects were undertaken including the rebuilding of heavily damaged schools; the county seat moved from Everglades City to its current location at 41 and Airport Pulling Road. NGC planted native plants at the courthouse and established a Nature Trail nearby. Charismatic John F. Kennedy was elected president and his beautiful wife, Jackie, became an international icon of glamour and style. JFK's assassination in 1963 unleashed forces for political change, spurred on by Lyndon Baines Johnson. School integration, Medicare, the Voting Rights Act, and the civil rights movement would change the country forever.

The 70 million baby boomers who came of age in the sixties wanted change. Many supported the Women's Movement, some opposed the Viet Nam War, a few became hippies but they all embraced popular music: the Beatles, Bob Dylan, the Supremes, Peter, Paul and Mary, the Beach Boys, the Grateful Dead and others. The pivot away from the conservative fifties affected even quiet Naples. Its population had grown to 5,000. Park Shore, Moorings, Coquina Sands and Marco Island were under way when Alligator Alley opened in 1968. Rachel Carson's *The Silent Spring* intensified interest in the environment and The Everglades: *River of Grass* by Marjory Douglas continued to exert influence locally. The Conservancy of S W Florida traces its origin to the defeat, in 1965, of the "road to nowhere"--a

developer-backed plan to push a road through the mangrove lined estuaries to connect Naples and Marco Island. The Conservancy also worked to preserve what today is called Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve where the road would have gone. A history of NGC written at the time noted that "when the Conservancy was established, many men left (the Garden Club) to work with that group." Naples Garden Club had always supported the aims of the Conservancy with its endorsements and financial aid; now it was giving up its members! NGC also supported the founding of the local Audubon Society in 1961.



Seventh Annual

Flower Show

of the

Naples Garden Club

To Be Held At

THE WOMAN'S CLUB

Saturday, March 24, 1962

1 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Exhibition of Orchids

and Plant Material

By Caribbean Gardens

Mrs. Ralph S. Brydon, President

Mr. J. Shirley Eiles, General Chairman

Co-Chairmen

Mr. Ralph S. Brydon
Mrs. L. R. Croendyke
Mrs. Frank Garry
Mr. John A. Burnham, Jr.
Mrs. John A. Burnham, Jr.
Mrs. C. F. Goltz

Mrs. R. W. Rundell, Secretary

1962 Flower Show Handbook cover

Naples Garden Club encouraged improvements to commercial landscaping by bestowing Awards of Merit to five businesses annually. It continued to hold annual flower shows, including a Christmas show in 1969, and house and garden tours to raise funds for beautification projects.

Naples Garden Club incorporated in 1964, rejoined Florida Federation of Garden Clubs in 1967 and immediately raised its dues to $5.00.

1970s

In the early 70s Viet Nam and Watergate dominated newscasts. After Richard Nixon resigned from the presidency in 1974, a recession ensued: interest rates escalated and inflation soared. In 1970 a new house cost $23,400; in 1979 it cost $58,500--but a Gulf Shore condo cost $64-84,000 and a lot in Port Royal started at $62,000.

Americans, worn out by the Viet Nam War and government scandals, turned inward. Novelist Tom Wolfe dubbed the seventies "the Me Decade." Self-help books like *I'm Ok, You're Ok* proliferated. *The Mary Tyler Moore Show, All in the Family,* and *Roots* were popular TV shows that pushed social consciousness while *Love Boat, Fantasy Island,* and *Charlie's Angels* offered escape. These were the days of bell bottom trousers, Granny dresses, hot pants, micro-minis, maxis, peasant tops, wrap dresses, long sideburns and leisure suits. The Beatles broke up in 1970 but many other groups succeeded them playing funk, punk rock, new wave, heavy metal, progressive rock and disco music. *Saturday Night Fever*, the Bee Gees and John Travolta dominated the end of the 70's.

Some Southwest Floridians expressed concern that unchecked growth would impact Collier County negatively but even as their calls for conservation grew louder, the population skyrocketed to nearly 65,000 residents by 1979 and the Coastland Mall opened in 1976 to service this influx of residents.

Naples Garden Club, numbering 140 in 1970, had moved its meetings to the First Presbyterian Church when the Caribbean Gardens became Jungle Larry's. It held its board meetings at the Bank of Naples but the club yearned for a "garden center" of its own. Thus, after the last train departed from the Naples Depot in 1971, NGC's president wrote to Atlantic Coast Line to inquire about the possibility of acquiring the Depot. Many other groups were eyeing this central property and ultimately the community joined forces to have the Depot added to the National Register of Historic Places and created the Southwest Heritage Foundation to administer the building as a community center. A garden club member even suggested the name--the Depot. Naples Garden Club contributed to the restoration and received a 10' x 18' office--just in time for its 25th Anniversary in 1978. Members were thrilled! Club records could be brought out from under beds and be organized. Records had been passed from president to president and some had never been recovered. They had space for meetings, workshops and for storage, at last.

In 1975 dues were raised to $7.50 and the membership limited to 250. Monday workshops were introduced and horticulture classes were scheduled on a regular basis.. It joined the rest of the country in celebrating the nation's bicentennial with the motto: "Leave your trowel print in history." The home tour was formally named "House and Garden Tour" and the ticket price increased to $4.00 prior to the tour, $5.00 day of the tour. The Naples Garden Club ended the decade with 196 members.

The achievements of Naples Garden Club during the 70's are so numerous, they are best expressed as a list:

- Contributed to the restoration of the Depot
- Contributed to Rogers mini park
- Donated to prison therapy
- Preserved and planted 6th Street medians
- Paid for green house for orchids, bromeliads and other rare plants at Big Cypress Nature Center
- Cleared and planted the garden at Palm Cottage
- Planted four strips on either side of widened Crayton Road with trees , now designated as historic
- Supported acquisition of Barefoot Park and its designation as a public park
- Arranged landscaping of 3rd Street shopping district
- Sponsored attendance for two students to the Youth Environmental Conference
- Donated a new fence to Youth Haven
- Beautified River Park
- Gave a workshop on Christmas arrangements at Grace Lutheran Church
- Cooperated with Palmer Broadcasting Company in a seedling tree project
- Donated flowering trees to each local school

CHECK — President of Southwest Heritage, Inc., Charles Letson accepts a check for $15,000 from Mrs. Esther Freyermuth, president of the Naples Garden Club, right, and Mrs. Merton Durant, center, treasurer of the club. The check was presented to the Olde Naples depot, which Southwest Heritage, Inc. is converting into Naples' first cultural-civic center. Star Photo by John Lawter)

Southwest Heritage gets $15,000

Check presentation in late 70s

1980s

In 1980 the number of traffic lights in Collier County could be counted on your fingers; the population had reached 86,000 but Naples was still a low key, laid back destination. With the economic malaise of the 70s diminishing during the Reagan administration, Collier exploded. The Ritz Carlton (1985) and the Registry Resort (1986) were opened and housed guests arriving by air at the Southwest Regional Airport, completed in 1983, and by car on the brand new Interstate 75. The first social event at the Ritz Carlton was NGC's lunch and fashion show, produced by Jacobson's. NGC continued to host these fundraising shows throughout the 80s and the money raised made it possible to contribute $18,000--"the largest gift the club has ever made in one year" (according to then President Marge Hagan) to the Naples Philharmonic (now Artis).

hion Preview Dazzles at New Hotel

MORE THAN 400 SUPPORTERS OF THE NAPLES GARDEN CLUB GATHERED

The first social event held at the new Naples Ritz Carlton - A NGC luncheon and fashion show.

Some of the tourists attracted by the luxury resorts liked the ambience of Naples so much that they bought homes or condos at the developing communities of Pelican Bay, the Vineyards, Lely Resort, Park Shore and others then underway, and some joined the Naples Garden Club, swelling its membership to 246. They paid $25 in dues, were expected to sell ten tickets to the House & Garden Tour, now $15 a ticket, and were listed by their husband's names in the yearbook. They had great guest speakers: Dorothy Tempell, the chief floral designer from the Reagan White House, the president of Audubon, representatives of the Conservancy, Mayor Ned Putzell, and the celebrated and innovative floral designer Bob Thomas. No refreshments were served at general meetings that were

open to the public. Flower show titles included the state and national prize winning *Miracles,* and *Wishes, The Naples Season, Timely Tables* and *Floral Extravaganza.*

Home entertainment was expanding during this period. ABC, CBS and NBC were being challenged by cable television networks ESPN, HBO, CNN and Fox--but they all covered the “Royal Wedding” of Prince Charles and Princess Diana in 1981, watched by millions of viewers. MTV launched performers like Michael Jackson, Madonna, Duran Duran and Prince to fame and fortune. Video gaming started with PacMan and morphed into a billion dollar business. *Dallas* and *Dynasty* were nighttime soaps that showcased the bright colors, bold make up, big hair, big shoulder pads, designer jeans, gaudy accessories and overwrought interiors that epitomized the tastes of the times.

“Greed is good," proclaimed Michael Douglas in the movie *Wall Street*. Robust investment returns permitted people to buy second homes. Suddenly Naples experienced traffic jams as the population climbed to 152,000 in 1989. Development created a backlash: "Don't East Coast the West Coast" and "Make Growth Pay for Growth" became the mantras.

At the end of the decade NGC moved into larger quarters at the Depot. This move coincided with the adoption of a new logo for the club, the *Strelitiza reginae,* drawn by member Betty Peyton. This logo was in use until 2012 when it was adapted to the new logo. A *Strelitiza* garden was planted in front of the Depot and maintained by NGC until its move in 2005. Monthly design workshops ran the gamut from basic line and mass arrangements to assemblages, floral mobiles and constructions. Inspiration was taken from the “space race”, sculpture, emotions, music, holidays, fabrics and household items. Members learned about Florida gardening from visits to each other’s gardens and through plant exchanges and workshops conducted by plant specialists and collectors.

NGC received Certificates of Recognition from the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs and the Shell Oil Co. for funding the Animal Rehabilitation Center at the Conservancy. It also succeeded in petitioning the Naples City Council to declare Naples a bird sanctuary.

NGC Donations 1953 - 2012	Grand Total
Big Cypress Nature Center	$10,970
City of Naples - Various Projects / Naples Preserve	$45,219
Collier Co Museum - Craighead & Wilkerson Home	$13,000
Collier Co Schools (landscaping)	$500
Conservancy of Southwest Florida	$26,500
David Lawrence Center, The	$2,500
Early Years Education Foundation - Gardening for Children	$1,000
ECHO (Educational Concerns for Hunger Organization)	$1,500
Florida Federation of Garden Clubs Projects	$29,500
FGCU Endowed Scholarship ($100,000 Commitment start 2009-'10)	$80,000
Grace Place for Children & Families	$1,830
George Washington Carver Complex	$15,000
Habitat for Humanity	$42,500
Immokalee Friendship House	$2,000
Naples Botanical Garden ($100,000 Idea Garden start 2007-'08)	$178,172
NCH (Garden of Hope & Courage, landscape planting)	$4,665
Naples Depot (Southwest Heritage Foundation)	$62,500
Naples Historical Society / Palm Cottage	$16,000
Naples Philharmonic Center for the Arts	$18,915
Naples Players - Landscaping	$2,000
Naples Woman's Club - Schools and Hospital Planting	$1,222
Norris Center - Plantings	$2,000
Scholarships Misc. Studying Horticulture	$160,000
School Programs (Junior Gardeners)	$7,416
Shelter for Abused Women	$1,000
St. Matthew's House	$6,000
Tiger Creek Project	$2,000
Von Liebig Art Center - Landscaping	$2,100
World Assoc. of Flower Shows	$1,000
Youth Haven	$5,265
TOTALS	$742,274

2010's	2000's	1990's	1980's	1970's	1960's	1950's
			$10,000	$470		$500
	$7,700	$17,119	$9,000	$9,000	$2,400	
	$7,000	$6,000				
						$500
$15,000	$7,500			$500	$4,000	
	$2,500					
	$1,000					
	$1,500					
	$14,150	$14,850	$500			
$60,000	$20,000					
$1,830						
			$15,000			
	$42,500					
	$2,000					
$62,172	$96,000	$20,000				
	$2,500				$1,000	$1,165
	$15,000	$10,500		$37,000		
	$3,000	$8,000	$5,000			
		$915	$18,000			
		$2,000				
						$1,222
	$2,000					
	$115,000	$45,000				
	$875	$641	$5,000			$900
	$1,000					
	$6,000					
				$2,000		
		$2,100				
	$1,000					
	$5,000			$265		
$ 139,002	$ 353,225	$ 127,125	$ 52,500	$ 48,765	$ 7,400	$ 3,787

The Medians

Sixth Street Median (2013)

"The deteriorating landscaped medians in the heart of the city of Naples are being repaired and restored.

Those of us who have watched those medians turn mangled and brown over the past year or so have wondered whether anybody in charge has a sense of history. The Naplescape program, later growing past the city limits into Collier/Naplescape, was launched in Naples in the late 1980s by the late mayor Ned Putzell.

They became the model for landscaped medians throughout the county and the rest of Southwest Florida. ***They became an example of what made Naples special****."*

Naples Daily News editorial, 2006

Sixth Street Median (1974)

Planted medians are more than pleasing. They provide economic, aesthetic and psychological benefits to all of us while reforesting the roadway corridors. They

- ✦ Calm traffic
- ✦ Cool and screen adjacent properties
- ✦ Reduce air, noise, heat, water and glare pollution
- ✦ Enhance community ambiance
- ✦ Increase property values
- ✦ Increase tourist appeal

In l974 NGC joined the campaign to keep the 6th Street medians from becoming a parking lot and donated $8,000 to landscape them after the battle was won in the City Council. In the late 80s NGC joined Mayor Ned Putzell's[1] Naplescape 87, an effort to complete the medians on US 41 north of Pine Ridge Road. NGC contributed a total of $13,000 and was recognized for its involvement by the City of Naples and Florida Federation of Garden Clubs.

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1 Ned Putzell was a Harvard educated attorney and Port Royal resident who typically rose before sunrise and drove an old Volkswagen. After law school "Wild" Bill Donovan, a World War I hero and founder of the OSS, hired him. Putzell helped Donovan set up the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), which was the precursor of the CIA and served as an OSS officer during World War II. He was the first recipient of the Greater Naples Leadership Parke Wright Award.

Staff photo by Eric Strachan

Median islands landscaped along U.S. 41 North

Harley Williamson of Sunny Grove Landscaping prepares the ground for sod Monday at one of 22 median islands being landscaped along U.S. 41 North. The beautification project is known as Naplescape and the money to pay for the project was raised through private donations and city funds. The project should be done sometime in April.

Naplescape 87 morphed into a private/county/city effort dubbed Naplescape 90 that produced a master plan for the county. The Collier County Landscape Beautification Master Plan was adopted in April, 2003 by the Board of County Commissioners and sets "a base level of landscaping" for new road construction projects. This basic landscaping includes clean median backfill with landscape-quality soil, electrical and irrigation sleeving, curbing, and brick pavers at the median ends. Budget constraints have resulted in an elimination of side of the road trees which were further restricted due to limited right of way competing for space with needed utilities.

Portions of Airport Road, Collier Boulevard, Santa Barbara Boulevard and Vanderbilt Beach Road are not scheduled for landscaping at this time due to a lack of funding, according to Connie Deane, community liaison for Growth Management. “If communities wish to landscape, it can be done through the creation of a Municipal Service Taxing Unit (MSTU) or Municipal Service Benefit Unit (MSBU)."

Naples Garden Club still has work to do.

Naplescape '87 to Landscape Medians North of Fleischmann

Medians between the north and southbound lanes of US41 North are the target of a beautification effort to enhance the gateway to the City of Naples.

Naplescape '87 is designed to develop these medians in line with existing landscaping found farther south on the Trail.

Concerned community groups are cooperating with the City of Naples to improve the first impression visitors have of the city; that of beauty, elegance, good management and cleanliness.

Naplescape '87 is the first phase of the plan, an aim to improve three miles of highway median, between Neapolitan Way and Fleischmann Boulevard.

The City has allocated $300,000 for the project, but $200,000 more is needed to implement it fully. The additional funds must be raised through donations. Several events will be held during the week of May 3 through May 10 to call attention to the project and help raise the needed funds.

Mayor Edwin J. Putzell, Jr. has officially declared this week Naplescape '87 Week in the City of Naples. The goals of Naplescape '87 coincide with the long range targets of the "Keep Naples Green" program, a plan spearheaded by the Mayor to create a beautiful green boulevard from the northern suburbs of town to its southeastern border. The program includes all visual aspects, such as building fronts, signage, curb cuts, parking areas, landscape design and maintenance.

The Naples Garden Club has pledged $5,000 to Naplescape '87, and private individuals have donated large sums and small.

Sale Backs Naplescape

Residents can lend their support to beautifying Naples' medians at the Naplescape '87 booth at Coastland Center this week.

For $5.00, citizens can purchase "one square foot of beauty" on the highway median and participate in the town-wide movement to enhance three miles of median between Neapolitan Way and Fleischmann Boulevard. The booth will be located inside Coastland Mall from May 4 to May 8.

The "median sale" is part of week-long festivities highlighting the Naplescape '87 project. Today, Mayor Edwin J. Putzell, Jr. planted a tree on the Chamber of Commerce grounds.

A plant sale was held outside Coastland Center Mall on May 3 to benefit the Naplescape fund. Area nurserymen and landscapers donated plants and high school Key Club members assisted customers.

On Saturday, May 9, proceeds from the 11th Annual Great Dock Canoe Race will also be donated to the Naplescape '87 fund.

Fund organizers hope the week's events will achieve increased response by all those who enjoy Naples' unique ambiance.

1990s

It is ironic that a decade of unprecedented peace and prosperity was ushered in by a war: Desert Storm or the Gulf War lasted from August 1990 to February 1991 and was televised on CNN. Baby boomer Bill Clinton became president in 1993, less than two years after the fall of the Soviet Union, an event which greatly expanded markets for American products. Sophisticated new electronics and innovations in telecommunications and computer networking spawned a vast computer hardware and software industry that revolutionized the way industries and individuals operated. The number of users of the world wide web multiplied at the rate of about 3500 times a year, and by the year 2000 their number reached an estimated 295 million. Low inflation combined with low unemployment and strong corporate profits sent the stock market surging. The Dow Jones Industrial Average, which had stood at just 1,000 in the late 1970s, hit the 11,000 mark in 1999.

The new, stricter building codes created in the aftermath of Hurricane Andrew made building and remodeling more expensive in Collier County but demand was unaffected. In 1990 a Port Royal property might have cost $600,000 to a million; in the late nineties, $2 and $3 million plus prices became the norm as the population of Collier increased 65.3% (152,099 in 1990 to 251,377 by 2000).

In addition to all its other attributes, Naples added shopping to its attractions. Third Street and Venetian Village remained charming shopping meccas, but the opening of Waterside (1992), an upscale shopping destination anchored by Saks and Jacobsen's and designed as a meandering, staggered courtyard--complete with waterfalls and lush landscaping--almost destroyed Fifth Avenue South. Business owners and civic leaders decided that a cohesive plan for Fifth Avenue was essential for its survival and engaged renowned urban planner and architect Andres Duany. With his guidance, the street was transformed. In 1997 the Sugden Community Theatre, home of the Naples Players, opened in the heart of Fifth and NGC was happy to donate some of the majestic palms planted in its courtyard. Again, in 1998, NGC contributed to the landscaping of the von Liebig Arts Center that had opened just off Fifth Avenue. The opening of the von Liebig cemented Fifth Avenue South's position as a cultural, dining, and shopping destination.

Higher education came to Collier via International College (now Hodges) in 1990, Edison State College (1992) and Florida Gulf Coast University in nearby Estero (1995). Another new effort, Naples Botanical Garden, was just underway in 1998. It was another organization NGC was happy to support. The colleges proved

to be great resources for knowledgeable speakers and environmental and horticultural experts.

Diamond Jubilee plaque on tree contributed by NGC

In 1998, Mayor Bonnie MacKenzie asked Naples Garden Club's president, Helen Stephens (the only president to serve two terms), to serve on the City of Naples Diamond Jubilee Committee's tree planting project. Helen Stephens reports, "So the Naples Garden Club was able to obtain 75 donors for trees for Cambier Park. The trees were dedicated at a special ceremony at the Band Shell. I was invited to read the names of tree donors and offer them proper thanks from the City... Each tree was marked with the name of the donor." The Diamond Jubilee Committee expressed hope that "future generations will continue to build on their community's legacy and firm foundation of vision, fortitude, integrity and dedication."

Much about this time of "irrational exuberance," was contradictory. Americans were affluent but adopted "grunge" clothing. Martha Stewart and Oprah Winfrey gave advice on everything from brownie baking to adoption on television but were a boon to book publishing. Stadium Naples, an ambitious plan to build a golf stadium in north Naples, turned into a notorious corruption case: "Roads weren't being built. Developments that shouldn't have been built were being built. Zoning decisions were not based on merit but who was being paid off... The saying around here was, 'To get along, you go along.' It was a cesspool" declared special prosecutor Michael Von Zamft. Ten co-defendants were prosecuted for "conspiring to deprive the citizens of Collier County of the honest services of public officials by swapping financial incentives for votes and influence favorable to their projects."

Naples Garden Club, with a membership hovering around 200, exerted a more uplifting influence. It continued to hold an annual flower show at the Depot each spring with themes like *Light; Visions; Awareness; Palms, Palms, Palms; Parade; The Medium is the Message; Novel Events; Naples, Our Paradise* and *Odyssey. Its House Tour was a popular as ever* When the City of Naples appointed a week in June "Garden Week," NGC marked the occasion by releasing butterflies on the Depot loggia.

2000s

Is this new millennium an age of revolutionary technological breakthroughs or is it a decade of destruction? Destruction arrived on 9/11/01 when the World Trade Center was attacked by terrorists, killing 3,000. The two front War on Terror followed. Natural disasters like the tsunamis in 2004 and 2011 and hurricane Katrina wreaked havoc. Hurricanes Charley and Wilma and the Gulf Oil Spill impacted Collier County. The meltdown of the banks in 2007 and the bursting of the real estate bubble damaged people throughout the world, financially and psychologically. Collier County was the epicenter of the housing boom: Collier's population had grown 28% since 1995 to 251,377 in 2000 and an additional 20% to 303,893 in 2005. Social gatherings--including Naples Garden Club meetings--were filled with chatter about the latest high price paid for a house or the profits made from "flipping." Collier home prices soared to a median price of $505,000 in 2005--out of reach for many essential personnel. This so called "affordable housing crisis" didn't last long--the housing bubble burst in 2007/08 creating foreclosures, business failures, unemployment, personal bankruptcies, and plummeting house prices. Ranked first in personal income in the state, even Naples residents experienced hard times. But most of the well educated (28% college graduates) and well-off (annual incomes of $75,444) hung-on--but growth in their county came to a complete stand still.

The technological advances of the 2000s are a far happier story. No one can imagine living without email, GPS, texting, Google, Wikipedia, hybrid cars, Twitter, apps, iPhones, iPads, Amazon, Travelocity, Facebook (NGC has its own closed page where photos, horticultural hints, and friendly messages can be shared), You Tube and Netflix. A few of these advances were already part of everyday life in 2003 when Naples Garden Clubs' membership totaled 200. That year City of Naples Mayor, Bonnie MacKenzie, proclaimed "Naples Garden Club Week" to mark the club's Golden Anniversary and to honor its contributions to the city, including the sea oats it planted on the beaches for erosion control and its financing of medians and mini parks. The club celebrated the anniversary at a cocktail party held on the patio of the Depot on Flower Show weekend. In December, Robb & Stucky hosted the club's members at a 50th anniversary tea in its community room.

Flower Shows are always a highlight of the garden club season because they engage so many of the members. In 2003 NGC created a Liturgical Flower Festival at Trinity By The Cove Church in Port Royal featuring stunning traditional British

designs. The annual Flower Shows held at the Depot continued with themes like *Trains, Ballet,* and *Water- More Precious Than Gold* and *The Arts*.

NGC lost its home in 2004 when the Depot was transferred to Collier County for use as a museum. Fortunately Naples Botanical Garden welcomed NGC and made a large space available for its use as a headquarters. Relocating to Naples Botanical Garden yielded more than a beautiful activity center: Naples Botanical Garden became NGC's partner in producing the newly named Naples Flower Show,™ the largest standard flower show in southwest Florida. Combining NGC's expertise in mounting standard flower shows and NBG ability to coordinate and produce large events was wildly successful. The first Naples Flower Show,™ themed *Connecting People+++Plants+++Places* attracted over 4,000 visitors. Since then flower shows have been titled: *Color, Fantasy, Belo Brazil, It's In the Bag,*

Entrance to the Naples Flower Show at NBG in 2004

Wonder Women, Garden Party, Light , Black Tie--Green Thumb and the upcoming 2014 *Alice in Wonderland.*

After the move, NGC general meetings were held at the Norris Center, then the Windstar Room at Naples Botanical Garden, followed by Moss Hall at Moorings Presbyterian Church and, finally, at the Kapnick Center. General meetings will be held at the Eleanor and Nicholas Chabraja Visitor Center at Naples Botanical

Garden when the building is completed. Raymond Jungles will be designing the adjacent gardens. This award-winning landscape architect, who apprenticed with Burle Marx and created the Brazilian Garden at NBG, has been a very popular speaker at two general meetings. Other speakers included Jack Kramer, local author of 100 gardening books; Tony Tedesco, floral designer and adviser to the National Garden Club; Ron Morgan , author and floral designer par excellence; and Jane Godshalk, a noted designer from Longwood Gardens.

These programs proved so popular that NGC initiated a reservation system via internet. Other organizational changes made NGC a more efficient and responsive organization. It became a 501©3 tax exempt, nonprofit organization in 2003. It developed an interactive website on which members could check committee meeting dates and member contact information--but the beloved "Yearbook" is still published. *Trowel Prints* became digital. A provisional class was created. These new members share a year together as they fulfill their obligations--but the traditional Provisional Tea is maintained. Board orientations, where board training is undertaken and best practices explored, have become annual events. A governance chair was added to the board. During this time NGC hosted two Flower Show Schools (8 sessions in total) which made it much easier for members, and other southwestern Floridians, to become accredited NGC judges.

Idea Garden Plaque at NBG

NGC's Idea Garden at Naples Botanical Garden was opened as a place to inspire the small home gardener or patio gardener to grow vegetables and flowers in unusual ways. It is located next to the Florida Garden.

Naples Garden Club members are diligent, hard working, conscientious and generous. They give their energy, time, and money to better the community in which they live. Mary Kux, who died in 2005, worked with the Junior Gardeners at Lake Park and River Park schools for generations. She displayed the children's work at the flower shows, planted a tree with them every Arbor Day and recruited members to assist the kids in making corsages or bouquets for Mother's Day. NGC now works at the Avalon School with the Global Gardeners who will again participate in the annual flower show in 2014, as they did in 2013. This continues a long tradition of working with Junior Gardeners begun in 1957.

NAPLES GARDEN CLUB
HOUSE & GARDEN
2013 TOUR

In addition to the flower show, NGC members produce a complex and intricately planned House & Garden Tour every year that requires coordination, time, committee meetings and many volunteers. Tickets (which sell out in less than a week) are now available on the NGC website and "patrons," who make an additional contribution, may purchase their tickets in advance of the general public. These upgrades to ticketing reduces some

Club president Linda LaRue Brown checks on House & Garden Tour guests as they prepare to board their motor coaches for the tour

of the work, but members act as house hostesses, bus hostesses, greeters and servers at the Hospitality Center. They fill each house on the tour with elegant floral designs; stuff hospitality bags; produce a brochure and acquire the houses. They do all of this to raise money for good causes. Superpeople!

Members, who now total 225 and pay $100 dues, work hard but they also play hard and enjoy the company of fellow members whether it is at a meeting, at a dinner, or on a trip. "A beautifully run Garden Club with enthusiastic members makes the Naples Garden Club a special part of life in Naples" (Marilyn Gross, NGC member).

Welcome
THE END!
Ingrid Maguire Creativity Award winner

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Photo on the cover is the Maidenhair Fern Grotto in the Mosaic Garden at Naples Botanical Garden. Now denuded of Maidenhair Ferns, it still provides a beautiful backdrop for the many weddings that are performed here.