

Branching Out: Getting to know your fellow club members



Doris Fina

Member since 2003

What kind of gardening do you do? Or prefer?

I do vegetable, some annual cutting flowers, and perennials. My two goals from the very beginning were:

- 1. Something in the yard should be in bloom every month. (My witch hazel died, so right now I am missing January.)*
- 2. Pretty much everything should be low maintenance.*

Over the years I have had a lot of involvement in the care of ill and aging family members. Frequent trips to their homes demanded that my garden and yard be pretty independent. Day lilies are my favorites.

My vegetable garden is the exception to goal 2. It is only 22x22', with lots of fence and netting to keep the critters at bay. I usually have about eight tomato plants and vary the variety each year. I always have two varieties of pole beans and peppers, two or three varieties of basil and winter squash. Everything else changes every year. Outside the fence are rhubarb and raspberries.

Since I retired, I have added more cutting flowers. I have been taking Sogetsu Ikebana classes and availability of seasonal materials is essential. I call my gardening technique Italian freestyle.



When did you start gardening? What drew you to it?

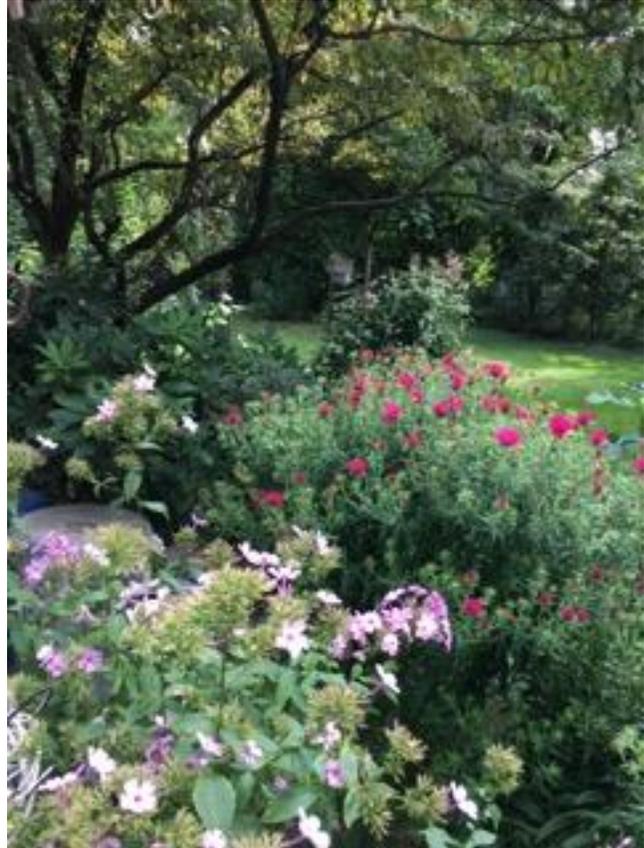
My mom had a classic Victory garden in the 40's and 50's. With six kids to feed this was a necessity. We all participated and I learned early on

that garden chores were much more satisfying than indoor chores. And we all helped with preparing produce for canning and freezing. I still put up as much as I can to extend my enjoyment of summer produce. The smell of the soil is a wonderful memory deeply imprinted from early childhood.



What would you like to tell the club about yourself: other passion(s); work (current/former/volunteer); family; gardening credentials; etc.?

I worked as a pediatric nurse at Boston Children's Hospital for 49 years. For the second half of my career I was the liaison between families and the operating room. Though many of the 60-90 procedures performed each day were lower risk (sports injuries, hernias, tonsillectomy, etc.) others, such as open heart, brain and other major tumor surgery, carried a high risk of intraoperative complication or death. I was the front line of communication and crisis intervention with families. Every day was intense. Nothing is simple to a parent waiting for a child in surgery. When I got home after a 12+ hour shift I tried to spend a few minutes walking in my garden out back to reset my equilibrium.



How did you become involved with the Natick Garden Club?



Long-time member Maggie Keene was an OR nurse at Children's and she told me about the club. Initially my work schedule conflicted. But when that resolved I joined. I was a relative newcomer to Natick. When you move to a new town as a single woman at the age of 50 fitting in can be challenging. Meeting and sharing with other club members, —particularly downtown planting—helped me bond with, and really feel part of the community. It is a good feeling. My yard and garden have been particular sanity and life savers for me since March. I can't imagine not having the daily opportunities to be outside in my own safe place. Somehow, I never really feel alone when I am in the garden. Maybe the fact that there is often a coyote watching or some deer or wild turkeys lurking in the woods beyond my property

adds reality to that feeling. Not to mention the Cooper's hawk in the tree and hummingbirds flitting by.



What is most important to you about NGC membership?

Second to Downtown planting, I love the energy that prevails at our meetings. Members arrive filled with enthusiasm and eagerness to share ideas, successes, and those humbling failures of gardening life. People are truly happy to see and help each other. And the food is exceptional.

What would you like to see the club do that it isn't doing now?

I wonder if the club might be a presence at the Downtown Farmers Market. Perhaps a table showing our activities - much like the Natick Days effort, but on a regular basis. Perhaps once a month.

Ellen Yetman

Member since 1998

What kind of gardening do you do? Or prefer?

My favorite kind of gardening is flowers. In earlier years I did enjoy growing vegetables. When I was growing up my family always had many large gardens with all kinds of vegetables, one being corn which we sold by the roadside. When I was about twelve years old, I had my own vegetable garden to earn a Girl Scout badge.

When did you start gardening? What drew you to it?

Living next door to my grandparents, I remember my grandmother's bleeding hearts. I have several in my yard, red and white ones. I also remember my grandfather growing his red cannas. When I first moved to Natick and had a large vegetable garden, I grew a row of zinnias and a row of marigolds. They were the big flowers back then. Now the marigolds and zinnias come in many sizes and colors.

What would you like to tell the Club about yourself?

I am retired now and enjoying my grandchild and love to travel.



How did you become involved with Natick Garden Club?

I first saw a flyer about the Natick Garden Club at a neighbor's house about the second meeting. I attended and have been going ever since. However, that neighbor never joined. Over the years I have held many positions in the club as treasurer, membership, trips, logo items and now do the tree for the Festival of Trees.



What is the most important thing to you about NGC membership?

Most important about the NGC is the many wonderful friends I have made who are always willing to share knowledge and plants. My yard would not be as nice as it is without all the many wonderful speakers and programs the club has had.

What would you like to see the club do that it isn't?

I would love trips to see many of the gardens in the USA.



Avril Bacon

Member since 2007

What kind of gardening do you do? Or prefer?

I focus on perennials and flowering shrubs. I have a hilly site which can be challenging.

**When did you start gardening?
What drew you to it?**

Started in my apartment years and years ago.



What would you like to tell the club about yourself: other passion(s); work (current/former/volunteer); family; gardening credentials; etc.?

I've worked for SMOC in Framingham since 2016 and love helping families. I worked in the emergency dept. at Faulkner for 14 years. My boss was the emergency room chief. I was given an award as the only non-medical person who grabbed a gown and dove right in to help/comfort the Marathon bombing victims.

How did you become involved with the Natick Garden Club?

Shortly after I purchased my house in '96, I was walking my dog, and ran into Emma Regele who of course introduced me to Sue Copen, another neighbor. Emma mentioned the garden club, (both Emma and Sue were members.) Checked it out and have been a member ever since.

What is most important to you about NGC membership?

I would like to get back to visiting members' gardens, not just Joyce's (always



beautiful garden!) Would love to see our members' gardens and possibly do visits to other garden clubs.

Caitlyn Siebenmorgen

Member since 2020

What kind of gardening do you do? Or prefer?

I have just begun my gardening journey! While I prefer growing vegetables, I have taken a great interest in flower gardens with a focus on English cottage style and New England natives.

When did you start gardening? What drew you to it?

I officially started gardening 8 years ago when my husband agreed that if I could successfully grow vegetables in pots, he would build me a raised garden. That being said, I come from an agricultural family. My grandfather was one of the largest citrus & onion producers in Texas! He was a test farm for Burpee, so I always got to taste test the new varieties as a child. It is by far my favorite childhood memory!



What would you like to tell the club about yourself: other passion(s); work (current/former/volunteer); family; gardening credentials; etc.?

I work at TJX for the TJMaxx Kids Division where I have been for the past 13 years. I am currently serving on the Board of Directors at the Riverbend School in South Natick. I have two children, Piper (7) and Lincoln (4). My passions beyond gardening include running (just finished the Boston Marathon virtually in September!), travelling the world with my family, cooking, and making new friends.

How did you become involved with the Natick Garden Club?



When I moved to Natick 7 years ago, I saw a sign in the spring for the Annual Plant Auction. While I didn't attend it the first year because I had a newborn, I went the 2nd year and brought my daughter with me. We have been going annually as our favorite kick off to summer tradition. You may have seen Piper in the front row bidding on her favorite purple flowers or even helping Doris with the raffle prizes in 2019! I helped this past year with the Online Plant Sale and so enjoyed meeting club members I decided to join!

What is most important to you about NGC membership?

So many things come to mind. First and foremost, gardening is a hobby that is not restricted by generational differences!! I love meeting new people and learning



about culture, community and new ways to try things. In a time where many people are working from home and self-isolating, gardening can be a stress reliever and when working with a vegetable gardening, rewarding for all in the family. I look forward to a lifelong journey pursuing my gardening passion with this community.

I am particularly interested in expanding my cottage garden so I welcome thoughts/opinions!!

What would you like to see the club do that it isn't doing now?

There is always an opportunity to instill historical knowledge in the younger community. Expanding upon a multi-generational community will offer various and enticing perspectives to ensure the club evolves seamlessly.

Improved efficiency of the Annual Plant Auction. If the opportunity arises next year to have it in person, how do we combine the learnings from virtual and apply to the in-person event? Since we have had such a tremendous amount of donations come through from the membership, sometimes the in-person auction can be quite a lengthy process. Start early on securing "historically proven" best sellers from donors, and have them as an online bidding auction.



Mary Beth Connolly

Member since 2010

What kind of gardening do you do? Or prefer?

Civic beautification is my favorite type of gardening. I believe that helping to provide beautiful public spaces for the enjoyment of all passersby is a most valuable contribution to improving the community. The



opportunity to work on the installation and maintenance of the various public plantings managed by the Natick Garden Club was one of the reasons I joined the club. I've been a member for nine years now, and in that time I have chaired/co-chaired three of the committees involved with civic beautification: Downtown Natick Planters, Morse Institute Library Planters, and Morse Institute Library inside plants. It is always a rewarding experience, both planning and organizing a seasonal planting and working with fellow members to install and maintain it. When I travel, which I enjoy very much, I find myself drawn to public parks and gardens. It is always uplifting to observe how various communities employ local flora to achieve the same goal as we do here in Natick. I've been fortunate to visit many public gardens and have included a few photos of me in my favorite ones: Bergen, Norway; Lima, Peru; Melbourne, Australia; and Hongkong.

When did you start gardening? What drew you to it?



When I was a child, I would help my grandfather plant his extensive flower and vegetable gardens, often accompanying him to the garden center to select the plants. To this day the smell of a garden center nursery brings back his memory. Now I enjoy planting containers my family and I can enjoy from our deck. I have too many visiting critters I don't want to fight with to plant much in the way of vegetables.

What would you like to tell the club about yourself: other passion(s); work (current/former/volunteer); family; gardening credentials; etc.?

Prior to retiring in 2009 I worked for a third-party international logistics firm, managing imports and exports for various other companies. Once I retired, I was able to travel with my husband, which we did as often as possible. We've managed to visit about 75 countries, for which I am very grateful. We're looking forward to seeing more of the world as soon as it is feasible. In addition to traveling, I became involved in several community organizations, and spent a great deal of time working for the regional English as a Second Language program headquartered in Framingham, both as a volunteer tutor and technology facilitator and board member. I have always found volunteering to be a gift to myself. I also keep myself busy reading, cooking, and swimming.



How did you become involved with the Natick Garden Club?

I am also a member of the Fifteen Gardeners of Natick, where I made the acquaintance of Shirley Fitzpatrick, a legendary member of the Natick Garden Club. She encouraged me to join and I did. The civic beautification opportunities afforded by the Natick Garden Club are what initially drew me.

What is most important to you about NGC membership?

Aside from the opportunities for civic beautification, I truly value the opportunity to meet and get to know so many interesting members. I have found the members to be most welcoming and encouraging to new members. I have learned a great deal about so many topics: flowers, trees, landscaping, conservation, invasive plants, critter defense. I enjoy listening to other club members talk about their gardens and passionate horticultural interests and find it very rewarding to work on group projects with the other members.



What would you like to see the club do that it isn't doing now?

Our greatest asset as a club is our collective knowledge and willingness to share it. We do it well but there is always room for improvement. I think it would be a good idea to reach out to new residents of Natick to let them know about the club and how it might be of interest to them as homeowners dealing with a new landscape or one which was left to them but perhaps they aren't

sure what to do with. I was thinking of a periodic postcard mailing to residents who have recently closed on a home. Perhaps we could also offer a one-hour garden/yard assessment as a raffle item for future plant auctions. I know that I would have benefitted from a walk through with a knowledgeable gardener when I first moved into my home.

