

# **THE GARDEN CENTER, INC.**

## **Brief History**

Organized 1951    Incorporated 1952

Federated 1953

Council Flower: Rose

In June of 1915, a group of Valdosta women formed The Floral Club. In April 1919 this club went inactive “to devote their time to Red Cross work.” After World War I, the club reorganized in January 1925 as The Garden Club of Valdosta. In 1927 the first yearbook was published and the club maintained a garden center at the Carnegie Library. The Garden Club federated with The Garden Club Georgia, Inc. in 1928. The annual Spring Flower Shows began and the rose was selected as the club flower. In 1939, growth in membership necessitated dividing The Garden Club into three circles. With the start of World War II in 1941, The Valdosta Garden Club voted not to disband but to meet only periodically. Club members pledged full time to war work and growing Victory Gardens, home canning, the Red Cross, and the U.S.O. shrubbery was furnished to landscape Moody Field and the Club provided a floral spray to accompany the remains of each fatality from the Base Hospital to its final resting place. The work to make Valdosta the Azalea City of Georgia began during this period.

At the end of the war in 1945, the Garden Club intensified the project of beautifying Valdosta and the City Council passed the resolution declaring Valdosta “The Azalea City of Georgia.” During 1947-1949, a study of wild flowers was undertaken and wild flower gardens were started. Flower arrangement and horticultural schools were conducted and the yearbook won a national cash-prize award from Horticulture Magazine and The Garden Club of Georgia, Inc. Yearbook Award. Membership growth by 1949 resulted in a total of seven circles. In 1951, The Garden Club purchased The Crescent, a 1898 southern mansion, for its home. The Garden Club was reorganized as The Garden Center with a council of seven clubs. A charter and bylaws were written and approved and in 1952, The Garden Center was incorporated and federated in 1953 with The Garden Club of Georgia, Inc. and the National Garden Clubs, Inc.

Restoration and preservation of The Crescent became the main purpose of The Garden Center, Inc. In May 1954, The Garden Club of Georgia Trophy for Outstanding Achievement was presented to The Garden Center, Inc. for The Crescent project. Mrs. T.H. Smith,

Sr., Mrs. Leonard Mederer and Mrs. R.B. Whitehead were voted life members of the governing board of The Garden Center, Inc. Council for their outstanding and untiring efforts for this project. Thirty-two years, 1951-1983, were devoted to fund raising and work to complete the major restoration of The Crescent. In 1980, The Crescent was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Hyta Mederer, last of the original life members, died in 1997.

The Garden Center, Inc. supported the goals and projects of The National Garden Clubs, Inc. and The Garden Club of Georgia, Inc. through years and continue in the present. The list of projects included sponsoring annual flower shows, spring, fall, holiday and patriotic shows and shows with the Camellia and Hemerocallis Plant Societies; basic design and landscape design courses; hosting meetings of the State and District boards and other meetings. The council maintains a library and display gardens.

The holdings of The Garden Center, Inc. have increased and The Crescent Complex now (1999) includes a separate auditorium built in 1957, a Chapel converted in 1977 from the original wash house, the Jones Kindergarten School, circa 1900, was moved from its original site to the Crescent garden in 1986.

The Crescent is available to the public for rental and is a popular place for weddings, receptions and civic gatherings. The Garden Center, Inc. members keep it open Monday through Friday from 2:00 to 5:00 for tours.

October 24, 1990 was a great day in the history of The Garden Center, Inc. At that time the parcel of land located at 901 North Toombs St. and housing a 3200 square foot brick office building was donated to The Garden Center, Inc. by Mr. Harley Langdale, Jr. in honor of his wife, Eileen Cox Langdale, a long time garden club member. The income it produces will be used to benefit The Garden Center, Inc.

In June 1999 Mrs. Dorothy Jones presented a table and chairs in memory of her husband, Carl Jones. They are pieces of original furniture used in the kindergarten house, which is now part of The Crescent Complex.

The Garden Center Inc. participates in the life of the community, actively working with the Tree Commission, the Tourism Commission and the Parks Commission.

On going projects are the annual Antiques Show and Sale in October, Christmas Open House for the public with days set aside for the school children's tours, a holiday party for members in December, the Spring Flower Show and tours of the Crescent and garden.

Improvements to the Garden Center complex include brick patios, shade gardens, garden lighting, wrought iron fencing, air conditioning of the second and third floors of The Crescent, redecorating of the "Bride's Room," an entrance hall chandelier and tile flooring in the auditorium.

Major maintenance includes interior painting of The Crescent and the Chapel. Replacement and repair of the Auditorium building columns, a complete new roof for The Crescent and roof repairs to the Chapel.

The Board of Trustees of The Garden Center, Inc. fluctuates. In 2001, there are ten clubs; Amaryllis Garden Club, Azalea Garden Club, Camellia Garden Club, Designing Women, Dogwood Garden Club, Grand Gardeners Club, Holly Garden Club, Magnolia Garden Club, Southern Charm Garden Club and Town and Country Garden Club. The Garden Club, Inc. holds one general membership meeting each year in March.

## **History of the Garden Clubs of Valdosta**

By: Mrs. Paul Myddleton

1956

Since the dawn of existence women have been universally attracted by flowers. They love to see them in all of their gorgeous beauty, to grow them, to cut and arrange them, to share them and to enjoy the rare sweetness of their delightful odor.

To further this love for flowers, an enthusiastic group of women, black in June 1915, met and formed what was then known as The Floral Club. The aim of this club was to foster a love for gardening, improve home grounds, stimulate an interest in community beautification and a civic pride in the colored women by offering prizes for the most improvement and best kept yards.

The Floral Club published monthly a column in the local newspaper on gardening. It also staged the first flower show in Valdosta and the Garden Clubs have continued to carry on these projects through the years. The first officers of The Floral Club were:

President	Mrs. J. L. Giddens
Vice President	Mrs. A. H. Havenkotte
Secretary-Treasurer	Mrs. F. H. Ramsey
Corresponding Sec.	Mrs. Abial Winn

These four officers and the following composed the charter members; Mrs. H.D. Britt, Mrs. Ben Bently, Mrs. Ashley Belote, Mrs. C.C. Brantley, Miss Leila Fender, Mrs. A.J. Little, Miss Bessie Pendleton, Mrs. N.T. Pindar, Mrs. D.B. Small and Mrs. Flemming Winn. One

man, Mr. D.B. Small, was an honorary member. Two of these charter members and original officers are most active members of the Azalea Club at present, Mrs. F.H. Ramsey and Mrs. Abial Winn.

After three very active years the club dropped their activities in April 1919 that they might devote their time to Red Cross work; but reorganized again in January 1925 as the Garden Club of Valdosta - with all the original members of the Floral Club as members and with the same aims and enthusiasm.

The presidents of the Garden Club with some of their most outstanding accomplishments are listed as follows:

**Mrs. C.C. Brantley President 1925-1927**

It was at her home that the reorganization took place. She continued the newspaper column and the rose was selected as the club flower. In 1925 the first scrapbook was kept, which custom has continued. In 1927 the first Yearbook was published.

**Mrs. R.H. Powell President 1927-1929**

The club was federated in 1928. Mrs. Powell, being a past master in the art of growing fine chrysanthemums, staged the first Chrysanthemum Show, which was a huge success.

**Mrs. Luther Giddens President 1929-1931**

The living Christmas tree movement was started at this time, and Mrs. Giddens had the honor of being the first local member to be elected to a State office.

**Mrs. J.W. Mann President 1931-1933**

Held the first Christmas Tree Contest, with Mrs. F.H. Ramsey winning first prize. Promoted Roadside Beautification. On February 22, 1932 a living Christmas tree was planted on the grounds at The Woman's Building, which resulted in our becoming members of The American Tree Association. Sponsored the markings of native plants, shrubs and trees in Brookwood Park. Planted the grounds at the jail, held the first Zinnia Show. Planted a tree at Emory Junior College, which was dedicated to Mrs. D.B. Small, who had always been an inspiration and guiding light in all the club activities. Contracted for roses from Hjort's Nursery, at fifteen cents, to be planted for beautification purposes.

**Mrs. I.H. Tillman President 1933-1935**

Started Garden Center at the Library. Was elected as a State Officer. Entertained Mrs. McHatton as a guest speaker.

**Mrs. Henry Dukes President 1935-1937**

The custom of putting out May Baskets was revived. Began holding meetings in The Woman's Building where heretofore they had been held in various members homes or hotel parlors. Passed and enforced the rule that all members not paying dues by June 1st were out.

**Mrs. R.H. Bassford President 1937-1939**

Held first Garden School with Mrs. Croan as teacher, assisted by Mrs. McHatton, Mrs. Hastings and Mrs. Flourney. Had a display of Camellia Prints by Mr. Broadman of Augusta, Georgia. It was voted to divide the Club into Circles.

**Miss Hyta Plowden (now Mrs. Leonard Mederer) President 1939-1941**

At the beginning of this term the club had grown so large that it sprouted three branches. At a called meeting, at the home of the president, the club was divided into circles (which had been voted on previously). The members divided into groups according to zones, selected their names and elected their officers, which were:

Magnolia	President	Mrs. Abial Winn
Brookwood	President	Mrs. Howard Dasher
Pine Park	President	Mrs. J.W. Mann

It was voted to have three general club meetings per year with each of the three circles taking turns as hostesses, and six Circle meetings per year. During this term there was staged at most outstanding County wide Flower Show, the first of its kind and a huge success. Conservation was epecially stressed during this time.

**Mrs. C.C. Rousseau President 1941-1943**

Interest in the Junior Garden Club was revived at this time. The Club and Circles had made wonderful plans and gotten off to a fine start when they were so sadley interrupted by the rumble and roar of cannons echoing from Pearl Harbor, which started World War II. After this The Club met and voted Not to disband, but to meet only periodically and pledged full time to war workand growing Victory Gardens. A most commendable job was done in this patriotic work. It was at this time that the job was conceived to make Valdosta the Azalea City of Georgia.

**Mrs. C.O. Templeton President 1943-1945**

The war was still on and no group of women ever worked harder at their jobs of raising Victory Gardens, home canning, Red Cross, keeping the U.S.O. decorated with fresh flowers at all times, acting

as hostesses at U.S.O. and furnishing delicacies for their parties. Shrubbery was furnished to landscape Moody Field. The Garden Club furnished a spray to accompany the remains of each casualty from the Base Hospital to its final resting place. It was stressed that everyone keep their home gardens beautiful for the return of the boys. To help promote this cause the Victory Gardens, a Garden School was held by a staff of professors from the agriculture department of the University of Georgia, to which all South Georgia was invited. A committee, headed by Mrs. Paul Myddleton, served a delicious luncheon at The House in the woods for the guests of this occasion. Proceeds from same to help further the patriotic work of the club.

### **Mrs. Virginia N. Esterman President 1945-1947**

Now that peace was a reality, the president urged that all gardeners return to the task of making "Valdosta a place of beauty and joy forever." To continue making every plot a beauty spot by growing peace gardens, and planting living memorials. Flowers were placed in the hospital on Saturdays. An intensive City-wide spring clean-up campaign was waged, in which all school children were enlisted. A resolution was sent to the City Council that passed and made Valdosta "The Azalea City" of Georgia-which renewed a new interest in planting azaleas.

### **Mrs. H.P. Quillian President 1947-1949**

Conservation and beautification was the theme. The Club took on the task of beautifying the park on East Hill Avenue and Emory Junior College, by furnishing plants, trees, shrubs and bulbs by the thousands. A study of wild flowers were started. Camellia adequate for the increased membership. Mrs. Jesse Fort, of National renown, and Mr. Hubert Owens, of the University of Georgia, conducted an arrangement and horticultural school. The Yearbook won a national cash prize - awarded from Horticulture Magazine.

### **Mrs. J.B. Johnson President 1949-1951**

Since Valdosta was now "The Azalea City" of Georgia, the club started planting Formosa azaleas on Highway 41 - the northern entrance to the city - the Courthouse Square and Carnegie Library were replanted with azaleas and camellias. Liner azaleas were bought and sold at a minimum and every citizen of Valdosta was encouraged to plant at least two azaleas and one camellia at every home. A Judging School was held by Dorothy Biddle and Maude Jacobs. Sponsored the organization of The Men's Garden Club in 1948. Published the most complete and most outstanding Yearbook in the history of the Club. Mrs. Walter Shroer was chairman and the book won a State award. On October 28, 1949 the Garden Club

was hostess to the Garden Clubs of the 8th District of Georgia with Mrs. R.J. Carmichael, Federation President, as guest speaker for the occasion. The Club had continued to grow to such an extent that the four circles were overflowing, there being a membership of 182. Zoning was inadequate so the officers of the Club and Circles met at the home of Mrs. Johnson and divided the entire membership into seven circles by drawing the names of all members. The names of the four old circles were retained and three new ones added. The circles, their presidents and number of members were:

Azalea	President	Mrs. H.L. Bolton	27
Brookwood	President	Mrs. Robert Perry	27
Camellia	President	Mrs. Arthur Crabtree	25
Dogwood	President	Mrs. H.M. Giges	26
Hemerocallis	President	Mrs. R.L. Stump	25
Magnolia	President	Mrs. Frank Means	26
Pine Park	President	Mrs. W.E. Laite	26

At this time the chairmen of three outstanding committees, conservation, horticulture and scrapbook, were added to the executive board, making this the largest in the history of the club. The Garden Center was moved from the Library to Herring-Conoly Furniture where all board meetings were held and arrangement contests were conducted monthly - each circle being responsible for one entry - the type of arrangement being different each time and winners being chosen by popular vote.

### **Mrs. T.H. Smith President 1951-1954**

While all of the work of the Garden Club through the years has been far above par in carrying out the aims and ambitions of its members; and attaining and even surpassing goals set in every phase of community beautification, culture, and making Valdosta The City of Azaleas, the real Vale of Beauty - in staging wonderful Flower Shows etc.; the term of Mrs. T.H. Smith has not only carried on these many traditions but she started her term by saying, "Let us start with a vision" and she quoted Soloman who says, "Where there is no vision the people perish." She took as her theme Restoration and Preservation. She had a vision - a far-sighted one- a dream of what might be done to restore and preserve "The Crescent," original home of Col. and Mrs. W.S. West - a gracious, stately, picturesque mansion with spacious grounds and many of the most beautiful spreading oaks (with hanging moss) that has no equal in this part of the state, and so typical of the South that is no more.

The Garden Club had never had a home. She learned that this home had been purchased by a group of business men and was to be razed and the lot used for business purposes. Mrs. Smith called a board

meeting on June 6, 1951 and announced that this property might be available. An investigating committee, composed of Mrs. D.W. Freeman, Jr., Mrs. Leonard Mederer, Mrs. A.J. Strickland, Sr., Mrs. R.B. Whitehead, Mrs. Harley Langdale, Jr., Mrs. Arthur Crabtree, Mrs. Walter Shroer and Mrs. Smith was appointed and was instructed to secure the aid of a lawyer or business man and investigate the possibility of making this purchase. The committee learned among other things, that it could be purchased for \$35,000 - for a limited time only and were given the option on it. Mrs. Smith approached the club treasurer with the news that there was less than \$500 on hand. The treasurer said that it was a wonderful dream but could never be done, for she had seen other combined organizations struggle for years to raise much less than half this amount. This opposition and discouragement only fanned the flame and Mrs. Smith left her treasurer in a state of shock but with an increased fire of determination to realize her dream - as if to say;

“Somebody said it couldn’t be done  
But She, with a chuckle replied;  
Maybe it couldn’t, but she’d be one  
That wouldn’t say so ‘til she tried.”

But there were two on the Investigating Committee, Mrs. Mederer and Mrs. Whitehead, that agreed that it was a marvelous dream and could be a reality. They made plans to raise the money from any and every source, not only from club members, for this was to be the pride and joy of the whole community.

The Executive Board and all the Circle chairmen were called to meet at “The Crescent” with the Investigating Committee to look the project over. Senator and Mrs. West and son William had long since passed on, and the home had been partitioned into apartments and was in a sad state of repairs from foundation to roof. Mrs. Whitehead made a speech, in which she enthusiastically endorsed Mrs. Smith’s dream and presented the plan for raising the cash before buying it - which was further endorsed by Mrs. Mederer. This investigation meeting was followed on September 11, 1951 by a meeting of the Executive Board at the home of Mrs. Smith, augmented by the circle presidents. There was a full attendance. Everyone was tense, some with the excitement and eager anticipation - others with opposition. Mrs. Freeman gave her Investigating Committee report and the plan was made known that the \$35,000 for the purchase plus \$15,000 for repairs be raised in pledges before the option expired or else the deal was off. Mrs. Freeman reported that \$7,325 had already been pledged. After much discussion and amending the motion that finally went on record and was unanimously carried was: “The Garden Club buy the W.S. West property if the cash can

be raised for the purchase price of the property, plus some extra cash to begin repairs.” This recommendation to be presented to the club membership at the general meeting. At the general meeting, on September 18th, Mrs. W.E. McArther, President of the Jacksonville, Florida Council of Garden Clubs, was the guest speaker, her subject - “Our Vision.” Her club had recently acquired a home - a Garden Center - and her experiences, enthusiasm and comments were most timely and helpful. After the speaker departed the business of the hour was stated and proceeded with. The report from Mrs. Freeman, chairman of the Investigating Committee, gave all the advantages and disadvantages to be faced, and stated that to date the pledges amounted to \$17,735, besides several pledges for labor and materials. The recommendation from the Executive Board was read. There were many questions and heated discussions some who so emphatically opposed the move in the beginning spoke just as enthusiastically for the move at this meeting. The house was packed with members! Possibly at no time in the history of the club had the interest been so keen or varied. Many spoke for the project and many against it. Freedom of speech was exercised - democracy was at its fullest! When the question was called and the vote taken, the motion carried and the meeting was adjourned. There were congratulations, good natured jibes - but all went forward with a will to work together as a team for the one big thing that the majority wanted - a permanent home. There was a deadline to meet and the time was short. Every means of publicity was employed - daily press notices, radio, public speeches, personal contact, letters to out of town friends. Mrs. Smith, being so widely known, solicited and received donations from former Valdostans from many parts of the country who still had a love for and an interest and pride in Valdosta. A donation of \$5,000 was received from the County Commissioners. The City Council was asked to match that gift but came across a small margin of \$2,500. When this gift was made known to the public a stormy protest came from a group of women objectors, who appeared before the council and demanded that the Mayor, J.E. Mathis and the three councilmen, E.W. Jackson, J.C. Green and John Bray Giddens, who voted for the gift, personally reimburse the city treasury or local actions would be brought against them. Lawyer J.B. Copeland pointed out that this project was not for the Garden Club alone, but for the people of Valdosta and Community - an attraction for visitors and tourists - a place of grandeur which will enhance, in all, an appreciation of culture.

As the time limit was drawing near a concentrated effort was made by radio and press - masterful speeches by members and non-members were made and published, in an appeal for funds. Places

of business were visited and lists of donors and firms appeared periodically in the papers.

We, too, the seven Federated Garden Clubs of Valdosta, have a home, one to be justly proud of through the years. Yes, the Garden Center is of such prominence in the state it was used as full size cover for the November 1952 issue of The Garden Gateway. It was pictured in the magazine section of the Atlanta Journal and Constitution, together with a lengthy history of it. A long account of it was published in the Green Thumb Magazine, a Florida publication. It was viewed with breath taking admiration when its doors were thrown open to the delegates from all over the nation to the National Hemerocallis Convention that was entertained here May 1954. For the success of this project, Mrs. Smith had the pleasure of receiving, in the name of the Club, the Garden Club of Georgia Trophy - the highest award given in the state for outstanding achievement. At the State Garden Club Convention in Macon in 1954, Mrs. Smith, Mrs. Mederer and Mrs. Whitehead, being the largest contributors (as club members) to the project, and because of their interest and persistent and untiring efforts toward making this dream come true, they were unanimously voted, by the Executive Board, to become life members of the governing board of The Crescent - an honor so justly deserved.

In addition to the many accomplishments by the garden club members during this term of office, there is still another award that made all of Valdosta proud, which was presented to Mrs. R. B. Whitehead at the State Garden Club Convention in 1952. This trophy was given by the Peachtree Garden Club of Atlanta for the best "Individual Achievement" and it was received by Mrs. Whitehead for the planting of the beautiful 'Camellia Trail' through the tall stately pines on the college campus.

While all of this was taking place, the Garden Club was continuing to grow and change in many ways. The following methods were used for dividing the circles into clubs to be federated (1) Those who wished a change may apply for a transfer to another club, provided that the club they choose has not reached a full membership of 25. (2) A group of a minimum of 15 old Garden Club members may form a new club if they so desire. (3) New members will be assigned to the club of their choice if possible, otherwise, they will be drawn into a club with a vacancy. These clubs were the result of the reorganization and were federated in 1951: Amaryllis Club, Azalea Club, Camellia Club, Holly Club, Pine Club and Town and Country Club. Mrs T. H. Smith sponsored the organization of a Business Women's Club, the Magnolia Club, in 1953, which was federated in 1954.

It became apparent that if The Crescent was to be placed on the tax exempt list of the government, and the generous donations for its purpose exempt from income tax, that it was necessary to incorporate. The services of Col. H. C. Eberhardt were obtained, who conducted the legal proceedings. "The Garden Center, Inc.," was the name approved by the Secretary of State of Georgia. Having this approval, an application was made to the Superior Court of Lowndes County for the charter which must be signed by not less than five members. These were: Mrs. T. H. Smith, Mrs. Walter Schroer, Mrs. Leonard Mederer, Mrs. R. B. Whitehead and Mrs. W. S. Southwell. Judge George R. Lilly signed the charter promptly and asked Mr. Eberhardt to convey his best wishes to the ladies for a successful project, which he regarded as one of the finest and most progressive civic undertakings which has been started in this community in a long time.

The constitution and by-laws, which had recently been revised and re-written, under the chairmanship of Mrs. Paul Myddleton, for the governing board and the newly federated clubs, did not prove sufficient for The Garden Center, Inc. M. Eberhardt graciously took this task of conform to the newly incorporated center. This appears later in this volume.

In appreciation to the merchants and the people of Valdosta for the many kindnesses extended to The Garden Club of Valdosta, and to reciprocate for these, the Club voted to have Camellia Day - instead of the usual show - to decorate all show windows of merchants desiring it with arrangements of Camellias, and have booths at various points of the city for pinning a camellia on all passers-by and visitors to the city.

One of the chief aims, in connection with this project, was to have a Botanical Garden - a test garden - which is also a realization and the history of which will be dealt with separately.

Mrs. Larry Bethune President 1954-1955

Junior Garden Club work took on new life with Mrs. R. B. Whitehead taking an active part in the reorganization. Garden Center News Notes appeared in The Valdosta Daily Ties weekly. A sale of Christmas trees was conducted from the front lawn by Parramore and Griffin. Holiday House, with the theme 'Romance of Santa Claus,' was held during the Christmas season. A tea was held at "The Crescent" in honor of Mrs. T. J. Smith, President of The Garden Clubs of Georgia. The seven Federated Clubs participated in this.

The main project during this term was interest in securing a blue print for proper furnishing of the house; with major emphasis on remodeling of the kitchen, making it more convenient to serve at the

wedding receptions that The Crescent” is becoming noted for. New water and sewer pipes were installed from the house to the streets.

Miss Kathryn Ulmer President 1955 - 1956

During this time the theme was “Learning Together.” A course in parliamentary law was taught by Mrs. D. L. Burns, Parliamentarian; The ABC’s of Flower Shows by Mrs. Guy Rice; Flower Show School, course I, was taught by Mrs. John M. Newell and Mrs. Joe Grevas. A fall general meeting was held and a lecture on Landscape Architecture given by Mr. Thomas G. Williams, of the University of Georgia. Two flower shows were held, ‘A Parade of Beauty’ in the fall with Mrs. T. H. Smith general chairman; a camellia show, ‘Wedding Festivities for the Camellia Season,’ with Mrs. Guy Rice as general chairman. Several minor changes and amendments were made in the Constitution and By-laws. An irrigation system was donated for the south lawn by The Magnolia Club. the executive Board voted to add tow more sprinklers to the north side. Zoysia grass plugs were donated by Summit Hall Turf nurseries and Federated Clubs sponsored the Christmas Lighting contest. The Clubs cooperated with Lilly Rogers, colored Home Demonstration Agent, in staging a flower show, and \$25.00 was given to be used as prize money.

Through good business management, as well as being good horticulturists, the test garden committee is now able to sell enough surplus plants each year to purchase new varieties that give the garden a very high rating among all of the test gardens in the nation. Every year hundreds of visitors walk through the garden gates to share the beauty with those who had a mind to work and to materialize a vision and make a dream come true.

“Whoever makes a garden  
Has never worked alone;  
The rain has always found it,  
The sun has always known;  
The wind has blown across it  
And helped to scatter seeds,  
Whoever makes a garden  
Has all the help he needs.

Whoever plants a garden  
Should surely not complain,  
With someone like the sunshine,  
And someone like the rain,  
And someone like the breeze  
To aid him at his toil,  
And some like the Father

Who gave the garden soil.  
Whoever makes a garden  
Has, Oh! so many friends!  
The glory of the morning,  
The dew when daylight ends.  
For wind and rain and sunshine,  
And dew and fertile sod,  
And he who makes the garden,  
Works hand in hand with God.”

— Douglas Malloch

### History Of Our Test Garden

By: Mrs. Guy Rice

Once upon a time (all true Fairy Stories begin this way) a very great lady saw a vision, and dreamed a dream of preserving for posterity one of the lovely old homes of Valdosta. The lady was Mrs. T. H. Smith. She inspired two other great ladies who also saw a vision of what this place might mean to the future of Valdosta. These ladies were Mrs. Leonard Mederer and Mrs. R. B. Whitehead. It would be impossible to include in this short sketch the names of all the people who helped to make this dream come true, but to say that the people who love, and give: and the CRESCENT stands today as memorial to all who had a part in sharing the vision of Mrs. T. H. Smith.

As the history is being written, it is interesting to observe the special interests of the group; some saw the need of the house being repainted, and general repairs as needed; other saw lovely furniture that would enhance the beauty of the interior. Mrs. Leonard Mederer saw the grounds as a fitting background for the beautiful old home and as Chairman of the grounds, she began making plans to make a garden that would be a compliment to the house. No one will ever know how much of her time, money and personality she has invested in this project.

Before any work was begun, Mr. R. J. Drexel was consulted, and he gave then, and he continued to give of his time and talents, to the making of the grounds what they are today. First he drew a plan and made a list of the plants that would be needed. Mrs. Mederer enlisted the aid of Mrs. Guy Rice, as her co-chairman, and together they began to collect people and materials to help bring this area into the plan as suggested by Mr. Drexel.

Mr. and Mrs. Foxy Wilcox gave the lovely boxwood around the house and down the front walk. They also gave the wrought iron garden furniture under the pergola.

Mrs. W. B. Sullivan gave the boxwood in the urns on the front steps.

The Men's Garden Club did a "man's share" of the work by contributing the following: 90 azaleas @ \$1.00 each; 25 roses @ \$1.00 each; 40 boxwood @ \$1.00 each.

The camellias have been contributed by Mr. and Mrs. Walter Schroer and Mr. and Mrs. R. B. Whitehead. Mrs. Turner Brice, Mrs. Abia Winn and Misses Julia and Florrie Bell made a wonderful contribution in giving rooted boxwood cuttings for outlining the paths in the garden. Lovely specimen plants of boxwood were given by Mr. and Mrs. Harmon Williams, Mrs. F. H. Ramsey and Mr. R. J. Drexel.

Mrs. Sam Hjort gave two tea olives and 25 roses. A variety of plants were given by Mr. Everett Bass, Mr. Hollis Oliver, Mr. Lester Dean, Mr. Guy Rice, Mr. and Mrs. W. A. Findley. The capitals on the columns of the pergola were given by the H. N. Bray family,

Georgia Ace Fertilizer Company has given generously of fertilizer and the Georgia Peat Moss Company was most liberal with peat moss. Parramore and Griffin planted the front lawn. Southern Cotton Oil Company has given fertilizer.

The city and county officials were most generous with men and materials as needed to get the grounds cleared off and ready to plant. The hardware and supply stores in Valdosta gave the paint for the pergola.

Mrs. T. H. Smith gave 60 Red Pinocchio Roses. Mrs. Leonard Mederer and Mrs. Guy Rice gave 40 Fashion Roses and two garden benches.

Mr. and Mrs. J. C. E. Connell gave two large azaleas.

With all these gifts, it was soon evident that more than was visible would need to get the garden ready for the National meeting of the American Hemerocallis Society in 1954. The garden committee began using the materials with which they were most familiar . . . plants . . . as a means of financing the fencing and irrigation system which was needed before it would be safe to begin actual planting. From 1952 to November 1953 this committee made \$2,237.37 through the sale of plants, many of these were contributed by interested people and many of them were plants bought for resale. With this money the fence was built, the irrigation system installed, the brick walks laid and the pool and pergola were built.

Letters were written to hemerocallis hybridizers, inviting them to send their choice hererocallis to grow in the test garden for the enjoyment of the visitors to the National meeting in May of 1954,

as well as a nice spot of advertising for themselves. The following responded in a most generous way: ARMistead, Bechtold, Claar, Carpenter, Childs, Connell, Davis, Douglas, Emigholz, Heyward, House, Hall, Lamb, Lester, Lerington, Nesmith, Parry, Register, Richards, Sass, Shriner, Sewell, Sutton, SJaxton, STout, Taylor, Traub, Vestal, Watkins, Wheeler, Wilds and Wood.

Many of these plants have been given to the test garden that they might be sold to help maintain the garden, and in the purchasing of new plants to keep the interest of the public in the newest and best of the introductions.

In 1954 the newly organized Georgia Hemerocallis society gave \$100.00 to the test garden in appreciation of the promotion work that the garden was doing with hemerocallis, this money to be used to further the work with hemerocallis.

#### Addendum to Early Histories

Many improvements and additions have been made since the early histories were written.

An auditorium has been built. The wash house, built at the same time the Crescent was built, has been remodeled to become the Chael in the Garden - dedicated to the Lord, in honor of Hyta Plowden Mederer.

A pool with fountain, including goldfish, has been installed and dedicated to the memory of Corrine Briggs Smith.

A marble sundail has been placed in the garden in memory of Mrs. Jewel Whitehead.

These three ladies are the one with the wisdom and foresight to acquire the property for a Garden Center.

An arbor has been added for the beauty of the garden and to sere those who walk there for weddings, and other occasions or just for pleasure.

The historic kindergarten house, a gift of the Valdosta Heritage Foundation, was relocated from its former location on the corner of Troup and Magnolia Streets, to the Garden. The Heritage Foundation donated the labor and materials to restore the unique building for the enjoyment of all.

The garden plots are planted and maintained by each of the Garden Clubs. Planting changes with the season.

The display garden, with its beautiful "Daylillies," was planted and is maintained by the Hemerocallis Society. Many valuable plants are located here. Each year the Hemerocallis Society holds its show at this facility.

The Camellia Society holds its Flower Show in the Crescent and/or auditorium each year in November.

Labor, Love and Money have been freely given to beautify and preserve the Crescent and the Garden for the present and the future.

In the early 1980s the Crescent was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

There is a Christmas Open House for the public held the first weekend in December.

The Crescent is open from 2-5 week days for the general public and by appointment for special tours.