

50 YEARS and GROWING STRONG

■ Happy Valley Garden Club marks half-century of gardening, friendships with special events

By ELLEN SPITALERI
The Clackamas Review

A 50th anniversary is always an occasion to celebrate, and members of the Happy Valley Garden Club are planning special activities to commemorate their group's half-



PHOTO BY ELLEN SPITALERI

Happy Valley Garden Club members pictured are, back row left to right, Sue Gilbert, Jennifer Buss and Priscilla Wells Robinson; front row, Gloria Cockburn and Leona McDonald.

century of gardening, socializing and community service.

Until then, it's business as usual for the club with the garden club meeting at 9:30 a.m. April 10 at the Happy Valley Baptist Church, 14095 S.E. King Road. Jody Peters, a Los Angeles-based floral designer and stylist will present "Soilless

Succulent Centerpieces." The hands-on workshop is open to everyone, and the \$10 fee covers lunch.

The Happy Valley Garden Club is seeking new members, said Jennifer Buss, the club's co-vice president. The group holds meetings once a month, September through May at the

church, and past topics have included snail management and forcing bulbs indoors. The group also has hosted presentations from local nurseries Garden Thyme and 7-Dees. All are welcome to attend, Buss said.

The Happy Valley Garden Club started 50 years ago in Leona McDonald's living room, and four of the original members are still active in the group.

When McDonald and Evelyn Mell came up with the idea for the club, "we said this is just going to be gardening and no socializing. That went by the way-side," McDonald said.

The group has lasted 50 years, she said, "because we absolutely care for one another."

Another reason for the group's longevity is because "everyone participates. They hold an office, enter flower shows or help give talks about gardening," said Gloria Cockburn, another of the original members of the club.

"They are open to new people and so down to Earth. Anyone with their fingers in the ground will recognize the wealth of knowledge in our founding members," said Priscilla Wells Robinson, one of the newest members of the club.

50th anniversary activities

Robinson is the anniversary committee chair and said the club has five special events planned, one for each decade of the group's existence.

First up will be a members-only ladies tea party, and then on Aug. 9, the club will attach a commemorative plaque to a

tree the group planted years ago at Happy Valley Park.

"That is a concert night, so we will have a potluck and enjoy the concert," Robinson said, adding that the club also will have some planting activities set up for children.

Next, club members will participate in the Oregon State Flower Show Sept. 22 to 24 at the Oregon Garden in Silverton.

"We will enter pieces that incorporate references to our 50th anniversary," Robinson said.

A "Discovery Walk" will be the highlight of the club's Nov. 13 meeting.

"We'll have tables set up by decades with photo books and speakers from within the group. It will be a trip down memory lane," Robinson said.

The last event on Dec. 10 will be a members-only holiday luncheon when attendees can take a look back on 2018 and reflect on all the club's many activities, Robinson said.

Community service

In addition to meetings and activities, the club members financially support organizations like the Garden of Enchantment in Sandy, Portland's Leach Botanical Garden and a statewide program called Pennies for Pines that works to restore forests.

"We help out at the Sarah Hite Rose Garden at the Milwaukie Center and have a responsibility to help children learn to love gardening," said co-president

CELEBRATE GARDENING

WHAT: The Happy Valley Garden Club's April meeting will feature a hands-on workshop on "Soilless Succulent Centerpieces," presented by Jody Peters of Jody Peters Designs

WHEN: 9:30 a.m. Tuesday, April 10

WHERE: Happy Valley Baptist Church, 14095 S.E. King Road

DETAILS: Lunch will be served. Contact Jennifer Buss at jenb@bussmold.com for further information

Sue Gilbert, who joined the club in 1973.

All the members are interested in supporting "the generation coming up. Our whole landscape depends on them," Cockburn said.

"We need to encourage the young kids. When we have work parties at church, we ask the children to help," McDonald said.

"I was a science educator for years, and it's part of [the club's] pledge to promote education," Robinson said.

She noted that the club has an outreach program at Happy Valley's Spring Mountain Elementary School, working on a restoration project.

"Helen Forbes is a forward-thinking teacher there, and she has fourth- and fifth-graders out there with loppers and picks to remove the English ivy and blackberries," Robinson said.

'Lifelong friendships'

The Happy Valley Garden Club started out with about 18 members in 1968, McDonald said, and now boasts nearly 40 members.

Of the original members, Cockburn, McDonald, Mell and CB Ross are still active.

"The garden is why I get up in the morning," McDonald said, adding that the club members have formed deep and lasting connections that have seen them through life's ups and downs.

"What makes our group different from others is the lifelong friendships and rich history as a group, and the commonality of gardening," Buss said.

The members all have many other talents, like entertaining and homemaking that intermix with gardening.

"Their true and deep-rooted interest in sharing their talents and can-do attitude is contagious, and passing that on to the younger generations ahead is just natural to them," Buss said. She added, "We need the younger generations to keep our club going, so we want to get them involved and be as excited about gardening as our club members are."