

## **A view of Historic Garden Week from District II of the Garden Club of Virginia:**

*Compiled by Virginia Gillock, Historic Garden Week Chair, District II*

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To the members of the Augusta Garden Club,

Deneen asked me to do some research into how other clubs manage Historic Garden Week. As the Chair of District II for the GCV, my focus for this report has primarily been on that area, which includes Charlottesville, Orange, Harrisonburg, Staunton, Lexington, and Lynchburg. I have had many discussions with various members of the GCV leadership in HGW, including Karen Ellsworth, Director of Historic Garden Week, Stephe Broadwater, the State Chairman of Historic Garden Week, Meg Clement, immediate past State Chairman of HGW, and Betsy Casteen, past Vice Chair of HGW. Here is a summary of some facts, some statements, and a few ideas of how other clubs manage their garden tour:

To begin, from **the perspective of the Garden Club of Virginia**, there are 3 goals attached to Historic Garden Week:

1. It's the only thing that all 47 clubs do together annually..... camaraderie is the key!
2. It is a fundraiser and supports our restoration projects, a fellowship program, as well as our centennial project with state parks.
3. It's a public relations event- by far, what the Garden Club of Virginia is best known, by the public- hence the tagline- America's Largest Open House!

The GCV has 47 member clubs.....

How many tours are there each year? On average, 30.

Last year, there were 30 tours.....

**13 were hosted by 1 club**

**10 were hosted by 2 clubs**

**3 were hosted by 3 clubs**

**3 were hosted by 4 clubs and a council (Richmond).**

Here are **examples from our district**, district II:

- The Charlottesville area has three member clubs; Albemarle GC, Rivanna GC, and Charlottesville GC. They have three days of tours, which include Morven on Saturday, a House and Garden tour on Sunday, and the UVA's Pavilion gardens on Monday. Each club alternates being the host club every three years. The Chair and Co-Chair is from the same club, the Advertising Chairs are from the club that will be the lead host for the next year, and the host club assigns HGW tour properties to the other 2 clubs for them to assign a house/property chair and hostesses as well as assign those clubs to arrange flowers. They also have a Tri-Club Steering Committee which meets 3x/year to coordinate and communicate HGW activities including an exchange of ideas for procurement.
- Harrisonburg has one member club, The Spotswood GC, and they host their own tour every year.
- Orange has one member club, Dolley Madison GC, and they host their own tour every year.
- Lynchburg has two member clubs, Hillside GC, and The Lynchburg GC, and they alternate each year being the host club, and they share many duties, including hostesses, publicity, advertising, and flower arranging.

Here is a **quick financial analysis** between Staunton and Lexington (attached are the detailed averages for 2007-2015, which are similar):

Summary of Averages between clubs 2007-2015:

Staunton: Attendance average was 523, and income average (excluding guidebook sales) was \$11,864.

Lexington: Attendance average was 509, and income average (excluding guidebook sales) was \$10,584.

Here is an update from GCV for 2016 and the 2017 tour we shared:

*Lexington 2017 = 675 attendance and a net of \$10,847 collected locally and \$1,800 in online tix sales*

*Lexington 2016 = 610 attendance and a net of \$9,511 collected locally and \$1,625 in online tix sales*

*Staunton 2016 = 966 attendance and a net of \$19,187 collected locally and \$3,875 in online tix sales*

The HGW State Chairman, **Stephie Broadwater**, is from the Nansemond River GC, and they alternate being the lead or host club with two others, the Franklin GC, and the Elizabeth River GC. Here is what she has to say:

*We have 1 lead club every 3rd year with the chair being from this club and co-chairs from the other 2 clubs. Committees chairs are from the lead club and members from the other 2 clubs so everyone is working on the tour, learning the tasks and making new friends. We divide the locations / homes by club to handle flowers and hosting. The clubs help each other out with these duties if needed or requested. We're heading into our 4th year of working together and are enjoying it. Plus it helps each club with the work load and procuring home and sponsors.*

There are many **Pros and Cons** to alternating a tour with another member club. Here are some thoughts regarding the Augusta GC alternating with the Blue Ridge GC:

Pros

- The camaraderie of teaming up with another club. Making new friends!
- Many hands make less work
- Procurement may be easier when only securing homes every other year in your community

Cons

- Lexington and Staunton represent two separate communities geographically spaced 45-50 miles apart
- Lack of continuity for advertising and publicity, as well as community support when alternating years
- Our local economy does not benefit as much from a biannual event as it does from an annual event

Summary:

Either way, we must remember that The Augusta Garden Club was one of the first clubs to join the Garden Club of Virginia and host a garden tour in the first year of Historic Garden Week, 1929. We are home to one of the first Restoration projects of the Garden Club of Virginia, The Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library garden, designed by Charles Gillette in 1933. Whatever we decide to do as a club, we must make a clear decision and then show our unity by coming together to support our next tour in 2018. This we will do with the Blue Ridge Garden Club, regardless of our vote, as we have already pledged to do. The next year, 2019, will be our Centennial tour, and our vote will help decide whether we host this tour on our own, or host with the support of the Blue Ridge Garden Club.

Thank you for reading and please don't hesitate to ask more questions!  
Virginia