

## **GARDEN CLUBS OF ILLINOIS**

**Award # 43b Historic Preservation**—To a club for dedication to the continuing challenge of reclaiming and preserving a historic site recognized by local, state, or national authorities.

**Award Submitted by: Cress Creek Garden Club of Naperville**

**Number of Members: 110**

**Date submitted: October 30, 2025**

- 1. New Project: No**
- 2. Brief summary and objectives of project:**

The Paw-Paw house and post office was built in 1833 and was moved from Webster and Jefferson in Naperville to the grounds of Naper Settlement in 1977. Since 1979 (only four years after our founding) Cress Creek Garden Club has taken on the project of planting the surrounding gardens of this historic house which served as an early post office. The name “Paw Paw” comes from a grove of paw paw trees planted near the house.

Each year our dedicated committee chairs meet with the Naper Settlement coordinator in February to plan the gardens around the historic home. During the planning session, attempts are made to keep plantings true to the time period. Plantings include colorful annuals which are ordered wholesale through our plant sale offerings. Needed changes to perennial beds are discussed. Spring planting date was held mid-May, 2025, and a team of about 20 members were present to do spring clean up and plant annuals. The garden we plant and maintain is divided into 9 different areas/beds. Each week following planting and throughout the summer members volunteer weekly to weed and maintain the beds. Since 2024, Settlement staff took over watering of the Paw Paw garden. Our goal is to keep the gardens looking neat for the thousands of visitors that come to Naper Settlement each year.

On October 17, 2025 another group of dedicated members gathered to clean up the gardens and put them to rest until next spring.

In 2009 Cress Creek Garden Club was inducted into the “Naperville Distinguished Heritage Hall of Honor” for more than 30 years of service to Paw Paw House Gardens. CCGC has also won a Presidential Volunteer Service Award for our sustained commitment to caring for the gardens at the Paw Paw post office. This year, in 2025, the Settlement recognized Cress Creek Garden Club during our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year by hosting a tea which included members, Settlement staff and the mayor of Naperville.

- 3. Involvement of Club members, other organizations, etc:**

Over the course of the season from May through October, over 50 members are involved with planting, maintaining, and cleaning up of gardens surrounding this historic marker. Our Club chairs work directly with Naper Settlement staff to plan and prepare for this garden.

- 4. Project expenses and means of funding:**

The budget for Paw Paw house planting is \$650. This amount is funded through the Club’s two yearly fundraisers: Make It Bake It (in November) and the Plant Sale (in May). Club members donate hours and hours of time throughout the season to maintain and keep the gardens watered.

- 5. Continuing involvement, follow-up, maintenance:**

As we have for the last 46 years, Cress Creek Garden Club will continue working with Naper Settlement to provide volunteers to keep the gardens that surround the historic Paw Paw house beautifully planned and maintained. It is our longest on-going project and we are proud of our long-time relationship with Naper Settlement.



Paw Paw House at Naper Settlement



CCGC Members pictured on porch of Paw Paw House



The Mayor addressing CCGC at tea given to commemorate our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary



Tea Time!



Spring planting, May 2025





Special pink bed planted for breast cancer awareness. Our sign nestled in flower bed.



October—Fall Clean up



Clean up crew pictured at side of Paw Paw House