

The Darien Garden Club is celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2021. At the board meeting on 8/17/2020 the board brainstormed ideas to celebrate this upcoming anniversary. One of the ideas was to have a garden walk featuring members' gardens. In past years we held informal garden walks for members only. This anniversary year idea was to host a more formal garden walk, open it to the greater community, showcase members' gardens and raise funds for our club. With Covid-19 continuing to be a concern it was felt that an outdoor event would allow for social distancing and safer public participation. A steering committee was formed and met several times to outline the proposed event. The plan was approved at the September, 2020 board meeting. "Every Garden Tells a Story" took root and started to grow.

The event was publicized via post-cards, our club website, lawn signs, press releases, paid advertising and of course word-of-mouth. Advance tickets could be purchased on-line through Eventbrite or from club members. Date of event tickets were available at each of the gardens. A garden walk passport was developed that provided a map, the address and description of each garden, information about our club and an ad placed by Bartlett Tree Experts who was a corporate sponsor.

Our June, July and August of 2021 meetings were held at the members' gardens that were designated for the garden walk, two gardens toured each month. This served as a "dress rehearsal" and allowed for on-site planning of traffic flow, parking, placement of ticket takers, docents and artists. In addition, our members were able to tour all six gardens given that most would be working in one garden on the day of the event.

As gardeners we knew that the weather would significantly impact our event. We recognized that a bad summer storm with lightning and thunder could derail our best laid plans. During planning meetings we reviewed precautions for safety in recognizing and intervening with heat emergencies should we have a hot, humid day. Guidelines were provided by one of our members who is a certified Outdoor Emergency Care technician. Shade, seating and water were available at each location. Boxed water was donated by the Boxed Water is Better Company. Fortunately, Mother Nature smiled on us, prayers answered, and we had perfect weather.

Every Garden Tells a Story was held on Saturday, July 17, 2021. Gardens of six members were showcased, each garden titled to reflect its unique history and design. (photos attached). At each location the gardener was available to share information and answer questions. Additional garden club members were on-site as docents, having previously learned about the garden. The Darien Arts Council provided artists and musicians who donated their time and talents on the day of our event. Vocalists and visual artists added another dimension of pleasure for the guests touring the gardens. We held a "Bazaar" at the entrance to one of the gardens. The Bazaar featured garden related items, handmade crafts, vintage items, and plants for sale. All items were donated by club members. Bartlett Tree Experts provided us with one hundred and thirty oak tree saplings that we distributed to attendees.

Our club has a long-standing relationship with a local restaurant – Chuck's Southern Comfort Café. Chuck Pine raises hundreds of vegetable plants in a large garden behind his establishment. Our attendees were welcomed to visit his garden. He developed a special menu for the day of our event and shared some of his recipes with our guests.

We considered our event a great success on many levels. It was an "all hands on-deck" endeavor with every member of our club participating in one way or another. Volunteer time and efforts fell into numerous categories – planning meetings, garden preparation, research/learning/labeling plants, bazaar donations/crafts/plants, bazaar preparation and set-up, publicity/advertising, and volunteering day of the event. A conservative estimate of volunteer 1,200 hours were contributed by our members to plan, prepare, and carry out this event. Working together fostered new ideas, knowledge and friendships. Four hundred fifty-three tickets were sold. Several hundred people were inspired and educated about gardening, composting, pollinators, creating habitat, growing fruits and vegetables, and simply enjoying a garden. Involvement of a local restaurant and the Darien Arts Council fostered further community relationships. Attendees commented positively about the gardens, the music, the friendliness of our members, and the vast knowledge shared. During the garden walk nine individuals requested information about joining our club. Surveys sent out via Survey Monkey and Facebook reviews reinforced that our event was very well received by the attendees. Financially this was the most successful fundraiser in the history of our club. (details attached)

Final Expenses and Revenue

Expenses 4,500 Postcards:	426.84
250 Passports:	181.79
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Yard Signs	104.93
Stands:	31.86
Patch ads	70.00
Garden Glories Ad	120.00
Timberlake ad	45.00
Misc. copies	15.81
Darien Arts Council Donation	200.00
Event Insurance	245.00
1000 Wristbands	17.78
Poster Supplies	105.03

Total Expenses \$ 1,740.8

Revenue:	Tickets sold by members (115)	1725.00
	Eventbrite tickets (302)	4530.00
	Sold on day of (36)	720.00
	Bartlett Sponsorship	300.00
	Table Rental	100.00
	Donations (misc)	5.00
	Bazaar	1715.85

Total Revenue \$ 9,095.85

Net Profit \$ 7,355.04

453 Tickets Sold.

In-kind donations – estimate - \$200 reported.



DARIEN GARDEN CLUB
 Presents
Every Garden Tells a Story
 Garden Walk
 And
 Bazaar
 Saturday July 17, 2021
 9:30-3:30
 Celebrating 50 years of Education,
 Friendship and a Love of Gardening

Publicity postcard



Cover of passport



Bazaar



Discussions in David's garden.



Tree house in Pat and John's garden



Tranquil shade in Pat and Algis' garden.



Fred and Kim's native garden.



Lush landscape at Chris and Mark's garden.



Pond feature in David's garden.



Enjoying the view.



Cheerful color in Evenin and Scott's garden.



A docent leading guests.



Board meeting and garden walk discussion.