



# **THE GARDEN CLUB OF VIRGINIA**

MEMBERSHIP STUDY

NOVEMBER 29, 2005

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## PURPOSE OF STUDY

This survey was conducted among 1,558 members of The Garden Club of Virginia. The Garden Club of Virginia undertook this membership study to develop a five year strategic plan.

The primary objective for this study centered on finding ways for The Garden Club of Virginia to better serve its members. The **key issues** measured by the questionnaire included determining:

1. Reasons for joining The Garden Club of Virginia
2. Member image perceptions of The Garden Club of Virginia and its activities, accomplishments, programs, communications and finance structure
3. Evaluating alternative sources of income/fund development
4. Member perceptions as to The Garden Club of Virginia's future goals/objectives
5. Comprehensive member demographics

## METHODOLOGY

### **Universe**

The universe studied was all members of The Garden Club of Virginia.

### **Sampling**

All members were given an opportunity to complete the survey, whether online or a paper version. A total of 1,558 completed the survey, including 1,162 online and 396 who completed a paper version of the questionnaire.

### **Questionnaire**

YMR assisted in the design of the questionnaire to cover all of the subjects identified in the research objectives. A copy of this questionnaire is included in the Appendix.

### **Fielding**

Members received an email invitation from The Garden Club of Virginia to participate in the survey starting on September 7, 2005. The survey remained open until October 2, 2005. A total of three reminder emails were sent to alert members that the survey was still open. Paper surveys were distributed and collected during this same time period. Volunteers from The Garden Club of Virginia entered the data from the paper surveys into YMR's online surveying software.

### **Analysis**

Statistical tests have been performed to determine any "statistically significant" differences among responses and between various demographic segments. The total sample of 1,588 yields a maximum statistical error of  $\pm 2.5\%$  at the 95% level of confidence (i.e. if this study were repeated 100 times, in 95 of those times the percentage giving a particular answer would be within 2.5 percentage points of the percentage who gave that answer in this study).

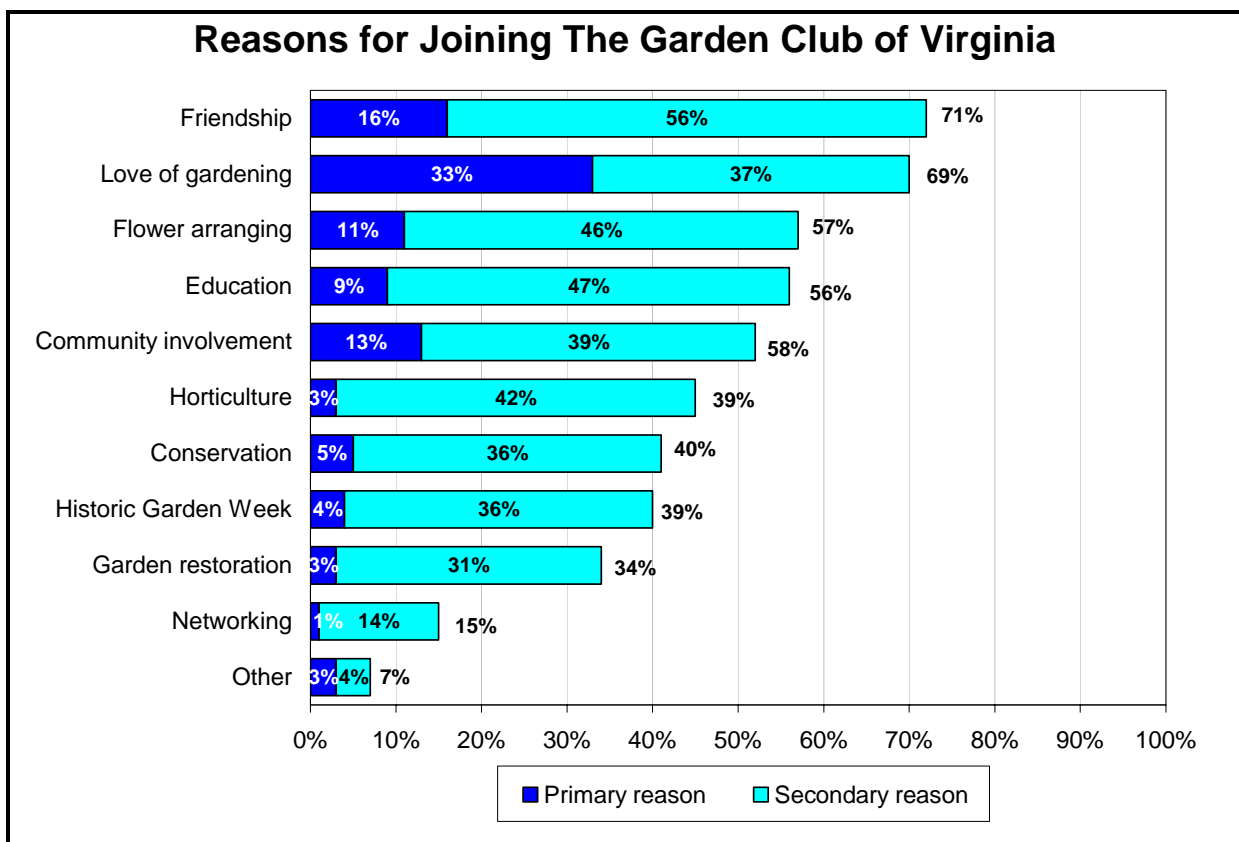
### **Data Tables**

Data tables used in the analysis of this study are provided under separate cover. These tables are shown in total and cross-tabulated by key subgroups. The percentages of some questions may exceed 100% due to rounding and/or multiple responses permitted for that particular question. The base will often vary for different questions because a response was not required based on an answer to a previous question or because a respondent skipped that particular question.

## SUMMARY FINDINGS

### Reasons for Joining Garden Club of Virginia

Seventy percent of the surveyed members name love of gardening (the most often-cited “primary” reason) or friendship (the most often cited “secondary” reason) as reasons for joining the Garden Club of Virginia (69%-71% each). A majority also cite flower arranging, education, and community involvement as a primary or secondary reason for joining the Garden Club. – Tables 1-5

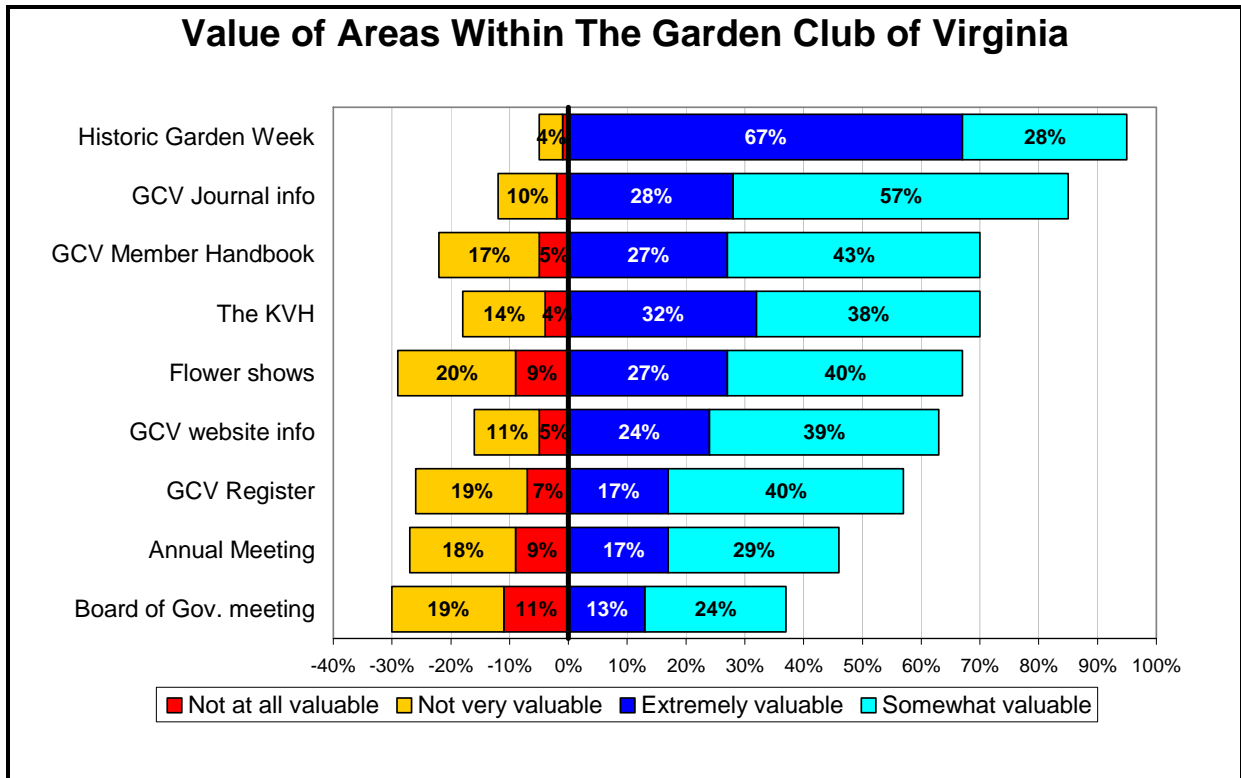


- Friendship is more important to seniors, or those aged 55 or over (73% vs. 67% of those under age 55).
- Districts III and IV attach more importance to community involvement (57%-60% each, compared to 47% for the rest of the sample).
- Districts I and II place most importance on love of gardening (75%-77% each, compared to 66% for the rest of the sample).

- Active members are more likely to mention:
  - Flower arranging (58% vs. 49% of inactive members)
  - Community involvement (53% vs. 44% of inactive members)

**Perceived Value of Garden Club Services**

Two-thirds describe the Historic Garden Week as “extremely” valuable (67%)—this is twice as high as the “extremely” valuable ratings assigned to any of the other aspects relating to the Garden Club. Two-thirds are unable to rate the value of the Board of Governors Meeting in October (34%). Those who “don’t know” how to rate these areas are not included in the chart below. – Tables 6-15

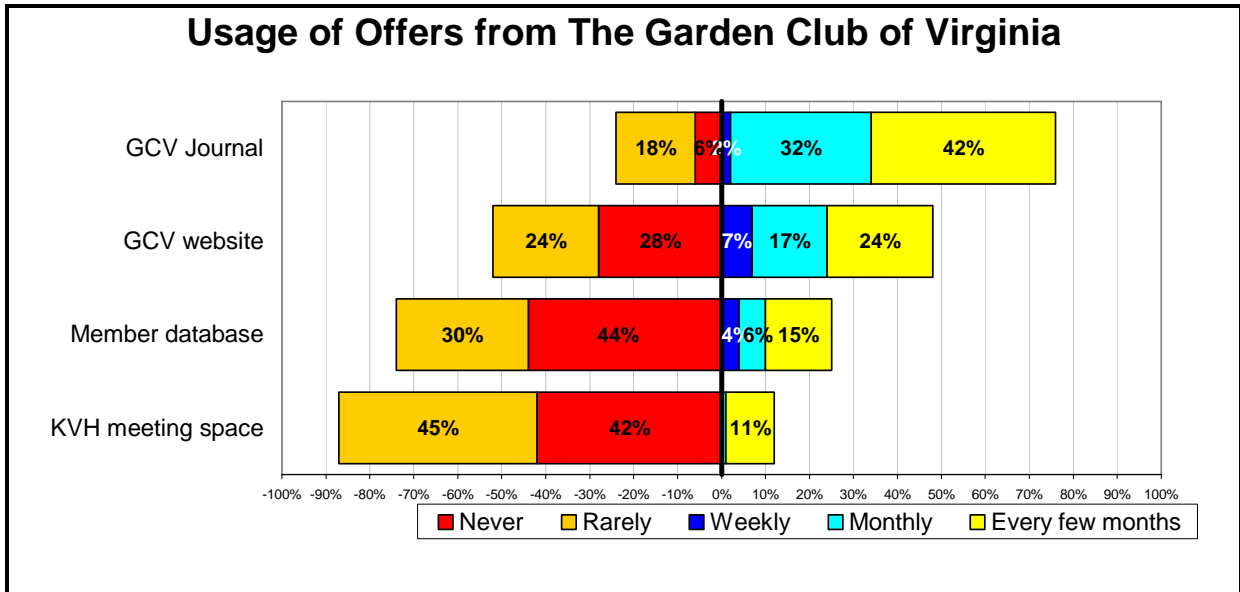


- District I members are much more likely to rate Kent-Valentine House as “extremely” valuable (47% vs. 29% of the remaining Districts).
- Districts IV and V are more likely to rate Flower Shows as “extremely” or “somewhat” valuable (74%-75% each, compared to 63% for the remaining Districts).
- The oldest (age 65+) members attach more value to several aspects:
  - Historic Garden Week (77% valuable vs. 62% under age 65)
  - Flower shows (76% valuable vs. 64% under age 65)
  - Kent-Valentine House (76% valuable vs. 68% under age 65)

- Register (65% valuable vs. 54% under age 65)
- Annual Meeting (52% valuable vs. 43% under age 65)
- Board of Governors Meeting (46% valuable vs. 33% under age 65)
- But oldest members attach less importance to the website (46% vs. 72%)

**Utilization of Garden Club Resources**

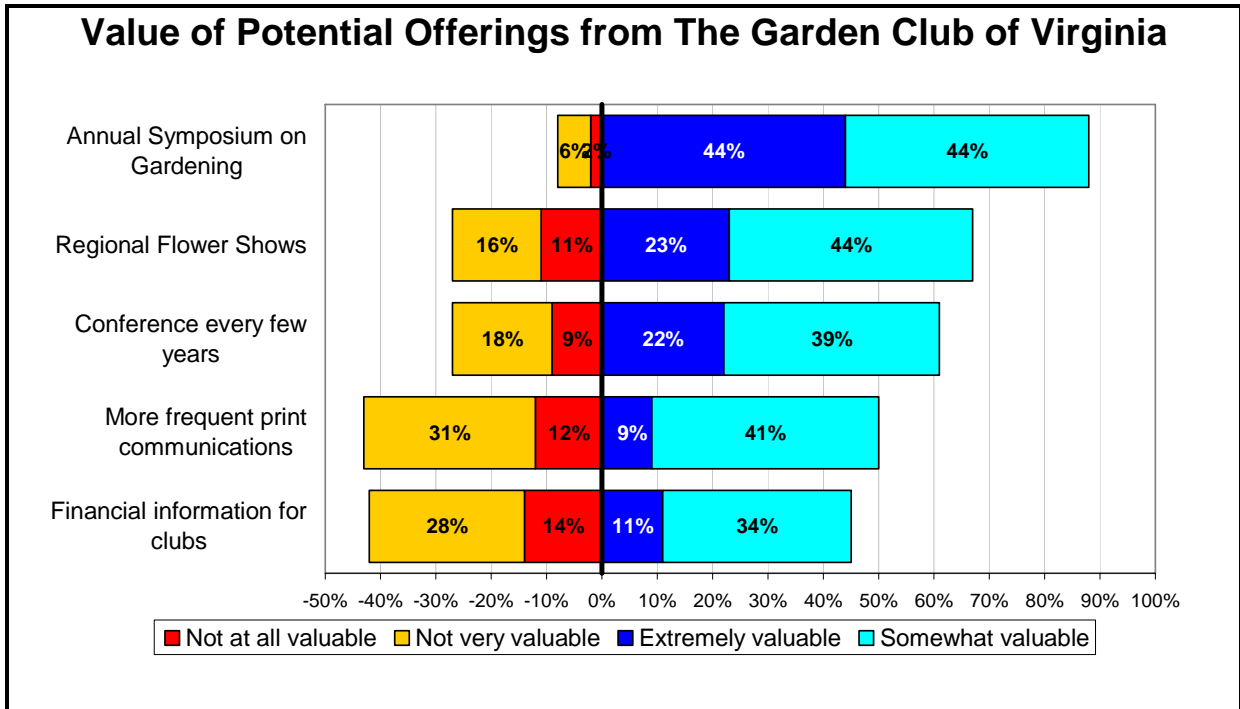
Three-fourths refer to The Garden Club of Virginia Journal monthly or every few months (74%, including 32% who refer to it monthly). Weekly utilization of The Garden Club of Virginia website (a modest 7%) is actually higher than weekly usage of The Garden Club of Virginia Journal (2%). – Tables 16-20



- The oldest (age 65+) members are more likely to refer to The Garden Club of Virginia Journal on a monthly basis (40% vs. 33% age 55-64, and 24% under age 55).
- But the oldest (age 65+) members are less likely to utilize The Garden Club of Virginia website (18% weekly/monthly, vs. 28% under age 65).
- District I members show higher utilization of:
  - Kent-Valentine House (29% use at least every few months, vs. 8% for rest of sample)
  - Member database on the website (16% weekly/monthly, vs. 8% for rest of sample)

**Value Attached to Additional Garden Club Services**

Among those services the Garden Club is considering offering to members, the Annual Symposium generates the most interest (88%, including 44% who say it would be “extremely valuable”). Another two-thirds place value on the Regional Flower Shows (67%). – Tables 21-26

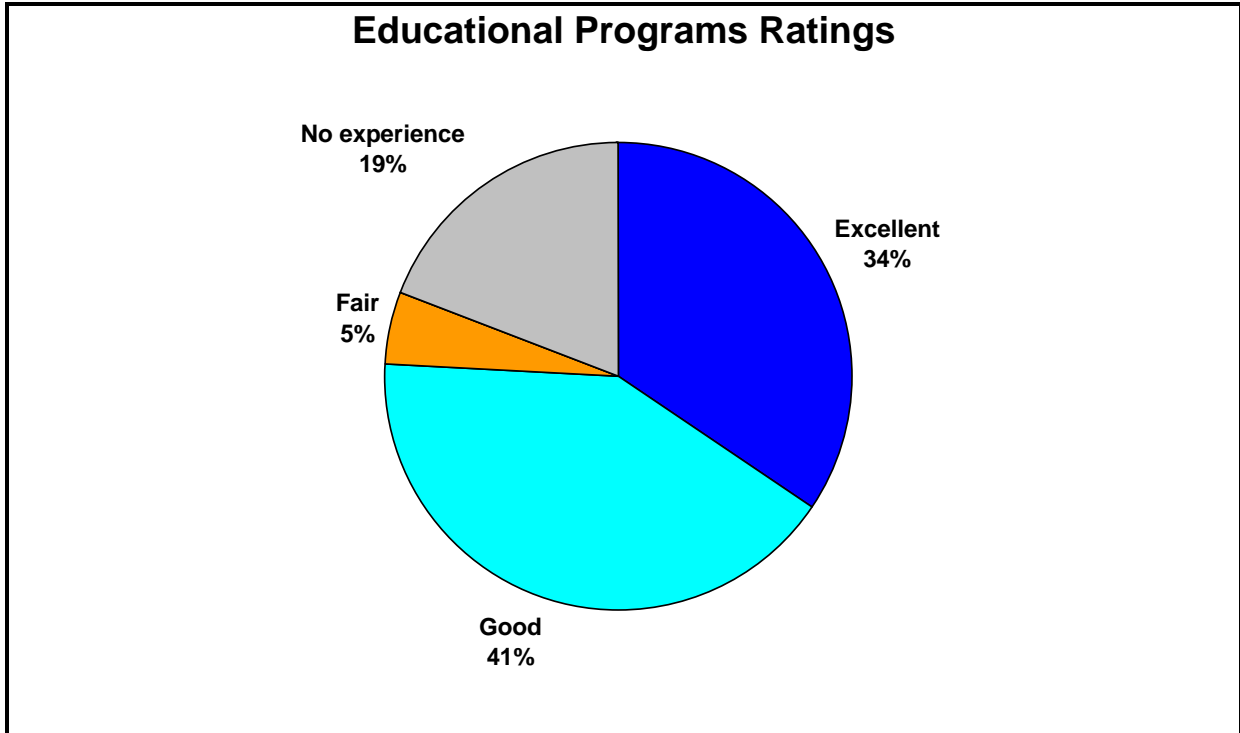


- The oldest (age 65+) members are more inclined to attach value to Regional Flower Shows (73% vs. 65% of those under age 65).
- But members under age 65 members are more likely to value the Annual Symposium (90% vs. 84% of those age 65+).
- Current members place increased value on more frequent print communications (58% vs. 49% of those who have been members for 2+ years).

**Rating the Garden Club’s Educational Programs**

Three-fourths of the total respondents rate the educational programs of the Garden Club as “excellent” (34%) or “good” (41%) (75%, including 35% who rate programs “excellent”). “Fair”/“poor” ratings are just five percent overall, with no ratings of “poor.” Nineteen percent do not have any experience with the educational programs and are unable to provide a rating. –Table 27

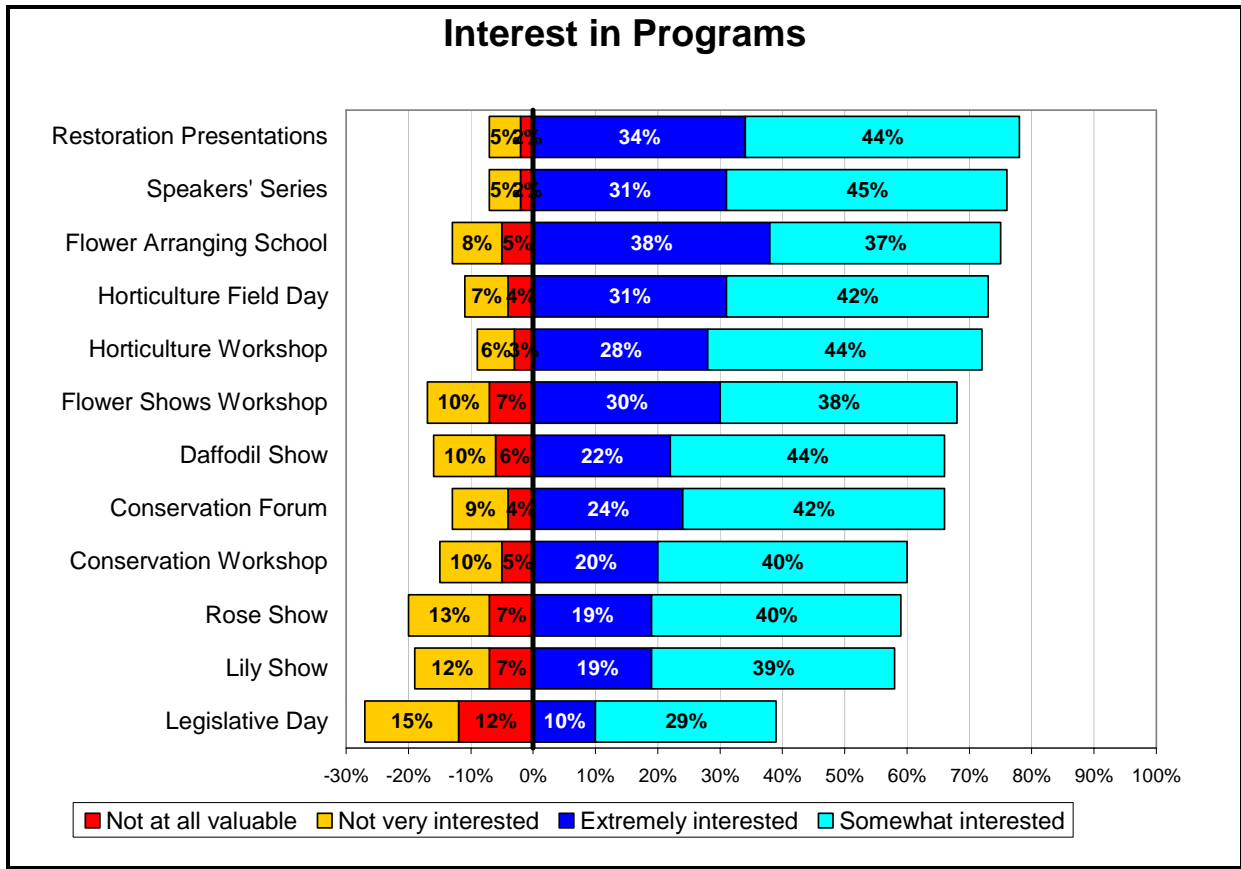




- More “excellent” ratings among:
  - Members aged 55+ (37% vs. 28% of those younger)
  - Been a member for over 10 years (39% vs. 27% of those who have been members for 10 years or less) – however, 53% of those who have been a member less than two years have no experience.

### **Interest in The Garden Club of Virginia Programs**

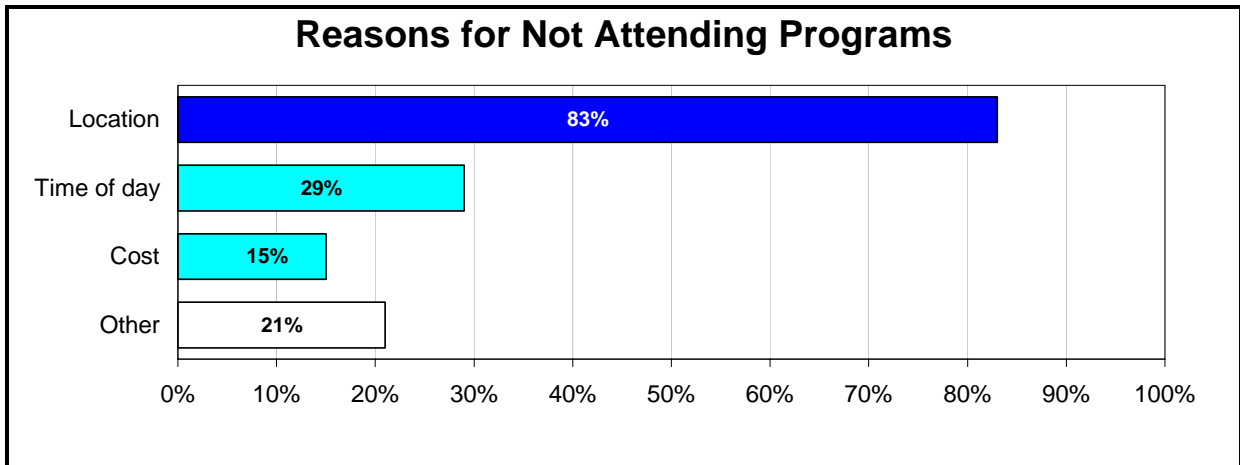
Approximately three-fourths express at least some degree of interest in Restoration Projects, Speakers’ Series, Flower Arranging School, and the Horticulture Field Day or Workshop (72%-78% each). In fact, a majority of the surveyed members express at least some interest in each of the Garden Club programs (with the exception of Legislative Day). Those who are unsure or are neither interested nor uninterested are not included in the following chart. –Tables 28-40



- The oldest members express stronger interest in:
  - Restoration Projects (81% vs. 77% under age 65)
  - Daffodil Show (75% vs. 62% under age 65)
  - Rose Show (66% vs. 60% age 55-64, 51% under age 55)
  - Lily Show (67% vs. 58% age 55-64, 51% under age 55)
  
- Newer members show more interest in education/workshops:
  - Flower Shows Workshop (75% vs. 63% members for 10+ years)
  - Flower Arranging School (86% vs. 67% members for 10+ years)
  - Speakers' Series (80% vs. 74% 74% members for 10+ years)
  - Horticulture Workshop (85% under 2 years, 77% 2-10 years, 68% 10+ years)
  
- District V members show more interest in:
  - Flower Shows Workshop (73% vs. 67% for rest of sample)
  - Flower Arranging School (82% vs. 74% for rest of sample)
  
- Interest in both the Daffodil and Lily Shows is lower in Districts I and III.

**Barriers to Attending Garden Club Programs**

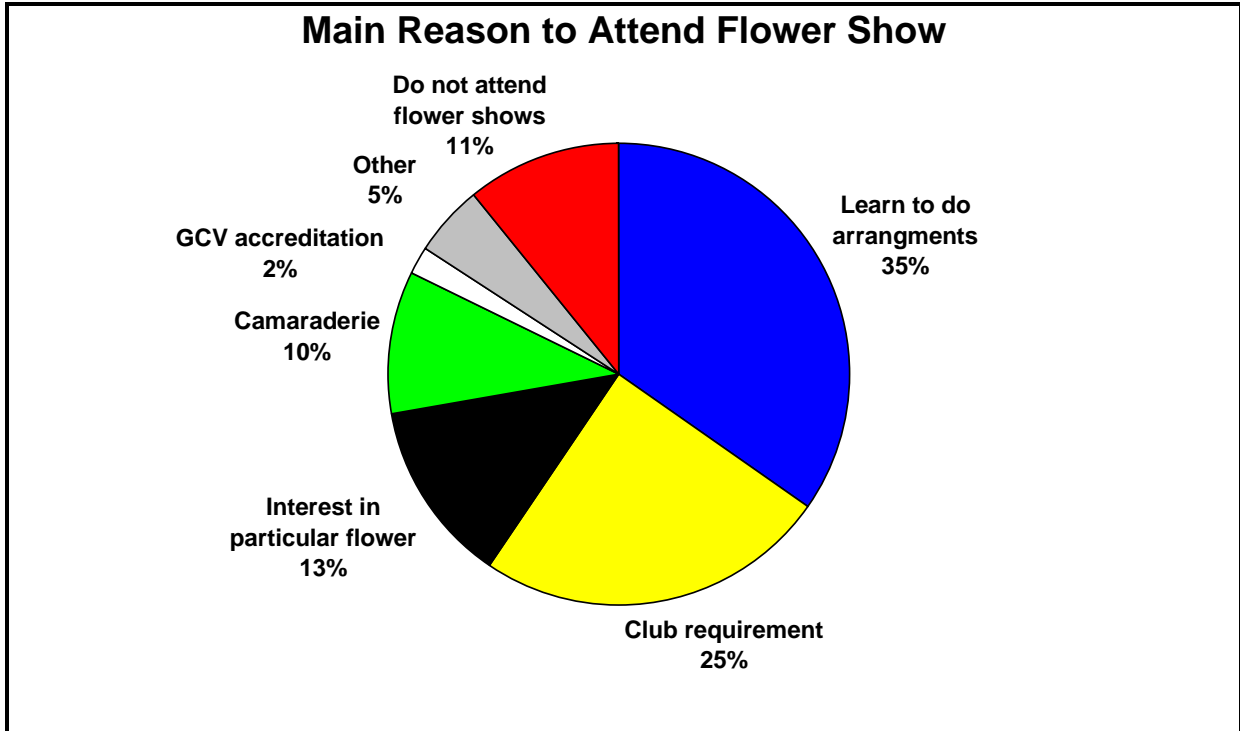
Location is the main reason for not attending a program of interest, with 83% specifying this as the reason. Time of day (29%) is a distant second, followed by cost (15%). – Table 41



- Location is the key barrier, but time of day is relatively important to:
  - Younger members (43% vs. 22% of those age 55+)
  - More recent members (35% vs. 24% members for 10+ years)
  - District I (36% vs. 27% for the remaining Districts)

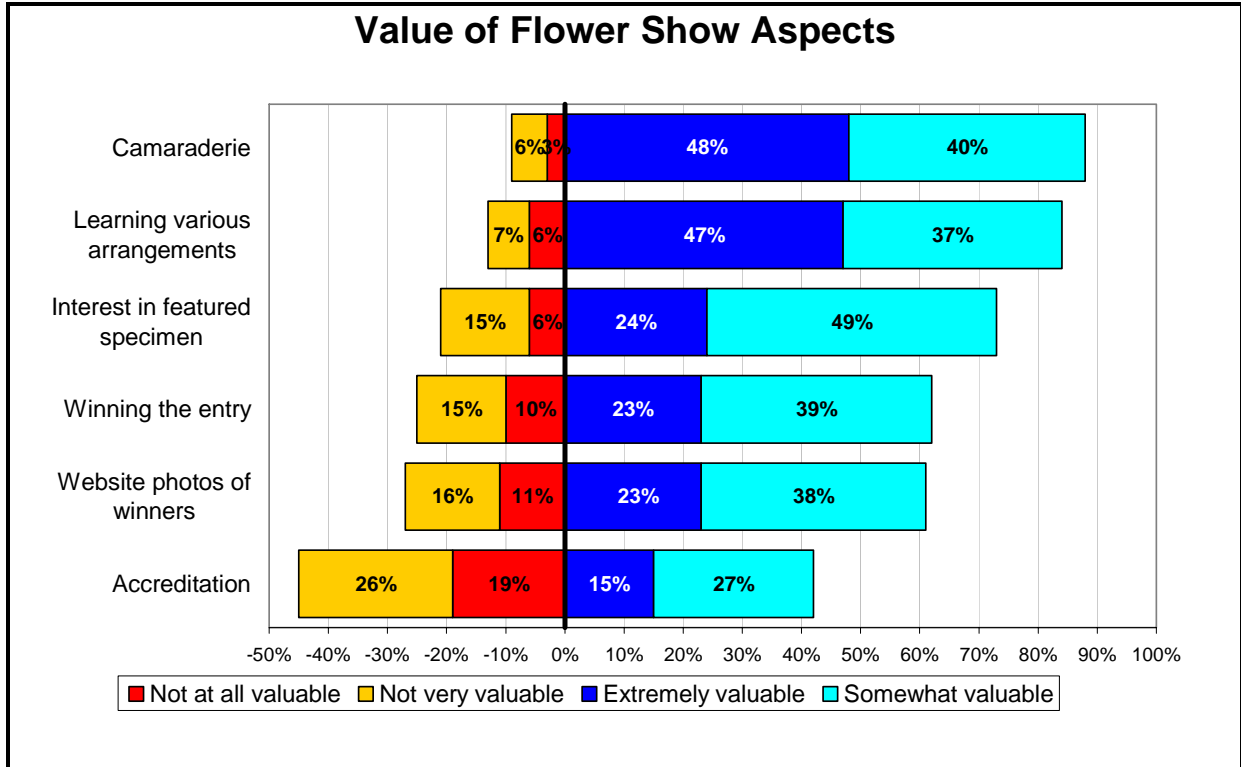
**Value Attached to Flower Show Aspects**

Just over a third believe that learning to do various types of arrangements is the main reason members might want to attend a flower show (35%). The second ranking reason is that attendance is a club requirement (25%). – Table 43



- Learning to do various types of arrangements is especially strong when:
  - Newer members (59% less than two years vs. 33% who have been a member longer)

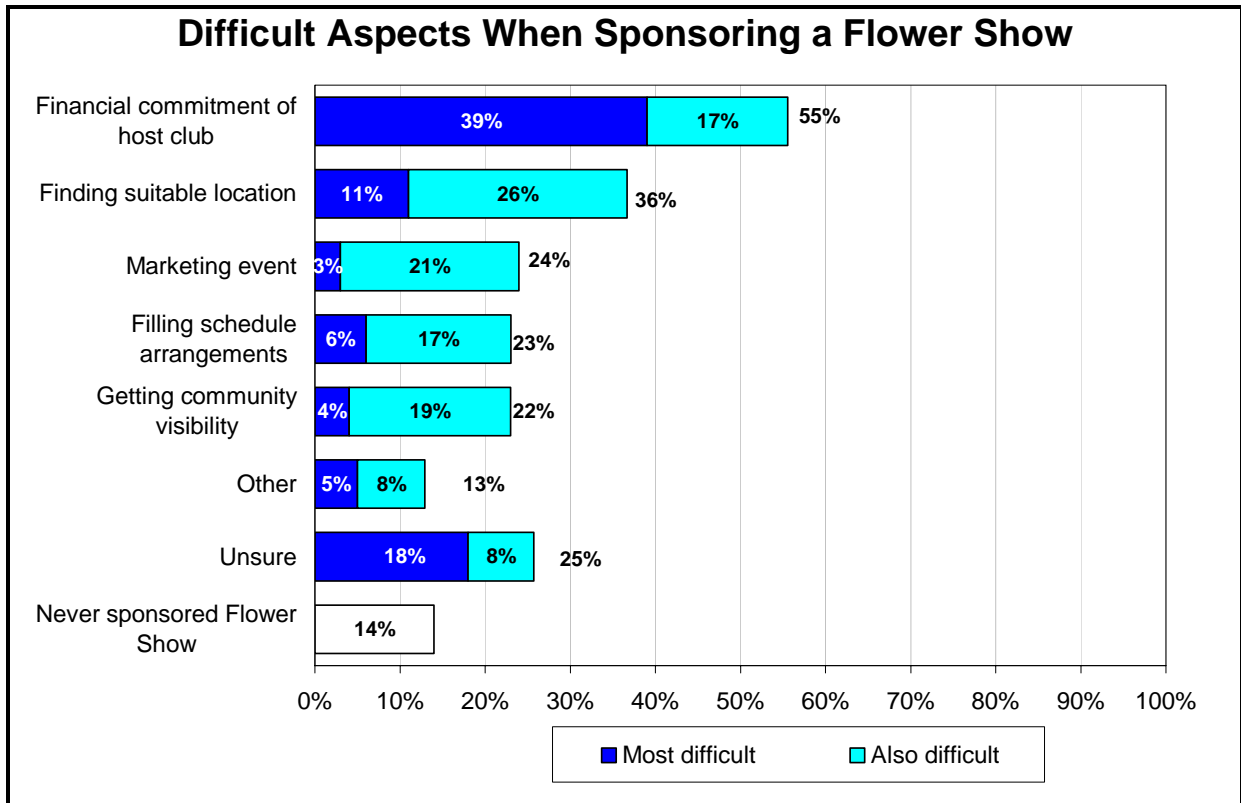
Camaraderie and learning artistic arrangements are perceived as the most valuable aspects of Flower Shows (84%-88% rate these aspects “extremely” or “somewhat valuable”). Nearly three-fourths also place high value on interest in the featured horticulture specimen, and approximately six in ten value the website photos of winning arrangements, and winning their entry. On the other hand, 46% do not place much value on the Accreditation of the National Rose, Lily, and Daffodil Societies. – *Tables 45-51*



- Camaraderie is “extremely valuable” to:
  - Older members (52% vs. 41% under age 55)
- Winning your entry is “extremely/somewhat valuable” to:
  - More established members (63% vs. 51% members for less 2 years)
  - Served in both Leadership/Committee post (70% vs. 57% no post)
- Learning artistic arrangements is “extremely valuable” to:
  - Recent members (58% vs. 45% members for 2+ years)
- Website photos of top entries are “extremely/somewhat valuable” to:
  - Younger members (65 vs. 53% age 65+)
  - District V (70% vs. 59% of the remaining Districts)

### **Barriers to Hosting Flower Shows**

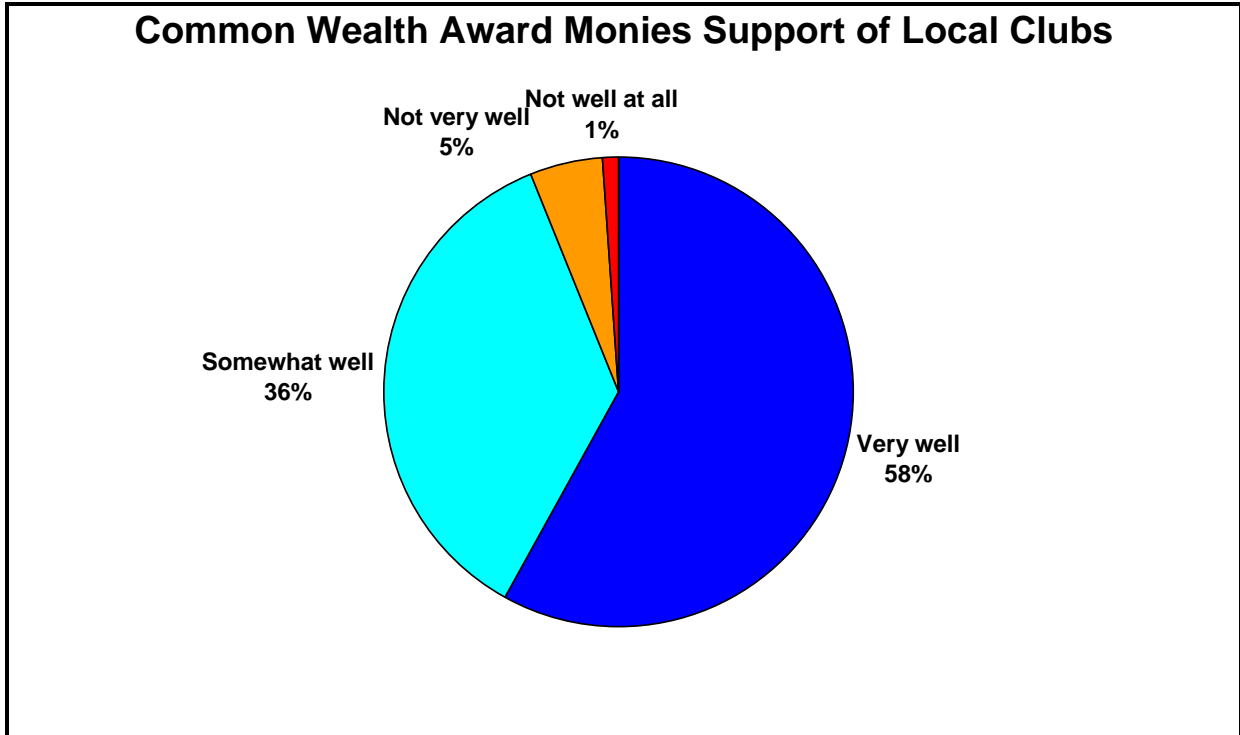
The financial commitment of the host club is perceived as the most difficult aspect of hosting Flower Shows (55% name it as a difficult aspect, including 39% who name it as the most difficult). Finding a suitable location is a secondary concern, along with marketing the event and getting visibility in the community. – Tables 52-56



- Financial commitment is especially concerning to:
  - Older members (58% vs. 49% under age 55)
  - Served in both Leadership/Committee post (64% vs. 48% no post)
- Finding a suitable location is relatively important to:
  - Districts I and III (42%-43% vs. 33% of remaining Districts)
  - Older members (25% under age 55, 37% age 55-64, 47% age 65+)
  - Served in both Leadership/Committee post (40% vs. 33% no post)

**Garden Club Support of Individual Club Projects**

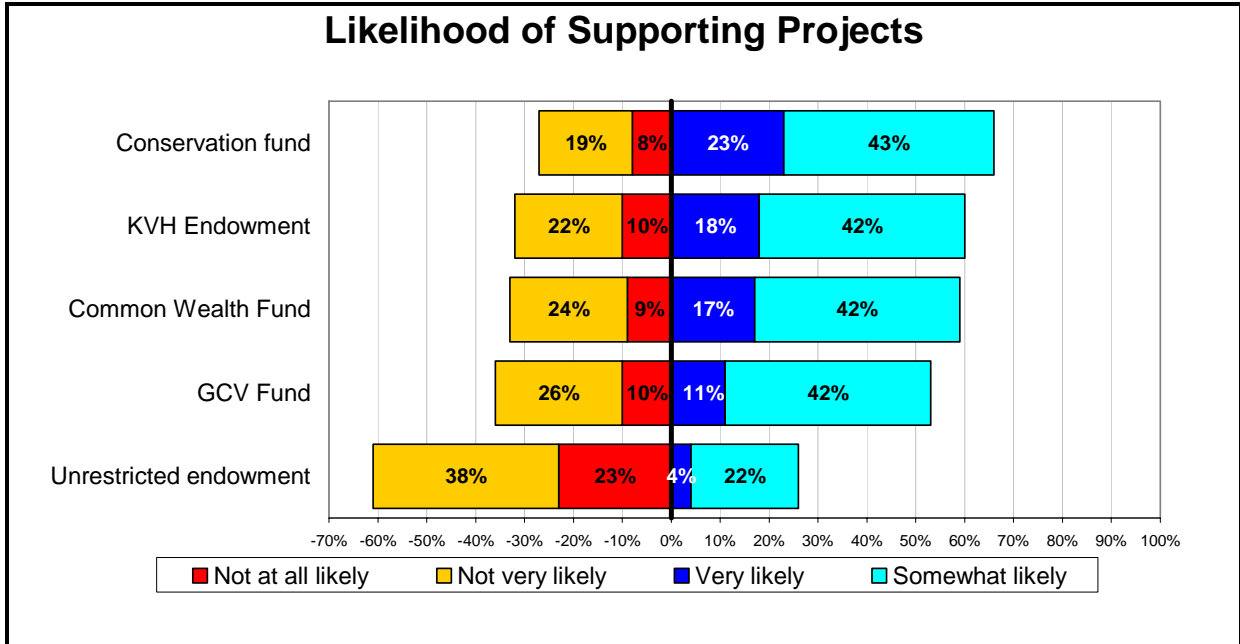
Over ninety percent of the surveyed members believe the Garden Club is doing “very” or “somewhat” well in its support of individual club projects (94%, including 58% who say “very well”) through Common Wealth Award monies. – Table 57



- Most likely to rate Garden Club “very” well:
  - Oldest members (69% vs. 53% under age 65)
  - Established members (66% vs. 48% members for less 10 years)
  - District II (67% vs. 56% of rest of sample)

**Likely Financial Support of Individual Projects**

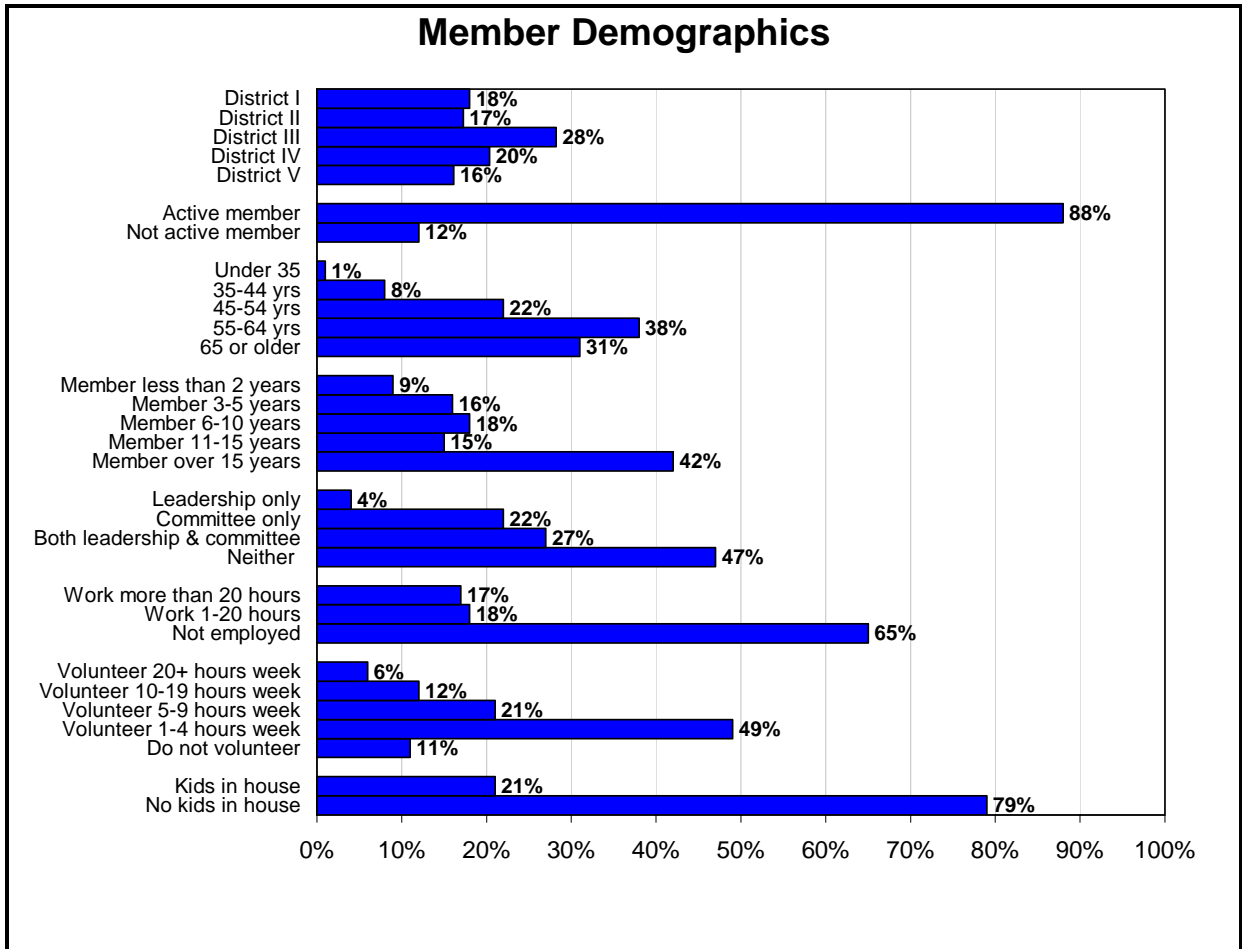
Approximately sixty percent to two-thirds are likely to make a financial contribution to support the Common Wealth Fund, the Kent-Valentine Endowment, or the fund to support conservation (59%-67% each). Note that most are “somewhat” likely to make a contribution to each, as opposed to being “very” likely. Likely support is not as strong for the more general “special projects” fund, and support drops off substantially for the unrestricted endowment fund. – Tables 58-63



- More likely to support Common Wealth Fund:
  - Served in both Leadership/Committee post (64% vs. 55% no post)
- More likely to support Kent-Valentine Fund:
  - District I (68% vs. 59% of the remaining Districts)
  - Oldest members (67% vs. 58% under age 65)
  - Established members (64% vs. 56% member for less 10 years)
- More likely to support a fund to support conservatism:
  - Support equally strong among newer/more established members



**Member Profile**



## BOTTOMLINE: FINDINGS & ACTIONS

### Membership Priorities by Age

- *Research findings:* **Love of gardening is the primary reason for joining the Garden Club, followed by friendship, which is especially important to seniors.** Flower arranging, education, and community involvement also are cited by a majority of surveyed members as reasons for belonging to the Garden Club.
- *Research findings:* **Older members (age 55-65+) place the most value on flower shows.** The appeal of the Rose Show, Lily Show, and Daffodil Show are highest among older persons.
- *Research findings:* **More recent members (less than 10 years) place more value on education.** Newer members show the most interest in Flower Shows Workshops, Flower Arranging School, the Speakers' Series, and Horticulture Workshop.
- *Research findings:* **The Garden Club's educational programs rated very positively.** Three-fourths rate the educational programs as "excellent" or "good" and few assign a "fair" or "poor" rating (the remaining members do not have any experience with these programs).
- **Implication: Marketing workshops and education will help the Garden Club attract and retain younger members.** Flower shows and the camaraderie associated with these shows continue to be extremely important to the older members. However, newer members report lower interest in these traditional shows (which some describe as "outdated" or "intimidating"), and more interest in "hands-on" educational workshops and the Speakers' Series. Verbatim comments at the end of the survey also address the need to be more flexible with younger members who may have work or family commitments.

### Perceived Value of Garden Club Services

- *Research finding:* **By a wide margin, the Historic Garden Week rates as the most valuable of the Garden Club's services.** Over nine out of ten members rate the Historic Garden Week as valuable. More significantly, two-thirds rate the Week as "extremely valuable"—that is at least twice as high as the "extremely valuable" ratings assigned to all other services, including the Kent-Valentine House (32% "extremely valuable") and Flower Shows (27% "extremely valuable").

- *Research finding:* **In terms of providing additional services, an Annual Symposium generates the most interest.** Almost nine-tenths attach value to an Annual Symposium, which is substantially higher than the two-thirds who attach value to the possibility of offering Regional Flower Shows.
- **Implication: Maximize the impact of the Historic Garden Week and Annual Symposium.** These two programs are viewed as more valuable than any of the other programs or services, including existing Flower Shows and potential Regional Flower Shows. Verbatim comments from some members make suggestions for improving the Garden Week: “The membership that is under 55 years of age are frustrated with a commitment that is so large in terms of time, with so little money raised.”

### Communications

- *Research finding:* **The Garden Club Journal has widespread appeal among members.** Nearly nine out of ten members attach value to the Journal (although most say the Journal is “somewhat” valuable, as opposed to “extremely” valuable). And three-fourths read the Journal on a semi-regular basis.
- *Research finding:* **There are limitations to newsletter communications.** Three-fourths access the Journal, but not a timely basis (it is read monthly or every few months). At the same time, there is little interest in additional print communications (just one in ten members are “very interested” in additional print communications). Further, the appeal of the Journal is not as strong among newer members.
- **Implication: Supplement traditional newsletter communications with more timely email communications.** Younger, more recent members show stronger interest in email communications. Consider periodic emails with members, and an update of the website to make it more interactive.

### Fund-raising

- *Research finding:* **The Garden Club of Virginia’s support of individual club projects is perceived very favorably.** More than ninety percent believe The Garden Club of Virginia is doing “very/somewhat well” in its support of individual club projects.
- *Research finding:* **The likelihood of making financial contributions beyond membership dues appears strong.** Members are most likely to contribute to a fund to support conservation (two-thirds). Approximately sixty percent also are likely contribute to the Kent-Valentine Endowment or the Common Wealth Fund. But there is a noticeable decline in the likelihood of contributing to more general projects, such as the special projects fund or the unrestricted endowment fund.

- **Implication:** Target specific projects, such as conservation, when approaching members about making financial contributions. Another example is the Kent-Valentine endowment; the likelihood of contributing to this endowment is much higher in District I, which also shows a much higher utilization rate of the Kent-Valentine House in comparison to the other Districts.

### **Future Priorities**

- *Research finding.* **Conservation is the area that members are most likely to support.** Two-thirds are likely to contribute to a fund to support conservation. While support for additional contributions beyond membership fees is somewhat limited, the likelihood of contributing to conservation efforts ranks first, and support is equally strong among established members and more recent members.
- *Research finding.* **Verbatim comments about the future direction of The Garden Club of Virginia center on conservation.** Education and restoration efforts also emerge as important issues.
- **Implication:** Conservation efforts are the consensus choice as the area that The Garden Club of Virginia should focus on in the next ten years. As stated in the member comments, “The continued strong participation in conservation is good and I believe it should be equal to the energy and funds put into historic garden restoration. Restoration should never be neglected as this has been the strength of the organization but today's society demands that we concentrate on preserving what we have.” Another common theme: “The GCV should assume a bigger voice in the Commonwealth on land management and land preservation. The GCV should assume a bigger voice, in partnership with other conservation organizations, on issues concerning clean water and air.”

NOTE: The conclusions and suggested actions made here are based solely on the data available from this study.