



Planting Perennials

STRATEGIC PLAN

The Garden Club of Virginia

Spring 2005 – 2006





Dear Garden Club of Virginia Members,

This year could certainly rank among the most challenging and rewarding since The Garden Club of Virginia was founded in 1920. Metaphorically speaking, we've moved from putting in annuals to planting perennials. I am immensely proud of our progress — as I'm sure you will be too when you read this report.

I. Achievements

- Initiated organized strategic planning process for the first time ever
- Systematically investigated where we are and where we are going
- Set long and short-term goals

II. Process

- Hired Lee Switz, professional Strategic Planning Consultant
- Assembled Strategic Planning Committee
- Sent out survey and received 51% response (national average: 17%)
- Conducted 11 focus groups, one in each of five regions
- Researched what's being done in other places
- Held retreat to analyze information and set goals
- Presented findings to Annual Meeting

What follows this letter is documentation of all our hard work — values, goals and charts. But what's really important first is a well-deserved thank you. I couldn't have done my job during this past year without the help of immediate past president Mary Hart Darden and Development Chair Catherine Whitham, tireless volunteers who were with us from the start. And a hearty thanks to all of you as well for your input, participation and enthusiasm.

We have set more goals than we can accomplish within the next two years, just as I often order more bulbs than I can reasonably plant. But there is always time, and now that the preparation has been done, we'll be able to enjoy the results of our labors for many years to come. How beautiful!

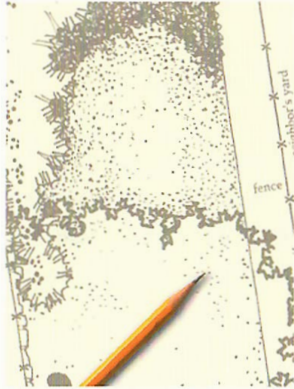
Sincerely,

Deedy Bumgardner

Deedy Bumgardner

Outgoing President

The Garden Club of Virginia



HOW IT ALL BEGAN



WHY STRATEGIC PLANNING IN THE FIRST PLACE?

The first reason is practical. In fall 2004, The Garden Club of Virginia asked several local foundations to make a matching gift to support the Balustrade Project at the Kent-Valentine House. The foundations countered with a common request, asking to see The GCV strategic plan. Unfortunately, such a thing did not exist. Fortunately, one foundation did give a matching gift of \$100,000 to jump-start the project anyway, and The GCV ultimately raised a total of \$235,000. Yet the lesson was not lost. The GCV had learned that if it wanted

to engage in major fund-raising in the future, it would need an official plan of action.

The second reason for strategic planning is related to values and mission. As identified in both the survey and focus groups, our members appreciate the friendships they develop and the trust our club engenders in the community. They also value the civic engagement and diverse programs offered by The Garden Club of Virginia.



Quantifiable Goals

- Hold a symposium and/or convention for all members
- Double The Garden Club of Virginia Endowment to at least \$3 million
- Increase the Common Wealth Award Fund to at least \$300,000
- Offer a scholarship in Horticulture and Conservation
- Increase conservation and beautification initiatives
- Promote The GCV through the *Journal*, Historic Garden Week Guidebook, press releases and other publications
- Develop a regional framework
- Develop relationships with like-minded organizations
- Assist committees in setting two and five-year goals
- Re-evaluate the Strategic Plan every two years
- Evaluate the current dues structure

Intangible Goals

- Encourage unrestricted gifts
- Review Flower Shows
- Assess staff structure
- Increase educational opportunities for all members
- Improve internal and external communication



STRATEGIC PLAN: Short-term Goals



THE NEXT TWO YEARS

Long-term goals are most easily accomplished through a series of short-term steps. After much debate, the Strategic Planning Committee identified the most

important objectives for the club over the next two years, and the Board of Directors approved this plan of action. These two-year goals are divided into the club's customary six areas of focus.

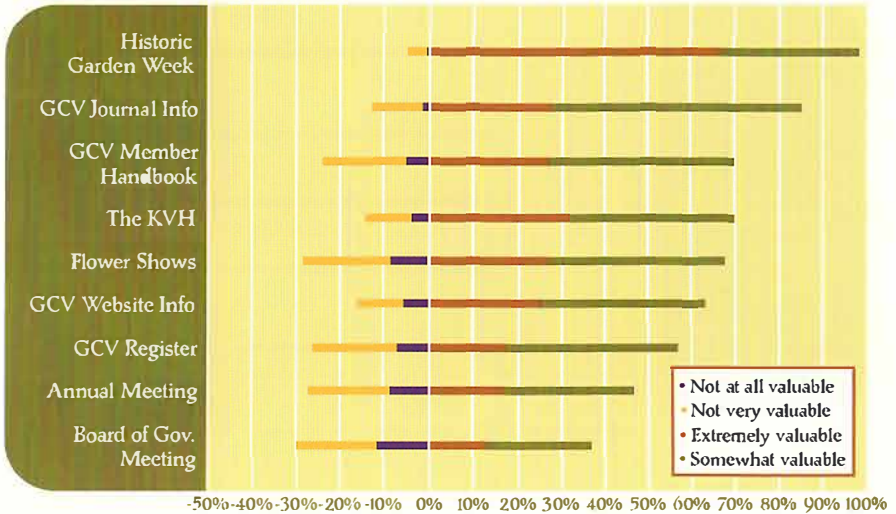
Historic Garden Week/Restoration Goals

1. Conduct an economic impact study of Historic Garden Week by region
2. Make the Historic Garden Week Guidebook more of a marketing tool
3. Promote Restoration Projects

Conservation Goals

1. Support the Conservation Committee in building relationships with legislators, boards of supervisors, and city council members
2. Take an active role in local community conservation activities
3. Partner with other organizations having similar goals

VALUE AREAS WITHIN THE GCV



With 17% being a strong response according to national averages, GCV members turned in 51% of their surveys. Their responses were broken down into groups according to district, age, length of membership and various other factors. The results were enlightening.

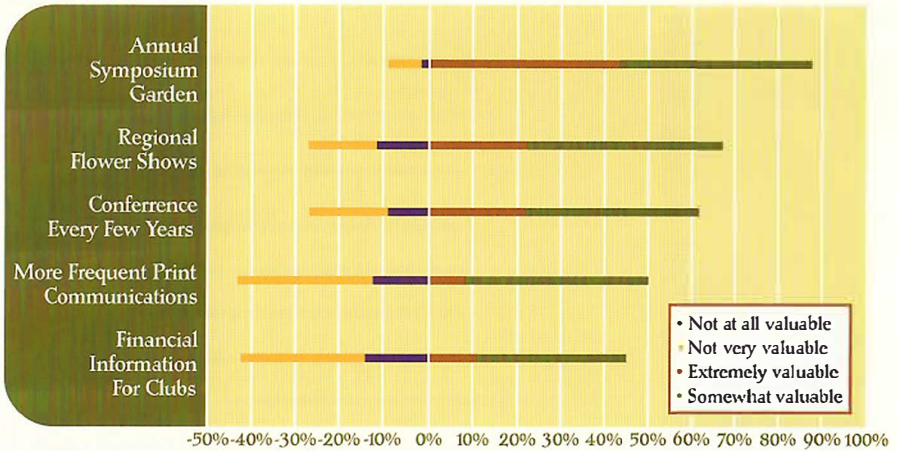
- Conservation should be the main area of focus in the next ten years
- Workshops and lectures help attract and retain younger members
- Historic Garden Week and Restoration projects are high priorities
- Timely e-mail communications should supplement the *Journal*

- Specific projects are most likely to elicit financial contributions
- A statewide symposium could engage more members

FOCUS GROUPS

To gather even more information, 11 focus groups were held between May and November 2005. Each focus group was made up of a particular constituency: past presidents; current club presidents; the Board of Directors; committee chairs; and club members from the areas surrounding Lynchburg, Norfolk, Northern Virginia, Richmond and Staunton. Between May and November 2005, each group was asked to discuss three main questions:

VALUE OF POTENTIAL CLUB OFFERINGS

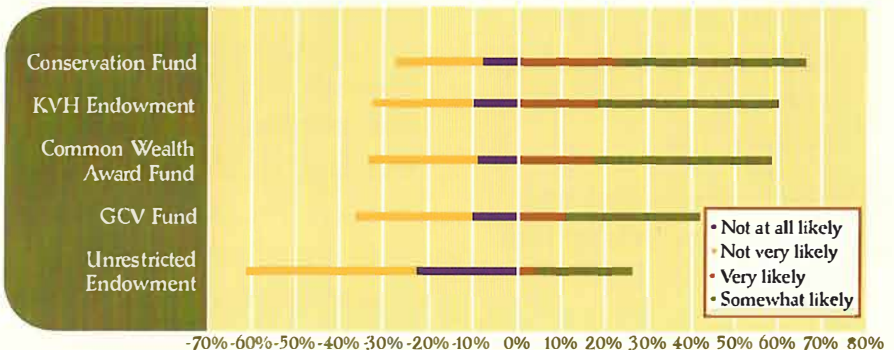


- *Why do you care about The Garden Club of Virginia?*
- *What do you feel is our most important activity?*
- *What direction should we take, moving forward?*

Responses tended to echo survey information, but they also raised new and important issues, such as:

- *How high a profile do we want?*
- *How can we provide greater flexibility for younger members with busy lives?*
- *How willing are we to change, and at what pace?*
- *Are we interested in talking with or influencing outside groups?*

LIKELIHOOD OF SUPPORT





COMMITTEE RETREAT



In March 2006, the Strategic Planning Committee met to review and refine the information gathered from the survey and focus groups. Working in pairs, committee members tackled each of the six major issues:

- Historic Garden Week and Restoration
- Conservation and Beautification
- Education and Flower Shows
- Communications
- Finances
- Infrastructure

They summarized feedback, reported findings from other states, identified critical issues to be addressed, and finally, made recommendations as to how these issues could be accomplished most effectively. This

information will provide the framework and inform future GCV activities.

STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Mary Hart Darden, *Chair*
The Nansemond River Garden Club

Sally Guy Brown
The Garden Club of Alexandria

Deedy Bumgardner
The Augusta Garden Club

Meg Clement
Three Chopt Garden Club

Ellen Harrison
The Nansemond River Garden Club

Karen Jamison
The Garden Club of Williamsburg

Lisa Mountcastle
The Garden Club of Alexandria

Cabell West
The Tuckahoe Garden Club

Catherine Whitham
Three Chopt Garden Club

Janice Whitehead
The Spottswood Garden Club



STRATEGIC PLAN: Long-term Goals



THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

What's most important is a shared vision of the big picture. Yearly accomplishments are merely steps on the way to far-ranging goals. So, after 11 months and 21 meetings, the Strategic Planning

Committee submitted an official plan of goals to be accomplished by the year 2011. These are divided into quantifiable goals and “softer” goals that are not so easy to measure.



Since America's earliest days, the green fields and abundant flowers of Virginia have proved a delight to the eye and a balm to the soul.

Today, The Garden Club of Virginia works to maintain historic gardens and landscapes, conserve the state's natural resources, and provide the education and inspiration necessary to maintain this proud heritage.

This is a worthy but challenging mission. Clearly, The Garden Club of Virginia needed a formal, written plan to fulfill it. Without identifying needs and forming goals, its laudable inten-

tions might end up as nothing more than laudable intentions. So, the formation of a strategic plan seemed necessary to ensure The GCV mission would indeed become a reality.

THE GARDEN CLUB OF VIRGINIA BOARD MEMBERS

Deedy Bumgardner, *President*

Nancy Bowles

Sally Guy Brown

Jocelyn Connors

Mary Hart Darden

Fleet Davis

Mary Bruce Glaize

Mary Ann Johnson

Joyce Moorman

Kim Nash

Molly Rueger

Meredith Scott

Dianne Spence

Cora Sue Spruill

Page Sullenberger

Peggy Talman

Cabell West

Mina Wood



SURVEY AND FOCUS GROUPS

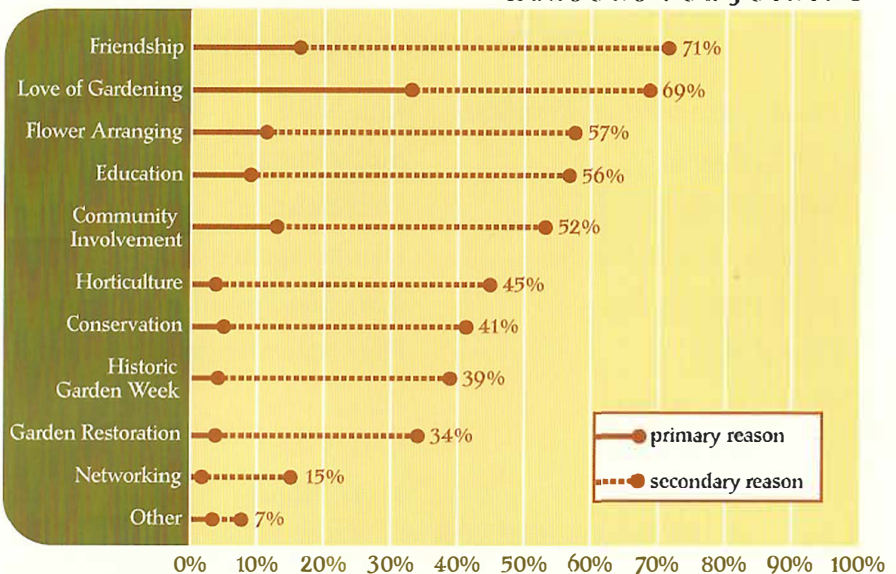


SURVEY

Last fall, the Strategic Planning Committee — in conjunction with a professional organization called Your Market Research — wrote and distributed an informa-

tion survey to The Garden Club of Virginia's 3,300 members. The survey addressed issues ranging from reasons for joining to perceptions of the future. The response was overwhelming.

REASONS FOR JOINING



Education/Flower Show Goals

1. Assess the amount of time and money spent on Flower Shows
2. Investigate The GCV providing financial and marketing support for Flower Shows
3. Help clubs provide speakers and develop programs on gardening, garden design, pruning, growing, flower arranging and judging

Communication Goals

1. Expand the public relations effort to focus more on promoting GCV activities
2. Launch a new publication called “The GCV Year in Review”
3. Strengthen internal communications and update the Members Handbook

Finance Goals

1. Build The Garden Club of Virginia Endowment and Common Wealth Award Fund
2. Recommend the Board of Directors approve a dues increase

Board Goals

1. Update job descriptions of Board Members to reflect Strategic Plan goals
2. Continue regional focus groups
3. Strengthen relationship between The GCV Board and individual clubs





Dear Garden Club of Virginia Members,

So much has happened in this past year, and there's still so much more to do. I think our #1 identified value of "friendship and camaraderie" will serve us well in the upcoming years, as we band together to make our club an even more impressive organization. Clearly, we all owe a debt of gratitude to Deedy Bumgardner and the Strategic Planning Committee, who helped us take this giant step into the twenty-first century.

The next two years should bring changes in all six areas of concentration: Historic Garden Week and Restoration; Conservation; Education and Flower Shows; Communication; Finance; and Board. In accordance with the short-term goals we've identified, in the next two years as your president, I particularly want to concentrate on

- increasing the impact of conservation initiatives
- developing a financial structure to support our long-term goals
- strengthening the operating structure of our Board and committees
- improving communication with members, individual clubs and the public
- expanding educational opportunities

Thanks to so many of you who returned our questionnaire and participated in focus groups. Thanks for reading this report, so you'll understand our new direction. And thanks especially for supporting our mission — maintaining Virginia's proud heritage of beauty and restoration. I look forward to my term with great anticipation. I also look forward to getting to know many of you personally, as we work together to reach our common goals.

Sincerely,

Sally Guy Brown
Incoming President
The Garden Club of Virginia





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