

## Lucy Elliot

Lucy joined the Garden Club of New Haven in 1989 and for over 28 years she was an active member, a leader, a mentor, a teacher, and a dear friend to all of us. Our Club archives reflect that she served busily, productively, and effectively as chair of numerous committees — Horticulture, Visiting Gardens, Hospitality, Nominating, Flower Show, Holiday Workshop and Civic, and sometimes she chaired these Committee more than once! Additionally, she was Club president from 1995 to 1997. Her guidance, inspiration, follow-through, advice, and passion were so important to setting our vision and our mission.

As you may know, Lucy was a consummate gardener and an amazing exemplar. Throughout the years, she participated in Garden Club shows, won numerous awards within the Club, at State Federated meetings, and from the Garden Club of America. She even managed to participate fully in the activities of two Connecticut garden clubs — the Garden Club of New Haven and the Clinton Arbor Garden Club.

Lucy opened her home in Clinton to us over and over again for workshops, meetings, garden visits and chats, offering tea sandwiches, buttery cookies, plant cuttings and wise gardening tips. She was a source of great gardening wisdom!

At the first workshop that I attended in 2000 in her basement, she taught us how to mix concrete, to fashion containers, and to fill them with exotic Alpine plants and tiny succulents.

Then, several times a year she divided perennials from her beautifully-designed garden – tall, bearded iris, yellow and orange daylilies, fragrant lavender, astilbe, heuchera, shade-loving hosta, silver-leafed ferns, and she shared them readily with all of us.

I remember walks with Lucy through her meadow, along the path down to the Long Island Sound. We talked about the conservation of our natural resources, the creation of land trusts, the preservation of wildlife habitats and her desire to ensure that that scenic beauty and open spaces would remain intact for future generations. As she walked along, she would gather Queen Anne's Lace, rose hips, and various seed pods, all of which she brought back to the house to dry, to spray paint silver and gold, and to store away carefully for holiday arrangements.

Every year she brought these dried flowers to the carriage house at Edgerton Park for the garden club's holiday workshop— an event that she started over 30 years ago. Her car was overflowing with evergreen cuttings, vibrant artificial red berry stems, GCNH tags affixed to bamboo sticks, and cat food tins painted gold or silver and filled with oasis. In addition, there was always a model boxwood tree, beautifully decorated, that she hoped we might be able to replicate. Some of us could!

Lucy successfully nurtured house plants in her conservatory, which she identified, labeled, and transported to Club meetings, making them available for all of us. She led classes on propagation— teaching us how to create new plants through division and layering and stem cutting, urging us to treat them with rooting hormones, to keep them moist, to seal them in plastic bags until they were well established. Now many of Lucy’s Angel Wing, dark-leafed, or ‘Ambassador’ begonias reside on our windowsills and her beautiful hibiscus plants add a tropical flare to our gardens.

Lucy was a florist. When I say that, I don’t mean that she was a professional arranger, I mean that she was a florist in the original sense of the word: **a grower of flowers**.

Clearly, she cultivated gardens and she cultivated friends. How fortunate I was to have known her!

On October 29, 2017, Lucy's family and friends gathered at the carriage house to honor her and to dedicate a tree in her memory — an ***Acer saccharum*** (a Sugar Maple). This species has always been one of America’s most-loved trees and seems so fitting for Lucy. /It is known for its tolerance, its graceful shape, its spreading canopy, its lovely green foliage in the spring, its delicious syrup, and its beautiful fall color when the leaves turn yellow, burnt orange and red.

Today, as we create these festive holiday arrangements, I cannot help but think about Lucy and the pleasure she would have as she loaded cars up with decorations that would be delivered throughout the city and bring pleasure to so many.

It seems fitting that in this our centennial year we officially rename the holiday workshop and dedicate it in honor of our dear friend, Lucy Elliot.

December 2024