The New Jersey Committee of the GCA is celebrating its silver anniversary! In May 1987, Zone IV hosted the first Annual Meeting organized by a Zone with Chairmen Angie Austen (Stony Brook), Pat Buchsbaum (Rumson) and S.J. Gordon (Short Hills). A profit ensued, and Millicent Johnsen (Rumson), GCA President 1983-85, suggested using the funds to form a committee similar to the Philadelphia Committee in Zone V. With the help of then Zone Chairman Nancy Strong (Somerset Hills) and enthusiastic ladies, the NJ Committee was founded.

With a goal of stimulating the knowledge and love of gardening, funding projects that benefit the State of New Jersey and supporting Summer Intern Scholars from Rutgers’ School of Environmental and Biological Sciences, the committee consists of two delegates from each of the 12 Zone IV clubs, members-at-large and an executive board. For 25 years, the committee has met five times a year at the Frelinghuysen Arboretum in Morristown, NJ, to advance their objectives.

To raise funds, a Lecture & Luncheon is held annually. In September 2012, members of the original 1987 committee plus past chairmen were feted and the committee’s history was celebrated. Many of the original NJ Committee became chairmen along with: Tabby Cochran (Somerset Hills), Liz Silvernail (Trenton) and Linda Seebach (Short Hills). They were all remembered, especially Millicent Johnsen, the inspiration for the committee, who honored the group with her presence.

It is impressive how many of these GCA ladies have continued to be active and attended the fall event. (The Garden Club of Madison was not yet a GCA member when the committee was founded.)

Celebrating the 25th Anniversary added to the excitement generated by the Garden Clubs of Madison and Englewood. They organized the 2012 Lecture & Luncheon. Tovah Martin spoke on “Gardening for the 5 Senses.” Proceeds support the Summer Intern Scholars. Three scholars were selected from Rutgers last year and there will be at least two scholars this year.

The NJ Committee also raises funds through the Growing Fund, where all Zone IV members are encouraged to contribute to finance grant projects that benefit New Jersey and are proposed by member clubs. Last year over $20,000 was given to the Glenmont Greenhouse Warm Watering Project within Thomas Edison National Historic Park, the start-up of a Kitchen Garden at Morven Museum & Garden in Princeton and to establish the Freeman Medal Winning Plants Collection at the Reeves-Reed Arboretum in Summit. Four grant requests have been received for 2012–13.

In twenty-five years, 73 grants and more than $330,000 have been distributed for community projects in New Jersey. 25 students were aided with scholarships totaling $50,000.

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