

Local Flower Show Promises Horticulture And Historic Gowns

BY **Emma Zehner** | JUN 25, 2014 8:39 AM

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Terri Twig estimates that she has 12 to 15 wedding dresses in her house. For years, she has been fascinated by their stories, so when the Branford Garden Club was looking for a theme for this year's

flower show, Twig knew just the thing.

The 2014 show, an event that happens every four years, is titled "A Gardener's Wedding." On Saturday, June 28 and Sunday, June 29 from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. and 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. respectively, the creations will be on display in the Branford Community House on 46 Church Street. Tickets are \$10 for adults and free for children 12 years and under.

The Club is also hosting a ceremony at 11:30 a.m. on Sunday on the Green. "...As our way of saying thank you to the people who make it possible for us to do frivolous things like have flower shows on summer weekends, we are going to have a ceremony of thanks at the Veterans Memorial."



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While wedding gowns are the theme, this weekend's event is about flowers, too. "A flower show, first and foremost, is a competition," said Twig, the co-chair of the flower show and a member of the Branford Garden Club. "And the wedding theme is woven throughout the entire design section of the competition."





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"I think we struck a chord because as soon as word started getting out around town, we started getting offered wedding dresses," Twig told Marcia Chambers, the Branford Eagle editor, in a recent interview on the set of BCTV, the town's public access television station. "...I think they are a really important part of people's history, but no one ever sees them." Three gowns were displayed on the BCTV set.

A Dress For Each Decade





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Since deciding on the theme, the Garden Club has collected at least one dress from every decade starting in the early 20th century. In addition, the Club borrowed one dress, a green and brown plaid dress from the 19th century, from the Historical Society. Twig explained that wedding dresses haven't always been white, but instead the trend started in 1840 when Queen Victoria married in white and even into the 20th century, white was a sign of wealth and only worn by upper class women.

There are eleven designs that will be judged by members of the Federated Garden Clubs of Connecticut on Saturday morning before the displays are opened to the public. Within each design, which is called a "class," there are four entrants. For the most part, participants are members of the Branford Garden Club, though the competition is open to anyone who enters, Twig explained.

Examples of categories include "Ever Since I was a Little Girl," "Jilted," and one class using ugly bridesmaid dresses. At the interview, Twig displayed an example of an entry into the first category called "It Fits" inspired by Cinderella.

"I think they are going to be looking more at the colors, silhouettes, and the details and trying to capture that for the dress or something that complements it," Twig said of the competitors. "...Like you might decide if you have a very fussy gown you might want something simpler."

For the public, a flower show is something else.

Enter the Flowers

"It's a chance to see horticulture," Twig said. "We have a huge display of cut specimens, pot-grown, and also container arrangements and things like that, window boxes, and even miniature gardens." As part of this event, the Garden Club is also hosting a number of educational lectures, from which attendees can find ideas for their own gardens.

In addition to the flower displays, the Garden Club will have a number of vendors on site. The Club paired up with the Branford arts groups to bring in members to show and display their artwork. Twig explained that the Club tried to select a variety of vendors, which are not all garden related.

The Garden Club will be selling fresh cut flowers out of members' gardens and will also be selling notecards with photographs of flowers and gardens in addition to a t-shirt made for this event.

The Club is also offering discounted lunch or dinner receipts at local restaurants as part of the ticket required to enter the show.

The Garden Club started advertising early. At the Memorial Day parade, a 16- year-old girl and a 17 year-old boy dressed as bride and groom and rode in a convertible. The girl wore an authentic 1940s gown, while her groom wore a WWII uniform borrowed from local veteran Sgt. Walter Zielinski.

Similarly, at the Branford Festival, local high school girls walked around the fairgrounds wearing some of the newer dresses from the collections to advertise the event.

Although this event is one of their most visible, with an estimated 150 members, the Garden Club is also very active the rest of the year.

"A lot of people don't realize just how much we do in town," Twig said.

The Club helps to maintain the baskets in the center of Branford. Although the town is responsible for some of the maintenance, Twig explained that on hot summer days, members can be found with step ladders and gallon milk jugs helping to keep the plants alive. In addition, the Club works on the gardens of the Harrison House and the Green, among others.

The Club also has educational programming in some local schools and has developed a garden therapy program for seniors at the Orchard House.

Twig explained that the Club is private and receives no money directly from the town, and therefore relies heavily on donations from local businesses and members. The flower show is a big fundraiser for the Club.

The Garden Club is always looking for more members. Those interested can send an application to Janet Dahl at jdahl333@aol.com.

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