Millis Public Gardens

The History of Millis Gardens

Millis has a long history of gardening as it transformed from a rural agricultural community to its current status as a residential community. Residents formerly grew flowers, vegetables and herbs for sustenance and commerce.

In the late twentieth century an organization known as The Oak Tree League was formed by interested residents. It was a large civic organization which actively participated in, and financially supported, many town groups, one of which focused on gardening.

The gardens were located in various areas of Millis. One large garden was located near the Memorial Building where the current small Peony garden flourishes. Another was located in the center of Towles Corner. It has been recently restored. Another was located at the junction of Union Street and Route 109 which is now a paved division of Union Street. Another existed at the current Welcome Sign site.

As time passed the Oak Tree League eventually disbanded with the current Millis Garden Club being formed in 2004 by enthusiastic members who had been in the Oak Tree League. It formed as a non-profit organization and continued to be devoted to gardening, active fundraising and educational events. Joining with the Lions Club, it co-sponsored the annual Millis Beautification Day held in April to clean up Millis roads. In 2005 it initiated and funded the planters currently located at Millis Public Library, the Memorial Building, the Vietnam/Korean Memorials, the fire station and at Exchange Street. In 2005 it initiated The Children's Garden at Oak Grove Playground and planted it in 2007, now privately owned and maintained by Oak Grove Farm.

The Garden Club members were involved in the construction of the new Millis Public Library gardens surrounding it which reached completion in 2013. Garden club members still actively participate in the maintenance of the library gardens as part of volunteers the library director recruits for that purpose. An additional garden along the front windows was added by a volunteer in 2025.

A resident named Althea Clifford started a garden of perennials across the street from her home on Dover Road Extension where it intersects with Route 109. After her death in 2021, neighbors continued her efforts. The DPW then cleared the area adjoining it, seeded it with grass, and planted new trees along Dover Road Extension, thereby producing a greenway with a stunning tip for drivers and local residents.

Interested seniors led by Barbara Chotkowski from the Council on Aging established the COA Tribute Garden in memory of beloved seniors who had passed. Located at the entrance to the Senior Center on the right side of the Memorial Building, it brings pleasure to all who pass by.

As time progressed, the membership of the Millis Garden Club diminished to the degree that events were eliminated and the focus became maintaining the planters, the Welcome Sign garden and the Pump House/Station garden. The three Memorial Building gardens were restored with the assistance of the Department of Public Works from 2020 to 2024. In the fall of 2024, daffodil bulbs donated by Harrison/McPhee Inc. were planted by club members and interested volunteers at all the veterans' memorials and around the large evergreen tree donated as well by Harrison/McPhee Inc on the north lawn of the Memorial Building in Millis. In 2025 the Towles Corner garden was restored by the collaboration of the DPW and the Millis Garden Club.

In addition to the privately owned Children's Garden at Oak Grove Playground, there is an active garden club at the privately owned residences at the Regency at Glen Ellen that beautifies the grounds there as allowed.

The following pages describe the current public planters and gardens in Millis.

Althea's Garden



Althea's Garden was started by a neighbor named Althea Clifford at the junction of Dover Road Extension and Main Street. It was expanded by, and continues to be maintained by, neighbors in the area belonging to the Garden Club who water by jug, plant, weed, and deadhead regularly. They clean in spring and fall and spread mulch provided by the DPW upon request.

It consists of forsythia, rose and hyacinth bushes, spring bulbs, giant dahlias, day lilies and the following perennials: bleeding heart, catmint, coneflower, dianthus, foxglove, gaura, hosta, iris, loosestrife, mums, rose campion, Russian sage, salvia, shasta daisy, yucca.

Council on Aging Tribute Garden



The COA Tribute Garden is located at the south side of the Memorial Building next to the steps leading to the entrance to the Senior Center. It contains memorials to past seniors as well as plants, a birdbath and birdhouses decorated by seniors.

It consists of spring bulbs, lilies and the following perennials: coneflower, coreopsis, hosta, phlox, salvia, sedum, shasta daisy, spirea. Annuals are added for continual blooming.

Barbara Chotkowski and seniors maintain the garden during the growing season. A key provided by the DPW controls the water spigot above the garden on the building.

Exchange Street Planters



The Exchange Street planters are located on the small island in the middle of Exchange Street at its junction with Main Street

The planters are filled with new or refertilized potting soil and planted three to four times a year with mostly annuals and decorative items to reflect the seasonal changes of New England. Occasionally perennials are used if so chosen by the creative garden club member who maintains them.

The Millis Garden Club provides the financial support for the display and the members plant, weed, deadhead and water during the growing season. Water is brought in gallon jugs and in hot weather, two jugs a day per planter are required.

Fire Station Planters

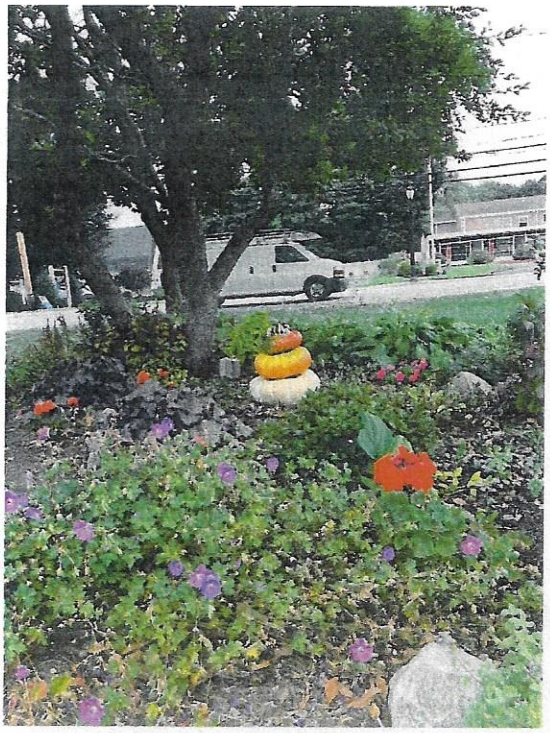


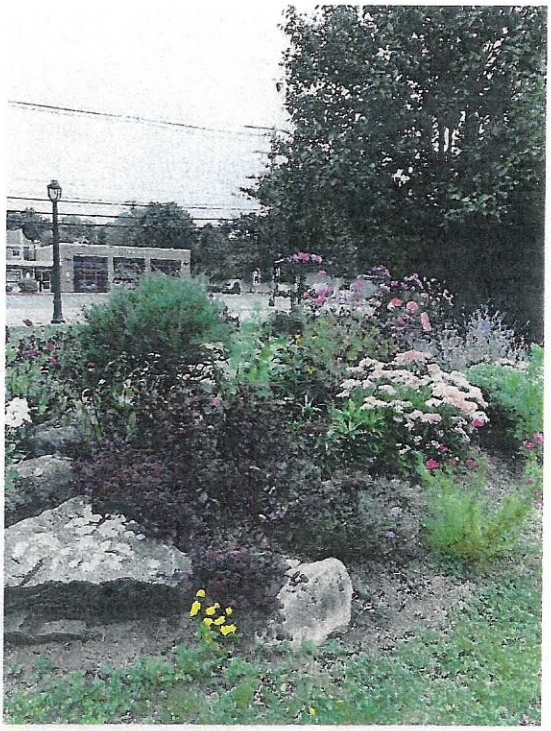
The Fire Station planters are located in the right corner of the grassy area at the entrance to the fire station.

The planters are filled with new or refertilized potting soil and planted with annuals, perennials and decorative items reflecting the seasonal changes of New England at the creative choice of the Garden Club members who volunteered to maintain them.

Supported financially by the Millis Garden Club, the members plant, weed, deadhead and water the plants regularly during the growing season. Water is available at a spigot outside between the fire station engine doors. In hot weather two gallons a day per planter is necessary.

Horseshoe Garden





The Horseshoe Garden is located at the corner of Route 109 and Park Street at Memorial Building.

It is maintained by one or more Garden Club members who clean it in the spring and fall and mulch it with DPW provided mulch in the spring. The members fertilize with Rose Tone, Plant Tone, Holly Tone and weed, prune, deadhead and replant regularly with transplanted or new plant donations during the growing season.

Water is provided via a spigot on the side of the Memorial Building controlled by a key provided by the DPW office in Room 206 inside the building. Hoses are wound on a reel attached near the spigot. Watering is permitted according to town regulations. If large amounts, weeds, trimmings and leaves are left in neat piles for removal by the DPW. Small amounts are removed in bags by the volunteers.

The garden consists of maple, hawthorne and evergreen trees, hydrangea, Mountain Laurel, hybrid tea and shrub rose bushes, spring bulbs, iris, Asiatic lilies, day lilies, grasses, ground covers and the following perennials: astilbe, baptisia, blanket flower, black-eyed susan, bleeding heart, bluebells, butterfly bush, catmint, chrysanthemums, columbine, coneflowers, coral bells, cranesbill, delphinium, dianthus, forget-me-not, foxglove, gaura, hosta, Jacob's heart, Japanese lantern, lavender, lily of the valley, milkweed, myrtle, phlox, pin cushion plant, Russian sage, sedum, and vinca.

The following bulbs are planted in the spring and removed in the fall: canna lilies, dahlias, and gladioli.

At the desire of the gardener, annuals are used to enhance the continuation of the blooms such as begonias, coleus, geraniums, impatiens and marigolds.

Korean/Vietnam Memorial Planters



The two Korean/Vietnam Memorial planters are located on either side of the memorials in the front lawn of the Memorial Building.

The planters are filled with new or refertilized potting soil and planted three or four times to reflect the seasonal changes of New England with primarily annuals and decorative items. Occasionally perennials are chosen according to the creative design of the garden club member who maintains them. An attempt is made to use patriotic colors from the span of time from Memorial Day to the Fourth of July.

The Millis Garden Club provides the financial support for the display and the member plants, weeds, deadheads and waters according to town regulations using a spigot and hose attached to the Memorial Building which is controlled by a key supplied by the DPW in Room 206 inside the building.

Library Back Entrance Planters



The back library planters are located on both sides of the bench aside the entrance right garden.

They are filled with fresh or refertilized potting soil and are planted by members of the Millis Garden Club three to four times a year to reflect the seasonal changes of New England. With financial support by the club, members plant annuals mostly with decorative enhancements but will also choose bulbs and perennials.

Weeding, deadheading are regularly performed and watering by two gallon jugs daily in hot weather is a necessity.

Library Gardens



Library Gardens

The library at 961 Main Street has three gardens at the front entrance, two gardens at the back entrance, two gardens across the street from the back entrance and three gardens in the courtyard. They consist of bulbs, trees, shrubs and perennials. The garden plot immediately in front of the library front windows consists of annuals planted in the spring by volunteers as well as canna, dahlias, and gladioli which are removed in the fall to be replanted in the spring.

The Library director annually recruits volunteers from the community to clean the gardens in the spring and fall, mulch them in the spring with mulch provided by the DPW, and weed as needed during the growing season. The weeds are piled to the left of the clothing collection shed in the parking lot for removal by the DPW.

Peony Shade Garden



The Peony Shade Garden is located on Park Road next to the hedges aligning the Memorial Building parking lot.

It is maintained by a Garden Club member who cleans it spring and fall, mulches it with mulch provided by the DPW in the spring, fertilizes with Plant Tone, and weeds, prunes, replants with donations, and deadheads it during the growing season.

It is watered according to the town regulations using a hose located in a reel attached to the Memorial Building to the right of the main steps of the entrance. A key is necessary from the DPW office located in Room 206 on the second floor of the building to turn on the water which the member keeps during the season. If the piles of weeds, trimmings, and leaves are

large, the DPW will remove them, otherwise the member uses a bag and takes them to the transfer station.

The garden consists of peonies, day lilies, hemlock, maple, pear and evergreen trees, spring bulbs, and the following perennials: columbine, hosta, Japanese lantern, loosestrife, milkweed, sedum, shrub rose, and yarrow. It is further enhanced with annuals of the member's choice.

Pump House

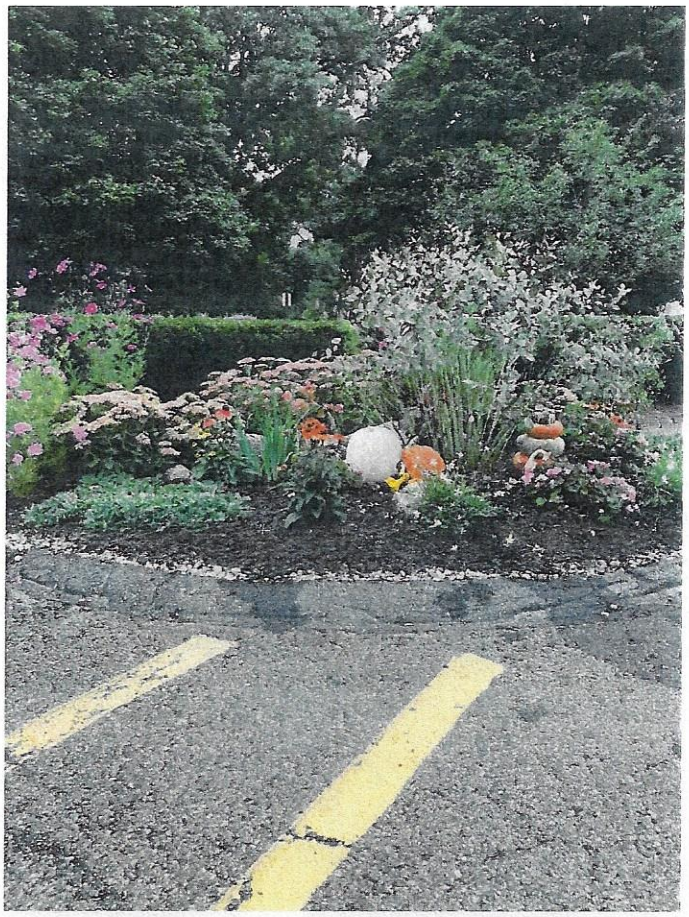


The Pump House Garden is located at the triangular junction of Village Street and Route 115.

It is maintained by one or more Garden Club members who clean it spring and fall and mulch it in the spring with mulch provided by the DPW. Members weed and prune it during the growing season. Large piles of refuse will be removed by the DPW. Water is available at a spigot at the Pump House but the garden is not regularly watered.

Azalea bushes, apple and Kousa dogwood trees, daffodil bulbs, day lilies grow there and the following perennials: Montauk daisies, mums, sedum, tiger grass and thistle.

Town Hall Parking Lot



The Town Hall Parking Lot garden is located in the center left side of the main parking lot directly across from the main entrance to the Memorial Building.

It is a semicircle-shaped rock garden edged with small stones and consists of spring bulbs and the following perennials: baptisia, blanket flower, catmint, coneflower, chrysanthemums, gaura, lavender, lilies, and sedum. Annuals are added as desired.

Garden Club members fertilize with Plant Tone, weed, deadhead, replant with donated plants and water regularly according to town regulations via a hose attached to the town hall to the right of the steps. The spigot is controlled by a key provided by the DPW.

Towles Corner Garden



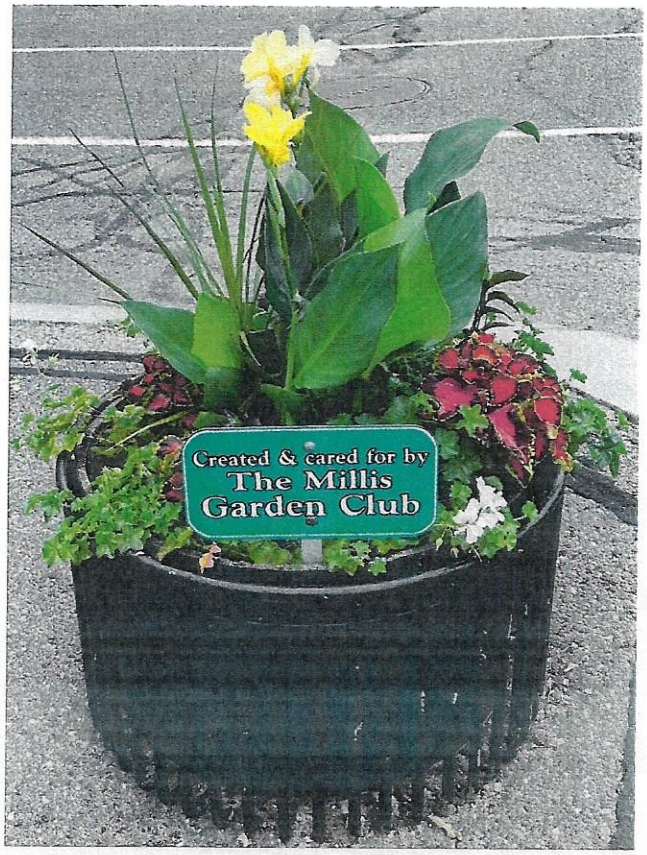
The Towles Corner Garden is located in the triangle at the junction of Exchange Street and Middlesex Street. It is also the location of the Harold Hall Memorial Square. It has been recently been cleared and restored with new soil by a joint effort between the Millis Garden Club and the DPW.

The garden consists of paths, two apple trees, rocks, spring bulbs and the following perennials; astilbe, catmint, columbine, coral bells, hosta, iris, milkweed, Russian sage and sedum. An award winning rose "Miracle on the Hudson", named for the heroic crew and passengers of Flight 1549, has been planted as well. Further perennials will be added. Gracing the garden as well are a bird bath donated by a resident and a bench dedicated to Janice Simpson, a former sixth grade teacher in Millis and an avid garden club member.

Towles Corner Garden

It is maintained by garden club members who fertilize with Rose Tone and Plant Tone, plant, weed, deadhead and water the garden. Weeds, if in large amounts, and leaves are removed by the DPW. Water is supplied by the gardener with gallon jugs brought from home or provided by two generous neighbors who live adjacent to the triangle.

Town Hall Planters



The two town hall planters are located at the foot of the stairs leading into the main entrance of the Memorial Building.

They consist of fresh or refertilized potting soil and mostly annuals and decorative items with occasional perennials. Reflecting the seasonal changes of New England, they are changed two to three times per year.

Supported financially by the Garden Club, members plant, weed and water regularly according to their own creative choices. Water is provided via jugs or a key-controlled spigot and hoses attached to the building to the right of the stairs. The DPW provides the key.

Welcome Sign



The Welcome Sign Garden is located at the junction of Village Street and Route 109. It is maintained by one or more Garden Club members who clean it spring and fall, spread mulch provided by the DPW in the spring and weed, prune, and deadhead during the growing season. There is no water source so members occasionally bring jugs of water for that purpose.

It consists of azalea, bayberry, mountain laurel, rose, and spirea bushes, yews, day lilies, spring bulbs, grasses and the following perennials: columbine, coneflower, coreopsis, lamb's ear, lily of the valley, milkweed, rose campion, Russian sage, salvia, sedum, and yarrow.