

JO CHAMPNEY

AND THE BEDFORD GARDEN CLUB'S LILLIAN DUTTON HERB GARDEN

SUSAN WINGFIELD, APRIL 20, 2020

*I learned many things about Jo when researching and writing the History of the Bedford Garden Club.*

*Jo shared many stories from the earlier years of the Club.*

Jo Champney has been an active member of the Bedford Garden for over 60 years, and has been an honorary member for over 40 years. She has served as Club Treasurer, Secretary, and Vice President. She has been on many committees — Horticulture, Programs, Civic, and Yearbook Cover (her yearbook covers were made using pressed leaves and ferns). For many years she wrote the gardening tips for our newsletters; and we continue to use many of her tips in our newsletters today. She was our program leader for several workshops: Making Terrariums and Berry Bowls, Making Pine Cone Wreaths, and Modern Flower Arranging.

Jo was one of our members who researched and started the Lillian Dutton Memorial Herb Garden at the Job Lane Farm Museum. They visited herb gardens in the area, and liked the Whipple House Garden in Ipswich, which had raised beds, a split rail fence, and crushed shells for the walks. They decided to model our current Lillian Dutton Memorial Herb Garden after the Whipple House Garden, but used crushed stone for the walkways instead of crushed shells. Cynthia Houston, Hazel Proudfoot, Jo Champney, with their husbands, and with Mickey Dodd's help, installed four raised beds for the herbs. Ground breaking took place on October 28, 1978.

Jo tells us "Bruce McQuaid of Salt Box Nursery removed the topsoil, installed a six-foot by thirty-foot brick walk, and a cedar post fence at the Job Lane House for the herb garden." The herb garden, located outside the kitchen door, is a "botanical sampler," says Jo. "It is a memorial to Lillian Dutton, who lived in the house and sold herbs. The garden illustrates the life of the housewife in those early times. It was she who tended the garden, and who made and dispensed the remedies that came from the garden. Many of the plants in the garden came from the fields surrounding the Job Lane House."

Jo Champney was the Chairperson of the Job Lane House Herb Garden from the time it was created until a couple of years ago. She and her committee faithfully met there every Tuesday morning during the spring, summer, and fall to maintain the garden and flowers on the property. Though she is no longer the chairperson, she remains as their advisor. Jo loves the roses and apples from the apple tree. She said, "in June 1990 it was the custom of the beautification volunteers tending the Lillian Dutton Memorial Garden at the Job Lane House to mulch the Herb Garden with buckwheat hulls. Imagine our surprise and chagrin after all that work to find our buckwheat 'hulls' had sprouted everywhere! Evidently the seeds had not been removed. Four of us worked all morning weeding them out. New England Nurseries replaced the two bales of buckwheat hulls, but not the time and labor to remove the sprouts and replace the hulls." Jo also remembers when a raccoon spent a winter in the storage shed at the Job Lane House, making a mess.

Another story Jo remembers about our Club is that the Trust Company Bank asked us to decorate their bank for the Christmas season. Jo made a wreath for them, using her daughter's hula hoop as a base." She also recalls that, "Peg Joslin helped and we used gilded evergreens." She said, "the decorations were beautiful, and we also decorated the watering trough."

She also recalls making twenty-two terrariums, and a pine cone wreath for some of the fairs we had in our earlier years. She was also one of the judges in 1968 when the Club teamed up with the Jaycees to judge Christmas decorations in our town. Judges Jo Champney, Bob Benoit, and Mr. Higgins drove all over town to view the decorations and to award a prize, won by Mr. and Mrs. Haig Tatosian.