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## THE HISTORY OF THE HARPER WOODS BEAUTIFICATION COMMISSION

For many years the City of Harper Woods relied on the City's Garden Club to assist in the spring planting at the various City facilities. The City Council elected to establish a Beautification Commission on October 2, 1990 by City Ordinance. The ordinance charged the newly formed Commission with advising the City Council on programs, projects and activities aimed at improving the beautification of the city. Residents were solicited for appointment and most of the charter members were avid gardeners themselves.

The newly formed Commission held their first meeting in May 1992, where they elected officers, established regular meeting dates, and discussed goals for the Commission. Among the goals selected, were the need to establish yearly Beautification Awards for residential homes, develop a landscape plan for the City Offices, parks and other facilities, designate a City Flower, and establish a yearly Perennial Plant Exchange.

Once the Commissioners focused on landscaping the City facilities, their imprint became noticeable almost immediately, as a plan was developed to replant the front of City Hall with perennials and annuals and put in three berms, which covered most of the front lawn area of City Hall. The berm and the plantings were constructed and planted in the fall of 1994, and in the spring of 1995 daffodils and grape hyacinths filled the front of City Hall greeting residents with a colorful breath of spring in an otherwise urban setting. Needless to say, City Hall and City Officials received numerous compliments on the new look, which provided further inspiration to the Commission as they proceeded to devise planting schemes for the library, which adjoins City Hall.

Last year the Public Works Department planted a beautiful garden at the City's Public Works building on Old Eight Mile, and is maintained by the office staff. So, plan for a beautiful spring!

Future plans for City Hall include the installation of decorative lighting and brick pavers to further spruce up both buildings. Their new goal is to have this work completed by 2012.

As for designating a City Flower, the Commissioners selected the Bearded Iris and since that time Iris' have been planted at all City facilities, and a campaign to plant them throughout the city will hopefully take place next spring.

Another activity the Commissioners promote is the yearly Perennial Plant Exchange, which is usually held the third Saturday in May, and has grown in participation from just a handful of people to well over one-hundred. The exchange is quickly becoming an area favorite, and allows participants to exchange perennial plants which are first inspected by a Master Gardener. Area businesses donated Azaleas and other garden products, which were raffled off to the plant exchange participants.

Lastly, and perhaps the most publicly visible activity the Commission promotes, is the yearly nomination and selection of "Award Winning Homes" in the city. This activity starts out in early spring with notices in the City Newsletter and articles in the local paper soliciting nominations from residents who wish to nominate a home in the City for its outstanding appearance and its contributions toward making Harper Woods a better place to live. During this nomination process, residents and Commissioners forward up to one-hundred nominations to the City Clerk's Office where they are passed on to the Commission for their review. Upon receipt of these nominations the Commissioners review each home, and after reviewing all the homes, the top ten nominees are notified of their selection. The homeowners are then invited to attend an Awards Dinner, where they are presented a plaque, by both the Mayor and the Beautification Commission.

The Beautification Commission's contributions have significantly made Harper Woods a better place to live, and have established a path toward making continued improvement in the future.

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