



Diane Ward, president of the Stouffville Horticultural Society, had her first water garden at 10.

SJOERD WITTEVEN PHOTO

Society's work blooms all over town

BY HANNELORE VOLPE
Staff Writer

Whitchurch-Stouffville Horticultural Society president Diane Ward was spotted hanging out the window of the York-Durham Heritage train last fall. She was yelling.

Anyone who listened closely would have heard her hollering out the names of the trees, shrubs and flowers that grow along the track from Stouffville to Uxbridge.

Bev Parker and Eileen Thomas stood close behind scribbling madly to take down all the information. The plants growing along the tracks will eventually be marked with signs for train travellers to spot more easily.

PREZ GARDENS LITTLE

"I like nature. I don't even do a lot of gardening, but I have had a water garden since I was 10," said Mrs. Ward, who seems to enjoy doing unusual things.

For one thing, the mother of three and grandmother of five is in her 30th year as a livestock inspector for the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville, to assess dead and dying livestock. The former farm girl has been involved in things agricultural most of her life.

She was president of the Markham Fair in 1989 and was one of the founders of the fair's Pizza Project, which taught grades 3, 4 and 5 students where their food comes from. The program continued for 12 years until it folded two years ago.

Mrs. Ward helped to develop the pond and stream programs and others she teaches at Green Acres Outdoor Education Centre in Stouffville.

Since 2000, she has been president of the local horticultural society, which has been responsible for many spots of colours and beauty throughout Whitchurch-Stouffville for over 80 years.

Society members have worked on numerous planting projects around town, with the notable help of Thelma Creighton, Mac Keith and Marna Moldon.

They've planted trees, shrubs and flowers and cleaned out overgrown flower beds at places such as Duffin's Creek, the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum, the Ballantrae Community Centre and the Stouffville cemetery.

The society works together with the town, Mrs. Ward noted. "That's how we can honour so many requests."

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People come to the society's meetings to learn more about plants, flowers, crafts and gardens all over the world, whether they're tending marvellous flower beds and vegetable gardens or lovingly taking care of a window box or two.

Between 50 and 60 people attend meetings, including a plant sale in May and a seed sale in October. This year, well-known garden experts will talk

about everything from beneficial insects and weeds to Japanese gardening. There are also several flower shows and photo contests each season for both adult and junior gardeners.

From April to November, the society's gardeners gather on the third Monday of each month at Stouffville United Church. The first meeting of this year on April 14 featured Frank Kershaw talking about Historic and Heritage Gardens of Ontario.

EXPERT IN TOWN

The next meeting is Monday. It starts with a flower show at 7 p.m., with the judging beginning at 7:45 p.m. Internationally renowned garden expert Leonard Teengs, who has done flower arrangements for Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands and various celebrities, will lead a workshop on making an exclusive floral design. There is a \$25 fee for materials for those who want to create a floral design.

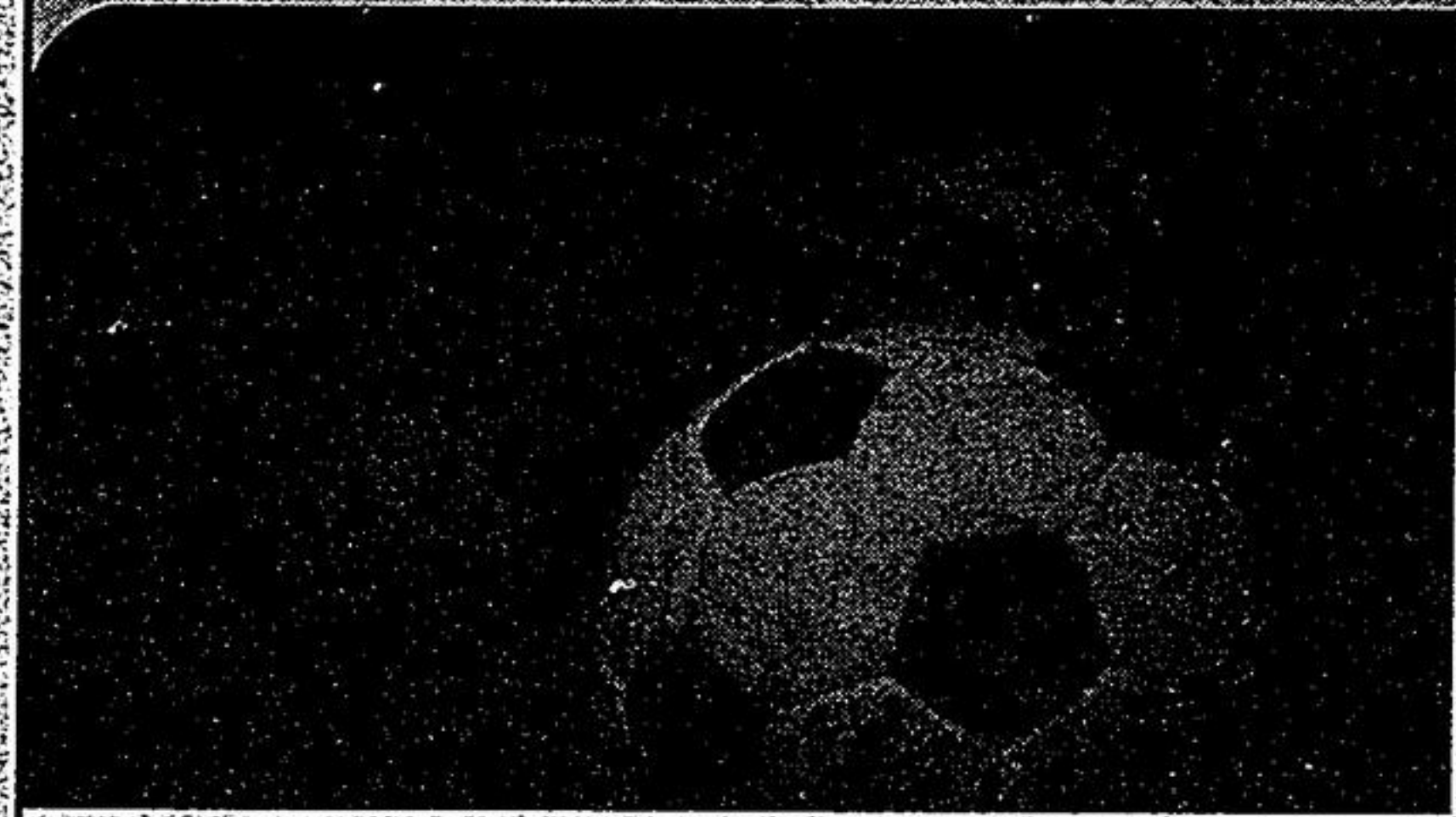
Youngsters in the horticultural society have a chance to help with plantings, as well as enter the flower competitions, workshops and photo contests.

Last year, a window box designed by member Bruni Nielsen for the Whitchurch-Stouffville Horticultural Society won second prize at the Canadian National Exhibition. As part of its work in the community, the society has donated the park benches along Duffin's Creek and sponsors a Mother's Day craft at the library in May.

The society's membership fees are \$10 per year, with a family rate of \$15 and a junior membership at only \$2. Non-members are welcome to attend any meeting for a \$4 admission fee.

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