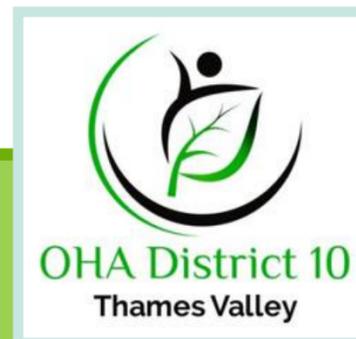


MEMBERSHIP

- **Recruitment Strategy:** How to find new members
- **Retention Strategy:** Keeping your current members interested and engaged





THE CHALLENGE

Membership recruitment and retention is an ongoing challenge for volunteer organizations. How do we attract new members? How do we keep the members we have interested and engaged?

As a group, we face several challenges, i.e.: balancing volunteer and personal life, a reluctance to gather (a direct result of COVID), aging demographics, and even in some cases, a misconstrued public perception on who we are and what we do.

WHO ARE WE, & WHAT DO WE DO?

1

A SOCIETY IS A VOLUNTEER NON-PROFIT HORTICULTURAL ORGANIZATION WITH A MANDATE TO KEEP OUR LOCAL COMMUNITIES BEAUTIFUL, SUSTAINABLE AND LIVABLE.

2

WE'RE AN ORGANIZED GROUP OF GARDENERS OF ALL AGES, PROMOTING AN INTEREST IN HORTICULTURE THROUGH EDUCATION, MARKETING MATERIALS, SHARING OF PLANTS & SEEDS, AND OUR SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE.

3

WE SHARE A COLLECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS OF OUR IMPACT ON NATURE - PLANTING NATIVE PLANTS AND TREES, REMOVING INVASIVES, AND CARING FOR THE ENVIRONMENT.

4

WE ENCOURAGE YOUNG GARDENERS THROUGH YOUTH PROGRAMS AND OFFER SCHOLARSHIPS FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION IN HORTICULTURE.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Horticultural Society

“Horticultural Society” is an official sounding name that may intimidate the new gardener, “Do I know enough to join this group? I just pick the plants that I like.”

Garden Club

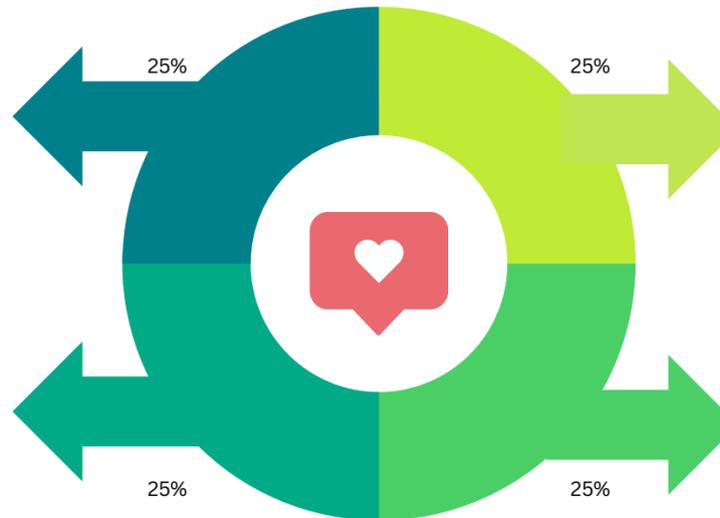
“Garden Club” may be a friendlier nickname to attract new gardeners and a younger demographic. “I like to garden, I’m going to join.”

Official Name

Horticultural Society is our official name and is required to be used on all official documentation i.e. OMAFRA & OHA.

Nickname

Choose a nickname like “Garden Club” that can be used on your website, marketing materials and social media.



RETENTION - WHAT CURRENT MEMBERS WANT

Run a Survey and Ask Them

- **What do they like about your Society? Not like?**
- **What enticed them to join?**
- **Is your general meeting routine stale/ boring? Too much business?**
- **What do they find the most interesting or fun?**
- **Is your email/ newsletter communication effective? Do they read it?**
- **How often do they check your Society's social media & website?**
- **Have they referred a new member? Are there benefits for referrals?**
- **Would they volunteer for leadership/ board positions if asked face-to-face?
With a co-chair to share duties? If the term was limited to one year?**

RECRUITMENT - WHAT NEW MEMBERS WANT

New Members

NEW MEMBERS want to belong to an active group that meets their expectations, aligns with their interests and personal goals, provides inspiration and is educational, makes them feel valued and part of the group, creates an opportunity to make a difference in their community, and provides some type of personal gain they receive by being a member.

“ New members may be “trying out” your Society to see if this aligns with what they want. ”

Designate one of your members to be a mentor for the new member, to introduce them to others, answer questions and stay in touch.



MEET YOUR PROSPECTIVE NEW MEMBERS

JOHN



67 yr old, retired, lifetime gardener, looking for an active community group to join for personal interest, sharing of knowledge & social interaction.

HEIDI



45 yr old busy mom, new to community, wants a group that aligns with her ideals of growing healthy foods, conservation & contributing to community.

KIERA



15 yr old teen, wants to learn about growing plants, gaining volunteer hours, likes Horticulture class at school, debating on Horticulture or Landscaping as a career.



GROWING YOUR MEMBERSHIP

**Now that you know who your target audience may be,
how do you reach them?**

- John may see your advertisement at the coffee shop, the senior's centre, by word of mouth, or in the newspaper.
- Heidi may see it on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, hear about it through a neighbour, or by a search online for garden clubs in her area.
- Kiera may see it on a flyer at high school, on SnapChat, TikTok, a text from her friends group, as a volunteer or employee.

Gear your marketing to locations where they will see it. One type of advertising will not work for everyone. Make it stand out and be appealing to each of the demographics you want to attract.

If you can grab their attention, that's the first step.

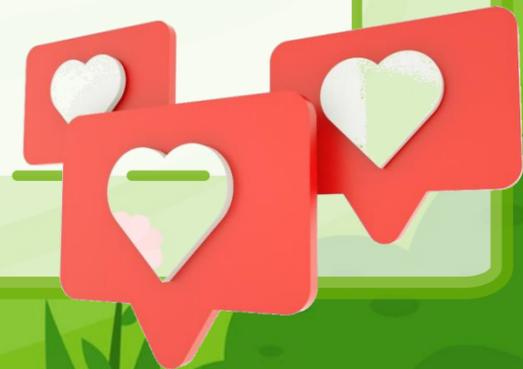
SHARE YOUR MESSAGE

You may not know **HOW** to post on Facebook, or Instagram, YouTube or TikTok, run a design program or create a website.

THAT'S OKAY.

There are people out there who **DO KNOW HOW** to do those things, and would be willing to help. Just ask.

Reach out to members of your Society, a young person you know, ask at the local high school or community college.



TRY SOMETHING NEW

1 Offer a **GRASS-ROOTS LEARNING SERIES**. People might like the idea of growing their own foods, but don't know where to start, or how to care for the plants, or what to do with them once they're harvested.

2 Run **HANDS-ON WORKSHOPS, DESIGN CLASSES, BUS TRIPS, CONTESTS, BRING-A-FRIEND NIGHT** to attract new people in the community who many not have the confidence to join otherwise.

3 **BUY COMPOST** in bulk to sell. Run a **SEED EXCHANGE. A FALL HARVEST SWAP MEET. A HARVEST DINNER PARTY** at a Society meeting. **INDOOR PLANT EXCHANGE. BEST GARDEN OUTFIT** or a **DRESS-UP NIGHT** with mocktails. **A GARDEN QUIZ** with seed packs as prizes.

4 **REVIEW YOUR MARKETING STRATEGY OFTEN**. Keep the content relevant, current and fresh. It may take a few different approaches to attract new members and get your current members coming out for more.

MORE IDEAS

4

LET THEM KNOW HOW THEY COULD HELP. A DOOR GREETER, BRING REFRESHMENTS, HELPING WITH THE PLANT/BAKE SALE, MAINTAIN FACEBOOK PAGE, INTRODUCE SPEAKERS, MENTOR TO A NEW MEMBER, GARDEN HELPER.

5

WE'RE ALL BUSY PEOPLE. BOARD POSITIONS CAN BE DAUNTING. SHARE THE DUTIES. OFFER A CO-POSITION. A FEW HOURS TO HELP OUT IS DOABLE, BUT A LONG COMMITMENT IS LIKELY TO BE A "NO!"

6

TRY NOT TO SOUND DESPERATE, "WE NEED PEOPLE!!!" (YEAH, WE KNOW YOU REALLY DO.) LET MEMBERS KNOW YOU HAVE A GREAT BOARD AND YOU ENJOY BEING A PART OF IT. THAT IT'S AN OPPORTUNITY TO SHAPE THE SOCIETY FOR TODAY & INTO THE FUTURE.

7

ORGANIZE GARDEN-THEMED EVENTS AND OFFER DISCOUNTED MEMBERSHIPS IF THEY JOIN DURING THE EVENT. OFFER A **REFERRAL INCENTIVE. A RECRUITMENT NIGHT WITH A FREE MEMBERSHIP DRAW.**

OHA DISTRICT 10'S WEBSITE

www.gardenthamesvalley.ca

FILES & RESOURCES

THE SOCIETY ANNUAL REPORTS TO THE DISTRICT 2022 are available. These reports are a valuable resource, full of innovative ideas that worked for other Societies to attract new members while keeping their current members interested and engaged.

A NEW PERSON IS INTERESTED!

Don't be Shy

No one likes a braggart, but this really is the time to **BRAG** about how **AWESOME** your Society is!

Be open, welcoming and enthusiastic.

Mention your mission, vision and goals, your programs, all the great things your Society does in the community, the benefits to them by joining. Invite them to come to your next meeting to see what you're all about.

It's A Team Effort

Create a **MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT BLURB** to use when approached by a prospective new member.

The opportunity to recruit new members may happen with any member of your Society at any time or at any place.

Each of your members should know the recruitment blurb to keep your message consistent.

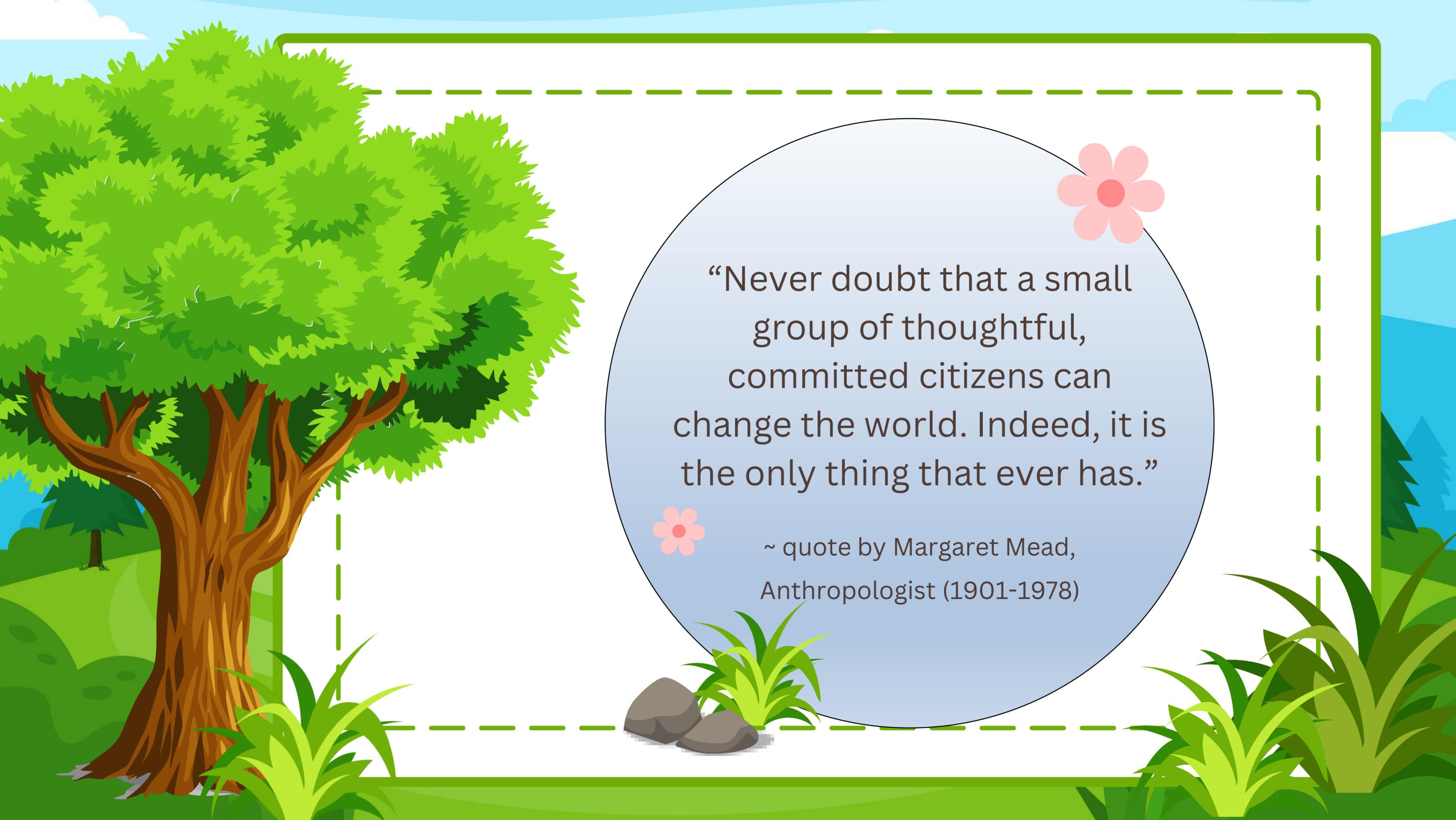
SUMMARY

- 1**) Ask your current members what they like/don't like about your Society. How to make it more interesting. Make some changes to keep members coming back.
- 2**) New members may be a mix of genders, of all ages and experience levels. One advertising method will no longer work. Reach them where they hang out.
- 3**) Use a variety of methods to reach prospective new members. Develop a membership recruitment blurb and share with your members to keep your message consistent.
- 4**) Approach members for leadership positions face-to-face. Explain what's involved & why you need them. Share duties, co-chairs. Limit the commitment to a set time ie: one year.
- 5**) Try something new. Society Annual Reports, shared on the District website www.gardenthamesvalley.ca, have ideas to increase membership and engage members.

GARDENING IS BOOMING

Some of the hottest trends in hobby gardening in 2022, next to the increase in home-grown vegetables and fruits, was in creating eco-friendly gardens that could withstand extreme weather conditions, perennial gardens for pollinators, a shift towards native plantings and trees, creating an outdoor oasis for grown-ups, and collections of architectural and sculptural plants.

The garden business is booming in Canada and will continue to grow.



“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

~ quote by Margaret Mead,
Anthropologist (1901-1978)

**BEST WISHES
FOR A SUCCESSFULL**

MEMBERSHIP STRATEGY



OHA District 10
Thames Valley

Presented by
OHA District 10 Thames Valley



Garden Ontario
KEEPING ONTARIO BEAUTIFUL