

Columbia Gardeners Records, 1972-2016

PRESERVING THE HISTORY OF COLUMBIA, MARYLAND

Columbia Archives

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Inventory of the Columbia Gardeners Records Record Group Number – RGXLVIII

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Descriptive Summary

Collection Title

Columbia Gardeners Records, 1972-2016 (bulk 1973-1990)

Collection Number

RGXLVIII

Creator

Columbia Gardeners, Inc.

Extent

4.25 linear feet; 1 oversize flat box

Repository

Columbia Archives
6310 Hillside Ct., Suite 100
Columbia, MD 21046

Administrative Information

Provenance Statement

The records of the Columbia Gardeners were donated to the Columbia Archives in three separate groups in 2011. The original donation came from the organization itself and consisted of materials collected by its presidents, 1973-2000. Additional donations came from Alex Hekimian, former president of Columbia Gardeners, and by Mary Gold, Columbia Gardeners historian. In 2016 Columbia Gardeners donated approximately 2.5 linear feet of documents that had been maintained by Columbia Gardeners president, Clyde Pyers (ca.2010-2015). Future accretions to the collection will continue in accordance to the organization's document retention policy.

Access Statement

Collection is open for research.

Columbia Gardeners Records, 1972-2016 (bulk 1973-1990)

Publication Rights

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Preferred Citation

Columbia Gardeners Records, Columbia Archives, Columbia, Maryland. [Series. Subseries. Box Number.]

Agency History

Columbia Gardeners (1969-)

Columbia Gardeners was and is (as of 2016) an all-volunteer, non-profit organization focused on promoting and encouraging “community interest in and support of cooperative gardening” in Howard County, Maryland (Articles of Incorporation, 1975). It was founded in early 1969 in the “new city” of Columbia, became an incorporated non-profit organization in 1975, and was a key player in the establishment of three County-owned properties that were designated as permanent community garden space. The organization provided access to garden space and administered that space as community gardens for its members every year of its existence. It currently (2016) manages about 500 individual garden plots at three locations in cooperation with Howard County Recreation & Parks.

The American Community Gardening Association offers a broad definition of a community garden as “any piece of land gardened by a group of people.” Each community garden and community gardening organization is unique. They are shaped by their place, physical environment, times and people. Columbia Gardeners is distinctive in at least three ways: 1) in its setting in a “planned” new city; 2) in its persistent efforts to set aside public land as designated permanent community gardening space; and 3) in its longevity.

The New City of Columbia, Maryland

In the late 1960s when the modern American community gardening movement was just getting started, communal garden space in a middle class, suburban, “planned city” seemed an improbable prospect. Most community garden projects were either hold-overs from the 1940’s Victory Garden era, or gritty, vacant lot neighborhood projects in inner cities. The idea was too new to have been considered by Columbia’s planners – space for communal gardening was not included in the detailed blueprints for Columbia’s neighborhoods. However, by 1975, before the city was ten years old, almost one in ten of the city’s families was involved in raising vegetables, fruits and flowers in community garden space. They were organized, and they called themselves, “Columbia Gardeners.”

As a planned city designed to offer an alternative to the suburban tracts typical of the Baltimore-Washington corridor, Columbia was laid out differently – in walkable, integrated neighborhoods with lots of open space. It facilitated the building of housing accessible to a range of family incomes. Not surprisingly, it attracted a diverse politically and socially active population. The energy and expectations of Columbia’s “pioneers” were key to the founding of many innovative community organizations including Columbia Gardeners.

The first residents of Columbia included Evelyn Haynes, a lively, gray-haired 72 year old with a lifetime of community activism behind her. Shortly after moving to the new city in 1968, Ms. Haynes established the *Friendship Exchange* (see RGV Miscellaneous Organizations, Columbia Archives) to foster community among her new neighbors. As she settled in, she was dismayed that such a progressive new community had not made provisions for food gardens. In fact, Columbia’s strict covenants regarding suitable home landscaping, its many apartment and

townhouse residences and its tree-shaded lawns were all barriers to those bent on raising their own vegetables and fruits.

Ms. Haynes tackled the problem head-on. She called on James Rouse, president of The Rouse Company (TRC), Columbia's developer, to discuss her concerns, and she persuaded him to lend an acre or so of unused commercial property near the current Columbia Mall for temporary garden plots. In the summer of 1969, about 30 gardeners dug into this first community garden. By 1973, two garden sites, one on Cedar Lane in West Columbia and one on Oakland Mills Road in East Columbia were in use by about 600 gardeners. By 1976, there were three fully occupied sites with more than 800 garden plots. All three sites were on property "borrowed" by the gardeners from Howard Research and Development Corporation (HRD), TRC subsidiary in charge of developing Columbia. Columbia Gardeners had become a force to be reckoned with.

In the ensuing years, both the city of Columbia and Columbia Gardeners weathered economic booms and downturns, evolved and flourished. Community gardens in suburban, middle class neighborhoods are now much more common than they were 40 years ago. But the relationship between Columbia's alternative approach to land use and community gardening remains unique. The determination of Columbia's pioneers to make community gardening a permanent part of the landscape and a long-term recreational opportunity for all residents continues to be a force within the organization.

Permanent Plots Now!

The early relationship between the community gardeners, HRD and the Columbia Association (CA, Columbia's community association) was a productive one. HRD licensed the land to the gardeners; CA was contracted to provide garden site amenities such as water tanks for irrigation and annual plowing. However, the fact remained that these sites were situated on land slated for future development by HRD. The availability of the same garden site, or any site, was not guaranteed from year to year. The gardeners were forced to move several times over the years as their carefully tended plots turned into housing, schools, shopping centers and parking lots. Moving from one temporary site to another over the years – one writer labeled the gardeners "nomads" – was not only frustrating to gardeners, it was unsustainable. Suitable property would cease to be available in the near future. And, as Ms. Haynes pointed out, only *permanent* garden plots would provide gardeners the opportunity to build garden soil over time and to plant perennial crops like asparagus and berries.

In May 1973, the Gardeners, under President Paul Wisniewski, presented a detailed "Proposal for Permanent Garden Plots" to HRD and CA. Although the developer agreed in principal with the idea, implementation was not forthcoming. In the spring of 1974, the Gardeners lost their garden site on the east side of Columbia to new development. They were offered a new temporary location nearby, but the move made the push for a permanent place to garden more urgent.

During the next two years, pressure increased on HRD, CA and on the County government to develop a coordinated plan to establish permanent plots. The period was marked by letter writing, presentations, reports and budget hearing testimony. In December 1975, County Executive Edward Cochran announced the formation of a task force to study the feasibility of

permanent plots – the Family Garden Plot Advisory Committee. A positive report from the committee was issued in April 1976 and real progress ensued. Within months HRD agreed to the transfer of property on Oakland Mills Road in Columbia to the County for a minimal fee and the requirement that the property be used as community garden space. The County approved funds to develop the site. An access road and parking spaces were established, garden plots and pathways were laid out, and water pipes and outlets installed. Elkhorn Branch Garden site, owned by Howard County Recreation & Parks and managed by Columbia Gardeners, Inc., was dedicated in May 1977.

With Elkhorn Branch site secured as a permanent site, the annual agreements with HRD to provide two temporary sites continued after 1977. The sites, one in West Columbia and one in East Columbia, were operated along with the permanent site at Elkhorn. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the organization's work to secure additional permanent plots was scaled back as an economic slowdown reduced the County budget and slowed the arrival of residents (and hence, new gardeners) to the area. New commercial development also slowed and the prospect of losing future garden space did not seem so dire. When the economy picked up again, the Gardeners' concern with securing permanent plots also resumed. It was more obvious than ever that suitable sites for future gardens were not going to be available indefinitely.

1985 through 1987 saw surveys, petitions and lobbying aimed at convincing the County government to establish more new sites. The abrupt announcement in 1987 that the two temporary HRD sites would have to be vacated by the Gardeners in a matter of months accelerated the process. Two new HRD properties were selected to be transferred to the County for permanent garden plots. The new sites, at Long Reach (Old Dobbin Road) and West Side (Martin Road), were established and opened in the spring and summer of 1988. At the request of many gardeners, both sites included raised beds for use by disabled individuals. Howard County Recreation & Parks began renting the properties to Columbia Gardeners that same year, although final transfer of the properties to the County from HRD took several years. Development at both sites, including water installation, was completed by 1995.

In 1988, direct licensing of garden sites from HRD ceased. Columbia Gardeners concentrated on developing and managing the three permanent sites through annual rental agreements with the Howard County Recreation & Parks. The problems of delayed installation of water access at the new permanent sites, poor soil and drainage issues at the West Side site, rising maintenance costs and task of filling key volunteer management positions all demanded attention. During the 1980s, activities related to acquiring more permanent gardening space were on the back burner, but not forgotten.

From 1990 to 2000, the number of foreign born residents in the County almost doubled (from 6.1% of the population to 11.3%). Many of these immigrants turned to gardening to grow native foods and to find family recreation. This influx of new gardeners and new gardening traditions, together with the advent of the "eat local" movement and interest in eating fresh, ethnic and organic foods, reinvigorated Columbia Gardeners. The sites filled to capacity, with annual wait lists at the Long Reach and Elkhorn sites.

In addition, the financial crisis of 2008-2009 created yet another new wave of gardeners – those who wanted to take up gardening to ease tight family food and recreation budgets. The need for community garden space became critical. Through a partnership with Howard County Community Action Council and the Howard County Food Bank – which wanted to establish a regular source of fresh summer produce for their growing number of clients – and the assistance of Baltimore Gas & Electric Co. (BGE) and Howard County Recreation & Parks, almost 100 new plots were added to the Long Reach and Elkhorn sites in 2010. Six of these plots at Long Reach were dedicated to growing food for the Food Bank and were tended by local volunteer high school students.

Longevity – 1969-2016

Columbia Gardeners founder, Evelyn Haynes, left Columbia in 1974 and the organization, having reached a high of 1000, saw interest in gardening drop somewhat. There was a search for leadership. A small but enthusiastic corps of newcomers stepped up to move the organization forward. This committed group formulated By-laws and Articles of Incorporation; the organization became an incorporated non-profit called Columbia Gardeners, Incorporated in 1975.

They applied for and were granted Internal Revenue Service (IRS) tax-exempt non-profit status. This was achieved after an initial rejection in 1976 by IRS officials, who were confused as to how to classify this novel type of organization. They deemed Columbia Gardeners to be an agricultural group, and as such, it did not meet the requirements for tax-exempt status. The Gardeners persuaded many local, state and federal agencies and officials to lobby the IRS on their behalf. At the same time, the Gardeners emphasized the all-volunteer membership, and the community and educational aspects of their group to IRS officials. In 1977, the IRS reversed their earlier ruling and established that Columbia Gardeners as a tax-exempt non-profit 501(c)(4) social welfare organization. Incorporation and IRS non-profit status were the ground work that enabled the Gardeners to pursue their goal of permanent plots more effectively and to establish a framework for permanency as an organization as well.

In its 1975 application for non-profit incorporation, the Columbia Gardeners purposely extended its area of operations to include all of Howard County. The organization now served and was supported by many County residents, not just those in Columbia. This expanded reach and its resulting partnership with County government and other community organizations has been mutually rewarding. It has served the viability of Columbia Gardeners well over the years.

Like most grassroots volunteer organizations, Columbia Gardeners has experienced many changes in leadership as well as ups and downs in member numbers and participation during its 45 years. It has seen the initiation, growth and sometimes failure of policies and projects. Despite the establishment of three permanent garden sites in the County, the vision of neighborhood communal gardens has not been fulfilled. Finding committed volunteer officers and board members is a challenge in some years. The balance between enforcing membership rules, recognizing diverse lifestyles, and fostering personal and community dialogue is one that requires constant adjustment.

The group's focus on accessing and administering garden sites for its members County-wide has remained solidly at its center. However, members have also understood and supported the benefits of community gardening that go beyond the production of budget-friendly, nutritious food. Attention to these broader benefits have kept it relevant and enabled it to partner with other organizations, schools and agencies over the years.

In their Vision and Mission Statement of 2013, the Gardeners reiterate their long-term purpose and goals; they “envision a community where people of all ages and cultural backgrounds share knowledge and experience in the practice of community gardening, thereby enhancing quality of life, cultivating spirit of community, and promoting green sustainable ways of living.” Their mission as a non-profit organization is to: “1) provide safe and affordable garden space to community residents; 2) be a knowledge sharing resource for healthy, sustainable gardening practices; and 3) partner with other groups and communities to enhance gardening opportunities.”

Timeline

The 1967-2015 timeline below lists some of the milestones, issues, partnerships and community projects that illustrate Columbia Gardeners' history and values.

1967	First residents move into new city of Columbia, MD
1968	Evelyn Haynes, Columbia Gardeners founder, moves to Concord House in Columbia, from Washington, DC (October)
1969	“Site Selection Criteria for Garden Plots” report published by CA (February) First communal garden plots in Columbia cultivated near the present-day Columbia Mall by Evelyn Haynes and friends
1971	HRD-owned garden site on east side of Route 29 (off Thunder Hill Road) opens
1973	Two temporary community garden sites on HRD property (Cedar Lane and Oakland Mills Road) utilized; about 800 members
1974	First official Columbia Gardeners' member newsletter, <i>The Agronomist</i> , published (January) Membership climbs to nearly 1000 Surplus garden vegetable distribution to those in need instituted
1975	Estimated two million families in U.S. participate in community gardening Three temporary community garden sites on HRD property utilized Bulk seed and plant orders for members offered Gardening program targeting senior citizens implemented Columbia Gardeners becomes an official non-profit corporation (April) Green Thumb logo designed by Steve Loos adopted

Columbia Gardeners Records, 1972-2016 (bulk 1973-1990)

1973-1976	Columbia Gardeners campaign for “Permanent Plots Now!” heats up
February 1973	Evelyn Haynes and Paul Wisniewski, Columbia Gardeners president, meet with James Rouse, President of TRC, to discuss permanent garden sites
May 1973	“Proposal for Permanent Garden Plots,” written and circulated by Columbia Gardeners leadership
1974	Columbia Gardeners Permanent Plots Working Committee intensifies planning/campaigning
September 1974	“Search for Permanent Plot Sites” memo published by CA
June 1975	Columbia Gardeners survey of members regarding establishment of permanent plots conducted
October 1975	“All Out Campaign” for permanent garden plots announced by Columbia Gardeners leadership
December 1975	County Executive Edward Cochran announces formation of task force to study feasibility of permanent plots – Family Garden Plot Advisory Committee established by County Executive Order #75-7
May 1976	Report from Family Garden Plot Advisory Committee issued
May 1976	HRD transfer of Elkhorn site property to County and County funding for project approved by County Council
January 1977	Deed transfer of land to Howard County Recreation & Parks completed
March 1977	First annual rental agreement between Columbia Gardeners and Howard County Recreation & Parks for Elkhorn site signed
May 1977	Elkhorn Branch Community Garden site dedication
1978	Wildlife-friendly shrubs and trees installed at Elkhorn site borders by Gardeners as specified in Elkhorn rental agreement with the County
1976	Columbia Gardeners, Inc. initial application for IRS tax-exempt status denied
1977	In a reversal, Columbia Gardeners, Inc. recognized as IRS tax-exempt non-profit 501(c)(4) organization (April)
1978	Gardening education talks for members by University of Maryland Extension agents initiated
1979	First annual Columbia Gardeners’ picnic
1979-1981	Columbia Gardeners membership drop off; “lack of volunteer leadership” becomes issue
1982	Columbia Gardeners submits petition to County government for permanent plots at both West Side and Long Reach

Columbia Gardeners Records, 1972-2016 (bulk 1973-1990)

- 1983 Boy Scout merit badge and Eagle Scout projects ongoing at all three sites
- 1986 Columbia Foundation grant funds applied for and used in a “Low-income Gardeners” assistance program; grant renewed for 1987 season
- 1987 HRD announces that both the Long Reach and West Side garden sites will be developed and that gardeners must leave within the next year
Columbia Gardeners member survey regarding establishment of additional permanent plots conducted
County Council approves funding for land transfer and development for two permanent plots; several potential sites identified
- 1988 Permanent Long Reach site opened by Howard County Recreation & Parks (May)
Permanent West Side site opened by Howard County Recreation & Parks (July)
Raised garden beds for disabled gardeners introduced at both new sites
- 1990 Wait lists for garden plots commence at both Elkhorn and Long Reach sites
- 1992 Howard County petitions HRD for additional land for gardens adjacent to Long Reach site
- 1993 “Reinventing Columbia Gardeners” effort begins transition of garden site management from single manager to team management
- 1998-1999 Initiation of cooperative programs with Foreign-Born Information & Referral Network (FIRN) participants
- 2003 Columbia Gardeners rental agreement with Howard County Recreation & Parks expanded from nine month annual contract to twelve month contract allowing year-round gardening
- 2004 Elkhorn site parking area tree line completely re-landscaped by the Gardeners
- 2006 Columbia Gardeners By-laws reviewed and updated
University of Maryland Home and Garden Information Center institutes annual training sessions for staff and University of Maryland Master Gardeners at garden sites
- 2010 Almost 100 new plots added to Long Reach and Elkhorn sites in cooperation with Howard County Recreation & Parks, BGE, Howard County Community Action Council and the Howard County Food Bank

Columbia Gardeners Records, 1972-2016 (bulk 1973-1990)

- 2013 Columbia Gardeners Statement of Vision, Mission, and Values approved by board (March)
- 2015 Significant County-assisted improvements were made at all three garden sites including permanent compost and wood chip bins, small raised-bed garden plots and additional water spigots. Elkhorn site boundaries were reconfigured to reflect updated property survey markers.

Sources:

American Community Gardening Association. <http://www.communitygarden.org/> (accessed May 8, 2013).

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Columbia Gardeners Statement of Vision, Mission, and Values, Columbia Gardeners, 2013. Columbia Gardeners, Records, Columbia Archives, Columbia, Maryland. RGXLVIII. Series 1. Box 1.

Graham, Tom, "Gardeners up in arms: the politics of pumpkins." *The Columbia Flier* (December 4, 1975): 7-8.

Howard County's Foreign-born Community: Dimensions, Growth and Implications. A Study Conducted by the Association for the Study and Development Community for FIRM, Inc. and the Howard County Department of Citizen Services. Howard County, 2005.

http://www.howardcountymd.gov/uploadedFiles/Home/Department_Hidden_Content_%28PDF_and_HTML%29/Citizen_Services/ForeignBornNeedsReport-Final.pdf (accessed May 8, 2013).

Lawson, Laura J. *City Bountiful: A Century of Community Gardening in America*. University of California Press, 2005.

Nixon, Robert W. "Nomads, green-thumb activism, tomatoes and si gua: 40 years of community gardening." *Washington Gardener* 3, no. 6 (January/February 2008): 38.

Wisniewski, Kay, "Permanent plots now!" *The Columbia Flier* (May 12, 1977): 56.

Wisniewski, Paul. *Columbia Gardeners Proposal for Permanent Garden Plots*. [Columbia Gardeners], 1973.

Columbia Gardeners Records, 1972-2016 (bulk 1973-1990)

Location of three permanent garden sites in Howard County, MD:

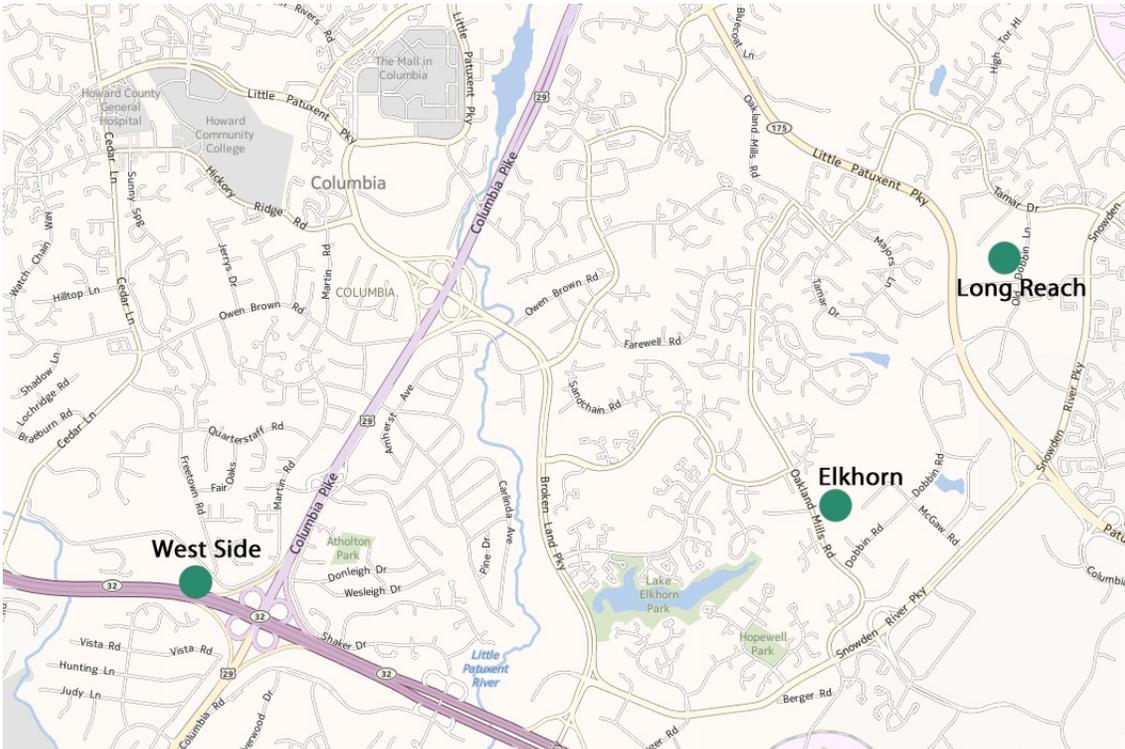


Image from Nokia Maps, 2013

Scope and Content Note

The materials in the Columbia Gardeners records document the beginnings, goals and accomplishments of one of the earliest and longest-lived community gardening organizations of the modern United States “community gardening movement.” These collected documents, photographs, maps and ephemera, dating from 1972 through 2016, give an “insider” account of a grassroots organization that was committed to community activism as well as to communal gardening. Some records may be consulted as how-to information regarding the set up and management of community gardens. They also provide insight into the individuals, who, over the years, kept the mission of “promoting and encouraging community interest in and support of cooperative gardening” alive and relevant.

Columbia Gardeners’ roots go back to 1968-69 when it began as an ad hoc group of Columbia, Maryland residents who wanted to grow their own vegetables and fruit communally. By 1973 the group was calling itself “Columbia Gardeners,” and by 1974, had grown in membership to almost 1000 active members who cultivated individual plots at three large, temporary garden sites in Columbia. In ensuing years, Columbia Gardeners became an incorporated non-profit organization that campaigned successfully to establish three County-owned permanent community garden sites, managed and maintained all three on a contractual basis with the County, continued to promote and support community gardening options for a growing and diverse County population and initiated many community educational and outreach programs. The group remains active today (2016). It has operated on an all-volunteer basis since its inception.

The bulk of documents in this record group date from 1973 to 1990. Most were created by the organization itself, although there is a comprehensive set of published media articles about the group as well dating from 1973 to 2013. Most of the materials came from three sources:

- Columbia Gardeners’ “Presidents’ Files.” The source of most documents in this group came from historical presidents’ files – approximately six linear feet of items collected between the years 1970-2001 by 13 successive presidents of the organization. These files were stored in a Columbia Gardeners’ member’s home for several years without being updated or circulated; they were discovered in 2011 and presented to the Columbia Gardeners historian. The files were diverse and unorganized. Each president’s files were kept separately and varied widely in quantity and depth. President Clyde Pyers files, ca. 2010-2015, were acquired in 2016 and integrated into this collection.
- Personal files of Alex Hekimian, president of Columbia Gardeners, 1975-1977. This group was a detailed set of records documenting, for the most part, the organization’s early years (ca. 1974-1977), including the process of incorporation, application for IRS tax-exempt status and campaigns to establish permanent garden sites. These records were carefully arranged by topic and date. They are especially rich in clippings, reports and correspondence pertaining to the 1973-1977 “Permanent Plots Now!” campaign that resulted in the establishment of Elkhorn Branch site in 1977.
- Personal files of Mary Gold, Columbia Gardeners historian, 2000-2016. This group consisted of Columbia Gardeners newsletters, council minutes and treasurer reports, 1984-2015; and documents pertaining to administration of the Elkhorn Garden site, 1984-

1993. They were filed by topic and date and included several oversize maps of the garden plots at Elkhorn garden site, 1977-1993.

The files from the three sources were combined, individual items interfiled and arranged by series, and, within series, in topic-based folders. As an integrated whole, there are two series that are complete, or almost complete, for the years described, and they are the backbone of the record group. They are the minutes of the executive council monthly meetings (1974-2015) and the newsletters of the organization (1974-2015). Two additional types of documents are well represented: annual calendars of tasks to be performed and annual garden applications with garden regulations. Copies of all of the Columbia Gardeners' important legal documents are filed here including Articles of Incorporation and recognition of incorporation by the State of Maryland (1976), first and updated versions of by-laws (1975, 2006 and 2013, respectively) and Internal Revenue Service (IRS) correspondence granting the organization non-profit tax exempt status (1977). The originals of the legal documents, where available, remain in the hands of Columbia Gardeners.

In 1976, the newly incorporated Columbia Gardeners, Inc., applied to the IRS for non-profit tax-exempt status. The comprehensive documentation in these files about that application indicates that the group was one of the first community gardening organizations to make such an effort. The IRS was unsure how to categorize the group and denied tax-exempt status under a section that addressed agricultural and horticultural organizations. After pressure was exerted by the Columbia Gardeners and the agencies and politicians that they had enlisted to lobby on their behalf, and after clarification to the IRS as to the goals and activities of the group, the IRS reversed itself the following year. The group was granted tax-exempt status under section 501(c)(4) as a social welfare organization. The documents related to this process shed light not only on the application and appeal process itself, they provide detailed information on the organization's character that is not available elsewhere. And the letters, in particular, present an impressive tally of government offices and politicians on the local, State and Federal level that responded to Columbia Gardeners' requests for help in attaining tax-exempt status.

Perhaps the most significant portion of these records relate to the Columbia Gardeners' campaigns to establish permanent community garden plots in Howard County. The files are rich in personal correspondence between Columbia Gardeners' officers and various Columbia and County personnel, official and unofficial evaluations of the resources and property needed to establish permanent sites, gardener opinion surveys, newspaper stories and press releases and documentation pertaining to the County budgeting process. In the end, Howard County Recreation & Parks did purchase land for and established three permanent community garden sites (one in 1977, two in 1988). It is clear, however, that this probably would not have happened without the impassioned lobbying effort of a small group of Columbia Gardeners to bring about "Permanent Plots Now!" as evidenced in these files.

The bulk of records about the implementation of permanent garden sites date from 1973-1977. Most of these were donated by Alex Hekimian who was the president of Columbia Gardeners during that period and the effort's driving force. The history reflected in the documents is unique in at least two ways. First, Columbia Gardeners was one of first grassroots groups in the United States to prioritize permanent land access for gardeners as an important community asset and

essential to the sustainability of community gardens in a quickly developing residential area. Second, the unique political status of Columbia as a commercially created and unincorporated city required Columbia Gardeners to develop partnerships with Columbia's developer, Howard Research and Development Corporation (HRD), Columbia's governing community association, the Columbia Association (CA), and Howard County government.

The Columbia Gardeners record group is not complete or comprehensive. There is spotty documentation from the late 1980s and the 1990s aside from the organization's newsletters and council meeting minutes. Data regarding the historical locations and membership of the garden sites administered by Columbia Gardeners are also incomplete. Finally, although community activist Evelyn Haynes is credited by several early documents as the founder of the group, there are no documents created by her. She evidently left Columbia in 1974. There is a copy of one letter written in 1975 to Ms. Haynes by Alex Hekimian providing her with an organization update. Evelyn Haynes died in a retirement community in Henderson, North Carolina in 1994 at age 96.

Three documents were created to complement this record group by Columbia Gardeners historian Mary V. Gold: 1) a complete list of officers and their positions, *Executive Council Members and Officers 1974-2012 Chart*; 2) a biographical sketch, *Evelyn G. Haynes: Community Activist and Founder of Columbia Community Gardens*; and 3) a comprehensive bibliography, *Publications about Columbia Gardeners, Incorporated and about the Development of Permanent Community Garden Sites in Howard County, Maryland 1969-2013: A Bibliography*. See Series 1. History, for items 1 and 2, and Series 5. Media, for item 3.

An ongoing search for more historical materials that may fill gaps in this record group and the document retention policy of the Columbia Gardeners that requires periodic submission of various types of records to Columbia Archives, will result in accretions in years to come.

In summary, the Columbia Gardeners record group has been arranged into 14 series.

- Series 1: History, 1973-2013
- Series 2: By-Laws, Articles of Incorporation, 1975-2013
- Series 3: Minutes, 1974-2015
- Series 4: Correspondence, 1972-2014
- Series 5: Media, 1973-2016
- Series 6: Reports, 1976-2014
- Series 7: Newsletters, 1974-2015
- Series 8: Activities, 1973-2015
- Series 9: Subject Files, 1968-2015
- Series 10: Financial Documents, 1973-2014
- Series 11: Ephemera, 1974-ca. 1995
- Series 12: Photographs, 1973-2005
- Series 13: Maps and Charts, 1977-1999

Series Descriptions

SERIES 1. HISTORY, 1973-2013

(< 0.25 lin.ft.)

This series is primarily comprised of lists of the officers, council members and individual members of the Columbia Gardeners, 1973-2012. There are also some documents that describe the responsibilities of officers over the years and one organizational chart, ca. 1974.

Executive Council – membership lists. Individual lists of the organization’s officers, referred to as “council members,” were maintained intermittently from earliest days until the mid-1980s. Council members were elected each October at an annual general membership meeting as required by the organizations’ by-laws. Those elected decided among themselves who would hold the positions of president, vice president, secretary and treasurer soon after the election. “At large” members (usually three), often served as committee heads. Also considered Council members were site managers and their assistants (identified as such starting 1976), newsletter editors and committee heads. Persons in these posts were approved by the council; they were not elected. Missing formal officer lists from this file (to 2000): 1974, 1983, 1987, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1995-1997, 1999.

Executive Council Members and Officers, 1974-2012 chart lists all known council members/officers for the period. The post titles and names were extracted by the processor from the early officers’ lists in this series, the organization’s newsletters (Series 7. Newsletters) and the Council minutes (Series 3. Minutes). Note: the minutes often discussed unexpected vacancies and how they were filled.

General membership – membership lists. It appears that regularly compiled, general membership lists were never maintained as such for this organization. Each manager at the three garden sites kept yearly records of their gardeners and their plots. Records included mailing addresses, assigned plot numbers, fees paid and, sometimes, phone numbers/email addresses. Only a few of these lists have been preserved. Although the Columbia Gardeners’ by-laws provided for non-gardening membership at a reduced fee, very few of these members are on record. Note: other sources identifying individual members of this organization are mailing labels (Series 4. Correspondence), lists of committee members (Series 8. Volunteer Activities) and garden site plot maps (Series 12. Maps and Charts).

Miscellaneous documents pertaining to the organization’s history in this series include an undated list of potential names for the organization with “Columbia Gardeners” highlighted, a handwritten 1970-1974 timeline of significant events in forming the organization, early descriptions of officers tasks/responsibilities and an organizational chart, ca. 1975. Two mission statements date from about 1990 and 2013. “What is a County Liaison?” paper dates from 2000. Also in this folder is a biographical sketch of acknowledged founder of Columbia Gardeners, Evelyn

Haynes, *Evelyn G. Haynes: Community Activist and Founder of Columbia Community Gardens* (Mary V. Gold, 2012).

Note: for more information on the history of Columbia Gardeners, consult almost any other series in the record group, according to information required. Historical data about the garden sites themselves – location, number of plots, fees, etc. – may be found in property contracts (Series 10. Financial Documents), annual garden membership applications (Series 8. Activities) and in newsletters (Series 7. Newsletters). Historical narratives may be found in newspaper and magazine articles (Series 5. Media).

Folders are arranged alphabetically. Within each folder, items are arranged chronologically, with undated materials filed last.

SERIES 2: BY-LAWS, ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION, 1975-2013
(< 0.25 lin.ft.)

Founding legal documents in this file:

- *Articles of Incorporation of Columbia Gardeners* (1975). Includes State of Maryland approval notification as final page and 1 draft copy of the Articles with notes (by Alex Hekimian). Note: incorporation was completed April 1, 1975, State Department of Assessments and Taxation of Maryland
- *Columbia Gardeners, Incorporated. A Non-Profit Organization. By-Laws* (1975)
- Letter from attorney Philip Sturman to Alex Hekimian confirming incorporation with photocopy of state notification attached, dated April 21, 1975.
- *Bylaws of the Columbia Gardeners, Incorporated (Inc.). A Not-For-Profit Organization, adopted September 18, 2006.* “Replaces by-laws instituted in 1975.” The by-laws were updated again in 2013.

Note: legal documentation related to the organization’s non-profit status vis-à-vis the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and contracts/property rental agreements are filed in Series 10. Financial Documents. Columbia Gardeners gardener rules and regulations updated annually and some Columbia Gardeners board policies are filed in Series 8. Activities.

Documents are arranged chronologically.

SERIES 3: MINUTES, 1974-2015
(0.5 lin.ft.)

Two sources of minutes are included in this series – Executive Council meetings and General Membership meetings.

Executive Council. Executive Council meetings were held each month except for December and, in some years, November. Meetings were held at members' homes on a rotating basis, 1973 – ca. 1998. Thereafter, they were held at public meeting rooms. Minutes were kept by the secretary and submitted for approval at the following month's meeting. Topics for discussion each month were general business issues, and special and seasonal projects and problems. A site report was presented by each site manager and a treasurer's report made. For the first several years, the secretary mailed reminder notices of the upcoming meeting to council members that included an agenda and map to the member's house where the meeting was to be held. When available, these agendas are filed next to the relevant minutes. There are a few gaps in holdings – two or more missing sets of minutes are in the following years: 1981, 1987, 1989-1993. There are no council minutes for 1994.

General membership. One annual meeting of the general membership, to be held in October, was required under the organization's by-laws. Typical agendas included election of new council members, president's report, treasurer's report and garden topic presentation by a guest speaker. Two sets of October meeting minutes in this file are accompanied by attendance/sign-in sheets. Significant gaps exist with the bulk available in this file covering 1975-1986 and 2006-2015.

In 1995, a second, more casual, general membership meeting was inaugurated called, "Spring Fling." This meeting focused on seed and plant exchanges and featured an informational speaker. Few minutes for these meetings have been found.

Of note: minutes for a special membership meeting held in January 14, 1975 address Columbia Gardeners' application for incorporation. The minutes for October 6, 1986 are handwritten notes by person unknown – County Council member, Elizabeth Bobo, was guest speaker, addressing the issue of permanent plots.

Executive Council meeting minutes precede the one folder of general membership meeting minutes, and are arranged chronologically, with undated materials filed last.

SERIES 4: CORRESPONDENCE, 1972-2014
(0.25 lin.ft.)

This series contains the bulk of correspondence collected by Columbia Gardeners – both incoming and outgoing – primarily from the period 1973-2001. There are also four sets of mailing labels maintained by the organization, 1976-1980.

Business – external correspondence. Letters in this file are limited to those exchanged between Columbia Gardeners and the Howard Research and

Development Corporation (HRD), the Columbia Association (CA) and/or various Howard County government officials. Letters relate to garden site availability and upkeep, County budget hearings and other business. There is also correspondence to and from County officials related to Columbia Gardeners' support of the closing of Oakland Mills Road near the Elizabeth Smith property in 1976. Of note: letters to and from Steve Loos regarding his design of the Columbia Gardeners green thumb logo.

A 2000 letter sent to June Booker, Columbia Gardeners president, from the Howard County Recreation & Parks office cites the county's acquisition of the Long Reach garden site property from HRD including a copy of the deed and plat map defining the property boundaries.

Business – internal correspondence. This correspondence includes letters (draft and final versions), cards and notes exchanged between Columbia Gardeners officers and between officers and individual members, outreach letters to the general membership and form letters for members – e.g., a notice of member non-compliance with rules. Of note: copy of a letter to Evelyn Haynes, Columbia Gardeners' founder, from Alex Hekimian (May 1975) detailing the organization's incorporation.

Miscellaneous. The bulk of items falling under miscellaneous correspondence date from 1975-1980 and include letters of enquiry about Columbia Gardeners including an exchange between Columbia Gardeners and Rodale Publishing, informational letters suggesting gardening and research topics, newsletter submissions from outside parties and requests to and responses from publishing companies regarding book donations.

Note: correspondence *not* contained in this series is 1) correspondence directly related to the establishment of permanent garden sites (Series 9. Subjects, Permanent Plots); 2) some correspondence directly related to individual rental and maintenance contracts (Series 10. Financial Documents, Contracts); 3) correspondence connected to Columbia Gardeners' application for Internal Revenue Service tax-exempt status (Series 10. Financial Documents, IRS Documentation); and 4) most email correspondence. The latter is archived on the Columbia Gardeners users' group server.

Folders are arranged alphabetically. Within each folder, items are arranged chronologically, with undated materials filed last.

SERIES 5: MEDIA, 1973-2016
(<0.25 lin.ft.)

Media items contained in this file are limited to print materials and fall under two categories: items written by Columbia Gardeners members for promotional

purposes – advertisements, press releases and brochures; and magazine and newspaper articles published about Columbia Gardeners and Columbia Gardeners members.

Advertisements, press releases and brochures. Promotional materials include draft, marked up and published press releases. Most date from 1974-1980. Columbia Gardeners published advertisements for garden participation/signup in local newspapers during the first years of the organization. Ads often included a printed membership application form. During the campaign for permanent plots, releases about public meetings and campaign progress were published. A press release from 1973 notes the donation of books on organic gardening to the Howard County Library, and has a photo included. This file also contains copies of promotional brochures on colored paper for handout at local events, ca. 1990. A 2015 printout of Columbia Gardeners interactive website was added in 2016.

Magazine and newspaper articles. The two folders of magazine and newspaper articles about Columbia Gardeners contains almost 70 original and photocopied items dating from 1973 to 2013. Articles include reports about the status and activities of Columbia Gardeners, as well as “human interest” stories about individual members. Papers represented include *The Baltimore Sun* – both city and Howard County sections, *The Columbia Times*, *The Columbia Flier*, *Columbia Magazine* and *Washington Gardener* (magazine).

Note: articles that are particularly informative about Columbia Gardeners’ history and their campaign for permanent plots: “Gardeners Up in Arms: The Politics of Pumpkins” (*The Columbia Flier*, 1975), “Permanent Plots Now!” (*The Columbia Flier*, 1977), and “Nomads, Green-Thumb Activism, Tomatoes and Si Gua: 40 Years of Community Gardening” (*Washington Gardener*, 2008).

A comprehensive bibliography, *Publications about Columbia Gardeners, Incorporated and about the Development of Permanent Community Garden Sites in Howard County, Maryland 1969-2013: A Bibliography*, by Mary V. Gold, cites articles (most available in this series) with abstracts and full-text sources where available. An addendum cites 10 major books and journal articles pertaining to the history of community gardening, some of which may be found in Series 9. Subject Files, Reference Materials.

Another source of articles by and about Columbia Gardeners is the organization’s newsletters (Series 7. Newsletters).

Folders are arranged alphabetically. Within each folder, items are arranged chronologically, with undated materials filed last.

SERIES 6: REPORTS, 1976-2014

(<0.25 lin.ft.)

Gardeners' surveys. The bulk of this series is comprised of four Columbia Gardeners' surveys of members that were conducted 1977-1980 and 1985. For these years, Columbia Gardeners surveyed its members for feedback concerning demographics, gardening activities, satisfaction with the organization's performance and suggestions for improvements and new projects. Comments were encouraged. Formal reports from surveys included here are the only ones found to date. Each of the surveys for 1977, 1978 and 1979 include a blank questionnaire, most if not all of the completed and signed forms and a summary report of survey responses. 1980 is represented by only 1 blank and 1 completed survey form. Results for the 1985 survey were extracted from a letter written by President June Booker to William Mitchell, Director, Howard County Recreation & Parks.

Note: surveys of gardeners were conducted after 1980; however, documentation is scattered or not available. Notes about some of these surveys may be found in newsletters (Series 7. Newsletters). In addition, two member surveys, conducted in 1974 and 1984, were devoted solely to opinions about the development of permanent garden plots. The documentation related to these surveys is filed in Series 9. Subjects, Permanent Plots.

Miscellaneous reports. Designated annual reports, published as unique documents, appear not to have been created or kept with any regularity by Columbia Gardeners. The two short annual summary reports included in this series are the only ones found to date. More often, the substance of an annual report was published in one of two places: 1) a president's report in the late fall or early spring edition of the organization's newsletter (Series 7. Newsletters) and/or 2) a president's or treasurer's report presented at the annual fall meeting (Series 3. Minutes). A report pertaining to water usage at garden sites (1996) and a survey of gardeners' residential zip codes (2014) are included here.

Note: periodic president's and garden site managers' reports were included in almost all editions of the newsletter (Series 7. Newsletters). Monthly treasurer's reports or statements may be found in Series 10. Financial Documents, and/or embedded in Columbia Gardeners Council meeting minutes (Series 3. Minutes).

The gardener surveys are arranged chronologically. Miscellaneous reports are filed last; items are arranged chronologically, with undated materials filed last.

SERIES 7: NEWSLETTERS, 1974-2015
(0.5 lin.ft.)

Columbia Gardeners began compiling and distributing a newsletter “by and for” members starting in January 1974. Format, frequency and even the title changed over the years. The first issue (January 1974) was without title. The banner read, “The ???”, and articles included a president’s note asking for suggestions for a title. The second issue (April 1974) was titled *The Agronomist* (spelled “Agronist”). *The Agronomist* continued until September 1995. The third title was *Green Thumb Gazette* (1996-Autumn 1999) and the fourth and current title is *The Green Thumb* (Spring 2000-). Electronic distribution of the newsletter was added as an option in 2011.

In size, the newsletter started as a four-page letter-size mimeographed publication. It later grew to a multi-paged legal-size publication, tri-folded for mailing. Starting with the *Green Thumb Gazette*, the format returned to letter-size with 6 to 8 pages. Frequency also changed: 1975-1982 – 6 or 7 issues per year, 1983-1999 – 4 or 5 issues per year, 2000-2002 – 3 issues per year and 2003-present – 2 issues per year (Spring and Fall).

In some years the newsletter appears to have been issued irregularly; thus it is difficult to know if there are missing issues from these years. Otherwise, the newsletters appear to be complete through 2015.

Each newsletter almost always contained the following items: list of officers and their contact information (phone or email), president’s report, site managers’ reports (one from each site) and calendar of organizational activities. Until 2001, first issues of the year (January or February) contained a copy of that year’s renewal membership/plot application form and a copy of the Rules and Regulations. After 2001, applications and rules were mailed separate from the newsletter and the first newsletter issue of the year was published later (in March or April).

Starting in 1976, plant and/or seed sales were announced in a mid-spring newsletter issue usually accompanied by a copy of a sale coupon or order form. In the early years, an annual survey questionnaire for gardeners accompanied a fall newsletter issue; results were sometimes tabulated and reported in later issues.

Other content found in the newsletters varied widely, depending on the interests and resources of the editor and contributors. Typically they included announcements, gardening information, recipes, book reviews, local businesses’ coupons, etc. During the late 1990s and early 2000s, a column called “Ask the Bugman” appeared, written by gardener Mark Hardin, Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Coordinator with the Smithsonian Horticultural Services Division.

Note: several draft “cut and paste” versions of early editions of *The Agronomist* are included in the files to illustrate how the newsletter was compiled and published before computer word processing/publishing programs were utilized.

Folders are arranged chronologically, with newsletters arranged chronologically in each.

SERIES 8: ACTIVITIES, 1973-2015
(0.25 lin.ft.)

This series is devoted to activities that Columbia Gardeners members did annually on a regular basis. Some activities were administrative – formulating and distributing gardener application forms and garden regulations, and arranging for plant and seed sales each spring. Other activities were centered on the organization’s involvement in community outreach – e.g., arranging surplus vegetable distribution programs, participating in neighborhood fairs and working to integrate community groups like the Scouts into gardening activities. Some activities occurred on a more intermittent or one-time basis and these are addressed in other series, especially in Series 9. Subject Files.

Application forms and garden regulations. A garden plot application form and list of garden rules/regulations were distributed together in early spring to each previous year’s gardener. These members were given first chance to renew their old garden plot or the option of choosing a different plot or plots. Applications were mailed either with the January or February newsletter or as a separate mailing. Electronic submission options were implemented in 2011. Applications from new gardeners/members were accepted later in the spring after renewers’ requests had been filled. Beginning around 1990, applicants were required to sign off on the rules, stating that they agreed to abide by the rules as part of the garden rental “contract.” A service agreement that committed each gardener to a required number of hours of volunteer work was added a few years later.

Each annual application in this file is accompanied by its corresponding annual list of garden site rules. The application form includes information about location of the garden sites, plot sizes available, rental fees for each including special fee categories and options for volunteer activities. The “dos and don’ts” of member behavior at the garden plots changed somewhat from year to year, but always rested on encouraging members to be “good neighbors” to both each other and to the community. Applications and rules are missing for several years: 1981, 1983-1984, 1993-1998, 2002, 2004 (rules only), 2006-2007, 2008 (rules only). Note: early spring newsletters (Series 7. Newsletters) contain inserted applications and rules that may not be included here.

Board-approved guidelines for financial transaction (2014) and “Wait List” policy (2015) were added in 2016.

Community outreach. Most of the items in this file pertain to sponsorship of a vegetable judging contest and surplus vegetable distribution. The vegetable judging contest was done in conjunction with the Harpers Choice Community Association Country Fair held each August, 1974-1977. Documents include correspondence, list of rules and lists of winners. Note: for newspaper articles and pictures see Series 5. Media. Surplus vegetable distribution to the needy began about 1978 via the organization's social action committee. This activity continued through the years with donations going to various community organizations included Howard County Grassroots, Howard County Senior Centers and churches. Note: committee member lists may be found in this series under Volunteer Activities.

Plant and seed sales. Cooperative purchase of seeds and plants by gardener members began in the organization's earliest days (first documentation dates from 1976). Purchasing as a group provided better prices and better plant/seed selection. The sales were seemingly not used as fundraisers. Bulk seed sales, usually arranged through mail order, ceased before 1983. Plant sales were held in most but not all years and were done in cooperation with local nurseries and growers (e.g., Sharp Farms, 2010-2015). In some years, tomato cages and straw mulch were also offered for sale. Documentation in this file, with most dating 1995-2014, ranges from invoices and financial reports to order forms which include plant varieties offered and prices.

Task calendars. Officers created annual task calendars that were schedules of administrative and maintenance jobs to be undertaken each month. These "to do" lists provide insight into the nature and scope of the seasonal work load of the organization's volunteer officers and members. There are separate calendars for newsletter production deadlines. The run of calendars is incomplete, and style and format vary from year to year.

Volunteer activities - committees. These folders contain handwritten and computer printout committee membership lists. Each member of Columbia Gardeners was required to complete volunteer service hours as part of his or her garden contract. Members usually signed up for specific volunteer activities, including service on standing committees, at the beginning of each season. Committee titles and functions changed over the years as the organization's needs and opportunities evolved. Committee titles heading these lists include Telephoning, Social Action, Educational Activities, Cooperative Purchasing, Bulk Purchasing and Plant Sale, Picnic, Newsletter and Surplus Food Distribution. Few lists have dates, but most probably date from the 1970s and 1980s. Committee lists related to development of permanent plots are filed in Series 9. Subject Files, Permanent Plots.

Note: more information on committees and their activities may be found in the Series 7. Newsletters.

Miscellaneous items include accounts of Boy Scout volunteer days, garden merit badge procedures and Eagle Scout projects, Girl Scout volunteer day list and an undated printed announcement describing “Meyer Ashendorf Island” (Jackson Pond, Long Reach) memorial garden, facilitated by Columbia Gardeners.

Folders are arranged alphabetically. Within each folder, items are arranged chronologically, with undated materials filed last.

SERIES 9: SUBJECT FILES, 1968-2015
(0.75 lin.ft.)

This series focuses on special projects that Columbia Gardeners initiated and worked on primarily in the years 1975 through 1999. It also includes a file of published reference materials collected by successive Columbia Gardeners presidents, 1968-1990, and documents related to specific garden sites, especially the Elkhorn site.

Foundation grants. During the mid-1990s, Columbia Gardeners applied for and was awarded two grants from the Columbia Foundation. These grants were used to assist low-income County residents to garden at a community garden site by supplying them with seeds, plants and tools during the 1986 and 1987 growing seasons. How-to information, tilling and a complementary plot were also supplied. Documents include application forms and final reports. A third grant application in this file was developed in cooperation with Howard Community College Environmental Club and the Chesapeake Bay Trust, but was never completed.

Reference materials. This file of reference resources is comprised of books, pamphlets, fliers, extension bulletins and clippings (published 1968-1990 with many undated) about general horticulture, gardening and community gardening collected (and presumably consulted) by Columbia Gardener presidents during the years 1975-2000. There are three books of note: *Soil Survey: Howard County, Maryland*, U.S. Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service, 1966; *Community Recreational Gardening*, Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, U.S. Department of Interior, 1975. (Outdoor Recreation Action, Report #36) and *Gardens for All: Guide to a Greener, Happier, Healthier Community*, Gardens for All, 1973.

Additional documents related to Gardens for All (now National Gardening Association) were added in 2016, including their *Community Gardening Procedural Manual* (1974) and various conference handouts. USDA Soil Survey data were the subject of a Columbia Gardners membership meeting presentation, ca. 1990, given by Wesley Earp, Howard County Soil Conservation Office. Text and handouts are filed here.

Site-specific materials. During most of its existence, Columbia Gardeners maintained three garden sites in Columbia simultaneously – one on the west side of Route 29 and two on the east side of Route 29. Although they changed exact locations during the early years (see Agency History), they were commonly called 1) Owen Brown and later the Elkhorn site, 2) Long Reach site and 3) West Side site.

Materials in this file date primarily from 1984 to 1993, with a few dating from 2001, 2004 and 2005. Almost all deal exclusively with the Elkhorn Garden site and were acquired from Elkhorn site managers Mary Gold (1984-1993) and Barbara Eves (2000-2005). Documents include draft site manager reports, plot assignment lists, plot assignment map, site volunteer task calendars, documents pertaining to transition from single site manager to co-manager system (Elkhorn, 1994), report detailing renovation/replacement of a 100-foot tree line in front of the Elkhorn site with photos and plant list (2004).

Three documents are from the West Side site – a fence building report, a gardener member list and a 2001 manager report. A significant number of documents related to all three sites was added in 2016 including a copy of the *Elkhorn Thymes* newsletter. Note: additional information may be found in membership lists (Series 1. History), member mailing lists (Series 4. Correspondence) and garden site maps (Series 13. Maps and Charts).

Permanent garden plots. The materials in this series pertain to Columbia Gardeners' campaigns to establish permanent community garden plots in Howard County. *This group of documents is the most comprehensive in the Columbia Gardeners record group.* The file as a whole is informative of the planning, partnerships, political strategy and follow-through required to establish a permanent community garden program in any jurisdiction.

Columbia Gardeners campaigned continuously for the establishment of publicly owned community garden sites in the County almost since its inception. The documents reveal a long and sometimes heated lobbying effort aimed at convincing HRD, CA and Howard County officials that community gardening deserved a place on public open space.

Concerted campaign efforts may be divided into 3 separate periods:

- The first campaign, ca. 1972-1976, led by Presidents Paul Wisniewski and Alex Hekimian, culminated in purchase of the “Elkhorn Branch” garden site on Oakland Mills Road, Columbia in 1977, by Howard County Recreation & Parks. Documents show that significant work during this period was done by Hekimian, Wisniewski and Connie Matheson, Columbia Gardeners Permanent Plots Committee chairperson, 1974-1977. Most of the documents in this file relate to this first campaign.
- The second campaign effort, ca. 1986-1988, led by President June Booker, culminated in the establishment by the County of two additional sites, the

West Side site on Martin Road, Columbia and the Long Reach site on Old Dobbin Road, Columbia in 1988.

- A third campaign occurred during 2008-2010 and was led by President Clyde Pyers. This effort was done in close cooperation with Howard County Recreation & Parks, Baltimore Gas & Electric (BGE), Howard County Community Action Council and the Howard County Food Bank. About 50 plots were added adjacent to the Long Reach site and 50 plots adjacent to the Elkhorn site, all located under power line rights of way. Documentation from this period should be forthcoming from the organization in coming years. Note: see 2010 news articles (Series 5. Media) for more information about this site expansion.

The land at all three current permanent garden sites is owned by Howard County Recreation & Parks with the exception of the acreage beneath the BGE power lines which is leased to the County for gardens. All three sites have been administered and maintained by Columbia Gardeners, Inc. since they opened. The bulk of documents in this file, especially those related to the first campaign, came from Alex Hekimian.

The documents are arranged chronologically within six categories:

- Background (various County and Columbia Gardeners reports, 1969-1975)
- Correspondence (letters to and from persons at CA, HRD and Howard County Council and administrative offices, 1973-1997)
- County Budgets (printed budgets, County legislative agendas and testimonials made at County Council meetings, 1974-1989)
- Family Garden Plot Advisory Commission (County Proclamation, meetings minutes and final report, 1975-1976)
- Surveys (gardener surveys conducted 1975 and 1984)
- Miscellaneous (1977-1987)

The sheer volume of correspondence documenting the challenges and progress of the first campaign is indicative of a persistent, grassroots effort. Documents of note from the first campaign: *Site Selection Criteria for Garden Plots* (CA, 1969); 1974 survey of Columbia residents pertaining to preferences in terms of permanent garden space in Columbia; "Sequence of Events" document (Alex Hekimian, 1976) listing important meetings and milestones, 1975-1976; letter stating HRD's intention to transfer property on Oakland Mills Road to Howard County for the purpose of permanent plots (Douglas A. McGregor, HRD, Jan. 16, 1976); and printed invitation to the opening "Plant In" at Elkhorn Branch, May 14, 1977.

Documents of note from later campaigns: results of a 1985 members' survey regarding establishment of permanent plots, initial Long Reach site plans, documents discussing various County locations for garden sites including the Elizabeth Smith property (Columbia), Trotter Road (Clarksville) and Centennial Park (Ellicott City), and printed invitation to an official "Open House" at Long

Reach site, May 14, 1988. A brief report, *Potential Community Garden Plots*, by Jan Clark, Columbia Association (2014) was added in 2016.

There are also various formal reports concerning feasibility and implementation of permanent garden space. Two were written by Columbia Gardeners members: *Columbia Gardeners Proposal for Permanent Garden Plots* (Paul Wisniewski, 1973) and *Implementation of Community Garden Sites*, (Columbia Gardeners, no date). The latter includes text regarding costs, funding, management and organization (offers Columbia Gardeners as a model), annual calendar of management tasks and potential additional features such as organic gardening options and educational programs. Examples of notices, rules and regulations and application are appended.

Note: additional pertinent information may be found in press releases and articles (Series 5. Media) and in selected annual rental agreements for garden site properties (Series 10. Financial Documents). A “Permanent Plots Now!” campaign bumper sticker is filed in Series 11. Ephemera.

Folders are arranged alphabetically with the exception of those pertaining to Permanent Plots, which are filed last. Within each folder, items are arranged chronologically, with undated materials filed last.

SERIES 10: FINANCIAL DOCUMENTS, 1973-2014
(0.5 lin.ft.)

This series consists of items related to the financial activities of Columbia Gardeners including budgets and budget worksheets, treasurers’ reports, taxes and related Internal Revenue Service documentation and contractual agreements.

Budgets. Annual budgets, in some form or other, were created and approved by Columbia Gardeners officers each year. However, the documents here represent only a few years and they show that dates, budget formats and procedures for approval were diverse. These budgets include the headings “proposed,” “adopted,” “estimated,” etc. Some provide general figures and some show detailed expense and income amounts. Most are clearly worksheets with notes and suggestions written in the margins. The bulk of materials in this file are dated 1977-1981 and 1986-1987. There are no records for 1982-1985 and 1988-1997. Note: selected treasurer reports in this series include a table column for “total budgeted.”

Contracts – insurance policies. Contains files related to liability insurance policies, 1989 and 2006.

Contracts – maintenance. Contracts for mowing, plowing and other landscaping jobs at the garden sites were arranged for on an annual basis. Contractors were

private businesses and CA. This file consists of only a few documents, most dating from 1977-1990. It includes early contracts and notes regarding site mowing at Elkhorn. There are also job and payment details regarding the environmental landscape installation done by Columbia Gardeners in cooperation with the Urban Wildlife Research Center at the newly developed Elkhorn garden site, 1977. Note: see also letters discussing maintenance support from the CA (Series 4. Correspondence).

Contracts – property lease and rental agreements. Although Columbia Gardeners explored options for direct purchase of garden site property in its early years, it has never owned its own land. The organization licensed land from HRD at two sites, Owen Brown and West Side, 1972-1974, and subsequently at three sites: Owen Brown, 1974-1976; West Side, 1974-1987 and Long Reach, 1974-1987. The agreements clearly identify where the land for each site was located, including plat data, and they outline responsibilities and liabilities of each party. The earliest HRD contracts are missing from this file. Specific contracts here are for 1978 (West Side and Long Reach), 1979 (West Side and Long Reach), 1980 (West Side and Long Reach), 1981 (West Side and Long Reach), 1982 (West Side and Long Reach), 1983 (West Side and Long Reach, letters only), 1986 (West Side and Long Reach) and 1987 (West Side only).

As Howard County Recreation & Parks acquired permanent sites from HRD, the rental agreements shifted to County legal offices. This section was augmented significantly in 2016 with many agreements, some signed originals, for all three sites, 1989-2012. They include maps and plat information for each site. Although the Long Reach site agreements were between the Columbia Gardeners and the County, the contracts for 1987-1997 state that the property was still owned by HRD and leased to the County for use as gardens. Likewise, contracts for Elkhorn and Long Reach, 2010 – 2012, include documentation of the agreement between Howard County and BGE regarding property use under power lines for garden plots.

Beginning in 2003, the agreements with the County were expanded from nine month annual contracts to twelve month annual contracts. Of note is a copy of the first agreement with Howard County, “Gardening Site Management Agreement between the Howard County Department of Parks and Recreation and Columbia Gardeners, Incorporated,” 1977.

Note: some letters related to lease/rental agreements may be found in Series 4. Correspondence.

Internal Revenue Service (IRS) documentation. Columbia Gardeners applied for IRS tax exempt status as a not for profit corporation in 1976. After initial rejection, the IRS granted the group 501(c)(4) status as a social welfare organization in 1977. This file contains not only correspondence between Columbia Gardeners and the IRS, it includes copies of many letters sent by

Columbia Gardeners to officials and agencies requesting their support in obtaining IRS recognition. This includes letters to Presidents Ford and Carter. Of note: a copy of the original letter confirming IRS tax exempt status, dated June 28, 1977. An IRS tax return and computer card set is also from this period. Two IRS letters from 2008-2009 reiterate Columbia Gardeners' 501(c)(4) status.

Treasurer and audit reports. This file contains both monthly and annual financial statements from Columbia Gardeners treasurers, 1975-2009, and copies of three informal third party audit reports – for 1977, 1980 and 1986. The treasurers' reports vary widely in amount of detail, format and frequency. With a couple of exceptions, most years' reporting is incomplete at best. There is no data for the years 1979, 1981-1982, 1987-1988 and 1993-1996. The audit reports were done by accountant Daniel Sandler with the caveat, "for management purposes only." They include figures for "Assets & Fund Balance," "Receipts and Disbursements" and "Changes in Fund Balance." Additional information on the organization's financial status may be found in the minutes of both the Executive Council and General Membership meetings (Series 3. Minutes).

Miscellaneous. Invoices in this file date from 1974-1985 and include those for newspaper ads, film rentals, promotional materials and insurance coverage (1975-1976). There is also a copy of a corporate accounts authorization form dated 1985.

Folders are arranged alphabetically. Within each folder, items are arranged chronologically, with undated materials filed last.

SERIES 11: EPHEMERA, 1974-ca. 1995

(< 0.25 lin.ft.; 7 items)

Items in this file are primarily promotional materials distributed by Columbia Gardeners during their campaigns for permanent garden sites in Howard County. They consist of:

- "Permanent Plots Now!" bumper stickers (1974)
- round button pins with green thumb logo and "Columbia Gardeners (1974)
- T-shirt with green thumb logo and "Columbia Gardeners" (1982)

Note: invoices for buttons and stickers are filed in Series 10. Financial Documents. Correspondence from Steve Loos, green thumb logo designer is filed in Series 4. Correspondence.

Also filed here are "Columbia Gardeners" decals with the green thumb logo (ca. 1995; 3 x 3 in.). They were used as member vehicle identification stickers.

Folders are arranged alphabetically.

SERIES 12: PHOTOGRAPHS, 1973-2005

(< 0.25 lin.ft.; 37 photographs)

This series is made up of a variety of photographs in both black and white and in color. Sizes and organization vary.

Subjects and contexts of the photographs:

- Columbia Gardeners Library Donation. 1 photograph taken to accompany press release, printed in *Columbia Flier*, 1973
- Columbia Gardeners Officers, 1975 and 1976
- Potential Permanent Garden Sites, 1986. 7 landscape images probably taken of land later developed as Long Reach and West Side permanent garden sites
- Aerial photograph of Elkhorn Garden Site, ca. 1995
- Elkhorn Tree Line Renovation Project, 2004-2005. 21 images of Elkhorn landscaping project

Note: photographs of Columbia Gardeners members and activities may also be found in newspaper articles (Series 5. Media) and in Columbia Gardeners newsletters starting in about 1995 (Series 7. Newsletters).

Items within the folder are arranged chronologically with undated materials filed last.

SERIES 13: MAPS AND CHARTS, 1977-1999

(20 maps)

This file is comprised of 19 maps of the garden plots managed by Columbia Gardeners, Inc., Elkhorn Garden site. Map sizes range from 12 x 19 in. to 11 x 24 in.. The maps were created annually by the garden site manager. These documents present a good record of renters' names, the number of plots rented from year to year and changes in site boundaries – plots were added and/or deleted from the site's periphery over time. One map, attached to a copy of the deed for purchase of the Long Reach site property by the County from HRD, documents the plat detail and boundaries.

Of note: the earliest two Elkhorn maps are undated but were most probably created in 1977, the first year that the newly designated permanent site at Elkhorn was tilled and rented. These maps show 250 full size plots (20 x 25 ft.) and 18 half size plots rented that year. 13 of the full size plots were designated communal corn plots.

Note: documents that may have maps embedded in them are newsletters (Series 7. Newsletters), garden plot application forms (Series 8. Activities) and property rental agreements (Series 10. Financial Documents).

Items were separated to oversize storage boxes in Columbia Archives.

Processing Notes

The materials contained in this collection had no or inconsistent order when they were donated to Columbia Archives. Many items from the large Columbia Gardeners “Presidents’ Files” were loose, and some were contained in bundles, bindings and folders with no apparent order. Some folders came with year designations. Many items smelled moldy and were aired. With a few exceptions, duplicative items were removed from the collection.

The smaller donations, from Alex Hekimian and Mary Gold, were carefully ordered, but were very narrow in their topics and time span. Their arrangement did provide some guidance in the creation of series and topic folders.

Items from all donations were combined and interfiled according to series and topics. Organization of the materials, category designation and identification of significant items was done by Mary V. Gold, Columbia Gardeners historian since 2005 and board member since 1984. Future accretions will be interfiled according to the original series list.

Wherever possible, dates found on items were used. For undated items, research and personal knowledge of the processor were employed to assign circa (ca.) dates or date ranges. These items are chronologically filed within their assigned folders. A few items remain undated and are filed at the end of their folders.

Some documents contained staples and paper clips. Staples and paper clips were replaced with stainless steel staples and paper clips. More commonly, items were damaged by adhesive tape, adhesive labels, correction fluid (White Out) and torn edges. These documents were photocopied onto Permalife paper and replaced. Newsprint articles and carbon copied documents were also photocopied onto Permalife paper and replaced. Photographs were removed from paper and plastic sleeves and placed in individual archival quality sleeves.

Photographs, oversize materials (including maps), and some ephemera were separated into format specific enclosures, folders and/or boxes and placed in appropriate format specific collections within Columbia Archives. Separation sheets serve as placeholders in the folder of origin for the separated items, and direct users to the physical location of the separated items.

The entire collection has been re-housed into acid-free folders and boxes.

Columbia Gardeners Records, 1972-2016 (bulk 1973-1990)

Related Collections

American Community Gardening Association. <https://communitygarden.org> (accessed Jul. 25, 2016).

City Farmer - Canada's Office of Urban Agriculture. <http://www.cityfarmer.org> (accessed Jul. 25, 2016).

Columbia Gardeners, Inc. <http://www.columbiagardeners.com> (accessed Jul. 25, 2016).

Community Gardening. Alternative Farming Systems Information System, National Agricultural Library, United States Department of Agriculture. <https://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/community-gardening> (accessed Jul. 25, 2016).

Gold, Mary V. *Publications about Columbia Gardeners, Incorporated and about the Development of Permanent Community Garden Sites in Howard County, Maryland 1969-2013: A Bibliography*. Author, 2012.

Grow Annapolis Community Gardening. <http://growannapolis.org> (accessed Jul. 25, 2016).

Grow It Eat It, University of Maryland Extension. <https://extension.umd.edu/growit> (accessed Jul. 25, 2016).

Wisniewski, Kay. *Gardening in Howard County*. Columbia Publishing Corp., 1979. 122 p. [Columbia Archives ColA 635 Wis 1979]

Container List

BOX	FOLDER	TITLE	DATE
SERIES 1. HISTORY			
1	1	Executive Council – Membership Lists	1973-2001
1	2	Executive Council/Officers 1974-2012 Chart	2012
1	3	General Membership – Membership Lists	1976-1980
1	4	Miscellaneous	1972-2013
SERIES 2. BY-LAWS, ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION			
1	5	Founding Documents	1975-2013
SERIES 3. MINUTES			
2	1	Executive Council Minutes	1974 (Dec.)-1976
2	2	Executive Council Minutes	1977-1978
2	3	Executive Council Minutes	1979
2	4	Executive Council Minutes	1980-1981
2	5	Executive Council Minutes	1982-1983
2	6	Executive Council Minutes	1984-1985
2	7	Executive Council Minutes	1986-1987
2	8	Executive Council Minutes	1988-1989
2	9	Executive Council Minutes	1990-1991
2	10	Executive Council Minutes	1992-1993
2	11	Executive Council Minutes	1995-1997
2	12	Executive Council Minutes	1998
2	13	Executive Council Minutes	1999
2	14	Executive Council Minutes	2000-2001
2	15	Executive Council Minutes	2002-2003
3	1	Executive Council Minutes	2006-2007
3	2	Executive Council Minutes	2008-2009
3	3	Executive Council Minutes	2010-2011
3	4	Executive Council Minutes	2012-2013
3	5	Executive Council Minutes	2014-2015
3	6	General Membership Minutes	1975-2015
SERIES 4. CORRESPONDENCE			
4	1	Business – Internal Correspondence	1974-2014
4	2	Business – External Correspondence	1972-2011
4	3	Mailing Labels/Lists	1976-1980
4	4	Miscellaneous	1975-2000

BOX	FOLDER	TITLE	DATE
SERIES 5. MEDIA			
4	5	Advertisements, Press Releases, Brochures, Website	1973-2016
4	6	Magazine & Newspaper Articles	1973-1979
4	7	Magazine & Newspaper Articles	1980-2013
4	8	Publications Bibliography	2012
SERIES 6. REPORTS			
4	9	Gardeners' Survey	1977
4	10	Gardeners' Survey	1978
4	11	Gardeners' Surveys	1979, 1980, 1985
4	12	Miscellaneous Reports	1976-2014
SERIES 7. NEWSLETTERS			
5	1	Newsletters – The Agronomist	1974-1975
5	2	Newsletters – The Agronomist	1976-1977
5	3	Newsletters – The Agronomist	1978-1979
5	4	Newsletters – The Agronomist	1980-1981
5	5	Newsletters – The Agronomist	1982-1984
5	6	Newsletters – The Agronomist	1985-1986
5	7	Newsletters – The Agronomist	1987-1988
5	8	Newsletters – The Agronomist	1989-1990
5	9	Newsletters – The Agronomist	1991-1992
5	10	Newsletters – The Agronomist	1993-1995
5	11	Newsletters – Green Thumb Gazette	1996-1998
6	1	Newsletters – Green Thumb Gazette/The Green Thumb	1999-2000
6	2	Newsletters – The Green Thumb	2001-2003
6	3	Newsletters – The Green Thumb	2004-2015
SERIES 8. ACTIVITIES			
7	1	Application Forms & Garden Regulations	1973-2015
7	2	Community Outreach	1976-1990
7	3	Plant & Seed Sales	1976-2014
7	4	Task Calendars	1975-2006
7	5	Volunteer Activities – Miscellaneous	ca. 1975-1990
7	6	Volunteer Activities – Newsletter, Typing & Correspondence	ca. 1975-ca. 1980
7	7	Volunteer Activities – Social Action, Education & Picnic	ca. 1975-1980
7	8	Volunteer Activities – Telephoning, Cooperative Sales & Photography	1973-1980

BOX	FOLDER	TITLE	DATE
SERIES 9. SUBJECT FILES			
8	1	Columbia Foundation Grant	1985-1986
8	2	Columbia Foundation Grant	1986-1987
8	3	Miscellaneous Grant Applications	1998-1999
8	4	Reference Materials – Community Gardening	1973-1987
8	5	Reference Materials – Gardens for All, Inc.	1974-1976
8	6	Reference Materials – Gardens for All, Inc. – Conference	1975
8	7	Reference Materials – Gardens for All, Inc. – Procedural Manual	1974
8	8	Reference Materials – Horticulture, Gardens	ca. 1979-1990
8	9	Reference Materials – Soil Survey	1968-ca.1990
8	10	Site-specific – Communications	1985-2015
8	11	Site-specific – Member Lists and Plot Diagrams	1976-1998
9	1	Permanent Plots – Background	1971-1974
9	2	Permanent Plots – Background	1975
9	3	Permanent Plots – Committee Members	ca. 1975-ca. 1980
9	4	Permanent Plots – Correspondence	1972-1974
9	5	Permanent Plots – Correspondence	1975
9	6	Permanent Plots – Correspondence	1976
9	7	Permanent Plots – Correspondence	1977-1985
9	8	Permanent Plots – Correspondence	1986-1997
9	9	Permanent Plots – County Budgets	1974-1976
9	10	Permanent Plots – County Budgets	1986-1989
9	11	Permanent Plots – Family Garden Plot Advisory Comm.	1975-1976
9	12	Permanent Plots – Miscellaneous	1977-2014
9	13	Permanent Plots – Survey	1974
9	14	Permanent Plots – Survey	1985
SERIES 10. FINANCIAL DOCUMENTS			
10	1	Budgets	1977-2014
10	2	Contracts – Insurance Policies	1989-2006
10	3	Contracts – Maintenance	1973-1999
10	4	Contracts – Property License & Rental Agreements	1977-1988
10	5	Contracts – Property License & Rental Agreements	1989-1996
10	6	Contracts – Property License & Rental Agreements	1997-2012
10	7	IRS Documentation	1975-2010
10	8	Miscellaneous Invoices and Bank Documents	1974-1997
11	1	Treasurer Reports	1975-1998
11	2	Treasurer Reports	1999-2009
11	3	Treasurer Reports	2010-2014
SERIES 11. EPHEMERA			
11	4	Bumper Stickers & Decals	1974-ca.1995
11	5	T-Shirt & Button Pins	1974-1982

BOX	FOLDER	TITLE	DATE
SERIES 12. PHOTOGRAPHS			
11	6	Photographs	1973-2005
SERIES 13. MAPS AND CHARTS			
11	7	Elkhorn Site Maps	1977-1993
11	8	Long Reach Site Map	1999