

## History of the Garden in the Park

“To commemorate our 50<sup>th</sup> year we are going to plan and plant a rock garden in Beacon Hill Park. This will be marked with our name and the occasion. A committee of four have been appointed to attend to this, Mr. A. Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Ed Lohbrunner, and Mr. E.W. Lythgoe. “

(Minutes of the V.I. Rock and Alpine Garden Society, January 20, 1971  
recorded by Dorothy Hanson, Honorary Secretary)

In January 1973, a summary report on the progress of the Beacon Hill Rock Garden Project was submitted:

“Basic work commenced in April 1971, with the digging out of all crevices. This was to lessen the possibility of native shrubs and perennial grasses remaining to mar the final effect. At the same time, a set of steps were constructed to provide easy access through the Rock Garden. These were built to follow, what appeared to be, a well worn path.

Work parties of 6 to 15 persons have attended fortnightly, weather permitting. During the planting period, work parties maintained a weekly schedule, when weather allowed.

Our accomplishments have been as follows:

Cleaning of crevices, and placing of rocks for overall affect. Building rock steps. Approximately 10 yards of rock was collected on numerous week-end trips from considerable distances, to match the rocks on the site. 15 to 20 yards of soil was brought in, screened and mixed by hand, then distributed where needed. Over 200 plants have been planted. These should make an interesting if modest show in 1973, vandals and ducks permitting.”

(Report filed by Major P.L. Platt, President)

The following years, it was reported that 150 different saxifrage were planted (50 donated by Mr. Lohbrunner) and Cyclamen Neopolitanum (now known as *C. Hederifolium* or Ivy-leafed Cyclamen) were added. In 1974, Dorothy Hanson noted:

“The Beacon Hill Rock Garden now has another planting area ready. This will be a Rhododendron bed, and should make a splendid showing. Mr. Al Smith and Mr. Ernie Lythgoe are the two main “human bulldozers” who have cleared the area...Major Platt, when his back allows, has done a great deal to help, as has Mr. Mastin and Mr. Lohbrunner.

We all get credit for this project, we should all feel obligated to contribute in some way. It will remain a lovely monument to our efforts long after we are gone, but what a wonderful monument to leave! It’s really a worthwhile project.”

In 1977, 19 rhododendrons were added to the garden.

This was the start of the Garden in the Park and work continues today. Crevice gardens were added in 2006, 2022 and again in 2023 (see The Crevice Gardens section.) The Cyclamen and Rhododendrons are still evident. *Kalmiopsis leachiana*, planted in 1972, makes an impressive show in the spring, but unfortunately, there is no evidence of the saxifrage added in 1974 or many of the other plants. Vandals and ducks have had their way!

A garden is always a work in progress and volunteers continue to maintain, renovate and add to the garden. A new sign was added in 2025 to acknowledge the “lovely monument to our efforts.”