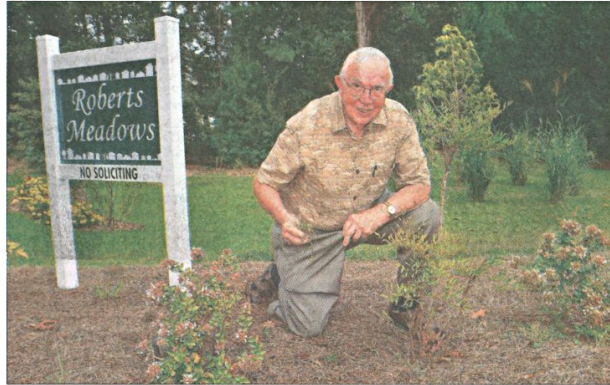


HOME & GARDEN



TIM KIMZEY/TIM.KIMZEY@SHJ.COM

Mort Sams works on a garden project at Roberts Meadows in Spartanburg. The 86-year-old Sams plants and cares for the garden at the entrance to his subdivision.

A love story flourishes, and a gardener won't slow down

Sometimes when people reach their 80s, you might think they have done it all and are just settling on the couch.

But when it comes to Mort Sams, that isn't true. Mort has begun a new life, as well as a new garden, at the age of 86 years young.

Mort's story began awhile back, when he was married and had five sons. He used to make his sons pick up pine cones on their property and remembers them hating it, every bit.

Mort grew up in Greenville and lived in Atlanta, Denver and New York for years. His dad was a farmer. Mort comes from a long line of strong genes, as his two sisters are 89 and 91. His father died at 102 and his mother at 95, so Mort feels like he still has a lot to contribute.

When he moved back to Spartanburg, he was single again and in his elder years. He was working for Bill Wilson at the time. Mort volunteered to help Bill prune the cherry trees on Pine Street and wound up cutting his finger badly.

One of the other volunteers, Martha, helped him with his finger. Well, one thing led to another, and they started seeing each other, fell in love and got married.

Mort laughs as he says with a twinkle in his eye, "Martha and I are the only love story in the Spartanburg Men's Garden Club book 'And the Trees Remained' by Henry Pitman. You can find our story on page 55."

They moved to Roberts Meadows, a nice development off Sloan's Grove Road on the east side of Spartanburg. Well into his 80s, Mort started a garden around his house and spent his time planting it and being part of the Spartanburg Men's Garden Club.



Linda Cobb

Garden Cameos

Eventually, as his home garden flourished, Mort figured out he would have excess plants and would need a place to plant them. That's when he came up with the idea of planting a welcome garden at the front entrance to Roberts Meadows.

He approached the local homeowners association, got its permission and some help from its members, and they began to plant the front entrance in November 2011.

At the same time, Mort attempted to transplant a line of mahonia given to them. Well, only one made the transplant, and he was left with a bunch of spaces to be filled, so he replaced the dead mahonia with a nice row of abelia. He also added liriope and iris.

Planting in the soil wasn't easy, as it was hard as a brick, so the larger plants were planted with an auger. He also added a California variegated cedar that was brought from a former home. Much zebra grass was also added.

For the final phase, Mort added two Knockout roses to the planting bed. Marigolds dot the center of the bed. There is an ice wall of dark green Leyland cypress with some altheas planted in front of the dark green screen. The dark green sets off the blooms of the althea nicely.

Nandinas and variegated

yucca light things up in the garden. Dahlias and clerodendrum finish it all off.

Fully aware that the soil was horrible at that site, Mort has spent a lot of time watering all the plants by hand. Mort loads a big tub into the trunk of his car and two watering cans. He fills the tub up, drives up to the garden entrance and waters the plants by hand. Mort mulches the marigold bed and doesn't use any chemicals to spray. The addition of a small amount of 10-10-10 does the job.

Mort still maintains that you don't have to go to a lot of expense. He keeps the garden going by working in it and watering it several times a week.

"Gardens are an extension of our souls," he said.

Around town

The Spartanburg Garden Club Council will have its fundraising event in my garden from 6 to 8:30 p.m. Oct. 4. Heavy appetizers and wine will be offered, as well as silent auction items. Tickets are \$30 and are available by mail until Oct. 1. Make checks payable to SGCC and mail to P.O. Box 6915, Spartanburg, SC 29304. For questions, contact Suzanne Leone at ssleone@charter.net, 583-3975 or Janet Adams at janetadams10@aol.com or 597-1155.

I will present a lecture called "Garden Jewelry" at 7 p.m. Monday at the Spartanburg County Headquarters Library at 151 S. Church St. The lecture will teach you how to add dimension to your garden with garden ornaments.

This lecture series is free. Call Ann Moore at 596-3502 for more details.

Reach Linda Cobb at 574-8493 or lindacobb@charter.net.