

Hatcher Garden and Woodland Preserve

by Uziel Crescenzi



LOCATED IN Spartanburg, 30 miles from Greenville in northwest South Carolina, Hatcher Garden and Woodland Preserve is a shining example of what can result from collaboration between generous benefactors and a civic-minded community. In 1969, Harold and Josephine Hatcher moved five minutes from downtown Spartanburg to be closer to their daughter, Alice. In their search for a place to retire, the couple purchased an eroded cotton field for their new home. Over time, the Hatchers recognized the potential of the site as a community green space and began restoring the woodland and enhancing the landscape. Over 10,000 trees and shrubs were planted, gullies were filled, paths were laid, and additional land procured.

By the 1980s, the property had attracted the attention of the entire community. Civic groups like the Spartanburg Men's Garden Club, the Spartanburg Garden Club Council, Spartanburg Community College, and the Unitarian Universalist Church volunteered to help with the

planting and maintenance to create a green haven for all to enjoy.

In 1987, the Hatcher family donated the land to the Spartanburg County Foundation. There was no formal opening to the garden, but with the conversion to non-



Top: The nationally-recognized Conifer Collection in winter. Hellebores, above, and edgeworthia, right, are among the late-winter bloomers in the gardens at Hatcher.

profit status and establishment of a board of directors, Hatcher officially became part of the public fabric of Spartanburg.

GROWING WITH THE COMMUNITY

The 12.1 acre garden and preserve transition seamlessly from each other. Throughout the woodland area, "garden rooms" offer a variety of landscapes, including a wildflower hillside, a waterwise demonstration garden, a 20-foot, man-made waterfall and stream, a healing garden, gift shop and nursery, and notable conifer and hosta collections.

The garden's **Conifer Collection** is one of 15 in the Southeast recognized by the American Conifer Society as a reference garden. It includes 200 specimens representing more than 40 conifer species and 16 different genera. Although shade-loving hostas can be found growing throughout the garden, the **Robert Lawrence Odom Hosta Friendship Garden** features more than 250 different selections showcasing the genus's incredible range of size, leaf color and patterning, and flower color.





The waterfall in the woodland preserve is a favorite visitor destination.

Robin Vollmer, Hatcher's executive director, describes the garden and preserve as a "photographer's paradise" because something is always in bloom. In winter, hellebores and camellias take center stage. In spring, visitors enjoy displays of native ephemerals such as trout lilies (*Erythronium* spp.), mayapples (*Podophyllum peltatum*), and trilliums. In late summer the brilliant blossoms in the butterfly garden draw a diverse array of pollinators. With the arrival of fall, the garden's forested backdrop provides one last burst of color before things begin to wind down.

"We want garden visitors of all ages to experience a sense of wonder in the woods as they discover fragrant flowers, seek out hidden birds and wildlife, and listen to the rushing water of the creeks and waterfall," says Vollmer.

EDUCATION, ACCESSIBILITY, AND HEALING

Each year, some 40,000 visitors enjoy the scenic landscape at Hatcher, which is maintained by two full-time staff members and a roster of active, dedicated volunteers. Vollmer says the biggest challenge lies in "continuing to build and maintain the gardens the same way the Hatchers envisioned."

To this end, Hatcher hosts a variety of educational programs throughout the year for children and adults such as first-graders learning about how seeds germinate, or local community college students getting hands-on instruction in plant care. Popular annual events include spring and fall plant sales (April 15 and 16 and September 30 to October 1 this year), along with an early summer "Twilight in the Garden" fundraiser that includes a dinner and auction.

There also has been an ongoing effort to make the garden more accessible to visitors with physical limitations and challenges. To this end, the garden features two quarter-mile paved paths wide enough for two wheel chairs side by side. A fairly recent milestone was the opening in 2011 of the **Garden of Hope and Healing**. The garden came about through substantial community involvement, including *pro bono* work by two local landscape architecture firms. "The healing garden provides a conveniently located escape for hospice and cancer patients, their caregivers, and others in the community in need of solace, inspiration, and renewal," says Vollmer.

Additional Information

Hatcher Garden and Woodland Preserve,
820 John B. White Sr. Blvd, Spartanburg, SC 29306. (864) 574-7724.
www.hatchergarden.org.

- Open year round, dusk till dawn
- Admission: Free
- Hatcher Garden and Woodland Preserve participates in the AHS Reciprocal Admissions Program. AHS members with a current membership card receive a discount in the gift shop and plant nursery.

Other nearby sites to explore:

Falls Park on the Reedy, Greenville, SC.
www.fallspark.com/167/Falls-Park.

Greenville Zoo, Greenville, SC.
www.greenvillezoo.com.

Milliken Arboretum, Spartanburg, SC.
www.milliken.com/en-us/ourcompany/visitors/Pages/milliken-arboretum.aspx.

Josephine and Harold Hatcher died in 1999 and 2003 respectively, but their legacy lives on both through the garden and through their daughter Alice Hatcher Henderson, who is an active board member and garden volunteer. Given her family's involvement with the garden, it's not surprising that she particularly enjoys giving tours and sharing the garden's history with its visitors. 🌿

Uziel Crescenzi is an editorial intern with The American Gardener.