

March 2020

Gardening & Beautification

A Publication of the Spartanburg Men's Garden Club



Welcoming Men & Women

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is the newsletter of the Spartanburg Men's Garden Club. It is published monthly except in December, and is available to the public free of charge. Sign up for the emailed newsletter by sending your request to: Newsletter@DirtDaubers.org

President's Corner

We have now had two very good presentations to start the year. We have also started the year with some new members. We have added three regular members and three corporate members. Let's continue to work hard to attract additional members. Please share the program listing when inviting guests to attend our club meetings. We are working to get the monthly newsletter transmitted a week before the meeting so that members not only have a chance to read the newsletter, but to share it with others who have an interest in gardening.

March 14 is our litter pick up date. The Spartanburg Men's Garden Club has adopted a section of Pine Street that crosses Main Street. Please come out at 8 AM on the 14th and help keep our city clean.

We are working on rebuilding our corporate membership as mentioned in our recent Newsletters. We are open to all suggestions on adding corporate members. Please let the board members know who we should solicit or you can call 864-708-3114 or email me (philip.abers@gmail.com).

Betty Montgomery

"Looking Forward to Spring Bloom"

Our March program for the Men's Garden Club will be given on Monday, March 16, by well known Club member and garden writer, Betty Montgomery.

Betty was in the first Spartanburg Master Gardener class in 1985 and is interested in all types of gardening. You may have seen her recent article about pruning trees and shrubs in a recent article in the Spartanburg Herald Journal or her article in the March issue of the "Spartanburg Magazine" on blooming cherries.

She is planning a visual presentation for us about spring blooming flowers. Remember – Monday, March 16 at 7:00 pm in the Health Sciences Building of the Community College.

Future Programs

April 20 – "Apples for Everyone" including information on new cultivars and new ways of growing them in a small space. The program will be presented by Jon Klimstra of TK Family Farm in Rutherfordton, NC.

May 18 – "Making Good Soil" Speaker will be Leslie Rodgers, Director of Education of Atlas Organics. Program will be about recycling garbage in the Spartanburg-Greenville area.

June 15 – "The Greening of Spartanburg" with Ricky McAbee, owner of Roebuck Nursery. What makes Spartanburg the beautiful city it is?



Post Office Box 1502
 Spartanburg, SC 29304
DirtDaubers.org

Founded in 1948 as the "Dirt Daubers" the Spartanburg Men's Garden Club welcomes men, women and corporate members with an interest in nature.

As well as sharing gardening interests, the club has planted over 5,000 trees in Spartanburg, assists with many area beautification projects, teaches a gardening class to the public, and conducts a twice-yearly Tree & Shrub sale.



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Photography by Linda McHam



Forsythia



2020 Litter pickup schedule

March 14 rain date **Mar 21**

June 13 rain date **Jun 20**

Sept. 12 rain date **Sep 19**

Dec. 12 rain date **Dec 19**

Our area for litter control is Pine St. from Palmetto St. to McCravey Dr.

We meet at 8 AM in parking area behind Chamber of Commerce (off Oakland Av.)



Deciduous Azalea



Deciduous Magnolia 'Elizabeth'

**Renew Now
 2020 Membership**

**Single \$20 Family \$28 Student \$5
 Corporate \$100**

Forms are located at **DirtDaubers.org/Membership** and will be available at the next general meeting.

Bring check or cash & completed form to Joyce Crescenzi.

ALL MEMBERS of SMGC should join the **SpartanburgMGC Yahoo Group**. It's the only way for members to know what is going on on a timely basis. It can be useful for reminders of upcoming events, to ask for help with various projects, and to be notified of last minute changes of schedules and venues. Only half the membership has joined, which means that YOU may be missing out on our activities! Send an email to (Linda McHam) and she will send you an invitation to join. You need to complete the process by signing up and joining the group after you receive your invitation.



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Member Musing By Phil Abers

Presby Iris Garden

Nearly every year we lived in New Jersey, Edie and I went to Presby Iris Garden. The garden is located in Monclair, which is in northern New Jersey not too far from Newark. The Presby Iris Garden was established in 1927 and has over 10,000 iris encompassing 1500 varieties. The heirloom iris bed has one iris from the 1500's! There are 26 beds with bearded iris. The garden also has Siberian, Japanese and Louisiana Iris. The Louisiana Irises are planted in a small creek bed that traverses the garden.

This year is a special year at Presby. The American Iris Society is hosting its annual convention in Newark and is celebrating 100 years as an organization. Presby has the guest iris beds for this year's convention and for the first time will have irises from around the world. A guest iris is an iris that a hybridizer submits for planting in the guest iris bed for the convention. The hope is that the iris lovers see the guest iris, which are typically new introductions, and will be inspired to buy the iris rhizomes.

If you are not able to travel to New Jersey in May, there is a local option available to you. The Piedmont Carolina Iris Society (PCIS), which is our local club, is having an iris show on Wednesday, April 29, from 1 – 3:30 PM at the Cowpens Library. Next year PCIS will be hosting the region 5 iris convention around the first of May, 2021. That event will include a tour of local iris gardens. Stay tuned for more information.



**History of the club
continues on the
following pages.**

Chapter 4

Enhancing the Enhancements: SPARTANBURG BEAUTIFICATION AND MGC GARDEN SPOTS

*Everyone can identify with a fragrant garden,
with the beauty of sunset, with the quiet of nature.*
– Thomas Kinkade

It is not clear when or how the strong emphasis on “beautification” began in Spartanburg. Surely, this community, with its heritage of quality, has always had such an emphasis. If not, how would the great street trees of Converse Heights have been planted or how would the Wofford Campus have had such a fine landscape plan? How, or why, would Duncan Park have developed and what would have brought about the architectural excellence of the old County Library building on Library Street, or the quality structures and layout of Converse College, and of Wofford? Surely, this community had a background of loving and appreciating beauty.

It may have been when W. O. Ezell joined the new Spartanburg Men's Garden Club in about 1951 that the trend toward horticultural beautification really began. Mr. Roger Milliken's love for trees and excellent landscaping set a high standard, beginning in the late 1950s, just as Hans Balmer later demonstrated his passion for beautification by developing spots of beauty around the community. And Newt Hardie is currently living a mission of eliminating the ugliness caused by the kudzu vine. It was, however, in the early 50s that “Mr. W. O.” began a trend of floral beauty that has made Spartanburg a very special place. The Men's Garden Club was a part of it and has proudly continued that emphasis.

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Recently retired from Geer Drug Company, Ezell not only encouraged the relatively young Men's Garden Club to begin a program of beautification, but led the program with his personal labor until his health began to fail in the early 1970s. He was chairman of the Spartanburg City Beautification Committee in 1956 when a newspaper article stated, "Spartanburg is now a City of Flowers." He continued that leadership, along with being Projects Chairman of the Club, until the late '70s. It is not clear when or how the Piedmont Beautification Committee was organized in Spartanburg; it replaced the City program in the 1980s with somewhat broader goals.

Gardens apparently existed at Cleveland Park and Duncan Park earlier, but they were improved by the City (and probably the Club) adding roses and mums in 1958 under Ezell's leadership. Flowers along city streets began to appear at that time, due to the same guidance. While no detailed documentation is available, extensive landscaping of Duncan Park was probably the major and largest beautification project of the Club at that time.

Charles Lea, long-time secretary and editor of the monthly "Gardenettes" newsletter, reported these complimentary remarks about the Club's association with Ezell's city beautification work in June, 1959. "W. O. Ezell gave a fine progress report on the work of his committee on the 'City Beautiful.' It will pay our members to check the parks and city intersections of streets to see what has been done this spring. It will bring pride to your hearts in appreciation of what has been accomplished by so few, with so little. Again, we take our hats off to our fellow-member, W. O. Ezell, for his untiring efforts to complete the project 'City Beautiful'." Lea went on to say, "Visit Duncan Park and see the part *your club* had in this project. In two or three more years Duncan Park at least the eastern end, is going to be the beauty spot of Spartanburg. Let us keep up the good work."

The next month, Lea commented, "The Men's Garden Club should be proud of their work in Duncan Park, and should visit there each month in order to see the continuous blooming that takes place. Remember that the north end of Duncan Park, from the old arena to the Union Road [Street], *is a special project of the Men's Garden Club.*"

Dr. Bob Reynolds remembers, "W. O. Ezell had started flowerbeds at the entrance of Duncan Park. These had become neglected when he was no longer able to care for the beds. Clayton Brown wanted to restart the beds at this location. Clayton started with four beds where WO had originally had his beds. After a few years the city built a cinderblock raised bed on each side of the entrance road. Bradford pear trees were added one in each bed and along the road. The Bradford Pear trees required a lot of water to keep the flower beds functioning. The Spartanburg Water Works initially furnished water for a number of years, but terminated this "free water" later. Recently, the Bradford pear trees were removed and knockout roses were added in the bed. That special love for and association with Duncan Park continued as Reynolds maintained the Union Street entrance garden for many years as a Club project.

Charles Lea was the official delegate from the MGC to the national convention of The Men's Garden Clubs of America held in Jackson, Mississippi, May 5-8, 1959. He made a detailed and very positive report in his "Gardenettes" newsletter of this, his first convention participation. The following related to the Magnolia tree he was given.

Last, but not least, the Jackson Men's Garden Club gave to each representative present a small Magnolia Grandiflora seedling from the new big champion tree located in Pascagoula, Miss. Its circumference is 13 ft. 7 in., height 52 ft. with a

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branch spread of 92 feet. This tree replaces the old champion, a Florida magnolia now dead, and grows within sight of the Spanish Fort just off U. S. Highway 90.

I want the seedling to belong to the Club—to be planted in one of our parks, preferably in Duncan Park, properly labeled, where the Club has done so much beautification work.

Unfortunately, the desire for proper labeling was not accomplished, but this is probably the large Magnolia standing in the landscaped area of Duncan Park today.

The city's first "Spring Flower Festival" was sponsored by the Club in 1959, and again the next May. While no details currently exist of either its extensiveness, or its success, it is an indication of growing interest in community beautification and horticultural education.

In April, 1960, Charles Lea's "Gardenettes" reported on Morgan Square beautification, and on other activities:

W. O. and his Beautification Committee ought to feel mighty proud. Their work is paying dividends all over the city. Every member of the Men's Garden Club should take pride in the wonderful improvements to the barren corners of our streets and the forlorn look of our parks. Morgan Square was a sight for sore eyes during the past ten days. General Morgan, will never gaze on a more delightful picture than he did Easter Morning, no matter where they move him. The Square must have known this would be its last opportunity because as soon as the tulips are through blooming it becomes another parking area." Lea continued with this encouragement, "It will pay you to visit all the beauty spots of the city during these spring weeks. Follow the flower trails through the city. Have you noticed the hanging baskets on Main Street? The frost did not seem to hurt them that Sunday night before Easter.

Flowers and new landscaping of Morgan Square formed a significant Club effort in 1960 along with many new "garden spots" around the area. As reported earlier in the April 1960 newsletter, Morgan Square was approaching its height of beauty in 1961, when it was partially destroyed while a new parking lot was constructed by the city. This cycle of "build and destroy" continues to this day and may be an inevitable part of progress!

1961 was a busy year for the Club and for Mr. W. O.'s Spartanburg City Beautification group. Along with J. P. Carlton and Red Arnold, Club leader Claude Sherrill organized and led the Club's new "Yard of the Month" project in 1961. It promoted broad citizen participation in home landscape improvement. This program continued for several years.

A step forward in "hands on" beautification was taken in 1961. Charles Lea, secretary and editor of the monthly newsletter reported on recent board action with this paragraph in the June edition "It was also decided that the Spartanburg Men's Garden Club should beautify a vacant lot in the city, and a committee, W. O. Ezell, Jack Lemmon and Charles Lea, was appointed to proceed to select and plant such a lot in the name of the Club."

The result of that assignment was probably what Lea reported later that fall. "Have you seen the new project on [South] Pine Street? Claude Sherrill and W. O. Ezell have already begun work getting ready for the plantings. Claude handles the tractor and farm implements just like he had been raised on the farm. We expect to have an up-to-date report at our next meeting on the work and the financing." In December, he reported good progress and anticipation that it "has the promise of being the show-place of the city when completed." Subsequent newsletters aren't available, but this was undoubtedly the beginning of the

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Club's *Selecto Garden*, its largest and most ambitious landscape project, the South Pine Street garden across from the Pine Street School.

Unfortunately, Lea's newsletters aren't available after December 1961, so details of the progress are not available. This 3,000 foot long multi-hundred rose, azalea, shrub and bulb garden on South Pine Street extended from the condominium complex north of St. Andrews Street, past Boyd Street and the school, past Twin Drive, Sunset Drive, and Crystal Drive, and almost to Morningside Baptist Church. It was clearly the best known beautification project of the Club at that time. Although quite modified today, it continues as an asset to the community.

The outstanding color tri-fold, published by the Beautification Committee and the Chamber of Commerce of Greater Spartanburg, entitled "Spartanburg - South Carolina - The Floral Showplace of The Piedmont" was a significant promotional feature.

A commercial post card was also published at about the same time with the label "*Lusterchrome Reg. U.S. Pat. Office, Made only by Ticnnor Bros Inc., Boston 15, Mass.*" It identifies the face of the card with this garden description:

Spartanburg, S. C. – The City of Flowers – The Spartanburg Men's Garden Club's *Selecto Garden* CONTAINS:

- 686 Labeled Hybrid Teas, Grandiflora, & Florabunda Roses, 140 varieties.
- 80 Azaleas, 40 varieties.
- 101 Labeled Beds of Tulips and Daffodils containing 21,000 bulbs.
- 1100 Assorted Shrubs. Located on Pine Street.

The descriptions on these publications seem almost unbelievable, but their pictures, along with the many photographs of Ezell taken there, confirm the garden's magnificence. Although the two descriptions don't agree exactly, they are similar. And they, and much other documentation, confirm that the Club was clearly its primary developer and received invaluable publicity from it.

The local *Herald-Journal* newspaper ran an extremely positive article in September of 1961. It opened with these words; "The male greenthumbers are on the march here again." It continued:

This time the prolific planters have picked a project so big it requires reinforcements. 'Its 3,000 foot long,' Men's Garden Club President Jim Culcleasure reported Saturday. 'That's substantially larger than the Duncan Park and other beautification projects these volunteers have completed around Spartanburg in recent years.... Since the project will cost several hundred dollars [today, this sounds like a monumental understatement]...a program is being organized for local businesses to provide funds by acquiring memberships at \$5 each for groups of their employers. Geer Drug Co. and Community Cash Stores have started the ball rolling by taking out 30 memberships.

The next month, the newspaper reported that the response from businesses had been excellent with participation by 16 sponsor firms, "...but we need and invite others to join in our beautification work," said Culcleasure. "The gardeners are doing all the work during off hours from their store, office and other jobs...The project will require several weeks to complete...It will beautify one of the most important approaches to the city."