

February 2023

Gardening & Beautification

A Publication of the Spartanburg Men's Garden Club



Welcoming Men & Women

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Gardening & Beautification

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:
Webmaster@DirtDaubers.org

President's Corner

As you read the February 2023 Newsletter, you will see a couple of new sections. In conjunction with our 75th Anniversary, we will be featuring brief biographies each month. One biography will be about a past member of historical significance and one biography will be about a current member. This month will feature WO Ezell. I know the street in Spartanburg is named after him and I see references in the club history about his many contributions. I am curious to learn more about him.

The second new section is the one titled "Upcoming Events." This section will contain information about upcoming meeting presentations, garden tours and events relating to our 75th Anniversary Celebration. We already have a few events lined up and expect to have more as the year progresses. I hope you are able to come and participate in these events and make this a great year for the club.

Erin Howe SMGC Speaker February 20, 2023

"All About Peonies"



Our February presenter will be Erin Howe, owner and manager of Red Maple Flower Farm. On this eleven-acre family farm in northern Spartanburg County, Erin grows peonies for cut flower bouquets and offers more than ten varieties of peony plants for the home landscape. Erin will discuss peony varieties and culture for the South Carolina Piedmont.

Join us on Monday, February 20 at 7pm at the Health Sciences Building on the Spartanburg Community College Campus. The presentation is open to the public free of charge.



<https://www.facebook.com/SMGCDirtDaubers/>



Post Office Box 1502
Spartanburg, SC 29304
DirtDaubers.org



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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.



2023 Litter pickup schedule

- March 11** rain date **Mar 18**
- June 10** rain date **Jun 17**
- Sept. 9** rain date **Sep 16**
- Dec. 9** rain date **Dec 16**

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.)

Renew Now
2023 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.

Upcoming Events

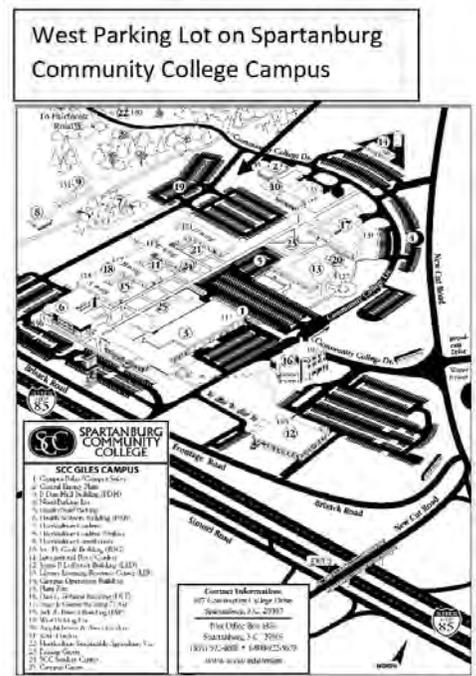
Garden Tour - Boris and Jane Bauer

On Wednesday afternoon, March 1, the Spartanburg Men's Garden Club will visit the garden of Boris and Jane Bauer in Easley, SC. This six-acre garden contains more than 180 Magnolia taxa as well as extensive collections of azalea and Rhododendron. This tour is scheduled to coincide with peak bloom of the Magnolias.

We plan to meet at the West Parking Lot at the Spartanburg Community College campus at 12:30 PM and car pool to the Bauer Garden in Easley.

We plan to be back in Spartanburg around 4:30 PM.

Bauer Garden Address: 112 Woodward Way. Easley, SC



Betty Montgomery Garden Tour

Betty's garden will be open on Saturday, April 15 for the Garden Conservancy, 10 to 4. See <https://www.gardenconservancy.org/open-days> Her garden will also be open for special friends on Sunday, April 16 from 12 to 4. The Men's Garden Club is included on this date.

Save the Date – May 6, 2023 - Garden Tour

On May 6, 2023, Gardens of selected members of the Spartanburg Men's Garden Club will be open to the public. We will be showcasing our gardening talents and raising the awareness of our Club. Please spread the word and make this a great event.



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Photography
by Linda McHam



Camellia japonica
'Pink Perfection'



Camellia japonica
'Leucantha'

Our Corporate Members are listed below. Please support them.

Creekside Garden & Nursery
Hatcher Garden & Woodland Preserve
Piedmont Farm & Garden
Peggy Wilson, Realtor
Schneider Shrub & Tree Care
Wofford College



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Member Musing

By Bruce Fraedrich

Gregory Bald

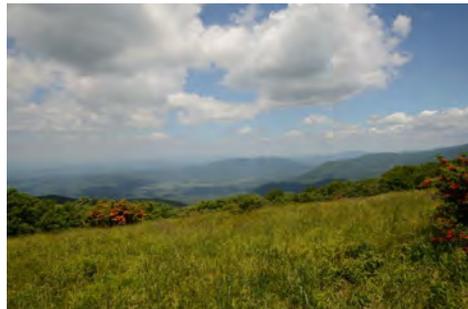
The Gregory Bald azaleas in the Great Smokies National Park are considered among the most unique and spectacular hybrids to be found in nature. In mid-June, Gregory (more correctly Gregory's) Bald becomes the Mecca for azalea geeks from places as far away as Europe and Asia. Hundreds of azaleas come into bloom across the ten-acre bald. The plants are natural hybrids between four species of native azaleas: *Rhododendron calendulaceum* (Flame azalea), *R. arborescens* (Sweet azalea), *R. viscosum* (Swamp azalea) and *R. cumberlandense* (Cumberland azalea.) These hybrids developed over centuries of cross-pollination of the four parent species to produce a wide diversity of flower colors including red, orange, yellow, pink and white. There are some unique bicolor flowers and some have a distinct fragrance that was likely inherited from the *R. arborescens* parent.



The hike to Gregory Bald is over eleven miles round trip with a 3000-foot elevation change. The Park Service rates the trail as "strenuous": as a 70-year-old, I thought the rating was completely understated. The trail takes you through a mixed hardwood forest that contains a diversity of woody and herbaceous plants that changes with elevation. The trail is not busy midweek, even in peak azalea season, and wildlife sightings, including black bear, are common. The Bald itself is interesting: the mountain top is covered by tall grass interspersed with azaleas and blueberries. This Bald existed when the first white explorers visited the area and no one is

certain whether these tree-less mountain tops were formed naturally from lightning fires or were intentionally burned by Native Americans to promote wildlife. Views of Cades Cove and Fontana Lake are spectacular from the tree-less Bald.

Horticulturalists have collected seed from the Gregory Bald azaleas and progeny can be viewed in public collections and selections are available for sale. If you are not into the hike to Gregory Bald, you can view an extensive collection at the Southern Highlands Reserve, a native plant arboretum in Lake Toxaway, NC. These ten-year old plants bloom in early June at the lower elevations of this Reserve. More information about the Southern Highlands Reserve can be found on their website: <https://southernhighlandsreserve.org/>





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Biography

W.O. Ezell



Walter Orlando (W.O.) Ezell (1891-1979) was a prominent Spartanburg business, civic and church leader. He was also one of the founders and a very active member of the Spartanburg Men's Garden Club, serving as a Board Member and President. For 49 years, Mr. Ezell held various roles at the Geer Drug Co., concluding his career as Vice President. Prior to his retirement, before and after work, Mr. Ezell, with the back seat of his old green Desoto filled with cow manure, could be spotted working along the thoroughfares of Spartanburg planting and tending to flowerbeds and trees. His work enhanced the beauty of the city creating a more attractive place to live. During his retirement, his interest became a full-time endeavor. W.O. Ezell was recognized by Spartanburg and the State of South Carolina for his hard work in beautification projects throughout Spartanburg. Duncan and Cleveland Parks, Converse Heights, Pine Street, and the Downtown Airport are a few places that benefited from his efforts. Later in his life, Mr. Ezell offered handy gardening tips and solutions as a regular guest on WSPA radio. Mr. Ezell was honored to represent the Spartanburg Men's Garden Club at a White House event hosted by Lady Bird Johnson held in the Rose Garden to recognize outstanding garden clubs. In the 1970's, a two-mile section of Highway 29 in Spartanburg was named W O Ezell Boulevard in honor of his efforts to beautify the city.

Daphne Sawyer

Originally from Delaware, Daphne Sawyer grew up in her parents' garden, including her father's large beds of tall bearded iris, fruit trees, roses, lilies and any other blooming plant her father could lay hands on. Her grandfather had a magical Williamsburg style garden, laid out with brick lined beds and boxwood hedging, lattices and tons of places to hide. Her childhood paradise was Longwood Gardens and Winterthur (which do not grow iris!!!), just up the road.

Growing up in the Cold War and nuclear arms race, Daphne set out on her own détente mission in college. She studied all things Russian through graduate school, living and working in Russia as the Soviet Union slowly dissolved into the Russian Federation. Upon repatriation, she moved into information technology, focused on digital networks. Her first network engineering job was on the 101st floor of Tower Two in the World Trade Center, NY. She evolved into technology consulting and spent the remainder of her professional career working with clients transforming their businesses through technology.

She reconnected with iris when her father was diagnosed with stage four cancer and she relocated to southeastern Pennsylvania to be near. Father and daughter made iris their healing balm for the next 23 years, joining the American Iris Society, attending annual iris conventions and growing every kind of iris their climate would tolerate, including Louisiana Iris. Daphne eventually joined the Louisiana Iris Society and served twice on their Board. She is a member of the Historical Iris Preservation Society and introduced Louisiana Iris into that program in 2022.

When not obsessing about iris, Daphne obsesses over books. A lifelong book collector she began apprenticing in book repair, binding and marbling seven years ago. She has her own bindery in the back yard where she rescues all sorts of books from the abyss. For exercise and entertainment Daphne has two smooth fox terriers who demonstrate more energy than nuclear fission by 4pm daily. They keep her chasing balls and hate gardening and books.

Daphne transplanted to Travelers Rest in 2018 and once again, has reconnected with her iris passion thanks to Everette Lineberger, Phil Abers and Stan Gray at the Coastal Georgia Botanical Garden. Wherever she has worked and traveled she has sought out gardens and their gardeners for inspiration. A beautiful garden is her church. Locally, she is an active member of Spartanburg Mens' Garden Club and the Piedmont Iris Society. She has several iris projects in partnership with Hatcher Garden in the works.

History of the club continues on the following pages.

Chapter 10

Something Bigger than Ourselves: THE GARDENERS OF AMERICA / MEN'S GARDEN CLUBS OF AMERICA

*How does one keep from "growing old inside"? Surely only in community.
The only way to make friends with time is to stay friends with people....
Taking community seriously not only gives us the companionship we need,
it also relieves us of the notion that we are indispensable.*

- Robert M. Brown

The affiliation of the Spartanburg Men's Garden Club with the national organization, Men's Garden Clubs of America, in 1950 was a good move. It was good for the local club *and* the MGCA. Locally, the Club received much inspiration and service orientation. Nationally, the organization received considerable leadership, inspiration and guidance from the Club and many of its members.

The national organization was formed by a group of four local men's garden clubs from the Midwest in 1932 and later moved its headquarters to the Des Moines, Iowa, area. During its heyday, it grew to 10,000 nationwide members.

The Spartanburg group of men gardeners was organized in 1948 under the name The Dirt Daubers. It was renamed Spartanburg Men's Garden Club in 1950 when W. P Rich was President. The SMGC applied for affiliation with the MGCA in 1953. Application was made by Karl Selden who was president that year. The affiliation was quickly approved and became effective on February 15, 1953. Of the 27 names on the application, those probably

most well known, besides Rich, Selden, and Lea, include Luther Boswell, W. O. Ezell, R. L. Handall, Dr. George D. Johnson, Jack M. Lemmon, Frank Powell, and J. M. Culcleasure.¹

It is not known who promoted this national affiliation, but encouragement from the older Asheville MGC was undoubtedly a factor. MGCA was a well known 21-year old organization composed of some 50 men's garden clubs—unique clubs at that period of time.

Selden represented the Club that first year at the National Convention in Memphis, Tennessee, in April of 1953. He was said to be one of six South Carolina residents in attendance (the other five are unknown). Of local interest was the fact that Converse College's Victor Montgomery Garden was included on a list of "Favorite Gardens in the U.S."

National conventions were a popular and valuable vehicle for growing and networking. Charles Lea and his wife attended the one two years later in Houston when there was a report of nine MGC clubs in South Carolina (these are also not known).

It was the Jackson, Mississippi, convention in 1959 which Lea attended with \$20 provided by the Club to help finance attendance. As detailed in the chapter on Iconic Members, he brought home the seedling Magnolia which is believed to be the magnificent tree in Duncan Park today. He wrote in his newsletter this good impression of the national organization and how important he thought it was to the local club:

I would like to say a word about the relationship of the national to the local club. No one can appreciate this relationship until he has attended at least one national convention. You have literally hundreds of men scattered all over the United States meeting to give and to receive information on horticulture and gardening that you cannot get in any other way except here. The national club has been set up to help the local club, and the annual dues could, not purchase one-thousandth of the by-products that come from membership. A local club could paddle its own canoe along life's journey sufficient unto itself, but when you are a member of the national organization you have a feeling that you are traveling down the garden paths of life hand in hand with a group that brings to you a fellowship and information that is beyond purchase by money.

The next year, the convention was held in Asheville and the friendship between the two clubs was strengthened. William Atkins, R. G. Tessner, Lea and Ezell represented the Spartanburg Club. This may have been the first time the Club was recognized nationally when Ezell was presented a certificate of commendation for his efforts in beautifying Spartanburg. Ezell and Lea were regular representatives at these national meetings for many years. More early honors followed—Lea, Ezell and E. L. McArthur accepted MGCA's Industrial Landscaping Beautification Award for the City of Spartanburg and a similar one for the relatively new Greenville-Spartanburg Airport. The Club received the prestigious Woodson K. Jones Award as the Outstanding Member Club for meeting many standards: for increased membership, sponsoring vegetable and flower shows, paying dues on time, organizing new clubs, and for having previously received a bronze medal. This was great recognition for a young club with fewer than 100 members!

It was in another national meeting—Atlanta in 1964—that Lea and Ezell were first given national leadership rolls. The former was appointed chairman of the National Projects Committee and the later became chairman of the National City Beautification Committee.

¹ A copy of the Charter Membership Roll as submitted to MGCA in 1953 appears in Appendix 16.