

June 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

Gardening is a great activity and a wonderful way to relax, get some exercise, create beauty and make friends. We recently had an experience that illustrates why gardening is so special. I received an email from a woman whose son was getting married in Spartanburg on Friday, June 2. She learned that her future daughter-in-law's favorite flower is a bearded iris. The mother wanted to know if I had any bearded irises that were blooming. June is well past the time for bearded iris to bloom in our area, yet there was one bloom stalk out of the few hundred irises on the property.

I told her she could have the iris, but it may not be blooming. It turns out the family was from Michigan and they were driving down for the wedding. The family came over after the wedding on Friday and the tall bearded iris was blooming in all its glory. It is a striking iris, called Uprising, and it has a very large flower. It was truly special that this iris bloomed for the newlyweds.

How did this lady from Michigan get my name? Why would a tall bearded iris bloom in June? I think this couple is blessed. Nature can do some amazing things. We, the Spartanburg Men's Garden Club, also do amazing things. Let's continue the good work.

Drew Jeffers SMGC Speaker June 19, 2023



The speaker at the June meeting is Drew Jeffers who is the County Coordinator and Horticulture and Natural Resources Agent for Spartanburg County. Drew's presentation will focus on new pests of landscape plants in the Upstate. In the last few years, several invasive insect and disease pests have been introduced into South Carolina and several others can be expected in the near future. Drew will provide information on these invasives with emphasis on identification, biology and management.

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



<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, and conducts a twice-yearly Tree & Shrub sale.

Photography by Linda McHam



Jones Cooley shows off his onions from his garden at Lake Cooley.



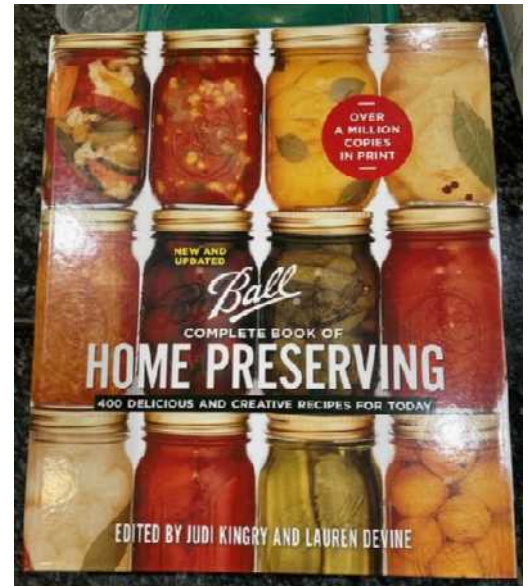
2023 Litter pickup schedule

Sept. 9 rain date **Sept 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.)



This summer will be a great time to start planning for canning and preserving fruit and vegetables. This is the one book you need.



Jones Cooley's vegetable garden.

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.



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Biography

Don Crowder - Past President

Don joined the Spartanburg Men's Garden Club in 1999. Neighbors, Jane and Jim Bagwell encouraged Don and his wife, Denie, to attend and join the club. The members were welcoming and soon Don was in with "both feet". His first position was on the Board of Directors and he served in this position until he was asked to serve as President in 2003.

Don was a member of the 2000-2001 Master Gardener class led by Joe Maple. There were many Monday nights that he would attend class then drive to Charleston for work. During the course he became interested in propagation. Winston Hardigree was his mentor in learning how to propagate many different plant materials. He supplied the Men's Garden Club with many crape myrtles for several years. Don had much success with many plants, but not so much with others. Our backyard and deck became his nursery. During the class, he was approached by Jess Taylor to help design the ponds at the entrance to Hatcher Gardens, and being a civil engineer, this was right up his alley.

The club has been fortunate for Don to serve several terms as president, 2003, 2004, 2015, 2018, 2019 and half of 2020. There were times when he was working out of town that Board meetings were held with Don on a speakerphone from out-of-state. There was no Zoom or Facetime apps during those years. He was instrumental in making the move from the nursery from Hatcher to Spartanburg Community College. With his engineering skills, handling the logistics of the move, setting up the irrigation and drip systems were just the challenge that he needed.

A few other highlights of his terms as president were the National Convention of The Gardeners of America. He and Linda McHam diligently planned an excellent convention attended by members from across the nation. There were educational and interesting break-out sessions, field trips and speakers. One of the highlights was the banquet with Dr. Michael Dirr as the keynote speaker. Another highlight was the planting of crape myrtles in the median of Highway 221 from the intersection of Blackstock Road to the new Dorman High School. Many of these plants remain today. During the Spring and Fall plant sales at SCC, he could be found directing traffic at the entrance to the nursery. Don was also instrumental in the club's move to the SCC campus. He worked diligently with the administration and the horticultural department to make this move successful. Many days he would be found propagating, repairing the irrigation system, and doing kudzu removal in the "pine grove".

Don grew up on a farm in Newberry County, South Carolina. The family raised some crops and cattle. They also gardened vegetables for themselves and neighbors. His sister has memories of growing cotton on their land. The children would come home from school and pick cotton for a nominal price for bag. Being the youngest of the children, Don always managed to get out of a lot of the work. A diehard Clemson Tiger, he graduated in 1973 with a BS in Civil Engineering. Lockwood Greene Engineers brought him to Spartanburg, where he and his family remain. Someone said of him when he passed in 2020, that he would do anything asked of him unless Clemson had a home game. Not only was he a devoted member of the Spartanburg Men's Garden Club, he was husband, Dad and Pop. There were many days and evenings that he could be found on the soccer field, baseball or softball diamond coaching his children's teams.

The Club named our book fund for horticultural students at SCC, The Donald R. Crowder Book Fund in his memory.



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Biography

Charlie Crescenzi

I grew up in New Cumberland, across the Susquehanna River from Harrisburg, PA. After an uneventful childhood I graduated from Shippensburg University (it was Shippensburg State College way back then.) In the summer of 1968 I was hired as a Middle School American History teacher by the Dover Area School District and would stay there for the next 30 years. The faculty there was one of the finest groups of people I have ever known. In fact, I even married the French teacher in 1969. Joyce and I have been together since then. We have three kids, Charles, Robert and Eleanor, spread out from North Carolina, to Tennessee and Oregon.



By 2006 Joyce and I had gotten tired of snow, ice and shivering so we decided to head South. I had also decided to re-retire from my second job as Education Coordinator for the York County Heritage Trust. Joyce had gotten a tip about Spartanburg so we arrived on a Sunday and bought a house that day. No, we had never been in Spartanburg before, just lucky I guess. Not long after that, Joyce heard about the SMGC and the rest is history. The Club has become an important part of our lives. I had the honor of being President for two years and continue to serve on the board and bake brownies.



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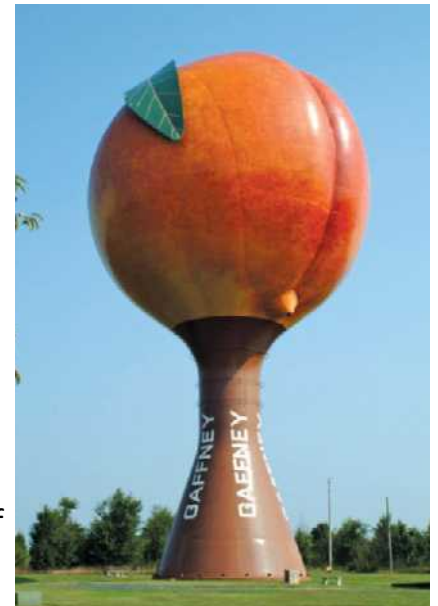
Member Musing By Beth Waddell

THE SOUTH CAROLINA PEACH

On a recent trip to a local farmers market, we were delighted by the “symphony of senses” that surrounded us as we opened the car doors. The delicious sights and smells of the strawberries, early peaches, cantaloupes and watermelons were intoxicating. I could hardly wait to touch and taste the fruits and produce that were so fresh that I could practically hear them growing.

My mind wandered to the importance of peaches for our state economy. As a child, there were peach orchards all around us owned by local farmers. Many of us had our first jobs working in the peach sheds, and quite a few of us even learned to drive cars along the dusty orchard roads. Research I recently read said that South Carolina is still one of the top three peach producing states in the US and the peach is listed as our state fruit. One article stated that South Carolina produces three times the amount of peaches (in pounds) than Georgia, “The Peach State”, during a typical season. Commercial peach farming began in Georgia and many varieties were hybridized there. That’s fine if Georgia gets the title since South Carolina got the history and the Peachoid, the peach shaped 135 ft. water tower filled with one million gallons of water, in Gaffney.

Peach trees are pruned in early spring before the sap runs to be less susceptible to infestation and disease. They are pruned before the leaves and fruits hide the shape of the branches. If you are pruning these trees, first look for the main branch connected to the roots, but trim off any “suckers” trying to grow beside it. Take off any dead, diseased or unhealthy branches as well as old dried fruits. Trim off the lesser important of all crossing branches and cut low to the ground the center vertical branch of the tree so that the tree begins to have the shape of your hand as you hold an imaginary giant peach. These five or six remaining low branches from the center root stem are angled at 45 degrees and evenly spaced around the tree and always angled upward. These main branches hold a hand-like smaller branch that produces, carries and bears the delicious fruits. This trimming allows sunlight to evenly hit the fruits for an abundant crop and sprays, if needed, to work best. The fruit develops on the new wood, so care should be taken in all of the trim work. When pruning, use common sense and observation to all angles of the tree to keep it looking balanced and healthy.



Don't worry. There is not a test on the above information, but take a moment to imagine that WE are the peach trees planted into God's beautiful orchard. We are constantly rooted in his fertile soil for substance and strength. Our “suckers” that tried to spring up from the roots to rob us of our joy and happiness have been eradicated. We are reminded to let our old bad habits and the baggage of former mistakes be cut off and destroyed as were the diseased limbs. All our actions and thoughts should be raised in an upward angle seeking the majestic sunshine through kindness and service to others. The fruits should be shared and enjoyed by those in need of a smile, a simple laugh or a new friendship. Enjoy a fresh peach as soon as possible and imagine the “symphony of senses” created just for you. May you be the pick of the crop!

History of the club continues on the following pages.

11 – THE KUDZU COALITION

Impressed by this, Milliken’s horticulturist, Stewart Winslow suggested that Hardie get in touch with Dr. Larry Nelson, a professor in Clemson’s Department of Forestry and Natural Resources, who was active in kudzu control research. Winslow thought each would find much of interest in the other’s work. He and Henry Pittman participated in the first sit down meeting with Hardie and Nelson at Billy D’s Restaurant in August of 2004. All agreed that control of kudzu should be a high priority for those who think trees are important and that kudzu should be destroyed. Nelson was not aware of anyone else working on manual control methods and encouraged Hardie’s continuance.

At that first meeting Nelson shared his plans for having a graduate student begin in 2005 to experiment with the use of sheets of plastic to kill the kudzu. Hardie immediately agreed to perform “quick and dirty” tests of this idea and within a month had some answers. Hardie bought black and clear sheeting from Lowe’s and with Pittman’s help, stretched it out at the same site across from Carolina Garden World. Within ten days it was clear that the heat under the sheeting would kill kudzu foliage but that the kudzu plants would recover when the sheeting was removed.

Newt Hardie and Clemson’s Dr. Larry Nelson consult in 2006.



Hardie was excited about the new findings (apparent success) and reported early successes and failures to Nelson at the next meeting in September. While the idea of “solarization,” using the heat of the sun to kill *weeds*, was not new, Hardie’s simple tests in August and September of 2004— now depicted on the Kudzu Coalition’s website—were the first experiments using plastic sheeting to attempt to kill *kudzu*. Research was under way.

Intrigued with the idea that there may be many ways to control the noxious vine—many that were not known—Hardie and his local colleagues were energized by the Nelson suggestion of forming a local “coalition” consisting of Spartanburg organizations and individuals who were interested in increasing Spartanburg’s beautification by fighting kudzu. This seemed to fit right in with the spirit embodied in the many Spots of Pride which were then being put into place through the leadership of Hans Balmer. Pittman and Hardie decided that the two primary organizations whose advice and support would be of the most importance were the Men’s Garden Club and the City of Spartanburg. If these two organizations would support a kudzu control initiative, Pittman and Hardie vowed they would start it.

Very significant to the formation of this coalition, was a review and advice meeting which they had a few weeks later with Mayor Bill Barnet and City Manager Mark Scott. The Mayor started the meeting by saying that the city did not have money for new activities. Pittman and Hardie assured him that “We are not here to ask for money.” From that point on, the meeting was a big success.

“We enjoyed our visit together Friday morning and the discussion regarding the effort to put together a coalition to consider ways in which we might control kudzu in our community,” wrote Barnet to Hardie. He continued, “I join with Mark Scott in enthusiastically supporting your vision and energy. I think it is a terribly important

11 – THE KUDZU COALITION

opportunity for us to begin to focus on this long-term problem and to come up with solutions that control this plant life before it has an even more adverse impact on the aesthetic and functional aspects of this city.”

Parallel with this important endorsement from the Mayor, the Men’s Garden Club’s board of directors approved helping organize and partially underwriting the proposed Coalition to Control Kudzu and it became an official MGC project. Tom Bartram’s newsletter of October, 2004, had this report: “Kudzu Coalition – We’ve agreed to join a collation of organizations to seek means of improved kudzu control. Newt Hardie is our prime representative in this and works with Dr. Larry Nelson of Clemson.”

The Club’s annual official list of accomplishments for 2005 included this important statement: “Kudzu Control. With early and ongoing encouragement and some financing by the SMGC, Newt Hardie has been the champion of this program.”

So, indeed, with the support of both the Club and of the City, a new and “unique in the world” movement entitled the *Coalition to Control Kudzu* was underway and it would have great influence not only on the Spartanburg community, but also on many areas and institutions across the south.

While, admittedly, neither the Club nor a large number of its members were exceedingly active participants in Newt Hardie’s new endeavor, the endorsement of and financial backing from the Men’s Garden Club as an *official project* gave an indication of special significance and power to the Coalition. But perhaps of even more importance was the fact that the Club’s official status as an organization to which tax deductible contributions could be made² resulted in the Coalition receiving significant financial support which was channeled through the MGC.

During this period, the Club’s Board regularly invited Hardie to report on the status of the kudzu project and to update the Club on the continuing progress in control methods and expanding work sites around the community.

Even though the *official* relationship as a project of the Club terminated in 2007 when the Coalition was granted its own 501(c)3 tax exemption status, the close bond remains intact. Many of the Coalition’s volunteer workers are members of the Club as are seven of its 19 current top leaders, including Hardie who continues to serve as the Coalition’s president.

Dr. Nelson was on the advisory board for the Club’s kudzu committee. He worked closely with Hardie for two years as the use of plastic sheeting was proven to kill kudzu plants when used for the full season and many improvements were made in the process – such as using sheeting with built in UV protection. Unfortunately, Dr. Nelson died unexpectedly in 2007.

Over the years, the Spartanburg Men’s Garden Club has been proud of its part in organizing and supporting this important group which has achieved national recognition (2009) and has been filmed in operation for broadcast in Korea (2009). Its official name is *Kudzu Coalition* although it is known on the website (www.kokudzu.com) as The Coalition to Control Kudzu Without Chemicals. It is run by a Board of Directors with approximately 17 members, but more importantly, it has hundreds of volunteers, many of whom are youth.

² As an active member of the national organization, The Gardeners of America / Men’s Garden Clubs of America, the SMGC was automatically a “501(c)3 organization” and as such received many contributions to support the work of the Coalition as an active program of the Club.

11 – THE KUDZU COALITION

Its educational program called “Kudzu Kollege” and its creative approach to making manual labor fun and enjoyable are major reasons for the Coalition’s success. Its work with non-chemical methods of controlling kudzu such as the use of barriers, scaffolding, fire, hot water and the use of continual innovations of ordinary farm equipment with unique attachments made in Spartanburg by Pressley Machine Works and designed to combat kudzu continue to produce success and attract attention.

The Kudzu Coalition considers the Spartanburg Men’s Garden Club the “Mother Organization” and recognizes the birthing period on its website www.kokudzu.com. Many of the kudzu warriors regularly participate in the Club’s litter pick up events. The Coalition is now a valued corporate member of SMGC: brothers and sisters in spirit, love for the environment, appreciation for trees and garden sites, and activists in these pursuits.