

**GARDENING**

# Honoring the unsung heroes beautifying Spartanburg

How fortunate we are to have different groups of people who work hard to make Spartanburg a more desirable place to live. There are several groups that stand out to me and I am sure there are others that have done a great deal of work to make Spartanburg a more desirable place to live. The ones I am most familiar with are the Men's Garden Club, Spots of Pride, Tree Coalition, Group of 100, Noble Tree Foundation and the Northside Initiative.

Over the past 15 plus years, these groups have worked hard to make a difference in Spartanburg County. They have each played a role in some way to make our community a better place to live. Cleaning up areas that were eyesores and unattractive was the mission of several. Their involvement has done things including cleaning up abandoned lots, planting trees and shrubs in medians, adding fountains and statues to beautify, landscaping areas such as our downtown airport and interchanges on Interstate 85, planting trees along Pine Street and East Main Street, removing kudzu and English ivy from trees, cleaning up the entrances to Spartanburg and more.

How fortunate we are to have the leadership of people including Bill Barnett, Newt Hardie, Hans Balmer, Henry Pittman, Kurt Zimmerli, the Johnsons and Roger Milliken. These people have each had a major role in getting people involved to clean up or improve our city in some way. These leaders, plus many others, have taken the



**BETTY MONTGOMERY**

"bull by the horns" and made a positive outcome.

Where would we be without the Men's Garden Club? They have planted thousands of trees in our county and have made Spartanburg much more beautiful. Maples were planted along Pine Street, willow oaks along East Main Street, crapemyrtles along Highway 221, cherry trees along South Pine Street and other places. Pittman, along with other volunteers, led the charge to get these projects done. Fortunately, they are still working to plant trees and to make a major difference with two faithful volunteers Bob Reynolds and Benny Carter.

Balmer was the workhorse behind getting Spots of Pride going. With his gentle manner, he encouraged people and businesses to undertake an area that needed attention. He would visit and show them his ideas of beautifying places that were less than attractive. He gave plans for people to adopt an area that needed to be cleaned up, shrubs and trees planted and to maintain them for three years. Most of these projects took place in medians and intersections that were heavily traveled. He was successful and has been missed greatly since his untimely death to pancreatic cancer. His legacy continues with a



**Workers with the Trees Coalition, including Jimmy Kelly, and volunteers and participants with the Universi-Tree program, help cleanup and eradicate invasive species, including kudzu and wisteria along the Mary Black Foundation Rail Trail in Spartanburg in 2014.**

very active board.

The Group of 100 began by taking on one project each year. They would take sites that were major eyesores, clean them up, landscape the area and add statues, fountains, trees or shrubs. The first project was to remove the "Egg Roll King" from a median and re-landscape it with a lovely fountain and trees. Since then, they have done a miraculous job of creating lovely sites around the city. Projects like children saluting the flag on Daniel Morgan Avenue, the intersection of Pine and St. John, the Mary Wright School, cleaning up an eyesore on Church Street and North Pine Street and others. Each project stands out as you drive by and you might never know they were responsible.

The Tree Coalition, under the leadership of Hardie, cares for trees. This group prunes and removes suckers, and sees that trees are properly mulched. They remove English ivy, kudzu and wisteria from trees. Hardie, at 80 is like "the Energizer bunny." He is out doing something every day. He

has worked hard to teach people in neighborhoods about taking care of their trees, and has gone out with them and cleaned up areas. He gets groups of volunteers to prune and remove invasive plant material. Volunteers have worked hard to clean up the entrance into Spartanburg via Highway 221 and Interstate 26. Hardie is presently working on cleaning up the areas of No. 176 at Highway 9 where there is trash, weeds and junk trees, making this eyesore attractive for people entering our city. This organization is run out of the back of Hardie's car where all his equipment is readily available to clean up "spots of embarrassment" as he calls them.

Hardie is great at motivating people to get the job done. It shows how one person can make a difference. He has gotten students from different schools and taken them out to clean up projects like the Mary Black Foundation Rail Trail and Lawson's Fork Creek. People call Hardie and tell him about areas that need attention and he does his best to get a group to undertake the project. One of his latest



**City of Spartanburg employees hang baskets in downtown Spartanburg in 2014 as part of the Spot of Pride program.**  
HERALD-JOURNAL FILE PHOTOS.



**Newt Hardie works to dig up Kudzu crowns in an effort to clear away the weed near T.K. Gregg Recreation Center in this 2009 photo.**

projects was alerting the Department of Transportation of dead trees along Woodburn Road and cleaning the ivy on the trees.

Today, Spartanburg is a lovelier, more desirable place because of people caring and taking action. Every time a group works to clean up an area, plant a tree, hangs up a flower basket downtown, takes on a spot of pride or cleans up a spot of embarrassment, think about how much this helps to enhance our community. Everyone can make a difference. Take a strip of road near your

home and remove the trash. Report litterbugs. Plant a tree. Volunteer to help with some project or create your own neighborhood group to clean up a vacant lot or donate to one of these organizations.

Thank you to all who have made a difference and to those whose names I have not mentioned, you get a double thank you. You are heroes for beautifying Spartanburg.

— Betty Montgomery, the author of a "Four Season Southern Garden," can be reached at [BMontgomery40@gmail.com](mailto:BMontgomery40@gmail.com).