

DIRT Daubers

Meet the group that's beautifying our city with projects and education

During these winter months, sharpening tools, pruning rosebushes and feeding azaleas keep gardeners busy in anticipation of crocuses bursting from the soil.

"It's an exciting time to be a member of the Spartanburg Men's Garden Club," said club president Everette Lineberger.

Seeing the fruit of their labors in flowering shrubs, trees and bulbs are not the only reward.

Plans are being finalized to host the 2006 National Convention of The Gardeners of America/Men's Garden Clubs of America at the Marriott at Renaissance Park on April 20-22.

The closest the annual convention has been to Spartanburg previously is Asheville.

The Spartanburg club with 190 members and a dozen corporate supporters is the only one in the state.

Lineberger said most of the national organization's strength is in the Midwest, but the local club with its 57-year-old history is making its mark.

He joined the club shortly after mov-



Harold Wolfe and Susan MacDowell prepare pots for the Spartanburg Men's Garden Club annual container spring sale at Hatcher Garden.

ing to town in the 1960s.

"I was impressed by the rose gardens that Mr. W.O. Ezell (a charter member of the garden club) had across from our church (St. John's Lutheran). I saw him working there all the time. That was my first exposure to the Spartanburg Men's Garden Club," he said.

Lineberger retired as minister of the church in 1990.

"I found that since then I have been able to plant more and more flowers. It's quite rewarding," he said.

And for 50 years, he has grown irises and shared his expertise at monthly programs for the Spartanburg Men's Garden Club.

"We have quite a variety of program topics from Clemson extension speakers to hybridizers. Presentations on

By **Janet S. Spencer**
Photography by **Gerry Pate**



Henry Pittman prunes a maple tree at Hatcher Garden and Woodland Preserve.



Spartanburg Men's Garden Club members prepare pots for an upcoming annual container spring sale at Hatcher Garden.

water gardens, irrigation, lawn care, fertilizers, shrubs, camellias, home fruit. And the speakers range from hobbyists to professionals," he said.

The membership is diverse. Nearly 40 percent are women.

"Membership is beneficial — not only as a gardener. I've gotten to know a lot of people that otherwise I would not have met," Lineberger said.

Jess Taylor, a director emeritus, and his wife, Allene, have been members of

the club for several years.

Taylor has a pavilion named in his honor at the Hatcher Garden and Woodland Preserve that the club supports.

"We enjoy working there," Allene

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Taylor said.

She is also excited about the club establishing a library with items being catalogued as members search for the appropriate location to house it.

Henry Pittman, also a director emeritus, said the local club became affiliated with the national organization in 1953, after first being dubbed the “dirt daubers.”

Pittman gives Ezell credit for working tirelessly to beautify Spartanburg well before today’s Spot of Pride project was conceived.

Pittman has documented the club’s progress over the years with a folder filled with documents that detail litter pickup, crape myrtle selection and maintenance, landscape evaluation and kudzu control.

Hatcher Garden and Woodland Preserve is a major recipient of the club’s assistance and members’ labor of love.

The club has contributed over \$55,000 to developing the garden and preserve and for several years has given \$3,000 annually for maintenance.

Pittman said members also contributed to and maintain a large Spot of Pride in memory of Ezell on the west side of town and another on the east side in memory of former club president Claude Sherrill.

Plant sales in the spring and fall have supported the club’s finances since 1975.

And tree projects on I-85, North Pine Street and Highway 221 were initiated and received state and federal assistance, Pittman said.

Club members are also friends of the crape myrtle tree.

As advocates, they emphasize proper maintenance of crape myrtle trees, in an effort to stop “crape murder,” or over-pruning and destroying the natural beauty of the tree’s shape.

The club is dedicated to its goal of continuing to make the Spartanburg area more beautiful.

“We want to live up to that reputation,” Lineberger said.

The motivation is inspired by a poem Ezell borrowed before his death from Dorothy Frances Gurney and used on the cover of his booklet, “Carolina Garden Guide.”

“The kiss of sun for pardon, the song of the birds for mirth. One is nearer God’s heart in a garden, than anywhere else on earth,” Gurney wrote. ♦



Want to dig in?

The club meets on the third Monday of each month at 7 p.m. in the community room of the Arts Center on South Spring Street.

Dues are \$35 annually for individuals and \$45 for households.

For more information on the Spartanburg Men’s Garden Club, call Henry Pittman at 579-0532.