

Gardening

Linda Cobb: Lady Slipper Garden Club committed to helping beautify Spartanburg

By Linda Cobb

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The Lady Slipper Garden Club has been in operation for the past 42 years serving Spartanburg.

Mary Helen Smith, who is the outgoing president, has spent her time focusing on native plants. Native plants are defined as plants that grow well in this area with little maintenance. She has done a good job of spreading the word about these plants. The incoming president is Jan Goldstein.

When Smith asked the garden club's members to serve on committees to help the group carry out its mission, no one turned her down. They have been planting and mulching beds at the Hope Center for Children, working on the urns at the Spartanburg Regional Healthcare System Hospice Home and helping teachers to plant trees on Arbor Day at the Charles Lea Center's Penarth Home and many more projects.

But their story really begins when Newt Hardie, president and chairman of the Trees Coalition, spoke to the club last November. Hardie talked about how his team of volunteers worked to remove invasive plants such as English ivy, along with seedling trees from areas where they have become an eyesore. One of the garden club members decided to donate \$1,000 anonymously to the Trees Coalition to replace the invasive plants with native plants in honor of the members of the Lady Slipper Garden Club.

Jane Bagwell, the garden club promotion chairwoman, said, "We were thrilled about this donation because it was given to honor all the community work that this club has done to beautify and educate Spartanburg over the past 42 years and continues to do. This is an amazing club. All the dues go straight to working on our projects."

In addition to the donation, several garden club members volunteered at a "Tree Party" held at Hatcher Garden and Woodland Preserve by the Trees Coalition. The work was done in return for Hardie speaking at the club.

The group focused on removing the invasive plants from a strip along Sylvan Drive and the Carrington neighborhood. Kevin Parris, arboretum director for Spartanburg Community College, recommended what native plants should be used after the area was cleared of the invasive plants.

Parris planted 40 azaleas and Bob Reynolds, of the Spartanburg Men's Garden Club, planted 20 cucumber magnolias. In addition, 20 big leaf magnolias, seven ashe magnolias, five osmanthus, 20 Florida yews, 35 swamp white oaks, 15 American



Linda Cobb photo

Lady Slipper Garden Club Members, from left, Jane Bagwell, Mae Carey, Mary Helen Smith, Cathy Minch, Shirley Llewelyn, Lois Stringer and Helen Gould pose beside the renovated roadside that a donation funded to replant with native plants.

elms, six silky dogwoods and 12 beauty berry were planted.

Smith is proud that these plants were grown at Spartanburg Community College.

The clearing out project started on Feb. 5 and was completed at the end of March. The goal was to put back native plants that would survive in this climate without too much maintenance or water.

“The overgrown plants with the addition of all of the invasive varieties was an eyesore,” Smith said.

The surrounding neighborhoods of Carrington, Sylvan Heights, Converse and Crystal Springs Ravines have taken over ownership of this project. The effort has proven to be a fine example of “paying it forward” from the beginning with a garden club talk which evolved all the way to revamping a roadside location and turning it into a beautification spot. This is a job well done.

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