

HATCHER GARDEN

Volunteers work to remove English ivy

Trees Coalition invites community to help Wednesday mornings

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Alice Henderson didn't realize how rapidly English ivy could grow before she and her father, Harold Hatcher, planted the invasive vine several years ago at Hatcher Garden.

"Dad and I grew up in the Midwest where ivy didn't grow so fast," Henderson said. "We both like the fact that as it grew it kept the land from eroding, but you have to keep a very close eye on it. We realized it was getting out of hand."

English ivy is a non-native invasive vine that finds its way into parks and nature trails, climbing and killing native trees. On the ground, ivy can choke out other plants and create an "ivy desert" where

other plants can't grow.

Every Wednesday morning, volunteers and trained contract workers suit up in gloves and bright orange vests and wield garden tools to remove that ivy from Hatcher Garden off John B. White Sr. Boulevard in Spartanburg.

The team is led by Newt Hardie, a retired Milliken & Co. employee and master gardener who founded the Kudzu Coalition in 2004 to combat kudzu in Spartanburg. In 2012, the group became the Trees Coalition and expanded its scope to include additional invasive plants like wisteria and English ivy.

"Non-native invasive plants are the leading cause of the decline and extinction of native plants and birds populations,"



Alice Henderson, daughter of Harold and Josephine Hatcher, who established Hatcher Garden in Spartanburg, helps the Trees Coalition remove invasive English ivy from the garden. Every Wednesday morning, community members are invited to help with the group's efforts to eradicate the ivy. ALEX HICKS JR/
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Hardie said.

When Harold and Josephine Hatcher moved to Spartanburg in 1969, they noticed the area that they later turned into Hatcher Garden was awfully eroded, Henderson said.

"They loved working outdoors and they got

the idea of buying up this eroded land and working to restore it," she said. "They wanted to create a space where people in the community could enjoy nature together."

The Trees Coalition has been removing the garden's ivy for several years,

but it wasn't always the group's main focus. Volunteers initially targeted kudzu, privet and wisteria.

In 2014, the group began removing ivy from the trees and successfully cleared 217 stems. The remaining tree ivy will soon be taken care of, Hardie said.

Now the Trees Coalition is tending to ground ivy and invites the community to help remove it at Hatcher Garden each Wednesday from 8:30 a.m. until noon.

"We don't ask volunteers to engage major ivy infestations," Hardie said. "Instead, we use a variety of methods to knock back the heavy ivy so that it is easier for newcomers to be successful. If you can weed a garden, you can pull ivy."

Betsy Steel-Walton has volunteered with the group for about two months, assisting with

ivy removal.

"What first caught my attention was kudzu and trees that I'm just curious about," Steel-Walton said. "I'm far more capable of pulling ivy though, and there is plenty of it."

Hardie estimates about 2,500 feet of ground ivy has been removed from Hatcher Garden, with much more to go.

The time required to eradicate the plant depends on the number of volunteers who come out to help. If at least 20 volunteers regularly help, the ivy could be gone by next year, Hardie said.

"The place is beautiful and we do it to honor Mr. Hatcher's creation," Hardie said. "Mr. Hatcher would be proud of the effort and the results."

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