

**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE
GARDENER
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Dear Fellow Gardeners,

This is a bittersweet column as it is the last issue of the *Gardener* magazine. This has been a fine publication put out by diligent and talented editors, the last of whom is our secretary, Marcia Peterson. Thank you, Marcia, and all of Marcia's predecessors, for a job well done. You have kept us informed, entertained, educated and in touch with your excellent work and we are very appreciative.

Spring is creeping up on us and I for one will certainly welcome it. It seems to have been a very long, cold winter.

Thank you to all those kind souls who sent calls and cards and get well wishes following my second total knee replacement. I certainly enjoyed all your kindness

and appreciate being kept in your prayers. Cleaning up my garden this spring is going to be such fun and without pain!

Hope you will look through this issue of the *Gardener* very carefully as you will find the registration form for the National Convention to be held at the Holiday Inn at the airport in Des Moines June 24-26. The hotel reservation is there also, along with the schedule of events. Do please plan to join us for a really good convention! The Des Moines club has been making plans for more than two years to host us this year and they are promising lots of treats!

At this writing, the new partnership with the American Horticultural Society is signed and sealed. You can expect the first issue of *The American Gardener* to be delivered to you in mid July. I know you will enjoy this fine publication and take pride in the new association with a very large, excellent group of gardeners and experts.

I hope you will take time to check out the AHS website, which you can access from our website, and to familiarize yourselves with the vast array of benefits of this partnership. We hope someday to have a club in Alexandria, VA. and to hold a national convention at River Farm, AHS' headquarters on the banks of the Potomac.

Let me take a few moments to brag a little on our Spartanburg, S.C. MGC. It was my pleasure to have a glorious two day tour of Spartanburg, hosted by Henry Pittman and Bob Almond, two dynamos of that club, in November, just prior to the National Board Meeting in Jackson. You'll find some pictures of these two gentlemen on some of the sites they helped to develop.

The Spot of Pride project was started and is conducted by the group "Pride Task Force". It is an informal group begun by two local women who were tired of seeing the highways littered, poor business landscaping, billboards hurting our scenic roadways, etc, and began a quiet crusade to correct these things and make Spartanburg neater, cleaner and more beautiful. The group has grown slowly over the years to about 15, but is still informal with no treasury and only one officer, the Chairman.

We have a group of areas that Pride concentrates on such as hanging baskets downtown, billboard control, litter, trees, and abandoned buildings.

The organization took the lead in working with the city a number of years ago to procure federal grant money to re-beautify a large street-side area that the MGC had beautified in the 60s by Mr. Ezell—it is now called Pride Trail and is a fine beauty spot.

About 5 years ago Pride began a tree project patterned after the very successful Trees Atlanta. One of our Pride members has taken that as a personal project closely tied to a local conservation organization. It is called Trees Spartanburg and has been responsible for planting a hundred or more street trees. I have helped a little with this, and have supported it strongly, as has the MGC.

Since then, some 40-50 have been constructed, or are planned. Ground rules are as follows:

City and Pride supplies proposed landscape plan, including irrigation (we feel irrigation is essential for a quality public garden area)

City solicits bids for new SOPs, hopefully a group at the time for best price. This includes installation and ongoing maintenance.

Sponsors (businesses, foundations, hospital, schools, private organizations, etc, etc.) pay UP FRONT for installation and 3 years of professional maintenance

The Spartanburg County Foundation has set up a repository account for these funds which are proper tax deductions to the sponsors.

Funds are controlled, dispersed jointly by the Foundation, City and Pride. Total has now reached over a million.

Costs are escalated about 10% to provide funds for replacements as necessary without going back to the sponsor.

Sponsor is recognized with a SMALL, neat, standard sign with: “Spot of Pride” and

Sponsor is recognized with a SMALL, neat, standard sign with: “Spot of Pride” and our dogwood logo, and the sponsor’s name.

Sponsors have the opportunity of renewing their sponsorship after the 3 years. Otherwise we look for a new sponsor.

The MGC continues to support and encourage the SOP program—they send letters of congratulations and thanks to all sponsors.

A strong and dedicated leader has made this work. It is so successful because of the burning desire of Hans Balmer. As with most community projects, they require a leader with a “fire in the belly” for success. He has had help and encouragement from the Pride organization, MGC, Garden Council, City of Spartanburg, etc. and from the County to a certain extent. And the local media has given great PR. And Mr. Milliken (Milliken Fabric Mills owner) and the Noble Tree Foundation have been strong supporters and participants.

The concept is a great one, and should work in many communities if there is a leader who will push it, monitor, promote, and follow up. Could your club help with such a project? It certainly will get you some significant recognition, could help draw new members and very positively reinforce the best parts of our organization. We all need to start small, but Spartanburg MGC has helped raise this project to a very high standard and is still called upon to design some of the landscaping and provide many of the trees planted on these Spots of Pride. Let’s give Spartanburg a big hand on a job well done!

Henry and Bob certainly rolled out the big red carpet and I thoroughly enjoyed seeing the fruits of their labors. Thank you again, Gentlemen.

Have you invited anyone to join your club this year? We could certainly use some new members, and just two new members will earn you a Spade Club award!

See you at the convention!

Happy gardening,

Honey Barnekoff