

Arbor Day Is a Plan for the Future – Even as We Remember Our Past

Arbor Day celebrates the planting, upkeep, and preservation of trees. Trees create positive outcomes for our ecosystems and communities through civic improvement. The Raleigh Garden Club planted a grove of dogwoods in Claremont Park to honor members who passed away the previous year and held a lovely dedication service on Arbor Day to remember our departed friends.

Planning for Trees

Our Civic Improvement Chair begins planning in January in cooperation with the Raleigh Dept. of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources (Parks Dept.). A location and the species of tree is selected jointly, and this year Claremont Park was chosen. It is a relatively new park along Crabtree Creek and our location was selected to improve an area near the Greenway Trail. The species chosen was *Cornus florida* 'Cherokee Princess,' a cultivar that is a vigorous, disease-resistant selection with large white flowers followed by bright red bird-attracting fruit.



1 - A mature specimen of the Cherokee Princess dogwood and one of our newly planted ones, with its dedication plaque.

The preparations for the Memorial Service on Arbor Day included calling friends of each honoree in the Club and finding out about their family and close friends. Invitations are sent, and a program prepared as a keepsake for each attendee. Club members are invited at the meetings and by our newsletter and website. This year, because our trees were along the Greenway, balloons and signs welcomed attendees and guided them to our ceremony. Chairs were ordered for the day, and a little prayer said for sunny weather.

Arbor Day Celebration

The Parks Dept. does the actual planting of the trees and sets a memorial plaque on a stand in front of each one. This is done in February so that the trees have plenty of time to settle in before the hot weather comes.

On Arbor Day, the day of the dedication, the weather was sunny and warm. Spring was in full bloom. Our members and family members, some 30 in all, gathered in the early afternoon to celebrate and remember our departed friends. After the Welcome by our President and an opening prayer, our Civic Improvement Chair Laurie spoke on the importance of Arbor Day. She reminded us that planting trees contributes to our environment over long periods of time by providing oxygen, improving air quality, climate amelioration, conserving water, preserving soil, and supporting wildlife.

She then spoke of the tree dedication in honor of our six departed members and introduced a speaker for each honoree. The speakers shared many a fun story in their remarks, bringing smiles and even an outright chuckle as these wonderful gardeners and friends were briefly brought back to life in our minds.



2 - Our Arbor Day Tree Dedication Ceremony. Laurie, Civic Improvement Chair, welcomes all while standing next to one of our newly planted dogwood trees.

Reflecting on Our Accomplishments

The most significant accomplishment of the memorial planting of our six lovely dogwood trees will be how they are enjoyed by greenway trail walkers for decades to come! And enjoyed just as much by the wildlife they will support, especially the berries in fall for the Cardinals, dark-eyed juncos and migrating waxwings. Also the several species of butterflies that favor dogwoods as a host plant, including the blue azure.

Cooperating with the Parks Dept. to improve our city is a project of civic improvement, meeting a key goal of both GCNC and our Club.

Perhaps best of all the ceremony on Arbor Day gave each of us attending the chance to connect to our love of our community and our role as a garden club to plant trees in support of its ecological health and beauty. The tree planting symbolizes a certain point in time, when we

honor our past members, and is also an Arbor Day gift of trees that will endure and grow stronger, blossoming with life, year after year, for generations to come.

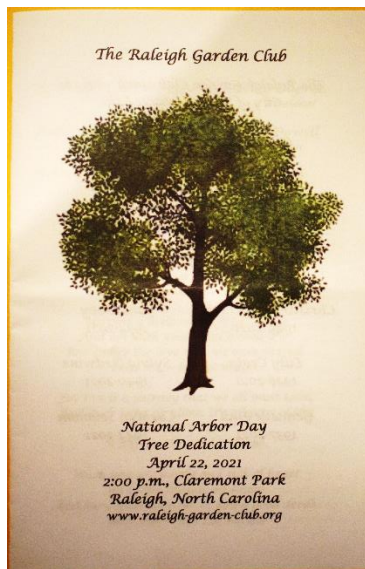
Financial Report

The Raleigh Garden Club gave \$1000 to the Parks Dept. for the Arbor Day tree planting. This money was budgeted from our member dues. The Club also shoulders the cost of the ceremony, an additional \$200 for renting chairs, printing the program, and other incidentals.

How did we do?

The many expressions of gratitude on the day of the ceremony testify to the success of our Arbor Day activities. Later that year, one of the family members visited the grove and sent us word that the trees are growing. She thanked us, saying how much the memorial tree meant to her and her sister, visiting out of town. Our Club members all look forward to seeing them next spring in bloom for the first time!

Thank you for the opportunity to tell about one of The Raleigh Garden Club's most cherished traditions. Planting a grove of our beloved and native dogwoods in the memory of our past members is a living tribute on Arbor Day that benefits present and future generations, and a symbol of a gardener's life well lived.



3 - Our Program is a keepsake for the friends and family of our honored members, each of whom has a tree planted for Arbor Day