
George Harding Azalea Garden - A Progress Report

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Status

As of the end of October 1992, a very few volunteers have put in almost 700 hours of work, and have accomplished the following:

- The garden site has been completely cleared of grass, great quantities of English ivy, and a variety of miscellaneous weeds and shrubby growth.
- Several malformed trees have been removed and others trimmed.
- Four huge piles of somewhat-composted leaves, about 200 cubic yards, were dumped on the site by Arlington County at no charge, through the efforts of the American Horticultural Society (AHS).
- About half of the leaves have been spread over the garden site and about half of those leaves have been tilled into the soil.

Other items of interest include:

- A soil test indicates a pH of 4.8, which we will raise somewhat with agricultural lime.
- A proposal was received by the AHS for getting water to the site and installing an irrigation system, along with a pledge from AHS to pay 2/3 of the cost.
- We have a pledge of 80 cubic yards of pine bark for the cost of hauling it from North Carolina; this bark will be spread and tilled in as a longer-lasting soil amendment than the leaves.
- We have a pledge of another 200 cubic yards of leaves from the County later this fall, which we will spread and let sit over the winter.
- We have pledges of many, many plants from individuals and nurseries, including a number of nurseries which advertise in **THE AZALEAN**.
- We have received just over \$4,000 in cash contributions from individuals and chapters, including \$500 each from the Ben Morrison, Brookside Gardens, Northern Virginia and Richmond, Virginia Chapters of the ASA and several \$500 memorial gifts.

Problems

The major problem has been the lack of labor, except for a handful of dedicated volunteers who have come week after week, some from almost 60 miles away. Without their effort, we would hardly be getting started with the tremendous job of clearing about 10,000 square feet of mature English ivy, spreading the mountains of leaves over the 400-foot length of the site, and repeatedly tilling about 20,000 square feet of soil. With more help, we could have been finished with the basic site preparation long ago, and be getting on with the detailed design of the garden layout.

Because of the lack of help, we're wearing out. We now plan to use a front-end loader to ease the work of spreading leaves and bark, somewhat regretfully because of the attendant soil compaction as well as the expense. Fortunately, our membership has been quite forthcoming with money.

Forecast

It's going to be a magnificent garden at a very prominent site, fitting of its title and its purpose. Although we are somewhat behind our development schedule, we have the winter to catch up by lining up all of the plant donations, deciding exactly where each of the plants will be going in the garden, developing a visitor's brochure for the garden, and getting ready for a massive planting effort in the early spring. At this moment, the dedication is still tentatively planned for May 1993, in time for the blooming season.

Help

It's not too late to help, whether with plants, money, or just plain work. Our schedule has evolved to every Wednesday and most Saturdays, from 8:00AM to about 1:00PM. If you are available to help on Wednesday, or Saturdays, first call Bob Stelloh at (301) 840-1714 or Milt Lerner at (703) 765-0225 to make sure that we'll be there. River Farm is at 7931 East Boulevard Drive, just off the George Washington Parkway about five miles south of Interstate 495. □