

GROWING IMMORTAL

By Heather Magruder

The steel sculpture rises from the lawn, appearing to be an outcropping of some sort of inordinately large flower. Titled The Immortal Turf, it beckons from a grassy lawn that edges busy John B. White Boulevard in Spartanburg, announcing the entrance to Hatcher Garden and Woodland Preserve. Striking and sturdy, it is also an appropriate testimony to the couple who took an acre of land, a retirement hobby and a love of nature and then cleared, dug, planted and nurtured it until they transformed a backyard garden into a 10-acre public garden and woodland preserve right in the middle of a bustling Upstate city.

When Harold and Josephine Hatcher began this project in 1969, the land had been so depleted of all nutrients by decades of cotton growing that it was only red clay, scarred by gullies that deepened with every hard rain. Harold loved it. He cleared weeds, amended soil, rose every day with the sun to create a space that would nurture anyone who visited.

As she had been through their decades of marriage, Josephine was his partner in the garden. When the soil was ready, Josephine stepped in and began planting natives. Harold moved on to bigger things.

"Harold didn't want to fool with anything smaller than a shrub," says Joe Mullinax, executive director of Hatcher Garden and Woodland Preserve. Ultimately, Harold and Josephine would plant over 10,000 trees, shrubs and flowers, purchasing adjoining pieces of property as they became available. As the gardens grew, Harold and Josephine invited people to join them in working and enjoying the land. First, individual friends came, who helped Harold with various projects, including the creation of a waterfall on the property. Soon, word got out, and the Hatchers found themselves working alongside members of the Spartanburg Men's Garden Club, the Spartanburg Garden Club Council, Spartanburg Technical College and more. Their dream was well on its way to coming true. Before he passed away in 2003, Harold saw his dream of a public garden and greenspace for the Spartanburg community complete when he gave the land to the Spartanburg County Foundation.

Today, Hatcher Garden is open to the public every day of the year during daylight hours. Walking paths guide visitors through a diverse array of flora and fauna in the gardens. Visitors glimpse everything from a medicine garden and bald cypress pond to Josephine's natives, including Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Trillium, oakleaf hydrangea and big-leaf magnolia.

Hatcher Garden and Woodland Preserve carries on Harold and Josephine's legacy of nurturing the land and the community by partnering with many community organizations, offering Junior Master Gardener classes for children and by working the garden as the Hatchers did. On any given day, you may find staff and volunteers creating new gardens within the garden, like the garden that will hold rhododendron, heather and more, or testing new perennials for use in the garden and for sale to the public at one of the two annual sales. Every day, The Immortal Turf calls from the roadside, continuing the Hatchers' invitation. Whether they come to work or to relax and find comfort or inspiration in the garden, all are welcome, any time the sun is up.



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Preserve
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www.DiscoverSouthCarolina.com