

# The Ability Garden Gazette

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Fall 2007

## 4-H Ability Garden Camp: Yoga, Dance, and Bubbles!

Eighteen young people attended two 4-H Ability Garden Camps; one met July 9—13, the second met on Thursdays in August. Several new activities were offered this year, including yoga, dance, and a special visit from the Fort Fisher Aquarium.

Angelika Lacer, who teaches many of the children during the school year, led the group through yoga postures in several different locations throughout the Arboretum. Turning the Wheel, a modern dance group, shared their movement interpretations of the children, accompanied by drumming.

The Fort Fisher Aquarium environmental educator brought a number of living sea creatures in a tank, bringing the ocean experience to the garden.

Water Day is always a special closing day activity! Everyone got wet and everyone had fun.



Carolyn Dunn and Katie Zeigler enjoy Water Day at the end of July's camp session



Jessica Young transplants lemon balm



Emily looks at a horse shoe crab shell from the Ft. Fisher Aquarium



Campers explore the herb garden

### Preview Party:

It's time to get ready for next year's Preview Party, which will be held on Feb. 1 from 7:00 pm—9:00 pm at the Schwartz Center. Please call Beth Ann at 798-7668 if you can volunteer to serve on a committee!

## Cape Fear Area United Way funds Ability Garden

The Cape Fear Area United Way made its first-ever award to Cooperative Extension's Ability Garden with a grant of \$7,500 on June 21. The award is designated for operational expenses, specifically the salary of the program's registered horticultural therapist (HTR).

The intensively competitive application process required extensive re-

search-based evidence of goals, impacts, and indicators of success. Funding from United Way offers recognition that horticultural therapy increases the wellness of the entire community.

Another benefit is participation in the United Way Speaker's Bureau which raises public awareness of the Ability Garden programs.

## Judy Adkins: Volunteer Brings Unique Style to Plant Care

Life changed for Judy almost thirty years ago when she experienced a nervous breakdown. Until then she had worked in the demanding field of nursing, where she made life and death decisions every day. After the breakdown, this was no longer possible.

But Judy didn't want to give up on life. Eventually she found her way to the Ability Garden at the Arboretum, where she is able once again to help others and lead the way. She grew up on a farm in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia and spent a lot of time outside tending to the vegetable gardens. During her classes at the Ability Garden she became both student and teacher, sharing her extensive plant knowledge and helping other students with their activities.

"I have a green thumb," she says with pride. "I got to teach the others about plants I knew, showing them how to plant them. I helped them with their tasks – helped them understand what we were doing."

Judy also made some new friends that she still sees in her exercise classes at the Y. Thanks to her hard work, she has managed to lose a significant amount of weight and bring her diabetes under control.

She is also able to continue her visits to the Arboretum, now in the role of volunteer. "I water plants here (in the Administration Building) and in the visitor's center," she explained. "I help plants to live and grow and look pretty. I also pick up the cans that are collected in the storage building."



Judy Adkins looks like a garden when she comes to volunteer

When she isn't working at the Arboretum, she works with her neighborhood watch group to maintain a safe and comfortable environment. She has learned how to run the irrigation system at her apartment complex and makes sure the grounds are watered over the weekend.

"All my plants are coming back," she said, adding that the changes in the seasons and the return of her plants help her cope with her mental illness.

Judy ended the conversation by saying she would recommend the Ability Garden program to everyone. She took her watering can to the next office, knowing that the plants and the people who lived with them needed her knowledge and attention.

## Landfall Foundation Announces Grant for Ability Garden

The Landfall Foundation has awarded the Ability Garden a \$6,000 grant for 2008. The grant will support the New Hanover County Public School Education Outreach Project. This project focuses on making horticultural therapy available to more public school students by advising schools about installation and use of adapted garden beds for students with special needs along with offering more classes here at the Ability Garden.

## Volunteers upgrade gardens at Hospice

On May 31, eight people gathered at Hospice Life Care Center to refresh the Ability Garden there. Participants, volunteers, Ability Garden staff and Hospice staff all came together to take out old plants that had completed their life cycle and replace them with fresh, new annuals and perennials.

The garden also provides an excellent volunteer opportunity for Ability Garden participants and graduates who have gained horticultural knowledge and want to keep their skills sharp. The volunteers worked hard under a hot sun to weed, plant and water several flats of annuals and perennials that had been grown during therapy sessions throughout the spring.

Ability Garden volunteers returned in September to prepare the beds for fall. Ongoing maintenance requires regular commitments of time and energy and keeps the volunteers engaged in their community.

On June 28 and July 12 the Ability Garden provided a visiting artist during The Sunshine Camp, a summer day camp for kids dealing with the death of a loved one. Each child made a grasshead as a way to learn practical coping skills while sharing their grief.



Paul Allen (right) pulls weeds with the assistance of Ben Miller (left) and Claire Hetzel (center).

# G'Day, Mate! Claire Hetzel Arrives from Down Under

Claire Hetzel, horticultural therapy intern, is the newest member of the horticultural therapy staff. A native of Australia, she earned her bachelor's degree in horticulture from the University of Melbourne and worked there with people with disabilities. She is in America seeking to complete registration through the American Horticultural Therapy Association (AHTA).

Claire is implementing the horticultural therapy replication project at Davis Health Care Center (DHCC), a project that received significant funding from the Davis Foundation. Her first impression on arriving at DHCC was they had an amazing greenhouse that was falling into disarray.

"It didn't look like a good working space at first glance, but then I saw the outdoor area and some good quality plant material," she said. She also learned quickly that the recreation therapy staff was well informed about horticultural therapy.

She wondered how she could get to know sixteen strangers in a thirty to forty minute session, especially since some of the people were hearing-

impaired and needed direct, one-on-one communication.

"Their actions showed that they had the knowledge of gardening and they showed enjoyment in gardening," she went on to say.

Claire wondered about the cultural divide that might exist between a young Australian and elderly Americans. There were unpredictable language and cultural barriers. Even the plants were very different from what she knew in her native country.

Now that she has been working at DHCC for several weeks, Claire feels positive about the experience.

"I'm getting to know the residents – there are new faces every week," she said. In fact, the program is so popular that there are almost more than she can comfortably serve!

When grant funding ends next July, Claire will look for more opportunities to work in the United States in order to complete her HT registration. "In terms of learning, America has a longer history, a more developed knowledge base, and higher professional standards" than other countries, including Australia, she explained.

Recognition of her registration by AHTA will be recognized everywhere in the world.

Since she is going to be in America for a while, Claire is assimilating to her new culture. When she wants to feel really American, she just drawls, "How y'all doin'!"



Regina Brewington douses Claire with water

## Seasonal changes for Ability Garden plants

*Phyllis Meole, HTR*

As we move into the Fall/Winter gardening season we are busier than ever in the Ability Garden. Here in Wilmington, in Zone 8, we have a terrific opportunity to grow a wide variety of plant material that thrives in the cooler months of October, November, and December.

The Ability Garden program is truly a "hands-on" experience for all of our gardeners. Typically, our tiniest seedlings are handled by some of our more seasoned volunteers in the Monday Garden Club. As the tiny plants get bigger and stronger they can be "bumped up" into our standard 4" pots. This task is fun and engaging. The work encourages participants to exercise judgment, develop hand-eye coordination, and

self-assess the quality of their work. For those with less manual dexterity or visual acuity, plugs rather than seedlings are the material of choice.

Everyone who participates in our program takes a plant home and the rest are used on the Arboretum grounds, sold at our plant sales, or shared with schools and nursing homes. In addition, the Ability Garden has an ongoing service project at the Lower Cape Fear Hospice and LifeCare Center. We supply them with seasonal plants for a lovely butterfly garden and maintain the garden on a regular basis.

Our mission in the Ability Garden to provide meaningful, therapeutic nature-based activities for our participants and volunteers presents a won-

derful opportunity for us to be very productive horticulturists. At this time of year we grow most of our plant material from seed. This requires an investment of time and effort but the end result is very high quality mature plants that are completely acclimated to our particular climate here in Southeastern North Carolina.

Some of the plants we'll have for sale this fall will be ornamental cabbage and kale, violas, giant red mustard, swiss chard, colorful lettuces, parsley, chives, and rosemary. In addition, we always have a wide variety of easy to grow houseplants.

So the next time you see our plants remember that a tremendous amount of effort, expertise and care from program participants went into their creation. The Ability Garden is truly a place where everyone is able to do something very special.



**Cooperative Extension's Ability Garden  
New Hanover County Center  
6206 Oleander Drive  
Wilmington, NC 28403**

Cape Fear Area  
United Way



*North Carolina State University and North Carolina A&T State University commit themselves to positive action to secure equal opportunity regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, sex, age, or disability. In addition, the two Universities welcome all persons without regard to sexual orientation. North Carolina State University, North Carolina A&T State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments cooperating.*

### Call for Volunteers:

A new social purpose enterprise called Plantability is under development which will generate revenue to support on-going operating expenses. In order to sell more plants we are collaborating with Hoggard High School's Horticulture Program and Pender Correctional Facility's horticultural therapy program. We will need additional volunteers to man the plant sales and pick up plants as this program grows. If you enjoyed working at the Master Gardener's Plant Sale and would like to support this program, please call Beth Ann at 798-7668 to volunteer.

#### Upcoming Plant Sales:

Oct. 17—Poplar Grove Farmer's Market, 8:00 am —1:00 pm

Nov. 8—NHC Government Complex, 10:00 am—2:00 pm

Nov. 15—Arboretum grounds, 8:00 am—5:00 pm

### N.C. State Announces Funding for Agent position

North Carolina State University has announced funding of the Horticultural Therapy Extension Agent position at the New Hanover County Cooperative Extension office retroactive to July 2007.

This funding not only provides sustainability for the program, it is a recognition of the importance of addressing this issue within Cooperative Extension's educational mission.

The programming process includes creating objectives, delivering educational information to a targeted audience and determining the impacts.

The Horticultural Therapy staff reaches a non-traditional, diverse audience with valuable skills devoted to improving their health and wellness, a major issue being addressed within Cooperative Extension.

#### Special donations:

**Stained Glass Raffle:** Many thanks go out to Dick and Julie Lisle whose donated stained glass works of art raised \$410.00.

**Lion's Club donation:** On May 22 the Lion's Club made a \$500.00 donation to the Ability Garden. "This donation lets us help those who cannot help themselves," said their spokesman as he presented the check to Beth Ann Scisco, program director.

**Masonboro Home and Garden Water Garden Tour:** Proceeds from the First Annual Water Garden Tour totaling \$750.00 were donated to the Ability Garden in May.

#### National AHTA conference:

Coming this fall, Heather Kelejian will present a major paper titled *Ability Garden Replication – Lessons Learned from Three Garden Programs* at the National AHTA Conference in Silver Spring, Maryland. Along with Phyllis, she will describe the process involved in the replication of the Ability Garden at Davis Health Care Center.