The Sandhills Horticultural Society lost its “founding mother” on February 4 with the passing of Jane McPhaul, a woman whose vision, love, and unending support for the gardens provided the foundation for what we see there today.

Her commitment goes back a very long time. Jane was a counselor and job placement specialist at the college in the early1980s and a member of the State of North Carolina’s committee to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Sir Walter Raleigh’s English settlement attempt, the famous Lost Colony. She brought her reputation as an organizer to Fred Garrett, the Director of the Landscape Gardening Program, and soon they had adopted a design for a formal English garden submitted by student Susan Frett. They obtained approval from college administration to raise funds and set a fundraising goal of $100,000. Within days, Jane had organized a fundraising committee of prominent local citizens (she knew everyone). The committee wrote small grants to private foundations, sought dollars from the NC Department of Cultural Resources and other agencies, and even held Renaissance-style banquets, dubbed “Merry Feasts” for groups of 15-20 revelers. Jane understood that the gardens needed large donations, but she also knew the value of involving people on a smaller and more intimate scale. The funds came in, donors sponsored special features such as the central fountain, and the garden was completed and dedicated in 1987, right on the 400th anniversary. It was named The Sir Walter Raleigh Garden and joined the Ebersole Holly Garden as the second named garden on the college’s grounds.

An Enduring Legacy

But Jane’s commitment to the gardens did not end with this initial success. She realized that if additional gardens were to be constructed, a source of funding and community support needed to be in place. She proposed to Mr. Garrett that an organization be created with the purpose of generating funds to establish and maintain future gardens—providing a living laboratory for students and a source of inspiration to the community. Thus, the Sandhills Horticultural Society was born. In 2011, at the dedication of the Jane McPhaul Herb Garden within the Raleigh Garden, Fred Garrett said,

The Sandhills Horticultural Gardens would not be what they are today without the loyal support of hundreds of people contributing their time and money to the Sandhills Horticultural Society—which started with an idea from Jane in 1987.

Jane’s commitment to the gardens and the Society continued throughout her life. For many years she served as a docent and was the “go to” docent for leading children’s groups. Her natural persona matched their child-like joy. Even after her retirement from the college, Jane continued to lend guidance and direction to assist the program and its students. Her enthusiasm for life was simply contagious. She made every project an adventure and took so many along for the ride.

In appreciation of Jane McPhaul’s lifetime of contributions to the College’s Landscape Gardening Program and the Sandhills Horticultural Society, the upcoming Patrick Dougherty sculpture will be named in her honor.
Pruning Brambles

Johanna Westmen

The title of this article may not be a term familiar to most people. The term brambles are the name given to plants in the genus, Rubus. These can include the many forms of raspberries as well as blackberries. Reasons for pruning brambles can be as simple as wanting more fruit production. But can also include pest management and cultural practices such as increasing air circulation and light exposure. Another reason to prune brambles comes from the very nature of these plants - they are rampant growers.

In order to prune brambles, you need to assemble your tools and materials. I would recommend a pair of pruners, pair of loppers, heavy gloves and arm protection such as a long sleeved shirt or jacket.

Understanding the physiology of how brambles grow will help you understand their pruning needs. Brambles are plants where the roots and crown are perennial, but the canes (upright stems) that come from the crown are biennial. This means that they live just two years. In their first year, the cane will grow vigorously and will store energy for the second year that it produces fruit. Once the cane has fruited, the cane will start to decline and eventually die. Keep in mind that there are some ever bearing species that fruit late in the first season and can again fruit in the second year. Since your two year old canes will die after they fruit, you can cut them down to the ground immediately after you pick the fruit. Be careful not to damage the crown of the plant.

Since different types of brambles have different growth and fruiting patterns, each one will have their own pruning practices. Keep in mind that you can always prune to remove any dead, diseased or damaged canes at any time of the year. Listed below are different types of brambles and the pruning practices required.

Raspberries (summer bearing red and golden). These plants produce tall, unbranched canes as well as root suckers. The best time to prune these plants is in late winter or early spring before the actual new growth begins. If you are growing these brambles in a bed, rather than a row, thin them down to six to ten canes per square foot. Another way to look at it is to try to leave an average of 4-6 inches between canes. When new growth starts back in the spring you can tip prune your second year canes to about 4-5’ high.

Blackberries (black and purple). These plants tend to branch profusely and will grow in a vase shape. They will usually not send up any root suckers. In the spring, when the first year canes reach about 18-20” tall, prune back the tips to encourage strong branching. In the second spring you can trim the branches back to 8-12 inches. If you are thinning the canes, try to leave at least 5-10 canes per plant.

Raspberries (ever bearing). These varieties are sometimes called fall bearing as well. The first year the canes should produce fruit at the tips of the canes and in the following summer these same canes will produce fruit, but much lower on the plant. The answer to pruning these popular ever bearing plants is to remove the cane tip after the fall harvest the first year. When the summer harvest has happened the following year, you can prune the rest of the cane to the ground.

I hope this introduction to pruning brambles will be useful to those already growing their own and perhaps encourage others to try them in their garden. I would recommend doing your research on varieties that do well for us in the Sandhills and give them a try. The rewards can be delicious!

Dougherty Project

You may support the Patrick Dougherty sculpture installation.

Make your checks payable to the SCC Foundation / Dougherty Project, attn. Germaine Elkins and mail them to:

3395 Airport Road, Pinehurst NC, 28374.

Thanks for your generous support.
The Sandhills Horticultural Gardens lost one of its most loyal and wonderful supporters with the passing of Sue Williamson on January 23. If you have visited the G. Victor and Margaret Ball Garden Visitors Center on either a Monday or Friday, you already know Sue Williamson. She was a faithful greeter in the reception center from the beginning; in fact, she volunteered to serve even before the building was completed in 1999.

Sue was born in 1933 and grew up on a small farm in Columbus County, North Carolina. She earned a BS degree in Science from East Carolina University and a Master of Art in Teaching from UNC Chapel Hill, followed by a Masters of Art in Chemistry Teaching from Loyola in New Orleans. In 1967 she won a scholarship to study abroad. All of her graduate studies were accomplished with stipends from the National Science Foundation. Later she was involved in additional graduatework at California State Fullerton, UC Berkley, and Duke University in Durham, North Carolina.

Sue transformed her impressive educational background into a passion for teaching. The first years of her professional life were spent teaching in the North Carolina public school system, the last four teaching chemistry at Pinecrest High School. In 1973 Sue came to Sandhills Community College to teach chemistry. She later called her 25 years of employment at Sandhills “the best working years of my career” working with Dr. Avery Dennis and all of the faculty in the Science Department. Former colleagues in the department strike a common theme when describing her: “A very gracious lady who was fully dedicated to helping students reach their potential and was always available to help students from early morning to late afternoon.”

In addition to her accomplishments in the classroom in both high school and college, Sue was an active and involved member of the community. She served on the Ruth Pauley Lecture Series Board at Sandhills Community College for 18 years and was made an honorary member following her long service; she was a member of Alpha Delta Kappa Sorority for women educators, holding all major offices in the local chapter; she has held all major offices in the local branch of the American Association of University Women; and she was an active member at The Church of Wide Fellowship in Southern Pines, having served as deacon, assistant financial secretary, and archivist. In addition to her long tenure as a volunteer at the Ball Center, she also served on the Sandhills Horticultural Society Board for a term. This full life left a bit of time for hobbies, and she enjoyed cooking, needlework, reading, and travel.

Sue often commented on her volunteer work as a greeter at the G. Victor and Margaret Ball Garden Visitors Center-- that she looked forward to working there every week meeting local people, many from other states and countries. She greeted each visitor with that soft-voiced, unassuming dignity for which she was known. She will be greatly missed.

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**The First Sign of Spring**

**Annual Bedding Plant Sale**

Benefits student’s field trips

Monday, April 19th – Friday, April 23rd

Annuals, herbs, tomatoes and pepper plants.
Pre-order ONLY.
Pickup at Ball Visitors Center, April 19th to 23rd

For order forms go to:
https://www.sandhills.edu/landscapegrd/

For additional information, email: landscapegardening@sandhills.edu
Or call 910-692-3382
To control summer annual weeds like crabgrass, apply a pre-emergent herbicide in late February to early March.

Apply fertilizer to warm season lawns after they start to become green.

Prune your azaleas after they finish blooming.

Troubleshoot your irrigation system for proper operation and coverage in preparation for summer.

Water gardens can be cleaned at this time as well as repotting and fertilizing your aquatic plants.

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