

Several years ago, I was the District Director of the Garden Club of North Carolina , District I, for four years.

It was a job I truly enjoyed and I met so many lovely people. I served four years because even then, it was hard to get people to step forward to take on the jobs of leadership, even though many of them were very qualified. Towards the end of my second term, I began to look again for a replacement. I focused on a lovely, funny lady who was an exceptional gardener and flower show judge. Her name is Mary Settle Reeves. Eventually she gave in and took on the job while still protesting she didn't feel capable. Needless to say, she became one of the best directors they ever had and ended up serving two terms, as well as climbing the ladder in the state organization. She has never lost her enthusiasm for gardening and garden clubs. Even though I don't get to see her very much, I consider her a dear friend and a model of all that is good in a woman. One thing I didn't know about her was her outlook on gardening, which is another thing we share. She posted this on Facebook last week and I want to share it with you.

I love Gardening • Gardening is not only beneficial for the environment, but it also has positive effects on our mental and physical health. The smell of soil has been shown to increase serotonin, helping to boost your mood and reduce stress.

Digging in the dirt, with the soil under your fingernails, is also good for your gut health, proving that gardening connects mind, body, and nature in a unique way.

Additionally, gardening can help reduce symptoms of ADHD, anxiety, and depression, offering a therapeutic experience that brings us closer to the earth. The simple act of planting and nurturing life can improve self-esteem and provide a sense of accomplishment as you watch your garden grow.

Gardening is more than just a hobby; it's a path to a happier, healthier life. Whether you're tending to flowers or growing your own food, the benefits are undeniable.

Did you know??

I share this with you not only because it mirrors our own garden theme... *“Mental, Emotional, and Physical Health through Gardening”* but teaches us a valuable lesson when our confidence and enthusiasm fails us. You never know what you are capable of until you try. Keep that in mind when you are asked to do a job you don't feel capable of. You may surprise yourself.

This is a BIG weekend for us. Saturday is the Garden Expo we have been preparing for the past several months. We have been propagating plants since October to sell as a fundraiser. Unfortunately, Mother Nature had that surprise of freezing weather dropped in our laps and on our plants. Many of you lost plants you were planning to bring to the event. I have no doubt most of them will revive but not by Saturday. We are ok though. Plants are trickling in and we will have some to sell. If you find you have some sale-worthy, you can bring them by in the morning. Please have them labelled and cleaned up. We will also sell cuttings for \$1 each. I plan to trim some shrubs on Friday to bring. You might do the same. The Expo opens to the public at 9 a.m. We will be in booth #38. We have a tent and tables, which Debra Smith and her husband are going to set up. We also have people lined up to man the booth. We have at least 150 plants ready to sell, as well as some garden items. Stop by and see us. Wear your pink Garden Club shirt if you can so we stand out in the crowd. There will be many vendors at the event. It will be a nice Saturday get away. Thank you all for your hard work and your good intentions. No matter what happens, we always do our best and enjoy what we do.

Don't forget to buy your tickets to the Annual Luncheon either from your Circle or at the March Meeting. Dues must be paid by May 1. Notices will be distributed at the March Meeting. Information regarding dues is found on page 16 of your Yearbook.

The deadline for Award Nominations has been changed to March 4. Please review the information on awards given to you by Louise Andrews or in your Yearbook on pages 18-19.

Don't forget to bring donations to Ways and Means. The March meeting is the last one to sell things this garden year. Ask either Pat Dermody or Helen Goller if you can help with storage of left over items until next garden club year. Thanks to both of them for their hard work this year, It is not an easy job to haul stuff back and forth, price it, display it, and pack it all up again, all with a smile on their faces. They did a great job.

This will be a relatively short newsletter. I have to do my job now of getting plants ready for Saturday. I appreciate all of you and if I can be of any service, contact me at any time.

Regards, Mary Neal, President