

Marie Martin

ASTON, N.C.

Marie Martin begins the story of her garden by saying it got started with about 100 roses, a description that immediately tells you beauty is a top priority for this gardener. "I've been gardening since childhood," Marie said. "My mother had a gorgeous garden with paths, an arbor and plenty of roses. That's where I got my start."

Marie has used the talent for creating a beautiful landscape that she learned by her mother's side to creating a breathtakingly beautiful garden at Misty Oaks, her home in Aston, N.C., just outside Warrenton. Over the years those initial rose bushes have been joined by walks full of English boxwoods, rhododendron, camellias, hostas and plenty of perennials.

Now 88 years old, Marie continues to work in her garden and add new things each year. "Gardening helps keep you young," Marie said. "You might be out walking and bend over to pick up a little weed, and then you discover other little things and come back with treasures. It's inspiring."

Among the many roses in Marie's garden, one of the special ones is an old double-double rose that has been passed down in her family from generation to generation. It is this philosophy of sharing and passing along plants that Marie learned from her mother and incorporates into her own garden. Plants that have entered her garden have been passed on to her by family and friends, and she also digs up and shares many of her established plants with friends and neighbors.

"Anyone who comes through here and says they just love something, I'll dig up

part of it or take a piece to let them root it," Marie said. She even lets the birds contribute to the passalong nature of her garden. "I have crape myrtles that have been reseeded by birds taking them to different places in the garden, so they're planted to perfection," she described.

Not one to sit still for long, Marie still runs her beauty shop in Henderson, N.C., where she shows plants with her customers.

While Misty Oaks might house a passalong garden, it definitely is not a haphazard one. The stately roses make their mark in one part of the garden, while nearby a formal garden of about 150 English boxwoods line beautiful stone walkways. Of course, the landscape is also full of towering trees. Under the oak trees Marie has beds of hostas that present a magnificent appearance each summer.

Marie has a lot of room for planting whatever her heart desires on her four and a half acres. While it's hard for a woman who's so passionate about gardening to name a favorite plant, she has a special fondness currently for the stargazer lily. The voles that populate Marie's garden like this lily too, but she's working on an idea to protect her lilies from the rodents next year.


"I'm going to plant the lilies in a wrought-iron horse trough and the add tulips and pansies to make a spring container garden," Marie said. "I'm always planning and trying to find ways to escape the critters."

Marie often shares her garden with visitors, and many brides come to have their wedding portrait made or even hold their wedding at Misty Oaks.



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Marie's spirit of sharing extends beyond her own garden. An active member of the Little Garden Club, she has contributed to beautifying her community in many ways, from helping plant wildflower seeds along the highway as part of Lady Bird Johnson's beautification initiative to working with her club to plan and build a garden around General Bowers' tombstone in Warrenton.

Marie's love of gardening and creative ideas have touched many people over the years, and continue to do so. Her gardening plan is simple: "A vision will come to my mind and then I pursue it." It is the pursuit of beauty that continues to bring Marie joy. 

Who's Your Favorite Gardener?

IF YOU HAVE a family member, friend or neighbor whose gardening has added to the life of your community, please contact *Carolina Gardener* at editor@carolinagardener.com or write to the editor at *Carolina Gardener Magazine*, P.O. Box 4504, Greensboro, NC 27404.