



**Sexton, Pastor Tend Church Garden**

**Malachi Duke, Bill Bennett Keep Trinity Presbyterian Pretty**

# Church Garden Helps Keep City Beautiful

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Every year at this time, the "Keep Durham Beautiful" campaign is launched.

"Why the litter?" — after all the efforts to provide convenient alternatives for refuse disposal, asked a recent article in the Herald.

The problem is an individual one. It's like a stone thrown in a pool — the ripples spread out in ever-widening circles. If we, personally, let down, whether it be in keeping our yard presentable or failing to vote, we infect others by our examples.

Everywhere the fight to "keep things up" goes on in monotonous, repetitious tasks. They sometimes seem so meaningless and fruitless. But we keep right on. Weeding the garden, knowing well the weeds will grow again overnight. Or out we go with the lawn mower, to cut the grass that we mowed only a few days ago.

We can't give up. Then maybe our neighbor wouldn't, either. The thing would spread all around us, like a sort of domestic measles.

When you're sprucing up the neighborhood, you're fulfilling an obligation to yourself and your neighbors. Then if others on your street or road keep up, the whole community gets a lift. That's what "Keep Durham Beautiful" is all about.

Everywhere you turn around Durham, you run across an unexpected lovely spot. True, you have to look for some of them, but they're there. Keep looking.

Dennis Deyton, assistant Durham County Extension Agent, called a real jewel of a garden to my attention. It's the Cloister Memorial Garden at the Trinity Avenue Presbyterian Church.

This quiet nook nestles between the tall brick church and its adjoining classrooms. It forms a courtyard with lovely black wrought-iron gates complete with angels. These gates into the garden are alongside the cloister of the church on the Trinity Avenue side. They are open from 8-5 daily.

Although the garden has been lovingly planted for five years, the growth is so luxurious, it looks at least 10 years old. It is the pride and joy of William Crompton Bennett, the church's minister, and Malachi Duke, the church sexton.

A rare variety of a Japanese holly tree is the focal point of the garden. It is in a raised brick planter with a ledge that provides a great resting perch for a tired visitor. This is in the center of the garden. A brick walk leads you straight to it, around it and straight on again to a doorway of the church complex.

The rest of the space is planted in grass. According to Bennett, it takes a beating. Every Sunday the garden is open after church. It not only is a good gathering place, it is used for receptions and small weddings, too. With all the activity, it still has a good green turf.

Another unusual planting in this garden is a dawn redwood tree. Dennis Deyton calls it a "cousin of the famous Sequoia." There's one on each side of the handsome gates. They have about doubled their growth in the five years they've lived in that spot.

Like most folks that plant, Bennett fears he and Duke have overplanted, that things are too large or too crowded. You don't get that feeling at all. Reds and blues of various shades, as well as dramatic white clematis blend with the greenery. Not shy little clematis but giant size, as large as a grapefruit. They are very showy against the dark green shrubbery.

There are white dogwood, spruce, Japanese cherry and maple trees. Huge mahonias with their holly-like leaf and purple berries grace each side of the doorways. Large tree ivy bulges out underneath, cascading down the brick steps.

For rhododendron lovers, there are two different colors in bloom now. You'll enjoy their large handsome flowers.

One word of warning, if the doors of the garden slam, hope the night latch isn't on. People have been known to be imprisoned there, Bennett laughingly recalls.

But you couldn't be in a more beautiful place. This little gem of a garden is listed in the "Flowers and Gardens of North Carolina," published by the Travel and Promotion Division of the Conservation and Development Dept. of N.C. Other Durham gardens included are St. Philip's Episcopal Church Garden and the famous Duke Gardens.

Trinity's listing is described as a "small garden. Charming."

Not only do I agree but go a step further. I say it is a good example of "holding the fort." Setting a good example. Sooner or later, William Crompton Bennett might get tired of the whole thing. Or Malachi Duke may retire. Someone else will have to tend to that garden. They could say, "Why not stop right now? Let everything in me and about me slide comfortably downhill?" They don't and won't. They know that something far more important is involved.

Laboriously, step by step, monotonous daily tasks have made Durham more beautiful every year, little by little. It is up to us to carry on.

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