



## Memorial Arboretum Garden *served by Rockdale County Extension and MGEVs*

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Georgia Master Gardener Extension Volunteer Program

Community and nature are brought together in the Memorial Arboretum Garden located at the Georgia International Horse Park in Conyers, GA. Master Gardener Extension Volunteers (MGEVs) in Rockdale County provide the vision and leadership to create an arboretum that also serves as a memorial garden within the community. Visitors to horse shows and other events held at the Horse Park are often drawn to the arboretum garden.

Approximately 37 species of trees identified by signage make up the garden that is part of six acres of forest leased by the City of Conyers. Pathways create access to most of the trees, and benches were installed by MGEVs to provide a place for visitors to rest.



**150**  
volunteer service  
hours in 2017

**12**  
MGEVs  
contributed to  
this project

Visitors can enjoy the native trees as they stroll down paths or relax on benches. Visitors have come from all over the USA, Canada, and other countries, and have shared many positive compliments about the garden.

In addition to offering an escape from the sounds of the city and its traffic, the arboretum garden serves as a memorial to community members who have passed away. Community members can purchase honorary plaques to be mounted by a chosen existing tree or select a tree from an approved plant list to install in the arboretum. The memorial plaques of honor are mounted to markers made from telephone poles donated by Georgia Power that are cut to an appropriate size. Currently, more than 100 trees within the arboretum have memorial designations. Trees closer to the roads are reserved for community members needing wheelchair access to their memorial trees. The garden, with its pathways and benches, provides opportunity for visitors to spend time in quiet reflection and celebration of the lives of loved ones.

Community members who purchase memorials also share in the responsibility of caring for the designated tree, with guidance provided by MGEVs. Individuals are asked to

help keep invasive plants under control and remove debris from the area around the tree and surrounding pathways. While drawing community members closer to nature, the garden also provides opportunity for community members learn about tree care, tree maintenance, and other educational Extension programming available to the community.

The Memorial Arboretum Garden is described as an ongoing labor of love. Started in 2005 by MGEV Cesare Matrundola and continued by MGEVs in Rockdale County, the garden offers a place to celebrate life while soaking in nature. MGEVs come together for monthly workdays throughout the year to ensure the garden is well tended. During these workdays, MGEVs plant new trees, install posts and dedication plaques, trim low branches, or cut fallen branches when needed. Matrundola is recognized by a plaque in the garden for his vision, dedication, and leadership at the arboretum.

Over **100** memorial trees are currently included in the garden.



*The Georgia Master Gardener Extension Volunteer Program prepares volunteers to support UGA Cooperative Extension in delivering gardening information to Georgia's citizens and communities. Since 1979, Master Gardeners and UGA Extension have helped Georgians become healthier, more productive, financially independent and environmentally responsible.*

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