

## Garden Club

By Yvette Bannen

The first meeting of the Pine Knoll Shores Garden Club's new year will be on September 9 at 9:30 a.m. at the town hall. The program will be a presentation by JoAnn Shallcross, chair of the town's Recreation Advisory Committee, who will discuss the town-wide birdhouse competition to be held in February 2010.

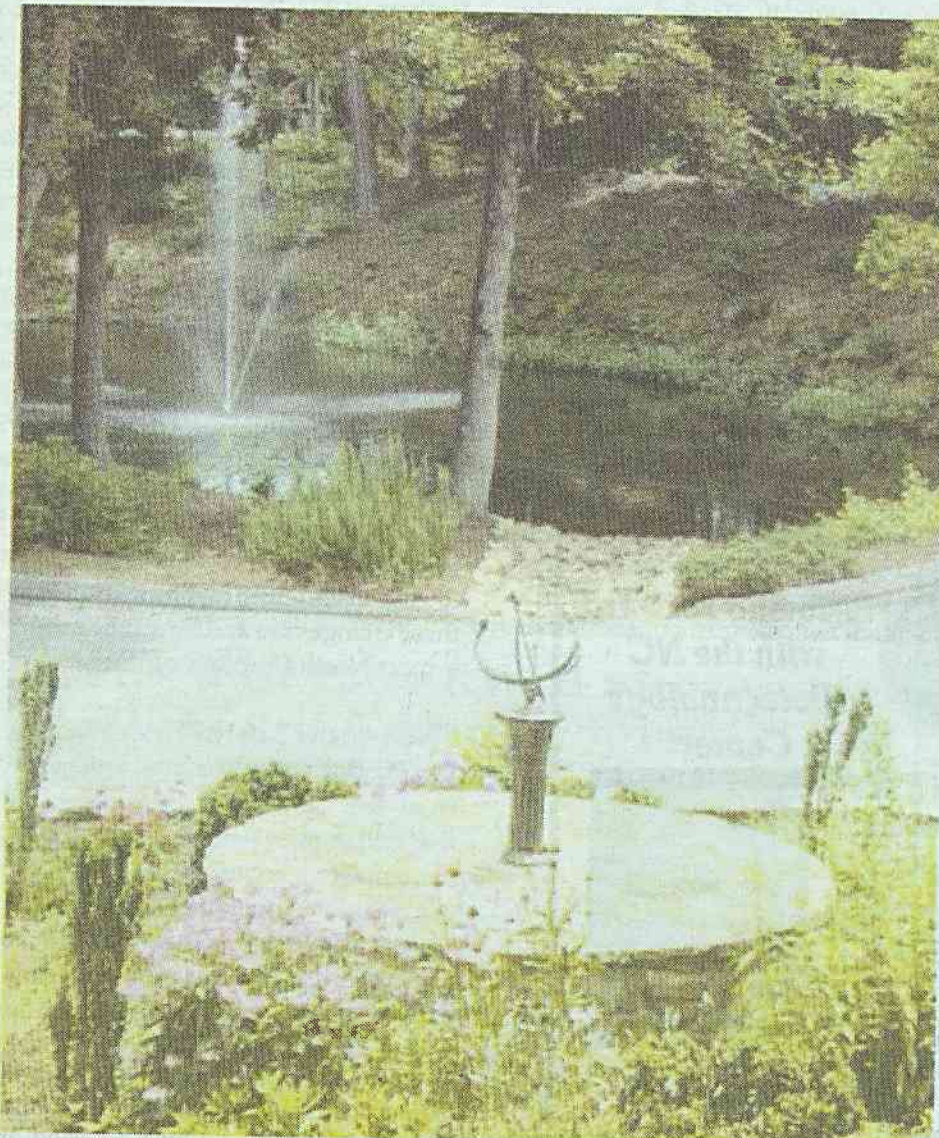
One project that had been the subject of many discussions at garden club meetings was finally accomplished in June. The sluiceway that leads to the retention pond in front of town hall was "dressed up" by Carolina Home & Gardens. Heavy-duty plastic was put

down to prevent weeds from growing and then covered with four tons of Tennessee river rock.

Over the summer, members have continued to pick up trash in designated areas and have reported for work days to weed and tend the various sites in town maintained by the garden club.

A watering schedule was set up for the garden club members to keep the new planting on the Oakleaf Drive island watered during the heat of summer.

PKS residents and visitors are always welcome at the meetings held at town hall on the second Wednesday of the month at 9:30 a.m.



**Pride of Graden Club:** A view of the Hereth Garden (Dedicated to Peg and Lee Hereth, May 21, 1999) and the new sluiceway leading to the retention pool in front of town hall.

## Beach Adventures for Young Children

By Phyllis Makuck



ones that are exposed and dig down a couple of inches to capture those that have buried themselves in sand. You can see the youthful advantage being close to the ground has in this pursuit.

I'll warn you that while you're digging for coquinas you may pull up some creepy crawly sand fleas (*Emerita*), also known as mole crabs, sand crabs or lookie cookies. They tickle the palm of your hand, but such surprises

make a hunt more exciting.

Many of us who do not have small children find ourselves entertaining grandchildren or other little guests during warm weather months. Even in this magnificent playground we call home, we can start scratching our heads wondering how to entertain the kids—especially late in summer and early fall when they have already been on a number of seashore treasure hunts, built their sandcastles, dug miniature inland waterways, scooped up minnows in the shallows, sat at the shore's edge and let ocean water wash over their legs, and even dared to go into a gentle surf. Two beach activities I highly recommend if you haven't tried them with young children are picking coquinas during the day and taking a ghost-crab walk with flashlights at night.

Coquinas (*Donax*) are small bivalve mollusks in smooth colorful shells about the size of beans, so they are also known as bean clams. To catch them, you need a bucket with a little water in it, and hands that are not shy about digging in wet sand. You may find their empty half shells on the beach, but you want live ones. Look for them burrowing in wet sand as the surf advances.

When the tide is fairly low, I walk along the water's edge with my young guests until we spot a few. Some will be real tiny, but we are looking for the ones that are, in fact, bean-sized. We scoot down as the water recedes, pick up the

The more hands engaged in searching for coquinas the faster you get enough to bring home and cook for appetizers. Have the children rinse them several times. Then, allow the coquinas to soak in cold fresh water awhile to get out sand particles. Put them on the stove in a pot with a little water and salt. In a few minutes, they will pop open, snapping to the delight of youngsters. After draining cooked coquinas, you add butter and garlic then eat all the ones that have opened. Adults will find them delicious, and most children love them as well.

You can then wash out empty shells, give them back to the kids with paste and construction paper. Children love to create refrigerator-worthy coquina designs.

Then, if you aren't too exhausted, keep the youngsters up past dark for a ghost-crab walk. During the day, you can see sand-colored Atlantic ghost crabs (*Ocypode quadrata*) emerge from sand holes, but the real adventure is to take flashlights and go for a beach walk after dark, when crabs are especially active. Direct a light on an approaching ghost crab, and it will freeze. Being out on the beach at night makes you aware of how alive the sand is. I still find myself screeching with the children when a critter sidles up to our bare feet.