



NEWS RELEASE

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“Follow the Blooms” during the 59th Annual Cape Fear Garden Club Azalea Garden Tour © April 13-15, 2012

Wilmington, North Carolina: Enjoy Southern hospitality amid the glorious color of azaleas and spring flowers during the **59th Annual Cape Fear Garden Club Azalea Garden Tour©** in the beautiful coastal region of Wilmington, North Carolina. An official event of the North Carolina Azalea Festival, the tour is one of the longest running and most popular garden tours in the South. Tour Chairman Karen Smith invites visitors to “Follow the Blooms”. “Our gardens change each year and I am especially pleased with this year’s eleven private gardens. They offer a variety of styles and features from whimsical cottage to stately formal designs, unique garden elements and the outdoor living spaces that have become so popular. There is truly something for everyone.” In addition, tickets include admission to the New Hanover County Arboretum and on Saturday, April 14, admission to Airlie Gardens. During the tour, **Cape Fear Garden Club Azalea Belles©** will welcome visitors in each garden.

On Friday, April 13 at 10am, the tour opens with the colorful **Ribbon Cutting Ceremony and Azalea Queen’s Garden Party©** at “Knapdale”, the home of Ronnie and Cyndi McNeill. Located on Hewlett’s Creek and overlooking the Intracoastal waterway, the home honors the family’s Knapdale, Scotland roots and shares its name with the 18th century McNeill ancestral home once located in Laurinburg. This historically inspired home with formal gardens offers the perfect backdrop for the **Cape Fear Garden Club Azalea Belles©** and their escorts, the Citadel’s **Summerall Guards**. Numbering over a hundred, the belles are dressed in handmade antebellum gowns. Special guests include the Azalea Queen, local and national celebrities and the North Carolina Azalea Festival Committee. After the ribbon cutting, visitors are invited to enjoy punch and homemade cookies served by members of the Cape Fear Garden Club. Musical entertainment by Stevenson/Stoll Suzuki Studio completes this old-fashioned Southern garden party. On Friday morning, visitors have free roundtrip bus service beginning at 8:30am at Southside Baptist Church, 3320 South College Road. Buses run until noon. No parking is available at the ribbon cutting site until after the ceremony.

Tickets are available through the **Cape Fear Garden Club Azalea Garden Tour ©** website www.azaleagardentour.org and the North Carolina Azalea Festival Office, 5725 Oleander Drive. Beginning March 1, tickets will be on sale in the Wilmington locations of Ace Hardware, Dragonflies, The Sterling House, New Hanover County Arboretum and local garden centers. During the tour, tickets are available for purchase at each garden. Children under 12 are admitted free, except for the ribbon cutting, where \$1 is charged per child. Good all three days, the ticket includes a map for a self-guided tour with descriptions of each garden. Gardens are open 10am to 6pm.

Profits from the **Cape Fear Garden Club Azalea Garden Tour©** are distributed throughout our community as beautification and horticulture grants, scholarships at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington and Cape Fear Community College, and conservation efforts at Battery Island, a National Audubon Society bird sanctuary. Over one million dollars has been distributed in the past 59 years, including \$83,000 in 2011. Cape Fear Garden Club, Inc. is the oldest and largest garden club in North Carolina and among the largest clubs in the nation. For more information about the club, please visit us on Facebook or on our website www.capefeargardenclub.org.

For additional garden tour information visit www.azaleagardentour.org or call (910)620-6958.

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