

**West Piedmont District
Lake and Hills Garden Club
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Remember the story about the mustard seed, smaller than any other seed, that grew into a huge tree? Something very similar happened to the Lake and Hills Garden Club (LHGC).

In the fall of 2019, the LHGC took a tour of the Table Rock Tea Company, just one of two tea farms in South Carolina. Our group toured 17 acres where the owners - Steven and Jennifer Lorch - grow, process, package and sell what they call "uniquely American teas" in the shadow of Table Rock Mountain near Pickens.

Then, in the spring of 2020, the Lorchs put out a call to our club. They were in desperate need of help. They had thousands of tiny tea seedlings that required potting, but they didn't have enough people to do the work. On each of five separate occasions, Lake and Hills Garden Club volunteers worked three hour shifts at the



Table Rock Tea Company potting over 7,500 *Camellia sinensis* plants that the Lorchs had propagated from seed in their greenhouse. As these tender plants cannot tolerate direct sun, the newly planted seedlings were placed on racks back in the greenhouse where they will remain for one year. So pleased were they with all of the work that had been accomplished, the Lorchs began referring to the LHGC volunteers as their "A" team, which is led by LHGC member Edna Melamed. When the "A" Team showed up to work on Mother's Day, Steve Lorch even presented the LHGC volunteers with red roses.

Now, one year later, the LHGC will propose a new permanent club project: Table Rock Tea Company Planting. While the project will require no funding on our club's part, our volunteer efforts will help a new business flourish and, as the business thrives, so will our club. Ten percent of all Table Rock Tea Company sales goes to charitable outreach through their ConnectiviTea® Fund. As the Lorchs contemplate plans to plant many more acres, they know that the seedlings they plant today will last far beyond their own lifespans. Indeed, the Lorchs are planting the future.

So what began as a mustard seed tour back in 2019 has developed into a magnificent tree as a permanent project for the LHGC. Such a wonderful way to both help out a local business and uplift our own spirits!

The Table Rock Tea Company is another way example of President Lynn Pode's theme at work. Several LHGC members literally "rooted" the community on three occasions. On site at the Tea Company, LHGC members potted seedlings, a lot of seedlings. . . in fact, over 2,000 seedlings! Steve and Jennifer Lorch, Table Rock Tea Company owners, refer to LHGC members Lynn Pode, Laura Havran, Denise Doyle, Nancy Tilley, Nan Donovan and Julie Hoppock as their "A Team."