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Garden News

Notes From the Director

By David Creech

As many of you know, Dawn puts this newsletter together. It's not easy. First, she has to cajole and then beg us to get our stories in on time. When the deadline approaches, the volume goes up, and I'm usually the last one in. When I beg for more time and Dawn gives me the death stare, I know it's over. Procrastination may be the ultimate act of defiance, but enough is enough. It's not easy producing a first-class newsletter and Dawn does a fine job laying it all out, making things fit, and finally getting it mailed and on its way. However, my chore here is equally arduous. I have to produce an epistle up at the front that will inspire, educate and entertain. Not easy when all I have is a few moments here and a few moments there - and the garden is calling.

First, let me get one thing out of the way. I've decided that the staff of arboreta and botanical gardens, particularly those with a modicum of success, is often cursed with a kind of roughly managed chaos of people, horticulture, computers, and paper. Our life is basically a whitewater river of events to get ready for, survive and clean up after. Even though it's a bit grueling at times, it's a good

thing. After all, we aren't gardening just for us. Everyone's on board. If you don't have strong educational programming, you don't have anything. If you don't have fun events, what's the point? We're making a difference in the plant world and it's all about competent staff and enthusiastic volunteers going about their day's work. One thing for sure - this is not a stagnant garden world. We're adding new garden beds, pulling in exciting new plants, planting more, and still trying to pull off two giant plant sales per year.

When it comes to events, we've been through the mill. With a van load of students, Dawn and I enjoyed the Southern Region meeting of the American Society for Horticultural Science in early February at Mobile, Alabama. We're proud to say our horticulture judging team did well, came away with some trophies, including first place team in woody ornamentals. At the PNPC, we had a fabulously successful controlled burn with the help of the Texas Forest Service and Nacogdoches Fire Department. In late March, we hosted the national meeting of the Azalea Society of America and Mother Nature gave us a great event with

participants coming from faraway places to enjoy their time in Nacogdoches.

Hasn't the garden been glorious! I don't think we could have had more people through the gardens. More bus tours, more tourists, more visitors and more shoulder to shoulder excitement than ever before. The Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden has bordered on magical this spring. The Mast Arboretum is awash in new plants and plants flowering for their very first time ever. Barbara's stewardship of the signage project in the Azalea Garden gets an A+. We can thank Dottie Wisely for making that happen. The gazebo on Wilson Drive has a landscape and just says I-am-meant-to-be-here! There's a new garden on the south side of the Lines of Vines and it's looking for a name. We've got a new dry garden planting coming on line east of the Art building. With the Tucker house roof repaired and the back yard "Firewise" landscape in - signed and interpreted, by the way - we are ready to go with that educational mission. Bottom line, we're gardening fast and furious and having about as much fun as any garden you could find. See you at the plant sale and let's keep planting!

Les Reeves Lecture Series

April 19 - Steven Chamblee

May 17 - Bill Welch

June 21 - Mike Schnelle

Garden Seminars

May 19 - Flying Flowers - Butterflies 101

- Larry Shelton

Call 936-468-1832 for more information

Garden News is a newsletter about the horticultural gardens at Stephen F. State University:

SFA Mast Arboretum

Pineywoods Native Plant Center

Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden

Jim and Beth Kingham Children's Garden

The World at Your Feet

By Dr. Darrel McDonald, President, Arboretum Board of Advisors



Dr. Creech is on top of the world!



Visitors from Spain point to their home



Volunteers from Shangri La Botanical Gardens pose



Dawn Stover points to Alabama, the origin of the azaleas behind the 'world'

Todd Ulrich is among the most innovative globe designers in the world. He designed the 4' diameter shown in the Ruby Mize Azalea Garden in the SFA Mast Arboretum. The image of the earth was created by piecing together cloud free Landsat images. The scale of the globe is approximately 1:12,000,000. The images have been reprojected to fit into gores. The images were transferred to a space age material using an ink jet printer. Next the individual scenes were sewn together to form the outer skin of the globe. A durable bladder is placed inside the earth images and inflated to form a smooth surface, extremely accurate globe. Todd also has a 15' diameter high resolution globe. Todd resided on the family farm located outside Cincinnati, Ohio. Todd has an interactive globe installed at the Peabody Museum at Yale University, National Geography, and several other sites. More images of his work can be found at RealWorldfx.com.



Dr. Darrel McDonald, aka Professor World, lives up to his nickname!

Azalea Garden Signs

By Barbra Stump

Permanent signs, designed to National Park standards, are now installed in the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden--45 bed signs describe special features or plants in each bed and five that describe larger special collections that span many beds.

Each sign has one or more color photographs that will remind people of bloom during non-blooming seasons and get them to return. The general collection signs are: Japanese Maple Collection, Hydrangea Collection, Native Azalea Trail, Azaleas are in the Genus Rhododendron, Azalea Society of America Support. This big project was made possible by our Mize Wisely Azalea Garden Endowment. Thanks so much, Dorothy!



A view of the sign in Bed 30 - Dorothy's View

Garden Gala Day is Here!

By Dawn Stover



It's that time of year again! The spring sunshine chases the winter blahs away, and the temperatures draw gardeners outside. Our beds are cleaned and prepped, perhaps our veggies are planted, and we're on the move to find some really neat plants to satisfy our ever-hungry plant pallet. It just so happens that the SFA Horticultural Gardens (including the Mast Arboretum, Pineywoods Native Plant Center, and Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden) is having a little plant sale on April 14th. Granted, if you're reading this newsletter you've probably been to or at least heard about our plant sales, and know that "little" might be an understatement.

On Friday the 13th, barring any bad omens, arboretum volunteers and students will begin the process of moving every plant in the greenhouses and nursery facilities out to the SFA intramural fields. This is no easy task, but those of you that remember the early sales know that the space afforded by this grassy expanse is well worth our efforts. No more are the days of fighting for one of three garden carts only to then find yourself in a hurry-up and wait position to get into a cramped 30 x 100 foot, 95 degree greenhouse! We literally have a football field's worth of room and lots of little red wagons eager to assist plant hunters.

Our entire plant list can be found at www.arboretum.sfasu.edu. For time and space sake, here's a smidgen of the neat things we have and hopefully some inspiration to boot.

Ornamental grasses have been the rage for some years now, and rightly so. If ever there was a low maintenance plant, these guys definitely fit the profile. There are some truly unique selections this year. Bamboo muhly, *Muhlenbergia dumosa*, is a drought tolerant, clump forming grass, with

a fine, airy texture. If you want the look of bamboo, but can't seem to find the room, this is a superb alternative. Mexican feather grass (*Stipa tenuissima*) is another drought tolerant option. Feathery foliage sways gracefully with the slightest breeze. Grass-like plants for the shade garden include sparkler sedge (*Carex phyllocephala*) with an explosion of variegated foliage and the weeping brown sedge (*Carex flagellifera*) that glows like a jar of honey in a sunny window.



Carex flagellifera

Chinese lanterns (*Abutilon sp.*) are fun to play with and mix incredibly well with the outrageous varieties of sun coleus, and other dazzling annuals like the Profusion Apricot zinnia, Joseph's coat (*Alternanthera sp.*), ornamental peppers (*Capsicum annuum*), and Dr. Creech's favorite: black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*).



Abutilon 'La Vie en Rose' with *Alternanthera ficoidea 'Calico'*

Super-powered perennials include some fantastic coneflowers (*Echinacea spp.*) with cultivars like the bold 'Magnus', orange 'Sundown', and fragrant yellow 'Harvest Moon', and prairie phlox (*Phlox pilosa*) including our new find by plantsman, Peter Loos, the lovely white 'Forest Frost'.



Echinacea purpurea 'Magnus'

Exotic things are always around, and this year is no exception. Crinum, butterfly ginger, rain lilies, purple and lime elephant ears, purple cotton, burgundy okra, and night blooming jasmine are but a few.

True staples in our gardens will be available too: versatile salvias (*Salvia*), shade loving azaleas (*Rhododendron*), Japanese maples (*Acer palmatum*), and giant leopard plant (*Farfugium japonicum*) to name a few.



Farfugium japonicum

The SFA Horticulture Club will be on hand selling their cool new t-shirts, hypertufa planters, crown tire planters, a bottle tree or two, and some light refreshments. Their sales support the students' annual trip to the American Society for Horticultural Science horticulture judging contest.

As always, the general plant sale helps garden development and supports our educational programs.

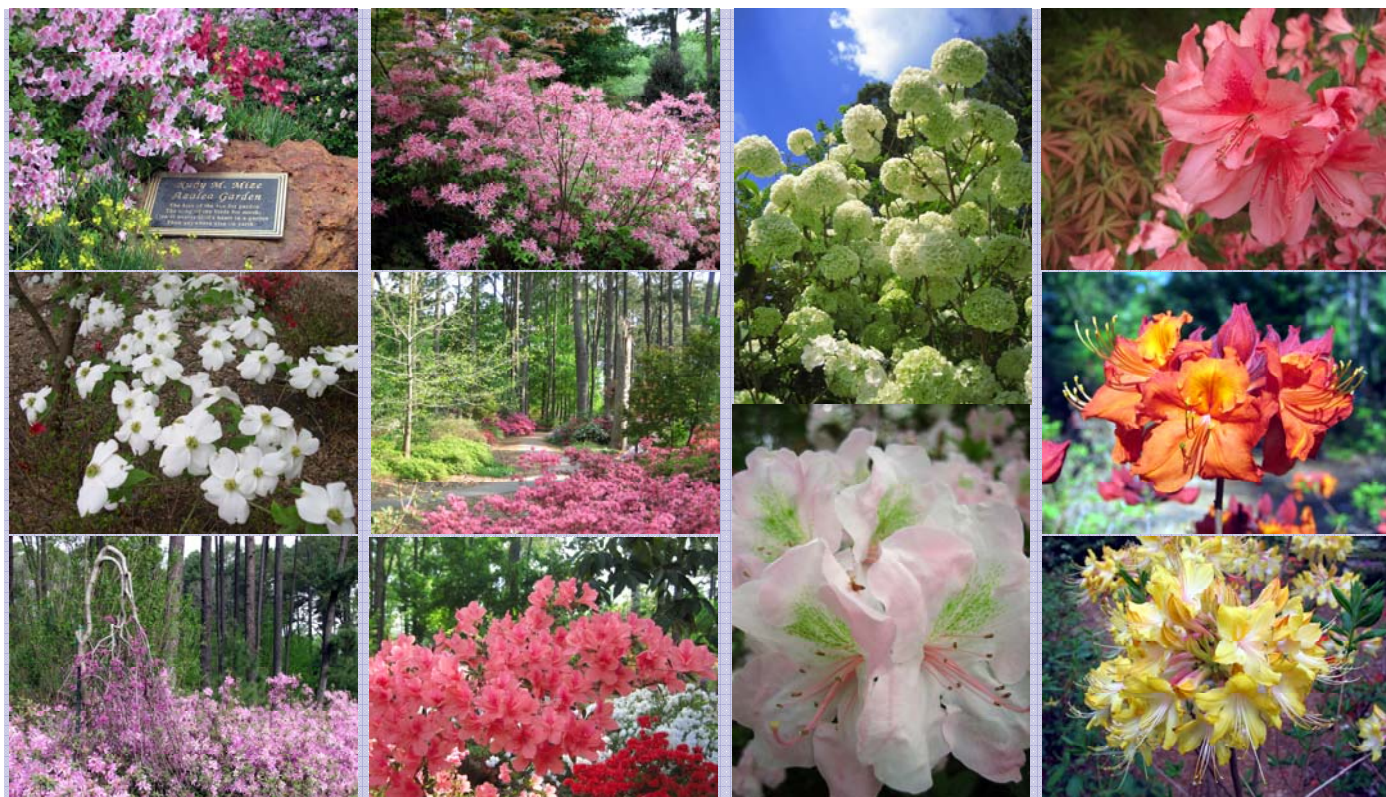


Azalea Garden in Full Bloom for Azalea Convention

By Barbara Stump

March 29th through April 1, the SFA Mast Arboretum hosted the 2007 national convention of the Azalea Society of America (ASA). The Society began in 1977 to study azaleas and promote their use in the landscape. Members—84 of them—came from as far away as Michigan, Connecticut, Georgia, and Illinois to see what a number of ASA members from Texas and Louisiana already knew; that is, East Texas is a fabulous place to grow azaleas. Of our collection of over 7,500 azaleas, at least 25 percent of them have come from members of the ASA. For example, the “purple spider azalea” *Rhododendron stenopetalum* ‘Koromo Shikibu’ was propagated by renowned azalea nurserywoman, Ms. Margie Y. Jenkins, who was awarded the ASA’s Distinguished Service Award at the convention. The ASA has been involved with the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden since the groundbreaking in 1999, and we constantly receive plants to evaluate from members such as Maarten van der Giessen. Without the advice of such members we would not have the diverse, rich collection that we have: 525 cultivars from 52 hybrid groups, either evergreen or deciduous. It was high time that these helpful, knowledgeable, and generous ASA members got to experience the garden. Weather threatened on Saturday morning the 31st, but stayed only overcast—perfect light for color photography of hundreds of azaleas. I am so happy to tell you the members were pleased with our work here!

P.S., in Dr. Creech’s note below, the second Barbara is SFA Mast Arboretum Board Member Barbara Wagner. She is the most organized Barbara I have ever known. Because of her steadfast “hand on the wheel” the ASA members and the myriad Arboretum, community, and Tyler volunteers meshed perfectly to hold a very successful and memorable convention. Many many thanks go to her forever.



“Barbara and Barbara, Inc., professional conference planners, certainly hit a home run with the National Azalea Society Conference. It seemed like everything just fell into place. The weather broke. Everyone survived the Tyler bus expedition. The banquets were fun and what a gathering of plant enthusiasts, most coming from faraway lands. This was not an easy conference to pull together. Both Barbaaras seem to be blessed with the ability to handle details. What little I saw of those details made me very tired. The volunteers were first class and we all had a grand time because we knew it would end as a success with a bunch of folks scattered far and wide telling others about what a great place, what an amazing garden, and the nicest people you could ever meet live in Nacogdoches. Here’s a fact: the SFA garden world can capitalize on our history, our reputation, and our character. We’re a diverse fun garden with plenty of interesting plants. We’re known. We can do more of this kind of thing. We can reach out more, educate more, and entertain more - simply because we have an audience that wants to be here. This is an opportunity we won’t pass up. My best thinking right now, however, is that we shouldn’t jump on this too quick. Barbara and Barbara both need a year to rest up or, at the very least, a good weekend or two pulling weeds in the garden before they start something else.” DC – 4/4/07

Princess for a Day

By Dawn Stover

This azalea season brought many new things and people to Nacogdoches. With all of the hubbub that azaleas and gardens bring about for adults, a very special lady had another mission in mind: a “Little Princess” Garden Party. Queen Luna, Dr. Cheryl Boyette, planned a tea party for little princesses far and wide. Of course with Dr. Boyette, what’s on the outside always has a bit of a deeper meaning. The goal was to bring children into the garden with play in their hearts and imagination on their minds, and to allow the girls and their parents to bond in a beautiful, outdoor setting.

Originally Cheryl planned a Sunday event that would accommodate 50 princesses. When all of the spots filled up by 10 am the day after the ad ran in the paper, it was

quickly decided that two days of garden princesses were in order. In all, a total of 92 young ladies attended coming from not only Nacogdoches and Lufkin, but from distant kingdoms like Diboll, Conroe, Sugarland, Sante Fe (Texas), and Plano.

Upon arrival, each princess received a magic wand, princess bubbles, and a butterfly bead bracelet kit to make at home. The parents were given a magic garden complete with seeds of moon vine, yard-long beans, Easter egg radishes, and baby boo pumpkins. The girls learned magic through chemistry by making their own fairy dust, which they sprinkled on nearby azaleas to help them grow. A “Find the Fairy” type of treasure hunt helped unite girls and moms as they worked together to locate three fairies in the azalea garden. When the fairies

were found safe and sound, each girl received a pink, crown-shaped lollipop.

What tea party would be complete without yummy treats? Miniature brownies and cheesecakes accompanied bite-sized petit fours. Fruit was served in a watermelon basket, while finger sandwiches and punch rounded out the menu.

Queen Luna did have a bit of help from Princess Swallowtail, Elyce Rodewald, as well as the *Nacogdoches Daily Sentinel*, and the Nacogdoches CVB. Other helper princesses included Myste Snow of the *Sentinel*, Hanna and Hunter Sowards, Kelly Childress, Grace Garrigan, and Miss Teen Nacogdoches, Kristin Oglesbee.



“When Cheryl and Elyce first ran this idea by me, I said it’ll never work, seems silly and why would anyone want to do this? Yes, they won me over - and yes, I was wrong. The event was so popular it quickly overbooked and it had to be spread over two days. So much for my foresight into kiddo-event-planning. Anyway, I stopped by intending only to take a few images and get on my way. I ended up staying for the whole darn thing and I’m not sure why. The setting couldn’t have been better and the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden was at its finest. A gray overcast sky, threatening rain but never delivering, put a special mood on our group. The three to seven year olds were dressed in their costume princess finest. Flowers were everywhere, there was a fancy tent in the council ring, fancy tables, fancy tablecloths, and a fancy buffet line of goodies on fine china and some kind of fairy punch. Don’t ask me about the fudge-brownie morsels. Then there was the bubble machine. Judging by the general glee it created, I decided all little kids need to own their own bubble machine. And then this tribe of young gals gathered up their wands and fairy dust and started a dancing, skipping, spinning, hopping, expedition through our forest trails. And while they were scattering fairy dust here and there – God only knows what it was – and I was snapping a few images, it was then that I thought, hey, we really are making a difference and having some fun at the same time. Tying this community to the SFA garden world in all kinds of educational, enlightening and entertaining ways is what it’s all about.” - DC- 4/4/07



What's Up at the PNPC

By Greg Grant

It's been a busy spring at the native plant center. First of all, you'll notice some changes in the back yard. We are in the process of finishing up our unique Firewise Landscape. We've put in a crushed granite pathway, some Grubbs white clay pots from Marshall (my favorite pots in the world!), and seeded a cool season perennial rye lawn for the Easter egg hunt. It's the same grass they use on Kyle Field. Of course it's just temporary until it gets hot.

We've added a *Viburnum dentatum* (Arrow Wood Viburnum) collection to the mesic bed in the front yard as well as some new additions to the xeric bed near the house and the riparian bed along the creek. We hope to add a native fern collection as the main feature of our riparian bed. Please let us know if you have access to a plentiful supply of native ferns.

We have a number of great plants in this year's sale including red buckeyes, Southern sugar maples, Duelberg sage, Gulf coast muhly, coral honeysuckle, and many more. You can support the PNPC by purchasing



Muhlenbergia capillaris in bloom last fall

these native treasures on April 14th.

My mom, Jackie, is on a mission to plant beautiful native coral honeysuckles to help them keep up with their Japanese cousin that has made a royal nuisance of itself. Speaking of invasive plants, we need LOTS of help cutting and controlling the Chinese privet in the Tucker Woods here. If you know any volunteer groups looking for a project, send them our way.

Be sure and check out the native marsh and prairie plants in our "Marsh-Meadow". You'll notice we had a successful controlled burn this spring. The baptisias and Louisiana iris are currently in bud. I'm quite enamored with swamps and prairies at the moment. I've planted two new bald cypress swamps and two little pocket prairies at home in Shelby County. I also recently attended the Big Thicket Science Conference in Beaumont and came back excited about the possibility of bringing Ivory Billed Woodpeckers and Louisiana Black Bears back home to East Texas. Both used to be plentiful here. If you have land, consider restoring some bottom land hardwood forest for these beautiful creatures from our past.

Come see us and check out the bluebirds and pileated woodpeckers on the PNPC property. By the way, a big thank you goes to the Four Seasons Garden Club for a generous, much needed donation to the PNPC. It helped us "pave" a new landing/introduction area for visiting local students.

Help! We're Being Invaded!

By Greg Grant

Thanks to Star Trek and its television kin, deep in everybody's mind lies a hidden fear that one day the earth will be invaded by aliens from outer space. They of course will enslave all humans, exhaust all the planet's resources, and then move on to claim their next victim after extinguishing all life as we know it. That sounds terrifying doesn't it? OK, I admit for those of you who are "imagination challenged", it sounds like a crock of compost. No such things could ever happen because invading aliens from the outer reaches don't exist, right? Well, it's actually much closer to being true than one would think. All you have to do is look up and down the roadside and you'll see an actual invasion, in progress, "as we speak".

This is a very serious issue which has been ignored way too long. It's just not right for Texas bluebonnets, Texas mountain laurels,

Texas sage, or any of our homegrown Texas natives to be pushed out by visiting thugs like Chinese privet, Japanese honeysuckle, and English ivy, but it is happening. Many overly vigorous invasive exotics from other countries are clogging our woods, meadows, roadsides, fence rows, streams, swamps, and lakes. In doing so they threaten the existence of many of our more mannerly natives that have called Texas home for thousands of years. I am personally on a quest to eliminate these botanical ruffians from my landscape, woods, and farm. I don't plant them (or suggest doing so) and I eliminate them every chance I get. The following dirty dozen are just a few of the especially troublesome outsiders threatening our beloved Texas landscape.

Annual Ryegrass (*Lolium multiflorum*): Would you believe the number one threat to our most popular cool season wildflowers

(like Texas bluebonnet) is this commonly planted "winter grass"? Thousand and thousands of bags of seed are planted for winter pastures in Texas each year in addition to the endless miles of roadside and pastures where it has naturalized. It grows vigorously during the winter and early spring then reseeds prolifically before dying during the summer. It is native to southern Europe. Please go home as I'm very allergic to you!

Bradford Pear (*Pyrus calleryana*): Did you realize one of the most popular and commonly planted flowering trees in America is a spreading invasive species from China? The tiny little pears are spread throughout the landscape leading to extremely thorny and aggressive seedlings forming impenetrable thickets. Just say no to Bradford pear and monoculture!

Chinaberry (*Melia azedarach*): The

Invaded, cont.

“pride of China” used to be a beloved tree in the South. Unfortunately it seeds along Texas rivers like crazy and has made a real nuisance of itself.

Chinese Privet (*Ligustrum sinense*):

Once a common hedge in southern landscapes, Chinese privet now blankets thousand of miles of Texas fence rows and thousands of acres of East Texas hardwood forests. It poses a threat to many spring ephemerals by blocking sunlight to the forest floor. It's our number one enemy at the PNPC where it has formed it's own ocean on the forest floor. It will take everybody's help and a monumental effort to eradicate it.

Chinese Tallow (*Sapium sebiferum*):

Known for its striking fall color this alien invader has all but eliminated our unique coastal prairies. These treasures share many of the same wildflowers and grasses as the Great Plains but also provide winter homes to an amazing diversity of migratory birds. Many are choked with thickets of Chinese tallow as far as the eye can see.

Elephant Ear (*Colocasia esculenta*

aquatilis): This is the first elephant ear I ever grew. Be careful when somebody has an overabundance of a free plant to give you! It's an aquatic thug from South America with long runners and has choked hundreds of miles of Texas streams and lake shores. It's very difficult to control once established as most of these outlaws are.

Golden Bamboo (*Phyllostachys aurea*):

Known as “damboo” to many that have it, this Chinese bully is known for its ability to grow through asphalt and invade even the nicest neighbor's yards under their fence. It has formed large impenetrable stands on old

home places where the owners have long since gone.

McCartney Rose (*Rosa bracteata*): Cattle ranchers particularly hate this thorny Chinese rose as it spreads across open pastures by seed, runners, and cuttings and is very



A view into the woods from the trails at the PNPC. Chinese privet, *Ligustrum sinense*, dominates the understory of the forest canopy.

difficult to control. This gal is mean and has sharp curved fingernails! Who said roses were hard to grow?

Japanese Climbing Fern (*Lygodium japonicum*): It's amazing how something that looks so delicate can be so imposing. This little hussy has set up shop in the Big Thicket of southeast Texas and won't go home. The same lady that gave me the elephant ears gave me this too!

Japanese Honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*): It's very sad that this symbol of the South turned out to be a mini version of kudzu. It has tasty nectar and a wonderful fragrance but unfortunately has colonized woodland and fence rows across the country, particularly in the South. I'd much rather see our prettier and more mannerly

coral honeysuckle, *Lonicera sempervirens*.

Johnsongrass (*Sorghum halepense*): All good farm boys and girls know about this pest from South America. It's especially troublesome on our roadsides where it blocks traffic vision and chokes out native wildflowers.

Water Hyacinth

(*Eichhornia crassipes*): Another pest from South America, this one was spread through water gardening. Though it has very pretty flowers, thousands of acres of Texas marshes and lakes are now choked with this floating nuisance.

Please consult with local environmentalists and botanists to find out what the problem plants are in your area. It varies widely in our large diverse state. The following plants have also been found naturalized in different areas of our great state. Do your homework. Your hand is

on the latch. Be careful what you turn loose!

Also running loose in certain areas of Texas: Ardisia (*Ardisia crenata*), Bermuda grass (*Cynodon dactylon*), Chinese parasol tree (*Firmiana simplex*), Chinese pistache (*Pistacia chinensis*), Chinese wisteria (*Wisteria chinensis*), empress tree (*Paulownia tomentosa*), English ivy (*Hedera helix*), giant reed (*Arundo donax*), lantana (*Lantana camara*) lilyturf (*Liriope muscari*), mimosa (*Albizia julibrissin*), mondograss (*Ophiopogon japonicus*), multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*), nandina (*Nandina domestica*), periwinkle (*Vinca major*), salt cedar (*Tamarix ramosissima*), tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), and wintercreeper euonymus (*Euonymus fortunei*).

"A true conservationist is a man who knows that the world is not given by his fathers but borrowed from his children."

- Audubon

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Plant a Chickasaw Plum!

By David Creech

Prunus angustifolia 'Guthrie' is a Chickasaw plum variety selected in northern Florida known for its bloom display and fruit quality. Chickasaw plums, sometimes referred to as Sandhill plums, are native to the eastern 2/3 of Texas and all the way to the east coast. Fruits are reddish-yellow and quite delicious. They make great preserves and jellies, and Indians are reported to have dried them on hot rocks and stored them for future use. This is a fine plum for our area, one that can be expected to bring in a crop with no spray program. Bloom time is reasonable enough to avoid a late frost. Our 'Guthrie' is almost a perfect open center tree, a ten-footer tree resting on the NE corner of the Art Building on Wilson Drive. It's right along a busy sidewalk. Over the years, I've noticed it blooms consistently in early to mid-March and never fails to stop a few folks in their tracks, many taking the time to reach up and pull a branch up close to get a better look at the flowers. It's a traffic stopper. Not only that, this is a tree

that gets really popular when the fruit is ripe. Actually, I've been trying to snag some seed from the tree for years, but I've lost to the barrage of sneaky robbers and thieves. Some are not so sneaky. This past summer I encountered a mother with two kids in tow, everyone armed with brown paper bags, and she had just sent her little boy up into the tree to get those "over there". I approached with a plan in hand. After she got over the idea that I was there to bust her, we came up with a deal: harvest a bunch, but when you're through with them, could you spit the seed in a bag and bring it back to us? She did!

With what Dawn and I were able to collect and that nice bag, we now have a nice crop of seedlings and hopefully we won't give them all away before the Fall plant sale!



Prunus angustifolia 'Guthrie' greets passersby on Wilson Drive