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Winter 2010

## SFA Gardens Newsletter, Winter 2010

SFA Gardens, Stephen F. Austin State University

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# Notes From the Director

By David Creech



SFA MAST ARBORETUM \* RUBY M MIZE AZALEA GARDEN \* PINEYWOODS NATIVE PLANT CENTER

# SFA Gardens News

Welcome back! First, let me say that there's great joy in SFA Gardens land. It's a verb, you know! An action word! I'm going to keep repeating that until everyone gets it. By the way, it took me forever to get the nuance. For the record, Dawn's dreaded newsletter article deadline demand has fallen exactly when our weather has turned cold and ugly - and as much as I hate to talk about the weather, I must!

Brrrrrr! It's cold! We've just suffered through four very cold nights. For us, brutal is temperatures in the teens (this isn't Minnesota). At my home on Swift Hill, Friday morning (January 8, 2010), the temperature dipped to 17° F. Saturday morning it was 10° F. Sunday morning it was 12° F. Monday morning found the temperature at 22° F. That's a rough cold spell for Nacogdoches! In fact, I don't think it's been this cold since December 23, 1989 at 5:47 AM when the mercury plummeted to zero! Few of us will forget that one. For the record, I have some experience with cold simply because I'm so old. Plus, everyone knows gardeners remember catastrophic weather events better than most folks. For SFA Gardens, we've had our moments (floods, hurricanes, drought, and tornadoes), but right now our worries are all plumbing centered, as soils go to shifting, pipes go to breaking, and faucets go to popping.

For an arboretum, a record hard freeze event is not a bad thing. Actually, it's a good thing. As I see it, after many years of mild winters, we finally get a really good plant hardiness test of the hundreds of interesting species, clones, and varieties we've added to the gardens

over the past decade. Which banana genotypes survive? Which herbaceous perennials come back and which say goodbye? How did the *Callistemon* do? Will the evergreen Mexico oaks shed their leaves? I was just looking at some blocks of *Michelia maclurei* seedlings developed from the program at the Nanjing Botanical Garden in China. This is an exciting untested species in the South, and this freeze event will answer some hardiness questions. Our *Taxodium* genotype evaluation program includes cooperators across the south, with several in northern states (Missouri, Oklahoma, Kansas, Kentucky, and North Carolina), and sub-zero events this year will provide some great data to work with.

SFA Gardens continues to amaze me. Projects are everywhere. Greg Grant is spearheading a project to build on our already impressive crape myrtle collection at the Coliseum parking lot. New varieties were planted in December 2009 along the western edge of the parking lot. This important project will end up being the world's first drive through crape myrtle arboretum! Greg is now our master label maker and we're finally seeing a steady stream of quality labels going into the gardens all the time.

A brand new blue bunny sculpture in Asian Valley of the Mast Arboretum has added a touch of something to the garden, not sure what, but I like it. Dawn has planted hundreds of new woodies

throughout the garden - some real plant excitement there and our level of maintenance has never been better. Keep an eye on Bill Jobe's kitchen garden in the herb garden this spring; we're excited about that. Over in the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden, Duke Pittman and his crew get an A+ on maintenance. Place never looked better. Near the creek, our brand new half moon steel structure is in place supporting the world's first weeping baldcypress green tunnel allée in the USA. A planting of 54 fig varieties is now in place on the slope by of the SFA Grounds complex on Starr Avenue. God only knows what the hard freezes have done to this collection - only time will tell. On the corner of University Drive and Starr Avenue, we have a "coming soon" banner for the SFA Recreational Trail and Gardens, which will soon be replaced with a beautiful redwood sign and kiosk. This is a very exciting project of the Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture and SFA Gardens is proud to be part of the development. There's been lots of details. Barb Stump, Duke Pittman and crew smoothly dealt with a myriad of issues with this planting and managed to get all the plants in before

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Planting 'Koromo Shikibu' azaleas along University Drive

## Notes, continued.

Christmas. We've thinned that front edge along University Drive, had a water meter installed by the city, added ten loads of sand to that front line, mulched it heavy with compost and pine bark, tilled that in, and planted some long rows of hundreds of 'Koromo Shikibu' plants. Perfect! A new cedar rail fence will follow. This garden will be drip-irrigated and a battery-operated time clock, controllers, and valves will be in place before spring. With 68 acres, some great trails, water on hand, and good soils, well, the opportunities for adventuresome gardening seem awfully tempting. Time, labor, and money will tell the tale here. Over at the PNPC, Trey Anderson is busy building the spring



Jonathan Pickenpaugh and Trey Anderson survey the construction site of the future green roof pavilion at the PNPC

crop, beginning the construction of a green roof pavilion at the north edge of the prop-

erty, and keeping maintenance at a remarkably high level.

We've made a few changes in our office locations. Greg and Barb have cheerfully moved into the Tucker house which gives me a better opportunity to provide them with the over-the-shoulder attention they thrive on. Keep planting!

## Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden Celebrates Camellias at 2010 Symposium

By Barb Stump

Circle March 13<sup>th</sup> on your calendars and be sure to come to our Azalea Symposium that will focus on another companion plant collection we've been methodically building in the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden. This year we are featuring the genus *Camellia*, with Dr. William C. Welch, noted horticulturist from Texas A&M University and popular garden writer and speaker sharing his passion for heirloom camellias and how they belong in home gardens.

Our camellia collection includes over 250 specimens, 20 of which are species camellias such as the very tiny white-flowered *Camellia fraterna* (native to southeast China). The collection is about one-third fall-blooming *Camellia sasanqua* (sometimes known simply as "sasanquas" in the South), one-third spring-blooming *C. japonica*, and one-third new hybrids. All are spectacular in their seasons.

I went out Thursday January 7 to take cuttings and found nearly a dozen still blooming in the windy cold that hovered near 30 degrees. One example is the single nearly yellow bloom of the hybrid *Camellia* 'Kino-gozan'. The petals have a very thick

substance to them and would make a dramatic accent to a home garden. The yellow likely comes from one of its parents, *C. nitidissima*. As anyone who has been on one of my Azalea Trail tours of the garden, I mention how horticulturists and nursery owners have all been working toward yellow magnolias and camellias. In the current American Camellia Society journal there's an article about a new species identified in China called *Camellia azalea* that is not only very yellow, but also blooms year-round. Dr. Creech, look for this for us on your next expedition to China!

Fear not, there will be plenty of Japonicas to see in bloom during the March Azalea Trail season (March 13-April 4, 2010), as the buds on *C. japonica* stay tightly closed during the cold season to protect the blooms. One of the camellias to watch for during the tour Dr. Welch and I will give after the symposium is *Camellia japonica* 'Nanbankô'. It is deep red and a great example of the "peony" form of camellia, where there are many inner petals (petaloids) in a mass in the center of the

bloom. It came from a well-known camellia nursery and is on their list of "cold-hardy spring bloomers." We've just placed another order for more of these. It is wonderful to enjoy Camellias blooming alongside



*Camellia japonica* 'Nanbankô'

the azaleas in March.

Why all this enthusiasm for camellias? They are very long-lived shrubs that really take very little special care. They are evergreen, and look good in the landscape, even when they aren't in bloom. And when they are in bloom, they light up our cool seasons with colors from palest pink to deepest red,



# Berried in the Landscape

By Greg Grant

We all love flowers. They of course generally attract the most attention in a landscape. They are unfortunately generally restricted to the warmer months of the year. Not to worry, as there are certainly other forms of color to be enjoyed during the off months. Remember, most of the color in the landscape is provided by the assorted B's...blooms, birds, butterflies, bark, and berries. Most of us know about and properly appreciate the blooms, birds, and butterflies, but bark and berries usually hang out with the likes of the late Rodney Dangerfield. We'll bark up the other trees later but for now let's concentrate on berries.

Not all plants make berries and of course all berries aren't showy or edible. Always remember to tell youngsters (and nuts like me) not to eat any berry or other fruit from plants unless they know for a fact that they're edible. Luckily most edible berries taste good while toxic ones do not. Naturally, native plants are better choices for providing food sources for native birds and animals. Whether grown for you or other wildlife, native berries and other fruit provide an added dimension to your landscape that flowers alone can't provide. As a matter of fact, I'd like to be berried in my own yard (if that's legal)!

**American Beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*):** This showy deciduous woodland native sports purple-pink berries in the fall and winter. It makes great cut material for indoor arrangements. It's also known as French mulberry (though not from France or related to mulberries) and can be found in a white berried form and a pinkish one introduced by good friend Matt Welch of Austin.

**Carolina Snailseed (*Cocculus carolinus*):** This deciduous twining vine doesn't offer that much to see during the spring and summer but during the fall and winter it can be a showy knockout with its brilliant scarlet-red fruit clusters hiding tiny snail-like seeds.

**Coral Honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*):** Unfortunately most Americans are more familiar with the fragrant invasive Japanese honeysuckle (*L. japonica*) than our own Texas native coral or trumpet honeysuckle. Though normally red-orange

it can also be found in yellow. It's not fragrant but it does have attractive blue-green foliage and brilliant red berries.

**Dogwood (*Cornus sp.*):** The acidic soils of East Texas are blessed with the showy flowering dogwood (*C. florida*) which boasts beautiful red berries during the fall. Central Texas and more alkaline areas lay claim to the rough leaf dogwood (*C. drummondii*) which has unusual white berries.



Berries on our native dogwood tree

**Hawthorn (*Crataegus sp.*):** There are many species of true hawthorns in the state. They are generally known for fowl scented white flowers in spring, thorny stems, and clusters of red fruit in the autumn. The legendary mayhaw (*C. opaca*) has larger fruit that ripen in April and May which many folks in the Southeast claim makes the best jelly in the world. The delicate foliaged parsley haw (*C. marshalli*) is becoming more popular as an ornamental as well.

**Hollies (*Ilex sp.*):** What would winter be like without holly berries in the landscape (and the house)? Our numerous hollies provide attractive (generally evergreen) foliage and showy berries on easy to grow



Yaupon hollies produce many bright red berries

plants. Remember, only the females produce berries but "it takes two to tango". The most planted include American holly (*I. opaca*), yaupon holly (*I. vomitoria*), and the deciduous possum haw holly (*I. decidua*). A number of hybrids and introduced species are available as well. Every year I like possum haw holly more and more. It never fails to fill up with bluebirds, robins, or cedar waxwings. This year it was yellow bellied sapsuckers partaking. What a treat!

**Red Cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*):** What most Texans refer to as "cedar" is actually a juniper instead. True cedars are in the genus *Cedrus* and aren't native to Texas. The most common true cedar you might encounter is the deodar cedar (*Cedrus deodara*). Our own native "cedar" has long been valued as a source of fence posts, wood for "cedar" chests and pencils, and of course homegrown Christmas trees. Although the males are a source of irritating pollen for some, the females twinkle with attractive silver-blue berries during the winter. Like most of our native berries they provide an excellent source of winter food for songbirds.

**Roses (*Rosa sp.*)** Most gardeners aren't aware that we have native roses in Texas. All wild roses produce nutritious fruit known as hips. A number of antique roses (and some modern shrubs) still retain this ability to produce showy hips which are generally red or orange. Unfortunately the invasive Japanese multiflora rose (*R. multiflora*) entices birds as well which has led to its rampant spread across the eastern U.S.

**Southern Magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*):** As if giant fragrant flowers weren't enough, the elegant southern magnolia also produces cones of brilliant red fruit in the fall. Every part of this stately magnolia is worthy of indoor decorative display.

**Strawberry Bush (*Euonymus americanus*):** Most gardeners think of the foreign, tacky, scale prone golden euonymus but this gentle, green leafed southern native is more known for its red fruit popping out of its fall pods giving rise to its other common name "hearts a bustin."

**Turk's Cap (*Malvaviscus drummondii*):** The showy red, pink, or white twisted

## Berried, continued

“hibiscus” blooms attract hordes of butterflies and hummingbirds but soon give way to small, red-orange tomato-like fruit which are actually edible in a pinch. I used to nibble on them in Mrs. Daly’s yard as a kid. Wildlife find them much more palatable.

**Viburnum (*Viburnum sp.*):** There are a number of viburnums both native and adapted to Texas gardens but my favorite is the rusty blackhaw viburnum (*Viburnum rufidulum*). This native small tree has burgundy fall color and fairly tasty blue-black berries in the fall. They taste a bit like raisins to me. One co-worker however said they tasted more like rabbit pellets! I personally haven’t tried rabbit pellets.

**Waxmyrtle (*Myrica cerifera*):** This native

evergreen shrub or small tree comes in both a standard form and a compact, dwarf form. Once again the females produce blue-gray wax covered berries while the males just stand around twiddling their green thumbs. All parts of the plant have a pleasant scent when crushed. I’ve even heard of it being used as a bay leaf substitute in cooking. I’ll drop one in the gumbo next time and let you know.

### For more information on native berries in your garden see:

*Attracting Birds to Southern Gardens* by Louisiana friends, Neil Odenwald, Tom Pope, and Charles Fryling (Taylor Publishing, 1993).

*Texas Trees a Friendly Guide* by San

Antonio friends, Patty Leslie and Paul Cox (Corona Publishing, 1988).



Brilliant red fruit produced in fall by Turk’s cap

## There’s a Forest Coming to SFA’s LaNana Creek!

By David Creech

Ta da! SFA Gardens is pleased to announce a brand new exciting project. We are reforesting the stretch of LaNana Creek that flows through the SFA campus! This won’t be easy. Actually, this is a major challenge but if our strategy is successful we should have a great young forest shading both the west and east banks of this creek.

Whether in rural or urban landscapes, the Texas Forest Service and many other agencies across the South recommend that creek sides be forested. There are multiple reasons for this: 1) aesthetics, 2) the filtering of sediment and nutrients from runoff, 3) forests allow water to soak into the ground and hold precipitation on trunks, branches and foliage, 4) stabilization of stream banks and reduction of erosion, 5) shading reduces stream water temperature and improves the quality of aquatic life in the summer and 6) forests provide food and habitat for aquatic organisms. Urban stream-side management zones are as valuable in agricultural and urban settings as they are in the forest.

We have a great team assembled in

the Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture that includes Dave Creech (SFA Gardens), James Kroll (Wildlife/Ecology), Jimmie Yeiser (Weed Control), Mike Legg (Recreation and Interpretation), Hans Williams (Urban Forestry), Matthew McBroom (Hydrology), Dave Kulhavy (Landscape Ecology), and Pat Stephens-Williams (Recreation and Interpretation). Our brand new Dean, Dr. Stephen Bullard, was quick to support the project and, finally, we are happy about the enthusiastic

thumbs up given the project by SFA’s Physical Plant, in particular, Mr. Lee Brittain, the Director of the Physical Plant. As we all hope, this is just another step in helping making SFA the stellar Tree Campus USA model.

Our goal is to reforest the western and eastern sides of LaNana Creek for about 2000’. That’s 4000 running feet of full sun tree planting opportunity. In fact, our calculations reveal a potential forested green belt of about 4.5 acres and 2000 trees. Over the next four years, we intend to plant a wide range of documented native plants that should find creek side living to their liking. Baldcypress is heavily represented simply because they are perfect for the spot, and this project fits in with our long term *Taxodium* genotype research program. This will be one of the largest, if not the largest and most diverse collection of *Taxodium* in the world!

We have no illusions. This won’t be easy. Failure is a possibility. During floods, water in the channel is swift and belligerent. Stream banks get regularly scored. Chunks of bank



The December 23, 2009 flood tests newly planted trees along the LaNana Creek

See Forest, page 5



# HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM THE PNPC!!!

By Trey Anderson

I've survived another year! What a wonderful holiday break. It was a very white Christmas in Lubbock, Texas with my girlfriend Christina Keim's family. New Year's Eve was spent with friends and I proposed to Christina on January 1, 2010. It was truly a great start to a new year! But what about the PNPC?

Currently we are working on several projects including increasing native plant stock numbers, green roof pavilion construction, garden maintenance, and we're now breaking in our Club Car Carryall 295 utility vehicle. This amazing machine was made possible through a George and Fay Young Foundation grant. It's got bells and whistles forever, including a four wheel drive IntelliTrac system that allows it to engage on its own whenever necessary, four wheel hydraulic disc brakes, electric lift for bed, 23 horse power air-cooled Kawasaki gas engine, large heavy duty steel tilt cargo box, four wheel suspension, and many more functional accessories. A big thank you to the George and Fay Young Foundation for making this happen. With forty acres at the PNPC, this utility vehicle will help us make more happen more quickly!



The new Club Car utility vehicle at the PNPC

With the Spring Garden Gala Day plant sale just around the corner, we're filling the greenhouse with many herbaceous goodies with a track record of durability and show in our garden. After a late fall and early winter scarification and stratification regime, we're proud to find many woody seed germinating and ready for planting. We've upcanned last year's woody plants in the nursery yard and are getting them ready for sales to come. A few examples of new plants we may introduce include owl's claws (*Helenium* spp.), uncommon vervains (*Verbena* spp.), and bluestars (*Amsonia* spp.). We're always looking for "new" native plants that are attractive, hard to find, easy to grow and will sell! On our wish list for the year is *Vibrunum acerifolium*, the maple leaf Viburnum – not rare but certainly rarely encountered in landscapes. Dr. Creech has put his crosshairs on *Hamamelis vernalis*, the red witch hazel, which is rare in East Texas but certainly a great native deserving greater use.

A green roof pavilion project is finally making progress at the north end of the PNPC. It'll make a great addition to the garden –and another important environmental message we will be presenting to the public. Green roofs are covered with vegetation. They cool the underlying structure and retain rainwater, which reduces storm runoff impact. In fact, we will be collecting the roof runoff in rain barrels and using that in the garden to keep our garden beds moist and happy. The 16'x16' structure will be supported by fifteen 10-inch raw cedar posts. With six inches of substrate on the

roof, it'll have to be strong. A flagstone patio is planned for the floor and garden beds with an iron ore gravel courtyard will add the finishing touch.



Forms for the support posts of the green roof pavilion

While we haven't settled on just what plants will call the roof home, we do intend to include many drought tolerant native grasses and wildflowers such as little blue-stem (*Schizachrium scoparium*), gulf coast muhly grass (*Muhlenbergia capilaris*), blazing stars (*Liatris* spp.), milkweed (*Asclepias* spp.), and possibly a few vines such as manroot (*Ipomea pandurata*) and clematis (*Clematis* spp.). As per Dr. Creech's instructions, the structure is being built so that the roof can be given a "controlled burn" every now and then to remove dry and old vegetation. So, someday, if you happen to drive by and see our green roof on fire, don't get too excited and lose control of your car! It's all a part of our plan to promote excitement in the garden.

## Forest, continued

fall away. Our strategy is to plant strong five gallon plants, drive a steel t-post on the north side of the tree, and then tie the tree at the top, middle, and bottom. Our thinking here is that this might keep the plants from being washed away. Guess what? It worked! Wouldn't you know it? Right after our first planting in mid-December 2009, we received about five inches in one storm and perhaps more up north, enough

that LaNana left her banks for over 18 hours. Our newly set trees endured hours under water with only the tips of steel t-posts and trees showing! Yes, we lost a few plants and many had their planting holes scored away. After the flood subsided, we ran down the line of three hundred trees and shoveled a little dirt here and there to cover exposed root systems and refill planting holes. One of those grrrrrr

moments. All in all, I think we came through fine. Let's face it: good gardeners are stubborn. Once the trees have been in place two or three years and are kept limbed up a bit, it's my opinion they can weather anything Miss LaNana might dream up. Of course, this is horticulture and a disaster could happen at any moment. After all, I'm always worried there's a herd of beavers coming our way!

# Nacogdoches Naturally

by Kerry Lemon

Imagine children romping in the forest, asking the names of the plants and trees, pointing out clusters of fungi, searching the creek bed for animal tracks, and talking enthusiastically about the next fishing day.

It is rare to find children playing outside and hiking in the woods in our modern world where so much of their lives are filled with organized activities, television shows, video games, MP3's, iPod's, Wii's, cell phones, and on and on. Yet every Wednesday afternoon since September, children can be found at the SFA Pineywoods Native Plant Center exploring the trails of the Tucker Woods, engaged in learning about the natural world. Working in cooperation with the Boys and Girls Club, Nacogdoches Naturally, a new educational component of the SFA Gardens, provides these kids the opportunity to enhance their outdoor skills and knowledge through hands-on discovery and play.



*A variety of methods were used to explore millipedes at the "Meet the Creepy Crawlers" family day.*

Funded by a COOP grant through the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and sponsored by the SFA Pineywoods Native Plant Center, Nacogdoches Naturally promotes outdoor education and recreation programming for underserved populations in our community. One of the major goals of the project is to encourage participants to develop a lifetime enjoyment of outdoor recreation activities and a commitment to a land conservation ethic. Under the supervision of Elyce Rodewald, SFA Gardens' dedicated education coordinator, and project director, Kerry Lemon, six SFA student workers have been hired to help work with this new outdoor education program. This collaboration with SFA students gives them an opportunity to expand their skills and

knowledge of outdoor education as well as gain direct experience working with children and families. Nacogdoches Naturally has added several interesting elements to the already thriving education programs being offered through the SFA Gardens.

Some days are spent wandering through the woods playing nature games, other days the focus might be angler education, Dutch oven cooking, or using a compass. The kids have planted switch grass, cypress trees and palmettos as well as put out black walnut seeds in the bottomlands. These service projects contribute to the continued preservation and development of the Native Plant Center. Allowing the children to explore the facility and become personally invested over an extended period of time lets them develop a connection to the land. It is through personal connections with nature that land ethic concepts can be formed. Being able to provide an ongoing program with these children gives them the opportunity to have an intimate attachment to a specific natural area.

Originally, inspired by the Texas Forest Service workshop, *Nature Realized: Connecting Children to the Land*, family weekend programs and adventure outings are offered once a month in addition to the after school program. The Family Fun Day Kick-Off in August was a huge success with 43 families and over 140 people participating in a variety of activities including making outdoor ice-cream, bird watching, orienteering, geocaching, angler casting practice, tent set-up, and much more. Nacogdoches Naturally has the cooperation of numerous partner organizations that participated in that first event and will assist in the programming throughout the year. These include Texas Parks and Wildlife, Texas Forest Service, US Forest Service, SFA Latino Legacy, SFA Outdoor Pursuits, SFA Team Geo, SFA Volunteers, Pineywoods Audubon Society, Nacogdoches Parks and Recreation, and Boyette Consulting. Another successful family day was the November program, Meet the Creepy Crawlers. At that event children and their families were given close-up, hands-on exposure to snakes, butterflies, spiders, centipedes, walking sticks, hissing cockroaches and an observation bee hive presented by the East

Texas Bee Keepers Association. There was much laughing, giggling, and wide-eyed amazement as kids held snakes and millipedes, let butterflies rest on their fingers and cheeks, and observed the inner workings of a honeybee hive.



*Kerry Lemon introduces Maddie Livingston to a butterfly at Family Fun Day*

The program will continue through July and encompass our summer camp sessions in June. All are invited to join us on Family Fun Days which are held monthly with a \$5 charge per family unless otherwise noted. Check out the schedule below and call 936-468-5586 or email [lemonkb@sfasu.edu](mailto:lemonkb@sfasu.edu) for more information or to make a reservation.

**January 30** – Lakeside Park (in cooperation with Nacogdoches Parks and Recreation) – Fishing and Outdoor Cooking – 9 am – noon

**February 6** – Mission Tejas State Park – Dutch oven cooking and history hike – 9 am – 4 pm

**March 6** – Caney Creek Recreation Area/ Lake Sam Rayburn Nature Center – 9 am – 4 pm

**March 27** – Martin Dies State Park – Basic Canoeing Instruction – 9 am – 4 pm

**April 17** – SFA Garden Gala Plant Sale – Camping with Children and Outdoor Recreational Resources – no charge – 9am – 2 pm

**May 22-23** – Tyler State Park – Family Camping Weekend

**July 10** – Lake Nacogdoches – Picnic and Water Fun – 10 am – 2 pm



# Before and After

By Dawn Stover

What a start to the New Year! You know it's been cold when a 50° day feels downright toasty! It's hard to tell what's been damaged, but I suspect we'll be a little better off than we think. That of course depends on how optimistic one was during that bitter, bitter cold spell. So far, we've had a little frost damage to the silver dollar eucalyptus and a Mexican sweet shrub, and some pretty severe damage to some of our agaves. The true test for me will come with spring and the return of our herbaceous perennials. I suspect most will be ok, but there's a nagging thought in the back of my mind that my treasured gingers will not fare so well. It's not necessarily the cold I worry about, it's the rain that provided soggy conditions to plants that require dry feet when dormant. I always say that my job is to kill plants, and those that survive are worthy of recommendation!



*"Windows" in the poly house*

While our green-leaved friends take a break from everyday life, we've had little nip and tuck here and there in our growing facilities. We've cleaned house, so-to-speak, in the North Shade House and replaced the weed barrier on the floor. No more weeds peaking through the holes and no more slipping on the slime! The poly house was due for some new plastic, especially after creating



*New greenhouse covering*

"windows" in the sides this last summer for extra ventilation. It's a bright, new world in there and the plants are happy to have the extra

sunlight - when it's available that is!

The facelift we are most excited about is the new retaining wall on the east side of our facilities. We've been slowly watching the original wall, and subsequently the growing space behind it, slip precariously toward the ditch to the east. During this cold, wet winter our wonderful



*Old retaining wall*

team from the Physical Plant and Grounds Department came to our rescue with a beautiful, sturdy new wall. It completely changes the look of our facilities, and now we're no longer an eyesore for visitors and potential students. If I may say so, we're awfully proud of how the project turned out. We'll put a few more rocks on top to even out low spots, lay weed barrier and new irrigation, and soon be back in business - barring any major freezes! Special thanks to Lee Brittian, Director of the Physical



*New retaining wall. What an improvement!*

Plant, and our SFA Grounds crew who pushed this project to completion so quickly.

With the construction of the new retaining wall, the equipment made a huge mess out of an area that is always soggy if not plain wet. I have NEVER been so excited to see such a mess! This area is prime real estate for the development of a rain garden, and I couldn't be more excited for this opportunity. (Look for a description of a rain garden in the following article.)



*Jeff Brewer with "Bird"*

Finally, our newest and bluest feature: Bunny. Our friend and local artist Jeff Brewer donated one of his metal bird sculptures in 2007. Sadly, the bird flew the coop last summer by way of an unkind art thief. Enter Bunny; an 11-foot-tall, 500 pound mass of steel. We are so happy to see Bunny greet us from his home in Asian Valley every day. He's been roughed into the landscape with leaf mulch and Arkansas moss rock and will soon be surrounded by plantings of ornamental grasses - which were part of Jeff's vision. Bunny is on kind of a temporary/permanent loan. He's ours until a buyer comes along. Thank you Jeff!



*"Bunny" surveys the landscape*

# Rain Garden 101

By Dawn Stover

In it's most basic form, a rain garden is a depression or swale in the land planted with plants suitable for edges of wetlands. The purpose is to absorb water from hard surfaces such as roofs, driveways, parking lots before it gets into waterways. Rain-water is absorbed by the plants themselves, but also soaks into the ground

through channels created by these deep rooted plants.

What's the point? Those extensive root systems also do a great job of keeping the soil where it should be, i.e. preventing erosion and slowing flooding. Rain gardens are mighty effective at cutting pollu-

tion too. They can reportedly reduce pollution by 30%. In my opinion a well designed and built rain garden will be more effective than that.

Our garden will be located to the east of our growing facilities near the ag/art parking lot. Follow our lead!



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## SFA Professor Receives International Horticulture Society's Top Honors By Kayli Steger, SFA Public Affairs

NACOGDOCHES, Texas—Dr. David Creech, professor of horticulture at Stephen F. Austin State University, was awarded the Sidney B. Meadows Award of Merit, the highest honor of the International Plant Propagators' Society Southern Region, at its annual meeting in Biloxi, Mississippi.

Creech received the prestigious award based on his numerous contributions to the nursery industry, his students and the public, said Dr. Fred Davies, Southern Region IPPS editor.

“Dr. Creech is a master teacher and mentor who has had a huge impact on horticulture students and has been very active in promoting practical experience of his students through hands-on learning,” Davies said.

“For the past 30 years, he has been ‘Dr. Horticulture’ of East Texas, and with his selection, development and introduction of new plant materials, he has greatly benefited the nursery/green industry. He is deeply deserving of the Sidney B. Meadows Award of Merit.”

Some of Creech's research emphases include blueberry germplasm, crop nutrition, endangered plant rescue, new plant introductions and evaluations, and sustainable solutions to environmental concerns.

Creech earned a bachelor's degree in horticulture from Texas A&M University, a master's degree in horticulture from Colorado State University and a Ph.D. from Texas A&M.

Creech has served as an SFA faculty member for more than 30 years and currently directs the SFA Gardens, which include the Mast Arboretum, the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden, and the Jim and Beth Kingham Children's Garden. He also co-directs the 40-acre Pineywoods Native Plant Center. Creech has been developing these gardens since 1985.

