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## SFA Gardens Newsletter, April 2000

SFA Gardens, Stephen F. Austin State University

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APRIL 2000

If you haven't touched base with the SFA Mast Arboretum in the last couple of years, you can expect a big change when you do. As a testing ground of new plants for landscapes of the South, there's plenty to see. There's something here for everyone who has a love of gardening. Get your calendar. There are a few events on the IMMEDIATE horizon that need front page shouting and we invite you to the:

APRIL 8, 2000 – DEDICATION OF THE SFA PINEYWOODS NATIVE PLANT CENTER - with Lady Bird Johnson sanctifying the event as a special day in East Texas. On the agenda: Charter School children singing program, "Country Willie Edwards" of our very own shop providing the best old country you've ever heard (one song with a little Greg Grant prose transfusion that will make the whole thing rather eclectic and memorable). You are invited to revel in this special moment. Dedication at 11 AM, a social before. Location: At the Tucker house on Raguet Street. Parking is at Raguet Elementary and the university's parking lot just to the south of that. SFA van shuttles will be running.

What is the SFA Pineywoods NPC?

The SFA NPC is a 40-acre natural area resource that will promote the conservation, selection and use of the native plants of the Southern Forest. The site, just ½ mile north of the SFA Mast Arboretum, lies in the center of Nacogdoches and at the north end of the SFA campus. The site is a unique mixture of dry uplands, mesic midslopes and wet creek bottomland. The gardens will feature the SFA Mast Arboretum's "Three R's endangered plants conservation program – Rescue, Research and Reintroduction" and will display a backbone of proven performer natives in a patriarch forest setting. This is a cooperative project of the SFA Mast Arboretum with the Forest Resources Institute of the College of Forestry. Dr. James Kroll, Forestry, and I are serving as co-Directors with an active Board. Essentially, with University, community and regional support in place, this garden spot will be home to a myriad of incredibly positive attributes for Nacogdoches. All of the necessary ingredients are in place.

APRIL 8, 2000, 12:30 – BANQUET LUNCHEON AT THE FREDONIA HOTEL HONORING LADY BIRD JOHNSON.

Dr. Bob Breunig, Director, National Wildflower Center, will be the keynote. Bob is a terrific speaker and knows just how to put everything into perspective. A procession of speakers will tout and explain the value of a regional native plants center. Tickets are available until Thursday, April 6, 2000 (I know, I know: very short notice). This should be a fun event in Nacogdoches and a real honor to have Lady Bird Johnson cutting such a wide swath in the native plants world in East Texas.

A spot at this mid-day banquet honoring Lady Bird Johnson and the SFA NPC can be reserved by calling Jimmi Rushing at 936-468-4600, Jan Kingham at 936-569-7601, or

the Office of University Advancement at 936-468-5406. Tickets are \$50 per seat, with all proceeds over costs going to the NPC.

#### APRIL 9, 2000 AT 2 PM IN THE AZALEA GARDEN - DEDICATION AND GRAND OPENING OF THE SFA RUBY M. MIZE AZALEA GARDEN

The Grand Opening is scheduled for 2 PM on Sunday, April 9, 2000 in the Azalea Garden on University Drive (east side of LaNana Creek). Parking will be on the south side of the W.R. Johnson Coliseum, a short walk from the garden. Ms. Dottie Wisely and other dignitaries will say a few words prior to the unveiling of the garden's sign, a big East Texas red river rock with plaque inscribed – a tasteful, quiet enhancement perfectly in fitting with this new garden's charm. We will have the red and white tent up for refreshments afterward, and guided tours of the collection will be provided. For more information, contact Barbara Stump at 409-468-1832.

#### APRIL 14 AND 15, 2000 (9 AM–1 PM) - BUGS, BUTTERFLIES AND BLOSSOMS

At the Children's Garden Pavilion on College Avenue: Bugs, Butterflies, and Blossoms celebrates the relationships of plants, insects and people using hands-on student centered activities. Many of the activities are based on curriculum developed by the Growing Minds Butterfly Gardening Project. Activities include stories in the Secret Garden, music in the Shade Garden, Art in the ARB, edible critters, planting a flower garden, rock painting, creating a mini butterfly garden, an Earth Day project, exploring insects and helping create a special addition to the Children's Garden. Friday is for teachers/students. For more information: 936-468-1832.

#### APRIL 22, 2000 - 9 AM TILL 5 PM – SPRING GARDEN GALA DAY

This year's plant sale will feature the best "Dawn Parish crop" ever produced – more plants, more diversity and lots of excitement. The day-long event starts at 9 AM and will go till 4 PM. There will be walk and talk lectures in the garden, refreshments, and a rare plants silent auction. Dale Groom, noted author, lecturer, TV star, and SFA alum will be on hand for a book signing and lectures in the garden. For more information: contact Dawn Parish at 499-468-4404 or dparish@sfasu.edu.

#### THE SFA MAST ARBORETUM'S 2000 LES REEVES LECTURE SERIES

Room 110, Agriculture building, Wilson Drive

7:00 PM (Refreshments and Social Before)

Apr. 20: Liz Druitt, Southern Living, Birmingham, "Roses...No Spray Hosea"

May 18: Jill Nokes, Austin, "The Natives are Restless"

June 15: Steve Dobbs, Oklahoma, "Color My World Without Flowers"

July 20: Sharon Lee Smith, Blue Moon Gardens, “Salivating over Salvias”

Aug. 17: Greg Grant, Flora Catalpa Arboretum, “Heavy Thoughts and Light Bulbs”

Sept. 21: Aubrey King, King’s Nursery, Tenaha, “When You’re Hot You’re Hot”

Oct. 19: Bill Welch, TAEX, College Station, “The Bountiful Flower Garden”

Nov. 16: Dr. Brent Pemberton, TAES, Overton, “Happy Trials to You”

\*\*Dec. 14: Dave Creech, Director SFA Arboretum, “Cedar Waxwing Philosophical”

\*To be held the fourth Thursday due to Spring Break.

\*\*To be held the second Thursday due to Christmas Break.

The lecture series is sponsored by the Les Reeves endowment fund and the SFA Mast Arboretum MASTer Gardeners. For more information you can contact 1) Dave Creech at 409-468-4343 (email: [dcreech@sfasu.edu](mailto:dcreech@sfasu.edu)); 2) Greg Grant at 409-468-1729 (email: [ggrant@sfasu.edu](mailto:ggrant@sfasu.edu)); or 3) Trudy Baynes of the SFA Arboretum MASTer Gardeners at 409-560-1001 (email: [twbaynes@lcc.net](mailto:twbaynes@lcc.net)). A big thank you goes out to Bill and Marilyn Larison for providing the lodging for our out-of-town speakers at the Haden Edwards Inn, 106 N. LaNana (409-559-5595). This is a major transfusion into the health of the lecture series and we appreciate it.

#### DAWN’S DIRT – DAWN PARISH

As we begin this New Year and millennium, I will be writing to you for the first time with a master’s degree. I am thrilled to have this accomplishment under my belt, and want you all to know that you played a huge part in my career as a student at SFA. Thank you for being so friendly and supportive. I look forward to developing our relationship as I continue on as Research Associate for the arboretum.

I can’t begin to tell you the remarkable and also challenging transformation this garden has been through since my first visit here in 1996. We’ve more than doubled in size, added a beautiful Timber Framers’ pavilion, and have performed a good deal of “creative destruction” (yes this means phase I to all of our alumni – sorry, guys!). This year we have an incredible list of things to do to bring the garden to yet the next level. We have an azalea garden to finish, a children’s garden to expand, a pond to develop, a system of signage and interpretation to develop to make the garden easier for self-exploration, and not to mention trying to keep everything maintained at the “Greg Grant standard of landscape maintenance.” We’re so lucky to have such a good crew of student workers and a brand new volunteer organization. All of our goals will be met beyond all expectations. Thank you to every one who plays a part in making things happen.

Here comes the good stuff. We're making a bold statement this year with some bold plants. With a pond in the works and some empty areas near a drainage ditch we've got a lot of space to try some unique, hardy tropicals. We've acquired some beautiful gingers from our friends at Mercer Arboretum and the San Antonio Botanical Garden. I debated on whether or not I should list each species and decided it would be pretty tedious to write as well as read. Here's an overview of a few genus we'll be planting. With sun and plenty of water we should have an awesome show from the butterfly (Hedychium), spiral (Costus), and blue (Dichorisandra) gingers. For the shade we'll use peacock (Kaempferia), hidden (Curcuma), shampoo (Zingiber), dancing lady (Globba), and cardamom (Alpinia) gingers. We'll get some bold accents in the sun from a myriad of canna and elephant ear cultivars.

As always, we're trying many new things. I invite you to come see our new tropical additions as well as the many other things that are going on. If you'd like to a part of the excitement around here, we are always looking for enthusiastic hands. Our new volunteer group, the MASTer Gardeners, meets every third Thursday at 6 pm. Come check it out! In any case, I hope you'll take the time to enjoy the garden as much as possible.

#### THE GREG GRANT CORNER:

It's been a very busy spring as usual. I'm writing for three magazines this year and constantly up against deadlines as usual. In addition for writing periodically for Texas Gardener and Country Living Gardener, I'm writing a monthly piece for Neil Sperry's Gardens magazine.

My speaking schedule remains hectic as well. Along with a number of regional, Texas and Louisiana talks, I managed to book myself for three different Virginia talks this year. I'm desperately trying to cut back on my speaking engagements in order to spend more time in my two gardens. Actually make that THREE gardens now, as I've added another Arcadia garden to go along with mine and my parents. I really do want to have a fine garden and of course gardens are never actually finished. In my case, I'm just getting started. Unfortunately, I've got big plans and a little budget...sort of a Saint Bernard dream on a Chihuahua bank roll. That's OK though, I'll finish them if I have to resort to selling flowers on the street corner. Of course, by the time I get them finished I'll be too old to see them!

Things are really happening at the Arboretum as usual. Matt's been a fabulous addition to our team. We couldn't ask for a better pair than Matt and Dawn. Matt does seem to have some strange affection for plants that won't sell though. Must have learned it from Dr . Creech!

My Ornamental Horticulture Class has once again adopted beds around the Agriculture Building, so take it easy on the criticism. They're just kids, and they're learning. The bed directly in front of the building is also my seed crop for Laura Bush Petunias. I told Jerry

Parsons the other day that considering the way the presidential campaign was going, we might want to bulk up my Purple Sugar McCain!

The SFA Horticulture Club plans to have the Laura Bush Petunias for sale at the Spring Garden Gala in addition to a number of other colorful plants like ornamental Castor Beans and color bowls. King's Nursery in Tenaha also carries the Laura Bush Petunia along with a number of my other introductions.

I'm scheduled to teach an evening class in Longview next fall if you know anyone interested in taking a Landscape Design class or has thyme to kill. It will be held Tuesday nights at the Kilgore College Center. My boss said if there's not a big crowd he's firing me. Or did he say he was going to fire at me in a big crowd?

Got to go. I'm two articles behind and there are a million e-mails to open. -GG

#### AZALEA GARDEN NOTES – STUMP'S VIEW

The big news is that there is a view. The garden begins to look like a garden. Since October the garden has become much better defined by trails, drainage ditches along trails, and addition of many loads of red clay sand and limestone gravel. Major thanks to new Azalea Garden Technician Matt Welch for learning the intent of the design so rapidly and being so adept with earth-moving equipment. The garden is finally getting into shape so visitors will be able to walk the garden without hip-waders! Dr. Creech, Matt, and I continue to worry about drainage, especially in the Council Ring, but many well-hidden culverts now direct water away from beds and trails, thanks to Matt and many of Dawn Parish's work-study students for making so much happen in so short a time!

Oh, yes, and there are 16 new beds, mainly in the two-acre northwest quadrant of the garden. About half of this area is the new Native Azalea Trail, going from the new trail along Burrows Creek on the north to the major East-West road on the south, all in high pine shade. The native azaleas represent collections from nurseries across the south, many friends I have met through the Azalea Society of America. We have Transplant Nursery's new "Maid in the Shade" collection from Lavonia, Georgia; Dodd & Dodd Nursery's new "Confederate Series" from Semmes, Alabama; and a wide variety from Doremus Nursery in Warren, Texas. While these plants are now in their winter deciduous phase, they will bloom off and on through this spring and summer to give us a wonderful range of color: from the very pale pink of the Piedmont (aka Florida Pintxer) Azalea, *Rhododendron canescens*, to yellow and fragrant R. 'Lisa's Gold,' to the very dramatic red and orange truss of R. 'Jeb Stuart.'

Filling in the far northwest corner is a multitude of evergreen cultivars from over 15 breeding groups, primarily from Alabama's Van der Giessen Nursery. We recently hauled in a large collection of Satsuki from this same nursery, as well as nearly 40 numbered Holly Springs, Back Acres, Linwood, and Gartrell cultivars from specialty breeders for testing. For two large beds in open sun, our good friends at Greenleaf

Nursery in Houston donated a large collection of Southern Indicas, as did Louisiana nursery-woman Margie Jenkins who also provided several outstanding Satsuki cultivars such as the delicate pink star-shaped R. 'Kozan.' We are also very fortunate to have a series of numbered Huang cultivars from Plant Development Services in Loxley, Louisiana, all representing the only azalea work to come out of China. Jenkins Farm and Nursery is our primary source for the signature azalea for the garden, the light purple, spider-flower form, R. 'Koromo Shikibu' which is currently blooming along the eastern edge of the garden; these will rebloom sporadically through the fall.

As you might have suspected, Dr. Creech has been busy adding other woody plant collections. Eighteen Loropetalum (Chinese fringe flower) cultivars now reside along the new protective berm along Burrows Creek, and a Cephalotaxus (Japanese plum yew) collection (37 taxa) is now planted on the far southern end. Japanese maples are in every bed throughout the shadier parts of the garden, but we still need to build our camellia-holly-magnolia-Sweet Olive screen along the south and southwest edges to "soften" the view of the SFA Grounds and Equipment storage area, certainly one of the most interesting design challenges for the garden.

Keep an eye on us as we get the garden in shape for the official dedication Sunday, April 9, at 2 p.m. You are all invited to walk through its' second bloom season, enjoy some music and refreshments, and help SFA give us an official blessing. We promise to give you a trail map, so you won't get lost, and a list of collections so you can find special plant friends in the future.

#### THE CHILDREN'S GARDEN – CHERYL TATE

We are in our second year of the Growing Minds Butterfly Gardening Project a collaborative with The Kellogg Foundation, the Arboretum, College of Education, Departments of Agriculture and Elementary Education and the College of Forestry. This past year, the project trained two hundred and ten elementary education majors to use butterfly gardening to teach all content areas, emphasizing science, and to use the SFA Mast Arboretum as a teaching resource. Each pre-service teacher introduces the methods and content they have learned into area classrooms. The Growing Minds Butterfly Gardening curricula promotes active, student-centered learning through real-life experiences occurring in the garden environment. Students are able to practice skills including observation, problem solving, and making predictions as they participate in garden activities. The Growing Minds curricula introduces per-service teachers to methods for incorporating Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills guidelines for science, with interdisciplinary ties to other subject. These pre-service teachers develop lesson plans for their classrooms based on their experiences.

Each semester the area schools that have partnered with SFA to provide the pre-service teachers with classroom experience and mentor teachers are invited to participate in a "Growing Minds" field day. This semester, "Growing Minds" will partner with Keep Nacogdoches Beautiful and International Paper Co. to incorporate the gardening program into an all day event for teachers and area students. The event called BUGS,

BUTTERFLIES AND BLOSSOMS will provide fifteen activity stations manned by the pre-service teachers and visiting specialists from several fields. This collaborative effort gives the SFA students the opportunity to experience working in a community education project, developing communication and organization skills.

The Kellogg Foundation funding is based on the idea of forming partnerships and sharing resources not just within a community but also across traditional barriers. The Growing Minds Project is just such a model. During the first two years the project has provided professional development for graduate students at Texas A&M University at Texarkana, pre-service teachers at Texas A&M University at Commerce and classroom teachers in both the Nacogdoches area and Commerce.

Some of the project first students are now in classrooms all across Texas and we have heard from several requesting help to begin the program at their school. The following are only a few of the hundred or so e-mails we have received from pre-service teachers about their experience in the project. These are our future teachers, they can create the next generation of Arboretum volunteers!

“I absolutely loved the class today. It was a little cold though. I like to garden, always have. My mother says I have a green thumb. I took a pair of my brother's old work boots (the ones with that lace up) and I planted petunias in them about four or five years ago. I look for old containers to plant things in. I found an old wash pan in the pasture and I planted herbs in it. Kids love to do this kind of stuff. I think this is a wonderful project for any age. It teaches responsibility, and the wonder and awe of life. Life comes in many packages and if you can teach a child to value the many parts they become better adults.”

“I have thoroughly enjoyed learning about garden installation from Ms. Tate. I am starting to understand how you can integrate curriculum from a gardening project. I am interested in maybe teaching a lesson using the eggs to make a small garden. It was interesting to learn about the different colors of bluebonnets that are starting to develop. I am glad Ms. Tate is going to give us a list of Internet websites so we can learn more about gardening with a classroom. Before this week I never knew that certain flowers attract butterflies. I still have some questions about what is the purpose of the larval plant? Is it there so the caterpillars can have something to feed on before they turn into butterflies? Do you have any materials where I can read about the process a butterfly goes through?”

“I am also excited to start the butterfly garden. Already I have learned so much about gardening. My favorite new garden technique is the shoe garden. I think this is a great way to let the child show individuality as well as save money. (Everyone has old shoes they grow out of) I can't wait to share these ideas with my students.”

“Besides it being a little cold Tuesday, I really enjoyed having Ms. Tate come and talk to us. I have never done anything like this before and I am really looking forward to it. I



think this will really grab the children's attention and they will learn while they are having fun. But what I am looking forward to is learning about it also.”

“I'm an early childhood major, so of course I'm always looking for something that is educational and exciting for my future students. I definitely think I will try butterfly gardening in my classroom.”

Year three of the Kellogg Foundation funding may be available to continue the matching funds for this project. Additional information about the entire project and the annual report can be found at: <http://grants.tamu.edu/leadership/projects/default.htm>

## NOTES FROM THE GARDEN – DR. DAVE CREECH, DIRECTOR, SFA MAST ARBORETUM

OK! OK! I know we're late with the update. We've ended up racing to bump this into the mail system just a few days before some of the most major “events” in this garden's history. Don't ask how these things happen. Forget the litany of excuses I had in mind, instead, let it be known that procrastination is certainly the ultimate act of defiance around this garden. The Update is late. So be it.

Status of the SFA Mast Arboretum. From this chair, it's simple. As a 15 year old teenager, the 20+-acre Arboretum is now a class home to one of the most interesting, fascinating, Texas-tough and challenging woody and herbaceous plant collections in the South. Our plant diversity remains stunning and wonderful collections abound. The accessioning policy works. Computer mapping is a cornerstone and still functioning, albeit we are always behind. The web offers a great opportunity to put all of our plant work “out there” and be an educational centerpiece in the South; time is the problem there. Our herbaceous world is better than ever and the woody world has never been more interesting. Visitation is high. Tours are up. Having three full-time hard working, plant loving folks around (Greg, Dawn, and Matt) has made a huge difference. The student worker crew is better managed. We have some involved students. As a result, our maintenance is up. The volunteer picture is rosy. The Les Reeves lecture series is a hit. The Arboretum's relationship with Gary and Mark over in Grounds is wonderful. The Physical Plant (James and John) understands how to move mountains and jump buildings in a single bound. The Azalea Garden and NPC developments can only be seen as pluses for the region. Of course, it's not all fun; our garden challenges remain — insects – weeds – drought – maintenance - personality gymnastics – and, most important, when will that next flood hit, anyway? Still, the tasks are easy to understand. Timing and prioritization remains a challenge.

The drought in the fall and winter of 1999 will walk into the record books (rainfall in 1999 about 39 inches, down about ten from the average). While recent rains have brought a few smiles, spring and summer remain in front of us. This winter has been exceptionally mild with few freezes and temps no lower than the high teens. A dry, mild winter in general with much more sunshine than normal. Magnolias and azaleas are ten days to two weeks ahead of last year's show.

The People: The SFA Mast Arboretum is home to a high-energy full-time team that makes SFA Horticulture really special in the South. First, there's Greg Grant: accolades everywhere, teaching on-the-ground real world horticulture, garden writer, and now cutting a wide swath in the "new plants" color world of the nursery industry in the South. Second, there's Dawn Parish, our brand-new "Research Associate": managing a bigger-than-ever crew, working with volunteers, still loving roses and making everything happen on "this side of the creek." Third, there's Barb Stump and Matt Welch leading the charge on the "other side of the creek" – that's the 8-acre SFA Ruby M. Mize Azalea project, no small undertaking in its own right. Barb is the wonderful detail-focused, efficient, write-everything-down, get-it-done Azalea Garden coordinator and graduate student. Matt, our new full-time Arboretum Technician, brings all kinds of talent, work ethic, personality, and his plant-loving nature into the program (Agaves forever?). Fourth, there's Cheryl Tate, Keep Nacogdoches Beautiful lady of the town, doctoral candidate in Forestry, and, finally, the coordinator of our Children's Garden Project, funded by a Kellogg grant, that has resulted in herds of kids and teachers learning in the garden. Fifth, Kathleen Davis, graduate research assistant, carries the charge for our "Three R's" endangered plants conservation program and she's neck deep in the details and challenges of the brand new SFA Pineywoods Native Plant Center. Finally, there's a herd of students and volunteers helping get the work done.

Happenings since the last Arboretum Update (Sept 1999):

October 2, 1999 - Fabulous Fall Festival – our best-ever fall plant sale and event; judging from flyers distributed, over a thousand enthusiasts attended the event. The event brought in almost \$9000 for the Arboretum, our best ever for a fall plant sale. Dawn Parish, our stellar "Research Associate", nurtured into show a fine crop on schedule: a lot of diversity, most in flower, and healthy foliage - all of this in spite of some pretty healthy insect control challenges. Thanks to volunteers, MASTER Gardeners, students, and the powers above for a perfect day. "About Tyme", a local blues band provided entertainment - a big hit. Crowd control was exciting . . . and there was only one fight in the daylong, plant-grabbing event, an argument evidently over ownership of a particular cart of plants. We were able to prevent a coming-to-blows scene, but just barely.

Matt Welch came on board as the SFA Mast Arboretum Technician in October 1999, a position that carries with it the development phase of the SFA Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden. In just a few months, Matt has done it all: trail and bed development, planting, mulching, insect control, culvert-drainage work, student labor management, irrigation installation, flagstone laying in the council ring, and the sheer joy of wandering around in a special sea of azaleas and wonderful companion plant collections. Matt comes to the Arboretum after two years at Taylor's Nursery in Raleigh, North Carolina, one of the premier nurseries on the east coast. For those who know him, we are talking about a very smart young man with all kinds of kinetic plant energy pointed in many directions. Let the sun shine in!

Website development continues with more pictures, more text, and more pages. Check out the new website for Horticulture 321, Greenhouse Management, for the Fall, 1999, course – a first in the department – and something we intend to build on. All lecture notes and some fine links to other premier greenhouse web sites. We're doing the same for other courses. Greg's Plants site has been given a major facelift and text additions/revisions. Much remains to be done. Thanks go out to Wayne Weatherford for allowing us to break new ground in cyberspace. [www.sfasu.edu/ag/arboretum](http://www.sfasu.edu/ag/arboretum)

Trips: No point to look through the calendar – it's too busy. A January-February stretch found me with 9 talks in 4 weeks (I think Greg had 73 talks and 4 workshops in the same time period?). A major A+ trip was a trek (8 students, Greg and I) to the Southern Region conference of the International Plant Propagators Society, Mobile, Alabama, October 3-6, 1999. Great nursery tours and fine talks by the movers and shakers of the nursery industry in the South. Another major field trip: an October 30, 1999 Mercer Arboretum's Fall Gardening Symposium in Houston, Texas (with six Horticulture Club students running the SFA Mast Arboretum booth and selling plants). Another interesting trip with 17 Horticulture students in tow was a November 11, 1999, expedition to annual Texas Greenhouse Growers Association conference, College Station, Texas and an after-the-event tour of the TAMU Floral Research Gardens, now officially on the map with 60 (?) acres potential. General conclusion: the backbone of a fine TAMU garden is in place. There are some enthusiastic, determined faculty involved. There are the expected funding realities. Soil and water and water problems are certainly more intense than at SFA. Still, our general conclusion: good people, outstanding potential. There are other trips, other talks, and other conferences that could be included but for lack of space.

Dec 3, 1999 – Graduate student Dawn Parish (now our Arboretum Research Associate) passed her MS orals with flying colors and graduated December 1999. Three days later, graduate research assistant J.C. Andersen passed his MS Agriculture orals, and graduated December 1999. JC served as the very front line during the first and second year of the development of the Azalea Garden. Much of the credit for the azalea garden project going from privet-infested jungle to where we are today goes to JC. JC has taken a nursery job in Austin, Texas, and is certainly missed.

New gardens – new plants? Yes, we still manage to expand, year-by-year, bit-by-bit. Since the last update, we've managed a new bed in Asian Valley, a magical sweep of conifers (and hollies yet to be planted) on the east side of the Art building, and the "twin borders" is off to an especially fine start this spring. The Elking Environment has received a facelift with the drainway improved. More development is coming to the east of the Elking Environment. The new ADA parking lot on the intramural field is screaming for a landscape. The Ag/Art parking lot border is exquisite at this writing. The Children's Garden is home to a vibrant color show this spring, sporting some Grant petunia seedlings, a maroon bluebonnet front line, an almost complete Abelia collection, and plenty of refinements. Dawn is spearheading a "pond" garden project, planned for the old "bog" garden, a development that will bring this unique spot back to glory. Weeds have been beat back, plants moved, and the outline of a fairly large pool has been

defined – summer project is my guess. There’s a MASTER Gardener tomato/pepper trial going in this spring in the line of vines garden.

A special gift came to us with the passing of a wonderful horticulturist from Dallas, Mr. Logan Calhoun. Logan left the Mast Arboretum his “garden” of plants, a really wonderful special collection, most of which was dug and transported by Matt Welch plant by plant in three truckloads to the Arboretum. The plants have been given a special home in the Elking Environment. More on this gift in the next update.

Funding News: People and budgets drive programs and, since the last update, our budget picture has improved. We have been granted \$2000 from International Paper that will help us with signage and interpretation in the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden. Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo awarded the program \$7500 for our “plants with promise” program. The Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden endowment provides a solid foundation for that garden’s maintenance and development in the year’s ahead. Nursery industry support has been terrific. The Mill Creek Gardens endowment allows a solid foundation of support for our “Three R’s” endangered plants conservation program. The Smith County Master Gardeners will be awarding a deserving Horticulture student an annual \$1000 scholarship. The Tyler Men’s Garden Club will be doing the same. Marilyn Larison’s donation of lodging for our out of town speakers is terrific. The Les Reeves endowment fund guarantees support to our ever-increasing-in-popularity lecture series, a wonderful educational outreach success of this garden. Then there’s an increasing army of generous folks that have become true friends of the garden, people that believe in just what this garden can become in the South. Yes, we’re a small town deep in the Pineywoods of East Texas . . . but our garden energy is not.

I’ve told the Arboretum warriors that once we “gets past” the two big ground-breaking, crowds-of-people Dedication events and the Spring Gala, then we can then take a deep breath, rejoice that we survived, and relax for a while (couple of hours, maybe). As we all know, a gardener’s work is never done. Join us in all or any of the events coming up – there’s plenty of horticulture here for everyone.