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SFA Mast Arboretum News

February 2005

Garden Gala Day Plant Sale

April 16, 2005

9 a.m.- 2:00 p.m.

SFA Intramural Fields

P.O. Box 13000-SFA Station, Nacogdoches, TX 75962-3000
Phone: 936-468-3705 Fax: 936-468-4047 <http://arboretum.sfasu.edu>

SFA Mast Arboretum Celebrates Twenty Years!

By Dr. David Creech

The SFA Mast Arboretum will be twenty this year and Elyce assigned me the task of “quickly” putting some words together for an article that is poignant, insightful and inspirational. She suggested I reflect back on the last twenty years and thoughtfully answer a few questions. What was the original vision for the garden?

What did I think back then about where this “garden world” would go? Was there a plan? Then she shook her finger at me and said that it had to be good enough to cause all the members to burst with pride and joy and that this year’s Fall Fandango for the Arboretum members had to be an extra-special one. Hey, I can do that.

I think that most of our garden’s good fortune can be credited to students, serendipity and just plain good luck. The Arboretum got its start in the Fall 1985 with a small Horticulture Landscape Plant Materials class project on the South side of the

Agriculture building. It was a sad, back-filled quarter-acre spot but there was some sunlight and a nearby water tap looked good to me, so off we went. This place is all about students. When you’ve sat in one spot for as long as I have, you end up with an amazing parade of characters passing by: great young people who ended up going to school here and ended up getting excited about work and Horticulture. The track record of our graduates in the nursery, greenhouse and landscape world is not shabby. I’ve heard nurserymen and landscapers say



1985 Landscape Plant Materials Class in the Phase I Garden

many times that SFA grads aren’t “afraid to work hard.” Our graduates are scattered near and far. I’m convinced that the Arboretum became a part of the fabric of the rest of their lives, a small but efficient teacher of attitude, work ethic and enthusiasm for growing plants. Wanting to wake

up eager to go to work is not a bad goal, and it is certainly a blessing.

I got a little burst of enthusiasm for Elyce’s deadline when I found a 1986 slide that goes all the way back to the first spring in the Arboretum: a May shot of a Landscape Plant Materials class. To capture forever

Stephen F. Austin State University
Department of Agriculture
SFA Mast Arboretum
PO Box 13000-SFA
Nacogdoches, TX 75962-3000

the button-bursting pride of that class, I climbed up a healthy extension ladder to get on the roof of the Agriculture building. This was it. The whole garden. All of it. It was a tiny spit on the South side of the Agriculture building, a semester project that included a lot of bed development, fence building, broken chainsaws, and finally, tree and shrub plantings (all little tiny one gallon plants). The centerpiece was a petunia variety trial in the spring. It's true. It was brash, polychromatic and poorly thought out - as far as colors and design - but it was exciting, colorful, and as one lady said "it shouts a joyful noise to the Lord!" - so, hey, we thought it looked fantastic. I will never forget another cheerful lady who approached me that spring in the garden and asked where she could get that petunia variety named "unk". I said "unk?" Then it hit me. "Oh, that probably stands for unknown!" Well, that proves we've been losing labels for a long time.

Here's the disturbing thing. Once I had the slide scanned in and the image up and zoomed in on, I suddenly realized that I could still remember most of their names. Good grief. There's Mike Sewell, now Grounds Director at Texarkana Junior College. There's David Reuter and he's in Houston. There's Julie Klammer and I see her every year at the TNLA conference. There's Melanie Anfosso and she's happy and healthy and gardening in Nacogdoches. There's Tom Wharton, with a long time career in the produce part of the grocery industry. There's Ginger Tannery, in Nacogdoches as a teacher. There's Brent Bridges (he's in Corpus - not sure what he's doing) and I'm not sure where Robert Ankrom is working. Here's the scary part! I could, if asked, conjure up a story or two about each. There are plenty of personalities and wonderful humans in the parade of young people that have worked and learned in the SFA Horticulture world. The Arboretum, field trips, labs, the Hort Club, the parties, conferences, judging teams, and the great social world of the Ag building family, well, it's a long four years and it's great to get to know and influence attitude. So many of these young people have left their mark in the garden and are continuing to leave their mark in Horticulture. We've always said this garden was designed, installed and maintained by students and that's still true today.

Because of that long ago mission to get eager-to-learn students in front of plants and how they grow, well, we now enjoy three tractors, three trucks, three

greenhouses, equipment, shade houses and container yards, 60 acres of land, water, sunlight, a great staff, an energetic flock of student workers, and the nicest gathering of volunteers you could ever hope for. Nacogdoches is such a terrific place to grow plants and friendships, and there's been no better place to make it all happen than right outside the back door of the Agriculture building. 2005 will be better than 2004, and 2004 is almost impossible to beat. Keep planting and we'll let everyone know later about an extra-special 2005 Fall Fandango. DC

2005 Nacogdoches Azalea Trail Activities Announced

The Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden at the SFA Mast Arboretum is a favorite stop on the Nacogdoches Azalea Trail. Guided tours may be scheduled by calling Barb Stump at 936-468-4129 or e-mailing bstump@sfasu.edu.

Other events during the Nacogdoches Azalea Trail are:
March 19: Flora Garden Club Plant Sale
 9 a.m.-noon in Regions Bank parking lot, intersection of Pilar and Fredonia Streets, Nacogdoches



April 2: Azalea Symposium: "Growing Healthy Azaleas." 8:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m., Room 110, Agriculture Building on Stephen F. Austin State University campus. Cost \$25, includes lunch. To register in advance, contact the Nacogdoches Convention & Visitors Bureau at 936-564-7351, or 1-888-OLDEST-TOWN, or www.visitnacogdoches.org.

April 9: Art of Floral Design Using Azaleas
 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. in lobby of Andrews & Andrews Law Offices, 311 E. Main Street, Nacogdoches. To enter a floral display, contact Sherry Ward at 936-564-2066.

For more information, contact the Nacogdoches Convention & Visitors Bureau, 936-564-7351, or 1-888-OLDEST-TOWN, or www.visitnacogdoches.org.

Legacies Are Plentiful at the SFA Mast Arboretum

By Dawn Stover

It's been twenty years since Dr. Creech and the first Landscape Plant Materials class broke ground on the south side of the agriculture building. Many students have come and gone as have many plants, but many of the "themes" created by students still remain.

I was lucky in my horticultural pursuits to come to the arboretum when I did, as most of the theme gardens and the greenhouse structures were already in place. But in the eight years since I've been here the changes have continued. I want to highlight some of the legacies and acknowledge the growth that makes us what we are as we enter into our twentieth year of horticultural enlightenment.

I recognize and appreciate the blood, sweat, and tears that my predecessors donated, but I never really thought of how personal their efforts were. In my second year of graduate school, two fellow students were about to graduate and wanted to leave their own mark at the arboretum. Dale Ermi and Chris Jones decided, with weeks to spare in their tenure, to create a "white garden." They scrounged around Dr. Creech's shade house and found a gardenia, a mock orange, an oak leaf hydrangea, some variegated ivy, and borrowed some garlic chives from somewhere in the garden. They liberated limestone rocks from the grounds department, and the white garden was made. This last minute effort of Dale and Chris, even though it was a little rough, made me realize that each of our former students have their own legacy in the garden. Scott Reeves, my mentor and former boss, began the original perennial border. Susan Elking created the Elking Environment. Peter Loos built an awesome bog garden. Shawn Geiman cleared the "north woods" that was to be the home of the endangered species collection, made wonderful signs, and ran irrigation to nearly the entire garden. Cheryl Boyette organized the construction of the children's garden pavilion. JC Anderson, Mike Frith, and Derek Landry built the foundation for the Azalea Garden, the design of which was a major part of Barb Stump's thesis. Matt Welch gave us the conifer garden, and the new addition of the dry garden, and began the Native Plant Center. Lance Craig continues Matt's legacy at the Native Plant Center, and has built a fine metal building. Nathan Unclebach, a current Horticulture Senior, is on his third water garden. Many of us in the interim and the present have helped with, maintained and embellished these areas as part of our own legacy in the arboretum.

These legacies are full of life lessons. I like to think that we learn from our successes as well as our mistakes. We learned that *Houttuynia*, planted after Scott's departure, is a battle that can't be won. Horsetail, planted in the bog against Peter's wishes, is yet another losing battle, as are the green elephant ears in the Elking Environment. The endangered plants' garden, originally in the "north woods" is now at the Native Plant Center, and Asian Valley has spilled into this area. Schedule 40 PVC is recommended for a really good reason - Nathan has pulled up more than his share of old PVC bought in the days of meager budgets. I can't mention those hard to chew life lessons without acknowledging the many successes that make us what we are today. Trees and shrubs planted in the early days are maturing beautifully. We have outstanding plant collections that are too numerous to mention. The point is each and every one of our students and volunteers, past and present, have shaped this arboretum, now twenty years strong.

Things in the garden are ever changing; isn't that the nature of our business? How ever many changes occur, there is always that part of our alumni shaping the entire legacy of this arboretum. I know I have left a good many people out of this prose; contribute my ignorance to age and absence. We will be approaching our alumni to share their stories of building the arboretum, to be shared in newsletters throughout this anniversary year. If you have a story or have left your legacy, please pass it on.

Texas Forest Service Supports Education Programs

Smokey Bear, accompanied by District Forester John Boyette, recently stopped by the Arboretum to present a \$10,000 Texas Forest Service Urban Forestry Partnership Grant to Dr. David Creech. Since 2001, this grant has helped to support education programs for children and adults at the SFA Mast Arboretum and Pineywoods Native Plant Center. Last year, over 10,000 people participated in an education program hosted by the Arboretum or PNPC.



2005 Events

Les Reeves Lecture Series

Third Thursday

7:00-8:30 p.m.

Agriculture Building, Room 110
Wilson Drive

February 17: Steve Owens, Oklahoma State University, "Devine Plants: Climbers for Your Garden (I'm All Tied Up in a Knot About Vines)."

March 17: Bob McCartney, Woodlanders Nursery, SC, "Plants to Shock and Awe Your Neighbors."

April 21: Jeff Kuehny, LSU, Baton Rouge, "Hot Plants for Cajun Gardens."

May 19: Gary Outenreath, Shangrila Gardens, Beaumont, Texas, "We're Bigger Than You So Take Down That Highway 59 Sign!"

June 16: Jon Lindstrom, University of Arkansas, "You Think I'm Obsessed With Plants? So What?"

July 21: Linda Gay, Mercer Arboretum, Houston, "Bamboo – Just Another Woody Grass!"

August 18: Aubrey King, King's Nursery, Tenaha, Texas, "I'm Not Leaving Tenaha Until I Get Even."

September 15: Greg Grant, Naconiche Gardens, Nacogdoches, Texas, "Spiderman III – A Lycoris Love Story."

October 20: Bob Byers, Garvan Woodland Gardens, University of Arkansas, "Hog Wild About Gardening."

November 17: Norman Winters, Mississippi State, "I'm Colorful; You're Not."

December 15: Dave Creech, Director, SFA Mast Arboretum, "Attention to Detail Around Here Is Not Just a Wish; It's a Policy."

Garden Seminars

Seminars are held from 9:00 a.m.-Noon in Room 118 of the Agriculture Building on Wilson Drive. To register, contact the education office at 936-468-1832; email erodewald@sfasu.edu; or send payment with name, address, daytime phone number, and seminar title to: SFA Mast Arboretum-Garden Seminars, PO Box 13000-SFA, Nacogdoches, TX 75962-3000.

February 26: Old Roses for East Texas Aubrey King, owner of King's Nursery in Tenaha, will share his love of old roses through an in-depth lecture and hands-on workshop. Learn how to identify, prune, and propagate roses as well as how to choose the best roses for your garden. Each participant will receive an old rose to add to their garden. \$25

May 7: Propagation Station Dawn Stover will show you how to make the most out of your landscaping dollar through propagation. Topics will be geared to the average gardener who may not have high-tech nursery facilities. Instruction will include division as well as cutting and seed propagation. A hands-on demonstration will follow the lecture. \$30

Come Meet the Natives!

(Continued from page 3)



R. 'Aromi Sunrise' a native hybrid cross of species *R. austrinum* with Knap Hill hybrid 'Hiawatha'. Photo by Barbara Stump.

Nursery in Aiken, South Carolina. Because of this breeding work, our deciduous azalea colors range from pale pink through bright orange and into salmons, golden yellows, and even a yellow with a white edge. Come visit the garden during the Nacogdoches Azalea Trail, March 16-April 9, 2005, and enjoy our natives.

As for the care and culture of native azaleas at your home, they need high shade, moist but never soggy soil, and lots of organic matter. Our pine forest in the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden has been a nearly perfect growing environment. Even though they are natives, they are woody shrubs and require extra water and mulching during their first establishment years. Oh yes, and expect them to get big: at least 8 feet tall by as much around, some up to 15 feet tall. They are great back-of-the border or accent plants, with other evergreen plants and perennials covering their winter branches, or stellar specimen plants. To learn more, sign up for the "Growing Healthy Azaleas" Azalea Symposium, April 2, 2005 to be held at the Arboretum.

To learn even more, there is a very new reference book you might want to order: L. Clarence Towe. 2004. American Azaleas. Portland: Timber Press. 146 pages. ISBN: 0-88192-645-0 (hardcover).

Come Meet the Natives!

By Barbara Stump

As spring begins to warm up the azalea buds, it's time to walk the Native Azalea Trail within the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden. That is, walk around Beds 25, 26, 27, and 28, centrally located on the northern end of the garden. You will be richly rewarded by not-your-typical colors and fragrance, the two main reasons we designed the Native Azalea Trail into the garden. While this past winter the native azaleas have looked like bare sticks with large, complex imbricated buds, they will soon begin a bloom period from early March until June.

There are 15 North American azalea species now recognized. All are native to the U.S., as opposed to the evergreen azaleas, which originated in the Far East. Native deciduous azaleas are characterized by long tubular flowers, sticky hairy leaves, and stamens that

extend beyond the flower's corolla. The flowers may be born singly, in whorls, or very rarely in a "ball truss" form that makes

the plants look like they are bearing pink or yellow snowballs. (We are still hoping to get a few of the latter forms). Most bloom just before or during the time that the shrubs leaf out. We have 236 different taxa in the Ruby M. Mize azalea Garden; that is, 236 different genus-and- species or genus-and-cultivar combinations. Three species and their relatives do especially well here: *Rhododendron austrinum*, the Florida Azalea; *R. canescens*, the Piedmont Azalea; and *R. viscosum*, the Swamp Azalea.

Nurserymen in the past 30 years have been actively selecting promising seedlings (from seed collected from superior plants) and by breeding and crossing for certain desirable traits (using the pollen from one



Species *Rhododendron austrinum* (Bed 2). Photo by Barbara Stump.

parent and placing it on the stigmas of another parent). We have been fortunate to know some of these nursery owners. Therefore, we have: *R. austrinum*, (species from Jenkins Farm and Nursery in Amite, Louisiana); *R. canescens* 'Phlox Pink' and *R. 'Welch's Yellow'* (selections from Doremus Nursery in Warren, Texas); *R. 'Aromi Sunrise'* and *R. 'High Tide'* (hybrid crosses of Knap Hill hybrids—deciduous breeding lines developed in Britain in the early 1900s—with heat-tolerant *R. austrinum*, or with another Aromi seedling selection, respectively). We also have several hybrid series in the garden: the Confederate Series, from Dodd & Dodd Nursery in Semmes, Alabama; the Maid in the Shade Series from Transplant Nursery in Lavonia, Georgia; and the Pastel Series from Woodlanders

Continued on page 6



Native selection of *R. calendulaceum* x *R. pericyclenoides* 'Homebush' by Azalea Society of America member Joe Schild. Photo by Joe Schild.



Native selection, *R. canescens* 'Phlox Pink' (Bed 27) Photo by Dr. Creech.

Remember When? The SFA Mast Arboretum in the Early Years: 1985-1995

1985

The Arboretum begins with Phase I garden on the south side of the Agriculture Building as a semester project of the first Landscape Plant Materials class. Irrigation by dragging hoses.

1986

Landscape Plant Materials class installs Phase II garden just to the south of Phase I.

Written proposal to the administration to support the expansion of the Arboretum turned down. Forestry colleagues object to our Arboretum sign. Sign removed and replaced with SFA Horticultural Gardens. Everyone happy.

First Garden Gala Day. Newspaper advertising. A petunia nightmare between our woodies is on display. Polychromatic migraine headache. No one attends. Long lonely day.

1987

University plans to build concession stands and restrooms for the intramural fields in our small Arboretum. We are being replaced by a toilet! After much discussion, the restrooms are relocated and the Arboretum now has 10.17 acres of growing space.

Asian Valley theme garden planted in bottomland.

1988

Dry garden created as foundation planting for Art Building.

Irrigation system expanded into bottomland.

Bog garden created in natural wet area. Peter Loos takes chief design and curatorial role.

Holly row planted along Lanana Creek Trail.

Vegetable garden created at the north end of Arboretum.

1989

Bog garden boardwalk constructed and Herb Society of Deep East Texas tackles an expansion plan in the Herb Garden.

1990

Local chapter of the American Hemerocallis Society establishes the Daylily Garden and a donation from the Daughter of the Republic of Texas allows for the creation of the Heritage Garden with plants popular in early Texas Landscapes.

Susan Elking creates three large entrance gateways from treated timbers.

Herb Garden receives a facelift. Paving brick donated by Henderson Clay Products.

Scott Reeves and Doug Hines create perennial border, and Peter Loos creates an iris garden

Ron Stone, "Eyes of Texas" does a 12-minute feature on the Arboretum. Terrific exposure. "Star Search" does not call.

1992

Entrance kiosk built by Rick Walston and Kevin Borowski and Heritage Garden pergola created by Shannon Short, Rick Walston, Cleve Moore, and Kevin Borowski.

300 plant lovers attend Garden Gala Day.

Shade garden created, and Susan Elking begins construction of a 4000-square foot rock garden.

1993

Telephone Pioneers of America donates a memorial for the astronauts who lost their lives on the Challenger Space Shuttle Mission.

Outdoor lecture deck built in Shade Garden.

1994

100-year record flood sweeps through Arboretum while Dr. Creech is on sabbatical in North Carolina. Six months after the flood, there is little evidence of the disaster and only six plants were lost.

Lines of Vines installed in the vegetable garden.

1995

Ms. Elisabeth Montgomery presents an endowment to the Arboretum for the conservation and development projects at Mill Creek Gardens, an incredible resource of upland sands, mesic mid-slopes, wet creek bottoms, springs, and seeps.

SFASU Arboretum Board of Advisors created.

SFA Horticulture Club Brings Home The Bacon!

By Dr. Dave Creech

The SFA Horticulture Club took home the first overall team award in the J. Benton Storey Student Horticulture Competition held in Little Rock, Arkansas February 4-7, 2005. "The SFA Horticulture Club struck Arkansas Hog country and came home with the bacon!" said Dr. David Creech of the team. Team members were Amanda Bittick, Trey Anderson III, Jenny Wegley, and Nathan Unclebach. The competition pits Southern U.S. horticulture clubs in a judging event with four classes: Woody Ornamentals, Greenhouse Floral and Foliage Plants, Vegetable Crops, and Fruit and Nut Crops. The competition is held during the Southern Region meeting of the American Society for Horticultural Science, a gathering of all the universities across the South featuring Horticulture Departments. The conference is a gathering of researchers, extension, and teachers for workshops, meetings, oral papers, posters and a chance to connect with colleagues. Texas A&M and Mississippi State University took the second and third place overall team awards. Other SFA team awards included a second place finish in Woody Ornamentals, first place in Vegetables and first place in the Fruit and Nuts Division. Individually, Trey Anderson III was the third high scoring individual in the contest, and took a third place individual in the Fruit and Nuts Division. Nathan Unclebach took first place individual in Vegetables. Amanda Bittick took second place individual in Vegetables and first place in the Fruit and Nut Division. Dr. Dave Creech serves as co-advisor to the Horticulture Club and said, "The best thing about this is not beating the likes of TAMU and other big schools in a competition, which is great, of course, but, really the best thing is helping our students mix with Horticulture professors and students from all across the South to exchange ideas, make plans, and talk Horticulture."



SFA winning Horticulture Judging Team (sitting, l-r); Amanda Bittick, Trey Anderson III, Jenny Wegley, Nathan Unclebach; (standing l-r) Dawn Stover, Horticulture Club Advisor and Dr. David Creech, Horticulture Professor and Arboretum Director.

Meadows Foundation Grant Benefits Educational Programs at Arboretum and Pineywoods Native Plant Center

Stephen F. Austin State University has received a grant worth up to \$107,000 from The Meadows Foundation of Dallas. The grant will benefit SFA's Pineywoods Native Plant Center, as well as East Texas school students and teachers.

The university will use the funding to train 75 East Texas-area teachers each year for the next two years to use inquiry-based environmental science teaching and will provide field-based science instruction to 7,700 school-aged children in the first year. In the second year of the grant, instruction will be provided to 8,500 children.

Through the Meadows Foundation grant, the Pineywoods Native Plant Center and the SFA Mast Arboretum will seek to provide hands-on, outdoor activities to improve the science literacy of school students and their teachers.

"These activities will allow students to become actively engaged in asking questions, seeking solutions, designing investigations, and then asking new questions," said Elyce Rodewald, education coordinator of the plant center and arboretum.

"Students involved in inquiry learning are encouraged to cultivate problem-solving skills by developing an understanding of how to make observations, collect and analyze information, synthesize information, and draw conclusions."

Grant funds also will be used at the native plant center, located at 2900 Raguet St., to complete site plans and pre-design work for an indoor environmental education center and, by Sept. 30, 2006, to complete an additional two miles of walking trails.

"We have about a half mile of trail at the PNPC, mostly surfaced with grass or pine bark," said Dr. Dave Creech, SFA agriculture professor and director of the Pineywoods Native Plant Center. "This project will enable us to surface this trail and extend it to other areas of the site and down the hill to LaNana Creek."

The SFA Pineywoods Native Plant Center has been

a project of the SFA Mast Arboretum since 2000, in association with the Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture. Together, the plant center and arboretum provide nearly 60 acres for the study and display of exotic and native plant horticulture.

The university has received \$77,000 in funding for the first year of the grant, according to Dr. Jerry Holbert, vice president for university advancement.

"Funding for the second-year is \$30,000 and must be matched dollar-for-dollar in new donations to the university specifically designated for the project," Holbert said. "This grant will enable SFA to greatly enhance and expand its environmental education program. Literally thousands of children in East Texas will benefit from the generous support of The Meadows Foundation."

The Meadows Foundation is a private philanthropic institution established in 1948 by Algur H. and Virginia Meadows to benefit the people of Texas. The foundation's mission is to assist the people and institutions of Texas improve the quality and circumstances of life for themselves and future generations. Foundation grants support work in the fields of arts and culture, civic and public affairs, education, health and human services.

The Meadows Foundation has received numerous awards for both its philanthropy and its management. It was the first recipient of the Texas Medal of the Arts for sustained support of arts and culture in Texas, and was named Outstanding Foundation of the Year by the National Society of Fund Raising Executives.

For more information about the foundation, visit the Web site at <http://www.mfi.org>. For information about the environmental education programs at SFA, call (936) 468-1832.



Students from Lufkin Middle School Learn about East Texas ecosystems with Elyce Rodewald, Education Coordinator at the PNPC and Mast Arboretum.
Photo by Hardy Meredith.

