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MARCH 2001

NOTES FROM THE GARDEN - Dave Creech, Director

The last update was way back in April of '00, so I'm forced once again into creative apologies. OK, OK, it's all my fault. How's that? I should have had one out last summer and then last fall and now I blame it on an eight-week neck and shoulder pain war zone over the Christmas holidays, something that ended just last week. I promise you: it took the fun out of everything. Well, now I'm well. Spring is upon us and there's plenty to rejoice about.

People: People first, you know. I got to thinking (which is sometimes dangerous) on just how much the Arboretum has grown since our beginning way back in '85. The recipe is simple: Acreage, exciting plants, some good soil, a source of water, students, enthusiastic people = adventuresome gardening.

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>ACRES</u>	<u>FULL-TIME STAFF</u>
1985	1	1
1987	10	1
1996	10	2
1997	20	3
2000	60	5

Of course, there are others that fall into the "less than full time staff" category.

Greg Grant continues to amaze, delight, and educate the horticulture world all across the South. No one gives as many presentations, writes as much and teaches as effectively as this Arcadian. Gardening is in his genes (jeans?). Oh No . . . he's rubbing off! Sometimes I swear there's a key in his back that keeps him going all day long, scattering the gospel of smart gardening wherever he treads. He's young, vigorous, smart, unfettered by normal human vices, and no one can preach the gospel of good gardening better than Greg. If that wasn't enough, all along the way, he's seeing that impressive numbers of selections from his breeding work and others make their way into the trial gardens and showcases of the South. It works because of Greg. Many are guaranteed to be popular in the trade simply because they're good plants. Some, and these are his words, are destined for extinction. Working with Mark Holl in the Grounds Department, Greg's latest SFA thrust, with Brena Duren helping, is the planting, of an outstanding collection of the best-of-the-best crape myrtle varieties, most already in their new home on the numerous islands in the Coliseum parking lot. Now, just to keep Greg from sainthood, I want everyone to know that dealing with SFA paperwork is not a talent he enjoys. For those of us who have experienced the wrath of Purchasing, or the mine fields over in Accounts Payable or the trip wires lining the Business office, well, we've learned that the best approach is often a soft one. Greg doesn't agree. He fights armadillos with the same affection. Enough said. J

Dawn Parish, the Arboretum's Research Associate, and the queen bee of the place has grown into the job and, most important, she loves it. Last year's two sales were the best ever and the revenue has made a difference. She's found a niche in a varied job that involves working with volunteers, producing two crops per year, and keeping the place in fine form. Balance is the key, and as she and I both know, this place is more than just a little dynamic in terms of excitement, learning, plant and people problems, headaches, challenges, defeats and great conquests. Her penchant for plants holds her in good stead with more frequent speaking engagements fine tuning here love of horticulture. Most important, she has learned to quietly take what she can from any grumpy moments the Boss thinks is healthy for his well-being.

Matt Welch, the PNPC research associate, made the jump back in August 2000 from SFA Azalea Garden Technician to the quieter environment over at the Tucker Estate. He's probably in more of a hurry to make the place shine with "development" than I am. After 15 years watching the Arboretum's pace, the bottom line still remains that garden adventure, whether slow or fast, is still fun, slow or fast. While the concept plan of Darrel Morrison is intriguing and exquisite and beautiful, we should never forget that the plants to save, study, multiply and appreciate make it all worthwhile. For those of you with a penchant for natives, you might want to join our effort to make the Tucker Estate the best native plants garden in the South. Contact Matt Welch at 936-468-4104 or email him at mwelch@sfasu.edu. The big event planned for the PNPC is the first-ever Cullowhee's Lone Star Regional Native Plant Conference in the end of May. It will be a fun-filled three days with great speakers, socials, bus field trips and some outstanding entertainment. For an on-the-web description of the schedule and a registration form: go to <http://www.sfasu.edu/ag/arboretum/events/index.htm>.

Wes Nichols is the latest addition, coming on board in the Fall of 2000 as Arboretum Technican, the position responsible for the maintenance and development of the 8-acre Ruby M. Mize Azalea garden. He's the on-the-ground man responsible for running the place. If you see something you like in the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden, tell me; if you see something you don't like, talk to Wes. Just joking. The Azalea Garden is a constant challenge with the next year dedicated to garden bed drainage improvement (there are 42 big beds in this garden), weed control, pest management, mulching, pruning, and planting. Wes brings unique talents and obvious strengths to Horticulture at SFA, not just for the Azalea Garden, but for the entire program as well. He is quickly learning to deal with that every-now-and-then feeling that we're building a barn, but the field is on fire.

Graduate students continue their trek through the garden development world while here. Barbara Stump is a classic; Three years ago she wandered in casually to check out the Horticulture program and the opportunities for an MS. Little did she know that her shoulders would carry the documentation of the site preparation, design, installation, maintenance, mapping, and everything else for the creation and nurturing an eight-acre azalea garden (NO graduate student in America can say that). Plus she serves superbly as editor the Azalaean, and author of a recent article: Building a new public garden - the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden - from the ground up. The Azalaean - Journal of the Azalea

Society of America 22(4): 82-84. Bravo. Derek Landre and Michael Morrison, both non-thesis MS candidates, are grunting and groaning to make this place a better garden.

Grounds: Good grief, no university has as friendly and cooperative a Grounds-Horticulture relationship as ours. Gary Williams and Mark Holl are the Arboretum's best friends. Both are former Horticulture students, which some say means none of us can ever run for office. That's not true. Mark can run for office. While they may shake their heads in dismay at times over something the Arboretum is up to, it all balances out in the end. Lee and Clark in Irrigation are top-flight, cheerful water problem solvers; let's just say we've created more than a few challenges and head-shaking-in-amazement moments. It's amazing to see them tackling ANY major pipe disaster and calmly getting it fixed pronto. Grounds and the Arboretum have a plant-sharing and facility-sharing friendship based on smart use of resources, and the fact that we all like what we do. Much of this wouldn't happen without the support of John Rulfs, head of the Physical Plant. It's no secret: there is plenty going on that wouldn't be happening if the Physical Plant couldn't come to our rescue. The few toe-stubbing miscues that the Arboretum has been involved in over the years, none really major, while met with a frown and a few choice words, has been followed by support when we needed it. Latest example: getting the PNPC tied in to the University's water system.

Volunteers: Who are all these people anyway? Dawn is leading the charge with much brimming about. The SFA Mast Arboretum Volunteers, formerly the SFA Mast Arboretum Master Gardeners (do not ask), are making a huge difference. Volunteers have a dedicated website button right on the home page of the Mast Arboretum website that explains everything and posts activities, chores, events, meetings, etc. The level of volunteerism bubbling about this place is nothing short of amazing.

Lecture Series: The Les Reeves Arboretum Lecture Series is the best thing since sliced bread. I can't decide what's bringing the crowds in: the pre-lecture snacks, the lectures, the plant giveaway, or the admission fee (zero)? The big debate is room size, with moving a hassle and confusing, and not moving meaning maybe some crowd turnaway problems. Anyway, it's better than lectures to five or six well-fed attendees, each taking home about six plants each.

Happenings since the last newsletter

April 8, 2000, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Demonstration Garden was dedicated by Lady Bird herself and the grand opening of the Pineywoods Native Plant Center (PNPC) was well attended. Appreciation luncheon after the dedication was a big hit at the Fredonia. Great crowd, children singing, wonderful ambiance and the project is off to a good start. April 8, 2000 - \$53,000 - T.L.L. Temple Foundation grant to SFA Pineywoods NPC for "tractor and plants" portion of proposed budget. At this writing, a 49 hp Kubota tractor and front end loader is getting heavy work at the PNPC and a 30" X 100' Jaderloon Quonset greenhouse is about to be erected.

April 9, 2000, the dedication of the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden, with Dottie Wisely and family present for the unveiling of the plaque near the council ring.

April 22, 2000 - Arboretum Garden Gala Day Sale with \$17,661 in receipts, the best ever, with the best crop ever for sale. An excellent mix of clean, colorful and healthy plants for East Texas gardens.

October 7, 2000 - Fabulous Fall Festival set a record for a fall sale: \$16,000. The crowd and the total income was a real surprise.

November 16 - 18, 2000 - From inflation to illumination to fascination is the best way to describe the high-tech 16' diameter globe that rested on display at the Tucker House on Raguet Street and at the Children's Garden Pavilion in the SFA Mast Arboretum. The surface of the globe was synthesized through actual NASA images by WoldSat International of Canada and constructed by WorldFX, Inc. of Cincinnati, Ohio. This extravaganza is a composite of cloudless-day photos, a true picture from space of the earth in all its shining glory. The globe was illuminated at night and Darrel McDonald deserves the credit and vision for making everything happen. with funding for the three-days of viewing made possible through donations from the SFA Mast Arboretum, SFA Forest Resources Institute, SFA Geography/HUES GIS Lab, SFA's Economic Education Project in Human Sciences, and the Political Science Department in the College of Liberal Arts.

\$17,581.00 - in-kind gift - 9/13/00 - 1971 azalea plants (mostly large container grown) donated by Pope's Azalea Farm, Canton, Texas. \$3030 - 9/25/2000 - 605 azalea plants with a wholesale value of \$3030.00 from Johnson's Nursery, in Forest Hills, Louisiana. Wonderful in-kind donations that couldn't come at a better time for the Azalea Garden project!

\$4100 - awarded in October, 2000, Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo proposal funded a "Field-grown cut flowers for Texas" project.

\$10,000 - October 27, 2000 - George and Fay Young Foundation, Dallas, Texas awards a grant for a signage and interpretation project at the Pineywoods Native Plant Center.

\$17,000 - 11/27/2000 - with Alan Sowards and Cheryl Tate as lead writers of this proposal after consultation with this professor - Virtual Field Trip Network Project: SFA Mast Arboretum/Pineywoods Native Plant Center - part of the never ending myriad of neat projects that spin off from Arboretum Children's Garden educational programming.

01/26 - 01/29/2001 - Five students and I attended the Southern Region American Society for Horticultural Science Conference in Fort Worth, Texas. Four member judging team of Cary Von Simpson, Seth Bates, Brena Duren, and Ryan Conklin competed against seven other ACB teams in a four-category contest (greenhouse, nursery, vegetables and fruit). Final Results: SFA Judging team took 1st place overall team, 1st in Greenhouse, 1st in Nursery, 2nd in Fruit. On an individual basis, SFA had the two high scoring individuals,

Cary with a 1st and Seth with 2nd. In Nursery, the top three scores of all teams were SFA's Simpson, Conklin and Bates. In Fruit, Simpson was 2nd. A very noisy sweep. Number two team was TAMU. Third was Oklahoma State. SFA making a lot of noise in front of the entire Awards Luncheon, and, best of all, in front of many who still say, "Now, where is that?" Greg gets extra kudos on this one for pulling the plant materials together, working with the students during their study sessions, and constantly encouraging the "let's learn it all" attitude.

Garden Developments and New Plants: The drought of 2000 will be a memory. With July, August and September standing out there with almost zero rain and that burst of high temperatures around the first of September, we are talking plant-busting extremes. Temps cracked 110oF on September 1st. It's amazing to see which plants take it all in stride and which don't. Many of our conifers burned on their west side . . . wasn't a water problem; it was a heat problem. Big additions to the collection include a wide range of gingers, most via our good friend at Mercer Arboretum, Linda Gay, and all under Dawn's careful eye. Over 100 different Hydrangeas are now calling the Azalea Garden home, probably the most extensive collection in the South. One of the big pluses is the steady improvement of the Arboretum website. Wayne Weatherford, the Agriculture Department's webmaster, never ceases to amaze me with his enthusiasm for building one of the best Arboretum websites in the South. We have several exciting projects planned for 2001, including a real road/trail from the Lines of Vines over to Art, an improved Elking Environment, and a stream/pools project at the Children's garden.

DAWN'S DIRT - by Dawn Parish, Research Associate SFA Mast Arboretum

After the worst summer and the wettest winter I've ever experienced as a gardener, I'm pleased to say that the Arboretum still remains a great inspiration to me. We have accomplished many things and have enormous potential for even more improvements! The Children's Garden is now home to a model butterfly garden that will also be implemented on a smaller scale at elementary schools throughout Nacogdoches. The drainage ditch beyond the Elking Environment has been developed by our enthusiastic student Nathan Unchlebach. The Shade Garden continues to see a continued diversity of plant species as we find wonderful new shade tolerant plants. The new Perennial Borders are well in the process of getting all of the kinks worked out. Our ginger collection has grown considerably and will have a new home this spring. Some much needed and overdue urban forestry has occurred in the shade garden, lifting the canopy and providing easier access and brighter shade. We continue to see greater numbers of school children every spring, and now offer fun, educational activities for them thanks to Cheryl Boyette and some patient volunteers. Unfortunately we've lost Matt Welch as our Azalea Garden Technician, but by a huge stroke of luck we have found Wes Nichols to take on the daunting task of bringing the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden into fine form. Wes is a very welcome addition to our team. Barb Stump continues to do an amazing job of finding homes for a multitude of new azalea varieties. This year we hope to see a stream with connecting pond system come to fruition at the Children's Garden. More space for hardy gingers and tropicals is being carved out. The new Perennial Borders should look its best under the guidance of our volunteer group. Bill Jobe is the new president of our volunteer

organization. He is very motivated to see our group improve and grow. The Herb Garden is slated for a major facelift. Overall garden maintenance will improve. The azalea garden will be included in the Nacogdoches Azalea Trail tour this spring, promising many new visitors to our little part of the world. Our sales have become more successful than ever, drawing large crowds before the doors even open. This year should prove to be no exception. Children's activities through Bugs, Butterflies, and Blossoms will take place the morning of the sale, and as always, we'll provide entertainment and tours throughout the garden for the adults. We have a great deal to accomplish this year, and with the remarkable support of our Arboretum Friends, there will be no stopping us! Thanks to each and every one of you.

THE GRANT RAMBLE - Greg Grant

As usual, I've spent the majority of the spring traveling and giving talks. I've managed to give lectures in Marshal, Dallas, Belton, Mobile, Jackson, College Station, and McKinney in the last month. One of the highlights was getting to visit with the incomparable Felder Rushing in Jackson, Mississippi. His yard was a hoot as usual. He and his Master Gardeners have created a "recycled garden" at the Louisiana Agricultural Museum complete with bottle trees, crown tire planters, and license plate edging. I plan to return this summer to photograph it. It's a neat little garden.

Dr. Welch and a number of other informative speakers will be at the Tyler Spring Landscape Conference, scheduled for February 17 at the Tyler Rose Garden. Don't miss it. Blue Moon Gardens usually has some great plants available, which often include some beautiful poppies, hollyhocks, and larkspur.

Also, don't forget to attend the Neil Sperry All Garden show coming up Feb. 24 and 25 in Arlington. I'll be on the program along with a number of other Texas gardening experts. The trade show has doubled in size in recent years. In addition to some fun new plants, last year I purchased a new Stihl gas powered hedge trimmer that I now can't live without.

Make sure and show up for my SFA Lecture Series talk on a proposed East Texas Jonquil Festival too. I've been thinking about this for at least a decade now. This group of unsung flowers needs to be celebrated instead of ignored. What other flower looks and smells pretty, never needs water, fertilizer, or pesticide, and lives forever? They are true East Texas heirlooms that were passed on to us from our ancestors. I'm not going to shut up about them until everybody learns their names, propagates them, plants them, buys them, appreciates them, and celebrates them.

Make sure and congratulate the members of our SFA Horticulture Judging team which took first place in the team and individual competition at the recent ASHS meeting in Fort Worth. Members of the team were: Carey Von Simpson, Seth Rodewald-Bates, Ryan Conklin, and Brena Duren. There's not a smarter more competitive team on earth! They beat all the big schools across the South. My other school (Texas A&M) was second, while Dr. George's school (Oklahoma State) placed third.

This year's CEMAP Texas Superstars are: Bunny Bloom larkspur, Laura Bush Petunia, Butterfly Deep Pink Pentas, and Shantung Maple. Look for them in your favorite specialty nursery. Proceeds from the Superstar labels on these plants help support future trials of more potentially Texas tough plants. For more information on the plants see www.Texasuperstar.com.

I have a special guest coming in March. My dear friend Flora Ann Bynum, who is secretary and co-founder of the Southern Garden History Society will be our speaker at the SFA Lecture Series. She will talk about the historic gardens of Old Salem where she lives and gardens. I will be dedicating my little Flora Catalpa Arboretum in Arcadia to her as well. I will be hosting an "open garden" the day of the lecture series (Thursday, March 22) for anybody interested in stopping by. I normally don't entertain visitors as I'm too busy working. So here's your one invited chance to see a Jeckyllesque-white trash-cottage garden in the flesh (not you, the garden, please). It's located in downtown Arcadia at the intersection of FM 138 and FM 1645 in Shelby County, about 30 minutes from Nacogdoches. Come by anytime that day before the lecture series.

Until next time, happy gardening! -GG

CHILDREN'S GARDEN UPDATE - Cheryl Tate

Spring will be a busy time in the Children's Garden. 150 SFA Elementary Education 301 students will be gardening in the Arboretum this semester. The project will teach these future teachers how to use gardens to meet the new state mandated requirements for 30-40% of science classes to be field or lab based. The "Growing Minds Project" now in its third year will continue to garden with 13 NISD classrooms. We are excited to be moving into the secondary schools this semester as Central ISD joins the Growing Minds team. Central Outdoor Learning Center will design and build a butterfly habitat through the project. Central students in the seventh grade GT class will explore design, site selection, plant selection and propagation with Cheryl Boyette and Central science teacher Susan Sanders. These students will then mentor Central second graders as they all work together to design and install the garden habitat.

Bugs, Butterflies and Blossoms the spring children's event is planned to correlate with the Arboretum Spring Garden Gala. Free Monarch caterpillars and exciting activities throughout the morning are planned to help develop our next generation of arb volunteers and SFA hort students!

Dr. Alan Sowards and Cheryl Boyette, with the support of Dr. Creech and the Department of Elementary Education, have received a grant from the Virtual Field Trip Network. The grant will develop web lessons, activities and teacher information based on a virtual field trip of the SFA Mast Arboretum and the Pineywoods Native Plant Center. The project is part of a TEA effort to develop 80 sites in Texas. Our project links the project to the Growing Minds projects at Carpenter Elementary in Nacogdoches and the Central ISD Outdoor Learning Center.

Cheryl and Dawn are also planning a training session for those interested in doing tours for school groups.

Research shows 90% of all adults that garden had a gardening experience as a child!

STUMP'S VIEW - Barbara Stump

After Three Years in the Azalea Garden - In the past six months, lots of work has gone into making the garden trails firmer and drainage more defined, while truckloads of plants have been planted. Big thanks go to Matt Welch for starting the work, and to Wes Nichols and Derek Landre who continue it. While they built four beds where the big red and white tent stood during the dedication speeches, added another 11 irrigation risers and a few hundred feet more of irrigation line, I mapped all the plants and features in the garden. Just as it began to look like there would be big empty beds, two donations came in out of the blue. March 23, 2000, George Johnson and his wife heard my keynote talk "Building a Public Garden: The Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden from the Ground Up" -in Charleston, South Carolina, at the Azalea Society of America (ASA) annual meeting. He got so enthused hearing about all the ASA members who have donated plants that he called me up, offering whatever I wanted from his stock. Matt and I high-tailed it over to George Johnson Nursery in Forest Hill, Louisiana, in what I thought was a huge truck (a 14-foot U-Haul), only to find that all 750 mature plants would not fit. We packed about 500 in and said a big "Thank You!" Well, George and his wife came over the next weekend with the rest, in a surprise visit. This gave us a wonderful new infusion of big-flowered Southern Indica color (purple-fuchsia 'Pride of Mobile' and 'Daphne Salmon'), red Kurume 'Massasoit', and lovely pink and white Pericat hybrid 'Hampton Beauty'). So, I am now naming that section of the garden "Johnson's Corners". Then, Charles and Chris Pope of Pope's Azalea Farm in Canton needed to clear some space and sent out feelers to all the arboreta in the neighborhood. Amazingly, we were the only one taking them up on the offer. Charles Pope, a retired Houston policeman-turned-nurseryman brought them all himself in his absolutely perfect delivery vehicle, an 18-foot horse trailer. He brought us large numbers of some really nice material: white-and-purple 'Martha Hitchcock', lavender 'Corry', Shammarello hybrid 'Elsie Lee', and a purple Yodagawa azalea with flowers as big as an Indica, 'Poukhanense Compacta'. So, Bed #35 is now named "Pope's Fandango" to recognize their generosity.

More new plantings of note: Dr. Creech has been collecting *Buxus sempervirens* specimens for several years; the entire collection of 38 is now planted on the southern end of the garden in Beds #24 and #35. He and Dawn have also procured one of the larger collections of hydrangeas in Texas; 98 cultivars are now planted all along the base of the front berm. As both the lavender 'Koromo Shikibu' azaleas and the white and pastel hydrangeas grow, this will look like a 700-foot wave of SFA colors! More rare camellias are now tucked in the Camellia Forest Loop making up the southern end of the garden. Finally, our largest azalea collection is the May-blooming Satsuki. We had 42 specimens from van der Giessen Nursery and PDSI in Alabama and Jenkins Nursery in Louisiana

planted in Beds #31 and 32. To these we added 139 cultivars that we ordered from Nuccio's Nursery in California and planted in Beds #4 and 17.

Not to worry about the bed numbers I keep mentioning. As a by-product of the soon-to-be finished (!!) thesis and mapping work, there will be a Big Sign at the north entrance to the garden telling you just where all these beds are located, supported by bed signs and a free-to-the public trail map. The very professional sign will look like the one on the LaNana Creek Trail by Liberty Hall and has been largely funded by a signage grant from International Paper Company. Target for all of this to be done by the beginning of the Nacogdoches Azalea Trail, to be held March 1-24. The garden will all be on the official house and garden tour March 17, 1-4 p.m. as part of the Azalea Trail festivities. Come visit and see it in all its spring blooming splendor! (If you want a copy of the article on the garden that appeared in the winter 2000 issue of the ASA journal, THE AZALEAN, please contact me at bstump@inu.net or see it on the Arboretum website.)

THE GARDEN VIEW - Wes Nichols

As the newest member of the Arboretum team, Dr. Creech has asked me to provide a few words introducing myself. I've been a plant enthusiast all of my life. I grew up in Rosenberg and went to work for Cornelius Nursery in Houston in 1984 where I became a Texas Board Certified Nurseryman. I worked there for ten years in sales and as a yard supervisor. I also worked for Bill Bounds Nursery as a landscape supervisor, and through this job was able to work on the Azalea Trail in River Oaks. At that point, I moved to Nacogdoches to help my parents on our family farm. From the minute I came to Nacogdoches, I wanted to work at the Arboretum. There weren't any positions available so in 1998 I became the manager at Cook's nursery. Last September, I learned of an opening at the Arboretum and applied for the position. I was hired, and began working as the Arboretum Technician in October of 2000. My main responsibility is the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden.

My enthusiasm for plants is only surpassed by my passion for surfing leading me throughout Mexico, Hawaii, South America, Central America, New Zealand, and Australia. I believe that the Azalea Garden has great possibilities. My short-term goals are to improve the roads and drainage for easier access by visitors, and continue to add to the collection of companion plants. In the future, I would like to see the completion of a visitor center, a permanent parking facility and a bridge connecting the Azalea Garden with the rest of the Arboretum.

I am really happy to be part of this team, and I'm looking forward to adding my ideas to the development of the Azalea Garden.

NATIVE NOTES - Matt Welch

Greetings from the PNPC! As we head into the coldest month of the year and the plant world quietly snoozes beneath a blanket of fallen leaves, it seems only appropriate to take care of some pre-spring business. In this case, that business involves a few introductions.

First of all, let me introduce myself: my name is Matt Welch and I am the new Research Associate for the Pineywoods Native Plant Center and the Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Satellite Garden here at SFA. I am proud to say I am an SFA graduate with a BS in Horticulture and two years of wholesale nursery experience from Taylor's Nursery in Raleigh, NC. Upon moving back to Nacogdoches in the Fall of 1998 I began working for Dr. Creech as the Azalea Garden Technician. About five months ago I took the job here, and I can't imagine a better move. It's been a crash course in "native planthood" for a fellow who was raised on garden introductions from China, Japan, South America, South Africa-heck, nearly everywhere but Texas! Although it's been both fascinating and challenging learning native plants and their habitats, I must say some of the most interesting elements of the natives world are not native plants but native plant people! (Anyone who has met Mr. Peter Loos knows just what I'm talking about).

Next, I should introduce the Pineywoods Native Plant Center (PNPC) for those of you who have not yet heard of this project. The PNPC is a cooperative effort between the SFA Mast Arboretum and the College of Forestry aiming to put a spotlight on the native plants of the Pineywoods and their habitats. It is a 40-acre tract surrounding the Tucker House (Forest Resources Institute) which borders the Lanana Creek Trail. The garden will be divided up into different ecozones, each zone representing a particular habitat found in the Pineywoods. Areas so far in the works include a pitcher plant bog community, longleaf pine savannah, cypress swamp, post oak savannah, and mesic midslope community. We were thrilled to receive the concept plan for the garden, a vision of Mr. Darrel Morrison, FASLA, which included education centers and a large horticulture facility. The primary goal of the Center will be to educate the public about the importance of our natives not just from an asthetic standpoint but from an ecological one as well, placing emphasis on endangered natives such as the Neches River Rose Mallow (*Hibiscus dasycalyx*) and the White Bladderpod (*Lesquerella pallida*).

The last, but by no means least important introduction is Jeremy Macki, who began working at the PNPC in October. Jeremy is a horticulture student who is quickly becoming a native plants nut. He is working part-time around classes and is doing a great job keeping up with the sometimes chaotic work routine here at the PNPC. One minute he may be entering data into the computer, the next he's sitting on a tractor moving giant piles of brush. We're glad to have Jeremy on board.

For the spring, we're starting to gear up for the Cullowhee Lone Star Regional Native Plants Conference in May. The conference boasts an all-star lineup of speakers, including authors and native plant gurus from across the south. Hosted by the PNPC, this will be a terrific boost for the garden and education about native plants in the South. There will also be interesting and educational field trips to various points of botanical interest in East Texas, as well as a native plant sale here at th PNPC. For more information regarding Cullowhee, contact the PNPC office via e-mail at mwelch@sfasu.edu , or phone (936) 468-4104.

As you can see there are lots of irons in the fire here at the PNPC, and although we are off to a good start we've only scratched the surface. This garden will be a resource to

educate and enrich the community and it cannot be completed without community support. We are currently working out the details for a volunteer organization as well as membership levels and benefits. If you are interested in getting involved in the development of the Pineywoods Native Plant Center and the Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Demonstration Garden, well, you are invited to come by or contact the office. We will put you on our mailing list and you will receive information regarding membership and volunteer projects as soon as it becomes available.

Well, I can't just sign off without mentioning a few plants. First of all, I'm sure most of you have noticed the spectacular display of holly berries this year from all our native *Ilex* species. I have been particularly impressed with the yaupons (*Ilex vomitoria*) and American Holly (*Ilex opaca*) on the roadsides. On the herbaceous side of things, now is a great time to appreciate those plants that may not have the showiest of flowers but offer the only green on the forest floor during the winter months. A few to keep an eye out for include Christmas Fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*), the grape ferns (*Botrychium* spp), and one of my favorite groundcovering vines, Partridge Berry (*Mitchella repens*). For the eagle-eyed plantpeople, now is the time to look for the emerging cranefly orchids (*Tipularia discolor*), which produce a single leaf in the winter in order to build up energy for an August-September bloom. The leaf is a 2" by 3" long tear drop that stays close to the ground and is creased along the veins much like a Chinese fan. It can be found in shady wooded areas with a thick layer of leafy humus on the ground. Although craneflies aren't the showiest of our native orchids, they are definitely worthy of discovery in the winter landscape.

Well folks, spring's just around the corner, which means lots more great native treasures to see. We here at the PNPC sincerely hope you will take some time this spring to get out and discover what the Pineywoods has to offer. Take a hike!