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Winter 2006

## Pineywoods Native Plant Center, Winter 2006

SFA Gardens, Stephen F. Austin State University

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## Notes From the Director

By Dr. David Creech

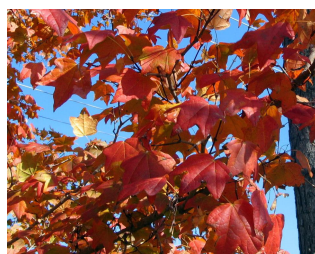
Let's face it. Fall foliage literally colors our world this time of year. I know we're not upstate Pennsylvania, but this Pineywoods fall has been especially vivid. I'm not sure why, but the yellows seemed more yellow and the reds redder. Maybe it was just me, maybe not, but here are a few fall of our fall color standouts in the Arboretum.

### The maples were stunning!



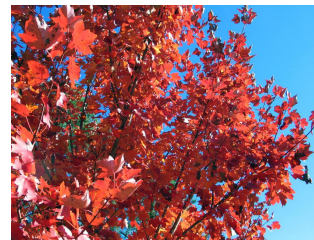
*Acer barbatum*

Our native Florida maple, *Acer barbatum*, is robust, light-hearted and, if given a little sun, will splash a big yellow across a forest. It's totally at home in the garden world at SFA. The chalk maple, *Acer leucoderme*, is another rarely encountered na-



*Acer leucoderme*

tive, a smaller version of the southern sugar maple, and is always beautiful in the fall.



*Acer rubrum* 'King's Highway'

Still another native, *Acer rubrum*, the red maple, is highly variable from seed but improved varieties are worth the hunt. That's 'King's Highway' by the gazebo and it's about as perfect a red as one could imagine.

One fascinating maple in our collection, *Acer skutchii*, hails from the mountains of Mex-



*Acer skutchii*

ico. Parked by the headhouse, this forty foot, white-barked tree sported butterscotch yellow foliage last fall but this fall decided to throw some orange hues with reddish overtones. It seems to hold its



*Acer buergeranum*  
'Ningpoense'

leaves forever! *Acer buergeranum*, the trident maple, is an exotic of tremendous character and form and can become a sizeable shade tree. The variety 'Ningpoense' has been consistently red in the fall. *Acer ginnala* is really *Acer tataricum* ssp. *ginnala*,



*Acer tataricum* ssp. *ginnala*

but it's still the Amur maple, and it's been in the garden for almost twenty years. It turns a surprising blazing red and maroon in the fall. While the show is brief, it's intense. This species has proven to be remarkably alkaline tolerant.

### Garden Seminars

- January 13 - Making Herbal Soap
- February 17 - Pruning Workshop
- March 24 - Budding and Grafting

### Les Reeves Lecture Series

- January 18 - Steve Bierberich
- Feb 15 - Mary Anne Pickens
- March 15 - Steve Dobbs

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

**SFA Mast Arboretum**

**Pineywoods Native Plant Center**

**Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden**

**Jim and Beth Kingham Children's Garden**



## Notes From the Director, cont.

Of course, it's hard to beat the diversity of tree forms and fall foliage color that comes with *Acer palmatum*, the Japanese maple. With over 200 varieties on display, the



*Acer palmatum* 'Chitoseyama'

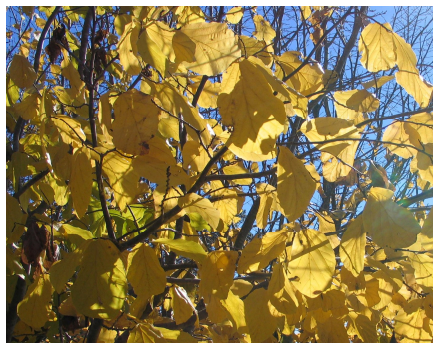
Ruby M. Mize Azalea garden is just about the best collection of Japanese maples in the South. My favorite for the moment is *Acer palmatum* 'Chitoseyama', a true tree form sporting modestly cut leaves. This variety grows strong and healthy in our climate and features bright clean red foliage for a long show in the fall.

*Ungnadia speciosa*, Mexican buckeye, sports redbud-like flowers in the spring and turns a terrific butterscotch yellow in the fall. This is a big shrub or small tree - depending on just how you look at things. The species has been vigorous and easy to grow



*Ungnadia speciosa*

in the dry garden - tending to make a multi-stem fountain of a tree to 15' or more. It's important to plant "high" on well drained soil in a full sun spot. The seed pod is striking and a buckeye or two in the pocket always brings good luck, right?



*Parrotia persica*

*Parrotia persica*, Persian witchhazel, is just one of those trees that gets better and better with age. Long lived and durable, this exotic from the mideast is totally at home in a full sun dry spot and never fails to make a bright yellow beacon in the garden. With fascinating winter flowers, interesting tree form and branching, and when it gets some age, the bark takes on a dramatic exfoliating character. This is an all purpose tree for southern landscapes.



*Chionanthus pygmaea*

*Chionanthus pygmaea*, the dwarf fringe tree, comes from Florida and is endangered in its native habitat. Closely related to our native fringe tree, *C. virginicus*, our one specimen is a stiff eight feet tall in more than a dozen years and is a delightful yellow in the fall. It develops a bright yellow foliage in the fall.

## Showing Off Camellias



Camellias are beautiful and popular plants in southern landscapes, and area gardeners will soon have the opportunity to view hundreds of camellia blooms at the East Texas Camellia Society show scheduled for January 2007. The show will be co-hosted by the SFA Mast Arboretum and East Texas Camellia Society and will be held in Room 110 of the Agriculture Building on Wilson Drive. The Show will be open to the public from 1-4 pm on Saturday, January 27 and from 1-3 on Sunday, January 28.

The East Texas Camellia Society welcomes new members. Hal Vanis, club president, said, "Our programs include growing camellias indoors and outdoors, grafting, trimming, fertilization, getting flowers ready for shows, native plants, and other subjects." For more information about club meetings or the upcoming camellia show, contact Hal Vanis at 903-854-4517.

*Camellia japonica* 'White by the Gate' is one of over 500 camellia flowers expected to be exhibited at the East Texas Camellia Society Show



# Branching Out

By Greg Grant



*Tillandsia usneoides*

You may notice several different “apartment dwellers” growing on the branches and trunks of the trees at the PNPC. The gray, wispy Spanish moss, *Tillandsia usneoides*, dangling from a precious few branches is a bromeliad related to the pineapple. It is a living, flowering plant, not a true moss, disease, or parasite. It robs no nutrients from the trees, deriving all its own food from sunlight, moisture, and organic matter. Growing “on air” in trees makes it an epiphytic bromeliad instead of a terrestrial (ground dwelling) one like pineapples. Historically, Spanish moss had many homestead uses including stuffing for mattresses and binding for mortar.

If memory serves me correctly, we actually have three different species of *Tillandsia* native to Texas. Spanish moss, *T. usneoides*, in East Texas, ball moss, *T. recur-*

*vata*, in Central Texas, and giant ball moss, *T. baileyi*, in South Texas. It’s funny how most folks in the South revere Spanish moss (“Evangeline’s hair”) but many in Central Texas think ball moss is a noxious parasite - which it IS NOT, will even grown on power lines.

You might notice a number of different shades and textures of other growths on the trunks of most of the trees. Most of these are lichens.

Lichens are composed of a combination of a fungus and blue-green algae growing together in a symbiotic, or mutually beneficial relationship. They occur in many shapes and colors and can grow on tree bark as well as rocks. They are not parasites either and do not sap any food from the trees.



Lichens and mushrooms growing on a fallen tree at the Piney woods Native Plant Center

Some of the green “fuzz” on the lower tree trunks is a true moss, or bryophyte. Moss thrives in shady moist conditions and may or may not grow on the north side of the tree. Mosses spread by spores instead of seeds.

The amazing resurrection fern, *Pleopeltis polypodioides michauxiana*, one of my favorites, can be seen growing higher on the branches of some of the hardwood trees.



*Pleopeltis polypodioides michauxiana*

This opportunistic, epiphytic, true fern goes dormant during dry weather by turning brown and shriveling. When it rains, it miraculously revives and turns green again. There has always been an abundance of resurrection fern on the post oaks, *Quercus stellata* at home in Arcadia. The LSU campus was replete with it on the lives oaks *Q. virginiana* when I taught there as well.

Don’t let the fact that most of the leaves have gone deter you from enjoying nature. The woods are full of interesting characters! Introduce yourself.



## Earth Science Rocks!

By Elyce Rodewald

How does it feel to be a water droplet traveling through the water cycle? What is erosion and how can you prevent it? How is a clay particle like an M & M? What secrets can the rocks at the Native Plant Center tell you? Over 475 Nacogdoches 5<sup>th</sup> graders discovered the answers to these questions and many more at the first-ever Earth Science Field Day held on November 15. Volunteers, staff, and SFA forestry majors led students in hands-on activities that taught concepts targeted by the state science

curriculum. High winds, falling acorns, and dropping temperatures added to the excitement of outdoor learning!





# We've Gone Bald on Lanana

By Dr. David Creech

Take a peek at a new forest on the west bank of Lanana Creek. It's right across from the Coliseum parking lot - and only a few hundred steps North of the Jim and Beth Kingham Children's Garden. Basically, we've gone bald. Bald cypress, that is. Lee Brittain, our new Physical Plant Director, likes bald cypress enough to let the Arboretum stake a claim to a sizeable chunk of streamside property. With happy graduate students - Lijing Zhou, Lacey Stokes, and Brennan Whitehead - we've planted over 100 bald cypress trees in a really nice run along Lanana, with trees 10' apart on a triangular pattern. The collection represents 17 genotypes from Ms. Zhou's



Graduate students Brennan Whitehead, Lijing Zhou, and Lacey Stokes stand amidst the newly planted bald cypress forest along Lanana Creek.

thesis work and we've replicated the genotypes in three main blocks. They are all grown from seed from wild-selected parents and advanced selections in Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, and New Mexico - except our hybrid *Taxodium X* 'Nanjing Beauty', which was cutting grown. Thanks go out to two primary cooperators: Dr. Ken Krauss of the National Wetlands Research Center in Lafayette, Louisiana - and Dr. Donald Rockwall of the School of Forest Resources and Conservation, University of Florida, Gainesville. This really is a unique collection and some fascinating germplasm. Come back in a thousand years and we'll give you the final report!



## 2007 Les Reeves Lecture Series

**January 18** - "Great Plants Can Come From the Great Plains!" - Steve Bieberich

**February 15** - "Taking All the Right Paths to That Perfect Garden" - Mary Anne Pickens

**March 15** - "Landscape Like a Pro!" - Steve Dobbs

**April 19** - "White Shadows, Twin Dragons, & a Really Mad Hatter: Discovering the Beauty & Mystery of Chandor Gardens." - Steven Chamblee

**May 17** - "Colorful Gardens for Sun or Shade" - Bill Welch

**June 21** - "Woody and Herbaceous Gems for the Landscape" - Mike Schnelle

**July 19** - "Palms, The Princes of the Plant Kingdom" - Grant Stephenson

**August 16** - "It's 118 in the Shade and All I Can Think is Why am I Here?" - George Hull

**September 20** - "Art and Science: Redoute" - Barney Lipscomb

**October 18** - "Improving Plants for Southern Gardens - Cecil Pounders

**November 15** - "Lotus: The Whole World Gets It but US" - Ken

**December 20** - "Mexico, China and Baseball - Ain't Life Grand?" - David Creech



The SFA Arboretum Les Reeves Lecture Series is normally held the third Thursday of each month from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm in room 110 of the Stephen F. Austin University Agriculture Building on Wilson drive (between the Art building and the Intramural fields). It is FREE and open to everyone! Refreshments are served before the talk and a rare plants raffle is held afterwards.

# Report From the Ruby Mize Azalea Garden

By Barbra Stump



*Acer japonica* 'Meigitsu'

In keeping with our goal of cutting-edge plant testing and evaluation, we have planted maples from the East and West Coasts in full western sun in Bed 45. This spring we planted each of the *Acer palmatum* Japanese maples that we received from Virginia Japanese maple grower Elizabeth Gardner that she considered "sun-tolerant": These include: 'Aoyagi', 'Arakawa', 'Beni hoshi', 'Edgewood', 'Hatsu shigure', 'Hogyuku', 'Kasen nishiki', 'Stella Rossa', and 'Winter Flame'. We also have two specimens of the vine maple, *Acer circinnatum* 'Sunglow' in this bed, as well as a number from the Oregon nursery of Stanley and Sons, including: 'Beni hoshi', 'Beni

shi en', 'Hatsu shigure', 'Kasen nishiki', 'Saotome', and 'Yasemin'.

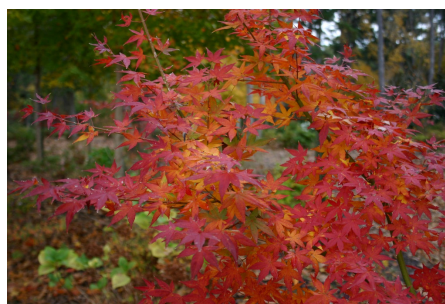
With drip irrigation they all made it through the summer, but several showed the stress of the experience with tip burn and some top branch die-back. Year two with these will tell us truly whether they can thrive in the Texas sun.

Just before Thanksgiving Dr. Creech and I had the opportunity to walk the gardens with Keith Johansson of MetroMaples from Arlington, Texas. He is considering bringing the International Maple Society here and seemed impressed with our collections on both sides of LaNana Creek. We are trialing one of his new *Acer truncatum* clones that he selected for brilliant red fall color. Next year, we hope to share a photo of this gem in full fall glory.

## Color Notes

But, as Dr. Creech says, wasn't this a fabulous year for fall color in the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden? He and Greg have both sung the praises of the *Acer barbatum*, the southern sugar maple, which sets the forest aflame with the brilliant yellow color. My

favorites this year have been the reds and oranges. *Acer shirasawanum*, the full moon maple, has so many shades of red and orange as to defy description. At the beginning of November, a walk into the garden from the west and by Bed 16 (near the ROTC tower) let you see the broad wide-open doubly serrated leaves of *Acer japonicum* 'Meigitsu', which is also bronze when the new leaves unfold in the spring. We sincerely hope this does grow to the ultimate height of 33 feet listed in the books. Another star on the western side of the garden is *Acer palmatum* 'Takao', whose leaves are a brilliant red in Bed 41.



*Acer palmatum* 'Takao'



## Reminder About Azalea Society of America Convention

Convention co-chairs Barbara Stump and Barbara Wagner report that all is on-schedule for the Azalea Society of America convention, "Azaleas in the Pines: A Texas Garden Party," March 29-April 1, 2007. The Arboretum is hosting this convention with lots of help from the Nacogdoches Convention and Visitors Bureau. We are planning for a maximum of 140 very keen azalea gardeners and growers from all over the US and will show them our own Arboretum Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden and several gardens in Tyler, including the expansion of the Ina Brundrett Azalea Garden at Tyler Junior College. To find out more, please visit the convention Web site,

[www.nacogdochesazaleas.com](http://www.nacogdochesazaleas.com).



## 2007 Garden Seminars

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Grow your garden of knowledge by attending an SFA Mast Arboretum Garden Seminar! In-depth programs provide practical information to gardeners in all stages of growth—from beginner to experienced. Seminar space is limited, so advance registration is required.

To register, contact the education office at 936-468-1832; email [erodewald@sfasu.edu](mailto: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. To learn more about becoming a member of the Friends of the SFA Mast Arboretum and SFA Pineywoods Native Plant Center call the education office at 936-468-1832.

**January 13: Gifts from the Garden—Making Herbal Soaps** Join experienced soap maker, Zaina Farrar, in creating a variety of delightful herbal soaps. Learn recipes, techniques, and take home samples of luxurious soap that you will make during the workshop. Space is limited, so register early! 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Room 118, Agriculture Building, Wilson Drive. Members \$25. Non-members \$35.

**February 17: Sharpening Your Pruning Skills—Moving Beyond the Green Meatball** Discover the fine art of properly pruning fruit trees and ornamentals from Dr. David Creech, SFA horticulture professor. You can also join the battle against crape myrtle mutilation and learn how to prune, not ruin your trees. Members \$20. Non-members \$30.

**March 24: A Scion of the Times—All About Budding and Grafting** Dr. Creech is back to teach the plant propagation techniques of budding and grafting. Participants will practice on a variety of plants. Bring a small, sharp pocket knife. Dr. Creech will supply the first aid kits! Members \$20. Non-members \$30.

**May 19: Flying Flowers—Butterflies 101** Larry Shelton, naturalist and butterfly enthusiast, will explore gardening for butterflies as well as butterfly identification and biology. Participants will also take a leisurely hike through the Arboretum to identify favorite butterfly plants and habitats, and we hope to do some butterfly watching along the way! Members \$20. Non-members \$30.

**September 15: Improving Your Images with Digital Photography** Join Jeff Abt, landscape designer, garden writer, and photographer extraordinaire, to learn tricks and techniques for using your digital camera to capture incredible garden images. Members \$20. Non-members \$30.

**December 1: Deck the Halls—Using Evergreens to Decorate for the Holidays** Evergreen branches and garlands once served as symbols of enduring life and a fruitful year to come. Join Dawn Stover, Research Associate at the SFA Mast Arboretum, to learn how to create elegant wreaths and garlands using materials from mother nature. Learn principles of wreath, garland, and centerpiece construction and make a wreath to enjoy at home for the holidays. Members \$25. Non-members \$35.



## Mark Your 2007 Calendars!

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**January 27-28** - East Texas Camellia Society Show

**March 29 - April 1** - Azalea Society of America National Convention

**April 14** - Garden Gala Day - plant sale

**April 23-26** - Bugs, Butterflies, Bees, and Blossoms

**May 24-26** - Texas Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta annual conference - San Angelo, Texas

**August 17-19** TNLA Expo and Convention - Dallas, Texas

**October 6** - Fabulous Fall Festival - plant sale

**October 19** - Fall Fandango - members party

**October 26-27** - SFA Homecoming

# Winter Color

By Dawn Stover



*Camellia sasanqua*  
'Leslie Ann'

As daylight dwindles, whether or not the temperatures do, our gardens fall into a state of dreamy rest. The pace slows, and even on warm, clear winter days

there's no haste to move about in the garden. Sure a few cool season weeds pop up here and there, but they're slow to grow and easy to pull. Once all of those fall leaves have been raked and mulched, what's a gardener to do? Shall we southern gardeners sit by the fire and browse seed catalogs as we watch the snow drifts against the windows? Well good luck making that happen! We may not be blessed with four true seasons, but we are blessed with mild winters that make it possible to continue our admiration for Mother Nature. I won't tell you what you should be doing in your own garden right now. Instead I'm stepping out of my perennial skin, if you will, and into the world of shrubs and trees.

The garden enters and exits winter with showy bursts of color, and a subtle yet fragrant interim. The following are just a few of the things you will find in the Arboretum from now until the arrival of your next newsletter:



*Camellia sasanqua*  
'Setsugekka'

Camellias begin the show, blooming as early as October and as late as February and March. The earliest to bloom is the

true tea camellia, *Camellia sinensis*, with showy, single white flowers with a pleasant dollop of buttery yellow stamens. Plants are lightly fragrant, and the deep, dark green of the foliage makes the perfect foil for the clean, white blossoms. Up next are the Sasanquas, *Camellia sasanqua*, and their hybrids. Flowers are large and blousy, often single, and often with a prominent, telltale patch of bright yellow stamens. Flowers can be white like the 'Setsugekka', any shade of pink like 'Leslie Ann' or 'Pink Butterfly', to a near brick red like 'Yuletide' or 'Midnight Lover'. This group is my personal favorite because they bloom so

freely before any real winter weather can set in and turn a pretty flower into something akin to used tissue. As a whole, the later blooming Ja-

ponicas, *Camellia japonica*, have much more beautiful, and dare I say perfect, flowers, but they often coincide with a major, used tissue-inducing freeze. Some Japonicas are exceptional in that they are early



*Camellia japonica* 'Otome'

blooming, and in particular 'October Affair' is simply breathtaking. 'Otome', also known as 'Pink Perfection' is a very close second. As time progresses, I hope to become more familiar with the camellias in our collection, and to introduce you to the best of the best within.

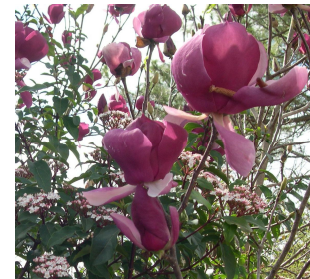
I mentioned an interim with subtle yet fragrant blossoms. When the initial explosion of camellia blossoms is waning, and the days become yet shorter, your nose may lead you to some late blooming shrubs.

The leatherleaf mahonia, *Mahonia bealei*, offers a bright punctuation of upright panicles consisting of lightly fragrant, buttery-yellow flowers. The spiky, evergreen foliage offers a neat, architectural exclamation throughout the year, and the pretty flowers are followed by glowing light-blue berries in the spring. Other late-blooming



*Camellia sasanqua*  
'Midnight Lover'

shrubs are best viewed close up, and if your olfactory senses are lacking, I'm afraid they'll be of little visual value to you. I'm referring specifically to winter hazel, *Corylopsis veitchiana*, and fragrant wintersweet, *Chimonanthus praecox*. Each has waxy, cream-yellow blossoms that are sweetly fragrant. Pictures of the winter hazel on the internet are spectacular, but I think that ours in the garden is lacking enough in age to make it somewhat still inconspicuous. The blooms aren't terribly large, or bright on the wintersweet, and when it's in foliage it's not particularly anything to write home about. Ah, but that sweet, sweet smell. It's not overpowering, not cloying. It's just enough to make you hunt for the source. As they are both deciduous, plant them amongst your evergreens for a pleasing winter treat. Fragrant honeysuckle also blooms late, or rather early. Despite the small flowers, it is evergreen. It too is fra-



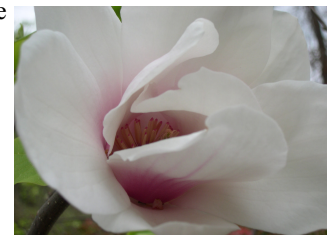
*Magnolia x 'Jane'*

grant, but not something that pleases my particular sense of smell.

The arrival of the tulip magnolia blossoms indicate that winter's

slumber is nearing its end. Spring will soon follow. We have an outstanding collection at the arboretum that merits its own article, perhaps in the spring installment of *Garden News*. I will give a hint of what might come: from white to pink, dark pink, and even yellow, from 'Jon Jon' to 'Jane, we have so many beautiful forms to see.

Even though the pace is slower, there are still so many things to see at the Arboretum in winter. I didn't even mention bark or bulbs, or flowering plums, or banana shrubs. Don't be a stranger, discover the winter treasures and pleasures in the Arboretum before they slip away.



*Magnolia*  
'Jon Jon'



Stephen F. Austin State University  
Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture  
PO Box 13000-SFA  
Nacogdoches, TX 75962-3000



<http://arboretum.sfasu.edu>

## A Bit of History

A portion of Lanana Creek Trail and the Tucker Woods Trail were recently incorporated into the newly paved ADA accessible trail system at the SFA Pineywoods Native Plant Center. In a recent email, Dr. F.E. Abernathy shared the history of Lanana Creek Trail and Tucker Woods Trail.

He recalls, "My seven-year-old grandson and I blazed the trail through Tucker Woods in the spring of 1990. Some of it was so thick Edward had to cut holes and crawl through. The Tucker land was in pretty good shape because the trees had been left alone from the beginning. The Hinds land at the north end was all briars, privet, and tall trees. I cut most of the original Tucker Woods trail by hand—machete, chain saw, and Stihl blade cutter—and later, the city cleared out the stumps along the path with a Cat. Most of the clearing of the brush was done by hand, but Dave Creech cleared areas of the south end (near the shot-put field) with his bush hog. We cleared most of the underbrush by hand out to a hundred or more feet from the Trail. Then we carried

and stacked the cut brush back into the remaining brush growth. I sprayed the privet hedge for two or three years, when it came back in the spring. When we finished in 1992-3, the Trail proper, from the shot-put field to Raguet Street, was an open park. A couple of years later—'94, I think—I decided to clear a path from the main Trail out to Raguet, because so many hikers from that Raguet neighborhood complained about having to go to the end of the Trail to get on it. We cut the Trail up to the top of the hill, where the woods ended and then cleared and mowed a path out to Raguet Street. Tucker Woods workers helped keep that path cleared. Then we cleared a park area on both sides of this new trail."

The entire Lanana Creek trail project was started as a part of the 1986 Sesquicentennial Celebration. The trail follows Lanana Creek from East Austin to the City Soccer Complex. It was created to preserve, beautify, and utilize the flood banks of the Lanana Creek for the people of Nacogdoches and to leave the Lanana Creek Trail as

a lasting remembrance of Nacogdoches' celebration of Texas' 150<sup>th</sup> birthday. The original trail committee included F.E. Abernathy, Chairman, Archie McDonald, Carroll Schoenewolf, and John Anderson.

We are certainly indebted to those who had the foresight, perseverance, and energy to create this wonderful trail, and we are excited to join the ranks of numerous volunteers, Eagle Scouts, and SFA students who have contributed to the construction and maintenance of the trail. As more visitors explore the SFA Pineywoods Native Plant Center on the new universally accessible trails, we think they will agree with Dr. Abernathy that "that piece of nature is one of Nacogdoches' treasures."

