

## 2005 Les Reeves Lecture Series

The Les Reeves Lecture Series is entering its eighth year at the SFA Mast Arboretum. This very popular educational program is funded by the Les Reeves Memorial Endowment, and lodging for speakers is generously provided by Ann Phillips at Llano Grande Plantation. Raffle plants are donated by Kings Nursery, Naconiche Gardens, and the SFA Mast Arboretum. Delicious refreshments are compliments of the SFA Mast Arboretum Volunteers. Plan now to attend the 2005 lectures to hear great horticulturists from all over the United States. The lectures are free, open to the public, and no reservations are required. A rare plants raffle is held after the lectures. Lectures start at 7:00 p.m. in Room 110 of the Agriculture Building on Wilson Drive.

**January 20:** Jeff Abt, garden writer and landscaper, Nacogdoches, "The Warm and Sensitive Gardener."

**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."

## Beat Those Winter-Time Blues with an SFA Mast Arboretum Garden Seminar!

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. 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](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.

**January 22: Landscape Design Made Simple** Greg Grant will solve the complex riddle of proper landscaping with his simple rules of basic landscape design and obvious examples of what NOT to do. He will cover everything from concrete grottos to cottage gardens. Everybody should be afraid of Greg, but nobody should be afraid of design! \$20

**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

**March 19: In Search of the Rare Silky Camellia--Native Plant Field Trip** Visit Little Cow Creek and Canyon Rim in Sabine County under the expert guidance of Matt Welch, native plant guru and manager of Naconiche Gardens, and Lance Craig, Research Associate at the Pineywoods Native Plant Center. We will board vans and travel south to explore a forested seep and breath-taking canyon looking for silky camellias, native azaleas, orchids, ferns, trilliums, unusual viburnums, witch hazels and more! Return by 3 pm. Lunch provided. Space limited. \$20

**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.

*Special Thanks to  
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# SFA Mast Arboretum News Fall 2004

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## On the Trail of the Red-Flowering Sweet Osmanthus, *Osmanthus fragrans*

By Dr. David Creech

In plant-hunting circles, one of the elusive treasures yet to make its way into the USA is the red-flowered Sweet Osmanthus. There have been rumors and some have said they have seen pictures, or knew someone who had the plant, or heard of someone who had a friend who saw a picture, and there have been other intriguing tales but still, no factual encounters. Well, I can now say that the rumors are over. I have seen *O. fragrans* 'Zhusha Dangui' and while I caught it just past peak with petals a bit spent, I can say, yes, it's red enough to make the mark. Sure, there's a slight cast of dark orange in the petals but there was enough red there for me to go to drooling and wanting to snatch a cutting. I didn't because Chinese jails are reported as spartan, but I've got the ball rolling to introduce this cultivar and about a dozen others in the near future. Let's just say I told my host "I have got to have this one."



*Osmanthus fragrans* var. *aurantiacus*  
at Suzhou Osmanthus Garden.

I was lucky enough to be invited to participate in the first International Sweet Osmanthus Conference in Shanghai, China in early October 2004. I was invited by the famous scientist Xiang Qi-bai of the Nanjing Forestry University. The catch for this trip was I had to give a talk

on the "Status and Use of *Osmanthus fragrans* in Southern USA landscapes," which was quite a challenge since so little is documented. However, with the help of friends across the South, I managed a talk that acquainted our hosts with the plant in the USA and its production in the nursery industry. The conference included one day of talks from international and Chinese lecturers and then, best of all, Janet and I enjoyed two days of touring gardens in Suzhou and Hangzhou famous for the species. The ancient Sweet Osmanthus of China is one of the ten traditional flowers of China. The sweet smelling tree is revered with many specimens over 1000 years old! In fact, during October when the species is at its best, over ten Chinese cities honor the plant with a wide variety of special holidays. In a carnival-like atmosphere, Chinese citizens flock to Sweet Osmanthus gardens to bask in the fragrance and glory of the plant.

China has applied to the International Horticulture Society to be the official international registry for the genus, and while that application is pending, there's good reason to think it's a slam dunk. After all, China has a long

history with the plant and harbors most of the world's ancient germplasm of the species. Old trees are revered, signed and interpreted, and given holy attendance. Protective fences mark their importance. Tourists flock to gawk at their size and glory. The most ancient plant known in China rests comfortably in the grounds of the Shengshui Temple, Nanzheng County, Shannxi Province and is over 2100 years old. It's 40 feet in height, and this magic tree was planted by the Xiaohe himself, the Minister of the Han Dynasty. The most impressive tree that I saw personally was the stately specimen in the landscape of

Linggu Temple, Nanjing city, Jiangsu province. This dense-foliaged giant is over 21 feet in height and sports a crown diameter of 24 feet. It rests alone in the valley, and when in bloom on an early morning, the entire valley is filled with its magic.



*Osmanthus fragans at Linggu Temple*

There are over 157 varieties of sweet olive in China divided into four main groups: Fragrans, Latifolius, Thurnbergii, and Aurantiacus. It's the latter that's attracted the plant hunters' eyes . . . for in it rests the oranges and orange-reds. All emit a beautiful fragrance. In the last twenty years, an effort was made to preserve the species in China and select superior cultivars. Cultivars have been selected for flower size, characteristics of the flowers, abundance of flowers, time of bloom, tree form and habit, bark, branch, leaf, pedicel, and fruit. *Osmanthus fragrans* has been in cultivation in China for over 2000 years before it was introduced into the West. Sweet Osmanthus did not make it into our country until 1856, and there are very few varieties and certainly no dark oranges or reds to be found here. Hopefully, that will soon change. The most exciting recent introduction into the USA is 'Fudingzhu', or more popularly known as 'Nanjing Beauty'. It's very floriferous, white flowered, and is known to bloom quickly in the nursery container. *O. fragrans* var. *aurantiacus* is the orange-yellow form that one can find occasionally in the landscapes of the South; and it's a treasure when it reaches peak bloom and fragrance. There are a few other varieties reported but none have taken the trade by storm.

In terms of popularity, Sweet Osmanthus has a long way to go in the USA. We visited one nursery near Guangzhou that produces 1.5 million plants per year! While most Chinese nursery plants are destined for the China marketplace, which is huge, there is a growing interest in exporting new cultivars and plants to the international market. For that to happen there will have to be cooperation, marketing and promotion. I have proposed to the Sweet Osmanthus Branch of the Chinese Flower Association that the SFA Mast Arboretum in

Nacogdoches should be the very first official Osmanthus garden in the USA! Think about it. The Mast Arboretum is ideally suited to test, protect and promote the wide variety of cultivars found in the gardens of China. I imagine a mapped, signed and data-based campus-wide collection—a sweet-smelling garden to serve as the foundation for a new and growing industry.

## ***Influence of Nitrogen Fertilizer Timing and Rate on Azalea Bloom***

*By Julie Fullenwider*

The azalea is a must-have shrub in the southern landscape. Fertilization recommendations often suggest fertilizing the plant after bloom to discourage early bloom and damage due to late spring freezes. The objective of this study was to determine the effect of fertilizer timing and rate on azalea bloom. Five varieties of azaleas were selected for this study, using sixty plants in each variety, for a total of three hundred plants. The four varieties located in the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden on the Stephen F. Austin State University Campus include 'Koromo Shikibu,' 'Poukhanense Compacta,' 'Kaempheri 6811,' and 'Rosea.' One variety, 'Elsie Lee,' is located in front of Steen Hall also on the Stephen F. Austin campus.

Three rates (0, 50 and 100 lbs of nitrogen/acre) of ammonium sulfate (21-0-0) were applied at four different times of the year (December, February, March, May). Each plant received a single application of fertilizer. Each fertilizer treatment was replicated five times within each variety.

Beginning in March, buds and blooms were counted on a previously tagged branch of each plant. This data was put into one of four categories:

- Stage 1: Pink tip (bud swell with first color showing at tips)
- Stage 2: Pink bud (expanded and just prior to opening)
- Stage 3: Open (fully open in prime show)
- Stage 4: Bloom decline (bloom in wilt or other indication of decline)



*ects data in the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden.*

*Julie Fullenwider, horticulture graduate student, coll*

Bloom counts were taken weekly until all blooming had ceased. A percentage of blooms in Stage 3 were statistically analyzed to show the effects of fertilized and non-fertilized plants in relation to bloom time. There were no significant differences in bloom time in relation to rate or time of fertilizer application. The conclusion is that fertilizer timing and rate has no effect on the bloom time of azaleas. Bloom time of plants that received fertilizer in December was not significantly different from those that did not receive fertilizer. In visual observation, bloom times were not noticeably different in the research plants when compared to other groups of azaleas not included in the study. It is the researcher's thought that the microclimate is a larger factor determining the time of bloom than is the time and rate of fertilizer application.

## ***Nacogdoches Recognized as First-Ever ASA Azalea City***

*By Barb Stump*

On November 2, 2004, the first-ever Azalea Society of America "Azalea City" designation was presented to the City of Nacogdoches. Mayor Bob Dunn accepted the award presented on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Azalea Society of America. The award is represented by a plaque with the citation and colorful images of an evergreen azalea and a deciduous azalea.

In the award notification, the chairman of the ASA's Azalea City committee, Joseph Schild, said about the Nacogdoches application: "It is clear from the information and application submitted that the City of Nacogdoches, Texas has an active history of promoting and celebrating azaleas with various municipal, civic and community events. Azaleas are obviously a part of the community culture and it is only fitting that your city should receive from the Azalea Society of America the certification as an ASA Azalea City."

This award recognizes the efforts of many people who are planting azaleas, learning about them, and making the annual Nacogdoches Azalea Trail a success. Among these are Azalea Trail Committee members Gayla Mize and the Flora Garden Club; Rocky Dumas; Sherry Ward; Eloise Adams; the Convention and Visitors Bureau board and staff; local nurseries; and SFA Mast Arboretum staff and volunteers. The Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden at the Mast Arboretum is a central feature of the Nacogdoches Azalea Trail. The Azalea City designation is intended to recognize cities that promote and display azaleas in festivals, azalea trails, garden tours, and lectures. The award can be used in marketing future azalea-related activities.

## ***Update: Jack's tired, lost a little weight, but he's still got all his charm . . .***

*By Dr. David Creech*

Jack, SFA's amazing first-ever-to-bloom-in-Texas corpse flower, has settled into his new home in the glasshouse, and he's ready for a long winter. After all the excitement of Jack's July Jamboree, it's time for a deep sleep. It's true we had high hopes for seed set but we failed. Pollen flown in from a University of Connecticut plant was applied through a window we cut near the bottom of the spathe. Everyone had a hand in swiping the pollen on with a spatula, so now we can all blame each other for the failure, I guess. At any rate, the peduncle supporting the cone-shaped fruiting head melted into a pitiful puddle of despair—taking with it our hopes and dreams for baby jacks to spread across the South. To add to our disappointment, we learned that the University of Connecticut and Disneyland plants both failed to set seed, so we're zero for three attempts. Not too good. Since that time, we've waited and wondered. Is Jack dead? Will he ever come back to life? What should we do? Well, with a great deal of theater and a little China jet lag, I decided to use a Plant Propagation lab to dig Jack up from his slumber, clean him off and repot him in the greenhouse with fresh media.

Jack seems healthy. He's still dormant, lighter than last year, and looks a bit tired, but not too much worse for the wear. We noticed a few cormlet-like objects on Jack's side and bottom and these were "popped" off and potted up . . . maybe some future Baby Jacks here? Most interesting was the weight loss. In March, 2004, Jack weighed in at 26 lbs. 2 ozs. After flowering amidst TV, news folks, admiring visitors and a little Barry White music, Jack settled into a deep sleep. He now weighs 21 lbs. 12 ozs. which means that flower cost him just a hair under 5 lbs. Flowering cost him about 20% of his original body weight. I'd be tired too. The most frequent question around here? When will Jack flower again? We just don't know; but if it happens, we'll get the word out.



*SFA Horticulture majors, Trey Anderson, Taylor Maxwell, and Wes Schuler display the corm and "cormlets."*