

## OCTOBER 2001

For anyone who likes to plan ahead, here's the Mast Arboretum schedule of events for the remainder of this year and for ALL of 2002! Can you believe we're this organized? Well, we are (at least in this arena). We've snagged a super lineup of speakers for the Les Reeves lecture series next year - and we've done it early enough to get it posted in a number of Houston/Dallas 2002 gardening calendars and brochures. This monthly event is still about the best show in town for the money (zero) and enjoyment (priceless). The lecture series is graciously supported by an endowment provided by Theresa Reeves, her family and friends. About 100 each month enjoy pre-lecture munchies, a great lineup of speakers, and a fun plant giveaway - that is never rigged. The SFA Mast Arboretum Les Reeves Lecture Series is normally held the third Thursday of each month at 7:00 PM in room 110 of the Stephen F. Austin University Agriculture Building on Wilson drive (right next to the intramural fields). Refreshments are provided by the SFA Mast Arboretum volunteers and lodging for our out-of-town speakers is often graciously provided by Marilyn Larison of the Haden Edwards Inn. Now, the question still remains: will we eventually have to move - or should we just force everyone to watch standing up, shoulder to shoulder?

Fabulous Fall Festival - Oct. 6, 2001 - Plant Sale, Walk and Talk Lectures, Rare Plant Auction, Entertainment, Booths, and Refreshments. Contact Dawn for details: 936-468-4404 or (dparish@sfasu.edu) and the plant sale list is on the web: [www.sfasu.edu/ag/arboretum](http://www.sfasu.edu/ag/arboretum).

Oct 18, 2001: Jim Kamas, TAMU Horticulturist, Fruits, Fredericksburg, TX: "Going Nuts over Fruits!"

Nov 15, 2001: Matt Welch, PNPC Research Associate: "Running Wild with the Natives!"

Dec 13, 2001: Dave Creech, Director SFA Mast Arboretum: "Whew, what a year it's been!"

Jan 17, 2002: Jeff Abt, garden writer, landscaper from Nacogdoches, Texas, "Let me just say this about that . . . and other horticultural dictums spoken ex cathedra "

Feb 21, 2002 Allen Owings, Extension Horticulturist from Baton Rouge, Louisiana: "Louisiana Landscape Lagniappe - A Little Something Extra."

Mar 21, 2002 : Todd Lasseigne. JCR Arboretum in Raleigh, North Carolina: "New plants at the JCR Arboretum."

April 18, 2002: Don Wilkerson, TAMU, Extension Horticulturist, "In the trenches . . . building the TAMU Horticultural Gardens from the Ground Up."

April 20, 2002: Garden Gala Day - 9 AM Till 5 PM. Plant Sale, Walk and Talk Lectures, Rare Plant Auction, Entertainment, Booths, and Refreshments.

May 16, 2002: Mike Schnelle, Professor of Horticulture, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, "The Oklahoma State Botanical Gardens . . . new plants, new plans."

June 20, 2002: Bill Welch, Horticulturist, TAMU, College Station - "Gardening tips that would normally cost you a fortune."

July 18, 2002: Bill Adams, Horticulturist, TAMU, Houston, Texas - "Photography for the gardener."

Aug 15, 2002: Aubrey King, King's Nursery, Tenaha, Texas - "What's Hot at the Nursery!"

Sep 19, 2002: Greg Grant, Horticulturist, Arcadia, Texas - "The Arcadia Connection."

Oct. 5, 2002: Fabulous Fall Festival - Plant Sale, Walk and Talk Lectures, Rare Plant Auction, Entertainment, Booths, and Refreshments.

Oct 17, 2002: Scott Ogden, garden writer, landscaper, Austin, Texas - "The Garden as an Expression of Power and Control" or "Bondage and Discipline in the Garden"

Nov 2, 2002: Jim Robbins, Extension Horticulturist, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas, "We're Hog Wild on Gardening."

Dec 12, 2002: Dave Creech, SFA Mast Arboretum, Nacogdoches, Texas - "Making peace with the natives," and "The Year in Review."

#### **NOTES FROM THE GARDEN - Dave Creech, Director**

Change. I guess it's inevitable. While it's tempting to wax philosophic on any number of subjects just kind of related to September 11th, I'll resist . . . and let's talk SFA Mast Arboretum, plants and people. First, people.

#### People Changes:

Greg Grant, lecturer and color plant extraordinaire, resigned in May to pursue other interests. It was a major loss, of course, but SFA can boast that we benefited enormously from the three and a half years that Greg was here. The place bears an indelible stamp of color improvement and new display beds, and Greg left a trail of great plants everywhere you look. In fact, there's 5.3 times as much color bed and border space as when he arrived! The mix of plants, while still amazingly diverse, is carrying more proven performer color plants - there's more massing - and there's a new gardening mentality in the landscape. While the maintenance of the Arboretum is way up, no one can deny that the visitation and landscape impact is better than ever . . . and we've done it, so far, without sacrificing diversity.

Mark Norman, was hired to fill the lecturer position and came on board September 1st. He brings a unique background and a solid set of hands-on talents to the program. I think we've got a winner on our side. Mark is one of our own, a 1999 MS graduate in Horticulture. His thesis was the "Site analysis of the Tucker estate, Nacogdoches, Texas," which, by the way, received rave reviews from Darrel Morrison, a nationally recognized Georgia landscape architect hired to develop the concept plan for the Pineywoods Native Plant Center. At a PNPC Board of Advisors meeting, Darrel held up Mark's thesis and said "this made my work easy - all of the base data needed was there and presented clearly." Mark has had a varied career. He was a Christmas tree and vegetable grower. He rode bulls in his youth and had a promising career until one of his rides wrecked his wrist - that experience will surely help him deal with the bureaucracy of academia. He sold real estate and was a salesman for a Texas agricultural machinery enterprise. He worked for the Texas Blueberry Marketing Association as a quality control coordinator. He is a landscaper and a licensed irrigator. He is determined to put a first-class turf management program into SFA Horticulture and the Arboretum. With a flurry of activity and some unique budget development, Mark has laid Emerald Zoysia sod between the twin borders and above and below that stretch; it should be wonderful in two to three weeks. Two goals in the next year are turf display plots and a one-hole golf course and fairway. Time will tell. Mark has a let's roll up our sleeves and make it happen attitude, something this garden should only nurture.

Barb Stump is on staff! Hooray. We are pleased to announce that Barbara Stump has been hired as a ½ time Development Coordinator for the Arboretum and the PNPC, paid for via the College of Forestry and the Department of Agriculture. She will be dealing with the myriad of details that come with the garden world here at SFA . . . increasing memberships, producing a "real" newsletter, working with benefactors, grant writing, event programming, report writing, upgrading our signage and interpretation effort, and, if that's not enough, Barb will still have plenty of time to keep up with the maps and plant databases associated with the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden. Barbara has just finished the MS in Horticulture with the thesis, "Site Analysis and Design of the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden," a monumental and first-class effort. Barbara brings unique and special organizational talents to a young garden growing faster than it's ever grown before. The garden needs her now more than ever. In fact, this update will probably end the era of newsletters and updates compiled by yours truly . . . a sad passing for me in some ways, a blessing, perhaps, for readers and supporters. More pictures. I get it.

Lance Craig is a new graduate research assistant addition to the program. He will be stewarding a fantastic cut flower project over the next few years. Lance brings a can do attitude to the project. Take a look at his work at the cut flower plots, now under development in the lines of vines.

People Not so New!:

The Arboretum and PNPC staff remain set in the trench of hard work. Dawn Parish is up to her last minute details on the Plant Sale October 6th. She must be on top of things

since I won't even be here . . . and every detail I bring up seems to have already been covered. Nothing like not being needed! I'm in Austin giving a Pineywoods talk at the annual Native Plant Society of Texas conference. The crop is cleaner this year than ever before and most of the plants are listed on our website. In addition, Dawn is steering a fine crew of student workers through various projects. Garden maintenance is up. We are moving a lot of dirt. New plants are going in.

Wes Nichols is the Technician charged with the maintenance and development of the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden . . . we can't wait until this garden gets a little age and character. It's a winner for SFA and the region.

Matt Welch is the Research Associate charged with the development of the Pineywoods Native Plant Center, a from-the-ground-up project bound to make a statement heard across the South. Give the place five years!

#### Mast Arboretum Volunteers

No doubt we have the gardeningest group of volunteers ever. The Mast Arboretum Volunteers meet one time per month at 6:00 PM before the lecture series. They help with the event, garden projects, outreach efforts, and make the plant sales a success. If you are interested in joining, come to the meeting.

#### Grounds

There should never be a list of folks that support the Arboretum that doesn't put an exclamation mark after the Grounds program. We have some die-hard support coming from Gary Williams and Mark Holl. While both kind of wince when they see us coming, they know we're trying hard to make this a better place. They help us with chores we could never tackle (dump trucks, dead tree removal, road work and a myriad of other activities). From my observation at many universities, it's not typical for a Grounds and Horticulture program to work as closely as ours.

#### **EVENTS SINCE THE LAST UPDATE**

April 21, 2001 - Garden Gala Day - 9 AM Till 5 PM. \$24,200 -Another record breaker and we swore it would be our last bedlam event. 1000 shoulder-to-shoulder folks thrashing through an ocean of plants is not a pretty sight - and we decided then and there that our next sale will see the Arboretum spread out plants and people for a more orderly, comfortable and easier flow of plants. A Dawn Parish crop produced in the Horticulture facility. Plant Sale, Walk and Talk Lectures, Entertainment, Booths, and Refreshments.

May 30 - June 2, 2001 - Hosted by the Pineywoods Native Plant Center, the first-ever SFA Cullowhee Lone Star Regional Native Plant Conference was a huge success. With 233 registrants, the conference boasted five pre-conference field trips to East Texas habitats, two days of lectures with 17 speakers, two socials, a plant sale, educational booths, a book signing, and, finally, a Saturday night bar-b-q at Matt's under the red and

white tent with Carol Schoenfeld at his finest in the after-dinner presentation, which was followed by an evening reveling with the band, About Tyme. Good grief. Thanks go out to Matt Welch at the PNPC for simply surviving the ordeal without going into shock at the details, and pulling off a major successful event for the university, to be repeated in 2003.

We are pleased to announce that we have received a \$150,000 grant for the proposal "Ornamental annuals, bulbs, and corms for cut flower production and gardening in warm climate regions" from the Texas Department of Agriculture/Texas-Israeli Exchange Fund, and the Jewish National Fund/Keren Kayemer Leisrael (JNF/KKL). SFA receives \$75,000 and our Israeli counterparts (Rina Kamenetsky and Ziva Gilad) receive \$75,000, over a three-year period. Rina and her daughter will be visiting us in mid-October for a few days as they absorb Texas Horticulture. Dr. Leland Thompson will be handling the economic analysis of the cut flower project, and the Arboretum and outreach growers will be collecting field data on plant performance. The project is an interesting one, testing a wide range of potential plants for cut flower field production. The plots at the N end of the Arboretum (the lines of vines/vegetable garden) have been transformed with 240 cubic yards of sand and 90 cubic yards of mulch, primarily to provide better root drainage and enhance plant performance. Dawn Parish is coordinating the on-the-ground plantings in the Arboretum (and across the creek in plots near the Azalea Garden) with Lance Craig, who will come on board in January 2002 as the Graduate Research Assistant for the project. We've got three years ahead of us . . . lots to learn . . . a website is planned to deliver the information on species, planting times, # cuts to anticipate by row lengths, post-harvest considerations and a myriad of other factors that affect the industry.

The SFA Mast Arboretum managed an educational booth at the 08/17/2001 TNLA convention in Dallas, Texas . . . with Dawn Parish carrying the major burden (just getting the booth up is a very long story - they had no record of our registration - not a pretty picture). All in all, a terrific conference with plenty of former students to visit and nurserymen and plant professionals to be inspired by!

The Horticulture program is now the proud owner of a brand new ¾ ton Dodge truck with extended cab! Our first new truck. We will not retire the 1982 Dodge until forced to; this beat up brute has been a bark-hauling, equipment-toting work horse for many years.

We just received notice that the program has received a \$10,000 grant from the Texas Forest Service, an urban partnership grant. We are creating an "educational programs" coordinator (with SFA Mast Arboretum match for the rest of the salary). This will be a full-time position to deal with the already impressive number of school-age and adult groups that tour our garden resource. In addition, the position will be responsible for coordinating all of the details associated with the lecture series (hotels, speaker system, room set up, etc.). The position will be responsible for creating a self-guided tour booklet. With over 100 "groups" this last year, there's no doubt that we need someone to make this a first-class operation. Interviews to begin soon!

Finally, in terms of funding, we have received a grant from the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo (approximately \$7000) to study the influence of fertilizer rate and timing on the date of Azalea bloom and its quality. There's some debate about this in azalea circles, with many professing that early spring applications of Nitrogen encourage earlier bloom that is short-lived and that fertilizer should be applied after bloom. This is somewhat contradicted in the literature with other "crops," mainly a number of temperate fruits. Should be interesting, and it's terrific to have such a solid foundation of azaleas on hand in numbers to allow a good experiment!

## **PROJECTS**

Since the last update, the gardens have jumped a notch or two. Just take a walk - it's looking better than ever with changes all around.

The Mast Arboretum has been on a trail-building binge this summer. We build a road just on the west side of the Children's Garden, a trail wide enough to allow trucks to enter the bottom from College Street. That allowed another big development that was sorely needed: a trail from the vegetable plots to the East side of the Art building- something that was a heavily-used, often boggy mess for students taking a shortcut to College. We've eliminated the problem with a well-elevated road base of red clay. A limestone rock base, rolled and then packed, will come soon. Just SE of this, we've created a big berm for planting . . . it's been kept clean of weeds, bark mulched, and is ready for planting this fall. As for the garden, the ginger display has been awesome this summer and fall. It will be exciting to see what survives the winter and what does not. The borders have been given major attention with plants going out and plants going in, part of the never-ending evolution of our gardening effort and development.

The Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden is going into its third winter in great shape, with the largest stockpile of bark mulch in our history. Thanks go out to CalTex for supplying the product. Most of that mulch will be spread in the next month or two. Wes Nichols led the attack on weeds this summer and fall . . . via early morning roundup applications and hand weeding. While there were a few times when it wasn't quite clear who would be victor - weed or man - Wes managed to wrestle the garden into the third winter amazingly clean. With over a mile of trails, six acres of garden beds, and 8000 plants . . . he's got a boat load to keep up with. The most recent project is to build the gardens on the south side of the old ROTC tower, an interesting challenge in terms of drainage and soil type, and then to extend the irrigation system into this area. The Azalea garden is a garden in evolution and will be a sight to behold. Finally, Barbara Stump installed the first Azalea Garden sign at the SE corner of the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden.

The Pineywoods Native Plant Center has seen improvement this summer. The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Demonstration Garden is on its way. The irrigation system is functional and unobtrusive. The greenhouse is up and surely, surely, surely can be operational by November. We desperately need gas and electricity on site. The first goal is to build a good horticulture facility. A Jaderloon 30' X 100' poly Quonset structure is nearing completion. A second pad is built and ready to receive crushed limestone rock

base with weed barrier as a cover . . . this will serve as an "outdoor" container growing yard. The road from Raguette Street into the property (as called for in the Darrel Morrison concept plan) has been defined with a red clay base. We need about \$15,000 to get a limestone rock base - strong enough to support traffic of any kind. Funding for PNPC development is coming through a number of grants. A T.L.L. Temple Foundation grant of \$53,000 bought the wonderful Kubota and front end loader, purchased the Jaderloon, and helps with our plant procurement needs. The George and Fay Young Foundation, Inc. has provided two \$10,000 grants that have made progress possible on several fronts, including signage and interpretation, irrigation system development, and finishing up the horticulture facility project. The PNPC recently received a boost with a \$20,580 grant from the University Research Council to test a wide range of native plants as candidates for field grown cut flowers, and to accumulate a germplasm repository on important native species. The plots for this work will be to the SE of the Horticulture facility at the PNPC and will comprise about ¼ acre in the first year of this work. Stop by and enjoy Matt's handiwork.

## **PLANTS!**

It's the plants, %!#\*\*\$! What that means is that it's easy for a growing successful garden to get involved in so many things (events and meetings, building roads, buildings, dealing with budgets and planning, planning, planning) that plants often get lost in the shuffle. Not so here. There is plenty of energy still pouring into building plant collections and finding new plants to trial. That won't change. What is lacking is reporting! The coming year will see a big burst of activity in the "plants" section of our website. Much has already been done. Without Wayne Weatherford, nothing would have been done; he is as able a webmaster we could ever hope to embrace as part of the garden mission. Check out his work. Basically, we "feed" Wayne images and text and he performs his magic. [www.sfasu.edu/ag/arboretum](http://www.sfasu.edu/ag/arboretum) and then hit the plants button!

In terms of collections, there are several worthy of mention. The Hydrangeas form a long line on the east side of the Azalea garden with over 150 represented! Working with Linda Gay, Dawn has assembled, propagated and planted a wide range of gingers . . . and Wayne has put a "Gay's Gingers" website on our home page; it's a winner. Dawn planted a wonderful swath of ornamental grasses on the south side of the twin borders and they are beautiful, with plenty of show stoppers. A *Salvia greggii* collection is new to the Elking Environment and look for a great trial of over fifty new salvias acquired through Richard Dufresne in North Carolina. The *Cephalotaxus* (Japanese plum yew) collection has enjoyed a good year of growth with minimal losses. Our *Loropetalum* collection has done well in spite of a giant pine tree coming down in that area of the azalea garden. The conifer collection on the east side of the Art building is in great shape with a wonderful foundation of proven conifers to guarantee a great garden as soon as plants get some scale and age. We remain impressed with a wide range of deciduous magnolias, particularly some that sport yellow flowers - 'Honey Bee' was gorgeous this spring. The Ginkgo collection did not perform well. Planted on the South side of the coliseum above the retaining wall to a parking lot, growth was poor. Part of the problem may have been

inadequate irrigation during the summer or a poor choice of a wood chip product as a mulch. Hopefully they will begin good growth next year?

### **SUPPORT THE DREAM!**

This will be the last update generated by Dave Creech. It marks the end of an era. Change is inevitable. The task of producing a slick newsletter with pictures (!) will fall on Barbara Stump's shoulders. There will be a better presentation of what's happening, upcoming events, and plant features. The first newsletter is slated to be mailed out around the first of the year. With Barbara's English major and Library Science mentality, the final product will be a winner.

There's no doubt that this place is nothing like it used to be . . . and it's nothing like it's going to be! Only five years ago, the SFA Mast Arboretum was pretty much students, wheelbarrows and a couple of shovels. Those days are gone. We now have a new truck and an old one. There are two shiny Kubotas moving mulch, soil and projects along. There are more students involved than ever before. There are more groups and visitors using the garden than at any time in our past. Our budgets are bigger and better than ever, but so are our costs. Not only have our gardens grown, so has the complexity. The SFA Mast Arboretum is more than just a garden of plants, it really is a garden of people. Any support you can move to adventuresome gardening in Nacogdoches is appreciated!