

SEPTEMBER 1999

PRESS RELEASE: The SFA Mast Arboretum in Nacogdoches, Texas, will celebrate another fun annual "Fabulous Fall Festival" October 2, 1999 from 9 AM until 5 PM. The event includes an all-day plant sale featuring a wide range of new, uncommon, and Texas-tough container-grown herbaceous and woody plants, a silent auction of rare plants, some special surprise entertainment, refreshments, educational booths and lectures in the garden. The walk and talks will begin at 9:30 AM at the Heritage Garden and continue throughout the morning. Activities for kids at the Children's Garden will go on all morning. The Festival is possible because of the Nacogdoches Master Gardeners, the SFA Arboretum Volunteer Corps Organization and the students of SFA Horticulture. For more information: Call 409-468-3705 at SFA or the Nacogdoches Chamber of Commerce at 409-564-7351.

Anyone wanting to pitch in and help out at the big Fall event, please call Dawn at 468-4404. Lots to do on the Thursday and Friday before the sale (organizing and cleaning up plants, setting up tables and chairs, labeling, getting the handouts ready, etc.), and as many hands as possible on board for October 2nd – helping folks find plants and being the kind of happy gardening hosts that we are! See Dawn's Dirt column later in this update!

Nacogdoches County Master Gardener/1999 Les Reeves Lecture Series

We've got some great talks coming up that you won't want to miss! Here's the schedule for the rest of the year.

September 16: Dr. Steve George, Texas Agricultural Extension Service, Dallas, Texas, "Designing THE Crape Myrtle Kingdom"

October 21: Linda Gay, Mercer Arboretum, Humble, Texas, "Tropicals in the Landscape"

November 18: Paul Cox, San Antonio Botanical Center, "The San Antonio Botanical Garden" ("The Alamo was a Multicultural Picnic")

December 16: Greg Grant, SFA Arboretum, Nacogdoches, Texas, "Making a Cottage Garden...a Personal Experience "

The SFA Mast 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.

NOTES FROM THE GARDEN - Dave Creech, Director, SFA Mast Arboretum

OK! OK! Here's another update coming right up to the wire and, as you might have guessed it, with the October 2nd Fabulous Fall Festival looming, we should have gotten this out about a couple of weeks ago. Let's just say life has been a bit tumultuous lately. At any rate, late or not, we are proud to announce the best fall crop selection ever for the plant sale. Hope to see you there. Dawn has done a super job building the inventory (available on the web: <http://www.sfasu.edu/ag/arboretum/plantssaleoct299.htm>). Going to be fun day for all.

Since the last update March 5, 1999, much has come to pass in Arboretum land. Let's just say the plants and people landscape remains as dynamic as ever. Good fortune seems to shine on this garden and there's so much good news that it's difficult to know where to begin.

HAPPENINGS:

Greg Grant continues to amaze and excite. No one manages the pace Greg takes with such a relaxed and easy stride. Since the last newsletter update in March, Greg has been a flurry of talks and trips and making things happen. He survived a two-week trek in early June through the mid-west with two vans of enthusiastic horticulture students touring gardens and nurseries from dawn till dusk every day (well, I think he survived). He's been to Europe and back. He's got plants everywhere making a dynamic dent in what's grown in the South for color. He's snagged lots of exciting plants and he's thrashed the landscape around here into a totally new look. The change in the Arboretum is obvious. The bones of a new garden around the Agriculture building are in place. One big change is 5.6 times as much border space as two years ago. Lots more color is obviously another. At this writing, the twin borders – Dawn's dawn to dusk mirror borders – are living proof of what really likes hot, hot weather and tough times. We've had a dismal rainfall picture since our last rain July 2nd. Wait till next year!

A big round of applause please for Ms. Dawn Parish. Our Arboretum Technician since January, Dawn now has a new position in the Arboretum, one with grade and credibility a bit more commensurate with her qualifications and talents, and one with the position title: "Research Associate: Ornamental Plant Evaluation." She's all smiles and for good reason. We're talking a career with a future, the ability to make a mark and an educational opportunity to boot. Who wouldn't smile? This garden is just plain exciting to work in. New plants, old plants, novel plants, Walmart-bound plants, bound-to-die-soon plants, what-the-heck-is-that plants – hey, we're that kind of place.

So, the "Arboretum Technician" position is now open. We will be going through a formal search to fill that position and have some good candidates in the wings. End result will soon be two full-time staff to deal with the Arboretum's on-the-ground growth and excitement. We need that help and more right now. The Azalea garden is on budget, on time, but there's still way too much to do! But we will persevere and by December, 1999, our goal to have the 8-acres filled will have been met – come heck or high water (don't

even think about the latter!) – and we will have boosted the Arboretum's presentation up a notch as well. Big changes planned for the Bog and in the area between Asian Valley and the lines of vines.

Barbara Stump is our SFA Azalea Garden coordinator and a self-professed I-hate-hot-weather person. It must be some of those Northern habitat experiences that made her that way. As far as the Azalea garden is concerned, however, she's been nothing but a Godsend. No one could have a more interesting MS thesis project on earth. Building an 8-acre azalea garden, one with the kind of special collections this garden will be home to, is no easy chore. Having Dave Creech as an MS advisor might be seen in some quarters as a tough row to hoe. Barb's thesis work guarantees a practical design, one that capitalizes on excellent irrigation, good drainage strategies, and common sense horticulture. Barb's thesis is titled: Site Analysis and Development of the SFA Ruby Mize Azalea Garden. Whew. This is even more amazing: Barb has tackled the responsibility of being the editor of the Journal of the Azalea Society of America – no mean feat there. Not only that, Barb's article on the SFA Azalea Garden was on the same page as the Callaway Gardens development article – let's not compare budgets! (Stump, B. 1999. University in East Texas building a world-class Azalea Garden. *The Azalean – Journal of the Azalea Society of America* 21 (2): 30-31).

Cheryl Tate is now Cheryl Boyette and as her update blurb indicates . . . she is continuing to make the Children's garden project grow. One piece of good news: we've learned that the Children's Garden Pavilion has received the 1999 "Excellence in Wood Design" award for an institution in Texas from the Texas Forestry Association (TFA). The award will be presented at the annual TFA conference in October 1999 in College Station, Texas. Congratulations, Cheryl.

JC Andersen will be wrapping up his Master's degree this December and he gets much of the on-the-ground credit for making the Azalea Garden happen. From cutting down trees for more sunlight to digging ditches with the ditch witch to gluing pipe for the irrigation system, he's done it all.

Kathleen Davis, our newest graduate research assistant, has taken the baton from Dawn and is running with the Hibiscus dasycalyx, Neches river rose mallow project. This fascinating endangered plants project is a cooperative venture with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife and the Texas Parks and Wildlife. The work to date was recently published in the NPSOT News (Creech, D., Dawn Parish, and Bea Clack. 1999. Saving the Neches river rose mallow, *Hibiscus dasycalyx*. *Native Plant Society of Texas News* XVII (3): 1, 3.) and is summarized in the Three R's section of the SFA Mast Arboretum website: <http://www.sfasu.edu/ag/arboretum/RRR/npsotfall1999%20hibdas.htm>.

The SFA Pineywoods Native Plant Center is off the ground after being dedicated March 27, 1999. Since then, there's been a flurry of activity. The Center now has a Board of Advisors and a mission statement and bylaws are in the works. The NPC is a joint project of the Forest Resources Institute in the College of Forestry and the SFA Mast Arboretum. The goal is to create a 39-acre green belt with the mission (still being refined) to promote

the education, conservation and use of native plants of the Southern Forest. Plans are underway for a master plan; much of the work has already been done by Mark Norman who graduated in August, 1999, with the MS thesis titled: "Site analysis of the Tucker estate, Nacogdoches, Texas." Mark did a superlative job and has left the foundation from which many great plants and plans will grow. Congratulations, Mark!

OTHER GOOOOOOOD NEWS!

It's official. The SFA Azalea Garden is now the Ruby Mize Azalea Garden thanks to a wonderful gift from a terrific lady, Ms. Dorothy Wisely. Her generosity guarantees the most wonderful garden spot in East Texas!

The May 22nd 1999 Garden Gala Day plant sale brought in \$14,130, a best ever event for the Arboretum;

The SFA Arboretum Board of Advisors created a committee with the intention of developing a "strategic action plan" (<http://www.sfasu.edu/ag/arboretum/strategicplan52099.htm>); this work in progress will point the way to the future.

Greg Grant and Dave Creech are alternating "Plantsmen's Picks" articles for TexasGreen, the trade magazine for the Texas Nursery and Landscape Association.

Ms. Theresa Reeves has generously donated another gift to support the ongoing and ever-popular Les Reeves Lecture series.

Ed McGee of the Tyler Men's Garden Club and Master Gardeners has notified us of their decision to support a \$1000 scholarship to a promising Horticulture student with first disbursement in the Spring, 2000.

Dawn Parish ran the Arboretum/Horticulture booth at the annual Texas Nursery and Landscape Association annual convention in Dallas, August 6-8, 1999.

Five busloads of Daylily enthusiasts toured the Arboretum May 29, 1999, as part of the Region IV Daylily Society conference.

If you haven't visited the website, do! Wayne Weatherford has done a magnificent job with this and deserves a big round of applause.

Finally, we would be remiss if we didn't give some hearty thanks to the Physical Plant and Grounds. Without their support, this garden just wouldn't be. James Harkness and John Rulfs in the Physical Plant are big supporters of what we do. Gary Williams and Mark Holl in Grounds are always there to lend a hand.

NOTES FROM THE GREG GRANT CORNER:

Phase I and II Renovations: I'm sure most of you have noticed the drastic changes that are occurring in Phase I and II. Most popular question is "Why". There are quite a few reasons for the changes. First of all, fifteen beds of assorted shapes were too hard to mow around and maintain. As most of you know, we are on a limited budget with a limited work force. Planting, weeding, mulching, mowing around, and edging fifteen beds was a nightmare that never quite finished.

Secondly, visitors to the Arboretum never knew quite where to start or which direction to proceed. Therefore the Basic Landscape Design Class came up with a traditional strip of lawn bordered with simple easier to maintain beds on either side. This funnels the visitors down through the Arboretum both visually and physically. It also makes the area much easier to mow and edge by eliminating all the sharp curves and corners. In addition, much lower maintenance perennials that don't have to be replanted each year have replaced the high maintenance annuals. Color plants, especially perennials and perennial borders are the most popular gardening concept in the world right now. This brings us more in line with modern horticulture.

Dawn did an outstanding job with her "dawn to dusk" color scheme and plant selection. Thanks for all you do. Her work with roses and perennials puts us in the mainstream of horticultural interest.

We have planted a Dwarf Burford Holly hedge behind the borders to show off the perennials and direct the visual flow. Will need several years to make their presence known. We will be planting El Toro Zoysiagrass down the alleyway because of its fast growth and wear tolerance. The San Augustine that was there was usually a muddy accident waiting to happen.

Standing on Wilson Drive at the entrance to the Arboretum we now have a vista framed by the twin perennial borders, with the weeping Chinese Hackberry as the focal point.

The plans are for Phase II to be a maple grove in an English Park setting. Benches will be placed against the backside of the holly hedge for relaxing and viewing the constant activities on the Intramural Fields.

We still have a lot of work to do but the end is in sight. I predict the new borders along with the new azalea garden will be the most popular spots in the Arboretum. As a matter of fact, The Farm and Ranch News shot the borders this morning for their show. You know what they say... "If you build it, they will come." They're coming! - Gregius the Destroyer

DAWN'S DIRT – Dawn Parish

It sure has been an interesting summer. After a pleasantly mild beginning it seems like we turned into the Sahara Desert overnight. After a few weeks of doing nothing except

dragging hoses during the day, we found ourselves in a voluntary water-rationing program. So, we were able to work outside all day and then drag hoses every other night from 5 PM to 9 am. Tell me that's not the time to decide if you really like gardening or not! September has brought back our students and a slight reprieve from the oven-like weather. There are many plants that have proven their worth to the arboretum through this summer, and summers past. Most of these tough-as-nails perennials can be found in the new perennial borders as well as throughout the garden: Salvia x 'Indigo Spires', Phlox 'Robert Poore', Hamelia patens, Anisacanthus wrightii, Cuphea x 'David Verity', Tecoma stans 'Gold Star', all Lantana cultivars, all Ruellia cultivars, and our new Indigofera heterantha. With a slight monthly sheering, the Blue Princess and Pinwheel Princess verbenas have provided nonstop flowers for a constant collection of butterflies.

The Fabulous Fall Festival will be here on October 2, and we'll need all of the volunteers we can get. Traditionally, the Thursday and Friday before the sale are spent in last minute preparations including tagging, watering, setting up tables and the tent, and last minute sprucing up. On the sale day we need cashiers, runners, and "crowd control" (basically answering questions from our customers). Friday before we'll have a bar-b-q potluck for all volunteers and their families. The arboretum will provide the bar-b-q. This is a really fun event and gives volunteers and new recruits the opportunity to get to know each other in a beautiful setting. Please call me at 468-4404, or email at dparish@sfasu.edu if you'd like to volunteer, or if you'd like to be put on the phone list.

RUBY MIZE AZALEA GARDEN UPDATE - Barbara Stump

We are on schedule with Phase II of building the garden, thanks to the generosity of a daughter of Nacogdoches and two very hard-working young men. These people are, respectively, Dorothy Wisely now of Indianapolis, Indiana, and J.C. Andersen, horticulture graduate student, and Johnnie Heath, a just-graduated Forestry undergraduate.

The big news, due to Mrs. Wisely's generosity, is that as of July 27, the Board of Regents officially renamed the garden the Ruby Mize Azalea Garden. This honors Mrs. Wisely's mother, a long-time resident of Nacogdoches and a keen gardener. Mrs. Wisely's gift sets up an endowment specifically for the Azalea Garden to be disbursed, as appropriate, by the SFA Mast Arboretum director. The endowment is large enough to sustain the garden, add special collections, and make improvements as it grows and more and more people come to see it. Sometime in the near future, hopefully when Mrs. Wisely visits this fall, a bronze plaque mounted on a specially selected boulder will be installed in the garden bearing the inscription she chose:

You are closer to God in a garden than in any place on earth.

The Ruby Mize Azalea Garden

Because she saw the immediate need to help prepare the ground for Phase II planting, and because her mother was a very practical woman who knew the value of irrigation for

gardens, Mrs. Wisely gave sufficient funds to cover installing 2500 feet of irrigation this summer. This is where J.C. and Johnnie carried the day. Not only did they lay the irrigation pipe and install the risers, but they also cleared the western half of the garden, cut down enough trees in the northwest corner to ensure proper sunlight, and even ran the ditch-witch to dig the trenches: Two talented guys who came through when we needed them!

As for what else is going on: 13 new beds are now outlined in the northwest corner, with sand and bark mulch being tilled in to build up the planting areas. This will be the Native Azalea Trail. We have just gotten a collection of native hybrid crosses from Transplant Nursery in Georgia, including a few of their very fragrant "Maid in the Shade Series." What makes these light pastel-colored flowers so unique is their *Rhododendron atlanticum* and *R. austrinum* parentage. In October we will be going to nurseries in Alabama (Van der Giessen and Dodd & Dodd nurseries) and Louisiana (Jenkins Farm and Nursery) to get more native hybrids. Texas nurseries closer to home will supply the fragrant Texas Azalea, *R. oblongifolium* (Doremus Nursery), and more wonderful *Indicas* and *Formosas* (Greenleaf Nursery). We will be planting 2500 azaleas and camellias, and over 100 Japanese maples, *Loropetalums*, and *Chamaecyparises* by December 1. Official dedication is being planned for March 18, 2000, so mark your calendars to attend.

CHILDREN'S GARDEN UPDATE – Cheryl Boyette

The Children's Garden seems to become a more beautiful site with each season thanks to Dawn Parish, Greg Grant and the Arboretum. The rockwork that was completed in late spring adds a beautiful dimension to the uniqueness of the pavilion structure. Texas Forestry Association will recognize the exceptional design of the Children's Garden pavilion in October with their "Award for Excellence in Wood Design." The award will be presented to the Arboretum at the TFA annual awards luncheon in College Station.

April and May were busy times as always in the Children's Garden with 60 Elementary Education students learning how to use the Arboretum as a teaching tool. These SFA students in turn shared their knowledge of the Arboretum with 1200 Nacogdoches area school children and teachers. Using the equipment and supplies in the new Discovery Kits purchased with funds from the Mary Birch Foundation gift, students and teachers explored the Arboretum. The kits include activities and equipment for exploration in the areas of soils, water quality and aquatic habitats, trees, plants and pollinators, bugs, and the Arboretum habitat. The kits are available to teachers and youth leaders visiting the Arboretum.

Fall will bring another 120 SFA Elementary Education students to the Arboretum to learn gardening to attract butterflies and how to use gardening to meet State mandated TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) curriculum guidelines. These future teachers will also have the opportunity to explore and use the Arboretum Discovery Kits. Plans are in the works to bring the Nacogdoches area students these opportunities, and SFA education

majors will be working with the Arboretum. This program is made possible by a grant from the Kellogg Foundation.

Children's Garden outreach is expanding, first to teachers attending two graduate classes this summer at SFA. Fifty teachers from across Texas learned how to use outdoor discovery to give their students hands on learning opportunities. In early August 40 more teachers at Commerce Elementary school in Commerce, TX were given a two day seminar on Butterfly Gardening and developing their school grounds as an outdoor learning lab. Our outreach will continue with the help of a second year of funding from the Kellogg Foundation. Elementary Education majors at Texas A&M at Commerce, 60 students, will attend 3 days of classes on using the Butterfly Gardening curriculum developed at SFA to teach state mandated TEKS. Emphasis will be in the content areas of math, science, social studies and language arts. The same program will be provided in November to teachers from Texas and Louisiana attending graduate classes at Texas A&M at Texarkana. The SFA Children's Garden outreach program is helping train the horticulturists of tomorrow.

The Fabulous Fall Festival in the Children's Garden is going to be a blast. Children and parents are invited to come learn how to make a butterfly box and raise butterflies from caterpillars, and how to create a garden for butterflies and hummingbirds. Other activities will include a bug hunt, making pots from newspaper and other gardening fun. Children's activities will take place from 9:00 AM – Noon.