



Garden News

Notes from the Director Dr. David Creech

I've had a severe case of writer's block lately, so when Dawn said it was time for another newsletter, I found myself throwing a fit. Didn't we just do one? Can't we postpone? While it gives me some solace that procrastination is the ultimate act of defiance, I really don't have much of an excuse. After all, I am semi-retired, which means I should have time on my hands. I don't. It's not as if we don't have a lot of news to report. With Dawn and a virtual army of volunteers leading the charge, we enjoyed a world-record \$42,000 Spring Garden Gala day plant sale on April 12th. Barbara's azalea season ended up with more buses, tourists, visitors, and excitement than ever. Elyce, our pied piper among the kiddo crowd, continues to tirelessly skip through one environmental education program after another. Finally, Greg Grant, over at the PNPC, continues to educate, entertain, and enlighten, and the native plant world continues to grow and prosper.

I've always felt that the lady that brought us to the dance is named Diversity. She's interesting, exciting and, let's face it, she kind of runs the show around here. Over the years, it's rather amazing how many plants have called this place home. Some stayed less than a year. Some lingered for a while

before saying good bye. Then, there are others that have refused to leave. One particular group that is chock full of survivors is the bold evergreen crowd. One of our favorites is *Michelia*, a genus recently tucked into Magnolias. I counted 16 different *Michelias* and *Mangletias* in our garden that have prospered for many years. Outside of Magnoliaceae, there are plenty of other broad-leaved evergreens making a mark. *Machilus*, *Phoebe*, and *Cinnamomum* are increasingly finding their way into the arboreta and botanical gardens of the South. While it's too early to tell just what kind of impact this transfusion of hardy evergreen woody plants will have on the gardens of the South, it's nice to know that there are still new plants to find, trial, and test. Here are two bold tropical-looking woody evergreens worth getting excited about.

Dendropanax trifidus is a member of the Araliaceae family and makes a small evergreen tree in Zone 8, perhaps Zone 7, if somewhat protected. While rarely encountered, I've seen it elsewhere in the South and it has never failed to impress me. It provides a bold and tropical effect to a shady southern landscape. As far as I can tell, there really isn't an accepted common name - but Bob McCartney of Woodlanders refers to it as tree

ivy in his website, which is a pretty good name. It does look like a tree ivy, kind of a combination of *Fatsia* and *Hedera* all rolled up into one. We recently hosted six Chinese faculty members from Nanjing Forestry University in China, and while touring our gardens, they quickly huddled around a specimen and after a great deal of discussion, they said this was the duckfoot tree, and they said it did quite well in their area of China. Since duckfoot tree as a common name is sometimes used for *Ginkgo*, I think "duckfoot ivy tree" is a better name. After all, the leaves do resemble a duck's foot. While



Dendropanax trifidus

the smooth white bark is striking, the leaves are the primary feature. They are big, bold and glossy. The tree is reported to reach sixty to seventy feet in its natural habitat in Japan, and I suspect mature specimens in the South will top out at half that. The species is easy to root (June cuttings under mist), grows fast, prefers a little shade, and appears pest-free in our garden. If

Continued on page 2

Little Princess Tea Party, March 29, 2008....



Notes from the Director, cont.

there's a downside, it would have to be that, on rare occasions, some folks experience a mild rash (contact dermatitis) when handling the plant. Of course, that's kind of true for Aralias and many other plants in general, but my attitude is enjoy the plant, just don't roll in it.

Metapanax davidii is another member of the Araliaceae that calls SFA home. I suspect this large shrub with evergreen three-fingered leaves is destined to be another plant offering a tropical look to the southern landscape. It's a Fatsia-like relative with an interesting nomenclature. Once *Nothopanax*, *Metapanax* has recently been ac-

cepted as a new genus in South China and Vietnam. With the Chinese name Yi ye liang wang cha, we think "false ginseng" is a better name, as presented by Todd Lasseigne of the Paul J. Cener Botanical Garden in North Carolina. Todd wrote, "on *Metapanax*, a group of evergreen shrubs related to *Fatsia* and other araliads, little to nothing is known about them in the U.S. For a few years now, the Sarah P. Duke Gardens has grown *M. davidii* and *M. delavayi* both of which have suffered no injury at temperatures below 0°F. Collections made in China of *Metapanax* - some not yet identified to species - by Dan Hinckley and

others from Heronswood Nursery show an extraordinary range in leaf shape, lobing, color, gloss, and other characteristics. This, assuredly, will be an exciting genus of plants to watch, and at the least will expand the realm of successfully growing "Fatsia-like" plants in the southeastern U.S." (JCR Arboretum Newsletter 8 (2).

Mark down May 28-June 1 on your calendar. It's our fourth Cullowhee Lone Star Regional Native Plant Conference, a mega-event with lectures, field trips, banquets, socials, and a plant sale. Hope to see you there! Until next time, keep planting!

LAST CHANCE TO REGISTER...

***** **Lone Star Regional Native Plant Conference** *****

May 28-31, 2008

field trips * workshops * lectures * plant sale

Join a unique blend of naturalists, horticulturists, nurserymen, landscapers, and gardeners to learn more about current topics in native plant conservation, propagation, research, and landscape use.

For complete conference and registration information: <http://pnpc.sfasu.edu>

Chinese Delegation Visits our Garden World

Dr. David Creech

The SFA Mast Arboretum, as part of Stephen F. Austin State University's College of Forestry, has taken the first step in to establish a long-term collaboration with Nanjing Forestry University (NFU) in Nanjing, China. A six-member delegation led by Professor Jin Chi Zhang, Dean of the College of Forestry and Environmental Science, enjoyed a busy schedule as our guests April 19-25, 2008. Dr. Daniel Norton, Director of International Programs, will be preparing the first draft of a written contract with NFU. Dr. Norton notes that "a partnership between SFA and NFU has great potential and I look forward to welcoming our first NFU students in the spring of 2009."

In October, I will be leading a team of six SFA faculty members to China, to present the document and tour the university's for-

est resources, visit with students, and take in local nurseries, forests and conservation areas. I've been cooperating with NFU and Nanjing Botanical Garden since 2001, primarily with the programs of Professors Yin Yun Long, He Shan'an, and Yu Hong of the Nanjing Botanical Garden.



Dr. Changgen Lu, Dr. Qingwei Guan, Dr. Haibo Hu, Dr. Jin Chi Zhang, Professor Yunlong Yin, Dr. Yinlong Zhang

Conversations at NFU over the past few years led me to believe that collaboration made perfect sense; after all, Nanjing enjoys a similar climate and vegetation, and both NFU and SFA have very strong forestry and horticulture programs. The goals of cooperation are simple: 1) Student and faculty exchanges from short term to semester long, and 2) cooperative research projects that benefit the urban and natural forests of both countries. This visit could not have happened without support from some great SFA faculty interested in increasing our international presence. SFA faculty members Dan Norton, Dale Perritt, Shiyong Li, Mike Fountain, Dave Kulhavy, Matt McBroom, Jeff Adkins, Jimmie Yieser, P.R. Blackwell, and Joe Ballenger all deserve a big round of applause for making our Chinese visitors adventure here a good one.

Spring Plant Sale a Huge Success!

Dawn Stover



On April 12th, the SFA Mast Arboretum and Pineywoods Native Plant Center hosted our annual garden gala day. This event has blossomed from a card table and lemonade in a Dixie cup kind of day to an area wide event attracting local friends as well as guests from as far as Dallas, Houston and Shreveport. While there's always that initial "Oklahoma Land Rush" for plants, we've found that folks who arrive after the starting bell are still happily tempted with plenty of plants. Each year, those of us that work the sales rarely have a chance to look up and around the sale field until the initial waves of shoppers dwindles a bit, usually around 11 am. This year, the field was still full, and remained so long after that 11 o'clock window came and went. We were still checking out wagons at 3 pm! Our cashiers noted that most of the late morning



A happy customer poses with her colorful selections

customers were first time visitors from Dallas. A big thank you to Mariana Greene of the *Dallas Morning News* for the beautiful, full-page write up of our gardens, including a plug for our sale and the Cullowhee Na-

tive Plant Conference in a recent edition of her newspaper.

So here are the stats: we sold at least 282 different varieties of plants, moved at least 12,00 individual plants to the intramural fields on 2 trucks and trailers with a steady stream of volunteers and students. Thanks also go out to Mark Holl and SFA Grounds who stepped in and provided the safety fence as well as a few hundred more plants.

We were all a little tired by 4 o'clock on Saturday afternoon, and more than a little sunburned, but the call from our accounting crew later that evening made it all worthwhile. We had the best sale ever, earning nearly \$42,000! Thank you to each and every one of you who support us with your time or your dollars, or both!



Floral Design Exhibit

Michael Maurer



For the first time in a number of years Floriculture was taught during this last spring semester at SFA. Topics covered in the course included history of floral design, elements and principles of design, and design mechanics. The lab was hands-on with many different skills and design styles covered including bow and wreath making,

English gardens, bud vases, corsages, as well as linear, circular, symmetrical and asymmetrical designs. One of the high points of the semester included designs using azaleas that coordinated with Nacogdoches Azalea Trail festivities.

The highlight of the semester was the Floral Design Exhibit which was the students' final design project. Themes for the Floral Design Exhibit were Southwestern, Texas and Tropical. If you missed the spring's Floral Design Exhibit you really



missed some great floral designs.

Your next opportunity to catch the next Floral Design Exhibit will be at the end of the current May-Mester on Wednesday May 28, 2008 from 12:00 noon till 5:00 p.m. in 118 of the Agriculture Building. There will be a silent auction for those of you interested in purchasing these student-created masterpieces.



Balanced Beauty: Symmetry in the Landscape

By: Greg Grant



design in mind. In my opinion, the only five you truly need to know are balance, repetition, dominance, scale, and unity. We'll tackle balance first.

For years now most homeowners have yielded to the frequent advice of avoiding formality in the landscape. Straight lines, sharp angles, and clipped hedges have typically been frowned upon as a landscape option. As a matter of fact, balanced foundation plantings have even earned the derogatory nickname, "mustache landscapes".

Though the majority of gardens as of late have yielded to the more "English" school of naturalistic landscaping, there's certainly nothing wrong with "French" formality.

As a matter of fact formal, symmetrical landscaping is much more famous and historical than its looser, less contrived counterpart. Symmetrical style landscapes were made famous in the grand gardens of Spain, Italy, and France and date all the way back to the Romans, Egyptians, and Persians. Just take a look at an heirloom Persian rug to admire the beauty of these ancient gardens. As a matter of fact, the earliest ornamental gardens were most likely "four-square" gardens bisected by a cross axis and punctuated by a central water feature. Variations of this ancient design concept are often repeated in many herb gardens today.

Unfortunately most "native" landscapes have proven to be a bit wild for the taste of most homeowners. But that doesn't have to be the case. Both formal and informal landscape can be accomplished with the use of native plants. Heck, one could create Versailles with Texas natives if they wanted to. When developing ANY landscape with ANY kind of plants it's very important to keep the basic principles of



Formal gardens have universal appeal and despite recent popular rhetoric, never go out of style. Their simple geometry is comforting in an otherwise hectic world of chaos. It's very pleasing to look at a well-groomed formal landscape and realize that it is possible to have SOMETHING under control these days.

Traditional homes with symmetrical facades are often suited to the balanced beauty and elegant lines of this timeless design style. Proper asymmetrical balance is often difficult for homeowners to understand and achieve, but even a design "simpleton" can grasp symmetrical balance. As long as the same size and number of plants and objects are used on both sides of your central axis, your balanced mission will be accomplished. This central axis can be visibly obvious as with a walkway or it can be an imaginary line running through the middle of your landscape or home.



Though most balanced formal landscapes are associated with rigid plantings consisting of rectilinear lines composed of varying sized clipped hedges, they don't have to be. One of the most popular styles in the last century has been French formal design planted with English informal plantings. This happy marriage gives you good structure ("bones") while allowing for a softer, more naturalistic planting style.

Continued on page 5



Balanced Beauty, cont.

If you are considering a formal makeover for your “garden gone wild”, consider the following simple dictionary of refined landscaping:

Sheared (boxed) hedge: Hedges are clipped or sheared at least several times per year to keep them in the appropriate “building block” shape. Native shrubs that lend themselves to shearing in Texas include yaupon holly and cherry laurel. While hand shears are fine for small plantings, gas powered shears are much more appropriate for more ambitious projects.

Allée: These are just alleys of identical trees often used to line driveways, walks, or property lines. They create a tunnel view often focusing on a focal point at the end.

Topiary: True topiary consists of clipping shrubs into fanciful shapes, essentially living statuary. Gardeners with less time on

their hands often resort to preformed shapes covered with clinging vines or groundcovers. Their eye-catching appeal makes them well suited as dominant focal point.

Espalier: Espaliers are created by training plants into flat planes, and often used where space is limited. Typically espaliers are used against walls or as living fences. My mom has ‘Little Gem’ magnolia espaliers. Of course vines like coral honeysuckle and



Carolina jessamine can be trained to appear espaliered.

Parterre: These are simply ornate patterns in the landscape usually formed by clipped living plant materials. They are designed to look down upon like decorative rugs. Often the space between the patterns is filled with herbaceous color plants or occasionally gravel.

Pleach: When trees, shrubs, or vines are trained onto a structure to form an arbor, tunnel, or living outdoor room, it is known as pleaching. In Europe trees are often used, but climbing vines are often substituted here. That’s really cheating. Just across the bridge headed into the azalea garden you’ll see weeping baldcypress (*Taxodium distichum* ‘Cascade Falls’) being readied for the coolest pleached allée on earth!

Arboretum Achieves Monarch Waystation Certification

Dawn Stover

Monarch Watch is an educational outreach program based at the University of Kansas. It serves to connect children and students of all ages with the world of science. Monarch Watch provides information on the biology and conservation of monarch butterflies. It has grown into an internet based program with participants in over 2,000 schools and nature centers in the United States and Canada. Through Monarch Watch, any individual or group meeting certain criteria is eligible for certification as a Monarch Waystation.

What is a Monarch Waystation? It is a man-made habitat that provides the resources necessary for monarchs to produce successive generations critical for sustaining migration. Habitats must include nectar flowers to provide an energy source for reproduction and migration, and they must include host plants that support successive generations of caterpillars which also enables migration. Milkweed is the primary host plant for monarch caterpillars.

Monarch Watch was created out of concern for declining populations of native host and nectar plant sources due to development and herbicide use. To offset these losses,

Monarch Waystations can be created to help supplement these increasingly rare native plant habitats. Monarch Watch also encourages conservation and protection of existing habitats.

There are some fairly easy criteria to meet in order to achieve certification as an official Monarch Waystation.

Size: A minimum of 135 square feet should be incorporated into your habitat. This is a little smaller than a 12’ x 12’ space. There is no maximum limit for space.

Exposure: Site must receive at least six hours of direct sun a day.

Drainage and Soil Type: Loose, well-drained soil is best to support most species of milkweed.

Shelter and Density of Planting: Plants should be relatively close together to help hide monarch larvae from predators, but shouldn’t be so close as to create poor growing conditions for the plants.

Milkweed Plants: It’s suggested to have at least 10 plants that include at least two different species.

Nectar Plants: Provide at least four nectar plants that bloom continually or successively throughout the season. Ideas include zinnia, lantana, pentas, and purple coneflower.

Monarch Waystation #2025 is located at the Childrens’ Garden in the SFA Mast Arboretum, just off of College Avenue. We’re still filling in spots with nectar plants, but there’s a plethora of milkweed, as well as many other host plants for other butterflies. Come see the caterpillar nursery sometime!

For more Monarch Waystation information and registry information visit www.MonarchWatch.org/ws.



A monarch caterpillar hungrily munches milkweed.

**SFA MAST ARBORETUM * RUBY
MIZE AZALEA GARDEN *
PINEYWOODS NATIVE PLANT
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Azalea Trail a Smashing Success and We're Still Blooming!

Barbara Stump

Thanks to that fabulous "March Gladness" article by Randy Mallory in the March 2008 issue of *Texas Highways* and very colorful advertisements placed by the Nacogdoches Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB), we had a bumper crop of visitors to the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden. We have provided tours to 1,590 visitors from Master Gardener groups and groups scheduled by the CVB since March 15, 2008. While I was able to do most of these, I am proud that Azalea Garden Volunteers Sherrie Randall and Don Parsons helped several times, much to my delight. The garden has been in spectacular bloom this year, with its peak day March 29th, timed perfectly for two "main events": the Little Princess Tea Party and the Annual Azalea Symposium.

The Tea Party, co-chaired by Cheryl Boyette and Elyce Rodewald was even better than last year's. Forty-one darling princesses (and 49 adults) learned about flowers while they hunted for tiny fairies in the azaleas, watched magic tricks, and listened to music. Cheryl and Elyce were dressed as

moths and the princesses helped release real butterflies as well.

The symposium theme was "Secrets of Azalea Gardens, Old and New" and featured three speakers: Bart Brechter "Historic Bayou Bend Gardens (1926-56)"; Dr. Regina Bracy, "Creating the New Margie Y. Jenkins Azalea Garden"; and Margie Jenkins, "Easy Ways to Propagate Evergreen and Deciduous Azaleas." The participants learned easy ways to reproduce favorite azaleas and some ideas about how to use azaleas in their gardens.

What is going on in the garden now? We are still blooming. As you can see in the photo, one of our latest blooming azaleas is 'Frosted Orange' developed by James Harris of Lawrenceville, Georgia. This mounding azalea gets to be about 30 inches tall by about the same wide, and is covered in white flowers with brilliant orange edging. The effect of our 10-year-old plantings near the front of the garden is waves of orange until mid-May. We also have Satsuki

blooming, and the tall (36 inches or more), very double 'Macrantha Pink'.

Our other big news is that the entrance on the northern edge of the garden will be transformed this summer. First, Texas Department of Transportation contractors will improve the culvert under University Drive, and then we will replant to make the entrance to the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden a welcoming and beautiful "first impression" for our visitors.



Rhododendron x 'Frosted Orange'