

**AN OUTLINE HISTORY OF THE SFA ARBORETUM –
1985-1997 – THE FORMATIVE YEARS**

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS</u>
1985:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Fall, 1985 - The "Arboretum" begins on south side of the Agriculture building - semester landscape project of the first Landscape Plant Materials class: ½-acre shrub and color garden referred to as the "phase 1" garden. Student enthusiasm is high. Interesting combination of formal and informal garden beds. Irrigation by dragging hoses.
1986:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Spring, 1996, Landscape Plant Materials class designs and installs the "phase 2" garden just to the south of the phase 1 garden: a tree/shrub/color garden, deck and arbor, and raised beds.◆ Written proposal to the administration to support the expansion of the Arboretum into the bottomland property east of the Horticulture facility and Agriculture/Art Parking lot. Proposal turned down.◆ Forestry colleagues object to our Arboretum sign. We may be killing SFA's chance of ever getting a "real" Arboretum. Twenty years of Arb committees at SFA. Take down the sign and put up one saying SFA Horticultural Gardens. Everyone happy.◆ May 9, 1986 Garden Gala day. Newspaper advertising, couple of public service spots. On display: a petunia nightmare as filler between our woodies. Polychromatic migraine headache. No one attends. Long, lonely day.◆ Hines Nursery donation: two van loads of plants. First donation of plant goodies from J.C. Raulston: two UPS boxes full of strange and wonderful plants.◆ Fifty metal photoplate labels donated by Mr. Lee Alexander.◆ LPM class constructs steps, bridge and arbor to Ag/Art parking lot.◆ First "Friends of the SFASU Arboretum" newsletter.
1987:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ In early spring, LPM class and I discover pink flags in middle of our small Arboretum on south side of Agriculture building - about two acres - and learn that the university plans to build a concession stand and restrooms for the Athletic Department's Intramural field. Students want to fight. We are being replaced by a toilet! Tempers ease and I buckle down on spring break writing a 20-page proposal to administration justifying the Arboretum's expansion into the bottomland property (one paragraph requesting that the restrooms be relocated).◆ In March, 1987, after much discussion, proposals, and objections from various campus factions, the University President, two vice-Presidents, my Dean and chairman take a walking tour of the property proposed for Arboretum expansion. The President agrees! The university officially

sanctions the Arboretum. Handshakes all around. Icing on the cake: the restrooms are moved further south and out of our existing collection. Property borders the Athletic Department's Intramural field, LaNana creek, and College Avenue. Brings Arboretum to a total of 10.17 acres of grow space!

- ◆ Thirty uncommon trees planted on ten foot spacing to define the Arboretum's southern-most edge - other side: athletics. Marking our territory.

- ◆ New sign erected at front of the Arboretum - routed, stained, reading SFA Arboretum. We are back.

- ◆ March and early April spring freezes kill many tender plants and damage others. Even native oaks and pecans nipped back.

- ◆ An "Asian Valley" theme garden planted in bottomland. Plants of the Orient. 52 Japanese maples, 210 different azaleas, rare trees and shrubs. Island bed approach developed. Fall 1987 LPM class.

- ◆ Expedition to Mexico with Lynn Lowrey. Seed expedition. *Scutellaria suffretescens*, pink form, found near horsetail falls west of Monterrey.

1988:

- ◆ Dry Garden created as foundation planting of south face of Art building. Yuccas, Dasyliirions, Hesperaloes, Agaves, cacti . . . desert willows, mexican redbuds, buckeyes as small trees. Raised bed/RR tie frame - 4 inches of sandy loam for elevation - limestone - bark mulch.

- ◆ Shelby County courthouse landscape project in Center, Texas: an outreach effort that involves students planting a wide variety of native trees and shrubs - a few uncommon exotics. Interesting collection for horticulturists (three species of Taxodium, many Quercus, Acer). Funded by the Shelby county historical commission. First outreach.

- ◆ Irrigation system was quietly expanded into the Arboretum bottomland (2" mainline, manual valves, 1" submains, 6' risers on steel t-posts, and impact sprinklers on a 50' X 50' grid). Never ask permission, always ask forgiveness. Bob Rogers, Grounds, is co-coinspirator. Student volunteers, rented ditch witch. Philosophy: "you pay for an irrigation system whether you buy one or not." In my mind, a good solid-set irrigation system is a key factor to success; the first two years after planting critical.

- ◆ Garden structures: two bridges, five benches, landscape timber steps.

- ◆ Bog Garden is created in a natural wet area of the bottomland. Peter Loos takes chief design and curatorial role.

- ◆ A holly row created along the LaNana Creek trail. *Ilex opaca* varieties adjacent to the native plants garden and Oriental hollies adjacent to Asian valley section.

- ◆ A full-sun container growing area created by three students: 24' X 90'.

- ◆ First hand-drawn map handout placed at kiosk at front of arboretum.

- ◆ Vegetable garden created at the north end of the Arboretum complete with solid-set sprinkler irrigation.

- ◆ A conifer and holly garden was created on the south side of the Physical

plant and as a foundation planting for part of the east face of the Art building. RR ties, mulch.

◆ S.B. Hayter trust funds a two-year site analysis of a proposed plant sanctuary, Mill Creek Gardens - unique natural area six miles west of Nacogdoches on Hwy 21.. Chuck Martindale's MS thesis project.

◆ Three-week tour of east coast Arboretums and botanical gardens.

1989:

◆ Continued plantings of the new conifer/holly garden, the bog garden.

◆ Bog Garden gets a 60' long catwalk - GRA's Chuck Martindale and Rick Rankin do the work.

◆ Herb Society of Deep East Texas tackles an expansion plan.

◆ Irrigation system expanded in bottomland. No one complaining.

◆ Arboretum officially becomes a well-connected part of the LaNana creek trail - city takes the trail under the College Avenue bridge and Arb donates four 32' long steel footpath bridges to traverse tributaries feeding into the creek. "Jewel in the LaNana creek necklace" begins.

◆ Ten-day excursion across the south visiting arboretums and botanical gardens, nurseries, and plant enthusiasts. Return pumped up with many new plants.

◆ Plant inventory moved to computer database and hand-drawn maps updated. Rick Rankin begins survey work of the arboretum for first AutoCAD map creation.

◆ Expedition to Mexico with Lynn Lowrey, Ted Doremus, Alice Staub, John Fairey, Carl Schoenfeld, and Meg Hoey. Return with many new plants (seed and cuttings).

◆ December 23, 1989 record low. Temperature dips to zero. Immediate symptoms on many "standards in the trade." - data taken.

1990:

◆ Local chapter of the American Hemerocallis Society establishes the daylily garden - \$2000 gift. Railroad tie beds and plans for a fountain floor.

◆ Daughters of the Republic of Texas gift (\$2000) allows for the creation of the Texas Heritage Garden - plants popular in early Texas landscapes.

◆ Ms. Susan Elking, Art Department, designs and creates three large entrance gateways from treated timbers, each different and sure to be noticed (entrance to Asian Valley, the Bog Garden, and the southeast corner of the Arboretum).

◆ Rick Rankin, Graduate Research Assistant, creates the first AutoCAD base map of the Arboretum based on a 50' X 50' grid system that includes layers for significant features (buildings, topography, irrigation lines, utility lines). This creates the platform for plant location mapping.

◆ City and university support for moving the LaNana Creek trail through the Arboretum's eastern edge. Construction work under the bridge at Starr Avenue and a crushed limestone trail put in place. University funds four

32' metal footpath bridges built by Dr. Long's Agriculture Mechanics class and for the LaNana Creek Trail, now running down the eastern side of Arboretum.

◆ Diane Morey Sitton. 1990. Arboretum a learning haven for students. **Gardens and More**, May 1990: 20-24.

◆ September, 1990, AutoCAD lab is installed in Agriculture building.

◆ Herb garden receives a facelift with help and funding from the Herb Society of Deep East Texas. Paving brick donated by Henderson Clay Products.

◆ Perennial border created by Scott Reeves and Doug Hines. 12' wide and 120' long.

◆ CAD lab created - 9 computers loaded with AutoCAD and 18 students.

1991:

◆ Survey and computer mapping project continues.

◆ Marketing survey by class of Dr. Donald Curtis (Business professor and Arboretum booster) indicates 66% of Nacogdoches residents contacted in a phone interview did not know what an arboretum is and 71% didn't know we existed. Back to the drawing board.

◆ Carpenter School project involves a heavy planting of a wide variety of native trees and shrubs in an "arboretum park-like setting."

◆ Daylily garden fountain project gets off the ground in early 1991 and never ends. Class project of Art professor, Mr. John Daniels. Construction nightmares.

◆ Creation of an Iris garden. Peter Loos and students construct raised beds and bench terraces along the slope that faces the intramural field on the south side of the quonset greenhouse. Funds via American Iris Society for Peter Loos, GRA.

◆ A "grasses for Texas" garden is created just to the north of the Bog Garden. Raised beds framed by railroad ties.

◆ Three-week expedition to the gardens of the northeast during the summer of 1991.

◆ Ron Stone, 'Eyes of Texas' does a 12 minute feature on the Arboretum - terrific exposure. Star Search does not call.

1992:

◆ Entrance kiosk built by Rick Walston and Kevin Borowski next to Wilson Drive sidewalk. Attractive cedar-shake roof with plenty of space to display educational information, brochures, maps, plants in bloom news, etc.

◆ Texas Heritage Garden: a 12' X 20' cedar pergola with benches constructed via the work of Shannon Short, Rick Walston, Cleve Moore and Kevin Borowski. Zig-zag cedar post fence surrounds the Heritage garden. All donated materials.

◆ Arboretum Garden Gala day - 300 attendees with perfect weather.

◆ Eagle Scout project constructs a heavy-duty bridge in the Arboretum

over the southern most tributary that feeds into LaNana creek.

◆ Shade garden created with a foundation of ferns donated by Jack Price, Blanchard, Louisiana. Railroad tie framed beds, steps constructed via four Youth Opportunity Unlimited kids: disadvantaged, high-risk kids for eight weeks, four hours per day in the summer.

◆ Arboretum receives 300 railroad ties from Curtis Pruett, Texas State Railroad. Student volunteers.

◆ Master's of Fine Arts student Ms. Susan Elking begins the creation of the "Elking Environment," a 4000-square-foot rock garden - that will serve as her thesis project. Combining rock/timbers, fountains, lights, steel bows, irrigation, etc. to create a piece like no other. That's for sure. Creech's main comment all the time: "what about maintenance?"

1993:

◆ Telephone Pioneers of America gift installs a "memorial" for the Challenger mission in the native plants garden. Dedication in summer attended by Senator Bill Haley, Representative Jerry Johnson, SFA President Dan Angel and 100 others. Taps in the garden, full-dress Marine Corps drill team and 21-gun salute. Not sure what all this means.

◆ 450 railroad ties donated to Arboretum effort by Texas State Railroad; student enthusiasm waning after hauling via trucks and trailers.

◆ Second Eagle Scout Bridge over the northern most tributary feeding into LaNana Creek. Trail is now negotiable to College Avenue.

◆ Arboretum Garden Gala Day attended by over 200 visitors.

◆ The fountain in the daylily garden is finished and it works!

◆ Tom Crossett, President of Central Point limestone rock quarry, Cleburne, Texas, donates 175 tons of limestone rock for the "Elking Environment." Atlas trucking provides reduced-rate trucking: six semi-truck loads.

◆ Elking environment proceeds - mammoth project on our resources. Susan Elking developing amazing shoulders moving rock.

◆ Transfusion of many new plants into the garden.

◆ An "outdoor lecture deck" is built in the shade garden as a class project; can seat 30 students.

◆ Our first wedding in the garden. Sneak in and take pictures.

1994:

◆ I spend fall sabbatical at North Carolina State University under Dr. J.C. Raulston and return inspired. 440 new woody plant accessions for Arb.

◆ While I'm away for the fall, Shawn Geiman tackles the "clearing" of the last undeveloped section in the Arboretum: the "north woods," a two-acre privet-infested thicket.

◆ Flood of October, 1994 - 100 year record, devastating; moves logs and brush into the garden from Shawn's clearing project; 100 railroad ties lost. I am on sabbatical and students are frantic. Emails are frantic. Colleagues at SFA not short of humor. (Postscript: six months after event, little sign

that a disaster has occurred -only six plants lost).

◆ Diane Morey Sitton. 1994. A growing project: The Arboretum at Stephen F. Austin State University. **Gardens** 8(7): 22-24. (Feature on the arboretum by free-lance author).

◆ Initiation of the SFASU Arboretum's "Plants with Promise" program: Acquisition, evaluation, propagation, distribution and promotion strategy.

◆ 150 German bearded Iris varieties donated to the Arboretum by Dr. Don Curtis and we end up killing most of them.

◆ Continued plantings in the dry garden and shade garden; perennial border lengthened; "Native Plants" section expanded.

◆ A new collection, the "lines of vines," is installed in the rows of solid-set sprinklers for the vegetable garden; over forty woody vines on 10' tall 4" X 4" posts.

◆ Discussions begin with Ms. Elisabeth Montgomery on the possibility of an endowment and conservation easement on 119 acres six miles west of town. Office of University Advancement handles details and agreement finalized in September, 1994. Objective of the endowment is to promote the conservation, selection, and use of the native plants of Texas and to evaluate new landscape plant materials in Texas using Mill Creek Gardens as a platform. First funds of \$100,000 allocated.

1995:

◆ All \$100,000 of the Ms. Elisabeth Montgomery endowment is in place. Proceeds dedicated to conservation and development projects at Mill Creek Gardens. Incredible resource of upland sands under pines, mesic mid-slopes, wet creek bottoms, springs and seeps, and an eight-acre lake at its center.

◆ May 19, 1995: Formation of the SFASU Board of Advisors and interim officers. Bylaws committee begins work. Board of Advisors is made up of university officials, local boosters, nurserymen, landscapers and TAMU CEMAP representatives.

◆ Formation of the Arboretum Volunteer Corps Organization (AVCO); Interim Coordinator Roger Hughes, Nacogdoches retiree and Arboretum booster. AVCO Handbook created.

◆ First Arboretum "Plant Location Handbook." To be published every January and old copies archived (computer files on tape and paper copies in library).

◆ May 20, 1995: Arboretum Garden Gala Day is attended by over 600. Plant sale generates \$4800.

◆ North Woods is finally cleared of the underbrush, brush piles burned, and stumps ground. Endangered plants garden plans.

◆ "Alternative fruits" garden created at north end of vegetable plots.

◆ A "Shrub Border" collection is planted between Art and the Physical Plant.

◆ Art/Alley Garden created by Robert Simkunas, undergraduate student.

- ◆ The “Vending Building” garden is created.
- ◆ Fall, 1995: many new plants set in the garden. Significant collections of *Ilex crenata*, *Mahonia*, *Loropetalum chinense* and many new conifer, shrub, and vine cultivars.
- Fall, 1995: Established a *Hibiscus dasycalyx* recovery project at Mill Creek Gardens under direction of GRA Stacy Scott, on leave from US Forest Service, California where she is an endangered plant biologist.. Receive small plants of *Phlox nivalis* ssp. *texensis*, Texas trailing phlox, known from only three locations in world - Center for Plant Conservation, Greg Wieland..

1996:

- ◆ Big excitement of the year: \$375,000 A.T. and Pat Mast, Jr. endowment, September, 1996 - income dedicated to general operating support of the Arboretum.
- ◆ February 29, 1996. Institute of Museum Services (IMS) consultant, Mr. Donald Buma here for the day. Meeting from 1 to 3 with VP Ashley, VP Holbert, J.L. Young and myself. Meeting from 3 to 5 pm with members of the Board and Volunteer Corps (21 in attendance). Consulting report distributed May 3, 1996 to Arboretum Board of Advisors, Volunteers, and SFA administration.
- ◆ Mill Creek Gardens - *H. dasycalyx* introduction research continues and *Phlox nivalis* ssp. *texensis*, Texas trailing phlox, plots were established (seven blocks of 80 plants) and widely blocks widely scattered in a dry upland sand under pines and a fire management program. Two graduate students: Stacy Scott and Chris Jones. Kiosk completed and one Mill Creek Garden sign erected. Shade house irrigation.
- ◆ 1996 plant location book - second in a series. Improving. Need an index.
- ◆ Endangered plants garden pergola construction project - stout enough and well anchored enough to take the stoutest floods. ? Two garden beds created from 15 cubic yard loads of sandy loam - one for Texas trailing phlox and the other for *Hibiscus dasycalyx* - and other endangered.
- ◆ SFA Horticulture gets a line in the budget: \$10,500; first ever and puts us along side Poultry, Beef, Swine, Soils Lab.
- ◆ First-ever technician, Ms. JoAnn Carter, comes on board in September. Arboretum will never be the same.
- ◆ Shade garden development - sandy loam bobcat loads and pine bark mulch - Hosta/Fern collection. Aroids. Shade gingers.
- ◆ Expansion of land under garden beds.
- ◆ Magnolias-on-the-slope collection. 20 cultivars.
- ◆ Lines of vines - up to five rows; 86 woody vines on a stick. *Lonicera sempervirens*, *Wisteria sinensis*, *floribunda*, *frutescens* cultivars, many others.
- ◆ CEMAP trials - woven into our testing platform at the lines of vines/vegetable garden. Lantanas for days. Verbena. *Surfinia* petunias.

- ◆ 500' new border 10' wide along-side the Ag/Art parking lot.
- JoAnn Carter imagination garden - just to south of the entrance gate to the shade garden - grasses - unusual shrubs - rocked drainway.
- ◆ May Garden Gala Day - crowd estimated at 1000 - plant sale \$10,000
- Fabulous Fall Festival in October - crowd estimated at 600 - plant sale \$4800.
- ◆ Thomas, Sami. July, 1996. Move beyond the basics. Article and color pictorial on the SFA Arboretum's plant evaluation program. **Nursery Management and Production** 12(7): 34 - 44.
- ◆ Largest planting of woody trees, shrubs, vines in the fall ever - 360 new plants into the garden.
- ◆ Expedition to China (12/12/96 - 1/15/97). *Camptotheca acuminata*, Happy tree of China, germplasm collection.

1997:

- ◆ Garden structure - benches/ pergola - built on the slope just south of the Art building. Billy Morrow.
- ◆ New benching system in the poly house and glass house. We're here to stay.
- ◆ Flat East Texas red river rocks used to line the perennial border and hosta/fern collection garden beds as an edging. Dramatic. Rocks don't float. 600' of beds edged.
- ◆ Ginger garden created just to east of Iris collection. Mercer Arboretum donation.
- ◆ New garden on Wilson Drive just to north of Physical Plant building. 3000 square feet - pool, sandy loam beds, mulch, rock as edging, paving.
- ◆ Paving expanded in Daylily Garden.
- ◆ Our three fountains actually work.
- ◆ Arboretum named a satellite garden of the "Hardy Fern Foundation," primarily through the work of volunteer Roger Hughes.
- ◆ Arboretum website up and running.
- ◆ 1997 "Plant Location Handbook" - 56 pages. Finally legible. Need index.
- ◆ Creech, D.L. 1997. In support of Biodiversity. **American Nurseryman** 184 (12): 38-43.
- ◆ May Garden Gala Day crowd estimated at 1500. New Red/White tent a hit. Plant sale: \$10,000. Bolivian flamenco dancer Lydia Harber. Wynn Logan and the Golden Dreamers band. Bill Welch, Greg Grant, and Dave Creech walks and talks. Circus-like atmosphere.
- ◆ Plans for the Outdoor Education Pavilion begin in earnest. Timber Framers Guild of America project. 24' X 24' architecturally interesting structure on College Avenue. Campaign begins.
- ◆ Children's Garden planning begins in earnest. President approves the project in March 1997 and funding campaign initiated. Timber Framers Guild of North America "outdoor education pavilion" slated for

construction in March 1998. Funds sought to support the conversion of the north end of Arboretum into an outdoor learning center for local schools. Working with colleagues in Education, Forestry . . . and an Arb committee of volunteers.

- ◆ **Texas Highways** photographer and writer here three times, doing a feature that will appear in March 1998.

- ◆ Request to move my position to a 12 month appointment, no summer teaching . . . approved by VP Ashley. Morale improved.

- ◆ Approval for a world-class azalea garden on the opposite side of the creek. Meetings with and support of Dan Angel led to Board of Regents approval in October, 1997. Work begins in December 1997.

- ◆ Campus as Arboretum proposal meets with some hesitation and change is to Arboretum cooperating with Grounds in a "campus beautification" project.

- ◆ September 1997, first significant cap outlay for the Horticulture program since 1982 - new 35 hp Kubota, John Deere tractor, equipment.

- ◆ Greg Grant comes on board as a new Horticulture faculty - October 1997.

- ◆ Arboretum expansion has been on a theme-garden-by-theme-garden approach (see attached map). Maintenance by students in Horticulture (now \$5500 for student assistants from our state budget) and work-study students (≈\$8000 per year average). Graduate students take lead role in managing work study projects. Weekly "Arboretum Warriors" work list posted every Monday morning to prioritize work activities. Labor/maintenance crises are often gruesome. Volunteer curators of great help. Technician a boon to program.

- ◆ Two Main Arboretum events: hosts an Arboretum Garden Gala Day, a third Saturday in May event - and a Fabulous Fall Festival, first Saturday in October. Board of Advisors meetings set for the day before.

- ◆ Garden tours. The Arboretum conducts one to two hour tours to school-age kid groups, garden clubs, nurserymen, landscapers and others by appointment. Since 1987, this service has grown tremendously and is stretching time management: i.e., 63 tours in the last academic year. Tours led by this professor, graduate students, and Horticulture seniors.

- ◆ Plant acquisitions by exchanges, gifts, and purchases: North Carolina State University Arboretum, Arnold Arboretum, National Arboretum, specialty nurseries, plant hunting expeditions, and plant enthusiasts. 2800 taxa now in living collection with another 400 to be set in late fall, 1997. While focus has long been trees and shrubs, pressure to move into more garden color and herbaceous displays is intense.

FRIENDS OF THE SFASU ARBORETUM NEWSLETTER - Chronicles the development of the Arboretum, plant acquisitions, plant observations, botanical information, book reviews, and upcoming events. "Friends Updates" - two or three per year - are not included.

Friends of the SFASU Arboretum Newsletter No. 1, April, 1986: 8 pp.

Friends of the SFASU Arboretum Newsletter No. 2, September, 1986: 11 pp.

Friends of the SFASU Arboretum Newsletter No. 3, December, 1986: 24 pp.

Friends of the SFASU Arboretum Newsletter No. 4, May, 1987: 24 pp.

Friends of the SFASU Arboretum Newsletter No. 5, October, 1987: 18 pp.

Friends of the SFASU Arboretum Newsletter No. 6, March, 1988: 32 pp.

Friends of the SFASU Arboretum Newsletter No. 7, September, 1988: 26 pp.

Friends of the SFASU Arboretum Newsletter No. 8, August, 1989: 28 pp.

Friends of the SFASU Arboretum Newsletter No. 9, May, 1990: 36 pp.

Friends of the SFASU Arboretum Newsletter No. 10, February, 1991: 33 pp.

Friends of the SFASU Arboretum Newsletter No. 11, December, 1991: 38 pp.

Friends of the SFASU Arboretum Newsletter No. 12, March, 1993: 40 pp.

Friends of the SFASU Arboretum Newsletter No. 13, February, 1995: 34 pp.