I don’t know how we did it; the Jimmy Hinds Park actually made great progress in 2015. With two major floods, a four month dry spell, and our usual litany of crises and catastrophes, we managed at the last moment to make all our goals. With the first year funds arriving slightly over a year ago we opened up the 2-acre patch at low cost with a quick discrete bulldozing – and lots of hand work. We’ve gone from a privet-infested forest to a nice sunlit patch of LaNana creek bottomland. We’ve controlled the stump sprouts chemically, eliminated the exotics, and over seeded with ryegrass. There’s a great view from Austin Street on the North edge. A major goal for 2015 was to install a robust irrigation mainline and submain. I’m pleased to report that as done. Another goal was to establish signage and interpretation of the JH Park. A first interpretive panel is in place. Another major goal for 2015 was to kick off a focus on fruit trials. For that, we’ve constructed a fine three-wire trellis system, soon to be home to over 56 varieties of muscadine grapes. The plants are in the PNPC nursery and will be planted in March 2016.
WILDFLOWER STRIP:

We’ve planted a football field long strip along Austin Street to wildflowers. Established in the winter of 2014-15, we have success – need to establish plugs of other interesting prairie perennials to increase the diversity. This image displays last year’s spring show 2015 with Janet Creech. Coreopsis is cheerful and Phlox and Verbena are also making their presence known. Goal is an easy to maintain stretch, essentially an annual weed eater chore.
NEW TREEHENGE – In January 2015 we established a “treehenge” at the eastern edge of the JH Park. This circle is comprised of a bald cypress clone, T502, a hybrid of the Monteuma cypress and our native bald cypress. We have a goal with this planting. For the next few years, the trees will be pruned each winter to one central leader with very short side branches. After the trees reach 20’ tall they will be pulled toward the center via a rope and comealong, something that will be an annual chore. Over the next decade, this process is repeated until the leaders can all touch, naturally graft, and ultimately become a structure - creating a unique “teepee” sculpture.

This is our older treehenge which lies on the western edge of the JH Park. It’s a 60’ diameter circle with a bald cypress variety called ‘Cascade Falls’, a dramatic weeping form. There’s nothing like it in the world.
IRRIGATION SYSTEM INSTALLED: Getting water to the JH Park was a major project in 2015. With Lee Stapleton (SFA Physical Plant) we mapped out the ditch for ½ mile, much of it through some difficult forest. At the JH Park we created a mainline that runs 800’ with riser take offs every 80’ down the line. This means that nearby water is now assured for the first few years of establishment. We tapped in to the Pineywoods Native Plant Center irrigation system (a nice 2” line) from a spot very near the Bomar Music Preparatory House at the north end of the PNPC.
SIGNAGE AND INTERPRETATION: We installed one small interpretive panel that projects the history of the place and Jimmy Hinds role in SFA Agriculture and the industry in our region.
MUSCADINE GRAPE VINEYARD – in the Fall 2015 we constructed a three wire trellis system for a collection of mainly muscadine varieties. We are working with other Universities in the South to evaluate new breeding lines, advanced selections, and recently introduced varieties. We currently have 56 varieties that will be planted in March 2016. This is the first step in developing a collection of fruit trees and ornamentals suited for the site. Student workers installed a great trellis system. Plants will be set at base of each post and surrounded by a 4’ tube of chicken wire to protect plants from deer. Do not ask what we think of this city’s deer control strategy. A drip line will be laid out in May or June 2016 to get the plants through the first year or two.
The end result will be three wire system. Each vine will be trained as a single trunk to the top of the post, pinched, then new growth formed into two arms and trained down the middle wire. In the future, shoots from that arm can be trained down the two outside wires. Using a good sandy loam, we are also creating a slight mound at each plant to enhance drainage around the plant. Note the 4’ chicken wire tube – deer protection. Deer have become a huge headache at SFA Gardens.