



Notes From the Director

By David Creech

Right off the bat, let's have the drum roll for all the bulleted good news since the last newsletter!

◆ We have a brand new Pineywoods Native Plant Center Research Associate, Trey Anderson!

Trey came on board in June and he's an SFA graduate, strong in forestry, botany, horticulture and GIS skills.



New hire: Trey Anderson

Trey's settled in to making this place a must-visit spot in the region. For right now, Trey's big focus is installing a Jaderloon moveable bench system in the PNPC greenhouse, being able to locate a pipe wrench, and getting to know all the ropes of how to get things done in the garden.

◆ We have a brand new SFA Gardens Outreach ½ time Research Associate, Greg Grant! Greg has literally moved laterally into a less physically demanding ½ time position, one in which his talents for new plants, writing, speaking and generating smart gardening projects can flourish.

◆ Dawn successfully directed the wettest-ever spring garden gala day, a day full of

driving rain and thunderstorms, only to find when the clouds cleared that this sale ended up as one of the best ever! Kudoes to the wettest group of volunteers ever at a plant sale. Judging from this crowd, it's easy to conclude that a little rain never stopped a plant-obsessed gardener.

◆ We had a pair of red-shouldered hawks nest about a hundred feet from the PNPC horticulture facility. The pair built a beautiful home high in a sweet gum over the main loop road, and then raised a healthy youngster, now a beautiful young predator happily snatching squirrels, birds, cats, small dogs, and, perhaps, even surprised beavers here and there along its LaNana creek home. I wonder what happened to the beavers at the Arboretum; they seem gone?



Our resident red-shouldered hawk
Photo by Hardy Meredith

twenty acres of the PNPC via a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Grant, a big step to ridding the place of this bad guy from China. This project will take

two to three years to reach a point where we can say we won, privet lost.

◆ Michael Maningas (SFA Outdoor Pursuits), Mike Legg (SFA College of Forestry), and I are still jumping up and down with joy about the new trails and bridges over at the Hunt Woods Recreational Trail Project.

Improvements are due a



New bridge in the Hunt Woods project

timely Texas Parks and Wildlife grant. What a great mix of SFA physical plant talent, heavy equipment, asphalt, and a plan to work with! If you haven't visited the 68-acre property, you should. It's the very rough jewel across from the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden on University Drive and the winning proposed name, for now, is SFA Recreational Trail and Gardens! We vote yes!



Peaceful trail in the Hunt Woods project

Notes From the Director, continued

◆ The Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden had a remarkable spring show with herds of humans roaming on the trails, along the trails . . . and way off in our azalea beds. Barbara pulled off another successful azalea symposium, hosted many groups, did some interviews, and squired many visitors from distant lands through our collections.



Barb Stump leads a tour through the Azalea Garden

◆ While the numbers aren't in for 2009, this has got to be some kind of record for educating kids at the SFA Gardens. As if to say she's not too busy, Elyce stewarded in a 'Nacogdoches Naturally' grant described later in this newsletter. Let's just say it's really a very good program for our community. It's a batch of exciting after-school and on-weekend environmental education events for children and their parents.

◆ The dream of a LEEDS-certified Conservation Education Center and Green Roof Pavilion at the PNPC is just a little closer to reality. We've got some great pledges in place and optimism on a couple of more. We've had a presentation by an architectural firm and we're hoping to get Lake Flato to visit. The spot is perfect. The project is a smart one. It fits the times.

◆ The SFA Mast Arboretum remains the beehive headquarters of so many positive plant projects. Dr. Jeff Adkins has brought our propagation mist system into the 21st century. Dr. Maurer is off and running with a turf evaluation project over in front of Grounds and the Bus Barn on Starr Avenue. Over it all, Dawn leads the tight ship of new plants, new garden features, new garden beds, new plant labels, getting ready for the next plant sale – and knowing that our successful vegetable garden has made everyone tired of squash.

◆ Blueberries rule! SFA Horticulture has a long history working with blueberries and we currently have our research plots at Mill Creek Blueberry Farm, west of Nacogdoches on Hwy. 21. Of the many selections that have

been observed, measured, picked over, eaten, and looked at for over twenty years, there's one that we will be naming as a joint release with the USDA, a clone called MS 108. This plant will be introduced as a homeowner blueberry. It's enjoyed consistent production over many years. A key point, the fruit needs to be held on the bush an extra day or two to fully ripen into a dark blue to almost black berry to get the full sugar content. It's a bit tart if picked early. One of my friends in Mississippi joked that we could name it Texas Tart. We didn't find that funny. Any suggestions?

Keep planting!



Dr. Creech stands next to our Texas native blueberry

A Snowball's Chance in...

By Dawn Stover

Sweet alyssum is a versatile and under-used, cool season annual in the south. I'm often disappointed when visiting garden centers in November and not being able to find this relatively cold-hardy, fragrant, little beauty. It will tolerate our mild weather days in winter, although perfect drainage is a must. Plants often become available in late February and early March and make fragrant fillers for containers, excellent edge-of-the-border plants and delicate fillers amongst the seas of pansies we tend to plant in the south before they burn up in May.

Now you might wonder why I'm writing about a cool season annual in the middle

of a summer where we've had above average temperatures that have exceeded 100° more days than not. We have recently become a small trial sight for select Proven Winners' plants, and among them is a sweet alyssum that is still blooming as I write this on July 9th.



Snow Princess™ on July 9th

The Proven Winners' web-

site lists this as a hybrid and it's official, legal name is: *Lobularia* SNOW PRINCESS™ Inlbusnopr™ PPAF PBRAF. Look for it simply as *Lobularia* Snow Princess™.

I probably should have pulled this plant about a month ago as it doesn't look as good as it might, but I'm simply in shock and awe that this plant hasn't burned to a crisp just yet. I was eyeing it about a week ago thinking it's demise was ever-near. Then those glorious 2 inches plus of rain came. This silly, snowy little princess decided to bloom again. I think I'll try to keep it until August. Wish me, and the plant, some luck!

In the Limelight: The Panicle Hydrangea

By Dawn Stover

I've loved hydrangeas since I was a small child. My great grandmother grew beautiful, big leaf, mop head hydrangeas on the north side of her house in Cypress where I grew up. The memory of those blousy, blue and pink blooms is one I treasure almost as much as the field of bluebonnets she created from three transplanted little plants nearly a century ago. Little Grandma is long gone, but lived well into her 90's. The hydrangeas live on hopefully at her old house that's since been sold, and surely with my uncle and cousin whose homes lie just south of Little Grandma's old home.

I've brought them here to the North Country (aka Nacogdoches) too, from a start my uncle eagerly rooted for me when I asked. With our more acidic soils in Nacogdoches, I expect to see more blue than pink, but many of you know that's not a problem in my book.

A new chapter. I first came to SFA as a student a few (ha, ha) years ago. I quickly met the oak leaf hydrangea or *Hydrangea quercifolia*. As Dr. Creech described them in our Landscape Plant Materials class, "A true four seasons' plant with huge white flower panicles, great fall color and interesting bark in the winter." Color me smitten. A few years later, on a day full of plant tours in Knoxville, Tennessee I saw these big beautiful GREEN flowered hydrangeas everywhere. Me = head over heels! I now think that these were immature flowers of the smooth hydrangea, *Hydrangea arborescens*, more than likely a variety called 'Annabelle.'

A grand finale? Is the pinnacle to my hydrangea fancy the panicle hydrangea? Last year I found some liners available for *Hydrangea paniculata* 'Limelight'. Before I figured out the big green ball I lusted for in Tennessee was 'Annabelle', I thought 'Limelight' was perhaps the plant I'd met so briefly and fallen in love with. Well, it wasn't, but I liked Limelight better! If you were lucky, you picked one up at the plant

sale last fall.

Introduction to a very versatile hydrangea. *Hydrangea paniculata*, commonly known as the panicle hydrangea is native to Japan and eastern China. It grows to 25 feet in the wild, but is more often seen at 10 feet or less in the landscape. Most sources state that plants are often limbed up and grown as small, multi-trunked trees, but they are equally happy when maintained as medium to large shrubs. Plants are deciduous, and blooms appear on new wood – meaning that you can prune them in the fall without removing the next year's blooms.



Hydrangea paniculata 'Limelight' blooming in the Arboretum

Plants need at least three hours of sun to bloom, and will be more compact and floriferous in full sun. Individual flowers are often greenish white to creamy white and often fade with age to a shade of pink. Neutral to acidic soils are acceptable, as long as adequate drainage is provided. It's also reportedly deer resistant and drought tolerant. I can confirm the latter, but have not spoken to any deer to report on its tastiness or lack thereof.

At center stage. In the past, the panicle hydrangea has been described as a coarse shrub, but I think the newer varieties supersede that description. Gangly branches and open, sparse, cone-shaped blooms definitely lend to the definition of coarse. Recently, selections have been made for more reasonably sized plants and fuller, more ele-

gant and more rounded blossoms.

'Limelight' is definitely in the more desirable category. The breeders definitely realized this and 'Limelight' holds two patents: PP#12874 and CP#2319. This lovely selection hails from Holland, yet shrugs off our summer heat. In the South, lime-green flowers will eventually age to a complimentary soft ivory, and in late-summer will take on a rosy-pink hue. Panicles can range from six to twelve inches, and are full and more round than elongated. They make excellent cut flowers, and whether in a vase or in the landscape mix well with any other color you choose to pair it with. It is a breath of fresh, cool air on a hot summer's day!

Up and coming stars.

With all the attention the big leaf hydrangeas and oak leaf hydrangeas have gotten recently, it's a given that breeders and plants men would turn their attention to the panicle hydrangea. Two varieties that I'm very excited about in the Arboretum are 'Little Lamb' and 'Pinky Winky.' 'Little Lamb' is a relatively diminutive selection at three to four feet with big, fleecy white blooms. 'Pinky Winky' boasts huge flower heads that continue to grow as the season progresses. On

each inflorescence, the older sterile flowers will fade to a dark pink while new flowers emerge a pure white, with soft pink "middle-aged" flowers bridging the gap. Our specimens are less than a year in the ground, so I'm reticent to proclaim my love just yet. Another variety that I have yet to acquire is called 'Quick Fire,' named so for its habit of blooming nearly a month before other panicle hydrangeas. Personally, I have little use for this trait as the big leaf and smooth hydrangeas are at center stage a month before the panicles bloom. I like the progression from the three different species: oak leaf in late spring, big leaf and smooth in early summer, and panicle in mid to late summer. Now if someone will work on a winter blooming species, my hunger for hydrangeas will surely be satisfied.

Beat the Heat with a Taste of the Tropics

By Greg Grant

We all know Texas can be unbearable during the summer. Many gardeners get discouraged and throw up their hands. Transplanted residents often throw up for-sale signs! But if you've gardened here for very long, you've most likely come to realize that there are plenty of plants that survive our alternating dry and wet heat.

We actually have three different growing seasons in Texas. We are of course cool during the winter, and must grow frost tolerant plants then. Our winter conditions are the same as those during spring in Europe and the North. Then we have our mild to warm conditions during the spring and again in the fall. These pleasant gardening times here can last anywhere from thirty minutes to thirty days depending on the year. These temperatures are equivalent to summers in Europe and the North.

Unfortunately our third season is ours alone. I would feel much better about our Texas summers if the rest of the world got to share them with us. Sure, it hits 100 degrees in Chicago and Washington DC every now and then. But nobody except the desert southwest gets the extending baking that we do. Nobody gets to experience our 80 degree nights. And as we know, it's not always dry. Our proximity to the Gulf Coast provides plenty of humidity to take out many heat tolerant, desert loving and Mediterranean plants. Generally this period lasts from around May 1 till October 1. That means at least half of our gardening year deals with oppressive heat and drought with occasional tropical floods scattered in for good measure.

So what's the answer to gardening during a Texas summer you ask? It's really quite simple. Grow plants that are used to these same conditions. We aren't the only hot place on earth you know. Sure, that means we have to grow many plants as annuals and others that go dormant, but hey, that's life.

You can either grow plants that tolerate (and often thrive on) the summer heat, or you can grow plants that barely survive or die entirely. Those are your choices.

We DO NOT have the choice of growing the same summer color plants that you see in northern and European gardens during our summer season. Remember; their sum-



A red banana bursts forth from colorful foliage

mer is our spring. So be prepared for most of these plants to suffer an agonizing death during our Texas infernos. But that's OK, as long as you expect it and change them out for something more adapted. Too many Texas gardeners think everything is supposed to die during a Texas summer. If you believe that, then you've been growing plants from the wrong side of the globe. By far, the plants most adapted to our blazing summers are from the tropics. There's no place on earth that mimics a Texas summer better. Whether as bedding plants, containers plants, or tender perennials, start beating the heat with a taste of these. Look out though. They're hot!

Banana (*Musa sp.*): Bananas have long been a popular tropical fruit and tender perennial, but now they are trendy all over the world as dramatic warm season annuals. Their bold foliage can be green, burgundy, or variegated and makes a wonderful backdrop for more timid specimens. Sun to part shade. 5-10 feet depending on the species.

Butterfly Ginger (*Hedychium* species and hybrids): The smell of *Hedychium coronarium* drifting through summer garden is as good as it gets. With flowers somewhat resembling butterfly wings, *Hedychiums* are generally considered the most cold hardy gingers. Part shade to sun. Give them more water as sunlight exposure increases. 3-5 feet.



Hedychium coronarium

Castor Bean (*Ricinus communis*): Once known as "The Palm of Christ", castor beans are big bold annuals and can have green, bronze, or burgundy leaves. My granddad used to grow them to shade the chickens. All parts are poisonous so keep away from pets and kids. Full sun. 6-10 feet.

Copper Plant (*Acalypha hispida*): Copper plants aren't just copper anymore! They can be red, pink, golden, or cream as well as having giant leaves or tiny ones. All are great annuals for sunny summer color. Full sun. 1-3 feet.



Acalypha 'Pink Feather' - a selection of copper plant

Esperanza (*Tecoma stans*): This tropical beauty sports golden yellow, lightly fragrant bells all summer long. The Texas Superstar cultivar 'Gold Star' is the showiest. It's an annual in the North, perennial in the South. Full sun. 5 feet.

Firebush (*Hamelia patens*): Hummingbirds adore this heat loving Texas Superstar, attracted to its bright orange trumpets until frost. With cool temperatures in the fall, the whole plant turns brick red. Sun to part shade. It's an annual in the North, perennial in the South. 4-5 feet.

Mid-Summer Maintenance Doings in the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden

By Barb Stump

In these very hot summer days, come visit the many shady spots in the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden where you can rest on a bench and enjoy cool early morning and late afternoon breezes. Now that the garden is in its 11th year, our Japanese maples and other exotic trees are reaching mid-story height and adding foliage texture as well as shade.

Irrigation adjustments. Some of our lovely trees are also contributing to “rain shadow” issues in some of our beds. This Dr. Creech concept occurs where plantings or tree growth blocks irrigation water from getting to shorter plants. The cure? Careful tree pruning. Enter the guys with a gas-powered pole saw, which has made “limbing up” lower branches to clear pathways for the water. Azalea Garden Technician Jon Roach and student worker Taylor Quinn are hauling off piles of limbs for later chipping up by SFA Grounds.

Watering has been priority #1 as we’ve already had a week of 100-degree-plus weather and many no-rain days. Thank goodness for our irrigation system that can cover the garden a few beds at a time over

a week’s time. Dr. Creech and our crew extended the irrigation to cover the planting of all of the Encore Azaleas™ planted on the southwest side of the garden and the new plantings around our the east end of the culvert through which Burrows Creek flows.

Azalea pruning. Meanwhile, summer is not usually the best time to prune, unless it is a matter of survival for your plants. I have been laboring to prune some of our more vigorous azaleas apart so they can grow into denser, more compact shrubs that we can identify one from another. Don’t worry, we’ll still have plenty of azalea flowers next March for Azalea Trail!—Azaleas set their buds by the end of the summer; and, I am carefull in “feathering” the branch pruning so flowering branches cover pruned off branches. Dawn is using some of the cuttings to raise a good crop of azaleas for the Spring 2010 Garden Gala plant sale.

Plant labeling and inventorying. My Azalea Garden volunteers—Sherrie Randall, Jimmy Rodriquez, Peg Kern, Gerry Peacock, and Don and Bonnie Orr—have

been so helpful in keeping up with beds that they have adopted and have been helping me identify which plants need labels and have helped stick them. Watch for new labels every week. We ask for patience on the hundreds of azalea labels, which will take us several more months. The good news for Japanese maple fall-color enthusiasts is that we will stick the 200+ Japanese maple labels by the end of August. These permanent labels are like the ones in the Arboretum, and they make the SFA Gardens collections so much more educational for our horticulture-curious visitors.

My heartfelt thanks to these volunteers for their diligence and friendship in this detailed work! Should you like to join our merry band, especially during Nacogdoches Azalea Trail March 13-April 3, contact me at bstump@sfasu.edu.

Entrance Signs. Finally, two new big signs are in the works, one at the entrance by the Johnson Coliseum and another by the western entrance. Greg Grant is helping me keep these elegant and colorful so they will complement our colorful Visitor Guide and Map brochure.

Taking Educational Outreach to the Next Level

By Dave Creech

I think it was Felder Rushing, the eminent horticultural sage from Mississippi, who said we’re all here to educate, entertain, and enlighten. Well, that led me to wondering “how are we doing here at SFA?” Well, I can report that I’ve studied the situation and we’re doing fine.

The adult education numbers are based on numbers from on campus and off campus educational events. Whether it’s a presentation to a small garden club or large trade show crowd, the result is the same. We are getting the word out. For those who visit, we are connecting them with the natural flora through the Pineywoods Native Plant Center - and the same citizens can connect with the managed landscape gardens of the SFA Mast Arboretum and get blown away in the showcase Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden. James Kroll said it best when he said, “Nacogdoches, Naturally!” Educational outreach at the SFA Gardens is our

monthly Les Reeves Monthly Lecture Series, all kinds of gardening seminars, and workshops galore. Of course, spring is our busy time of year, essentially endless spring parade of garden groups on formal staff-led or docent-led tours of the gardens in bloom. In my eyes, educational events fostered by the three gardens have grown to what seems to be staggering proportions. From my perch, I see the management of details as some kind of Spartan juggling and wrestling match. Yet, with the greatest of ease, Dawn, Elyce, and Barb bring all things together in style and grace. With librarian like detail, Barb produces suitable for framing well highlighted spread sheets with color coded cells to handle the who, when, what, where, and why. We usually skip the why column. For inquiring minds, everything we do at SFA Gardens is one click away at our website: <http://arboretum.sfasu.edu>. Hit the

events button and there you are.

As for educating children, that too has exploded. I never cease to be amazed at the crowds of little people, all wide eyed at what they’re seeing, hearing and doing. I see them as wandering tribes of little people, moving cheerfully from one garden station of learning to the next. Think about it. At every stop, they’re getting to learn something important about our natural world from someone motivated to teach. This is a green, hands-on, see me, touch me, and study me living laboratory. If motivated teachers mean motivated kids, we’re hitting a home run.



The Not-So-New Kid on the Block

By Dawn Stover

There's a new face over at the Pineywoods Native Plant Center, but it's a face that will prove familiar to many of you. With Greg's recent transition to part-time status, the Research Associate position, basically the manager of the PNPC, became available. Trey applied for the position several years ago when Lance Craig left for the Army, but we were afraid he was still a little wet behind the ears. It's not easy to work for an old curmudgeon after all. Trey is Nacogdoches born and raised. He grew up in the Carrizo Creek neighborhood and is a graduate of Nacogdoches High School. He and his prettier half, Christina Keim, are working on converting an old metal building into a home in the same neighborhood Trey grew up in. Christina is also an SFA horticulture alum, and they will neighbor our friends Roger and Sherrie Randall who own the Blueberry Place. Trey began his career at SFA in the College of Forestry, but before long found a better fit in the Department of Agriculture in the Horticulture Program where he graduated in May of 2005 with a BSc in Horticulture. Since his first interview for the PNPC position and this most recent and successful bid at the job, he's mastered quite a few skills and grown into quite a native plants man. Trey spent several summers with Dr. Charles Allen in Fort Polk, Louisiana performing plant surveys on the army base there. Here, Trey was able to nurture his love affair with native plants. He would email pictures of the things he

and Dr. Allen found in this undeveloped piece of heaven. At one point, he was offered a full time position, but Trey chose to remain close to home and family. He's gained valuable landscaping, lawn care, and consulting experience working for Nacniche Gardens and Evergreen Lawncare. At James F Ward and Associates, Trey ac-



Dr. Creech and Trey survey a potential project.

quired GIS skills which put him head and shoulders above all of our other most recent PNPC candidates. His most recent job was with Castilaw Environmental Services where he worked on ecological site descriptions, environmental inspections for pipelines, and watershed protection planning. I know that it was very difficult for Trey to leave the Castilaw family as he dearly loved that job and the time in the field it allowed him. The educational opportunities at SFA were more than Trey could resist though. When asked why he sought this position

again, Trey described a deep passion and devotion to native plants, and a strong need to educate the public about them. Plus, he really loves horticulture and SFA. Not bad qualities, eh?

His goals for the Pineywoods Native Plant Center are to make it a first class demonstration location for water wise gardening and site specific, Texas tough plants. He would like to be involved with interpretation and educational programs, and he's not afraid to get his hands dirty. Ultimately, he'd like to restore the bottomland hardwood forest to demonstrate reclamation and restoration of a disturbed site.

For now, Trey has taken on the tasks of installing rolling benches in the PNPC greenhouse and reorganizing and cleaning up the nursery facility. And since it's summer, he's getting real hands-on experience with the tricky irrigation system, which he hopes to bring up to date.

When probed for his favorite plant, Trey was quick to note that the blazing star, or *Liatris aspera* was at the top of the list. He plans to have it available at next spring's plant sale.

The staff of the SFA Gardens couldn't be luckier to have Trey on board. If one didn't know better, his job description was written just for him.* I think he's the right candidate for the job, how about you?

* To answer any questions from our SFA Legal Council, the job description for this position was written in 1999 when Trey was a senior in high school!

Nature Deficit Disorder Does Not Exist Here!

By Dawn Stover

Elyce and Kerry have done it again. They have successfully taken children ages 4 through 15 and literally unplugged them for a week. No TV, no computers, no mp3 players. Just Mother Nature and all the entertainment and education she is willing and able to provide.

Children had the opportunity to attend one of three summer camps with age appropriate curriculum and activities: Wonder Woods for 4-6 year olds, Mill Creek Camp for 7-10 year olds, and Wilderness Adventures for 11-15 year olds.

There were 76 campers in all, 20 of which



were on full or partial scholarship. Thank you to Arboretum Volunteers and Advisory Board Members, members of Austin Heights Baptist Church, and former board

member Bonnie Hammet for donating \$2,560 for children who might not have been able to attend without their support.

We are very blessed with the partnership and support of the Nacogdoches Junior Forum who kept campers fed and hydrated with yummy snacks and drinks.

And last but not least, thank you to the army of volunteers who nurtured these children with the ways of nature: Dr. Cheryl Boyett, Texas Forest Service, Pineywoods Beekeepers Association, the Columbia Center, the WET Center, and a host of exceptional volunteers and energetic students.

No Child Left Inside

Photos by Elyce Rodewald and Kerry Lemon



Wonderwoods Camp

Mill Creek Camp



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No Child Left Inside, con't



Wilderness Adventures

