



SFA Gardens *News*

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Winter 2012

Notes from the Director

By David Creech

I don't know about you but I'm happy to put the last two years behind us. You can just peek out the window to know something bad has happened here. This two-year dry/hot spell is an all-time Texas record. Period. Here in Nacogdoches, we're normally blessed with an average of about 48 inches of rainfall per year. Matthew McBroom, assistant professor in the Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture, tells me we managed to scrape out 25.2 inches in 2010. In 2011, we had a bad summer and fall but ended up at 35.4 inches, simply because 10.5 inches of that came in November and December! So we're dry. If that wasn't bad enough, this past summer was a marathon of 100+ temperatures. Texas will never be the same. According to the Texas Forest Service, there are 500 million trees that bit the dust in our state and that doesn't even count the trees in great swaths scorched by wildfires - an amazing 4 million acres there. The catastrophic fire in September near Bastrop made national and international news and wiped out 1,600 homes and 1.5 million trees. What's sad is how so many old patriarch trees bit the dust in big numbers, simply dying of thirst and saying goodbye. All those trees that lost their leaves back in July and August are probably firewood, but there's still hope for those that edged into dormancy in mid fall. When spring is finally sprung, we'll know.

There is some good news here. At SFA Gardens, we gained a lot of knowledge of which plants thrive, survive or simply die when they're truly tested. Because we care, most of our plantings came through in fine shape. With a bit of

fear driving us, we added miles of drip lines to our plant-growing enthusiasm. In the Gayla Mize Garden, we went with a couple of gallons of water per day per plant strategy with an inexpensive battery-operated controller, and a one emitter at each plant strategy. Not much water, but it works. In some cases plants thrived on this minimalist but regular gift of water. Where irrigation reigned, things look great. Where it didn't, many plants simply went to toast. That said, I want everyone to know that my number one New Year's resolution is to enjoy a rainy, mild 2012. I hope I do as well there as on my other resolutions. Past experience says we're in trouble.

Have you ever seen such a colorful fall? Even our sweet gums, not normally associated with great fall color, were suddenly sky-rockets of red, burgundy and orange. The great fall show is probably due to the incessant drought our forests have been forced to endure. With no water, photosynthesis shuts down, chlorophyll levels drop, and all the pigments in the leaves are magically unmasked. Anthocyanins, carotenoids, xanthophylls and other pigments rule the day.

The SFA Gardens has just wrapped up the largest transfusion of woody ornamentals ever into the garden. With the eight acres of the Gayla Mize Garden looking pretty blank, we've been amassing many great plants for

this new garden. To add to the plantings, Janet and I took a truck and trailer and headed east. Thanks go out to Bobby Green and Maarten van derGiessen - both own interesting nurseries near Mobile, Alabama. Via Maarten, we're excited about a fantastic collection of deciduous azaleas and their hybrids that now call SFA Gardens home. We also managed to acquire some wonderful, true rhododendrons out of John Thornton's work in Louisiana. These are clones selected for heat tolerance with thick leathery leaves and large trusses of colorful flowers. We've had some of John's selections in the Ruby Mize Garden for years and have found some vigorous surprises in the mix.



Sweet gums color brilliantly against a bright blue fall sky and loblolly pine curtain.

SFA MAST ARBORETUM * RUBY M. MIZE AZALEA GARDEN * PINEYWOODS
 NATIVE PLANT CENTER * JIM AND BETH KINGHAM CHILDREN'S GARDEN
 * GAYLA MIZE GARDEN

STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY—ARTHUR TEMPLE COLLEGE OF FORESTRY AND AGRICULTURE

Notes, cont.

There has been great progress at the Gayla Mize Garden. Our student crew has finished two long boardwalks, two bridges, dressed up the trail network, planted and mulched hundreds of new trees and shrubs, and opened up a little more sunlight into the garden with the selective removal of a few water oaks, sweet gums and elms. If past experience is a guide, it won't take long till the canopy fills in and we're wondering why we didn't remove more. One thing that all this garden development has done is increase the number of visitors. It's amazing to me to see the number of humans and dogs enjoying the place. I drove by one Sunday morning a few weeks ago to find the parking lot brimming over. I struck up a conversation with a tall elderly gent and his wife who were squiring two beagles around. He asked me if I worked there and I said, "Why yes I do . . . I take care of all of the plumbing problems here and in our other gardens." He said, "Well, tell whoever runs this place that we really appreciate all the hard work. It's really beautiful and we can't wait to see it grow." Is that the ultimate compliment or what?

A road trip to Peckerwood Gardens in December with SFA Gardens employees Dawn Stover and Duke Pittman, along with a few students was a real treat and a trip down memory lane. I hadn't been in over a decade, shame on me, so it was an eye-opening experience to take in how full the landscape has become. John Fairey, the owner and creator, has designed a unique setting for his expansive collection of rare plants native to the southern United States and Mexico that are mingled with some of

their Asian cousins. Peckerwood is in an unlikely place for a lush garden. It's about an hour's drive from Austin, College Station or Houston. John and I shared several great plant-hunting expeditions to Mexico back in the 1980s and early 1990s. I call that time the good old days, long before things turned dicey in the mountains for plant enthusiasts

looking for the next great plant. John is a Texas A & M University architect who has devoted his lifetime to the creation of a unique architectural and landscape experience. He's been creating myriad theme gardens in an unlikely central Texas landscape. It was great to find a wonderful specimen of *Magnolia schiedeana*, a close relative of *M. grandiflora*, in good shape. The Mexico oaks were healthy. *Sabal*, *Agaves*, *Yucca*, *Dasyliirion*, *Hesperaloe* and many desert shrubs are well-

established and make a striking architectural statement under the live oak forest. Take a virtual visit at www.peckerwoodgardens.org and plan a real-life visit on one of their "Open Days."

Take a look at our improved SFA Gardens website – <http://sfagardens.sfasu.edu>. We're working with a new CMS (content management system) that allows yours truly to quickly make changes from my office. Travis Killen, the Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture's information tech-

nology specialist, has been a terrific help, and he now understands how hard it is to teach an old dog new tricks. That's me. Besides the main page, we have six main web pages – the SFA Mast Arboretum, the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden, the Pineywoods Native Plant Center, the Gayla Mize Garden, the SFA Recreational Trails and Gardens and a



Yucca rostrata punctuate a view of the famous blue wall at Peckerwood Gardens

page for our environmental education work. Wow. Our events page is up to date. We've added new plants to the plants web page with a focus on plants that have limited information available via a Google search. For instance, do a search for *Acer skutchii* and we're number one! We've recently added a number of Mexico oaks - a fascinating group of woody trees that have survived the 2010-2011 droughts in fine form. Until next time, keep planting!

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Once Upon a Time...

By Dawn Stover

Dr. Creech and his wife, Janet, recently made a whirlwind trip to Alabama to visit long-time nursery friends and to pick up myriad azaleas and other wonderful companion plants. Stops at Green Nurseries and Van der Giessen Nurseries garnered some wonderful new selections of azaleas and camellias.

It's my job to accession plants - log them into our database - so I basically get to say hello to every new plant that comes through our doors. I knew ahead of time that many of these plants were earmarked for the Gayla Mize Garden, so I tried not to form any attachments. Do you know how hard it is to keep your plant lust in-check when so many cool plants are at your fingertips? So when Dr. Creech told me to set aside some things for the arboretum, boy did I do a dance of joy! Some of the camellias were blooming, and they were so pretty! Many were soft shades of pink and simply lovely to see. Those of you who know me, know that I am not a girly-girl. It's not that I'm a tom-boy, but frilly and lacy aren't necessarily words used to describe me. But oh how those soft pink petals spoke to me! And do you know what they said? "We want to be in a fairy garden!" (Yes, plants do talk.) And then I told Duke what they said. (Know that Duke has more than two tattoos, shoots deer and names his beard.) I saw the light bulb: he heard the same thing!



Camellia japonica 'October Affair'

Duke and I have been working on re-vamping an existing area in the arboretum. OK, really it's more like I have an idea, and Duke makes it happen, and as a result, we had an area previously overgrown with liriopse and ivy just waiting for a new mission in life.

One of the "survivors" of the make-over was a *Camellia japonica* called "October Affair." I saw a modest bloom or two last year, and perhaps this is when the seeds for a fairy garden were sown. This year "October Affair" seemed as if it were always in flower. I wouldn't say the plant was covered, but I can say it has had a respectable handful of new blooms for several weeks now. And my, it is stunning! The fully double flowers are white, heavily blushed with pink and, when slightly opened, form a six-pointed star. I posted a picture in one of my online gardening groups and received more than a few comments doubting its authenticity as a real-life flower! As pretty as it is, "October Affair" does suffer from that common *japonica* used-tissue look when the flowers are past their prime, but the new flowers more than make up for that attribute. We have been lucky so far this winter in that the timing and frequency of our freezes hasn't affected the flowers, so we've had quite a lovely and lengthy show.

The new fairy-inspiring camellias are unnamed *Camellia sasanqua* hybrids. They are good-sized, beautiful plants with smallish, feminine-pink flowers often loosely semi-double with open centers. I look forward to sharing our long-term impression of these beauties! *Camellia sasanqua* are among the easiest camellias to grow, with healthy, dark-green foliage and blooms able to dodge hard freezes and leap tall buildings in a single bound. They are hardy in zones 7-9 and prefer bright shade or morning sun.

There is some repetition - a good aspect in garden design - to tie the specimen camellias together. I love the combination of bright, lime-green paired with shades of pink, both tints of the complementary colors red and green. A combination that just evokes a fairy kind of feeling, don't you think? One of our relatively new acquisitions completed this picture perfectly. We've woven a row of *Illicium parviflorum* "Florida Sunshine" throughout the garden. It boasts vivid lime-green foliage with upper stems colored in a contrasting red. As winter progresses, the foliage takes on a lighter, more yellow hue that cheerfully shouts in the otherwise dormant landscape. *Illicium parviflorum* is a native of Florida that appreciates a rich soil with plenty of moisture; however, plants will perform quite well in less favorable conditions and are quite drought tolerant once established. "Florida

Sunshine" has performed very well in the nursery, and I have high hopes for it in the landscape. They are hardy in zones 6 to 9 and prefer light shade.



Illicium parviflorum 'Florida Sunshine'

To anchor the area, there is a border of one of our more compact Satsuki azaleas, *Rhododendron* "Fujimori." If you ever wanted a perfectly rounded, never-needs-pruning, pink blooming shrub, 'Fujimori' is the answer. The Japanese have been breeding and selecting Satsuki hybrids for more than 500 years, and most within the group are late flowering and compact in nature. This description fits "Fujimori" to a T. And of course, the pink flowers fit with our theme.

So what's a fairy garden? The Internet will tell you it involves miniature figures and miniature houses all grouped amongst miniature plants. Well sure, but our motivation is a little more life-size. Once the plantings mature and blossoms are found in each of the seasons, we hope to awaken a sense of play, a bit of whimsy and perhaps the tiniest inkling that something magical is in the air. At the very least, we hope you will enjoy a neat, peaceful little spot nestled in the arboretum. And I hope our theme encourages you to think a little deeper when creating new areas in your landscape. Take inspiration from extraordinary things: dinosaurs, butterflies, candied confections, monsters or even perhaps fairies. Happy gardening!

Nature's Classrom

By Kerry Lemon

Every season is an opportunity to observe the wonder of Mother Nature's garden. An amazing diversity of native plants surrounds us here at the SFA Pineywoods Native Plant Center, and our urban forest oasis is gifted regularly with myriad wonders. Sitting at my desk as I write this, I glance out my window at a dozen sparrows tiptoeing around the backyard, scratching for their afternoon snack.

In spite of a summer of drought where many trees were lost, the new wildscape garden bloomed with brilliant colors and bustled with insect activity. During the worst of the dry, hot month of August, Greg Grant and I marveled while watching the migration of Mississippi Kites circling the gardens over the course of several days.

The small perennial bed at the edge of the parking lot is a breeding ground for numerous insects in various stages of development. For example, each year we are treated with the complete life cycle of the Gulf Fritillary butterfly (*Agraulis vanillae*), from tiny yellow eggs, to caterpillar larvae munching voraciously on the passion vine, to dozens of chrysalis hanging from the metal handrail leading to our backdoor, and finally to the fluttering of orange wings of the adult



butterflies filling the air.

Wildlife sightings of deer, hummingbirds, snakes, eastern bluebirds, raccoons, woodpeckers, and so many more are common in the gardens and along the trails. We even had an opossum move into our storage shed over the Thanksgiving holidays. This fall the Tucker Woods screamed its fall colors of red, yellow and orange with a deafening intensity.



Sharing these experiences with others is one of my contributions to the SFA Gardens program as assistant education coordinator and project director of Nacogdoches Naturally. I can think of no better place to introduce children and families to the unending miracles of the natural world. Each week during the school year, my staff of SFA students and I bring a group from the Boys and Girls Club of Nacogdoches to experience this remarkable place. One of the favorite activities is the adopt-a-tree project where each child chooses a tree as their own for the year. They label the trees with their names and observe how the trees and surrounding environment change over time. This is one of the ways that these children began to identify with and connect more directly to this special outdoor place. This intimate relationship with a place can make a real difference in how a person relates to the world around them. It fosters a sense of belonging and stewardship that lasts a lifetime. On many a Wednesday afternoon, in all kinds of weather, the backyard areas of the Native Plant Center are filled with the bustling chaos of excited young people learning and exploring under the canopy of trees.

This urban forest also provides a wonderful outdoor learning playground for some of our Family Fun Day events. In December, Nacogdoches Naturally hosted "Meet the Creepy Crawlers," a day filled with bugs, worms, bees and snakes. Families were able to have hands-on experiences with these

creepy crawlers, create crafts, gather insects using a sweep net and take a safari hike on the trails looking for signs of our animals friends. As they learn about the benefits and challenges of animals that slither, creep and crawl, it is our hope that these children and their parents will become more comfortable with these forest creatures.

During the fall, both the after-school program and Family Outdoor Adventures took field trips to the SFA Experimental Forest located 8 miles southwest of Nacogdoches along the Angelina River in the Alazan community. The Jack Creek Loop trail follows a stream bed through a mixed forest of 100 year old pines and hardwoods. This living outdoor classroom provides an experiential learning adventure that fosters respect for forest systems. Both groups hiked the almost mile-long loop trail learning some of the trees' names and getting a chance to experience the incredible diversity of the woods of East Texas.

The educational programs offered through SFA Gardens are among the most significant learning opportunities available in our community. The support from SFA is enormously important. While recently visiting colleges with my 18-year-old son, I looked for other colleges with similar outdoor spaces and educational programs. I have yet to see any other campus that has developed these types of green spaces and opened up their services to the surrounding community in the ways that are happening in the College of Forestry and Agriculture at SFA. Sharing a love of plants and the wonders of the natural world is a large part of our mission at SFA Gardens. Truly, this is the best place imaginable to work and an incredible asset to share with the community.



The LaNana Creek Corridor

By Dr. David Creech

In December 2009, an SFA Gardens project to reforest LaNana Creek was approved by Dr. Steve Bullard, dean of the Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture and Lee Brittain, direction of the SFA Physical Plant. The proposal requested that a 1/2 mile stretch of LaNana Creek that runs through the campus be planted as a streamside management zone (SMZ) - a strip on each side of the creek designed to reduce erosion, increase biodiversity, improve stream health, enhance aesthetics and provide a unique opportunity for student involvement and academic studies. Most importantly, this thin strip links the Pineywoods Native Plant Center to the Mast Arboretum.

Two years later, SFA Gardens added about 700 bald cypress trees along our LaNana Creek SMZ. They are quite visible from the Starr Avenue and College Avenue bridges. These are not ordinary bald cypress. They're either promising new clones or are superior seedlings from various programs across the South.

One thing we've learned in this project is that we can't give up too easily. We can't be afraid of drought, floods, record heat and cold, hurricanes, weeds, wild hogs,

beavers, squirrels and other critters conspiring to wreck our garden vision for the creek. Nope, we just keep planting.

The bald cypress are staked with a steel t-



A view of the bald cypress SMZ along LaNana Creek

post on the upstream side and are tied at the top and midway of each post. If a flood comes, we are ready. They should stay in place. In two or three years with an annual limbing-up of our young trees, we hope to get their crowns above flood height. By that time the root system should be strong enough to deal with stream flow and our steel t-posts can be pulled.

A second major constraint is water. While we're right next to the creek, the banks get

very dry in a drought. It hasn't taken us long to realize we need drip irrigation in the first and second year if we're going to make it through the kind of drought we're experiencing. During the summer, we irrigate each of the young trees two to three times per week with about four gallons through drip irrigation. It's a precarious system but it worked, and while it's not much water, the trees have actually thrived.

It's not an easy life here for a young tree. The beavers have once again spotted our project and have taken down a dozen or two trees during the holidays. Just to prove we're kind hearted, we painted all the young trees with white latex or polyurethane that had a really vicious bottle or two of Texas hot sauce added to the concoction. Our dream is that our beaver friends will take

one bite and head for Lufkin. If this doesn't work, talk to our lawyers.

(Editor's note: The trunk paint with hot sauce idea isn't working. Obviously, the beavers think it's seasoning. At least one staff member thinks the chili concoction was for gringos. A more aggressive concoction, suitable for Texan beavers that includes habaneros rather than wimpy chili power, has been suggested but has not been applied as of press time.)

Experience the Seasons of the Pineywoods Native Plant Center

By Trey Anderson

There is no season such delight can bring as summer, autumn, winter and the spring.

- William Brown

There is a bright and fresh feeling of tender, new leaves awakening with the spring.



Summer brings warm breezes, bright flowers and the hum of busy wildlife.

The beautiful colors of fall show the hidden brilliance masked in spring and summer.



With the quiet slumber of winter, a rare snowy blanket is a magical sight to behold.

Fowl Weather Gardens By Greg Grant

It seems that everybody these days is playing host to birds in their gardens. We go to great lengths to select plants that provide much needed food and shelter. We install birdbaths, bird feeders and birdhouses for our fine-feathered friends. Heck, I have more than 100 birdhouses myself! Thanks to "Miss Daly," who lived up the hill from my childhood home, I now have a life-long affection and custodial responsibility for bluebirds and any other homeless bird that passes my way. I have gotten used to thinking of them as my friends and neighbors. I consider them family!

What I haven't gotten used to is the fact that many of them leave each year. And those that don't migrate annually have a bad habit of not calling home when they spend the night in their friend's garden. What's a parent to do not knowing where his children are? I get nervous when they fly the coop. We need them under our wing so we can look out for them, right? It makes me want to pen them up at times so I can watch them constantly. Of course I wouldn't dare cage a beautiful wild bird.

But what about penning a domestic bird that doesn't mind being caged? Maybe one that can't even fly that well, or needs tender loving care. Perhaps one that can run to the house and let you know when the sky is falling! I'm talking chickens of course. Once a staple in country farm yards only, chickens are now quite the garden rage across the country. Martha Stewart even has chickens.

Though chickens are thought of as barnyard fowl, they can fit quite nicely in a garden. I've had both chickens and a garden for most of my life. They're equally therapeutic. I love watching chickens scratch, I love listening to a mother hen call her little bitties, and I love listening to a rooster crow. Of course I generally get

up before they do.

For those of you who weren't raised on a farm, let's look at a few basic poultry definitions and requirements. Male chickens are called roosters, females are hens, and babies are called chicks or bitties.



Miniature breeds are known collectively as bantams or "banties." All hens are capable of laying eggs, all of which are edible. However, you must have a rooster to fertilize them if you plan on raising your own chickens. And, yes, Virginia, fertilized eggs are edible. And just in case you're worried about eating baby chickens (heaven forbid), it takes 21 days of incubation to hatch a chick. "Yard eggs" are those from chickens that get to run free and eat bugs, weeds, etc. These are also known as "free-range" eggs. The yolks from these are usually a darker orange-yellow and will make your cakes and cookies more golden colored. Chickens are territorial and jealous so it's better to have only one mature rooster per yard or pen unless you plan on hosting your own chicken fights - NOT a good idea in urban areas! Remember that only roosters crow. This might be good information if you have lazy neighbors, night-owl family members or live next to the mayor.

Though chickens can be raised in small wire coops or in tight quarters like store-

bought birds, they certainly appreciate being able to run around and forage. They are good at catching bugs, and they also love tender new weeds. They are pretty good at mowing a lawn as well. To keep your chickens safe from varmints and

dogs, I would suggest an outdoor pen where each chicken has at least 10 square feet, preferably of sod and soil. The bigger the better though, as they will eat all the vegetation in smaller pens. Some fat domestic breeds (Rhode Island reds, barred rocks, leghorns, etc.) can't fly very well and would only need a fence around 5 feet high to contain them. Sleeker, wilder birds like game chickens (wild jungle fowl) and assorted bantams are much better fliers and would need higher fences (possibly topped) or to have one of their wings clipped to

prevent flying the coop. If you plan to have your birds "running afoul" in the landscape, it's better to choose these faster, high flying types in order to save their necks! Everybody and everything likes chicken. Guineas and game chickens are the best at surviving outside of a pen, as they are both close to their wild forms, similar to native plants in the landscape.

If you do choose "free-range" chickens in your landscape, be aware that they love to scratch around and eat young tender seedlings and bedding plants. They love to take "dust baths" in the shade next to all plants, concrete slabs, etc. My experience has shown that placing brick or stone skirts around the base of precious plants helps curb this. Old timers used to plant castor beans just for the chickens to gather and till under.

Even though chickens love to eat grass, weeds and bugs, you'll want to supplement that with some grain. Most chicken owners feed "hen scratch" (sorghum and chopped corn), "chops" (chopped corn) or laying pellets. These are all available

Foul...cont.

from your local farm and ranch feed store. Hen scratch is like Blue Bell ice cream to a chicken so be wary of overfeeding. About a quarter cup per chicken daily is probably sufficient. If you use a bulk feeder that your chickens have constant access to, you might want to use laying pellets, which are slightly less appetizing to them. These feeders are handy if you only want to put out feed once a week instead of once a day. And of course chickens, like all animals, need a constant supply of fresh clean water, especially during our hot Texas summers. It's also important that you provide cover for them to stay out of the rain and nesting boxes for the hens to lay eggs in. Of course you will need to clean out your pen several times a year. It's not the most pleasant task on earth but it does provide a wonderful high nitrogen organic fertilizer for your garden.

Chickens come in many beautiful colors, sizes and shapes. I myself currently own

silver-laced wyandottes (because my Granny Ruth said that's what her granny had), barred rocks, black stars, and one stylish crested, buff laced, Polish rooster. The more common breeds are available at your local farm and ranch store usually in the spring. Rarer breeds can be special ordered. Many chickens are available from farmers' markets and local "swap shop" radio programs. Remember that many cities may have ordinances against raising chickens within the city limits.

My chicken yard actually serves as a fruit orchard as well. It's really a great system. They mow the grass, dispose of the dis-



eased fallen fruit, control the insects and pull the weeds while yours truly harvests the bounty. In addition, they run their own little fertilizer factory on the side, provide nutritious eggs for cooking and even volunteer for an occasional Thanksgiving dinner. Don't cry foul! It's the circle of life.

Pinus glabra - Spruce Pine

By Dr. David Creech

Although spruce pine is rarely encountered in our region, there's every reason to believe it's a great landscape pine for East Texas. Somewhat uncommon even in its home range, spruce pine is found in a wide band across the South. It prefers the lower coastal areas and grows from South Carolina into Florida and then across to the Pearl River in eastern Louisiana. Rarely found in pure stands, spruce pine tends to be scattered near and in bottomlands of mixed-hardwood forests in close proximity to magnolias, American beech, tupelo, sweet gum, water oak, Shumard oak, cherrybark oak, swamp chestnut oak and live oak.

Pinus glabra is generally less than 100 feet tall. However, the Mississippi state champ located on U.S. Forest Service property in Scott County is 156 feet tall with a circumference a little over 12 feet. It is located in the Strong River flood plain just south of the Morton-Marathon Road. In Texas landscapes, the tree is slower growing and achieves a smaller stature than loblolly, slash or shortleaf pines. While it prefers moist bottomland soils, it manages quite nicely when planted in drier land-

scapes.

The image here is of a spruce pine planted in the landscape of the Shelby County courthouse in Center, Texas. This landscape was established in 1988 as a contract job with the SFA Horticulture Club and the City of Center. This was a wonderful ex-



Spruce pine planted at the Shelby County Courthouse

perience for my students who made a presentation to the Shelby County Historical Commission and met city and county officials before the plan was accepted and implemented. Will Fleming, legendary plantsman from near Hempstead, Texas, provided most of the large container-grown trees.

Greg Grant and I are Shelby County-grown, and we both can testify this is a fairly harsh site. The fact that the tree has survived the droughts and hot spells of the past two years is testimony enough to its tenacity. But there's one other attribute that deserves mentioning. Spruce pine is very tolerant of compaction. In fact, if you've ever attended Center's annual poultry festival and seen the hundreds of folks roaming the event, trampling under and around the tree, you would have to agree this is one tough tree. While it's only two or three days a year, and the tree has a year to heal and get ready for the next festival, it's still a compaction event of Olympic proportions. The Shelby county courthouse landscape is home to many other interesting trees planted about a quarter-century ago by my students. They all shout, "Hey, we're still here and we're East Texas tough!" If you're interested in the landscape details check out a long ago August 1989 SFA Arboretum newsletter that details the plantings and even provides a map! Visit our website for all of our past newsletter additions. <http://sfagardens.sfasu.edu>



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Come Grow With Us!

2012 Azalea Symposium **By Barb Stump**

Mark your calendars for the 11th annual Nacogdoches Azalea Trail—March 10 through April 7, 2012. The kick-off event is our annual azalea symposium March 10 from 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m. This year we will show water-conscious ways to grow beautiful azaleas. Hence our symposium theme is “Wise-watering for Azaleas.” First off, Dr. David Creech will present ways to use low-cost efficient watering systems. Local azalea enthusiasts will share colorful stories about growing azaleas without major irrigation. We hope to have two people knowledgeable (and entertaining) who successfully propagated thousands of azaleas in the 1960s and 1970s and then handed them out all over town. I can’t release their names yet, but they come highly recommended by SFA Gardens board member Jeff Abt. Lunch will be

provided, followed by a hands-on workshop on drip-irrigation, led by Dr. Creech.

My guided tour of the SFA Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden will focus on the unique features of deciduous and evergreen azaleas for home landscapes. We will tour the new Gayla Mize Garden. This is a wonderful demonstration of a big (eight-acre) garden watered completely by drip-irrigation. We’ll talk about the fine plant collections there. While some of the plants are still small, the vision of the garden is taking shape. Special collections include the “best-of-the-best” new deciduous azalea breeding work as well as many new camellias. As usual, the symposium will be held at the SFA Agriculture Building and is sponsored by the SFA Gardens and Texas Chapter of the Azalea Soci-

ety of America. The Texas Chapter is providing an azalea for each registrant. The fee is \$30 for SFA Gardens members; \$40 for non-members. Contact sfagardens@sfasu.edu or 936.564.7351 (the Nacogdoches Convention and Visitors Bureau) to register.

Other Azalea Trail events:

- March 17: Downtown Sidewalk Sale
- March 24: Art of Floral Design
- March 31: Little Princess Tea Party

More information is available on the Azalea Trail Web page:

azaleas.visitnacogdoches.org