



**SFA GARDENS ANNUAL REPORT**  
**JAN – DEC 2025**



**SFA Gardens**  
**Pineywoods Native Plant Center**  
**2900 Raguet Street**  
**Nacogdoches, TX 75965**

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HERE'S AN EASY WAY TO SUPPORT OUR PROGRAM!

## SFA GARDENS AS A UNIVERSITY AND REGIONAL RESOURCE

SFA Gardens continues to be recognized and valued as a regional horticultural resource and for its beautiful public gardens on the Stephen F. Austin State University (SFASU) campus. The mission of the SFA Gardens is to promote the conservation, selection and use of native plants of Texas; acquire, evaluate and promote new and adapted landscape plant materials while promoting plant diversity in the landscape; serve as a living laboratory for SFA students, faculty, and nursery and landscape professionals; and provide an aesthetic and educational environment for students, visitors and residents. It is managed administratively within the Department of Agriculture in the Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture (ATCOFA) with support and guidance from a Board of Advisors made up of representatives of the horticulture industry, local garden clubs, conservation organizations, as well as community members and Stephen F. Austin State University faculty. The gardens are managed by four technicians who maintain the plants and implement garden projects under the supervision of the director, Dr. Dave Creech, and in collaboration with the SFA Physical Plant Department.

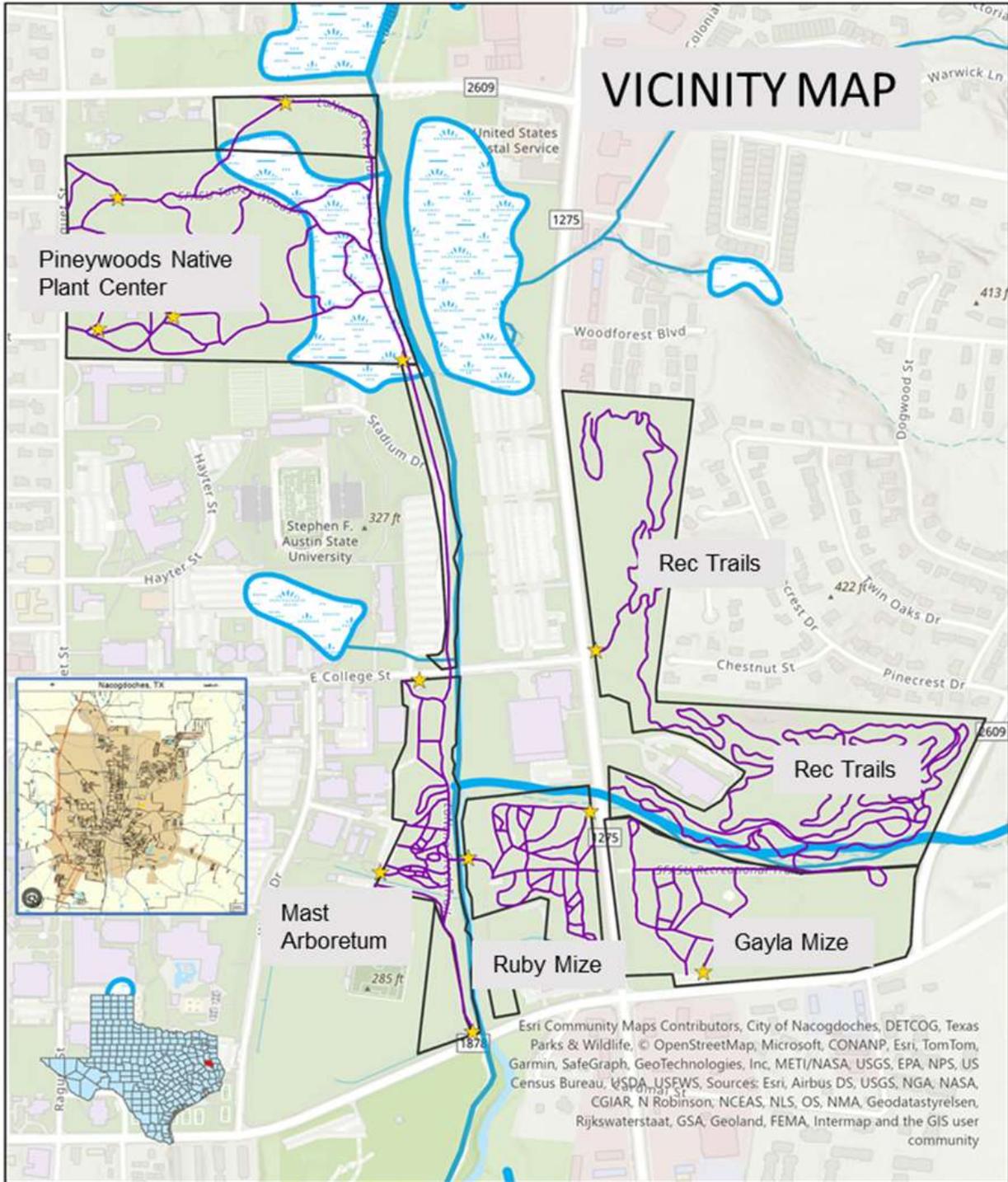
SFA Gardens comprises 138 acres of the 650-acre SFASU campus (see map next page). There are six themed gardens that make up the majority of SFA Gardens.

1. The **Mast Arboretum** is now named in honor of and partially supported through an endowment from Adlai T. Mast Jr. and Patricia Mast. It is a 10-acre garden along LaNana Creek and is home to many rarely encountered woody ornamental. Established in 1985, this garden has withstood the test of time. It is accessible from the parking lot behind the SFASU Agriculture Building on Wilson Drive, or on College Avenue near the LaNana creek bridge.
2. The **Jim and Beth Kingham Children's Garden** is comprised of two acres and is located on the west side of LaNana Creek, south side of College street and on the west side of the LaNana creek bridge. It was established as a tranquil outdoor space for learning. A timber frame pavilion, built by the Timber Framers Guild of North America in 1998 is its centerpiece. Gardens featuring pollinator plants surround the pavilion. It is named in honor of and supported through an endowment from Jim and Beth Kingham, enthusiastic supporters of SFA and the Nacogdoches community.
3. The **Ruby M. Mize Garden** is named in honor of Ruby M. Mize, an avid gardener, and was created and is supported through an endowment established by Mize's daughter, Dottie Wisely. The garden was originally designed by Barbara Stump, a graduate student at the time, and it brought together SFA students, community members and nursery professionals to transform the existing overgrown pine forest into a beautiful 10-acre garden. This garden is famous for its azaleas, camelias, Japanese maples and many other plants that bring year-round color to the SFASU campus. It is located on the west side of University Drive south of the William R. Johnson Coliseum and can be accessed by vehicle from a driveway off University Drive or on foot from the Mast Arboretum.
4. The **Gayla Mize Garden** is an 8-acre garden named in honor of longtime SFA Gardens friend and a driving force behind the creation of the Nacogdoches Azalea Trail, Gayla Mize. It is located at the northeast corner of the intersection of University Drive and Starr Avenue. Adjacent to the Gayla Mize Garden is the 60-acre SFA Recreational Trails and Gardens featuring multi-use trails winding through woodlands. This garden is partially supported with proceeds from an endowment provided by Ray Mize.

5. The **Pineywoods Native Plant Center**, established in 1998, is a 38-acre living laboratory and recreational resource for SFA students and community members and visitors and is located on Raguet Street between East College and East Austin streets. The site features the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Demonstration Garden, the Tucker House and its surrounding Firewise landscape, a wetland, the Healing Garden, and the Tucker Woods Trail. Also on the site is Blueberry Hill, a patch that has over 60 varieties and selections of blueberries used for research and evaluation. The Brundrett Conservation Education Building, funded by private donations and named in honor of Tyler philanthropist, Ina Brundrett, is an asset to SFASU and the community as this is where most of the SFA Gardens educational programs are held.
6. The **Jimmy Hinds Park** is made up of two acres located south of East Austin Street and east of Raguet Street. It is named in honor of SFASU's first agriculture professor, Jimmy Hinds and is situated on the property where he lived and farmed. The property was once a privet-infested forest and is now a sunlit patch of bottomland. The site features a muscadine grape vineyard where 72 varieties are grown for research and evaluation. Two circles of bald cypress cultivars, affectionately known as "Treehenge," offer a peaceful place to sit and enjoy nature.

In addition to the themed gardens, SFA Gardens has planted and continues to manage a collection of bald cypress tree cultivars and genotypes in the four acres bordering the 1-mile-long stretch of La Nana Creek Trail that runs through the SFASU campus. Fruit research plots where figs, kiwis and pineapple guava are grown and studied make up four acres of SFASU property north of East Starr Avenue and east of the Intramural Field on Wilson Drive. Additional horticultural research is being carried out at the SFASU Center for Applied Rural Research and Innovation (CARRI) site on Stallings Drive, on the northwest side of Nacogdoches. There, a two-acre research plot has been established and continues to be managed by SFA Gardens to evaluate and propagate climate resilient woody ornamental trees for Texas. SFA Gardens also manages a project at and funded by Moody Gardens in Galveston to find, plant and study "climate resilient trees, shrubs, palms and other ornamentals for a 21st century Galveston." The project has provided research projects for five graduate students and involved numerous undergraduates.

As a community and regional resource, the Nacogdoches Country Chamber of Commerce and the Convention and Visitors Bureau report that SFA Gardens remains a top query by phone or email from people looking for information on Nacogdoches. Tripadvisor listed the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden as the #1 top attraction in Nacogdoches. In addition to managing beautiful public gardens, SFA Gardens offers many types of educational programs designed to inspire audiences of all ages. These include the Theresa and Les Reeves monthly lecture series, monthly meetings with volunteers, garden seminars, field days, family fun days, youth educational programs, outreach programs, and guided tours of the gardens. Guest speakers include academic and industry professionals as well as self-taught experts in horticulture and gardening related fields.



0 305 610 1,220 Feet



**Legend**

- Trails
- River
- Garden Boundary
- Marsh, Swamp, Bog, Prairie
- ★ Trail Heads



## GARDEN COLLECTIONS

What still separates SFA Gardens from so many university gardens is the scale of work that is done with numerous plant species and the sheer diversity of the collections. SFA Gardens celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year and its success has a lot to do with its age and the connections made with arboretums, botanical gardens, commercial nurseries, academic institutions and plant enthusiasts who graciously shared seed or cuttings. As a result, the SFA Gardens is now home to a treasure trove of interesting woody trees rarely seen. Over 400 cultivars of azaleas and nearly 200 cultivars of camellias make up very large collections in SFA Gardens. The number of Japanese maple (*Acer palmatum* and *A. japonicum*) cultivars exceeds 400. The gardens are also home to an interesting collection of other species that have stood the test of time, many of which are rarely encountered. A recently submitted abstract is here:

A Synopsis of Forty Years of SFA Gardens Woody Ornamental Evaluation. David Creech\*, SFA Gardens, 2900 Raguet Street, Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, TX 75965. (dcreech@sfasu.edu)

SFA Gardens is located in the Pineywoods region of East Texas and covers 56 ha of on-campus property, half of which is irrigated. Most of SFA Gardens is in the LaNana creek bottomland and subject to flooding. Nacogdoches is in USDA Hardiness Zone 8B and typically receives 122 cms of rainfall per year. Summers are usually hot and dry with most rainfall occurring in the fall, winter and spring. Since 2021, climate challenges have been record-breaking. Since 1985, the SFA Gardens mission has been to evaluate a wide diversity of woody ornamentals, fruits and herbaceous perennials. Large collections of woody ornamentals include both genotypes and cultivars of *Taxodium*, *Rhododendron*, *Camellia*, *Acer*, *Quercus*, and *Magnolia*. SFA Gardens includes many species less well known or rarely encountered in the landscapes of southern USA. Our mission for forty years has been to acquire, plant, provide good culture for the first two to three years of establishment, propagate the superior performers and distribute propagules to cooperators and nurseries. Recent climate challenges have allowed the gardens to reach conclusions on what plant materials thrive, survive or die. Superior introductions that have exhibited long term climate resilience include the following: *Taxodium distichum* 'LaNana', *Acer saccharum* ssp. *skutchii*, *Prunus* X 'Purple Pride', *Quercus virginiana* 'Grandview Gold', *Lagerstroemia faurei* 'Bayou View', *L. indica* 'Precious Pink', *Gardenia jasminoides* 'Whispering Pines' and 'Cutie Pie', *Hydrangea quercifolia* 'Lowrey', *Callicarpa americana* 'Welch's Pink', *Itea virginica* 'Petite LeBlanc', *Ilex* X 'Cherry Bomb', *Itea virginica* 'Petit Blanc', *Myrcianthes fragrans*, *Scutellaria sufrutescens* (pink flowered), *Rhododendron* X 'Dottie's Red Slippers', and 'Speckled Spider'. Significant fruit collections include golden and green kiwifruit, feijoa, jujube, muscadine grape, persimmon and blueberry. Since 2016, a Moody Gardens, Galveston, Texas, 1 ha research plot under high salt and wind conditions has revealed several species worthy of greater use in coastal Gulf South, including *Myrcianthes fragrans* and *Acca sellowiana*. Descriptions of SFA Gardens plants with promise can be found here: <https://dcreechsite.com/2020/04/13/plant-glossary/>. Long term woody ornamental and alternative fruit evaluation programs are sparse in the Gulf South and deserve greater attention and support.

SFA Gardens has a significant bald cypress evaluation and improvement program built on a foundation of diversity in the genus *Taxodium*. One clone, T406, aka 'LaNana', resulting from the program is highly desirable as a landscape tree as it does not produce knees. It was derived from a bald cypress/Montezuma cypress cross seedling acquired from Nanjing Forestry University in China. SFA Gardens has a thirty year collaboration with this university. In addition, 'LaNana' is alkaline tolerant, fast growing and resistant to needle blight. Needle blight is a malady of *Taxodium* in the south, particularly when trees are young. 'LaNana' pushes buds early in the spring with light green foliage that is remarkably frost tolerant. More information about this clone can be found on Dr. Creech's website:

<https://dcreechsite.com/2017/01/03/taxodium-x-lanana-born-in-america-and-mexico-improved-in-china/>.

Work with the Mexico mountain sugar maple, *Acer skutchii*, a fast-growing, drought- and alkalinity-tolerant species, has made an impression in the nursery industry. The original tree was planted in the SFA Gardens Mast Arboretum, on the north side of the SFA Plantery headhouse in the mid-1980s. It is perhaps the oldest tree of this species. Seedlings from this tree are planted in the Mast Arboretum and at the Science Research Center and make up this collection. The species has proven itself for over forty years at SFA Gardens and parts beyond. It's strong performance as a sugar maple in central Texas is an eyeopener to many. In the east Texas region, the foliage does not show color until it makes seed. Then, the leaves can vary in shades of red, yellow and orange.

The SFA Gardens holds an extensive collection of loquat leaf oak (*Quercus rysophylla*) a Mexican species of oak. A large specimen, located at the southeast corner of the Art Building on Wilson Drive is a record tree in the state, in competition with another big tree at Trinity University in San Antonio. Other Mexican oak trees including *Q. canbyi* and *Q. polymorpha* call SFA Gardens home. SFA Gardens also has a collection of several interesting clones of live oak (*Q. virginiana*) worthy of propagating. Recently, SFA Gardens established a collection of "golden live oak" in the Pineywoods Native Plant Center. The leaves are canary yellow for a few weeks in spring before becoming green later. SFA Gardens hopes to propagate and share this interesting clone that was received from Albert Durio in Louisiana.

## **RESEARCH AT SFA GARDENS**

While most of the property making up the SFA Gardens is dedicated to woody and herbaceous ornamentals, a significant fruit research platform is in place that is appreciated by pomologists for its diversity and breadth. The program collaborates with faculty and staff in land grant institutions in Texas, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana and Arkansas. See images in the pictorial portion of this annual report.

### **Blueberries**

SFA has enjoyed a long history with the development of a blueberry industry. The SFA Gardens blueberry germplasm evaluation plot is on the north end of the Pineywoods Native Plant Center. The plot originally included over 114 cultivars and advanced selections, typically three plants of each, however damage from wild pigs and weather events have reduced the number of cultivars to 60. In 2026, after the fencing around the blueberry plot is reinforced to prevent entry by wild pigs, native *Vaccinium* species of known Texas and Louisiana provenance will be added to serve as a germplasm repository for the *Vaccinium* genus. One major problem that we can't seem to get under control in this city is hogs wreaking havoc in

the landscapes along LaNana creek. The Pineywoods Native Plant Center catches the worst of the wild hog herd now calling LaNana creek home.

### Muscadine Grapes

A muscadine grape vineyard was established in Jimmy Hinds Park and includes over 72 cultivars and advanced selections. The vines, now eight years old, are quite productive with the three-wire system used to produce them. A collaboration with Dr. Stephen Stringer, USDA plant breeder, in 2023 resulted in the release of one variety and a journal article has been submitted for publication in 2025. Dr. Justin Scheiner, state viticulturist with Texas A&M AgriLife is writing a muscadine handbook based on the results of his laboratory work characterizing the fruits brix (sugar content), acidity and nutrient parameters from muscadine fruit collected from SFA Gardens. The 2025 crop was harvested when the vineyard was opened to the public in September. The muscadine collection at the Jimmy Hinds Park is included in a Garden Delights muscadine improvement program. Three plants each of thirteen new seedless clones were planted in the vineyard in 2025. These clones are expected to make a huge breakthrough for the potential of this crop in the marketplace.

### Figs

The fig orchard in SFA Gardens was established in 2014 and now has over 100 varieties including about 60 new accessions obtained in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Agricultural Research Service that were planted in 2024. Dr. Tim Hartmann, extension specialist with Texas A&M AgriLife, planted the same fig accessions at Texas A&M University.

### Kiwifruit

The first Kiwifruit varietal trial was planted in 2010 at SFASU and the research was funded by the Texas Department of Agriculture, USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant for several years. The trial resulted in a first-ever-in-Texas crop of golden kiwifruit, *Actinidia chinensis*, in 2014. SFA Gardens kiwifruit plots have enjoyed seven good to average crops out of the last ten years. While the original varieties continue to be studied, SFA Gardens is also evaluating new genetics from the breeding program at Changsha, China. In collaboration with Dr. Tim Hartmann, extension specialist with Texas A&M AgriLife, the researchers are working primarily with Nick Steyn with TopFruit in South Africa and Ross Stevenson, kiwifruit grower/businessman in Auckland, New Zealand. Three farmer cooperators in Texas are planning to cultivate kiwifruit on their properties to help the research team gain a better understanding of the commercial possibilities of green and gold kiwifruit in the South. The potential for kiwifruit production in East Texas was announced in a recent online newsletter by Freshpublishers (<https://www.freshplaza.com/north-america/article/9663517/east-texas-and-the-potential-for-kiwi-cultivation/>).

### Pineapple Guava

An ongoing project, "Pineapple Guava, a Potential Fruit Crop for Texas," is supported by a Texas Department of Agriculture/USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant. Dr. Tim Hartmann, extension specialist with Texas A&M AgriLife, serves as co-PI for the project. SFA Gardens has a long history with pineapple guava, *Acca sellowiana*, but have only recently begun to evaluate varieties and production strategies. Formerly known as *Feijoa sellowiana*, this small tree has been in landscape use across the South for a century, however its fruit is often inferior in size and flavor. New cultivars in China, New Zealand, Greece and Italy suggest another

look at this interesting fruit for the local market. Dr. Hartmann has been collecting fruit from the pineapple guava growing in SFA Gardens collection and those growing at Texas A&M University. He is conducting consumer preference studies to identify the most marketable varieties. In addition, the cultivars are being trialed at both locations to collect yield data and develop more efficient propagation techniques. A field day was held at Texas A&M University with the director of the SFA Gardens participating to promote the fruit. The SFA Gardens pineapple guava collection is located in the fruit plots on the eastern side of the intramural field on Wilson Drive.

### Moody Gardens Project on Galveston Island, TX

Since 2016, the SFA Gardens project at Moody Gardens has continued as a long-term research effort to find “climate resilient plants for a 21<sup>st</sup> century Galveston Island”. Over 100 cultivars have been planted in the research plots as potential Galveston Island candidates. Two superior performers are *Myrcianthes fragrans* (Simpson’s Topper or Twinberry) and *Acca sellowiana* (pineapple guava). The 2016-2019 and the 2020-2024 reports are available online from the SFA Gardens website: <https://www.sfasu.edu/gardens/about/projects>.

Through a subcontract with Louisiana State University (LSU) in 2024, SFA Gardens has collaborated with Dr. Ed Bush, professor in the School of Plant, Environmental and Soil Sciences at LSU in Baton Rouge, to bring LSU’s Coastal Roots program to the Moody Gardens project. Through this program, students from 2<sup>nd</sup> grade through high school grow native plant seedlings that they later plant in coastal habitat restoration projects. Three schools were recruited into the program in 2025 and plans are being developed to bring in more schools in 2026.

Publications, presentations, and reports associated with the results of research conducted by SFA Gardens staff are included in the director’s section of this report.

## **EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS**

SFA Gardens continues to serve as a premier learning resource for students in agriculture, forestry, horticulture, environmental science, biology, art and other disciplines. The horticultural specimens growing in the gardens and the natural vegetation communities found at the Pineywoods Native Plant Center provide a living laboratory where faculty and students can teach and learn about their environment. SFA Gardens hosted 56 educational events in 2025 including 16 youth education programs, 12 free lectures, 10 meetings with volunteers, 13 professional training events for SFASU students, four Garden Seminars, three Family Fun Days and one Fruit Research Field Day. In addition, SFA staff and volunteers led 11 guided tours of the gardens and staff conducted 7 outreach activities throughout the region. These events are well attended and enjoyed by participants (Table 1).

Table 1. Participation in educational programs hosted by SFA Gardens staff and volunteers in 2025.

Program	Total Number of Participants
Theresa and Les Reeves Lecture Series	510
Garden Seminars	80
Fruit Research Field Day	21
Family Fun Days	181
Youth Educational Events for School and Homeschool Youth	1,863

Nacogdoches County 4-H Gardening and Horticulture Project	128
Guided Tours of SFA Gardens	1,169
Other educational events in the SFA Gardens	85
Face to Face Educational Outreach Activities	480
Virtual Educational Outreach Activities	15
Total	4,532

SFA Gardens hosts the Theresa and Les Reeves Lecture Series on the second Thursday of every month in the Ina Brundrett Conservation Education Building. These free lectures are open to SFA students and to community members and feature academic and industry professionals as well as self-taught individuals who are experts in horticulture and gardening and related fields (Table 2).

Table 2. Lectures offered in 2025 in the Theresa and Les Reeves Lecture Series at the SFA Gardens.

Date	Speaker and Affiliation	Lecture Title
01/09/2025	Monica Mackle, Texas Butterfly Ranch	Postponed by ice storm
02/13/2025	Andrea DeLong-Amaya Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center	Beauty and the Bees: Understanding Pollinators and Designing Landscapes to Support Them
03/13/2025	Jordan Cunningham SFA Gardens	Plant Sale Preview: Plant and Plan for Success
03/22/2025	Monika Maeckle Texas Butterfly Ranch	The Monarch Migration: Its Rise and Fall
04/10/2025	Colin Lyman Houston Botanical Garden	Sensory Garden Design: Connecting Plants and People
05/08/2025	Kim Benton Texas A&M AgriLife	A Snake Woman's Garden
06/12/2025	Bob Byers Fort Worth Botanical Gardens	The Basics of Designing Great Garden Borders
07/10/2025	Anna Timmerman Louisiana State University	Growing Citrus Successfully in Containers and Cool Climates
08/14/2025	Todd Lasseigne Bellingrath Gardens	Bellingrath Gardens and Home: Past to Future
09/11/2025	Tim Hartmann Texas A&M AgriLife	Alternative Fruits for the Home Orchard
10/09/2025	Dawn Stover Nectar Collector	Plants are the Answer!
11/13/2025	Heidi Sheesley TreeSearch Farms	Natives, Pollinators and Shade Gardening
12/11/2025	Dr. Dave Creech	SFA Gardens Against the Odds: A Year in the Garden

Four Garden Seminars were held in 2025, and the program fees help support the educational programs offered at SFA Gardens. Dr. David Creech, SFA Gardens director, led the **Grafting with Dr. Creech** workshop on February 22, 2025. The participants were able to practice

grafting with Japanese maple stock provided by the SFA Gardens and take their grafted trees home with them.

Dr. Andrew King, assistant professor of ornamental horticulture at Texas A&M AgriLife at Overton, led a ***Plant Propagation*** workshop on May 3, 2025. The participants learned about the techniques used by horticulturists to produce ornamental plants as well as the best times of year and types of plants for rooting using old growth woody stems and new growth woody stems. The participants were able to practice propagating different species of plants and take them home with them.

Volunteers, Kathy Redman and Judy Almaguer, led a ***Ghoulish and Gorgeous Gourds*** workshop on decorating gourds on September 13, 2025. The participants used acrylic paints, shoe polish, leather die, and raffia to create birdhouses, bowls and home décor. Participants were provided with gourds and materials to make their creations and took their finished products home with them.

The annual holiday decorating workshop, ***Deck the Halls*** was held on December 6, 2025 in two sessions, one in the morning and the second in the afternoon. Dawn Stover, owner and founder of *The Nectar Collector* led the workshop in which the participants created holiday decorations using live materials cut from the SFA Gardens. Participants were provided with all the items needed to make their holiday decorations which they then took home with them.

A fruit research field day was held on September 9, 2025. Dr. Dave Creech presented “The SFA Gardens’ Fruit Research Plots” and Dr. Tim Hartmann, Texas A&M AgriLife, presented “Alternative Fruits for the Home Orchard or Commercial Field.” The participants visited the fruit research plots at SFA Gardens after the presentations. A “Pick Your Own Muscadines” day public event was held in the muscadine vineyard on September 5, 2025. A great turnout for the event occurred despite heavy rains.

The SFA Gardens hosts many educational events for school children, homeschool children and 4-H members. The environmental educational program staff collaborates with faculty in the James I. Perkins College of Education to give future elementary school teachers experience in teaching outdoors using nature-based activities with real elementary students. The Bugs, Bees, Butterflies and Blossoms event for children in grades K-2 has been offered by this collaboration and in partnership with Texas Forestry Association for over 25 years, making it the longest running environmental education program in East Texas. The partners also offer the Wild About Science event for children in grades 3-5 each year. In 2025 a new event, Livestock AgVentures was offered twice at the Pineywoods Native Plant Center. In this event, SFASU Agriculture students hosted activity stations to teach elementary school students about livestock and their products. Another new program offered in 2025 for youth is the Nacogdoches County 4-H Horticulture and Gardening Project. In this program, thirteen 4-H members in grades 3-10 meet twice per month to participate in Junior Master Gardener and similar curricula activities. The Nacogdoches County Master Gardeners are assisting SFA Gardens in delivering this program.

## FACILITY USE

The Ina Brundrett Conservation Education Building (CEB) serves as a classroom and meeting place for SFASU faculty, staff and students as well as for adults, youth and families in the East Texas region. During 2025, 99 events were held in the Ina Brundrett Conservation Education Building (Table 3).

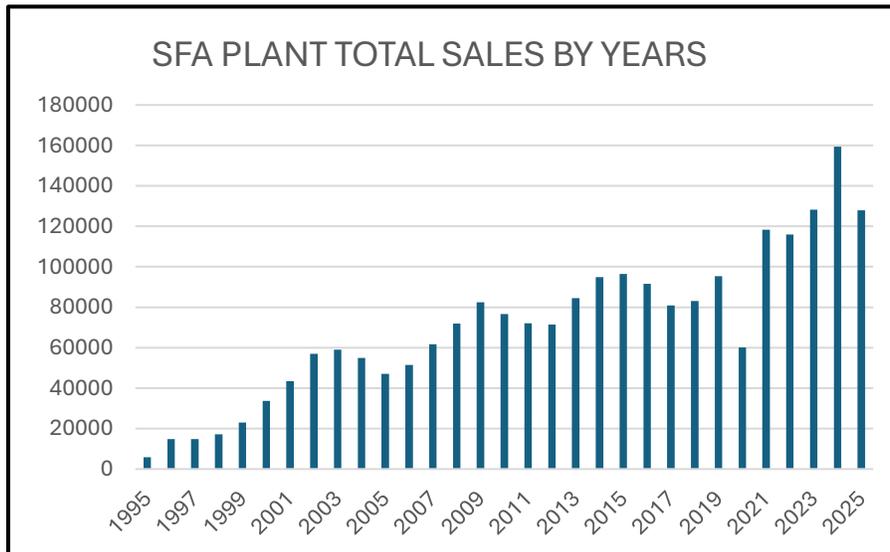
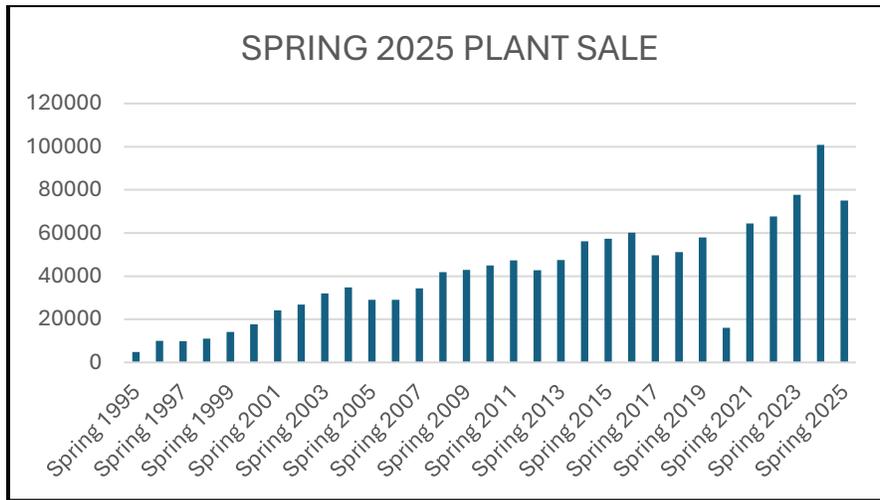
Table 3. Activities and Events Held at the Ina Brundrett Conservation Education Building in 2025.

Type of Event or Activity	Number of Days Building Used
Youth Education Programs	20
Lecture Series	12
Outside Organizations for Meetings	11
Lunch Bunch Meetings with Volunteers	10
SFA College/Department Meetings or Events	9
SFA Education Students Training or Class	9
SFA Agriculture Students Training or Class	4
SFA Forestry Students Training or Class	5
Board of Advisors Meetings	4
Garden Seminars	4
Plant Sales	4
Family Fun Days	3
International Society of Arboriculture Meeting	3
Fruit Field Day	1

## SUSTAINING THE SFA GARDENS

SFA Gardens receives state funding that partially supports the operation of the gardens. Annual distributions from several endowments dedicated to supporting specific gardens or activities, as well as gifts, donations, grants and memberships make up a large percentage of the annual budget. A new endowment is in place in 2025 as the result of the benevolence of a former horticulture student. This endowment will support a summer internship at SFA Gardens in summer 2026. A Texas Department of Agriculture/USDA Specialty Crop Block grant continued to support research in 2025 on the commercial potential of pineapple guava as an economic crop in Texas in collaboration with Dr. Tim Hartmann, extension specialist with Texas A&M AgriLife. An annual gift since 2019 from the Micky Elliot Family Foundation has been extremely helpful in keeping staff employed to maintain gardens and implement new garden projects in the SFA Gardens.

Two student led projects assisted the program in 2025. First, the Construction Jacks, advisor David Martin, rebuilt the long 520' boardwalk that joins Pineywoods Native Plant Center to Jimmy Hinds Park. The boardwalk was completed in April 2025. Thanks also to Sally Ann Swearingen for her support and Thomas Dimmitt, SFA Gardens Technician, for keeping the project moving along with any materials needed by the club. Second, a big thank you to Monique Coleman, Art undergraduate student, for painting the mural on the new "bee observatory" at the PNPC. It's a perfect home for this educational tool and will be seen by thousands of school age and college students in the years ahead.



Revenues from two plant sales held each year also support the programs and activities provided by SFA Gardens. Despite heavy thunderstorms occurring during the Spring 2025 Plant Sale, it brought in the third highest sales at close to \$80,000. The sales from the Fall 2025 Sale were also third highest, bringing in close to \$55,000.

SFA Gardens staff submitted several grant proposals in 2025, six of which were awarded.

- A 2025 Recreational Trail Program grant from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department was awarded to SFA Gardens. Dr. David Creech, SFA Gardens director, and Dr. David Kulhavy, professor in the College of Forestry and Agriculture, serve as principal investigator and co-investigator, respectively, for the project titled "Building a Path to the Future at the SFA Gardens." Once completed, the project will rehabilitate nearly seven miles of asphalt trails, 0.5 miles of dirt trails and 370 linear feet of boardwalks and bridges in the Mast Arboretum, Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden, Gayla Mize Garden and Pineywoods Native Plant Center. New features will include 1,250 feet of new trails and 12 trailhead signs throughout SFA Gardens. Project also includes the purchase of an articulating loader and attachments. The total project cost is \$356,944, of which the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department will contribute \$285,004 and SFA Gardens will contribute \$71,940. A grant agreement and funds are expected to arrive in 2026.
- SFA Gardens was awarded \$34,094 from SFA Environmental Fees for fiscal year 26 to support the 2026 Pineywoods Summer Camps that will host 72 children ages 4 to 10 years at the Pineywoods Native Plant Center. Funds will be used to pay 10% salary support for the environmental educational program coordinator, salary for a part-time camp coordinator for six months, salary for eight SFA students to work as camp counselors, and the background checks required for all of staff and students working with the children. Some activities during the camps will be conducted in collaboration with the Campus Recreation Outdoor Pursuits program.
- Two grants, one for \$1,500 to support the 2026 Royal Tea Party and one for in-kind donation of \$500 worth of snacks for the 2026 Pineywoods Summer Camps, were awarded to SFA Gardens by the Nacogdoches Junior Forum.
- Two grants, one for \$1,000 award to support the Bugs, Bees, Butterflies and Blossoms Festival in 2026, and another for \$1,000 to support plant production for the SFA Gardens, were received in 2025 from the Four Seasons Garden Club.
- Eight people are employed to work for SFA Gardens. Since two of them work part-time, the total number of full-time equivalent staff at SFA Gardens is seven. In 2025, volunteers working in plant production and garden maintenance under the supervision of SFA Gardens greenhouse and nursery manager and garden technicians, contributed 1,602 hours. Also in 2025, volunteers under the supervision of the environmental education programs coordinator contributed 238 hours for a total of 1,840 volunteer hours. The current monetary value of volunteer time in Texas is \$33.59 per hour, according to the Independent Sector, therefore the monetary value of volunteer time contributed towards the SFA Gardens in 2025 is \$61,805.

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Future goals for the SFA Gardens include maintaining and enhancing existing gardens and taking signage to a new level. We will expand educational activities for SFA students, educators, and community members, and continue a history of research activities.

Specific projects follow:

1. Protect the muscadine and blueberry research plots with hog proof fencing
2. Replace plants damaged by hogs in all of the gardens
3. Replace wooden benches in the PNPC
4. Replace faded interpretive signage in the gardens
5. Install signs to identify plants in one or more of the gardens
6. Improve plant labeling and mapping activities
7. Install more picnic tables at the Pineywoods Native Plant Center
8. Continue to seek grants and gifts that will support the operations of the SFA Gardens
9. Initiate the “Native Roots Program” in east Texas to provide professional development opportunities for teachers and educational activities related to environmental education for youth

## CONCLUSIONS

Any serious look under the hood at SFA Gardens will impress. Currently, eight people make up the paid staff of the SFA Gardens. Four of them are garden technicians who maintain the six gardens and trails. Two members of the staff, the director and the assistant to the director, work half-time. The nursery/greenhouse manager is responsible for propagating, growing, and maintaining the plants sold at the plant sales, planted in the gardens or moved into research/outreach projects. The environmental education programs coordinator brings youth and families to the gardens for educational events.

As far as sustainability, the handwriting is on the wall. External funding is the key to sustaining SFA Gardens in the future.



HERE'S AN EASY WAY TO SUPPORT OUR PROGRAM!

## SFA GARDENS STAFF REPORTS



Left to right: Thomas Dimmitt, Duke Pittman, Dave Creech (1/2 time), Elyce Rodewald (1/2 time), Kay Jenkins, Devin Stage, Jonathan Carrillo and Jordan Cunningham.

Total of 7 FTE's. Salaries are 24% state and 76% externally funded

## DR. DAVID CREECH 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Dr. David Creech was a faculty member from 1978 to 2007 when he retired and returned in a half time position as director of SFA Gardens.

### Publications and Presentations

Creech, David. Jan 10, 2025. **Container Blueberry Production Strategies**. Virtual conference, a zoom presentation to the Annual Texas Fruit Virtual Conference, 72 online

King, Andrew R. and David L. Creech. Feb. 1, 2025. **Influence of stratification treatments on germination of *Acer skutchii* seed from seven different genotypes**. A presentation at the Southern Region American Society for Horticulture Science annual conference. Irvine, TX. 11 participants.



Holzappel, A., E. Bush and D. Creech. Feb. 1-3, 2025. **A Comparison of Raised Bed heights for Home Garden Production**. Southern Region American Society for Horticulture Science annual conference. Irvine, TX.

Creech, David. Feb 15, 2025. **Celebrating Natives**. A presentation to the annual conference of the Sabine Master Gardeners, Many, LA. 168 participants

Creech, David. Feb 18, 2025. **Celebrating Natives**. A presentation to the Montgomery County Master Gardener's class, Conroe, TX. 93 participants

Dilulio, Dani. 2025. Coastal Roots Program: Exhibitor at the Party for the Planet. Moody Gardens, Galveston, Texas. Booth.

Alessandro Holzappel<sup>1</sup>, Edward Bush<sup>1</sup>, David Creech<sup>2</sup>. 2025. Improving Garden Production in Coastal Environments Using Raised Garden Beds. **American Journal of Plant Sciences**, 16(3), 419-433. <sup>1</sup>Louisiana State University Agricultural Center, Baton Rouge, USA, <sup>2</sup>Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, USA. <https://www.scirp.org/journal/ajps>; ISSN Online: 2158-2750; ISSN Print: 2158-2742.

Creech, David. Feb 22, 2025. **Grafting Workshop**. Presented at the Ina Brundrett Conservation Education Building. 24 participants

Creech, David. Mar 9, 2025. **Growing Azaleas in a Hostile Land**. American Rose Center, Shreveport LA. 21 participants

Spring 2025. Seeing the Forest and the Trees. **Sawdust**, Vol 52 (1): 28-30; Features a pic and explanation on our kiwifruit work.

Creech, David. May 20, 2025. **Climate Resistant Landscapes for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Lufkin**. Presentation to the Angelina County Master Gardeners. 46 participants.

Creech, David. June 11, 2025. **Climate Resilient Landscapes for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Gulf South**. SE Green Conference and Convention, Duluth, GA. 43 participants.

- Anna Mazurek. June 2025. Come to Texas's Oldest City for the History. Stay for the Blueberries, Barbecue, and Gardens. **Texas Monthly**: <https://www.texasmonthly.com/travel/nacogdoches-texas-oldest-city-history-blueberry-festival-trip-guide/>
- Shradhda Suman Jnawali<sup>1</sup>, Matthew McBroom<sup>1</sup>, Yanli Zhang<sup>1</sup>, Kevin Stafford<sup>2</sup>, Zhengyi Wang<sup>3</sup>, David Creech<sup>1</sup> and Zhongqian Cheng<sup>1\*</sup>. 2025. Effectiveness of Rain Gardens for Managing Non-Point Source Pollution from Urban Surface Storm Water Runoff in Eastern Texas, USA. **Sustainability** 2025, 17, 4631 (<https://doi.org/10.3390/su17104631>)
- Creech, David. July 7, 2025. **Climate Resilient Plants for the Gulf South in an Era of Rapid Climate Change**. Presentation to the quarterly "Science Café" and membership meeting of the Big Thicket Association, Beaumont, TX. 34 participants.
- Creech, David. July 25, 2025. **Climate Resilient Woody Ornamentals for a Changing Pineywoods**. Texas AgriLife Research and Extension Center, Overton, Texas. 53 participants.
- Creech, David. Aug 5, 2025. **Climate Resilient Trees for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**. A presentation at the Texas Nursery and Landscape Association annual Convention, San Antonio, TX. – 36 participants
- Creech, David. Sept 5 – 12, 2025. Trip to Oregon, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and back with Ross Stevenson of Miko Asia, Ltd., Auckland, NZ; meetings with university research and extension faculty/staff for developing kiwifruit research/development, a variety evaluation program utilizing new genetics.
- Creech, David. Sept 19, 2025. **SFA Gardens Fruit Field Day**. A presentation on the fruit research projects at SFA Gardens (muscadines, Kiwifruit, Feijoas, Figs, and other alternative fruits). Tim Hartman, co-PI on a TDA/USDA Feijoa project, presented on alternative fruits with potential for Texas. Afternoon tour of plots with emphasis on Feijoa plot. 21 participants.
- Creech, David. Sept 25, 2025. Highland Lakes Master Naturalists – short presentation in the Conservation Education Building and tour of the PNPC landscape and horticulture facility. 22 participants.
- Article in Travel, Taste and Tour magazine puts a heavy emphasis on the SFA Gardens [https://traveltasteandtour.com/2025/09/seasons-of-charm-fall-into-nacogdoches/?fbclid=IwDGRjcANdOoxleHRuA2F1bQlxMQABHpSEOF\\_bFQyOQv1TiwoCxIJTHILaTVd6vyefe3HFGapwSQYYO1AYqqLg-vxN\\_aem\\_hQMyxQf0utg7pn8NzL0vlg](https://traveltasteandtour.com/2025/09/seasons-of-charm-fall-into-nacogdoches/?fbclid=IwDGRjcANdOoxleHRuA2F1bQlxMQABHpSEOF_bFQyOQv1TiwoCxIJTHILaTVd6vyefe3HFGapwSQYYO1AYqqLg-vxN_aem_hQMyxQf0utg7pn8NzL0vlg)
- Creech, David. Oct 14, 2025. Presentation to the Pines Garden Club, Nacogdoches, TX. Local residence. 13 participants
- Creech, David. Oct 14, 2025. **Tips and tricks when planting trees in a Hostile Land**. A presentation to the Texas Forestry Association meeting, Lufkin, Texas. 9 participants.
- Jay White. 2025. Two Colorful Anniversaries. **Texas Gardener** Vol XLV (1): 6. The editor's column celebrated the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the magazine and the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of SFA Gardens.
- Oct 19-24, 2025. Attended the International Plant Propagators Society Conference held in Orlando, FL. Board meetings, participated in the plant auction after the banquet, field

trips, student Devin Stage, Forestry, received a scholarship to the conference. Jonathan Carrillo participated.

Oct 25, 2025. 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of SFA Gardens. At the Conservation Education Building. A come and go celebration with good attendance in spite of storms.

Creech, David. 2025. The Maples of SFA Gardens; Forty years and counting. A presentation at the North American Maple Society annual conference, Irving, Texas. Nov 7-9, 2025. Field trips, served as auctioneer for the plant sale. 66 participants

Creech, David. 2025. Invited by JBerry Nursery, Gran Saline, Texas, to participate in a visit to Tuscon, Arizona, to connect with four large wholesale nurseries and two botanical gardens – focus on dry loving plants with potential adaptation in East Texas. Nov 17-21, 2025.

Creech, David. 2025. A presentation to the Urban Forestry class, Dr. Hans Williams. History, development, focus SFA Gardens. Discussed managing fertility and irrigation when the crop is so diverse (species, container size, etc.). 13 participants.

Creech, David. 2025. **SFA Gardens: Against the Odds.** Les Reeves Lecture Series at the PNPC, Ina Brundrett Conservation Education Building, 44 participants.

Press on Skutch maple in 2025:

- 1) Mr. Maple YouTube video on our work with Skutch maple: <https://youtu.be/ltike3ng3Sw> ;
- 2) The Weekend Gardener KXAN, <https://youtu.be/UOBcNZ9H6JQ>;
- 3) Natural Gardener video on opportunities with skutch maple and the role of SFA in its popularity. <https://www.facebook.com/reel/1349025956697583>

**East Texas and the potential for kiwi cultivation** Link: <https://www.freshplaza.com/north-america/article/9663517/east-texas-and-the-potential-for-kiwi-cultivation/>

In addition, Dr. Creech led tours of the SFA Gardens for the 1) Greg County Master Gardeners, 3/19/2025 – 16 participants; 2) Nacogdoches Retired Teachers Association, 03/20/2025 – 18 participants; 3) Nottingham Forest Garden Club, 03/27/2025 – 18 participants; 4) Garden Club at PCA Charter School, 03/27/2025 – 16 participants; 5) Texas Garden Club Convention, 04/02/2025 – 11 participants; 6) Del Webb Sweetgrass Garden Club, 04/04/2025 – 46 participants; Hinchcliffe Recital group, 04/12/2025 – 6 participants; and NPSOT Longview Chapter, 11/01/2025 - 13 participants

Grants: 1) Since 2016, a Moody Gardens research grant, a “Climate Resilient Ornamentals for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Galveston Island” project. In 2025, the project spent \$72,383.00. 2) Since 2024, a Texas Department of Agriculture/USDA Specialty Crops grant has supported an alternative fruit project, “Pineapple Guava, a Potential Fruit Crop for Texas”. This project was awarded \$31,945. 3) In 2025, we received a Recreational Trail Program grant from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, with co-PI Dr. David Kulhavy, Forestry, for the project titled "Building a Path to the Future at the SFA Gardens." The total project award is \$356,944. 4) From SFA Environmental Fees, SFA Gardens was awarded from SFA Environmental Fees a grant to support the 2026 Pineywoods Summer Camps. Awarded \$34,094. 5) The Nacogdoches Junior Forum awarded SFA Gardens \$2000 to pay for the meals and snacks for the Royal Tea Party and Pineywoods Summer Camp programs.

Total funds via research/development proposals: \$497,366

## **JORDAN CUNNINGHAM 2025 ANNUAL REPORT**

Nursery and Greenhouse Manager

### **Presentations:**

February 28 – I had the pleasure of teaching Dr. Maurer's' Floral design lab

March 13<sup>th</sup> - 'Planting and Planning for Success' 45 mins  
Les Reeves Lecture Series speaker 41 in attendance

March 19<sup>th</sup> – 'A Trip to the Greenhouse' - SFA Garden  
Lunch Bunch 7 in attendance

April 16<sup>th</sup> – 'Identifying our favorite Pollinators' SFA  
Garden Lunch Bunch 11 in attendance

August 22<sup>nd</sup> – Gave an SFA Gardens intro presentation to  
about 90 incoming freshmen

October 15<sup>th</sup> – 'Saving for spring with Cuttings' - SFA  
Garden Lunch Bunch 9 in attendance

November 18<sup>th</sup> "Seeds or Cutting" Sugarland Garden Club Speaker 80 in attendance



### **Tours:**

February 12<sup>th</sup> - Tour of the greenhouses New Summerfield agriculture students 22 in attendance

March 27<sup>th</sup> - Tour of the greenhouses for the Pineywoods Charter Academy Garden Club 16 in attendance

April 10<sup>th</sup> - Tour of the PNPC Greg Grant's master gardeners 20 in attendance

June 5<sup>th</sup> - Tour of the greenhouses ISA conference tour group 30 in attendance

September 9<sup>th</sup> - Tour of the greenhouses Perspective 4H horticulture students 17 in attendance

### **Education/Conferences:**

Attended the Texas Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta conference, January 15-17, 2025.

### **Plant sales:**

February 22<sup>nd</sup> - Early Edible Plant Sale Total: \$1,209

April 5<sup>th</sup> - Garden Gala Plant Sale Total: \$74,870

October 4<sup>th</sup>- Fabolous Fall Festival Plant Sale Total: \$52,930

### **Garden events:**

September 19<sup>th</sup> - Fruit Field Day industry field day

October 25<sup>th</sup> – SFA Garden 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration

### **Lunch Bunch events:**

January 15<sup>th</sup> – Lunch Bunch with Dr. David Creech - Dr. David Creech

February 19th – ‘In the garden’ with Garden supervisors - Thomas Dimmit and Duke Pittman

March 19th – ‘Plant sale preview: a trip to the Greenhouse’ - Jordan Cunningham

April 16th – ‘Identifying our favorite Pollinators’ - Jordan Cunningham

May 15th – Tour of the Gala Mize Garden – Duke Pittman

August 20th – Introduction and welcome back - Jordan Cunningham

Sept. 17th – Plant sale preview - Jordan Cunningham

Oct. 15th – ‘Saving for spring with Cuttings’- Jordan Cunningham

Nov. 19th – ‘Take time to notice’ with Jeff Apt

### **2025 Goals Completed:**

- ❖ Add plantings of small annuals and perennials to the Mast arboretum.

We did several plantings in the Mast arboretum of a few different annuals and perennials. Some of the most successfully implemented plants were Begonia ‘Dottie’s Eyelash’, white trailing Lantana, Caladium ‘Heart to Heart Bold and Beautiful’. Some plants that did not do well include Acheilia and Plumbago.

- ❖ Update our system of seed germination flats in the greenhouse for better results.

We now have a new system for placing and monitoring seeds in the greenhouse. This system has helped us by better identifying quickly germinated flats and having a place to put seeds that take longer to germinate. Over all seeds are spending less time in the greenhouse and are potted up to be used faster.

### **Other 2025 Successes:**

- This year we did several “contract-grow” projects that included growing 1200 native plant for the Moody gardens Pollinator festival and 300 Malvaviscus for Gandy Nursery.
- I also had a spotlight article in the Lazy Gardener & Friends Houston Garden Newsletter
- In collaboration with Jason Milward, SFA Gardens and the SFA School of Art will be hosting a sculpture competition in the garden. We are hoping to host an intro even with pieces from SFA Faculty starting April 18<sup>th</sup> 2026
- SFA Gardens employed 18 student assistants in 2025
- SFA Gardens volunteers logged 1602 volunteer hours in the nursery and garden beds

### **2026 Goals:**

- ❖ Tag and select the best native azaleas during peak spring bloom
- ❖ Help map the gardens specifically in the Ruby Mize Azalea Garden and the trial garden
- ❖ Create an SFA Gardens seed mix
- ❖ Increase weed management in nursery

## KAY JENKINS 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Environmental Education Programs Coordinator



The SFA Gardens continued advancing real world education of SFA students through employment in the nursery and educational programs, volunteer opportunities, and graduate student internships and field studies. The Gardens also continued growing the horticulture and environmental educational programs offered to community members in the region with free lectures and fee-based garden seminars. Youth educational programs were also expanded to reach more of the region's K-12 students. Program fees, donations, plant sale revenues, membership dues and grants from state and local organizations have contributed to the success of the educational programs we offer. Enough cannot be said of the value of the SFA Gardens

volunteers' service, without which some of the educational programs would not be possible.

### Youth Education Events

SFA Gardens and James I. Perkins College of Education partnered with the Texas Forestry Association and the Texas A&M Forest Service to host the annual ***Bugs, Bees, Butterflies and Blossoms Festival*** on March 24 and March 27. Forty-two SFA pre-service teachers taking Dr. Melissa Hulings' *Early Childhood to 6th Grade Science* course hosted four activities for kindergarten through second graders. The event was held at the Pineywoods Native Plant Center and featured three Project Learning Tree® activities and one activity developed by Dr. Hulings. The Four Seasons Garden Club supported the event through a generous donation which helped offset costs of hosting the event.

The pre-service teachers were trained to provide the activities by Dr. Hulings, Ted Stevens, Education Director for the Texas Forestry Association and State Coordinator for Project Learning Tree, Laura Stevens, Wildland Urban Interface Coordinator for Texas A&M Forest Service, Region 3B, and me. The pre-service teachers became certified to use the Project Learning Tree lessons in their future classrooms.

The event was attended by 437 children across 28 classes from six public and private schools. The children learned how to observe and document signs of animals, how to identify products of trees, how animals use their sense of smell to respond to the environment around them and about the eating mechanisms of butterflies and their caterpillars. The event offered the 42 participating SFA education students valuable hands-on teaching experiences with kindergarten through second-grade children in an outdoor environment. This is the largest and longest-running environmental educational program in East Texas and plans are under way for the spring 2026 event in late March.

The SFA Gardens and the Department of Agriculture hosted ***Livestock AgVenture Days*** for kindergarten through 3rd grade school children on April 29 and 30 at the Pineywoods Native Plant Center. The day began with a live milking demonstration provided by the Southwest Dairy Farmers using their mobile dairy classroom. Then the 19 classes rotated among three activity stations hosted by 92 SFA Agriculture students in which the schoolchildren had opportunities to touch a chicken, cow, and piglet. The event was attended by 284 students and

50 accompanying adults from as far away as Centerville and Grapeland and as close by as Raguet Elementary.

SFA Gardens is hosting the Nacogdoches 4-H Gardening and Horticulture Project, entitled **Grow It, Know It!** with support from the Nacogdoches County Master Gardeners. Thirteen students in grades 3 – 10 are participating in the project that began in September 2025. They meet once a month on a Tuesday evening to learn about different aspects of horticulture. The members also meet once a month on a Saturday morning for an activity day in which they work in their vegetable garden containers, plant seeds, and propagate plants by rooting cuttings, dividing plants, and other vegetative methods. In December the participants made holiday table centerpieces using left over live evergreen materials from the SFA Gardens Deck the Halls event and using containers recently donated by a community member. As the members participate in the activities, they are working towards earning certificates in the Texas A&M AgriLife Junior Master Gardeners Program. Certified Master Gardeners and interns come to the meetings and activity days to help the students complete the activities and help me with setup and cleanup. Their support is truly appreciated!

**EcoAdventures: A Homeschool Journey into Science and Nature** was hosted by SFA Gardens staff and volunteers on Sept. 24 for homeschool students from the region. Originally planned to be held in the Kingham Children’s Garden and Mast Arboretum, the event was quickly moved inside the William R. Johnson Coliseum due to an unplanned thunderstorm. Although severe weather reduced attendance compared to last year, 13 children and their accompanying parents enjoyed identifying trees by their leaves, hiking on the indoor camouflage trail, modeling a water molecule on its pathway in the water cycle, and acting as plants reducing erosion on a hillside during a mock rainstorm. SFA Gardens volunteers and East Texas Chapter Master Naturalists volunteers hosted the activity stations. We are very grateful to the SFA Athletics for accommodating our move into the coliseum for the event.

**Livestock AgVentures** for 233 students in grades K-2 was held at the Pineywoods Native Plant Center on October 22 in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture. Twenty-six SFA students majoring in agriculture hosted activity stations for the 14 classes attending the event from Tenaha, SFA charter and Westwood. The students learned about livestock animals and the products derived from them. They were also able to pet pigs, cows, and chickens. The Southwest Dairy Farmers brought their mobile dairy classroom and provided a live milking demonstration.

Another annual youth educational event in which SFA Gardens, Texas Forestry Association, and James I. Perkins College of Education collaborate is **Wild About Science**, held in the fall each year. This year’s event was held on November 6 and 7 for students in grades 3-5 at the Pineywoods Native Plant Center. SFA education majors in the James I. Perkins College of Education (pre-service teachers) were trained to host stations offering three 40-minute activities from the *Project Learning Tree* curriculum by Dr. Hulings, Ted Stevens, and me. Since the event coincided with Texas Arbor Day, the activities focused on the identification of trees by their leaves, evaluating the health of trees, and learning about the life experiences of trees by exploring tree cookies. Over 330 students in 21 classes attended the event which provided the 29 SFA pre-service teachers with real-life experience teaching in the outdoors.

One learning excursion was hosted by SFA Gardens at the Pineywoods Native Plant Center. Groveton Elementary brought two classes of fifth graders for a two-hour field trip on May 13, 2025. Two volunteers and I hosted three 40-minute activities for the 42 students who attended the excursion. The activities had the students comparing and contrasting abiotic and biotic

inventories at different study sites, modeling how trees compete to meet their essential needs, and simulating the formation of fossils and the paths that rocks take in the rock cycle.

Table 4. Participation in the youth educational programs held in the SFA Gardens in 2025.

Youth Educational Event	K- 12 Students	K- 12 Classes	Adults	SFA Students	Volunteers
Bugs, Bees, Butterflies & Blossoms	437	28	129	42	
Livestock AgVentures, Apr. 2025	284	19	50	92	
Learning Excursions	42	2	6		2
Nacogdoches 4-H Gardening and Horticulture Project	77		68	2	8
EcoAdventures: A Homeschool Journey into Nature	13		5		5
Livestock AgVentures, Oct. 2025	233	14	21	25	
Wild About Science	339	21	32	29	1
Total	1,425	70	311	116	24

### Family Fun Events

Several Saturday Family Fun events were held in 2025, beginning with **Backyard Birding** held on February 15, 2025. This event was scheduled to coincide with the Great Backyard Bird Count, a global citizen science event held in February each year. Fifteen volunteers from SFA Gardens, East Texas Chapter of Master Naturalists, and Pineywoods Audubon Society hosted the event and documented 27 species of birds in the Pineywoods Native Plant Center, despite the cloudy drizzly weather. Participants included 8 adults and 12 children who braved the weather and participated in guided bird walks, bird photo scavenger hunts, and other bird activities held indoors.

The **Little Princess Tea Party** was held on April 26, 2025 in the backyard of the Tucker House in the Pineywoods Native Plant Center. The theme of the party was conservation and three women important to conservation in the Nacogdoches area were celebrated: Barbara Stump, designer of the Ruby Mize Azalea Garden, Debbie Stevens, who inspired the planting of daffodils throughout the city, and Lady Bird Johnson, who contributed to the native plant demonstration gardens in the Pineywoods Native Plant Garden. The children enjoyed interacting with live butterflies and creating fairy gardens. This event was hosted by SFA Gardens volunteers and SFA students who made the day a memorable one for the 25 princesses and 21 adults who attended.

The **SFA Gardens 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration** was held on October 25, 2025. Live music, cake, punch and a walk-through memory lane via photos and other memorabilia were offered at the Iva Brundrett Conservation Education Building. Morning scavenger hunts were hosted in all of the SFA Gardens although morning rain dampened enthusiasm. The rain cleared up for attendees to enjoy the activities at the Brundrett Conservation Education Building which also included a bird photo scavenger hunt, tree leaf identification activity, planting succulents, identifying insects by their sounds, and painting gourds. Altogether 105 people attended the event and included 16 children and 5 volunteers.

Monique Coleman, SFA art student and SFA Gardens hosted the **Fall Foliage Art** event on November 7, 2025. Two families and two SFA students attended and learned techniques for

creating a watercolor depicting a tree in fall foliage glory. Participants were able to take their paintings home with them. Monique discussed how incorporating the design elements of scale and perspective are used in artwork. Monique Coleman is the artist who painted the beautiful mural on the back of the Win Day Bee Observatory depicting wildflowers and bees at the Pineywoods Native Plant Center.

Table 5. Participation in the family fun days held in the SFA Gardens in 2025.

<b>Family Fun Event</b>	<b>Adults</b>	<b>Children</b>	<b>Volunteers</b>
Backyard Birding	8	12	15
Little Princess Tea Party	21	25	7
SFA Gardens 40 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary	89	16	
Fall Foliage Art	7	3	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>28</b>

***Presentations***

Kay Jenkins presented a webinar on the Bugs, Bees, Butterflies and Blossoms (BBBB) Festival to the Texas Children in Nature Network to fourteen participants. The attendees learned about the behind the scenes work and partnerships that support the event.

***Funding Requests***

I prepared four grant proposals for funding to support the environmental education programs and three of them were awarded. SFA Gardens received a \$1,000 gift from the Four Seasons Garden Club to support the Bugs, Bees, Butterflies, and Blossoms Festival. The Nacogdoches Junior Forum awarded SFA Gardens \$1,500 to pay for the meals for the Royal Tea Party in 2026 and awarded an in-kind contribution of snacks and supplies worth \$500 for the 2026 Pineywoods Summer Camp programs. SFA Gardens was awarded a grant of \$34,544 from the SFA Physical Plant from environmental services fees paid by students. The funding will be used to hire a camp director and eight student assistants to plan and lead the Pineywoods Summer Camp programs in 2026.

***Professional Development***

I attended the Texas Children in Nature Network Summit in College Station in December and learned about ways to engage children in educational activities in the outdoors from environmental educators from all over the state through presentations, hands-on activities, and networking. I also completed required training for protecting youth provided by SFA and Texas A&M University.

***Volunteers Supporting the Environmental Education Programs***

Volunteers are the lifeblood of all activities occurring at SFA Gardens. For the educational programs alone, 19 individuals contributed a total of 238 hours of volunteer time. The current monetary value of volunteer time in Texas is \$33.59 per hour, according to the Independent Sector, therefore the value of the volunteer time contributed towards the SFA Gardens educational programs is \$7,994.42! But volunteers provide more than monetary value to the educational programs, they contribute to an enthusiastic and fun work environment for staff and student assistants working at SFA Gardens.

## ELYCE RODEWALD 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Assistant to the Director, ½ time

We have a wonderful staff at SFA Gardens, and it is a pleasure to support their work through clerical and administrative duties.

Main responsibilities include:

- Maintaining member and donor databases
- Facilitating building and garden rentals
- Scheduling garden tours
- Completing travel requests and reports
- Following activity and balances on 26 garden accounts



## DUKE PITTMAN 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Garden Supervisor

I have been at SFA as a Technician since 2007. My main area of responsibility is the Gayla Mize Garden. Wild hogs continue to be a serious problem throughout the SFA Gardens. Several plants, including rare varieties, were dug up in the Gayla Mize Garden. Many plants were brought back to the nursery to grow out another year. Accomplishments in 2025 include:

- Added new Japanese maples and azaleas in sunlit areas
- Repaired pedestrian bridges in collaboration with Campus Recreation
- Removed several dead trees in collaboration with Dempsey, SFA arborist and Physical Plant
- Cleaned up the underbrush in the Taxodium collection along LaNana Creek
- Repaired and strengthened the pavilion in the Gayla Mize Garden that was damaged by a fallen tree
- Managed invasive species



## THOMAS DIMMITT 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Garden Technician



As the custodian and gardener of the Mast Arboretum for the past six years, I am truly blessed to be toiling in the soil and assisting student workers. The Mast Arboretum was the first named garden and has a rich history shaped by the labor of past students, technicians, and volunteers. I remain deeply appreciative of the vision established before my tenure and strive to preserve and enhance it whenever possible.

### Business as Usual

Annual weather events once again presented challenges, but they were manageable. Multiple trees of varying sizes and species were downed, bucked, and removed. In my free time, I have worked to repurpose some of the stumps and debris for aesthetic purposes. I am pleased to report that people have been using the carved stump chair for studying

and reading. The repurposed stumps may also explain the appearance of several new, unknown pop-up wood art fixtures in the Mast Arboretum.

The catalpa collection (*Catalpa ovata* and *Catalpa x chilopsis*), planted in 2023, experienced two *Catalpa ovata* mortalities; both have since been replaced with the same species. As new plants continue to be added throughout the arboretum, pruning, training, irrigation, and mulching have remained priorities.

Gardens Supervisor Duke Pittman and student workers made a significant effort to reduce understory brush pressure along the *Taxodium distichum* collection on LaNana Creek. Several exotic invasive species, including chinaberry, tallow, brier, buckwheat, and privet were removed. Desirable native understory species such as wax myrtle, frogfruit, and cardinal flower have replaced the invasive species in the LaNana Taxodium collection.

Additional collaboration occurred with the Physical Plant during the removal of a sugarberry wedged into a mature cottonwood tree at Jimmy Hinds Park. Chris Dempsey, the sole arborist for the SFA campus, safely lowered the hazardous tree while I assisted on the ground.

Nursery stock was purchased or donated and picked up from three nurseries to support the SFA Gardens plant sales and to plant in the Ruby Mize Garden, Mast Arboretum, and Gayla Mize Gardens.

- J. Berry Nursery, Grand Saline, Texas 75140
- Michael's Nursery, Glenmora, LA 71433
- Shane's Nursery, Forest Hill, LA 71430

### SFA Gardens Newsletter Articles

- Winter 2025: *Conservation Cons and Cheats: Benjamin Franklin, Chinese Tallow, and BPI*
- Fall 2025: *Down in a Creek*
- Summer 2025: *Catalpa – Be Like the Catalpa*
- Spring 2025: *Carving: I Promise This Isn't Cutting into My Work, But Maybe My Left Thumb*

## New Initiatives

To remain competitive and relevant, every garden and organization must be innovative and adaptable. Each year, we continue to do so by trialing new plants, collecting new genetics, expanding outreach, and responding to evolving plant needs – biophilia! New plantings in the Mast Arboretum included river birch (*Betula nigra*) along LaNana Creek; black tupelo (*Nyssa sylvatica*) in Dinosaur Valley; *Ginkgo biloba*; 20 Japanese maples (*Acer* spp.); bur oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*); swamp chestnut oak (*Quercus michauxii*); cypress (*Taxodium distichum* ‘Apache Chief’); Mexican sugar maple (*Acer skutchii*); and Chinese juniper (*Juniperus chinensis* ‘Angelica Blue’). Herbaceous plants provided from Jordan Cunningham were also installed, adding color and seasonal interest along Holly Row and in the Children’s Garden.

Staff and students collected pawpaw and black walnut seeds for Jordan Cunningham. We are eager to observe their development, as the seed provenance is from Nacogdoches County.

## Collaboration & Tours

- At the beginning of the year, I personally purchased equipment to support lecture recording in the Conservation Education Building (CEB). Using the new microphone system, we successfully recorded Monika Maeckle’s lecture on Monarch butterfly migration. The video, which includes her PowerPoint slides, was uploaded to YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nc7VYNYQ4Rs&t=162s>). We are currently exploring sustainable video-editing solutions to continue posting recordings from our monthly lecture series.
- Assisted in securing approximately 30 pine logs for Campus Recreation’s De-Stress Fest 2025
- Assisted with weeding in the Ruby Mize Garden for the SFA Gardens Fortieth Anniversary
- Provided Mast Arboretum tours during the SFA Gardens Fortieth Anniversary

## Intramural Field & Kiwis

The fruit plots near the intramural field on Wilson Drive are managed intermittently by Garden Supervisor Duke Pittman and myself. The fig plots were remapped following flooding events and are being prepared for new genetic material provided by John Cash. One notable addition is *Ficus carica* ‘Ocracoke Island,’ a salt-tolerant fig with a history dating back to early American settlement. The remaining empty rows in the intramural field have been planted with rooted cuttings and seedlings of pineapple guava (*Acca sellowiana*). As with all garden areas, these plots have been regularly irrigated, mulched, and weeds killed to maintain plant health.

## JONATHAN CARRILLO 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Garden Technician

My efforts in 2025 focused on cleanup, infrastructure improvements, property maintenance at the Pineywoods Native Plant Center (PNPC) and associated facilities. These efforts supported safety, accessibility and long-term sustainability across these areas. Routine maintenance included keeping the roads, paths, and trails clear of trash, debris, leaves, and other obstruction to help maintain a clean and professional appearance across the PNPC and Jimmy Hinds Park. Stewardship of the PNPC's natural environment, including not only the plants, but also the small and large wildlife that are valuable components of the ecosystem is important to me.

The SFA forestry building was demolished in January. SFA Gardens was able to acquire reusable materials from the forestry greenhouse before it was destroyed. These included heaters, tables, pots, water hoses, and many more items that were repurposed at the PNPC. A large u-shaped bench, formerly located inside the forestry building was moved to the PNPC for use during educational activities and for the public to enjoy.

Accomplishments for January included revamping a rock bed/drainage at the Healing Garden in the PNPC was another accomplishment for January. This project took several days to complete and looked immaculate when it was finished. I had to dig up old rocks, stones, and petrified wood to pull them all out of the garden and bring in new soil and crushed rock to make a good base so that the water could flow freely with no other disturbance to the surrounding soil. After placing the soil, I took all rocks, petrified wood, and placed them back in the garden to look like a riverbed of rocks. I also shaped the boxwood hedge in the Healing Garden and removed unwanted plants and vines, as well as overgrowth of desirable plants.

My first big project for the PNPC in February was building the foundation and framework for a covered pavilion to protect the honeybee exhibit. First, I constructed a solid pad in order to set four corner posts, After the posts were installed, I installed a tin roof over the site. A floor for the pavilion was built using stepping stones and concrete. Once the floor was completed, I added sheets of plywood, that I painted prior to installation, to the south side of the structure. A beautiful mural was later painted on the plywood by SFA art student, Monique Coleman. With the help of the Pineywoods Beekeepers Association we received a generous donation of several bee boxes so that we may be able to keep a bee observatory at the new location. Something really cool that happened when we rescued a bee hive from a water box near the coliseum on the SFA property and brought it to the new bee observatory. Unfortunately, the bees did not take to the relocation and after a couple of weeks they swarmed off, which we discovered is normal for a late in the season relocation attempt. We are more informed and ready to take on the task of receiving a hive of bees for the next season.

I helped clean and level the flagstones in the council ring in the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden so that it could provide a safer event venue. In March, Chris Dempsey, the SFA arborist, collaborated with us to remove a tree that had fallen in Jimmy Hinds Park. The tree had fallen over onto another tree creating a potential hazard for all pedestrians that passed the area. Throughout the spring I tended the vines, repaired irrigation lines, and repaired damage from



wild pigs in the muscadine vineyard and the blueberry patch. I reinforced the fences around both areas with barbed wire, and in some places, cattle panels.

Work in April began with preparing the sales yard for and assisting during the Spring Gala Plant Sale. Another accomplishment in April was expanding the nursery pad south of the shade house. I purchased and spread soil and crushed rock to level the area and aid drainage. Weed barrier cloth was then added. I built a fence around the shade house and adjacent nursery pad with two gates. Finally, I leveled the floor of the shade house to improve drainage and improved the irrigation system by making it an automatic system.

Mowing, spraying for weeds, and repairing pig damage were the major activities in May. In addition, I trimmed muscadine vines, maintained the blueberries, and repaired irrigation lines that were damaged by squirrels. I created a small garden bed for planting seasonal color in the Jimmy Hinds Park and installed a large sign with the name of the park. My work in June included assisting with the removal of a hazardous tree in the PNPC, installing new valves and control boxes to automate irrigation in the blueberry patch, improving the fence on the north side of the nursery pad, and general landscape maintenance in the PNPC.

July's hot, dry weather forced me to manually water several areas in the PNPC to maintain the plants. I continued to repair damage caused by the wild pigs, maintain the muscadine vineyard and take care of the landscapes in the PNPC. In August, I installed a new mailbox for the PNPC. SFA Gardens hosted a "Pick Your Own Muscadine" event in August. Despite the rain it was a great success. One participant gathered 20 gallons of muscadines. A second event was held in September when some of the muscadine vines produced a late batch of fruit. September brought windy days which brought down tree branches that had to be cleaned up. More reinforcement was added to the fence around the muscadine vineyard.

I helped prepare the sales area and assisted with the Fall Plant Sale, held on October 4, 2025. Later, I built a pad, installed irrigation and erected a premanufactured dog kennel near the shade house for the proposed Native Roots project. I had a wonderful opportunity to go to IPPS International Plant Production Society which was held in Orlando Florida in October. Devin and I transported a truck full of valuable plants that were donated for the fundraising auction at the event. My curiosity was piqued from attending sessions and learning about the industry and how I can best be effective and an asset in my area. The speakers were very informative and knowledgeable. I look forward to the upcoming year where it will be hosted in Houston Texas. I still have much to learn and look forward to the opportunity.

At the end of October and during November, I focused on much needed infrastructure improvements at the PNPC. I extended a culvert that runs under the driveway to the shade house and reinforced the driveway to repair damage from erosion. Then I repaired the retaining wall on the east side of the greenhouses which required removing rotten wood and posts and then installing new posts and tin sheets, and backfilling with soil. Landscape maintenance accomplished in November included keeping fallen leaves away from buildings and mulching garden beds with pine straw. December found me replacing wire that supports the muscadine vines that had broken under the weight of this year's fruit. I also took beams out of the large greenhouse, cleaned them, prepped them, and then painted them. After they were reinstalled, contractors came in and completed the installation of a new wall for the back of the greenhouse.

## Moody Gardens Project 2025 Year End Report

I continued to be a big part of the Moody Gardens project in Galveston throughout the year. We went to Moody Gardens once a month for three days each time to maintain the plant trials installed by SFA Gardens. This involved clearing weeds, checking growth, and checking watering systems. In collaboration with an SFA graduate student working on a thesis project, Devin and I made 6 rows that were 200 feet long. We then installed an irrigation system, 200 bald cypress trees and 200 live oak trees. We work with the student to gather data on the research project while also maintaining the other plots that were installed in years.

Once when I was pulling weeds early in the morning, I accidentally pulled out a rattlesnake. Thankfully she was calm enough for me to pick her up, give her a kiss and relocate her. Some may say I'm crazy for that but it's something I have always wanted to do, just like Steve Irwin. Not only are there rattlesnakes on Galveston Island but also red wolves, aka coyotes that have genetics from the red wolves. I have been able to witness many different kinds of waterfowl and migrating cranes that use the nearby marshes. Overall, the year in Galveston has been a great success, not only for the graduate students, but also for the other plots that we have established there. I have enjoyed many exciting times spent there and look forward to many more opportunities to work with new graduate students that will get to partake in the great resource we have there. Life's a garden, dig it.

## DEVIN STAGE 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Garden Technician

What a wonderful year it's been! The Ruby Mize Azalea Garden has had many vacant spots planted with a new succession of life and color. This will contribute to the future beauty of the SFA gardens system.

A few large trees have died and one notable tree fall occurred this season. These trees are a part of the dominant canopy class and they have begun to drop branches that negatively impact the plants in the lower canopies. These dead trees are on top of the list to be removed in the new year to stabilize the system while ensuring public safety and preserving the integrity of the plants beneath them.

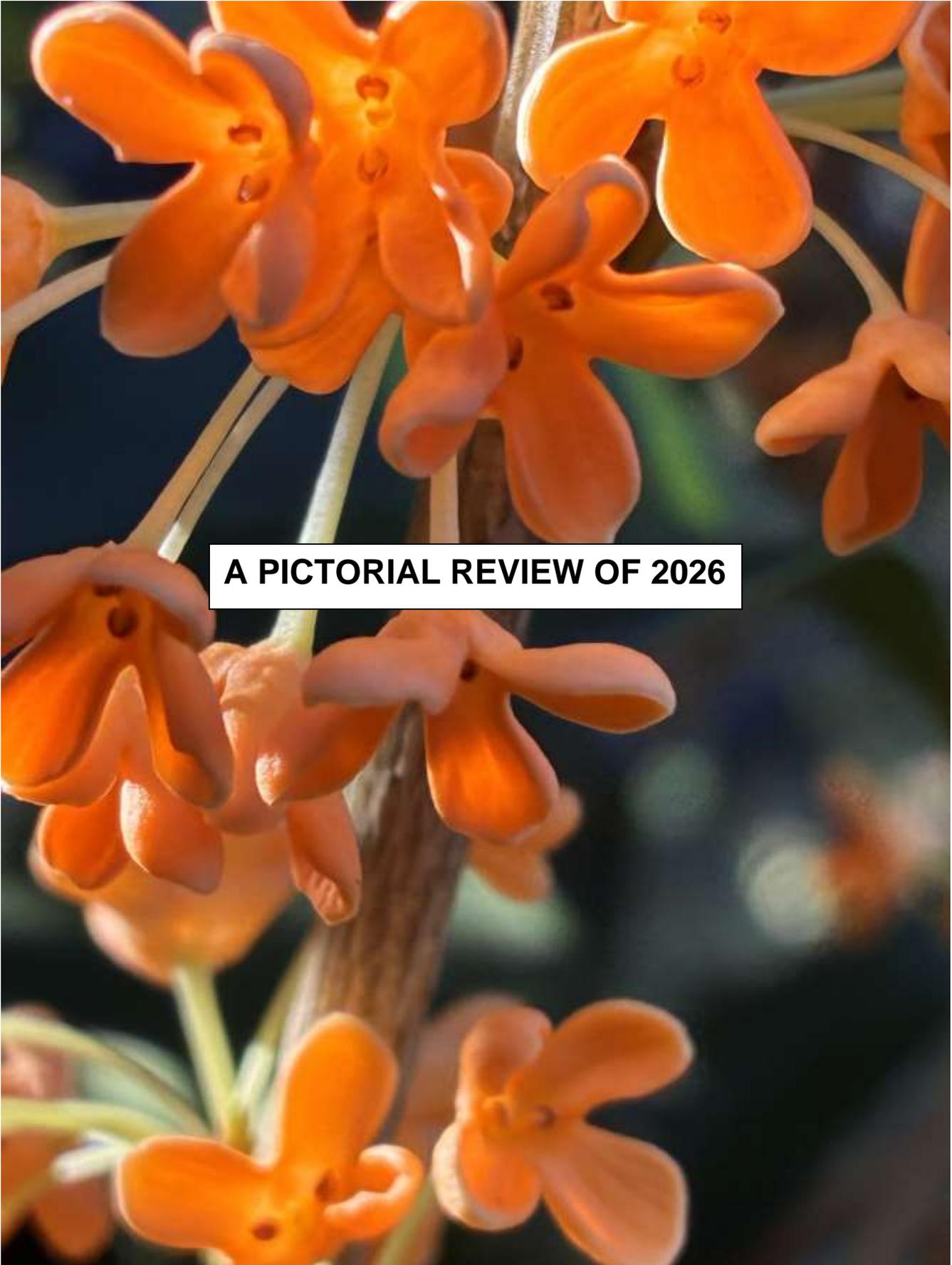
Several trees were removed from the parking areas in the Ruby Mize Garden in collaboration with SFA Physical Plant. A collection of Southern Magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*) trees growing along the drive on the western perimeter of the garden was pollarded. This practice reduced the total height of the trees to avoid conflict with service lines. This pruning practice will be applied to the remainder of the population surrounding the PPD equipment yard next year. The practice encourages the plants to produce more branches lower to the ground which increases the density of foliage and should help block the view of the equipment in the PPD yard. As well as having greater foliar growth at a lower canopy level, the trees should provide greater fragrance nearer to ground level.

I used a skid steer and soil to create a level parking area for storing College of Forestry and SFA Gardens equipment. A garden bed was built for planting next year to help block the view of the stored equipment. I reinforced the existing streamside management zone along LaNana



Creek by adding a large new bed that will be planted next year. The redesigned and created parking areas within Ruby Mize Garden will allow visitors to drive through the garden, park, and enjoy the plantings without having to leave their vehicles.

The SFA College of Forestry acquired a Biochar incinerator which is a mobile machine that uses timber harvesting waste to create biochar. I became certified to operate it which will allow me to help reduce debris in the gardens.



**A PICTORIAL REVIEW OF 2026**

**WE ARE FORTY YEARS OLD!**



SFA Gardens started as a small quarter acre plot in the Fall of 1985 and has grown into 138 acres of garden excitement. Our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary was held October 25, 2025 at the Conservation Education Building and was a come and go reception for over 100 folks who support the mission, hopes and dreams of this special part of the garden capital of Texas!

## ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION FOR KIDS



Kay Jenkins is the Environmental Education Coordinator at SFA Gardens. She is responsible for connecting the gardens to teachers, school kids and adults.

**STUDENT DRIVEN PROJECTS**



Monique Coleman, Art Student, did a great job on the back of the bee observatory, PNPC



ConstructionJacks managed a very difficult reconstruction of the 520' of boardwalk that connects the Pineywoods Native Plant Center to the Jimmy Hinds Park. Left to Right: Conner Vogel, Jacob Craft, Joseph Martinez, Dave Creech, Thomas Dimmitt, and David Martin (faculty advisor). Bottom row: Lenea Maddux and Alexis Martin (student assistants)

## FORMER STUDENTS MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE



Top left, clockwise: 1) Dave Creech with Gerick Schraub, 2) Scott Reeves; 3) Mollie Dornak and Heather Thormahlen; 4) Dr. Andrew King; 5) Jemima Essien.



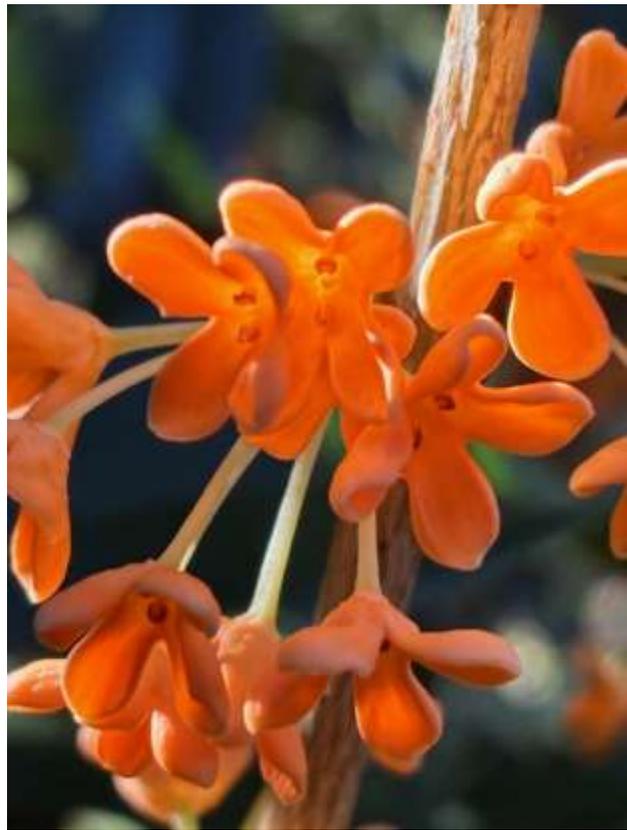
## PLANTS WITH PROMISE



Top left, clockwise: 1) *Cercis canadensis* 'Flame Thrower'; 2) *Calycanthus* 'Burgundy Spice'; 3) *Cinnamomum chekiangensis* with Dave Kulhavy; 4) 'Koromo shikibu' azalea; 5) seedling of *Quercus virginiana* 'Grandview Gold'



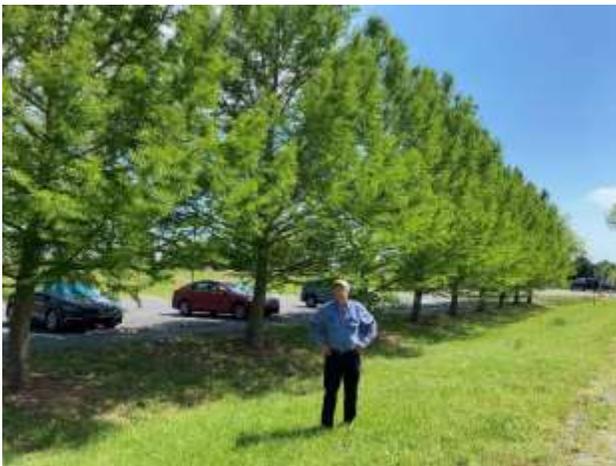
Top left, clockwise: 1) *Rhododendron* 'Allen Owings'; 2) *Rhododendron* 'David Creech'; 3) *Callicarpa americana* 'Lowrey's Ghost'; 4) *Callicarpa americana*, seedling of 'Welch's Pink'



Top left, clockwise: 1) *Acer palmatum* 'Ukigumo'; 2) *Osmanthus fragrans* 'aurantiacus'; 3) *Lagerstroemia langkaiwensis*; 4) *Acer skutchii*;

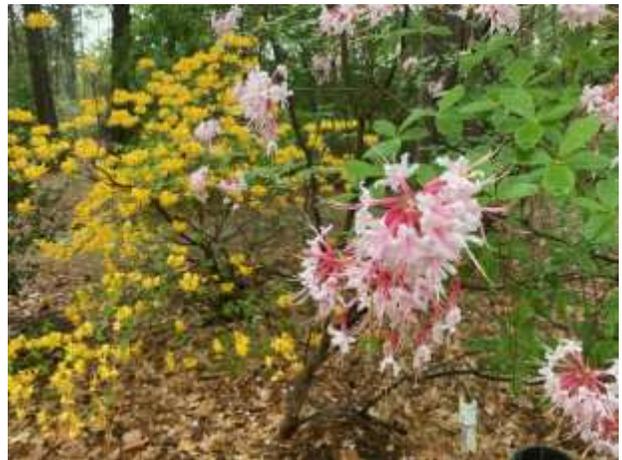


Top left, clockwise: 1) *Gardenia jasminoides* 'Whispering Pines'; 2) *Hibiscus dasycalyx*; 3) *Callicarpa longissima*; 4) *Agave ovatifolia*



Top left, clockwise: 1) Magnolias pollarded in Mar 2025, 2) Same line in Nov 2025; 3) Hydrangea quercifolia seedling found between the bricks on the Tucker bridge; 4) Rhododendron 'Speckled Spider'; 5) Taxodium X 'T502' as an allee at the Red River Wildlife Refuge, Bossier, LA

## DECIDUOUS AZALEAS



The collection of deciduous azaleas represents a wide swath of native genetics, one of the best collections in the Gulf South. Acquired through a network of friends in the industry, the Azalea Society of America and plant enthusiasts.



Top left, clockwise: *Camellia sasanqua* 'Dream Weaver'; *Camellia japonica* 'Aglai'; *Camellia japonica* 'October Affair'; *Parrotia subaequalis*;



Top left, clockwise: *Lagerstromia caudata*, *Illicium floridanum* 'variegated sport'; *X Gordilinia*; Jim Berry and Dave Creech with *Taxodium distichum* 'Little Guy'



## FRUIT RESEARCH AT SFA GARDENS



Top Row: Kiwifruit remain encouraging, Golden Dragon and CK3 a good combination

Bottom Row: Our Feijoa plots are still young, first crops, collaborating with TAMU



Top left, then clockwise: 1) In 2025, we had a modest crop on mid and late blueberry bloomers, 2) Jujube collection, a bullet proof crop; 3) Justin Scheiner and Andrew King, TAMU, in the SFA Gardens muscadine patch – we’re excited about the new seedless muscadine selections coming in the future.

## WILD HOGS ARE A MAJOR PROBLEM



Wild hogs and deer remain the number one threat to SFA Gardens. With limited resources and all the city and university rules, regulations, laws, policies, procedures and guidelines, it's been a challenge. With three generations a year and ten pigs per litter, it's easy to see how things can get out of hand. Wild hogs have learned that the city and SFA is a "safe zone." The blueberry and muscadine grape research plots include rare genotypes and breeding selections and they have been degraded. The back yard has been attacked several times. If we're not lucky, they might move into the Tucker house. By the way, that last image is AI generated. It's not real. The pigs are.

## PLANT SALE EXCITEMENT



Top left, clockwise: 1) a rainy-day spring sale, did a last-minute Sunday opening and made third highest in sales ever. 2) Fall sale ended up being the third highest in our history. 3) Loyal customers and a motivated staff; 4) set up takes days and involves volunteers, staff and student assistants.

**ON THE GROUND STAFF**



Top left, clockwise: Duke Pittman (Gayla Mize Garden); Jonathan Carrillo (PNPC); Thomas Dimmitt (Mast Arboretum); Devin Stage (Ruby Mize Garden)

**CONNECTING WITH PEOPLE FROM NEAR AND FAR**



We connect with plant-oriented people at conferences near and far and by having events at SFA Gardens. Tours in the spring and fall bring in a wide range of garden enthusiasts.

## MOODY GARDENS PROJECT



Since 2016, we have worked on Galveston Island. We have graduated five MSc students and have two underway. Upper left, then clockwise: 1) Vega container studies; 2) Jonathan Carrillo preparing new pot in pot research plot; 3) Devin Stage and Alessandro Holzzapfel; 4) Brittany Zwahr, Graduate Research Assistant



Upper left, clockwise. *Myrcianthes fragrans* in plots; *Myrcianthes fragrans* in one gallons; Dr. Ed Bush, LSU collaborator; Alessandro Holzapfel (LSU grad student) and Devin Stage



Thank you!