



# Garden News

## Notes From the Director

By Dr. David Creech

SFA Gardens! It's a verb, you know. Great news! There's great joy in our garden! We've had plenty of rain, fall is upon us, planting season is near, and, best of all, I made Dawn's newsletter deadline. Who could ask for more?

Since the last newsletter, I've returned from a three week adventure in China, involving two projects through the Nanjing Botanical Garden and Nanjing Forestry University. In so many ways, this may have been the best trip ever. While it was a grueling 13-hour plane ride, too many hotels, too many banquets, and too many meetings kind of trip, there wasn't a day that went by when Janet and I didn't look at each other and say, "Oh, my God!" Taking in the great Wall of Badaling and nearby Beijing's basket of amazing showcase monuments – from Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City, the Summer Palace, the Imperial Palace and Gardens, and the Qinhuangdao Olympic Park – to the recently completed world's longest "ocean bridge" that crosses the mouth of the mighty Yangtze south of Hangzhou – to bullet trains and new railway stations and mega-airport, China is a country on the go. Still, it's not the still steamy economy that amazed me. What's locked in my brain is one particular visit to see one particular tree in the Yunnan.

Modified from my trip notes: 08-30-09 – *Nestled on a pine forest alpine hillside near Lijiang in Yunnan province is Yufeng lamasery. What a magically quiet and lonely place this is! The lamasery was built at the end of the Qing Dynasty in the traditional Chinese courtyard design. Essentially a combination of the architectur-*

*al styles of Tibetan and Han Buddhism, Taoism and the local Naxi Dongba ethnic group, the Yufeng temple, surrounding grounds, and local citizens make this a very ethereal spot on earth. Years ago, I had heard of a "camellia of ten thousand flowers," and when I mentioned it to my Chinese colleagues, they immediately put it on our agenda. The "camellia of ten thousand flowers" was planted in the years of the Chenghua Ming Dynasty, and is thought to have been planted between 1465 to 1487, well before the construction of Yufeng temple. The lamasery is one of the Scarlet Sect lamaseries of Lijiang and lies about ten miles northwest of the city at the southern foot of Jade Dragon Snow Mountain. This is one lonely lamasery in the alpine highlands of the eastern Himalayas. When we arrived at the base of the lamasery, we were greeted by a short line of stalls with ladies hawking traditional Chinese arts and crafts. We were the sole visitors that morning and I learned that the Naxi are an independent sort, had refused to pay the bribes to Lijiang tourist bus companies and was now paying a price.*

*The Naxi are a matriarchal society, and traditionally the women run the show, owning property, running the business, managing the financial resources and taking the lead on all matters family and work. The men, I was told, spend most of their time "reading, taking care of children, and hoping not to be turned out by his woman for another man." Sure didn't sound much like my home place. As for the camellia, it's an amazing courtyard monster trained on an arbor to cover about 600 square feet in shade. Off to the side sat a quiet and demure lama of 93 years. We learned that he has taken care of the tree for over forty years, and sure enough, under the eaves of the temple were old faded photographs of him as a younger man sitting in front of the tree in full bloom. While we didn't find a single bloom on our day to visit, the form and character of the tree left me more or less speechless, not common for my disposition. The tree is interesting. The main trunks and branches are twisted, shaped and pleached into an arbor-supported flat canopy. It reportedly blooms two colors for over one hun-*



Dr. Creech and company stop for a photo in front of Jade Snow Mountain

## Notes, cont.

*dred days - and is thought to comprised of two grafts, a combination of the trunks and branches of the lionhead camellia and Camellia reticulata. Lion's head is the most popular cultivated variety among the Yunnan camellias and is often listed as C. x hiemalis 'Shishigashira'. I'm not totally sure of its ancient heritage but it's known to grow fast, grow tall, and be tough as nails. Most of the 100-year old camellias in the Yunnan are lion's head. Lion's Head flowers are colorful and grow in circles, four or five petals to a circle with about 30 petals total while C. reticulata blooms are smaller and white. One Chinese source referred to the tree with this award-winning prose, "with the irradiation of the brilliant sunglow and the contrast of the green grassland, the flowering tree looks like burning flames from beyond. It is the real 'King of the Camellia Trees'." The grounds are also home to many ancient trees, all obviously under tender loving care, including a pleached 150 year old Michelia yunnanensis and an ancient Magnolia delavayi, both fine specimens in their own right. As we drove away, I thought I might need to get back here when the tree is in full show. Hopefully, the old lama will still be sitting there to greet us.*

While it's always great to travel, it's equally wonderful to get home to the garden. The last few months has seen an amazing amount of growth in all of our gardens.

The easy summary is that there's no fear of change here. Even though the recession is not far from our minds, the Fabulous Fall Festival October 3<sup>rd</sup> was a record plant sale – proving once again that avid gardeners are not to be stymied by an economy in free fall. Plants are what it's all about, right? With plenty of my over the shoulder advice,



*Camellia of Ten Thousand Flowers planted and tended in the Yufeng lamasery*

Dawn smoothly stewarded the plant sale into one of the most successful smoothly run sales in our history.

Our educational program continues to grow with more adults and children educated, entertained and enlightened than any previous year. Surely there's a ceiling on what we can do, not what we could do.

As for other staff changes, there's a new kid on the block. Duke Pittman is an SFA Hor-

ticulture graduate and now the new SFA Gardens Technician. We've snagged a bona fide landscaper, so expect some great things in the years ahead.

The campaign to find the money for a Conservation Education Center remains on our front burner. We've come a long way in the process and we hope to choose an architectural firm soon. While we've got about a third of the 1.5 million dollar project pledged, there's still plenty of work ahead before we've got carpenters going.

The SFA Recreational Trail and Gardens across from the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden is finally taking shape. Michael Maningas, SFA Recreation, and Mike Legg, SFA Forestry, and I are still pinching ourselves about this wonderful new green resource in our community. With 67 acres of slopes and bottomlands to work with, this may be the next great link in our chain of garden pearls on the LaNana Creek necklace.

With funding by a Texas Parks and Wildlife grant, over a mile of asphalt walking, jogging and biking trails are now in place and the property is now home to an officially sanctioned mountain biking trail. SFA Gardens has taken on the challenge of duplicating the face of the azalea garden on the other side of University drive. A cedar rail fence and about a 1000' of Koromo Shikibu azaleas will soon be making a new home there. Until next time, keep planting!

## Dia de los Muertos Celebration at the PNPC

By Dawn Stover

The PNPC will be the setting for a real treat next Monday, November 2, 2009.

Quetzal Ollin Chicahuac, Aztec cultural attaché, and associates of the Urban Connections Program will offer a special performance celebrating el Dia de los Muertos. Interpretive music and dance will serve to link culture and nature. Mesoamerican poetry from the book *Canciones de Flores, Poesia Nahuatl* will be read in Nahuatl, Spanish and English. This book includes

color etchings by Carolina Vinamata, and is published through SFA Regents Professor of Art Charlie Jones and the Lanana Creek Press. Special presentations will be held throughout the day for area students, with festivities open to the public beginning at 4 pm. The main performance will kick off at 6 pm with a Ceremonial Opening of the Garden (la ceremonia abriendose el lugar). The event is hosted by the Urban/Rural Connections Program and Latino Legacy - a

partnership with U.S. Forest Service, Stephen F Austin State University and the Texas Forest Service. Other sponsors include the SFASU Latin American Studies Program, SFA College of Art and the Friends of Historic Nacogdoches, all of which look forward to presenting this wonderful cultural celebration to the community for free. For more information, contact Tamberly Conway at 936-468-2014.



# Ms. Ruth

By Dawn Stover

We lost a dear friend this summer. Ms. Lily Ruth Williamson passed away on September 4, 2009. Ms. Ruth as we all called her was a fixture around the Arboretum when I came here in the mid 1990's. She curated the area that we now call the "old perennial borders." Without fail, she'd have a pile of weeds and trimmings each Tuesday from those borders. I remember her looking thin and frail at the time, all the while seeming to move mountains. I always thought she "came" with the garden, and perhaps she did. Ruth was an avid gardener all of her life. The little house she lived in on Pearl Street was one she had grown up in with her parents. The grounds around her house were always immaculate and had been a labor of love passed on to her from her mother, affectionately called Maw Maw. There were purple and blue irises on the north side, purple coneflower, phlox, and rudbeckia on the south. A gorgeous white Lady Banks rose guarded the east side of the property, as did many heir-

loom pass along treasures. Several tall trees provided excellent bones in her landscape, providing just the right amount light.

In addition to her gardening, Miss Ruth kept a daily constitutional walking from her home and circling the entire campus. She always wore her sun bonnet, and the days she gardened would bring a little red wheelbarrow with her own tools. Eventually, time and I suppose age began to set in. A particularly nasty plant in the old perennial borders became more than Ruth wanted to deal with. She still came by on her constitutions, and would help pick up sticks in the shade garden, neatly breaking them into foot long pieces and placing them in the neatest little stacks. Sometimes weeks would go by and then she'd peek her head in the door for a drink and a smile. She fought a never-ending battle with those stately trees at her house in the fall, raking so many leaves we all wondered if her tiny frame could handle it. This summer, I re-

ceived a call from her niece Shelly letting us know of her passing. What a sad day. Shelly said that she was with Ruth when she passed and that she had reassured Ruth that there were no leaves to rake in heaven, only beautiful flower gardens to enjoy.

We will miss this dear lady, but heaven is lucky to have such a sweet gardener to tend the flowers. In her honor, we will be naming the color trial area to the south of the Glasshouse the "Ruth Williamson Color Garden."



# TLC for Azaleas - Plant Them in the Fall

By Barb Stump

My favorite fortune cookie message ever was used in an ad for a green industry expo several years ago: "He who hesitates in Fall, has empty hands in Spring." This is so true, especially for azaleas in our hot humid summers. Fall is the time to add new plants to your gardens because the cool fall and winter temperatures promote good root growth before the warm seasons speed up the leaves' growth processes. If we create new planting beds, lay irrigation, plant new azaleas (and ornamental trees), mulch them, prune out dead wood (but not azalea flower buds!), pull out dead or sickly plants and replace them with healthy ones all during the fall, we will have more flowers on healthier plants for the spring-time azalea show.

New SFA Gardens Technician Duke Pittman and his crew are following this advice in the work going on right now in the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden and the SFA Recreational Trails and Gardens project. We are preparing the ground to plant more purple spider azaleas (*Rhododendron stenopetalum* 'Koromo Shikibu') along University Drive. The azaleas have arrived

and will be planted as soon as our drip irrigation system is installed. The effect will be a "mirror image" of the purple azaleas and split-rail fencing seen across the front of the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden. The 2010 Nacogdoches Azalea Trail (March 13-April 3) will be twice as showy, thanks to these additions—people and plants—to the SFA Gardens.

Our source for the purple spider azaleas is the nursery of 88-year-old nurserywoman Ms. Margie Jenkins of Amite, Louisiana. She has been propagating this specialized azalea for years, but her nursery also has a long list of unusual trees and of Robin Hill hybrid azaleas. She selected the Robin Hills because they have been successfully cold-hardy and heat-tolerant. These hybrid azaleas were developed by Robert Gartrell of Wyckoff, New Jersey, to produce late-blooming large-flowered azaleas that were hardy in Zones 6b to 9b. We have 25 of the 69 Robin Hill cultivars that Gartrell named (out of his 25,000 seedlings and 1,000 crosses). Our latest blooming in 2009 was coral-colored 'Robin Hill Gillie' and pink-and-white 'Robin Hill Wendy', both bloom-

ing into late April. One of my favorites from the five new cultivars we just ordered is 'Gwenda'. The single pale pink and white bloom is at least 3 inches across. As with many of the Robin Hills, it is a fall-bloomer as well. This will be a lovely new accent in our garden to complement pale pink *Camellia sasanqua* 'Leslie Ann', which will begin blooming very soon in Bed 8 in the southern end of the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden. Our best contender for "SFA purple" is 'Robin Hill Congo', now planted near the western entrance of the garden.



*Rhododendron* 'Robin Hill Congo'

# Sweeter as the Days Grow By

By Greg Grant

We all dream of success with plants that we can't have, right? Who hasn't secretly craved torrents of tulips? Piles of peonies? Loads of lilacs? I'll be the first to admit that wishing for the impossible was part of my younger, more naïve gardening days. Frankly, it's hard to look at Dutch bulb catalogs, East Coast mail order catalogs, and English gardening books without being overcome with horticultural lust. After all, we're ONLY human.

After studying horticulture and visiting countless gardens I came to realize that there were certain plants from other climates that we could grow if we only matched them up with our appropriate corresponding season. Many of the northern and European plants that you see thriving during their spring and early summer months are actually much more adapted to our relatively mild winters. This includes hollyhocks, larkspur, peony poppies, and the sweetest of them all, sweet peas. We plant these in the fall, grow them through the winter, bloom them in the spring, and pull them out when all hell breaks loose (literally) during the summer.

I didn't realize that I could even grow these plants in Texas for the longest time for several reasons. First of all, you don't see them very often in most Texas gardens. Pansies seem to make up about 90% of our winter palette here. I don't have anything against pansies, but as they say, "man can't live by bread alone!" Another reason these plants aren't common in our spring gardens is that they are best direct seeded into the garden during the fall. Our fast paced "show me the money" society demands that most of the flowering plants we purchase be at their peak bloom when we buy them. This is all fine and well for lots of folks, but as a gardener, I like to actually GROW things. I love looking at pretty flowers but it's much more gratifying to actually bloom it myself, especially from start to finish.

The beloved sweet pea (*Lathyrus odoratus*) is native to Italy and has been a popular

annual vine in gardens all over the world for years. The "butterfly pea" shaped flowers generally range from sweetly fragrant to heavenly, and can occur in a multitude of colors, including white, pink, red, lavender, purple, blue, maroon, bi-colored, and striped. They are wonderful early spring garden flowers in Texas but are even more divine cut and brought into the home. A few look great in little vanilla bottles and larger bouquets look good in leftover root beer bottles. Heck, sweet peas would look good in a plastic cereal bowl full of spoiled milk!

Sweet peas should be planted in full sun and well-drained soil in the cool temperatures of fall. I usually plant mine in October or November. They are cool season fairly cold hardy plants but will not tolerate



*Red sweet peas contrast beautifully with Greg's bright white home in Arcadia*

extremely fast, hard freezes or intense heat. Organic matter and a bit of slow release fertilizer should be incorporated before planting. Seeds should be soaked in water over night and planted about an inch deep. Once they germinate they will remain as small slightly sprawling pea vines until late winter when warmer temperatures arrive. The plants should be covered and protected during severe, hard freezes. I usually fertilized them again when they start climbing in the spring. I normally use lawn fertilizer or chicken litter. Stakes or trellises should be provided if you haven't planted them on a fence or other structure.

Depending on the fickle Texas weather, sweet peas can bloom nicely for as little as a week to as much as a month or two. Once they start dying from heat stress, I pull them out as with other cool season annuals. I normally don't save my own seed but I know of several gardeners in Texas that do. You must leave the plants until the pods dry and the seeds are ripe. It's not pretty but it's economical and fun. Larry Stein has a nice reseeding red flowered strain on his late grandmother's fence in Castroville. He says they were from the last can of sweet pea seed that Porter and Son sold. I grew them in San Antonio one year and saved a few seed that I now plant here in East Texas.

If you're lucky enough to have a wonderful nursery to produce your fall transplants,

they actually make bigger, healthier vines. I've even planted them as late as late winter. It's very critical to get your vine established and blooming before warm spring weather sets in. This is why we can't grow spring-seeded sweet peas like much of the world. We have a small window of opportunity in the spring to bloom them and it's critical that our plants be already established. Transplants give you a jump-start in this race. Otherwise, seed can be obtained from most seed racks (remember those?) or a number of mail order catalogs. I have never been very fond of the dwarf "bush" sweet peas so I always avoid them. I have

been happy with almost all climbing cultivars that I have grown but generally try to select those that mention long stems, intense fragrance, and heat tolerance. My color preference seems to change depending on which picture or flower I'm looking at!

Each year I grumble that it's too much trouble growing sweet peas and plan to give it up. Then when I pick my first little bouquet I remember why I do it. Sweet peas have been loved by all since they were first cultivated as garden flowers and I doubt this will change anytime soon. They just seem to get sweeter as the days grow by.



# Grand Weeping Bald Cypress Allée

By David Creech

There's a change brewing at the footpath bridge over LaNana Creek in that special spot that connects the Mast Arboretum and Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden. Several years ago we planted a curvilinear row of weeping baldcypress on each side of the asphalt trail. I had decided what we really needed here was the very first weeping baldcypress allée in the world! I think this is a very big deal but I'm finding others who don't get it at all. I can't count the times visitors have asked, "What's this funny tree and what the heck are you doing here?" Well, on the first question, that's easy, it's *Taxodium distichum* 'Cascade Falls', a fascinating clone discovered at Cedar Lodge Nursery in New Zealand. It jumped the Pacific ocean and landed on the west coast via Larry Stanley of Stanley and Sons, one of the leading specialty nurseries in Oregon. Just to set the tone and cheer me up, the clone was patented and anointed with a pretty hefty royalty. With only a small amount of begging, SFA Gardens soon became home to some of the first in Texas and we've been growing them ever since. 'Cascade Falls' is geotrophically challenged. Yes, it's a bald cypress but it's a clone that doesn't know which way is up. Since it's difficult to root, trees are always grafted. If it's not staked it sprawls on the

ground forming a rather sad puddle. The only way to get height is to stake it. That's not always the easiest thing to do in the nursery or the landscape. Once the central



Arches made of rebar are set in place to guide the bald cypress allée

leader is staked and gains wood and diameter it becomes rigid and the tree finds itself well able to stand up on its own. Side branches on staked specimens are extremely pendulous, marvelously green, and each branch seems hell bent to reach the center of the earth. Our theory is that by training the main trunk over our steel archway and letting things "set" a few years we can end up with a rigid "tunnel of green" archway. This is a theory. We could be wrong, the whole thing breaking up and falling apart in

a jigsaw puzzle of despair with me cursing the day we came up with this idea. Time will tell. For now, kudos go out to John Carter, one of our enthusiastic Ag Technology students, who took the lead, understood the vision, and then turned it into reality. John center-welded two 20' sections of 5/8" rebar together, which was then curved into a 12' tall, 24' wide arch. He then tack welded that arch to deeply driven steel t-posts. With a little cross bracing, it isn't going anywhere. For those of you wondering about planting under a major high voltage power line like the one that runs through our garden along LaNana Creek, you will be pleased to know that we've visited with Gary Cooper of Oncor Electric at the site. After explaining this project and others we have in mind, we were glad to hear that as long as trees don't get any taller than 15', we can plant in the company's wide right of way. The trees for the allée were donated by Mike Arnold, owner of TreesUSA in Lindale, Texas, a large wholesale tree and shrub nursery known regionally for quality and inventory. I don't want to say how far back I've known Mike, but let's just say he was a Horticulture senior when I first arrived at SFA in 1978. Just to remind me that I'm older than dirt, we now have Mike's son Brian about to graduate in Horticulture. Hand me my cane.

## The Newest Kid on the Block

By Dawn Stover



Duke Pittman stands ready to go to work

Next time you're in the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden, be sure to say hello to our newest team member, Duke Pittman. He's been on board in a temporary capacity since late September, and officially joined the Gardens staff this October. We have al-

ready seen a lot of progress in the Azalea Garden, and look forward to working with Duke in the years to come.

Duke was born and raised in Mexia, Texas and spent many summers in Nacogdoches with relatives. When it came time for him to choose a college, SFA was a natural choice for him as Nacogdoches was like a second home. In 2002, Duke bought a home in Garrison and enrolled at SFA. For several semesters, he took a variety of classes trying to figure out which path to choose. One fateful semester, he met Dr. Creech and that was the end of his searching! He had always enjoyed landscaping and gardening and didn't realize he could

make a career out of it.

After graduation Duke got engaged to Tamara Story, an SFA dance major, and created a landscaping business called 'Blooms, Sweat and Shears' with the intention of staying in Nacogdoches. Then another opportunity came knocking, and he jumped at the chance to be on board here at SFA. He takes great pride in the potential to take such an excellent garden like the Mize Azalea Garden to the next level.

When asked his strengths Duke says he's "one helluva weed puller." He's also really great with the student workers. He's a great asset to our team. Be sure to say hello!

# Cempasúchil: Flower of 400 Lives (and 400 uses!)

By Dawn Stover

The path I take when writing an article for this newsletter is never a quick one. As newsletter editor, I often wait until all of our other staff members submit their articles before writing mine so that I can fill whatever blank space is necessary. Maybe I use the time waiting for my muse, or maybe I'm really good at procrastination. Whichever option you choose, this month's path has been quite a journey.

Fall is my favorite time of the year. The weather cools off, the rain comes back, students are back from summer vacation, and fall holidays come one right after the other. Holidays are my favorite part of fall in large part due to the fact that I get to decorate my home, AND I get to change it up every month! In addition to store-bought decorations, I love bringing natural things in to help celebrate the season. Right now you'll find real pumpkin planters on my porch, and gourds in the house. Those will give way to pine cones, and evergreen boughs the very day after Thanksgiving...fall decorating doesn't stop until mid-winter at the Stover house you know.

So this year I was thinking of using something new. Horse apples. You know, those big, brainy, lime green fruits from our native bois d'arc tree. I love plants with stories, and the bois d'arc has a good story. Our local garden writer thought so too, and he wrote about them in the paper not long after the idea settled into my head. I also collected some of the ghoulish fruit to place on my mantel, but left them in a plastic sack. In my car. For a couple of days. I no longer have the desire to decorate with or write about them.

Next thought: the pumpkin. Somewhere I saw an article featuring top 10 things you didn't know about pumpkins. Inspiration! Plus you can grow a pumpkin, you can decorate with a pumpkin, you can eat a pumpkin, and pumpkins definitely have a story. The article did mention the Day of the Dead...

So in my tangential train of thought, I wondered "are there flowers or plants associated with el Dia de los Muertos?" Google answered with an absolute "yes!" The *Flor del Muerto* or Flower of the Dead is the marigold. What fun! A flower and a story!

El Dia de los Muertos has origins in an ancient Aztec festival celebrating the dead. Little has changed in the last 2000 years, despite the best efforts of the Spanish, and today we find a blend of the traditional Aztec celebration and the Catholic All Soul's Day and All Saints' Day. This tradition, or celebration, is not morbid in the least. It is a time of remembrance and celebration of deceased loved ones. The Aztecs embraced death rather than fearing it, believing that death was a continuation of life; that we are merely dreaming when alive and truly awake in death.



*A photo from an internet blog of an altar strewn with marigolds with a caption that reads "Unfortunately, Juan didn't realize he had a potentially fatal marigold allergy until it was too late."*

It is believed that during this time period it is easier to communicate with the departed and *ofrendas* (offerings) of favorite food and drink are placed on graves or elaborate altars made with candles, pictures, and favorite possessions of the deceased.

So what about the flowers? Marigolds, know as *cempasúchil* in the Aztec language Nahuatl, are also known to the Aztecs as the flower with 400 lives and serve as a symbol of death. They also believed the scent and bright colors of the petals drew in and welcomed spirits to their *ofrendas*. Trails of petals lead spirits from the cemetery to their altar where a cross of more petals is made on the floor so that the spirit will expel his guilt as he steps on it before reaching the altar. These altars are also elaborately decorated with hundreds of marigold blossoms.

Spanish Catholics worked hard to eradicate the festival celebration of the dead, believing the rituals to be morbid and pagan. The

role *cempasúchil* played led to its disdain by the Spanish, who managed nonetheless to disseminate seeds throughout Africa, southern Asia, and Europe. What we know today as African or French marigolds are a result of breeding programs in those countries from those native Mexican plants.

The first recorded use of the marigold can be found in the *De La Crus-Badiano Aztec Herbal* of 1552. It notes that they are useful in the treatment of hiccups, when struck by lightning, and for anyone wishing to cross a body of water safely. Their uses obviously reach far beyond the natural world.

Marigolds are also well revered in many of the lands where they have naturalized. In India, it is considered a sacred herb to the Hindu who use the flowers as an offering to Lord Vishnu. Medicinally, Indians use a poultice of the leaves to heal cuts and minor abrasions as well as conjunctivitis.

Marigolds are edible, and the carotenoids present in the petals make an excellent dye for food or fabric. Growing up, I remember my grandmother planting them between her tomatoes to deter the nematodes. Grandma also fusses about the bland color of dumpplings made from store bought eggs (she even adds yellow food). Egg farmers should know that feeding chickens marigold petals will help darken egg yolks as well as enhance the yellowness of chicken skin. Marketable qualities for sure!

If that weren't enough, marigolds are nectar plants for butterflies and the African marigolds, *Tagetes erecta*, are excellent cut flowers. And while Grandma grew the little orange and red French marigolds, *Tagetes patula*, I have to say I'm quite fond of the taller African variety having trialed it for cut flowers.

Marigolds perform best in hotter months, but can be planted any time after frost. They are as easily sown directly into the ground as they are grown from transplants. Mild, wet springs can lead to spider mites, but when planted in mid-summer pest-free plants will take you to the first frost. At which time you can incorporate them into your fall décor, or cut them for your very own *Dia del los Muertos* celebration.



# Getting My Feet Wet as We Speak

By Trey Anderson

Well folks what can I say? I finally have my dream job at the Pineywoods Native Plant Center (PNPC). It is a spectacular facility to be a part of, and I have good intentions of making it an even bigger and better resource for the university and the community as well.

We have several projects that we have finished, have started, and are planning to start as soon as possible. The first project that I was assigned when I started this toasty summer was to put together the Jaderloon moveable benches. This was an exciting challenge that I and a handful of part-time students worked on. There was blood, sweat, and maybe a few tears. It was hard to see the blood and tears for all of the sweat, but we finally finished the project and it is amazing. The greenhouse is roughly 3000 square feet and we now have the ability to use around 2500 square feet of it for production of our beloved native plants.



*New, moveable benches in the PNPC greenhouse*

The mist bed is currently at the top of our list of things to finish, and I am sure that it will be finished by the time you all are reading this. It will be outfitted with the latest and greatest Senninger inverted misters and a new bottom heat system to aid in successful propagation.

Our nursery pads have been outfitted with new Senninger mini-wobbler sprinkler heads to provide for more even coverage and uniform pressure. We also moved the old faucet tree to the front of the growing facility and added 3/4" faucets to assist with providing adequate pressure while also making it easier to turn on and off with the twist of one valve versus five or six. The stock plants have been organized so that all sun or shade trees, shrubs, vines, herbaceous dicots and herbaceous monocots are grouped together for uniformity. We have added some upright assistance structures for those easy to blow over plants like switch grass and other assorted top heavy plants and plan to build more in the near future.

Another big project in the planning stage is the 16' by 16' green roof pavilion. It will be constructed in the center of our muscadine collection on the north side of the property by the new SFA Music Preparatory building. We plan to use as much cedar as our budget allows to support the cumbersome load of soil, water, plants, and framework from above. We'll also leave bark on fifteen ten-inch logs that will be placed on the façade to provide a more naturalistic look. When

finished it will be a wonderful educational tool for the university as well as the community and I'm sure will be the site of many events in the future.

This coming fall and winter we are planning on tackling the irrigation system for the front display beds that is in poor condition. We will install new sprinkler heads and shovel resistant PVC pipe that will tie in to drip lines where applicable. This should lead to less water usage if applied correctly and allow more even coverage of the entire beds that need them.

We have just recently started going on seed collection expeditions to acquire seed from our known populations of unique, rare, hardy, and hard to find native plants. So far we have several new prospects for ornamental natives that we are planning to grow out for sale and display in our gardens.



*Finding seeds at Mill Creek Gardens*

With that I leave you with a unique Greek proverb that I found the other day that says:

*A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in.*



**Watch for a for a special feature on our newest program, Nacogdoches Naturally, in the next Garden News!**



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## A Forest for Every Classroom

By Elyce Rodewald

A Forest for Every Classroom is a year-long professional development series for educators aimed at providing inspiration,

of their own “place” are more eager to learn about and be involved in the stewardship of their communities and public lands.

A Forest for Every Classroom, directed by Dr. Pat Stephens-Williams, assistant professor in the Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture, is funded through a US Forest Service Urban Connections grant.



*Teachers become more aware of the sounds and smells of the forest during the caterpillar walk.*

knowledge and skills required to transform classroom teaching into effective and exciting place-based learning. At the heart of the program is the belief that students who are immersed in the interdisciplinary study

Thirty educators met recently at the SFA Pineywoods Native Plant Center for their first weekend of instruction and inspiration. The weather was beautiful, the food was delicious and the program was definitely inspiring. Greg Traymar, associate of Joseph Cornell and director of Sharing Nature USA, shared highly effective techniques to explore nature with children and adults. Traymar demonstrated the process of “flow” learning—awaken enthusiasm, focus attention, direct experience, and share inspiration—with activities from Sharing Nature with Children and Sharing Nature with Children II by Joseph Cornell. He stressed the importance of opening students’ minds with joy and enthusiasm so that they are eager to learn and so that they develop a deep connection to nature.



*The identification game definitely awakened the enthusiasm of Forest for Every Classroom participants.*