

SFA Gardens News

Volume 9, Issue 1

Spring 2014

Notes from the Director

By Dr. David Creech

Let's see, since the last newsletter we've endured one of the coldest winters in decades; dedicated the Ina Brundrett Conservation Education Center; hired Dr. Jared Barnes as a new assistant professor in Horticulture; dedicated the Dawn Stover-Jeff Brewer driven Sculpture for All event; hosted three different groups from China and the "Mr. Maple" Nichols brothers from North Carolina for the Azalea Symposium; greatly

expanded a number of plant collections, and had the biggest spring plant sale on record. From my perch, we have the best ever staff mostly running on fumes, and professionally juggling about 10 balls in the air each! I call it the "self-inflicted wounds syndrome." There are just too many opportunities to say yes. That's what happens when you hire passionate people

who rarely use the brakes. With spring in full force and summer around the corner, I'm making a vow to slow down as travelers, event managers and lecturing far and wide. Time to put our



crosshairs on what we do best, including adventure-some gardening, educating youngsters and contributing to the quality of life in Nacogdoches. The good news, after the flurry of the past year, is we emerged with no crises, no catastrophes, and zero bad news to report. If anyone asks, you can just tell them SFA Gardens is on a roll.

Although two weeks

late, the spring show at SFA Gardens was a first-class display of azaleas, camellias, maples, and other spring flowering shrubs and perennials. In terms of numbers of visitors, it's obvious the

word is getting out. I ran into folks from Indiana, Wisconsin, and Tennessee, all snowbirds spending time in Texas. One couple stopped me and asked if I worked there. I responded as always do, "Why yes, I do. I'm kind of in charge of plumbing and irrigation." Their reply was, "Well, you should tell your boss that this place was such a wonderful surprise for my

wife and I – we had no idea such a beautiful garden could exist in Texas!" They had heard about SFA Gardens from relatives in Houston who had been here, so they decided to make a stop. Yay for positive comments!

Dr. Jared Barnes will be joining the SFA team for the fall semester as a brand new assistant professor in horticulture. With 28 applicants

Notes, *cont.*

for the position, we were thrilled when this young man made the wise decision to join the SFA team. Barnes brings a fresh new face to the teaching program and great plant knowledge. Simply put, he's a rare combination of plant scientist and plant geek. Which is what made this place.

SFA's horticulture judging team of Amny Rose, Jordan McGee, Gus Walker, and Ariel Jones put in a fine performance at the annual conference of the Southern Region American

Society for Horticultural Science Southern Region held Jan. 3-Feb. 2, 2014 in Dallas. With seven university teams participating in the J.B. Storey Horticulture Judging Contest - four students per team - SFA won third place overall team, second place greenhouse floral and foliage team, second place woody ornamentals team, and third place vegetable team. McGee was second place high scoring individual overall and third place woody ornamentals individual. Rose was also third place

greenhouse and foliage individual. Kudoes to these great, young horticulturists.

As we edge into the full force of spring and summer, things couldn't be more cheerful. SFA Gardens is no longer a child, nor a teenager. The adulthood of SFA Gardens is upon us. With that will come more plants, plans and people, all coming together for a better Nacogdoches.

FAQ's about the Little Princess Tea Party

By Elyce Rodewald

Each spring, as young ladies flock to the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden for the Little Princess Tea Party, Dr. Creech is often concerned with the festive activities. We recorded a recent conversation he had with Elyce Rodewald, just in case others might be as worried as Dr. Creech.

DC: Did I authorize this event?

ER: Of course.

DC: This is the silliest thing I have ever witnessed. Why would you do this in the garden?

ER: The tea party introduces people to nature and gardening in a new and enjoyable way. People who might not normally spend time outdoors love coming to the Little Princess Tea Party.

DC: This looks like a lot of work, shouldn't you be pulling weeds?

ER: Many people and organizations within the community work to-

gether for this special day Dr. Cheryl Boyette, SFA Gardens staff members and student workers, Nacogdoches Junior Forum volunteers, Alpha Psi Omega, and Nacog-



doches Pediatric Dentistry.

DC: Wouldn't the kids rather stay home and play video games?

ER: No. Each year all the tickets sell out very quickly.

DC: Why do the mothers force

their daughters to dress up?

ER: The daughters actually enjoy dressing up. Some spend hours, days, or even weeks planning what to wear to the tea party.

DC: Are the children...well... obnoxious?

ER: Absolutely not. Princesses are intelligent, kind, brave, generous, loyal, magical, polite and quite strong when they need to be.

DC: Why would a parent encourage their child to live in a fantasy world?

ER: Children who spend time playing and using their imagination are building skills important for adult life. The tea party also is a chance for children to spend special time with their mother, grandmother or aunt.

DC: Fairies aren't real. Why would you lie to a child?

ER: Fairies aren't real!

2014 SFA Pineywoods Camp Summer Program

By Kerry Lemon

The end of the school year doesn't mean that our environmental education program takes a summer vacation. We are eagerly awaiting our annual pineywoods summer camps that kick-off in early June. Children from pre-school through high school will have some truly wonderful experiences exploring nature with our highly trained and experienced staff.

During **Wonder Woods** our youngest campers ages 4 -6 will explore the wonders of nature through songs, games, art projects, hiking, hands-on discovery, and presentations from forest experts. Wonder Woods will return to the SFA Pineywoods Native Plant Center. This location offers wonderful, diverse areas for campers to wander and investigate as they learn about the animals and plants of these woods. The fun-filled week will culminate on Friday with a fishing adventure at the SFA Ag. Pond, followed by a family sack lunch at



the PNPC.

"Connections in the Wild" will be the theme at **Jack Creek Camp** as campers ages 7 -11 gain



an understanding of the interdependent relationships between all parts of the natural world, while expanding and improving their outdoor skills. Jack Creek, located 8 miles southeast of Nacogdoches in the SFA Experimental Forest, is a spring-fed stream that meanders through a mixed forest of pines and hardwoods. Learning through hands-on investigation, campers will be encouraged to delve deeper and expand their knowledge as they experience these unique forest environments. On Friday, campers will travel from the Experimental Forest to a close-by water source to spend a special morning of canoeing and fishing.

Wilderness Adventures gives our older campers ages 12-15 an opportunity to take their outdoor skills to the next level. They will be expanding their canoeing and camping skills while developing im-

portant team-building skills. By encouraging campers to immerse themselves in a more in-depth discovery of the forest, we hope to develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of the wilderness areas of East Texas.

On Monday, campers will practice their outdoor skills and knowledge, experience rock wall climbing and participate in low ropes activities at the Student Recreation Center, coordinated by SFA Outdoor Pursuits. On Tuesday the group will travel to Lake Nacogdoches for a full day of basic canoeing training. Wednesday morning they will play on the high ropes course prior to leaving for Martin Dies Jr. State Park to set up camp and enjoy an afternoon and evening of camp activities. On Thursday, they begin their canoe adventure on the river. After a full day of canoeing the group will return for campfire cooking and fun. We plan to return to Nacogdoches Friday.

We'll return to the SFA Gardens in fall with many new and wonderful summer experiences and many new tales to tell. We can't wait to share this year's adventures with you!



Sculpture for All - 2014-15

By Dawn Stover

It has been incredibly fun and rewarding to work on the Sculpture for All event with my friend and colleague, Jeff Brewer who is now a tenure-track faculty member in the SFA School of Art! We began our capital campaign last summer to raise money to bring a national juried sculpture exhibition to the SFA Gardens. Late last year we put out a call for entries, and by January we chose the 10 artists we felt best fit the idyllic scenery on campus. After carefully choosing the location for each piece and preparing each site, wonderful sculptures began to arrive from all parts of Texas, Missouri, Kentucky and even California! We enlisted the help of SFA Gardens own, Duke Pittman, and SFA Grounds heavy equipment operator, Randy Holland, for the installation. My guess is that neither one of those two would have ever thought they would be doing something like this! Five pieces were installed at the Mast Arboretum and five in the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden. The installation coincided with the Nacogdoches Azalea Trail.

Juror John Daniel is a professor emeritus at SFA. He taught sculpture at the university for 37 years. We kicked off the exhibition with a reception at the end of March. Gardeners and artists alike came together to celebrate this amazing pairing of man-made and natural beauty. Brewer announced the three winners chosen by Daniel and we offered guided tours to all of the sculptures. There was a wonderfully diverse audience in our gardens, one that would not

have occurred without Sculpture for All.

This project would not have been possible without the financial support of our SFA Gardens members, SFA Friends of the Visual Arts, the community at large and by a very generous grant from the Nacogdoches Convention and Visitors Bureau. Thank you all!

For more information about the artists, garden maps of the sculptures or to donate to future exhibitions, please visit

www.sculptureforall.com

The winners chosen by Daniel included:

Joe Barrington with Red Star Studio in Throckmorton, Texas won first prize with "The Messenger."



Kurt Dryhaug, professor of sculpture at Lamar University, earned second place with "Rolling Keel."



Robbie Barber, associate professor of sculpture at Baylor University, took home third place with "Stroll in the Park."



Other artists included:

Danny Clements an SFA School of Art graduate from Chester with "Vertical Rust."



Peter Mangan from Blanco with "The Sentinel."



June Woest of Houston with "Pharmacy Domesticus."



Andrew Light from Lexington, Ky., with "Divergent (with I)."



Mark Benkert from Ojai, Calif., with "Pilgrim."



Rachel Wilson from Avilla, Mo. with "Wilson Down."



Dana Younger from Austin with "Melted Army Men."



2014 Azalea trail highlights

By Barb Stump

The great news is that we had a very long season for azaleas, due to several freezing and near-freezing nights in March. So, while the official Nacogdoches Azalea Trail was scheduled for March 1-31, we had lots of color from Southern Indicas and Kurumes blooming in the second week of April, along with most of our deciduous azaleas. The "purple spider azalea" - 'Koromo Shikibu' - and the Huangs waited until the last week of March to bloom like crazy instead of their normal blooming time of mid-February. This season our bloom periods have been quite mixed up. While it is easy to blame the temperatures, that doesn't seem to be the complete answer. For example, one of our earliest bloomers, 'Red Ruffles' didn't begin to bloom until March 20. In fact, some were still blooming April 19, when the typical bloom period starts and ends at least a week earlier. Perhaps the cold affected some chemical that initiates bloom. This sounds like a good topic for an azalea research project to me. Needless to say, we've had lots of calls asking for the "best weekend" to come. I try to predict when the largest collections of brightly colored azaleas would bloom. But it is hard to predict when I know we have great collections, including Satsuki and Robin Hill hybrids that bloom "late" in late April and into May. Each year we try to balance visitors' expectations for quantity of bloom with our mission, which is to grow and display the broadest diversity of azaleas,

Japanese maples, camellias and other ornamentals that we can in our climate. A diverse collection cannot all bloom at the same time, by definition. Our view is that a diverse collection always has something of interest, even if the azaleas are not blooming. Our approach has been to have areas of color in as many of the 46 beds as possible and for as long as possible. Repetition of the same colorful variety in a number of beds also helps increase



'Hampton Beauty' azalea offers a beautiful and reliable show during the Nacogdoches Azalea Trail. It is a favorite of the SFA Gardens' staff!

the impact.

Thanks to the Nacogdoches Convention and Visitors Bureau, especially media and community relations coordinator Jannette Watts and tourism coordinator Nancy McMahan, we kept visitors informed. Jannette posted my

weekly "Bloom Reports" on the CVB Azalea Trail Web page and my photos to the CVB Facebook page. Nancy scheduled (and rescheduled) bus tours. My newest Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden docents are Susie Lower and Kendal Rogers, who helped along with Sherrie Randall and Don Parsons. Thanks to all for their talented work.

March 22 was a big day in the garden, with both the Little Princess Tea Party and our annual azalea symposium. The tea party was a great success as always, thanks to organizers Elyce Rodewald and Cheryl Boyette. We also sincerely appreciated pediatric dentist Dr. Jennifer Criss for her sponsorship of the "tooth fairy"-themed party for 100. Melissa Livingston-Weaver read and acted out the tooth fairy story while SFA vocal students Sarah Joblin and Lindsay Lymer sang songs to the little princesses.

We had our annual azalea symposium that same day, featuring Tim and Matt Nichols of MrMaple.com in North Carolina. They grow and ship 1000 kinds of maples, and were amazing as they presented "Heat-tolerant Maples for the South." They gave us permission to tape the event to help encourage people to come to SFA Gardens. (Visit our Web page for the link.) During the day someone asked them where was a good place to go to see heat-tolerant maples. They simply answered, "These gardens at SFA." What a nice recognition of our selection processes! Our maples have all flushed out their spring colors and set seed. Watch for the fall

What's up at the PNPC?

By Greg Grant

Despite the harsh winter, things are thriving at the Pineywoods Native Plant Center. I unfortunately lost my three most tenured workers during the spring semester. I was sorry to see them go, but glad the new kids learned the ropes quickly and helped us have our most successful plant sale ever. The top ten sellers from the PNPC at our spring sale were dogwoods, Henry Duelberg salvia, baldcypress, Stars and Stripes pentas, Buttercream lantana, Texas star hibiscus, Big Momma's Turk's cap, Celeste fig, wild strawberry, and blueberries. As always we grew a mix of southern natives and nativars, my introductions and hard to find plants from my garden and horticulturist friends.

My stalwart volunteers John Makow and Anita Kite help with greenhouse and nursery production each week and are quite indispensable. Henderson County volunteers Nina Ellis, Carol Titley, Shirley Hobbs and Peggy Wyatt, also faithfully help us maintain Mimi's Garden near the Tucker House. I couldn't survive without them either! We can still use volunteers to help with Chinese privet control, trail clearance, bed maintenance, and nursery weeding so let me if you might be interested.

We love the new Ina Brundrett Conservation Education Building and are in the progress of finishing the native plant landscape around it. The front of the building features moisture loving dwarf palmettos, Louisiana iris, and Neches River rose mallow, along with sweeps of gulf muhly and 'Northwind' switch grasses. The garden leading up to the entrance

will contain native perennials to attract butterflies while the bed along the side and back of the building will contain a number of my Turk's Cap introductions which will provide a summer and fall haven for hummingbirds. Three parsley hawthorns in a mass of Texas star hibiscus make up the bed next to the porch.



A red buckeye in flower at the PNPC

As usual, the spring season provided a grand show of flowering dogwoods along with fine displays of several different clones of our native wild honeysuckle azalea and red buckeye. The little endangered species bed just behind the Tucker house also provided a grand and fragrant display of Texas trailing phlox. Meanwhile the marsh-meadow didn't disappoint with an assortment of false indigo in blue, white and yellow. My favorite resident of all there is the brick red *Iris fulva*. Red is an unusual color in an iris species. Due to the complete color range in *Iris*, the genus was named for the goddess of the rainbow.

A number of groups came to tour the PNPC this spring including Master Gardener groups from Cherokee, Gregg, Harrison and Nacogdoches Counties. SFA Gardens has always served an integral

role in training Master Gardener groups throughout East Texas and beyond. This year I'm scheduled to speak to both the Alabama and Arkansas state master gardener conferences.

I continue to write articles for each issue of *Texas Gardener* and Neil Sperry's *Gardens* magazines along with my monthly blog at arborgate.com. In addition Dr. William C. Welch and I are working on a book about rose rustlers. On the subject of roses, Mimi's Garden at the PNPC features the thornless variety of our native prairie rose (*Rosa setigera serena*) on the pergola entering the garden. The pink and white single flowers each spring make me think of apple blossoms.

The PNPC continues to experience downed trees from recent storms and drought. One even fell across one of our boardwalks! Luckily we have hired Brian Whitehead part time who is capable of repairing just about anything. If you need replacement shade trees for your own landscape we've potted up a number of species for the fall sale including black gum, red maple, Shumard red oak, tulip poplar and white oak.

If you'd like to take up birding, the PNPC is a great place to do it with habitats ranging from upland through mesic, marsh and riparian. We have many different species to experience. My special joy this spring were the brown headed nuthatches, known for open pine habitats and white breasted nuthatches which are found in hardwood forests.

Until the next issue, get out and enjoy the wild outdoors.



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Come Grow With Us!

Planting Seeds, One Child at a Time

By Elyce Rodewald

Bonnie Hammett was a dear friend of the SFA Gardens for many years. She was a member of the SFA Gardens Advisory Board, faithful volunteer and one of the original “wagon police” at the plant sale. She also was an enthusiastic supporter of our educational programs and summer camp program, continuing her support after moving to Oklahoma. She often said that we were “planting seeds, one child at a time.” Hammett passed away last November.

We have a unique opportunity to use a gift from her to begin an endowment for scholarships for the SFA Pineywoods Camp. This camp provides unique and exciting outdoor experiences that make a positive difference in the lives of the campers. Scholarships are offered to children from low-income families who might not otherwise be able to attend. Please consider a contributing to the Pineywoods Camp Scholarship Endowment and help us “plant seeds, one child at a time.”

Contributions can be made to: SFASU Foundation, PO Box 6092, Nacogdoches, TX 75962. Please specify Pineywoods Camp Scholarship Endowment.

