



SFA Gardens NEWS

Notes from the Director

By Dr. David Creech

I've concluded the only thing that doesn't change is change. With Greg Grant and Kerry Lemon gone, the place is certainly different. I keep wanting to pop in and ask Greg a question or run an idea by him to understand why the idea makes no sense at all. He was good that way. I miss him. Anne Sullivan, who acquired Barbara Stump's position, has assumed budgeting responsibilities and reminding me I have a meeting, deadline or why I forgot to ... you fill in the blank. While I haven't yet convinced her that her job is not crisis management, I'm making progress.

We're excited to announce we have two new visiting scientists from Nanjing, China. Dr. Jianfeng Hua, his wife, Qian Jiang, and their five-year-old son, Junwei, have settled into Nacogdoches as their home for the coming year. Hua and Qian will be officing at the Tucker house, and we're busy planning a number of research projects. Hua is an associate professor in the Institute of Botany in the Jiangsu Province and Chinese Academy of Sciences at the Nanjing Botanical Garden. Qian is a soil engineer in the Institute of Soil Science, Chinese

Academy of Sciences.

Hua will be designing and implementing a number of salt tolerance studies with a focus on *Hibiscus hamabo* (very salt tolerant) and as a rootstock for other *Hibiscus* species that are not so salt tolerant. He will test them for their adaptation to the challenged environment at our Moody Gardens research plot. Additionally, he will be continuing our never-ending work with *Taxodium*, bald cypress, which is a major coastal windbreak forest tree for the coastlands of China.

Qian will be immersing herself into the Soil and Plant Tissue Testing Laboratory in SFA's Department of Agriculture. She will be studying our standard analytical protocol for the thousands of farmer samples the lab runs each year and then undertaking a number of methodology studies to determine efficiencies. Their son "Joey" is a precocious youngster and will attend Raguet Elementary School.

Please make our

Continued on pg. 2 »

In This Issue:

- 3 | *Photinia serrulata*
- 4 | Gardens Bucket List
- 5 | New Staff Member
- 6 | Dr. Leon Young
- 6 | Texas Pollinator PowWow
- 7 | Upcoming Events



guests welcome. This young couple and their child represent the new China. They're sharp as tacks, both parts of the growing middle class and on a mission to make our world a better place. They've moved into an apartment, bought a car and are navigating the paperwork to be a part of our community. They will forever be imprinted with the hospitality and excitement that makes the Pineywoods a wonderful place to live and work.

At SFA Gardens, we're bracing for our first serious cold snap. Our gardens are ready to go to bed. The irrigation systems are being shut down and drained. Under Duke Pittman's steady hand, Chris Dempsey and Josh Donnelly are the go-to men for leading the charge on all our projects, whether it's working on the gazebo project

at the Gayla Mize Garden, setting a new row of posts in the muscadine vineyard or building a gate, they make it happen. They'll tell you my over-the-shoulder attention and advice is what makes it all go smoothly. Well, maybe they won't say that exactly.

With Greg gone, Dawn has moved her office to the peace and quiet of the Tucker house. She's assuming the title of "head grower" and will be managing the production at the facility behind the Agriculture Building and at the Pineywoods Native Plant Center. This is no small chore, but with experience comes wisdom. She's more than up to the task to produce quality plants for the plant sale and handle all the plant growing and educational projects we have underway. Finally, Elyce Rodewald continues to provide

quality kindergarten through 12th grade and adult programming, and Jocelyn Moore is our new assistant educational programs coordinator. Moore has jumped in with passion and unbridled enthusiasm to educate, entertain and enlighten our youngest citizens. Happy days are here again.

All that said, let's never forget we're here for plants, plans and people. As the cold, dark days of winter are upon us, don't forget to walk the gardens. We're blessed in our Pineywoods garden that there's always something to see. SFA Gardens, staff members, students and volunteers are here to connect others with the bliss that can be found in our natural world.

Let's keep planting.



Left: SFA Gardens Director David Creech's wife, Janet, walks their dog, Tye, in SFA Gardens during the fall to enjoy the changing seasons. Right: Visiting scientists from Nanjing, China, Dr. Jianfeng Hua, his wife, Qian Jiang, and their son, Junwei, have settled into Nacogdoches as their home for the coming year.



The couple will be officing at the Tucker house. Hua is an associate professor in the Institute of Botany in the Jiangsu Province and Chinese Academy of Sciences at the Nanjing Botanical Garden. Qian is a soil engineer in the Institute of Soil Science, Chinese Academy of Sciences.

● *Photinia serrulata* — Chinese Photinia is Texas Tough

By Dr. David Creech

I've never really been a photinia fan. Seeing so many dead red tip photinias planted across the South has given me an aversion to these plants. Red tips are susceptible to *Entomosporium*, a fungal disease that has taken red tip from the top of the nursery pack to near the bottom of the commodity world. The red tip photinia (*P. x fraseri*) is a hybrid, a cross of *P. glabra* and *P. serrulata* — the Japanese photinia mated with a Chinese photinia.

In my opinion, the death-by-disease catastrophe with red tips is normally found with hedge rows and folks who like to prune. On the other hand, there are plenty of big, old red tip specimens across East Texas that have zero problems with the disease. They're usually solitary soldiers and often enjoy a space of their own in the sun, and they're rarely touched. Now, it also is true there are reportedly newer, disease-resistant red tip clones. We have a clone called 'Pink Marble,' and while it's attractive, I have no idea if it's disease resistant or how it'll hold up in the landscape. 'Red Robin' and 'Indian Princess' are new in the garden and touted as more disease resistant. Time will tell if that's true.

However, the plant we're sure about is *P. serrulata*, the Chinese photinia. This species can get big. It's actually a tree and has large, dark green, leathery leaves. Most importantly, we've never seen any symptoms of *Entomosporium* on Chinese photinia in our region. While reportedly susceptible to three forms of *Cercospora* leaf spot, that malady hasn't revealed itself in our region when the species is planted in a sunny spot.

At SFA Gardens, we have an interesting *P. serrulata* clone that came to our garden many years ago via Sherwood Akin of Sibley, Louisiana. It was one of his seedlings selected because it had a superior shape and form than other seedlings. In the Mast Arboretum, our best specimen receives good sun and moisture and is planted adjacent to a wet spot in the garden. This football-shaped, 12-foot shrub has endured hurricanes, floods, and the drought and heat



Photinia serrulata

of 2010 and 2011. It's never been pruned — except for a few cuttings every now and then. White flowers are arranged as bright clusters that are 6 to 8 inches in diameter. New growth is slightly pinkish bronze. The springtime flower clusters are followed by fruit clusters of red berry-like fruit, which persists a bit into the winter.

Here are some important points. First, Chinese photinia hasn't proven to be invasive in our garden or in the area. While I've encountered a chance seedling here and there in East Texas, they're few and far between — certainly nothing like some of the other bullies in our woods. This tree just doesn't do well in shade, which is perhaps a major reason it can't get a foothold.

Second, Chinese photinia roots at good percentages and grows off fast in container culture. Cuttings can be taken almost any time. May-June cuttings make good salable plants in 18 months.

Third, after 2010 and 2011, which had record heat and drought in our region, I came away impressed by how our older Chinese photinias in East Texas just didn't seem to care about the heat. I've been admiring one big fellow on top of Swift Hill, which is nine miles east of Nacogdoches on State Highway 7 and only half a mile up the highway from my home. It sits in a full sunspot in a dry, low quality soil and it's never blinked during the devastating heat and drought of 2010 and 2011. Any plant that can hang tough when the temperature reaches 112 degrees has my vote. I'm convinced this is one tough plant.

As for pruning, I don't think it's needed, just let the bush develop its own character. As a street tree, it could be pruned into an attractive multi-stem, small tree with a rounded head. Employing the rule of thirds is a good start. I've seen it used that way in China as a street and avenue tree and thought it looked great.

Gardens Bucket List

By Dawn Stover

As I walked in the garden the other day, I saw late-season pollinator activity on some flowers spared from our first November frost. Upon closer inspection, I found a beautiful, metallic green bee. I've seen pictures of these glorious little sweat bees on the internet, and I've caught quick glimpses of their frenetic nectaring in the garden, but I've never caught one still enough for my handy smartphone to photograph clearly. Cool and wet weather was on my side, and my little, late-season friend was moving slowly, savoring each drop of nectar like it was the last. And yes, I captured a fairly clear photo.

The more I thought about it, the more I realized I never thought I'd actually photograph a sweat bee in my lifetime, and that was something I could check off my bucket list.

Have you ever thought about your horticultural bucket list? I haven't — at least not until that sweat bee let me do something I thought impossible. This got me thinking: Are there pie-in-the-sky things I'd love to do that might just come to fruition if I put my mind to them?

If you think about it, there could be bucket-list categories — easy, medium and hard. Truthfully, the picture of my shiny, green friend would be on my easy list. Capturing a host of other flighty, little critters like swallowtails, monarchs and bumblebees also is on the easy list. How about waiting for a flower you've never grown before to bloom? How many of you have grown night-blooming cereus — counting the days and staying up late just to catch the essence of the first bloom? What about waiting for one of those stunning, yet stinky, star

cactuses to bloom?

We bloomed “Big Jack” in 2004. He was the first corpse flower to bloom in Texas, and one of fewer than two dozen that had ever bloomed in the U.S. at the time. I'm pretty sure that was on Dr. Creech's list. Blooming a second is on my list and not because Dr. Creech says he'll retire when that happens. It's not easy to keep a corpse flower alive, much less to grow it to flowering size.

Out-of-the-ordinary gardening accomplishments definitely qualify for the bucket list. Rooting cuttings that are notoriously difficult to root or germinating seeds that have failed to germinate in the past are both extremely satisfying. Maybe I should add grafting to my own list, but I realize that would mean putting “patience” on my list. Oh well.

The medium bucket list allows for bigger dreams that are attainable if you put your mind to it. I didn't realize Longwood Gardens and Chanticleer Gardens in Pennsylvania would be on my list until we visited last summer. Talk about elevated horticulture and design. If it's anywhere, it's in Pennsylvania.

I dream of visiting the High Line in New York City and Gas Works Park in Seattle. Both are amazing gardens turning discarded and polluted places into urban ecological destinations that beautify and revitalize surrounding areas. The High Line is visited more than the Statue of Liberty, and while crowds don't really appeal to me, visiting a horticultural space that is inspiring to non-horticultural folks has great appeal.

Also on the list is a visit to former student, Rebecca Turk, at Moore Farm Botanical Garden in Lake City, South Carolina, with a slight detour to see The Pearl Fryar Topiary Garden in nearby Bishopville. I'm kind of counting on Rebecca's connections (hint, hint) to allow for the chance to meet Mr. Fryar in person.

I've long been a fan of a group called the Texas Pollinator PowWow, and attending one of the group's gatherings is definitely on my bucket list since they are



Firepink create a seasonal impact beneath quaking aspen in the Elevated Garden at Chanticleer in Pennsylvania.

usually held in places that are a seven-hour drive or more from Nacogdoches. After I asked the group about a meeting in East Texas and an impromptu site visit from their steering committee, Nacogdoches is now the next location for the Texas Pollinator PowWow in May.



Let's move on to those wistful wishes of bucket list items that will more than likely never happen unless a winning lottery ticket is involved. What would you do? Where would you go? I would go botanizing in Thailand and Vietnam, looking for wild collections of hidden peacock and butterfly gingers, and immersing in ginger species I've never seen or heard of before. I would visit my friend, Jimmy Turner, at the Royal Botanical Garden in Sydney, Australia. While still overseas, I would stop in England to visit Hidcote Manor Garden, Sissinghurst Castle Garden and Wisley Garden. In France, Monet's Garden at Giverny and Le Jardin



Plume in Normandy are on the top of the list. While on the continent, I'd visit any and every villa garden in Italy and stop in Germany to see where my horticultural roots originated. It's a good thing my husband plays the lottery. There's a tiny chance for global travel!

While this bucket-list business is something I've never given much mind to, it's nice to take time to reflect on things to accomplish and things to dream about. The new year allows us pause to set our course for the year, and I have some big dreams to accomplish here at SFA Gardens. First, we'll need to build a big, new greenhouse at the Pineywoods Native Plant Center. We are in good shape and are crossing our fingers for a summer opening. I'd like to create more "designed plant communities" in SFA Gardens using the style described in my new favorite book, "Planting in a Post Wild World" by Thomas Rainer and Claudia West.

I hope to continue our efforts to collect locally sourced native plants to be able to distribute appropriate plant material for our area and to use in creating more pollinator gardens here at SFA and in Nacogdoches. Lastly, with Greg Grant's departure, I'm looking forward to more greenhouse growing opportunities as I absorb those responsibilities at the PNPC and the Mast Arboretum. Between the capable army of volunteers, dedicated student workers and your support, we can check off everything on the 2017 bucket list. Thank you for supporting us with your memberships, volunteerism and plant sale attendance. Happy New Year!



Eucalyptus and ornamental grasses provide visual contrast at Chanticleer Gardens in Pennsylvania.

New Assistant Education Coordinator Welcomed to SFA Gardens

By Elyce Rodewald



SFA Gardens is pleased to welcome Jocelyn Moore to the position of assistant education coordinator. Moore is an avid gardener and is passionate about sharing her knowledge with the community.

Moore is one of the organizers for the Thomas J. Rusk Elementary School gardens and of the popular Seed Swap. She also is familiar to

Pineywoods campers, as she has served as a counselor for two summers.

In her new position, Moore will be involved with all aspects of the education program, including Nacogdoches Naturally afterschool program, family days, learning excursions, garden seminars and other duties as assigned.

"I am thrilled to join the SFA Gardens' team, and I am excited to share my passion for natural systems and gardening with students here in Nacogdoches," Moore said.

Moore is originally from Oregon, and she is quick to point out she and her family did quite a bit of research before choosing the perfect place to create their homestead. Fortunately for us, Nacogdoches fit their criteria and was the winning location.

Dr. Leon Young Remembered

By Dr. David Creech

Dr. Leon Young, professor of soils at SFA, passed away Dec. 2, 2016. We've lost a great soils professor, a kindred spirit for adventuresome agriculture and good friend of SFA Gardens.

He's left us too soon. Young's mantra for years was, "No matter how sophisticated or advanced the human race becomes, we still owe our existence to a layer of topsoil and the fact that it rains." Young was old school. It's not dirt. It's soil.

SFA's Soils, Plant and Water Analysis Lab and our work with blueberries had so much to do with the soil, leaf tissue and irrigation water standards that are the basis of the industry in the South.

For formal and informal research projects involving plant nutrition questions, Young was the go-to guy.

While his foundation was forages and the wonderful world of row crops, he reveled in the nuances of nutrition across a wide range of crops. Our latest project at Moody Gardens and salt-tolerant plants along the coast generated many conversations on why plants are salt tolerant and what strategies exist that we can use to grow plants in challenged environments.

Born on a cattle and forages farm in Medina County near Devine, Texas, we're positive Young is farming somewhere on God's back 40. We'll miss him.



Dr. Leon Young, professor of soils at SFA, passed away Dec. 2, 2016. We've lost a great soils professor, a kindred spirit for adventuresome agriculture and good friend of SFA Gardens.

Texas Pollinator PowWow to Host Conference in May

By Dawn Stover

SFA Gardens is partnering with the Texas Pollinator PowWow to bring a conference to Nacogdoches May 5 through 7. The theme of this conference is "It takes a Village: Biodiversity of Pollinators, Plants and People." Experts will speak on bees, butterflies, bats, birds and black bears.

The lineup includes Doug Tallamy, nationally known entomologist and author of "Bringing Nature Home;" Merlin Tuttle, founder of Bat Conservation International; Clay Bolt, natural history and conservation photographer for organizations like Scientific America and Audubon Magazine; and a host of experts from SFA.

Two interactive night activities include a moth night and a bat walk. The conference wraps up with a field day at Boggy Slough, a conservation easement of The Conservation Fund.

Texas Pollinator PowWow is a capacity builder in pollinator conservation. The organization includes active and enthusiastic participation from non-governmental organizations, academia, the private sector, and local, state and federal governments, according to the organization's website. These participants serve as speakers, exhibitors and attendees.



TEXAS POLLINATOR POWWOW MISSION:

To provide education, resources and networking opportunities to natural resource management professionals and volunteers — and the community at large — and to empower them all in conserving our pollinators and their habitats across the landscape.

IF YOU GO:

Conference registration is \$50 a day or \$80 for the two days. The day-three field trip is free with conference registration. The moth night and bat walk are \$15 each.

For more information and registration forms, visit www.texaspollinatorpowwow.org.

Upcoming Events

JAN. 21: KID FISH

The City of Nacogdoches is hosting Kid Fish from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Lakeside Park, where children can fish for trout and earn their Texas Parks and Wildlife Department Junior Angler Certificate. This free event offers food and fun for the entire family.



JAN. 28: NATIVE TREES: SELECTING, PLANNING AND PRUNING

Learn the reasons for and specifics of proper pruning and training of shade, ornamental and fruit trees with Chris Dempsey from 9 a.m. to noon at the Brundrett Conservation Education Center, located at 2900 Raguet St. The seminar costs \$15 for SFA Gardens members and \$20 for non-members.



FEB. 4: PERMACULTURE BLITZ: LASAGNA GARDENING AND VEGETABLES FOR EAST TEXAS

Learn about the best vegetable varieties for the Nacogdoches area and the permaculture technique of "lasagna gardening" from 10 a.m. to noon at the Pineywoods Native Plant Center. A potluck lunch will be held at noon for participants. A \$5 donation is suggested.



FEB. 9: THERESA AND LES REEVES LECTURE SERIES

Listen as Bob Byers, director of the Fort Worth Botanical Gardens, presents "Great Perennial Borders Don't Just Happen; They're Always Works In Progress" at 7 p.m. in the Brundrett Conservation Education Building. The lecture is free to the public and will be followed by a drawing for plants from SFA Gardens.



FEB. 18: GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT AND BIRD DAY

Join members of the Pineywoods Audubon Society, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and National Association of Interpretation for a day meeting the birds of East Texas from 9 a.m. to noon at the PNPC. Attendees can participate in bird Olympics, birdwatching and more. A \$5 donation will be appreciated.



MARCH 9: THERESA AND LES REEVES LECTURE SERIES

Hear Grant Stephenson of Horticultural Consultants Inc. of Houston explain "Understanding Palms to Understand Their Needs to Thrive in the Landscape" at 7 p.m. in the Brundrett Conservation Education Building. The lecture is free to the public and will be followed by a drawing for plants from SFA Gardens.



MARCH 15 - APRIL 15: AZALEA TRAIL

Follow the Nacogdoches Azalea Trail through the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden, Gayla Mize Garden, Arboretum, PNPC and throughout Nacogdoches from March 15 to April 15. For more information about activities scheduled during this time, contact the Nacogdoches Convention and Visitors Bureau at www.visitnacogdoches.org.



MARCH 25: LITTLE PRINCESS TEA PARTY

Magic, music and merriment abound at this whimsical party from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden. This is a charming event for grandmothers, aunts and mothers to share with their princesses, ages 3 to 10 years old. The party costs \$25 per person and reservations can be made online beginning Feb. 1 at sfagardens.sfasu.edu.



APRIL 1 - GARDEN GALA DAY PLANT SALE

A variety of hard-to-find, "Texas tough" plants will be available during the Garden Gala Day Plant Sale from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the PNPC, located at 2900 Raguet St. Inventory includes Texas natives, Texas Superstars, heirlooms, tropicals, perennials, shrubs, trees and unusual species.



For more information, call (936) 468-4129 or email sfagardens@sfasu.edu.



COME GROW
WITH US.

Stephen F. Austin State University
Arthur Temple College of
Forestry and Agriculture
P.O. Box 13000
Nacogdoches, TX 75962
936.468.4404
sfagardens@sfasu.edu
sfagardens.sfasu.edu
Facebook: SFA Gardens

Arthur Temple College of
Forestry and Agriculture
STEPHEN F. AUSTIN
STATE UNIVERSITY



“I prefer winter and fall, when you feel the bone structure of the landscape — the loneliness of it, the dead feeling of winter. Something waits beneath it, the whole story doesn’t show.”

— Andrew Wyeth

