



SFA Gardens NEWS

Notes from the Director

By Dr. David Creech

What an interesting spring this has been! If you're a gardener, weather kind of sticks with you. I remember the 1983 tragedy with two weeks of freezing weather as if it were yesterday. The Dec. 23, 1989, plummet to 4 degrees Fahrenheit sticks in my mind. Who can forget the calamitous heat and drought of 2010 and 2011? Well, this past winter will stay in our memories for lack of cold, as it's been a record warm winter. Except for one blast from the North that drove the temperature down to 17 degrees Fahrenheit, it's been balmy. That freeze did more damage than one might have expected, most likely due to the warm temperatures preceding the cold front.

The real stress now is lack of winter chilling. We came in at less than 450 hours below 45 degrees Fahrenheit, and our region normally receives 650 hours. As a result, woody trees and shrubs with higher chilling requirements are struggling. For instance, if you were planting Golden Delicious here you would need about 1,200 hours with less than 45 degrees Fahrenheit for the tree to successfully leaf out and bloom properly in the spring. With 450 hours, the tree would simply die. Peaches, plums, blueberries and others are now

emerging short of winter chilling, and while they will survive, the flowers are often deformed, crops will be short and growth is weak.

There are many good things happening at SFA Gardens. After seven years of contemplation, we have a seven-course labyrinth of classical design at the Gayla Mize Garden. We have a new staff member, Malcolm Turner. Malcolm will be splitting duties between three projects: kiwifruit, our Jimmy Hinds Park effort and the Moody Gardens project. Dawn Stover successfully completed the first plant sale. Before the sale, she had the plant list online, two greenhouses brimming over and a shade yard full of exciting plants. I'm thrilled about our first offering of *Parrotia subaequalis*, a new Persian witchhazel with fire engine red fall color. Duke Pittman and Chris Dempsey are busy firing up the drip system in the Gayla Mize Garden with the usual chores of repairing breaks, adding lines for new plants and getting ready for what may be a long, hot summer.

Continued on pg. 2 »

In This Issue:

- 2 | Ray Mize
- 3 | Secret Garden
- 4 | Here Today, Gone Tomorrow
- 5 | A Place to Say 'I Do'
- 6 | The Labyrinth
- 6 | Summer Camps
- 7 | Upcoming Events



Gardening on a big scale is no easy task.

Travel, while exciting, can be tiring. Spring has seen trips to Alabama for the annual conference of the American Society for Horticultural Science Southern Region, where I met and connected with friends and colleagues across the South. A trip to the 140-acre golden kiwifruit plantation near Clanton, Alabama, followed the conference. The plantation's investment is the first of its kind in the nation. I have long ago abandoned the philosophy by Susan Sontag, "I haven't been everywhere, but it's on my list." I'm off to New Zealand in April and then China in July. Still, getting to see the kiwifruit plantations in New Zealand during harvest is a bucket list item. The fact that SFA is the first to fruit this special fruit in Texas is a big deal, and we're excited about a Texas Department of Agriculture grant just now getting started.

As for China, I'm off for three weeks of adventure, including moderating a session and presenting a paper at the International Botanical Congress in Shenzhen in the far South. A conference in China is no drab affair. The banquets are to die for. After that sojourn in South China, I will be connecting with colleagues at Nanjing Botanical Garden on blueberry and bald cypress projects in various provinces.

At SFA, we are quickly moving forward on the greenhouse project with bids going out soon. As with any major building project, there are myriad



Front row from left: Duke Pittman, Dr. David Creech, Chris Dempsey and Malcolm Turner. Back row from left: Dawn Stover, Anne Sullivan, Jocelyn Moore and Elyce Rodewald.

rules, policies, procedures, guidelines and bylaws. Epic attention to detail is needed. Dawn has stepped up to take the lead in bringing this exciting project to completion. After all, that makes sense; she is head grower. Until next time, let's keep planting.

SFA Gardens Friend, Supporter Ray Mize Remembered

 By Dr. David Creech

Ray Mize passed away March 13, 2017, in Nacogdoches. He was 86 and lived a full life. Ray was a great friend of the gardens, university and this community. I've known Ray since the 1980s. His wife Gayla was the light in his eyes, and she volunteered from the beginning in the Arboretum and in all kinds of city beautification projects. Ray was always in tow. He was a cattleman, and I ran a few head in Shelby County. He liked agriculture. I did too. We kind of connected. It was Gayla who brought him to loving flowers. Both Gayla and Ray had much to do with the creation of the Ruby Mize Azalea Garden. Of course, everyone knew Ray adored Gayla and for good reason. She was a very special lady in our town.

The road to the Gayla Mize Garden was a long one. SFA owned about 68



Ray Mize, a great friend of the SFA Gardens, university and Nacogdoches community, passed away March 13.

acres of land along University Drive. In 2008, Dr. Mike Legg in forestry and Michael Maningas in recreation submitted a Texas Parks and Wildlife proposal for a trails project. The proposal needed collaborators and some matching funds. SFA Gardens

stepped up, and as part of the deal, I wanted to name the property SFA Recreational Trails and Gardens. After all involved parties reached an agreement, we began the project. More than a mile of trails came together, and the area was dedicated in March 2010. Well, time passed and the trails were there but no garden. We did plant some purple spider azaleas, Koromo shikibu, to line the front of the Ruby Mize Azalea Garden, but that was about it.

When Gayla passed away in 2009, Ray lost his soul mate. He would travel University Drive, see that sign and shout, "SFA Recreational Trails and Gardens — Where's the garden?" I first knew of Ray's interest in building a legacy garden in 2010 after I received a call from my secretary. According to her, a large man with a patch on one eye had walked into the main office.

He was carrying an axe and a crosscut saw wanting to know, “Where is that Dave Creech?” To be honest, Ray kind of scared the ladies there. My office had moved to the Tucker House at the Pineywoods Native Plant Center, and we soon connected and a relationship was born. Ray was interested in the frontage along University Drive as a legacy for Gayla.

Things move slowly at a university. Ray visited with the administration, and the university gave its blessing on the idea of a legacy garden. Ray gave us a little funding, and we went into action. Ray told me, “I like to try on a pair of shoes before I buy them.” Being stubborn gardeners, we kept chipping away. It did take a serious effort to remove the understory of privet, tallow, green briar vine and honeysuckle. We removed a few trees, which always adds to the excitement of garden building. We needed a clean forest floor to see what we had. We needed a garden design, and Barb Stump sprang into action. After all, she was the designer and creator of the Ruby Mize Azalea Garden. Who better than her!

We had to deal with some drainage issues. There were plants to acquire and grow, and we needed to build a trail system inside the eight acres of garden. In 2011, when Ray was convinced he was on the right track and my crew was up to the task, he stepped up and provided the legacy endowment. The dedication of the Gayla Mize Garden

occurred April 16, 2012.

Ray was no average donor. He provided us with over-the-shoulder attention all the time. Ray was old school — skip the paperwork, roll up your sleeves, and make it happen now. He’d catch me in my office or the garden and never fail to nudge me to move faster. We needed more flowers. What the heck was I doing with my time? I said trails take time. Before I knew it, he had enlisted his grandson, Ryan Cupit, to help us get the trail base in. Why wasn’t the gazebo finished? We’re working on it. Did I understand what it meant to make hay when the sun shines? Yes, I’m trying. Did he have to bring some of his folks in there to make something happen? I’d explain it takes 100 years to build a garden, 200 if you don’t rush it. He wasn’t convinced.

Ray was a man on a mission. Our conversations usually ended with him saying, “Am I going to have to go talk to Baker?” That, of course, is SFA President Baker Pattillo. I hoped he was bluffing, but it did provide additional incentive. Ray liked to tease, and he always let me know at the end of our

visits how pleased he was with the way the garden was growing.

Ray truly loved the garden. It was an important connection to Gayla and to everyone in our community. His agricultural background meant he understood what it’s like to grow things on a big scale and what droughts, floods and freezes can do. He had empathy. Ray noticed when the parking lot was full and that always made him feel good. He liked the place being used. Ray was more than a supporter; he was an aggressive participant for a greener Nacogdoches. As a way of paying it forward, Ray left a legacy for Gayla, Jimmy, Lysa, his grandchildren and Nacogdoches citizens. When I walk the garden now, I feel there’s someone above pointing out everything we need to be doing. I suspect it’s Ray, and I’ll bet Gayla has him planting something in God’s back 40.



The Gayla Mize Garden was built as a legacy garden in honor of Ray Mize’s wife, Gayla, who passed away in 2009. Ray was a driving force behind the creation of this garden.

Nacogdoches Naturally Participants Help Create ‘The Secret Garden’

 By Jocelyn Moore

The SFA Gardens’ afterschool program, Nacogdoches Naturally, has been busy this spring growing a garden space dedicated to native edibles.

Elementary school students are doing much of the hard work themselves in establishing “The Secret Garden” filled with delicious native plants, a natural playscape and

outdoor classroom.

Recent projects include the assembly of raised beds, blueberry and cover crop plantings, and the preparation of rich soil by utilizing the lasagna layering method. Community members participated in Nacogdoches’ first Perma blitz — an event designed for folks to learn, volunteer and get to know one

another — which helped establish the beginning stages of the garden.

The garden strives to demonstrate attractive and sustainable methods of growing resilient, edible plants and simultaneously growing young hearts and minds.

Just as important as the plants themselves is the encouragement

Continued on pg. 4 »

of “free play” in nature. In his book “Last Child in the Woods,” author Richard Louv explores “nature-deficit disorder,” a condition developing in our youth caused by a lack of exposure and engagement with the outdoors. Log hopping, secret hideouts and fort building are all in the works to create a space full of adventure for children.

“The Secret Garden” is located behind the shade houses at the PNPC. Families are encouraged to enjoy the garden as it develops and taste test edible plants when ripe.

Those interested in volunteering with this project as it continues to develop and grow should contact Jocelyn Moore, SFA Gardens assistant education coordinator, at moorejv@sfasu.edu.



Nacogdoches Naturally participants help build a “Secret Garden” by constructing raised beds.

Here Today, Gone Tomorrow

By Dawn Stover

Although it seems like spring has been in East Texas since at least December, and our azalea season came two weeks early and left too soon, some of our favorite yet fleeting signs of spring have waited their turn for the spring equinox. Walks along the PNPC’s trails lead to joyous discoveries of lovely spring ephemerals that seem to come and go in the blink of an eye. These spring beauties arise, flower and reseed for a few short weeks before going dormant as the canopy above begins to leaf out and before the heat of summer takes over. If I could go dormant before the heat of summer, believe me, I surely would.

We wait and wait for the first ephemeral to appear and are rewarded with large sweeps of white trout lilies, *Erythronium albidum*, in the moist bottomland near Lanana Creek. As is typical with many spring ephemerals, white trout lily is truly a hands-and-knees sort of plant, reaching a staggering 4 to 6 inches in height. What they lack in stature, they make up for with abundance and are often found in large sweeps that tickle the trunks of our Florida maples and shagbark hickories. Immature plants produce a single, gray-green, leaf-mottled, brownish purple, resembling the scales of a trout, hence one of its common names. Plants that are mature enough to produce one tiny flower with

white, strongly recurved petals also produce a whopping two leaves.

If you blink, you’ll miss the cheerful white flowers of bloodroot, *Sanguinaria canadensis*, also blooming in the mesic creek bottom. Short-lived flowers persist for only a day or two and are borne singly on separate stems. The lobed leaves are quite attractive, persisting a bit longer than the flowers, and form small colonies. The plant gets its name from the blood-red juice emitted from any crushed part of the plant. Native Americans used the red juice to dye baskets and clothing and for war paint. It also was used as an insect repellent and has antibacterial properties. It is worth noting that the rootstock is poisonous if ingested. There is a nice



colony on the Maple Path, as well as a sprinkling here and there along the Lanana Creek Trail.

The wild hyacinth, *Camassia scilloides*, provides a showier stop on the ephemeral path in spring. I do take a knee to photograph these lovely flowers; their foot-tall, light blue flower stalks are noticeable from a distance. They have a grass-like bunch of strappy foliage to accompany the lightly fragrant, dainty flowers borne on racemes that continue to elongate as flowers continue to open toward the tip. Our patch is just past the cypress swamp along the South Tucker Woods Trail as you're walking toward Lanana Creek. Their bulbs are edible and nutritious, and they were an important staple for Native Americans and settlers who likely slow-roasted them to enhance their sweet flavor. Wild hyacinth resembles the death camas, *Zigadenus nuttallii*, of which all parts are poisonous. It might be a good idea to know the difference between the two if you intend to give the wild hyacinth a try!

We're back to our hands and knees looking for the tiny, bell-shaped, greenish-white flowers that delicately dangle along the arching stems of Solomon's seal, *Polygonatum biflorum*. As the equinox passes, these subtle beauties are barely initiating flowers. Generally, they are in full bloom around the first of April. Solomon's seal is happy in the rich soil of



This Jack-in-the-pulpit flower shows "Jack," or the spadix, standing in "the pulpit," or spathe.

moist woodlands, and it is prolific on the Shagbark Shortcut and the North Tucker Woods Trail. Blue-black fruit follow the graceful flowers in late summer. The young vegetative shoots can be boiled and will taste a bit like asparagus. Native Americans used the rhizomatous roots to make flour.

The last of the ephemerals we'll see in Tucker Woods is the Jack-in-the-pulpit, *Arisaema triphyllum*, which is just now pushing foliage. The common name comes from the flower structure, which consists of a spadix, "Jack," inside a spathe, "the pulpit." In this case, the spadix is a cylindrical stalk

consisting of teeny-tiny flowers, and the spathe is a leaf-like bract enclosing the spadix. If pollination is successful, a stalk with fleshy red fruit will follow the flower. Plants do contain crystals of calcium oxalate, which burn like a million fire ant bites, so consider this one inedible. Wood thrush, one of my favorite and most melodious songbirds, as well as wild turkey, which unfortunately are not in the SFA Gardens, eat the fruit.

All of our spring ephemerals provide an early season nectar source for native bees and other pollinators, save for the Jack-in-the-pulpit, which a fungal gnat pollinates. They are best planted as dormant specimens in fall and even then can be finicky about growing and thriving. They'll take a bit of time to establish but are worth the effort even if only for the fleeting reward each spring.



A Place to Say 'I Do'

By Anne Sullivan

Love is in the air, and yes, we host weddings in the SFA Gardens. Throughout the years, we have seen an increase in interest and requests for weddings at the PNPC's Brundrett Conservation Education Building and various locations throughout the gardens.

To accommodate these requests, we have developed an SFA Gardens wedding policy describing fees, available days, times and locations, and rules and regulations for weddings and receptions in the gardens.

For more information about having a wedding in SFA Gardens, contact Anne Sullivan, SFA Gardens program associate, at (936) 468-4129 or sullivanfa@sfasu.edu.



A bride poses for her wedding portraits at SFA Gardens. Photo by Allen Arrick.

The Labyrinth at the Gayla Mize Garden

By Dr. David Creech

We finally have a labyrinth in the Gayla Mize Garden that has a classical seven-course design with a wonderful East Texas look. A circle of 'Slender Silhouette' sweetgum trees uniquely surrounds the labyrinth. Even though we've talked about a labyrinth for many years, it wasn't until Eagle Scout Luke Stanley approached me about a project that this came together. When I mentioned this opportunity, Luke jumped at the chance. While funding was an issue, it finally all came to fruition. The project received a boost near the end with Tim Howell's donation of a Klingstone Paths treatment, which is a chemical that bonds the pea gravel into a concrete surface that is permeable to rain. It breathes.

In English, the term "labyrinth" is generally synonymous with a maze. However, contemporary scholars and enthusiasts observe a distinction between the two. In this specialized usage, maze refers to a complex branching multicursal design with choices of path and direction, while a unicursal labyrinth enjoys only a single path to the center. A labyrinth is easy to navigate, and it requires no complex thinking to find one's way to the center. Follow the path.

Unicursal labyrinths appeared early in history as designs on pottery and baskets, as body art, and in drawings on cave walls, churches and other structures. The Romans used ornate unicursal designs on walls and floors in tile or mosaic. Many labyrinths set in floors or on the ground are large enough to walk along the path. Unicursal patterns have been used historically in group rituals and for private meditation. In recent times, these patterns have found therapeutic value in hospitals and hospices.

Our single-path, classical seven-course design fits the



Above is a drone shot of the labyrinth by Dr. David Kulhavy, Laurence C. Walker Distinguished Professor in forestry at SFA. Pictured left Tim Howell of Klingstone Paths and Duke Pittman, SFA Gardens technician, stand in the labyrinth.

association of the labyrinth on coins as early as 430 B.C. From Roman times forward, labyrinths were almost always unicursal. Branching mazes were later reintroduced when garden mazes became popular during the Renaissance.

We encourage you to saunter to the middle of the labyrinth and then stroll out. It takes about four minutes to make your way to the center rock. Sit a spell and then wander out. Science proves that your blood pressure will drop, your mood will improve and all will seem right with the world. Try it!

Coming Soon to a Forest Near You

By Elyce Rodewald

It may be just the beginning of spring, but in the education office, we are already planning for summer and the Pineywoods Camp. During the past 15 years, campers have enjoyed exploring the plants, animals and ecosystems of East Texas. Camp is a time for challenges, to meet new friends and

reunite with old ones, to build outdoor skills and to reconnect with the natural world. Our Pineywoods Camp offers various experiences for three different age groups.

Wonder Woods campers (ages 4 to 6) investigate the wonders of wildlife through songs, games,



Wonder Woods campers enjoy a day outside interacting with nature.

art projects, hiking and hands-on discovery. The PNPC provides a diverse environment for campers to wander and wonder. Wonder Woods camp is slated for 8:30 to 11 a.m. June 12-17 and costs \$85. This week ends with a fishing trip to the SFA Ag Pond and a family picnic.

Jack Creek Camp (ages 7 to 11) immerses children in the pineywoods at the SFA Experimental Forest. Campers gain an understanding of the interdependent relationships in the forest and improve their camping, canoeing and fishing skills. Campers hike, explore and learn from

investigation, games, crafts and expert guest speakers. A day of canoeing and fishing at Lake Naconiche will bring this week to a special finish. Jack Creek Camp costs \$120 and offers two sessions. The first session will be June 19-23 and the second will be June 26-30. Both will be from 9 a.m. to noon Monday through Thursday and 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Friday.

Wilderness Adventures campers (ages 12 to 15) develop team-building skills and take their outdoor skills to a higher level. Campers are true adventurers as they overcome many challenges and discover many wonders

on an overnight camping and canoe trip. This camp costs \$250. Camp will be from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday, July 10, and Tuesday, July 11. Campers will stay overnight from 9 a.m. Wednesday, July 12, to 4 p.m. Friday, July 14.

Registration for the Pineywoods Camp 2017 is open. For registration forms, visit sfagardens.sfasu.edu, and click on LEARN. For more information, contact Elyce Rodewald, SFA Gardens educational program coordinator, at (936) 468-1832 or erodewald@sfasu.edu.

Upcoming Events

APRIL 22: INTRO TO BEEKEEPING

Experience the basics of care and culture for our favorite domestic pollinator with Dave Gallagher and the Pineywoods Beekeepers Association from 10 a.m. to noon at the Brundrett Conservation Education Building. This event is free to the public, but a \$5 donation per person is suggested.



APRIL 29: BREAKFAST ON THE FARM

Join SFA agriculture students for pancakes and sausage at this free event. You can meet the animals, take a hayride, explore and learn about agriculture through hands-on activities from 9 a.m. to noon at SFA's Walter C. Todd Agricultural Research Center on Highway 259 North.



MAY 5-7: TEXAS POLLINATOR POWWOW

SFA Gardens is partnering with the Texas Pollinator PowWow to host nationally acclaimed speakers and regional experts discussing "Biodiversity: Pollinators, Plants, People" at the Nacogdoches County Exposition Center. Experience bats and moths in evening excursions and study pollinator habitats in wetlands at Boggy Slough. For more information, visit texaspollinatorpowwow.org/.



MAY 11: THERESA AND LES REEVES LECTURE SERIES

Enjoy Brie Arthur, PBS TV correspondent, author and nationally recognized leader in the suburban foodscape movement, present "The Foodscape Revolution," which encourages people to "think outside the box." Arthur will discuss how pairing edibles in a traditional ornamental landscape increases biodiversity and adds purpose to everyday spaces.



JUNE 8: THERESA AND LES REEVES LECTURE SERIES

Hear Dennis Werner, horticulture professor at North Carolina State University, explore the topic, "Is Redbud the Next Crape Myrtle?"



JULY 13: THERESA AND LES REEVES LECTURE SERIES

Learn what Greg Grant has been up to since his departure from SFA Gardens in his lecture, "A Bright Spot in the Heart of Tyler — The Idea Garden."



Lecture series events listed above will begin at 7 p.m. in the Brundrett Conservation Education Building. Lectures are free to the public. A drawing for plants from SFA Gardens will follow.

*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 love spring anywhere, but if I could choose, I
would always greet it in a garden.”*

– Ruth Stout

