



SFA Gardens NEWS

Notes from the Director

By Dr. David Creech

It's been an interesting spring for the pineywoods as we've been in essentially a monsoon-like climate. The rain started after a chilly, but relatively mild, winter with low temperatures for the hardest freeze in the mid-20s. We had a late spring freeze in early March, not out of the norm, but many peaches and blueberries had already pushed flowers, which is not so good.

In nearby areas, an unusually early April freeze caught a good number of East Texans by surprise. Most were affected only slightly, but others in more inopportune locations, like within a frost or freeze pocket, suffered more.

Although heavy, the rain has been a godsend for SFA Gardens. We're going into summer with fine ground moisture for a change. Luckily, the tornadoes missed SFA Gardens, but we had some close calls. Unfortunately, tornadoes hit the Caddo Mounds State Historic Site west of Alto, and another disastrous twister damaged San Augustine.

As guests of Ross Stevenson and Murray Malone of Miko Asia, Janet and I traveled to Chile in mid-March for a week of immersion in the kiwifruit industry. We also traveled to the tip of South America in a

rental car where we visited some amazing territory and enjoyed the area's culture and botany. As a guest of Miko Asia, Malcolm Turner spent a week in Auckland, New Zealand, for an education in kiwifruit growing. What was Malcolm's conclusion? We have a long way to go.

In between rains, SFA Gardens' staff members have managed to keep planting and weeding. The spring plant sale was a barn burner with kudos to Dawn Stover, Jordan Cunningham, our staff, volunteers, students and those responsible for keeping the storms away. It was the first crop out of the new Quonset greenhouse, and the quality of plants was superb. Dawn and Jordan serve as our socially skilled stewards for the Spring Garden Gala Day Plant Sale. It's something of a tradition now for the gardens with an enthusiastic crowd at the gate and fine music, albeit my playlist rarely is appreciated.

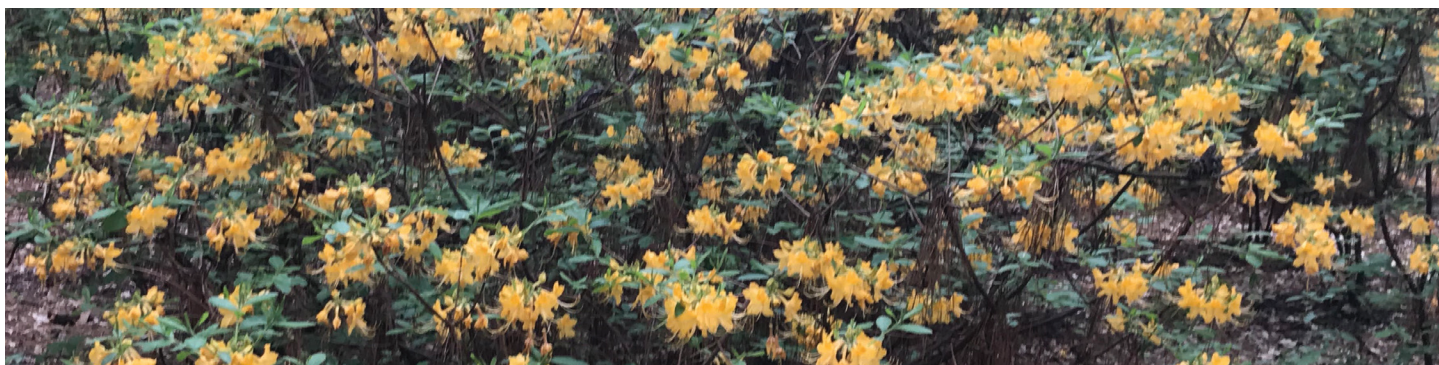
A new, rare and endangered plant garden is evolving in front of the

In This Issue:

- 3 | Plants Collection
- 4 | Kiwis in Chile
- 5 | Nacogdoches Naturally
- 6 | Green Time vs. Screen Time
- 6 | Ruby Mize Miniature
- 7 | Weather Wisdom
- 8 | Propagating Azaleas
- 10 | Lifelong Learning
- 10 | Mistflower
- 11 | Upcoming Events



Continued on Page 2 »



The spring show in the gardens was beautiful. The deciduous azaleas, pictured above, were outrageous this spring.

Tucker House and along Sara's Branch that promises great things in the upcoming year. It's a tribute to Elisabeth Montgomery, who many years ago supported our efforts. A new round of Sculpture for All is in place, and I am still not over losing the skull and raven sculpture by Joseph Barrington. I consider losing this piece a tragedy.

The trialing garden is getting a facelift and a transfusion of all kinds of interesting new, woody and herbaceous plants. Duke Pittman is the SFA Gardens' landscape manager, which in his case might as well be called disaster manager. From irrigation line breaks to faulty sprinkler heads to clogged emitters, it's all on Duke's watch. Beating the weeds back and cutting out dead trees and brush are daily chores. Let's just call it maintenance on a scale that's more than a bit challenging. John Dilday at the Mast Arboretum has moved the Elking Environment project onward, and a retaining wall remains the last tortuous step to completion.

The Kingham Children's Garden pavilion landscape also is getting a facelift. It's going to be a nice spot as it fills in.

Malcolm Turner manages the fruit work at SFA Gardens (muscadine grapes, blueberries, figs and kiwifruit), the "grounds" nursery and our project at Moody Gardens. At Jimmy Hinds Park, we have the most beautiful muscadine vineyard in town and the two strange bald cypress tree henges. We are convinced we can go back to growing ornamentals in this area with a proven deer-proof fence. A camellia collection is being added, and we have an inventory of dogwoods and redbuds ready to go in the ground this fall.

Anne Sullivan bravely attempts to understand the finances of our complicated organization and keeps the boss on time for reports and paperwork with deadlines of epic consequence always looming — this article being one.

Finally, Elyce Rodewald and Jocelyn Moore remain the cheerful leaders for thousands of kids and their teachers as part of the environmental education program. I continue to think that educating, entertaining and enlightening our youngest citizens may be the only really important thing we do. Until next time, let's keep planting.



Left: We enjoyed our first crop in our new greenhouse. **Right:** Members of the Chinese Association of Houston, Texas, toured our beautiful gardens this spring.

The Elisabeth Montgomery Rare and Endangered Plants Collection

By Dawn Stover

While SFA Gardens has long been involved in the rare and endangered plants arena, we haven't had a cohesive thread for educating the public about some of our most imperiled plant species in Texas. This year we are changing this by creating the Elisabeth Montgomery Rare and Endangered Plants Collection.

When I first came to SFA to study horticulture, I was fortunate to use horticultural applications with potential benefits in reintroducing *Hibiscus dasycalyx*, the Neches River Rosemallow. This was part of the three Rs focusing on rescue, research and reintroduction of rare and endangered plants that Dr. David Creech and my predecessor as graduate assistant, Stacy Scott, focused on in her master's work at SFA in the mid '90s. This was a few years prior to the inception of the SFA Pineywoods Native Plant Center, and we performed most of our conservation reintroduction work at Mill Creek Gardens with the support of an endowment from SFA Gardens supporter Elisabeth Montgomery in 1997. We are no longer actively conducting research at Mill Creek, so it's a natural evolution to enhance and better interpret the conservation efforts at the PNPC in her memory.

The plants will not be centered in one specific location but will be tucked into appropriate plant communities represented throughout the PNPC. Four plant community types are represented in the landscape and include dry-upland, mesic midslope, riparian and marsh. Plants will be sited according to habitat type and will be interspersed throughout the PNPC landscape.

Plants will be labeled with a specific designation indicating the visitor has found one of our rare treasures, in addition to its nomenclature and NatureServe conservation status. This status ranking system was developed in the 1980s to designate the rank of imperilment of individuals or populations and includes animals and plants. Species are assigned a conservation status at any of three geographical levels: G-global, N-national and S-subnational. Species also are ranked with numbers from 1 to 5. Number rankings mean (1) critically imperiled, (2) imperiled, (3) vulnerable, (4) apparently secure and (5) secure. There are other assignable ranks, but we have historically indicated the global and subnational rankings in SFA Gardens' publications and will continue to do so with this project. Additionally, we'll create educational signage and handouts for guests to learn more about these special treasures.

Texas is unique in that it is the crossroads of most of the ecoregions in the U.S., including the North American



***Hibiscus dasycalyx*, the Neches River Rosemallow**

deserts, coastal plains, the prairies of the Great Plains, southeastern Plains of Eastern temperate forests, and the Gulf Coastal Plains. Texas is home to a staggering amount of plant diversity, and it would be nearly impossible to represent the native flora of the entire state. Our goals are to represent the south central Plains of the Eastern temperate forests with a strong emphasis on the pineywoods of East Texas.

Some plants are easy to represent, like *Hibiscus dasycalyx* and *Gaillardia aestivalis* var. *winkleri*, Winkler's firewheel. Both respond remarkably with horticultural applications. Some won't be represented at all, like *Triphora trianthophora* var. *texensis*, Texas three-birds orchid, whose old-growth, beech-forest floor habitat is impossible to replicate, making relocation a distressing exercise in failure. We are here to be good stewards and understand the limitations of our collections. To add a heartbreaking note to the orchid, its only known location was directly in the path of one of the tornadoes that impacted East Texas in April. We hope to be a part of that recovery process if it's deemed appropriate.

Getting to know the native flora of the Pineywoods has been a tremendously gratifying experience for me, and I hope to impart some of that knowledge to you and other visitors to our garden. I've only scratched the surface and can't wait to continue this journey. Come along for the ride, and discover some of the amazing jewels in our own backyard. I'll be writing about exploring the plant communities of East Texas and highlighting the plant material we feature in the Elisabeth Montgomery Rare and Endangered Plants Collection on my blog at thesoutherngardengirl.blogspot.com. Stay tuned.

Kiwis in Chile

By Dr. David Creech

So, why visit Chile? Well, the country is situated on South America's West Coast and is one of the largest fruit exporters in the world, sending almost 3 million tons of fruit annually to more than 100 countries worldwide. In addition to green and golden kiwifruit, there are strong crops of cherries, blueberries, raspberries, grapes, apples, pears, peaches, nectarines, plums, apricots, avocados and citrus. In many ways, Chile is the California of the Southern Hemisphere. In fact, Santiago feels like California with a dry, high-sun climate and irrigation water running off the mountains from the west.

Chile exports about 180,000 metric tons of green and golden kiwifruit. Kiwifruit can be stored for four to six months and even longer if picked at the right stage, a critical factor for developing a constant supply for the world's produce aisles. Golden kiwifruit is a super fruit and relatively new to the world market. It is low calorie and low fat, and you can eat the skin. Only in the past three years has Chile entered the golden kiwifruit market with the Italian-developed cultivar Dori, which was bred cooperatively by the University of Udine and the University of Bologna in Italy. Prior to Dori, the breeding program introduced Soreli, another golden kiwifruit variety. Before these new varieties, there had been some production of the golden variety, Jingold, but it's being reduced because of susceptibility to *Pseudomonas syringae* var. *actinidia* and *Verticillium*. PSA is a devastating kiwifruit disease worldwide, and today kiwifruit orchards are learning ways to manage the disease. Rootstocks are part of the answer. PSA has not yet been found in the U.S. We suspect that will change. While the varieties at SFA have produced well on their own roots, this is probably not



Clockwise from left: Chile exports about 180,000 metric tons of green and golden kiwifruit. During Dr. Creech's visit, he toured the Subsole pack house near Santiago, Chile. Kiwifruit is exported to the global market from the coast of Chile.

the smartest strategy for the future. I wish it were. They root easily and grow off fast. However, the definite trend is grafting on PSA-resistant rootstocks. We are using seedlings of Bruno as a foundation for future trials.

For a fruit professor, getting a chance to tour the fruit industry near Santiago was impossible to turn down. My invitation for a mid-March, two-week visit came from the owners of Miko Asia, Ross and Colin Stevenson and Murray Malone. This is a global kiwifruit-growing, importing, exporting and marketing business located in Auckland, New Zealand, with offices and interests worldwide, which includes Chile. They have been visiting the Gulf South U.S. for several years and most recently have included Texas in their routes. They were lured to East Texas by the potential for growing golden kiwifruit (*Actinidia chinensis*) in the Gulf South and the modest

successes of plantings in Alabama, as well as at our small research planting at SFA Gardens.

Armed with climate models, spreadsheets and decades of experience, they hope to find a possible sweet spot in Texas for a significant commercial venture. We are co-conspirators for a Texas golden kiwifruit world. Of course, what drives the excitement is income potential. With high management, a \$2.99-per-pound retail value and potential production in the 40,000 pounds-per-acre range, it's easy to understand the interest in golden kiwifruit production.

On the other side of the coin are further considerations. Texas has a history of zero picking, meaning no fruit — until SFA entered the picture. At SFA Gardens, the kiwifruit trial was first planted in 2011. The first crop was in 2014, and we've had

good crops three out of the past five years. With this year's crop looking promising, that'll make it four out of six. That's a positive. Another positive has been partnering with Tim Hartmann at Texas A&M University to secure funding via a Texas Department of Agriculture Specialty Crops Block Grant. We enter 2019 with research plantings in Morris, Smith, Nacogdoches, Brazos, Caldwell and Waller counties. The variety picture is severely limited to three golden kiwifruit: Golden Dragon, Golden Sunshine and Gulf Coast Sunshine. Those three came to us via Dr. Jay Spiers of Auburn University. All three are patented by Auburn University in partnership with the Hubei Fruit and Tea Institute in China. The licensing process can

only be described as difficult. Further complicating the picture, kiwifruit are either male or female plants, and there has only been one successful male at SFA Gardens, CK3, and it has a tendency to bloom too early. However, global production is increasingly moving to all female orchards with pollen applied by ATV-mounted blowers or by hand at a considerable cost of about \$1,000 per acre.

What about U.S. competition? Near us in the South is the 160-acre planting near Auburn, Alabama. California is the big supply horse far to our west, but the only other significant golden variety is Sungold, which has limited acreage in California, and the production results are not yet in. Sungold is a New Zealand Zespri proprietary variety and not available even for trialing. That

said, golden kiwifruit prefers a humid environment and tends to shrivel in the dry, high-sun climate of California. The results of expensive high-shade and misting strategies are not yet proven. Add in the high cost of land and water, and California seems a less attractive location. Finally, we have six new varieties out of U. S. Department of Agriculture quarantine via our collaboration with Miko Asia, and we can now say the varietal picture is getting brighter.

With Malcolm back from a week of training in New Zealand and the Chile trip behind me, there's much to be done. We have an epic year ahead. Six good-sized test plots are in place, and the forecast for the crop we have this year looks promising.



Nacogdoches Naturally Receives Grant for Outdoor Education

By Elyce Rodewald

Texas children and families will have enhanced opportunities to explore the state's natural resources, thanks to \$1,585,400 in 36 grants awarded this year through the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department's Community Outdoor Outreach Program. These grants support community-based outdoor recreation programs and activities, such as camping, hiking, fishing, hunting, kayaking and more.

This year's recipients include SFA Gardens for its award-winning outdoor education program. Nacogdoches Naturally offers afterschool environmental education,

outdoor skills, archery instruction, a summer day camp, and weekend family programs to participants from the Nacogdoches Boys and Girls Club and local community.

CO-OP grant-sponsored programs encourage participants to explore the best of Texas outside and discover why life truly is better outdoors.

The TPWD established the CO-OP in 1996 to help introduce underrepresented audiences to environmental education, conservation and outdoor recreation programs. The program is authorized by the Texas Legislature through the department's

budget as a specialized component of the Texas Recreation and Parks Account program. Grants range from \$5,000 to \$50,000 and may be used to pay for supplies, travel, training, food and personnel costs.

CO-OP grant funding is available to tax-exempt organizations within Texas. During the past 23 years, more than \$20,733,490 has been awarded in the state to assist in this effort.

To learn more about Nacogdoches Naturally, contact Elyce Rodewald at (936) 468-1832 or erodewald@sfasu.edu.

Green Time vs. Screen Time

By Jocelyn Moore



As a mom, outdoor educator and former 10-year-old fort builder, I understand how important it is to get outside. We live in a time when it has never been more important for humans of all ages to engage with nature. Meanwhile, it is increasingly easy to stay inside the

various boxes we visit from day to day, usually in front of one of the multitude of screens we cannot seem to live without.

This struggle of green time versus screen time is real, especially for today's youth. This problem is not unique to our home lives. As education increasingly focuses on science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics, I'm concerned that much of this hands-on learning will be spent inside and often accompanied with a tablet. I would love to see educators take STEAM outdoors, where all the experiential and collaborative learning is immediately enhanced. Recent studies point toward the health benefits of time spent outdoors in relation to our mental, physical and spiritual health. Researchers also have demonstrated that increased time spent in nature will improve learning, academic performance and student behavior. The book "Last Child in the Woods" by Richard Louv is a must-read for anyone with an ounce of interest in this life-changing subject.

I am so proud to be part of the education team at SFA Gardens that fosters curiosity and engagement with nature through hands-on, experiential learning. Every outdoor program we do with kids — whether it is an afterschool club, field trip or summer camp — is a wonderful reminder of the need for all of us to get outside!



Ruby Mize Miniature

By Anne Sullivan

One morning in late April, my dog, Frances, was leading me through the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden on our morning walk through SFA Gardens. While on the trail, something pink caught my eye. I walked back to find the prettiest little pink azalea flowers I've ever seen.

Now let me confess something, and please don't hate me. I'm not a huge fan of regular, old azaleas or pink. And a little pink goes a long way with me. I also agree with a friend's husband



who used to say about azaleas, "If you leave town on the wrong weekend, you'll miss 'em." However, I have become a huge fan of deciduous azaleas in my short tenure at SFA Gardens, and the little pink-blooming evergreen on the trail turned my head. I thought, "I have to have one or two."

At the office that afternoon, Barb Stump came in and identified the flower as Fujimori, a Satsuki type azalea, meaning fifth month. She referred me to SFA Gardens volunteer Sherrie Randall for further clarity. I learned *Rhododendron* 'Fujimori' produces purplish,

pale pink, somewhat spidery flowers on a very compact evergreen azalea with a neat rounded habit blooming late in the season. The ones in Ruby Mize just started to bloom the first week in May while most others were fading fast. The delicate, but distinct, narrow, pale pink petals, about half the size of those on a regular azalea are what captured my attention.

Sherrie said she might be able to take a cutting from Ruby Mize and propagate one for me, but she also told me where I could locate one if I wanted to order the plant now.

Almost Eden, a plant nursery in Merryville, Louisiana, often shares plants with Dawn Stover at SFA Gardens and includes Fujimori on its list of bonsai starter plants. Fujimori is a great bonsai starter due to its diminutive size; in fact, the compact habit of the azalea lends itself well to the garden and landscape, as well as to bonsai. Bonsai is the art of aesthetic miniaturization of trees and plants in containers. A bonsai plant isn't a dwarf plant, but instead is equal to the full-size plant. The main idea is to create a tree, plant or landscape in miniature.

Fujimori grows to about the same height as its width, which is about 18 to 24 inches. It grows well in acidic soil in partial, filtered or light shade in zones 5a-8b, attracting pollinators and resisting deer. I can't wait to get one or two of my own. I have a fondness for all things miniature, and the Fujimori is pretty in pink and pretty darn perfect.



Weather Wisdom

By Jordan Cunningham

During the week of our spring plant sale last year, it was warm and spring-like, and the mulberries were fruiting. However, this year, we had a few nights where the temperatures dropped to almost freezing.

As we scrambled to save our more tender plants, I tried to remember the old saying about there being no chance of frost if a certain tree was blooming. Was it a fir tree, or maybe a pecan? Unfortunately, no weather saying, whether fact or fiction, could save us from 32 degrees.

Even with today's technology, we struggle to predict the weather. Before we had cellphones, we had to rely on our own observations to foresee it, which led to rhymes, folklore and predictions passed down between generations. Some of these are just fun to repeat, but a few of them actually hold water.

One that might sound familiar is, "Pink sky at night, sailors' delight. Pink sky in the morning, sailors' warning." This saying uses the timing of the color of the sky to predict rain. This saying's truth is debatable depending on whether it is the western or eastern sky that shows those fabulous shades of pink. However, most people believe this saying to be true.

A rhyme I have not heard before deals with the type of summer we will have. "Swallow nesting high, summer will be dry. Swallow nesting low, safely reap and sow." I can't say if this is 100% true, but I will tell you I am now paying more attention to swallows. I would like to know what kind of summer SFA Gardens will have. It's unlikely that swallows can predict the weather for an entire season, but there is some evidence that animals can sense when rain is on the way.

The saying I grew up with is, "If the cows are lying down, rain is coming soon." There are a few different versions of this one. For example, the cows may be at the fence or making more noise than usual. Animals are a bit more sensitive to falling air pressure than humans, and that can cause them to become irritable or noisy.

This saying gave me something to worry about this year: "If it thunders in February, it will freeze on the same day in April." In East Texas, we had a lot of thunder in February. Thankfully, now that April has passed we can confidently say

Continued on Page 8 »

this prediction is not true, at least not here. Maybe up north this is a more commonly accepted saying. We had plenty of strange weather this year, but if we had as many freezes in April as we had days with thunder in February, that would be incredibly unusual.

There are plenty of other fun sayings like, “A year of snow, a year of plenty.” This one is definitely true. Longer or colder winters give us better flowers and fruiting on many of the plants we love, like magnolias and fruit trees.

Have you heard, “You can gauge the temperature by listening to the number of cricket chirps?” Someone did some serious research on this and found that counting the

number of chirps in 14 seconds then adding 40 will give you the air temperature. I have yet to try it.

Another prediction people repeat is, “Dew on the grass, rain will never come to pass.” This saying is only true in humid places like East Texas. In drier climates, morning dew is a sign that rain will come later in the day.

Among weather channels, radar apps and old words of wisdom, we are doing our best to try and guess what Mother Nature will bring us today. But this is Texas after all, and the weather constantly changes. My favorite Texas weather saying is, “If you don’t like the weather, just wait a minute, it will change!”

Propagating Deciduous Azaleas

 By Dawn Stover



Rhododendron ‘High Tide’ blooms in the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden.

Deciduous azaleas are becoming more and more popular in southern gardens, and our own collection is maturing into something beyond spectacular. If you had the good timing to visit the Gayla Mize Garden this spring, I’m sure the spicy fragrance greeted you just before the brilliant explosion of colors caught your eye.

I’ve been toying around with propagating deciduous azaleas for a while, but I have only recently begun to focus seriously on successful propagation techniques as their popularity increases with our visitors and plant sale patrons. They are not the easiest plants to propagate and are certainly far more difficult to reproduce than their Asian evergreen cousins.

Judging by their modest availability in the trade and online, deciduous azaleas are not impossible to propagate, only tricky. And by tricky, I mean there are some unique steps seasoned nursery folks employ to successfully reproduce these beacons of spring. Longtime friend of the gardens and consummate nurseryman Maarten van der Giessen of Semmes, Alabama, shared his steps to success

with us in a conference we hosted a few years ago. I’ve largely followed his tips, but have often been derailed by the details involved with aftercare. This year, there were no diversions to protocol, and we enjoyed the most success in all the years I’ve been attempting to reproduce these particular plants.

First, timing is critical. Timing is the most important factor in any success to vegetative propagation, but it is vital for difficult-to-root plants like deciduous azaleas. These plants root best in the short window between softwood cuttings and semi-hardwood cuttings. Most perennials are rooted with softwood cuttings, meaning stems have pushed new growth but have not become stiff. You have to catch deciduous azaleas in a state between soft and semi-hardwood. I like to explain it this way — if you can bend the tip of the stem over and it is so pliable that it doesn’t break, it’s too soon for cuttings. If the stem is still bright green and can be snapped like a crisp green bean when bent, it’s the right time to propagate.

Cut material from plants first thing in the morning, place immediately in a plastic bag and spritz with water. Do not let your cuttings dry out at any point. If you are not able to process them right away, place them in the refrigerator or a cooler with ice. I prefer long cuttings, at least 4 to 6 inches of the stem end. I make a cut right below the bottom node and pull off the first two sets of leaves. Cut back the upper leaves just a bit in order to reduce water stress.

Stick cuttings upright in a well-drained potting medium, using a mixture of 50% potting soil and 50% medium grade perlite, in deep-celled trays. I also use a weak solution of rooting hormone, but Margie Jenkins, owner of Jenkins Nursery and the first woman inducted into the Louisiana Agriculture Hall of Fame, uses no hormone at all. Propagules are then placed

in intermittent mist until rooted. Rooting can take between four and six weeks. Once plants are pulled from the mist, they should be fed a solution of dilute fertilizer until late summer. At that point, plants need to stop pushing top growth and rest for the winter.

Here is the next critical lesson I've learned: do not pot plants up once they are rooted. They are best left outside for the winter in the pots or trays they were propagated in. I've lost more deciduous azaleas to premature potting than I care to admit. This last winter, I kept all of the propagated

material outside, covered with frost cloth when temperatures dipped below freezing and had the most successful crop I've ever enjoyed. It will take a year for plants to grow big enough for the plant sale, but with good protocol under my belt, we're set for the future.

Steps to propagating

1.

Deciduous azalea stems should snap like a crisp green bean when they are ready to root.



This wax myrtle stem demonstrates softwood. The tip can be pulled over without snapping.

2.



Cut stems right below the node – the point where the leaf attaches to the stem.

3.



Cuttings should be about 6 inches long, the lower leaves stripped, and the upper leaves cut back by about a third.

4.



Cuttings are placed in a well-drained potting medium under intermittent mist.

5.



Cuttings that were allowed to vernalize outside during winter were potted the following spring.

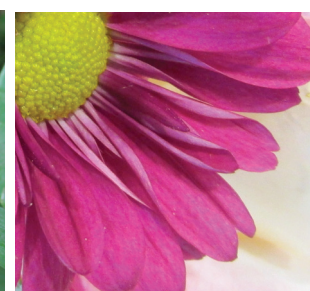
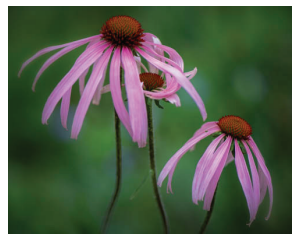
Lifelong Learning

By Elyce Rodewald

One key to a long, happy life is keeping the brain challenged and stimulated with lifelong learning. Nancy Merz Nordstrom, author of “Learning Later, Living Greater: The Secret for Making the Most of Your After-50 Years,” has called lifelong learning a “health club for your brain.” It promotes social interaction, develops our natural passions and abilities, helps us adapt to change, and leads to a more enriching and fulfilling life.

Lifelong learning can take many forms, such as volunteering, participating in community service, traveling and taking noncredit academic courses. Another great option is attending an SFA Gardens Saturday Seminar. Banish those memories of cramming for final exams, stressing over a project or staying up all night to finish a final presentation. Sign up for a garden seminar instead, and feed your passion for gardening and all things horticulture in a fun, friendly and stress-free environment.

Dr. Tom Willis, a retired physician and experienced general photographer, recently shared his passion for flower photography with an enthusiastic group at the PNPC at a Saturday Seminar titled, “Photographing Flowers.” He shared technical information about focal length, shutter



Lifelong learners participated in a photography seminar and took the above images.

speed and editing techniques, as well as practical information about what to pack in your camera bag when shooting in the field. He provided a stunning array of cut flowers for participants to photograph indoors, followed by a foray outdoors to explore the endless photography possibilities at the PNPC.

The flower photographers left

the workshop inspired to take more photographs and armed with new knowledge, techniques and confidence. I hope you will join an enthusiastic group of lifelong learners at a future garden seminar. Take your brain to the “health club” for an enjoyable workout with other passionate gardeners. I promise, no pain and lots of gain!

Mistflower: A Survival Story

By Jordan Cunningham



During summer 2010, my family sold our house three months before our new house was ready for us to move in. The result? Our family spent the summer camped out on the floor of my grandparents’ house with most of our things in storage down the road.

Before we left our old house of 16 years, my mom not so carefully plunked a handful of her favorite plant into a bucket of soil

and to grandmother’s house we went. That little plant survived a hot Texas summer in a plastic bucket in my grandparents’ yard. We planted a sad but still-living little sprig in our new yard a few weeks after we moved in, feeling hopeful.

Today that half-dead sprig has spread to fill two flowerbeds in my parents’ front yard. My dad mows it to the ground every year,

and every year it comes back, sprawling over the porch and sidewalk, threatening to drown nearby plants. In the spring and summer, it attracts all sorts of pollinators and a host of butterflies. Now it has grown to be more than five times the size of the original plastic bucket it once called home!

This powerful survivor is *Conoclinium dissectum* or Gregg's mistflower. A faithful returning perennial, it requires little care to grow and flourish. Gregg's mistflower is native to Northern Mexico, as well as Texas, New Mexico and Arizona. While it has never caused us any trouble, it is considered invasive in some gardens because it can spread so fast. However, mistflower has some good qualities. In addition to its fabulous lime foliage, its small, soft, fluffy flowers are plentiful and attract bees and butterflies. The almost weed-like qualities of mistflower make it a hardy plant, drought tolerant and good for hot summers in full sun. It provides steady color when other flowers drop from the heat. In fact, it flowers from early spring until early fall with



Mistflower is planted on each side of our porch. It is not in bloom yet, but the bright green foliage stands out in our yard looking soft and summery.

about a 2-foot height and an indeterminate spread. You can trim it back to keep it in control during its season. In our garden, we let our mistflower grow as it pleases, enjoying its color as well as its beautiful visitors. Goodness knows we owe our tough little plant for forcing its ancestor to survive in a bucket all summer.

A Very Special Thank You

By SFA Gardens staff members

We would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to Kasi Dickerson, senior marketing communications specialist at SFA's University Marketing Communications, for her patience and expertise in designing the layout of our quarterly newsletter.

She takes our articles and pictures and works her magic, producing a cohesive, attractive newsletter for our SFA Gardens members and others to enjoy each summer, fall, winter and spring. Thank you, Kasi, for being an important part of the SFA Gardens team!

Upcoming Events



JUNE 22: PROPAGATION

Join Dawn Stover, SFA Gardens research associate, to learn the secrets of successfully starting your garden plants from seeds and cuttings from 9 a.m. to noon at the PNPC. The cost is \$25 for SFA Gardens members and \$35 for nonmembers.



JULY 11: THERESA AND LES REEVES LECTURE SERIES

Enjoy learning the "Tips and Tricks for Planting the Right Tree in the Right Way in the Right Spot" from Jonathan Judice of Twinwood Farm.



AUG. 8: THERESA AND LES REEVES LECTURE SERIES

Listen to Jordan Cunningham, SFA Gardens greenhouse technician, explain "The Life and Times of a Nursery Worker: Propagation, Production and Morale."



SEPT. 12: THERESA AND LES REEVES LECTURE SERIES

Learn from Heather Thormahlen, territory manager of Treetown USA in Houston, on "Nature's Bounty for Home and Business – Using Natural Vegetation for Wreaths, Garlands and Table Decorations."

The free lecture series events will begin at 7 p.m. in the Brundrett Conservation Education Building. A drawing for plants from SFA Gardens will follow.

For more information, contact SFA Gardens at (936) 468-4129 or 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



Pineywoods Camps "Think Outside!"

Recipient of the Keep Nacogdoches Beautiful Sustainability Award

