

Azalea City News

Valdosta, Georgia receives designation

By Kathy Brunot—Valdosta, Georgia

Valdosta, Georgia, has long been called an “Azalea City” and this motto was even incorporated in the city’s logo.

A city employee by the name of R.J. Drexel, who later became the first city park superintendent, was instrumental in propagating and promoting the planting of azaleas in the 1940s and 1950s. He had a desire to make the parks in the city so beautiful that Valdosta would be a more interesting place to live.

Interestingly enough, Georgia adopted the azalea as its state wildflower in 1979. Both native and cultivated azaleas can be seen in landscapes throughout the city, blooming between March and August.

In 2000, a committee was formed by citizens of Lowndes County seeking to establish a spring festival that showcases the beauty of the azaleas planted throughout the community. On March 17, 2001, the first-ever Valdosta-Lowndes County Azalea Festival was born, attracting between 8,000 and 10,000 people to beautiful Drexel Park.

Drexel Park has been the location of the Azalea Festival ever since. The community recently celebrated its 7th Annual Azalea Festival, which became the appropriate time to announce Valdosta’s selection as a certified “Azalea City” by the Azalea Society of America.

The Azalea Festival continues to grow bigger and better with each passing year. The 2005 festival saw nearly 35,000 participants over the two-day festival. A highlight of last year’s festival was the planting of a special hybrid azalea named the ‘Spirit of Valdosta’ in Drexel Park. The ‘Spirit of Valdosta’ azalea will be available for sale to area residents later this year. The city hopes to see many of these azaleas throughout its neighborhoods and parks.

The city has nine active garden clubs that promote beautification efforts. One of our local women’s clubs, the Azalea City Women’s Club, has adopted a project of planting azaleas along a multi-purpose trail that traverses a 2.7-mile section of our community.

The trail, appropriately named the Azalea City Trail, crosses a portion of Valdosta State University Campus and Drexel Park, both of which showcase an abundance of azaleas. This trail is widely used by the community and allows citizens to enjoy the beautiful flowers.

The city will continue to look for ways to promote and appreciate the beauty that the azalea is known for in the community.

Editor’s Note: Valdosta, Georgia became the seventh ASA certified Azalea City on March 10, 2007. For a complete listing of Azalea Cities visit the ASA Web Site at www.azaleas.org.



▲ Azalea City Committee Chairman Joseph E. Schild, Jr., left, and ASA President Robert “Buddy” Lee, right, presented Mayor Joey Seeber of Tyler, Texas, with a framed Azalea City designation on March 30, 2007.

Photo Bill Miller

Tyler, Texas named official Azalea City

Courtesy of the Tyler Morning Telegraph

The Azalea Society of America says Tyler is one of the best cities in the nation to showcase and promote azaleas.

Because of this, the national group designated Tyler an official Azalea City.

After submitting an application emphasizing the annual Azalea & Spring Flower Trail, the city learned in December that it had become the nation’s fourth Azalea City.

The ASA held its national convention in Nacogdoches and many of its members came to Tyler on Friday, March 30, 2007, for the presentation ceremony.

Azalea City Chairman **Joe Schild** said Tyler’s application left no doubt that it met criteria.

“It was so beautiful and well thought-out,” he said. “Ya’ll did your homework.”

Mayor Joey Seeber said the designation confirms what residents have long known — that Tyler is a beautiful city.

After the ceremony, ASA President **Buddy Lee** said Tyler will be featured on the ASA Web site and its newsletter and in information sent to thousands of horticulture writers.

ASA established the Azalea City program in 2004 to certify cities that promote azaleas.

Chamber of Commerce and tourism officials (in Tyler) say azaleas annually attract tens of thousands of visitors.