

Azalea City News

Nacogdoches Azalea Trail begins March 10

The 14th annual Nacogdoches Azalea Trail ushers in springtime in East Texas March 10 through April 7 with a mixed bouquet of new events and mainstay favorites.

The centerpiece of the Azalea Trail is the 25 miles of self-guided driving routes that meander through the city and include the stunning Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden—the largest in the state of Texas.

Each trail begins at the Visitor Center, located at 200 E. Main St. in historic downtown Nacogdoches. Color-coded signs mark the routes, and maps are available at the Visitor Center. Nacogdoches, the oldest town in Texas, is located about 150 miles north of Houston via U.S. Hwy. 59.

“The excitement surrounding our Azalea Trail is really building as we make final plans for the special events and our residents prepare their gardens for the azaleas big annual debut,” said Lindsey Mathews, meeting and event coordinator of the Nacogdoches Convention & Visitors Bureau.

The Azalea Trail officially kicks off with the annual Azalea Trail Symposium from 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., Saturday, March 10 at the Stephen F. Austin Agriculture Building. The symposium focuses on ensuring the health of your home azalea gardens by presenting ways to use lost-cost efficient watering systems. The symposium is sponsored by the Texas chapter of the ASA.

The horticultural and artistic talents of local gardening enthusiasts will be on display at a floral design exhibit from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, March 24, at The Cole Art Center at The Old Opera House, 329 E. Main St. Unique floral arrangements featuring azaleas and other native plants will be included in the exhibit.

Entries in the sixth annual Azalea Trail Photography Show will be on display from 12:30 to 5 p.m., Tuesday through Sunday, March 24 through April 4, at The Cole Art Center at The Old Opera House, 329 E. Main Street. The contest is sponsored by *The Daily Sentinel* and judged and exhibited by the Nacogdoches Photography Club. Cash prizes will be awarded for the top 3 entries.

The Little Princess Garden Party in the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden returns on Saturday, March 31. Introduce your favorite little princess (or prince) to the beauty and joy of the garden at its most splendid time of year. Dress her up in her favorite princess or garden party outfit to enjoy refreshments, party favors, entertainment and crafts. Tickets are \$20 and seating is limited.

The Nacogdoches Main Street Sidewalk Sale will take place Saturday, March 31 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Downtown stores will be offering a variety of unique finds, great deals, and specialty items all right at your fingertips.

Hundreds of “bugs” will invade Nacogdoches on Saturday, March 31 from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. for the annual “A Blooming Good Volkswagen Show” in downtown Festival Plaza. Admission is free.

Sprint into spring on Saturday, April 14 with the all-new Running of the Blooms 10K. Walk, jog, or run along a trail framed by beautifully-manicured lawns, nationally-recognized gardens and historic landmarks. The run begins at 7:15 a.m. in downtown Nacogdoches. Be sure to register online at www.active.com.

For more information about Azalea Trail events or to schedule a group tour, call 888-OLDEST-TOWN or visit www.nacogdochesazaleas.com.

Palatka Gears Up for Azalea Festival

Dating back to the 1930s, the Florida Azalea Festival in Palatka, Florida, is one of the state’s oldest festivals. The festival, coinciding with the blooming of the azaleas, takes place every year on the first weekend of March.

Most of the festivities take place in Downtown Palatka, but a large concentration of azaleas in the Ravine Gardens State Park also draw a crowd. Historic Lemon Street houses vendors, arts and crafts booths, as well as entertainment venues. Other activities include a beauty pageant, golf tournament, and parade. The event is conducted by the Palatka Main Street program.

Tyler Azalea Trail celebrating 53 years

The 53rd Annual Tyler Texas Azalea Trail starts March 23 and runs until April 8. The trails feature beautiful yards groomed to perfection as well as plenty of scheduled events.



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E-mail vze1onzd@verizon.net or
mail address changes to:

Carol Flowers, ASA Secretary
700 New Hampshire NW, Apt. 1011
Washington, D.C. 20037

Two trails, the Dobbs and Lindsey trails, both start at the intersections of South Broadway and Houston Streets just south of the Smith County Courthouse. These trails soon split and meander through beautiful old residential neighborhoods south of downtown. The trails are easy to find because there are signs for them on Broadway Avenue.

Azaleas were introduced to Tyler in 1929 by Maurice Shamburger, one of the city's early nurserymen. Pleased with results of a test garden of azaleas, Shamburger shipped the colorful plants here by the boxcar loads from Georgia.

After completing his garden in 1929, Shamburger discussed the beautification potential of azaleas with Mrs. Sara Butler of the *Tyler Courier Times Telegraph*. Mrs. Butler not only encouraged Shamburger to promote azalea plantings in the city, but planted a number of bushes at her own home on Charnwood St.

That home site, along with several other gardens on Lindsey Lane, soon became springtime showplaces with their colorful azalea blooms, and Tylerites began buying the plants by the thousands. Some of the thick, towering azaleas at older homes on the Trail date back to the 1930s and 1940s.

By 1960, the blooming azaleas were attracting much attention, and that year the Chamber of Commerce established a marked route. The first trail featured about 60 homes on a five-mile route.

The trail was an instant success. Within two years it had expanded to 75 homes and was attracting 15,000 visitors. By 1964, 25,000 people a year were coming to see the azaleas. In 1986, it expanded to two miles and as of 2004; the Azalea Trail stretches eight miles and attracts more than 100,000 visitors to Tyler.

Call for Articles

The Azalean needs more good articles about azaleas, their care, and their use in the landscape. Ideas for topics include:

- Articles describing new public gardens or special azalea collections being created in your area.
- Descriptions and photographs of Society members' gardens.
- Current research on azaleas.
- Information about azalea festivals and sales.
- Historic garden restoration stories.
- Articles about noteworthy azalea hybrid groups or new species or cultivar introductions.

Articles should be submitted as Microsoft Word documents. Illustrations are highly encouraged and should be at least 4 x 6 inches at 300 dpi resolution. Submit materials to:

Preston & Bonnie Cooley, Editors
PO Box 627
Ladson, SC 29456
E-mail: theazalean@gmail.com.

The homeowners make the trail the success it is. They regularly increase their azalea plantings and spend countless hours making sure their yards are spotless for the annual visitors.

The trail has been featured in numerous newspapers and magazines, including *Southern Living* and *Texas Highways*, drawing visitors from all over America.

For more information about the Tyler Azalea Trail call 800-235-5712 or visit www.tylerazaleatrail.com.

Valdosta Set to Celebrate Azaleas

The 2012 Valdosta-Lowndes Azalea Festival will be held on Saturday and Sunday, March 10 and 11 in Valdosta, Georgia.

Attendees from all over the Southeast will enjoy one of our area's beautiful parks filled with more than 140 vendors, three stages of entertainment, a huge food court, a 5K race, a 1 mile fun walk/run, and a KidZone with a water-ball ride, frisbee chasing k-9's, inflatable attractions, a children's train ride, pony rides, a rock wall, a live tiger presented by Tiger Stripes Animal Sanctuary, carriage rides, and Humane Society pet contest.

Other areas of the park will feature a classic car and bike show (motorcycles on Sat., cars on Sun.), a mechanical bull ride, racing pigs, a plant sale by Wiregrass Technical College, roaming clowns and jugglers, a euro-bungee ride, and a whole lot more. This event has become a regional Festival attracting vendors and attendees from all over the Southeastern United States. We're delighted that we can offer this and so much more with no admission charge.

For decades, Valdosta, Georgia, has been known as "The Azalea City" because of its luxuriant plantings of azaleas that provide mounds of beautiful blooms in the spring. In March of 2000, resident Joanne Griner met with three employees of the Valdosta-Lowndes County Conference Center and Tourism Authority who believed like her that the often-heard "We should have an azalea festival" was an idea whose time had come.

Griner, Hilda Seymore, Beverly Pitzing and Andrea Cole began to recruit other "do-ers" in the community with event-production experience: Randall McClellan, Lena Bosch, Martha Gibson, Patsy Giles, Suzannah Patterson and Cheryl Marshall. Others came on board to form a grass-roots committee to apply for incorporation and tax-exempt status, enlist sponsors and develop events and activities to attract the public.

On March 17, 2001, the first-ever Valdosta-Lowndes Azalea Festival was born, attracting 10,000 people to beautiful Drexel Park. The park is named for a city employee who was instrumental in propagating azaleas and promoting their planting back in the 1940s and 1950s. Each following year has seen the addition of activities and expansion of festival hours. Azalea Festival 2005 saw nearly 35,000 folks enjoy circus acts, arts and crafts, music, food, KidZone, road races and more from Saturday through Sunday afternoon.

For more information about the festival, call 229-269-9381 or visit www.azaleafestival.com.