

2015 Convention

Texas Forest Country – Azalea Trails and Gardens

Connie Cottingham and Mike Sikes, Athens, Georgia

In March, ASA Members converged in the Zone 8b Texas Forest Country for the 2015 National Azalea Society Convention. Thursday night we boarded the busses for a reception, plant sale, and talks at the new Ina Brundrett Conservation Education Center in the Pinewoods Native Plant Center. We took busses to most events, and chatting with folks while waiting on and riding the buses turned out to be one of the best ways to meet new people. At Pinewoods, David Creech, Director of the Stephen F. Austin State University's SFA Gardens, introduced us to the area and the SFA Gardens, which are seven distinct gardens. It was good to



Jo Anne Sallom arriving in style.

that graced the Fall 2014 cover of this journal were in full bloom and much photographed. Mother Nature did not follow our schedule and decided not to arrange for

the garden's over 7,000 azaleas to be in full bloom while we were visiting, but there were some azaleas in bloom and the deciduous magnolias were in full glory. It was a treat to hear about the gardens during a tour led by Barbara Stump, since she was so instrumental in the development of this garden. Barbara must have made a mad dash to get home after the tour, to meet the group at her historic home and beautiful gardens for lunch before touring the garden of Mary Beth and Jim Haygood.

Many of us took the





Above: Donna and Ronnie Palmer speak with Dr. David Creech.
Below: Barbara Stump leading a tour.



AUTUMN FIRE™ ‘Roblez’ PPAF to everyone attending. Buddy Lee and David Creech conducted the plant auction, which included some lively bidding.

Saturday was a day of touring mainly private gardens, starting with the Furniss garden, a well-landscaped home surrounded by rolling pastures. The Gayla Mize Garden, a forest garden showcasing many understory trees as well as deciduous azaleas, is one of the newest additions to the SFA Gardens. We wandered the extensive trails there before heading to the Pineywoods Center for lunch and the plant sale. Afternoon tours included the Elliott and the Durr Gardens. Meeting Gloria Durr and experiencing her garden, built on 3-1/2 lots and around a city drainage ditch by the owners themselves over several decades, was a highlight of the trip. What an amazing lady and garden!

On Saturday night the awards ceremony was held at historic

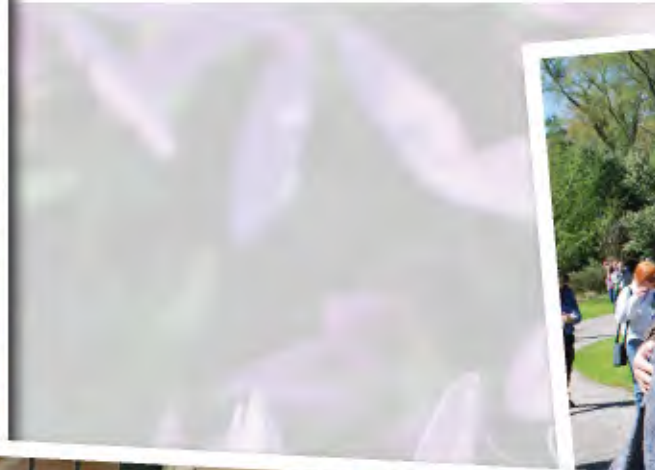
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time on our own to discover the restaurants in Nacogdoches; a few of us became regulars at The Liberty Bell downtown.

On Friday evening, Ronnie Palmer of Azalea Hill Gardens & Nursery in Arkansas explained Huang azaleas. Instead of a name, Huang azaleas use a numbering system in which every digit has a meaning. He also discussed the azaleas of Earl Sommerville of Georgia, and Satsuki azaleas. Buddy Lee spoke about deciduous azaleas and new Encore azaleas, then gifted an Encore®



Mrs. Durr and Miss Margie. Photo by Rick Bauer.



Plant Sale



Vincent Ciolino with Margie and Mark Jenkins.



Barbara Stump and Dave Nanney.



Gathering at Barbara Stump's home.

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Mast Hall in downtown Nacogdoches. Barbara Stump acknowledged the many people and organizations that helped to create this year's inspiring meeting, including the Nacogdoches Convention and Visitors Bureau and area garden clubs. SFA's newest assistant professor of horticulture Dr. Jared Barnes took us on a virtual PowerPoint tour of botany trips through the Southeast, including the largest population of *Rhododendron vaseyii* at Southern Highlands Reserve, and among wild miniature horses roaming Grayson Highlands, both in North Carolina.

Awards were then presented:

- John Migas, Outstanding Service Award
 - Bart Brechter, Outstanding Service Award
 - Dr. David Creech, A Special Friend of Azaleas Recognition
 - Barbara Stump, Exceptional Service Award
- Also referred to as the "Azalea Guru of East Texas" Award.*

New officers were announced:

Barbara Stump, Vice President
 Paul Beck, Treasurer
 Miles Beach, Director 2015-2017
 Bart Brechter, Director 2015-2017
 Joe Coleman, Director 2015-2017

Dave Banks, ASA webmaster, announced that **Susan Bauer** led the team of **Dave Banks**, **Paul Beck**, and **Rick Bauer** that digitized and obtained rights allowing for *The Azalean* to be online (see related story on page 7.) *The Azalean* index is online thanks to **Bill Miller**.

J Jackson read the four motions as printed in the Summer 2014 issue of *The Azalean*, and all passed without any objections.

We hope you enjoy these photos of the convention!



Mary Beth Haygood chatting before the banquet.

J Jackson and Jared Barnes stand with award winners Dr. David Creech and Barbara Stump.

