

# Azaleas 2017 – Down on the Bayou

## Thursday March 30 – Saturday April 1, 2017

### Hammond, Louisiana

*By Allen Owings—Hammond, Louisiana*

The Louisiana Chapter of the Azalea Society of America is looking forward to hosting the national convention in 2017 – “Down On the Bayou.” We will be headquartered in Hammond, LA – the Heart of Louisiana’s Florida Parishes. Hammond is located one hour east of Baton Rouge and one hour north of New Orleans. Peak azalea bloom in the Florida Parishes area is typically late March. Early blooms can begin in mid-February and there is typically azalea flower color through early May before transition begins to the summer- and fall-flowering repeat bloomers.

We will have a great time in the area with tours to historical St. Francisville, stops at local nurseries and several evenings for garden touring, plant buying, plus dining and socializing at the LSU AgCenter Hammond Research Station, home to the Margie Jenkins Azalea Garden.



Photo Allen Owings

▲ Margie Jenkins Azalea Garden at LSU AgCenter, Hammond, Louisiana.

▼ Mr. Imahara shown at Imahara's Botanical Garden.

### A Few Tour Visits

Imahara's Botanical Garden in St. Francisville is a privately owned garden developed and maintained by Baton Rouge area horticulture legend Walter Imahara. In 2003, Imahara purchased 55 acres along the backwash banks of the Mississippi River, located one mile from the historic town. He had a dream to plant a beautiful garden much like the one where he spent his childhood years, the historic Afton Villa Gardens. Azaleas, majestic live oaks, magnolias, and reflecting ponds became the images from which a “legacy garden” would be built, a gift from him and his wife to be enjoyed by all. For more information, visit: <http://imaharasbotanicalgarden.blogspot.com/>

We will also journey to the home and grounds at the historical Rosedown Plantation for a tour led by horticulturist Trish Aleshire. Now part of the



Photo Imahara Botanical Garden





Photo: Allen Owings

▲ Margie Jenkins Azalea Garden at LSU AgCenter, Hammond, Louisiana.

Louisiana State Parks, staff and volunteers work to conserve and maintain the site, conducting tours and programs to illustrate plantation life in the 1800s. In 2005, Rosedown Plantation was placed on the National Park Service List of Historic Landmarks. The gardens were the province of Martha Turnbull throughout her life. The Turnbells' honeymoon in Europe included great formal gardens of France and Italy, an influence seen in Martha's activities at Rosedown. The gardens grew out from the house over a span of many decades, to cover approximately 28 acres. In the 19th century, Rosedown was one of the few privately maintained formal gardens in the United States. For more information, visit: [www.crt.state.la.us/louisiana-state-parks/historic-sites/rosedown-plantation-state-historic-site/index](http://www.crt.state.la.us/louisiana-state-parks/historic-sites/rosedown-plantation-state-historic-site/index).

## Nursery Stops

We have been to Transcend Nursery, home of Buddy and Dixie Lee, during previous ASA national conventions in Louisiana. Join us again for their Southern hospitality and get to see Buddy's current breeding and plant development efforts. Also, for the first time, the ASA group will venture

to Buddy's new arboretum a few miles up the road. See heat- and disease-tolerant *Rhododendron* studies, new breeding efforts with Louisiana's native shrubs, and more. Also hear Dr. John Thornton share his 45 years of *Rhododendron* breeding knowledge.

Lunchtime on Friday will be spent at Bracy's Nursery ([www.bracys.com](http://www.bracys.com)) and the beautiful home and outdoor living area of hosts Randy and Regina Bracy. Bracy's Nursery started in mid-1980s and is now one of the largest wholesale production nurseries in Louisiana. We will get to enjoy both food and plants.

A stop at the home of legendary nurserywoman Margie Jenkins will conclude the afternoon of nursery visits. Margie will highlight some of her favorite plants and favorite azaleas in a "show and tell" presentation. This is not to be missed. Here we will have a dessert buffet. (Keep in mind – in Louisiana, we eat at every stop, so please pace yourself!)

## Speakers

Dr. Neil Odenwald, fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects and former director of the LSU School





▲ The majority of the sun garden plant trial area at the LSU AgCenter in Hammond was submerged under 2' of floodwaters from the Tangipahoa River August 14-15, 2016.

of Landscape Architecture, will share with all of us his love of historical Louisiana gardens, gardeners, landscaping, and design.

Plant pathologist **Dr. Mark Windham** from the University of Tennessee and **Dr. Rodrigo Valverde** from the LSU AgCenter will provide presentations. Dr. Windham will present "Growing Better Azaleas" and Dr. Valverde will discuss "Virus Identification in Azaleas."

## Entertainment

Our dinner entertainment on Saturday evening will be an encore presentation by **David Himelrick**, horticulture professor at LSU AgCenter. He will perform "**Illusions of the Mind**." What our brain "sees" is influenced by our past experiences, imagination, and associations. He will keep you guessing as he uses the power of imagination to draw an image that exists only in someone's mind!

Complete registration information and finalized details will be forthcoming in the next issue of *The Azalean*. In the meantime, please contact convention organizer Allen Owings at [aowings@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:aowings@agcenter.lsu.edu) or call 225/603-8096 (cell), 985/543-4125 (office). Email communication is preferred.

## Convention Updates

### South Louisiana—ASA 2017 Host State— Receives Record Rainfall, Flooding

August 13-15, 2016, was a trying three days in south Louisiana. From Hammond, LA westward to the Cajun Country of Lafayette, most of the area received rainfall amounts ranging from 8" to 32". Record flooding was experienced over a 20-parish region of Louisiana. But all is good! The ASA national convention is still scheduled for spring 2017! We looking forward to seeing everyone.

### More Good News from the 2016 Convention!

ASA treasurer Paul Beck notified us that the 2016 Williamsburg convention was so successful that the organizers have voted to give \$5,000 each to the ASA and the ARS. This donation will help with expenses in the coming years. Thank you, convention organizers!