

Lockerly Arboretum

By Jennifer Pollard—Milledgeville, Georgia

If you were to look at the history of Lockerly Arboretum, you will see a pattern of people. People with passion and vision.

It started with our founder, E.J. Grassmann. A civil engineer by training, he was a self-taught botanist and ornithologist. He had passion for the natural world and vision to create a horticultural laboratory in a community that he had loved and wanted to give back to.

Other passionate and visionary people have come to Lockerly over the years including Bo Edwards, Harriett Whipple, Sherrill Jones, Bill Maligns, and Jim Garner to name just a few. All of them have loved Lockerly and been passionate about caring for Lockerly and advancing our mission.

The latest person to bring their passion and vision to Lockerly is Ernest Koone. Ernest first came to Lockerly in 2018 to give a talk on native azaleas on Georgia Arbor Day. A simple conversation began that day and an idea began to take form. Ernest's passion for azaleas led to a vision for Lockerly where he could showcase the 13 azalea species that are native to Georgia, allowing them to return to their place of prominence and respect in Georgia's landscape. To date he has donated over 50 azaleas, ensuring the legacy of azaleas in Georgia. In addition to Georgia natives, the azaleas contributed include a number of Earl Sommerville's varieties.

It is unfortunate that over the past 50 or more years, we have lost track of collecting and showcasing these 13 species in public gardens across the state. It is unclear to us why this has happened. Perhaps it is loss of habitat or changes to their environment. Perhaps it is as simple as the fact that,

like anything, flowers, trees, and shrubs come in and out of fashion like shoes, art, and cars.

On 15 February 2019, we dedicated the Legacy Azalea Garden, recognizing Ernest's contribution. The long range plan is to continue to collect, not only Georgia natives, but also deciduous varieties derived from Georgia natives. This includes discovered varieties which had hybridized naturally in the wild or which were derived by hybridizers working with Georgia natives. [Photos 1-3]

The Azalea Society of America (ASA) is keenly interested in the preservation of azalea varieties which haven't necessarily entered into the commercial market and are at risk of being lost. They instituted the Legacy Project to foster the preservation of these varieties. Our current plans, in addition to the Georgia natives, are to expand our collection of the Sommerville, Strickland, and Varnadoe azaleas and to be recognized by the ASA as Legacy Gardens for these hybrid varieties.

Our horticultural legacy lies in our ability to recognize, preserve, and promote our native plants. As a nonprofit arboretum that is free and open to the public, Lockerly views it as our responsibility to showcase Georgia's treasures for the education and enjoyment of all.

Located in Milledgeville, Georgia, Lockerly Arboretum is a 50-year-old, 50-acre nonprofit arboretum, on the geologically unique Fall Line.

Lockerly Arboretum Foundation is the fulfillment of Mr. E.J. Grassmann's vision for an arboretum that would contribute to the natural beauty, cultural atmosphere, and environmental education of his community. Mr. Grassmann was the owner of American Industrial Clay Company, and

▼ Photo 1—First Azalea Legacy Garden planters (left to right): Ernest Koone, Azalea Society of America; Michael Bamford, American Rhododendron Society; Jim Pruckler, American Camellia Society.



Photo Jennifer Pollard

▼ Photo 2—First plantings at the new Legacy Azalea Garden at Lockerly Arboretum, which will preserve native azaleas and their hybrids for future generations. Plants set out with plenty of room to thrive.



Photo Rick Bauer

he founded Lockerly as a 501(c)3 organization in 1966. Lockerly has been serving the Milledgeville and Middle Georgia community as a public garden and educational resource ever since. Over the past 50 years, with the help of supporters and countless volunteers, Lockerly has:

- Become a Level II Accredited Arboretum through the ArbNet Accreditation Program;
- Become one of 19 American Conifer Society Reference Gardens in the Southeast;
- Created a collection of plants from around the world including Blue China Fir (*Cunninghamia lanceolata*), Variegated Canadian Hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*), Tall Stewartia (*Stewartia lanceolata*), Chinese Pistache (*Pistacia chinensis*), and Lacebark Elm (*Ulmus parvifolia*).
- Preserved Rose Hill, a National Register, 1852 Greek Revival home.

The Board and Staff of Lockerly are thrilled to add the Legacy Azalea Garden to this list of accomplishments! Our volunteer corps, the Dirt Diggers, are equally excited to add this collection and will have an integral role in the planting and care for the collection. It is our hope that the establishment of this garden will inspire other public gardens, arboreta, and homeowners to also create Legacy Gardens.

Lockerly specializes in three areas of programming, education, horticulture, and historic preservation.

Education

Serving approximately 5,000 children and adults each year, Lockerly's education programs are tailored for every age and embrace hands-on activities. Programs for students are in compliance with the Georgia Performance Standards as well as requirements for Eagle Scout badges and Master Gardener certifications. Participants in our programs come from area schools as well as the Boys and Girls Club; the Life Enrichment Center, a program for adults with disabilities; and home school groups. We also own a beautiful 200-acre tract in Putnam County known as the Oliver N. Worley Outdoor Education Center. It features locations to study water ecology, life sciences, ecology, and forestry as well as indoor classroom and lab space.

Horticulture

E.J. Grassmann envisioned a diverse collection of plants and trees in the Arboretum and our plantings are made with that vision in mind. Today, Lockerly boasts 50 acres of gardens, walking trails, and a pond. Our plantings feature flowering shrubs such as camellias and azalea, and a variety of trees including oaks and magnolias as well as perennials and annuals. A 1-mile nature trail is home to many mature hardwoods, including a Tall Stewartia, a small leaf Viburnum (*Viburnum obovatum*), and a Cedar Elm (*Ulmus crassifolia*), all Georgia State Champion Trees, as well as ferns, and wildflowers.

Historic Preservation

Lockerly Arboretum's beautiful Greek Revival home, Rose Hill, was built by Judge Daniel Tucker in 1852, when Milledgeville was the state capital of Georgia. [Photo 4] This magnificent treasure provides a window into 19th century life and serves as a museum, event venue, and classroom facility. Rose Hill was placed in the National Register of Historic Places in April 2017. Find out more at: www.lockerly.org

Jennifer Pollard is a native of South Georgia and a 1995 graduate of Georgia College with a BA in History. In her 20-year career she has worked in fundraising and nonprofit management for Macon Heritage Foundation (Georgia); Orchard House, Home of the Alcotts (Massachusetts); and Eastern Shore Land Conservancy (Maryland). In addition, she was a 1998 Elizabeth Perkins Fellow with the Old York Historical Society (Maine). Mrs. Pollard is a professionally recognized CFRE (Certified Fund Raising Executive), a credential she has held since 2008. She became Executive Director of Lockerly Arboretum in January 2017.



▲ Photo 3—Legacy Azalea Garden signage recognizes Ernest Koone's gift.

▼ Photo 4—Historic Greek Revival home, Rose Hill, dating to 1852, is now a museum at the Lockerly Arboretum, with classrooms and event spaces.

