

In Memory—Margie Louise Yates Jenkins 1921- 2020

Barbara Stump—Nacogdoches, Texas

We've lost a dear friend: On January 29, 2020, Miss Margie Louise Yates Jenkins died at age 98, in Franklinton, LA.^{1,2}

She had a life-long interest in growing plants, becoming a master propagator. Her early careers were in the Farmers Home Administration during World War II, then the Jenkins family dairy farm with husband Bryant Edward Jenkins from 1946 on. Along the way she developed an interest in preserving native plants near the farm. The Jenkins Farm and Nursery enlarged and prospered, and she became known as a horticultural authority. She participated in and was a featured guest speaker at work sessions and conventions of horticultural and botanical groups throughout the Gulf Coast South.

She was a master propagator of difficult species, which is how I first met her. In the early days of my assignment at the Stephen F. Austin State University Arboretum to help establish an 8-acre azalea garden, my late husband Mike and I toured public gardens across the South. We had been told to visit the Hammond Research Station in Hammond, LA. While there, we first saw the lovely lavender and purple-speckled 'Koromo-shikibu' azaleas. I asked whether they would grow in Zone 8b Nacogdoches, and the answer was "Yes, but only one person can propagate them, Miss Margie Jenkins!" We drove down the road right away to visit her. So began our many purchases of this lovely azalea, which thrives and graces 700 feet on both sides of University Drive, on the East side of the campus. For balance, we planted them on the East side frontage of the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden and the West side frontage of the Gayla Mize Garden. They repeat bloom, are evergreen, and make a lovely memory for me of a very smart, kind, and talented horticulturist and friend. In fact, they were blooming in January. Her legacy lives on both here in Nacogdoches and in her native Louisiana. (See Photo 1)



Photo David Creech

▲ Photo 1—We owe our large hedges of hundreds of *R. 'Koromo-shikibu'* (also known as "The Purple Spider Azalea") to the very green fingers of Miss Margie.

▼ Photo 2—Miss Margie in the Azalea Garden at Tyler Junior College during the day-trip to Tyler, part of the 2007 Nacogdoches ASA Convention.



Photo Leon Wacha

Not only this, but she also supported our educational efforts along the way... speaking at one of our early Azalea Trail Symposia (2008: "Easy Ways to Propagate Evergreen and Deciduous Azaleas") and attending both ASA conventions in Nacogdoches (2007 and 2015). (See Photos 2 & 3) What a fine role model for every gardening enthusiast.



Photo Barbara Stump

▲ Photo 3—Miss Margie in the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden Council Ring in Spring 2008. She was such a supporter of new gardens and arboreta. She was a speaker at that year's Nacogdoches Azalea Trail Symposium.

Her awards included the Nursery Persons of the Year by the Louisiana Association of Nurserymen (1993), James Foret Award by the Louisiana Nursery Association (2000), ASA Distinguished Service Award (2007), Florida Parishes Arena Hall of Fame Inductee (2013), and the Don Shadow Award by the Southern Nursery Association (2014). In 2018, she became the first woman to be inducted into the Louisiana Department of Agriculture Hall of Distinction.

It is truly fitting that the Margie Y. Jenkins Azalea Garden was established at the Hammond Experiment Station in 2006. The ASA convention visited it in 2017. The plaque at the entrance says so much about Miss Margie: "Margie Y. Jenkins... a person with a passion for plants and plant people." There couldn't be a more appropriate way to remember her. She was certainly a standard-setter for the rest of us to not

only enjoy plants, but also to learn about them and then share that learning as widely as possible with others.

Dr. Allen Owings, Louisiana Chapter President, offers these two ways we can help Miss Margie's legacy continue:

1. In support of Margie Yates Jenkins Scholarship Fund

Make check payable to: Louisiana Nursery and Landscape Foundation for Scholarship and Research

c/o Cari Jane Murray
P. O. Box 1447
Mandeville, LA 70470

[Write "Margie Jenkins" in memo line]

2. In support of LSU AgCenter Hammond Research Station

Make check payable to: LSU AgCenter

Hammond Research Station
21549 Old Covington Highway
Hammond, LA 70403

in support of the established Margie Jenkins Azalea Garden

[Write "Margie Jenkins" in memo line]

References and Resources

¹ For full information from official obituary see: *Times-Picayune Newspaper*, New Orleans, LA, January 31, 2020.

² Material taken from Margie Jenkins obituary on www.Legacy.com at:

<https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/name/margie-jenkins-obituary?pid=195230409>

Selected References from *The Azalean*

1. Lee, Robert (Buddy). "Azaleaphile Margie Jenkins." *The Azalean*. Winter 2003. 25(4): 84-87. [Originally appeared in *Louisiana Nursery & Landscape Magazine*. As "First Lady of Louisiana Nurseries." Fall 2002. Reprinted by permission of LN&L.]
2. Lee, Robert (Buddy). "Margie Jenkins Honored with SNA Award." *The Azalean*. Fall 2005. 27(3): 65. Award by Southern Nurserymen Association.
3. Editor. "Hammond Research Station to Establish New Azalea Garden Honoring

Margie Y. Jenkins." *The Azalean*. Fall 2006. 28(3): 59.

4. Editor. "Margie Y. Jenkins Azalea Garden Established at Hammond Research Station." *The Azalean*. Winter 2006. 28(4): 89.
5. Bracy, Dr. Regina P. "The Making of the Margie Y. Jenkins Azalea Garden." Summer 2008. *The Azalean*. Summer 2008. 30(2): 28.
6. Editor. "Another First for Miss Margie Jenkins." *The Azalean*. Summer 2018. 40(2): 46.