



NC STATE UNIVERSITY

Friends of the JC Raulston Arboretum

Newsletter

Winter 2023 – Vol. 26, No. 2



Greetings from the JC Raulston Arboretum

By Mark Weathington
Director

We were visited recently by a great group of students from the fantastic horticulture program at Spartanburg Community College in South Carolina. As I gave them my usual spiel about the

history and mission of the JC Raulston Arboretum, I emphasized it's not the stunning collection of plants we keep inside the gates of the Arboretum that makes this place so important. Rather, it's the things that leave the Arboretum – the plants we distribute and the knowledge we share – that have the greatest impact on our society. That got me thinking about the information we distribute, both formally and informally. All of you know (I hope) about our amazing educational programs onsite and online, but you may not be aware of the assistance we provide to other sources, so I took a look back at some of the citations and references we've received from recent publications.

The electronic journal *PalmArbor* from the University of California cited the JCRA for an article on the hackberry relative *Aphananthe aspera* noting that we had "... one of the larger specimens in the United States." The International Dendrology Society highlighted the JC Raulston Arboretum as one of their two featured gardens in their recently published yearbook. The Dutch publication, *Dendroflora*, used information from the JCRA for an article they published on *Helwingia*. They also proposed naming two *Helwingia* cultivars in J. C.'s honor: *H. chinensis* 'Raulston King' for the broad leaf form he distributed and *H. chinensis* 'Raulston Queen' for the narrow leaf form. A publication from the Atlanta Botanic Garden titled "Dangerous Discoveries" recounted a recent joint collecting trip to Asia. Two different *Fine Gardening* articles came from us in 2023.

I'm sure I've left out an important publication or two (it can be hard to keep track). Nevertheless, we are grateful that the information we provide is making an impact outside our gates.



JCRaulstonArboretum

Friends of the JC Raulston Arboretum Newsletter

Winter 2023 – Vol. 26, No. 2

Editors: Elizabeth Overcash and Blake Wentley

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Cover:

Daphne pseudomezereum by Maryann Debski

Daphne pseudomezereum (yellow daphne) – A native of Japan and Korea, this daphne drops all its leaves in summer and remains bare until early fall when the soft, green leaves emerge followed by bright yellow, scentless flowers from late January through March. Check it out now in the Lath House.

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Garden Updates

By Greg Paige
Director of Horticulture

Activity in the garden is never-ending. As the seasons shift, the garden flexes, grows and changes right before our eyes. Though we are a mighty 10.5 acres, there is much to see.

To keep this garden fresh for members and visitors, there is an ever-growing and unabating list of projects and areas to freshen up. A brief few highlights include the following projects.

Our spectacular Perennial Border continues to delight with multiple seasons of interest stemming from the constant evolution of colors and textures throughout the growing season. Tim Alderton, research technician, has been hard at work rearranging, planting, editing, pruning and keeping this backbone of the garden finely tuned.

Another area that is freshly green after a long, drawn-out season of brown is the newly sodded Gathering Lawn. Previously the temporary home for Mt. Raulston, you will now find freshly laid Bermudagrass rooting and spreading as I type this newsletter article. It will soon be ready for a spring filled with cloud gazing, picnics and maybe even a wedding or two.

Finally, Tim has also been busy at the entrance to the Nook. Where is the Nook you ask? It's the garden area on either side of the new path between the Perennial Border and the Finley-Nottingham Rose Garden. After much contemplation, the discovery of some extra goodies in the nursery, as well as a large *Agave* that needed to be relocated, the recipe was set. The goal was to make the entrance to the path more inviting and increase the plant palate that had become overgrown and one note. It is still young and developing, but it is a good welcome to this part of the garden and a nice makeover.

Keep your eyes peeled for future projects. We have eager volunteers and lots of creativity to share.



Forty-seven pallets of fresh sod ready to be installed on the Gathering Lawn.

A Spotlight on Chinese Sassafras

by Dennis Carey
Curator

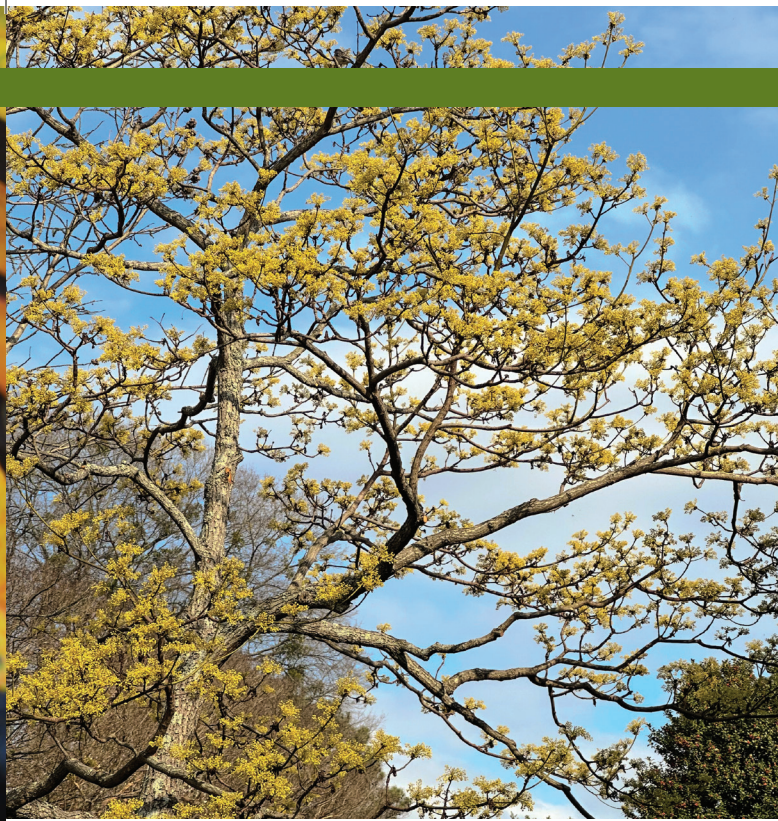
There is a special tree growing at the JC Raulston Arboretum, a Chinese relative of the United States native sassafras called *Sassafras tzumu*. Our one-and-only specimen is growing in a prominent spot in the Sunken Garden between the Ruby C. McSwain Education Center and the parking lot. Our specimen is still fairly young at just 20 years old and 25 feet tall, about one-third its eventual height.

The native range of Chinese sassafras covers the entire Yangtze river basin of southeast China. In its native China, *Sassafras tzumu* is popular as a timber tree and a landscape tree. In addition, practitioners of traditional Chinese medicine use the young leaves, pith and root bark as a cure-all in a manner similar to how Native Americans used *Sassafras albidum*. Curiously, as popular as it is in China, *S. tzumu* is rarely grown in the rest of the world.

Sassafras tzumu is a counterpart to the eastern U.S. native *Sassafras albidum*. As a garden plant, *S. tzumu* is different from *S. albidum* in several aspects. Our native species produces copious root suckers and without management spreads into an unruly thicket, whereas *S. tzumu* is a well-behaved, single-trunked tree. Both species have tiered branching although *S. tzumu* tends to grow a bit taller. Both species also have mitten-shaped leaves and nice fall foliage, but our native *S. albidum* with its yellows, oranges and reds is generally considered to be more colorful than the clear orange and yellow fall foliage of *S. tzumu*.



Sassafras tzumu showing its form and fall color as a younger tree in the Arboretum, 2007.



Clusters of fragrant yellow flowers covered *Sassafras tzumu* last winter in late February.

Both species produce clusters of fragrant yellow flowers in the spring, but *S. tzumu* blooms about a month earlier and is far more showy in bloom. Our native *S. albidum* is dioecious, requiring two plants to make seed while *S. tzumu* is at least partially hermaphroditic and can set seed by itself. The two species do not cross pollinate because they flower at different times, so hybrids are not known but represent an interesting opportunity for plant breeders. On both species, the approximately one centimeter fruit is an attractive dark blue color that is popular with birds. *S. albidum* holds the fruit on colorful red cupules while on *S. tzumu* the cupules are not showy. Chinese sassafras is best propagated by seed. We have had little luck with cuttings, whereas *S. albidum* is easily rooted from root suckers. One downside to *S. tzumu* is the tendency for late winter freezes to nip the flowers and leaves, not unlike the woes we face with deciduous *Magnolia*.

The JC Raulston Arboretum is one of the few arboreta in the U.S. to display Chinese sassafras. Other gardens include the New York Botanical Garden, Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University, Polly Hill Arboretum, Hoyt Arboretum, UC Botanical Garden at Berkeley, Sonoma Botanical Garden and Sarah P. Duke Gardens. Seedlings of our accession have been planted at Coker Arboretum in Chapel Hill and the U.S. National Arboretum in Washington, D.C., so we have had a bit of success in spreading this plant around.

The JC Raulston Arboretum acquired its specimen back in 2002 from Forestfarm Nursery of Williams, Oregon. Over the years a few other specialty nurseries in the U.S. have also offered it for sale including Piroche Plants and our local esoteric plant purveyor, Camellia Forest Nursery. However, currently there are no U.S. nurseries that appear to have it for sale.



The dark blue fruit of *Sassafras tzumu*.

True to our mission to promote plants that diversify the American landscape, the JC Raulston Arboretum has endeavored to distribute *Sassafras tzumu* to the general public and to the nursery industry. Seedlings of our *S. tzumu* were quite popular at the very first Southeastern Plant Symposium in 2019 as well as in one of our first online plant sales and in distributions to other botanic gardens. We've also given plants away in our Donor Connoisseur plant giveaway.

Please stop by the Arboretum and take a look at our Chinese sassafras. The best viewing times are February (blooms) and November (foliage) ... but it is a beautiful plant, 12 months of the year.

We at the JC Raulston Arboretum are fond of *Sassafras tzumu* and hope to encourage its spread in U.S. landscapes. JCRA Director Mark Weathington has written about *Sassafras tzumu* in the past and featured the tree on our YouTube channel a few times. Dennis Carey, curator, and Mark have also written a brand-new article about the genus *Sassafras* for The International Dendrology Society website, Trees and Shrubs Online (<https://www.treesandshrubsonline.org/>), which will be published soon. Our *Sassafras* article updates an out-of-date article with an expanded section on the history and ethnobotanical uses of the tree as well as an updated listing of places where the tree is being grown. We hope you will all check out this excellent resource.

Crape Myrtle Bark Scale

By Greg Paige
Director of Horticulture

Crape myrtle (*Lagerstroemia spp.*) is ubiquitous in the southern landscape.

You can find it planted in almost any and every situation, both home and commercial. There are many different cultivars to choose from in all shapes and sizes. It tends to be a very tough plant offering four seasons of interest. This plant has become overused in the landscape due to its toughness and availability, and nine times out of ten it is planted in the wrong situation and condemned to over-pruning and poor cultural practices. As a result of this overplanting and poor care, an exotic pest, the crape myrtle bark scale (*Acanthococcus lagerstroemiae* or CMBS), has quickly become a major issue for this popular flowering tree. And yes, we do know we've spelled "crepe" two different ways. We prefer the original referencing the crepe-like flowers, but you will most likely see "crape" used for this scale's name.

Introduced from Asia, CMBS was first reported in Texas in 2004. Since then, it has rapidly spread as far as Virginia, probably through infected plant material in the nursery trade. CMBS is a pinkish scale that produces a white waxy protective covering that grows and thickens as the scale ages. Males have wings and will fly to find and reproduce with females. Once the females produce eggs, they die leaving the eggs protected under their bodies and thick waxy coating. The females produce hundreds of eggs which hatch in the spring. Depending on the temperature, this can take place early April to mid May. The hatched stage of CMBS is called a crawler. They are pink and very small. The newly hatched crawlers will move out to new twigs on the crape myrtle and find a spot to attach and begin feeding on the phloem layer beneath the bark. Heavily infested plants will be coated with CMBS with thick layers of the waxy coating visible.

The phloem is high in sugar, and the waste produced from the feeding can attract sooty mold. This black sooty mold will also cover the stems, twigs and often the trunk of the tree as well as any surface underneath. This is very unsightly, attracts yellow jackets and can seriously reduce the vigor of the plant.

The best way to avoid CMBS begins with good cultural practices. Proper planting, good site selection, mulching, avoiding drought stress and resisting over-pruning or "crepe murder" will help keep your plants stress-free. Additionally, selecting other species to increase diversity in the garden will help reduce the number of potential hosts. If you do find CMBS on your plants, there are some control options to consider. A forceful spray of water will disrupt the insect. Fair warning, this has minimal effect and can also remove the desirable flaky bark. Horticultural oil sprays are a good mid-level defense. Treating the insect at the crawler stage is the most effective. Finally, a registered chemical treatment timed in early spring to avoid pollinators is very effective in eliminating this pest. There is much information about control measures for CMBS through the North Carolina Cooperative Extension, and consulting with a local arborist is always a good thing.



Adult crape myrtle bark scale feeding on a crape myrtle twig.



WINTER SYMPOSIUM The Obsessive Gardener

Saturday, February 17, 2024
JC Raulston Arboretum
In Person and Online

Featuring Joseph Tychonievich, Catherine Bukowski and Mike P. Gibson.

Join us for this half-day symposium with three phenomenal guest speakers who are just as obsessed with getting people excited about horticulture as we are! You are sure to leave entertained, inspired and ready to be obsessed with your spring garden. Early registration is now open.

And, don't miss the Online Rare & Unusual Plant Auction because, we know, you need more plants!



SOUTHEASTERN PLANT SYMPOSIUM

**Hosted by the JC Raulston Arboretum and
Juniper Level Botanic Garden**

Friday and Saturday, June 7 and 8, 2024
Hilton Raleigh North Hills
In Person and Online

This is your invitation for two incredible days of enlightening programming perfect for every plant lover!

2024 Speaker List is still growing but here are a few names to tickle your appetite:

- Amanda Bennett, Atlanta Botanical Garden
- Colston Burrell, Native Landscape Design and Restoration
- Janet Draper, Smithsonian Gardens
- Sam Hoadley, Mt. Cuba Center

Registration details coming soon.





Education to infinity and beyond ...

By Elizabeth Overcash
Education and
Communications Manager

Education is a core part of our mission here at the JC Raulston Arboretum. Stemming back to our earliest days we've had students using the gardens

as a classroom, volunteers working beside and learning from the best horticulturists, green industry professionals using the garden as a resource for new plants and new ideas, and our members expanding their horizons with talks delivered by guest lecturers from around the world.

Why do we do all of this? We want to share our passion for plants and connect others with the garden so they can be just as passionate about all these plants as we are! Education remains at the heart of the Arboretum as we move into the next chapter of our story. Serving as the education and communications manager, I am eager to continue our educational programming so that we remain a trusted resource for new and experienced gardeners and the green industry.

The calendar is once again filling up with programs. While our online Midweek programming has been (and continues to be) a great way of engaging people who aren't able to visit us in person, it's time to start filling the gardens with learners again. Our goal is to have programs as diverse as our visitors. We aim to reach homeowners with sprawling yards, renters with tiny windowsill planters, families raising our next generation of gardeners, plant enthusiasts hungry for the latest discoveries and industry professionals keeping on the cutting edge, just

to name a few. It's also important that we create a variety of programming because not everyone learns the same way. You'll see programs on the calendar in the classic classroom style, but also programs with hands-on activities in the garden for those who learn by doing. Further, we are incorporating more health focused opportunities because we know how much we gain from the gardens and want others to benefit from that as well. And through all of this, we will keep bringing you education in-person, online or both through hybrid programming, so you can join us whether you're across the country or right next door.

We are growing a community of learners and want everyone to be part of it! Through programs like "Intro to Gardening in the South," we are reaching out to new gardeners, new homeowners and newly relocated gardeners in our area giving them practical advice about how to create the home landscapes of their dreams. Our children's program is transforming the gardens into a classroom for area school children and giving them the opportunity to experience the outdoors in a fun, meaningful way. But it's more than just one morning education program or one school tour. It's about a deeper, lasting connection with those we interact with. This past summer, our 2019 summer education intern, Alexis Tennant, returned as our summer camp teacher! Her experience as a summer intern in college permeated into her classroom when she became an elementary school teacher for Wake County Public Schools. She created a garden for her school students to tend, taught them about worm



Bernadette Clark, bedding plant trials coordinator, sharing apples with "Friends of the Arboretum Lecture" participants.

composting and brought them on a field trip to the Arboretum. When there was a need with the summer camp program, she jumped at the chance to spend her summer with us again but this time as the lead teacher. She continues to be an important part of our community helping us reach more children and families, both here in the gardens as part of our summer camp program and in her classroom during the school year.

That's the spirit of education that we hope to continue in the coming months and years. We want to share our excitement with you and help you learn as much as you can so you're hooked on plants just like us!



2023 summer camp staff: Leah Poole, Alexis Tennant and Emily Workman.



Joy Burns, school program coordinator, helps a student hold a pipevine swallowtail caterpillar as they are learning about butterflies.

Education Updates

By Blake Wentley
Education Assistant

We are extraordinarily proud of the educational programming we produce here at the JC Raulston Arboretum. Our

education team has had an exceptionally productive year connecting people to plants through education, so here are only the highlights that we're able to fit on this page.

Our Children's Program is perhaps the most exciting of our team's successes. We managed to have a children's program on our calendar every week this year from May until "Moonlight in the Garden," providing a platform for families to inspire a love of nature in their children no matter when they're able to visit. We had eight phenomenal weeks of summer camps, all of which inspired creativity and curiosity in the little campers by providing them an opportunity to learn about the world in which they live by actually interacting with it (my niece, Lucy, thoroughly enjoyed our "Garden Critters" camp; her parents are still adjusting to the fearlessness with which she now picks up and plays with worms!). And our "Garden Storytimes" have been a huge hit, not just with the kids enjoying story and craft time in a beautiful garden setting but also with the parents discovering what a wonderful place for community interaction the JCRA can be. We ended up having to add three instances of "Winter Storytime" for early 2024 just to accommodate all the good vibes.

Our adult programming has been just as prolific, exciting and meaningful. NC State student and JCRA Education Summer Intern Allison Nidifer taught two sold-out sections of a class this summer on "Growing and Enjoying Cut Flowers," and everybody who took it could only rave about how much they learned. Our free biannual morning symposium for new gardeners "Intro to Gardening in the South" welcomed roughly 300 fledgling gardeners to the world of horticulture with lectures on soil, winter gar-

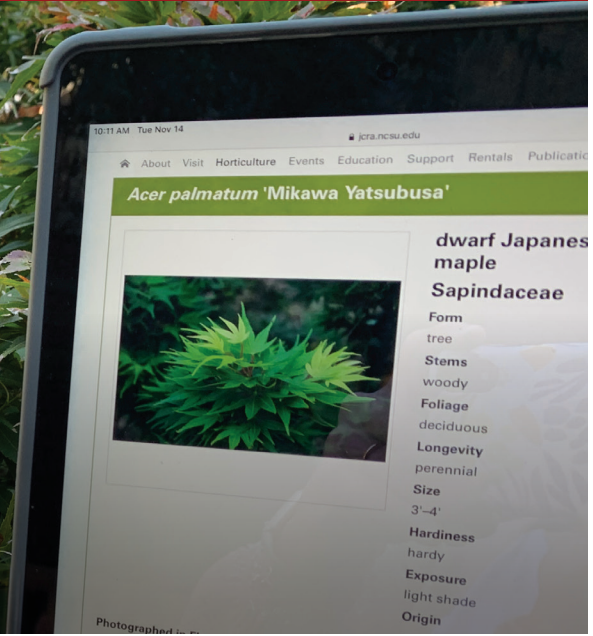
dening, and planting and pruning. The recordings of all our free programs are publicly available on our YouTube channel, so everyone has the tools they need to plan and plant for a better world. We also participated in NC State University's "Wellness Day" offering forest therapy mini-sessions, a guided garden walking meditation and other activities (all free) that encouraged mental wellness through interaction with our gardens. It never hurts to remind everyone what a wonderful mental health resource the JC Raulston Arboretum is, always has been and always will be.

Finally, in September we had a truly marvelous "Friends of the Arboretum Lecture" where we invited author and former JCRA Board Member, Diane Flynt, to discuss her new book *Wild, Tamed, Lost, Revived: The Surprising Story of Apples in the South*. Her lecture was fascinating and the supporting discussion featuring David Vernon of Century Farms Orchards and Ann Marie Thornton of James Creek Cider House was as much fun as the artisan cider and heirloom apple tasting that followed. We recorded the event for those who missed out; just make sure you have a few apples handy while you watch it – you're going to need them!

Right: Campers from "Garden Critters" camp looking for critters in the garden.



Researching Plants in Our Collection Online



By Kathryn Wall
Membership and
Volunteer Manager

In the ever-expanding world of horticulture, knowledge is power. At the JC Raulston Arboretum, we're committed to providing our members with the tools and resources they need to explore the diverse array of plants in our collection. With the vast range of species and varieties we have, the key to unlocking the world of botanical knowledge is just a few clicks away on our website (jcra.ncsu.edu).

Our website, a treasure trove of information, serves as a gateway to the magnificent flora that graces the Arboretum. Whether you're a seasoned botanist or just beginning to delve into the world of plants, our online plant collection database is designed to cater to your interests and needs.

Navigating the Plant Collection

To get started, simply visit our website at <https://jcra.ncsu.edu/horticulture/our-plants/index.php>. On the "Our Plants" page, you'll find a user-friendly interface that allows you to browse and search through our extensive plant collection. You can search for plants by common name, scientific name, plant type or even by specific garden areas within the Arboretum.

Detailed Plant Profiles

Each plant in our collection is accompanied by a comprehensive profile. These profiles provide a wealth of information including plant descriptions, characteristics, origin and growing needs. Whether you're looking for details about a particular species or need advice on how to care for a plant in your own garden, this information is invaluable. Our bed map system allows you to locate the plant so you could see it in person.

High-Quality Images

A picture is worth a thousand words, and we believe in that wholeheartedly. For many plants in our collection, you'll find images that capture the beauty and uniqueness of each specimen. These images not only aid in plant identification but also allow you to appreciate the aesthetic qualities of the flora we maintain.

The Power of Advanced Search

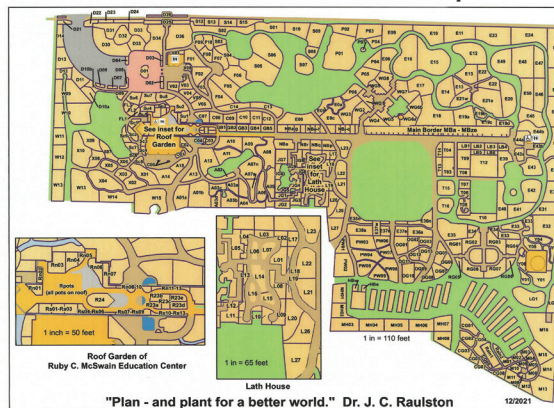
One of the most powerful tools at your disposal is the advanced search feature. If you have specific criteria in mind, such as plant size, bloom time or soil preferences, you can use this feature to filter and refine your search. This ensures that you find the exact plants that match your gardening and research interests.

Connecting with Our Community

Exploring the plant collection online is only the beginning. Don't forget to join our community for monthly in-person "Plant-lover's Tours" of the garden and weekly online gardening talks. Share your findings, ask questions and connect with fellow members who share your passion for plants. It's a fantastic way to exchange knowledge, learn from others and stay updated on the latest in the world of horticulture.

The JC Raulston Arboretum website is your portal to a world of botanical wonders. Whether you're a member or a curious visitor, our online plant collection database empowers you to research, appreciate and nurture the diverse and captivating plants that grace the Arboretum. Dive in today, and let the journey of discovery begin. Happy exploring!

JC Raulston Arboretum Bed Map



The bed map simplifies finding plant locations in the Arboretum's collection.



A Decade & Counting

By Arlene Calhoun
Associate Director

For the last decade, I've spent the first Saturday in October at the JC Raulston Arboretum Annual Plant Giveaway. I'm not alone for sure – it's an early morning start for all of us! We may feel a little sluggish at first, but the energy quickly rises when the gates open, our members start rolling in and "good mornings" are exchanged along with a few hugs from those we haven't seen in a while. I take pride in our thriving community and enjoy catching up with existing members and meeting new ones.

Staying on mission and building community are our mantras: diversify the American landscape; plant research and wild collecting; industry collaboration; connecting people with plants; expert knowledge and education – all priorities put into place by our founder, J. C. Raulston, that form a solid foundation for the Arboretum. They are top of mind and drive all that we do. They are as relevant today as they were ten years ago when I joined this amazing team and attended my first giveaway.

The Arboretum is far more than just a pretty place. We are an active part of NC State University – opening our gates for education, research collaboration and raising the bar for public horticulture. Our directors and horticulture team continue to connect with academic and horticulture experts around the world, but the biggest growth I've seen is the engagement and education of our plant-loving community led by our education team. The accessibility to our programs for both young and the not-so-young has extended well beyond anything we would have imagined a decade ago.

This Arboretum team doesn't hold back. The commitment to public horticulture and connecting people with plants is stronger than ever. We've added several new positions this past year and are looking to add a few more before spring. Our growth is directly related to the support of our members, donors, volunteers and program participants. That support has allowed us to expand our longtime goal of providing educational experiences to plant enthusiasts by providing free weekly programming with live Q&As that give direct access to our staff and expert knowledge no matter what city, county, state or country you call home. That same support and participation allows our gates to stay open and admission to be free seven days a week.

This last decade has seen daily visitation increase, and I still can't believe we have a single event that spans over seven nights and sells over 13,000 tickets across 19 states. My office is on the front of the Ruby C. McSwain Education Center and offers a front row view to the paths leading past our visitor center and the activity at our front desk. Guest services and engagement are weekly topics of discussion as we transition into my next decade.

The future is looking promising for the Arboretum as the interest in more plant-centric lifestyles becomes more mainstream, the need to interact with nature more imperative and the way in which we garden continues to evolve. It's easy to see the correlation between public gardens and life learners – there is still so much to discover, share and learn, and I am grateful for my front row seat.

Show your membership card at these locations to receive a special thank you from these local businesses that support the Arboretum!

BIG BLOOMERS FLOWER FARM

bigbloomersflowerfarm.com
275 Pressly Foushee Rd, Sanford, NC
10% off regularly priced plants.

CAMPBELL ROAD NURSERY, INC.

campbellrdnursery.com
2804 Campbell Rd, Raleigh, NC
20% discount on Campbell Road Nursery grown plants. (Sale items excluded.)

DURHAM GARDEN CENTER

durhamgardencenternc.com
4536 Hillsborough Rd, Durham, NC
20% discount off the total purchase.

FAIRVIEW GREENHOUSE & GARDEN CENTER

fairviewgardencenter.com
8224 Holly Springs Rd, Raleigh, NC
10% off total purchase. (Offer not valid on gift card purchases or consignment items. Cannot be combined with any other offer.)

GARDEN SUPPLY COMPANY

gardensupplyco.com
1421 Old Apex Rd, Cary, NC
12% off entire purchase.

GARDEN TREASURES

garden-treasures.com
3504 Edgemont Rd, Wendell, NC
10% off regular priced plants. Cannot be combined with any other discounts.

HISTORIC TREE CARE

historictreecare.com
Apex, NC
Free diagnosis & consultation based on images sent to Historic-TreeCare@gmail.com. JCRA members get second hour of work free, and discounts on 10-foot cherrybark oaks.

HOMEWOOD NURSERY & GARDEN CENTER

homewoodnursery.com
10809 Honeycutt Rd, Raleigh, NC
10% off all plant purchases.

LASTING IMPRESSIONS

lastingimpressionsleaves.com
10% off hand-cast concrete art pieces and hypertufa troughs. (Contact for a showing.)

LEAF & LIMB

leaflimb.com
511 Nowell Rd, Raleigh, NC
Free tree & shrub health assessment, not to exceed one hour (\$200 value).

MACON GARDENS

macongardens.com
2704 Burlington Mills Rd, Wake Forest
10% off regularly priced plants.

NORWOOD ROAD GARDEN CENTER

norwoodroadgarden.com
12825 Norwood Rd, Raleigh, NC
10% off regularly priced plants.

PIEDMONT FEED AND GARDEN CENTER

piedmontfeed.com/visit
4805 NC Hwy 54 W, Chapel Hill NC
10% off plants and pottery.

SIMCHOCK STONE

simchockstone.com
5404 Old Hillsboro Rd, Durham, NC
10% off all stone creations.

THE GARDEN HUT

nelsasgardenhut.com
1004 Old Honeycutt Rd,
Fuquay-Varina, NC
10% off trees and shrubs.



2024 Summer Camp Registration

Monday, January 29, 12:30 PM

Open to Arboretum members at the Family/Dual level or above.

Give the gift of membership this holiday season to the families on your list!



Why We Keep Records

By Dennis Carey
Curator

Many folks don't realize just how much time and effort the JC Raulston Arboretum staff spends generating and managing records. Every single JCRA staff member is involved in this. Why is this necessary?

As Arboretum Director Mark Weathington likes to say, "A collection of plants without records can be a beautiful garden, but only by keeping accurate records can it become a botanic garden." He also is known to say, "A plant is not 'planted' in the garden until it is watered and recorded in the database."

I like to think of our records as an extension of our mission – the JC Raulston Arboretum exists to promote plants that diversify the American landscape. To do that, we collect, evaluate and select great garden plants to distribute to the public. In order to achieve those goals, we must have a good handle on where and how plants are acquired, where and how we grow them, how to propagate them, how they perform over time and to whom we gave them. All of these things require recording data in our plant database.

Whenever I record something about our living collection in the database, I think to myself, "In a hundred years, when some researcher is poring over our records trying to track down some source or performance datum, I want them to be able to have a clear understanding of how and why we did what we did." That's a good approach for any arboretum to take.

The horticulture staff, Mark, Greg, Tim, Sophia, Bernadette and myself, along with our students and volunteers track the living collection to achieve our mission. For our wild collected plants, we record who made the collection, what type of material was collected (seed, cutting or scion) and where they were collected (latitude, longitude, altitude, environment and types of nearby plants). Once onsite, we research our plants to make sure that they are properly named, labeled and mapped. We track

how we propagate each plant and the growth history for woody plants. And when we deaccession a plant (a fancy word meaning remove from the living collection), we record why we decided to do so. Staff and volunteers also take photos of our living collection, so we can record plants visually too.

So the next time you see a JC Raulston Arboretum staff person hunched over a clipboard or a computer, remember, they are "gardening."



Volunteers Maryann Debski and John Atkinson checking plant labels and bedding maps.



One of the many bedding maps that show all the plants recorded in that section of the Arboretum.

Ruby McSwain's Legacy Helps the Arboretum's Future Flourish

By Amy Beitzel
Development Assistant

Known affectionately as "Miss Ruby,"
Ruby C. McSwain was known for her
love of flowers and gardening and for

being a generous philanthropist. Her support during the "Raise the Roof" campaign to build the education center that now bears her name has enabled the JCRA to provide some of the most impactful horticultural programming anywhere in the country. Her gift, along with the support of many other donors during the campaign completed over two decades ago, forever changed the trajectory and capacity of the JCRA.

Sadly, we no longer have Miss Ruby here to brighten the day as she did when she attended events and visited the Arboretum. Her passing in 2013 was a profound loss for the JCRA family as well as the many other organizations and individuals she supported through her friendship, advocacy and philanthropy.

Despite the loss of a dear Arboretum friend, her spirit lives on through the Ruby and Ernest McSwain Worthy Lands Trust. The trustees continue Miss Ruby's legacy of philanthropy for horticulture and education and have recently established an endowment in her honor that will play a pivotal role in advancing the daily operations for the Arboretum. Most importantly, this endowment ensures the Ruby C. McSwain Education Center will continue to provide a space for learning and engagement that can adapt and change as opportunities allow and will remain a cornerstone of our activities.

The Ruby and Ernest McSwain Worthy Lands Trust JC Raulston Arboretum Endowment not only provides meaningful financial support for the JCRA, it is also a heartfelt tribute to a truly remarkable couple. Miss Ruby's love for horticulture and her unwavering commitment to community enrichment continue to shape the very fabric of the JCRA.



Miss Ruby always brought her smiling face to JCRA events.

We are profoundly grateful to the Trust which continues to generously fund improvement projects over and above the endowment, ensuring that the Arboretum remains a beautiful and interactive space for our community. Thanks to the Trust's steadfast support, Miss Ruby's vision remains an enduring reality, and her legacy lives on through the vital work we do at the JC Raulston Arboretum.

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