



COMPOST PILE

O'ROURKE ACCEPTS HORTICULTURAL MEDALLION AWARD

Famed breeder of LSU Gold and LSU Purple Figs Honored

The Horticultural Medallion is the highest honor offered by LSHR. It is awarded to an individual for his or her long-time contributions to horticulture. Many of us have never seen this award presented, as it is awarded only upon special occasions.

Dr. Carlos Smith, County Agent for Avoyelles Parish Extension Service, made the presentation of the 2008 Horticultural Medallion Award to Dr. Ed O'Rourke at the Ira Nelson Horticulture Center, March 15, 2008. The following is his letter nominating Dr. O'Rourke.

"It is with real pleasure that I recommend Dr. Edmond N. O'Rourke for the Louisiana Society for Horticultural Research Medallion Achievement Award. Dr. O'Rourke was born and grew up in the Irish channel of New Orleans. From an early age he had a keen interest in all growing

things. Odd jobs as a kid consisted of subsistence vegetable gardening

during the depression and working in several commercial nurseries in the New Orleans area. Most of these concentrated on ornamental plant production. He acquired sweat equity and experience with such varied crops as Easter lilies, cyclamen, and camellia. His love of ornamental horticulture has continued to the present day.

"Dr. O'Rourke entered the army and served in France and Germany. During this time, he dodged bullets, repaired munitions and surveyed fruit crops and Calvado brandy in Europe. After the war, he entered the University

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LSU Purple Figs

2008 ANNUAL MEETING ENJOYED BY ALL *Back Home at the Hort Center*

Long-time LSHR members got nostalgic and confessed that being "back home" at the Ira Nelson Horticulture Center felt just right when LSHR held its 52nd Annual Spring Meeting there, March 15, 2007. A return to Jefferson Island for the event had been scheduled earlier, however various conflicts made it more convenient to hold the meeting at the traditional location.

Unperturbed by the change, members of the Society met early for coffee, juice and doughnuts, and bid briskly at profitable Plant and Silent Auctions. These events were followed at the

Lafayette Petroleum Club by a hospitality hour, buffet luncheon and a business meeting and closed with the awarding of the prestigious LSHR Medallion of Achievement by Dr. Carlos Smith to long-time teacher, mentor and friend, Dr. Edmond N. O'Rourke.

PROGRAM

Guest speaker for the occasion was Paul Faulkner Callaway, ASLA, nationally-renown landscape architect from Greensboro, N.C. Owner of Calloway and Associates, which

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From the President's Desk



2009 ANNUAL SPRING MEETING DATE AND LOCATION ANNOUNCED

At a LSHR Board Meeting Sunday, November 2, 2008, President Leonard Lasseigne announced that the Annual Spring Meeting will be held March 21, 2009, at the Ira Nelson Horticulture Center in Lafayette. The speaker will be Jenks Farmer of Columbia, S.C.

BALLIVIERO APPOINTED TO FILL TERM

Lasseigne also announced that Norman Balliviero has accepted an appointment to fill the term of former Board Member Lorraine Broussard.

ANNUAL SPRING MEETING DUTIES ASSIGNED

The following persons were named to duty assignments for the 2009 Annual Spring Meetings: Registration, Aline Arceneaux and Ruthie LaVaque

Plant releases, Billy Welsh and Dr. Dennis Wollard

Plant auctioneers, Dalton Durio and Heidi Sheesley

Auction clerks, Margo Racca and Rob Barry

Floor duties, Dr. Wollard

Silent auction, Nancy Rowe

Coffee, doughnuts and orange juice, Dr. Ellis Fletcher and Ann Justice.

From the Compost Pile Editor's Desk



This issue introduces a new feature which we hope to include regularly. We're calling it A Favorite Plant Release and we appreciate Diane Pecnik's delightful description of *Cestrum aurantiacum*, Orange *Cestrum*, to get the ball rolling. We'd love to have members send a paragraph or two describing a particularly loved LSHR Plant Release, whether it is was released in 1959 or 2008. If you have a photo, fine, but if not, we may be able to help locate one.

Articles, news items, dissertations, advertisements, reminders...any contribution to the Compost Pile that relates to the field of horticulture will be welcomed by the editor, and will appear in the next issue. Please share your expertise, or challenge the experts with your questions. My e-mail address is ajustice@bellsouth.net and phone is 337-233-5733.

Our thanks to Rebecca Moss for summarizing the 2007 Plant Release Reports in this issue. Please note the reporting form for the 2008 Releases is also included in this news letter. If you need an extra copy, please e-mail or call me at the address and phone number above.

MEMBERS ENCOURAGED TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF PLANTS OFFERED AT AUCTION

At the same meeting, President Lasseigne encouraged members who solicit plant donations for the Plant Auction to emphasize the need for unique and unusual plants, well-established in containers. Bedding plants will be auctioned by the flat, in order to stay within the time limits set for the auction.

GARDENING-RELATED ITEMS NEEDED FOR SILENT AUCTION

Members were asked to be thinking about items that they might donate for the Silent Auction during the Annual Meeting, such as gardening tools, pots and books. Items can be next-to-new, or discards which another gardener might find useful. Please contact Nancy Rowe at (337) 482-5348 for information.

OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS OF LSHR

Leonard Lasseigne, President

Margo Racca, First vice-president

Albert Durio, Second vice-president

Nancy Anne Rowe, Recording secretary

Ruth LaVaque, Treasurer

DIRECTORS AT LARGE

Norman Balliviero 2008-2009, 2009-2010, 2010-2011

Rob Barry 2006-2007, 2007-2008, 2008-2009

Cherry Fisher May 2007-2008, 2008-2009, 2009-2010

PAST PRESIDENTS WITH CURRENT MEMBERSHIP

Richard (Dick) Calhoun

Mary (Mrs. Arthur) Courville

Belle (Mrs. Kenneth) Durio

Dalton Durio

Barbara (Mrs. Ira) Nelson

James (Jim) Racca

DIRECTORS OF RESEARCH

Dennis Wollard, director

Kenneth (Ken) Durio, associate director

HONORARY BOARD MEMBERS OR OTHER

Aline Arceneaux, Past treasurer

Ellis Fletcher, Membership chairman

Ann Justice, Current editor, Compost Pile

Rebecca Moss, Past editor, Compost Pile

William (Billy) Welsh, Release propagator/coordinator



FYI: LSHR PLANT RELEASES 1959 – 2008

89,766 Individual Plants Released

Members of the Louisiana Society for Horticultural Research (LSHR) were presented selected plants for evaluation and personal enjoyment at the first meeting of the organization in 1959. Plant representatives, selected from 5 plant families, comprised the first 10 plants chosen to be released to members of the LSHR.

Since that time, plant distribution has become an established part of this annual event and a total of 89,766 individual plants have been distributed to members. Plants representing 100 plant families have been represented in society releases.

Amaryllidaceae has been the most dominant family providing 14.63 percent of all plants distributed while the next most prolific family, providing 4.49 percent, is Lamiaceae (Labiatae). Plant families responsible for at least 3 percent of all society releases include Acanthaceae, Araceae, Euphorbiaceae and Solanaceae. Plant families contributing at least 2 percent of all society releases include Agavaceae, Asteraceae (Compositae), Fabaceae (Leguminosae), Liliaceae, Malvaceae, Rubiaceae and Verbenaceae.

Some 70 plant families have each provided multiple plant releases while 30 plant families have been represented only by a single release.

The typical plant number included in a release has usually been between 12 and 15. However, the lowest number of releases was 7 in 1960 and the highest number was 36 in 1964.

Due to the popularity and excellent reception of some plant releases, the same plant has been included as a release on more than one occasion. Although 690 release plants have been

NEWLY ELECTED MEMBERS

According to Dr. Ellis Fletcher, membership chairman, new members elected to LSHR for 2009 include Bill Adams, Stuart Gauthier, Jean Gilstrap, Stacy Lee, Harold Letz, Monica Lundgren, Jude Rogers and Debra Utz.

Dr. Fletcher, reported that total membership as of November 2, is 256. Of these, 188 are Active, 37 are Sustaining, 15 are Honorary, 9 are Life, and 7 are Donor memberships. Of the total, there are 219 individual members and 37 family members.

presented to LSHR members, a total of 635 different plants have been involved. The number of genera involved in releases totals 296.

The most popular LSHR release has been the Red Passion-Vine, *Passiflora coccinea*, which was discovered by Professor Ira Nelson in Bolivia, in 1954. Since this plant was first distributed in the spring of 1962, 5 subsequent releases have been made (1965, 1969, 1972, 1979 and 2001). Another plant collected in Bolivia by Professor Nelson, *Hippeastrum evansiae* (Yellow Bolivian-Amaryllis), has been released 4 times (1959, 1963, 1971 and 2004). A total of 5 plants have been released on 3 different occasions and 37 plants have been released on 2 different occasions.



H. evansiae hybrid

Photo by: Robert Turley

By: Dr. William Ellis Fletcher

HOLIDAY CACTUS: 101

Thanksgiving cactuses and Christmas cactuses have been hybridized with each other to the point that we now group today's cultivars together under the catchall name holiday cactus. They bloom from November through January.

Place them near a bright, sunny window and keep the soil evenly moist. It is quite common for these plants to drop flower buds when you get them home. These plants resent being moved at all while blooming, much less being packaged, shipped, unwrapped, displayed, purchased and taken home. But, many blooms and buds will hold on, and their great beauty in shades of magenta, red, pink, orange, gold or white make their purchase worth it.

When they finish blooming, these plants should not be discarded. Holiday cactus will reward you with blooms for many years if grown correctly. After all the flowers have dropped off, allow the soil to become fairly dry before watering, and keep the plant in a bright window. An east or west window will provide plenty of light.

They also will thrive on a porch or patio in a semishaded position during the summer. They are triggered to bloom by long nights and chilly nighttime. The easiest way to get a plant to bloom again is to place it outdoors where it will get a little morning sun and shade the rest of the day. Leave it outside, allowing the progressively longer and cooler nights to initiate buds to form (do not leave the plant out on a night when a freeze is predicted, however). Allow the soil to dry before watering. Once you see little flower buds at the tip of the branches, move the plant into a bright window inside and keep the soil evenly moist.

Adapted from LA AgCenter Holiday Hints Winter 2008

2007 PLANT RELEASE REPORT

Most of the 2007 plant releases had their fans, but #4 Hibiscus acetosella 'Maple Sugar' and #5 Hibiscus tiliaceus 'Tricolor' were by far the favorites of LSHR members. The third highest rating went to #10 Tradescantia pallida 'Kartuz Giant'. These releases had more ratings of 9 & 10 than any of the others. The Bambusa oldhamii was highly rated by those that kept it but many members gave their release away due to concerns about the eventual size of a timber bamboo. Quite a few members who have the growing space available were thrilled with its inclusion

ANNUAL SPRING MEETING

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specializes in garden restoration and landscape design, "Chip" Callaway delighted the audience with a talk and power point presentation titled Inspiring Spaces.

THANKS TO WORKERS

President Lasseigne expressed thanks to all who helped to make the day a success, especially to Aline Arceneaux, Margo Racca and Ruth LaVaque who handled registration; also to plant release chairpersons and auctioneers, Mary Courville and Dalton Durio, to Margo Racca and Rob Barry, auction clerks; and to Rebecca Moss, Nancy Ann Rowe and Ann Justice, silent auction chairpersons. In addition, he recognized Dr. Ellis Fletcher, Dr. Willard and Billy Welsh for their roles in researching and distributing plant releases.

RECEIPTS FROM THE 2008 PLANT AND SILENT AUCTIONS

Gross receipts from the plant and silent auctions totaled approximately \$5,124.00. Lasseigne extended his appreciation to all who helped to make the auctions so successful, especially to those who donated plants and garden items. Auction plants were donated by the Baton Rouge Master Gardeners, Treeseach Farms, Sunset Herbs, Dr. Dennis Wollard, Albert Durio, Lorraine Billeaud, Heidi Sheesley, June Walker, Leonard Lasseigne, Jerry Alford, Chandler Durio, Naruto Uzumaki, Todd Lasseigne, Edmonde Poupert, Nancy Hagerman, Bera Smith and the Louisiana Department of Transportation.

PRESENTATION OF THE HORTICULTURE MEDALLION

Just prior to the close of the meeting, Dr. Carlos Smith, County Agent for the Avoyelles Parish Cooperative Extension Service, was introduced as presenter of the Horticulture Medallion Award to be awarded to Dr. Edmond N. O'Rourke. Please see the account elsewhere in this issue.

as a release. Below are the plant ratings and some of the comments and notes included in the reports. Releases #1, 2 & 7 did not receive enough numerical ratings to include an average.

1. Acorus gramineus 'Ogon' – Some members were very excited about growing this release since it had been featured in a gardening magazine. Notes: a) it loses its contrasting band in the shade b) did very well in damp areas with partial shade c) a single member reported a pest problem of beetles damaging the foliage.

2. Bambusa oldhamii - The primary concern was about its size in small yards. A couple of members reported that it was doing well planted in large patio containers. Very few problems were reported except some winter damage and one report of rust. It was observed to recover quickly from drought (or neglect!)

3. Euphorbia heterophylla 'Yokoi's White' – Avg. 7.49 Most comments were that the foliage was lovely and some reported that it bloomed all summer. Several found it too leggy.

4. Hibiscus acetosella 'Maple Sugar'. – Avg. 8.57 Reports were that it had gorgeous foliage color and blooms. It was a vigorous grower reaching 6-8 feet for several members.

5. Hibiscus tiliaceus 'Tricolor' – Avg. 8.17 Outstanding foliage; beautiful with or without blooms; color best in full sun.

6. Hippeastrum x 'San Antonio Rose' – Avg. 7.06 Bulb multiplied but not bloomed for most members. Six members reported beautiful blooms in the late spring.

7. Ipomoea quamoclit 'Alba' Some members noted concerns about it becoming invasive due to its prolific seed production, while others were thrilled by the seeds and collected them for next year.

8. Ruellia macrantha 'Christmas Pride' – Avg. 6.56 Very mixed reports with concerns about invasiveness and never blooming to 'lots of flowers with hummingbirds & butterflies'. It appears to have done better in the shade.

9. Tradescantia fluminensis 'Aurea' – Avg. 7.54 There were concerns about both of the Tradescantia releases becoming invasive. But both had many fans who loved their color and the texture they added to hanging baskets & beds as a ground cover.

10. Tradescantia pallida 'Kartuz Giant' – Avg. 7.88

2008 Plant Release Report

Please use this form to help LSHR know more about the 2008 Plant Releases. Please use the Comments and Notes lines for any other information that you noted.

Example

Name – Lagerstroemia indica – (Crape Myrtle)

Transplanted (location/light) – Flower bed – full sun or 6” pot – shade

Fertilization – Miracle Gro monthly

Current size and health – 24” – very healthy

Insect or disease problems – none

Overall performance (1-10 with 10 as highest) – 8

Comments and notes – fragrance

1. *Araujia sericifera* ASCLEPIADACEAE (White Bladderflower)

Transplanted (location/light) _____

Fertilization _____

Current size and health _____

Insect or disease problems _____

Overall performance (1-10 with 10 as highest) _____

Comments and notes: _____

2. *Chionanthus retusus* OLEACEAE (Chinese Fringe-Tree)

Transplanted (location/light) _____

Fertilization _____

Current size and health _____

Insect or disease problems _____

Overall performance (1-10 with 10 as highest) _____

Comments and notes: _____

3. *Cycas bifida* x *C. revoluta* CYCADACEAE (Forked-Leaf Cycas x Sago Palm)

Transplanted (location/light) _____

Fertilization _____

Current size and health _____

Insect or disease problems _____

Overall performance (1-10 with 10 as highest) _____

Comments and notes: _____

4. *Dianella tasmanica* ‘Variegata’ LILIACEAE (Variegated Flax-Lily)

Transplanted (location/light) _____

Fertilization _____

Current size and health _____

Insect or disease problems _____

Overall performance (1-10 with 10 as highest) _____

Comments and notes: _____

5. *Eriobotrya japonica* ROSACEAE (Large-fruited Loquat)

Transplanted (location/light) _____

Fertilization _____

Current size and health _____

Insect or disease problems _____

Overall performance (1-10 with 10 as highest) _____

Comments and notes: _____

2008 Plant Release Report

6. *Forsythia viridissima* var *koreana* 'Kumson' OLEACEAE (Silver-Vein Forsythia)

Transplanted (location/light) _____

Fertilization _____

Current size and health _____

Insect or disease problems _____

Overall performance (1-10 with 10 as highest) _____

Comments and notes: _____

7. *Juanulla mexicana* SOLANACEAE (Golden Fingers)

Transplanted (location/light) _____

Fertilization _____

Current size and health _____

Insect or disease problems _____

Overall performance (1-10 with 10 as highest) _____

Comments and notes: _____

8. *Justicia spicigera* ACANTHACEAE (Orange Plume Flower)

Transplanted (location/light) _____

Fertilization _____

Current size and health _____

Insect or disease problems _____

Overall performance (1-10 with 10 as highest) _____

Comments and notes: _____

9. *Setaria palmifolia* POACEAE (Palm Grass)

Transplanted (location/light) _____

Fertilization _____

Current size and health _____

Insect or disease problems _____

Overall performance (1-10 with 10 as highest) _____

Comments and notes: _____

10. *Solanum pseudocapsicum* 'Variegata' SOLANACEAE (Variegated Jerusalem-Cherry)

Transplanted (location/light) _____

Fertilization _____

Current size and health _____

Insect or disease problems _____

Overall performance (1-10 with 10 as highest) _____

Comments and notes: _____

11. *Trachelium jasminoides* "Pink Showers" APOCYNACEAE (Pink-Flowering Jasmine)

Transplanted (location/light) _____

Fertilization _____

Current size and health _____

Insect or disease problems _____

Overall performance (1-10 with 10 as highest) _____

Comments and notes: _____

MEDALLION AWARD

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of Southwestern Louisiana and graduated with a BS in Horticulture in 1947. From 1948 until 1951, he served as a USDA junior horticulturist. He then went to Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, and obtained a Master of Science Degree in 1953 and a Doctorate of Horticulture just 2 years later in 1955. After graduate school, Dr. O'Rourke worked at a USDA Station in Florida on various aspects of Tung-oil production and mineral nutrition.

"In 1959, Dr. O'Rourke joined the faculty of the LSU Horticultural Department where he was a gifted teacher and researcher. Any of Dr. O'Rourke's students in horticulture from retired president Dr. Don Ayo and my humble self, can only describe our education as a life-changing experience. His keen intelligence and pre-cybernetic-world phenomenal database both clarified the applied science concepts of horticulture as well as refined research approaches to solve real problems in ornamental production. His patience and persistence as a teacher generated positive memories on hundreds of horticulture students.

"His background in pomology led him to conduct extensive research with figs, plums, apricots, persimmon, blueberries, apples and pears. Several valuable fig cultivars such as 'Hollier', 'Yellow Celeste', 'LSU Purple' emerged from his research. Recently 3 of his cultivars, 'Tiger', 'O'Rourke', and 'Champagne' were released by the LSU Agricultural Center.

"Later his research emphasis was directed to the ornamental

From the Treasurer's Desk



This is just a reminder to our members that dues statements will be coming out soon. After receipt of dues payments, membership cards will be mailed. Be sure your dues are paid in time to receive your card by mail.

Members must present their own current membership card at the annual meeting in order to receive their plant distribution.

Is your name and mailing address correct in our records? Please take a moment to look at the mailing label on this issue. Membership cards will be issued with the name as it is on your mailing label. A name is very personal, and a correct address is important. Please send corrections to me at the return address of the Compost Pile or to Ruthiesgarden@cox.net.

Ruth LaVaque
Treasurer

project. Here he did significant research with poinsettia, lily, and chrysanthemum cultivar evaluations and cultural production techniques. He also worked with such diverse crops as Gloxinia, Gerbera, Calla and Begonia as forced holiday pot specimens.

"While always acknowledging his academic debt to USL, Dr. O'Rourke was active on the board of the La. Greenhouse Growers Association and was a member of the Louisiana Society of Horticultural Research (currently an honorary member). In addition, he was a member of the American Society of Horticultural Research – Southern Region, Sigma Xi, Gamma Sigma Delta, and Phi Kappa Phi.

"In his retirement, he maintains interest in several rare succulent plant groups such as Haworthia and Gasteria. He has produced several bigeneric hybrids of real elegance. In addition, Dr. O'Rourke has produced some very choice Zepharanthes cultivars.

"In summary, Dr. O'Rourke's renaissance knowledge of plant material was freely shared with the 30+ graduate students he guided and countless undergraduates he instructed, chastened, and inspired. His rapier wit and sincere interest in Horticulture and in the students have always been evident.

"I cannot recommend him highly enough for this award due to lifetime of contributions to the field of horticulture in Louisiana."

LAGNIAPPE ROSE CUTTINGS DISTRIBUTED AT ANNUAL MEETING

At the 2008 Annual Meeting, LSHR members turning in their reports on the 2007 Plant Releases were delighted to receive, in return, cuttings of a pink climbing rose. The cuttings were donated by LSHR First Vice President, Margo Racca who was assisted by the Ira Nelson Horticulture staff in propagating them. Because there was an insufficient number of cuttings to be included among the Plant Releases, and because the identity of the rose had not been determined, the cuttings were distributed as lagniappe to those members who turned in Plant Release Reports.

The origin of the cuttings is reported to be a pink climbing rose found growing many years ago at the Evangeline Motel near the corner of University Avenue and Pinhook Road. A friend gave a cutting in 1972 to LSHR member Bera Smith who planted it by her driveway at the corner of W. Bayou Parkway and King's Road. There it thrived and bloomed for many years enjoyed by neighbors and passing motorists. Although many attempts have been made to identify the plant, they have been unsuccessful.



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A FAVORITE RELEASE

By Diane Pecnik

When asked by Ann Justice what my favorite release of years gone by was, many plants vied for recognition but only one plant popped to the forefront of my mind - the Orange Cestrum. I believe it was released sometime in the early to mid 1990's.

It is not the prettiest, exotic, most fragrant, the most unusual or elegant BUT it is constant. Like a good friend, I can count on it for all seasons. If a plant is smiling when in bloom, then the Cestrum is in a constant state of jollification. It blooms often, stays evergreen, and neither wilts in drought nor burns in winter (except in extreme years).



Orange Cestrum Photo by: Diane Pecnik

missing a bloom. This past year I cut it way back but stuck a few of the sticks in the ground just because I felt they should have a chance to smile on their own. Well, they did. At the end of winter I spotted a little blossom cluster on an all but forgotten stick at the border of a bed - no leaves yet but the perennial bloom, smiling, among all the brown and wilt of the more faint hearted flora friends.

Its flowers and leaves aren't fragrant; however, in designing my studio, I left a window opening to always have this bit of cheer in view when all else has abandoned me.

It withstood drastic relocation as a mature plant, never