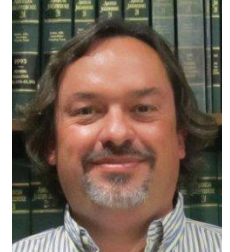




Todd Lasseigne Speaks and Gavel Is Passed at Annual Meeting

After receiving an enticing selection of plant releases and followed by a lively plant auction, LSHR members had the pleasure of hearing hometown celebrity, Dr. Todd Lasseigne, speak during the 2013 Annual Meeting luncheon March 16, at the Lafayette Petroleum Club.

Other significant events of the annual occasion included the passing of the president's gavel by Margo Racca, lady of many talents who has served as president since 2009, to Albert Durio, familiar to all as a plantsman, committed LSHR member and plant auctioneer extraordinaire. We thank them for their past and future service to LSHR.



Todd Lasseigne



Bignonia capreolata

In addition, two members, Dr. Allen Owings and Kristy Thompson, were recognized as Honorary Members for serving LSHR in extraordinary ways (please read nomination texts below and on page 6).

Treasurer JoAnn Pugh announced that the plant auction earned \$5,310.00 and the silent auction brought in an additional \$458.00 giving a total from both auctions of \$5,768.00.

It was also announced that the process by which members will be notified to pay dues will change. This is noted on page 3 in this issue of the *Compost Pile*.

President Racca expressed thanks to the following businesses and persons who donated items to the auctions: Sunset Herbs, TreeSearch Farms, Live Oak Gardens, Kent's Nursery, Dr. Dennis Wollard, Leonard Lasseigne, Dr. Don Ayo, Barry's Nursery, Ira Nelson Horticulture Center, Aline Arceneaux, Lafayette Art Association, Ann Justice, Dr. Jean Kreamer, JoAnn Pugh and Suzanne Clarke. President Racca was also a donor.

Racca also recognized those members who worked to make the day successful: JoAnn Pugh, Roxanna Champagne, Dee Nolan, Linda Bourque, Glenda Baliviero, Dr. Ellis Fletcher, Ann Justice, Dr. Dennis Wollard, Norman Balliviero, Mary Courville, Albert Durio, Heidi Sheesley, Leonard Lasseigne, Dr. Jean Kreamer, Rebecca Moss, Rob Barry and Billy Welsh.



Albert Durio



Margo Racca

Honorary Members Named

At a meeting of the LSHR Board of Directors November 14, 2012, the selection committee named the following persons, Dr. Allen D. Owings and Kristy Thompson, Honorary Members of the organization. These persons were chosen in recognition for their extraordinary service to the organization or to the industry. The text of the nominations appears below.



Dr. Allen D. Owings
Nominated by
Dr. Ellis Fletcher

Allen is a Professor of Horticulture employed by Louisiana State University Agricultural Center and serves as the Director of the Hammond Research Center. He is the statewide Leader for LSU Ag Center extension programs providing service to green industry professionals and

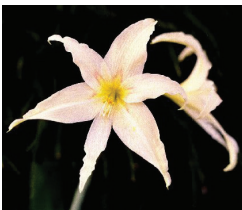
(Continued on page 6)



Kristy Thompson
Nominated by
Dr. Ellis Fletcher

Kristy earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Horticulture from the University of Southwestern Louisiana and earned a Master of Science degree in Communication from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette while employed as a Horticulturist at the Ira Nelson Horticulture

(Continued on page 6)



From the President's Desk



It is a special honor and a privilege to begin my term as president of the Louisiana Society for Horticultural Research. Our outgoing president, Margo Racca, deserves an enormous thank you from all of us—for guiding the society so ably and professionally. Thanks to her guidance and persistence, we are now poised to take our society to the next level of our research efforts. My objective, as president, is to encourage our progress by combining our existing resources to increase research that will benefit the horticulture industry by incorporating local university efforts. This ambitious but attainable goal achieves the focus of our founders' motivation that research is of the utmost significance of our society's legacy.

Our challenge lies in finding a means to achieve this goal. Through universities and organizations we can exchange the knowledge gained for the benefit of everyone. This shared information from research is essential to the growth of the nursery industry and furthers the education of the students studying horticulture today. Worthy research projects that need financing is our opportunity to support these research efforts from inception so we can reap the benefits of the outcomes.

Most of these projects can be conducted by our credible universities and can be co-sponsored by other beneficiary organizations like the LNLA (Louisiana Nursery and Landscape Association). By combining the knowledge of each of our members of programs, coursework and other components already in place, we can pinpoint our most needed areas of research. I invite all of our members to share their insight of their own observations so we can work efficiently and effectively. If we work vigilantly and frugally, we can make wise choices to support research that will be most advantageous to our industry.

Let us all be more vigilant about our research and make this year's reports show that we can be little researchers of horticulture in our own right and do our part. Hopefully all of your releases have been planted by now. I know mine are getting well established with the frequent rains and cool weather this spring. Hot temperatures are on us now and hurricane season has just begun. Oh, the joys of living in South Louisiana!

Our spring meeting has been set for March 22, 2014 at the Ira Nelson Center and the Petroleum Club here in Lafayette, featuring guest speaker Dr. Allen Owings. Dr. Owings is an excellent speaker and knowledgeable of Ornamental Horticulture. He also knows a thing or two about golf, so keep him focused on horticulture!

This is the most knowledgeable group of plant enthusiasts I know, so put some of that knowledge on paper and share it with all of us in the *Compost Pile*. Then you can honestly say you are a published writer at your next event!

Albert Durio
President

OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS OF LSHR

Albert Durio, Sr., President
Rob Barry, First Vice-President
Norman Balliviero, Second Vice-President
Roxanna Champagne, Recording Secretary
JoAnn Pugh, Treasurer

DIRECTORS AT LARGE

Harold Huffman 2012-13 (filling the unexpired term of Dr. Oswald Brown)
Glenda Balliviero 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-14
Dr. Donald Ayo 2012-13, 2013-14, 2014-15
Peter Piazza 2013-2016

PAST PRESIDENTS WITH CURRENT MEMBERSHIP

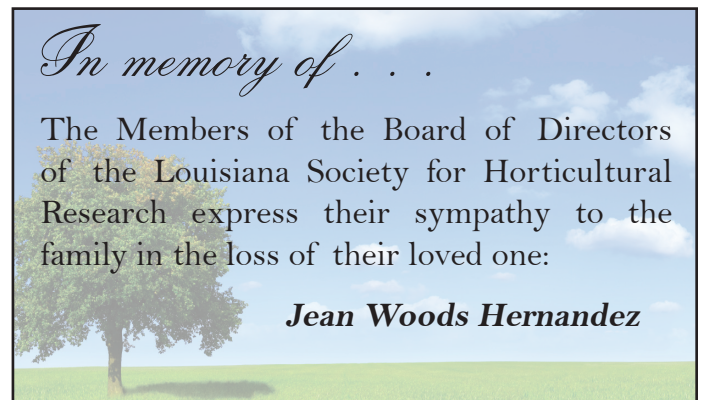
Richard (Dick) Calhoun
Mary Courville
Belle Durio
Dalton Durio
Leonard Lasseigne
Dr. Jim Racca
Margo Racca

HONORARY BOARD MEMBERS OR OTHER

Aline Arceneaux (Past Treasurer)
Dr. Jean Kreamer (Nominations Chairman)
Dr. Ellis Fletcher (Membership Chairman)
Ann Justice (Current Editor *Compost Pile*)
Rebecca Moss (Past Editor *Compost Pile*)
William (Billy) Welsh (Release Propagator/Coordinator)

EMAIL ADDRESSES NEEDED

If you have not turned in your email address, please do as soon as possible, via LSHR@cox.net. We understand that not everyone has email, but would like to hear from those who do.



Tracking 2013 Plant Releases with a Few Comments

At a recent LSHR Board meeting, a request was made for photos of the new plant releases, not as they were when we received them, but as we hope that they will look when they reach maturity. We will publish the photos in the next issue of the *Compost Pile*, but here are a few comments from our members reporting on the progress of their new releases.

Jackie Hirshberg, June 4, 2013: All my plants, except the caladium and the *Gladiolus byzantinus*, are doing very well. The caladium did not do well and disappeared quickly. The *Thumbergia grandiflora* is doing very well and is perhaps my favorite. We are doing all we can to take care of these delightful additions to our garden. Except for the squirrels stealing the numbered labels to use in their nests, everything is fine.

Mary Courville, June 13, 2013: My miniature caladium is beautiful. At first it looked a little sad so I put it in morning sun to almost mid-day. It is getting full with a very vivid white leaf. I hit it with a splash of liquid fertilizer and water about two times a week. Since it has gotten much hotter, I will have to transplant it into a little larger pot. It seems to like limited space so I will not go very large. It is really looking good. It gets a star as one of my favorites.

Margo Racca, June 4, 2013: The Little White Soldiers (*Drimiopsis maculata*) came in my box with two bloom spikes already in progress. I love the polka dot leaves and was able to watch as the blooms matured. I repotted it immediately in a 6" azalea pot and have watched as it has grown larger. The foliage has elongated and it has put on more leaves. Another bloom spike is erupting from the center of the plant. This one is a favorite for me.

Roxanna Champagne, May 30, 2013: My 2013 LSHR Plant Release, #6, Byzantine Gladiolus is blooming. As a whole most of my plants are doing great except for the miniature caladium. I almost lost it, but it is hanging in there and looking better. If I did a fairy garden, it would look great in that setting, but I have no time for a new interest!

Ann Justice, June 4, 2013: My Little White Soldiers is my favorite also, although I have been enjoying the blooming White Laurentia and Byzantine Gladiolus. The new senna, the White Rosa Montana, the Variegated Thumbergia are growing fast (Thumbergia has already climbed up into my patio arbor where it will mingle with a yellow Lady Banks rose).

Sadly, I lost my Lil Star Caladium almost immediately, probably by drowning! My Chinese Perfume Plant and Blue Stars are slow, but gaining. The plant that amazes me is the 2012 release, *Sophora tormensa*, which is 4 feet tall with beautiful shiny foliage, although no flowers yet. If I can control my obsessive overwatering, I think I'll have a good number of 2013 survivors.

Back to the Little White Soldiers, I learned in an article on the Dave's Garden website that its foliage is deciduous, dying down in winter, whereas the bulb is protected beneath the soil. Just so we don't think it's dead when the foliage dies back next winter.

From the Treasurer's Desk



**NOTE: IMPORTANT CHANGE,
PLEASE READ CAREFULLY!**

The Board has approved to simplify the dues process of notification and issuing membership cards. This new method will be in effect this December 2013. The next FALL/WINTER *COMPOST PILE* will have a membership renewal form about the size of a post card printed in the newsletter. You can either cut it out, copy it on a copier, or write the information out and mail to me with your payment. Easy to do! In the spring, you will use your *SPRING COMPOST PILE* with your address label as identification to pick up new releases. No membership cards will be issued (or to lose!). These steps will save the society the cost of doing two mailers to membership for notices and membership cards, and saves countless mailing labels, stamps and envelopes! Last December, I really looked like Lucille Ball with 1,250 labels, 500 stamps and 500 envelopes everywhere! The membership is near 250 members and growing!

The cost savings on stamps alone, about \$250, is half the cost of a scholarship, so this will be money well saved to award a worthy student. Thanks to the Board for approval and I will get to have more plant time! Your cooperation will be appreciated in the change. I hope to get to know each of you as we have a wonderful group of plant lovers! Happy Gardening!!

JoAnn Pugh
Treasurer

PS: I wonder if any young member will ask me, "Who is Lucille Ball?" My children did!!

Nominating New Members and Candidates for the Horticultural Medallion Award

LSHR members are able to nominate persons for TWO positions:

- 1) New members of the organization
- 2) Candidates for the Horticultural Medallion Award, the highest award offered by LSHR, awarded on occasion to an individual for his or her long-time contributions to horticulture.

Nominations must be sent to membership committee chair, Dr. Ellis Fletcher, 341 Orangewood Dr., Lafayette, LA 70503 or USLFletch@cox.net or LSHR@cox.net. Nominations will be accepted at anytime, however they will not be voted on by the Board of Directors until the Fall Board Meeting. They must be postmarked prior to November 1.

Nomination of an individual for membership is acceptable by e-mail since the date of electronic mailing is indicated. Reasons for nomination are not required.

Nomination of an individual for the Horticultural Medallion Award requires a post-marked envelope along with the letter of recommendation and a handwritten signature. It is mandatory to include reasons justifying nominations of persons for the Horticultural Medallion Award.

2012 Plant Release Report

By Glenda Balliviero

What a different winter and spring we had this past year. We had spring in winter and winter in spring which certainly did affect the growth and blooming of most plants. It was always a surprise to see what was blooming each week.

One thing for sure is that summer is here now and our plants will have to battle the heat and humidity of growing in Louisiana. Hopefully, you have already repotted or planted your 2013 Plant Releases and are keeping an eye on their progress. This is the time of year to be sure that they are kept well-watered, as drying out can be just as detrimental as freezing temperatures.

We were very pleased to receive a report on the 2012 plant releases from every member who picked up a box of release plants in March. We must remember that LSHR is a Research Society; therefore, reports from the releases are necessary in order to provide accurate ratings on the plants. Members were asked to rank each of the plants from 1 to 10, with the highest receiving a 10. Ratings took into account current size and health, location and light, insect or disease problems and, of course, overall performance.

And the Winners are . . .

Top Rated Plants for 2012 Releases:

TOP PLANT

Vitex trifolia 'Purpurea'
VERBENACEAE (Purple Chaste Tree).



This deciduous shrub or small tree acquired an overall rating of 7.33. Not only did it get the highest ranking but 25 people gave it a rating of 10, indicating it was their favorite plant of the release. The beautiful foliage of gray-green leaves with fuzzy, pale-purple undersides was the most praised characteristic of the plant. Its fast and continuous growth plus its beautiful lavender flowers covering it throughout the summer were other highlights.

1st RUNNER-UP

Malpighia glabra
MALPIGHIACEAE
(Barbados Cherry)



This tropical shrub that produces an edible thin-skinned red fruit high in Vitamin C received an average ranking of 6.42. It received 19 ratings of 10, which indicated that it was a favorite of many members. Even though most indicated that it had rose-pink blooms, only one person actually had

fruit. Usually, the fruit is not produced until the third year on the previous year's growth.

2nd and 3rd RUNNERS-UP were very close with the *Solenostemon* 'Smallwood Driveway' LAMIACEAE

(*Smallwood Driveway Coleus*) receiving a 5.86 and the *Begonia* 'Wings' BEGONIACEAE (*Wings Begonia*) with a 5.81.



Both of these plants are actually annuals needing to be overwintered in a greenhouse or with other protection; therefore, their overall performance

was truly a surprise. The coleus is a tender shrubby herb whose fringed mottled leaves of bright yellow, red, purple and orange was the highlight of the plant. The begonia's white to light pink flowers was its main attraction (sorry, no photograph was available).

RATINGS FOR ALL 2012 RELEASES

1. *Begonia* 'Wings' BEGONIACEAE (*Wings Begonia*) 5.81

This tender annual with shiny, pale-green foliage was considered to be an exceptional plant since it could be used as a nice house plant, or as a filler in front of a container planting or as a wonderful shade plant in the garden. The tropical look with abundant flowers was a desirable characteristic. It was easily propagated from cuttings and many members carried it over the winter in a greenhouse or sheltered area. Others said it had freely seeded and new plants appeared by the end of the summer. It was an overall performer for many as it received 19 ratings of 10. Pests/Problems: None, but it wasn't Chicken Proof.

2. *Bletilla ochracea* ORCHIDACEAE (*Yellow Ground Orchid*) 4.45

This hardy terrestrial orchid plant could have easily been underrated as many members thought they had actually lost the plant and did not realize that it is dormant in winter. Members reported that it does not multiply quickly and one person indicated that she had bought one from Parks 20 years ago and lost it, thus feeling the plant doesn't do well here. We'll have to see how our research on this one turns out in a couple of years; however, we do know that the plant is reported to be slower growing and not as cold hardy as *Bletilla striata*. Several members were able to witness some beautiful sweet small yellow blooms and considered it their favorite. In fact, one person indicated that she had blooms two different times. Pests/Problems: None

(Continued on page 5)

PLANT RELEASE REPORT (Continued from page 4)

3. *Fragaria* ROSACEAE (Heirloom Strawberry) 4.44

This perennial strawberry plant received a variety of comments. One member named it an awesome plant. For most, it produced many flowers but very few fruit. Some indicated that the fruit was small but tasty. It was said to be easy to propagate. It was considered to be invasive by some. Others had started new plants from the runners which will eventually produce more fruit. Further, others considered it to be a great ground cover and very prolific. Pests/Problems: Slugs and snails were problems reported by several members. Some plants, also, became the victim of raccoons.

**4. *Lysimachia* 'Purple Velvet' PRIMULACEAE
(Purple Lysimachia) 4.88**

This spreading herb with small purple leaves and reddish stems was a very promising plant to many. It is low-growing making a nice low mat. The color is beautiful and intense—red or dark reddish-purple if it receives sunlight. The plant flourished and produced beautiful yellow flowers; however, by August it had melted out for those who had planted in full sun. The roots spread easily to form a low-growing mat which wintered well. Most had trails extending 18 inches to two feet. Pests/Problems: Some had caterpillar problems. Others lost to raccoons.

**5. *Malpighia glabra* MALPIGHIACEAE
(Barbados Cherry) 6.42**

This tough plant is cold tolerant and forms a sprawling little bush that is usually wider than tall. It does best in full sun but will stay more compact in shade with fewer flowers. It has nice foliage but the flowers are not showy. Most had blooms but no fruit and many reported a lovely fragrance—"smells like sweet tarts." One said that it resembles a mini-crape myrtle. Another indicated that it was still in a pot and would get an 'E' for Effort. One member had acquired one in a cemetery in South Texas 30 years ago and loves it. Birds love the fruit. It was a great favorite of many since it received 19 ratings of 10. Pests/Problems: There was a problem with Loopers taking off foliage. Another member reported that ant hills were frequently observed nearby.

**6. *Sarcococca hookeriana* BUXACEAE
(Himalayan Sweet Box) 4.54**

This evergreen shrub was rated as a very interesting looking plant with nice natural shape but very slow growth. One person observed small closed flowers. It over-wintered without protection for most; however, it was reported that the top burned while the bottom remained green. It does not tolerate deep South Texas climate where one of our members lives. Pests/Problems: Lost to chickens.

**7. *Solenostemon* 'Smallwood Driveway' LAMIACEAE
(Smallwood Driveway Coleus) 5.86**

This tender herb has tremendous vigor and beautiful color especially in fall. The new color combination was nice as a Fall/Halloween decoration with gourds. Several members cut the plant back and observed that it then spread quickly and bloomed. Because of its very showy cut flowers and foliage throughout the summer, many considered it to be the best performer. Many members took cuttings which rooted easily, providing new plants. Pests/Problems: Root rot in January.

**8. *Sophora tomentosa* FABACEAE
(Yellow Necklacepod) 5.52**

This deciduous shrub has beautiful foliage of silky silver-green leaves. It is a very slow grower and only reached an average height of 18 inches. Several members indicated that it requires lots of water or will wilt quickly. Several of the plants had multi-trunks. Pests/Problems: Cut ants enjoyed the leaves.

**9. *Verbena tenuisecta* 'Alba' VERBENACEAE
(White Moss Verbena) 3.10**

Although this perennial herb had a beautiful texture, lacy dense fern foliage and nice spreading mat that formed a ground cover, it was a very poor performer. About one half of the members lost it almost immediately and others afterward. It was very sensitive to soil conditions. As a result of over-watering, the base became black and under-watering caused the plant to turn brown. It was indicated that those plants that did survive initially were melted out by the heat by August. A few members reported seeing it bloom in spring before it died. Members who placed the plant in a hanging basket, window box or rich organic soil reported more success. Several commented that it was a hummingbird favorite and one person commented that it was a good bonsai subject. Pests/Problems: More problems were reported for this plant than for all of the other plants put together. Pests included were leaf miners, mealy bugs, soot, mold, and spider mites. Many members reported using insecticidal soap.

**10. *Vitex trifolia* 'Purpurea' VERBENACEAE
(Purple Chaste Tree) 7.33**

This bush or small tree, besides being a fast, dependable grower, is lovely all year. Its leaf structure is impressive. The foliage is a beautiful contrast of silver on top and with dark purple on the underside creating a magnificent effect in a breeze. Beautiful lavender spike-like flowers bloom all summer and into fall in response to a full-sun exposure. It has a sprawling growth pattern that can be floppy if not pruned to shape. A remarkably tough plant, one person indicated that it was toppled by hurricane winds last year but came back in great shape after pruning.

(Continued on page 7)

HONORARY MEMBERS (Continued from page 1)

Dr. Owings

Project Leader for Adaptation Evaluation and Landscape Performance Enhancement of Herbaceous Ornamental Plants in Louisiana. He received his undergraduate degree in Plant Science from Southeastern Louisiana University and his graduate degrees from Louisiana State University and Mississippi State University.

I know Dr. Owings best from activities associated with the Louisiana State Horticulture Society in which he serves as Board Member, Newsletter Editor and Past President and from his association with the Louisiana Nursery and Landscape Association in which he has served or serves as Director of Research and Education. He's also an active member of the American Society for Horticultural Science and Louisiana Native Plant Society. Allen is a contributing author to three (3) nursery and landscape magazines and newsletters; also, he has a weekly column appearing in the Hammond Star newspaper. Should you be interested in twenty (20) other Professional Society Activities, you are referred to the following web site: <http://www.lsuagcenter.com/en/communications/authors/AOwings.htm>

In the absence of a College of Agriculture at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, and since ULL no longer has a degree program in Horticulture or Plant Science, it would serve the society well to be aligned with LSU's horticulture or plant science program in some way. For those of you in the nursery and landscape business, those associated with educational institutions, those who are members of the Louisiana State Horticulture Society and those who are associated with the Louisiana Garden Club Federation or Master Gardeners, you know Allen's interest in developing, procuring and testing and distributing "new" and "best" landscape plants for Louisiana.

Need I say more? Surely this individual, and the benefits he can provide to our organization, deserves the honor of being named an Honorary Member of the LSHR.

New Members Welcomed

Twenty-three persons were welcomed as new members of LSHR during 2012, raising the total membership to 214. New members include the following:

Hope Marks	Kyle Newman	Gail Wakefield
Theresa Holloman	Jerry & Jan Vinning	Danna Spayde
Marie Williams	Jacklyn Hirshberg	Ellen Grote
Sandy Rhodes	Narisah Mart	Kathy Conerly
Inez Barras	Doug Trahan	Dana LaBorde
Richard & Bonnie Babin	L.C. Cambre	Chandler Durio
Pat Huval	Geri Kraemer	Kay Hampton

Ms. Thompson

Center in Lafayette. She has worked tirelessly at the INHC for over fifteen (15 years) in various positions of responsibility with her latest duties being that of Supervisor during the period when Billy Welch underwent back surgery and during the period of recuperation.

As a laboratory assistant she was often responsible for assisting instructors in setting up laboratories, providing materials and supplies, and clean-up following completion of a given project. For visiting groups of school children (kindergarten, elementary and secondary grades), Civic and Service organizations and plant enthusiasts (Future Farmers Of America, 4-H Clubs, Judging Teams, Garden Clubs and Plant Societies) she served as tour guide and explained the University's role in providing leadership for the horticultural community.

Working with groups (Garden Club, multiple Plant Societies, Master Gardeners, Louisiana Nursery and Landscape Training and Testing sessions and the like) which meet at the INHC for monthly or periodic meetings, meeting their needs for projection equipment, room set-up and maintenance following their functions was often her responsibility. All of this, in addition to her duties within the greenhouses proper and ground maintenance.

Providing direction and supervision of individuals assigned as student workers was not an uncommon responsibility. Her role in serving as the "chief gardener" to the former and current President of the University, in my opinion, went a long way in favorably influencing the administration's viewpoint of the value of the Ira Nelson Horticulture Center. You will recall that during and after the non-acceptance of students into the Horticulture and Plant Science segment of agriculture, and with termination of the College of Agriculture, the INHC was left intact. With the loss of employees at the INHC, duties - non-related to maintenance and evaluation of plants and student laboratories - had to be assumed by remaining workers.

The one thing all of you recognize is the role of Kristy Thompson played in assisting the LSHR and those associated with our society. Every year, for those who visited the greenhouse range prior to our annual meetings, you noticed her work in helping assemble plant release boxes, doing janitorial duty, assisting those who needed help in transporting boxes to their vehicles and similar tasks. In addition to assisting in plant propagation, she also aided in the procurement of plants for release. Two of the releases for 2013 are being provided by Kristy - one from plantings from her yard and another from plants she purchased for experimental purposes at the President's home on the ULL campus and trial plantings at the INHC.

Our organization, as well as other plant-related groups and students, are materially richer today in their knowledge and appreciation of horticulture as a result of the efforts of this individual.

Some of you can think of many more reasons why Kristy Thompson should be considered to be named as an Honorary Member of LSHR.

LSHR Supported Hardy Hibiscus Trial Implemented

By Allen Owings

The LSU AgCenter has implemented a landscape evaluation trial of over 40 cultivars of hardy hibiscus, primarily *Hibiscus moscheutos*, at the Hammond Research Station. We are very pleased that this particular project received funding from the Louisiana Society for Horticultural Research in 2013. Thank you.

The project includes a field planting of cultivars from the hibiscus breeding program at Walters Gardens. Some of their hibiscus are in the Proven Winners Summerific Hibiscus program.

In addition, we have four colors in the Luna seeded line of perennial type hibiscus from PanAmerican Seed. The Luna series has been on the market for a number of years now and provides growers with a seed source option, as opposed to the majority of plant material in this group being available only via vegetative propagation.



Industry standard cultivars – such as the popular Flare series, Moy Grande (a previous LSHR release plant), TX star red hibiscus, Lord Baltimore and Lady Baltimore are included in the study. We are also planting the Red River cultivar that is gaining in popularity in Texas for large red blooms.

All of the above described groups are in a replicated planting. Data is being taken periodically and will include date of first bloom, length of bloom, length of peak bloom, plant height, flower diameter, susceptibility to saw fly larvae damage and more. Although, LSHR has funded this project for only one year, the study will be on-going through 2015. Some of the plants in our LSU AgCenter trial are also being evaluated by horticulturist Geoff Denny at Mississippi State University in Starkville.

A companion study that is for demonstration purposes only due to lack of sufficient plants for replication includes cultivars from Fleming Flower Fields. These hibiscus are known for the first reddish

and purple foliage colors, maple, palm and hydrangea leaf shaped foliage and improved compactness.

More updates and information on this project will be forthcoming. Thanks to LSHR for the financial support to get this project initiated.



LSHR Awards Grant to Owings and Scholarship to Walsh

At a meeting of the Board on March 15, 2013, Grant/Scholarship Chair Dr. Jean Kramer reported on the action of that committee. Following discussion, Dr. Kramer made a motion to have the Board accept LSU Professor Dr. Allen Owings as the recipient of a research grant and LSU student Shane Walsh as the scholarship recipient. The board agreed with the committee report and accepted the recommendation of the committee.

The grant has funded the LSU AgCenter in implementing a landscape evaluation trial of over 40 cultivars of hardy hibiscus, primarily *Hibiscus moscheutos*, at the Hammond Research Station. The project includes a field planting of cultivars from the hibiscus breeding program at Walters Gardens. Dr. Owings reported on the project in an article in this issue of the *Compost Pile*.

LSU student Shane Walsh will use the scholarship funds to continue his horticulture studies.



PLANT RELEASE REPORT (Continued from page 5)

One member commented that she disposed of the plant on her compost pile because it is banned as invasive in Florida and she felt that it should not have been included among the LSHR releases. One of the reasons for our research is to report invasiveness. None of our members has indicated that it is invasive, nor is it banned in Louisiana. Most people indicated that their plants were approximately five feet tall in March; however, one person's was almost 10 feet. Pests/Problems: None

In reading through each plant release report several things stood out to me. Fertilizers were perhaps only used by about 2/3 of the members and they were usually Osmocote (or other slow release) and Miracle-Gro. Some other popular products mentioned were Triple 8, Florikan, Dynamite, Superthrive and cow/pigeon manure; along with some new ones on the market which I have never heard of.

More members reported giving away many of their plants since they did not have an area to plant or because they may already have that particular plant; therefore, we don't get the reports on those plants which certainly does make a difference.

I always enjoy reading all the reports and certainly get a laugh from many of them. One person's plants drowned in a box and she apologized for killing the precious plants. Another's grandchild mowed down her plants and another's husband used a weed-eater on them. Yet another honestly admitted, 'Killed by Member'—R. I. P.

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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SAVE THE DATE

Mark your calendar now. Our next Annual Meeting will be held March 22, 2014, at the Ira Nelson Horticulture Center and the Petroleum Club.

One of My Favorite Plant Releases: Fire Fern

By Mary Lynch Courville

As the story goes, this release was not mine, it belonged to John and Zoe Lynch. It was called the "Fire Fern" or "Yellow Oxalis." I would frequent Orchid Gardens daily (since I lived there) and would go directly to the area on the east side of the greenhouses to check out the beautiful tiny red leaves that were sensitive to the touch.

I was a bonafide fern nut, but loved plants in general. Each time that I visited the area, Mom had made more cuttings of that precious little plant. I would aggravate the little plants by touching the leaves causing them to move quickly into a drooping state. They were very sensitive. Dad would say to me "That poor little plant shivers when he sees your Mom coming with the clippers." I would laugh and get involved with something else.

As the years went by, Mom continued to propagate the beautiful tiny plants. Customers loved them, they would buy them, kill them and come back for another. They seemed to thrive in Mom's favorite location which was on the east, in the shade, and watered about twice a week. Of course, if they gave her any indication that they were unhappy, she would replot the whole group, pray over them and put them back in the same place. It always worked. One of Dad's favorite sayings about Mom was that she could "root a rake handle."

Dad fertilized the orchids with a sprinkler system which benefited everything in the greenhouses. The tiny little Fire Ferns loved the extra treatment. When the terrarium craze took hold, Mom had a system of using sphagnum moss layered in between pea gravel. She figured that her special little brightly colored plant should love this type of setting. The humidity was perfect and we planted hundreds of terrariums. We used every beautiful little Fire Fern that Mom could propagate. Those plantings were the most successful for keeping the little Fire Ferns alive and happy indoors. I cannot tell you how many children that I showed this precious little plant to. I would encourage them to touch it and they would be startled that it drooped so quickly.

I will always cherish that plant release. It has such great memories. I would purchase another one if I could find it. Many thanks to LSHR for such enjoyment added to my life.

