

WHITE BEAUTYBERRY WINS THE 2022 PLANT RELEASE BEAUTY CONTEST

by Glenda Balliviero

This past year's weather was very challenging for gardeners and their plants because of the temperature.

Several freezes, as well as droughts accompanied by high temperatures, took their toll on plants, and LSHR member reports on our releases certainly indicate this.

The top plant was the *Callicarpa americana* 'Alba' (White Beautyberry) with the average rating of 4.3 followed by *Calliarpa salicifolia* (Willowleaf Beautyberry) with a 3.83. Beautyberries are certainly tough plants.

The Roman Candle Podocarpus ranked third among the 2022 plant releases, with a member rating of 3.67.

1. *Callicarpa americana* 'Alba' LA-MIACEAE (White Berry Beautyberry) 4.3 —This deciduous native woody shrub with arching growth pattern reaching 6' x 6' was the top release plant for 2022. It was just a few shy of receiving Great scores (5) from



50% of the members. Its dainty white flowers in spring followed by ornate white berries in fall was definitely the members favorite plant. It was described as being impressive, a nice container plant, great addition to the landscape,

very strong and durable, grew vigorously and a plant trooper as it came back after freezing temperatures plus drought conditions. Seems deer even like it as a delicious food. A few indicated birds loved the berries and one said that all the berries were devoured in 2 days time.

2. *Callicarpa salicifolia* LA-MIACEA (Willowleaf Beautyberry) 3.83 – This deciduous shrub with a loose and delicate growth habit containing shiny green foliage produces large purple berries made it a favorite of several; however, many pre-

ferred the native specimen. Oddly many felt to be a very slower grower while others said was aggressive and vigorous.

3. *Hydrangea paniculata* HYDRANGEACEAE (Baby Lace Hydrangea) 2.62—This dwarf *paniculata*-form hydrangea produces petite, lacy-white flower clusters that make a nice show against the dark foliage. It is a deciduous shrub that reaches 4' x 4' and makes for a beautiful container plant. Since it prefers shade to partial shade it did best in morning sun with afternoon shade. More than 1/3 of members lost the plant and 1/4 of them gave it the lowest rating of 1. Many indicated it struggled with heat and drought thus needing endless amounts of water. Thus temperatures both heat and freezes were causes of the death of many. Few indicated it was cute and an exceptional plant; however, there were very few comments. Dr. Michael Dirr, horticulture professor emeritus, at the University of

Georgia, developed the plant.

4. *Leucothoe axillaris* ERICACEAE (Coastal Doghobble) 3.58 – This native evergreen shrub with dark green glossy foliage turns reddish in the winter thus making it a great year round plant. The white, bell-shaped flowers in small racemes from the leaf axis were attractive. The foliage was very interesting and several indicated it would be great in arrangements. The coppery tinge of new growth was a highlight as well as the leaves changing colors in fall and lasting into winter. It was considered to be the Thirstiest woody ornamental and the heat actually scalds the leaves. It still was a favorite of many and considered to be a beautiful and great specimen plus the butterflies loved it.

5. *Podocarpus macrophyllus* 'Miu' PODOCARPACEAE (Roman Candle Podocarpus) 3.67—This evergreen coniferous upright

Beautyberry, continued from p. 1

shrub produces variegated new foliage that is white to light green in color making it attractive, especially if grown in full sun. The yellow variegated foliage was loved by many, yet one indicated it makes it look anemic. It is considered a very strong shrub, hardy and vigorous making it a great focal point plant as well as being a great addition to the landscape. It is tough and a low maintenance plant as well as being resistant to disease, pests and deer plus raccoons. It could be used as an accent plant or even as a hedge as it grows to 10-15' x 3-4'.

6. *Tecoma stans* 'Gold Star' BIGNONIACEAE (Gold Star Esperanza) 3.37 — This fast-growing, heat-loving, flowering shrub that produces large clusters of bell-shaped, bright yellow flowers is the most floriferous of all the Esperanzas. Not only does it bloom at an early age, but it continues blooming profusely from spring until frost. One indicated that it established very fast but was slow to form secondary branches. Many members were extremely pleased with how well it flourished in containers. Most planted in either morning or full sun which was ideal. Many

reported it was quite an attracter of various bees. Unfortunately, one third of the members lost their plant indicating the plant was either cooked by the heat of the sun or freezing temperatures. Those who were fortunate to have their plants survive were delighted with how they flourished and their continuous beautiful blooms added long lasting beautiful color to the landscape.

It's amazing to hear of the various ways plants are destroyed; from the husband or yard man cutting them down, to squirrels or raccoons digging up, to deer enjoying the great snack. So very many also indicate that they forget where they put it or can't find so presume its dead.

Many more people have started giving away their plants indicating they just don't have room in their garden for them; however, they should obtain the necessary information needed for our reporting. More and more people are planting their releases in containers and several people this past year have planted all their releases in pots to enjoy on their patio or in an adjoining area.

More and more members are not really filling out the rating numbers, but one person did give a plant an A+. Describing words



CHILLY 2023 PLANT AUCTION RAISES \$5,152; SILENT AUCTION, \$369

can be interpreted differently so it's best to use numbers to evaluate the plants.

Several commented on the great selection of plants they received. Another didn't understand why two large-growing beautyberries would be released; however, they were the top choices of the releases. Different colored flowers and berries made it possible for unique landscape scenes.

Temperatures dipped into the 40s for the 2023 plant auction, but bidding among the cold-hardy attendees remained pretty hot for the bevy of plants assembled by auction-master Allen Owings. LSHR thanks the nurseries below for their plant donations. Auction proceeds fund scholarships and research.

UL Ira Nelson Horticulture Center
LSU AgCenter Hammond Research Station
Clegg's Nursery, Baton Rouge, LA
Bracy's Nursery, Amite, LA
Kim's Nursery, Wilmer, AL
SFA Gardens, Nacogdoches, TX
Clyde Bartlett, Glenmora, LA

Westfarms Nursery, Franklinton, LA
Mizell's Camellia Hill Nursery, Folsom, LA
Transcend Nursery, Independence, LA
Treeseach Farms, Houston, TX
Albert Durio
Horticare Landscapes and Pools, Lafayette, LA
Kent's Nursery, Youngsville, LA

LSHR AWARDS \$2,000 SCHOLARSHIP TO AMANDA MIZELL



Amanda Mizell

Loranger native Amanda Mizell, a Southeastern Louisiana University graduate who is now pursuing a master's degree at LSU, has won a \$2,000 LSHR scholarship to support her studies.

"I am grateful and honored to have the opportunity to accept the Louisiana Society for Horticultural Research scholarship," Mizell said. "It is scholarships like this that help students pursue their goals and make research in the horticulture field possible."

Mizell's research will investigate wood fiber as a potting mix amendment.

"I have been working with plants almost my entire life, whether it was helping in our family garden or ecology classes in my undergraduate studies at Southeastern," Mizell said. "However, during my internship at the LSU AgCenter Hammond Research Station in the summer of 2022, I realized there was so much more to horticulture than I thought."

Mizell became intrigued by the substrate research conducted by Dr. Jeb Fields of the Hammond AgCenter. Fields was investigating wood fibers as a replacement for peat moss.

After helping Fields with collecting and analyzing data on wood fiber substrates, Mizell decided to pursue her master's degree in plant, soil, and environmental science.

"Being from Louisiana, I have always heard about our rapidly degrading wetlands," Mizell said. "I decided I wanted to help restore and conserve the Louisiana wetlands. However, my scope was widened even more as I learned about peat lands, which are one of the most productive wetlands in the world."

Peat lands are the source of peat moss, a popular potting mix amendment. However, peat is being harvested at unsustainable rates, while Louisiana has practically limitless wood fiber from its vast forestry industry.

Wood fiber might be an economical and effective substitute for peat moss, but more research is needed.

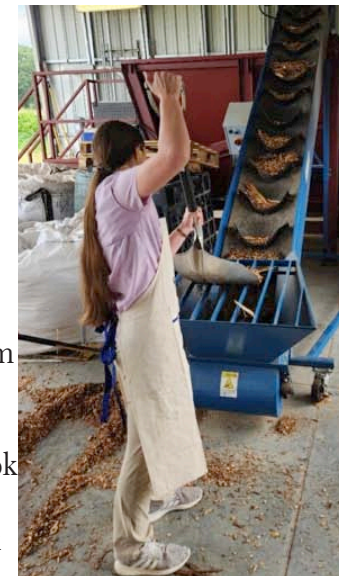
"My graduate research consists of comparing different species of wood as an amendment for soilless substrates," Mizell said.

Most research done on wood-based potting mix amendments uses loblolly pine. Mizell plans to investigate prominent native Louisiana wetland species such as bald cypress and water tupelo to evaluate how they perform in wood-based soilless substrates.

"We will also be closely evaluating the microbial activity of wood fiber substrates," Mizell said. "There is little known regarding the microbiology of wood-based substrates. The ability to understand how tree species and microbial activity impact a substrate will help develop more productive and sustainable soilless systems for growers."

Mizell will also take a closer look at the physical and hydraulic properties of the substrates. She will do greenhouse evaluations of crop growth and plant health, at they are affected by being grown in the substrates.

In recommending Mizell for the LSHR scholarship, Dr. Jeb Fields noted, "Amanda is coordinating an impressive research project to support nursery and greenhouse growers in Louisiana and across the country. I am thrilled to have Amanda in our program and look forward to continuing our work in the coming years."



Mizell runs wood chips through a hammer mill.

TEA TIME: STUDY EXTENDED, RELOCATED

A study titled “Tea in an Understory Production System” has been extended in duration by the LSHR board, as Covid-related labor problems caused delays.

The study’s principal investigator, Dr. Yan Chen, professor of horticulture at the LSU Hammond Research Center, has also moved the site of the understory tea plantings from Hammond to the Burden Research Center in Baton Rouge.

“For the understory planting at Burden, we have been planting tea seeds since January of this year,” Chen said. “We have had more than 90% germination rate with selected seed populations from ‘Georgian Tea,’ ‘Brew-Tea-Ful,’ and four Indian biconal selections.

“We are currently potting up seedlings to trade gallon pots. These plants will be ready for Burden in early November. As you can see in the photo, we have potted up about 400 pots with three seedlings in each, and there will be a total of 1,500 pots for the Burden site. Over the years, we have tried different planting systems, and planting multiple plants as a small group



Tea shows promise as a Louisiana crop, but the plants may grow better in a shaded understory setting, as Dr. Chen’s LSHR-funded study explores.

has worked better than planting a single plant, in terms of plant survival during the heat of the first summer. Because we collected seeds in-house, we are able to do multiple seedlings without

any additional costs. There will be a lot of field preparation to get ready for the planting in fall, and we have mapped the field and will be starting to make the raised beds soon.”

BRENDA GAUTREUX LSHR’S NEWEST BOARD MEMBER

Elected board member at large at the LSHR spring 2023 annual meeting, Brenda Gautreaux is a retired educator and dedicated plant enthusiast from Thibodaux.

She is part of a large LSHR contingent from the Houma-Thibodaux area. She served as president of the Thibodaux Garden Club for eight years. The group sponsors an annual tour of backyard gardens, with the proceeds going to city beautification projects.

Gautreaux has also completed Master Gardener certification; the LaTerre group propagates plants for an annual sale.

Gautreaux regularly attends the Reflections in the Garden monthly gatherings at the Burden Botanical Gardens in Baton Rouge.

“I do appreciate visiting beautiful gardens, and am a frequent attendee at the Mobile, Ala., Festival of Flowers, Southern Garden Symposium, and tours of homes and gardens,” she said.

Her bachelor’s and master’s degrees are from Nicholls State University in education and administration. Active in



BRENDA GAUTREUX

retired teachers associations, Gautreaux also donates time to St. Charles Borromeo Church.

Through a group called Sew Young at Heart, Gautreaux helps abused families.

She is a mother of three and grandmother of seven. “They keep me busy with baseball, football, soccer, music and dance in Thibodaux, Baton Rouge, and League City, Texas,” she said.

“I’m proud to encourage the bayou gardeners to become more active with LSHR, and will do my best to continue doing so.”

THE NEW ORLEANS BOTANICAL GARDEN



SET IN CITY PARK, WHICH IS LARGER THAN NEW YORK'S CENTRAL PARK, THE TEN-ACRE NEW ORLEANS BOTANICAL GARDEN OPENED IN 1936. IT IS ONE OF THE FEW REMAINING PUBLIC GARDENS FROM THE THE WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION (WPA) ERA.

THE GARDEN CONTAINS MORE THAN 2,000 PLANT VARIETIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD.

THE CONSERVATORY OF THE TWO SISTERS, AT LEFT, CONTAINS A LUSH TROPICAL RAIN FOREST EXHIBIT, AS WELL AS A LIVING FOSSILS EXHIBIT.

LOUISIANA RESIDENTS GET FREE ADMISSION ON WEDNESDAYS, COURTESY OF THE HELIS FOUNDATION.



THE HELIS FOUNDATION ENRIQUE ALFÉREZ SCULPTURE GARDEN

WALKING THROUGH THE LUSH BOTANICAL GARDEN, YOU WOULD NEVER SUSPECT THAT THE ENTIRE PROPERTY WAS UNDER WATER FOR MANY WEEKS IN 2005, FOLLOWING HURRICANE KATRINA.

“WE LOST ALL THE SHRUBS, ROSES, AND PERENNIALS,” GARDEN DIRECTOR PAUL SONIAT REMEMBERS. “ALL THE MAGNOLIAS DIED. ALLUVIAL FLOODPLAIN TREES SURVIVED; SOME OF THE BAMBOO, CRAPE MYRTLES AND PALMS SURVIVED.”

SONIAT, A UL LAFAYETTE GRADUATE, WAS THE LSHR FEATURED SPEAKER AT THE 2018 ANNUAL MEETING. HE LED THE GARDENS THROUGH A REMARKABLE RECOVERY. “WHEN KATRINA HIT WE HAD 155 EMPLOYEES AND NO CASH RESERVES. WE WENT BACK TO WORK IN OCTOBER 2005 WITH A STAFF OF 12. BY DECEMBER WE OPENED TO THE PUBLIC FOR CHRISTMAS.”

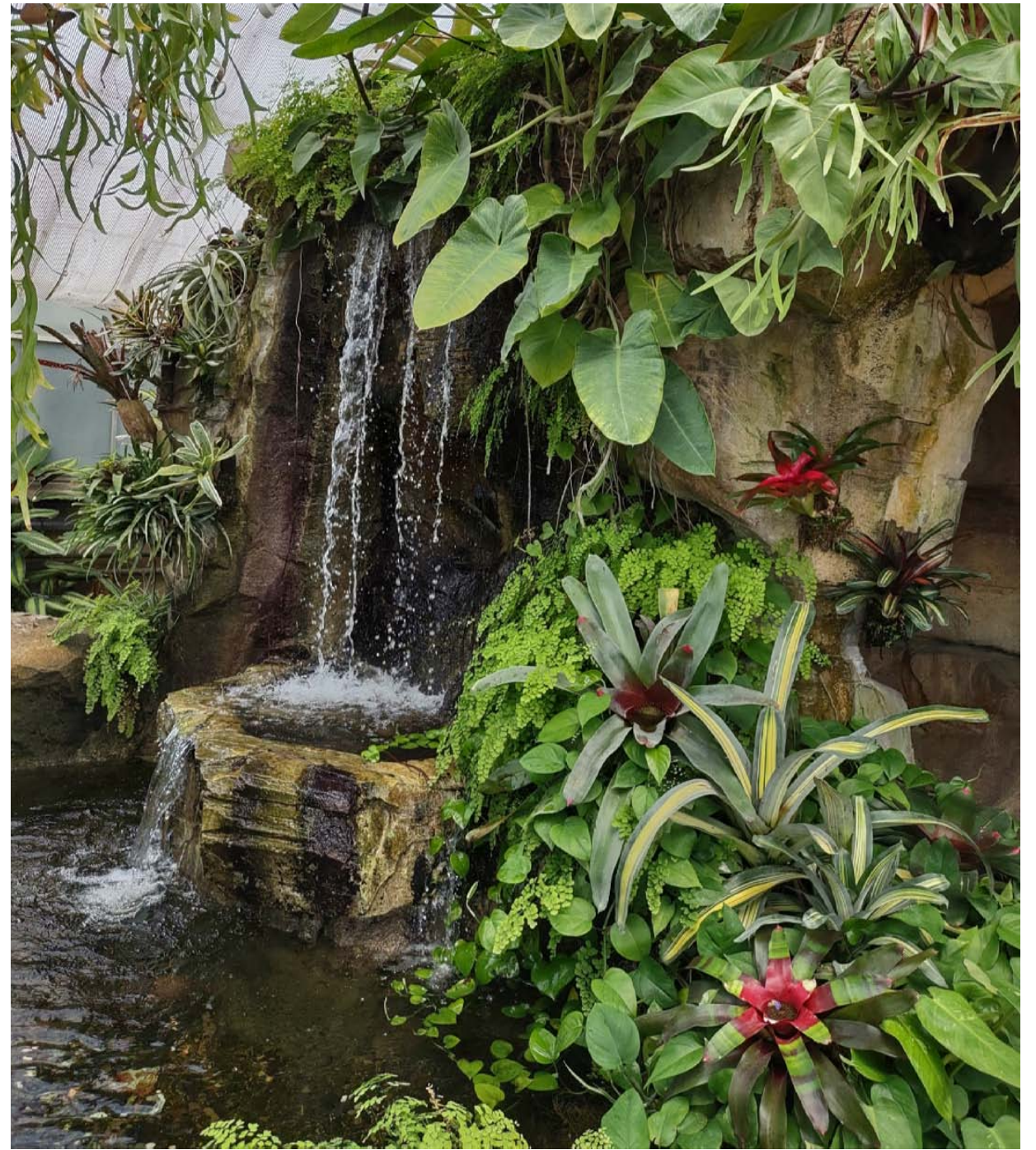
AN EMERGENCY GRANT OF \$1 MILLION FROM THE AZBY FUND, A NEW ORLEANS FOUNDATION, WAS CRUCIAL TO THE GARDENS’ QUICK RECOVERY, SONIAT SAID. “MANY VOLUNTEERS CAME IN; THEY WOULD JUST SHOW UP. EVEN THE NATIONAL GUARD HELPED US REPLANT.”



THE WORK OF MEXICAN AMERICAN SCULPTOR ENRIQUE ALFÉRES IS DISPLAYED IN THE HELIS FOUNDATION SCULPTURE GARDEN, WHICH WAS BUILT IN 2015. NINETEEN ALFÉRES SCULPTURES ARE ARRANGED THROUGHOUT THE 8,000 SQUARE FOOT SCULPTURE GARDEN, WHICH WAS DESIGNED BY LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT ROBIN TANNER. THE BOTANICAL GARDEN HAS SCULPTURE FROM OTHER ARTISTS AS WELL. BELOW IS A TRIBUTE TO SOFIA LOREN BY ITALIAN SCULPTOR FRANCESCO VEZZOLI.



LUSH TROPICAL FOLIAGE WITHIN THE CONSERVATORY





VISITORS TO THE NEW ORLEANS BOTANICAL GARDEN WILL FIND A DELIGHTFUL VARIETY OF PLANTS, FROM CACTI (UPPER LEFT) TO VEGETABLES (ABOVE), TO A SOUTHERN SHADE GARDEN (FAR LEFT), TO A BUTTERFLY WALK. THERE'S ALSO A JAPANESE GARDEN, AN EXTRAORDINARY ROSE GARDEN, A NATIVE PLANTS GARDEN, THE ZEMURRAY AZALEA AND CAMELLIA GARDEN, AND MUCH MORE.



A PARK WITHIN A PARK, THE BOTANICAL GARDEN IS PROXIMATE TO THE NEW ORLEANS MUSEUM OF ART, THE TRAIN GARDEN, THE LOUISIANA CHILDREN'S MUSEUM, A MINIATURE GOLF COURSE, AND THE MANY AMENITIES OF CITY PARK ITSELF. ADDITIONALLY, THE BOTANICAL GARDEN SPONSORS A FALL GARDEN FESTIVAL (OCT. 7 THIS YEAR) AND PERFORMING ARTS EVENTS. FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, VISIT THIS WEB SITE: [HTTPS://NEWORLEANS CITY PARK.ORG/VISIT-CITY-PARK/BOTANICAL-GARDEN/](https://neworleanscitypark.org/visit-city-park/botanical-garden/)

THE COMPOST PILE

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LSHR plant people, send me your news!
I welcome articles and photos about your favorite plants,
growing techniques and plant lovers.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The cold snap this spring had a saving grace. It drastically reduced wasps and harmful insects in the garden. No stink bugs, leaf footed bugs, few caterpillars and aphids to speak of.

It is hot as the devil and dry as the desert. Irrigate and work early or late, hydrate. I attended the LA State Farm Bureau Convention June 23. I am chairman of the Nurseryman Advisory Committee and was MC for the Sweet Potato, Pecan and Market Produce committees.

Dr. Mike Strain, Commissioner LDAF, is championing Louisiana agriculture. Buy Louisiana-grown produce and products. The pecan is now the official state nut. The estimated harvest for Louisiana this year is 20,000,000 pounds. Sweet potato production is at 6,000 acres. Market produce is in

decline due to weather, disease and market forces. The nursery industry suffered some plant loss from cold damage. Plant material is in demand, with some supply shortages. Nursery sales were good with nice spring weekend weather.

KiKi Fontenot lost her Southern highbush blueberry trial due to irrigation failure. So sorry for her loss.

I am looking for container-friendly plants for the 2024 plant release. Would like to add another Southern highbush blueberry variety, ornamental sweet potato with edible roots, thornless blackberry or raspberry. I am working with Billy Welsh, Albert Durio and Dr. Ellis Fletcher in pursuit of plant releases. Any suggestions or plant donations would be appreciated.

I will be polling the board members to

come up with a written policy for plant release box issues. We will discuss and vote at the fall board meeting.

Stay cool my friends!!!!!!

—Rob Barry

EDITOR'S NOTES

The LSHR annual meeting and plant release will be held March 16, 2024. The featured speaker for the noon luncheon will be Dr. Kiki Fontenot, who will discuss container-grown blueberries. More details on the annual meeting will be in the February issue of this newsletter.

Now is the time to nominate your gardening friends for LSHR membership, so that they will qualify for next year's plant release.

The LSHR board typically meets in late October, and this is the last meeting at which new members can be approved in time for your nominee to get the 2024 plant releases.

New member nominations should be emailed by October 15 to LSHR@lusfiber.net. Please include your proposed member's correct postal and email addresses.

TREASURER'S REPORT

The March 18 plant auction was a success, as total plant sales was \$5,152. The silent auction brought in another \$369. There were a total of 305 auction plants being bided by 42 members in live auction.

The funds raised are used to award research grants and scholarships at state universities. The board worked together in distributing a total of 119 boxes of new release plants. We welcomed 17 new members who picked up plants for the first time.

The luncheon had 81 attending a great meal at Lafayette Petroleum Club to hear outstanding program by Tres Fromme.

Please mark your calendar for March 16, 2024, for the next plant release day.

Your dues will be due December 31, 2023, and they remain the same, active \$15, sustaining \$25, and donor \$100. Be looking for emailed reminder in November to pay dues.

—JoAnn Pugh