

# THE COMPOST PILE

NEWSLETTER OF THE LOUISIANA SOCIETY FOR HORTICULTURAL RESEARCH  
SPRING 2024

## “EDIBLE ORNAMENTALS” WILL HIGHLIGHT THE 2024 ANNUAL LUNCHEON

Dr. Kathryn Fontenot, whose “New Hanover” Southern highbush blueberry was one of LSHR’s 2023 plant releases, will serve as luncheon speaker for the 2024 annual meeting.

Fontenot contributed an article on growing blueberries in containers, in the Spring 2023 LSHR newsletter. At the coming annual meeting, she will continue and broaden that discussion.

“My topic will focus on edible plants that also have ornamental value,” Fontenot said. “I’m going to discuss dual-purpose plants that also won’t take up too much garden space. I will also focus on how to grow these plants in containers.”

In January 2024 the LSU AgCenter promoted Fontenot to director of the AgCenter Southwest Region. In this capacity, she will lead the AgCenter agents who assist producers, families and 4-H clubs within 14 parishes in southwestern Louisiana.

Fontenot joined the LSU AgCenter in 2009, after completing her graduate degrees at LSU. In her previous work for the AgCenter, Fontenot was the state vegetable specialist, authoring dozens of vegetable growing guides.

Fontenot will work from the Rouse Caffey Rice Research Station in Crowley and from the AgCenter Sugar Research Station in St. Gabriel.

While her new role with the AgCenter is chiefly administrative, Fontenot will continue her current research on flowers, with the goal of developing flower farming for local farmers markets. She also



Dr. Kathryn “Kiki” Fontenot. The marigolds may or may not pertain to Kiki’s topic, edible ornamentals. Photo by Kyle Peveto, editor of Louisiana Agriculture magazine.

hopes to start a master floral designer program for advanced hobbyists, or for those who want to become florists. She also plans to use her grant-writing skills in her new role.

## MARCH 16 LSHR ANNUAL MEETING SCHEDULE

### Ira Nelson Horticulture Center

2206 Johnston St., Lafayette

**8-10 a.m. Plant release.** Bring your 2023 plant release evaluation form to the plant pickup area. The evaluation form can be downloaded from lshr.org. The hard-copy evaluation is required to receive this year’s plant releases. (New members who did not receive last year’s plants need not worry about the evaluation form.)

**New this year:** Members who are unable to attend because of special circumstances can get their plant releases in the following manner. They may send their completed plant release form with a representative. The representative must first meet with the LSHR President Rob Barry (who will be on site) to get approval. If approved and there are plant releases available after 10 a.m., the representative may pick up the absent member’s plant releases.

**9 a.m. Plant auction.** The auction will be outdoors near the Ira Nelson Horticulture Center, weather permitting. Indoors if not.

### Petroleum Club of Lafayette, 111 Heymann Blvd.

11 a.m. Bar open.

**Noon. Luncheon buffet and program.** The luncheon costs \$25 per person and includes tax and tip. Please send your name and the name of your guests, as name tags will be made. All luncheon attendance must be reserved and paid by March 7. Mail check to arrive by March 7 to: LSHR, P.O. Box 51366, Lafayette, LA 70505.

For more information on the luncheon, contact LSHR treasurer JoAnn Pugh, [joannpugh@hotmail.com](mailto:joannpugh@hotmail.com)  
cell 337-247-5526



# APPLY FOR LSHR SCHOLARSHIPS AND RESEARCH GRANTS BY MARCH 1

In addition to the annual plant release evaluations, LSHR promotes horticultural research through research grants and scholarships.

A March 1 deadline is approaching for both research and scholarship awards. If you know either horticulture students or researchers at Louisiana universities, please forward this newsletter to them. Details of both programs follow.

## RESEARCH GRANTS

LSHR offers \$3,000 to \$5,000 for applied research on topics related to ornamental horticulture.

Funded projects from the past include an evaluation of under-utilized or new magnolia varieties suitable for Louisiana landscapes; pine bark properties in potting soil mixes; and growing tea in an understory production system.

LSHR was formed 70 years ago to fund a plant collecting expedition to Latin America. Plant collecting remains a possible candidate for LSHR research funding; however, plant collecting is much more complicated nowadays, because of justifiable concern about

introducing species that might become invasive.

Research or plant-collecting proposals should be up to three pages long and contain a clear narrative and objectives, as well as a detailed budget and a summary of the proposer's professional credentials.

Researchers may combine LSHR funding with funds from other grant sources, but the specific use for LSHR money should be detailed in any proposal.

## SCHOLARSHIPS

LSHR offers two \$2,000 scholarships annually, to graduate students and upper-level undergraduates at a Louisiana college or university. Applicants should be studying horticulture, plant science or a closely related field.

Applicants should be U. S. residents with a GPA of 3.0 or better. Two letters of recommendation and an official course transcript must accompany all scholarship applications.

For further information about grants or scholarships, contact LSHR board member Rebecca Moss: [rebeccafmoss@gmail.com](mailto:rebeccafmoss@gmail.com).



# PLANT AUCTION PREVIEW

Dr. Allen Owings assures his LSHR fans that the show will go on, this coming March 16.

“We know everyone is looking forward to another exciting plant auction at our annual LSHR meeting,” Owings says. “Your friendly auctioneers will be there. Rain, sun, heat, cold, sleet, snow, hurricane, high tide....gotta auction those plants.”

Owings is not only the lead auctioneer; he also procures most of the auctioned plants. And he is still engaged in procuring.

“While we do not yet have a comprehensive list of offerings, you will find a nice selection of 1-gallon color items from our friends at the LSU AgCenter in Hammond, along with coleus,

porterweed and salvia in 4-inch containers,” Owings says.

He adds that Bracy's Nursery in Amite will provide 1-gallon Rhapsody in Color and Beneficial Blooms varieties, as well as balloon flower, milkweed, Uptick Coreopsis, Roman Red Salvia and more.

Owings hopes to have yellow-flowering deciduous magnolias for the auction. He's also scouting for harder-to-find Louisiana Super Plant woody shrub selections.

Other nurseries Owings will visit are: Doug Ingram Nursery in Homestead, Fla., Petals from the Past in Jemison, Ala., and Gardens in Texas. “We thank our generous friends across the multi-state area,” Owings says.

## LUNCHEON MENU March 16, 2024

PETROLEUM CLUB OF  
LAFAYETTE  
111 Heymann Blvd.

### Salad

Tossed greens with choice of dressing

### Entrées

Grilled boneless chicken  
Roast pork loin with gravy

### Vegetables

Honey glazed carrots  
Corn macque choux

### Starches

Lyonnais potatoes  
Cornbread dressing

### Desserts

Chocolate cake  
Bread pudding

Tea, coffee, water and dinner rolls  
with butter; cash bar

Spring 2024 luncheon reservations  
and payment are due March 7.

Please mail your payment check  
early, providing the names of all who  
will attend, as name badges will be  
made.

Luncheon-day reservations cannot be  
made.

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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.

## LSHR OFFICERS

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I hope that you are well and wish you a prosperous New Year.

We have had trying times for gardening. Our plants were dry and now they are cold. I look forward to spring and all the possibilities that it brings. I also look forward to our LSHR annual meeting and auction on March 16. Our guest speaker is Kathryn "KiKi" Fontenot.

Congratulations to my friend Albert Durio, who has won the James A. Foret Award, in recognition of lifetime service, dedication, and outstanding contributions to Louisiana's nursery and landscape industry. Albert and I were presented Lifetime Membership in the Louisiana State Horticulture Society. Thanks to all responsible.

Stay warm friends,  
—Rob Barry, LSHR president

## LSHR PEOPLE



LSHR First Vice President Albert Durio, at right in the photo, was presented the James A. Foret Award by the Louisiana Nursery and Landscape Association. Gerald Foret, left, presented the award at the LNLA meeting in Mobile.

A 1984 horticulture graduate of USL (now UL Lafayette), Durio was born into a nursery family as the ninth of 10 children.

Learning about plants from his father, Ken Durio of Louisiana Nursery in Opelousas, Albert worked in the family nursery for 20 years, then managed Live Oak Gardens Nursery on Jefferson Island for 10 years. He has managed Gerald Foret Nursery for the past 15 years.

Albert is a past president of LSHR. Affectionately known to family and friends as The Plant Whisperer, he is widely known for his dedication to nursery research.

## TREASURER'S REPORT

How exciting to see March 16 coming so fast. We are all ready for springtime and new plants from our LSHR release day.

On release day, the registration table will have a printed membership card for members to be used to pick up new plant releases. A table will be set up to turn in plant evaluations for those who received plants previous year. Another table will distribute luncheon name tags. Please have your 2023 plant evaluation sheets completed, as information used is important. LSHR is a research organization.

Our 2023 plant auction topped \$5,000, with more than 300 plants sold. The funds are used to award research grants and scholarship at state universities. Thanks to auctioneer Dr. Allen Owings for this wonderful fund raiser.

LSHR distributed 119 plant release boxes in 2023. This year we welcome six new members, who will pick up plants for the first time. Our 2023 luncheon had 81 attendees, who enjoyed a great meal and program at Lafayette Petroleum Club.

For the coming luncheon and Dr. Kiki

Fontenot's program, the deadline is March 7. Please send payment and names for yourself and all guests, as name tags will be prepared. The mail has been very slow arriving from out of town, so please mail your check early!

Details of the luncheon menu and program can be found elsewhere in this newsletter.

The board is looking forward to seeing all you plant-loving folks on March 16!

— JoAnn Pugh, LSHR treasurer