Emory Smith and his wife, Annette as a working farm and country retreat. The property was originally purchased in 1926 by Emory Smith to provide an arboretum of native plants, and to encourage its free use by both the University and general public. The visitor will find not only a place of learning, but a quiet place, far removed from pressure of life; a space of solace and contemplation.

LSU HILLTOP ARBORETUM is a 14-acre museum of plants with an extensive collection of more than 150 species of southern native trees, shrubs and wildflowers. The property was originally purchased in 1926 by LSU in order to establish an arboretum of native plants, and to encourage its free use by both the University and general public. The visitor will find not only a place of learning, but a quiet place, far removed from pressure of life; a space of solace and contemplation.

Emory donated the property to LSU in 1981 so that his “Hilltop” could become an arboretum of native plants, and to encourage its free use by both the University and general public. The visitor will find not only a place of learning, but a quiet place, far removed from pressure of life; a space of solace and contemplation.

Amphitheater

After years of planning our dream for having a Cajun Prairie inspired meadow, it is being realized in 2020. The 3-acre meadow is divided into four areas (A-D) with mowed grass pathways for strolling to allow visitors to experience a rich diversity of native annual and perennial flowers in a patchwork of grasses. Hydric swales, located on the perimeter of the four meadow areas delineate the four meadow spaces, provide drainage, and a unique growing environment for plants to grow that thrive in wet/moist conditions. An earthen amphitheater anchors the northwest corner of the meadow where visitors can sit back and enjoy a bird’s eye view, take photographs, read a book or enjoy a picnic lunch.

Keep in mind the meadows are still in their infancy. The management plan includes removing invasive plants as identified and needed. To manage the woody growth and cut down the grasses at the end of the growing season, bush-hogging is implemented once a year in December after additional meadow seeds are planted. The cutting process settles the seeds to the ground and the cut grass acts as mulch bedding down the seeds until germination in the spring. Volunteers called the Meadow Keepers, students from the LSU Robert Reich School of Landscape Architecture, collect seeds from other Cajun Prairies around the state and plant them in the meadow. Dr. Charles Allen, one of the foremost experts on Cajun prairies in the State is guiding the development and maintenance strategy, and says it will take ten years for the planting to reach maturity.

Spring is here and insects are buzzing! Butterflies are flying! Birds are nesting! Visit often to watch the meadow grow and flourish with the changing seasons and years.

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Visit www.lsu.edu/hilltop for visitor rules, facility rental and professional photography fees, a complete list of activities, events, and programs. Check website calendar for closures. Contact us at hilltop@lsu.edu or 225-767-6916 if you would like to schedule an activity or event. No unauthorized activities.
The Friends of Hilltop Arboretum is an independent non-profit organization that works in partnership with the LSU Robert Reich School of Landscape Architecture to preserve, protect and enhance Hilltop. Established in 1982, with thoughtful guidance from founder and benefactor Emory Smith, memberships from the Friends of Hilltop Arboretum make up about 20% of our annual operating budget. Memberships make it possible to further develop the site into a nationally recognized center for the study of native plants and landscape design. They also help us get kids outdoors, cultivate native trees and shrubs, and provide enriching educational opportunities for the entire community.

Membership Form

Yes! I wish to become a member of the Friends of Hilltop Arboretum. Here is my annual membership contribution of:

Membership level (Choose One):
- Violet $35
- Azalea $50
- Redbud $75
- Dogwood $100

Membership & Payment Information

Name
Address
City/State/Zip
Phone (h) (c)
E-mail
Visa ( ) MasterCard ( ) Exp Date /
Card #
Name on Card
Signature

Please send this completed form with either your credit card information or check made payable to: Friends of Hilltop Arboretum, P.O. Box 82608, Baton Rouge, LA 70884