Friends of HILLTOP ARBORETUM

EXPLORE.   LEARN.   ENJOY.

2022 Fall Newsletter

News and Upcoming Events
We are survivors at Hilltop! 2022 was a tumultuous year. Together we have faced the challenge of searching for a new director and have succeeded. Special thanks to the search committee composed of board members and LSU faculty who worked tirelessly for nearly a year.

The love of Hilltop is apparent in everyone involved. I’m heartened to see that the relationship between the Friends of Hilltop and the Robert Reich School of Landscape Architecture has grown stronger and closer.

Speaking of love of Hilltop, Amy Hughes, our office manager, has gone far beyond the call of duty in keeping Hilltop afloat without a director. Special thanks to Amy! It has been a pleasure working with her.

Hilltop has also been a survivor in the face of the pandemic. Many of the ideas we’ve incorporated such as online programs and plant sales associated with most courses have been very successful. They will be continued as we move forward. The support of volunteers and donors has been nothing short of amazing! Thanks to all of you, Hilltop is on sound financial footing.

Our fundraiser “Enhancing Emory Smith’s Legacy” was a complete success. We plan to start planting soon focusing on natives and introduced species Emory loved. I always get excited when we start planting at Hilltop. After all, that’s what an arboretum is about.

I want to extend a warm welcome to Maribeth Kniffin, PhD, our new director. She and I have been working well together. A quote comes to mind from the book Jonathan Livingston Seagull: “The gull sees farthest who flies highest” and with Maribeth we’ll be flying high!

Chris Werner
Hello, Hilltop community! I am excited to be the new director at LSU Hilltop Arboretum. It is a delight to be working at one of the most beautiful places in Baton Rouge. As a person fascinated with nature, scientist, and someone who enjoys working with the community and students, I look forward to meeting you, organizing ongoing programs, and advancing the Master Plan. Let’s continue to make Hilltop an active and welcoming community!

Similar to Emory Smith, I am originally from the Midwest – only I am from a small town in Southern Wisconsin rather than Iowa. I grew up playing in the wooded outdoors in a forest behind my childhood home. I have a broad background including a degree in biology with a focus on plants, a Master’s in water resources engineering, and a PhD in environmental studies, focused on hydrogeology and community-based planning. I have also enjoyed being a Leadership for Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) accredited professional and project manager in a past career. My vision is to work towards expanding opportunities for onsite research projects and community-based science to build the relationship between people and the land and water at Hilltop.

Since starting as director on August 1st, I have learned a lot from the wonderful Hodge Podge volunteers! The knowledge and dedication of this group is impressive. (I have heard through the grapevine that there used to be many more of you. Perhaps some of you in the larger community have an interest in coming back? Come introduce yourself!) This group has been busy preparing for the fall PlantFest sale taking place on Saturday, October 15th from 9 am to 4 pm. Pat Drackett from Crosby Arboretum will be speaking to us at Hilltop on Sunday, October 2nd at 7 pm to introduce distinct qualities of some of the plants that will be present at the sale.

This semester, we have two Master’s of landscape architecture students, Jacob Contreras and Huan Guo, working with us at Hilltop. They will be developing a design for green infrastructure to prevent erosion near the pond. They are also helping to coordinate workday events in the meadow to follow upon the Meadows Workshop with Drs. Charles Allen and Brendan Harmon that occurred on August 25th. My hope is that the leadership of the landscape architecture students collaborating with the horticulture and botany clubs on campus can involve students to give them a time to socialize in nature. Any students reading this, please contact me if you are interested in spending time at Hilltop.

Please save the date for the annual Symposium “Irises’ Tale of Conversation and Adaptability” this year on Saturday, January 28th, 2023. We have three great speakers joining us: Charles Perilloux, Patrick O’Connor, and Dana Brown. We will open with presentations from them and hold a panel discussion about irises and stormwater management. Join us to learn about Louisiana’s natural heritage.

I look forward to all that will unfold in 2023 and getting to know the neighbors and community around Hilltop, working on the Emory Smith Legacy plantings on the property (see website for more information), and developing additional educational programming for the community and students.

If we haven’t yet met, please come visit and tell me what Hilltop means to you!

Maribeth Kniffin
PlantFest Teaser 2022
Featuring: Pat Drackett
Sunday, October 2nd, 2-3:30 pm

The annual pre-sale PlantFest Teaser will feature Pat Drackett, who will talk about “25 Native Plants to Provide Benefits to your Home and Neighborhood.” Pat Drackett will discuss how being strategic about incorporating native plants can encourage wildlife, conserve water, and lower energy costs. The event will be held at the Arboretum’s Imo Brown Education Facility in the Beverly Brown Coates Auditorium. All plants featured will be available for sale on Oct 15th.

Registration begins at 1:30 pm. Online registration ($20) can be found on our website at www.lsu.edu/hilltop. Registration for the PlantFest Teaser and sale is free for members of the Friends of Hilltop Arboretum at the Azalea ($50) level.

To put the “tease” in this teaser, one of each of the plants presented will be available for purchase. We will have a drawing to determine who gets to purchase what. The rules of engagement are as follows:

- Only Teaser registrants may participate.
- They may put their name in up to six plant hats.
- They must be present to win their opportunity to purchase.

Come and join this fun event as we settle into the PlantFest season!

Pat Drackett is the director of Mississippi State University’s Crosby Arboretum, in Picayune, Mississippi, and an associate Extension professor of landscape architecture. She holds degrees in botany and an MLS in landscape architecture from LSU and practiced for two decades as a landscape designer before joining the Arboretum in 2007. Pat is always searching for new ways to inspire people to spend time outdoors in their garden, but with the goal of sitting and enjoying looking at it rather than laboring in it. Since 2015, she has conducted native milkweed garden trials to determine the best species for the home garden, and to naturalize and promote methods of garden design and landscape management that work hand-in-hand with ecological processes.

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PlantFest 2022
Celebrating our 38th Annual Sale!
Friday, Oct 14, 9 am - 7 pm (Members Only)
Saturday, Oct 15, 9 am - 4 pm

The 39th anniversary of our fall plant sale celebrates decades of masterfully collecting people and plants and bringing them together at the LSU Hilltop Arboretum. The sale will offer the largest selection of natives and adapted plants in one place, at one time in the Gulf South. Our Hodge Podge Plant Selection Committee has assembled a collection of plants that will thrive in your garden. Our plant signs have been creatively updated and will provide the information you need to select plants for your garden.

Brace yourself for our typical botanical “all you can tweet” plant feast … trees, shrubs, perennials, vines, ferns, fruits, gingers, camellias, incredible edibles, ornamental grasses, and more that run the gamut from native and traditional to eclectic and electric newcomers. Some are grown by our incredible Hodge Podge group. Others are imported from nurseries located in Louisiana and Texas. Well over 5,000 plants will be assembled, representing 600 different species … some making their debut at Hilltop this year.

We use self-serve shopping which means each person is 100% responsible for managing their purchases and getting them to their car. We recommend bringing your own wagon and helper. There will be no Hilltop wagons, holding areas, cart runners, or car loaders. Facemasks are encouraged, but not required to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

A handful of knowledgeable plant folks will be on hand to help shoppers with plant selections. Plant display vignettes that bedazzle with color or speak to those who want to go native or attract butterflies will help you get growing.

The Hilltop Gift Shop and Yarden Sale will be joined by specialty plant and garden vendors in Vendor Village, located under the open-air pavilion, to meet all the needs of gardeners and their gardens. Check our website for a complete listing of all participating vendors.

We offer both a tax and a membership incentive that add up to 20% in savings on plants purchased during the sale and may include additional benefits based on membership level. Become a member of the Friends of Hilltop Arboretum by close of business Wednesday, October 5th, to enjoy a member-only plant shopping day on Oct 14th from 9 am to 7 pm.

One week prior to the sale, check the website (www.lsu.edu/hilltop) for a list of the plants being offered at PlantFest. Parking is available in the Oak Hills neighborhood (not in the Hilltop parking lot). For parking and shopping information, see the Parking Map and Shopping Guidelines on our website www.lsu.edu/hilltop.

We Need Help for PlantFest
Please volunteer online!
https://www.lsu.edu/hilltop/events/plantfest/volunteerform.php

Support Hilltop! Clean house and drop off items for the Yarden Sale!
We welcome gently used yard, garden, and household items. Please, no clothing.
Hilltop Rentals: Versatility with a View

Are you looking for an ideal location for a small meeting, event, or party? Is your office at work holding an educational event or employee appreciation lunch? If so, Hilltop may be the spot for you. Located right off of Highland Road, Hilltop is easy for people to access and yet, once you go up the driveway, it feels like you have escaped from the hustle and bustle of the city. Our tranquil landscape is a great place for those who enjoy the beauty and serenity of nature. The meeting rooms have Wi-Fi access and the maximum capacity for any rental is 50 people. Hilltop’s Imo Brown Complex includes the following spaces

- **Cherry Owens Library** – long, narrow meeting room with seating capacity for 22, perfect for small meetings.
- **Margaret Holmes Brown Pavilion** – a covered open-air space overlooking the pond. Overhead fans help when the weather is hot and the seasonal lights lend a festive feel to any event.
- **Bert Turner Courtyard** – a lovely gathering space, connecting the pavilion to the auditorium with soft lighting around the wooden decking.
- **Beverly Brown Coates Auditorium** – a large climate-controlled, multi-purpose space with a mounted projector, full-size screen, podium with computer connections, and a warming kitchen.

Here are some of the ways groups have set up the auditorium for events:
Arlene Kestner’s Educational Fund

Arlene and Neil Kestner have a long history with Hilltop as neighbors for over 40 years. Emory Smith helped them find native plants for their home landscape. Their son, Lars, and his friends spent many hours playing at Emory’s property.

In 1988, Arlene was admitted to membership in The Herb Society of America (HSA) as a Member-at-Large. She was a founding member of The Society’s Baton Rouge Unit. As a member of The HSA national board of directors, Arlene held posts as Education Chair (1996-2000), Vice-President (2000-2002) and national HSA President (2002-2004).

Arlene was an East Baton Rouge Parish Master Gardener since 1996 and provided instruction on herb cultivation to the Louisiana Master Gardener training classes.

With Arlene’s leadership roles in the Herb Society of America and the Master Gardeners, she regularly visited Hilltop.

Arlene passed away on August 15th, 2021. With her passing, she donated $10,000 to the Friends of Hilltop to establish an education fund to support speakers at the annual symposium and provide educational scholarships for children to attend Hilltop Arboretum’s children day camps. Supporting education was very important to Arlene.

We are grateful to the Kestner family for the generous donation and look forward to carrying forth Arlene’s love of plants and education.

2023 Symposium

Irises’ Tale of Conservation and Adaptation

Sat, Jan 28, 2023, 9 am – 12:30 pm

Featuring: Patrick O’Connor, Charles Perilloux, and Dana Nunez Brown

EBRP Main Branch Library Conference Room

Louisiana irises are a critical part of Louisiana natural heritage that have been greatly impacted by land use and climate changes. During this symposium, we will explore iris species found in Louisiana along with their discovery and natural history. Two key iris experts, Patrick O’Connor and Charles Perilloux, will share their knowledge of irises and how their distribution has changed over time - weaving in stories of human-plant interactions. Expanding on her book, *Using Plants for Stormwater Management*, architect Dana Nunes Brown will focus on how irises provide important ecosystem services and can be a critical plant for stormwater management. After presentations from the speakers, we will host a panel discussion to offer the opportunity for speakers to discuss the future of irises and what is needed for their conservation and adaptation. The interactive panel discussion will welcome questions from participants.
The Power of Volunteers

From nursery work and spreading mulch to site cleanup and plant sales, our volunteers are the power behind Hilltop! In the past three years through COVID, our dedicated volunteers have helped keep the Friends of Hilltop financially sound and arboretum grounds breathtakingly beautiful. Here is a glimpse of the work that has been accomplished:

**Hodge Podge Nursery** – A dedicated, small group of volunteers have been coming to Hilltop throughout the pandemic to maintain the Hodge Podge nursery. They are usually here Wednesdays from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm potting plants, pulling weeds, watering, fixing plant tables, repairing wagons, making plant ID signs, attaching pricing tags and doing many other tasks.

**Mulch Spreading** – Master Naturalists Natalie Chiro and Steve Merritt and Oak Hills neighbor John Reed took on the monumental task of spreading mulch along the entire north perimeter tree line, an area approximately 500 feet wide and 10 feet deep. After they distributed more than 400 piles of mulch in the area and raked part of it out, a small team of additional Wednesday volunteers spread the remaining mulch piles.

**PlantFest and Spring Fling Plant Sales** – Not only are there volunteer plant experts, tally instructors, gift shop and Yarden sales people, and cashiers during the sale days, there is a ton of effort prior to the sale. The Plant Selection Committee diligently works to select the right plants for our customers’ needs. Volunteers inventory plants, make lists of tags needed, and print and attach plant tags by the thousands. One dedicated person makes all the plant ID signs! Volunteers also unload plant orders; set up tents, tables, and chairs; string caution tape blocking off Highland Road; adjust additional irrigation systems; and put out directional signs. Volunteers contact vendors and coordinate set up under the open-air pavilion. People donate items for the Yarden sale and price those items. In addition, the critical Watering Wandas and Wallys ensure plants are not too thirsty.

**Hurricane Ida** – What a mess! Nineteen trees down and debris galore! It was not clear or safe even to drive through the parking lot. A team of students from the LSU Robert Reich School of Landscape Architecture helped with the initial cleanup, making the parking lot and paths accessible. A large group of Hilltop and community volunteers followed up the initial efforts and worked to clear out tree debris and further clear out pathways.

**Cathedral Cleanup** – While the pathways were clear of hurricane debris, the areas around the western perimeter tree line had gone untouched. On a chilly Saturday in March, two dozen community and Hilltop volunteers cleared out the cathedral area. There were individuals, families, and even Cub Scouts who came out to help. It was a great effort put in by young and old alike.

**Meadow Seed Scattering** – In February, a dozen volunteers reseeded the meadows. Using a new technique, the edges of the meadows were raked to improve seed-to-soil contact, then the seeds were scattered and “shuffled” into the ground. Two hours of raking and twenty minutes of sowing to support the meadow.

**General Site Work** – While Newton Landscape Group does the major mowing and maintenance for the arboretum, there are individuals who volunteer to help with additional needs. We have someone who has worked for years, maintaining the bamboo in the bamboo pass. There is someone who owns a tractor and bush hog who has been putting in hours of work helping to clear the over growth along the western side of the property. Boy Scouts have built nursery tables, as well as a footbridge and benches. Someone makes sure the seasonal lights are all working, which helps with rentals.

**It’s Not All Outside** – Addressing and stuffing envelopes, copying, laminating, maintaining computer backups and software releases, assisting with A/V problems with the equipment in the auditorium, going to the post office, restocking the refrigerator, washing dishes, taking home dishtowels and tablecloths to be washed, writing our Blog, and posting on Facebook– who would do all this work? You guessed it, volunteers!

The list continues. All of these efforts bring in thousands of dollars in fundraising and save thousands of dollars in expenses. Where would Hilltop be without volunteers? An unimaginable image.

**Thank you to all!**
In Memory of Helen Levy
Helen Levy made an important mark at Hilltop and was loved by many. Her family admired her will to live with passion and simplicity. She loved traveling in the states and abroad, nature, wildflowers, hiking in the mountains of Tennessee, history, antiquing, art, books, the symphony, and theater. In her later years, she was known to generously drive friends in her large car, as few friends still drove. Helen was known as the life of the party who never wanted to draw attention to herself. On her 90th birthday, she packed up and drove to Tennessee so that no one in Baton Rouge would surprise her with a birthday party. On a different occasion, Helen went on a river boat tour with over 190 people. By the end, everyone knew her name and loved her. As her niece stated, “We miss her, but the memories of this precious little lady will be thought of forever!”

Julia Hawkins Bonsai Collection
The Hilltop Arboretum is honored to accept the invitation to house the Julia Hawkins Bonsai collection. Julia Hawkins and her family have been long-time supporters of Hilltop. She started growing her Bonsai collection in the early 1970s. The collection includes some of her favorite plants and Louisiana native trees. We anticipate creating a permanent display for the collection in the future.

Hilltop wishes to thank Lowell Tilley and the Louisiana Bonsai Society for their assistance in moving and maintaining this important collection.

We thank Linda Medine for her skillful photography that is showcased throughout this newsletter on pages 1, 2, 5 & 9. Linda’s eye captures the beauty of Hilltop. She is a member of the Friends and the Louisiana Photographic Society.

WHAT OUR FRIENDS ARE DOING

Baton Rouge Camellia Society
www.facebook.com/brcamellias

Baton Rouge Green
www.batonrougegreen.com

Baton Rouge Orchid Society
www.batonrougeorchidsociety.com

BREC’s
Independence Botanic Garden & Cohn Arboretum
www.brec.org

Capital Area Native Plant Society
www.canps.weebly.com

EBR Master Gardeners
www.ebrmg.com

Friends of LSU AgCenter
Botanic Gardens at Burden
www.burdengardens.com

Herb Society of Baton Rouge
www.hsabr.org

Louisiana Master Naturalists of GBR
www.lmngbr.org

Louisiana Native Plant Society
www.lnps.org
Cypress $500-$999
Kenneth Arceneaux, Stephanie Broyles, Maradee and Curtis Cryer, Jeannine Davis and Bob Carney, Jane Honeycutt, Cindy Moran, Deb and Ken McMillin, Judith Patrick, Cheryl and Wayne Stromeyer, Susan Turner

Magnolia $250-$499
Jessica Babcock, Sue Bartlett, Colette and Andy Daup, Emily and Al Delaney, Helen and Roy Dufreche, Devera and Jerry Goss, Janet and Kenneth Hogstrom, Katherine Inzer, Katherine King, Ruth and Peter Kovace, Kathryn and Stephen Meritt, Carol and Pete Newton, Terry Reh, Pam and Gerry Sulzer, Elizabeth Thomas, John Thomas, Denise Van Schoyck and Terry Tumlinelo, Eleulana Viator, Charles and Sharon Wern

Dogwood $100-$249
What’s yet to come in 2022 and a peek into next year!

HILLTOP CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER
PlantFest Volunteering
Thu, Sep 29 - Fri, Sep 30
Unloading PlantFest plants from truck

OCTOBER
PlantFest Teaser
Sun, Oct 2, 2-3:30 pm
Featuring: Pat Drackett

PlantFest
Fri, Oct 14 - Sat, Oct 15
Oct 14: 9 am-7 pm (members only)
Oct 15: 9 am - 4 pm

NOVEMBER
Meadow Workday and Social
Sun, Nov 13, 2 pm - 4 pm

DECEMBER
Wilderness First Aid Training
Sat, Dec 3 - Sun, Dec 4
8 am to 5 pm

Annual Meeting
Tue, Dec 6
12 pm

JANUARY
Annual Symposium
Tue, Jan 28, 8:30 am - 1 pm
Irises’ Tale of Conservation and Adaptation
Featuring: Patrick O’Connor, Charles Perilloux, and Dana Nunez Brown