Letter from the President

Dear Friends,

This has been an exciting year for Hilltop. So many positive things are happening. Having a new Director, Tara Titone, tops the list! Special thanks to everyone on the search committee both Friends and LSU School of Landscape Architecture faculty for the dedicated effort it took to find Tara. Her strong administrative ability, creative talents and dedication are already in evidence. Another positive result of this effort has been that the relationship between LSU and Hilltop has grown much stronger. Hilltop is now recognized much more to be the jewel that it is in the School of Landscape Architecture and College of Art + Design.

Another wonderful development is that we now have a third person on staff, Will Reinhardt. Will was our interim director during the search process and became nearly indispensable. His title is now Living Collections Manager, reflecting his extensive plant knowledge and how we plan to utilize that. He will guide development of the meadow and other site plantings and projects, and teach as well. With Tara and Will on board Hilltop is taking a course that is onward and upward! Amy and I can breathe a sigh of relief as these two very capable people are already making a difference.

Speaking of Amy, she has been a beacon of strength during the transitions of the last couple of years. Thank you Amy for the love of Hilltop you have shown. Thank you also to our Hodge Podge volunteers. They have been in transition too and are doing a great job growing our nursery. Our weekly newsletter is testament to that.

These are just a few of the positive things happening. There are many more coming in the months ahead ranging from very needed maintenance on our buildings to restoration of our educational programs and camps. Also, the Emory Smith Legacy projects are still in progress. We could never have achieved what we have at Hilltop without such loyal volunteers and donors. I am honored to be your president and grateful for the confidence you have shown in me. Hope to see you at PlantFest!

Sincerely,

Chris Werner

Letter from the Director

Dear Hilltop Friends,

Thank you for welcoming me this summer with such warmth and open arms!

I am very excited to be the new Director of Hilltop. These past several months I have enjoyed learning the ropes from the staff, Hodge Podge volunteers, and countless others who lend their time and expertise to Hilltop. Passion runs high here, and I believe that each person’s unique contribution is what makes Hilltop a jewel in our community. I feel honored to have been chosen to be part of this beautiful place that is special to so many.

Hilltop has always been a special place to me. Growing up in Baton Rouge, just down Highland Road, I explored Hilltop with my father, my friends, and their families. In the late 90’s, when studying landscape architecture at LSU, I remember class trips to Hilltop where Dr. Reich, Professor Max Conrad and Professor Charles Fryling would tour us around the site and fondly recount stories of Emory Smith and his plant collection. My time spent at Hilltop was where I learned that it was possible to create a sanctuary within the confines of a city where one could seek peace and feel the serenity of nature.

I join Hilltop with over 20 years experience working across multiple sectors in the field of landscape architecture. After spending my early career with landscape architecture firms in New York, New York, and Fort Lauderdale, Florida, I returned to Baton Rouge with a dedication to mission-driven work that focused on the improvement of Baton Rouge through design and community development. I have spent the last 12 years overseeing the design, outreach, and implementation of community-driven programs and master plans while ensuring agency growth and sustainability.

It is my belief that exceptional spaces and places require the assembly of diverse perspectives, experiences, and expertise, and I enjoy working with stakeholders, community partners, volunteers and design professionals to bring visionary plans to reality. This is just what we’re doing here at Hilltop, and with so many wonderful people onboard, I am excited for what we can accomplish together in 2024 and beyond.

I look forward to our continued interactions and meeting those who I haven’t yet had the pleasure of meeting. Our office is an open door, so please stop by and say hello! It is through our interactions with each other and the site that we gain an understanding of how Hilltop can continue to best serve our needs and those of the larger community.

Fondly,

Tara Titone
Letter from the Living Collections Manager

The last few months of Hilltop site work can be summed into the words, habits and habitats. The many plants making up a functional diversity at Hilltop present a great place for individuals and groups to study plant habit. A more formal study reveals larger habitats like the pond, meadow, ravine and forest edge. With these we are starting to see plants appear in distinct areas around Hilltop and are collected into a site based native plant document, which twenty LSU students are working together on.

Past LSU faculty have supported the idea of the cross-curriculum courses that would explore these possibilities for site based work in the form of a native outdoor lab. This will hopefully also meet the goal of experimental test plots and a permanent studio.

There are endless positive interactions of the students and friends of Hilltop in their relationship-building commitment to share a native plant passion. I will continue to implore maximum observations and documentation so we can be leaders in the space.

William Reinhardt

Site Progress at Hilltop

We've had a season of planning and progress here at Hilltop!

The wood decking surrounding the pond has been fully replaced by LSU and is again safe for walking. A sub-surface bubbling aeration system is being installed by consultants, LA Pond Management, in an effort to rejuvenate our pond and prolong the life of its inhabitants. Following this work, staff will work with Newton Landscape Group and Reed Hilderbrand on an updated planting plan for the pond perimeter.

We have been encouraged by the responsiveness of LSU to our site and maintenance needs and have enjoyed building relationships with the various departments. Repairs to our roof skylights were recently made by LSU after being damaged in one of our strong summer storms. LSU Police have increased their nighttime patrol at Hilltop and are working with us on a comprehensive site security solution. This winter, audio visual equipment will be purchased through LSU and installed in Hilltop’s Library to make the space more viable for business meetings and other rentals. Also new to Hilltop’s Library and Auditorium are WiFi upgrades. Last but not least, beginning November 1, Hilltop will receive a full roof replacement, fully funded and managed by LSU, with the oversight of +One Architects. We are grateful for LSU’s support and prioritization of our site!

A longtime project in the works, honey bees have arrived at Hilltop. Tucked behind the amphitheater in the hedgerow buffer zone are four bee colonies managed through a partnership with the Capital Area Beekeepers Association. On December 2, as part of the Emory Smith Legacy project, volunteers will assist with planting several native trees to extend our hedgerow buffer zone at the north perimeter of the property. We look forward to the introduction of a new tree canopy at the Arboretum in honor of Emory Smith.

Last but not least, we have been busy tending to the 3 acre cajun prairie-inspired meadow at Hilltop. Two of the four quadrants have been bushhogged, and plans are underway for the clearing of the other two prior to our winter transplanting and seeding. This winter, the two final metal footbridges will be installed in the meadow per the master plan, and two final footpaths traversing the meadow will be established along with a new meadow quadrant near the pond that will be used for education, testing and demonstrations.

Please stop by to watch our progress!

In Memory of Denise Van Schoyck

In July 2023, longtime Hilltop volunteer Denise Van Schoyck passed away from a sudden heart attack. While a Master Gardener, she was not one to dig in the dirt on Wednesdays. She was happier working behind the scenes. Most people do not know that several years ago she helped us redesign our membership database. She met with us to get a good feel for how we used the information and how we wanted to improve what we were doing. Once she had the new design, she checked back regularly to make sure it was working the way we wanted, always willing to make changes.

Every year for the symposium she oversaw registration, including printing, assembling, and organizing the name tags. At home! Talk about working behind the scenes. She had an eye for detail that helped us improve our efficiency for checking people in quickly. You could also find her at the Tally Table during Spring Fling and PlantFest sale, but her passion was helping quietly.

What tremendous gifts Denise gave to Hilltop with her time and talents.
PlantFest! 2023
Celebrating our 40th Annual Sale!
Saturday, October 28, 9am - 4pm & Sunday, October 29, 12pm - 4pm
Wednesday, October 25, 9am - 6pm (Members-only)

The 40th anniversary of our fall plant sale celebrates decades of masterfully collecting people and plants and bringing them together in the unique natural space that is the LSU Hilltop Arboretum. This year’s botanical offerings will feature a feast of native and traditional trees, shrubs, perennials, vines, ferns (best selection in BR!), camellias, edibles, ornamental grasses and more. Over 3,000 plants representing over 300 species will be available that have been sourced from reputable and trusted nurseries in Texas and Louisiana.

New to this year’s sale will be Swamp Fly, an environmental firm, who will provide consultation and design services as well as installation and maintenance tips for your plants, particularly natives. Swamp Fly inspires ecological wonder and brings sensorial beauty to the landscape through their work with both residential and commercial clients. As in the past, a small number of “Hilltop plant people” will also be available to assist with your plant selection and help you find the right plants for your space. We invite you to visit the adjacent Vendor’s Village, Hilltop Gift Shop, Children’s Activity Tent, and “Yarden” Sale while you’re here, as there’s sure to be something for everyone!

Become a member at the $35 Violet level by Thursday, October 12, 2023, to receive a 20% in savings (tax and membership benefit) on plants purchased during the sale and a 10% discount only for members at a certain level and above in the gift shop. Members at the $50 Azalea level and above will receive the additional benefit of free admission to the PlantFest! Teaser. All current members of the Friends of Hilltop will receive an invitation to the members-only plant sale where shoppers will have first pick of plants available at PlantFest!

PlantFest! Teaser
Featuring: Tammany Baumgarten
Sunday, October 15, 2pm - 3:30pm

This year’s PlantFest! Teaser program will feature Tammany Baumgarten, owner of BaumGardens Landscape and Design, based out of New Orleans. A passionate advocate for sustainability, Tammany will share her philosophy on incorporating native plants into the landscape and introduce us to her “Top 25 Native Plants that Promote a Healthy Ecosystem in the Backyard and Beyond.”

Tammamy Baumgarten is a licensed Landscape Horticulturalist who has a keen interest in creating habitat and is an intense advocate of native gardens but applies these principles with a practicality sited to the needs of each client and space. Tammany is involved with horticultural and ecological organizations and continues to study landscape diversity and ecological function to apply those principles to her designs.

At this annual PlantFest! “pre-quel Teaser,” one of each plant featured will be eligible for purchase via a lively auction. All plants featured in the Teaser will be for sale during PlantFest! After the program, attendees will have an opportunity to walk through the Hodge Podge Nursery for a viewing of all plants prior to the “main event.” Register today!

PlantFest Volunteers Needed
Wednesday, October 4 - Sunday, October 29

We need help for PlantFest! Volunteers are needed before, during and after the sale for the following activities. We greatly appreciate your help!

Plant Unloading - October 4, 5
Sign up for Plant Unloading

- **Plant Expert:** Identify the plants that are delivered
- **Inventory Tracker:** Make sure that all plants paid for were delivered and indicate that a cart load is complete and ready to be moved
- **Plant Tag Distributors:** Provide plant ID signs and sales tags to each cart of plants
- **Plant Movers:** Move plants with tags and ID signs to their spot in the nursery
- **Plant Taggers:** Tag plants that have been delivered to their spot in the nursery

Plant Watering - October 4 - 29
Sign up for Plant Watering

- **Watering Wandas:** Water all plants daily, from date of delivery up to the plant sale

PlantFest Setup and Takedown - October 24, 29
Sign up for Setup and Takedown

- **Setup:** Place tents, banners, signs around site

PlantFest - October 25, 28, and 29
Sign up for PlantFest!

- **Plant Expert:** Provide information on plants for sale, and advise customers on selections
- **Tally Helper:** Help customers fill out the tally sheet
- **Cashiers:** Check membership status, calculate purchase price, and collect payments

Yarden Sale, Gift Shop, and Children’s Activity Tent - Sign up here

- **Youth Volunteers:** Help in the Children’s Activity Tent or be a Wagon Helper - Sign up here

Yarden Sale Donations - Last Call!
Drop off your gently-used items to Hilltop by Friday, October 13. We welcome yard, garden, and household items. Please, no clothing.

We truly appreciate everyone who has taken the time to donate your items. Every dollar made goes to Hilltop.
Hilltop Rentals: Versatility with a View

Would you like to get away from the office for a meeting or retreat? Would you like to be surrounded by tranquil nature at your small outdoor wedding? The LSU Hilltop Arboretum may be the venue for you. Our award-winning facility was designed by Lake|Flato Architects of San Antonio, Texas. Beautiful views include blooming native meadows, a pond with a wooden boardwalk, and a formal courtyard with pineland savannah shrubs, wildflowers and trees. Hilltop is an ideal location for those who enjoy the beauty and serenity of nature.

The Imo Brown Complex includes the following meeting spaces:

- **Cherry Owens Library** – a small, well-lit meeting room, seats 22
- **Margaret Holmes Brown Pavilion** – a covered open-air space overlooking the pond and site
- **Beverly Brown Coates Auditorium** – a large, multi-purpose space, seats 50, layout options below

Facility Rental Information can be found on our website. Please contact us to schedule an appointment for a tour.

Looking Ahead: Discover Nature Lecture Series

Through a partnership with the Louisiana Master Naturalist of Greater Baton Rouge (LMNGBR) we are proud to offer these exciting Discover Nature programs featuring local and national experts who are in touch with nature and are eager to share their experiences. All programs are held in the Beverly Brown Coates Auditorium at Hilltop. For students and Hilltop and LMNGBR members, the fee is $10 per program; $15 for non-members.

**Can’t Beat ‘Em? Eat ‘Em!** - November 28, 2023
**Chef Philippe Parola**

**Lewis & Clark: A Culinary Journey** - January 20, 2024
**Chef Katherine Gividen, CEC**

**Purple Martins, Brazilian Explorations** - February 27, 2024
**Krista Adams, Purple Martin Conservation Initiative**

**Plants for Birds** - March 26, 2024
**Jane Patterson, BR Audubon Society**

**Louisiana Herb Journal** - April 23, 2024
**Corinne Martin, Clinical Herbalist**

**Monarchs, Migration and Milkweed** - Tuesday, May 28, 2024
**Linda Auld, NOLA Bug Lady**

Save the Date: 2024 Friends of Hilltop Annual Symposium

**Revolution Natives!**
Saturday, January 27, 2024, 9 am – 2 pm
Featuring: Larry Weaner, Dr. Malcolm Vidrine, Dr. Charles Allen, Swamp Fly Native Landscapes
EBRP Main Branch Library Conference Room

What does it mean to live in a liberated landscape? Have you ever wondered how to make the shift from traditional garden design to ecological landscape design but are scared to ditch the weeding and watering? Join us at the 2024 Annual Symposium where we explore what it means to have a successful garden- one that is rewarding, stimulating, and environmentally friendly- and how the incorporation of natives into the designed landscape can change the way you think about what a garden should do and be.

Larry Weaner will share his knowledge on environmental science and the traditions of garden design, expanding on his book, *Garden Revolution: How Our Landscapes Can Be a Source of Environmental Change*. Dr. Vidrine and Dr. Allen will take us on their journey of ‘Re-wilding Acadiana’ and explore what it means to act in a manner that curbs foreseeable impacts of global climate change while living in Louisiana. Swamp Fly will provide insight on the creation and maintenance of residential landscapes that bring ecological wonder and sensorial beauty while providing nourishment and connectivity to the non-human world.

After presentations, we will host an interactive panel discussion and welcome questions from participants.
**Children’s Opportunities**

### Children’s Bookshelf
*In memory of Paula Dillemuth*

With more than 40 fun, interesting, and informative nature books, our Children’s Bookshelf contains fiction and non-fiction titles about trees, nature, plants, animals, bugs, gardening, ponds, woods, and all things Hilltop. The books are located in the Hilltop Gift Shop and are available for you and your children to enjoy while visiting the grounds during business hours. So pack a picnic lunch, stop by the Gift Shop, pick up a couple of books, and enjoy an afternoon under the trees or by the pond. You will be glad you did.

We want to thank all those who have contributed to this special collection. If you would like to contribute to our Children’s Bookshelf, please let us know!

NOW BACK! Junior Master Gardener Kids Camp

**Monday, November 20 – Tuesday, November 21, 2023, 9am – 1pm**

$50 Members / $85 Non-Members (Non-Member Rate Includes an Annual Membership)

**Junior Master Gardener (JMG) is a get your hands in the dirt program developed by the University Cooperative Extension Network that introduces young gardeners (ages 7-10) to the fun, art, and science of gardening. Your children will be "digging" the hands-on garden projects, gardening crafts, container herb garden, and hikes to collect treasures from nature on the beautiful grounds of the LSU Hilltop Arboretum. Children who complete the fall "Thanksgiving" week camp will earn two Junior Master Gardener chapter pins. Nutritional snacks will be provided. Parents will provide a brown bag lunch and drink.**

JMG will be offered three times a year: in the fall (two-day Thanksgiving Camp), spring (two-day Easter Camp) and summer (third week of June) from 9am-1pm.

Thank you to the Louisiana Master Gardeners of East Baton Rouge Parish for providing support for the program.

**Register here!**

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**The Power of Volunteers**

Our volunteers are the driving force behind Hilltop, and we believe this is a place for everyone. Their efforts not only bring in additional funding for Hilltop, they also save Hilltop thousands of dollars in the process. We are so grateful for our volunteer family!

**Hodge Podge Nursery** – This dedicated group of volunteers is the life line of the Hodge Podge nursery. Working hard on Wednesdays from 9am - 12pm potting plants, weeding, watering, researching natives, tracking plant inventory, making plant ID signs, and attaching pricing tags, this group also does a wonderful job of keeping spirits high. Let’s not forget the weekly newsletter and weekly contribution of delicious potluck treats!

**Emory Smith Tree Planting** – Thanks to generous Emory Smith Legacy Fund contributions, Hilltop’s staff and volunteers were able to gather for two volunteer planting days to plant several trees to honor of Mr. Smith’s legacy.

**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, our volunteers put in an exorbitant amount of effort prior to the sales. The Plant Selection Committee diligently works to select the right plants for customers’ needs. Volunteers inventory plants, make lists of tags needed, and print and attach plant tags by the thousands. Did you know that ONE dedicated volunteer researches and makes ALL of our plant ID signs? Volunteers also water plants daily, pick up plant orders in Texas, unload plant orders, set up tents, tables, and chairs, and direct traffic. Volunteers contact vendors and coordinate Vendor Village set up under the pavilion. Just two volunteers intake, clean and price all Yarden Sale donations prior to setting up and selling. Let’s not forget take down!

**Meadow Tending and Planting** – Our Landscape Architecture Grad Assistant and the LSU Meadowkeepers kept their eyes on the quadrants, ended to invasives and tracked observations. In February, a dozen volunteers reseeded the meadows and planted transplants that they’d procured from several off-site visits.

**General Site Work** – In addition to the regular mowing and maintenance, many individuals contribute to the vitality of our site. One member maintains the bamboo pass, one plants and tends to our native Irises, and another grows hundreds of fern plugs for Hilltop at his home. A gracious neighbor has taken it upon himself to hand water struggling plants on the weekends during the drought season while another uses his own tractor to bush-hog our meadow and tidy our overgrowth. Several others continue to make themselves available to assist with post-storm debris cleanup.

**It’s Not All Outside** – Sharing the story and history of Hilltop at events, illustrating (and folding!) our t-shirts, deep cleaning our kitchens, addressing piles of envelopes, maintaining computer backups and troubleshooting staff IT issues, assisting with A/V and equipment, posting on social media, attending to the Gift Shop and assisting with Hilltop Programs... we could not run our operations without these volunteers. A special thanks to our neighbors and regular walkers who provide extra eyes on Hilltop!

**Emory Smith Legacy Fund**

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**Yarden Sales**

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**Lone Star Eagle Scout Troop 203**

Eagle Scout Troop 203 spent summer weekends at Hilltop building new nursery tables and footbridges and clearing a trail that was once previously inaccessible trail. Holmes Building donated materials to make the projects possible. The LA National Guard Youth Challenge Program deployed 50 students into our ravine and meadow. What a huge impact they made in such short time!
Volunteers Needed
Sign up here!

New and Renewing Members
Greater Oak Hills Civic Association

Live Oak $1,000
Judy and Catherine Coates and Brian Haas, Kerry Jacobs, Bill and Linda Johnson, Donnie L. Nabors, and Jerri Lynn Turrentine and Jerry Fisher

Magnolia $500-999
Maradee and Sitti Cryer; Jeanine Dubois; Dan and Andrea Andy Dees, Randy Harleson, Deb and Ken McMill, Cynthia Moran, Cheryl and Wayne Strongmore, Sharon and Chris Werner

Site Work Day - Emory Smith Tree Planting Saturday, December 2, 8am - 12pm
Roll up your sleeves, shave your plant, and join us to plant several trees along the northern perimeter of the Arboretum on Saturday, December 2, from 8am-noon. To be a part of fulfilling Emory Smith’s dream that Hilltop will become a “complete arboretum of native Southern trees and plants.” We will be planting southern magnolia, sweet bay magnolia, spice, myrtle, and more.

Newton Landscape Group will help us coordinate the tree planting activities. The Hodge Podge Volunteers will "keep the change" cash donations

Opposites attract: Bring prunes, rakes, shovels, and towels. We will provide water, coffee, and snacks. These activities are a great way to meet other Arboretum supporters and learn about local ecology while getting some exercise. Great for individuals, groups, organizations, and community service volunteers.

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EVENTS CALENDAR

OCTOBER
- **PlantFest! Volunteering**
  Thu, Oct 4 - Sun, Oct 29
- **PlantFest! Teaser**
  Sun, Oct 15
- **PlantFest! Plant Sale**
  Sat, Oct 28 - Sun, Oct 29
  Wed, Oct 25 (Members-only)

NOVEMBER
- **Discover Nature Lecture**
  Tue, Nov 28

DECEMBER
- **Volunteer Workday-Site**
  Sat, Dec 2
- **Wilderness First Aid Training**
  Sat, Dec 2 - Sun, Dec 3
- **Annual Meeting**
  Tue, Dec 5

JANUARY
- **Discover Nature Lecture**
  Tue, Jan 20
- **Annual Symposium**
  Sat, Jan 27

FEBRUARY
- **Wilderness First Aid Training**
  Sat, Feb 10 - Sun, Feb 11
- **Discover Nature Lecture**
  Tue, Feb 27

MARCH
- **Discover Nature Lecture**
  Tue, Mar 26

APRIL
- **Spring Fling Plant Sale**
  Sat, Apr 20 - Sun, Apr 21
  Wed, Apr 17 (Members-only)

CALL
- **Phone:** 225.767.6916

MEET
- **Schedule appointments:** Tuesday-Friday, 9 am - 4:30 pm

CLICK
- **Email:** hilltop@lsu.edu
- **Website:** www.lsu.edu/hilltop

CLICK
- **Hilltop Digest:** [Subscribe here](#) to receive our weekly update

VOLUNTEER
- **Come help us on site!**