Lynn R. Lowrey, Plantsman
by Mary Anne Pickens

[Presented at the 17th Annual Meeting of the Southern Garden History Society, Houston, Texas, March 26-28th, 1999.]

Houston horticulture in recent years has been greatly influenced by a quiet, unassuming man, a Southern gentleman, who truly became a legend in his own time. Lynn Lowrey was a horticulturist by training, a collector by nature. He collected plants and people. A mentor to many, Lowrey left a horticultural legacy to Houston and to Texas. Who was Lynn Lowrey? What did he do? He published no books and only a few articles, yet other authors acknowledged him and dedicated books to him. None of his nurseries were grand successes, yet he influenced other nurserymen in their choice of plants. He collected and promoted many plants, yet only one rare Camptotheca tree that will probably never be seen outside China carries his name. He was the acknowledged leader in the native plant movement in Texas, yet he rarely attended the meetings of the Native Plant Society of Texas. He hated crowds, yet when he died those who attended his memorial service represented many branches of the Agricultural Extension Service, major universities, arboretums, wholesale and retail nurseries, landscape architects, and landscape design companies. Each of those attendees was his friend, each had a connection and a sphere of influence in the world of horticulture and gardening, and each had been touched Lynn Lowrey.

Lowrey was born in Mansfield, Louisiana, on May 30th, 1917. He graduated from Louisiana State University in 1940 with a degree in horticulture. After serving four years in the United States Army during World War II, he came to Houston in the 1950s where he took a job with Teas Nursery, an established Houston firm. In a few years, he opened his own nursery, launching the career that would establish him as an internationally acclaimed horticulturist. Through the years his nurseries always carried unusual plants, which he deemed garden worthy. The sign in front of his first nursery on Westheimer Street in Houston advertised fruit trees and rare and native plants. Lowrey felt that natives were under used and were a source of readily adaptable flora for our gardens. His first

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CALENDAR

September 23rd-25th, 1999. “Newport and the Art of Gardens and Landscape,” the Third Salve Regina University conference on Cultural and Historic Preservation, to be held in Newport, Rhode Island. Conference will address the evolution of Newport’s landscape and the creation of gardens and the art of those gardens during the 19th and early 20th century. Speakers include Richard Guy Wilson of the University of Virginia and John Simonelli, president of the Victorian Society in America. For more information contact: Salve Regina University, Sponsored Conferences & Programs, 100 Ochre Point Avenue, Newport, RI 02840-4192, or call (800) 351-0863.

September 28th, 1999. Garden History Seminar, “The Evolution of the Williamsburg Landscape,” with lectures by Colonial Williamsburg Foundation staff on topics of landscape archaeology, garden history, and garden restoration. [See article in this issue.] For more information contact: The Williamsburg Institute, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, P. O. Box 1776, Williamsburg, VA 23187, (757) 220-7255, or 1-800-603-0948, or e-mail Deb Chapman at dchapman@chw.org.

September 30th-October 1st, 1999. “Plans and Plants of the Southern Landscape” is the theme of the twelfth biennial Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes conference at Old Salem. [See article in this issue.] It is hoped that the development of this theme will help those involved in landscape restoration by providing historic plans, documents, and plant lists that can be useful as guidelines. For more information contact conference coordinator, Kay Bergey, Old Salem, Inc., Salem Station, Winston-Salem, NC 27108. Phone (336) 721-7378.

October 15th-16th, 1999. Southern Garden Symposium & Workshops, P. O. Box 2075, St. Francisville, LA 70775; phone (504) 635-6330.


May 5th-7th, 2000. 18th Annual Meeting of the Southern Garden History Society, Mount Vernon, Virginia. Meeting chair is J. Dean Norton, director of horticulture at Mount Vernon. Dean is planning an exciting venue for SGHS members, and promises to top the last meeting hosted by Mount Vernon. PLEASE NOTE: This is a different date from the one printed in the last issue of Magnolia. Be sure to check your calendar.

August 26th-27th, 2000. 2nd biennial “Historic Plants Symposium” of the Thomas Jefferson Center for Historic Plants at Monticello. Details to be announced.


October 14th-18th, 2001. 9th International Heritage Rose Conference in Charleston, South Carolina. Contact Charleston Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, P. O. Box 975, Charleston, SC 29402. Phone (803) 853-8000.

April 18th-21st, 2002. 20th Annual Meeting of the Southern Garden History Society in Natchez, Mississippi. Dr. Elizabeth Boggess, meeting chair.
efforts at advertising native plants met with little success, however, and he recalled years later that when he put out a sign advertising wild azaleas that it must have brought in at least one car a week.

Reflecting about people's reluctance to use native plants, he said:

Maybe people thought that wild plants in Texas couldn't be very good for "civilized plantings." I have heard the statement in the past, "Why that grows wild" as if that was an indictment, and it couldn't be considered for planting.

Lowrey's bywords were: "This is a great plant. Take it and try it." Often he would say, "This is a Very Important Plant," but then all plants were VIP to Lowrey. Anxious to test the limits of plants, he gave them to friends across the state. Friends who lived in San Antonio recalled Lowrey's fascination with East Texas plants while friends who lived in East Texas recalled his fascination with South Texas plants. Lowrey was simply testing his favorites for adaptability beyond their normal range.

While others may recognize Lowrey as a pioneer in the native plant movement in Texas, he never acknowledged his role. He left it to others to do the organizational things and make the speeches to promote using native plants in the landscape. Lowrey pioneered in a unique way. He simply started using native material in his landscapes and encouraging others to do the same. He felt that formal design was inappropriate for most of our gardens and he encouraged a more natural look to soften the view of our buildings. He liked using native plants and seeing how they would perform in our gardens. Some of his first landscape jobs with their natural look raised some eyebrows. His landscaping was not always popular, but gradually he caused a shift in our collective thinking about our landscapes.

Concerned that as the amount of pavement increases our natural environment decreases, Lowrey believed that through our landscaping we could improve our environment. In one of his nursery newsletters, Lowrey said:

Landscape design is usually viewed as the art of arranging lawns, trees and shrubs on a site to make it more attractive. This view is expanding to include the functions that landscape design can perform to improve the environment of a site.

Today a garden style that is widely promoted by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department is one called Wildscape, which encourages using native plants in natural landscaping to provide cover and food for wildlife, particularly for birds and butterflies. That style was not widespread in the 1950s, but it was a style that Lowrey used.

At one of the first homes he landscaped in Houston's affluent River Oaks area, Lowrey planted a natural looking thicket of trees and shrubs to shield the house from the busy street. The landscape must have caused quite a stir and a good bit of discussion in the neighborhood. Here was a landscape without nearly clipped hedges, without azaleas, and without the traditional expanse of front lawn. Ruth London, a prominent landscape architect whose portfolio included work at Bayou Bend for Ima Hogg, recommended Lowrey to the homeowner. London described Lowrey as a "nice young man who just knows everything about plants"

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and he is so inexpensive." Through the years, Lowrey had many patrons in the River Oaks. Many examples of naturalistic landscaping can be found in River Oaks today, including Lowrey's first.

In Lynn Lowrey’s mind, Houston was the land of opportunity for gardeners. He knew that Houston could accommodate a wide range of plants. In one of his newsletters he wrote an article, which he titled "Houston: Crossroads of East and West, Temperate and Subtropics." He said:

Houston, despite soil and moisture problems is a crossroads of plant types. We can grow maples and palms, pines and acacias. The Southeastern pine forests find their southwestern limit in Houston. The western prairie with huisache and mesquite comes up to Alief on the west side of Houston. The temperate forest trees come right down to Buffalo Bayou. and the mild Gulf coast climate lets us grow bananas, cycads and oleanders. Also our different soil types: gumbo-clay, concrete hard sand-clay, and humus poor deep sand make gardening more demanding and interesting. Still we can grow such a great variety of plants that Houston can be one of the most interesting places to garden.

In the early 1970s, Lowrey installed a commercial landscape for Clark Southline Equipment Company on Cavalcade, near I-45 in Houston. Today, nearly 30 years later, the lush landscape stands as a testimony to Lowrey and his bent towards using unusual combinations of plants.

The owner of the company loved palms, and Lowrey obligingly incorporated them into the landscape, along with plants from various sites in Texas, the South, Mexico, and Asia. Garden writers Sally and Andy Wasowski describe the planting:

In the tradition of classic botanic gardens that plant according to taxonomy instead of by habitats, he also planted a few foreign versions of plants in the same family, such as *Cupressus macrocarpa* from Mexico along side *Cladophora abei* from Alabama and *Bignonia capreolata* from Asia along with *Agave*. *Berberis trifoliata* from the Texas Hill Country.

Many plants that seem quite common today were not being used in our Houston landscapes when Lowrey started. As he encouraged others to try new plants, he often gave away more plants than he sold. Arboretums and public gardens, public schools, college campuses, and private gardens across the state are botanically richer today because of his gifts. The Houston Arboretum, Mercer Arboretum, The Robert A. Vines Environmental Science Center Arboretum, Bayou Bend, San Antonio Botanical Gardens, Stephen F. Austin Arboretum, and many other lesser known gardens all house plants from Lowrey. Paul Cox, San Antonio Botanical Gardens, said that it wasn’t uncommon to have “mystery” plants appear at the arboretum’s doorstep and he would always know that Lowrey had been by.

In the 1950s when most people were satisfied with clipped privet or ligustrum, Lowrey was using wax myrtle, *Myrica cerifera*, and wild olive, *Cordia boissieri*. When his customers wanted nothing but the new fashion azalea, Lowrey would persuade them to also find a place for parsley hawthorn, *Crataegus marshallii*, to provide additional spring...
Lowrey collected the seedling in 1963, began propagating it, and of course, encouraged others to try it. Greg Grant, of Stephen F. Austin University, believes this was the first L. fauriei hybrid introduction made anywhere. In 1967, the National Arboretum began using ‘Basham’s Party Pink’ in their hybridization work. They released their first hybrid, “Natchez” in 1978, fifteen years after Lowrey’s introduction of ‘Basham’s Party Pink.’ In 1982 the National Arboretum released ‘Tuscarora,’ a coral-flowered selection resulting from crossing ‘Basham’s Party Pink’ with L. indica ‘Cherokee.’ Today hybrids are quite common with new introductions each year from the National Arboretum, but Lowrey had been the pioneer in the field. ‘Basham’s Party Pink’ is widely available and is marketed by Color Spot in San Antonio.

Although Lowrey’s primary interest was woody material, there are a number of perennials that are quite common now in our gardens and can be attributed to him. Ruellia brittoniana var. ‘Katie’ is a popular little Ruellia with many gardeners and its popularity can be traced to Lowrey. Shortly after Lowrey sold his nursery in Conroe, Texas, to his friend Katie Fergerson, two employees, Herbert Durand and Nolan Guillot, discovered a little natural hybrid Ruellia. When it was brought to Lowrey’s attention, he began testing it, sharing it, and promoting it. Commonly called ‘Katie’ Ruellia, it is now marketed widely and provides color in our long, hot, humid Houston summers. In subsequent work, Greg Grant used ‘Katie’ Ruellia as the female parent to cross with a standard pink Ruellia to produce the ‘Bonita Dwarf Pink’ Ruellia. Grant’s pink selection is sometimes called ‘Dwarf Katie Pink’ Ruellia.

The Skullcap, Scutellaria suffrutescens, is another...
popular Lowrey plant. David Creech, Director of Stephen F. Austin Arboretum, recalls being with Lowrey on a trip to Mexico in 1988 and asking Lowrey about the name of the plant with the red flowers. Lowrey responded, “What red flowers?” Lowrey had not seen it because he was red color blind. At the end of the day, however, he told Creech that the Scutellaria would probably turn out to be the most important plant of the day. Its current popularity in many gardens supports his remarks.

When we think of the glorious days of plant collecting, we may remember Robert Fortune in China, or David Douglas in the Pacific Northwest or even Ferdinand Lindheimer in Texas. Lynn Lowrey joins their ranks as a twentieth-century plant collector, collecting not for Kew Gardens or Asa Gray, but for us in our gardens. Although most of the plants Lowrey collected were not new to science, he always watched for the good forms: the yaupon with the slightly larger leaf, the maple with a bit brighter color, the persimmon with the attractive bark, the azalea with the best flower, or the agave with the deepest blue blade. From these, Lowrey would collect seeds or cuttings to propagate and he always shared them with his friends. He loved the “thrill of the chase” of plant collecting. He collected from the pine woods of East Texas to the limestone ledges of the Hill Country, from the brush land of South Texas on to the Big Bend and the Chihuahuan Desert, and perhaps most importantly, into Northern Mexico and the mountains around Monterrey. In a memorial tribute to his friend Benny Simpson, Lowrey described the excitement of those collecting trips with friends:

Plant hunting with Benny, Carroll Abbott and Barton Warnock was like an expedition looking for gold nuggets. While a trip through an East Texas forest might be boring to some, to locate a chalk maple and validate its occurrence in Texas was a big discovery to Benny and me. To see a field of new-to-us flowering shrubs in the Brush south of Free and realize these were the rare Courseria axillaris (Baby Bonnets) was great excitement.

During the 1960s, Lowrey collected what he considered one of the rarest plants in Texas and the United States, the Texas pistachio, Pistacia texana. The Texas pistachio grew near Del Rio, Texas in an area where Amistad Dam was being constructed. Lowrey knew that when the dam was complete much of the plant’s natural habitat would be covered by Amistad Lake. Lowrey was concerned that the plant was already so rare and might become extinct in the wild. He worked diligently to get a gene pool established. He worked primarily from seeds but also experimented with grafting Texas pistachio onto the rootstock of Chinese pistachio, Pistacia chinensis. Today Lowrey’s Pistacia texana can be found in nurseries specializing in native Texas plants.

Another of his early interests was Sabal louisiana. Robert A. Vines, author of Trees, Shrubs and Woody Vines of the Southwest, showed him a stand of these palms in Brazoria County, Texas in the mid 1960s. Lowrey began propagating them. The botanical description of the palms has been a matter of debate for many years. Some feel that the palms are hybrids of between Sabal minor and Sabal mexicana. Dr. Ed McWilliams, Professor, Texas A & M University, said that Lowrey believed Sabal louisiana was a true species. Lowrey worked with the palms for many years, compared their growth with that of Sabal minor and had, as McWilliams said, long term knowledge of the plant that few other people had.

Lowrey was fascinated with the plants in Mexico. He made his first trip to Mexico in 1937, while still a student at Louisiana State University. Through the years he made more than sixty to collect plants. His friend Benny Simpson would never accompany him and would tell him there was enough material in Texas to occupy anyone for a lifetime. Collecting in Mexico became almost an obsession with Lowrey. His son-in-law, Mike Anderson, recalled that Lowrey liked to collect in the mountains around Monterrey at elevations between 3000-6000 feet because he felt these plants would adapt to Houston’s growing conditions.

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elevations lower than that, the plants were more suitable for dryer climates.

In 1988, John Fairey, owner of Peckerwood Gardens and Yucca Do Nursery near Hempstead, was one of a number of people who accompanied Lowrey to Mexico. Fairey wrote:

This first expedition with Lynn made a marked change in our lives and would forever alter the future direction of Yucca Do Nursery and Peckerwood Garden. During the next four days, we saw everything from high-altitude cloud forest to desert—an intense introduction to a new way of seeing. Searching for plants began early in the morning and often continued by flashlight, until after ten at night. Lynn is a storehouse of hard earned knowledge from decades of wide-ranging travel throughout Mexico and Texas. He generously shared ideas and information about everything, from obtaining collecting permits on both sides of the border to timesaving tips, and methods of cleaning, storing, and germinating seed. He is a master of making the exhausting work of plant hunting an adventure in learning. This memorable expedition laid the foundation for our desire to further explore Mexican flora.

On one of his collecting trips to Mexico in 1982, Lowrey and his friends Emmett Dodd and Dr. Ray Jordan discovered a small tree that was classified later as a new legume and was named *Myrospermum sousanum*. A rare, usually multi-trunked small tree, *M. sousanum* has white pea-like flowers. Dr. Marshall Johnston and Alfonso Delgado, botanists at The University of Texas at Austin, wrote the description of the plant. The plant can be found in arboreums across the state. Lowrey felt that finding *Myrospermum sousanum* indicated the importance of looking for more plants in Mexico. The legume was named for Dr. Mario Sousa, an authority on the legumes of Mexico.

Lowrey’s collecting skills were responsible for his one brief departure from his own nursery business. In the early 1980s, Joe Bradbury, President of Lone Star Growers (now Color Spot), a large wholesale nursery in San Antonio, offered Lowrey a position to collect and provide them with new plants. Jerry Parsons recalls that Bradbury had been impressed with a large Montezuma Cypress, *Taxodium mucronatum* in Parson’s back yard, and upon learning that Lowrey had collected and grown it, Bradbury decided to embark on a native plant venture with Lowrey as his native plant specialists. This was the first time a major Texas wholesale grower showed any interest in native plants. According to Parsons, Bradbury had not met Lowrey before he hired him, but was willing to put forth a sizable investment because of Lowrey’s reputation. Parson feels this says “quite a bit about the man [Lowrey] and his legend.”

Mike Anderson recalls that Lone Star offered Lowrey a salary, a credit card, and a pick-up Truck and said, “Go Collect.” What began as a promising partnership proved to be unsatisfactory. Lowrey’s nature did not allow him to fit into the corporate mold. Coworker Agnes Hubbard remembers Lowrey saying he did not like turning out thousands of plants “looking like little soldiers.” He was happier doing his own collecting, sharing with his friends along the way. A few of Lowrey’s introductions are still marketed by Color Spot today, but most are available only through smaller wholesale growers who specialize in native plants.

Although Lowrey taught many people, he did not call himself a teacher. He referred to himself as a student, saying he would be a student all his life. His careful observation and research of his beloved plants certainly made him a student, but by sharing his knowledge with so many others, he became the consummate teacher. His influence on other horticulturists, nurserymen, and landscape architects was phenomenal. Jill Nokes, author of *How to Grow Native Plants*, called him “a gentle guru.” Another friend, Agnes Hubbard, told of his teaching her to look at plants from the inside out. As they drove around, whether it was in downtown San Antonio or in the mountains of Mexico, he would quiz her about the Latin names of plants they were seeing. If she made an error in identification, he would patiently stop, point out subtleties about the plant—the color of the bark, the angle of the branches, some little something that would distinguish it from something similar. By doing this, she acknowledges, he gave her a foundation in botany that would enrich her life and her career always.

Many other friends consider him their teacher and mentor. Sally and Andy Wasowski dedicated their book *Native Texas Gardens* to him, as did Mark and Mary Bowen with their book *Habitat Gardening for Houston and Southeast Texas*. University professors told their students about Lowrey and took them to gardens he had landscaped.

Lowrey in Mexico, late 1980s.
Lynn R. Lowrey, Plantsman...

so they could see his work.

Lynn Lowrey made Anderson Nursery in Houston his headquarters during the last part of his career. Owned by his son-in-law and daughter, Mike and Patsy Anderson, the nursery specializes in flora of the traditional Lowrey vein: native and unusual plants, many of Mexican origin. Working primarily alone as the propagator in the nursery, Lowrey continued his associations with numerous horticulturists and nurserymen. He corresponded with many foreign horticulturists as well as those from across the United States. His daughter, Patsy Anderson, said it was not unusual for Lowrey to get calls from all over the world. Often when foreign visitors came to Washington, D.C. to visit the United States National Arboretum, they were advised there to detour by way of Texas for a visit with Lynn Lowrey.

In the last few years of his life, Lynn Lowrey became actively involved in growing *Camptotheca acuminata* trees for cancer research. Although research on *Camptotheca* sp. had been carried on for many years, a revival of interest in it and a shortage of available trees for research purposes prompted one researcher to call Lowrey. Until then, the only source of available trees for research purposes was California. Lowrey remembered years ago he had obtained some plants from his friend Tom Keeter, horticulturist for the city of San Antonio, and then had given one to another friend who lived north of Houston. Upon checking that tree, he found seedlings growing prolifically, so he collected some, brought them back to Anderson Nursery and began propagating them. Mike Anderson said they soon had 600 trees growing and had definitely cornered the market on *Camptotheca*. The trees were subsequently donated for research to the Stehlin Foundation for Cancer Research at St. Joseph's Hospital in Houston and to Xylomed Research in Monroe, Louisiana.

*Camptotheca acuminata,* called the "Tree of Joy" or the "Tree of Love" in China, had been introduced into the United States in 1911 by the USDA. In 1991, after Lowrey began propagating *Camptotheca* trees for research, he took some plants to David Creech for the Stephen F. Austin Arboretum. He gave Creech instructions to plant most of them outside but to keep a few in the greenhouse. Creech had not done anything with them when a few days later, Dr. Li Shiyou, visiting professor in the Stephen F. Austin University Department of Forestry, came knocking on his door inquiring if Creech happened to know where he could get *Camptotheca* trees. Creech recalled that he had helped Dr. Li previously with various materials such as mulch or extra pots, but it seemed almost ironic that Dr. Li knocked on the door at this particular time, hunting *Camptotheca* trees. Creech shared Lowrey's seedlings with Dr. Li and shortly afterwards was able to introduce him to Lowrey. Through Lowrey's contacts, Dr. Li received a grant for his research from the Houston Livestock Association, enabling him to go to China to study *Camptotheca* species in the wild. Dr. Li invited David Creech to accompany him along with another friend of Lowrey's, Katie Northrup. In December 1996, they made a five-week tour of China, surveying existing *Camptotheca* trees. They found a new species in the Sichuan province, which Dr. Li named *Camptotheca lowreyana,* thereby immortalizing Lowrey in the plant world. *Camptotheca* trees have now been declared endangered in China and no longer can be exported.

In March 1995, while actively involved in *Camptotheca* propagation, Lowrey was concerned about funding for additional cancer research on the trees. He wrote in the *American Nurseryman*:

> *Camptotheca acuminata* illustrated the importance of further studying plants for medicinal uses. Although much less is known about the healing properties of this plant than those of *Taxus,* it is one of the most promising plants in cancer research. Despite the need for evaluation of different strains and content of camptothecin in different parts of the tree, funds for this basic research have been insufficient.

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Through his skill in connecting people, Lowrey played a part in providing the funds for that research. Shortly before he died, he also took the experimental drug Camptothecin as part of his own cancer treatment.

It seems fitting that Lowrey's last work was such an important one. His fascination with plants had ranged from their use in landscaping to their use in medical research. His love of plants knew no boundaries, no constraints. His generosity to others continues. Even those he will never meet will benefit from his love of plants. Lowrey died on June 28th, 1997.

In March 1999, two white oaks, two fringe trees, and a swamp chestnut oak were planted in the new Lynn R. Lowrey Arboretum on the campus of Rice University. Spearheaded by Charles Tapley, architect and landscape architect, and Jerald Mize, an attorney, businessman and plant enthusiast, the Arboretum will feature native Texas trees and shrubs. In addition to serving as a living memorial to Lowrey, the Arboretum will be used as an educational resource for Rice University. Lowrey's legacy lives on.

Camptotheca, Tree of Joy.

Awards Received by Lynn R. Lowrey

Southwest Chapter ASLA Honor Award

American Association of Nurseryman National Landscape Award to Lowrey Nursery in recognition of achievement in landscaping and beautification for North Loop Office Park.

The Houston Botanical Society Environmental Achievement Award for personal achievement to Lynn R. Lowrey in recognition of his success in preserving endangered plant species native to Texas in city, and in propagating and establishing such plants in other suitable locations; his relentless pursuit of collecting and introducing native and other rare plants to the Houston area; his generosity in always sharing his knowledge and time with others.

The Houston Chapter of the American Institute of Architects and the Municipal Art Commission presents an award of distinguished achievement to Lynn Lowrey for an outstanding contribution to the environment of the city of Houston by Tom Dodd, Jr., Award of Excellence Second Annual presented to Lynn Lowrey for his achievements in understanding, promoting and using native plants of North America.

The Native Plant Society of Texas presents the Nancy Benedict Memorial Award for an act of conservation/service in the field of Native Texas Plants to Lynn Lowrey for his work on the conservation, propagation, distribution of Pistacia texana Swingle. Eighth Annual State Conference, Dallas, Texas.

The Garden Club of America gratefully acknowledges the significant contribution to Horticulture by Lynn R. Lowrey for pioneering the use of native plants in the landscape and for generous sharing of his knowledge, time and plants. Garden Club of Houston, Zone IX.

Sierra Club, Lone Star Chapter, Letter of Recognition for contributions to plant conservation in Texas, June 4th, 1996, applauding Lowrey's "many years of collecting, propagating, planting and promoting plants native to Texas and the Southwest...your efforts have gone a long way toward building appreciation for the value of native plants and the habitat that they provide."

The Native Plant Society of Texas presents this Charles Leonard Weddle Memorial Award in recognition of a lifetime of service and devotion to the Texas native plants to Lynn Lowrey. Presented this 19th day of October, 1996, at the annual meeting of the Society, El Paso, Texas.
1999 “Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes” Conference
by Keyes Williamson, Old Salem, North Carolina

The theme of this year’s Conference on Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes will be the preservation and documentation of historic gardens and landscape features. The conference, to be held at Old Salem in Winston-Salem from September 30th to October 2nd, 1999, will provide a forum for leading scholars to present their recent work on garden history and landscape preservation. Documenting historic gardens and landscape plans has long been the goal of the Southern Garden History Society and this conference is a continuation of that effort, with a focus on the functions and boundaries of a garden, as delineated by a fence-line, and establishing the background for Tyron Palace’s Perry Matthews’ examination of the plant lists of Eastern North Carolina.

As our list of appropriate plant varieties expands, the need to organize this body of information in a useful form becomes increasingly important. George Stritikus, having compiled extensive lists of historic plants appearing through the years in Alabama’s gardens, will lead a workshop on using computers to collate this information. At the heart of this year’s conference will be a panel discussion, led by Colonial Williamsburg’s Gordon Chappell, which will discuss the need for and the best ways to develop an accurate plant list for Southern historic gardens. Perhaps most useful among the panelists for this kind of open discussion, to share ideas and elucidate the potential obstacles that inevitably exist in such an ambitious project.

By including several conference participants in the panel discussion, we are sure to hear a wealth of opinions and ideas from both private individuals interested in garden restoration and professionals involved in garden restoration. Each participant will offer a unique perspective on how to proceed with further research and documentation, as well as how to make the transition from research to restoring a garden. While locating a contemporaneous drawing of a garden is immeasurably helpful, locating the drawn garden on the physical site remains a challenging feat. William Rieley, presently the landscape architect for the Garden Club of Virginia, will examine how recent computer technology assists the identification and explanation of historic landscapes. Computers promise to be a valuable tool in the future, accompanying the trusty trowel of the archaeologists.

Landscape restoration has long depended upon archaeology to locate garden features; and establishing the boundaries of a garden, as delineated by a fence-line, is often the important, first step. Peter J. Harrison, calling upon his extensive research into historic garden features, will remind conference participants of the functions and styles of garden fences. Camilla Wilcox, as curator of education for the Reynolda Gardens of Wake Forest University, researched the plant listed on Thomas Sears’ 1917 plan for the gardens of Reynolda, and Mrs. Wilcox will lead a workshop outlining her experience finding a practical approach to restoring garden plantings.

While restoring a historic garden combines the work of many fields, perhaps no single element of a restored garden captures the attention of a visitor as much as the plants themselves. An accurately restored garden must include appropriate plants, and at this conference several leading plant authorities will discuss documenting period plant varieties. Peggy Cornett’s work on popular nineteenth-century annuals is well known, and she will expand upon this subject to examine documented flower varieties of the South. James Cothern’s work on popular nineteenth-century annuals is well known, and she will expand upon this subject to examine documented flower varieties of the South. James Cothern, a SGHS board member, will focus upon the antebellum South and the plants Southerners used in their gardens and groves. North Carolina’s rich horticultural heritage, complete with illustrious plant explorers and gardens of every variety, serves as the background for Tyron Palace’s Perry Matthews’ examination of the plant lists of Eastern North Carolina.

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Chatwood Garden Opens

by Flora Ann Bynum, Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Chatwood Garden in Hillsborough, North Carolina, was opened to visitors in April by its new owners, SGHS members Bruce and Susan Lueck. In the 1950s Helen Blake Watkins began developing extensive gardens around the circa 1808 house on the property, which had originally been used as a tavern and hostelry. Mrs. Watkins' garden became well known throughout the South for its extensive collection of old garden roses, featured in a three-room walled garden. By the time of Mrs. Watkins' death in 1993, the garden had grown to cover several acres and included multiple perennial and woody beds, a large woodland garden, and a stream bed added to provide a water feature.

The Luecks bought the property in 1997 and have worked for two years to renovate and restore the garden beds. There are currently 350 varieties of old garden roses, and thousands of species of other plants, especially featuring those varieties used in Southern gardens. The Luecks have added a one-hundred foot "Long Border" along the rose garden wall. A formal parterre garden of fruits and vegetables is under way.

Chatwood is now open spring through late autumn on Thursday afternoons at 2 p.m. by appointment. Reservations may be made by calling (919) 644-0791 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Helen Watkins (then Helen Blake) spoke at the first Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes conference in 1979 on old garden roses. In May 1982 the conference program included a tour of Chatwood.

Of Interest

Biltmore Portrait Graces New Olmsted Stamp

A new postage stamp set for release in September honors Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903), founder of American landscape architecture and creator of Biltmore Estate's landscape plan. Biltmore, the home of George Vanderbilt, was the site of the Southern Garden History Society's 1998 annual meeting. The stamp features Olmsted's portrait, commissioned by Vanderbilt and painted by John Singer Sargent in 1895, which usually hangs in the Second Floor Living Hall of Biltmore House, but was on loan to the National Gallery of Art for its Sargent exhibition. Also in the stamp are a photo of Central Park and two architectural landscape plans, all designed by Olmsted.

1999 "Restoring Southern Gardens and Landscapes" Conference...

continued from page 10
“The Greener Side of Texas” Delights SGHS Members
by Peggy Cornett, Editor

Southern Garden History Society annual-meeting participants enjoyed once again the gracious hospitality of our Texas hosts. Conference coordinators Nancy Haywood, Linda Hughes, Susan Keeton, Jayme Ponder, Betty Schoolar, and Bill and Diane Welch are to be commended for producing an outstanding meeting in Houston on March 26th-28th. Their months of preparation and hard work was certainly evident in their selection of high quality speakers, their careful arrangements for interesting field trips, and their meticulous organization of fabulous after-hour receptions and dinners.

From Bayou Bend to the Antique Rose Emporium, meeting attendees were delighted every step of the way. A handsome and informative, seventy-page conference booklet supplied the participants with a detailed account of the lectures, speaker biographies, and activities for the weekend. This valuable program was enhanced by archival photographs and illustrations from the early Houston landscape, making it a great meeting memento.
"The Greener Side of Texas"
Delights SGHS Members ...
continued from page 12

We are greatly appreciative of the edifying venues provided by the staff members at Bayou Bend Collection and Gardens, the Menil Collection, and the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston. Special thanks go to Mr. and Mrs. Frank C. Smith, Laura Rice Neff, and Mr. and Mrs. W. McIver Streetman who opened their private gardens to society members, and to Mr. and Mrs. Nathan Avery, who hosted the annual dinner and business meeting, at which Allen Lacy, "Dean of American Garden Writers," gave the keynote address.

Sunday's optional field trip took attendees northwest of Houston into the rolling Hill Country of Washington County.

Peter Kaarup with a cart-load of plants at the Antique Rose Emporium. Peckerwood Garden, the home and nursery of noted plantsman John Fairey, was a real highlight. This Garden Conservancy property in Hempstead, Texas, with an outstanding collection of native rarities from Texas and Mexico, is described as "an artist's garden set in a natural landscape." It was hard to pry participants away from the garden's dizzying collection of unusual specimens and the proprietor's adjacent business, the renowned Yucca Do Nursery. A delightful picnic lunch at Margaret Shanks' garden antique shop in Brenham was followed by a trip to everyone's favorite, the Antique Rose Emporium. There, owner Michael Shoup gave a brief overview of the ever-expanding nursery before turning us loose to enjoy the inspiring and often whimsical garden displays and myriad assortment of roses.

Of the outstanding roster of lectures, two will be reprinted in Magnolia. This issue contains the profile of plant explorer and nurseryman Lynn Lowrey, which was presented by Mary Anne Pickens, past president of the Native Plant Society of Texas, and member of the Winedale Historical Center and Advisory Council of the University of Texas at Austin and of the Pioneer Unit of the Herb Society of America. She also has been a frequent Magnolia contributor. Ms. Pickens' great-grandfather J. F. Leyendecker started Pearfield Nursery in 1876, and her grandparents continued to run the nursery through the 1950s. Her interest in the history of horticulture has evolved through research on her family's nursery and that of other nineteenth-century Texas nurserymen.

The fall issue of Magnolia will feature "A New Look at our French Gardening Roots: Nouveau Jardinier de la Louisiane," an essay by Sally Kittredge Reeves, archivist of the New Orleans Evening reception at Bayou Bend.

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Spring SGHS Board Meeting
reported by Flora Ann Bynum, secretary-treasurer

A
possible web site for the society was discussed at the
spring SGHS board meeting held in Houston March 26th.
Kenneth McFarland will chair a committee— including Harriet
Janasma, Perry Mathewes, and Peggy Cornett—to investigate the
possibilities.
The board members were approved by the board for a
second term: Dr. Elizabeth Boggess, Dr. Edgar G. Girhan, and
Barbara Wells Sarady. These board members were re-elected at
the society's annual meeting held the following day. Ms. Jansma,
who will not be returning to the board, served as chair of the
nominating committee. A committee to present nominees for the
next annual meeting will be chaired by Gail Griffin and includes
Peter Hatch and Flora Ann Bynum.
The idea of establishing local chapters of the society in areas with
a large membership was suggested. Dr. William C. Welch, publications chair,
reported that the translation by Sally Reeves, was moving forward. It is being
published by the LSU Press under the sponsorship of the society.

Three board members were approved by the board for a
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A special committee for a twentieth anniversary commem-
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Haywood, co-chair, Harriet Janasma, and Peter Hatch.

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translated by Sally Reeves, was moving forward. It is being
published by the LSU Press under the sponsorship of the society.

Gordon Chappell, chair of the historic plant list for the South,
which the society is sponsoring, asked board members to seek out
historic plant lists and encourage others to do so. He hopes to
have the list ready by the twentieth anniversary of the society in
2002. [See article on the plant list in this issue.]“

Garden History Seminar,
"The Evolution of the
Williamsburg Landscape,”
September 28th, 1999

Colonial Williamsburg will be sponsoring a one-day
Garden History Seminar, Tuesday, September 28th,
1999, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Members of the
landscape and archeological research departments will
explore 18th-century Williamsburg through the eyes of the
early gardeners, the seminal landscape architects and the
modern professionals who have contributed to the beauty
that is Williamsburg.
The seminar will take place in the in the Hennage
Auditorium of the DeWitt Wallace Gallery. Laura
Viancour, manager of garden programs, will welcome guests
to the seminar at 9:00 a.m. The roster of speakers includes
Kent Brinkley, landscape architect for the Foundation, who
will be speaking on "The Evolution of the Macro-
Landscape." Kent will examine the profound changes to the
landscape encompassing Williamsburg during the last three
hundred and more years.

Terry Yemm, garden historian for the Foundation, will
follow with, "A Discourse on Gardening by John Randolph,
An Avid 18th-Century Gardener." Terry will bring to the
seminar both his experiences in character interpretation and his
work on John Randolph's plant diaries.

Following the morning break, Gordon Chappell,
director of Landscape and Facilities Services, will present
"Contrasting Rural & Urban Gardens in Colonial
Virginia." an examination and comparison of historic sites
both within and outside of Colonial Williamsburg.
The afternoon session will feature "Brothers of the
Spade," Wesley Greene's study of the plant exchange
between John Custis and Peter Collinson. Wesley Greene,
with Terry Yemm, was a founder of the very successful
colonial nursery site at Colonial Williamsburg.

Kate Meatyard, research fellow in the Department of
Archeological Research, will conclude with "Arthur Shurcliff's
Early Landscapes of Colonial Williamsburg." Arthur
Shurcliff, Colonial Williamsburg's first landscape architect,
studied gardens both in the Eastern United States and in
England in order to identify precedents for the gardens and
landscapes he would recreate for the restored city.

Registration fee is $40 per person and interested persons
should contact the registrar at The Williamsburg Institute,
Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, P. O. Box 1776,
Williamsburg, VA 23187. Or call at (757) 220-7255, or
1-800-603-0948. Or e-mail Deb Chapman at
dchapman@cwf.org.
A Southern Plant List
by Gordon Chappell,
Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia

The Southern Garden History Society and the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation are jointly sponsoring a project to compile a list of historic plants for the South. At the last board of director's meeting held in Houston in March, Gordon Chappell, landscape director at Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia, briefed the board on progress with the plant list project.

The plant list will be a compendium of plants mentioned in attributed historic sources. Thus far, Chappell and Larry Griffith, project coordinator, have collected about 15 lists, dating from 1732 until 1935.

Among the lists submitted to date are:
- Thomas Jefferson's Monticello list, submitted by Peter Hatch;
- Bernard McMahon's Philadelphia catalogue, William Booth's Baltimore catalogue, the William Faris Annapolis list, and the Sinclair and Moore nursery list from Baltimore, submitted by Barbara Sarudy;
- the William Byrd plant list, submitted by Colonial Williamsburg as well as Colonial Williamsburg's own historic plant list;
- the plant lists from Bethabara gardens in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, submitted by Flora Ann Bynum;
- the list compiled from the Brothers of the Spade correspondence between Peter Collinson and John Custis, compiled and submitted by Peter Hatch;
- a colonial vegetable list compiled and submitted by Wesley Greene, garden historian, Colonial Williamsburg;
- John Randolph's Williamsburg list, compiled and submitted by Terry Yemm, garden historian, Colonial Williamsburg;
- the Middleton Place list;
- the Hardy Croom citations submitted by Goodwood Museum & Garden, Tallahassee, Florida;
- and the Jacob Smith list from Fayetteville, Arkansas, compiled by John Fitzgerald and submitted by Harriet Jansma.

The composite list will include common and botanical names (if given), the date of each plant's appearance on each submitted list, the date and provenance of each original list, the submitter of the list, and the plant type, i.e.: perennial, tree, shrub, etc.

Gordon Chappell and members of the landscape department at Colonial Williamsburg are developing a standardized format so that the final product will have universal utility. Chappell encouraged all members of the Southern Garden History Society to participate in the project, emphasizing that the more diverse the lists the greater the use the combined list will have in the future.

In addition, a facsimile of each submitted list will append the document, so that a researcher can not only determine the date of the use of a plant but also determine the other plants that were used in the same garden.

If you have questions about this project please contact Gordon Chappell, (755) 220-7764 and e-mail at elcgc@vt.edu, or Larry Griffith, project team leader, at (757) 565-8713. They will be pleased to discuss the project and lead you through the process of preparing a list.
Members in the News

SGHS members are featured on the next three programs of the New Orleans Old Garden Rose Society.

- **Liz Druitt** speaks in June on “Gardening with your Dog,” featuring her dog, Henna Moon. Liz is now assistant garden editor for *Southern Living* magazine in Birmingham, Alabama.

- **Greg Grant** of Center, Texas, will speak in July on “Guns & Roses (Cool Plants).” Greg is co-author of *The Southern Heirloom Garden*.

- In August, **Rosemary Sims** of New Orleans presents a program on the art of combining plants of different sorts, illustrated with examples from recent visits to great gardens.

Notarial Archive, who has done a careful translation of Jacques-Felix Lelievre’s 1838 *New Louisiana Gardener*. Her work with this important early book on French horticulture in New Orleans was sponsored by the Southern Garden History Society and is slated for publication by LSU Press later this year.

Avenue of live oaks through Houston’s River Oak district.

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**Peter J. Hatch**, President

**Kenneth M. McFarland**, Vice-President

**Flora Ann Bynum**, Secretary-Treasurer

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Deadline for the submission of articles for the fall issue of *Magnolia* is July 31st.