

The Crosby Arboretum

Mississippi State University Extension Service

Quarterly News Journal

Winter 2008

23.0

DEVIL'S WALKING STICK *Aralia spinosa*

Next time you visit The Crosby Arboretum, ask to be directed to the Devil's Walking Stick. We have one that has set up shop near the greenhouse, perhaps courtesy of a passing thrush, oriole, mockingbird or vireo following a snack on a nearby plant.

Aralia spinosa is said to be one of the most viciously spiny things in the vegetable kingdom. However, Crosby Arboretum's Grounds Manager Terry Johnson may award that title to the smilax vine intertwined with our devil's walking stick. One would need to make a conscious effort to grab the walking stick's straight trunk, but smilax is known for its sneak attacks. Between the *Aralia's* sinister spines and the way the bonelike leaf stems and midribs pile up around its base as it sheds its leaves, there is something downright spooky about this plant.



Devil's walking stick is found in the eastern United States growing in open woodlands, clearings, and along forest edges. It has a habit more like a giant perennial than a tree or shrub. Mature specimens may grow up to 20 feet or more and develop a few branches, but younger plants have just a single naked stem with all the leaves clustered at the top. Ours is just such a juvenile stalk, and is about 8 feet tall. Several years ago it caught the eagle eyes of volunteer George Barry and Terry Johnson, even though it is tightly nestled in a cluster of holly, sweetbay magnolia, and the aforementioned smilax vine.

The trunk of this unusual plant is lined with sharp toothlike spines. The exotic ferny-looking bi- or tripinnate leaves may grow up to 6 feet long, and are born on long prickly stems that are themselves spiny along the ribs. Huge clusters of little white flowers appear at the ends of the branches in mid to late summer, and provide a treat for swallowtail butterflies. In early to mid fall, they are followed by showy masses of purple black berries.

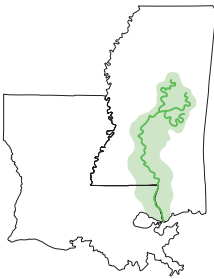
Devil's walking stick was used for medicinal purposes by Native Americans and early settlers. The bark was administered as a purgative and the berries were employed in pain killing preparations. Various parts of the plant have been used to treat boils, fever, toothache, cholera, eye problems, skin conditions, and snakebite. Berries of *Aralia spinosa* are valuable as food for birds, black bears, and other wildlife.

Photo permission of the Ozarks Regional Herbarium. (<http://biology.missouristate.edu/Herbarium>; Text: www.floridata.com)



CROSBY ARBORETUM'S NEW SENIOR CURATOR

Join us in welcoming Pat Drackett, our new Senior Curator. Pat brings an extensive background in plants and an enthusiasm for public education to the Arboretum. A lifelong gardener, she holds degrees in botany and landscape architecture. For the past twenty years she has practiced as a landscape designer and horticultural consultant, and has enjoyed promoting and designing with native plant species. Please stop in and meet Pat next time you visit Crosby Arboretum!



The **Crosby Arboretum**
Mississippi State University

A regional arboretum representing the native flora of the Pearl River Drainage Basin in Mississippi and Louisiana.

Picayune, Mississippi, USA

FOR THE BIRDS!

Project FeederWatch

Time to focus on feeders! The 21st season of Project FeederWatch is underway, but you can sign up at any time. Your counts will help scientists monitor changes in feeder-bird populations over the winter from year to year. New participants receive a kit with a handbook, a bird-identification poster, a calendar, and an instruction booklet. Join the flock! For more information about Project FeederWatch or to sign up in the U.S., please visit www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/.



The Great Backyard Bird Count February 15-18, 2008

Crosby Arboretum is an ambassador for one of the year's most fun, interesting and important birding events – the Great Backyard Bird Count. This annual four-day event engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are across the continent. Anyone can participate, from beginning bird watchers to experts. It takes as little as 15 minutes. It's free, fun, and easy – and it helps the birds. Despite the name, participants can count birds anywhere for as little or as long as they wish during the four-day period. Over 80,000 checklists were submitted in last year's event. Call Robin Veerkamp at (601) 799-2311, Ext. 104 for details. For more information visit www.birdsource.org/gbbc/.

Plants at Crosby Arboretum with Winter Interest

COMMON NAME	BOTANICAL NAME	CHARACTERISTIC
RED MAPLE	<i>Acer rubrum</i>	Red and orange flower clusters on reddish twigs.
LITTLE BLUE STEM	<i>Andropogon spp.</i>	Tan, leafy stems with white, fluffy seeds.
PLUME GRASS	<i>Erianthus giganteus</i>	Tall grass with feathery seeds rising from the top
AMERICAN BEECH	<i>Fagus grandifolia</i>	Tan, drooping leaves persisting on stems.
YELLOW JESSAMINE	<i>Gelsemium sempervirens</i>	Vine with fragrant yellow tubular flowers.
DECIDUOUS HOLLY	<i>Ilex decidua</i>	Bright red fruit clinging to dormant stems.
GALLBERRY HOLLY	<i>Ilex glabra</i>	Black fruit borne on small, leafy stems.
AMERICAN HOLLY	<i>Ilex opaca</i>	Bright red fruit; stems with stiff, spiny leaves.
YAUPON HOLLY	<i>Ilex vomitoria</i>	Bright red fruit; clustered on short stems.
GOLDEN CLUB	<i>Orontium aquaticum</i>	Yellow flower cluster; growing in water.
POND CYPRESS	<i>Taxodium ascendens</i>	Striking trees with tan, shredding bark.
ELLIOT'S BLUEBERRY	<i>Vaccinium elliotii</i>	Small pink/white flowers; pale green stems.

Reservations: Call the Arboretum office at (601) 799-2311, ext. 101 to confirm all events and to make a reservation, seating is limited. Programs subject to change.

Address: 370 Ridge Road, Picayune, MS 39466; P.O. Box 1639, Picayune, MS 39466

E-mail contact: drackett@ext.msstate.edu

Hours of operation: Wednesday-Sunday, 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

Admission Fees: Adults, \$4; children under 12, \$2; members free.

Webpage: www.crosbyarboretum.msstate.edu. Lists programs and events, volunteer opportunities, arboretum and natural area information, and news updates.

The News Journal is a quarterly publication of The Crosby Arboretum, Mississippi State University Extension Service. Journal subscriptions may be obtained with membership at the Arboretum. Printed on recycled paper.

Please address correspondence to:

Pat Drackett, Editor
The Crosby Arboretum
370 Ridge Road
Picayune, MS 39466

Crosby Arboretum Program Schedule

January 2008 - February 2008

January 2008

PRESCRIBED BURN DEMONSTRATION

Every Thursday and Friday

In January and February

10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Learn fire management techniques and observe a prescribed burning demonstration by Crosby Arboretum Burn Manager **Terry Johnson**. Wear old clothes and boots, dress for the weather, and bring a lunch. **Program available only if environmental conditions are favorable – call office to confirm one hour prior to workshop.** Admission is free for arboretum members; \$5 for non-members. Persons under the age of 18 must be accompanied by an adult. Reservations requested.

WINTER VOLUNTEER MEETING

Saturday, January 12

9 a.m.

All are invited to attend this upcoming volunteer meeting. Explore the many opportunities to volunteer here at the Crosby Arboretum. For more information, contact Robin Veerkamp at (601) 799-2311 Ext. 104.

FEEDING BIRDS IN WINTER

Saturday, January 12

10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Birds often need extra food in the winter for fuel and warmth. Children will enjoy making suet feeders, peanut butter pinecone feeders, and other delights to attract birds to your backyard. All materials will be provided. Members children \$3; non-members \$5. Please register by January 9.

Kids

CREATING A BACKYARD

WILDLIFE HABITAT

Saturday, January 19

1 p.m. to 2 p.m.

Planting wildlife-friendly plants in your backyard may provide you with more entertainment than television! The basic needs of food, water, and shelter for birds and other wildlife will be discussed, along with ways to attract specific wildlife such as hummingbirds and butterflies. Learn how to design your yard for optimal use by wildlife, and which native plants provide the highest wildlife value. Admission is free for arboretum members and \$4 for non-members. Please register by January 16.

SQUARE FOOT GARDENING: Family GROWING MORE IN SMALL SPACES

Thursday, January 24

10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

The “square foot” approach to raised bed gardening is a method that anyone can enjoy – children, adults with limited mobility, and even those new to gardening can achieve spectacular results with less effort. **Kerry Johnson**, Horticulture Specialist with the MSU Extension Service, will discuss this simple method of growing better quality plants and vegetables with a minimal investment of labor and time. Admission is free for arboretum members and \$4 for non-members. Please register by January 21. Members' children \$3; non-members \$5. Please register by January 21.

February 2008

ARBOR DAY PLANT SALE

Saturday, February 2

Members' Only Sale – 9 a.m. to 10 a.m.

General Public Sale – 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

To celebrate Mississippi Arbor Day, you can choose from a variety of trees and shrubs at this plant sale. This is a good time to plant trees and woody shrubs, so come early for the best selection of native azaleas, mayhaws, hollies, mountain laurel, red maples, and many hard-to-find plants. Plant professionals will be on hand to help you select the right plant for the right place on your property. **Free admission.** Arboretum greenhouse.

WINTER VOLUNTEER MEETING

Saturday, February 9

9 a.m.

Explore the wide variety of opportunities to volunteer here at the Crosby Arboretum. Come prepared to work outside if weather permits. For more information, contact Robin Veerkamp at (601) 799-2311 Ext. 104.

MISSISSIPPI ARBOR DAY CELEBRATION

Family

Saturday, February 9

10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Celebrate Mississippi Arbor Day by planting a tree at the Arboretum! A special selection of trees will be planted into the Arboretum exhibits. Area organizations and individuals are invited to assist. **Free admission**, but please call the Arboretum office to register.

Crosby Arboretum Program Schedule

February 2008

February continued

HOME LANDSCAPING PRACTICES FOR MAINTAINING HEALTHY WATERSHEDS

**Saturday, February 16
10 a.m. to 11 a.m.**

Learn home gardening methods that can have a positive effect on the environment. **Chris Boyd**, MSU Extension Specialist, will discuss how planting native plants and other stress tolerant vegetation can reduce maintenance, watering, disease control and the use of chemicals. Soil testing will be discussed as a tool for guiding proper plant fertilization, thus minimizing the potential for creating future water quality problems. Admission is free for arboretum members and \$4 for non-members. Please register by February 13.

INTRODUCTION TO NATIVE PLANTS FOR THE HOME LANDSCAPE

**Saturday, February 16
1 p.m. to 2 p.m.**

Using native plants in our home gardens can lower maintenance, require less water, and save us money. How do we begin the process of integrating native plants into a home landscape already stuffed full of ornamentals? Learn how to choose the best areas for incorporating natives – replacing high-maintenance plants, providing infill plantings, or creating entirely new planting areas. Natives of particular interest for the home landscape will be discussed. Admission is free for arboretum members; \$4 for non-members. Please register by February 13.

TERRIFIC UNDERSTORY NATIVES

**Saturday, February 23
10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.**

Thickets are great tools in habitat gardening. **Rick Webb**, owner of Louisiana Growers in Amite City, Louisiana, will discuss how planting native understory shrubs and small trees, upland or wetland, in tight groups, is a super way of creating food sources as well as resting and nesting cover for birds and wildlife. Understory plants also enhance the soil with mulch and shade for the soil fauna, not to mention the value of the blessing to the human senses. This is a session, and a speaker, not to be missed by the native plant enthusiast. Admission is free for arboretum members and \$4 for non-members. Please register by February 20.

CONTAINER GARDENS

**Thursday, February 28
10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.**

If you are limited on gardening space, or just enjoy displaying seasonal containers on your porch or patio, you'll learn all aspects of container gardening here in this presentation from **Billy Joe Lee**, MSU Extension Agent from Pearl River County. Choosing containers, plants and soils, designing your plantings, and valuable tips on how to keep your container gardens in tip-top shape will be covered. Admission is free for arboretum members and \$4 for non-members. Please register by February 25.

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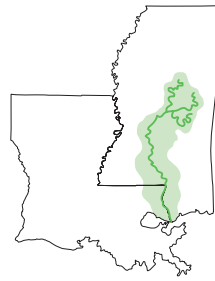
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The Crosby Arboretum Mississippi State University

A regional arboretum representing the native flora of the Pearl River Drainage Basin in Mississippi and Louisiana.

Picayune, Mississippi, USA

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Winter Landscape Evokes Reflection

“A winter landscape seems charged with inward-focused energy. It is as if all exists as proof of what has been and of the potential of what can be, as symbolic reflections of what has been taken and what will be returned, as a timeless equilibrium where change is the only constancy.”

— Edward L. Blake, Jr., Crosby Arboretum Director, 1984-1994, from the Winter 1985 Crosby Arboretum *News Journal*.

Boy Scouts Earn Eagle Projects at Arboretum

The Crosby Arboretum has received a recent face lift, thanks to some hard-working members of the Boy Scouts of America. Four projects were completed this past year by Scouts from Picayune Troop 5 working towards their Eagle Scout Rank requirements. Boy Scout **Ben Daniel** led his crew in waging war on the invasive aquatic Alligatorweed that had spread throughout the entire arboretum Pond Exhibit and waterway system. The arboretum does not use chemicals to control water weeds, and they must be removed mechanically. Daniel, his fellow Scouts, and long-time faithful volunteer **Paul Breland** donned their waders and joined Crosby Arboretum's

Grounds Superintendent **Terry Johnson** to plunge into the water. They used machetes to remove the Alligatorweed from around the banks while other Scout volunteers fished it from the water with pitch forks and rakes. At times the crew braved hypothermia as they splashed through the pond in 50 degree temperatures. Their activities provided entertainment for weekend visitors to the arboretum, including **Cub Scout Pack 437** from Slidell, and **Webelos Scout Pack 160** from Covington. **Leland English** repaired and painted the arboretum's front fence, which was in dire need of a sprucing up after twenty years of service. Leland's crew was threatened at times by rain and lightning – until the lightning turned a bit more spirited and drove the Scouts into the ticket booth. Terry Johnson reported that it was hard to get an exact count of the number of Scouts in the booth, as the windows steamed up quickly. **Wyatt English's** crew battled rain during their repairs of the hurricane stricken roof on the outdoor restroom building. They also repaired and painted the surrounding fence. **Ross Hooge** enjoyed perfect weather as he and his fellow Scouts sanded and painted all the posts on Pinecote Pavilion and installed new ropes. The Crosby Arboretum and Mississippi State University Extension Service would like to thank these fine young men, their fellow Scouts who participated, and the Pine Burr Area Scout District for all of their able assistance.



Membership Application

All contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed. For more information call: (601) 799-2311

_____	Student (send student i.d.)	\$ 10.00
_____	Individual	25.00
_____	Family	35.00
_____	Donor	100.00
_____	Business	100.00
_____	Patron	250.00
_____	Benefactor	1,000.00

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Renewing?

Memberships are for one year.

The Crosby Arboretum
Mississippi State University
P.O. Box 1639
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