

The Crosby Arboretum

Mississippi State University Extension Service

Quarterly News Journal

Spring 2011

25.2

SOUTH MISSISSIPPI'S INDIGENOUS AGRICULTURE FEATURED A "MOVING FEAST"

By Allan Nation

When the first Europeans arrived in South Mississippi 300 years ago, what did the landscape look like? Most people would imagine a dense jungle, but this wasn't the case at all.

The flat coastal shelf was almost devoid of trees and supported vast herds of bison. North of the coastal prairie the uplands were covered with widely spaced mature pine trees 120 to 130 feet tall, with an almost pure grass understory. In other words, the uplands were a savannah and not a closed forest. This beautiful landscape was created by the purposeful agricultural fire of the resident Native Americans, and the grazing habits of the bison. Mineral-rich hardwood leaves are a favorite treat for bison, and they readily pushed over small hardwood trees to eat their leaves. Consequently, the region became pine dominant and these native pines developed fire resistant due to the frequency of small grass fires.

Native Americans used a small smoldering grass fire to attract large animals to their ambush points, as bison and deer would follow smoke to lick the ashes for the minerals. They also used an encircling fire to drive small game, like rabbits, into their preset traps. Fire was also used to flush their favorite food, the black bear, from the region's dense bamboo canebrakes. In effect, the South Mississippi Native Americans were game ranchers, and managed fire was their major roundup tool. Over the four thousand years of human existence in South Mississippi, the whole upland ecosystem became fire adapted and even fire dependent. These upland hills broke into thousands of valleys and each valley had a stream to carry away the heavy annual rainfall. Along each stream an alluvial soil shelf developed studded with mature gum, magnolia and cypress trees. These creeks ran into streams which ran into rivers each with an ever larger alluvial shelf as the stream flow increased. It was on these nitrogen-rich, alluvial soils that the Native Americans began to farm corn.



Book signing event: On March 26, author Allan Nation will speak at the Crosby Arboretum. Copies of his new book, "A Moving Feast" will be available.

First, they would girdle the huge trees to kill them. This would open up the forest floor to the sun. Then, they would plant corn, beans and squash together in wide-spaced mounds of earth. The corn would feed upon the natural nitrogen, the beans would climb the corn stalk, and the squash plant would cover the surrounding land to prevent erosion from the summer rainfall. Indian corn was early maturing, and several crops of corn could be planted each year in South Mississippi's long growing season. The natural soil nitrogen would be exhausted in three years and the Native Americans would move their crops to newly opened ground. It was literally a "moving feast."

The Scots-Irish hide hunters who came into the region in the late 18th and early 19th centuries admired the native peoples' way of agriculture, and adopted it almost wholesale. Agricultural fire, grazing and subsistence corn farming formed the basis of South Mississippi's agriculture until the mid 20th century. Even today, our regional food preferences can be traced back to pre-historic Native American agriculture, which was shaped by our region's unique climate and topography.



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

Arboretum Notes:

Winter has brought plenty of activity here at the Arboretum. It has been exciting to watch our new Gum Pond Exhibit take shape. After the completion of the pond construction in October, we actually began to look forward to rain, and each rise in the pond's water level. Visitors and tour groups began to journey north to the new Exhibit, and give rave reviews. In January, Grounds Manager Terry Johnson led his crew of staff and volunteers to construct a new landing. And on Arbor Day in February, more than forty volunteers planted 500 swamp gum trees into the Exhibit. Thank you, Master Gardeners, 4-H club members, and Arboretum members and volunteers, for your help in getting our Gum Pond Exhibit off to a great start!

Even with the cold weather, our winter programs and events were well-attended, and the warm weather on Forge Day in January helped draw in more than 200 attendees, making it the best year yet. This spring we are pleased to offer you another season of outstanding programs, including three musical performances, an Earth Day celebration in April, and a special cooking class in May highlighting ways to bring local gardens' seasonal bounty to your kitchen table.

The installation is now complete for our new rainwater irrigation system! This was donated to the Arboretum by Avon Engineered Fabrications, Inc., and can be seen in the Children's Garden area. Powered by a solar controller, it will provide water for the raised beds in our garden. Come check out the new rainwater irrigation system at our April Earth Day celebration.

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.

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More than forty volunteers helped with the Gum Pond planting day on February 12 for Mississippi Arbor Day.

Planning for another major Arboretum exhibit, the Swamp Forest Exhibit, is currently underway. This four acre project will be constructed south of the new Gum Pond Exhibit, and north of the Slough Exhibit. A stream draining south from the Gum Pond will be developed, and the associated plant communities will be restored. Bob Brzuszek and his graduate design students from the MSU Landscape Architecture Department visited in January to walk the proposed site and observe the plant species, hydrology, and wetland configuration. LSU landscape architecture student Garrett Newton, who interned last spring for the Gum Pond project, will return this year to conduct his senior Capstone project, focusing on the new wetland exhibit. The students returned to attend a design charette at the end of February, focused on the development of a diagram for the Swamp Forest Exhibit. The group received guidance from a landscape architect and an architect from the Seattle ecological land planning firm, Jones and Jones. The new exhibit will serve to connect the new Gum Pond with the Piney Woods Pond.

Finally, in response to numerous requests, we are pleased to announce that we now have a Crosby Arboretum Facebook page. Visit our page for photos of the new Gum Pond, read our current Picayune Item column, and learn about upcoming programs and events.

– *Pat Drackett, Senior Curator*

Crosby Arboretum Program Schedule

March - April 2011

A HISTORY OF PEARL RIVER COUNTY (Adults)
Saturday, March 12
10:00 to 11:00 a.m.

Poet and writer **Don Wicks** with the Pearl River County Historical Society, will tell some interesting and informative tales about local history, such as colorful writer and poet Pearl Rivers, who became editor and publisher of the Times Picayune in 1876 at the age of 27. Members free; non-members \$5. Register by March 11.

MUSIC SERIES CONCERT: LISA LAMBERT & THE PINE RIDGE BOYS (Family Event)
Saturday, March 12
1:00 p.m. on Pinecote Pavilion

Lisa Lambert and her band kick off the Arboretum's Spring music series with their string-band "roots" music. The group is dedicated to preserving Southern musical heritage, and their sound is a twist on forgotten bluegrass, old-time, country, blues and gospel classics. The series is funded in part by the **Mississippi Arts Commission** and the **National Endowment for the Arts**. Members \$5, members' children \$3; Non-members, \$10, non-members' children \$6.

WILDLIFE DAY (School Day)
Thursday, March 24
9:00 a.m. to Noon

Children will thrill to exhibitors displaying live and preserved animals, while learning how to protect and maintain wildlife in a field day open to area K-12 schools and homeschool groups. Admission \$2 per child, free to teachers and chaperones. Please call by March 23 to schedule an arrival time for your group.

THE MOVING FEAST (Adults)
Saturday, March 26
10:00 to 11:00 a.m.

Allan Nation will discuss his fascinating book, and give historical anecdotes explaining the food history of Southeast Mississippi from Native American times to the end of World War II. Not a recipe book, *The Moving Feast* explains who ate what and why, and offers a summary of healthier choices for what we eat today. Members free; non-members \$5. Register by March 25.

**WILD ABOUT CREEPY CRAWLIES:
PROJECT WILD TEACHERS' WORKSHOP**
Saturday, April 2
9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

A fun FREE workshop for K-12 teachers and homeschool educators about **native Mississippi Creepy Crawlies** and how to use them in your classroom. A version of the Project WILD program, which focuses on "teaching children how to think, not what to think." Led by **Crystie Baker, Mississippi Museum of Natural Science Educational Outreach Biologist**. CEU's available. Call the office at (601) 799-2311 to sign up.

MINI GREENHOUSES (Kids)
Saturday, April 9
10:00 to 11:00 a.m.

Transform a plastic liter bottle into a small terrarium and enjoy nature inside your house! This project is a fun way to recycle while learning how plants grow. Workshop led by Master Naturalist **Mary Cordray**. Children must be accompanied by parent or guardian. All materials provided. Members' children \$2; non-members' children \$4. Register by April 8.

STRAWBERRIES & CREAM FESTIVAL (Family)
Sunday, April 10
1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

Bring the family, and join us to celebrate the history of the old strawberry farm on the lovely Pinecote Pavilion. Ice cream, fresh strawberries, and Picayune Frog Lemonade will be served. **Admission is free** and open to the public!

**EARTH DAY
AT CROSBY ARBORETUM**
Saturday, April 16
10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Celebrate the 41st anniversary of **Earth Day!** Come to a program, or visit exhibits that focus on nature and sustainable gardening. Explore a variety of stations with topics such as beekeeping, rainwater irrigation, gardening birds and butterflies, composting, and vegetable gardening. Members free; non-members \$5; non-members' children \$2

Earth Day Program Schedule:

ALL ABOUT LOUISIANA IRIS
10:00 to 11:30 a.m.

Dr. Patrick O'Connor, President of the Greater New Orleans Iris Society and owner of Zydeco Louisiana Iris Garden, will discuss the five Louisiana iris species, their natural distribution and demonstrate how to hybridize and propagate iris. Pearl River County Master Gardener and Iris Society Vice President **Eileen Hollander** will show how to distinguish Louisiana irises from nonnative species, and discuss iris culture information: planting and dividing, soil conditions, soil preparation, watering, mulching fertilizing, and disease control. Members free; non-members \$5.

SPRING MIGRATION!
1:00 to 2:00 p.m.

Why are warblers called the "jewels of the sky?" Learn how to identify, and prepare for, the many beautiful songbirds that will be passing through our area – and nesting and resting – over the coming months. Program led by **Susan Epps**, avid bird guide and author. Suited to ages 7 and up. Members free; non-members \$5; non-members' children \$2.

Crosby Arboretum Program Schedule

April - May 2011

**MUSIC SERIES CONCERT: BILL "Howl-N-Madd"
PERRY & BAND (Family Event)**
Saturday, April 23
1:00 p.m. on Pinecote Pavilion

Bill Perry has worked with many other blues performers including B.B. King. He has performed his original style of blues music for over 40 years in festivals and in clubs all over the country and the world. Ticket price is \$5 for Arboretum members, and \$3 for members' children; Price for non-members is \$10, and \$6 for non-members' children.

SPRING PLANT SALE

April 23 & 24, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sat./Sun.
Members Admitted at 9:00 a.m. Sat.

Grab a cart and choose from a variety of wonderful native trees, shrubs, and perennials for your home landscape. We'll have your favorite blooming plants such as native azaleas, mountain laurel, and bigleaf magnolia. Come early for the best selection of 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 (use Service Entrance).

LANDSCAPING WITH NATIVE PLANTS (Adults)
Saturday, April 30
10:00 to 11:00 a.m.

Learn how to have a low-maintenance and attractive landscape by incorporating native plants into your home landscape. Arboretum Curator **Pat Drackett** will discuss her favorite native plants for landscaping, and tell how to analyze your planting site in order to choose the appropriate plant material. Program is free to members and \$5 for non-members. Register by April 29.

Reservations: Call the Arboretum office at (601) 799-2311, to confirm all events and to make program reservations, as seating is limited. Programs are subject to change.

Physical Address: 370 Ridge Road, Picayune, MS 39466

Mailing Address: 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.

2011 Admission Fees: Adults, \$5; Seniors (over 55), \$4; Children under 12, \$2; Members, free admission to grounds and programs.

Webpage: www.crosbyarboretum.msstate.edu. Lists programs and events, volunteer opportunities, Arboretum and Natural Area information, and news updates.

PAINTED POTS (Kids)
Saturday, May 7
10:00 to 11:00 a.m.

Here is the perfect Mother's Day Gift for moms who love plants! Decorate a clay pot and design a Mother's Day Card using recycled materials. Workshop led by Master Naturalist, **Mary Cordray**. Children must be accompanied by parent or guardian. All materials provided. Members' children \$2; non-members' children \$4. Register by May 6.

**COOKING CLASS: BRINGING NATURE'S BOUNTY
TO YOUR TABLE (Family)**
Saturday, May 14
10:00 to 11:30 a.m., with lunch to follow

Learn about "sustainable food," or using in-season, locally grown produce for greatest flavor and health. Many of us are starting gardens for the first time to supplement our grocery supplies. Long-time Arboretum volunteer and ardent cook **Trish Blossman** will teach you how to use the harvest from your garden and "cook with the seasons." Following the program, we will enjoy lunch! Program fee (includes lunch) is \$5 for members, and \$7 for non-members. Register by May 13.

CHILDREN'S BLUES ART WORKSHOP (Kids)
Saturday, May 21
10:00 to 11:00 a.m.

While listening to a variety of blues music, children will create their own inspired art. Children must be accompanied by parent or guardian. All materials provided. Members' children \$2; non-members' children \$4. Register by May 20.

MUSIC SERIES CONCERT: KENNY BROWN & BAND
Saturday, May 21 (Family Event)
1:00 p.m. on Pinecote Pavilion

Blues artist **Kenny Brown** has toured all over the world and is a legend in the hill country of north Mississippi. He has played for 30 years with Mississippi blues guitarist R.L. Burnside, who has referred to Brown as his "adopted son." Ticket price is \$5 for Arboretum members, and \$3 for members' children; Non-members \$10, and \$6 for non-members' children.

SPRING FIELD WALK (Family)
Saturday, May 28
10:00 to 11:00 a.m.

Walk the Arboretum paths with Senior Curator **Pat Drackett**. Learn to identify plants seen along the way, hear their unique stories, and discover which are useful in the home landscape. Free to members and \$5 for non-members. Members' children free; non-members' children \$2. Register by May 27.



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native flora of the Pearl River Drainage
Basin in Mississippi and Louisiana.

Picayune, Mississippi, USA

Thank you, Annual Appeal Contributors

The Crosby Arboretum wishes to express our gratitude to the following individuals for their generous contributions for the 2010 Annual Appeal. To date, a total of \$4,035 has been raised. This will allow us to fund the construction of interpretive signs and benches, trails, and plant materials for our new Gum Pond Exhibit. We are grateful that so many of you are committed to seeing this new Exhibit completed. Thank you to all who have helped make this Exhibit become a reality.

Shelley Antoine

Mr. and Mrs. Jerry Alexander

Herschel and Anne Abbott

James and Jan Bell

Phelan and Fay Bright

Dr. Howard Bruggers

Bob Brzuszek

Dennis V. Caddell

Ruth Cook

Bill Edwards

Jo-Ann Fleming

Mike and Carol Fitzwilliam

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Alice Holmes

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William F. Schoell

Mr. and Mrs. Norman G. Stevens, Jr.

Mrs. Claudette Stewart

Dr. and Mrs. Fred Tatum

William L. Thames

Burney F. Threadgill

Glade and Jo Woods



The completed landing in the Gum Pond Exhibit, January 2011.



LSU landscape architecture student Garrett Newton planting swamp gum trees with Master Gardeners and 4-H members on Arbor Day, February 11, 2011.



Joyce Applegate's Pearl River Community College botany class planted more swamp gum on February 16, 2011.

Edward L. Blake, Jr.: An afternoon of remembrance and renewal

"Before, During & After The Crosby Arboretum"



Osmond Crosby, III
 Lynn Crosby Gammill
 Bob Brzuszek
 Robert Poore
 Larry Albert
 Dr. Neil Odenwald

Sunday, April 3, 2011 at 2:00 p.m.
Refreshments following

Guided tours will be available before and after the memorial.

Pinecote Pavilion

Membership Application

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

_____	Student (send student i.d.)	\$ 15.00
_____	Individual	30.00
_____	Family	40.00
_____	Donor	100.00
_____	Patron	250.00*
_____	Benefactor	1,000.00
_____	Business	
_____	Sweetgum	100.00
_____	Sassafras	250.00
_____	Live Oak	500.00
_____	Bigleaf Magnolia	1,000.00

Name

Address

City

State

Zip

Renewing? Memberships are for one year.

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