

Hammond Research Station Turns Focus on Growing Green Industry

Established as the Fruit and Truck Experiment Station in 1922, the LSU AgCenter's Hammond Research Station in Hammond has served the needs of the strawberry and vegetable industries in Southeast Louisiana for more than 80 years. While continuing to serve this industry, the station has now embarked on a new initiative to provide research and education for the green service industry.

Two 100-year-old oaks greet visitors as they drive through the entrance of the Hammond Research Station – one of the LSU AgCenter's most beautifully landscaped stations. And there's a reason for that. The station serves the needs of the nursery and landscape industry, or "green" industry, with the latest research-based information on improving the quality of urban and suburban life by focusing on human-affected environments. These oaks, in fact, are used in urban tree preservation workshops for demonstrating restoration and preservation of historic trees. The 157-acre station has about 100 acres of cleared land and the rest in timber.

Research and educational components

A retention pond and constructed wetland serves as a demonstration and research area focusing on how excess runoff from landscapes can be reduced and how landscape pollution can be mitigated. Various plants are grown in the wetland and evaluated for nutrient, chemical and erosion abatement as well as appearance.

An established pine forest provides an important natural environment duplicated across Louisiana. This area is used for research and demonstration in the use of shade and understory plantings and preservation of wildland as well as plant introduction, adaptability and sustainability studies.

The Margie Y. Jenkins Azalea Garden is being established to help consumers and professionals view plant type and



Yan Chen, horticulturalist at the Hammond Research Station, explains some of the research findings on fertilizers for landscape plants at the first-ever Landscape Horticulture Field Day on June 29, 2006. (Photo by Johnny Morgan)

form; flower color, size and type; and bloom season and length for different azalea species. Azaleas best adapted to Louisiana's climate are being identified.

An undulating border between the formal gardens and pine forest demonstrate an aesthetic transition from lawn to wildland and includes visual examples and study areas of naturalistic plantings for upland, lowland, shade and sun areas. Identification of native plants that have landscape potential and demonstration of native plant associations in the landscape-wildland interface will be an integral part of this edge along with evaluation plantings for sound barriers, screening and wildlife habitat.

Small island groupings of single species and combinations of annuals and perennials demonstrate composition, compatibility, design use and combination alternatives (color, texture and form). Projects include evaluation of new introductions for growth, vigor, aggressiveness; bloom; reliability; season; heat/cold, sun/shade and soil-moisture tolerance; and disease susceptibility. Structural plantings define and anchor spaces and



Dick Parish, engineer at the station, demonstrated spreaders and sprayers for landscape and gardening use. More than 80 people attended the station's first Landscape Horticulture Field Day on June 29, 2006. (Photo by Johnny Morgan)

provide visual appeal. Combinations of foundation plants, annuals, and perennials are evaluated for year-long interest and compatibility.

An urban forest grove features three to five specimens of several tree species. The use of truly native trees and shrubs for different habitats or areas of the state will also be studied, as will cultivar evaluations and cultivation requirements of lesser known native trees and plants. The maintenance of these trees provides training and demonstration opportunities. Over time these trees will provide research opportunities in suitability for urban uses, maintenance practices and new arboricultural materials and methods.

Firewise urban forestry is featured in two small woodland areas to demonstrate firewise concepts, prescribed fire uses and fire-dependent ecosystems. Various plots receive different treatments, such as winter burn, summer burn, mechanical fuel reduction, invasive species control and various methods of fireline construction and maintenance. This area provides training and research opportunities in firewise urban forestry and landscaping. It is managed in cooperation with the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry.

A care and maintenance area is a teaching lab for developers, landscape architects, contractors, maintenance personnel, growers, retailers and consumers. Research plots and facilities are used for plant evaluations and maintenance research.

Collections of popular and exceptional plants such as crape myrtles, hollies and ornamental magnolias will be showcased and evaluated in a dynamic exhibit. This

area represents new and expanded areas of ornamental horticulture diversity.

Southern homestead planting around a two-story house built in the late 1800s is a significant architectural aspect of the station. This former residence is surrounded by "homestead" plants, which duplicate 30- to 50-year-old landscapes found throughout the South. This site provides a special opportunity to introduce a wider assortment of classic, homestead and enduring plant species to the landscaper and demonstrates how established plantings can be renewed and complemented with new and fresh additions. The homestead garden was established in 2004.

Hody Wilson Camellia and Shade Garden is a legacy of the Hammond Research Station. This collection of camellias from the early work of W.F. "Hody" Wilson Jr. is in a grove planting across the highway from the station entrance. This garden area provides opportunities for preservation, collection, evaluation and cultivation of camellias.

Impact:

- ▶ Researchers at the station are using grants from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, Louisiana Nursery & Landscape Association, and other associations to research minor crops such as ornamentals, trees, flowers and vegetables.
- ▶ Studies are underway for weed, insect and disease management in landscape beds.
- ▶ Research continues on truck crops and strawberries.
- ▶ An internationally known granular applicator research program is conducted on the station. The scientist develops settings for product labels for many spreader and granular product manufacturers and evaluates spreaders for home and professional use.

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