

# Louisiana's **NURSERYMEN**



## **A Quality Christmas**

*Nathan and Julian Dondis of Greengate Garden Center*

**Inside: Your Second-Most-Important Salesperson • Saw Palmetto • Short Course**



### Flower Festival in April

The third annual Festival des Fleurs de Louisiane will be held April 10-12 in Lafayette's Blackham Coliseum (site of the first LAN meeting). Geared to the homeowner, the festival features educational talks on horticultural topics, as well as exhibits by commercial and nonprofit groups.

The event will include exhibits by Acadiana chapters of the following plant societies: bromeliad, orchid, rose, begonia, african violet, bonsai, irises, and camellias. The Lafayette Garden Club and area nurseries will also have booths. Within walking distance will be a Cajun music festival sponsored by the Lafayette Jaycees. The Festival des Fleurs de Louisiane is sponsored by the Louisiana Society for Horticultural Research and The University of Southwestern Louisiana. Admission is \$1. Exhibit booth prices are \$50 for nonprofit groups and \$75 or 15 percent of sales (whichever is greater)

for commercial groups. The festival opens to the public from 1 to 5 p.m. Friday, April 10, and from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Several thousand visitors and more than 30 exhibitors have participated in the past. Featured topic for the 1992 festival is bonsai. Vaughn Banting, the LAN 1991 Nurseryman of the Year, will be the keynote speaker.

### LAN loses assistant

After a year's service with LAN, Elizabeth Pope has left her executive assistant position. She and her husband have moved to New Orleans, where he recently was hired by Mobil Oil Co. as an exploration geologist. Elizabeth helped revise the Certified Nurseryman's manual, coordinate the 1991 LAN-MNA short course, and bring membership records up-to-date.

### Cruise the Caribbean

You can win a Caribbean cruise for two, through a promotion that

will benefit LAN. The prize includes the flight from New Orleans to Miami and a 3-day cruise from Miami to the Bahamas. Tickets are \$1; they can be bought from any LAN board member and from many nursery businesses.

The winner will be chosen at a drawing to be held Saturday, Jan. 18, 1992 at Live Oak Gardens.

Proceeds will support the seminars, research and scholarships sponsored by LAN. Gerald Foret, LAN board member from New Iberia, is coordinating the fund raiser.

### Certification Manual

The Louisiana Nurserymen's Manual is now available. It covers topics pertaining to garden centers, wholesale growing, and landscape contracting. The book prepares those who wish to take the Certified Nursery Professional exam. Those who pass may use the designation Louisiana Certified Nursery Professional, and display the certificate. Testing will be administered at various sites across the state, at dates to be announced. Beyond preparing for the exam, the manual is a valuable reference on many topics within the Green Industry. LAN members may purchase the manual for \$50 softbound or \$75 hardbound. Nonmembers pay \$25 extra. The books are available from LAN, 4560 Essen Lane, Baton Rouge, LA 70809.

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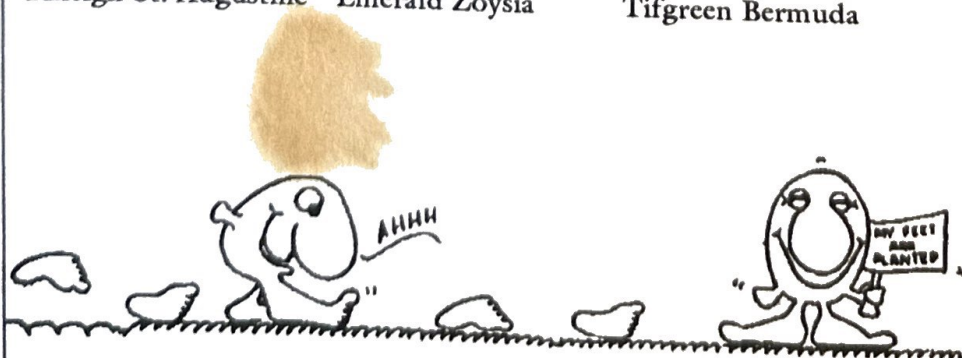
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### Louisiana's Nurserymen

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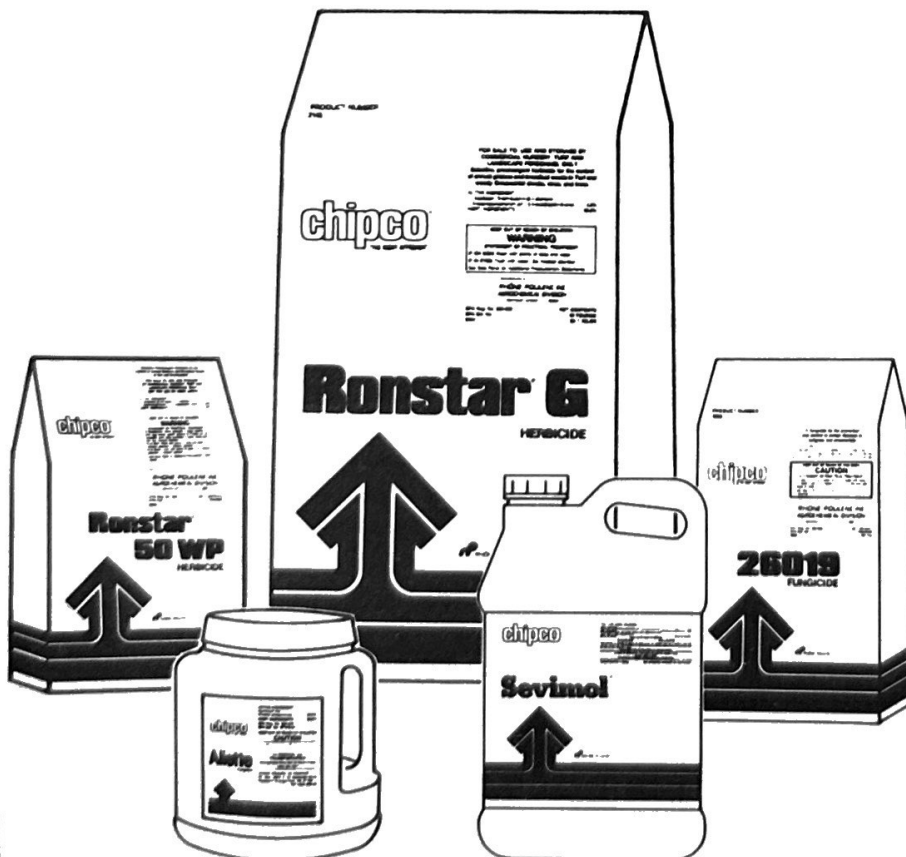
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# A QUALITY CHRISTMAS

## at Greengate Garden Center

**A** thousand points of light greet December visitors to the Greengate Garden Center. They shine above miniature Victorian villages and adorn

rows of trees. Choirs of angels hover from the ceiling, and Christmas music seems to emanate from greenery on the mantle.

For most of the year these rooms are your typical garden center hard goods sales area. But in mid-August Sally Dondis begins to transform them into a Christmas cornucopia.

"It's like a hobby. I really enjoy what I do," she says. But she allows that it's a lot of work. "I receive the goods, set prices, supervise sales, consult with the customers, and decorate every tree."

Greengate has been a Lake Charles institution for holiday decorators for 20 years. "We started so small; the store was so primitive," she remembers. Now the Christmas season is virtually a full-time occu-

showings of Christmas merchandise, and to some permanent showrooms."

She makes these buying safaris to New York and Atlanta with Julie Wimmer of Marshall's Nursery in Lafayette.

"We've done this for 10 years. It allows us to buy in quantity and get discounts. We want collectors' ornaments; we're looking for what the others don't have."

"We create themes as we go, sometimes with pieces from a combination of different vendors." Themes might be The Crystal Tree or The Angel Tree, for example.

"We always have a traditional Red and Green Tree. But I try to stay current on popular decorator colors. I go through the magazines like crazy—*Architectural Digest*, *House*



A miniature Victorian village, one of several in the Greengate Christmas display.

pation for her, one that begins almost as soon as Christmas is over. "In January and February I begin shopping for the upcoming Christmas. I spend about three weeks going to





Sally Dondis applies finishing touches to a tree.



*Beautiful*, and others." Christmas sales account for 13 percent of the annual retail gross income at Greengate. Next year Sally plans to start a decorator service, to extend her Christmas touch into homes and businesses.

### Beginnings

Sally and Julian Dondis started Greengate Garden Center Oct. 1, 1960. At first they were partners with Marshall Mugnier at a location

on Ryan Street. But they bought out Mugnier's share in 1963 and two years later moved to their present location on Lake Street. (Mugnier is now owner of Marshall's Nursery in Lafayette.)

"We were originally in business to do landscaping," Julian remembers. "But if people came by and wanted plants, we'd sell them. But we didn't push them." Over the years that changed. Landscaping now accounts for only 30 percent of Greengate's

revenues. About a fourth of the retail gross comes from sales of trees and shrubs; 29 percent is hard goods sales.

Like most retail nurseries, Greengate doesn't try to compete toe-to-toe with Wal-Mart on discount pricing. "Our market niche is to sell a quality product to a clientele who want results," Julien says. "Service differentiates us from the chain stores. We try to handle quality products and tell people how to use them to be successful."

To that end, *every morning* Dondis devotes 15 minutes to a sales meeting for all employees, prior to opening for business. "We discuss any problem or opportunity: new merchandise, pricing, information about plants. We might even take the LAN Certified Nurseryman's Manual and review, to educate our employees."

Greengate normally employs 15 to 20, but grows to 25 for the Christmas season. Nathan, the oldest of Julian and Sally's children, now manages the employees, allowing Julian time to concentrate on customer relations, marketing and other administrative work.

"Nathan started working full-time in 1978. By 1982 he was a manager, first for the retail business, now the whole nursery," Julian says.

### Quest for Quality

The biggest management innovation Nathan has introduced is a nursery-wide quality control program. Both Nathan and Julian liken quality control to a religion.

"It's a system by which you keep your business in top quality," Nathan explains. "It's really done wonders for us. People who were working for minimum wage become managers; it really transforms their attitude.

"You start with a quality leadership team. They listen to everybody and determine what our most pressing problems are. Then we form other teams to work on each problem. These are cross-sectional groups from throughout the nursery—sales, landscaping, accounting.



# HAROLD POOLE

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**A quality improvement team devised a system to track Christmas trees for customer pickup or delivery. Each tree is tagged with the appropriate information, then awaits pickup in one of a series of stalls made from old wooden pallets nailed together in a herringbone pattern. The stalls keep the trees upright and orderly. Nathan Dondis, above, places a tree in its stall.**

“For example, we had a problem with cashiers making too many mistakes. I was regularly having to drop what I was doing to correct the error. The team studying the problem recommended an operator’s manual for the cashiers, and they produced it for us. This Christmas season we have a half-dozen new cashiers, and it’s never been smoother.”

Another problem was delivering flocked Christmas trees, or locating them when the customer came to pick them up.

“Industry people have a term, *churn*, for the extra labor needed to correct something that wasn’t done right the first time. At times our delivery truck would bring a tree to a customer’s house without first calling to make sure the customer was home. If the customer wasn’t, a second delivery was necessary. At other times, customers would show

up to pick up their flocked tree, and we couldn’t find the tree. This happened several times last year.

“To handle this problem, our quality team developed a special ticket to be attached to each tree. The ticket specifies the customer and pickup date. We also built special holding areas out of old pallets, to put the trees until they were picked up. And we devised a flow chart that outlined every possible decision.”

These measures not only solved the Christmas tree problem, they brought employees into the decision-making, problem-solving process.

“Quality control has made a tremendous difference in our employees’ attitudes, and has decreased our employee turnover rate. This program will be ongoing.

“I think it could be a great thing for the whole nursery industry,”

Nathan adds. “The garden center business is so complicated: its seasonality, its perishability, its low-wage labor, its tough competition, its large variety of products. There’s so much information to handle. I can’t think of a business that complicated. What proves this to me is that there is no national garden center chain.”

Greengate employees were introduced to quality control through a “leisure learning” course at nearby McNeese State University, a program conducted by the American Society for Quality Control. Anyone wanting more information on this can contact Nathan Dondis at Greengate Garden Center.

With quality control part of their daily work-rhythm, Greengate employees and the Dondis family will likely continue to give Lake Charles spectacular Christmas displays for many years to come.



# Your Second-Most-Important Salesperson

BY WARREN PURDY

In the previous *Louisiana's Nurserymen*, I wrote an article titled, "Your Most-Important Salesperson." That was the telephone receptionist. Now I would like to tell you about your second-most-important salesperson—the person who has the last contact with your customers: the cash register clerk.

Not only must these clerks handle money properly—which management feels is their primary duty—but equally important, they are to convey to the customer the company's sincere appreciation for their business—no matter how large or small the purchase may be.

Every effort of other team members in the operation can be defeated at the cash register. It is called the great "turn-off" and this can be one of the reasons why many retail nurseries are not very successful.

As an example of this "turn-off," take the case of the local supermarket. How many times have you waited in line to be checked out, only to find a tired, discourteous clerk who makes you feel that he or she is doing you a favor? The store may have background music and beautiful surroundings to make your shopping more pleasant, but it loses your business because of the clerk at the cash register. If the prices are extremely low, you may come back. But you don't like it; and if a

competing market makes you welcome, you will most certainly change.

Remember, a supermarket is selling a necessity product; a retail nursery is not. Your nursery competes with a number of other industries for the excess consumer dollar after the necessities have been purchased by the prospective customer.

I have personally counseled several retail nurseries that were severely negligent when choosing and paying good, efficient, courteous and happy cash register clerks. Even in my own shopping, I have found that most cash register clerks treat you with suspicion when you present your credit card for payment. Their attitudes suddenly change into

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that of an FBI or IRS agent. Sound familiar? The clerk treats you as if you are guilty of something even though indirectly you are their boss. If it were not for you, the customer, the clerk would not have a position and the company would cease to exist.

#### Cash register host

What qualifications should the retail nursery manager look for and demand in a prospective cash register clerk?

1. A person with a happy personality, one who can "turn on" the customers and make them think they are the most important people to the company, no matter how large or small the purchase.

2. A person who is courteous and polite to everyone and has the ability to smile no matter what the circumstances might be. Also, the clerk should be able close the transaction with a cheery "Have a good day" or "It was a pleasure assisting you and come back soon."

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3. A person who, when accepting credit cards or personal checks, will refer to the customer by name when asking for additional identification, and do this pleasantly.

4. A person who is well groomed, neat and clean: make-up for women, especially the eyes—as this is a woman's best asset (believe it or not)—and well-managed hair and beards for men. In other words, people who can put their best personality forth for the customer, as the customer is actually the boss.

5. A person who is honest and very proficient in the use of the cash register. No one likes to wait in line after selecting their purchases. Speed is important, but do not sacrifice the other characteristics for this.

**Pay well**

Remember, the customers are the boss and they should be treated as such. The customers can be wined and dined by everyone in the retail nursery, but the cash register clerk is the last person to make contact with those customers. Whether they come back depends to a great degree on how these clerks handle them. So, pay well for for this service!!! It will return dividends many times over.

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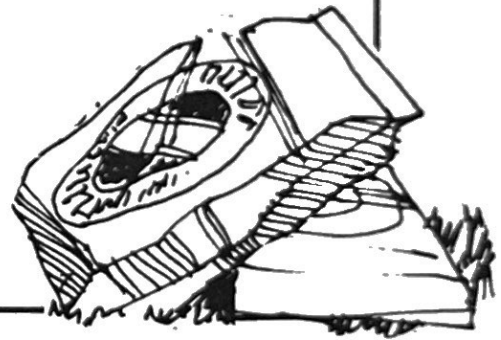




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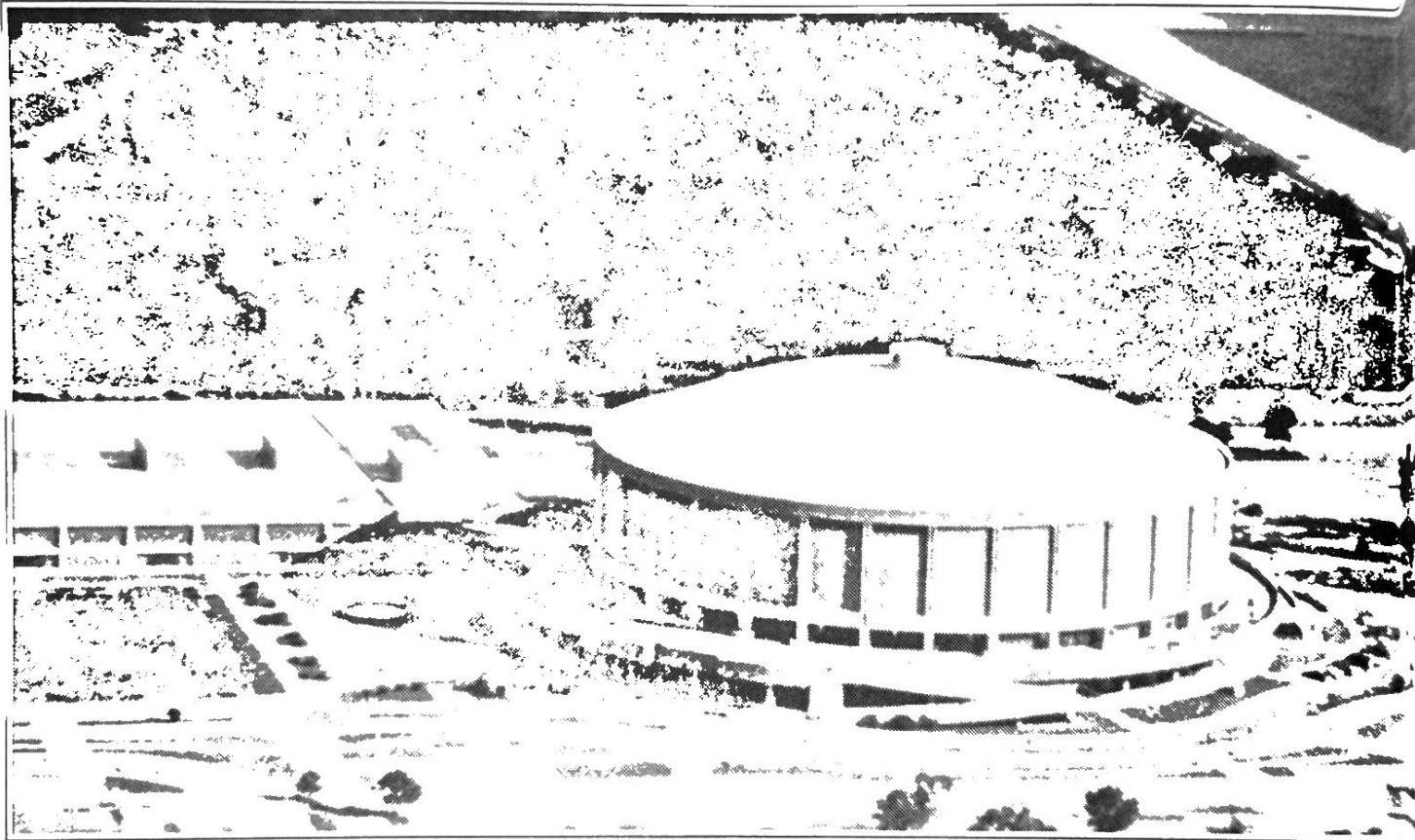


# Minding Your Bu

**LAN-MNA Short Course**

**Friday, Saturday and Sunday, January 10-12, 1992**

**Mississippi Coast Coliseum & Convention Center, Biloxi, Miss.**



**The Mississippi Coast Coliseum and Convention Center are directly proximate to the Gulf of Mexico, at right.**

**F**or the first time, the annual LAN-MNA short course and trade show meets at gulfside, at the Mississippi Coast Coliseum and Convention Center in Biloxi.

Conference theme will be "Minding Your Business: Key to Success in the '90s."

The show, which alternates between sites in

Louisiana and Mississippi, normally meets in Jackson, Miss., on even-numbered years, but that site was unavailable for 1992. Biloxi, while a distant drive from Shreveport or Oxford, should offer a somewhat warmer climate on a weekend that is often the coldest of the winter. In fact, this year conference planners

have introduced a new element to the annual meeting: a golf tournament.

In keeping with the conference theme, featured speakers will present lots of business advice for nurserymen, with sessions on marketing and tax planning.

Complementing these presentations will be reports on innovations and trends



# Business:

## KEY TO SUCCESS IN THE '90s



within the Green Industry. About 150 exhibitors will show the latest in nursery products and services in conjunction with the show, according to conference coordinator David Tatum, who serves as executive secretary-treasurer of the Mississippi Nurserymen's Association. To preregister, use the form on page 14.

### Itinerary

#### **Friday, January 10**

**8 a.m.-5 p.m.**

Exhibitor setup

**11:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.**

Golf Tournament

**Noon-5 p.m.**

Registration

**6:30 p.m.**

Cocktails & Hors D'oeuvres

#### **Saturday, January 11**

**8 a.m.-5 p.m.**

Registration

**8:30 a.m.**

*Welcome & Introductions*

LAN President Richard Maxwell

MNA President Dan Batson

**9:10 a.m.**

**Greenhouse & Woody Growers.**

*Profit-Tax Planning to Make It and*

*Keep It Until You Bequeath It.* Jim

Totherow.

**Landscape & Maintenance.** *Cost-*

*Effective Use of Chemicals in the*

*Landscape.* Michael Guthrie.

**Retail & Garden Center.** *Market-*

*ing to Today's Buying Public.* Chuck

Greenidge.

**10:10 a.m.**

**Greenhouse & Woody Growers.**

*Marketing for the Retailer's Need.*

Chuck Greenidge

**Landscape & Maintenance.** *John*

*Wayne is Dead and the Cavalry Ain't*

*Coming.* Patrick Moore.

**Retail & Garden Center.** *Profit-Tax*

*Planning to Make It and Keep It Until*

*You Bequeath It.* Jim Totherow.

**11:10 a.m.**

LAN and MNA general membership

meetings

**12:10 p.m.**

AAN Luncheon. Tickets are \$10.

**12:10 p.m.**

Ladies' Luncheon/Style Show. Tickets are \$10.

**12:10-5 p.m.**

Visit Exhibits

**5-6:30 p.m.**

Hospitality

**7 p.m.**

LAN-MNA Banquet

**9:30 p.m.-Until**

Dance; music by the Twilites

#### **Sunday, January 12**

**7:15-7:45 a.m.**

Worship Service

**7:30-10 a.m.**

Registration

**8 a.m.**

**Greenhouse & Woody Growers.**

*Innovations Within the Nursery*

*Industry.* Jim Berry

**Landscape & Maintenance.** *What*

*to Expect from Your Consumer.* Tom

Lied.

**Retail & Garden Center.** *Being*

*Competitive in a Competitive Market.*

Jeff Garrison.

**9 a.m.**

**General Session.** *Trends in the*

*Green Industry.* Tom Lied.

**10:10 a.m.-2 p.m.**

Visit Exhibits

**2 p.m.**

Drawing for \$2,000 Cash Value Vacation (must be present to win)

**2:10 p.m.**

Adjournment.

## Speakers

**Patrick Moore** of Alexandria, La., is a charter member of the "New Alliance," a cooperative group of Green Industry associations that includes AAN, ALCO, PGMS and ASLA. He is owner of a landscape architecture firm and a landscape management company. He is the Louisiana chapter trustee to the American Society of Landscape Architects.

He has managed landscape architecture projects ranging from residential site planning to multi-million dollar master plans.

**Tom Lied** is president of Lied's, a Milwaukee, Wis., company that provides land planning, landscape architecture and maintenance. Lied's also operates retail sales through two outlets and specimen plant growing through a 150-acre nursery. Lied is host and writer for "dig it," a 52-segment half-hour landscaping how-to show on educational television. He also writes technical manuals for the landscape

industry, and has contributed to many landscaping and gardening books published by Sunset Press.

He is founder and past president of the Associated Landscape Contractors of America. He also founded and presided over the Wisconsin Landscape Contractors Association, and is past president of the Wisconsin Nurserymen's Association.

**Chuck Greenidge** is president of Greenidge & Associates, an Evergreen, Colo., consulting firm for the Green Industry. He has conducted six national studies of lawn and garden retailing and distributing practices and trends. He has been the featured speaker at many nursery industry meetings, and has been a contributing editor to Garden Supply Retailer magazine.

**Jim Totherow**, a McMinnville, Tenn., partner in an accounting firm, claims to have more nursery accounts than any other CPA. An expert in taxes, he has represented

nurserymen's interests in IRS and in national legislation.

**Jeff Garrison** has been in the Green Industry for five decades, as retailer and representative for such manufacturers as UpJohn and FertiLome. He currently operates three retail businesses in the Dallas area.

**Jim Berry** manages one of the Flowerwood Nurseries in Mobile, Ala. He is past president of the International Plant Propagators' Society. He has been active in nursery association work and has spoken at horticultural gatherings in many Southern states.

**Michael Guthrie** is cochairman of the exterior landscape division of the Associated Landscape Contractors of America. He works in the Sales/Estimating-Maintenance Division of Ground Control Landscaping, Inc., of Orlando, Fla.

## Registration

Please Print

Name of firm: \_\_\_\_\_

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- LAN member  
 MNA member  
 non-member

Names of registrant(s) for badge(s):

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Total of full registrations @ \$45 each (includes banquet ticket)

\_\_\_\_\_ Total of one-day registrations @ \$20 each (no banquet ticket)

\_\_\_\_\_ Total of two-day registrations @ \$30 each (no banquet ticket)

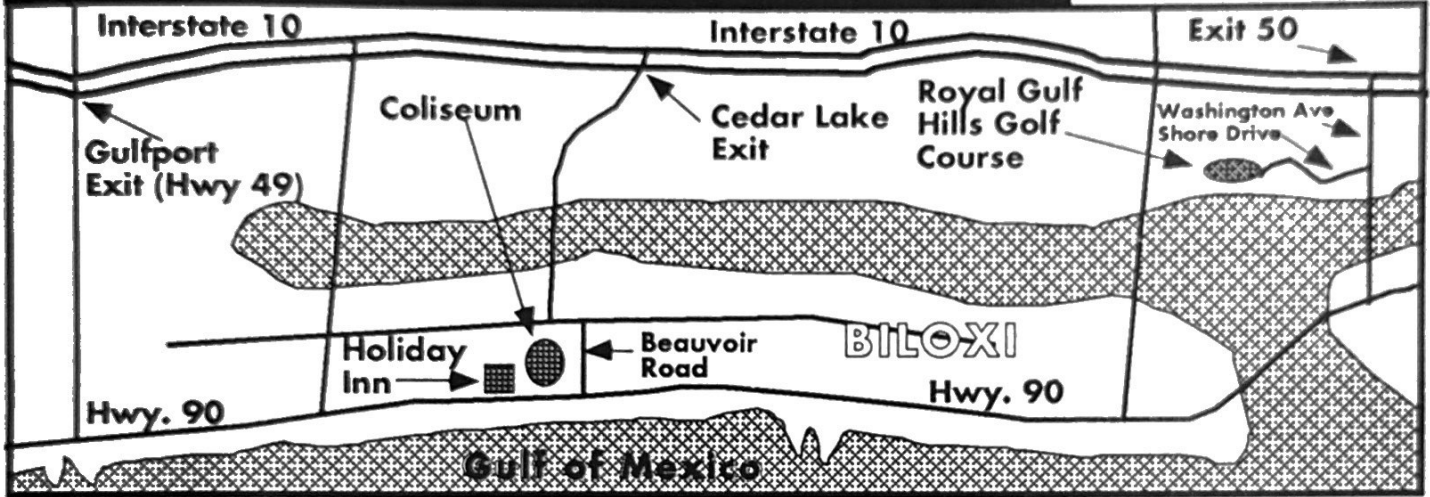
\_\_\_\_\_ Total of additional banquet tickets @ \$20 each

\_\_\_\_\_ Total amount enclosed

Return completed form and payment to: Dr. David Tatum, MNA secretary-treasurer, P.O. Box 5385  
 Mississippi State, MS 39762-5385. For more information, contact him at (601) 325-1682



# Arrival & Accommodations



The conference headquarters motel is the Holiday Inn, Biloxi, 2400 Beach Boulevard, Biloxi, MS 39531. The hotel is close to the Coliseum and to the beach.

Rooms are \$48 plus 9% tax. The adjacent Biloxi Inn (Holiday Inn Express) has rooms for \$44 plus 9% tax. To make reservations for either, call (800) 441-0882.

## Golf Tournament

Please Print

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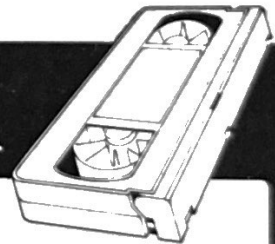


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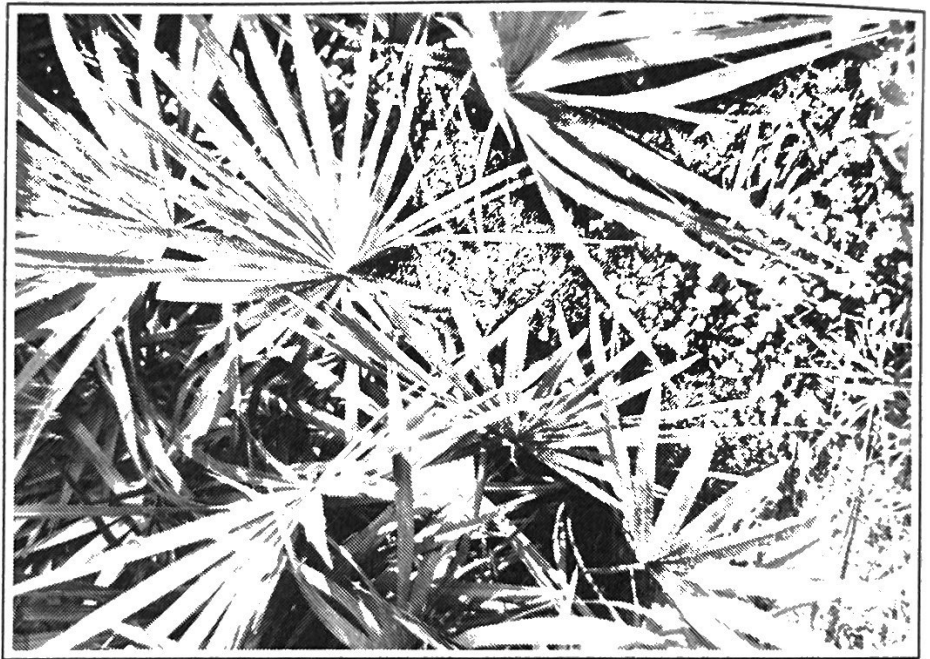
This low-growing, colonizing palm would be a natural around pools or used in residential or commercial landscapes where a coarse-textured plant is desired. It will tolerate either sun or shade and is cold-hardy in South Louisiana. It even can be used in a native or natural landscape, especially near a swampy setting.

Saw Palmetto, the only common name I've ever seen used, is scientifically known as *Serenoa repens* (Bartr.) Small. It belongs to the family *Palmae* (*Hortus Third*, 1978). The genera name *Serenoa* was dedicated in honor of Sereno Watson (1826-1892) a Harvard University botanist and an authority on North American flora (Read, 1961).

Saw Palmetto's range extends from St. Tammany Parish (Bayou Lacombe) eastward and through southern Mississippi and Alabama (the southernmost counties) to Florida, where it grows in all counties, including the southern keys. Then it extends northward through southern and eastern Georgia to Beaufort and Jasper counties South Carolina. It's rare in South Carolina and Louisiana.

In the Louisiana Special Plat List (April, 1987) Nellwyn Gilmore and Latimore Smith list *Serenoa repens* as critically endangered in the state but demonstrably secure globally.

Saw Palmetto will grow in alkaline or acid soils (Vines 1976) near fresh or brackish water, seasonally wet to dryish, piney, sandy soils and dunes (Godfrey and Wooten, 1981) or poorly drained flatwoods and marshes (Godfrey, 1988). I've also



**Palmetto imparts a distinctive, tropical look to the landscape. Although rare in Louisiana, it is adaptable and hardy.**

seen it growing in Sharkey clay in Eastern New Orleans.

Saw Palmetto is resistant to fire, drought and freezes (Bush and Morton). Bailey (1950) indicated that it will tolerate temperatures to 10°F. Accordingly the 11°F temperatures in December of 1989 did not damage the plant in eastern New Orleans. It's also tolerant of salt air breezes, according to Jones (1988). The growth rate of Saw Palmetto is slow to moderate, depending on soils and moisture. Seedlings are slow to establish, however.

Landscape qualities of this plant are numerous. It grows to a height of between 3 to 5 feet, leaves included. Bailey (1950) indicated that it makes a good pot plant and would be ideal on a patio or balcony. Often it forms thick masses and can be effectively used as a tall groundcover or as a foundation planting. It also makes an excellent plant for erosion control (Bush and Morton).

According to Loomis (1962) Saw Palmetto is ideal in parkways, around public buildings and in parks and gardens where low plantings will not obstruct the view. It provides very coarse texture, is relatively dense once well established and has an upright, uniform tendency when massed. Jones (1988) indicated that "(the leaves) are held stiffly erect and form quite an impassable barrier."

According to Godfrey (1988) and Bush and Morton, some populations growing near the Atlantic Ocean on the coast of Florida have petioles and leaf blades somewhat larger and bluish-green with gray underneath, sometimes called the blue-silver form. McCurrach (1976) stated that if the blue-green leaves were cut and sun-dried, the blue-green waxy layer would come off, however. Stevenson (1974) indicated that there are three silver-leaved varieties found near Ft.



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Leaf color of the normal population is slightly yellowish-green and shiny.

*Serenoa repens* is considered a multi-trunked species and as the species name implies the trunks tend to recline, creep or even become horizontal or subterranean. Bush and Morton mention that sometimes they'll even fork (which is rather unusual for most palm species). Some of the much older arborescent forms can attain heights of 10 to 25 feet (Vines 1976). However, Bush and Morton stated that trunks rarely reach more than 10 feet. Old leaf bases often remain attached to the trunks (Stevenson, 1974).


The leaves are fan-shaped (palmate) erect or ascending, suborbicular and 1 to 4 feet in diameter (usually 2 to 3 feet). They are quite stiff, yellowish-green to green to a silvery bluish-green and much clefted (each segment is twice clefted).

Leaf bases are cordate and the hastula (area where the petiole attaches to the leaf blade) is triangular and broadly rounded at the apex and extends only about  $\frac{1}{3}$  inch into the leaf-blade. Therefore it's not considered costa palmate, where the petiole extends into the leaf blade some distance (Godfrey 1988, Morton 1977, Read 1961 and Vines 1976).

The petioles are usually longer than the leaf blades and are armed with short, saw-toothed-like, sharp, rigid, recurved teeth, thus the name *saw palmetto*.

The short, much-branched inflorescences arise in spring and usually don't exceed the leaves in length. Individual florets are about  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch long, bisexual, ivory white in color and fragrant. It has 3 sepals, 3 petals ( $\frac{1}{6}$  to  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch long), six unequal anthers and one pistil with a superior ovary (Godfrey, 1988; Vines, 1976).

The ovoid to oblong fruit is considered a drupe and will become apparent in early summer; first appearing green then yellow to orange. The oily pericarp is thin and



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fleshy and ultimately turns black to bluish-black when ripe from August to September. The seeds are smooth, oblong to globose, beige,  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{2}{3}$  inch long by about  $\frac{3}{8}$  inch wide and somewhat flattened on the ventral side.

*Serenoa repens* is primarily propagated by seed. However, colonies can be separated but sometimes that's difficult. June or July is probably best and root pruning before separation also is best together with retrieving a sufficient root ball. The separated portion should contain several small trunks.

In order to propagate by seeds, be sure to acquire fresh seeds and don't delay planting. Most palm seed viability is short. Remove the fleshy seed coat. Germination will take anywhere from six weeks to as long as 3 to 6 months.

To get faster germination, soak seeds in water at 95°F for seven days prior to sowing. Then use sand, peat, or a mixture of the two as a sowing medium and place seeds about  $\frac{1}{4}$ " deep. Maintain bottom heat at about 86°F during germination. You might be able to get the first seeds to begin germinating in as few as 18 days from sowing. Carpenter (1987) did.

After germination, seedlings are slow to mature. I have some that I sowed in October of 1989 and they're only between 10 and 15 inches tall from soil line to leaf tip and each have about four spear leaves. They're planted in Promix BX potting mix in 4  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch plastic containers. At this stage they should be in full sunlight, watered and fertilized regularly at labeled rates.

As far as Saw Palmetto's usefulness to wildlife, in all probability the fruits are eaten by birds and rodents. Bombard (1950) indicated that the leaves are browsed by livestock especially in winter.

The uses of the plant are numerous. Duke (1985) and Blombery and Rodd (1982) indicated that the plant was used for food by the native Indians. The terminal bud is edible (Morton, 1977) as well as the fruits. However, other authors indicated

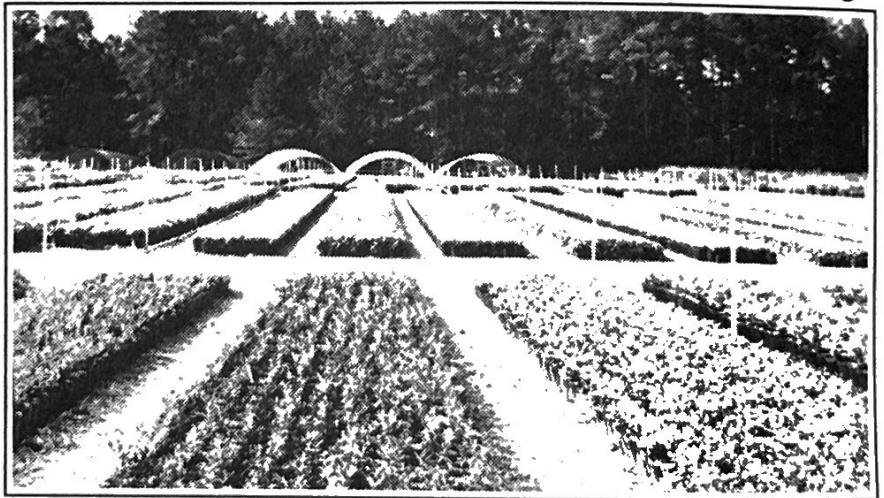
that the fruits smelled and tasted terrible. Morton (1977) cited J.K. Small who quoted the writings of Jonathan Dickenson in 1699 when offered fruits of Saw Palmetto by the Indians and, in spite of hunger, "we tasted them, but not one amongst us could suffer them to stay in our mouths, for we could compare the taste of them to nothing else but rotten cheese steeped in tobacco juice."

Morton (1977) further cited Dr.

John Gifford, who indicated that early pioneers of south Florida mixed Saw Palmetto berry juice and carbonated water into a soft drink called "Metto" and sold it in Miami. More recently Kitzke and Johnson (1975) indicated that the seeds are being used to make herbal tea in the U.S.

Blombery and Rodd (1982) also reported that the fruits are now being used as health food and in herbal medicine. Vines (1976) cited Mann, writing in the American

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Journal of Pharmacy (138:517, 1916) by stating that Saw Palmetto "appears to exert a stimulant action upon the mucus membrane of the genito-urinary tract . . . used in cystitis and has been recommended in cases of enlarged prostate of old men." Duke (1985) further indicated that the fruit is used as a diuretic, tonic, sedative, antidiysenteric, aphrodisiac, anticatarrhal and antiasthmatic (he provides chemical compositions). Interestingly, Duke (1985) reported that the fruits also are used as an aromatic in cognac and Duke (1985) and Vines (1976) both reported that the flowers are a significant source of honey.

Vines (1976) indicated that the stems are used as a source of tannic acid. May and Frahm (1943) reported analysis of the trunk and bud proved 90 percent water and 7.7 percent tannins. May and Frahm (1943) further reported that Saw Palmetto is a good cork substitute.

Medicinal properties of the fruits may have merit. Hartwell (1970)

reported that Saw Palmetto fruits are used to treat tumors. Grieve (1971) indicated that a dark brown to red oil is extracted from the fruit and used as a diuretic, sedative, and tonic. Wagner and Flachsbarth (1981) reported that essential oils, fatty oils, phenols, phenol carbon acids, carotenoids, sugars, tannins, sterines and beta-sitosterine were extracted from the fruit. Beta sitosterine shows good anti-inflammatory properties because it inhibits prostaglandin synthesis according to the researchers.

Few specific diseases are listed in the literature. "Index of Plant Diseases in the United States" (Anonymous 1960) mentioned the genera *Serenoa* but did not specifically report any causal organisms. "Index of Plant Diseases in Florida" (Wehlburg, et. al., 1975) failed to specifically indicate specific diseases but did mention that either the grouping of palms (in which *Serenoa* was included) don't occur in great numbers in Florida or they

have few diseases.

Bob Robson, garden columnist for the Palm Beach *Post Times* reported that as far as insects and diseases are concerned, "nothing seems to bother them."

Chase and Broschat (1991) reported that *Ganoderma* spp., butt rot (basal stem rot) attacks *Serenoa repens* as well as rachis blight caused by *Serenomyces sheari*. Control of *Ganoderma* spp. has largely been unsuccessful and protective fungicidal sprays (such as benomyl) or leaf removal may help control rachis blight according to the researchers.

I found no reports of insects infesting Saw Palmetto. However, John Voss, a member of the Louisiana Chapter of the International Palm Society told me that various caterpillars forage on the inflorescence "and wreck them." However, he has a small multi-trunked plant that he harvested more than 500 seeds from this year.

This very same plant also developed a minor leaf spot disease on a few lower leaves and in September of 1991, the author mailed a specimen to the Plant Disease Clinic, a part of the LSU Agriculture Center's Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service in Baton Rouge. The report indicated that the causal organism was *Cornepora* sp. and further reported that *Cornepora* sp. usually occurs on plants in decline or under stress. It's reportedly a weak pathogen and very opportunistic. No control measures were indicated.

The area in which the plant is growing received between seven and eight feet of rainfall between January through September of 1991. With this amount of rainfall, stress certainly can be expected.

As with many other native plants, Saw Palmetto is scarce in the nursery trade. I know of no Louisiana nursery that has seedlings. A palm society member in Alabama, Maxwell Stewart, 2557 West Rd., Mobile, AL 36693 sometimes has seedlings for sale.

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800-627-3819) listed about a dozen nurseries in Florida carrying gallons and plants up to 8 feet in their July 15, 1991 issue.

Since *Serenoa repens* is an endangered plant native to Louisiana and since it makes such an excellent landscape plant material especially in South Louisiana, I hope it will be used much more in our state in the future. It really deserves to be.

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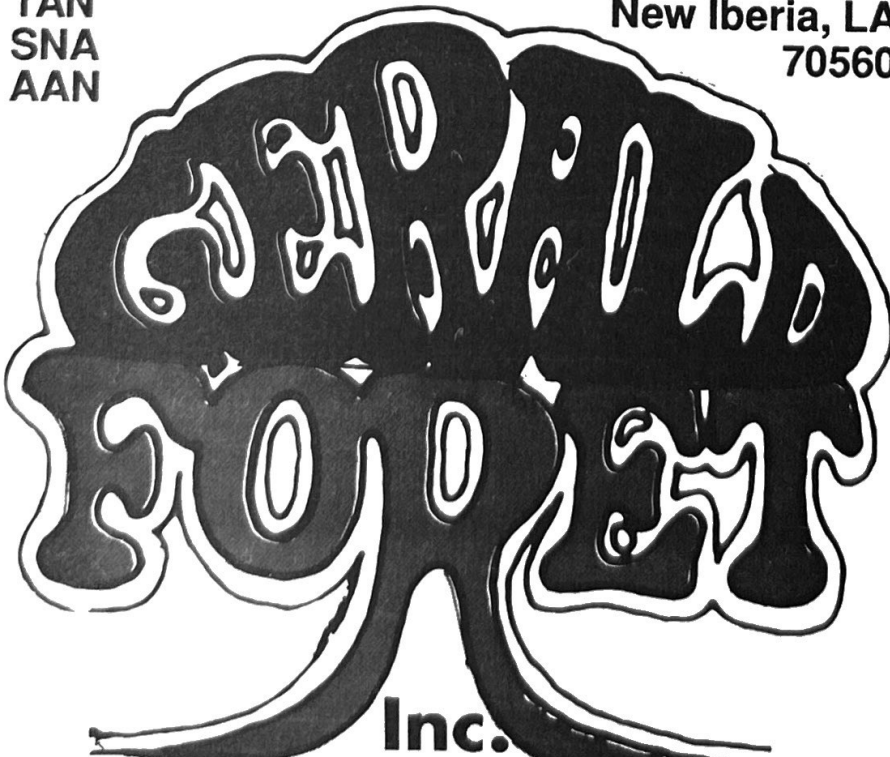
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