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Letter from the President

It's a busy time at Hilltop! As you all have noticed, a massive project is underway. Our roof has needed replacement for years. LSU is taking care of this under Tara's watchful eye, and the Friends are so grateful. Another project that's been underway for years, the Emory Smith Legacy project, has been completed. If you haven't walked the site recently, check out the Woodland Walk and the north perimeter. All of the plants are growing nicely. We are in the process of setting priorities for future projects and fundraisers large and small. If you'd like to be involved in workshops along these lines, please let me or Tara know.

I'd like to welcome two new board members: Brent Fortenberry, Interim Director of RRSLA, and Bryce Donner, new faculty member of RRSLA. Two faculty members recently left the board, Kathleen Bogaski and Kevin Benham.



Chris Werner in his element in the garder

Both contributed greatly to Hilltop and will be sorely missed. We are accepting nominations for new board members. If you or someone you know would like to join us, please let us know.

As we enter fall and PLANTFEST season, the Hodge Podge nursery and plant selection committee are busy at work. The plant list is growing and looks better and better every day. The PLANTFEST Teaser will be a real treat this year with our own Dr. Jenneke Visser as speaker. We appreciate all our loyal volunteers and donors. Hilltop could not exist without you.

Hope to see you all at PLANTFEST!

Chris Werner, Board President



Basketflowe



Tickseed





Letter from the Director

As I wander through the arboretum, I am amazed at the kaleidoscope of color and texture. I often wonder if an artist could create a painting depicting the breadth of what I see, hear, smell, and touch daily at Hilltop. Hilltop is the perfect place to escape for a short (or long) while. When walking through the meadows, you would never know you were in the middle of a suburban neighborhood. The peacefulness instills in me a sense of calm. I often say I feel like I am on vacation when I am at Hilltop. If you haven't experienced our Cajun prairie-inspired meadow in peak bloom, she's a sight to behold. Come for a visit this fall and see for yourself. You won't want to miss the brilliance of the swamp sunflowers.

This summer, we have been entrenched in construction projects. I'd like to formally thank Hilltop staff, Hodge Podge members, and our regular volunteers for their patience, perseverance, and creativity as we've navigated the facility re-roofing project. You truly are the glue that holds Hilltop together.

Although things are not fully back to normal, we have continued to work together to fulfill the mission, shared vision, and goals of the arboretum. We have worked to build on our program and event offerings, and I'd like to reiterate and confirm the great relationship we've established with the Louisiana Master Tara Titone says goodbye to a Sprouts summer camper. Naturalists of Greater Baton Rouge (LMNGBR). From Family Field Day and moth sheeting events to monthly Discover Nature programs and LMNGBR classes at Hilltop, we have worked together to fulfill our joint commitment to conservation education and service within our community. We are grateful for the partnership.

Finally, mark your calendars for a new Hilltop event, The Celebration of the Oak, on Sunday, December 8, which we hope will become an annual offering! I am also pleased to announce that the 2025 Friends of Hilltop Annual Symposium, "Homegrown National Park: A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard," will be held on January 29, 2025, featuring Douglas Tallamy, Bill Fontenot, and Cheryl Geiger. The Homegrown National Park grassroots movement motivates everyone to tackle the urgent challenge of biodiversity loss by prioritizing native plants in homes and workplaces. Both programs will be exceptional. We hope you will join us.

Thank you for your continued support. Whether you are a volunteer, member of Hodge Podge, neighbor, business retreat attendee, or wedding guest, we appreciate each and every one of you for your love of the sanctuary that is Hilltop.

tare trove

Tara Titone, Director





Blackberr

Vhite Beautyberry









In Memoriam...

Hilltop is mourning the loss of two longtime Hilltop Hodge Podge volunteers, Jean Kirkland and Sydney McBride.

An avid master gardener and founding member of Hilltop Arboretum, Jean volunteered thousands of hours at Hilltop and loved to share her knowledge of plants. Jean was a very dear friend to many at Hilltop. Sydney was a regular, dedicated Hodge Podge volunteer doing her part on Wednesday mornings- from addressing envelopes to folding and organizing the large bounty of PLANTFEST t-shirts, all with her sparking sense of humor and a sense of perseverance we all admired. This year's PLANTFEST! t-shirt was created in memory of Sydney and features her favorite flower, the 'Peggy Martin' rose.

We appreciate the many contributions of both Jean and Sydney over the years and will cherish our fond memories of their time with us. They are deeply missed.



Sydney McBride



an Kirkland

WHAT ARE SOME OF OUR FRIENDS UP TO?

Acadiana Native Plant Project <u>www.greauxnative.org</u>

Allen Acres - Calendar and Newsletter www.allenacresbandb.com/calendar

Cajun Prairie Habitat Preservation Society www.cajunprairie.org

EBR Master Gardener Association ebrmg.wildapricot.org

LSU AgCenter Burden Museum & Gardens www.lsuagcenter.com/portals/burden/

Louisiana Master Naturalists of GBR www.lmngbr.org

Louisiana Native Plant Society (LNPS) www.lnps.org

Louisiana Wild Society www.louisianawildsociety.com

Wild Ones Greater Baton Rouge Chapter greaterbatonrouge.wildones.org





Notes from Hilltop

The sights and sounds of the changing of seasons at Hilltop are magical. We are always observing new wonders here at Hilltop. It is our intention to find ways to share our findings to inspire you, our members, and others who may benefit from the data in our research. In the spring newsletter, we mentioned how we use iNaturalist to explore our surroundings at Hilltop, improve our observation skills, and connect us to a larger community that helps to make us all better naturalists. Since then, we have noticed that many of you have begun to use the app while visiting Hilltop to record your observations and learn more about what you are seeing! Even experts can use iNaturalist to help others identify and verify species observations. These observations contribute to a global dataset of biodiversity information that is used for science and conservation studies. Scan to QR code to download the app or make an account on the <u>iNaturalist</u> <u>website</u> to get started with your observations. Entries made while at Hilltop are automatically added to the Hilltop Arboretum Species Survey. Below are current Hilltop stats and some recent observations made by visitors.



iNaturalist stats for the Hilltop Arboretum Species Survey.



Recent iNaturalist observations recorded at Hilltop.

It has been a joy to observe increasing numbers of youth at Hilltop. Several youth volunteer groups have chosen Hilltop as their service site through the fall, spring, and even summer. Many thanks to Hilltop's own, Amy Hughes, and EBR Master Gardeners, Mary Tharp, Sterling Sightler, and Gaynelle Wolff, for their planning and coordination of our newly invigorated children's camps. With the help of several additional volunteers, we had a successful Easter Camp, Summer Sprouts Camp, and Backyard Habitat Gardener Summer Camp. Enjoy a few photos (right) from our days with the children. Please be sure to spread the word about our upcoming Thanksgiving and Easter camps. Space is limited!

Last but not least, we are grateful to LSU for their investment in the preservation of our unique facility at Hilltop. As of the end of August, the full facility re-roofing project at Hilltop is substantially complete. Please continue to take caution as the work wraps up. We look forward to resuming rentals for our busy fall season and apologize to those with whom we had to cancel on short notice.

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Scan to download the iNaturalist app and make a user account.



Early summer blooms line the serene pond walk.



An Easter camper enjoys Hilltop's amphitheater terrain



Backyard Habitat summer campers release butterflies with Volunteer and monarch-whisperer, Cathy Griffin.



LSU Geaux Big Volunteers take a well-deserved break from hard work at Hilltop with 80 of their peers.



Scouts Troop 7 volunteer at Hilltop on a Spring Day to mulch 65 trees in the Woodland Walk.

PLANTFEST 2024

Wednesday, October 2, 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. (Members Only Sale) Saturday, October 5, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. & Sunday, October 6, 12 p.m. – 4 p.m.

Celebrating decades of masterfully connecting people and plants in the unique, natural space that is the LSU Hilltop Arboretum, this year's PLANTFEST! will feature over 300 species of native and traditional trees, shrubs, perennials, vines, ferns, ornamentals, and grasses for purchase, sourced from reputable and trusted nurseries in Louisiana.

Hilltop "plant experts" will be on hand to assist with your plant selections and offer advice, whether you are looking to compose a stunning plant vignette, attract butterflies, or grow more natives in your landscape. Purchase a commemorative PLANTFEST! T-shirt and browse our unique collection of gently used eclectic wares at the "Yarden" sale. Visit the children's tent for crafts, fall-inspired activities, and take-home treats for your young ones. There is something for everyone at Hilltop!



ped and Lizard's Tail blooming along Hillton's nond ne

Current Friends of Hilltop members will receive an invitation to

the members only Sale where shoppers will have the first pick of plants! Become a Friends of Hilltop member by Thursday, September 26, to receive access to the Members-Only Sale and discounts at PLANTFEST! Members at the \$50 Azalea level and above will receive free admission to the PLANTFEST! Teaser on Sunday, September 29. All purchases are tax-free during the sale.

A list of plants being offered at PLANTFEST! will be published online the week of the sale.

PLANTFEST Teaser 2024 - Featuring Jenneke Visser

Sunday, September 29, 2-3:30 p.m.

Dr. Jenneke Visser, coastal scientist and devoted Hilltop Hodge Podge volunteer, will present her "Top 25 Garden Plants" on Sunday, September 29, from 2-3:30 pm in the Beverly Brown Coates Auditorium at LSU Hilltop Arboretum.

To put the "tease" in this annual PLANTFEST pre-quel, one of each of the plants discussed will be raffled off for purchase. Enter the raffle for your chance to bring home your favorite plant prior to the sale! Join us for a postprogram "walkabout" through the Hodge Podge Nursery where the plant arena will be set up with plants in their final nestling place for PLANTFEST!

Dr. Jenneke Visser has worked in and researched coastal Louisiana for more than 25 years. In addition to teaching at University of LA Lafayette and serving as Associate

Director of the Institute for Coastal and Water Research, she has been an advisor on several coastal wetland restoration planning efforts and has made significant contributions to restoration outcome forecasting. Jenneke is a reliable and dedicated Hilltop volunteer and coauthored the Friends of Hilltop Arboretum's "Native Plant Designation: Definitions, Methodology, and Procedure".

Registration FREE for members of the Friends of Hilltop at the Azalea (\$50) level and above; \$25 for the public and members below the Azalea level; \$20 for students.





PLANTFEST Volunteers Needed

We need your help! PLANTFEST volunteers are needed before, during, and after the sale. Please consider volunteering for one or more assignment. Sign up using the QR code.

Plant Watering - September 20 - October 4

Watering: Water all plants from date of delivery until plant sale.

PLANTFEST Plant Unloading - September 18 & 19

Plant Experts: Identify the plants that are delivered. Inventory Trackers: Ensure all plants were delivered, and confirm carts are ready to move. Plant Tag Distributors: Provide plant ID signs and sales tags to each cart of plants. Plant Movers: Move plants with tags and ID signs to their spot in the nursery. Plant Taggers: Tag plants that have been delivered to their spot in the nursery.

PLANTFEST Setup - October 1

Setup: Place tents, banners, signs around site.

PLANTFEST Plant Sale - October 2, 4 & 5

Cashiers: Check membership status, calculate purchase price, collect payments. Children's Activity Tent (weekend only): Assist youth volunteers, lead activities and crafts. Floater: Assist volunteers and staff with various tasks. Gift Shop: Greet customers, and assist with sales. Greeter/ Way-finding (weekend only): Greet visitors, and direct visitors to the various offerings. Plant Experts: Provide information on plants for sale, and advise customers on selections.

Tally Helpers: Assist customers with filling out tally sheets. Traffic Control/ Security: Direct traffic, manage vehicles, and assist with security. Wagon Helpers (weekend only): Assist youth volunteers, and bring plants to cars. Yarden Sale: Greet customers, and assist with sales. Youth Volunteers: Help in the Children's Activity Tent, and assist as a Wagon Helper.

PLANTFEST Take Down - October 5

Take Down: Work with staff and volunteers to take down event.

DID YOU KNOW THAT PLANTFEST IS PRIMARILY RUN BY VOLUNTEERS?

We thank each and every one of you for lending your hands and expertise to make our plant sales a success, year after year.

DONATE TO HILLTOP

Drop off your gently-used household and garden items to Hilltop by Wed., Sept. 25, for the PLANTFEST Yarden Sale No clothing please.

> All proceeds directly benefit Hilltop. Thank you!

Spring Fling Yarden Sale in the Hillton Arboretum Library







Upcoming Programs and Events

Discover Nature Lecture Series

Through a partnership with the Louisiana Master Naturalists of Greater Baton Rouge (LMNGBR), Hilltop offers monthly programs featuring local and national experts. These experts are in touch with nature and eager to share their experiences. Lectures are held at Hilltop from 6:30 p.m. – 8 p.m. Registration is \$10 for students, Hilltop members, and LMNGBR members; \$15 for non-members.

Rockhounding in Louisiana - Catherine Rouchon, Lapidarist Tues., Sept. 24

Bats and Brews – Speaker TBD

Tues., Oct. 22

Caroline Dormon, Pioneer Woman – Linda Auld, NOLA Bug Lady Tues., Nov. 19

Holiday Children's Nature Camps

Steve Antrobus presents, "Wild Mushrooms in Louisiand Julv's Discover Nature Series.

Backyard Habitat Gardener is a "get your hands in the dirt" program that introduces children, ages 7-10, to natural habitats and allows them to explore the world through horticultural and environmental science activities. Campers will foster an appreciation for nature and nurture a sense of awe and wonder for the natural world. Our counselors are enthusiastic and experienced, but the real teacher at Hilltop is our most treasured resource, the land. It is Hilltop's hope that we can encourage children to act in their own backyards and beyond!

Thanksgiving Backyard Habitat Gardener Camp Mon. and Tues., Nov. 25 & 26 Easter Backvard Habitat Gardener Camp

Mon. and Tues., Apr. 21 & 22, 2025









Easter Campers digging tree saplings with Volunteer Camp Coordinator Mary Tharp

Volunteer Bob Dillemuth builds a compo

Celebration of the Oak Sunday, December 8, 1-4 p.m.

One of the most essential members of the plant kingdom is the oak tree. Oaks support more life forms and interactions than any other tree genus in North America – a true keystone species. Learn how to honor our old oaks and start new ones at LSU Hilltop Arboretum's Oak Celebration. Bring the family to learn about the rich ecology of our most essential native trees – the mighty oak. Saplings, soil amendments, gifts and guides will be available for purchase along with tips from oak experts for planting and maintaining oaks of your own.

Stay tuned to our website for more information!



Conservation that Begins in Your Yard **Date:** Saturday, January 25, 2025, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. Featuring: Douglas Tallamy, Bill Fontenot, and Cheryl Geiger Location: EBRPL - Main Library

Words from Hilltop's Site Crew

Hilltop's site crew provides the power that sustains the arboretum. Hilltop's Living Collections Manager, Will Reinhardt, works with Groundskeeper, Kirk Calbert, and the Robert Reich School of Landscape Architecture (RRSLA) student interns and graduate assistants to maintain the site daily. We've had the pleasure of working with six students from RRSLA this year: Jacob Contreras, Hunter Gueydan, Arielle Harris, Connor Reese, Nina Freeman, and Laura Ramos. Each brings a unique skill-set and perspective to Hilltop and we are grateful for their hard work and perseverance in ever-changing conditions.

There is a great spirit as always at Hilltop, and the many plants and critters seem to agree. Life is singing as the past summer's droughts have been alleviated. The ravine has only been dry a few days. Thankfully the frogs are back! There are gulf coast toads in every puddle. Tree frogs of the genus Hyla are posing like superheroes. And a new one for me, the terrestrial frog, known as a sheep frog screams away from just beneath the ground. Each of these species interplays with the site, and during Hilltop's moth sheetings, raccoon visitors are commonly seen feeding on the froas! Another night time observation is the grasshopper and spider. As the spider population grows, the grasshopper daytime activity all but ceases, and they shift to feeding on the meadow at night. Come see what you can observe at Hilltop! - Will Reinhardt

The Hilltop experience is constantly evolving, with the seasons changing before my eyes. Even through the windy storms to excessive heat waves, I find peace within the meadows and scattered light under our immense trees. Working as a summer intern for Hilltop, I've gained an experience I wouldn't trade for the world. Being able to work with the plants hands-on has strengthened my knowledge of the world around me. As a landscape architecture student, knowledge of the processes that occur between the insects and plants within the environment is crucial. Simple activities like weeding, observing, watering, and pruning help strengthen this knowledge. I've seen a lot here at Hilltop the last 3 months; many species of bugs coming and going with the blooming of different plants, how the place reacts to floods and droughts, and the overall lush growth of summer flora. Whenever I started working here, the meadows were short, but healthy. They're so tall now that I can't see over them (a perfect place for hiding from children). Now that we're in the deep heat of August, the plants are beginning to bloom their last summer flowers in a spectacular manner- some reaching up to 7 feet tall! - Arielle Harris





Connor Reese and Arielle Harris (Summer Interns) release butterflies with campers.

spring storm damage



LSU HILLTOP ARBORETUM

Doug Tallamy by Rob Cardillo



Frog (Genus Hyla) posing in superhero. Photo of Dr. Roaer Butner

Connor Reese (Summer Intern) and Nina Freeman (RRSLA Grad Asst.) clean out pond.



Will Reinhardt (Staff) leads site crew clean-up efforts

Words from Hilltop Site Crew, continued...

Getting to Know Kirk Calbert

How long have you worked at Hilltop? 8.5 years

What does your job consist of?

I am the Hilltop Groundskeeper. I drive the gator, move trees to the site where they get planted, and water. I am mowing and blowing and keeping things moving along. I also wash the building's windows and power wash to keep things clean.

What do you enjoy most about the work you do?

I use a lot of mechanical tools- I like using them and seeing what works and what doesn't. I like learning about different brands of machines (Echo, Shindaiwa, Gator, Stihl). Knowing how to get around Hilltop with the Gator and the right tools is a challenge, and I am proud of being able to pick the best routes.

What is something valuable you've learned while working at Hilltop?

I have learned from many people at Hilltop over the years on how to work in a public garden, which has led me to my job at LSU AgCenter Burden Gardens. I like that people recognize me at both places, and I can provide my services.

Hilltop contains many hidden gems. Share with us one or two things you see that many others may not at Hilltop. Beautyberries, they are beautiful! Last year they struggled, and I had to water them to get them through the drought. I am happy they are back this year and looking strong.

Getting to Know Connor Reese

How long have you worked at Hilltop? This summer of 2024.

What does your job consist of?

I'm a Summer Intern and 4th year landscape architecture student at LSU. Weekly, I pull weeds and mulch, make observations, identifications, and share on iNaturalist and with fellow students. I drive the Gator, transplant and water trees.

What do you enjoy most about the work you do?

I enjoy being in an environment that provides interest and educational moments. I arrive to Hilltop early each morning and fish in the pond- it is a real gem of a physical feature. The knowledge gained will help inform landscape designs and adaptation to new strategies.

What is something valuable you've learned while working at Hilltop?

Identifying trees and shrubs, that's the purpose of an arboretum. Really diving into what is native and non-native, how much water the plants need, and paying attention to the weather.

Hilltop contains many hidden gems. Share with us one or two things you see that many others may not at Hilltop.

Seeing my first praying mantis, and how an insect can have an entire life cycle at Hilltop. I can watch them grow and occupy a piece of habitat and wonder what they'll do next. Also larger visitors like the Mississippi kite, which can move in from a larger habitat and nourish and shelter itself, keeping to itself, and hang out while I work.



Connor Reese (Summer Intern) assesses site damage from a summer storm



Jacob Contreras (RRSLA Grad Asst.) shows Connor and Arielle (Summer Interns) the site on their first day at Hilltop.



Kirk Calbert (Staff) mows meadow paths

Contributions to Hilltop September 1, 2023 – August 31, 2024

NEW & RENEWING MEMBERSHIPS Corporate Memberships

Bellanger Consulting, LLC, Goss Wealth Management, Greater Oak Hills Civic Association. Specialty Welding & Turnarounds, LLC

Live Oak \$1,000

Judy Bidner, Catherine Coates and Brian Hales, Kerry Hawkins, Jane Honeycutt, Brenda and Philip Legendre, Orv Marrioneaux, John Turner and Jerry Fischer

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Magnolia \$250-\$499

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Thanks to one and all!



Volunteer Teri Rome and Sprouts summer campers have fun with impromptu "water play."



Volunteer Linda Babin and Amy Hughes (Staff) work the Discover Nature registration table.



Volunteers Jenneke Visser, Gil Gautreau, Terry Tuminello, and Virginia Gardner unload plant sale plants.



Volunteer Kevin Langley educates Easter Campers on bees.



Volunteer Sarah Rayner engages Backyard Habitat summer campers in a plant lesson.



Volunteer Pat Holowell coordinates the Yarden sale!



Amy Hughes (Staff) introduces Sprouts summer campers to the daily camp theme.



Volunteer Bob Dillemuth preparing Hilltop for a compost lesson.



Will Reinhardt (Staff) leads Backyard Habitat summer campers in a commemorative camper tree planting.





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