

# The Crosby Arboretum

Mississippi State University Extension Service

Quarterly News Journal

Winter 2010-11

25.1

## THE LANDSCAPE LEGACY OF EDWARD L. BLAKE, JR.

### *The Crosby Arboretum's first director and designer passes at age 63*

*"Britain's Sylvia Crowe, this century's Grand Dame of landscape architecture, observed that "all the great gardens of the world have a unity of both execution and conception which shows they were created in a singleness of thought..." I feel this to be the most important thing that I have accomplished at the Crosby Arboretum."*

– Edward L. Blake, Jr.

Ed Blake was an alchemist as much a landscape architect. He worked with common everyday elements – words, earth, light, water and plants – but he somehow mixed these together into a special way that celebrated the poetic qualities of place. He referred to these common parts of Mississippi's lands as 'a landscape's *architecture*', or the underlying bones that results in life's patterns (plants, water). Indeed, process and patterns are what consultants Andropogon Associates prescribed as a basis for the master plan for Pinecote. While Ed was director of the Arboretum, he lived onsite and would rise early in the morning to photograph the site in all of its nuances. These ephemeral visions of misty mornings and towering trees made deep impressions upon his soul, and as he developed plans for new landscapes, he shook these powerful visions from his mind's-eye and expertly translated them into places that other people could directly feel and experience. Because of this, Ed's award-winning designs seemed uniquely suited to their place as he magnified the natural elements that were already present.

The extraordinary vision by early Crosby Arboretum founders allowed Ed to seek the truth in his work as he helped develop the fledgling organization's master plan. He cast off the design styles of the time, or any time, and instead listened to his inner voice.



*From our archives: "Crosby Arboretum landbreaking," photo dated August 1981.*

Ed wrote that "Genius loci and sense of place became important qualities guiding my perception of landscape's architecture. Pursuing these ideas led me to thirteen years of work that quietly changed my life. At the Crosby Arboretum, in Picayune, Mississippi, I listened for and found my voice."

Ed was a voracious reader, painter, and a lover of music and the arts. He thought deeply about what landscapes mean to our time and place, and he developed his own concepts of this. He called it the culture-nature phenomena, in which he viewed humans and nature as part of a living, symbiotic and mutually-dependent relationship. This viewpoint strongly contrasted the 1960's mantra that humans were somehow outside of nature and intrusive. Ed instead saw the seemingly polar opposites of humans and nature as a life-giving and necessary relationship. Fay Jones, architect of Pinecote Pavilion, vastly influenced Ed's thoughts with his underlying philosophy of architecture. Fay wrote that "It should

*(Continued on Page 2)*



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

Picayune, Mississippi, USA

***The Landscape Legacy of Edward L. Blake, Jr.***

*(Continued from Page 1)*

appear that man and nature planned and carefully arranged everything by mutual agreement, and each benefited immeasurably from the other. Then the live-giving, life-enhancing reality will lie neither in the building nor the site, but in the place between.” Similarly, Ed responded that “I seek diversity of expression through approaching land and man as a living, reciprocal relationship, an ecology. Exploiting the boundary between agent and medium, so that each is seen more clearly, is our purpose of site-specific intentions.”

In the 1994 Summer *News Journal*, Ed stated that “the Arboretum has been a wonderful opportunity to help advance something larger than any one of us. I am humbled when I realize it will outlive us all.” But the master plan for Pinecote is not yet completed, and the stories that are happening now will continue to be etched upon the land’s surface. We are only at the beginning of a fascinating journey as we follow Ed’s well-built intentions for the Crosby Arboretum. He once told me that it would take 50 years before people would fully understand what the Crosby Arboretum is truly about. Well, I guess we can say that just about 30 years later, we get it. Thanks Ed, for teaching us all to see, and allowing us to experience and touch the Piney Woods landscape. We are the richer for it, as are generations yet to come.

– **Bob Brzuszek**  
*Former Site Director and Curator,  
Crosby Arboretum 1990 - 2003*

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*Please join us in celebration  
of the life and work of  
**Edward L. Blake, Jr.**  
Sunday, April 3 at 2:00 p.m.*

We will explore Ed’s professional work before coming to the Arboretum, his defining work at the Arboretum, and his later projects after he and his wife Marilyn established The Landscape Studio in Hattiesburg. To celebrate Ed’s life and his intimate knowledge and love of the natural world, we will offer his beloved blues music, a chance for attendees to tell of Ed’s influence on their lives, refreshments, and guided tours of the journeys at the Arboretum, both before and after the celebration.

**The Cultural Landscape Foundation:  
Ed Blake, Jr. Biography**

The Cultural Landscape Foundation website at [tclf.org/pioneer/edward-blake-jr](http://tclf.org/pioneer/edward-blake-jr) has established a Pioneer profile for Ed Blake, Jr. Their *Pioneers of American Landscape Design* “chronicles the lives and careers of those who have designed our gardens, parks, streets, campuses, cemeteries, suburbs, and the innumerable other environments in which we live.” This profile page links to a full biography of Ed which includes information on his projects, including the Art Park at Catfish Row in Vicksburg, and 100 Acres: The Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park at the Indianapolis Museum of Art. The park was the focus of the PBS News Hour with Jim Lehrer on August 24, 2010, only six days before Ed’s unexpected death.

# Crosby Arboretum Program Schedule

December 2010 - January 2011

## December 2010

### **HOLIDAY TREATS FOR WILDLIFE** (Kids) **Saturday, December 4** **10:00 to 11:00 a.m.**

Decorate your yard for the holidays with birds in mind! Birds often need extra food in the winter for fuel and warmth. Make peanut butter pinecone feeders and other delights to attract birds to your backyard with Master Naturalist **Mary Cordray**. Children must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. All materials provided. Members' children \$2; non-members' children \$4. Register by December 3.

### **ARBORETUM OPEN HOUSE** **Saturday, December 11** **10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.**

Please join us for the Arboretum's annual holiday open house celebration. Come browse the Gift Shop, which this year features items made from recycled materials, as well as the work of local artisans and craftspersons. Light refreshments will be served. Program is free and open to the public.

## January 2011

### **ENJOYING WATER BIRDS** (Family) **Saturday, January 8** **10:00 to 11:00 a.m.**

Winter is an exceptional time for birding in Mississippi due to the presence of many birds not seen here during the rest of the year. Beautiful and interesting water birds can be found in places you wouldn't think of. Learn to identify common and some uncommon birds, such as ducks, snipes, waders, and shorebirds, with **Susan Epps**, avid birder and writer. Suited to ages 7 and up. Members free; non-members \$5; non-members' children \$2. Register by January 7.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL EXPERIENCES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD: PLT TEACHER WORKSHOP** **Saturday, January 15** **9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.**

The ever popular Project Learning Tree has a new program designed specifically for educators who work with children ages 3 to 6. Over 130 environmental experiences are presented and activities integrate science concepts with music, movement, math, art and reading connections. Workshop is free of charge through a DEQ grant by MS PLT State Coordinator, **Harold Anderson**, and Master Naturalist, **Mary Cordray**. CEU credit of 0.6 hours is also available for a \$10 fee. Call the office at (601) 799-2311 to pre-register. *Register early.*

### **WINTER VOLUNTEER MEETINGS**

**Sat., January 8 & Sat., February 5**  
**at 9:00 a.m.**

Many exciting volunteer opportunities are available at the Crosby Arboretum! For more information, please contact Volunteer Coordinator Robin Veerkamp at (601) 799-2311, Ext. 104.

### **WINTER BOTANY FIELD WALK** (Family) **Saturday, January 22** **10:00 to 11:00 a.m.**

Winter is a time when the beautiful structures of plants are revealed. Take a walk through the Arboretum grounds with **Glenn Hughes**, Mississippi State Extension Forestry Professor, and learn how to identify plants in winter – especially trees – by their characteristic shapes as well as their buds, bark, persistent fruits, inner bark fragrance, and pith structure. Suited to ages 7 and up. Members free; non-members \$5; non-members' children \$2. Register by January 21.

### **NATIVE PLANTS FOR ATTRACTING WILDLIFE** (Adults) **Saturday, January 22** **1:00 to 2:00 p.m.**

Turn your property into a bustling wildlife habitat! Learn which native plants offer the highest value to our area wildlife, and trips for designing your yard for their optimal use with the Crosby Arboretum's Senior Curator **Pat Drackett**. She will also discuss how to attract specific wildlife such as birds, hummingbirds and butterflies. Members free; non-members \$5. Register by January 21.

### **FORGE DAY: BLACKSMITHING & METAL-WORKING DEMONSTRATIONS** (Family) **Saturday, January 29** **10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.**

Join us for a day of metalsmithing demonstrations by area craftsmen. A chance to learn techniques and tips to get started in metalworking! Enjoy the demonstrations, or try your hand at the forge. (Those doing forge work must complete a waiver form prior to participating). Safety equipment for participants will be provided. Members free; non-members \$5, and \$2 for non-members' children.

**Walk-ins can usually be accommodated, but if possible, to help with our preparations, please call (601) 799-2311 to sign up prior to classes.**

# Crosby Arboretum Program Schedule

February 2011

## February 2011

### **COUNTDOWN TO THE GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT** (Kids)

**Saturday, February 5  
10:00 to 11:00 a.m.**

This is your chance to join the thousands of citizen scientists around the United States and help count birds in your neighborhood. This workshop is designed for young and old alike! Play the relay game "Beaks and Feet," create a bird identification wheel, and learn how you can participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count with **Master Naturalist Mary Cordray**. Children must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Members' children \$2; non-members' children \$4. Register by February 4.



*The fourth and fifth grade Challenge classes from East Hancock Elementary School in Kiln visited the Arboretum in October to study local wetland areas as part of their Coastal Ecosystems unit. In the pitcher plant bog, Dylan Hoda, a fourth grader from East Hancock Elementary School, holds a pitcher plant with an unexpected "hitchhiker" – a praying mantis (In background, Laura Fallin and Asa Grover look on).*

**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.

**2010 Admission Fees:** Adults, \$5; Seniors (over 55), \$4; Children under 12, \$2; Members, free admission to grounds and programs.

**Webpage:** [www.crosbyarboretum.msstate.edu](http://www.crosbyarboretum.msstate.edu). Lists programs and events, volunteer opportunities, Arboretum and Natural Area information, and news updates.

### **MISSISSIPPI ARBOR DAY CELEBRATION: PLANTING OF NEW GUM POND EXHIBIT**

**Friday, February 11  
1:00 to 3:00 p.m.**

Area organizations and individuals are invited to celebrate Mississippi Arbor Day by planting a tree at the Crosby Arboretum's newest exhibit, the Gum Pond! **Free admission**, but if possible, please call to register.

### **ARBOR DAY PLANT SALE**

**Saturday, February 12  
Members' Only Sale – 9:00 to 10:00 a.m.  
General Public – 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.**

Winter is a good time to plant trees and woody shrubs. Choose from a variety of trees and shrubs at this plant sale, and come early for the best selection of many hard-to-find native plants. We'll help you select the right plant for the right place! **Free admission.** Arboretum Greenhouse.

### **TEACHER WORKSHOP: WILD ABOUT MATH AND ART**

**Saturday, February 19  
9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.**

ProjectWILD activities are based in wildlife and ecology topics, but many are cross-disciplinary. This workshop with a **Mississippi Museum of Natural Science** facilitator will focus on how to teach math and art concepts for K-12 teachers and homeschool educators. Teachers of any subject or grade can learn new ways to incorporate these activities into their curriculum. Free workshop for teachers in Pearl River or Hancock Counties, no cost for the manual and 0.6 CEU's. For others, cost is \$15, and \$10 for CEU's. Please call the office at (601) 799-2311 to pre-register.

### **AN ENTOMOLOGIST'S TOP 10 LIST OF BENEFICIAL GARDEN INSECTS** (Family)

**Saturday, February 26  
10:00 to 11:00 a.m.**

Learn about beneficial insects and the pests they help control with **Chris Werle**, USDA Agricultural Research Service in Poplarville, and how they can promote a healthy ecosystem in your home landscape. Chris will reveal how to encourage these creatures to become a part of your garden. Attendees can "bring a bug" (preserve in a bag or jar in the fridge or freezer until the program). Members free; non-members \$5; non-members' children \$2. Suited to ages 7 and up. Register by February 25.



The **Crosby Arboretum**  
Mississippi State University

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Picayune, Mississippi, USA



Come walk our new path from the North Savanna trail to experience the Arboretum's new Gum Pond Exhibit.



The Gum Pond Exhibit will provide public education about an increasingly rare native Mississippi ecosystem.

## GUM POND SITE EXCAVATION IS COMPLETE

Site construction was completed over a two-week period in October, by Hattiesburg contractor Daniel Broome and crew, who have performed site work for other projects designed by Ed Blake. Daniel and his crew sensitively executed the pond's excavation, miraculously avoiding rainy weather which would have rendered the site unworkable. They finished ahead of schedule by working longer days, despite unforeseen challenges such as the need to install timber mats to allow traction for the heavy equipment. Grounds Manager Terry Johnson and his team of Arboretum volunteers lost no time in constructing a new path to access the exhibit from the North Savanna Trail. On Mississippi Arbor Day, February 11, the pond will be planted with swamp tupelo (*Nyssa sylvatica* var. *biflora*). All are welcome to join the Master Gardeners, 4-H youth, and Crosby Arboretum volunteers planting the trees.



(Photo courtesy of [www.southeasternflora.com](http://www.southeasternflora.com))

### PLANT PROFILE: POSSUMHAW HOLLY

The sight of a flaming female possumhaw holly (*Ilex decidua*) in full berry against a stark winter landscape is not easily forgotten. This deciduous subcanopy tree is found in full sun or partial shade on riverine floodplains or stream banks. It is good choice for screens due to its dense, clumping character, or as a specimen tree. Berries are palatable to birds and other wildlife once they experience freezing and thawing. Commonly grows to 15 feet.

## PLANTS AT THE ARBORETUM WITH WINTER INTEREST

COMMON NAME	BOTANICAL NAME	CHARACTERISTIC
RED MAPLE	<i>Acer rubrum</i>	Red and orange flower clusters; 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 top.
AMERICAN BEECH	<i>Fagus grandifolia</i>	Tan, drooping leaves persisting on stems.
DECIDUOUS HOLLY	<i>Ilex decidua</i>	Bright red fruit clinging to dormant stems.
INKBERRY HOLLY	<i>Ilex glabra</i>	Black fruit borne on small, leafy stems.
AMERICAN HOLLY	<i>Ilex opaca</i>	Female trees bear bright red drupes.
YAUPON HOLLY	<i>Ilex vomitoria</i>	Bright red fruit; clustered on short stems.

