

ABOUT OUR COVER

THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA BOTANICAL GARDEN

The Botanical Garden was conceived in 1968 when Dr. Fred C. Davison, President, charged a committee composed of faculty from the plant sciences "to study and present a final proposal for the establishment of a 'Living Plant Library' at the University of Georgia." The epithet, *Living Plant Library*, was used in preference to botanical garden or arboretum which evoked memories of the original botanical garden at the University that existed from 1832 to about 1855; and/or the Arboretum started on South Campus about 1908 by Dr. T.H. McHatton, Head of Horticulture. Both gardens were extinguished by the path of progress – campus construction. The gardens served useful purposes and many landscape plants were first introduced to Georgia and tested in them. A few notable remnants of the McHatton effort include *Pinus bungeana*, lacebark pine; *Ginkgo biloba*; *Liquidambar formosana*, Formosan sweetgum; *Cedrus deodara*, deodar cedar; and *Cedrus atlantica* var. *glauca*, blue Atlas cedar.

The use of the word "library" in the designation of a botanical garden was not well received by several people within the University including the then Director of Libraries. The name Botanical Garden was invoked to the satisfaction of those concerned.

The entire organizational effort, and it was mighty, that was needed to develop such a facility was spearheaded by Dr. Francis E. Johnstone, Jr., former Head of Horticulture. Dr. Johnstone painstakingly solicited assistance from the Garden Club of Georgia, the Georgia Horticultural Society, Georgia Nurseryman's Association, Schools of Environmental Design and Ecology, Departments of Horticulture and Botany and others.

The Botanical Garden committee responded with vigor to the challenges on the horizon. In March 1969, surveys had been completed of the proposed land and after several boundary switches the final 293 acres had been platted in 1972. The land chosen for the Garden is as rich in native plants and geology as any in the Piedmont of Georgia. The most recently abandoned farm land is covered with a vigorous stand of *Pinus taeda*, loblolly pine. Another area contains a stand of 125 year old *Fagus grandifolia*, American beech. The Garden is bordered on the western boundary by the Oconee River. Oconee means "big muddy" and with the spring rains the river runs reddish brown. A large floodplain is present along the river with its characteristic vegetation of *Acer negundo*, box-elder; *Betula nigra*,

river birch; *Carpinus caroliniana*, American hornbeam; and others. A gradual transition zone on the bluffs and slopes houses species such as *Symplocos tinctoria*, horse-sugar; *Halesia carolina*, Carolina silverbell; *Rhododendron canescens*, Piedmont azalea; and *Kalmia latifolia*, mountain-laurel. Many of the upland areas have succeeded to the beech, maple, oak, hickory phase. The wildflowers are abundant and range from carpets of violets in the floodplain to sensitive *Hepatica* species on the shady slopes above the small streams that permeate the garden.

In the early years money was limited and principal development included a master plan engineered through the School of Environmental Design, several miles of hiking trails, and in general a rather passive approach to the use of the garden.

The garden took a quantum leap forward in January, 1973 when the Callaway Foundation, Inc., of LaGrange provided a grant for a headquarters and administration building. The Callaway Building was dedicated in October, 1975 and became the focal point for all garden activities. The public often measures progress in terms of physical facilities and the new building provided the impetus for additional development.

The Garden had been operating with a half-time Director until July 1, 1973 when Dr. Johnstone was made full-time. A horticulturist and secretary were also added and the bulk of the work force was composed of students from the plant sciences, particularly horticulture.

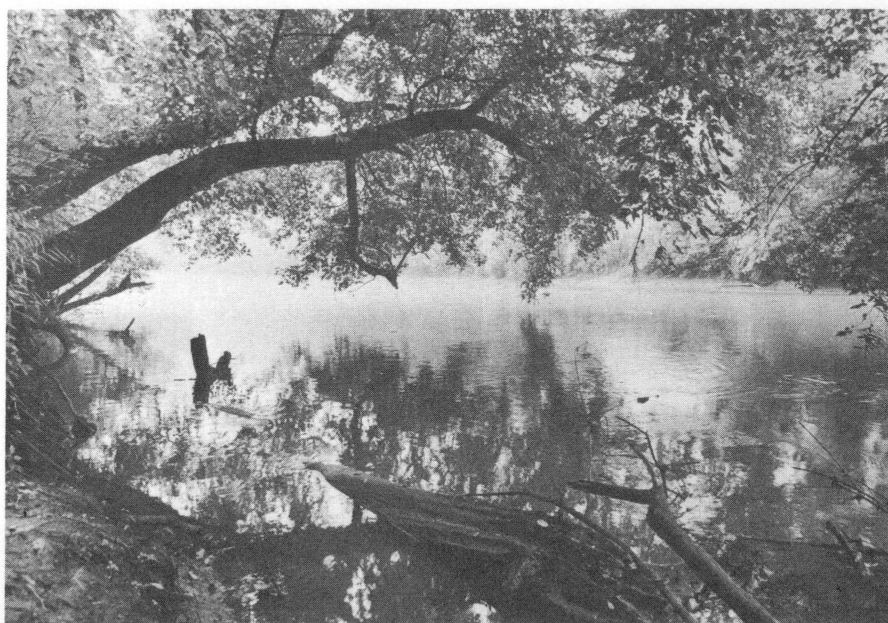
The public realized this Garden, unlike the previous, was progressing rapidly. Support started to materialize in the form of many donations. The Garden Club of Georgia presented a \$21,000 check to the Garden. An endowed rose

garden was given by Mr. D.A. Turner. The endowment now approaches \$60,000 and is sufficient to cover the maintenance costs of the garden. There was never a clear cut policy for collections development and those that did appear were serendipitous in nature. In 1977, two consultants were engaged to review the master plan and make recommendations. Their straightforward assessment recommended that an area should be opened up and designated for display gardens. Most of the earlier planting had taken place under the existing trees and the competition and poor soil limited the chances for success.

Dr. Johnstone's dogged persistence was the ingredient that brought the Botanical Garden to reality. He knew when to move forward and when to back off; two admirable traits when working with diverse faculty and public personalities. An example of this surfaced in the early planning stages when several committee members were adamant about any development. They wanted to preserve the natural integrity of the entire 293 acres. There would be no rose garden or for that matter any other "cultivated" garden. In 1971 Dr. Johnstone established broad-based support throughout the State with the nonprofit Friends of the Garden organization. He retired June 30, 1978 and was succeeded by an acting Director, Dr. Jacob Tinga until August, 1979 when I assumed the Directorship.

After surveying where the Garden had been, where it was, I charted a course for the 1980s. Mr. Geoffrey Rausch, Landscape Architect, Environmental Planning and Design, was engaged to review the master plan and suggest possible avenues for building and collection development. Geoff and his firm came up with an excellent plan for the development of the total

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Oconee River.