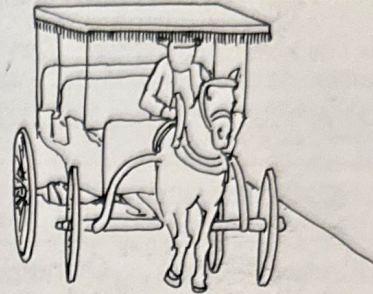


Louisiana's Nurserymen

Inside: LAN Short Course



New Orleans, Jan. 9-11

The official publication of the Louisiana Association of Nurserymen, Inc.

Volume 3

Number 3

December 1980



Cataclysm at Jefferson Island

Who Dealt This Mess?

A new dealer, obviously. By way of introduction, your new LAN magazine editor is Mike Maher, who lives in the country near Sunset.

I am a 1972 graduate of USL, and earned a master's degree from the University of Maine (in English) in 1974.

ADVERTISING RATES

The following advertising rates may be tailored to specific ad sizes and dates of appearance:

Back cover.....	\$125
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1/2 Page.....	70
1/3 Page.....	60
1/6 Page.....	35
1/12 Page.....	25

I am director of the USL News Bureau, and as editor of the University's alumni news, have won several awards for writing and editorial design.

I have something of a horticultural background, as my father headed USL's Agricultural Engineering department until July, 1980, and had a penchant for gardening. I've spent many hours potting vegetable plants in his greenhouse, which is well known in Lafayette gardening circles.

So much for pedigree. Politicians like to claim that they're only as good as their constituency. I don't know that editors can get away with the same lie. Editors are supposed to be establishers of trends and honers of the cutting edge.

But I have a lot to learn, and a lot of

contacts to make, so I will depend on you, the readership, to let me know if I'm giving you what you want to read. I also need tips on newsworthy topics in your area — if you come across a novel marketing technique or a labor-saving device or a new plant variety that your fellow LAN members would profit from knowing about, let me know and I'll let them know.

I hope to get the frequency of publication back on an even keel, too. Thanks to those of you who have bought ads. Many ads have been refurbished by LAN magazine's art director Anne Sargent, who does most of the hard work that gives this magazine its new look.

I look forward to meeting you all at the LAN Convention in New Orleans; try to make it.

Garden Center For Sale

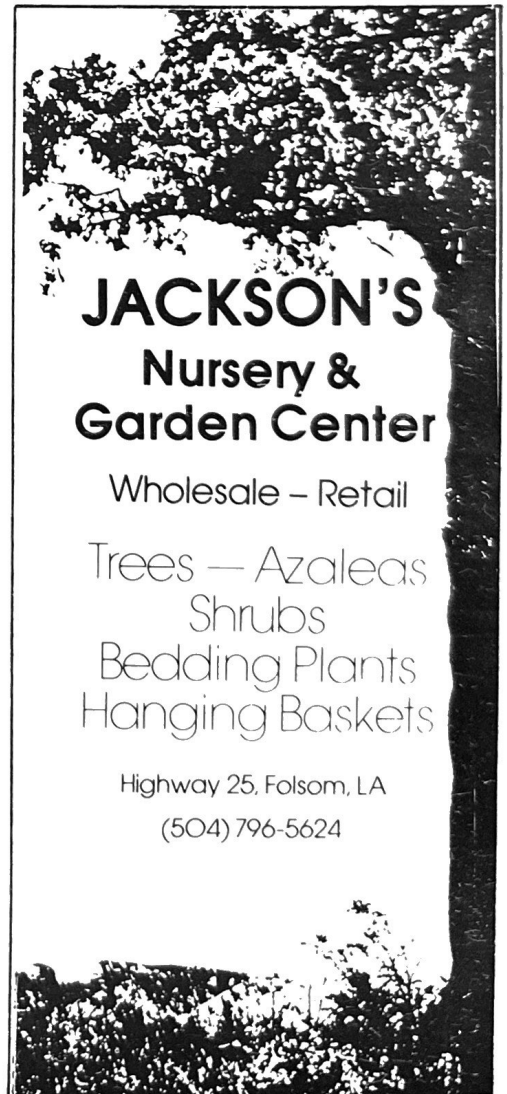
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azaleas**



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incorporated**

Buster Mizell
President

LAN Meets Legislative Subcommittee

Accountants, engineers and architects establish their own professional standards for certification. Why can't nurserymen?

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Forest Hill, LA 71430

Michael L. F. Cooper
Cooper's Landscaping
Rt. 1, Box 127A4-A
Lafayette, LA 70505

Herb's Oasis, Ltd.
8538 G.S.R.I. Ave.
Baton Rouge, LA 70510

Ken Vincent
Teak Nursery and Landscaping
2300 Pinhook Road
Lafayette, LA 70508

Mr. Perry L. Corkern
Rt. 4, Box 180A
Franklinton, LA 70438

Duncan's Nursery
P.O. Box 96
Ball, LA 71405

Richard G. Odom
Odom's Country Pines Nursery
Box 207
Forest Hill, LA

William J. Furlong, Jr.
Dogwood Hill Nursery
P.O. Box 656
Folsom, LA 70437

Growing on the Rocks
16334 Centurion Ave.
Baton Rouge, LA 70816

Delta Greenhouse and Florist
401-A Highway 23 North
Buras, LA 70041

Patricia R. Stelz
Stelz's Nursery
Rt. 2, Box 81
Covington, LA 70433

T.J. Murry's Nursery & Greenhouse
P.O. Box 151
Woodworth, LA 71485

That was the question, as LAN representatives Frank Evans, Walter Imahara and Dr. James Foret met with the Joint House-Senate Agricultural Committee Studying the Horticultural Law. At the October 1 meeting in Baton Rouge, the LAN committee voiced the following points:

The Louisiana Association of Nurserymen, Inc. wishes to detach itself from provisions of the Horticultural Act as currently written.

Our primary purposes are:

1. To upgrade our industry.
2. To protect the consumer.

We do not wish to require specific stipulations of prior experience or education as a condition for application to certify a horticulturist or a landscape contractor (including interior landscaping and plant maintenance services.)

Our basic plan is to require:

1. That persons interested in being certified pass the Louisiana Association of Nurserymen's Certified Nurserymen's Exam.

2. That they be certified in making recommendations for pesticide applications to plants by the Louisiana Department of Agriculture.

3. That they meet inspection standards on plant quality and health set forth by the Louisiana Department of Agriculture.

4. That they attend the Louisiana Association of Nurserymen's Short Course at least every second year in order to remain current in the industry. (Inspectors from the Louisiana Department of Agriculture will attend the Short Course to attest to the attendance of those persons who maintain a permit with the Department of Agriculture.)

There is no stipulation on membership in the Louisiana Association of Nurserymen.

We strongly urge the dissolution of the Nursery Stock Pot Plant Dealer Category, and that those businesses be granted a permit if they comply with inspection standards set forth by the Department of Agriculture as to viability of plants, adapted varieties, etc., as set forth by the Agriculture Extension Service.

Fees charged for the services given by the Department of Agriculture for Certification are to be determined by that department, and these monies retained for administration of the proposed strict inspection service recommended in these programs.

Cont. on p. 5

The Inspectors listed below are available to serve you.

Biologist I

Jimmy Kunkley
2064 Fern Drive
Denham Springs, LA 70726
(504) 665-2229

Dean Hart
Route 1, Box 535
Columbia, LA 71418
(318) 649-5133

Biologist II

Russell Brignac
P.O. Box 970
Opelousas, LA 70570
(318) 942-5478

Benny Fontenet
Route 5, Box 188
Ville Platte, LA 70586
(318) 363-6017

Eric Gates
1237 Murphy St.
Room 208, State Building
Shreveport, LA 71102
(318) 432-7525

Elton Thompson
Rm. 317, State Office Building
325 Loyola Ave.
New Orleans, LA 70112
(504) 568-5471

Robert Willett
Route 2, Box 280
Dry Prong, LA 71423
(318) 899-3851

Scions of the Times

Dr. Leslie Addison recently received \$14,000 from the U.S. Department of Energy Appropriate Technology Small Grants Program to research "Greenhouse Heating with Well Water." Addison lives at 625 Woodhaven Drive, Baton Rouge, LA 70815. Other small grant projects in the state of nursery interest include a grant of \$19,696 for "Microbially Fixed Nitrogen as Plant Fertilizer" to USL; "Low Cost Solar Space and Water Heater for Agriculture" to Sauros, Inc., Highway 384, Sweetlake, LA 70630; and \$1,600 for a "Water Source Heat Pump" to Dr. Howard Minn, Rt. 14, Box 2123, Lake Charles, LA 70605.

Louisiana is tied with Georgia and Wisconsin for 18th place in total value of state nursery production, according to the latest issue of *Nursery Business* magazine. The magazine gives all three states a \$30,000,000 production. *Nursery Business* ranks Mizell's Nursery, Inc., as first in the state, with \$2,100,000 in sales from 200 acres. Second is Casadaban's Nurseries, Inc., with \$1,500,000 in

sales from 500 total acres.

The top three nursery states in the nation are Florida, California and Texas, with respective total sales of \$450, \$400, and \$160 million figure.

Gardening burns 330 calories an hour, more than leisurely swimming, cycling, bowling or dancing. LAN members may use this abstract fact, originally reported in the *Garden Center Newsletter*, as leverage to coerce fitness- or diet-conscious members of the family into helping in the greenhouse.

The peat moss-producing areas of Canada got all the rain that Louisiana missed this summer. As a result, peat harvest is down 50% in both the U.S. and Canada. John Colby of the Eli Colby Company, Hanlan Town, Iowa, said his company was in good shape: "We have inventories above what we had last year, because of excellent harvesting in the first half of the season. But the farther east you go, the worse it gets. Some producers are down as much as

75%." Dennis McClosky of Windmill Nursery, Folsom, is undismayed by the peat shortage, though: "There's not a thing peat can do that pine bark doesn't do better." Spoken like a true Louisianian.

The LAN Scholarship Fund needs your donations to encourage excellence in aspiring horticulturists in our universities. Make your check out to LAN, and send to Dr. James Foret, LAN Secretary, Box 44492, Lafayette, LA 70504.

W. Price Magee died October 6 of this year. He was an Honorary Life Member of LAN, and was recognized for his contributions to the nursery industry at the 1957 LAN Convention. He was born and reared in Franklinton, and is the father of three daughters. He entered the field as a part-time nurseryman in the 1930s, beginning with camellias and azaleas, but adding to this general stock and container plants.

L.A.N. Cont. from p. 4

The major changes set forth in the above testimony are that there would be no educational pre-requisite for taking the licensing exam, and that the LAN Certified Nurserymen's Exam itself would be the criterion for licensure. Currently, an applicant needs a college degree or several years of experience working under a licensed nurseryman, as a pre-requisite for taking the exam. The test itself is administered by the State Department of Agriculture.

Should the legislature adopt these recommendations, the consumer would also gain some protection from retailers selling plant varieties not adapted to Louisiana.

"We received no official reaction to our proposal, but the Joint Legislative Committee appeared to favor our recommendations, since we were requesting **less** legislation than currently exists," said Dr. James Foret.



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Monday
thru Friday

Ben Williams of the LSU Experiment Station in Hammond discusses production of king-size poinsettias at the annual field day sponsored by the station. The variety "V-14 Glory" is potted in May, and the brakes are pruned regularly through mid-July. Three weeks later, the nurseryman pinches apical growth to allow lateral growth of 10-12 brakes. The top one inch of these brakes is pinched back a month later. The result at market time is a five foot poinsettia with 10-12 secondary brakes, each having 10-12 flowers. Williams said that the Cooperative Extension Service recommends a sale price of \$75-100 each for these plants, to recoup the considerable labor involved in their production. "V-14 Glory" is available from Paul Ecke Poinsettias, Ensonita, California.



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27th LAN Short Course and Convention



Monteleone

FRIDAY, JAN. 9, 1981

- 11:30-4:00** Registration — Mezzanine
1:00-1:15 Welcome, Invocation, Proclamation Address — Queen Anne Room (QAR)
1:15-2:00 Nursery Attitudes for the Eighties — Speaker — **Bob Berry** — Mid Western Nurseries, Tahlequah, Oklahoma.
2:00-2:30 Biological Control of White Fly and other new research — **Dr. Abe Oliver** — QAR — Entomologist, LSU, Baton Rouge
2:30-2:40 S.N.A. Report — **Dennis McCloskey** — Q.A.R.
2:40-2:45 Distribution of Comparative Bid Forms of Landscape Contractors — **Frank Evans** — Q.A.R.
2:45-3:00 Coffee Break in Exhibit Area — Bonnet Carre and R.E. Lee Room
3:00-4:30 Concurrent Sessions
RETAIL — Queen Anne Room
 Palms for Louisiana Landscapes: Installation and Maintenance — **George Pletcher**, Pletcher Wholesale Nursery, Harlingen, Texas
 Marketing for Fun and Profit — **Jim Johnson**, Ferti-Lome, Bonham, Texas.
WHOLESALE — La Neuville & Orleans East Rooms; Container Nutrition — **Karl Kolb**, Sierra Chemical Co., Milipitas, California
 Building a Sales Department — **George Hackney**, Wight Nursery, Cairo, Ga.
4:30-5:00 Exhibit Area Open — ICED BEER — Bonnet Carre and R.E. Lee Rooms
4:45-5:30 Board Meeting Begins — Cabildo Room
6:00-8:00 Cocktail Party to honor longtime LAN members Q.A.R.
 Program: Introduction, personality sketches and remarks — **Bill Kraak, Rene Casadaban, Earl Vallot**

FRENCH QUARTER FREE NIGHT ON THE TOWN FOLLOWING THE PARTY

SATURDAY, JAN. 10, 1981

- 7:30-8:45** Board of Directors Breakfast and Meeting (Continues from Friday) Cabildo
9:00-2:00 Registration — Mezzanine
9:00-9:05 Short Course Opens — **Frank Akin** — Q.A.R.
9:05-9:55 Professionalism in Business — **R.C. Aldridge** Q.A.R.
9:55-10:20 L.A.N. Business Meeting — **Walter Imahara** Q.A.R.
10:20-10:30 Coffee Break in Exhibit Area — Q.A.R.
10:30-12 Concurrent Sessions
RETAIL — Queen Anne Room
 Landscape Contracting — **Warren Purdy**, Houston, TX
WHOLESALE — Iberville North and South Rooms; Building a Sales Department — **George Hackney**
 Palm Production — **George Pletcher**
12:00-1:30 Lunch — The Andrew Jackson Restaurant
 Speaker: **Bob Odom**, Commissioner of Agriculture, State of Louisiana
1:30-2:30 Report on Developments in the Extension Service **Dr. Warren Meadows**, Extension Specialist LSU, Q.A.R.
 Extension Programs at the Parish Level — **Severn Doughty**
 Regional Programs (nursery groups) New Orleans — **Mile Tallen**, Baton Rouge — **Dan Thompson**
2:30-4:30 Concurrent Sessions
RETAIL — Queen Anne Room
 Computers in Retail Nurseries — **Frank Akin**, Akin Nursery, Shreveport.
 Landscape Contracting — **Warren Purdy**
WHOLESALE — Iberville Room
 Organization of Wholesale Nurseries — **R.C. Aldridge**
 Computers in Wholesale Nurseries — **Mike Richard**, commentator
6:30-7:00 Iced Beer in Exhibit Area
7:00-9:30 Banquet

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SUNDAY, JAN. 11, 1981

- 6:30-7:00** 2 mile jog (or walk) throught the French Quarter
8:00-8:45 A.A.N. Breakfast (Bienville Room — \$6.00
tickets available at registration desk)
9:00-9:10 Sunday Session Open — **Frank Evans**—Q.A.R.
9:10-9:45 Marketing Nursery Products — **Jim Johnson**
Q.A.R.
9:45-9:50 Farm Bureau Report — **Bill LeCroix** —
Chairman F.B. Commodity Board — Q.A.R.
9:50-10:10 Theft Prevention Program for Equipment etc.
State and National Program — **Ken Rabolet** —
Q.A.R.
10:10-10:30 Coffee Break Q.A.R.
10:30-12 Concurrent Sessions
RETAIL — Queen Anne Room
Plant Nutrition in Retail Sales Area —
Karl Kolb
Conclusion of Landscape Survey and Group
Discussion
WHOLESALE — Iberville Room
Migrant Workers in the Nursery —
R.C. Aldridge
Group Discussion on Nursery Operations
1981 — **Clarence Mizell**, moderator
12:00 End of Short Course

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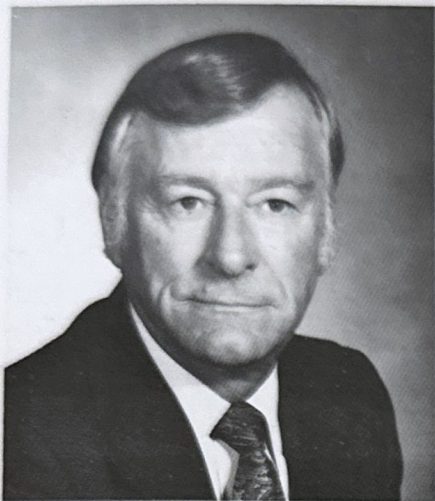
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Featured Speakers 1981 LAN Short Course



Warren Purdy

Warren Purdy's specialty is the bottom line. With 31 years of experience as a landscape architect, contractor, wholesale and retail nurseryman, maintenance contractor and specimen tree contractor, he is now management consultant for the nursery industry.

He will discuss landscape contracting at the 10:30-noon and the 3:45-5:00 concurrent sessions for retail nurserymen on January 10. He will review the profit and loss statement, and discuss how to find hidden costs, how to determine true costs of labor and equipment, and how to retrieve these costs profitably through accurate markup and estimating procedures. He will also explore why landscape contractors fail to achieve desired gross margins.

Purdy has a degree in business administration from the University of Southern California. He has been president of the California Landscape Contractors Association and the Associated Landscape Contractors of America. He now lives in Houston.

His experience in the nursery field includes design, installation, management, sales and marketing, accounting, legal, insurance, labor relations and association work.

He is a contributor to such publications as *Landscape Industry* magazine, and a nationally-known speaker for nurserymen's meetings, and a consultant for individual firms.



Richard Aldridge

Richard Aldridge of Von Ormy, Texas is president and general manager of the largest wholesale grower of general nursery stock in the South.

Nursery Business magazine lists the Aldridge Nursery as tied with six other nurseries for 16th place nationally in gross sales. Last year, his nursery rang up \$10,000,000 in sales.

Aldridge will discuss "Professionalism in Business" at the 9:05-9:55 general session in the Queen Anne Room on January 10. He will also speak on the "Organization of Wholesale Nurseries" at the 2:30-4:30 wholesale nurserymen's concurrent session that day. Aldridge will also discuss "Migrant Workers in the Nursery" at the 10:30-noon session for wholesale nurserymen on January 11.

Aldridge entered the nursery business in 1939. In addition to developing the largest commercial operation in the South, he has been active in the Texas Association of Nurserymen. He is past president of that group, and has chaired the TAN insurance committee and scope committee. He also serves on the TAN legislative, executive, and trade show policy committees.

For 12 years he was on the American Association of Nurserymen Board of Governors. At the national level, he has served on the AAN recommended plant list committee, the horticultural standards committee and the AAN Region legislative committee.



George Pletcher

Louisiana festivals produce Crawfish kings, Mardi Gras kings, Jambalaya kings, Boudin kings, and so forth, but the LAN convention will introduce to Louisiana soil a new kind of royalty: a Palm King.

George Pletcher of Harlingen, Texas, is indeed known as the Palm King, not only of Texas, but of the U.S.A.

He has the credentials to claim that throne. He has traveled to six continents to study palms and other subtropical plants; his most recent palm expedition took him through Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand earlier this year.

His hobby is appropriate for a man of his title: he **gives away** palm trees! He has given away over 25,000 palms since 1961, to cities, churches, schools, and to individuals.

To give away that many palms, who knows how many of the trees he's sold? He has operated a successful retail floral, nursery and landscape business for over 50 years. He now owns one of the largest wholesale nurseries in Texas.

Pletcher will discuss "Palms for Louisiana Landscapes" at the January 9 retail concurrent session, which meets from 3:00-4:30. He will speak on "Palm Production" to the wholesale growers concurrent session, which meets January 10 from 10:30-noon.

He has a bachelor's degree from Texas A&M, and a master's degree from Ohio State, and is life member of three national honorary fraternities.

Cataclysm at Jefferson Island

by Mike Maher

A Twice-Told Tale

I had just picked up typeset proofs of an article I'd written on Live Oak Gardens — what I'd hoped would be a fairly upbeat, informative article on one of the most efficient and progressive nurseries I'd ever seen — when Dean Foret stopped me in the hall.

"Did you hear what happened on Jefferson Island?" he asked. I had not. He gave me a thumbnail verbal portrait of what had occurred: drilling rig punctures salt mine shaft; the entirety of Lake Peigneur empties into the salt mine; land on the island subsides, causing considerable damage to the nursery and gardens.

The evening news and newspaper accounts confirmed it: a disaster that in sheer scale and outlandish circumstance would balk the most inventive of Hollywood disaster movie screenplay writers.

Thirteen hundred acres of water sucked into a vortex that was big enough to consume nine barges, eight tugboats and two drilling rigs. It took several days of backflow of Vermilion Bay water to refill the lake, at which point the barges, like children's toys stuck in the bathtub drain, popped back out again.

What did the most damage to the nursery and Live Oak Gardens was land subsidence. Big sheets of land gradually peeled off and fell into the lake, then slid into the abyss.

Sixty four acres were consumed.



The extent of the damage is described by Mike Richard in the post-disaster article that follows. I've decided to print most of the pre-disaster article, not that it was that scintillating a piece of writing, but because I suspect most LAN members need an introduction to Mike and his nursery. In the light of what existed on Jefferson Island before this bizarre cataclysm, the extent of the damage and the pathos of the tremendous losses is even more unsettling.

Bottom and top photos are, respectively, before and after shots of the half-acre conservatory at Jefferson Island. It was one of the finest in the South. The visitors center, the roof of which is visible above, once adjoined the conservatory.



Before the Disaster

Horticulture goes back a long way on Jefferson Island. The 30,000 Yankee troops who invaded South Louisiana in the fall of 1863 knew it as Orange Island. They sent a raiding party to destroy the Confederate salt works there, and to bring back fruit from the island's 6,000 orange trees.

Today the oranges are gone, but the same factors which made the area suitable for citrus give Jefferson Island an advantage as a wholesale nursery and garden site. Contributing this latest chapter in a long history of horticultural activity is LAN member Mike Richard.

"Jefferson Island has Lake Peigneur, a body of water about 1 by 2 miles in dimension, immediately to the north," Richard explains. "The nursery has another advantage in its location on a south slope. This combination of proximity to water and good air drainage makes it two or three degrees warmer, and much more frost-free, than the surrounding area. Those few degrees can be crucial."

A southern slope is nothing unusual among the piney woods, but declivity is rare in coastal Louisiana. Jefferson Island is the northernmost of Louisiana's Five Islands, a series of salt domes that align in a north-west-to-southeast axis in the Vermilion Bay-Cote Blanche Bay area. None of them are true islands, that is,

they're not surrounded by water, but they project up from the surrounding marshes dramatically.

Jefferson Island is best known not for its nursery or its oranges, but for its tropical gardens. Now called Live Oak Gardens, the place was originally named Rip Van Winkle Gardens, in deference to the role made famous by Joseph Jefferson, 19th Century actor who owned the island from 1870-1905. The island itself now bears his name.

Live Oak Gardens was begun in 1957 by J. Lyle Bayless, Jr., whose father had bought the island in 1917.

Bayless himself established the Alhambra Garden, with gardener Emick Landry. He then hired Geoffrey Wakefield of England to lay out a more comprehensive garden. The result of his plan was a series of gardens connected by pathways: the Alhambra Garden, the Cascade and Moon Window Seat, the Little Boy Garden, and the Chalice.

Live Oak Gardens opened to the public in 1966. Three years later, Mike Richard joined the staff as a part-time horticulturist, while he was completing his degree at USL in nearby Lafayette.



Mike Richard

Richard became director of the gardens in 1971. He added the Rock Garden, the Lily Pool, beds of tulips, hyacinths and annuals, the Cottage Garden and the Japanese Garden and Tea House.

In February of this year, a new visitors center and conservatory were added to the gardens. The public tour of the gardens begins and ends here.

The conservatory itself is one of the finest in the South. The 18,600 square feet of greenhouse space are arranged in a maze to provide 1,000 lineal feet of pathway, surrounded by a huge variety of plants. Richard trucked in over 2,000 cubic yards of topsoil to form this maze of raised plant beds.

Thousands visit the gardens annually; people come from all over the world to Jefferson Islands. "We even had a Japanese television crew come through the Gardens," Richard says. "Some friends of mine from Japan told me they saw me on TV there some time later."

But despite the fame and the number of visitors, Live Oak Gardens is not a money-making proposition. "You can't break even operating a botanic garden in such an isolated location," Richard admits.

But with or without the profit factor, J. Lyle Bayless firmly intends to preserve the island as a horticultural paradise. To further these ends, he has divided the operation into two parts: The Live Oak Gardens Foundation, to which he donated 400 prime acres of Jefferson Island land; and Live Oak Gardens, Ltd., which is the commercial nursery operation.

Richard is manager of the Foundation and president of the nursery. "Actually there's not that much connection between the workings of the gardens and the wholesale nursery,

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other than that the nursery leases its land from the Foundation; this produces revenue to operate the gardens."

Bayless retained only an acre of land for his personal use; he continues to live on the island in a new home not far from the visitors center.

Since becoming formally incorporated in 1973, Live Oak Gardens, Ltd., has grown tremendously. It now employs 20 full-time people, and includes 30,000 square feet under plastic, and 15 acres of concrete or limestone-covered container plant growing areas.

The wholesale operation has specialized in such plants as hollies, ligustrum, pittosporum, mondo grass, liriope, and the best-selling item, Asiatic jasmine.

Richard's sales will be up 50 percent over last year. He feels this results from years of producing an extra-fine quality plant at competitive prices. Automation helps, too: his potting machine assembly line can produce 10,000 container plants a day. Irrigation is totally automated, and a pallet-forklift system cuts by about half the amount of labor needed to fill an order.

After the Disaster

As I entered the Live Oak Gardens nursery Tuesday, November 25, there was little evidence that one of history's most bizarre man-made geological disasters had taken place five days before.

Expanses of container plants stretched out for acres; people were at work; the propagation greenhouses looked intact; the potting assembly line warehouse remained.

As I approached Lake Peigneur, however, the scene changed. The recently-completed visitors center, where I'd interviewed Mike Richard eleven days ago, was evident only because the top four feet of roofline projected above the water. The half-acre conservatory behind the visitors center was leveled; still-growing plants peeked out through shattered glass and rafters. The nearby home of J. Lyle Bayless had slid into the lake to the point where about half the bottom story was under water; the house was

about 30 degrees out of horizontal.

Mike Richard had slept very little the previous five nights. He'd been working feverishly during the day, and standing guard at the nursery at night. He nevertheless kept a remarkable equanimity as he related the following chronology of the disaster:

At about 5:45 a.m. Thursday, Texaco lost circulation on their rig on the lake. Just about that time, my sister Vickie Richard, who lives with my family on the island, awakened thinking someone was shaking her bed. A series of tremors began at that time, which gradually got closer together.

I went to the office in the visitors center, and later that morning the salt mine people came by and told us they were evacuating the mine. At about 10 a.m., they suggested we evacuate the nursery.

Up until mid-morning, nobody associated the problems in the mine with the collapse of the rig out on the lake. I learned later that the last elevator load of miners had about half an elevator full of water as they were leaving.

At about 10 a.m., I noticed the pic-

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Land subsided right up to the edge of the container plant growing area

tures on the walls of my office trembling. I went out into the visitors center, and looked out into the lake. At that moment a 500 foot circle dropped out of the lake, and a huge 'tidal wave' developed.

Within an hour, the lake was dry. I went to the Bayless home and began filming the whirlpool in the lake, and the collapsing shores of the lake.

The Delcambre Canal, which normally carries water south from the lake into Vermilion Bay, became a waterfall of northward-rushing bay water. Barges flowed down the canal, into the lake, and down the vortex into the salt mine. Not small barges, either. One had three cement trucks on it.

The lake began consuming its own shoreline. About an acre would fall off at a time, big slabs 200-300 feet wide by 35 feet deep. The land would collapse and form a big mud slide, like a lava flow, which went down the whirlpool.

The tremors from the salt dome got about 10 seconds apart, and even more frequent than that. All this time

there was a tremendous roar of wind out of the mine air shaft — air that was being displaced by water down in the mine. The roar didn't stop until about 4 p.m., at which time the air shaft spit mud out for about 200 feet. It took the lake almost two days to refill.

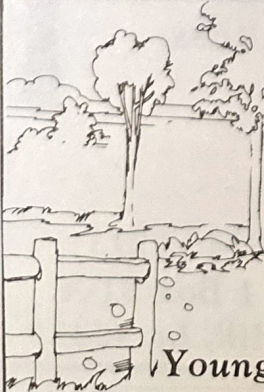
The damage was incredible: 1 salt mine, worth untold millions, which was the livelihood for 300 employees; two drilling rigs, 90 acres of land, the Live Oak Gardens visitors center, conservatory, part of the gardens, some greenhouses, the Bayless home and many more items.

Given the immensity of these losses, the Live Oak Gardens nursery fared rather well. The lake shore cave-ins consumed 10 acres of leased nursery land, but not the prime growing area. The land subsided right up to the potting warehouse and the nine greenhouses filled with liners. The warehouse is hanging over the edge of the lake now. These structures will have to be abandoned, but their contents may be saved.

The nursery also lost a truck, and its water wells and irrigation equipment. But timely rainfalls kept the plants in good shape. "If this had happened in mid-summer, we'd have been totally wiped out, everything would have died without irrigation," Richard admits.

As this magazine went to press, Richard was about to complete a new irrigation well and re-establish his water lines. He estimates a loss to the nursery of half a million dollars.

"This won't put the nursery under. If the Mine Safety and Health Administration tells us we can go on at this location, we'll get financing and rebuild."



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New Books

GRASSES

The grass family, one of the largest of all families of flowering plants, is of the utmost importance in Louisiana. Grasses are significant as forage for livestock; and all of the great cereal grains, as well as sugar cane and bamboo, are grasses.

Allen, herbarium associate in the USL biology department, recently has published *Grasses of Louisiana*, the only study of its kind for a Gulf Coast state. Because of the book's scope and thoroughness, *Grasses* will also be valuable for routine identification of grasses of other Southeastern states.

Grasses are notoriously difficult to identify. Dr. Allen provides identification keys, using terminology that is fully explained in the glossary. Virtually every grass species is illustrated, using the diagnostic figures from the second edition of the *Manual of the Grasses of the United States* by Hitchcock and Chase.

Allen gives descriptions of all grasses known to occur in Louisiana, along with statements on world distributions and maps showing the distributions in Louisiana.

Grasses of Louisiana costs \$9, and is available from USL Publications, Box 44548, Lafayette, LA, 70504. Make checks payable to USL Faculty Publications.

FERNS

The Lafayette Natural History

Museum and the University of Southwestern Louisiana have just published *Louisiana Ferns and Fern Allies*, a 280-page guide by Dr. John Thieret.

The book is written for a popular rather than technical readership, and facilitates identification of the 71 species of ferns and fern allies found in Louisiana.

The book is available from the Lafayette Natural History Museum for \$17.95 (add \$1.05 for shipping and packing). The museum mailing address is 637 Girard Park Drive, Lafayette, LA, 70503.

The general section of the book describes characteristics of ferns, cultivation, building a herbarium, and rare ferns and fern allies in Louisiana.

The taxonomic section contains an identification guide which emphasizes vegetative features of each fern. Each species account presents data on habitat, earmarks, morphology, taxonomy and range.

Each range is illustrated in full-page line drawing. Dot maps show the distribution of all species by parish.



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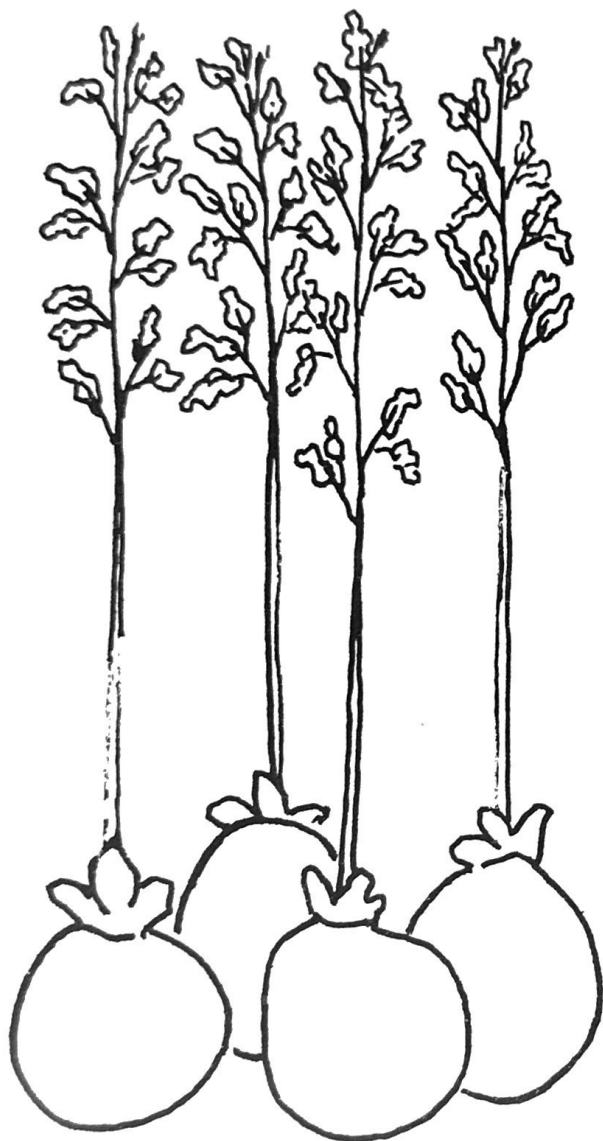
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