Louisiana State Arboretum Is a Delight for Visitors

The Louisiana State Arboretum is a delightful and enchanting place to visit for the most enthusiastic naturalist as well as for someone just beginning to discover the beauties of nature. An expert will immediately recognize the Arboretum as an excellent example of a Beech-Magnolia climax forest. Others will simply enjoy walking the paths of one of Louisiana's most beautiful, inspirational and quiet woodlands.

An arboretum is a section of land containing either natural growth or plantings, grown for scientific or educational purposes. Trees, shrubs and flowers are identified and labeled along the way, transforming the area into a living, breathing botanical museum which is easily accessible to human observation.

Arboretums are not the same as parks. By definition, they are less contrived and designed more for learning than for recreational use. Plants are cultivated for scientific or educational purposes and are made easily accessible to curious fingertips.

Arborets Through the Years

Arboretums are certainly not new. Oriental Emperor Shen Ming had one 2800 years before the birth of Christ and Aristotle designed one in Athens as an education forum. Royal courts throughout Europe began supporting botanical gardens during the 1300's. And the United States National Arboretum was established in 1927.

The Louisiana State Arboretum is large, more than 600 acres in size, and its plants consist of natural growth embellished with additional plantings of species that are indigenous to the South. Atypical of the terrain in the Louisiana prairieland, the topography of the Arboretum is varied and dramatic. The landscape ranges from nearly flat along the Walker Branch of Lake Chicot to steeper than 30% slopes along the terrace ridges. Due to the great variation in topography, almost every type of Louisiana vegetation, except coastal marsh and prairie, is represented on the site.

Rustic bridges and two-and-one-half miles of trails have been constructed to lead the visitor through the network of hills, ravines and creeks that support the Arboretum's myriad species of flora. Centuries-old giant beech, magnolia, oak and ash trees can be viewed from atop the many ridges in the area.

Take A Tour

At the entrance to the Arboretum, there is an interpretive shelter with educational exhibits on a variety of botanical subjects. Start your tour here and you'll immediately encounter a cow-cumbrer or big leaf magnolia which grows only in certain areas of Louisiana. From that point, you can take a short trail downhill to the Fern Garden and continue to walk along the Upland Terrace area. Nature trails take you deeper into the wooded areas and longer trails take you along Walker Branch or Ferguson's Gulley where several of the footpaths converge.

If you walk the trails quietly, you'll discover that live oaks, catalpas, sweet gums, persimmons, maples, beeches, magnolias, hickories, ferns and colic roots are not the only living things in the arboretum. There's a good chance that you'll encounter some two and four-legged critters, too: white-tail deer, wild turkeys, raccoons, opossum, fox, skunks, squirrels, and numerous species of birds.

Touch But Don't Destroy

Established in 1961, the Louisiana State Arboretum was the first such area in the South and the first state-supported arboretum in the United States. To help preserve the Arboretum for future generations, it is strictly prohibited to remove or damage any plants or animals. No pets are allowed on the grounds and no picnicking is permitted. Picnic grounds and camping facilities are available at nearby Chicot State Park.

Botanists, horticulturists, college students, youth groups, solitary nature lovers, and people of all ages are all attracted to this beautiful and fascinating place. No matter how you walk along the trails — whether carefully, with the attentive eyes of a scientist, or at full tilt with the care-free heart of a child — the Louisiana State Arboretum promises to be a memorable experience. Enjoy and please remember: Take only pictures — Leave only footprints.
A long the way—Trees, plants, and vegetation throughout the Arboretum are clearly identified to help visitors learn more about the area's special environment.

The Louisiana State Arboretum (Route 3, Box 489, Ville Platte, LA 70586, 318-363-6287) is located on Louisiana Highway 3042, approximately eight miles north of Ville Platte in Evangeline Parish and a mile and a half from the main entrance of Chicot State Park. Groups of ten or more can schedule a tour by appointment. Films on Louisiana wildlife are shown on Saturday evenings during the summer by the Arboretum staff at Chicot State Park.

DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, RECREATION AND TOURISM
OFFICE OF STATE PARKS
P. O. Drawer 1111, Baton Rouge, La. 70821
Telephone (504) 925-3830

The funds for this brochure were provided by the Ville Platte Chamber of Commerce, the Ville Platte Rotary Club, the Ville Platte Lions Club, the Ville Platte Jaycees and the Evangeline Art Association as a public service to give the general public information concerning the Louisiana State Arboretum and to promote a better tourist trade for Louisiana.