Annette Shay walks with her son, Alex, 20 months, to feed the ducks and enjoy the azaleas along the sidewalk in Girard Park Tuesday.

Flowers blooming along Azalea Trail

Todd Billiot
Staff Writer

LAFAYETTE — Stop and smell the flowers. The azaleas are in full bloom.

The beautiful scenes of pink, lavender, purple and red flowering azalea blossoms are sure to validate life's simple pleasures. Just take a leisurely stroll down a residential street like Myrtle Place or Girard Park Drive in Lafayette to see for yourself.

“They’re beautiful, gorgeous,” said Ann Justice, garden columnist for The Daily Advertiser.

From mid-February to mid-March Lafayette's Azalea Trail is officially in bloom. The 20-mile or so route snakes through Lafayette's residential streets, business district and parks, allowing visitors and locals alike to take in the beauty of azalea's along the “trail.”

The Azalea Trail contest, which started as a beautification project, will lapse this year due to scheduling changes within the Jaycee organization, said Brenda Borel, chairman of the board for the Jaycees, the sponsor of the contest in the past.

“People can still see the flowers,” Borel said.

The trail is sure to change somewhat next year, as construction along Camellia Boulevard will disrupt its course.

“The buds are formed around July,” Justice said. “They are very shallow-rooted plants. They like filtered sun. They can’t handle direct sun or a lot of shade.”

Justice said the variety of azaleas most often seen in Lafayette are the deep lavender Formosa variety, along with the large white G.G. Gerbing and pinkish-purple George Taber varieties.

A severe freeze will kill azaleas, though some of the new hybrids are more hardy, Justice said.

For those who are interested in azaleas, the Louisiana Chapter of the Azalea Society of America holds quarterly meetings in Hammond. The group is gearing up for its Azalea Festival in Hammond March 18 and 19. The web site address for the Louisiana chapter is www.plantweb.com/azaleasociety.