Evidence of springtime is beginning to appear throughout Louisiana, as Lafayette prepares for its annual spring welcome, the Lafayette Azalea Trail, March 14-28. 

Sponsored by the Lafayette Jaycees, the Azalea Trail heralds the arrival of springtime each year with a beauty pageant, a lawn judging contest, and a route along the city’s azalea gardens. The Azalea Trail is designated by signs marking the way.

“This year’s Azalea Trail will be bigger and better than ever,” said Jaycee Jim Laborde, who co-chairs this year’s event with Jaycee Vance Lanier. “We’ve planned the 1981 Azalea Trail to include more public involvement than in previous years. The Azalea Trail is always popular, and we want as many people as possible to enjoy it,” Laborde explained.

The public is invited to the pageant and crowning of the 1981 Azalea Trail Queen, which will take place at 7 p.m. March 16 at Rimrock Saloon on La. 167 in Lafayette.

The Azalea Trail, with the winners of the lawn judging contest marked by signs, will continue from March 14-28. The trail runs for several miles through the commercial and residential area of Lafayette, including sections of W. Congress, St. Mary, University, Pinhook, Beverly Dr. and Girard Park. The trail travels past homes both sumptuous and modest which have floral displays.

The azalea, native of East Asia and brought to the Gulf Coast centuries ago, is a shrub that bears thick clusters of flowers with colors ranging from white to purple. There are 50 distinct species.