

# WEEKEND

March 9, 2012

www.beachesleader.com

## Jacksonville Arboretum & Gardens worth visit

One of the best inspirations to plan your own home Florida garden is to walk in the natural areas of Florida and visit community gardens, parks, and recreational areas.

Observation of plants and trees in natural environments is a good way to size up the potential impact a particular planting will have in your landscape.

I encourage every gardener to make time in the next few weeks, as weather is warming, but still cool enough to enjoy time outdoors, to spend some quality time in our outdoor areas.

Today, school students conclude competition on the number of steps individual students and elementary schools have been able to log in at the Jacksonville Arboretum and



**LEE McDONALD**  
GARDENING  
COLUMNIST

Gardens. This beautiful garden is located on 120 acres. The garden illustrates many of Florida's natural eco-systems because it has been reclaimed after some 20 years as a strip mining area.

The mining left different levels, a lake, and ravine

See GARDENING, B-6

*Cont. from B-1*  
along creek and marshland trails. The mining concluded near the mid-20th century.

The healing force of nature, now coupled with the help of community volunteers, has created on this site one of Jacksonville's most beautiful and educational gardens. Wild azaleas and native plants, as well as added collections of trees and plants, give gardeners a chance to gather ideas for their own Florida gardens.

The relatively recently developed Arboretum has already been widely acknowledged as a leader in American Gardens, having been recognized by the American Forests National Register of Big Tree's for the Loblolly-Bay on the registry of Big Trees.

The Arboretum Board of Directors also received the Canopy Award for Civic Excellence at the 18th annual Mayor's Environmental Luncheon.

The President's Council on Service and Civic Participation with the National Community Service presented Lynda Aycock of the Arboretum with the Hand on Earth Award in 2010.

A trip to the Arboretum is good for your health and good for your garden. Easy trails allow you to meander at your own pace without over-exertion. Six beautiful trails with some intermittent seating will allow you to choose how much you take in on a given trip. Be sure to take a camera and make photographs of plants that interest you or a note pad and pen. Efforts are made to label the plants so that you will be able to identify those with which you may not be familiar.

The Arboretum hosts A Brush with Nature Plein Air event during which noted artists will be stationed throughout the arboretum capturing nature on canvas for the last three days of March. A Gala will be held at the end of this event to benefit the work of the garden. Works produced in the garden will be made

available for purchase. For more details visit [www.abrushwithnature.org](http://www.abrushwithnature.org).

This is an excellent time to acquaint yourself with the Arboretum.

Other garden choices in quick access to our beach communities are the Cummer Gardens, where you can see contemporary interpretations of the historic Shipman Garden with formal gardens, the Jacksonville Zoo where plantings are also carefully labeled for you to enjoy and learn the Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve, and the Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve. A Camellia Garden has been maintained by the Men's Garden Club in Jacksonville since the 1940's in Riverside Park. The trails in Hanna Park and the Heritage Demonstration Garden at the Beaches Museum will give newcomers and long time residents alike an opportunity to observe planned and natural plantings in the beach community. A bit further from the beach is the Mandarin Demonstration Garden, also maintained by Duval County Master Gardeners.

It is important that when you identify plantings that you like at any of the gardens not immediately in the beaches area that you check on the salt tolerance of those plants before adding them to a beach location. Some plantings that grow well just over the intra-coastal bridge will not grow well here in the beach area. In the next article I will discuss the single issue of salt stress and salt tolerance in plants in our coastal community.

Whatever your interest in gardening: whether you are one who simply enjoys visiting a beautiful garden or you are interested in beginning or expanding your own work in your personal landscape, this is a good time of year for you. Get out there, take some time for awe-inspiring relaxation, and peruse the wonders of nature that abound in our area.