



Dr. David Creech,

Director of SFA Gardens (with headquarters at the Pineywoods Native Plant Center)

Presentation,

“Lessons Learned from Forty Years of Native Plant Studies in the Pineywoods”

The Pineywoods of Texas is home to thousands of species, many unknown and many underutilized. While the typical urban landscape of east Texas is packed with exotics, many of those have proven unsustainable in the climate challenges of just the last three years. Yet, the native plant palate remains solid and deserving of greater use. Being pro native plants does not necessarily mean being anti-exotic but it does suggest that greater use of native plants is prudent, reduces the death and destruction that comes with the epic heat, drought, floods and freezes never seen before. To add to the mix of challenges, the Pineywoods Native Plant Center and others recognize that there are about fifty rare, threatened or endangered species deserving greater conservation concern. Many think that the opportunities for rescue, research and reintroduction should be taken to a higher level. This presentation will recount the efforts made, the successes, the failures, the challenges we face with a changing climate and a plan for the path forward.

Bio

After a long career in the Stephen F. Austin State University Department of Agriculture, Dr. David Creech retired in 2007 and returned to serve as the Director of SFA Gardens in a ½ time position. The 138-acre SFA Gardens is an umbrella for numerous theme gardens and collections of trees, shrubs, vines, herbaceous perennials and fruit. These serve as a valuable germplasm resource for the Gulf South. Dr. Creech received his BSc from Texas A&M University in 1970, his MSc from Colorado State University in 1972 and his PhD from Texas A&M University in 1978. Since arriving at SFASU in 1978, Creech’s research interests have been varied and include urban tree evaluation, blueberry and golden kiwifruit evaluation,

horticultural crop nutrition studies, new plant introductions for the ornamental horticulture industry, endangered native plant rescue, research and reintroduction and finding sustainable solutions to environmental horticultural concerns. He is the author of numerous scholarly and trade articles, and he has accumulated a long list of international consultancies since 1981 to Pakistan, Guatemala, Mexico, Nepal, Israel, Chile, New Zealand and China. In 2022, he received the ASHS Career Award for Outstanding International Horticulturalist which recognizes a member who has made an outstanding and valuable contribution to international horticultural science, education, research and/or outreach for a period of 10 or more years. Dr. Creech has served as president of the Native Plant Society of Texas, the Southern Region American Society of Horticulture Science, and the International Plant Production Society Southern Region.