



RAP GARDENS IN FOCUS

Explore Sites That Participate in the AHS Reciprocal Admissions Program

Crosby Arboretum

by Hyun Soo Lee



LOCATED IN Picayune, Mississippi, the Crosby Arboretum is one of the richest and most diverse native plant conservatories in the Southeast. Owned by Mississippi State University (MSU) and operated by the MSU Extension Service, the 64-acre site features an assemblage of about 250 plant species, all native to the Pearl River Drainage Basin of south-central Mississippi and Louisiana. The arboretum, which received the Garden Excellence Award from the American Public Gardens Association in 2016, works to preserve both this distinctive habitat and the trees, shrubs, wildflowers, and grasses that are indigenous to it.

Because of this focus, visitors to the arboretum can expect to get a good sense of “what Mississippi is about and see what’s

unique to the region,” says the arboretum’s director, Patricia Drackett.

NOTABLE FEATURES

The arboretum’s main area, also known as the interpretive site, is composed of three exhibits: aquatic, forest, and savanna. One of Crosby’s defining landmarks is the **Pinecote Pavilion**, a large, open-air wooden structure that is used as a venue for weddings and other social events. Designed in the 1980s by the late Euine Fay Jones, a former apprentice of Frank Lloyd Wright, the pavilion is a marvel of modern architecture, says Drackett, noting that “it consistently is named a favorite

The Pinecote Pavilion is reflected in the still water of the Piney Woods pond.

of American architects.” The pavilion’s location beside the **Piney Woods pond** makes it even more picturesque.

Also featured at the arboretum is a **pitcher plant bog**, a habitat in Crosby’s savanna that is home to yellow pitcher plants (*Sarracenia alata*) and other native wetland species. Toward the north end of the site, there is a **gum pond exhibit**, an example of an increasingly vulnerable, naturally-occurring swamp habitat found in forests of black gum or tupelo (*Nyssa sylvatica*) in the coastal South. While these are among the most popular areas in the arboretum, according to Drackett, more adventurous visitors will enjoy three miles of walking trails that run through all the exhibits. There is even an interactive **Children’s Trail**



Top: A bench provides visitors a place to rest and take in the view of the gum pond, part of a wetland ecosystem unique to the coastal South. Above: The pitcher plant bog—shown here with the plants in spring bloom—is part of the arboretum’s savanna exhibit.

Additional Information

Crosby Arboretum

370 Ridge Rd, Picayune, MS 39466.
(601) 799-2311.

<http://crosbyarboretum.msstate.edu>

- Hours: Wednesday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Fees: Adults: \$5; Seniors/Military: \$4; Children under 12: \$2; Members: free
- RAP benefits: AHS members receive free admission, free parking, a gift shop discount, and library privileges.

that introduces young visitors and their parents to local ecosystems.

Beyond this main site in Picayune, the Crosby Arboretum maintains seven natural areas in nearby counties, comprising nearly 700 acres in total. These areas include a diverse ecosystem called **Hillside Bog**, as well as a smaller beech-magnolia woodland known as **Mill Creek**.

DIVERSE OFFERINGS

Throughout the year, Crosby hosts a variety of events such as Forge Day, held each January, featuring blacksmithing and metalworking demonstrations. Other events include plant sales, field walks, and workshops spanning activities from kids’ crafts to forest bathing.

At Crosby Arboretum, both local and out-of-state visitors can experience Mississippi’s unique natural beauty and learn about important native species.

Hyun Soo Lee is an editorial intern for The American Gardener.

HOW THE RECIPROCAL ADMISSIONS PROGRAM (RAP) WORKS

This American Horticultural Society program is designed to encourage people to visit gardens, arboreta, and conservatories while traveling. As a current member, you receive free admission and/or other special discounts at more than 320 sites throughout North America! (Check “Regional Happenings,” starting on page 52, to see upcoming events at some of these participating gardens.) Here’s how to make the most of this member benefit:

- View the current list of participating locations and the RAP benefits they offer at www.ahsgardening.org/rapgardens. At the beginning of each year, this list is also published in a full-color booklet. To order, visit www.ahsgardening.org/RAPGuideHelp.
- Be sure to contact the garden before your visit to confirm the RAP benefits you can expect to receive. (Some sites may choose to enforce a 90-mile exclusion policy; if your zip code falls within that distance from the location, you would not receive the offered RAP benefits

there.) Admission to special events or exhibits may also be excluded.

- Present your current membership card at the admissions counter or gift shop to receive the RAP benefit(s) offered by that garden. Each card will only admit the individual(s) listed on the card. In the case of a family, couple, or household membership card that does not list individual names, the garden must extend the benefit(s) to at least two members; it is at the garden’s discretion to extend benefits to more than two individuals. Some gardens may require a photo ID.