

Red, White and Green

UL Lafayette deepens its commitment to planting and preserving trees



Students, from left, Ashton Abel, Letesha Davis, Tyler Dunphy and Aimee Graugnard plant trees near Broussard Hall.

UL LAFAYETTE IS ONE OF ONLY FOUR universities in Louisiana to be named a Tree Campus USA by the Arbor Day Foundation. The others are Louisiana State University at Alexandria, Northwestern State University and Tulane University.

“We have a long history of celebrating trees, going all the way back to our first president, Dr. Edwin Stephens. So, it made perfect sense to become a Tree Campus,” said Mike Hess, UL Lafayette’s grounds manager.

Hess said more than 100 trees have been planted on campus since the designation was announced in December. Trees and shrubs have been added near Burke-Hawthorne Hall; Angelle Hall; Olivier Hall; Montgomery Hall; the Student Union; within the Quad and Legacy Park; and along Hebrard Boulevard.

At an Arbor Day ceremony held April 17, more than 50 UL Lafayette students, including members of AmeriCorps, a national service corps, planted 43 trees. Bald cypresses, red bud trees, maples and magnolias were placed near Broussard Hall and Lee Hall. The Arbor Day Foundation and Toyota Corporation provided the trees.

The planting ceremony was part of a campus-wide cleanup day, which involved more than 150 UL Lafayette students. Some faculty members, university staff and other volunteers pitched in to help.

Jim Foret, an instructor in the Renewable Resources Department, serves on the advisory committee. “Our trees make the campus more appealing and inviting. They provide shade and improve the air. And, in

times of storms, they protect our buildings.

“By becoming a Tree Campus, the university is setting an example within the community of how to plant, care for and honor our trees,” he said.

By summer, the campus and community landscape will include a splash of red and white, when hundreds of crape myrtles begin to bloom. Apache Corporation donated about 500 trees to add color to the campus and to help create a gateway to the university.

More than 300 of the trees were planted at the intersection of University Avenue and Interstate 10, where artist Robert Dafford

TREE CAMPUS USA

To become a Tree Campus USA, a university must:

- establish a campus tree advisory committee
- create a campus tree-care plan
- verify dedicated annual expenditures on the campus tree plan
- hold an Arbor Day observance
- develop a service-learning project involving students.

ford has created two murals depicting the university logo beneath the interstate overpass. The murals direct drivers toward the campus via University Avenue. Dafford volunteered the labor to create the murals; the City of Lafayette paid for the painting materials.

Jan Swift, executive director of the Upper Lafayette Economic Development Foundation, said the improvements “will enhance the interstate exchange and remind visitors and residents that our university is an integral part of this community.”

The gateway project is a partnership among Apache Corporation; the Upper Lafayette Economic Development Foundation; UL Lafayette; Dafford; the City of Lafayette; and McDonald’s of Acadiana, which provided labor and equipment.

Hess said the remainder of the donated crape myrtles will be planted on campus and along University Avenue. “Visually, the trees will tie the gateway to the campus.” ■

CENTURY OAKS

UL Lafayette's Century Oaks aren't the largest live oaks on campus, but they are the most treasured of the *Quercus virginiana*.

On Jan. 1, 1901, Dr. Edwin Stephens, the university's first president, planted 18 young trees near the campus entrance. Ten remain, lining the corner of Johnston Street and University Avenue and shading the grounds of Girard Hall. (See map below.)

"At the turn of the 20th century, Johnston and University were dirt roads," said Jim Foret, a UL Lafayette instructor and licensed arborist. "Over time, horse-and-buggy traffic became car traffic but there were no curbs at the intersection. People would park their cars right up on the roots, compacting the soil.

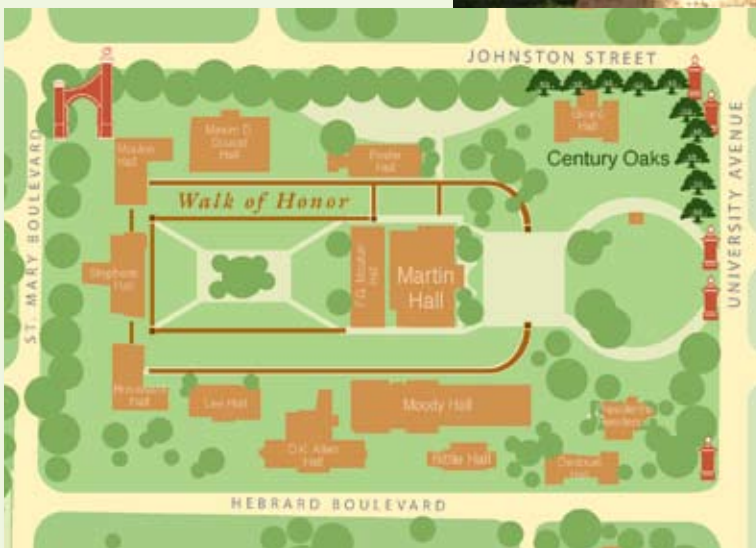
"Mature trees are especially vulnerable to root damage because they rely on an extensive root system."

The Century Oaks are receiving excellent care, said Mike Hess, UL Lafayette's grounds manager. "They are healthy. We're adding lots of mulch at the base of the trees to keep the roots cool and moist." The Century Oaks are among more than 250 live oaks on campus.

"In many ways, our trees are the ambassadors of our culture," said Hess. "By planting trees, Dr. Stephens was carrying out a vision. He was planning



TRAVIS GAUTHIER



UL Lafayette's Century Oaks are located near the North Gate.

for something he would never see but he wanted to establish a foundation. That's a tradition we're very proud of — and it shows in the beauty of the campus."

Stephens' commitment to promoting and preserving live oaks extends beyond the campus, said Hess. In 1934, he created the Live Oak Society, a registry of mature live oaks that now includes more than 6,000 trees throughout Louisiana. The society is managed by Louisiana Garden Club Federation Inc. Stephens' oaks were added to that list in 2001, when they reached the 100-year mark. ■