

THE BIG NEWS

Happenings in the World of Texas Champion Trees

Summer 2010

National Register of Big Trees Published

American Forests recently published the 2010 edition of the **National Register of Big Trees** as an online document (<http://www.americanforests.org/resources/bigtrees/BigTreeRegister2010new.pdf>) for the first time in the 70-year history of the program. Texas fared well in the latest contest with 11 of our recent nominees making it to the national list as shown in the table below. Our great state now counts 77 trees among 68 different species that are the biggest in the country, placing Texas third behind Florida (99) and Arizona (91) for the most national champs. Congratulations to all of the owners and nominators of these first-time champions from Texas!

Species	Cir.	Height	Spread	Tree Index	County	Owner
Ash, Gregg (littleleaf ash)	11	23	11	37	Brewster	Big Bend National Park
Basswood, Carolina	165	73	53	251	Real	Detering Ranch
Blackhaw, rusty	65	27	39	102	Cherokee	Louis Stockton
Chastetree, lilac (vitex)	123	28	40	161	Dallas	Lancaster Cemetery Association
Leadtree, great (tepeguaje)	87	38	58	140	Hidalgo	City of McAllen
Oak, bluejack	85	62	51	160	Wood	Will Godwin
Papaya	36	20	10	59	Harris	University of Houston
Pinyon, papershell	48	33	34	90	Brewster	Frances Springfield
Plum, Mexican	63	26	36	98	Red River	Elaine Alford
Willow, yewleaf	103	17	14	124	Presidio	Cibolo Creek Ranch
Yucca, Thompson (beaked yucca)	98	17	18	120	Pecos	Executive Inn Motel

Of course, as soon as the list is published it's out of date.... Our champion Texas redbud (*Cercis canadensis* var. *texensis*) since has died and we already have identified a couple of state champs that eclipse the listed national champ. There are also a few errors on the national list: the Mark Duff-nominated Ajo oak (*Quercus turbinella* var. *ajoensis*) is actually our champion netleaf white oak (*Quercus polymorpha*), and for some reason our nominated mesquite (*Sophora secundiflora*) state champ scoring 106 points was not listed at all. In another quirk of the listing process, *American Forests* recognized a large papaya (*Carica papaya*) growing on the University of Houston campus, even though that species is not considered naturalized in Texas and, therefore, is not listed as a state champion.

New Species Recognized

One major change to the national register was the recognition of many new species, based on the latest taxonomic information. Besides adjusting scientific names (*Bumelia* is now *Sideroxylon!*), 57 new species are now recognized and 22 species are no longer listed or have been combined with other species. This update of Dr. Elbert Little's 1979 *Checklist of U.S. Trees* was done in conjunction with state coordinators and sets a useful precedent for adding (or subtracting) species as new discoveries are made. In Texas (not counting the hawthorns), six new species are now eligible for the state and national big tree lists.

Quarterly List Published

TFS publishes the Texas Big Tree Registry quarterly at <http://texasforests.tamu.edu/>. Here's a snapshot of the new state champs or co-champs crowned so far in 2010:

Species	Cir.	Height	Spread	Tree Index	County	Owner
Ash, fragrant	20	18	11	41	Brewster	Big Bend National Park
Ash, velvet (Arizona ash)	164	44	70	226	Live Oak	Leslie Lunt
Crapemyrtle, common	109	32	36	150	Galveston	Melvin & Linda Doolan
Elm, cedar	122	78	52	213	Waller	Paul Weinman
Juniper, drooping	118	34	61	167	Brewster	Big Bend National Park
Madrone, Texas	162	46	61	223	Brewster	Triangle H Ranch
Mesquite, screwbean	23	18	29	48	Brewster	Lajitas Resort
Oak, Chisos red (Graves oak)	95	63	57	172	Brewster	Big Bend National Park
Oak, lateleaf	53	48	23	107	Brewster	Big Bend National Park
Pinyon, papershell	74	40	48	126	Edwards	Pinion Valley Ranch
Tallowtree (Chinese tallow)	159	55	58	228	Harris	William & Mary Jackson

Ornamental List Published

As promised months ago, we have added a new list of 30 common ornamental trees that have a chance to get big in our state. These are non-native species that are either widely planted for ornamental, farmstead or forestry purposes, but have not become truly naturalized in the state (yet). Go to <http://txforests.tamu.edu/main/article.aspx?id=1336> for the list, and keep your eyes open for a new champion as you travel around Texas!

Big Bend, Big Trees, Big Cats!

If you ever get to thinking that your job just doesn't excite you the way it used to, maybe you should tag along with TFS Regional Urban Forester Oscar Mestas (El Paso) and Program Coordinator Pete Smith (College Station) the next time they go big tree hunting in Big Bend National Park. Here are just a couple of the natural wonders they encountered:



Oscar's view from the South Rim of the Chisos



Pete's view of a momma mountain lion

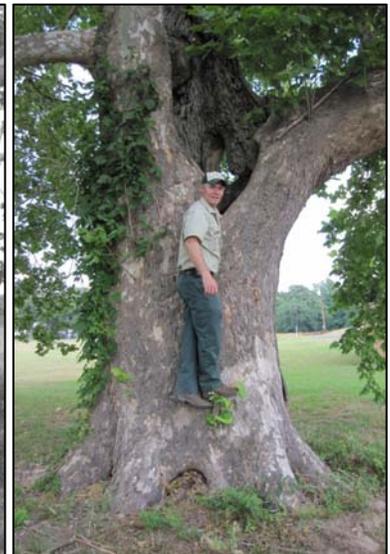
See more pictures from their trip – as well as several state and national champion trees – at <http://picasaweb.google.com/peterd.smith3/BigBend2010#>.

From the 'Cold Case' Files

Sometimes hunting for a big tree is like a snipe hunt. Before this age of Google maps, GPS coordinates and digital photos, we old-timers used hand-drawn maps, maybe a Polaroid photo or two, a compass and a well-honed sense of direction to get lost in the woods. But there's real joy in finding what you're looking for – even if you don't know where you're at – especially if it's a tree that hasn't been visited or measured in a while. Recently, Pete Smith and TFS District Forester Jason Ellis (Jacksonville) tracked down an old sycamore in Freestone County that was last measured in 1965. In 45 years, the tree had grown less than 9 inches in diameter and is now completely hollow!



Sycamore (and friends) in 1965



Sycamore (and Jason) in 2010