

THE BIG NEWS

Happenings in the World of Texas Champion Trees

Summer 2011

National Register of Big Trees Published

American Forests recently published the 2011 list of the **National Register of Big Trees** as an online searchable database (<http://www.americanforests.org/our-programs/bigtree/>). Texas again fared well in the latest contest with 23 of our recent nominees making it on the national list as shown in the table below. Our great state now boasts 86 national champion or co-champion trees among 77 different species, closing in fast on front-runners Florida (106) and Arizona (87) for the distinction of having the most national champs of any state. Congratulations to all of the owners and nominators of these first-time champions from Texas!

Species	Cir.	Height	Spread	Tree Index	County	Owner
Anacahuita (Mexican olive)	84	26	33	118	Cameron	Unknown
Bully, gum (gum bumelia)	108	58	53	179	Freestone	Jody Bonner
Cottonwood, Rio Grande	348	79	92	450	Jeff Davis	Fort Davis National Historic Site
Douglas-fir, Rocky Mountain	120	98	29	225	Culberson	Guadalupe Mountains National Park
Hackberry, spiny	28	15	20	48	Nueces	Villa Maria Senior Citizens Community
Hawthorn, littlehip	22	22	17	48	Sabine	Sabine National Forest
Hawthorn, Reverchon's	12	10	11	25	Dallas	City of Dallas PARD
Hawthorn, Tracy's	50	21	34	80	Jeff Davis	Calamity Creek Ranch
Juniper, drooping	118	34	61	167	Brewster	Big Bend National Park
Leadtree, great (tepeguaje)	89	48	63	153	Hidalgo	City of McAllen
Madrone, Texas	162	46	61	223	Brewster	Triangle H Ranch
Mexican-buckeye	11	14	14.5	29	Dallas	Dallas Arboretum
Mountain-laurel, Texas	61	39	22	106	Bexar	St. Francis Episcopal Church
Oak, bottomland post	129	73	61	217	Wood	Little Sandy Hunting & Fishing Club
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
Oak, Mexican white	95	49	73.5	162	Val Verde	TNC-Dolan Falls Preserve
Pinyon, papershell	74	40	48	126	Edwards	Pinion Valley Ranch
Pistachio, American (Texas)	33	23	27	63	Val Verde	Judge Roy Bean Visitor Center
Plum, Mexican	68	18	37	95	Harris	Grace United Methodist Church
Privet, Japanese	42	60	28	109	Harris	Sarah Spickelmier
Sumac, evergreen	27	21	26	55	Travis	Dorothy S. Gudgeall
Tallowtree (Chinese tallow)	159	55	58	228	Harris	William & Mary Jackson

Of course, as soon as the list was published in July, it's out of date.... We've already sent new national nominations for three species as of this writing. When accepted in 2012, these should allow Texas to slip past Arizona for #2 in the nation!



Champ of Champs

TFS publishes the Texas Big Tree Registry quarterly at <http://texasforests.tamu.edu/>. So far in 2011 we've crowned a whopping 29 new state champs or co-champs, with more than a quarter of those found and nominated by just one person! Gary Cheatwood, big tree hunter extraordinaire, has already found eight new Texas champions near his home in Red River County. At left, Gary is standing next to a nutmeg hickory on his family ranch, one that didn't make the list because he immediately went out and found a bigger one!

Big Tree Hunting

Want to know what it's like to search for big trees? Jump to <http://picasaweb.google.com/TexasBigTrees> ("High Plains Driftin' – 2011") to travel along with TFS foresters for the latest in big tree hunting across the state. It might just make your day!

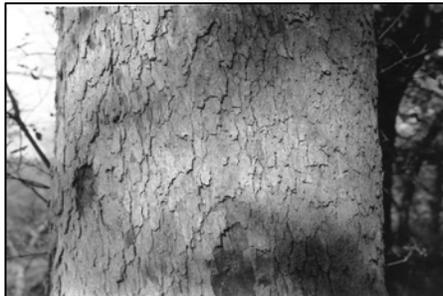
Citizen Foresters Get the Big Picture

Several Citizen Foresters recently met with TFS foresters Micah Pace and Pete Smith at the Dallas Arboretum for a day of big fun. Following up on earlier classroom training about the big tree program, this event helped Micah and Dallas City Forester Karen Woodard catch up on some long overdue measurements at the Arboretum. As co-manager of the big tree list for the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, Micah often has many more trees to keep track of than available hours in the day. That's where the Citizen Foresters come in; by learning how to accurately measure big trees these volunteers can help track the region's growing list of nominees. A great big thanks to all!



From the Archives

This Durand oak in Waco's Cameron Park has been on our list (#3) for over four decades. Since 1968 the tree has grown over a mere 10 inches in circumference. An otherwise healthy tree, the chunks of bark that slough off have progressively increased, as noted in the photos to below. Other Durand oaks in the park exhibit this same phenomenon, but not to the extent of this old-timer.



Durand Oak in 1968...



...with Oscar Mestas in 2005...



...and with Pete Smith in 2011

Farewell to a Champion

We lost one of our longest reigning national champs (1976) this spring. In April, our long-standing drought combined with red-flag winds and an electrical spark to create one of the worst wildfires in Texas' history. The *Rockhouse* fire, as it's now called, started near Marfa and within five hours swept north more than 25 miles, through Fort Davis, destroying many homes and businesses before racing through the pasture on the north edge of town where our king Rio Grande cottonwood (*Populus deltoides ssp. wislizeni*) held court for many years.

In fact, we had just visited the tree in March to update its measurements for the 2011 issue of the National Register. The tree measured a whopping 364 inches in circumference, 82 feet tall, and had an average crown spread of 115 feet, for a tree index score of 475 points – still plenty big enough to retain its champion status. You can see some of those pictures at the Picasa link above.



We lose a champion every now and then to a variety of natural forces: lightning, wind, insects, disease, or drought. But losing this big tree to this big wildfire is somehow very personal. It's a tree that has impacted many in its long life; a symbol of the steadfastness and determination of the West, a truly majestic tree. Goodbye, old friend... we're glad to have known you!