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# THE LYNN R. LOWREY ARBORETUM

of Rice University

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## NEWSLETTER

FALL 2011

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### The Drought

Texas is now suffering one of the worst droughts recorded. The devastating effects can be seen everywhere including the Arboretum of Rice University. In his almost 30 years as Grounds Superintendent, Ron Smith has “never seen anything close to this last year. [This drought] may be the worst in at least 50 to 60 years”. Although the City of Houston has put in place water restrictions, specific exceptions have been granted, such as watering for rare/important specimens, botanical gardens, and Arboreta. The Grounds Department at Rice has tried hard to keep our trees alive, by watering them frequently, with extra people working on night and weekend shifts and using as many water sources as possible including building dewatering wells, fire hydrants and water tanks. Priority has been given to irreplaceable “signature” trees, large prominent trees, recently relocated and newly planted trees. Despite these titanic efforts, Smith reports the loss of 25 trees because of the drought. Of these, almost half were water oaks, although most of these trees were already compromised due to age or damage. A planting moratorium has been put in place because of the drought; until conditions improve and the water restrictions are cancelled, no new planting will be undertaken on campus.



If this drought continues for several years, Smith suggests the general public should plant drought-tolerant, heat-resistant plants, including native grasses and even Agaves, Yuccas and Cactus.



### Lowrey Nursery Receives Major Award

In June, 2011, Lowrey Nursery was recognized by the *2011 Cullowhee Conference on Native Plants in the Landscape* with the Tom Dodd, Jr. Award of Excellence. This award has been presented annually since 1987; the first recipient was Tom Dodd, Jr. himself, and the second was Lynn Lowrey. This year, Lowrey Nursery, among 17 other nurseries, received this award for their outstanding contributions to the use of native plants in the American landscape, and for providing a source of native species and promoting their landscaping use. The native plant movement in North America is characterized by many individuals and organizations that aim for the conservation of native flora *in situ*, study and promote the understanding of our native flora, and expand knowledge of propagation/cultivation of native plants and their use in natural and designed landscapes. The recipients of this Award are nominated by the Cullowhee Conference attendees, and evaluated by the Award Committee.



Other recipients include Lady Bird Johnson (1990), National Park Service (1993), and The Nature Conservancy (1998).



For more information, please visit our website – [arboretum.rice.edu](http://arboretum.rice.edu)  
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## The Local Corner: *The Bur Oak*

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The Bur Oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*) is a native tree to the eastern and midwestern United States, including Central Texas. This deciduous tree can grow up to 100 feet, and can reach a trunk diameter of 10ft. One of slowest growing oaks, this tree commonly lives 200-400 years.



*Bur Oak*



With large, broad, deeply lobed leaves, its thick, corky bark enables this tree to withstand fire and weedeater damage better than most oaks. The Bur Oak possesses significant drought resistance due to its long taproot that can grow up to 2m deep in the first years of life.

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This tree serves as an outstanding ornamental because it tolerates urban conditions, including variable moisture and soil conditions, provides dense shade, and is resistant to air pollution and heat stress. The species name *macrocarpa*



*Bur Oak fruit: a food source*



*Bur Oak fruit*

refers to the large fruit which is an important source of food for birds and mammals. The common name describes the cup of the acorn, with slightly resembles the spiny bur of a chestnut.

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### Friends of the Lynn R. Lowrey Arboretum of Rice University

The Lowrey Arboretum impacts the lives of Rice students, visitors to our campus, and the beauty of our Rice neighborhood. Gifts to the Lowrey Arboretum Fund help to expand our role as a resource for Rice and the city of Houston. With your financial support we can facilitate research and educational opportunities, catalog and document the growth of our trees, increase the size of the arboretum collection and positively influence air quality.

Yes, I would like to support the Lowrey Arboretum with a gift of  
\_\_\_\$1,000 \_\_\_\$500 \_\_\_\$250 \_\_\_\$100 \$\_\_\_Other

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