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# THE LYNN R. LOWREY ARBORETUM

of Rice University

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## NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2011

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### Experimental landscaping

Rice University is well known for its perimeter hedges. However, the Lynn R. Lowrey Arboretum Committee has actively experimented with alternative plantings along Rice's perimeter, in particular at Entrance 2. This project initiated in November, 2006, included planting different species of ginger, Viburnum and ferns, Chinese mahonia, and aralias. The questions the Committee sought to answer were whether these plantings provide a visually appealing edge to the campus and how would these plantings hold-up over time in the deep shade.



*Recent view of Entrance 2*

On the other hand, we have learned that certain species do really well, like the Chinese mahonia (*Mahonia fortunei*), which has yellow flowers in the fall and does as well in full shade as it does in the sun.



*View of Entrance 2 when it was recently planted in 2006*

Time has passed along with extreme weather events, including the recent freezing temperatures in early



*Ginger recovering from freeze damage*

February and drought conditions. We now know that some species are very sensitive to freezing temperatures, like the ferns and ginger; but some are coming back.



*Chinese Mahonia*

The Arboretum Committee will keep this space to continue experimenting with other species of plants to identify those that can survive for the long term under these extremely hard conditions and use them as plants need to be replaced around the campus perimeter.



If you prefer to receive this Newsletter electronically, please send an email to

*arboretum@rice.edu*

### The local corner: *The rusty blackhaw*

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The Rusty Blackhaw (*Viburnum rufidulum*) is a shrub or small tree (grows up to 18 feet) native to the United States. The twigs are reddish brown, with a thin light gray coating; the leaves are in pairs with the petioles covered with rust colored branched hairs, therefore the name. With its waxy leaves, the rusty blackhaw is an excellent ornamental tree because of its amazing fall hues of red, lavender, pink, and orange. The creamy-white flowers appear in



*Rusty hairs in petioles*

March and April, in very showy rounded or flattened clusters (up to 5 inches wide). They are visited by bees and butterflies for their nectar.



*Flowers of the rusty blackhaw*



*Rusty blackhaw fruits*

In the fall the fruit is fleshy, bluish black lightened by a waxy coating, slightly longer than wide and taste similar to raisins; they are edible and relished by birds and small mammals. It is a slow growing species, hard to propagate; under the best of conditions, blackhaw seeds will take a year to germinate. It grows in well-drained soils in

the understory of upland mixed hardwood forests, and frequently along roads, fencerows and at the edges of fields. The Rusty Blackhaw is one of the best small flowering trees for Houston area gardens. Rusty Blackhaw is planted on the Rice campus in the Wiess Grove, located on the southeast side of Wiess College.



*Foliage of the rusty blackhaw*

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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.

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