



Bob Ratliff

Campus Rose Garden Finds a New Home



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By Bob Ratliff

Rose lovers will find a lot to like in a new garden on the Mississippi State University campus.

Researchers began working with landscape roses at MSU in 1982 and established a rose garden near the Enology Lab on the North Farm in 1985. In the mid-1990s, the garden moved to the teaching and research arboretum on the South Farm.

Plans for a new, more visible location took shape in 2004. Following selection of a site at the Highway 182 entrance to the R. Rodney Foil Plant Science Research Facility, rose planting began in the MSU Veterans Memorial Rose Garden during spring 2006.

"Rose enthusiasts from the local area and from around the state have helped make the rose garden a reality," said Pam Collins, assistant professor and director of gardens in the Department of Plant and Soil Sciences. "Private donors provided plant materials, funds and volunteer labor for the project."

Landscape architect Daryl Ray designed the garden, which features raised brick beds encircling a central gazebo.

Private contractors, personnel with the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station and members of the Department of Plant and Soil Sciences built the main architectural features of the garden, including the arched wooden bridge across a stream adjacent to the garden and the gazebo.

Most of the rose cultivars filling the garden were donated by Jackson and Perkins Nursery and James Mills, owner of K and M Nursery in Buckatunna and a longtime supporter of MSU's horticulture programs.

"Jackson and Perkins is a national full-service nursery, and their north Mississippi sales representative, Dave Shanklin, is a 1979 graduate of the MSU horticulture program who saw the value of this facility for teaching and research," Collins said.

Volunteers from the Oktibbeha County Rose Society and the Oktibbeha County Master Gardener program planted the first roses in the garden in March 2006.

"The garden provides a wonderful opportunity for rose enthusiasts from throughout the state to see some of the new cultivars," said Charles Weatherly, a member of the Oktibbeha County Rose Society. "It also allows local growers to learn new skills from some of MSU's expert horticulturists by volunteering for pruning and other tasks at the garden."

In addition to its role in teaching and research, the rose garden is available to the public. Designers worked to ensure the facility complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

"The garden is available for weddings and other events," Collins said. "Two weddings took place at the garden last fall, and we hope to have more scheduled for the spring."

There will be more plant-related development in the area.

"Planning is under way for a new arboretum with a variety of plants adjacent to the rose garden," Collins said. "Like the rose garden, the arboretum will be available to the public, as well as for teaching and research."