



# Rice Paper

The Newsletter of the LeConte-Woodmanston Foundation July 2010

## What will be the fate of Georgia's first botanical garden?

In 1936, Savannah Morning News writer George Lowe penned that the gardens of Louis LeConte in Liberty County, Georgia, were "undoubtedly the proving grounds for plants now disseminated all over the South." A decade later, Dr. James Stokes reported to the American Camellia Society about the rich legacy of camellias at LeConte's Woodmanston

*"Here it was that they established a botanical garden, mentioned frequently by the earlier travelers in the United States." Torey and Grays Flora of North America 1883 re: Louis and his brother John Eatton LeConte, Jr.*

Plantation, bemoaning the "loss of such a treasure."

In the 1970's the site of the once famous gardens and plantation

was rediscovered; added to the National Register of Historic Places; and, sixty-four of the most significant acres donated to the Garden Club of Georgia. A Master Plan was adopted in 1982, but those intentions to re-create the gardens and an interpretive rice plantation never came to fruition and in 1993, the LeConte-Woodmanston

Foundation, Inc. was established to take over as the site's guardians. State Senator and local business giant Glenn Bryant pledged to construct a visitor's center in honor of his late wife, Trudy, and the Cecil B. Day Foundation pledged funds to furnish the interior of the facility. The ceremonial groundbreaking took place on a rainy August day in 1997. But Senator Bryant

died and plans for the center with him.

Afterwards, the Board of Directors struggled to keep interest in the site alive, but in 2007, the old master plan was abandoned for one which would make LeConte-Woodmanston Plantation more significant to local inhabitants: preserving its inherent beauty, its history and legacies, and honoring *all* those who once lived and worked there.

Volunteers have been laboring to renovate the half-acre formal gardens constructed in the 1990's, and correcting old drainage problems to make ready for

"hunt" it has also become a rescuer of threatened camellia collections. One recent effort resulted in the transplanting of thirty camellias from an old estate in the path of the Truman Parkway expansion in Savannah.

Additional area at Woodmanston has been prepared to receive this and other collections.

*"It is pleasant to reflect on the glories of this garden and sad to think of the loss of such a treasure initiated about 140 years ago." Dr. James Stokes-1949*

But the organization needs to find funding for three full-time staff members very soon, or the site will close. Efforts to coordinate volunteer grant writers to find funding for salaries for a director, a fulltime groundskeeper, and a development director, has been unsuccessful.

Without sufficient volunteer labor to tend to the expanding gardens and nursery, as well as mowing and other routine site tasks, it is likely that the gardens will be closed to the public as of July 1st. The Foundation will still accept reservations for group tours and events. The Coastal Georgia Greenway Trailhead picnic grove and the nature trails including Flood Gate Pond will remain open.

When people realize what an asset this site can be to the Southeast, as an educational resource and as a tourist destination, and when the economy is a little brighter, hopefully, Woodmanston won't stay lost forever.



2010 is a spectacular year for blooms at Woodmanston.

"The Walk-an African American Tribute" memorial honoring over 6000 persons enslaved in Liberty County in the year 1860. Woodmanston has intact dike-works constructed 175-250 years ago by slave labor for the rice culture, which form its nature trails through historic Bulltown Swamp.

As a part of the American Camellia Trail, the Foundation has plans to plant nearly 600 registered Georgia cultivars of camellias. As a result of this

*"The garden of Louis LeConte...is decidedly the richest in bulbs I have ever seen; and their luxuriance would astonish those who have only seen them in the confined state in which we are obliged to grow them in this country." Alexander Gordon London's Gardener's Magazine 1832*



Comcast Corporation Savannah District provided materials, tools, labor and lunch to help lay bricks for "The Walk" memorial in April. Target Corporation joined in the fun a month later.



**IN MY OWN BACK YARD**

**PLANT AND ANIMAL SPECIES**  
Of LeConte-Woodmanston and Liberty County, Georgia  
Featuring Illustrations by Vanessa Readl

**TRUMPET CREEPER VINE**  
You can't miss seeing  
But you will not hear him

My trumpet-shaped flower  
Reddish-Orange in the tree

**GOPHER TORTOISE & INDIGO SNAKE**

I am a tortoise not a turtle  
Preferring dry land to the water.

I dig a deep burrow, where  
The Indigo Snake makes its lair.  
We are both protected by law  
As our numbers continue to fall.



Funding for the "Children's Garden" at Woodmanston and for the "In My Own Back Yard" coloring book series, was provided by grants from the Target Corporation.



*Eighty pre-1840 variety of roses were purchased and planted, in the formal gardens thanks to a donation from the Trustees Garden Club in Savannah this year.*



*Earth Day activities included planting trees at Riceboro Creek and face painting at celebrations in Hinesville. Stacey Ferrier, our current grounds manager, is the planter and the artist here. Volunteer Ann Gherich prepares to refurbish the herb garden.*



*In May, there were 32 camellias to rescue in Savannah and 300 camellias to air-layer in Waycross. A camellia nursery and "Camellia Forest" were established at Woodmanston.*



## **SNF HOLDING COMPANY**

*Thanks once again to our friends at SNF Holding Company for the printing of our newsletter.*

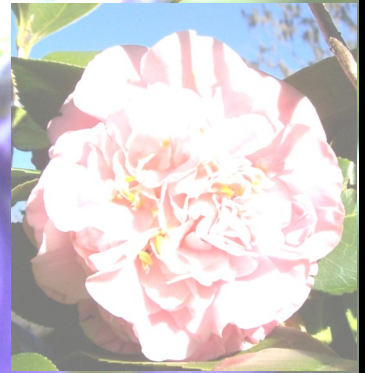




**Make a donation or contact  
LeConte-Woodmanston today  
to learn how you can help!**

**Mary Beth Evans, Executive Director  
LeConte-Woodmanston Foundation, Inc.  
P.O. Box 179  
Midway, GA 31320**

**912-884-6500  
Or email:  
info@leconte-woodmanston.org**



## **Upcoming**

<b>September-November</b>	<b>Dates TBA</b>	<b>Children's Garden Program</b>
<b>October 16</b>	<b>10:00-1:00</b>	<b>Fall Plant &amp; Bake Sale</b>
<b>December 11</b>	<b>11:00-5:00</b>	<b>"Noel! Noel! A Colonial Christmas"</b>
		<b>Wild Game Dinner/Entertainment/Vendors</b>
<b>December 11</b>	<b>6:00 p.m.</b>	<b>"The Walk" Memorial Dedication</b>

The LeConte-Woodmanston Foundation  
P.O. Box 179  
Midway, GA 31320

Website: [www.leconte-woodmanston.org](http://www.leconte-woodmanston.org)  
Email: [info@leconte-woodmanston.org](mailto:info@leconte-woodmanston.org)  
Office: 912-884-6500



**Inside: What will be the fate of Georgia's first botanical garden?**