



Southeast Texas Nursery Growers' Association Newsletter

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A Word from President... Steve Johnson

Rain, rain and more rain, sleet, and snow. Wow, what a winter we have had. We are now looking forward to spring, wild flowers (it is estimated that Texas has over 5,000 different species of wildflowers), warm weather and new growth. New growth on our tree farms, in our businesses, our membership, and in our lives. The anticipation of all we have to look forward to this spring is exhilarating.

Hopefully with the better spring weather will come increased sales for all of us.

Spring also means it's time to get geared up for some farm tours. We are in the process of getting several of them put together. Last year's farm tours were great and the attendance good too. Stay tuned to the upcoming newsletters and the web site for further details.

Thanks,
Steve

~ Dinner Meeting Announcement! ~

*You'll want to be at **Luigi's Restaurant Italiano** on **Jones Road in Northwest Harris County** on **Wednesday evening, April 14** to hear the ever popular **PJ Ellison's** latest on **ensuring your marketing success** during the **2010 season**.*

*Look for complete details in the April Newsletter and on the **STNGA web site**.*

Meet New Members

Top Notch Tree Farm Owners, The Lane Family of San Antonio

By Joseph D. Davenport, BFA, MBA, CLU, ChFC, STNGA Staff Writer

Picture, on the Austin County prairie just west of Sealy, a range of open ranch land, where in days past cattle grazed on the succulent grasses, and ranch hands harvested the lush prairie hay, a working ranch owned for more than a century by the Hintz/Robinson family.

And imagine the current generations "growing" vision: Susan Robinson Lane, her husband Bill and sons Jim, with his wife Carrie, and Chris, are in the process of bringing a new and vibrant enterprise out of that same nourishing soil.

You'd have the genesis of Top Notch Tree Farm LLC, a well planned and forward thinking venture dedicated to delivering premium quality trees to discerning wholesale buyers in the Gulf Coast, San Antonio and Hill Country markets.

Committed to excellence, the Lanes have platted some 25 acres of the Hintz/Robinson Ranch property for the first phase of their venture into 74 24'x300' beds. All the trees will be container grown. A "pot-in-pot" system will be used for the 15 and 30 gallon sizes, to stimulate better root ball development and reduce blow-over. Additionally, they will use increased spacing between all the trees to help develop bigger/wider tops with better branching and larger caliper trunks.

Inveterate planners, the Lanes have installed a water well, erected the supporting water tanks and installed underground irrigation supply lines to service the entire 25 acres. The naturally level terrain has been meticulously graded for access, drainage and potting/planting operations.

With their first "pot-in-pot" trees in place since April 2009, they now have some 20 varieties including bald cypress, Chinese pistache, red bud, desert willow, crape myrtles, elms and

oaks. Currently there are more than 6,000 trees growing at the farm with plans to more than double that amount in the next few years. Top Notch Tree Farm will ultimately offer 45, 65, 95 and 200 gallon trees.

According to Bill “With the variety of trees we have, our central, easily accessible location just off of Interstate 10, plentiful water, abundant flat sandy land for future growth and the stability of 6th generation Texans growing trees on land that has been in our family for more than 100 years, we believe that we offer real value to the wholesale buyers of quality trees.”

And, other than the heritage, what’s to know about Bill and Susan Lane and their families?

Bill, an entrepreneur in his previous career, was in sporting goods manufacture and distribution...he’s a veteran of more trade shows in that field than he’d like to remember... and so has gained a wealth of experience in both business management and marketing. Son Jim is engaged in commercial real estate in San Antonio and son Chris currently attends San Antonio College. All are frequently on site at Top Notch Tree Farm, into the nitty-gritty, “digging in the dirt”, with Farm Manager Scott Toelke, who directs day-to-day operations along with three full-time field hands.

And, what brings the Lanes to the Southeast Texas Nursery Growers’ Association? “WE NEED TO LEARN ALL WE CAN ABOUT SUCCESSFULLY GROWING AND MARKETING TREES!”, says Bill. “The STINGA members we’ve been able to meet and talk with in the years since we began our planning, have been wonderfully helpful, answering our questions, coming to visit our property, making suggestions, and in every way making us feel welcome. Their genuine interest and willingness to share has been truly unique, especially compared to what we have experienced in other lines of business; we’re so appreciative for what your members have done to help us along.” Well, that says it: That’s what the Southeast Texas Nursery Growers’ Association is, and does.

We welcome Bill, Susan, Jim, Carrie and Chris Lane to our STINGA Family!

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We are on the web!
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"Dedicated to the Highest Professional Standards of the Nursery Industry"

Upcoming Events/Notices...

Look forward to the following STNGA events your Board
of Directors has planned for you:

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|------------|-------------|---|
| * April 14 | Wednesday | Dinner Meeting with PJ Ellison
Luigi's Restaurant Italiano |
| * May/June | Saturday | TBD Nursery/Farm Tour |
| * July | | No Meeting (Vacation) |
| * August | | TNLA EXPO San Antonio |
| * Sep/Oct | Saturday | TBD Nursery/Farm Tour |
| * November | Wed, Nov 10 | Dinner Meeting with Speaker |
| * December | Wed, Dec 08 | Ann. Dinner Meeting/Election |
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