

The Old Ways Are Sometimes the Best

Written by Will Balk, Jr.

Tuesday, 01 July 2014 14:05 - Last Updated Wednesday, 02 July 2014 07:21



Most of the gardens in my life – the private gardens, the gardens of friends and relatives – have a history associated with them. Sometimes the home has some historical significance; sometimes the garden itself has been designed and worked and maintained for generations of gardeners; and sometimes the garden simply carries with it the long memory of gardening traditions in the deep South.

In most of these gardens, whether formally laid out or freely shaped by happenstance, there have been a number of plants which seem to appear as if by prescribed inclusion. I can always expect to find nandina (*Nandina domestica*), red spider lily (*Lycoris radiata*), abelia (*Abelia x grandiflora*); there's always a mimosa (*Albizia julibrissin*), a tea olive (*Osmanthus* sp.), and maybe a trellis covered with Coral vine (*Antigonon leptopus*) or the Lady Banks rose (*Rosa banksia*). These are all beautiful plants, easy to grow here and tough survivors, although in recent years both Nandina and Mimosa seem to have developed into invasive plants, spreading far too readily into wild habitat and sometimes taking over because of their vigor.

I've written before that every farm garden used to have at least a few pecan trees (*Carya illinoensis*) and a couple of Kieffer pear trees (*Pyrus* x). They provided bounty for the larder and had the potential for some much needed income for the farmer.

Another fruit tree which seems always to be found in any old farm garden is the delicious, reliable,

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