

Garden News

The State Botanical Garden of Georgia

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Reaching Out

Mission Argentina

Jeff Lewis, Director

On May 6, 1999, a cooperative agreement was signed by representatives of The State Botanical Garden of Georgia and the Jardín Botánico "Dr. Miguel J. Culaciati" in Huerta Grande, Córdoba, Argentina. So began the chain of events leading to a recent visit to Argentina by a delegation from the State Botanical Garden and University of Georgia.

The delegation which departed Athens on February 14, 2000, consisted of myself, Dr. Jim Affolter (Director of Research), Dr. Dave Giannasi (Director of the UGA Herbarium), Ms. Cheryl Mihalko (Landscape Architect, Business Outreach Services), Maria Navarro (Instructor, Agricultural Leadership, Education & Communication), Rebekah Chapman (Graduate Student in Ecology), and Hugh and Carol Nourse (Photographers). The travel was funded in part by a grant from the Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust; the Nourses paid their own expenses.

An overnight flight (10 hours) from Atlanta Hartsfield Airport and...it's summertime in Buenos Aires, Argentina's largest city. In fact, more than half of Argentina's 33 million people live in Buenos Aires, a sprawling city which sits beside the Río de la Plata, the world's largest estuary. Buenos Aires is the economic center, the political center, the cultural center--the center of almost everything. One of our



Cuchi Corral, just one example of the diverse terrain found in the Huerta Grande area.

new Argentine friends jokingly said that, "God is everywhere...but his office in Buenos Aires."

Córdoba City is Argentina's second largest city, a one hour flight northwest of Buenos Aires. Huerta Grande, our destination, is 77 km from Córdoba City at an altitude just under 1000 meters. Huerta Grande is one of several small towns in the Valle de Punilla that were once popular summer resorts due to cooler summer temperatures. Although many of the homes still exist, many hotels are closed or lack the luster of years past.

Argentina's economy is depressed and there is high unemployment. A country with a high literacy rate, many college graduates are unable to find work in their professions. Many families live "on the edge" barely making ends meet. Still, the people are upbeat and hopeful of better times to come.

The Jardín Botánico "Dr. Miguel J. Culaciati" is named after the former owner. His granddaughter now serves as director of the ten year old garden. A former estate garden, it is primarily an arboretum containing mature specimens of numerous tree species. About five acres in size, it contains an interesting diversity of plant species ranging from palms to conifers.

The purpose of our visit was three fold, 1) to conduct a museum assessment survey and gather

(continued on page 11)

IN THIS ISSUE

Botanizing in Argentina.....4

Families in the Garden.....7

Volunteer of the Year.....8

(L-R) Jim Affolter, Rebekah Chapman, Marta Lagrotteria, Hugh and Carol Nourse explore the local flora.

