



Photo by Beckv Leake

Texas A&M Regent Joe H. Reynolds of Houston donated this Polled Hereford bull to the beef cattle section of the Animal Science Department. John Mauer, one of the directors of

the center, holds the bull named CCR Beaumode 695. He weighs 1,920 pounds and is valued at \$35,000. He will be used as herd sire.

### Use of native plants

## Old concept returns to landscape

By MARY C. BECKER

Dried sumac leaves with a red beard of berries hung on the wall behind the desk. Staghorn ferns, part of Austin Stockton's doctoral research, sat under a growing light. Someone from the plant science department interrupted to ask if Stockton wanted to identify a plant that arrived in the mail.

Stockton shook out a couple dry leaves and a sprig of small, hard brown fruits. As part of his job, he answers identification requests. In a few seconds, he glanced at it and identified it as a Calleryana pear.

"A lot of time, the top might have died around an old farmhouse or something. The understock kept growing and people want to know what the devil they are," he explained.

The note in the box read: "It came from Mill Creek Park. It was an old homesite. I figure it was a grafted pear that has reverted back to what it was grafted from. Could that be possible?"

"Yep, that is exactly what it is," Stockton confirmed.

Besides playing plant detective, Stockton does research with Dr. Ed McWilliams on native plants. Stockton sees a trend toward using more native plants in home landscaping.

Using native plants for home landscaping is not a new concept, according to Stockton. Pioneers would often uproot sycamores from the riverbank to soften the outlines of their stark cabins.

Later when it became easier to buy cuttings, seeds, or plants from mail catalogs and nurseries, native plants were passed over in favor of exotics from Japan or novelties.

Few nurseries produce plants native to a region. It is a matter of supply and demand and the nursery cannot produce unless a demand comes from the public. The landscapers cannot use the plants if none are available. The public can not be aware of the possibilities if the plants are not used.

"It's sort of a crazy cycle," Stockton explained. "We don't have all the information to properly propagate our good native plants to offer the retailer or the general public through retail outlets.

"We don't have the general public educated to the extent of what they

can grow that is native and what would look good in their landscape and be easy to maintain.

"We don't really have all the landscape architects aware of the native material that could be used.

"Then there is just the overall public acceptance of whether they prefer the waxleaf ligustrum or a hawthorne. They might prefer the hawthorne if they could see the two in the nursery. Right now the hawthorne is not there as often as the ligustrum, so we are right back where we started," he pointed out.

Some homebuilders leave the native plants on their lots, moving them to the desired location. Another alternative is to uproot and transplant from private property after securing the owner's permission.

Stockton advised against people digging up plants indiscriminately.

"Most people can't tell the difference between hawthorne, yaupon and American beauty bush. . . or poison ivy."

"It really isn't that difficult, but you have to be patient," Stockton said. "Then people ought to be patient with landscaping in general. However, the overall temptation is to come in and try to do everything in one season.

"If you can come up with the best way to propagate, then you come up with uniform nursery stock the producer can get to the retailer. If the retailer has it available, then it can be utilized by the landscape architect or whoever wants to," Stockton explained.

"What it all goes back to is what we need to know to propagate these plants effectively and uniformly. Because you can't sell 50 containers of sophora secundiflora (Texas moun-

tain laurel) and have one plant 6 inches tall and the next one a foot and a half."

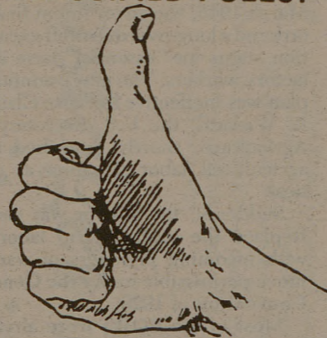
Soil conditions also dictate what survives. Stockton rated the Brazos area's soils as "pretty good to extremely sorry."

"Some yards will have a fairly good deep soil in the front, and you go to the backyard and it's solid clay 2-3 inches in the topsoil. So there aren't any generalizations you can make about Brazos county.

Native plants are better adapted to the area, they are better suited to the soil and climate, and are more disease and insect resistant, Stockton said.

He concluded that, "Its possible to save money and effort and still have an attractive landscape."

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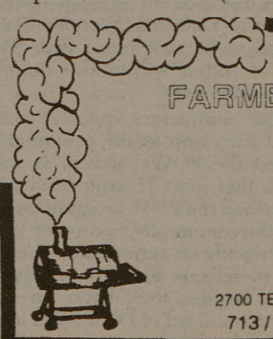
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## Experienced man shares wisdom

By BONNIE HELWIG

From the crown of his stetson to the tip of his boots, he is 100 percent "cowman."

With his rusty voice, he tells stories of ranching experiences with a sense of humor that only a weathered cattleman would have.

His handshake is powerful, his eyes are piercing and his smile is sincere and warm as he visits with students on the Texas A&M University campus each day.

Frank Litterst, an animal science instructor, was not born the son of a legendary Texas rancher as one might expect, but his incurable love for cattle was spurred by an uncle, who was a cowboy and later gave Litterst his start in the beef industry.

Litterst, 57, graduated from Texas A&M in 1935 and has spent his life working in the cattle business or closely related areas such as teaching undergraduate beef cattle production for the past four years at Texas A&M.

He calls Buda, in the Texas Hill Country near San Marcos, his native home, although he has lived in several regions of Texas as a rancher and a feed salesman.

Litterst said he always wanted to move back to Texas A&M since his college days.

"When I was ranching near Houston, I used to drive to A&M just to watch the football team practice."

In 1961, he and his family moved to College Station and he joined the agricultural education department as a beef cattle specialist in the adult education short course program.

Litterst spent the next 10 years traveling a total of 325,000 miles, presenting four-day beef cattle production short courses in 2,400 Texas

towns to audiences totaling 12,000 ranchers.

He joined the animal science faculty in 1975 and became manager of the beef cattle center and instructor of Animal Science 406, the beef cattle production course.

As a major project in Animal Science 406, the students must create their own "dream" ranch, furnish it with equipment and stock and make a profit after five years of operation.

"I developed this project to give the student a chance to draw up a dream ranch that many of them will never have, or that I never had either," he said.

"This is a senior level course, and a "wrap-up" of all the things that the student should have learned, such as nutrition, feeds and feeding and management."

Litterst said that he stresses many old-fashioned ideas in his class that once were tradition in the cattle business.

"I try to emphasize the importance of integrity, where a man's work is his bond," he said.

"This is a wonderful but complete business, and wisdom is just as important as education and knowledge. It takes some people quite a while to understand how complex it really is, and that's why some people are more successful at it than others."

Litterst said he was worried about the adjustment from teaching adults for 10 years to teaching college students, when he first began in the animal science department.

"My biggest problem now is that I get too attached to the students. They're all such fine kids. It nearly chokes me up to go to graduation each year because I realize that those students will never walk down the halls around here again as students.

## AGGIE MUMS

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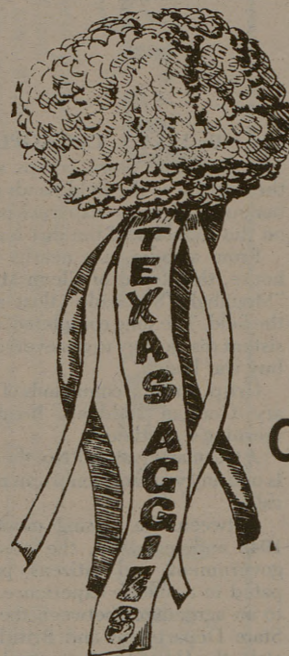
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