

Tallahassee's largest and oldest living residents are the cause for celebration

By Donna Meredith

The Tallahassee Garden Club (TGC) called and you have answered. Over 150 citizens nominated their favorite oak trees or joined the Third Live Oak Trail Facebook group to post photographs.

While the First and Second Live Oak Trails in 1940 and 1941 were conducted as a caravan on a single day, the Third Trail is designed as a self-guided tour. Such an excursion can easily be undertaken while social distancing.

You might start by driving slowly along our canopy roads—Centerville, Miccosukee, Old St. Augustine, Meridian, Old Bainbridge, Moccasin Gap, and Sunny Hill—and letting the beauty of the trees seep into your soul.

But we want you to visit the trees your neighbors have nominated as favorites, too. A map prepared by TGC shows the locations of the particularly fine specimens you nominated. The map can be found on the website, tallahassegardenclub.com. There you'll also find a YouTube video, photographs, resources on live oaks, and coloring pages for children.

We suggest concentrating on one area of the city at a time. For example, in the Northwest part of town, you will find exemplary trees like the Lichgate Oak on High Road, several beauties at Lake Ella and surrounding homes, and the gargantuan oak gracing the grounds of the Tallahassee School of Math and Science on North Monroe.

Besides the chain of parks downtown and the beautiful live oak by the Strozier Library on the Florida State University campus, you will find beautiful specimens in the Griffin Heights and Bronough neighborhoods. Don't miss Los Robles, where live oaks guard the entrance to the neighborhood and the front of the Tallahassee Women's Club. But there are gorgeous oaks scattered all through the Los Robles neighborhood and in the park, so make a slow journey to view these beauties that were on the original live oak trail.

On the east side of town, you'll find grand oaks in the Goodwood Plantation, the J. Alford and Miccosukee Greenways, Pedrick Pond by the Eastside Library, the Lafayette Oaks neighborhood, and Arvah Branch neighborhoods.

The Live Oak Trail map will help you plan your excursion. TGC considers it a work in progress. You may continue to nominate your favorite oaks by emailing your name, the address where the tree can be viewed from the street or trail location, and a jpg photo of the tree to TGC Tree Chair Sudi Scott at liveoaktrail@gmail.com. You can also post your live oak photos on our Facebook page, Third Live Oak Trail.

We appreciate our trees not only for their beauty, but for the shade they provide in summer, cooling our city and our homes. The nation's urban canopies, which are home to an estimated 5.5 billion trees, provide roughly \$18 billion in annual benefits to society through the removal of pollution from the air (\$5.4 billion), carbon sequestration (\$4.8 billion), reduced emissions (\$2.7 billion) and improved energy efficiency in buildings (\$5.4 billion), according to U.S. Forest Service.

A healthy urban forest has repeatedly been shown to be a critical component to a vibrant and livable community—economically, environmentally, and socially, according to the City of Tallahassee's Urban Forest Master Plan. Besides live oaks, our diverse local canopy includes such trees as the southern magnolia, laurel oak, Carolina laurel cherry, dogwood, crapemyrtle and many other species.

In recent years, the garden club has become increasingly concerned by the removal of many of our heritage trees. Instead of bulldozing them, we should strive to include them in development plans whenever possible. We need to open our eyes and appreciate them as the assets that they are.

So, take the whole family on a slow drive through a neighborhood near you to celebrate these ancient trees from the safety of your car. Or get outside for a walk, remembering to look up and really notice the grand old trees lining our avenues and gracing our neighbors' yards.