GROWERTALKS

Features

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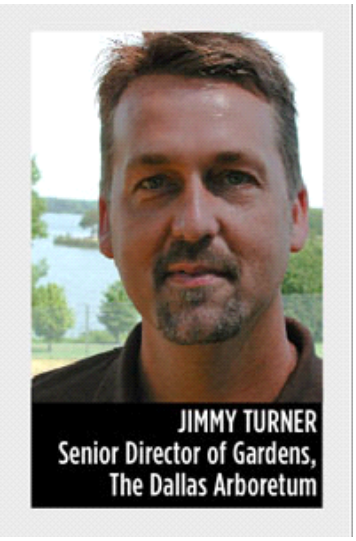
# Trial Comparisons: Who's the Hottest of Them All ...

*Jimmy Turner & Allan Armitage*

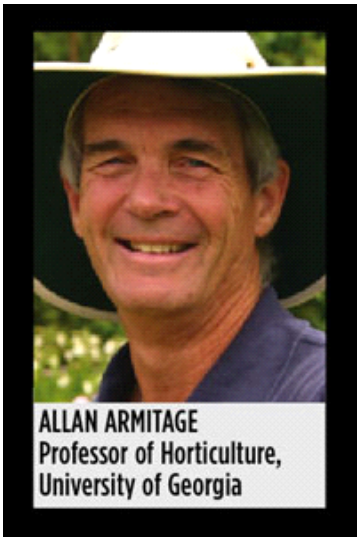



Is there really any question? Let's just look at some weather records from www.climate-zone.com. On average, Dallas has 45 more days per year over 90F than Athens does. That's a month and a half more! Oh, and that wimpy record high of 107 in Athens one August doesn't get close to the Dallas record of 113 for two days in 1980. That same year, we had 69 days over 100 degrees!

Most years Dallas has about 96 days over 90 degrees, but Athens only has 51. Do you think it cools off at night in Dallas? Wrong! Our night temperatures usually hang around the low 80s during the summer, but high 80s and 90s are very common. There is also that old belief that it's a "dry" heat here. If you believe that, I can guarantee you haven't visited Dallas during June. North Texas has higher humidity than Athens until July, then our humidity drops.

Humans may hate high humidity, but plants like it. Our local saying is that if it doesn't rot in spring, then by the end of summer it will dry up and blow away. And by blow, the average summer wind speed in Dallas is about 10 mph. Being outside in summer is like having someone holding a hair dryer up to your face.

Heck, as you can see by the numbers, any average summer in Dallas is a lot closer to being in hell than Athens. As we joke around here, "If you suddenly find yourself standing in the shade in a Texas summer, you might want to look up to make sure there aren't buzzards circling." They are the closest thing to clouds we see until late fall. There is no doubt why my trial garden motto is: "Trial by flower: If we can't kill it no one can!"




We are truly fortunate to have two exceptional trial gardens in the South—one at the Dallas Arboretum, which Jimmy Turner has turned into a must-see location, and The Trial Gardens at the University of Georgia, run by yours truly. When industry people visit these sites, they see the work of the world's leading breeders, they compare genera across breeders at one time, and they do something else as well. They sweat.

It is hot at both sites, regardless of whether visitors come for the formal open houses in June or July, or show up unannounced in August. Hot and humid, I might add.

When I was asked to compare the heat and humidity of Athens with Dallas, I realized it was an impossible task. When I wander through my trials on a broiling August afternoon, I know that if the plants could talk, they would say, "Get me out of here!" Of course, that is the whole reason for these research gardens; we are both looking for plants that say, "I kind of like it here."

From the research point of view, they are both highly useful, informative trials. Those are the plants that Jimmy and I recommend and that is why these locations are so good for the industry. And since both the Southwest and Southeast are chock-full of growers, nurseries and gardeners, let's be thankful for both.

I read Jimmy's essay on Dallas heat. He really did his homework, and it looks like he's right—statistically, Dallas is hotter than Athens. I must gracefully yield to his facts. So I think I will keep living the Athens dream and sweat just a tiny bit less than he does. **GT**