



[Tyler Made]

Historic neighborhoods, homes, and gardens remain traditional Tyler's stock and trade

Text and photographs by **RANDY MALLORY**

From where I sit, a picture-window perch in my home's sunroom within Tyler's 76-block Azalea District, a distinctive sense of tradition prevails.

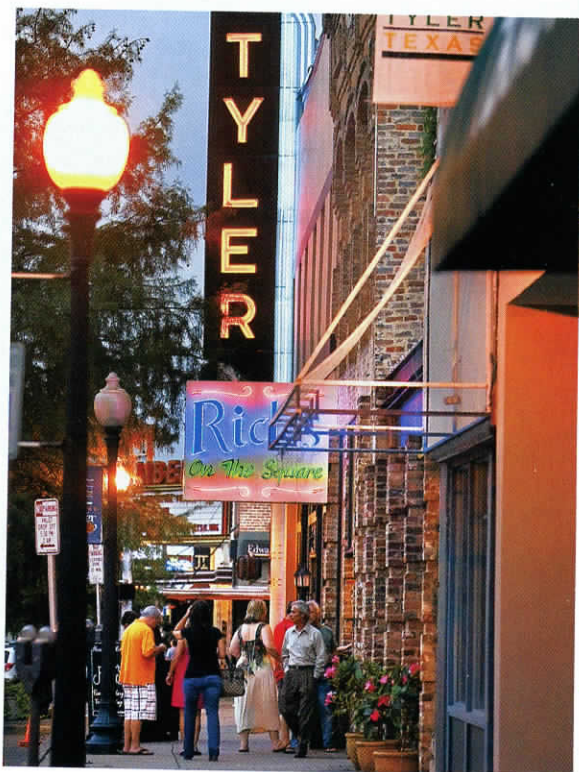
I can see old oaks lording over homes of diverse styles and sizes. The houses—mostly built in the early 20th Century—line red brick streets like architectural books on a shelf: a brick Victorian mansion here, a wood-frame Craftsman house there.

The venerable neighborhood embodies an old-fashioned ambiance that trendy “New Urbanism” developments aspire to emulate.

This time of year, I revel in autumn's metamorphosis. Oaks cloak themselves in shades of gold and bronze, sweet gums turn reddish-purple, and a looming bald cypress drops a blanket of rust-colored, needle-like leaves.

A couple of blocks away on Chilton Street, a decades-old Japanese ginkgo tree shimmers with a yellowish glow that aspens would envy. Homeowner Billy Barham, glad for passersby to pose

LEFT: Elissa Mallory and Lola stroll by a blazing Japanese ginkgo tree at Chilton Street and Lindsey Lane—a popular spot for fall photos. RIGHT: Downtown hangout Rick's draws diners with steaks, seafood, and live music. The “Tyler” neon comes from a former theater around the corner.



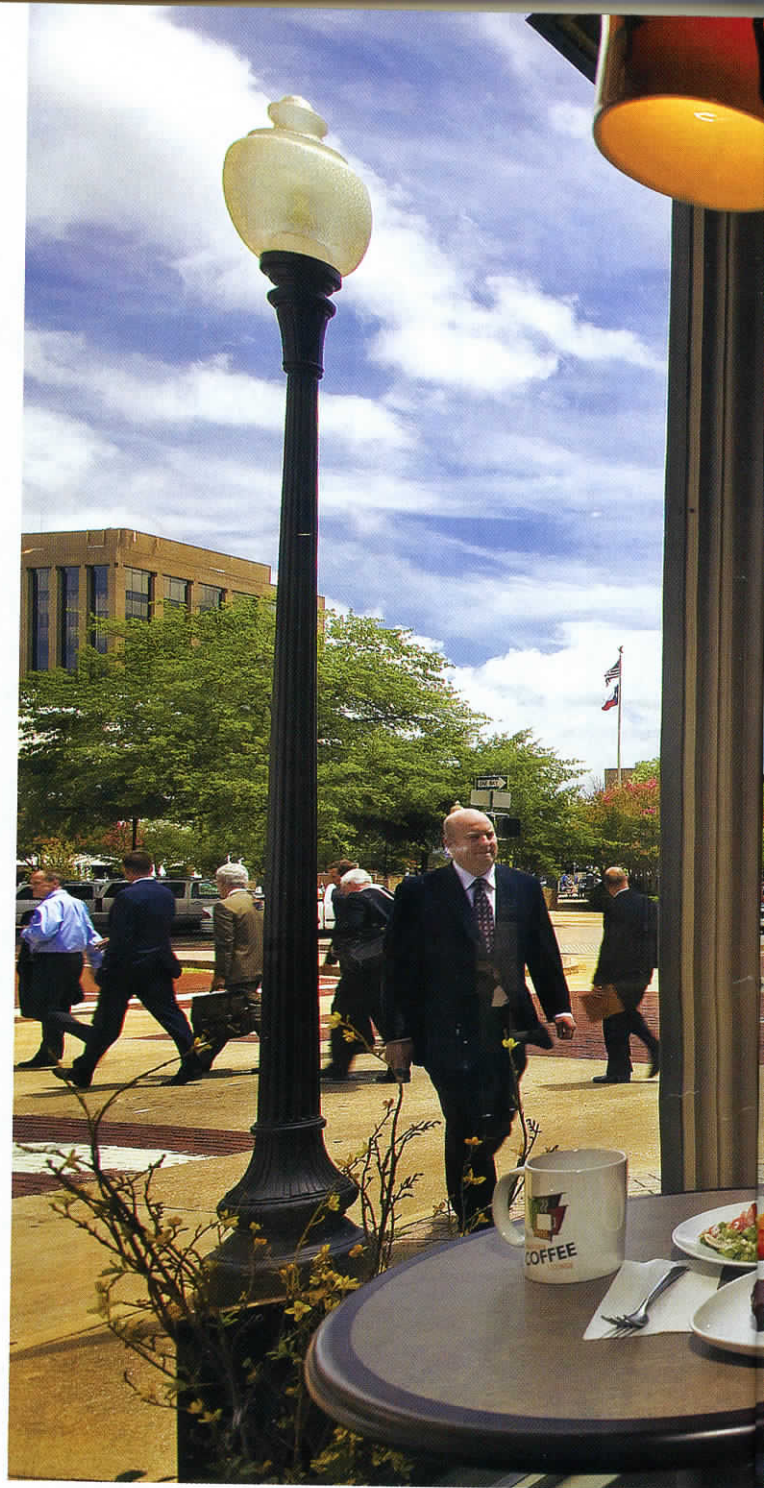
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for photos beneath his beloved ginkgo, suggests that they not wait. After an early freeze one year, the slow-growing, 30-foot tree shed its golden locks in a single day.

Most who live in Tyler's historic neighborhoods love sharing their surroundings. So much so, that locals regularly fling open front doors and garden gates for historic homes and gardens tours.

The largest garden in the city, the 14-acre Tyler Municipal Rose Garden dates to 1952 and welcomes visitors year round. It takes center stage each October when eye-popping roses—38,000 bushes and 500 varieties—look their best during the annual Texas Rose Festival (October 14-16, 2010). Since 1933, the festival's elaborate parade, Rose Queen's tea and coronation, and rose show have paid homage to a rose-growing heritage born of disaster.

A century ago, droughts, freezes, and disease devastated the area's peach orchards, and farmers turned to roses. By the 1950s, some 200 growers in the Tyler area raised half the nation's roses. Only a handful of growers remain, but local processors still ship much of America's commercial rose crop, even though it's grown mostly in Arizona and California. The Tyler Rose Museum, at the Rose Garden, uses historical photos and videos to tell the story of the growers who made Tyler roses famous. The 7,500-square-foot museum also boasts Rose Festival memorabilia and hand-sewn, bejeweled Rose Queens' costumes dating to 1935.



ABOVE: Noel Quinata enjoys a break and the view of Tyler's historic square at Downtown Coffee Lounge.
LEFT: The IDEA Garden showcases plants that grow well in the acidic soils of northeast Texas.

Each year I stroll the Rose Garden's Technicolor rows of neatly labeled bushes, and pause at its fountains and reflecting pool. I was delighted recently to rediscover another horticultural gem tucked in a back corner of the garden.

"I call it the garden beyond the roses," Sue Adee tells me at the IDEA Garden (IDEA is an acronym for Innovate, Demonstrate, Educate, and Apply). She's one of the Smith County Master Gardeners who hold seminars and nurture the 650 plant varieties packed into this 10,000-square-foot horticultural bonanza. "There's color in the garden just about all year," Adee says. "We want to show the wide

Downtown's courthouse square sports several noteworthy new venues—such as the Gallery Main Street and the Downtown Coffee Lounge—housed in structures saved by historic preservation efforts.



range of plants that can succeed in home gardens.”

In the last few years, Tyler has added roses to street medians and parks. These roses are among landscaping plants tested and recommended by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service as “Earth-Kind.” That means these plants grow well in a variety of soils, while thriving with minimal fertilizer, pesticides, and watering.

Last year the city also opened the Chamblee Rose Garden as the anchor of an all Earth-Kind botanical garden on the nine-acre grounds of the 1859 Goodman-LeGrand Home and Museum. Forest-green iron fences and native red-rock pillars surround the garden’s 120 rose bushes.

Goodman family heirlooms such as a grandfather clock from the Colonial era, fine silver and china, books, paintings, and photographs

fill the restored Classical Revival mansion (open for tours and special events), which stands as the northern gateway to historic downtown.

Downtown’s courthouse square sports several noteworthy new venues—such as the Gallery Main Street (juried shows of area artists) and the Downtown Coffee Lounge (aromatic coffee drinks and fresh-baked goods)—housed in structures saved by historic preservation efforts.

The best view of the historic square is from the new rooftop lounge at Jakes Tyler. This popular eatery (steaks and seafood) fills three levels of a 1904 building that once housed a men’s clothing store. From the rooftop here, you can see the sun set behind the 15-story Art Deco Peoples National Bank (now Tyler Towne Centre), designed by noted Houston architect Alfred C. Finn. When built in the 1930s, it was among Texas’ tallest



Rose City Rambling

HAD YOUR FILL of Tyler's fantastic homes and gardens? Check out my other Rose City favorites:

Don't miss the midway, entertainment, and livestock of the 95th annual **East Texas State Fair**, Sep. 23–Oct. 3, 2010, at the fairgrounds, 2112 W. Front St., 903/597-2501; www.etstatefair.com.

History buffs, head downtown to the 1904 Carnegie Library, home of artifacts and genealogical records at the **Smith County Historical Society Museum & Archives**, 125 S. College Ave., 903/592-5993; www.smithcountyhistoricalsociety.org. A few blocks away, watch freight trains and peruse railroad memorabilia at a 1905 depot housing the **Cotton Belt Depot Museum**, 210 E. Oakwood St., 903/533-8057. Nearby, treat the kids (or grandkids) to a lively time at **The Discovery Science Place** (a top 25 science center in the U.S. for kids according to *Parents Magazine*), 308 N. Broadway Ave., 903/533-8011; www.discoveryscienceplace.org. The courthouse square echoes with Texas roots music Oct. 9, 2010, at the City of Tyler Main Street Program/Heart of Tyler, Inc.'s **Texas Music Fest series concert**, 110 W. Erwin St., 903/593-6905; www.heartoftyler.com.

Revisit Civil War history at **Camp Ford Historical Site**, located on US 271 one mile north of Loop 323, where a reconstructed cabin recalls the largest Confederate prisoner of war camp west of the Mississippi River. Call 903/592-5993. Other Old South attractions include the **Dewberry Plantation**, 14007 FM 346 W., 903/825-9000 (www.dewberryplantation.com), and **Roseland Plantation**, 2601 Texas 64 W., 903/849-5553 or 866/ROSELAND (www.roselandplantation.com), which also boasts a bed and breakfast.

Stop at the **Tyler Museum of Art**, 1300 S. Mahon Ave., 903/595-1001; www.tylermuseum.org. Catch a performance at the University of Texas at Tyler's **Cowan Fine & Performing Arts Center** (3900 University Blvd., 903/566-7424; www.uttyler.edu/cowan).

See the animals—such as black-footed penguins, white tigers, black rhinos, and African elephants—in natural-setting exhibits at the **Caldwell Zoo**, 2203 Martin Luther King Blvd., 903/593-0121; www.caldwellzoo.org. Walk or bike with wildlife on 13-plus miles of hilly trails at **Tyler State Park**, 789 Park Rd. 16 and FM 14 N., 903/597-5338. For a pleasant in-town walk, try four miles of new wheelchair-accessible hike-and-bike trails starting at **Rose Rudman Trail**, 450 Shiloh Rd.; call 903/531-1370.

—Randy Mallory



buildings. The Great Depression didn't affect Tyler nearly as much as other parts of the nation. The East Texas Oil Field had blown in, and oilmen opened offices in the Peoples Bank tower and constructed homes in then-new neighborhoods.

The homes still recall those boom days along 100 blocks of the city's three largest National Register-listed historic

The annual Azalea & Spring Flower Trail winds some 10 miles through Tyler's vibrant neighborhoods. These pink blossoms sprawl over a wall at East 2nd and Roseland.



While Tyler's annual Rose Festival held in October features an elaborate parade and Rose Queen's tea, the Azalea & Spring Flower Trail welcomes thousands of visitors to view residents' homes and gardens.

neighborhoods—the Azalea, Brick Streets, and Charnwood districts.

My wife, Sallie, and I often walk or bike through these side-by-side neighborhoods. We stop at Brady's Coffee for a medium-roast brew and chit-chat with the regulars. Or we drop by Bruno's, a traditional Tyler favorite for Italian food since 1976, for hand-tossed pizza and antipasto salad. And, we frequently enjoy the Azalea District's lovely, eight-acre Bergfeld Park.

www.texashighways.com

Thousands of out-of-towners experience Tyler's historic neighborhoods during the annual Azalea & Spring Flower Trail (March 25–April 10, 2011). Two well-marked driving routes wind 10 scenic miles past homes and gardens gussied up in spring color.

A must-see stopover during the Azalea Trail lies at the corner of Dobbs Street and College Avenue. That's where the owners of three contiguous houses—owned by the Davis, Pyron, and McGuire families—let visitors meander through their lush, manicured gardens.

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TH ESSENTIALS



ABOVE: This private garden on College Street impressed 2010 Azalea Trail-goers with its formal hedges, water features, and statuary. LEFT: The new rooftop lounge at Jakes Tyler overlooks the courthouse square.

Banks of pink, red, and white azaleas line rock walkways and footbridges, while white and pink dogwood blossoms offer colorful contrast in dappled shade under tall pines and oaks.

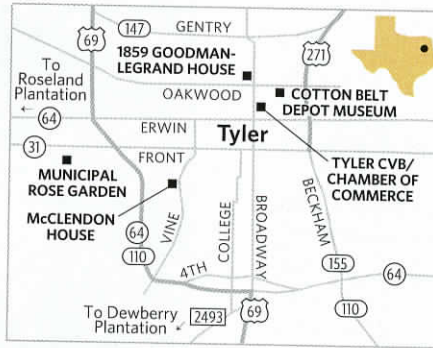
Azalea Trail visitors get a look inside a handful of well-gardened historic homes during the annual Spring Homes Tour, held in late March or early April. "People in the historic neighborhoods devote so much effort to their properties," says Historic Tyler executive director Janie Menegay. "They really want people to see the architecture and learn the history."

Year round, the 1878 McClendon House presents refined architecture and history. One family—descendants of Texas State Supreme Court justice M. H. Bonner—lived in the Eastlake Bracketed house for more than a century. The judge gave land for a house to his eldest daughter, Mattie Bonner, who married attorney Harrison Whitaker. The newlyweds obtained Victorian-style mantles, light fixtures, and furniture from New York City. The McClendon House was such a cultured gathering place that Texas Governor R. B. Hubbard, a family friend, described it as "like living on Fifth Avenue."

Mattie's younger sister, Annie, and her husband, Sydney McClendon, later bought the house and raised nine children there. Their best-known child was White House correspondent Sarah McClendon—famous for her grilling of presidents at press conferences. A preservation group restored the mansion and opened it to the public in 1988.

Each Saturday evening in October, the McClendon House offers guided Spirit Tours. (It's also open during the Azalea Trail, for special events, and by appointment.) The McClendon House has its share of ghost stories, but this not-so-spooky annual affair actually features local actors portraying Sarah and other influential McClendon family members.

[Continued on page 60]



Tyler

FOR HOMES & GARDENS information, an historic landmarks guide, and other tourist tips, call the **Tyler Convention and Visitors Bureau** at 903/592-1661 or 800/235-5712; www.visitt Tyler.com. For information on downtown events and attractions call the **Heart of Tyler Main Street Program**, 903/593-6905; www.heartoftyler.com.

Gardens and Tours

The **Tyler Municipal Rose Garden** and **Tyler Rose Museum**, 420 Rose Park Dr., hosts the 77th annual **Texas Rose Festival** Oct. 14-16, 2010. Call 903/597-3130; www.texasrosefestival.com.

The **Smith County Master Gardeners** present **seminars** on Oct. 5 and Nov. 2 (2010) in the Tyler Municipal Rose Garden's IDEA Garden. On Oct. 9, 2010, the group holds a **conference and plant sale** in Harvey Hall, 2000 W. Front St., next to the Rose Garden. On May 7-8, 2011, the master gardeners host their annual Home Garden Tour. Call the Smith County Extension Office, 903/590-2980; <http://grovesite.com/mg/smg>.

The **LeGrand Park & Garden**, 624 N. Broadway, hosts gardening **seminars** on Oct. 15-16, 2010, Tyler's "**Old Rose**" **open house** at the 1859 Goodman-LeGrand House and Museum on Oct. 16, 2010, and **Victorian Christmas** on Dec. 9, 2010. Call 903/531-1286.

The **McClendon House**, 806 W. Houston, hosts Spirit Tours each Sat. night in Oct. Call 903/592-3533; www.mcclendonhouse.net.

The 52nd annual **Tyler Azalea & Spring Flower Trail** takes place Mar. 25-Apr. 10, 2011. Call the CVB at 800/235-5712.

The 31st annual **Historic Tyler on Tour** (tour of historic homes) takes place Mar. 25-27, 2011. Call Historic Tyler, 903/595-1960; www.historictyler.org.

Chamblee's Rose Nursery, 10926 US 69 N., 800/256-7673; www.chambleerose.com.

Restaurants

Downtown Coffee Lounge, 200 W. Erwin St., 903/266-9192.

Jakes Tyler, 111 E. Erwin St., 903/526-0225; www.jakestyler.com.

Brady's Coffee, 309 W. Rusk St., 903/596-0508; www.bradyscoffee.com.

Bruno's Pizza, 1400 S. Vine St., 903/595-1676.

Other Attractions

Bergfeld Park, 1510 S. College Ave., 903/531-1370.

Gallery Main Street, 110 W. Erwin St., 903/593-6905.