Austin, Texas – a Place Where People Like to Have a Good Time!

An Invitation to the 2013 AVSA Convention

By Penny Smith-Kerker

First settled during the 1830s on the banks of the Colorado River, Waterloo was renamed after Stephen F. Austin and became the capital of the newly independent Republic of Texas in 1839. Austin experienced a building boom in the 1850s as the first Texas Capitol building and Governor's Mansion were constructed. Unfortunately, the limestone Capitol was destroyed by fire and a second building was opened in 1888.

The Texas Capitol, constructed of distinctive pink granite, is 14.5 ft. taller than the Capitol building in Washington D. C., helping to reinforce the view of many Texans that "Everything is Bigger in Texas." Austinites are so proud of the heritage of the Capitol that there is a law that prevents construction of buildings that would obscure the view from various locations around Austin.

Austin Skyline with Statue of Stevie Ray Vaughn *Photo Credit:* **Jean-Michel Dufaux**

Austin is located in central Texas on the eastern edge of the American southwest with the Texas hill country a short drive to the west and San Antonio and the Alamo seventy miles to the south. There are three man-made lakes in the city, including Lady Bird Lake, which runs through the center of town. The city has many parks, green-belt areas, and miles and miles of hike and bike trails. You see runners, walkers, and cyclists enjoying the Austin weather, rolling hills, and beautiful surroundings.

With the Texas legislature in town and the establishment of the University of Texas at Austin in 1883 the city economy has been traditionally focused on politics, state government, and education. But with a population of over 750,000 within the city limits, Austin is no longer a "college town." In the last thirty years, Austin has become a center for technology, music, and the film industry. Austin is sometimes called "Silicon Hills" due to the many semi-conductor and software develop-

ment companies in the area, and Dell is headquartered in Round Rock, a near-by suburb of Austin.

Austin emerged on the national music scene through local musicians such as Willie Nelson, Asleep at the Wheel, and the late Stevie Ray Vaughn. The PBS series "Austin City Limits" is the longest running concert music program in the US and is filmed in Austin. The official slogan of the city is the "Live Music Capital of the World," because it has more live music venues per capita than anywhere else in the United States.

With nearly 200 music venues and thousands of musicians, you can find a live music show for virtually every musical taste, any day of the week.

Austin has great restaurants and shopping areas. Popular restaurants serve Texas barbecue , margaritas, and outstanding Mexican food. Austin also offers many fine dining options along with fun and flourishing mobile food vendors, featuring crepes, gourmet doughnuts, and fusion cuisine. For shopping, there are many eclectic shops and boutiques featuring local designers and artisans, where you can purchase artwork, crafts, apparel, and jewelry. In addition, Austin has a new "Domain" shopping area (conveniently located close to the convention hotel) which offers over 700,000 sq. ft. of designer shops.

The Austin Convention and Visitor's Bureau sums it up very well. "Austin is just simply not like the rest of Texas. From the quirky cast of characters that populate Congress Avenue to burnt orange-clad University of Texas students, bats to Longhorns, four-star restaurants to down-home barbecue joints, corporate CEOs to struggling musicians, Texas' capital city stands apart from the rest. It's hip and friendly, yet in a vintage sort of way. It's high-tech and laid-back. It's politically charged and culturally rich. It's eclectic by nature and creative by design. Most of all, it's a place where people like to have a good time."

The First Austin African Violet Society (FAAVS) is very pleased to be hosting the 2013 AVSA Convention. We hope you will come to Austin to visit the capitol, eat some outstanding food, take a stroll on one of our beautiful trails beside the lake, take in some live music, and tour the Texas hill country. And of course, bring many exhibits for the show room. Please join us as "Violets Dance Across Texas" from May 26, 2013, to Sunday, June 2, 2013, at the Renaissance Austin Hotel. Y'all come on down!