

Lee Hall Courtyard

Clemson University Student Observation of Campus Landscape

By Jordan Walker

As you emerge from the depths of Lowry, a building of monstrous brick, floor to ceiling windows and the unending whir of outdated central heating, you have two modes of exit. First, you may exit out the front: an entrance of awkwardly placed, off center, double doors. Upon reaching the doors, your view is immediately cast through the exit and lands abruptly on the orange clad brick wall just on the other side of the darkened pavement. This wall, teaming with Yaupon holly (*Ilex vom-*

itoria), does little to calm the senses.

Ahh, but you could choose the second escape. This entrance, unnoticed to those who dash down Fernow Drive late for studio, is much easier on the senses. This courtyard of Lacebark elm (*Ulmus parvifolia*), is an escape from the dungeons of surrounding buildings. The circular paver is bisected with a straight sidewalk connecting Lowry to Lee Hall. Whether you choose the path of least resistance, or

walk to the curving edge, you will not fail to notice the arena-like canopy of the trees. Circling the courtyard, they soften the upward view but leave an over-sized doughnut hole of pure sky. When deep blue, it sets off the charreusse of the Lacebark's small leaves.

Wooden benches dot the exterior path. Those walking the bisecting trail are entertainment for those who choose to take a seat, take a breath, and enjoy the view. Immediately behind the wooden benches are tall shrubs that mask the exactness of the brick wall behind them. Their asymmetrical design and texture softens the landscape. The whimsical flowing of their evergreen branches alludes to the harsher breezes that lie just outside the courtyard.

Stand up from the bench, walk through the grass, cross the bisecting sidewalk, cross the opposing arced path and WHAM! You have caught a facefull of the wind that seems to become trapped in the brick cul-de-sac that houses many buildings full of knowledge and hard-working students. Pull your head from the pelting flow and gaze up. The tiny leaves of the Lacebark Elm dance to a faster tune than the shrubs. Their lightness is playful, their scent crisp this time of year. They play, all day, in a billowing breeze.

You must end your jaunt and return to class. A gentle smile crosses your face, you touch the smooth bark of the tree, and continue your walk. Back onto the bisecting sidewalk, you pass through your last two Lacebark Elms. On either side of the sidewalk, they stand at attention like the last two soldiers in an arch of sabers. With Liriope nesting at their feet, they bid you good day. Onward you travel, into the building. Fresh air tickles your nose and the cool burn of crisp spring air hits your throat. "It was only a moment," you tell yourself, "But it'll get me through."

