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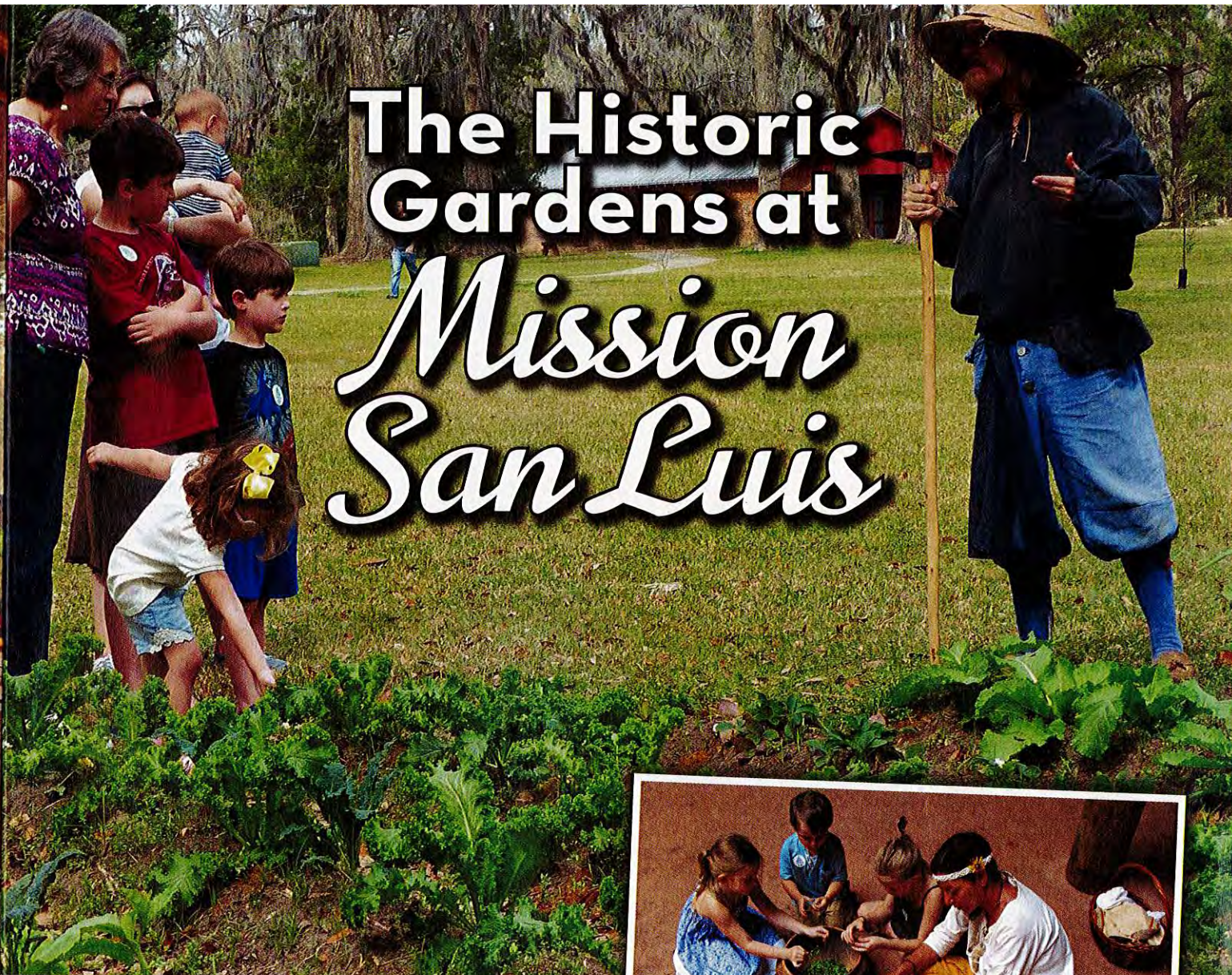
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The Historic Gardens at Mission San Luis



Mission San Luis, a National Historic Landmark site, is one of the Southeast's most important and dynamic living history sites. Located on Tennessee Street just west of FSU's campus, this landmark brings the past to life when guests encounter guides in period dress, a stunning array of reconstructed 17th-century buildings, and bountiful historic gardens and fields – all of which tell the stories of Apalachee Indian and Spanish residents from over 300 years ago.

At the entrance to San Luis, a visitor's first impression includes plantings that reinforce the Spanish Mission feel of the site. Here are xeric (drought-tolerant) local native plants and some exotic cacti and succulents, as well as Coontie palms. On the historic site grounds, visitors will find a friary complete with friar's garden, which contains medicinal plants. Friars needed knowledge of which plants could be used to treat which maladies common during the time period. In this garden you can see and smell rosemary (used to improve memory), borage (used as an antidepressant), and lemon balm (used to relieve stress and anxiety).

A short stroll from the friary brings visitors to the Spanish House, beside which is a large field garden for growing vegetables typically eaten by a Spanish family. As modern



people shift away from growing their own food, the heritage heirloom varieties of vegetables grown here sometimes give the opportunity to present visitors with uncommon surprises like the occasional red carrot or other variety.

Among the grounds and gardens, visitors can interact with historic interpreters who can explain the essentials of heirloom gardening using approaches like organic fertilizer and "companion planting." Companion planting appears in the Apalachee Indian field where the diet staples of corn, beans, and squash are grown together. The nitrogen-producing beans climb the cornstalks and the large squash leaves deter weeds.

There is so much to learn and experience at Mission San Luis. For more information call 850.245.6406 or visit missionsanluis.org.

By Mike Ard
Florida Department of State