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One-of-a-kind Rare red bay discovery

When I stepped out of the truck I said, ‘I have no idea what that thing is,’” laughs Scott McGhee, arborist for the Autumn Hall development, “but then the instant I saw it up close, I knew. I’d never seen anything like it.” McGhee is referring to the rare size of the champion red bay found at the Autumn Hall site in March.

While red bays are common in the Wilmington area, they are typically very small, with trunks only 6 inches across.

The Autumn Hall red bay was something completely different. On Thursday, March 13, with Autumn Hall developer Raiford Trask III, McGhee and others from the company there to witness the unex-

pected special event, the North Carolina Department of Forest Resources viewed, measured and analyzed the Autumn Hall red bay, and proclaimed it the state champion. With a remarkable circumference of 121 inches, it is the largest tree of its kind in North Carolina, topping the previous record holder’s circumference by 39 inches!

The champion red bay sits alongside the property line of Autumn Hall, on Eastwood Road. According to McGhee, the builders of Autumn Hall, under Trask’s watchful eye, are doing all they can to make sure the tree is conserved and protected. “Right now, the red bay is not near the construction, but when the construction moves, the land will be blocked off and

no construction will take place there. We’re doing everything we can to make sure this tree is happy,” says McGhee.

Along with efforts to preserve the red bay, Trask is going more than the extra mile to develop Autumn Hall in as eco-friendly a way as possible. “I started with the attitude to maintain existing vegetation and not stress our water systems. Bradley Creek is not in good shape, so we have opted to eliminate our footprint on it,” says Trask.

When Autumn Hall construction is complete, it will include 51 acres of parks and walking trails, along with an 8-acre lake. For more information, visit www.autumnhall.com. — Jessica Haywood