

Native Plant News

NEWSLETTER OF THE NC NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Native Plant News
Julie Higgie, editor

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MISSION STATEMENT:

Our mission is to promote the enjoyment and conservation of North Carolina's native plants and their habitats through education, cultivation and advocacy.

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Cape Fear Native Flora Focus

By **Will Stuart**

Thanks to the **Southeast Coast Chapter** and the efforts of co-chairs **Michael Abicht** and **Charley Winterbauer**, the 2017 Fall Outing was an event-filled weekend celebrating the native plant flora of the Cape Fear region.



Seed Swap at NCNPS's Fall Outing

From 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 16th, the New Hanover County Arboretum hosted the third annual Native Plant Festival which Society members were able to enjoy. Native plant vendors, Master Gardeners, horticultural experts and others were busy as perfect weather ensured a large turnout. Food trucks, live music, a seed swap and a variety of activities for children added to the celebration.

At 4 p.m. on Saturday, UNC Wilmington's **Darin Penneys** led an hour-long walk for Society members along a wooded trail adjacent to the campus.

On Sunday, two half-day walks were organized for our members. That morning, a group of 45 drove south to the Green Swamp where they were met by UNCW's **Roger Shew**. After Roger provided a brief overview of recent management of this Nature Conservancy property, we divided into two groups and hiked into the savannas. Purple spires of *Trilisa paniculata* and delicate white *Pleea tenuifolia* were both at peak bloom, attracting handsome Palamedes Swallowtails.

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President's Report

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Jean Woods

We have two Monarch Way Stations at the retirement center where I live in Brevard. In addition, four of us have milkweed in our yards. One of the Way Stations, installed in 2015, is near our house and was funded in part by a grant from the North Carolina Native Plant Society. In this Station we planted Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*) and Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) because they do not spread rapidly and are attractive plants. Since the area is large, we planted shrubs along with nectar sources, as well as some plants that support pollinators in general. This was a butterfly garden, so why not open it up to other pollinators as well, right? That was our thinking at the time. We included Mountain Mint, which spreads slowly and is controllable, because it is a magnet for bees and other insects.

This past spring, we had eggs on the Swamp Milkweed and soon had 12 fat Monarch caterpillars, which were the delight of the residents. Many people made sure their walks took them by the garden to view the caterpillars, and they often knocked on our door for assistance when they couldn't find the little critters. Some even pushed their rolling walkers to the garden to take a look.

And then one morning no caterpillars were seen, not even one. At first, we assumed they had pupated and we looked at every branch. There are only a few small trees and a few low shrubs in the garden, which is in a traffic circle on one of the streets. Many of us spent hours looking and never saw one chrysalis. And two weeks later, we did not see one Monarch butterfly. Where did the caterpillars go?

As many of you know, Monarch caterpillars eat only milkweed and digest the milky sap, which contains cardenolides, which is toxic and acts as a defense against predators. The bad taste and the toxicity discourage birds and other vertebrates from eating the caterpillars. However, invertebrates are not affected by the poison and caterpillars are prey to insects such as wasps, yellow jackets, spiders, Tachinid flies and ants, to name a few. In the wild, only about 1% of the caterpillars make it to the butterfly

(continued next page)

President's Report (cont.)

stage. Had some predator gotten the caterpillars?

Later in the summer there was another egg laying, and subsequent Monarch caterpillars were closely watched. One morning, my husband Joe saw a wasp attempting to move the body of a dead Monarch caterpillar



and we started to realize what might be happening. We had planted mint and Clethra next to the milkweed. The primary pollinator for Clethra is an Organ Pipe Wasp (*Typoxyion politum*), which is a mud dauber. In fact, we had seen the Clethra covered with these. The mint was also a big draw to wasps as well as bees. We had situated the prey and predator next to each other! Now it stands to reason that wasps (and other insects) can find the caterpillars wherever they are, but deliberately putting plants side by side that will attract a predator to its prey doesn't make sense.

We also made another discovery. In the spring, when we had the 12 caterpillars on four Swamp Milkweed plants, the 12 caterpillars ate the milkweed to the ground in short order. The Butterfly Weed is later to develop in the spring and we didn't have enough milkweed to feed the caterpillars. We were scrounging the hillsides for Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) to harvest and place the leaves in our garden.

Also in the fall, we had another large popula-

tion of Monarch caterpillars and the Swamp Milkweed, which had recovered, wasn't enough. So back to the Common Milkweed



hunt. Common Milkweed is not as attractive and will spread, but it is hardy, has big leaves and takes its time going down in the fall. I know from my experience in raising caterpillars in a cage, that if I give fresh Swamp Milk-

weed leaves as well as Common Milkweed leaves as food, the caterpillars will go straight to the Common Milkweed and eat it first.

We recently dug up the Clethra and moved it to another location, and are now planting a bunch of the Common Milkweed in its place. Yes, it will spread, but we will just have to keep it under control. We will also move the mint.

After losing the caterpillars last spring, three of us decided we would collect the caterpillars when we saw them and raise them inside. We used small, mesh, foldable laundry baskets turned on their sides, with the end closed off with cheese cloth, and held in place with clothes pins. We harvested milkweed leaves and placed inside on newspaper. When the caterpillars are ready to pupate, they can crawl up the sides and make their chrysalis. When the butterflies come out, we open the end, place the cage outside and away they go. The three of us this fall "fostered" and released about 80 Monarch butterflies and sent them on to

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President's Report (cont.)

Mexico! Joyce Pearsall, our local volunteer conservation specialist with Monarch Watch, tagged some of the butterflies we released.

When you are making your own pollinator garden, think about prey-predator relationships and consider using the Common Milkweed. I know that I have discouraged people from planting it because of its aggressive nature, but the Monarchs sure love it and it's the best food supply for them. I encourage you to plant milkweed and work to increase the Monarch population, which is in decline, and to build on what we are learning about planting Monarch Waystations. If you have questions or comments, feel free to email me, jeanw@ncwildflower.org.



Mark your calendars and make your reservations NOW! We are excited about our upcoming **Spring Outing, April 27-29**, in the southern mountain town of Franklin, NC. Due to its small size, lodging for a group can be challenging so early reservations are suggested if you want to be close to fellow members. We have reserved a block of rooms with a great discount at the Comfort Inn (828-369-9200). The total cost per room, per night, is \$88.60 (\$77.70 plus tax), with breakfast included. When making reservations please ask for the group rate for NCNPS. This price will be good until March 22, 2018. After that, you will have to pay the full price.



If you prefer a more charming atmosphere, there is Franklin Terrace B&B (828-369-8888), which is right across the street from the church where we will hold our meetings. Daily prices are as follows: standard room with one double bed, \$95; room with a queen bed and sitting area, \$119.99; and lastly, one room for four people with two double beds, \$139.00. You get a discount if you stay Friday night to Sunday morning. All rooms include a private bath and breakfast.

During that weekend, NCNPS will hold all meetings, lectures and a silent plant auction led by **Mark Rose** in Tartan Hall at the historic First Presbyterian Church. Plans are still forming, but we will have interesting and knowledgeable speakers and hike leaders. There will be a number of hikes to choose from, with varying degrees of length and steepness. Stay tuned for complete program details on this incredible weekend we have waiting for you!

—Lisy McLeod

Fall Outing 2017 (cont.)

Sunday afternoon, after a brief lunch break, the group reconvened and carpoled to Ev-Henwood Nature Preserve, a 175-acre property owned and managed by UNC Wilmington and home to a diverse mix of coastal forest communities. **Larry Mellichamp** led the group along one of many of the preserve's well-maintained trails. Lush trail-side stands of Southern Wood Fern were a highlight of the walk.

(All photos by Will Stuart)



New Hanover Arboretum



*Native
plant talk
at the
Arboretum*

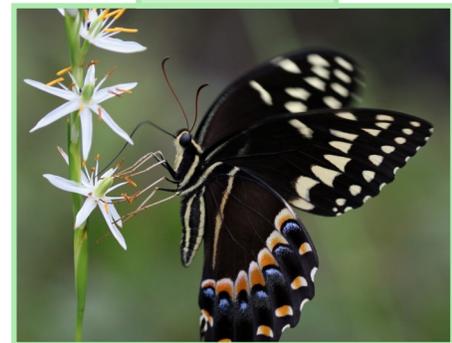


*Campus walk with Darin
Penneys*

*Walking
at Ev-
Hen-
wood*



*Palamedes
Swallowtail
on Rush
Featherling
(Pilea
tenuifolia)*



CHLOROFIENDS!*

Invasive Plants of the NC Piedmont, Pt. 3: Trees

By Lisa Lofland Gould



one to five coarse teeth at their base. Its tenacity for surviving in air pollution and poor, compacted soils was immortalized in Betty Smith's 1943 novel, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*.

Four introduced Piedmont trees merit the NC Native Plant Society's Rank 1—Severe Threat—designation: Tree-of-Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), Mimosa (*Albizia julibrissin*), Princess Tree (*Paulownia tomentosa*), and Callery Pear 'Bradford' (*Pyrus calleryana*). Asian natives, they all thrive in disturbed soils, but also invade more pristine habitats.

Tree-of-Heaven (so called in China because it survives at high altitudes where other trees cannot) was introduced as an ornamental into Philadelphia in 1748, and was brought into the western US by Chinese immigrants during the 1850s Gold

Rush, for medicinal uses. It now grows in all but seven US states. A prodigious seed producer, *Ailanthus* also sprouts from its roots and forms dense stands; it is allelopathic as well, producing chemicals in its roots and leaves that inhibit the growth of other plants (the sap is toxic, so people trying to dig *Ailanthus* out should wear protective gear). The fetid, pinnately compound leaves resemble the leaves of Black Walnut and sumacs, but unlike those species, the leaflets of *Ailanthus* have

Mimosa, native from Iran to China, also was an early ornamental introduction into the US (1745). Mimosa's fern-like leaves and puffy pink flowers are readily recognized, but don't let its pretty looks deceive you: it can form dense stands, outcompeting other plants for

sunlight and water, increasing soil nitrogen (it's in the Pea Family), sprouting vigorously after being cut back, and producing abundant seeds that stay in the seed bank for years. It is present in most of the US, except for the upper Midwest and the Pacific Northwest.



Bradford Pear spreading in woods in Richmond Co., NC

-Will Stuart

Princess Tree, named in honor of Czar Paul I's daughter, is another nuisance tree that can aggressively invade both disturbed and undisturbed habitats, including riparian areas. It has large (up to 12" long), opposite, heart-shaped, velvety leaves, and produces large quantities of wind-dispersed fruit that germinates quickly. The tan, round flower buds are also velvety and are produced in late summer, remaining on the tree until the large purple flowers bloom the following spring. Like Mimosa and Tree-of-Heaven, Princess (continued next page)

Chlorofiends! (cont.)



Leaflets of Tree-of-Heaven



Leaves of Chinese Parasol-tree -Lisa Gould

Tree sends up root sprouts, grows rapidly (up to 15' in a year), and can tolerate poor soils. It is present from New York and southern New England south to Florida and Texas, into the Midwest, and in Washington State.

Callery Pear wins my award for the most boring tree ever brought into cultivation, with its uniform shape repeating itself endlessly across urban and suburban landscapes. Not only is it boring, it can form dense colonies and has spread aggressively in most of the eastern and south-central US. Michael Dirr notes that it was introduced into Boston's Arnold Arboretum in 1908, and the cultivar 'Bradford' developed in 1919 with the hope that it would help breed resistance to the fungal disease "fireblight" into commercial fruiting pears. While this did not work out, a number of ornamental cultivars of the Callery Pear resulted. The 'Bradford' cultivar was supposedly sterile, but it turned out that cross-pollination among the various cultivars, and grafting issues, enabled fertile fruit to be formed. While birds and mammals eat the fruit, few insects find the foliage of use, making this tree of very low value to breeding songbirds, which relish caterpillars for their young. In one experiment conducted by Doug Tallamy, a White Oak tree was examined at eye level, to see how many

caterpillars were present: they counted 410 caterpillars, of many species. The same experiment was conducted on Bradford Pear, and only one caterpillar, of one species, was found.

Paper Mulberry (*Broussonetia papyrifera*) and White Mulberry (*Morus alba*) are ranked as "Serious Threat" by the NCNPS. Both are Asian natives that can form dense stands and spread into disturbed areas, roadsides, and moist forests. Paper Mulberry, also known as Tapa-cloth Tree, is important economically in Asia, where it has been used to make paper, cloth, furniture, and medicine. White Mulberry was introduced by the early settlers, in a failed attempt to import the mulberry-eating silkworm and create a silk industry. This species, now present in every US state except Nevada, hybridizes with the native Red Mulberry (*Morus rubra*) and may be displacing it.

Sawtooth Oak (*Quercus acutissima*) was introduced from Asia in 1962 and has now spread from Pennsylvania south to Georgia and west to Louisiana. Planted as an ornamental because of its tolerance to soil compaction, drought, and air pollution, it has also been used in wildlife food plots, possibly because this oak matures (continued next page)

Chlorofiends! (cont.)

rapidly and is able to produce fruit within five years from the acorn's sprouting. Sawtooth Oak has narrow, toothed leaves with a bristle on each tooth; the large acorns have fringed caps. To date there is no evidence that it can hybridize with native oaks, but given its recent introduction, it seems too early to predict its impact.

Three other Piedmont trees are not ranked by the NCNPS, but are spreading here and in other states: Chinese Parasol-tree (*Firmiana simplex*), Crape-myrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica*), and Weeping Higan Cherry (*Prunus subhirtella* var. *pendula*). I first saw Parasol-tree in my Winston-Salem neighborhood and was curious what this tree with smooth bark, an even bole, and huge, lobed tropical-looking leaves could be. I eventually met the homeowner, who told me his property once belonged to someone in the Reynolds family, and that the seeds had been brought from the south Pacific area around World War II (horticulturist Michael Dirr says it was introduced into the nursery trade in 1957). Since then I've seen many saplings in my neighbor's yard, as well as in the woods at the Reynolda Estate. This self-fertile tree produces an abundance of seeds. It's now on the radar of invasive.org, which suggests it should be a candidate for the [Early Detection & Rapid Response](#) program.

Crape-myrtle needs no introduction—it is a widely planted ornamental the South. This Asian native is considered invasive in states from Maryland to Texas; as NCNPS member Kathy Schlosser notes, “the more there are, the more they seem to spread”. And the same seems to be true of Higan Cherry, another Asian species that tolerates heat, cold, and stress once it's established, and that has a longer life than most ornamental cherries. We battle this species constantly at the Emily Allen Preserve here in Winston-Salem, and I've observed it along roadsides and other



Winter buds of Princess Tree -Lisa Gould

areas where it was clearly not planted. The message remains clear: GO NATIVE!

Chlorofiends! is a regular column in *Native Plant News*. If you have information or comments on invasive species in North Carolina, please share them with Lisa Gould (lisal Gould@gmail.com).

For more information about invasive species in North Carolina, visit the NCNPS's website at www.ncwildflower.org/index.php/plant_galleries/invasives_list and the NC Invasive Plant Council website at <http://nceppc.weebly.com/>. To determine the nativity of North Carolina plants, consult Alan Weakley's *Flora of the Southern & Mid-Atlantic States*, available as a searchable and downloadable PDF at <http://www.herbarium.unc.edu/flora.htm>.

*Thanks to Jim Butcher's The Dresden Files for the column title.

Chapter News

Margaret Reid Chapter:

A Plant Rescue with a Cause

On nearly any given weekend the NCNPS sponsors plant rescues in the Triangle area to translocate plants that are in the path of construction equipment. NCNPS has conducted rescues from the construction sites for roads and greenways in Cary and Apex as well as a large development in Chatham County. Typically there are between 5 and 10 folks who show up to participate in the rescues, ranging from retired school teachers and a marketing/financial specialist to retired military members and specialists in horticultural sciences.

Part of the fun of these rescues is learning the native flora of North Carolina and sharing that experience with others. Preparation for these rescues requires us to coordinate with developers and landowners for permission. We have a great relationship with the Chatham Park Developers to get advance notice of construction scheduled in the near-term and we get in ahead of the timbering/construction equipment on a search and rescue mission for the native plants that may otherwise not survive.

Earlier this year, the Margaret Reid Chapter received a request for some assistance on a project. The North Carolina Museum of Art (NCMA) was taking on the significant task of eradicating non-native and invasive plants from a section of their woodland park and wanted to restore the area using native plants. They asked if there was a chance we could help them with a source for the replacement plants, to recommend a local nursery or other source.

Our group suggested instead that we conduct a “targeted” rescue to source the plants for the NCMA restoration project. The curator of horticulture at the museum was enthusiastic



at the idea of collecting native plants from around the area. On Oct. 29th, we had 11 NCNPS and NCMA members show up to rescue plants at two of our Chatham Park development sites in Pittsboro. We split into two groups. The first group (three members) rescued about 100 Christmas Ferns (*Polystichum acrostichoides*) and the remaining volunteers rescued about 150 various other plants. Some of the species rescued were Downy Rattlesnake Plantain Orchid (*Goodyera pubescens*), Cutleaf Grape Fern (*Sceptridium dissectum*), Cranefly Orchid (*Tipularia discolor*), Partridgeberry (*Mitchella repens*), Green-headed Coneflower (*Rudbeckia laciniata*), Ebony Spleenwort (*Asplenium platyneuron*) and Rattlesnake Fern (*Botrypus virginianus*).

Four days after the dedicated rescue, the NCMA had a separate group of volunteers plant the native plants in their new home along a creek at the museum. While this is a good start to the restoration project, many more plants will be needed to represent our diverse North Carolina native flora. We don't have a date for the next targeted rescue, but it will likely be in early in 2018 when we can collect a wide variety of spring ephemerals.

—John Clarke

(Chapter News continued next page)

Chapter News (cont.)

Southern Piedmont Chapter

The Southern Piedmont Chapter and UNC Charlotte Botanical Garden booth at the Monarch Festival in Charlotte was abuzz Oct. 7th with inquisitive children and adults. This first-ever event was organized by **Angel Hjarding** of the NC Wildlife Federation's Butterfly Highway program and was held uptown in First Ward Park. The festival included a pollinator parade with delightfully costumed children, Monarch tagging, as well as many educational and "make and take" craft booths. The NCNPS/UNCC booth focused on the key connection between caterpillars and host plants, displaying nine examples of live plants. Visitors were engaged with the concept of solving "pollinator math". With pictures of caterpillars and butterflies paired to host plants, we made the point that without the variable of the right plant "x", you can't arrive at butterflies! Booth visitors were intrigued by the fact that while butterflies may generalize as they collect nectar, caterpillars are in fact very specialized and many can only eat 1-2 plants during their life cycle. Visitors were also surprised to learn that some caterpillars actually use grasses as host plants. So....if you want to attract more butterflies to your garden, think about planting their caterpillar host plants first.



Butterfly/Caterpillar	Host Plant Botanical Name	Common Name
American Lady	<i>Antennaria</i>	Pussytoes
Common Buckeye	<i>Penstemon digitalis</i>	Beardtongue
Painted Lady	<i>Helianthus</i>	Sunflower
Red-banded Hairstreak	<i>Quercus</i>	Oak
Eastern Tiger Swallowtail	<i>Magnolia virginiana</i>	Sweetbay Magnolia
Least Skipper	<i>Schizachyrium</i>	Little Bluestem Grass
Spicebush Swallowtail	<i>Lindera benzoin</i>	Spicebush
Variegated Fritillary	<i>Sedum ternatum</i>	Woodland Sedum

Thank you to the website plantmorenatives.com for this list, and to **Lisy McLeod**, NCNPS Board Member and Program Chair for this resource. Thank you to **Paula Gross**, Assistant Director UNCC Botanical Gardens for providing plant materials. Thank you to **Liz Wahls** for volunteering in our booth.

—**Beth Davis & Paula Gross**

See Festival Photos on p 13!

Choose an 'Edgy' Native!

By Bettina Darveaux

The leaf margins of some sedges might cut you, but that is not what I mean by cutting-edge. Every industry has its cutting-edge, pioneering, trail-blazing, or innovative new technologies or products and that also includes the nursery industry. Of course sedges are not new to the vegetation of our planet, but the realization of their merits in the garden do seem to be recently discovered and appreciated.

Sedges are flowering monocots in the Cyperaceae family and are found worldwide, especially in temperate and cold regions. They generally inhabit moist environments. They have grass-like leaves with parallel venation and can sometimes be confused with the related monocot plant families, the grasses (*Poaceae*) and the rushes (*Juncaceae*). It is easy to distinguish sedges by their 3-sided solid stems if you remember this ditty, "Sedges have edges, grasses have asses (hollow internodes), and rushes are round."

We are all very familiar with the universally loved, large, colorful, showy flowers widely available in the nursery trade and which are well represented in gardens. On the other hand, native plant folks are skilled at noticing and appreciating the subtle beauty, and unique floral structures of our cherished native species. In fact, sedges have either highly reduced or even absent perianth parts (petals and sepals) and yet are florally attractive! Take for instance White-topped Sedge

(*Rhynchospora colorata* syn. *Dichromena colorata*). White-topped Sedge has no perianth but numerous flowering spikelets in a dense terminal head that is subtended by white-colored foliaceous bracts. It is very showy, particularly en masse, and it will grow en masse! This sedge is rhizomatous and if it happily finds itself in a moist, sunny location, it will spread like gangbusters! I initially made the mistake by placing it in my bog garden, which I then had to dig out and redo as my

pitcher plants were being swallowed. I now have my White-topped Sedge growing in less-than-ideal areas of the garden to keep it in check.

Another sedge I am excited to have growing in my garden is Gray's Sedge (*Carex grayi*). This sedge has separate male and female flowers on the same plant (monoecious). Again having no perianth parts, the female flower spikes mature to be quite eye-catching with its large mace-like structure. Gray's Sedge forms a nice neat mound and likes shady areas of the garden. As an added year-round garden benefit, the foliage is evergreen. The same growth habit is true for Seersucker

or Plantain-leaved Sedge (*Carex plantaginea*). My Seersucker Sedge blooms in early March but it is the foliage that is its greatest attribute. Like seersucker fabric, the texture of the leaves is puckered making them quite interesting. It forms a nice dark-green evergreen mound in my shade garden.

My most recent sedge additions include Blue Wood Sedge

(continued next page)



White-topped sedge brightens this sunny, moist corner of the garden.

'Edgy' Sedges (cont.)

(*Carex flaccosperma*) and Cherokee Sedge (*Carex cherokeensis*). I have had neither plant long enough to observe their flowering, but I do enjoy the color and textural contrast between the wide, bluish-colored leaves of Blue Wood Sedge with the very narrow yellow-green foliage of Cherokee Sedge. Blue Wood Sedge is clump forming while Cherokee Sedge is rhizomatous, therefore perfect for filling in the lower canopy layer of the shade garden. Both these sedges also are evergreen. Like any native plant enthusiast who loves to try out new plants, I am looking forward to adding the next cool sedge to my garden, that being Fraser's Sedge (*Carex fraseriana*, syn. *Cymophyllus fraserianus*).

Whether it is because of their interesting foliage, their flower structures, or both, sedges seem to finally have come into their own as wonderful additions to the native plant garden. They are "edgy" in more ways than one!

-All photos by **Bettina Darveaux**



Female spikes of Gray's Sedge with individual female flowers enclosed within their sac-like perigynium. Male spikes are also visible in the background having tan-colored empty anthers.



Male and female flowers on different parts of the same flowering spike in Seersucker Sedge during March.



Interesting puckered leaves of Seersucker Sedge.

Charlotte Monarch Festival Fun!



Festival founder Angel Hjarding and UNCC's Paula Gross show their wings at NCNPS's South Piedmont Chapter booth.



Moss Garden Sanctuary

When we moved into our home in Chapel Hill some 30 years ago, there was a small area of moss at the bottom of a slope that I fell in love with and wanted to nurture. Nurturing means keeping leaves off and pulling weeds out. The moss, being happy, gradually spread into a full-size garden. The luminous, chartreuse green mosses glow in the sunlight because each leaf is only one cell thick, so they are transparent. The many kinds of mosses in the garden are all native to our county so they contribute a sense of Place. And a sense of Time. Moss is ancient. The first plants to colonize the land, they can still reproduce sexually only in the presence of drops of water.

Helping to create the shade that the mosses need, there is an extremely tall Southern Magnolia, which is the Guardian Tree. Her branches dip down to touch the ground, and you can sit inside her circle of embrace. Magnolias are also ancient, the very first trees to develop flowers. Expanding out from the moss into the forest are over 250 species of native trees, shrubs, vines, ferns, and wildflowers, a wildlife sanctuary, a human sanctuary, too.

The moss garden is a place of healing. If I'm tired and do some moss-weeding I feel rejuvenated. I call it "bending to the green" and feel like I'm bathing in green endorphins. Lying on the soft bed of moss creates a deep sense of rest. Walking on it barefoot, you can feel the green energies rise up through the soles of delighted feet. The green glow emanating all around you provides a sense, almost, of a compassionate presence. The moss garden thrives in every season. In spring the dappled sunlight on the moss makes the air glow green. It is indeed a "green room." All summer, the expanse of glowing green soothes the eyes. In winter it is an oasis of intense greenness, and little moss plants sticking up through the snow are a



sweet sight. Peering through a magnifying glass, a whole intricate miniature world emerges to stimulate the imagination. The broad expanse of moss is like a canvas, inspiring ideas for constantly changing combinations of rocks, wildflowers, ferns, and moss. Our friends love to have tea in the moss garden; it's an outdoor teahouse with a beautiful view.

The broad carpet of moss in our garden is a constantly evolving mixture of *Mnium*, *Plagiomnium*, *Bryoandersonia*, and *Entodon*.

Polytrichum and *Hypnum*, though, and *Atrichum* where it is happy, are so dense they grow alone in lovely patches. "*Mnium*" is the ancient Greek word for moss. Because so many of the mosses in our garden end in "um," *Polytrichum*, *Aulacomium*, *Climacium*, *Dicranum*, *Thuidium*, *Leucobryum*, *Hypnum*, I call them collectively "The Ums."

The enclosed moss garden is a sacred place, a temenos, for earth-honoring ceremonies. There is a rock and moss (*Atrichum* and *Dicranum*) shrine to Mother Earth. There is also a spiral of milky quartz and *Leucobryum* to celebrate that beautiful combination so often found in the wild. In the center of the garden is a little moss-roofed spirit house attached to a large male persimmon tree. It seems natural that Japanese temples to the Spirits are surrounded by moss gardens.

If you want to begin a moss garden, I would recommend looking around your property to see if there are mosses already growing somewhere. If so, that means they like the growing conditions, and that's a good place to start tending them and letting them expand. My favorite books on mosses and moss gardening are Annie Martins' *The Magical World of Moss Gardening*; George Schenk's *Moss Gardening*; and *Gathering Moss*, by Robin Wall Kimmerer.

—Betty Lou Chaika

Native Places



Graveyard Fields at Milepost 419 on the Blue Ridge Parkway is one of our state's premier native plant destinations. The Yellowstone Prong meanders through a valley in the shadow of Black Balsam Mountain. In early to mid-May, the Parkway is lined with blooming Mountain Fetterbush (*Pieris floribunda*) and stunning Pinkshell Azaleas (*Rhododendron vaseyi*). Throughout the summer, wildflowers and handsome shrubs line a mile-long hiking trail that connects upper and lower waterfalls. Graveyard Fields may save its best for last. In early October, fall colors decorate the surrounding mountain slopes and bright red *Vaccinium* (shrubs that include blueberries and cranberries) transform the valley. That's a sight not to be missed! Be advised that Graveyard Fields is very popular with hikers. An early morning hike is best.

—Article and photos by **Will Stuart**





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**We're
Wild
About
Natives!**



Betty Lou Chaika