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MAY 2013

UPSTATE *happenings*

Picking Up Pawpaws! See story at right.

Tuesday, June 18, 7:00 pm
Standing Up Mountains

It began with a phone call by a whip-smart teenager to a non-practicing attorney. It ended with a mountain saved from near destruction, a new legal precedent, and the historic Appalachian Trail maintained for another generation to enjoy. **STAND UP THAT MOUNTAIN: The Battle to Save One Small Community in the Wilderness Along the Appalachian Trail** by Jay Leutze (Scribner), is a classic underdog tale and the true story — akin to A Civil Action — of an outdoorsman living alone in Western North Carolina who teams up with his neighbors to save a treasured mountain and section of the Appalachian trail from being destroyed.

Jay Leutze is a board member of the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy. Greenville.

INVASIVE ALERT:

Fig Buttercup has just been discovered in Greenville County. Never heard of it? Try Lesser Celandine. It may be in the gardening catalog on your kitchen table.

This is SC's first sighting of *Ficaria verna* growing outside of cultivation. It is a vigorous plant that emerges in early Spring before most natives, forming a green blanket which, once established, native plants cannot penetrate. Toothworts, Dutchman's Breeches, Trout Lily, Trillium and Bloodroot are some of the natives most at risk.



Map courtesy of EDDmaps.org

It produces numerous tubers and bulblets, each of which can grow into a new plant when separated from the parent by animals or well-meaning weed-pullers, or carried downstream. Its bright buttery yellow flowers are in bloom now — an infestation looking like a green carpet with yellow dots, growing in low open woods, floodplains, meadows and waste places. After flowering, its above-ground parts die back and are mostly gone by June; it survives the winter as thickened fingerlike underground stems.

This is a very serious and challenging pest, and it is important that we do everything we can to prevent its establishing a beachhead. Its short life cycle offers very little time to attempt control.

Chemical pesticides can be effective, but are best used early before natives and amphibians have emerged. Small infestations can be tackled by hand digging with a small trowel, but soil disturbance can encourage further infestation. If digging is attempted, care must be taken to bag every scrap of plant, and make sure they are completely dead before delivering to a landfill.

Learn more at http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/cs/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr_010251.pdf, <http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/fact/rafi1.htm>, and www.namethatplant.net/article_ficaria.shtml

Picking Up Pawpaws!

They're not exactly pretty, and National Public Radio calls them "America's forgotten fruit." But the fact is, pawpaws are a prize. Thomas Jefferson grew the homely but tasty fruits at Monticello, and proudly sent seeds to friends in France. Nineteenth-century explorers Lewis and Clark, who evidently were as adept at wild food foraging as they were at mapmaking, relied on pawpaws when other provisions ran low during their transcontinental ramble.

As the only temperate member of the *Annonaceae* family, pawpaw is related to such tropical fruits as cherimoya, atemoya, soursop, and guanabana. Although the pawpaw's yellow, custard-like flesh is high in antioxidants and possesses a luscious flavor that has been described as "mango meets banana meets pineapple," pawpaws aren't found in the supermarket. For years their seeds weren't even commercially available. (Several seed catalogs now carry potted trees and bare-root cultivars.) The only way you could enjoy one of these exotic treats was to wander through an Eastern forest until you found the distinctive tropical-looking foliage of *Asimina triloba*, normally an understory tree that reaches only about 25 feet. The fruits hang in high clusters and the preferred method of harvest is to shake the tree. When they're ripe, the skin darkens and becomes spotted and freckled.

If you'd like to learn more about pawpaws, bring your questions to our May meeting, when Dave Oulette will regale us with tales of his pawpaw trials at The Musser Fruit Research Center. Oulette has worked as a research horticulturist at the "Musser Farm," as it's known, almost since it opened in 1994. This 240-acre fruit tree research facility has long been known as Ground Zero for Clemson University's famous peach trials. The farm's unique location, on an Oconee County peninsula surrounded on three sides by Lake Hartwell, creates a microclimate where peach trees are protected from spring freezes. Other fruits grown at Musser Farm include nectarine, almond, apricot, cherry, plum and wild *Prunus* species. — *Jeanne Malmgren*

Oulette holds an M.S. in Horticulture from N.C. State University and not only manages the Musser Farm orchards but also supervises graduate students conducting research in the farm's 2,500-square-foot laboratory and greenhouses. For almost a decade, that research included data collection on an older pawpaw variety. Remnants of that trial still grow at the farm.

David Oulette

Manager of Musser Fruit Farm

Tuesday, May 21, 7:00 pm

Founders Hall in Dining Commons, Southern Wesleyan University, Central

For a map and more information, visit <http://www.scnps.org>

Have you renewed your membership yet?

You can do it online: <http://scnps.org/scnps-membership/renew-membership/>

**South Carolina
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Upstate Chapter

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Spring Plant Sale

The Spring Plant Sale is all wrapped up and as usual we have a lot of great volunteers who deserve a lot of credit for contributing their time, energy, and expertise to make the plant sale a great event for our upstate community. This year I want to thank the group but I also want to draw special attention to four volunteers who carried a lot of weight this spring.

Jo Anne Connor was responsible for much of the advertising that we had this year. She took a list of contacts and spent hours sending emails and making calls to be sure the SCNPS had stories and blurbs and calendar of event listings in a wide array of publications throughout the upstate. Taking advantage of free publicity is important for a non-profit like the SCNPS that is trying to save every dollar for restoration projects. It's also frustrating and time consuming at times. This was a huge undertaking and I am thankful to have someone as dedicated as Jo Anne helping with the sale. Indeed after all of the time she put in presale, she showed up on Saturday with a smile and claim tickets to make the holding area run like clock work. Incredible!

Katie Dickson is also an invaluable asset to the SCNPS. She took on the task of vendor liaison for the sale and this is no easy task. We have a wonderful group of vendors who support the SCNPS plant sales but getting a large group like this organized is no small feat. On sale day when I walked around to check on the vendors I found every single one had made it there on time with their plants correctly tagged according to their assigned color. Each vendor had an inventory in hand and a vendor agreement on file. I literally did not do a thing except smile and shake hands but for some reason I got thanks for the sale being well organized. I did not deserve these thanks. Katie is the one who made it happen.

Last but certainly not least is Kitty and Miller Putnam. This couple of long time SCNPS members volunteered the use of their beautiful greenhouse to house the leftovers from the fall sale. I know from experience that over wintering container plants is a difficult task that requires constant attention. Irrigation requires maintenance and when plants fall over for absolutely no reason whatsoever, which they do repeatedly, they need to be stood back up before they become deformed or worse. Running a nursery is exhausting and it takes a lot of skill and patience. This spring when the set up crew arrived at the Putnam's we were presented with truckloads of beautiful plants. I dare say they were the best looking plants we had in the sale. This was an invaluable service given to the SCNPS this year and I cannot say thank you enough.

These four special volunteers and all of our setup and sale day volunteers made this a wonderful event. You all deserve our gratitude. Thank you. — Ryan Merck, SCNPS Plant Sale Coordinator



Now Showing — Downy Serviceberry!

Graceful simplicity. Those two words aptly describe the white or slightly tinted pink flowers of serviceberry (*Amelanchier arborea*) common to our mountains, piedmont, and the inner coastal plain of the Palmetto State. It is a member of Rosaceae (Rose Family).

The blossoms, about one inch in diameter, normally appear before the leaves in showy semi-erect clusters in late March to early May, oftentimes blooming around Easter. People have gathered the flowers for church services, perhaps giving the "service" connotation in its common name. Speaking of which, there is no shortage of other common names: sarvisberry, shadbush, juneberry, and sugarplum are familiar ones. The leaves (alternate, simple, oval to oblong), when they do emerge, arrive downy on the underside — a characteristic helpful to identification.

Serviceberry prefers moist habitats in well-drained soil including chestnut oak and oak-hickory forests, and around edges of bottomland hardwood forests. This species tolerates varying light levels, but is happiest in full sun. It will also grow in dry areas.

Its wood is extremely hard, and in years past was suitable for making into tool handles and hunting arrows. Today, serviceberry is often used as an ornamental in native landscapes.

Besides the wood's benefit, over forty bird species including cardinals, cedar waxwings, mockingbirds, and towhees love the red-purple berries that ripen in summer. Not all wildlife fly in for lunch, though. Squirrels, rabbits, chipmunks, voles, foxes, black bears and deer come by ground and either enjoy the fruit or browse the twigs and leaves. And, not to be overlooked, humans enjoy the fresh blueberry-like taste of the fruit in pies and muffins. — Steve Marlow