



# UPSTATE happenings

www.scnps.org

OCTOBER 2015

NEWSLETTER OF THE UPSTATE CHAPTER OF THE SC NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

## Upcoming Events ± Approximate Times

### Saturday, Sep 26, 9:00am-3:00pm National Hunting and Fishing Day

The Upstate Chapter will host a native plant and invasives educational booth for this event at Duke Energy's World of Energy at Lake Keowee. To help out please contact Cathy at [creas@clmson.edu](mailto:creas@clmson.edu) or 864-202-5062.

### NPS Greenhouse Sale: Oct. 1, 2, and 3 Just in time for fall planting, NPS members are invited to a sale at Miller and Kitty Putnam's greenhouse. On Oct 1-3 (Thursday, Friday & Saturday) from 9am-6pm, members can shop with a 10% discount.

All summer Miller and a group of volunteers have been propagating plants, and we have a good selection of herbaceous perennials and some shrubs and trees. A list will be available later in September.

The greenhouse is located at 180 Lakeside Dr, Greenville, just a mile from our sale site at Conestee Park. You can contact Miller at 864 325-9700 with questions. You are always welcome to shop at the greenhouse by appointment with Miller if these dates do not work for you.

October is the best time of year to put new plants in your landscape. The heat and stress of summer is over, and roots will have all winter to take hold in your landscape.

Proceeds from all our plant sales help fund the costs of our monthly meetings and speakers, special projects, educational outreach, newsletter, and field trips, among other things. Shop (with cash, check, or credit card) and support SCNPS at the same time!

### Saturday, Oct 17, 10:30am - 3pm Field Trip to Burk's Mountain, GA

Leader: Bill Stringer

Carpool meets at 8:15am Home Depot, 1339 S. Pleasantburg Rd., Greenville OR meet at 10:30am in the parking lot of Angies Steak & Seafood, 6003 Clarks Hill Rd., Appling, GA (at Pollards Corner) Burk's Mountain is part of a very small (3 peaks in 3 miles) mountain range on the lower edge of the Piedmont, just north of Augusta, GA.

So, you ask, "Why would we travel that far to see some native plants?" Well, what makes this tiny little mountain such a fascinating field trip venue is the geology. Much of the mountain-side is composed of serpentinite, a complex rock type that is formed when water comes in contact with high-base rocks under hot conditions, as in crustal plate boundaries under the ocean. At Burk's, rocks that have been thrust

(continued on page 2)

## Invasive epigeic earthworms, altered Ecology & the endangered white irisette...

IN SOUTH CAROLINA

*Sisyrinchium dichotomum*, commonly referred to as white irisette, is a rare herbaceous species belonging to the large and varied Blue Eyed Grass genus. It has been listed as federally endangered since 1991, with only a handful of populations still present in North and South Carolina. As recent as 1942 it was still considered a fairly common occurrence in its native range, but many factors have contributed to its decline over the years. Of course, there are the usual suspects: loss of habitat due to human activities, invasive plants competing for available space and resources, and the widespread use of herbicides. There is also newly discovered evidence that suggests invasive epigeic earthworms are speeding along the demise of this species, as reported in 2014 by Dr. Douglas Rayner of Wofford College.

Since 1998 Dr. Rayner has been studying the endangered white irisette, choosing the two largest populations documented in South Carolina as his subjects. With the help of Wofford students and facilities, he has cataloged and assessed information such as population size and seed production, as well as documenting the sites where the plants are present, including measurements of soil depth and leaf litter. As you can imagine, this has resulted in a wealth of data that can now be used to work towards the long term goal of protecting and restoring the dwindling populations of *Sisyrinchium dichotomum* still existing in our area. The bulk of the remaining white irisette communities occur in sites that have suffered some disturbance, which contributes to the overall instability of the ecosystems these plants call home, and also sheds light onto what is necessary for the plants to thrive. Research has shown that there is an overall downward trend in the occurrences that were studied, but there is no reason to give up hope yet.

At our October meeting Dr. Rayner will discuss his findings from 17 years of analyzing the Chestnut Ridge and Melrose Mountain populations of white irisette, highlighting the recent connection with non-native epigeic earthworms, and emphasizing the need for continued research and management. The insights already compiled by Dr. Rayner and his students provide the necessary stepping stones for future long term studies designed to further uncover the finer details of the white irisette life cycle, as well as isolate the main contributing factors of this species' decline. If we all work together, we just might be able to reverse the current trend towards extinction, ensuring these wildflowers will be around for future generations to enjoy.

— Mary Holcombe

## Dr. Douglas Alan Rayner

Associate Professor of Biology at Wofford College

Tuesday, October 20, 7:00 pm

Wofford College, 429 North Church Street, Spartanburg

☞ Meet at the Wofford admissions parking lot

(View campus map at [www.youvisit.com/tour/wofford](http://www.youvisit.com/tour/wofford).)

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## Upcoming Events (continued from page 1)

upward as plates moved are now exposed on land. Serpentinite outcrops can contain a variety of rock types, including talc, steatite (asbestos) and soapstone. These and other serpentinite rocks contain a variety of metallic elements, some of which are toxic to plants (such as nickel and chromium). As these rocks weather into soil, these toxic elements become available. This condition excludes many plant species that don't tolerate these elements, and leads to the presence of interesting plants that have evolved to be tolerant of these conditions.

Bring water, lunch and snacks and wear field footwear and clothing. To reserve your space, email [judy\\_seeley@hotmail.com](mailto:judy_seeley@hotmail.com) AND Bill Stringer at [catboyz@nctv.com](mailto:catboyz@nctv.com). Include your cell phone number, name, number in your party and indicate if you wish to carpool or are interested in camping at Mistletoe State Park. (Make your own reservation to camp.)



Burks Mountain, Columbia County, Georgia  
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**Monday, Oct 19, 3 - 5:00pm, Work Day in the "Skip Still Meadow," SC DNR Clemson Office • 311 Natural Resources Drive, Clemson.**

**Project Leader: Bill Stringer**

Help plant native grasses and forbs in the meadow, remove invasives, and maintain a rain garden and rain barrels. RSVP or questions... Contact Cathy at [creas@clemson.edu](mailto:creas@clemson.edu) or (864) 202-5062

**Tuesday, Oct 20, 7:00pm, Spartanburg**  
**Speaker: Doug Rayner**  
(See article Page 1.)

**Thursday, Nov 12, 9am - 12noon, Morning Work Session at our Cleveland Park Site, Downtown Greenville.** Plant rescued ferns and wildflowers!

Meet at the Vietnam Memorial in the Park. Parking is in the Lower Zoo parking lot (opposite intersection of Cleveland Park Dr and Lakehurst St). Bring gloves and digging tool. Contact Bill Sharpton at [gsharpton@aol.com](mailto:gsharpton@aol.com)

**Tuesday, Nov 17, 7:00pm, SWU, Central**  
**Speaker: Bobby Holliday**

Creator of the film *Crown of the Carolinas*, musician/filmmaker Bobby Holliday will present portions of his DVD film which showcases our area's unique profusion of rare plants, such as the Oconee Bells. Plan on seeing Holliday's skillfully photographed panoramas of the Blue Ridge Mountains, lakes, waterfalls, and wildlife. You just might leave this meeting with a renewed appreciation for where we call "home"!

## Basic Botany starts participants on the road to the Certificate in Native Plant Studies...

In spite of continuous downpours outside on Sep 9th, attendees in the program's introductory class delve into Radford's *Vascular Flora of the Carolinas* to key out a plant under the direction of Jeff Beacham.



## Love those Field Trips!!

### Coordinators Needed

Field trips to special native plant areas are one of the joys of belonging to the Upstate NPS chapter. If you have gone on a field trip, you know what fun it is. However, it takes some planning and organizing to select places to visit, find trip leaders, write newsletter articles, and keep track of participants. The current field trips coordinator will be heavily involved in planning the Spring 2016 Upstate Plant Sale and will not be able to do both jobs at once. Volunteers are needed to (*do one or several*):

- \* **Plan a field trip:** select and research a good trip destination, find a good trip leader, pick a date and times, and write a calendar item for the newsletter.
- \* **Lead a field trip.**
- \* **Keep track of field trip sign-ups.** Take a load off trip planners and leaders by being

the contact person with whom participants sign up via email and phone. Coordinate with the trip leader re carpools, paperwork, and last minute details.

- \* **Take over as field trips coordinator!**

More information (and training) available; contact Judy at [judy\\_seeley@hotmail.com](mailto:judy_seeley@hotmail.com) or 864 855-6396.

For updates and more information about SCNPS, go to [www.scnps.org](http://www.scnps.org)