

# TENNESSEE NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Volume 45, Number 4

December 2021

## *In the beginning...*

Late in 1977 the Tennessee Native Plant Society was formed. The earliest surviving newsletter is Vol. 2, No. 1 dated January 15, 1979. The following President's Message was written by TNPS President Robert E. Farmer, Jr. and is excerpted from that newsletter. Enjoy!

"Since December 1977, we have grown from an idea to an organization of about 650 members. We have met together in the natural meeting places of botanists to enjoy the region's diverse reservoir of flora and to think, plan and give hard direction to our goal of maintaining this diversity. This direction is now taking form in an active field program, in the beginnings of general conservation efforts, and in the strength of regular communication among folks of similar interests. As with most new efforts, our work has mixed uncertain starts with clear successes. The year has been one of emerging ideas, interest and energy, and I have enjoyed it."

"Under Ed Cox's leadership, the monthly field trips are now an institution. Some have been quiet Saturday morning gatherings of a few people to visit, for example, the remnants of a tall grass prairie or an endangered streamside golden-aster. Others have been large occasions requiring divisions into walking groups with leaders and guides. But all involved new names, faces and places, and the many strands of conversation which will gradually build the web of our becoming a constituency for plants. We look forward to January's indoor discussion of endangered species in Tennessee, and to Ed Clebsch's February tramp to the state's scattered groves of eastern white cedar. George Ramseur's good organization of the Savage Gulf occasion has already prompted mention of return to that area."

"Some efforts have been striking in their clarity of purpose and execution. In early autumn Joan Vaughn decided that a note paper series on Tennessee's rare and endangered flora was needed. At her prompting the essential team of taxonomist (Leo Collins), artists (Andrea Higdon and Babs McBride) and printer was assembled. They went to work and the first of the series is now available."

"Our conservation programs are emerging from diverse plans: the U. S. Forest Service in North Carolina has been receptive to our offer of help in designing vegetation management plans for some sensitive high-country areas on the Tennessee-N. Carolina border; we hope to be working with the Forest Service's landscape architect soon. A bill is being drafted which, if successfully moved through the General Assembly, will provide legislative foundation to the State's ginseng conservation program. Another bill aimed at generally giving some State protection to endangered and threatened species is also in the drafting stage. We will be shepherding these pieces of legislation over the course of the next few years. Mary Palmer Kelley reports that the first TNPS "plant dig" will probably take place in late February or March. And Rex Boner has been fitting people with tasks in response to our recent membership interest survey." [One paragraph skipped.]

"Perhaps our most important function at this early stage of TNPS evolution is developing a sense of community. The newsletter, about which we receive much favorable comment, will for present be a focal point in this development. We hope you will not only read it, but contribute to it. From the newsletter, our monthly field gatherings and the projects requiring group effort, we believe there is emerging the community of active interest which will underpin our effective constituency for Tennessee's native flora. At this stage, the organization especially needs the continuing support of those who this year expressed their commitment to Tennessee's flora by becoming charter members. Please renew this commitment by promptly returning the membership renewal form in this newsletter."

## TNPS Newsletter

This newsletter is a publication of the Tennessee Native Plant Society and is published four times a year, generally in March, June, September, and December.

The Tennessee Native Plant Society (TNPS) was founded in 1978. Its purposes are to assist in the exchange of information and encourage fellowship among Tennessee's botanists, both amateur and professional; to promote public education about Tennessee flora and wild plants in general; to provide, through publication of a newsletter or journal, a formal means of documenting information on Tennessee flora and of informing the public about wild plants; and to promote the protection and enhancement of Tennessee's wild plant communities.

Dues for each calendar year are:  
Individual/Family: \$20  
Student: Complimentary  
Institution: \$50  
Life: \$250

Dues may be sent to:  
Tennessee Native Plant Society  
P.O. Box 159274  
Nashville, TN 37215

### *Officers*

Karen Ripple Hill, President  
Allan Trently, Vice-President  
Bettina Ault, Secretary  
Kim Sadler, Treasurer  
Susan Sweetser, Past President

### *Directors*

Suzy Askew  
Louise Gregory  
Sue Bible  
Dennis Horn  
Bart Jones  
Larry Pounds

## President's Message

Happy New Year to everyone! May it be a kinder year than 2021.

The Annual Meeting of the Tennessee Native Plant Society was held on November 16, 2021, via zoom. Three Board members were up for re-election: Bart Jones, Suzy Askew, and Michelle Haynes. Bart and Suzy will return for another two years, but Michelle has stepped down. Sue Bible was elected in her place. In the fall of 2022 three more board members and all four officers will be up for reelection. If you are interested in serving, please let us know.

Currently your Board members are very busy scheduling speakers for our Native Plant Seminars (partial list in this newsletter), pulling together an exciting list of Field Trips (full list with details in our next newsletter), and putting the finishing touches on our May Conference in Chattanooga (Registration Form in this newsletter).

Two special projects are also underway.

- Slides are being digitized and placed in a DropBox library managed by a librarian and available for TNPS use.
- Our Tennessee native plants online course(s) is beginning to take shape.

Our Education Outreach Coordinators are busy preparing for events in their areas of the state. Upcoming outreach events:

- Dogwood Arts House & Garden Show, Knoxville – Feb 11-13 (One of our oldest events dating back to 1970s)
- Nashville Lawn & Garden Show, Nashville – March 3-6
- Wild Ones Plant Natives, Chattanooga – March 12 (Symposium) and March 19 (Plant Sale & Expo)
- Trails & Trilliums, Monteagle – April 9-10
- Conservation Days, Murfreesboro – April 22-23
- Spring Wildflower Pilgrimage, Gatlinburg – April 26-30
- Elsie Quarterman Cedar Glade Wildflower Festival, Lebanon – April 29-30

We have a busy 2022 planned. Won't you join us in some of the activities? Better yet, offer to lead an activity!



## *Spiranthes ovalis* Found in Bedford County

The first known occurrence of *Spiranthes ovalis* Lindley var. *erostellata* Catling in Bedford County was discovered this fall on Horse Mountain. Although native to eastern North America it is uncommon throughout most of its range. In Orchidaceae, the common name is Oval Ladies' Tresses.

These newly found orchids appeared in an area shaded for part of the day by high trees and occasionally mowed, but never mowed close to the ground as in a lawn. Like much of the region, the soil of Horse Mountain is of calcareous substrate. The genus *Spiranthes* grows terrestrially.

*S. ovalis* flowers are tightly spaced within each of the three ranks gently spiraling toward the tip of the inflorescence (spiral phyllotaxy of 1/3 or 1/4).

The delicate white flowers each with a recurved crystalline white lip appear in August through October. The blooms are smaller than *Spiranthes cernua*, with the actual flowers measuring only 4-5 mm in size. The plant is pubescent with capitate hairs on the upper stem and the green parts of the inflorescence. The species *S. ovalis* carries three oblanceolate glabrous smooth leaves along the stem. These leaves stay green through and past the flowering period.

Among the countless specific methods of pollination for Orchidaceae flowers, this orchid is cleistogamous. The flowers do not open enough to be pollinated from the outside, so they self-pollinate. A swelling of the ovaries, which would indicate successful self-pollination, was seen on the largest plant. An electron microscope would be needed, however, to show a nucleus inside of the seeds verifying that it had self-pollinated.

*Left top photo: Three ranks gently spiral towards the tip of the inflorescence.*

*Middle photo: Close-up of inflorescence taken September 20, 2021.*

*Bottom photo: Foliage*

*Right photo: Seed capsules*

A more detailed description of the species can be found in "Orchids of Indiana" by Michael A. Homoya (1993).

*Alice Jensen*



## *Mycology Safari, Big Cypress Tree State Park October 2, 2021*



There's always this gut-punch feeling when you wake up on a field trip morning and it is pouring down rain. This was the situation as I faced a weather forecast that looked very bleak for the rest of the day. But alas, rain is no deterrent for plants, or fungi in this case.

After driving in heavy downpours for two hours, the rain miraculously stopped as I approached Greenfield and the park. Could we be lucky enough to get a few hours of dry in the field? Soon after I arrived at the picnic pavilion at the park, a few others showed up, eventually totaling five participants. Checking the radar, it looked like we might have a brief respite from the rain, so we decided to head out.



As we walked to the boardwalk, we encountered a few wildflowers still in bloom; white snakeroot (*Ageratina altissima*), giant goldenrod (*Solidago gigantea*), and old field aster (*Symphyotrichum pilosum*).

Approaching the boardwalk, we looked for the red turtlehead (*Chelone obliqua*) that we saw during our last field trip here, but unfortunately, it appeared that it had been choked out by the highly invasive Japanese stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*). As we searched for the turtlehead, a flash of bright orange caught our attention. As we got closer, the large, striated fans of chicken-of-the-woods (Photo 1, *Laetiporus sulphureus*) came into focus. This large edible mushroom is much sought after by foragers. Continuing our search along the boardwalk, we encountered another wonderful edible mushroom, the summer oyster mushroom (Photo 2, *Pleurotus pulmonarius*). These fungi look like a bleached chicken-of-the-woods with its white, fleshy fans. Nearby this great edible, was growing one of the most poisonous of our native mushrooms, the Eastern North American destroying angel (Photo 3, *Amanita bisporigera*). The ghostly white rounded cap on a stem holds the distinct shape of the genus Amanita, a whole group of poisonous (to some degree or other) mushrooms. Many of our most familiar mushroom memes take their characteristics from this genus.



We got back on the boardwalk and went further into the flatwoods. A severe storm a couple of years ago downed many trees near the end of the boardwalk and this dead wood now supported a vast array of different kinds of fungi, colorful ringed shelf fungi of various genera collectively known as turkey tails (Photo 4), gelatinous masses like golden ear (Photo 5, *Naematelia aurantia*), tiny bonnet mushrooms (Photo 6, *Mycena galericulata*) and parachute mushrooms (Photo 7, *Marasmius* sp.), and even tendrils of membranous slime molds.



Sadly, at this point at the end of the boardwalk, the entire area was flooded, so we were forced to turn back, which turned out to be a blessing in disguise, because not long after we arrived back at the picnic pavilion and

began eating lunch, the rain came back with a vengeance. Safe and dry, it allowed us to spend some quality time with each other and share many great stories about our nature adventures. And although we only got a couple of hours to spend in the field, we were astounded at the diversity and numbers of the fungi present in the small area we explored.

*Bart Jones*



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## *The Grasslands of Dry Branch State Natural Area*

### *September 25, 2021*

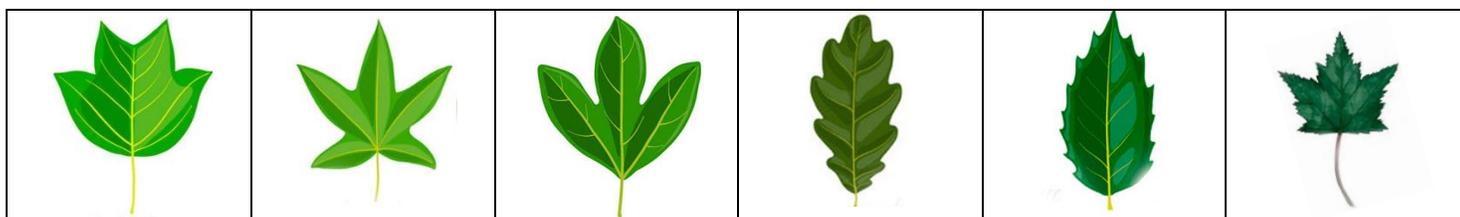
In celebration of National Public Lands Day, approximately 15 people met in Lewis County for the Grasslands of Dry Branch State Natural Area event. Leaders, Cooper Breeden, Southeastern Grasslands Initiative, and Allan Trently, Tennessee Division of Natural Areas first led the group to a remnant prairie along Old Linden Road. A section of this site is within the Southeastern Grasslands Initiative's Western Highland Rim Roadsides project. Using iNaturalist, we added plant species including the state listed Barbed Rattlesnake Root (*Nabulus barbatus*) to this project. From here we drove into the 2,169-acre Dry Branch State Natural Area. The natural area contains a series of grasslands along unimproved roads in the uplands. We explored one of these grasslands. Here we found Appalachian Blazing Star (*Liatris squarrulosa*), late purple aster (*Symphotrichum patens*), and other plants in the aster family. The highlight of the site was a plum tree (*Prunus* spp.) sporting ripe plums.

From the grassland, the group continued to the last site, a Highland Rim Parnassia Seepage Fen along Persimmon Branch just outside the natural area. This community contains the Federally Endangered Tennessee Yellow-eyed Grass (*Xyris tennesseensis*). The fen did have a few leafy clumps but unfortunately no flowers or seed heads. The *Xyris* population in the natural area is in much better condition though is much harder to get to.

*Allan Trently*

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## *Can You Identify These Tree Leaves?*



## Upcoming Events

- January 11 -- TNPS Board Meeting (Zoom)
- January 18 – Native Plant Seminar: Dave Walters & Dr. Cindi Smith-Walters on *Winter Tree Identification* (Zoom)
- February 11-13 – Dogwood Arts Home and Garden Show, Knoxville
- February 15 – Native Plant Seminar: Darel Hess on *Wildflower Photography* (Zoom)
- March 3-6 –Nashville Lawn & Garden Show, Nashville Fairgrounds
- March 12 – Wild Ones Symposium, Plant Natives 2022!, Chattanooga
- March 15 – Native Plant Seminar: Randy Hedgepath, *Some of My Favorite Wildflowers* (Zoom)
- March 19 – Wild Ones Native Plant Sale & Expo, Chattanooga



Details on facebook and our website, [tnps.org/events/category/calendar/](https://tnps.org/events/category/calendar/).

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## Native Plant Seminars

The Tennessee Native Plant Society will again host monthly Native Plant Seminars beginning in January 2022. These events will be held via Zoom on the third Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. Central (7:30 p.m. Eastern) and lasting about one hour. All members, and potential members, are welcome to join the seminars at no cost. The link to join each seminar will be posted on the *Seminars* and *Calendar* pages of our website ([www.tnps.org](http://www.tnps.org)).

Seminar speakers are drawn from our knowledgeable membership, from professionals across the state, and from the professors and students studying our Tennessee native plants. A range of topics will be covered that may include plants that are currently blooming, native plants in our yards, current research on native plants, protections for native plants, and so much more.

Join us for an hour a month to learn more about Tennessee native plants.

### 2022 TNPS Native Plant Seminar Schedule

January 18 – Dave Walters and Dr. Cindi Smith-Walters, *Winter Tree Identification*

February 15 – Darel Hess, *Wildflower Photography*

March 15 – Randy Hedgepath, *Some of My Favorite Wildflowers*

April 19 – Mary Priestley, *Nature Journaling*

May 17 – John Froeschauer, *Moths and Butterflies: Natural History and Gardening*

June 21 – Louise Jones, *Flowers for Nashville*

*Tree leaf answers:* Tulip Poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), Sweet Gum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*), Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*), Oak (*Quercus alba*), American Holly (*Ilex opaca*), Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*)



## 2022 TNPS Conference Registration

Chattanooga, TN ~ May 13-15, 2022

Please complete and return with payment by **April 28<sup>th</sup>**.

Please note:

- Our meetings will be held at the Clarion Hotel in Lookout Valley (3641 Cummings Hwy, Chattanooga, TN 37419). A block of rooms has been reserved at the discounted room rate of \$69.00/night; this special rate expires two weeks before the event. For reservations call 423-635-7203 and let them know that you are with TNPS.
- Breakfast is included and we are looking into box/picnic lunches for Saturday. There are many restaurants in the area for dinner.
- A schedule of hikes and talks will be posted soon at [www.tnps.org](http://www.tnps.org).

**Registration fee \$25 per person:**      # people \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$25 = \_\_\_\_\_

### Registrant #1 Information:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Special Needs \_\_\_\_\_

### Registrant #2 Information:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Special Needs \_\_\_\_\_

Make check(s) payable to **TNPS** and send to:

Karen Hill, 2152 Ravenscourt Drive, Thompsons Station, TN 37179

Questions? Email: [treas@tnps.org](mailto:treas@tnps.org)

## *When Are Dues Due?*

**All membership dues are due on January 1, including those who joined during the year up to and including June 30. If you joined on or after July 1, you receive the partial year free, then need to renew annually by January 1st.**

To make payment go to [www.TNPS.org](http://www.TNPS.org). Click on "Membership" on the bottom left side of any page and follow the directions for either printing a form and mailing it with a check OR use the online form.

Once the online form is completed, you will be taken to the PayPal page for payment with either a credit card or by your PayPal account. UNTIL PAYMENT IS MADE VIA CHECK OR PAYPAL YOU ARE NOT A MEMBER AND WILL NOT RECEIVE NEWSLETTERS.

If your address has changed, please email your new address to [info@TNPS.org](mailto:info@TNPS.org).

We do not print the newsletter in full color, but you may be pleased to find all the color in email copies and at our website on the Newsletter page.

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