The Sewanee PLANT PRESS

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University to Acquire Lost Cove!

Sewanee and the Land Trust for TN are in the process of raising funds to acquire 3000 acres in Lost Cove and Champion Cove. If all goes well, this exciting project will achieve a truly unique intersection between conservation and education.

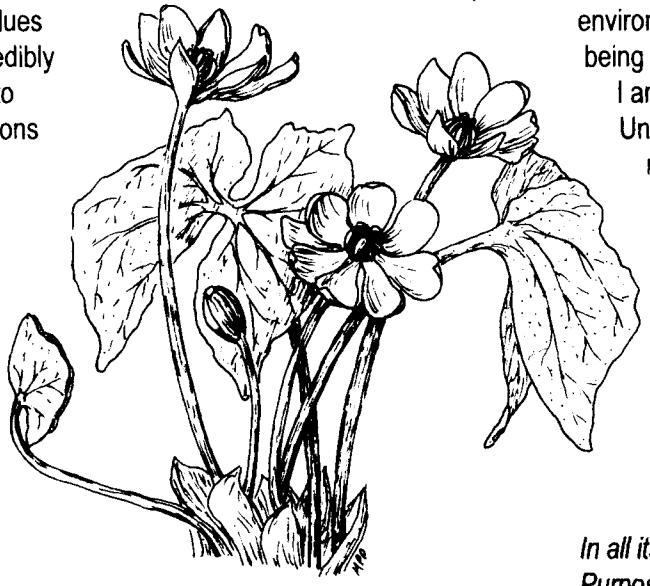
As someone who has worked hard over the last 15 years promoting the biological diversity and ecological values of the Cumberland Plateau, it is incredibly gratifying to be able to demonstrate to the rest of the state and peer institutions that this institution practices what it teaches!

Lost Cove is a key puzzle piece in a broader landscape conservation initiative that is linking together large blocks of unbroken forest. Contiguous to the current Domain, the Franklin State Forest, and Tennessee's Carter State Natural Area, its preservation maintains a major habitat corridor for wildlife on the Cumberland Plateau. Such corridors are incredibly rare in the eastern US where residential and commercial development and other land uses have fragmented the landscape into little pieces.

The 3000-acre Lost Cove area is a truly remarkable treasure to be adding to an already special 10,000-acre biologically rich Domain. As anybody who has made trek down to Buggytop Cave knows, the variety of habitats that one can explore in Lost Cove is amazing.

The Herbarium has already catalogued over 840 species of plants for the Domain (more than the entire nation of the Netherlands). With the addition of Lost Cove we expect to surpass 900, making us one of the most diverse locations on the Cumberland Plateau. At what other college in this country can a student go out and locate new county records for plant species and never leave their campus?!

So while I am excited from the standpoint of conservation biologist and plant ecologist, I am even more excited from the standpoint of a liberal arts professor and what this place means for Sewanee students.



This acquisition has broad sweeping implications for the college curriculum, campus operations, and how we manage our land. With 3,000 acres come 3,000 new student opportunities. I envision us designing summer field courses in ecology and archaeology that showcase the biodiversity and cultural significance of Lost Cove. I envision us designing long-term field studies that will involve undergraduate researchers for generations to come. Lost Cove represents an exciting educational challenge for The University of the South.

Sewanee is truly unique among its peers in the environmental studies arena in that it has its own landscape to study. A landscape that has intersecting geological, biological, cultural and aesthetic aspects that provide unparalleled interdisciplinary learning opportunities. Our soon- to-be 13,000-acre campus is a learning landscape and microcosm of environmental problems and challenges being faced by our entire region.

I am pleased to announce that the University of the South is rising to meet this environmental educational challenge in several major ways that will augment our increased landbase.

Earlier this month, The University Strategic Planning Committee unanimously passed a new strategic goal for Sewanee relating to the environment and campus sustainability:

In all its divisions, in accord with its Purpose Statement and cognizant of the unique resources it enjoys and obligations it bears, especially the unparalleled asset of the Domain, the University shall achieve national distinction for the caliber of its academic programs in the study of the natural environment. It shall also gain renown for the broad commitment of its campus community to the practice of sustainable living.

For those of you who haven't visited the campus recently, construction is well underway on Spencer Hall, the soon-to-be new home for the Sewanee Herbarium, the Landscape Analysis Lab, Sewanee

(continued on p. 2)

Battling Exotic Pest Plants

Who among us hasn't shaken her head in dismay at the aggressive nature of kudzu, as it creates impenetrable groundcover, clambers over trees, and even engulfs abandoned buildings? Kudzu, "the vine that ate the South," is probably the most well known of a number of non-native plant species that have immigrated and found our region to their liking. Some, like princess tree (*Paulownia tomentosa* (Thunb.) Sieb. & Zucc. ex Steud.), were purposefully planted here; others, including Nepal grass (*Microstegium vimineum* (Trin.) A. Camus), hitched a ride as stowaways in packing material or soil. Once they arrived, these plants have escaped to invade our natural areas, out-competing our native plants and generally taking over.

This fall, the herbarium was pleased to host a meeting of the board of directors of the Tennessee Exotic Pest Plant Council (TN-EPPC), a group dedicated to the control of invasive non-native plants. It includes professional biologists, ecologists, and natural resource managers, as well as landowners, gardeners, and others concerned about the effect of invasive plants on our native plants and animals.

At the meeting, Sewanee students Erin Tyrell (C'08) and Laura Candler (C'09) made a presentation about research that they are doing on a recent invader to the Domain, miniature beefsteak plant (*Mosla dianthera* (Buch.-Ham. ex Roxb.) Maxim.). A member of the mint family, the plant is fairly common in roadside ditches and other disturbed areas. Recently, it has begun to invade the forest, marching down the firelanes and popping up trailside. TN-EPPC welcomes this sort of information, because people with botanical skills who see a plant that they do not recognize form the front line in early detection of new invasives.

In our area, one of the most invasive exotics is privet (*Ligustrum* spp.), a shrub that forms lovely compact hedges when it is clipped on a regular basis. Unfortunately, these hedges are sometimes unattended or even abandoned. Left to its own devices, privet flowers and fruits prolifically, and the seeds get dispersed up and down the roadsides and throughout the forest.

In this writer's opinion, the privet situation is almost a lost cause in some parts of Tennessee. Except in the most sensitive plant communities or areas where the landowner can maintain vigilance against its return, it is practically not worth combating. The key to controlling or eradicating an invasive plant is early detection: identifying and eliminating it before it gets a foothold. One such plant that TN-EPPC is on the lookout for is cogon grass (*Imperata cylindrical* (L.) Beauv.), a highly invasive species in the Deep South. It forms an extremely dense mat that native plants cannot penetrate. This species is not officially known to grow in Tennessee, but it has been observed in North Georgia and Alabama, and very well may turn up in the southern tier counties in Tennessee.

The TN-EPPC website www.tneppc.org has a complete (and completely scary) description of cogon grass and instructions for whom to alert if you see it growing in Tennessee. The site also has an up-to-date list of the state's worst exotic pest plants, suggestions of native plants for gardening, and links to other regional and state exotic pest plant councils.

Also available on the website is a PDF titled *Nonnative Invasive Plants of Southern Forests*, an important resource for landowners interested in keeping their forest communities healthy. Produced by the U.S. Forest Service, the publication provides information for the identification and control of 33 plants or groups of plants that are invading the 13 Southern states at an alarming rate.

TN-EPPC is committed to raising awareness of the spread of invasive exotic plants and the threat that they pose to our native ecosystems. Board members are more than happy to provide speakers for garden clubs and other organizations. Check out their website and all of the information available there for download. Consider joining the organization—I did! Your $20 membership will go a long way toward helping with this work that is vital to the health of our ecosystems.

—Mary Priestley

Lost Cove, continued from page 1

Ecology and Environmental Studies Program. This state-of-the-art facility will finally provide a proper home for faculty, staff, and students involved in these exciting programs at Sewanee.

Lost Cove still has to be purchased and so I invite you to contribute and be a part of this very special initiative. If we raise the money (we have until February 2008), we will be expanding our Herbarium hikes this spring to include this very new and very special addition to the Domain.

To learn more about the campaign or to make a donation, contact Sewanee's Vice-President for University Relations, Rob Pearigen, at 735 University Avenue, Sewanee, TN, 37383; 931-598-1496; or <rpearige@sewanee.edu>.

—Jon Evans

The University's Purpose Statement includes the following: ". . . Sewanee enables students to live with grace, integrity, and a reverent concern for the world." —Ed.

Winter Calendar of Events

Shakerag Hollow in Winter: a Look at Lower Plants
Sat., Feb. 2, 1:30 PM, Yolande Gottfried
Mosses, liverworts, lichens, clubmosses, and even some ferns are not fazed by winter weather. Groundhog Day, right in the middle of the season, seems an appropriate time to learn more about these small but hardy plants. Meet at the Shakerag Hollow trailhead near the University Gates for this 1-hour moderate walk. Come prepared for muddy, wet, and/or rocky conditions.

Hunt for the First Hepatica—Shakerag Hollow
Sat., Feb. 16, 1:30 PM, George Ramseur
Having just celebrated St.Valentine's Day, which is also Old Groundhog Day, this weekend seems like a good time to check on "the birds and the bees and the flowers and the trees" and see what might be out early in Shakerag. Meet at Green's View for this moderate-to-strenuous 2-mile walk that may include a steep rocky section of the trail.

Wildflower Identification
Sat,. March 15, 10:30-Noon, Mary Priestley
The hottest wildflower book to hit the stands recently is the Tennessee Native Plant Society's *Wildflowers of Tennessee, the Ohio Valley, and the Southern Appalachians.* Mary will be using it in this early spring workshop. We will provide copies for use that day, and it is available for purchase at the University Book and Supply Store. While you are there, pick up a hand lens to further your enjoyment of these natural beauties. Meet in Woods Labs room 121.

Early Spring Wildflowers—Shakerag Hollow
Sat., March 22, 1:30 PM, George Ramseur
It's spring and it's Easter, and if you don't get out early you might miss the beginning of the big show in Shakerag—bloodroot and trout lily and spring beauties bloom early and fade fast. Meet at Green's View for this moderate-to-strenuous 2-mile walk that may include a steep rocky section of the trail.

All times are CST or CDT.

Wear appropriate shoes on all of these walks. Risks involved in hiking include physical exertion, rough terrain, forces of nature, and other hazards not present in everyday life. Picking flowers and digging plants are prohibited in all of the above-mentioned natural areas.

For more information on these or other Sewanee Herbarium events, please contact Yolande Gottfried at the Herbarium (931.598.3346) or by email at ygottfri@sewanee.edu.

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*Plant drawings, by Mary Priestley, are of twinleaf (*Jeffersonia diphylla*), which we believe grows in Lost Cove; miniature beefsteak plant (*Mosla dianthera*); ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*); and Christmasfern ("*Fernia noellia*").*

From the Editor

Because of the importance of the Lost Cove acquisition project and our desire to help get the word out in a timely manner, our Winter 2008 issue of *The Sewanee Plant Press* is coming out a little early. Look for the 2007 list of contributors in our spring issue. Many thanks to all, and best wishes for a happy new year from all of us at the Herbarium. *—MPP*

Membership Application/Renewal

The Friends of the Sewanee Herbarium support the work of the Herbarium: education, research, and conservation. A $10.00 annual contribution would be very much appreciated. The date of your most recent contribution is printed on your address label.

Name and Address (if different from that on the mailing label on the back):

_____

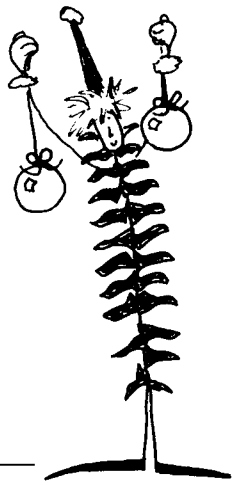
_____

_____

Amount Enclosed: ❑ $10.00 ❑ Other: $ _____

Please make check payable to The University of the South. Gifts are fully tax deductible.

Send to:
Sewanee Herbarium
c/o Mary Priestley
735 University Avenue
Sewanee, TN 37383



Others who might like to receive *The Sewanee Plant Press*: _____

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Homesite Deep in Shakerag Hollow

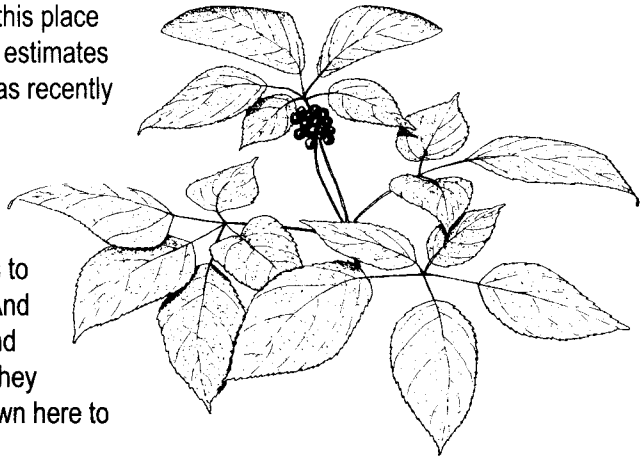
As part of the year-long celebration of Sewanee's sesquicentennial, Herbarium Director *emeritus* Dr. George Ramseur led an autumn hike to an old homesite far down the mountainside in Shakerag Hollow. "We've all heard the term 'Location, location.' Why would a person build here? . . . That's right—water! These people farmed."

We see the rusted remains of castoff metal ware, but it takes a practiced eye like George's to recognize other signs of habitation in this place: the piles of rock, the presence of certain tree species. "The main thing was to get the rocks out of the field. They planted on both sides of the wall. . . . The trees can tell you something about what's happened. These yellow-poplars and black locusts grew out in the open. They got their start after this land had been cleared."

Because there was much settlement here around the time of the Civil War, George surmises that this site was established about then. A forest comes back quickly once it has been logged, so it is difficult to say how long ago this place was abandoned, but George estimates that people were living here as recently as 80 to 90 years ago.

"They lived a subsistence life. They ate what they raised." In addition to farming, they collected herbs to use medicinally and to sell. And the women followed woodland trails up to Sewanee where they collected laundry to bring down here to wash. But life was not all work. Someone in this long-ago place found the time to plant flowers. "Come back in the spring," urges George. "This area is yellow with daffodils."

—Mary Priestley



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