



Dr. George Ramseur, Winner of Environmental Education Award

In this issue, the *Sewanee Plant Press* wishes to especially acknowledge Dr. George Shuford Ramseur on the occasion of his receiving the 2008 Yeatman Award for Environmental Education. This award, named for notable environmental educator Harry Yeatman, is given in conjunction with *Trails & Trilliums*, an event that takes place annually at the St. Andrew's—Sewanee School (see accompanying article). Dr. Ramseur is the Director *emeritus* of the Sewanee Herbarium, which was founded during his tenure as a professor at The University of the South.

Dr. Ramseur, a native of North Carolina and an alumnus of Elon College, came to Sewanee in 1958 after earning his Ph.D. in botany from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. He joined professors H. Malcolm Owen and Harry C. Yeatman in the then recently reorganized biology department and taught at Sewanee for 35 years, offering courses in general botany, plant ecology, plant taxonomy, plant physiology, and, on occasion, general biology. Harry Yeatman praised "George's great knowledge and enthusiasm for teaching, botany, ecology, and conservation of our natural resources and a desire to share our abundance with young and old listeners and hikers." Yeatman said, "George is just a wonderful teacher, inspiring many of his students to continue their studies and earn Ph.D.s in Botany." His fall field trips to the Smokies with his plant ecology classes are remembered as high points of their college years by many of those students.

After his retirement in 1993, Dr. Ramseur joined Dr. Jonathan P. Evans, his replacement in the biology department and as Director of the Herbarium, and curators Mary Patten Priestley and Yolande McCurdy Gottfried in a project to reorganize

the Herbarium and complete the Flora of the Domain of The University of the South. According to Mary Priestley, "The collection initially consisted of the pressed specimens that George's students collected over the years, plus several thousand specimens on permanent loan from UNC." Those UNC specimens were received thanks to the fact that Dr. Albert E. Radford, author of the *Manual of the Vascular Flora of the Carolinas*, directed George Ramseur's dissertation, a special relationship in that



he was Dr. Radford's first Ph.D. student. Many of the specimens were collected for the purpose of writing the *Manual*. Dr. Jon Evans states, "It has been wonderful to have George as a colleague and fellow botanist at Sewanee. His tremendous knowledge of the Domain and the flora of the Plateau continues to be of great value to both me and to students working with the Herbarium."

That knowledge also continues to delight the hundreds who have gone on plant walks led by Dr. Ramseur, sponsored

by the Herbarium and numerous other organizations, most notably the Annual Spring Wildflower Pilgrimage in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, which he has attended nearly every year since it began some 57 years ago. He is perhaps particularly noted for his ability to make fascinating a hike through Shakerag Hollow in the dead of winter, pointing out signs of earlier habitation or opening hikers' eyes to the beauty and variety of tree bark. Yolande Gottfried remembers, "It was a

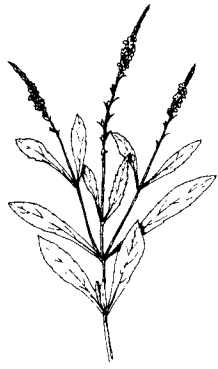
(continued on p. 2)

Trails and Trilliums

We are so pleased that our Director *emeritus*, George Ramseur, has been selected to receive St. Andrew's-Sewanee School's 2008 Trails and Trilliums Yeatman Award for Environmental Education. Our colleague and founder of the Herbarium is a natural teacher, as his many students can attest. If you haven't yet experienced George's engaging teaching style—or if you're in need of a refresher—join him at Trails and Trilliums April 19 for a short hike out to Piney Point, just ½ mile from the St. Andrew's-Sewanee campus. At 5:00 that evening George will be honored at the Wine and Wildflowers reception at the Monteagle Inn.

For more information about the weekend's events, including the schedule of hikes, garden tours, and workshops, see <trails.sasweb.org> or contact Margaret Matens at mmatens@sasweb.org.

—Mary Priestley



Verbena

Jonathan Ertelt graduated from Sewanee in 1978 with a degree in philosophy and received his Masters in Education with an emphasis on science education from Peabody at Vanderbilt in 1999. He worked at Cheekwood, the National Aquarium in Baltimore, and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte before taking over the supervision of the greenhouses at Vanderbilt. Jonathan makes his home in Nashville with wife Bonnie and son Sam. He is one of many of George Ramseur's students who learned from him the importance of closely observing the natural world. —MPP

We were driving back through western Kentucky today, cruising down the interstate at about 68mph (speed limit 65—I don't exceed the speed limit by more than 5mph, except occasionally to pass). Out of the corner of my eye I saw beautiful pale sky blue, but well below the horizon. In fact there was a patch, and then another, just off the road slightly down in the center median. I looked more closely as I continued driving, and with the next patch noted the cluster of upright spikes, starting roughly half a foot or so out of the green foliage and extending up another half foot to eight inches.

I smiled as I confirmed for myself the recognizing of an old friend—*Verbena simplex* Lehmann. As you could already tell from my brief description, this plant forms a small clump of anywhere from one to four or six shoots of foliage. The number of shoots per plant may depend on the schedule of highway maintenance grass cutting, though it may start branching early on its own. I'm not sure. The flowering spikes are fairly thin, and I've seldom seen them branching. Generally the plants appear in what would seem to be a dozen or so per patch, sometimes fewer.

But hang on—this is an old friend and yet now surprisingly new to me with this writing. Going back to my well-worn copy of Radford, Ahles, and Bell's *Manual of the Vascular Flora of the Carolinas*, I read with some surprise that this species is "perennial from deep rhizomes [underground stems]." The reason for my surprise at

this is that while I've noted several other roadside *Verbena* species spreading out and sometimes covering large areas of the median, I have never seen *V. simplex* in any other configuration but small occasional patches.

This had led me to think that it was likely a self-seeding annual. In fact, one of the other *Verbena* species (I don't recall which one) that I had collected and started in my garden quickly became a nuisance, eventually even growing under the sidewalk that defined the garden area and sprouting up in the yard on the other side—still a pretty species, but clearly a winter-hardy perennial with spreading rhizomes. The "deep rhizomes" of *V. simplex* are clearly different, for all the plants I've seen have been growing in small isolated patches so that I was sure that this species was an annual.

So now a whole series of ecological mysteries present themselves. Why is this wonderful light-blue flowered species not seen in greater abundance? Perhaps there are places where it actually is seen spreading out more; maybe the roadside patches with which I'm familiar suffer some from the infrequent mowing schedule in some way. I also noted in the book's description that the stems are "usually much branched," so the mowing schedule apparently doesn't force this to happen, though it might encourage the branching even more. Perhaps the cutting schedule gets the fruiting spikes just before the fruits are mature enough for dispersing viable seed. I wouldn't think that the suggested

preference for "basic or circumneutral soils" would be a limiting factor, certainly not throughout middle Tennessee where I'm more used to spotting this friend. It may be that each of the scattered patches of blue that I see represents an individual plant with the rhizome branching, rather than small populations that I had initially thought. And of course there is the less significant question about this ecological mystery—if I dig a bit of it up to plant in my limestone garden area, will it become either quickly or over time aggressively invasive as its close relative did some fifteen years ago? It may well be worth trying now to explore this mystery a bit more, as well as to enjoy the upright growth and short spikes of light blue.

Regardless of my decision, one thing there is to be sure of—I will enjoy seeing it among the interstate and highway roadsides as I travel along, just barely over the speed limit so that even at 72mph or so I can still see and pick out this treasure among many others. And every time I see it I'll be reminded of that most excellent class in plant systematics that Dr. Ramseur led us through some 30 years ago (!) this past spring.

With thanks—the biology major who never was.
Jonathan Ertelt, 6/13/2007

All quoted phrases are from Radford, Ahles, and Bell. Manual of the Vascular Plants of the Carolinas. 1968. Fifth printing, 1976. p. 890.

Ramseur, continued from page 1

pleasure and privilege to hike through Shakerag numerous times with George as we gathered information for our 'Trail Guide to Shakerag Hollow' which the Herbarium

published last spring. I finally began to recognize trees by their bark and branching patterns, but he could nearly always stump me with an ash tree. I also thank him for proposing me as a walk leader at the Smokies Wildflower Pilgrimage." She and

Dr. Ramseur also share the experience of having Dr. Radford as an advisor, she for her M.A. in Ecology from UNC.

—Yolande Gottfried

Spring Calendar of Events

Bluebell Island

Sat., March 22, 10 AM

Join the South Cumberland Regional Land Trust for their annual Bluebell Island Ramble. Bluebell Island is located on the Elk River and was purchased by SCRLT in order to protect its unique natural features for posterity. The island is regionally famous for its plethora of wildflowers, especially Virginia Bluebells. Meet at 10:00 a.m. at the gated entrance to the Tyson Foods parking lot on TN-50/US 64 W, just south of exit 127 off I-24 near the bridge over the Elk River, about two miles West of I-24. Easy except for crossing the Elk River on a log, but ropes or something else will be set up to make it accessible.

Bird Walks

Sat., March 29, Sat., April 12,
and Sat., April 29, 8 AM

David Haskell

Dr. Haskell, ornithologist and Sewanee biology professor, will be looking for spring migrants and year-round residents. Meet in front of the duPont Library. Cancelled in case of rain or high winds.

Short Springs

Sat., April 5, 9:30 AM

Jean and Harry Yeatman

This natural area on the Eastern Highland Rim outside Tullahoma features a profusion of spring wildflowers, like a little Shakerag (says Jean), and includes plants not seen on the plateau, such as Jacob's ladder, bluebells, barren strawberry, Virginia spiderwort, twinleaf, and maidenhair fern. Join the Yeatmans on their annual visit to this special spot. Meet at the Sewanee Market (at the blinking light on Hwy. 41A) at 9:30 AM for the one-hour drive to the site outside Tullahoma. The hike in is short but steep.

Shakerag Hollow

Sun., April 6, 1:30 PM Yolande Gottfried

Sat., April 12, 1:30 PM Jon Evans

Sun., April 13, 1:30 PM Mary Priestley

Sat. & Sun, April 19, 20 Trails &

Trilliums (<http://trails.sasweb.org>)

This is Sewanee's "Mecca" for wildflower lovers and these leaders are the experts. "A Trail Guide to Shakerag Hollow," published last spring by the Herbarium, is available at the University Bookstore.

THE SEWANEE PLANT PRESS

The Sewanee Herbarium
Dr. Jon Evans, Director
Biology Department
Sewanee: The University of the South
735 University Avenue
Sewanee, TN 37383

WEB SITE

<http://lal.sewanee.edu/herbarium>

EDITOR

Mary Priestley
marypriestley@bellsouth.net

CALENDAR

Yolande Gottfried
ygottfri@sewanee.edu

CONTRIBUTORS

Jonathan Ertelt
Yolande Gottfried

COMPOSITOR

Tammy Elliott

*Drawings by Mary Priestley are of narrowleaf
vervain (Verbena simplex Lehm.) and
bloodroot (Sanguinaria canadensis L.).*

Meet at Green's View parking lot (past the golf course). 2 miles, moderate to strenuous, with one fairly challenging incline.

(continued on page 4)

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.

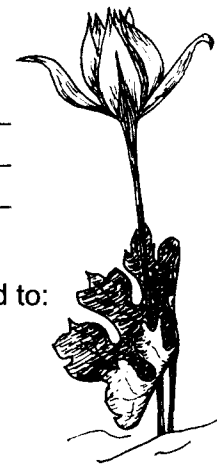
Name and Address (if different from that on the mailing label on the back):

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*: _____



Calendar, continued from page 3

April 23-April 27 is the week of the **Spring Wildflower Pilgrimage in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.**

Members of the Herbarium staff will be participating as walk leaders. For more information and registration visit the website at www.springwildflowerpilgrimage.org.

Collins West

Sun., April 27, 10:00 AM

Mary Priestley

This section of the South Cumberland State Recreation Area is the only other local spot on the plateau that rivals Shakerag Hollow for number and diversity of spring wildflowers. Meet at the Collins West trailhead, just beyond the Swiss-Memorial School in Gruetli-Laager. Bring lunch and extra water. 5 miles, strenuous.

Tom Pack Falls

Sat., May 3, 1:30 PM

Yolande Gottfried

This trail in Franklin State Forest is one of the few spots in this area where Catesby's trillium can be found. The abundant mountain laurel may also be in bloom. Meet at the Forest Ranger's headquarters building on TN Highway 156 (South Pittsburgh Highway). 2 miles, moderate.

Carter State Natural Area (Buggytop)

Sat., May 10, 10 AM

Dennis Horn and TNPS

The Tennessee Native Plant Society is conducting a plant inventory of the Carter Cave area for the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation. As part of this field trip, they plan to document all the plant species observed. There should still be late spring wildflowers blooming.

Meet at the University Book Store on the campus of The University of the South. Bring lunch, extra water, and a pen and notepad. 2-3 miles, moderate to strenuous, some off trail. For more information contact Dennis Horn at 931.461.0262.

All times are 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 events contact Yolande Gottfried at the Herbarium (931.598.3346) during regular business hours or by e-mail at ygottfri@sewanee.edu. For directions to Collins Gulf contact the South Cumberland State Park Visitors' Center (931.924.2980).

 Printed on Recycled Paper

SEWANEE

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH

Herbarium, Biology Department
735 University Avenue
Sewanee, TN 37383-1000

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

