



Our Local Sewanee Herbalist: Wisdom from Jennifer Cline



When thinking about plants, we often are astounded by their morphological characteristics like the vibrant purples and pinks rarely found in nature, or the sheer scale of size produced by our oaks and maples in the forest, but we often do not think about what is going on inside of each plant. Throughout the history of flowering plants, these beings have continually evolved chemical compounds within their structures to manipulate insects and animals into mutualistic relationships for producing and dispersing seeds. Alternatively, plants have created deterrent chemicals to protect themselves from animal munching that would hurt the growth of young plants.

Since the early times of humans, we have found ways that these plant chemicals can be used for our benefit in altering our own chemical imbalances or providing nutrition to our bodies. An interdisciplinary study of these niche human-plant interactions is called ethnobotany. Within this field, there is further specialized research focused on how plant chemicals have been used as medicine around the globe and how we might use these plant chemicals to combat diseases in the future.

Histories show that traditional herbalists have been the keepers of this plant knowledge for centuries in North America, and Appalachian folk healers who utilize plant medicines have thrived in this extremely biodiverse ecosystem of the United States. This traditional knowledge exists within our community with a fifth-generation herbalist, Jen Cline. Throughout her early childhood growing up in Northeast Tennessee, she would spend time with her grandmother who hails from Cherokee

descent. During her visits to her grandparents' property, she cultivated a relationship with the trees and flowers of Appalachia through nature hikes with her grandmother, who taught her the magical and medicinal properties of many of the plant beings they wandered around.

Additionally, she was taught to sit with plants throughout their entire season, listen to the environment, and truly facilitate a relationship with each individual by interacting with the plants through all of the senses. She recalls using these methods to learn about medicinal plants such as bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*), jewelweed



(*Impatiens capensis*), and spring beauty (*Claytonia virginica*). Though she learned the qualities of many plants during her childhood, she notes her continued education of the botanical kingdom as central to her practice.

When working with herbs, it takes time to learn each individual plant and how it interacts with human individuals, so Jen says that she researches the ways plants are used in various cultures around the globe, such as in the Ayurvedic botanical medicine of India, to broaden her understanding of healing herbs. She also turns to more local resources, such as continuing to learn from other herbalists on their approaches to both botanical education and methods of conveying this information to the public in a safe and practical manner.

Lastly, one of Jen's most influential resources is a book created by her great-grandmother that details plant properties from a variety of standpoints, aided by beautiful watercolor plant

drawings and recipes (constantly under revision) that discusses what medicines, whether it be a tincture, salve, tea, or dressed candle, work best for specific ailments and needs. When it came time to carry the torch of preserving the traditional botanical healing knowledge her grandmother taught her, she devoted her life to finding the most impactful way that she could enrich the lives of others through her calling as an herbalist. This came in the form of educating others about healing, some of which is directly focused on botanical medicine.

Jen moved to Sewanee in August 2020, and ever since, she has been making a positive impact on the community and finding ways to use her knowledge of plants for the good of those living in this portion of the Cumberland Plateau. In addition to connecting with the community, she has opened the Sewanee School of Herbal Medicine, which offers a wide variety of courses and certifications for those interested in learning more about the plant wisdom she has received over the years. Some offerings include a certification in Appalachian Folk Herbalism and a course on Herbal Magick.

She has also opened a storefront for the Cline Apothecary in downtown Sewanee along the Sollace M. Freeman Highway, where she is selling health products rooted in botanicals. The Cline Apothecary aims to provide a space where the greater Sewanee community can access holistic remedies and learn more about the many healing processes plants have to offer. It is truly inspiring to have a traditional herbalist and healer such as Jen in Sewanee sharing her passion for botanical medicine with our community.

—J.T. Michel, C'24



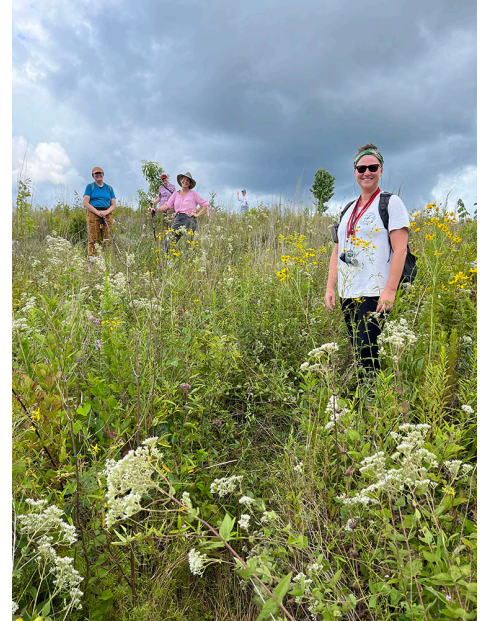
All Things Bright and Beautiful

 Drop by Stirling's, our campus coffee house, any time in January to see the Herbarium-sponsored art exhibit. Titled *All Things Bright and Beautiful*, this collection of nature-inspired works is composed of botanical illustrations by Dr. Jon Evans's plant systematics students, cyanotypes from a Plant Friday activity organized by herbarium fellows, and works by members of the journaling group and others across the campus and community, including one very industrious colony of hornets. Some of the works are offered for sale.

Timed to brighten the days of mid-winter, the exhibit, like Mary Oliver, calls us to pay attention to our natural surroundings, the change of seasons, and the other creatures with which we share this special place. We've included an interactive

piece—an abandoned hornets' nest—and we hope Stirling's patrons will take a moment to put their creative juices to work, draw some being that might next inhabit that space, and display their creations as part of the show.

For several years, the Herbarium-sponsored nature journaling group has enjoyed organizing this show. This year, in addition to visual art, members are sharing some writing in the form of haiku poetry. The group meets most Thursdays, 9–11 a.m., usually to draw and talk about their observations of nature. When possible, they visit interesting spots on and around the Mountain. All are invited.



Trails and Trilliums

Trails and Trilliums, a springtime celebration sponsored by the Friends of South Cumberland State Park, is scheduled for the weekend of April 21–23. For the first time, the event will be held at the historic Beersheba Springs Conference Center, a stone's throw from the Great Stone Door in Savage Gulf. Just this year, Savage Gulf was declared a state park in its own right, “spun off” from South Cumberland, the state's largest wilderness state park.

As always, the Herbarium is deeply involved, leading hikes and workshops, and helping plan the festivities. Both Herbarium Director Jon Evans and Associate Yolande Gottfried will lead hikes in Shakerag Hollow; Associate Mary Priestley will co-lead a hike through Big Creek Gulf, one of the three gorges that form the new state park. In addition, Sewanee's Bran Potter will lead a literary nature hike at the Stone Door. Other hike leaders include State Naturalist Randy Hedgepath, historian Richard Savage, and Kris Light, science outreach instructor for the American Museum of Science and Energy in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

Presentations will be offered by several people. Included are the head of Tennessee State Parks, Deputy Commissioner Greer Tidwell; University of Tennessee archaeologist Jan Simek; David Arnold, Tennessee state forester; and Georgeanne Eubanks, author of *Saving the Wild South: the Fight for Native Plants on the Brink of Extinction*.

Early morning bird walks and evening stargazing and night hikes will bookend all this, plus workshops, a native plant and local crafts sale, and an evening Wine and Wildflowers gathering at the nearby Red Barn, with music by the Sewanee Conglomerate Band. As if that weren't enough enticement, also the first statewide Tennessee State Naturalist Conference will be held in conjunction with this event.

To register and learn more about the event, see TrailsAndTrilliums.org. I hope to see you there!

—Mary Priestley

Friends of the Sewanee Herbarium

The Friends of the Sewanee Herbarium support the work of the Herbarium: education, research, and conservation. A \$10 annual contribution would be very much appreciated. The date of your most recent contribution is printed on your address label.

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Winter Calendar of Events

All Things Bright and Beautiful Exhibit

See the article elsewhere in this newsletter about this annual show at Stirling's Coffee House, which will hang through the month of January.

Winter Green—an Introduction to Mosses and Ferns

Saturday, Feb. 4, 10 a.m.–noon, Yolande Gottfried

In keeping with our plan to offer one educational event each winter, Herbarium Associate Yolande Gottfried will introduce interested participants to some of the “lower plants.” Winter is a great time to take a look at mosses, some ferns, lichens, and other non-flowering plants. Do mosses freeze? What is an Irish valentine? Are lichens really plants? Come with your questions and specimens, if you like! We will meet indoors with specimens provided to examine and, weather permitting, take a short walk outdoors to see them in the field. Meet in the Sewanee Herbarium on the first floor of Spencer Hall, room 173, on the campus of the University of the South. The main entrance is across from duPont Library and there is parking behind the library.

The Herbarium-sponsored nature journaling group meets Thursday mornings and is open to everyone. Get in touch with Mary Priestley for more information.

*A new year and a new look
for **The Sewanee Plant Press**!*



THE SEWANEE PLANT PRESS

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Drawings are by members of the nature journaling group. Photo is of the group on a rare plant survey with Caitlin Elam, C'03, Tennessee state natural heritage botanist.

HERBARIUM PUBLICATIONS

Fiery Gizzard: Voices from the Wilderness
What If Trees Could Walk?
Trail Guide to Shakerag Hollow
Sewanee Wildflowers in Watercolor

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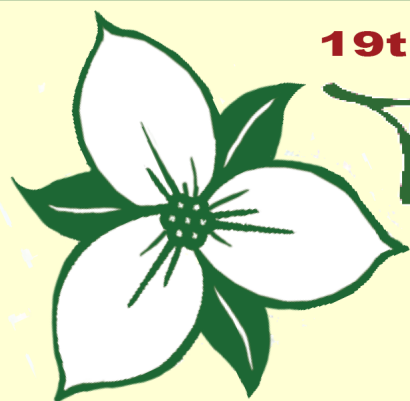
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**Trails &
Trilliums**

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CELEBRATING EARTH DAY & the 1st TENNESSEE NATURALIST CONFERENCE