

THE PLANT PRESS



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Newsletter of the Friends of the Herbarium

Summer 2001

Why the Great Tree Hunt?

*Once there was a tree, and she loved a little boy.
And every day the boy would come, and he would
gather her leaves and make them into crowns and play
king of the forest...*

Some people may be wondering, "Why should we search out, label, and document the largest trees of each native species on this insignificant wrinkle on Earth called Sewanee? Why all this bother?"

Shel Silverstein, in his children's book *The Giving Tree* puts this relationship in a simple yet powerful form. It is the story of a young boy and a tree as they grow up together. The tree gains happiness in giving the boy a sheltered place to play, apples for food, and, later, branches and trunk for fuel and building materials. In the end, the tree is used up but is still content because it can provide a stump on which the boy, now grown old, can sit and rest.

This story just scratches the surface of the complex and often one-sided relationship between humanity and trees. It touches on some basic roles that trees have played in human survival, protection, comfort, and inspiration. When you ponder the story, it is hard to imagine what more trees could possibly give us.

What have we given trees in return? In many cases, we have destroyed them thoughtlessly, damaged their habitat, depleted their numbers and sometimes completely eradicated their species. We have even removed them for nothing more than being messy, smelly, or just hard to mow around. We have poisoned them with chemicals and pollutants, undermined them with our construction, and strangled them with our concrete.

Thanks to some influential and concerned people, the way we treat trees is changing, and trees are beginning to be respected for all they mean to us. Sewanee's Big Tree Project, the brain-child of the Sewanee Herbarium and Sewanee's Tree City, is our way of paying tribute to these great "friends in the round" so we can earmark these giants for all to appreciate and admire.

*... And the boy loved the tree, very much.
And the tree was happy.*

—Sandy Baird
Big Tree Hunt Coordinator

Quotation is from *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein

The Big Trees

The Big Tree Hunt is on! This winter and spring, George Ramseur and Sandy Baird have tromped through Sewanee's backyards and hiked up and down the mountainsides to find the tree of each species that has the largest trunk diameter. Others have helped, nominating trees that they know about and, as in the case of several elementary school children, actually joining in the search. They have measured and documented 91 trees, representing 42 species.

The results to date are available at the Herbarium's web site. Below is a small sample of what we have located on the University Domain. Names in parentheses are those of the tree hunters who found them, and numbers are the trees' diameters, measured 4.5 feet above the ground.

- Yellow-Poplar (Loulie Cocke) – 55"
- White Oak (Ken Smith) – 54.5"
- Black Oak (Millie Dodd) – 47"
- Horse Chestnut (Ward Goodman) – 40"
- Basswood (Yolande Gottfried) – 39"
- Honey Locust (Sandy Baird) – 37"
- Black Cherry (Sandy Baird) – 18"
- American Holly (Joe Thoni) – 13.5"
- Flowering Dogwood (George Ramseur) – 10.6"
- Sassafras (George Ramseur) – 9.8"
- Serviceberry (Mary Priestley) – 7"
- Devil's Walkingstick (Mary Priestley) – 3.5"

Can you top these? We want to know. Also, we still lack champions in many species, including red-cedar, white pine, and several hickories. The hunt continues!



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New Hiking Guide

Go Take a Hike, a Guide to Hiking on the Domain of The University of the South has just been published. Written by Mary Priestley and Greg Allen, the pocket-sized guide includes descriptions of most of the fifty-or-so miles of trails that criss-cross the Domain. The book is available at Jill Carpenter Books and the University Bookstore in Sewanee.

The Mountain is Our Home

This fall, the Herbarium is embarking on a new educational venture: working with students in the environmental science class at the high school in neighboring Grundy County to help them learn about the unique biodiversity of the southern Cumberland Plateau.

The work is funded by a grant from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute to Sewanee's Biology Department and is being administered by the Landscape Analysis Laboratory at the University. The Landscape Analysis Lab is conducting research on the changing land use patterns on the Cumberland Plateau, specifically the large-scale conversion from upland hardwood forest to pine plantations. The Lab has found that this conversion rate has increased dramatically within the last 5 years, resulting in a decline in native forest habitat.

As the educational part of the grant, Sewanee college students will be working with school children in several grade levels in the county, and the Herbarium will be involved at the high school level. There, the focus will be on identifying Grundy County as a special place whose cultural history and natural history are intertwined. The program will involve a number of activities that illustrate the link between the people and this land. Plans include gathering oral histories, learning about traditional medicinal uses of plants, snacking on edible wild plants, hiking in the state park, and (of course!) creating a herbarium documenting the plants in the high school's outdoor classroom.

An on-site restoration ecology exercise is also part of the project. The three-year-old high school was built on a tract of land that was cleared of all its forest, and this property is contiguous with a natural

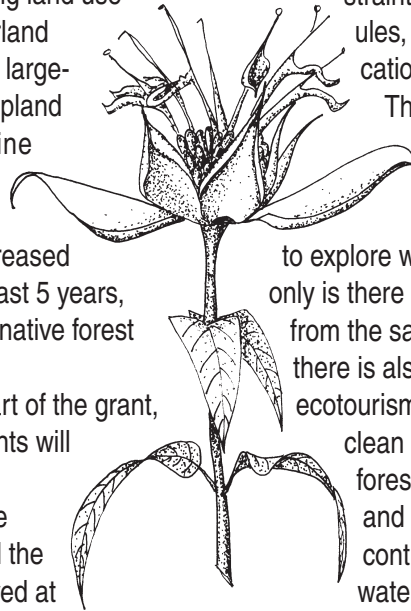
upland forested area. Students will run transects through the cleared forest and the intact forest, measure biotic and abiotic features of both, and design a plan to restore a portion of the cleared forest to natural forest conditions.

The use of technology will be an integral part of the program: students will record images using digital cameras, learn how to use GIS and GPS equipment, and do research and post their progress and results on the internet. They will interact with college students as much as possible, and, given the constraints on all of their schedules, much of this communication will be via e-mail.

The healthy and complex forests of Grundy County have multiple values that we hope to explore with the students. Not only is there direct economic value from the sale of forest products, but there is also the indirect value from ecotourism, clean streams, and clean air. Can we harvest forest resources sustainably and economically and continue to have clean water? Do we have a responsibility to our children to take care of the forests? And what, if any, is our responsibility to the creatures that inhabit the forests? How do we reconcile these sometimes-conflicting values?

As we learned during a pilot project at GCHS this past spring, the students are well aware of the importance of the forests of this county in their lives. Unfortunately, they feel helpless as they watch them dwindling. It is our hope that the facts uncovered during this project will help these young citizens of Grundy County recognize the critical role of conservation in protecting their rich heritage.

—Mary Priestley and Jon Evans



Summer Calendar of Events



Sandstone Outcrop Succession

Wed., June 27, 4 PM – George Ramseur

Explore the unique flora of the sandstone outcrops and enjoy the wonderful view from Piney Point. Meet at the tennis courts parking lot at St. Andrews-Sewanee School. Two miles, easy.

Summer Tree Identification

Wed., July 11, 4 PM – Yolande Gottfried

Learn to use the *Summer Key to Tennessee Trees*, by Shanks and Sharp, to identify some trees of the plateau. Meet at the Memorial Cross. One mile, easy.

Summer Wildflowers

Sat., July 21, 9 AM – Mary Priestley

The outer loop of the Meadow Trail behind the South Cumberland State Recreation Area Visitors Center winds through a variety of plant habitats. Expect to see a number of plants in bloom, including Joe-Pye weed, milkweeds, and asters, as well as some of the summer orchids. One mile, easy. The Visitors Center is located on Hwy. 41, between Monteagle and Tracy City. Phone (931) 924-2956.

For information on these and other events, telephone:

Sewanee Herbarium
(931) 598-3346

South Cumberland State Recreation Area
(931) 924-2956

Picking flowers and digging plants are prohibited in all of the above-mentioned natural areas.

Collection Highlights, continued from pg. 4

was collected thirty years ago, on May 3, 1971. The blackberries were avoided by earlier workers who found them hard to key out, leaving *Rubus flagellaris* Willd., a dewberry collected by William D. Province on the roadside of Highway 64, to have its identification verified and to be mounted and filed just in recent months.

Other labels bring back memories, such as a location "in fringe ditch along L&N tracks approx. 1.6 mi. s.e. of

Sewanee" by Fred Diegmann in May, 1965. "The L&N don't stop here anymore," as the song says, and the tracks are gone, too.

The name of Abbott Martin as collector, along with student Jim Hyde, drew notice to record number 3164, a specimen of *Trillium catesbaei* Ell. with the cryptic location "Jumpoff: Near Sewanee" and the date May 23, 1959. Dr. Ramseur remembers the often-gruff "Abbo" Martin coming to his door one day, causing him

to wonder what his botany students had gotten into this time in Abbo's Alley! However, Mr. Martin had this very specimen in hand, which he had brought for the student. And it is well that he did, for there are no specimens of Catesby's trillium in the collection even now from the Domain. It does occur in Franklin State Forest, which is in the area of "Jumpoff: Near Sewanee."

—Yolande Gottfried

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 Plant Press*: _____

Collection Highlights, part II



Record 3164

Browsing through the record numbers in the Herbarium database gives a surprisingly good overview of the collection. Record number 1000 is the humble lawn weed, narrow-leaved plantain, *Plantago lanceolata* L.,

collected on the roadside at the Arnold Engineering Development Center by Douglas E.

Kennemore, Jr., on June 4, 1996. This collector, with The Nature Conservancy, worked closely with the Herbarium staff in setting procedures and policies and in establishing the Sewanee Herbarium as the home of specimens collected at AEDC.

Record number 2000 is a typical plant of the Domain, the early-blooming,

yellow-flowered *Viola hastata* Michx., or halberd-leaved violet. It was collected on a streambank near the Woodlands apartments by a student, A. R. Applegate, on March 12, 1962—a representative specimen from the many spring semesters that Dr. George Ramseur taught plant taxonomy.

Number 3000, a Solomon's plume, comes from that first spring, May 19, 1959. It was collected by Jerry Moser on the side of the Lake O'Donnell Road, which didn't even have a name in those days and was called "the road to Lake O'Donnell" on the label. The plant's name has changed, too, from *Smilacina racemosa* to *Maianthemum racemosum* (L.) Desf., a reminder that checking and updating nomenclature has been another aspect of the task of the Herbarium in processing these collections.

Record 4000 is one of the most recently entered in the database, which now holds 4350 records, even though it

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Record 3000

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