



TENNESSEE NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Volume 46, Number 4

December 2022

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Upcoming Seminars: The Tennessee Native Plant Society hosts monthly Native Plant Seminars. These events are held via Zoom on the third Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. Central (7:30 p.m. Eastern) and last about one hour. All members, and potential members, are welcome to join the seminars at no cost. The link to join each seminar is posted on our Calendar website pages.

Dennis Bishop <i>Lawns to Wildflowers</i>	Jan 17
Erin Trip <i>Lichens of Tennessee</i>	Feb 21
Todd Crabtree <i>Rare Plants and Plant Communities of Southeast Tennessee</i>	Mar 21
Allen Trently <i>Native Plant Highlights from West Tennessee : 2008 to Present</i>	Apr 18

Copper Iris (*Iris fulva*)

by Bart Jones

In Tennessee, this stunning wildflower is only found in the counties near the Mississippi River. It is listed by the state as a threatened species.

Copper Iris grows in swamps and other wetlands and can withstand constant submergence in up to 6 inches of water.

Flowering occurs from mid-April to mid-May, depending on the time growing in standing water, with plants enduring prolonged inundation blooming later. It requires acidic soils with high organic content. Plants are usually around two feet in height.

The flowers of Copper Iris, as the name implies, are typically rusty-red or dull orange, occasionally even a yellow form may be encountered. They can range from 3 to 4 inches in spread, with both sepals and petals drooping away from the center, a trait which places them in the group known as Louisiana irises.

Louisiana irises as a group are popular horticultural plants and the five

species that comprise the group have been hybridized extensively to produce some dazzling garden plants. *Iris fulva* is often used to contribute "redness" to

the hybrid, which is most commonly expressed as a deep, rich purple when crossed with blue-flowered species. Also, it has a range that goes all the way to southern Illinois, so cold tolerance is another trait it passes to its progeny. All of these irises grow in wetlands, so they are great additions to water gardens.

Copper Iris is easily viewed in a couple of our state parks. At Reelfoot Lake State Park, several large clumps are found along the "land" portion of the boardwalk behind the visitors center and can even be found in wet roadside ditches around the lake. It can also be found at Meeman-Shelby Forest State Park near Memphis along the road that goes to the boat ramp on the Mississippi River as it winds through swampy areas.



Copper Iris, *Iris fulva*

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 1977. 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

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Bart Jones

Larry Pounds

Newsletter Editor

Donna Bollenbach

President's Musings

Holiday gatherings have begun as 2022 draws to a close. It has been a busy year for TNPS. We hosted eleven Native Plant Seminars via zoom which we recorded with links placed on the Seminars page of our website. We led thirteen field trips and reported what was seen in our newsletter. We hosted a very successful Annual Conference in Chattanooga with two speakers and two more field trips. And all of this has been reported in our four newsletters.

We have experienced the sadness of losing Past President Susan Sweetser, long time member Al Good, author Larry Mellichamp, and many others who have championed our native plants. TNPS provided a scholarship to the Cullowhee Native Plant Conference, and a grant

to Algood School for their native plant garden. We also celebrated the delisting of the Cumberland Sandwort, *Arenaria cumberlandensis*, after three decades on the national Endangered Species List.

With so many people turning to native plant gardening for solace during these COVID years and the many questions asked about how to create/convert to native plants at our homes and schools, we decided to add a new page on Native Gardens to our website. This is a work in progress; suggestions are welcome. In tandem with this effort, we are designing a grant program for Tennessee schools and/or students to apply for funding for their native plant gardens. These will in turn be featured on the Native Gardens page of our website. The grant program too, is a work in progress.

The full 2023 schedule for Native Plant Seminars will be posted on our website soon, but the first few seminars are listed in this newsletter. Field trips for 2023 will be posted in the first newsletter of the new year and listed on our website.

At our September Board meeting we voted to align our Education Outreach

Coordinators with our major cities, not with our three grand divisions. This results in the following alignment: Suzy Askew – Memphis, Shelley King – Knoxville, Mitchell Kent – Chattanooga, Karen Hill – Nashville, and potentially a fifth coordinator for Johnson City. The Nashville area has lots of events, especially in the spring. I need the help of an assistant coordinator for the Nashville area. Please consider saying

“yes” or even “maybe” via email (info@tnps.org). We would be working together to recruit new members and provide information on Tennessee native plants.

As this year ends, I want to thank each and every member of our Board for all that you do. I could not ask for a better group of folks to lean on for support, advice, and ideas. You all are the greatest! And Merry Christmas to everyone! May you have joyful holidays with friends and family.




Cumberland Sandwort, *Arenaria cumberlandensis*

Solidago roanensis var. *bicolor*?

by Richard L Helm

We are familiar with the white-rayed goldenrod, or silverrod, *Solidago bicolor*.



This is NOT
Solidago bicolor

This course, hairy plant is so morphologically similar to *S. hispida* (Cronquist's Manual forgoes its major description, simply saying, "Much like no. 8, but with white or whitish rays), that I would be tempted to suggest the former is simply a variety of the latter, except that I have never observed them growing together.

Unlike what I observed with much excitement this September.

On the Cumberland Mountain Segment, TN Valley Divide Section (south) of the Cumberland Trail, <https://www.cumberlandtrail.org/trail-segments/cumberland-mountain-segment/tennessee-valley-divide-section-south/>, between Woodson Gap and the natural bridge "Window Rock," there is a short, recently-built portion of

the Trail. It avoids the steep climb of the ATV trail over a knob by skirting around it, employing a couple of switchbacks. I was delighted when I first hiked it to see the Roan Mountain goldenrod (which I had observed in this area before) growing prolifically along most of its length. I spent some time this spring and summer clearing out this trail portion from an extensive tree blow-down a year or two ago.

On September 29, I returned and, to my delight, saw these smooth, thin-leaved goldenrods in bloom. It was unexpected as typically elsewhere in our county, as I recall, this species blooms in August. But the greatest surprise was that everywhere it was blooming, each plant had specimens blooming white!



Solidago roanensis:
yellow and white
varieties growing
together

TNPS ELECTIONS 2023

The following officers and directors have been reelected by acclamation (no opposition) and will serve as leaders of TNPS for 2023 and 2024 beginning January 1st:

President

Karen Ripple Hill

Vice President

Allan Trently

Secretary

Bettina Ault

Treasurer

Kim Sadler

Board (Middle TN)

Dennis Horn

Board (East TN)

Louise Gregory

Board (East TN)

Larry Pounds

Suzy Askew, Sue Bible, and Bart Jones will continue to serve as Board members throughout 2023. Please bring your questions, concerns and ideas to any officer or board member. We enjoy member feedback and participation.

2023 TNPS Native Plant Seminar Schedule

The Tennessee Native Plant Society will again host monthly Native Plant Seminars beginning in January 2023. 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).

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.

January 17 – Dennis Bishop, *Designing in Nature: Transforming Lawns to Native Plants*

February 21 – Erin Tripp, *Lichens of Tennessee*

March 21 – Todd Crabtree, *Rare Plants and Plant Communities of Southeast Tennessee*

April 18 - Allan Trently, *Native Plant Highlights from West Tennessee: 2008 to Present*

In Pursuit of Native Wildflowers: The Blue Ridge Parkway by Donna Bollenbach

This is the second of a series on **Places to See Natives**. It will center on Tennessee but may include north Georgia, north Alabama, and western North Carolina, where shared species are found. I have several experiences I can draw on, but your contributions are always welcomed.

July 1, Mount Mitchell & Craggy Gardens

Janet and I drove a little over an hour from our Roan Mountain State Park cabin to explore the Mount Mitchell and Craggy Gardens areas. As we traveled along the parkway in the early morning, it was clear why they call it the Blue Ridge Parkway. As seen from the overlooks, the mountains were layers of dark blue in the foreground to light blue in the distance. While the sun was still low, the clouds lay like a blanket between the mountain peaks, but as the morning light increased, they rose above the mountains, and the landscape gradually changed from blue to green.

The road off the parkway that goes up Mount Mitchell is our go-to place to see the small purple fringed orchids, *Platanthera psycodes*. We saw them last year and again this year. The small purple fringed orchid is not that small (some of the ones we saw were up to 2 feet tall) but is so named to distinguish it from the Large Purple Fringed Orchid. The two orchids look almost identical, but according to the guidebooks, the best way to tell them apart is the shape of their nectary opening: In the Small Purple Fringed Orchid, the nectary opening is partially hidden and is "pinched," in the shape of a barbell. In the Large Purple Fringed Orchid, the nectary opening is more prominent and rounder or squarish. This year, we only found the small purple fringed orchids.



Small Purple Fringed Orchid,
Platanthera psycodes

Craggy Gardens is not far south of Mount Mitchell at Mile Marker 364.4. The Craggy Gardens in the Great Craggy Mountains are a subrange of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The hike from the Craggy Gardens Visitor Center to the Craggy Flats is an easy 8/10ths mile uphill. The elevation at the top is 5,680 feet. One of my favorite sightings here



Phlox spp.

was one of a plethora of phlox. It was a single flower that was in early bloom. Its fresh pink petals overlapped like a pinwheel.

Leaving Mount Mitchell and Craggy Gardens, we drove to Burnsville for lunch and a beer. Homeplace Brewery offers both. Going there is a yearly ritual for us.

We love craft beer, and Homeplace Brewery has an excellent selection on tap.

July 2nd Pisgah Inn and the Vertical Bog

On July 2nd, we left Roan Mountain State Park and went to the Pisgah Inn, where we continued our explorations on the Blue Ridge Parkway. While waiting to check-in our room, we walked on trails near the inn. On the Pisgah Mountain trail, I saw a colony of plants that will be a common thread along the rest of our hikes: Galax (*Galax urceolata*), a slim spike of dainty flowers rising above a bed of round, bright green basal leaves. It favors the rich, well-drained woodland soils of the mountains.

The beautiful magenta bell-shaped blossoms of Leather vasevine (*Clematis viorna*) would also be a frequent plant of our rambles. We saw several species of smilax, including the Smooth Carrion Flower (*Smilax herbacea*), so named because it lacks the thorns and hairs of other *Smilax* species. I read it had a putrid smell, which attracted the bees and flies, but I didn't smell it. White Bergamot (*Monarda clinopodia*), Polk Milkweed (*Asclepias exaltata*), Fire Pink (*Silene virginica*), and Eastern Red Columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*) also grew on the trails.



Leather Vasevine, *Clematis*

The Vertical Bog

With sunshine to burn after checking into our room, Janet suggested we visit a vertical bog across from the Wolf Mountain Overlook at mile marker 424.8. A vertical bog is a rock face with rivulets of water that supports many plants,

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Places to See Natives... continued from page 4



The Vertical Bog.

including moss, grasses, ferns, wildflowers, and even small shrubs and trees. The plants take root in deep crevices and small cracks in the rocks, wherever there is enough organic debris for them to take hold. The most diminutive mosses grow right on the rocks.

One of the prolific plants on this vertical bog is the Grass of Parnassus (*Parnassia* spp.). While it was not in flower (it blooms in the Fall), the bright green basal rosettes of heart-shaped leaves formed thick colonies in the fissures of the rocks. Alongside it was the Mountain Saxifrage (*S. michauxii*) with its open panicle of delicate white flowers rising from a rosette of sharply toothed red and green spoon-shaped basal leaves, and the similar Mountain Lettuce (*S. micranthidifolia*) with large bright green oblong leaves. Also in the mix were several species of hypericum, sundews, ferns, large clumps of bluet, and mountain laurel. I was fascinated by the vertical bog and planned to spend more time there on my next trip.

July 3rd: Graveyard Fields, Investor Gap, and Frypan Mountain



Galax, *Galax urceolata*

that extensive logging left behind moss and lichen-covered tree stumps that looked like gravestones. A devastating fire ended any recovery of the trees here. The fire was so hot that it sterilized the soil resulting in

a prolonged recovery of the forest.

The loop trail starts as a paved path through a thick strand of rhododendron.

Then, wooden steps descend to a bridge over the Yellowstone Prong. It continues as a dirt path through a small, forested area that opens onto a wooden boardwalk—the boardwalk winds through a bog of cranberry bush, blueberry thickets, grasses, and wildflowers. Hypericum, bearberry, huckleberry, and blueberry grew in the wet field. We then crossed over the Yellowstone Prong and into a thick stand of small trees. Some small trees and shrubs were rhododendron maxima, mountain laurel, Southern honeysuckle, native hydrangea, and red maples. Galax and running cedar grew in the shade of the trees. We also saw ferns and Saxifrage along the streams. These shrubs and herbaceous plants are slowly building up the soil's fertility, so Graveyard Fields may eventually be a forest.

We left the Graveyard fields and took the Black Balsam Knob Road (Mile Marker 420) to Investor Gap. We did not hike the entire loop but walked along the roadbed, where we saw blooming mountain laurels, yellow jewelweed, foxglove, and many of the species we had seen earlier. There were also some rock faces with vertical bogs.

Our last hike of the day was the trail to the frypan mountain fire tower (Mile Marker 409.6). As we hiked, we spotted one of our target plants, Turk's Cap Lily (*Lilium superbum*), in bud, but it wasn't until we were about a ¾ of a mile in that we saw a cluster of orange nodding flowers.



Cranberry, *Vaccinium* spp.



Turk's Cap Lily, *Lilium superbum*

Yes, Virginia, there are Prairies in Tennessee...

Field Trip Report by Donna Bollenbach

It had been a while since I went on a field trip with a group of native plant enthusiasts. Still, my delight in walking in nature with like-minded people was renewed when I attended an outing in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, on September 10th. A steady downpour of rain did not deter 16 people from the Tennessee Native Plant Society (TNPS) and the Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning (TCWP) from following our trip leader, Larry Pounds, through the Oak Ridge Cedar Barrens Natural Area (the Barrens) and the Worthington Cemetery Trail, a TVA Small Wild Area.



The Oak Ridge Cedar Barrens is a unique prairie habitat with a thin or nonexistent soil layer. Two open areas (prairie pockets) are skirted by stands of eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*), a conifer that can thrive in the shallow, rocky soil. As we entered the first prairie pocket, a simultaneous chorus of oohs and ahs erupted. Showy yellow goldenrod (*Solidago nemoralis*) and purple blazing star (*Liatris aspera*) comingled with



White flat-top goldenrod,
Solidago ptarmicoides

native Indian grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*), frostweed (*Verbesina virginica*), tick trefoil (*Desmodium ciliare*), and other perennials. It was a spectacular mosaic of color.

The second prairie pocket had several Tennessee rare plant species, including white flat-top goldenrod (*Solidago ptarmicoides*), which doesn't look like goldenrod at all,

naked-stem sunflower (*Helianthus occidentalis*), and Torrey's mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum torreyi*). Big bluestem grass (*Andropogon gerardi*), black-eyed Susans (*Rudbeckia fulgida*), and Guara (*Guara bienis*) were also seen in both prairie pockets.



Naked-stem Sunflower, *Helianthus occidentalis*

After a short lunch break, but with no break in the rain, we headed to the Worthington Cemetery Trail. This Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) area protects the cedar barren habitat, a wetland, and the Worthington Family Cemetery, with gravestones dating back to the 1800s. It shares some common plants with the Oak Ridge Barrens, including eastern red cedar, blazing star (*Liatris spicata*), big bluestem, and coneflowers. One different and fascinating plant found there is Prairie Dock (*Silphium terebinthinaceum*), a yellow composite that grows up to 10 feet tall with huge spade-shaped basal leaves that sit vertically to the ground. In the wetlands area, we saw jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*), cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*), and native American holly (*Ilex opaca*).

Prairie Dock
Silphium terebinthinaceum



Roadside Botanizing in Northern Decatur County

Field trip Report by Bart Jones

On September 17th, a nice group of TNPS field trippers met at exit 126 off I-40 on a glorious early fall day for an exploration of the plants along the roadsides in northern Decatur County.

We proceeded to Sally Baker Road, where we made several stops. Some of the first plants we encountered were slender-leaf false foxglove (*Agalinis tenuifolia*), wingstem (*Verbesina alternifolia*), frostweed (*Verbesina virginica*), bluestem goldenrod (*Solidago caesia*), and tall ironweed (*Vernonia gigantea*). The next stop produced a profusion of flowers lining a moist ditch and up a clay embankment. Dozens of towering purple-disk sunflowers (*Helianthus atrorubens*) dwarfed smaller



Bluestem goldenrod, *Solidago caesia*



Gravelweed, *Verbesina helianthoides*

species like downy lobelia (*Lobelia puberula*), roundleaf thoroughwort (*Eupatorium rotundifolium*), gray goldenrod (*Solidago nemoralis*), and both large and small partridge peas (*Chamaechrista fascicularis* and *nictitans*). The last stop on Sally Baker Road was a small field that typically is full of starry rosinweed (*Silphium asteriscus* var. *asteriscus*) at this time, but it had been mowed weeks before and now was ablaze with gravelweed (*Verbesina*

helianthoides) and butterflyweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), plants which normally bloom in June and July. The flowers of these two species were teeming with butterflies, particularly Common Buckeye. What an unexpected treat!

We drove up to the top of the ridge, where we followed Low Gap Road for several miles. Being atop the ridge, the habitat was drier and rockier. This was the area where we would look for some of our target species, like Appalachian blazingstar



Appalachian blazingstar, *Liatris squarrulosa*

(*Liatris squarrulosa*) and bearded rattlesnake-root (*Nabalus barbatus*). We saw numerous individuals of the blazingstar along the road in perfect bloom, however, the rattlesnake-root

escaped us. But we were still treated to some nice plants like Southern prairie aster (*Eurybia hemispherica*), three native lespedezas; creeping lespedeza (*Lespedeza repens*), slender lespedeza (*L. virginica*), hairy lespedeza (*L. hirta*), and three goldenrods; fragrant goldenrod (*Solidago odora*), tall goldenrod (*S. altissima*), and elm-leaf goldenrod (*S. ulmifolia*).



Southern prairie aster, *Eurybia hemispherica*

Descending from the ridgetop, we entered an area of moist woodland along a small stream that produced another set of species for our enjoyment. Some of the highlight plants in this area were smooth yellow false foxglove (*Aureolaria flava*), jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*), dittany (*Cunila origanoides*), Short's



Hearts-a-bustin', *Euonymus americanus*

aster (*Symphyotrichum shortii*), lesser snakeroot (*Ageratina aromatica*), and several bushes of hearts-a-bustin' (*Euonymus americanus*) loaded with "busted" fruits. After enjoying the area for a few minutes, we made our way back to the meeting area. With some final conversation and heartfelt goodbyes, we wrapped up another successful field trip season.



When Are Dues Due? NOW

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 re-new annually by the following January 1st.

To make payment go to 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 using the online form. Once the online form is complete, you will be sent to the PayPal page for payment with either a credit card or through your PayPal account. You have the option of making a one-time payment or making recurring annual payments. Either way, 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.

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.

SAVE THE DATE:

TNPS ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2023

**Our annual conference is planned for
May 5-7
at Cedars of Lebanon State Park
in Lebanon.**

**Cedar glades, that truly unique habitat,
will be our weekend focus.**

PLEASE SAVE THE DATE

**TNPS Newsletter
P.O. Box 159274
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