

Chinquapin

The Newsletter of the
Southern Appalachian Botanical Society



Vol. 4, No. 4

Winter 1996

From The Editor's Desk.....

I am sure many members have had damaging weather on their minds over the past few months. Certainly the Raleigh-Durham area of North Carolina has been devastated by Hurricane Fran. Luckily, Fran totally missed the NC mountains, but it did some damage further north in Virginia. Likewise, there has been a lot of flooding and wind in New England, and recently the devastation of heavy snows has been heavy on the minds of the Great Lakes residents. Let us hope that the recovery of normal life activities will be as swift as the return of the vegetation. You might recall that last year many of us faced devastation by Hurricane Opal. While

there is still much evidence in our woodlands of this storm, the trees and other vegetation have made great strides in returning to their normal activities of growth this past summer.

With this issue we take a brief look at efforts toward a remedy for the chestnut blight (*Endothia parasitica*, also known as *Cryphonectria parasitica*), the most devastating parasite of the American chestnut as well as chinquapin. Undoubtedly many of you know of or are members of the American Chestnut Foundation (see "Organizational Spotlight"). This organization has stepped in and continued the search for a resistant strain through a vigorous breeding program that

has been abandoned by both the federal government, and more recently, the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station. Perhaps some of you know of reproducing trees and if you can harvest seeds, these may be of interest to the Foundation. I have, within the past five years, observed two trees 14 inches in diameter at breast height that still survive within several miles of Cullowhee, but their fruits are such a delicacy to wildlife that seldom can one find a nut on the ground. If you know of any significant efforts toward the ends of the recovery of the American chestnut, I am sure our readers and the Foundation would be happy to learn of them.

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John E. Fairey Challenge

The Endowment Committee solicits your support to help meet the challenge! We still need 12 members who are not listed on the 1966 Roster of Donors (see September issue of *Castanea* for roster) to donate \$100 or more to the Endowment Fund by December 15, 1996 to take advantage of the John E. Fairey, III's challenge to contribute an additional \$1000. If you are one of the 600+ members who have never contributed to the Endowment, you are in a unique position to help us meet the challenge.

Letters to the Editor...

Robert Haynes writes:

I was surprised to read in Chinquapin that Carroll E. Wood, Jr., President of SABC (then) for 1954 was deceased. I have had considerable correspondence with him during 1996, and, in fact, have talked with him on the phone. I, therefore, e-mailed a mutual friend, who is co-editing the Generic Flora of the Southeast with Carroll just to make sure that Carroll had not died without my knowing it. Norton Miller assured me that Carroll is alive and well. [Ed. note: Dr. Wood can be contacted as follows: Dr. C. E. Wood, Jr., Harvard University Herbaria, 22 Divinity Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138]

Welcome to Our New Members:

Paul Catling, Metcalfe, ONT, Canada; Rebecca Connelly, Columbia, SC; Willis DeHart, Riverdale, MD; Daniel Flisser, Cazenovia, NY; John F. Logue, Sumter, SC; Peter W. Julius, Bryson City, NC; Jeremy A. Keller, Columbus, OH; Charlotte E. Lackey, Asheville, NC; Ben Mattocks, St. Louis, MO; Paul L. Meyers, Hendersonville, NC; George W. Seckinger, Jr., Columbia, SC; Jack Smith, Chardon, OH; Jane M. J. Williamson, Columbia, SC; Thad E. Yorks, Syracuse, NY. Welcome aboard the fastest growing regional organization in botany!

Birds, Butterflies and Black-eyed

Susans: Right in Your Backyard!

The Kentucky Cooperative Extensive Service and cooperating agencies are presenting a conference on wildlife at Marriott Griffin Gate Resort, Lexington, Kentucky on January 21-24, 1997. This conference is designed to meet the informational needs of a wide variety of audiences including government officials, planners and engineers; city councils and planning commissions; natural resource managers; landscape architects and students; teachers or educators contemplating constructing outdoor classrooms; county extension fac-

ulty; garden club members and homeowners wishing to make their property more "wild" and attract wildlife and protect biodiversity. Continuing education credits will be granted by the University of Kentucky. Speakers for the conference include internationally recognized natural gardener Ken Druse; Dr. Lowell Adams, president of the Urban Wildlife Resources; Dr. Tom Barnes, an associate extension professor in the Department of Forestry at the University of Kentucky; Dr. Faith Thompson Campbell of The National Association of

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"Mountain" Mints?

J. M. Sullivan, writing in the Petal Pusher 11(3), the 1996 summer issue of the Missouri Native Plant Society notes: "A few centuries ago gardeners often used the word 'mountain' in the common names of white-hairy plants. They thought of them as 'snow-capped.'" The expression seems lost to most

of us. Have others observed the application of "mountain" to white-topped objects? I, for one, am accustomed to seeing mountain mints throughout the southern Appalachians and thought perhaps they were observed first here in the mountains, thus acquiring the name.—J. Dan Pittillo

Botanical Organization Spotlight

Editor's Note: In the upcoming issues we hope to feature various botanical groups within the region. Please send to the editor a summary of your organization for publication. **The American Chestnut Foundation**

The American Chestnut Foundation was established by a group of professional scientists and supporters, including Norman Borlaug, Peter Raven and Charles Burnham in 1983. Their mission is simple: restore the American chestnut as an integral part of the Eastern forest system. In 1989 the ACF established a research farm in Meadowview, Virginia (see details in the related column). The Foundation is overseen by the volunteer Board of Directors and active state chapters are located in Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Pennsylvania and New York. Their membership numbered over 2100 in December, 1995. They produce a quarterly newsletter, The Bark, and a biannual publication, The Journal. Anyone interested in the organization should contact The American Chestnut Foundation, P. O. Box 4044, Bennington, VT 05201; phone (802) 447-0110; e-mail chestnut@acf.org and on the web: <http://chestnut.acf.org>.

North Carolina Reports Soda Apple

Tropical soda apple (*Solanum viarum*) was reported this summer for Sampson County by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture. The plant grows up to six feet tall and is covered with thorn-like prickles. It is estimated to have cost the cattle industry over \$11 million in

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Creeks & White Footed Mice: Sweetshrub Distribution Allies?

By George Ellison

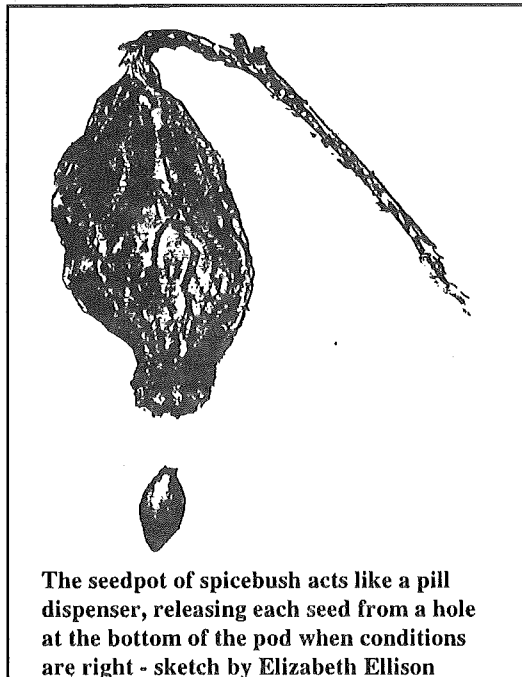
Write it down. Everything about a given plant's fruiting structure has to do with the development, protection or distribution of its seeds. Seed distribution is the grand finale for individual plants that have strived to germinate, flower, attract pollinators and set fruit. But as observers we all too often fail to pay attention to this fascinating phase in our favorite plants' life cycles.

One of the most intriguing fruiting structures commonly encountered in the Southern Appalachians is that produced by the shrub with opposite, deciduous leaves known as Carolina Allspice, bubby-bush, strawberry-shrub, or sweetshrub. Most everyone recognizes sweetshrub when it blooms in hardwood coves and along streams from early spring into early summer. The flowers feature numerous burgundy, straplike petals that curve in at their tips. Many - but not all - of the plants exude a spicy fragrance when crushed.

The lower leaf surfaces, twigs and petioles of hairy sweetshrub (*Calycanthus floridus* var. *floridus*) are pubescent. This is by far the most cotton variety encountered. The lower leaf surfaces, twigs and petioles of smooth sweetshrub (*C. floridus* var. *glaucus*, *C. floridus* var. *laevigatus*, and *C. floridus* var. *oblongifolius*) are smooth or with a few hairs. Populations bearing yellow-greenish flowers in Lumpkin, White, and Habersham counties in north Georgia were described (Ferry and Ferry, 1987) as a

new species (*C. brockiana*).

Sweetshrub grows profusely along the banks of a small creek that transverses our property, which is adjacent to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park near Bryson City, N. C. When we moved there 20 years ago, Elizabeth and I already recognized sweetshrub by its flowers and foliage, but we had never observed the fruiting structures. One mid-



The seedpot of spicebush acts like a pill dispenser, releasing each seed from a hole at the bottom of the pod when conditions are right - sketch by Elizabeth Ellison

winter day in the late 1970's, while walking along the creek, I spied what I took to be a moth cocoon dangling from a bare branch.

Donald W. Stokes, author of The Natural History of Wild Shrubs (1989), had an experience very similar to mine when he first encountered sweetshrub fruits: "When I first saw one on the plant, I had no idea it was the fruit and approached cautiously with wonder. A shriveled dark-brown sac, about two inches long, was hanging off the

BOTANICAL EXCURSIONS

branch; in size and shape, it reminded me of a *Cecropia* cocoon. As I removed it from the plant, I heard something rattle loosely inside. I again thought of a *Cecropia* cocoon, for when parasitized it is filled with many tiny wasp pupae. I put the sac down on the ground and started to cut it open with a knife. The exterior split easily and had the texture of parchment. I pried

apart the outer shell, somewhat apprehensive that I might discover some strange animal inside. To my surprise, the casing was filled with loose brown seeds that, in color and shape, looked much like baked beans.

"Because the seeds of sweetshrub are often found loose in their casing, one might wonder how they developed with no apparent connection to the plant. But if you open some seed cases carefully, you will find the seeds still attached to the casing, receiving their nourishment. These attachments will eventually dry out and break. "I took several of the sweetshrub pods ("pseudocarps") filled with about 20 seeds ("achenes") each to my office in town. I thought they were attractive, so I stuck the sections of the broken-off branches to which they were still attached into a vase on the far corner of my desk. One day a week or so later, I heard a seed drop on my desktop, then several minutes later another, then another, and another ...

The temperature and moisture conditions in my

Cont. on page 29

INTERNATIONAL CARNIVOROUS PLANT CONFERENCE

The next International Carnivorous Plant Conference, sponsored by the Atlanta Botanical Garden, is set for May 16-20, 1997 at the Atlanta Botanical Garden. The conference includes talks, plant displays and field trips. Registration is \$65. For information write: Steve Baker, International Carnivorous Plant Conference, Rt. 1, Box 540-19AB, Conover, NC 28613 or phone evenings (704) 256-7035.

Castanea Back Issues

The special issue of the Barrens Symposium is available for \$10.00 and regular back issues are \$6.00 starting with 1995. This price reflects current production, handling and shipping costs. Contact Secretary-Treasurer Charlie Horn.

West Virginia University has sent all back issues to Charlotte. Members can still get back issues before 1990 for a bargain \$1 per volume. This bargain price applies to availability (there are some missing numbers in many volumes).

Birds Cont.

Exotic Pest Plant Council, Springfield, Virginia; and Dr. Kate Stenburg, wildlife biologist, King County, Washington.

For more information about the conference, please contact: Tom Barnes, Department of Forestry, University of Kentucky, Lexington, 40546-0073. (606) 257-8633; fax (606) 323-1031; email tbarnes@ca.uky.edu.

Look Again

(Reprinted from: Shortia 12(4): Winter, 1990, Newsletter of the Western Carolina Botanical Club.)

As we walk through today's forests of oaks, hickories, beeches and maples it seems impossible that only a lifetime ago one-quarter of

these trees would have been American chestnuts. Yet when we look about we see ample evidence of this majestic

species' prevalence before it was virtually wiped out by a lethal alien blight. A few silvery gray boles still stand erect; many more lie prostrate but are astonishingly sound. Even more abundant are old stumps ringed by vigorous, persistent

sprouts that arise from the unaffected roots, some managing to produce spiny burs before succumbing.

The leaves of American chestnut (*Castanea dentata*) have a distinctive look of

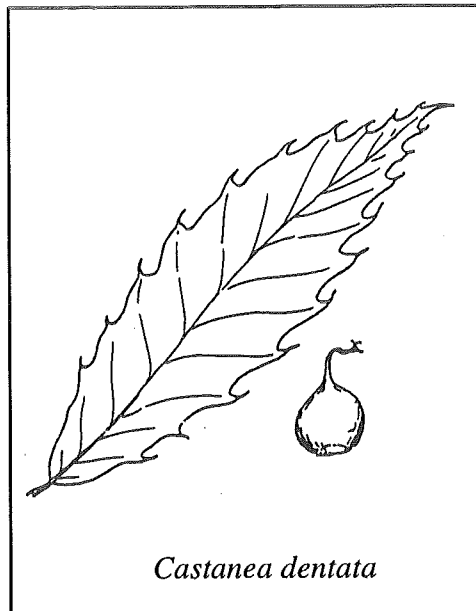
sharpness about them, owing to the large bristle-tipped saw-teeth that give it its specific name and the long, attenuated apex. Beneath, they are pale yellowish green, smooth and shiny.

Sometimes mistaken for it is the related Allegheny chinquapin (*C. pumila*), a shrub, or at most, a small tree. Here the leaves tend to be broader nearer the summit and narrow more abruptly to a short tip, and the teeth are smaller. The undersides are whitened with

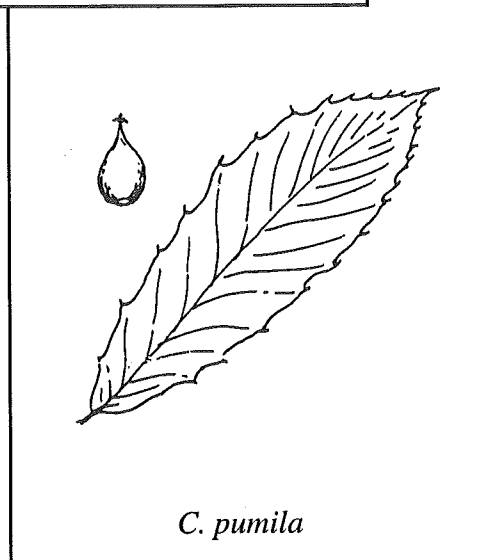
a dense covering of soft woolly hairs.

When fruits are present, the two species can be easily differentiated. Chestnut burs are two inches or more in diameter, and each

contains two or three nuts which are flattened on at least one side. In Allegheny chinquapin, the burs are smaller and contain a single rounded nut.



Castanea dentata



C. pumila

Radfords Launch Herbarium Fund

Albert E. Radford and his wife, Laurie Stewart Radford, have donated their land and home in Chapel Hill to the Botanical Garden Foundation as the first major contribution toward the Research Center and Herbarium of the North Carolina Botanical Garden's master plan. Dr. Radford is best known for this role in the Carolinas Flora Project that was initiated in the mid-1950's and culminated in publication of the Manual of the Vascular Flora of the Carolinas with associates Harry E. Ahles and C. Ritchie Bell. He taught systematics and served as Her-

barium Curator, 1948 to 1960, and subsequently as director of the Herbarium from 1960 to 1983. Laurie Stewart served as curator of the Herbarium from 1937 to 1942. They recently moved to their new home in Carolina Meadows. The Radfords care strongly that the NCU Herbarium is properly housed and cared for. This donation insures the future of valuable national assets of over 600,000 herbarium specimens.

"Diversity is a necessity, not just the spice of life." -E. P. Odum. 1971. Fundamentals of Ecology. W. B. Saunders Co., Philadelphia. 574 pp. (p. 510).

Botanical Excursions Cont.

office had become just right, so that the opening at the bottom of one of the seed pods had enlarged just enough to allow seeds to drop out. Had there been a little wind in my office, it would have shaken the pod on its branch and created a virtual cascade of seeds. I now know that sweet shrub fruits sometimes act as a sort of pill dispenser, releasing seeds when conditions are right. My office approximated springtime conditions for the pod-release mechanism.

Knowing that the shrub is commonly encountered along streams, I dropped some of the seeds into a cup of water. They were buoyant. Some floated on the surface; others sank just below the surface; others rolled lightly on the bottom. Those plants growing along stream are no doubt dependent, in part, on water for seed dispersal.

But what about those plants that grow on slopes far from streams? I have often observed holes gnawed in the sides of sweetshrub pods; indeed, the majority of the pods located will be in this condition, even alongside streams. Arthur

Stupka (1964), a naturalist and biologist in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 1935-1964, observed that "The chocolate-colored seeds are often removed from the large brown pods by white-footed mice."

The white-footed mouse (*Peromyscus leucopus*) is one of the most widespread and abundant residents of the region in which sweetshrub is widespread and abundant (Webster, et al., 1985). Like most other rodents they are busy critters, stashing away more food items in isolated caches than they can locate or eat, making them a likely suspect as the non-riparian distributor of sweetshrub seeds. In this instance, the dangling pod would serve not as a seed dispenser but as a tantalizing food pouch, ready and waiting to be raided.

A cautionary note. Even though the Indians and early settlers harvested the root or bark of sweetshrub to make tea used as a diuretic for kidney and bladder ailments, as well as for visual problems and as a calming tonic for malaria, the seeds are not to be ingested. They are reported to have an effect similar to strychnine. (I

State Flower Project

John Herr, who seems to abound with the energy of a teen-ager, has come up with still another idea: collect a set of state flower specimens from each state for archiving at West Virginia Herbarium. He proposes that each of the state representatives be responsible for making the collection of two specimens of each state's designated flower. It will be interesting to see how this project comes along. Keep the members posted, John! (Ed. note: I wonder what he'll think of next year!)

have been told by several traditional Cherokees in the Snowbird Community near Robbinsville, N. C., that during the 19th century sweetshrub seeds were sometimes placed in meat to poison timber wolves preying on livestock.) John K. Crellin and Jane Philpott (1989) note that calycanthine, a "highly toxic" alkaloid present in the seeds, can cause "violent convulsions, paralysis, and cardiac depression."

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- Webster, W. D., et al. Mammals of the Carolinas, Virginia and Maryland. Chapel Hill, NC, University of North Carolina Press, 1985.

Andre Michaux Bicentennial Observed

By Charlie Williams and William S. Logan

Attendees at the Charlotte Mecklenburg Tree Advisory Commission's annual Arbor Day Luncheon for 1996 were treated to a very special program sponsored by the Mecklenburg Treasure Tree Committee. April 3, 1996, marked the bicentennial of the great French botanist-explorer Andre Michaux's last great collection in America. The program presented to the Arbor Day audience dramatized this forgotten milestone in botanical history.

For eleven years, from 1785-1796, Michaux traveled thousands of miles across the length and breadth of eastern North America. He was the first scientifically trained botanist to explore the natural gardens that are the living mantle of the southern Appalachian Mountains. We see his legacy all around us in the name authority "Michaux" on literally hundreds of plants. He was a keen observer of what was different and unusual in the plant world and a bold, indefatigable explorer.

It is little wonder then, that in repeated trips through the Carolina Piedmont he would take note of the unusual magnolia trees growing across the Catawba River from Charlotte in what is now Gaston County. Beginning in 1789 he made notes in his journal about these trees, but it was not until April 3, 1796, that he made the signal entry about this species. Nearing the end of the return journey from his great exploration to the Mississippi River begun eleven months earlier, Michaux arrived on the banks of a small creek near Stanley, N.C. on April 3. On this memorable Sunday, he was about ten

miles west of the Catawba River and twenty miles west of Charlotte. All about him, the forest was beginning to answer the call of spring. What Andre Michaux observed that day and recorded in his journal for posterity were the freshly opened buds and unfurled leaves of the rare bigleaf magnolia, his appropriately named, *Magnolia macrophylla*. He collected plants for his garden in Charleston and wrote in his journal for the first time that this was a new

species of magnolia, in his words "un nouveau Magnolia."

The *Magnolia macrophylla* is a tree of superlatives. It has both the largest simple leaves and the largest flowers of any tree native to temperate North America. The striking purple-blotched white flowers may measure up to a foot and a half across and the leaves up to three feet long and a foot wide. Widespread, but not found in great numbers anywhere in its range, this tree adds a tropical

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Wild Ideas

Ideas are born by inquisitive minds. Perhaps some of us have had some speculative thoughts that have turned out to be basically correct when the facts were properly evaluated. Researchers often are driven by hunches and due to discipline must work for years to come to publishable conclusions. Many of us do not feel that these wild ideas should be left unexplored but will not have an opportunity to probe them further. This is the basis of this column. The wild idea needs to have some factual basis, though it does not necessarily need to be fully supported as in a reviewed publication.

Some Current Musings on Vegetational History

By J. Dan Pittillo

While many consider the Appalachian Mountains among the oldest in the world, geologist Bob Hatcher of The University of Tennessee points out that while the rocks are really quite old, the landscape is much younger, being a product of the much more recent glacial period of the Pleistocene and Quaternary Period. If that is true, then maybe those "rich cove forests" that are so delightfully diverse are a more recent addition to our regional flora. I have observed several times that a richer assemblage of herbs is often associated with debris avalanches in cove situations. On the other hand, Claire Newell observed a more diverse assemblage in Joyce Kilmer's Canada Hemlock Forest rather than in its nearby Rich Cove Forest. So, the question is, "What has been a more important contribution to the modern flora of the southern Appalachians? Is it what appears to be the ancient elements, such as magnolias, laurels, oaks and the like?" After all, Stanley Cain pointed out over 50 years ago that over 90% of our modern genera have fossil representatives in the Tertiary Period. Or alternatively, "Is the diversity of our flora a combination of these ancient elements with more modern ones that might have developed in response to the climate changes brought on by the glacial periods within the past million years?" Your essay on this question is being anxiously anticipated.

BOOK

CORNER

[If you know of books that might be of particular interest to the lay readers of our organization, please submit a brief paragraph of 3-8 lines for consideration in the newsletter. Longer reviews should be sent to Audrey Mellichamp for inclusion in Castanea.-Ed.]

For those seeking out-of-door experiences in Virginia, Allen deHart has a new and revised edition of The Trails of

Virginia: Hiking the Old Dominion (University of North Carolina Press). It not only gives the locations that offer good scenery, but also describes the vegetation in general terms. And true to deHart's books, it gives accurate measures of the distances and routes to the trailheads for each trail and descriptions and trail distances he personally hiked. Unlike some of his books designed to be carried along, this book is 1.25 inches thick, so it would be wise to copy maps and descriptions of the 1000+ trails described.

Vegetation of the Southern Blue Ridge Symposium

At the annual meeting this spring (April 16-19, 1997) SABS and the Southeastern Section of the Ecological Society of America are co-sponsoring a symposium on the vegetation of the Southern Blue Ridge Province in Greenville, SC at the Association of Southeastern Biologists meeting. The program will include half a day of presentations by many of the outstanding researchers in the field and promises to be one that will bring the members up to date on much of the recent research in this region. Plans are to publish the papers in the September, 1998 issue of Castanea. Mark your calendar for this important event.

Apples cont.

1994 and has infested nearly 1 million acres in Florida. Found in Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, and South Carolina, soda apple is highly aggressive, and its movement in articles such as

farm equipment, hay, seed, manure, etc., is prohibited by the US Department of Agriculture. Anyone suspecting the species in his area should contact the state cooperative extension agent.

SOUTHERN APPALACHIAN BOTANICAL SOCIETY Application for Membership

Name: _____ Date: _____
(name and address should be four lines as given)

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City: _____ State _____ Zip: _____

Optional: phone () _____ fax () _____ e-mail _____

AFFILIATION (Check one): College or university _____ Other educational or research institution _____ Non-institutional _____

NOTE: Memberships are only for the calendar year, January-December. Individuals joining in mid-year will be sent all back issues of Castanea and Chinquapin unless advising otherwise. Year you wish to start: _____

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Send To: Charles N. Horn, Secretary-Treasurer
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Bicentennial cont.

look to those special places in the forest where it is found.

Following Michaux's discovery, the tree was greatly prized in European gardens. Napoleon's Empress Josephine was among the select few to obtain these trees for her gardens. Horticultural interest led another plant hunter, the Scotsman John Lyon, to seek out Michaux's collecting sites and remove large quantities of the plant during several expeditions early in the nineteenth century. Lyon collected widely throughout the southeastern U.S. and was the last man to report seeing the *Franklinia alatamaha* of Bartram in the wild. Happily for all of us today, the *Magnolia macrophylla* escaped this fate and still thrives in the region from which it was first described.

Many months of research in the library and in the field were required to establish just which

little creek Andre Michaux visited for the *Magnolia macrophylla* plants that April day. One of the happy consequences of this effort has been the discovery, not just of Michaux's collection site, but several other unreported *M. macrophylla* sites in the same area. The tree remains rare, but it is thriving in Gaston County in its special niche habitat in far greater numbers than anyone had believed a year ago. We have observed relatively few really large trees of the species, but many hundreds of seedlings and young trees.

By a fortunate coincidence, Gaston County has recently begun a Natural Heritage Inventory. The project, conducted by Gaston's Quality Natural Resources Committee (QNRC) and the Schiele Museum, is being assisted by Charlotte's Habitat Assessment and Restoration Program (HARP). This team has

begun the work of examining the entire county for significant ecological sites. UNCC's Dr. Jim Matthews is the leader of HARP. Along with Dr. Larry Mellichamp, he is also an informal adviser and resource person for the *Magnolia macrophylla* history project. Dr. Matthews has been able to use the information we have learned about new *M. macrophylla* sites in the Natural Heritage Inventory. Thus, research into a little-noticed scientific event in the late eighteenth century has benefited the cause of science in our own time.

The story of how we were able to find a population of trees alongside a creek in Gaston County and link them to Andre Michaux is a story of botany entwined with genealogy, old maps, land transfer records, coincidences and persistent research. This part of the story will be told later.

Complimentary addressed issues: Please share with your interested friends who might wish to become members of SABS. Thank you—Ed.

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