



Blanche Dean Chapter of the Alabama Wildflower Society

May 2019 Newsletter

Public Library

May 7 Meeting

7 p.m.

Homewood

Preserving what the first settlers saw when they came to Alabama ----

Centennial Trees are Replanting our local forests

In 2008, Dr. Henry Hughes started what has eventually become known as the Centennial Tree program, and today, 11 years later, he has propagated and overseen the planting of literally thousands of native trees all over Central Alabama. Descended from parents often more than 200 years old, these Centennial seedlings have taken root along creek banks, in tornado devastated communities and in city parks. Whereas in the natural world our native species would regenerate themselves without human help, modern conditions often make this impossible. Enter Dr. Hughes, who wants to insure that we will continue to see these familiar faces for many years in the future.

“Ecologically,” says Dr. Hughes, “Centennial Trees are special. They are adapted to local soils, sites and climate, and thus have a greater potential than trees not native to the site to live more than a hundred years.” Because locally sourced natives are synchronized with Birmingham’s growing seasons, their timing coincides with the development and movements of our local animal populations -- from cicadas and butterflies to salamanders and migratory birds.

Dr. Hughes is recently retired from the Birmingham Botanical Gardens, where he served as Director of Education. He has served on the executive committees of Alabama Rivers Alliance, Cahaba River Society and Friends of Shades Creek. He co-leads the Springville Gathering, promoting collaboration among environmental groups in central Alabama. He studied forestry and botany at the University of the South and plant and soil sciences at the University of Kentucky and Texas A&M University. Earlier he worked for more than 20 years in the urban forestry and reforestation field in Alabama.

Dr. Hughes
along the banks
of the Cahaba
River. He is
especially
interested in the
use of natives to
control bank
erosion and
restore the flood
plain forests of
Alabama’s creeks
and rivers.



ALABAMA WILDFLOWER SOCIETY - BLANCHE DEAN CHAPTER
Minutes of April 1, 2019

Tonight's meeting was held at the Homewood Public Library. President Linda Sherk called the meeting to order at 7:10p.m. Treasurer Ida Gleaton announced that we had \$2,296.71 in the coffers.

Announcements included: 1) T-shirts will be available at the next meeting; 2) On Sunday, 4-28, there will be a wildflower-viewing hike at Ruffner Mtn., led by Linda Sherk; 3) There are two local plant sales forthcoming within the next few weeks; and 4) There will be a weekend class at Samford University, entitled SPRING BLOOMS AND BIRDS, led by Dr. Ellen McLaughlin, Samford biologist, on April 13. - For further details concerning any of these events, contact Linda Sherk at #205-415-1643 or BLT111@bellsouth.net. -

Tonight's speaker was announced by Program Manager Marty Schulman at 7:19p.m. Jason Kirby is currently employed by the Friends of Birmingham Botanical Gardens (FOBBG). He is the institution's first Archivist! His presentation topic was THE HISTORY OF LANE PARK.

Facts were rapidly conveyed this evening, sometimes quicker than the pen could record. This was likely of no consequence as many of the audience seemed to already be knowledgeable of much of the information. Allow the bells to ring for our botanical scholars.

Lane Park was a 200-acre parcel of land south of Birmingham which later became the home for the Birmingham Zoo and the Birmingham Botanical Gardens. Some 200-million years ago, it was under a sea. Environmental conditions were such then, and with later geological/sea life influence, that it became a mecca for iron concentration. Hartselle sandstone, very abundant in times to come, came to be a prominent component in the erected structures of the town of iron and steel, Birmingham.

William Pullen, a U.S. Revolutionary War soldier, is believed to have been the first white settler on the land. He was buried there although his grave was later relocated. In about 1889, the land was sold to the City of Birmingham. What came later was a series of historical occurrences. For some period of time, the site served as a Potter's Field, a burial

ground for the indigent. A tuberculosis sanatorium was erected and established in about 1910. At some point known as Red Mountain Park, it became Lane Park in 1934, named after B'ham mayor, A.O. Lane.

A.D. Griffin was the park's initial care keeper. The Kaul family, stalwarts in the timber industry, established the Kaul Wildflower Garden. Soon came a fish hatchery, and a golf driving range, this during the WPA days.

During these times, there were three entrances to Lane Park. 25 species of trees were planted.

Jimmy Morgan, B'ham mayor, insisted upon the establishment of a city zoo and gardens, and consequently the Birmingham Zoo was established in 1954. For several years, beginning in 1958, Harry Weaver (father of Rip Weaver, later manager of Aldridge Gardens) operated a golf facility.

In September of 1961, the Conservancy (Birmingham Botanical Gardens) opened. This was the magical decade for the BBG. Mell Wallace, a BYU horticulturist, displayed his talents in an illustrious manner. In September of 1964, the Japanese Gardens opened, this with the instruction and oversight of Katie Parson, a Japanese war bride. Many locally prominent citizens and families were involved with high visibility. The place was on the map for time indefinite.

The informative and entertaining program, with a question-and-answer terminus, concluded at 8:08 p.m. We will again convene on Tues., May 7, same time and place

Respectfully submitted, Charles E. Gleaton, Recorder

Brian Finzel is a high school biology teacher in Huntsville, as well as an amateur botanist, wildflower photographer and wildflower enthusiast. He is a former AWS secretary and former president of the Huntsville Wildflower Society.

For the purposes of species protection, he has asked us to list the location as simply Marshall County.

Last Saturday I was hiking in Marshall County and came across a plant I did not recognize. I immediately took pictures with my phone and sent them to a few of my botanist friends. They all quickly realized this was a plant that had never been identified anywhere in the world.

Yesterday I went back to the site with Dr. Brian Keener, a botanist at the University of West Alabama, along with some other plant enthusiasts. He collected specimens to begin analyzing and writing up this plant as a new species. Later this year, this plant should be characterized as a new species in a prestigious botanical journal. Dr. Keener has decided that the plant will be named after me, *Hexastylis finzelii*, or *Finzel's Ginger*.

The plant is on federal property, a TVA reservation, so it should remain protected. It will likely be listed as a federally endangered species within two years. We saw several hundred plants in an area the size of a football field, and currently know of no other sites anywhere nearby or elsewhere in the world. This plant is clearly related to two other species of ginger that are found in Alabama (*Hexastylis speciosa* and *Hexastylis arifolia*), but the flower structure and habitat makes this plant clearly distinct from them.

I believe it is divine providence that I happened upon a rare species of ginger. I believe my late mother, Ginger Finzel, led me to hike down this trail I had never been on before to find Finzel's Ginger. My mom endured many roadside stops on trips with me, patiently waiting while I took pictures of plants from all over the U.S. and Canada. This is every botanist's dream -- to identify a new species of plant!

Congratulations, Brian, for discovering a wonderful new addition to the natural world!

SAVE THE DATE –

Birmingham Fern Society Annual Fern Lecture -

A Geologic History of Ferns - from Past to Present

*A Talk by Jerald Pinson
Wednesday, May 15, 2019*

Reception: 5:30 p.m.

Talk: 6 p.m.

*Birmingham Botanical Gardens
Linn-Henley Lecture Hall*



Jerald will discuss the natural history of ferns, from their origin 380 million years ago in the Devonian and their survival of four out of the five major extinctions of life on Earth, to their astounding diversity today as the second largest group of vascular plants.

All are welcome—please join us!



FALL MEETING DATES FOR



THE BLANCHE DEAN CHAPTER

Monday, Sept. 16

Monday, Oct. 14

**Southern Grasslands Initiative “preaches the prairie,” telling the story of the
Forgotten Grasslands of the South**

Famed Alabamian and Harvard ecologist Dr. E.O. Wilson recently stated "to understand, cherish, and preserve the great natural heritage of the Southern Grassland Biome should be a priority goal in America's environmental movement." The Southeastern Grasslands Initiative was founded in order to focus on saving our fast-vanishing prairies, savannas, meadows, balds, barrens, glades, wetlands, and grassy woodlands. Undoing centuries of grassland loss and the erosion of our grassland biodiversity requires working urgently to make immediate impacts and to tell a story that has never been told in American history. To find out more about this amazing organization, look for them on Facebook.



Join Michelle Reynolds and Linda Sherk for a Wildflower Walk at the Cahaba Wildlife Refuge on Sunday, May 19.

Meet in the parking lot adjacent to Barnes & Noble, Trader Joe's at the Summitt Shopping Center(205 Summit Blvd., Birmingham,Al,35243) at 9AM. We plan on being at the Cahaba Wildlife Refuge by 10 AM, for anyone who wants to meet us there. Bring a picnic lunch, water, bug spray and a walking stick. Cahaba Wildlife Refuge Road(River Trace) is flat, but time permitting we may hike up a trail to the top of the hill overlooking the road or go to the Bib County Glades. We should be able to see Cahaba Lilies in bloom(for those who did not make the Cahaba Lily Festival) plus Red Buckeye, Tall Indigo Bush, American Hornbeam, Rusty Blackhaw, Narrow Leaf Silkgrass, Swamp Dogwood and much more.

Questions contact : Linda Sherk @ 2055-415-1643 or blt111@bellsouth.net

Alabama Wildflower Society meeting in Anniston on June 7, 8 and 9. Hayes Jackson will be leading our hikes on Saturday, June 8. He feels sure that the oak leafhydrangea will still be beautiful. Brian Finzel will be our speaker. We will be staying at Hotel Finial located at 1600 Quintard Avenue, Anniston, Al 36202 (256-236-0503). We have five king rooms (\$118.75 plus tax) and ten double queen rooms (\$137.76 plus tax) which will accommodate four people. When making reservations, please mention the Wildflower Society in order to get these prices. Dinner will at 6:00 p.m. at the Peerless Grille and we will be able to order from the menu.

Copies of the menu will be available when you check in.

NATIVE PLANT CONFERENCE 2019 MAY 30 – JUNE 2

This four-day event , to be held at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens, will celebrate Native Plants of the Southeast: Our Landscapes, History, and Culture and will feature pre-conference workshops, field trips, plant vendors, sales of books by presenters, a student poster session, an art exhibit, and a special evening dinner by Spencer Farm. Lunches will be catered by Brick & Tin. See bbgardens.org/npc.php for a schedule of events and conference details. Please join us! Registration is open.

Don't Forget to come to our May 7th Meeting to pick up the Alabama Wildflower Tee-Shirts that you ordered! Short sleeve is \$15 and Long sleeve is \$20. There will be extra tee-shirts.

Also your gift plant of Sundrops for joining or renewing in March will be there too for you to pick up.

Please contact Linda Sherk 205-415-1643 or blt111@bellsouth.net for alternate ways to pick up your tee-shirt or plant.