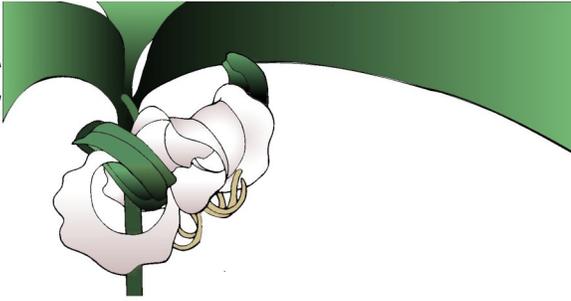


# BotSoc News



Volume 98  
Number 5  
September  
2023

## Early March trip to Savannah-Ogeechee Canal offers much to see, lots to learn

**Field Trip:** Savannah-Ogeechee Canal Museum

**Trip Leader:** Dr. Bobby Hattaway

**Date:** March 11, 2023

**Trip Report:** Lynn Hodgson and Ellen Blanchard

On a chilly but sunny morning, Dr. Bobby Hattaway spent two hours leading 11 BotSoc members and friends along trails near and next to the old Savannah-Ogeechee Canal. The canal helped transport local produce and timber from its completion in 1830 into the 1890s, until railroads took over most of the load.

Bobby led approximately the same trip March 27, 2021. This year, the trip was run a couple weeks earlier, and so the target swamp



Pictured above are side-by-side blooms of swamp jessamine (*G. rankinii*), left, and Carolina jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*), right. Photo by Bobby Hattaway.

jessamine (*Gelsemium rankinii*) was in full bloom and doing well. Bobby had brought some Carolina jessamine (*G. sempervirens*) from his home, so we could compare the acuminate sepals of the former to the blunter and shorter sepals of the latter, side-by-side. The richer color of the latter was also fairly obvious. Another target was to see and compare three palmettos: cabbage palmetto (*Sabal palmetto*), dwarf palmetto (*Sabal minor*), and needle palmetto (*Rhapidophyllum hystrix*). There is only a small patch of the latter, somewhat off the main trail, in among the dwarf palmetto.

Bobby expressed a little disappointment that more of the woody shrubs and trees were not leafed out enough for easy identification. Exceptions were southern highbush blueberry (*Vaccinium formosum*), mayberry (*V. elliotii*), sparkleberry (*V. arboreum*) and deerberry (*V. stamineum*). (Personally—this is Lynn speaking—I may never get them straight!)

We saw three members of the genus *Nyssa*, although they were still mostly not leaved out: water tupelo (*Nyssa aquatica*); swamp tupelo, or swamp blackgum

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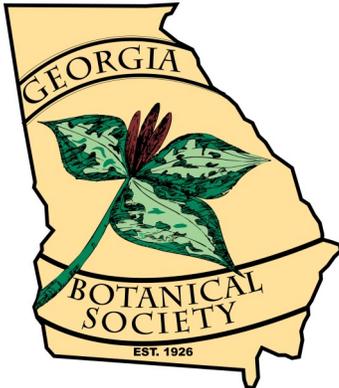
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**BotSoc News**

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**Georgia Botanical**

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**H**ave you ever found a rare plant? The best thing you can do is appreciate it where it is and leave it alone. Plants grow in locations where they are adapted, 'designed' to grow, and they will continue to grow there for beyond our lifetimes. But when people collect the

plants or clear land for development, the plants are removed forever. If people could take better care of plants than nature, then there would not be any rare plants. That doesn't mean you can't do anything. There is plenty you can do.

There are many ways you can help the situation of rare plants that are in decline. Knowing how to identify a rare plant is the first step. It is useful to know what plants are common or rare. From there, reporting a rare plant sighting to the appropriate authorities is a good option (see link in the following paragraph). From this you engage in a conversation with a source that may be able to help. They are only able to help if they are informed. Your involvement doesn't have to stop there.

There are situations where you can directly, have 'hands on,' help rare plants. If rare plants are going to be destroyed by land development, then perhaps transplanting the plants is a good option, but only if you are in contact with the correct authorities (check out <https://georgiawildlife.com/conservation/species-of-concern> for information from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources). I stress again, be authorized to perform such action. There are cases where growing rare plants can be helpful. There are opportunities to volunteer for such activities.

As a member you are already studying, volunteering, and supporting management of plants. Do continue to take the time to learn about plants around you. Engage in conversations with others on the topic. Then you will find opportunities to be more involved. I learn more about the plants around me every day. I identify, report locations, discuss with others, and grow rare plants. I know you do too.

Go out and look at some plants and have a great day!

*Timothy Estep*

## Member News

# Thank you, members and donors!

*A note from our membership chair:* The Georgia Botanical Society wishes to thank all members who have donated to the Society during the 2022-2023 Fiscal Year either by joining at the donor, life, or patron level, or by making a contribution to one or more of the following funds: Marie Mellinger Field Botany Research Grant Annual Fund; Maureen Donohue Habitat Conservation Fund; Tipularia; and General Fund. These contributions to the Society help support our efforts to increase the understanding and appreciation of plants and their relationship to the environment and their conservation. Individual thank-you letters have been sent to these members. If for any reason anyone has been inadvertently omitted, *please contact Jo Anne Romfh at joannromfh@aol.com*. The following memorial gifts are also acknowledged for the Fiscal Year 2022-2023:

- In Memory of Teresa Ware—Sam Pratt and John & Jo Anne Romfh
- In Memory of Tom Patrick—Gail Russell
- In Memory of Maureen Donohue—Frank & Eileen French

*Jo Anne Romfh*

## The Georgia Botanical Society welcomes its newest members!

New members who joined the Georgia Botanical Society between May 23 and July 29 of this year are:

Name	Hometown	Name	Hometown
Dan Alvear	Oxford, Ga.	Mary Nell Armstrong	Twin City, Ga.
Nikki Belmonte	Roswell, Ga.	Stephanie Benesh	Macon, Ga.
Emily Vorder Bruegge	Decatur, Ga.	Tammy Clemens	Cumming, Ga.
Donald Fontenot	Decatur, Ga.	Jackie Harder	Blackshear, Ga.
Betsy Harris	Fernandina Beach, Fla.	Katie Hendrickson	Dunwoody, Ga.
Spencer Jones	Athens, Ga.	Charles Milsted	Braselton, Ga.
Heather Moll-Dunn	Marietta, Ga.	Mamie Moore	Athens, Ga.
Ren Oliver	Gainesville, Ga.	Cat Ordway	Atlanta, Ga.
Kelly Petersen	Athens, Ga.	Megan Ruedas	Dalton, Ga.
Anne-Caroline Taylor	Bokeelia, Fla.	Taylor Winston	Atlanta, Ga.
Marijke Tromp	Loganville, Ga.	Anne Tunnessen	Macon, Ga.
Jerry Williams	Savannah, Ga.		

*Continued on Page 4*

## Member News—Continued from Page 3

... And please welcome also our newest Life Members, Patron Member, and donors of other gifts!

New Life Members join at the \$350.00 or greater level. New Life Members joining since June 2022 include:

Lena Hall

David Kearns

Kathy Stege

Jane L. Trentin

Our newest Patron Member (joining at the \$1,000.00 level or above) is:

Jerry Williams

Those making gifts to our Society in addition to the ones listed on the previous page include:

- Kathy Stege in honor of Linda Chafin for her cheerful and competent leadership of the Nature Ramblers.
- Elizabeth Fox in honor of Jennifer Ceska and Eddie Minche.

## Savannah-Ogeechee Canal—Continued from Page 1

(*Nyssa sylvatica* var. *biflora*); and Ogeechee tupelo, or Ogeechee-lime (*Nyssa ogeche*). Bobby pointed out that they had different growth patterns and slightly different bark and trunk bases; so with practice, they are distinguishable even in winter. (I repeat: Personally, I may never get them straight—at least in winter! Unlike the blueberries, however, I think I can now identify them by their leaves and/or fruit when those are available.—Lynn)



New leaves on a young bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*). Photo by Ellen Blanchard.



Christmas lichen (*Cryptothecia rubrocincta*). Photo by Ellen Blanchard.

There were a few things that were more easily learned and showing off in different ways. We could compare the white flower clusters of parsley hawthorn (*Crataegus marshallii*), surprisingly in bloom, and serviceberry (*Amelanchier arborea*), a very early bloomer. Ironwood—aka musclewood, aka blue beech—(*Carpinus caroliniana*) was showing off its sinewy-looking trunks. One young bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*) presented its feathery bright green new leaves for admiration at eye level. Bobby took a leaf off a delightfully blooming dwarf pawpaw (*Asimina parviflora*) and passed it around so we could wake up our sinuses. Christmas lichen (*Cryptothecia rubrocincta*) and the flimsy last year's seed capsules of Spanish moss (*Tillandsia usneoides*) were new to several participants. We even spotted a blooming spike of golden club (*Orontium aquaticum*) in the canal. It also goes by the common name of never-wet, which is

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## Savannah-Ogeechee Canal—Continued from Page 4



Savannah-Ogeechee Canal trip participants included (left to right) Dr. Robert “Bobby” Hattaway, Bill and Debbie Cosgrove, Josie and Stephanie Byrne, Ken Duke, Charlie and Ellen Blanchard, Timothy Estep, Karen “KK” Seminary, Kandy Duke, and Lynn Hodgson. Photo by Bobby Hattaway.

obvious when you splash water on the leaves.

There are always a few things to see other than plants. Josie Byrne was particularly adept at spotting small things for us—from seeds to critters. She found green anoles and blue-tailed skinks sunning, for instance. Ever the birders, Ellen Blanchard and I recorded early spring migrating birds singing all around us:

northern parula, yellow-throated warblers, and white-eyed vireos being the loudest.

Most participants left at lunchtime, but four of us followed Bobby out the trail toward the sandy uplands, where we found different oaks and blueberries. New to several budding botanists were the abundant horse-sugar trees (*Symplocos tinctoria*), some of which were in flower. We spotted some fungal galls common on these trees, and convinced others to hold them for a few seconds in their hands. All were fascinated by the fact they are noticeably cold to the touch. Why?



Bobby always gives a great field trip, with way more information than we can absorb. However, it is always delightful to follow such a knowledgeable botanist, wherever he chooses to lead us. ▣

Above left, fungal gall on a horse-sugar (*Symplocos tinctoria*) tree. Above right, open seed capsule of Spanish moss (*Tillandsia usneoides*). Both photos by Ellen Blanchard.

### Correction

In the story on American sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*) July 2023 issue of *BotSoc News*, two photo captions added an extra “n” to the botanical name. The spelling used here and elsewhere in that story is the correct one.

## Getting Started: The Pitfalls of Tree ID

# Let's talk now about half a dozen groups of woody plants that are just plain hard to tell apart

By Bobby Hattaway

**F**or this last suite of problems with ID of woody plants, I have decided to number the plant groups (families or genera) or species (last two) instead of enumerating the problem features would-be identifiers run into. Not only have these few been my personal bane, but I have seen so many people, including students, struggle with them over and over again. All of these have alternate simple leaves. Except for some of the species of holly (*Ilex*), which may or may not have teeth on the leaf margins, the others have mostly entire leaf margins. The other exceptions are three of the four species of tupelo (*Nyssa*) that have an occasional aberrant tooth or two in the upper half of the leaf. (Please see the photograph and line drawing on Page 11 of the July 2023 issue of *BotSoc News*.) Though not in the perfect order of difficulty, they are:

**Editor's Note:** This is the sixth and final installment in a series of extracts from Dr. Bobby Hattaway's "The Pitfalls and Other Problems Associated with Tree Identification in Georgia." The earlier installments started in the November 2022 issue of *BotSoc News* and continued in January, March, May and July 2023 issues. Bobby also has a handful of remaining print copies of the entire series, including the full text and all 23 photo and line drawing illustrations. If you'd like one, please contact Bobby via email at [botanikman@g-net.net](mailto:botanikman@g-net.net).

- 1) Most of the Heath family (*Ericaceae*) in the southeastern United States and especially the Coastal Plain;
- 2) Members of the oak genus (*Quercus*) with entire-margined leaves (primarily here meaning no lobes nor teeth);
- 3) Species of the holly genus (*Ilex*) without sharp-pointed lobes like those on American holly, though some have small marginal teeth [big gallberry holly (*Ilex coriacea*) and dahoon holly (*Ilex cassine*) may or may not have marginal teeth];
- 4) Species of the tupelo or black gum genus (*Nyssa*), especially sterile specimens of the one upland species, black tupelo (*Nyssa sylvatica*);
- 5) Common persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*); and
- 6) Horse-sugar or sweetleaf (*Symplocos tinctoria*).

Over the years I have wrestled with what to call this problem group. Here I will simply label them the Magnificent Six (in contrast to the "The Magnificent Seven" – a classic American western movie). If I added summer titi or red titi (*Cyrilla racemiflora*), which used to be problematic for me, that would make it the Magnificent Seven. However, despite this plant being common in Georgia, I don't remember others complaining about identifying it.

Besides all having alternate leaves, all six (or 7 if you add summer titi) of these problem plants have one thing in common. They are relatively nondescript in terms of form or structure (or morphology). In other words, when it comes to recognizing them most of the year, they have a sort of "blah" look to them. They are nondescript species that do not stand out much when not in fall color or when they are sterile—without reproductive features. (But let me be clear, when there are flowers or fruit on specimens of these six or seven groups, their identification is not that hard in most cases.)

*Continued on Page 7*

***Knowing that simple opposite-leaved plants are in the minority is helpful in identification***

When they are in sterile condition, all the above alternate, simple-leaved plants are nondescript and can pose ID problems. And also as mentioned earlier, there are a lot fewer *opposite-leaved plants*, especially woody ones. In fact, in Georgia, there are so few opposite-leaved woody plants they can be summed up by a mnemonic that apparently has been around for a while. It works for woody plants with opposite leaves (and thus twigs) in the Georgia piedmont and mountains—MAD DOGS and BUCKEYED CATS, which can be summarized as follows:

***Heads-up: A special outing is planned this month for BotSoc members and friends at the Atlanta History Center***

BotSoc Field Trip Chair Shannon Matzke will lead a special trip to the Cherokee Garden Library and Goizueta Gardens at the Atlanta History Center on Wednesday, Sept. 20, at, 10:00 am.

Attendees will receive a guided tour of the Goizueta Gardens at the Atlanta History Center by Sarah Roberts, Olga C. de Goizueta Vice President, that will last for about an hour. After the tour of the gardens, we will head to the Cherokee Garden Library (CGL) for an hour tour led by Staci Catron, director of the CGL. CGL is custodian of the archives of our Georgia Botanical Society, and Staci will show us the range of collections that date from 1586 to the present with an emphasis on our society's materials, including articles and photos from Marie Mellinger. This tour will require standing, but there are chairs at the library for those who need to sit.

Please note: *Preregistration is required.* To register, email Shannon Matzke at shannon9512@gmail.com. For more information and for directions to the Atlanta History Center, please visit the Field Trips page on our website where you can also always find all the listings and details of upcoming field trips. ■

- M = Maple, including box elder (also known as ash-leaved maple).
- A = Ash – white ash in uplands, green ash in lowlands.
- D = Dogwood – flowering dogwood in uplands, swamp dogwood in lowlands
- Buckeye = shrubs in the piedmont, trees in the mountains.
- Cat = Catalpa, Catawba (has both opposite and whorled leaves).

Note that some of these--box elder, ashes, and the buckeyes—have compound leaves, i.e., not simple like most of our nondescript problem plants. Plus, the mnemonic includes the uncommon whorled leaf arrangement seen in species of catalpa. By the way, as noted above, catalpa can have opposite leaves also. I can never seem to remember the mnemonic, but I think—with the three exceptions or caveats I mention below—it would also work well in the coastal plain, though this province has more woody species than further north probably because it is closer to the tropics where there are even more woody species compared to herbaceous ones.

There are three caveats I think that need mentioning here about the mnemonic. The first is with the “A” for ash. Ashes, with their compound leaves, are in the olive family with most other genera in our flora having simple opposite leaves. With “O” for olive, “MOD DOGS and BUCKEYED CATS” does not sound as

## Getting Started—Continued from Page 7

catchy or maybe as easy to remember, but it is more inclusive especially if you try to extend its coverage to the coastal plain. We have a number of non-ash members of the olive family (Oleaceae) in the Coastal Plain, some of which get further north in Georgia. And all have simple opposite leaves. The first two that come to mind are devilwood or wild olive [*Cartrema (Osmanthus) americana*] and fringe tree (*Chionanthus virginicus*). I already mentioned that the latter species often has sub-opposite leaves. We also have several species of swamp-privet or forestiera (*Forestiera*) which are native and several species of privet (*Ligustrum*) that are all nonnative.

A second caveat is that one other woody plant family in our flora with opposite leaves needs to be added. And that is the honeysuckle family (Caprifoliaceae) which, at least traditionally, included species in the viburnum (*Viburnum*) and elderberry (*Sambucus*) genera.

The last opposite-leaved group that needs inclusion, at least if one tries to cover the Coastal Plain, is that of the woody members of the madder family (Rubiaceae). This family, like many, becomes increasingly woody when we start approaching tropical latitudes. Two plants come to mind in south Georgia: buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*) and the fevertree (*Pinckneya bracteata*). By the time you get to south Florida, the number of woody species in the madder family gets quite numerous.

### **Conclusions and Takeaways**

I have tried to summarize in this series the most common problems for plant enthusiasts in woody plant identification in Georgia. I began with problems associated with the method used, including using keys. Pertinent references were introduced with the intended preference for resources that were more localized versus nationwide. And related to that idea, I encouraged plant enthusiasts to initially focus on woody species in their local neighborhood or at least the state of Georgia. That would mean working with only about 250 woody species instead of the roughly 4,000 total vascular plant species in the state. The latter includes the 250 and all the rest of Georgia's flora too.

Next I focused on problems associated with the complexity of the plants themselves. Except for problem No. 1—distinguishing trees from shrubs—the enumerated problems are not unique to woody plants. Nor are these problems confined to Georgia.

I also listed some that, when they are sterile, are nondescript problematic plants. I dubbed them the Magnificent Six or Seven. Knowing them in advance will help I think. I also called attention to the fact that there are fewer opposite-leaved plants in our flora than alternate-leaved ones.

Besides identifying the problems, I endeavored to provide solutions to solve those problems, and I hope my efforts eventually pay off for those that stuck with me through this series.

*Acknowledgements: I would like to thank Rona and Steve Cook for their comments and those of Kevin Doyle. ▣*

## Trees of Georgia: White Oak (*Quercus alba*)

# Add it all together—height, girth, spread—and white oak is the undisputed king of the eastern U.S. forests

**W**hen our ancestors first set foot in America they were glad to see the white oak (*Quercus alba* Linnaeus), for they saw it was closely related to the English oak (*Quercus robur*), which had been used to build England's great navy and merchant fleets and was known for its strength and watertightness. We soon built our own great navy with white oak wood, and all-oak ships were the pride of our early shipbuilders. Vessels such as our USS Constitution are a testament to the strength and longevity of white oak. Even in

By Richard Ware

World War II, the keels of our mine sweepers and patrol boats were still made of white oak. The early settlers used white oak wood for their blockhouses, bridges, barns, mills, log cabins, barrels or casks for wine and other liquids, and it was also a fireplace favorite. They used vast quantities of bark for tanning. The acorns were a staple of the Indians' diet, especially after boiling, which made them sweeter.

**Other names:** Stave oak, eastern white oak, forked-leaf white oak, ridge white oak. It is the state tree of Connecticut, Maryland, and West Virginia.

**Taxonomy:** Member of the Beech Family (Fagaceae). *Quercus* is the old Latin or classical name for an oak tree. The species name *alba* means white, probably referring to the bark.

**Description:** While the oaks, as a group, might be considered the kings of the eastern forest, surely then the white oak would be considered the king of kings. While there are trees that grow taller—the tuliptree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*)—and trees that sometimes have a thicker trunk—the sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*)—there is not a more massive tree in the eastern forests. Under favorable conditions, and when grown in the open, it can have many huge massive limbs (as large as the trunks on many other trees) extending out a great distance (sometimes 50 feet long or more), so as to make the crown spread greater than the height. Its leaves are deciduous, 5-9 inches long, with 7-9 rounded lobes. The depth of the sinuses separating the lobes varies, almost reaching the midrib in some cases. The base of the leaf narrows abruptly to become wedge-shaped at the stem. The acorn is about three-quarters of an inch long, light chestnut-brown when mature, enclosed about one-fourth of its length in a bowl-shaped cup that is covered with rough scales that



Flat, broad ridges on the trunk of a white oak (*Quercus alba*). Photo by Richard & Teresa Ware.

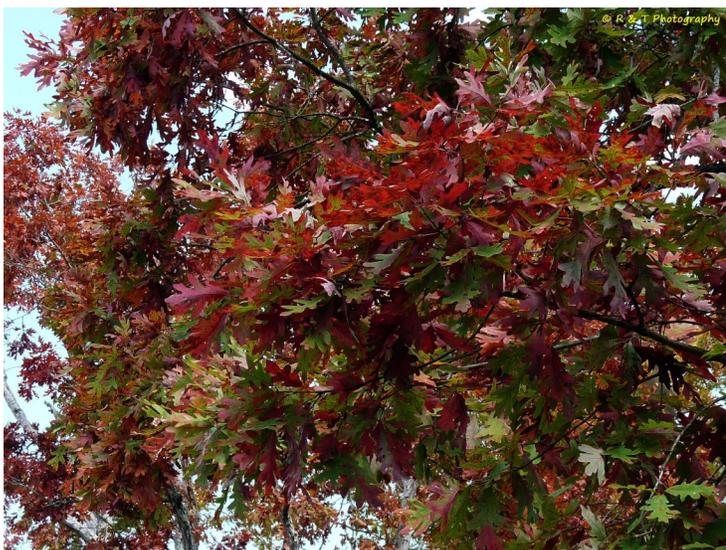
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## Trees of Georgia: White Oak—Continued from Page 9

are joined at their bases to form small knobs. The bark is light gray or nearly white, broken into thin scales, or on very old trunks becoming divided into flat, broad ridges. The tree can reach 150 feet in height and 6-8 feet in trunk diameter but is more commonly 60-80 feet high, with a diameter of 3-4 feet. In the open white oak develops a rounded spreading crown; in forest stands it has a tall clear stem and smaller crown.

**Habitat and distribution:** White oak grows on a wide range of soils and sites. It is found on sandy plains, gravelly ridges, rich uplands, coves, and well-drained second bottoms. It develops best on deep, well-drained loamy soils. However, growth is good on all except the driest shallow soils. White oak is found from southern Maine westward to east central Minnesota, southward to eastern Texas, to northern Florida, and along the coast northward.

**Uses:** The best and No. 1 use of a white oak would be as an excellent, long-lived, specimen shade



Above, white oak (*Quercus alba*) leaf sinuses are pronounced but variable. Left, white oak foliage takes on a deep and striking russet color in fall. Photos by Richard & Teresa Ware.

tree. Secondary uses include lumber for flooring, tight cooperage (barrels & casks), millwork, timbers, handles, boxes, and crates. Perhaps the largest amounts go into high-quality flooring, barrels, kegs and casks. As stated earlier it is prized for use in construction of ships and boats. The

wood is heavy, very hard, and strong. It is subject to large shrinkage during seasoning, and extra care must be taken to avoid checking and warping. Pores of the heartwood are impervious to liquids, making white oak the only successful wood for use as tight cooperage.

**Famous white oaks:** The white oak is a very long-lived tree; in fact, specimens are still standing that were already tall when Columbus landed and some are known to be 800 years old. There are many old, venerable white oaks along the whole region of the Jersey shore of the Delaware Bay. However, for reasons not clear, the largest and possibly the oldest are located on the eastern shore of Maryland, including the previous national champion Wye Oak, which stood 96 feet tall with a 119-foot crown spread and circumference of 31 feet 8 inches before falling in a storm in 2002 at the estimated age of 450 years. The Holly Hall White Oak at Elkton, Md., is a massive tree with a crown spread of 180 feet and is officially 407 years old and was there when William Penn landed in 1682. A rare 1681 map made for William Penn shows “An Oake Tree” near a tributary of the Susquehanna River. This tree, the Richards Oak, is still here, and measures 85 feet high, 24 feet in girth, with a spread of 115 feet. It was owned by the Thomas Richards family for over a century. In Athens, Ga. we find the tree called “The Tree That Owns Itself.” In 1820, William H. Jackson willed to the original white oak entire

*Continued on Page 11*

## Trees of Georgia: White Oak—Continued from Page 10

possession of itself and of all land within 8 feet of the tree on all sides. The original tree has since died, and a seedling from the original has been planted on the site, which is at the corner of Dearing and Finley Streets. The General Robert Toombs Oak stands in front of his house on East Robert Toombs Ave. in Washington, Ga. The Glebe Oak is located in Rock Creek Cemetery in Washington, DC, and was there when the first chapel was built in 1726. The Salem White Oak stands in the burial grounds of the Friends Meeting on Broadway in the town of Salem, N.J., and is the most distinguished of New Jersey's ancient trees. It was there when a treaty was signed with the Indians in 1675. One of the most famous of New Jersey's ancient trees is the Basking Ridge White Oak which stands in the Presbyterian Churchyard, has a spread of 140 feet and was 150 years old when the community was settled in 1720.



The cap of the white oak (*Quercus alba*) acorn typically encloses approximately one-quarter of the acorn's length of roughly three-quarters of an inch. Photo by Richard & Teresa Ware.

**Champion white oaks:** The National Champion White Oak is located in Brunswick Co., Va., with a circumference of 27 feet 7 inches (331 inches); height of 90 feet, and spread of 120 feet, total 451 points. The Georgia Champion White Oak is in Heard County with a circumference of 24 feet 5 inches (293 inches), a height of 101 feet, and a crown spread of 98 feet, total 419 points. ■

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## Field Notes

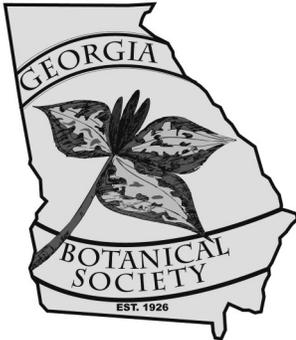
BotSoc President Timothy Estep writes:

- "I grow pitcher plants (*Sarracenia*). From my collection I had a large crop of open pollinated seeds. If you would like a few *Sarracenia* seeds to try to grow, send me an email at [timothystep@hotmail.com](mailto:timothystep@hotmail.com)," and
- "A friend showed me a pink flowered Spanish needles (*Bidens alba*). I did not know they could be pinkish. New to me, maybe new to you!"



Above left, *Sarracenia*; at right, a *Bidens alba* bloom. Photos by Timothy Estep.

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