
BotSoc News



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Tips for Good Plant Photography

By Bobby Hattaway

I don't profess to be a great plant photographer. However, I think I am at least above average. I have taken pictures of plants since 1972. I have learned many pointers through the years, some of the most important in a university class on biological illustration. I have many good books on the subject too. After many years, I distilled it all down to a few simple rules that most everyone can easily remember. A few years back I shared these ideas/tips with my good friend, Charles Seabrook, a longtime member of our Society. Charlie has been the environmental writer for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution for many years and is a good photographer himself. Nevertheless, years after I shared these tips, Charlie would mention from time to time on field trips how he liked my simple approach. So I thought I'd share my tips here in case they might help someone.

There are four rules I go by: 1) pick a good subject with average/normal features; 2) watch the background for distractions; 3) fill the frame with the subject; and 4) try to photograph diagnostic plant features. The last is the hardest to master because in the early stages of learning, most plant enthusiasts do not know what is diagnostic. In other words, they do not know what diagnostic features are associated with certain plants or plant families and that comes with experience. I will confess that in the early days (in the 70's), I thought the most important objective was to take an esthetically pleasing or "pretty picture." Plus I did not have enough experience back then to know what is important/diagnostic for a particular genus, species or even family of plants. Most of the pictures in books in my library are filled with pretty pictures that are not necessarily diagnostic. My more recent shots are more diagnostic than my earlier ones from years ago.

One other factor needs mentioning. A lot of good plant photographers strive to get good close up shots that are sharp. Though such photos tend to be esthetically beautiful "golly gee" pictures, such close ups are not necessarily showing the diagnostic traits. This is especially true when both flowers and leaves are useful in the ID of the plant. In defense of such photographers, ID may not be their prime objective.

Tip #4 should really be – strive for an esthetically pleasing yet also diagnostic photo. The process of learning what is diagnostic for a genus or family of plants is not a short or easy one. It takes knowledge. It is a little like learning computers in that you should not expect to learn everything in one day

*IN THIS
ISSUE:*

*Field Trip
Reports and
Photos - P5*

*Upcoming
Field Trips -
P11*

Continued on Page 4

President's Perspective



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Ellen Honeycutt

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Before I say anything else, I want to thank Hal Massie for his leadership to the organization especially during these recent trying times. I have valued his advice and help over the last two years of Pilgrimage planning. Without my asking, he assumed the role of coordinating the shirts for the Pilgrimage both years. And when we had to cancel the pilgrimage, Hal made sure folks got their shirts and that was a big job. Hal and I both have a military background and, for me in the Vice-President (VP) role, that really helped a lot. That's because the VP job is one of a planner and long-term planning was one of the most valued skills I learned in the military. Plus, I believe older folks (like me) have figured out that the better you plan, the less stress you have. (That even applies to doing your yearly taxes.) I envision the President's job in our organization as being more of a director and coordinator. Nevertheless, the President is ultimately responsible for everything.

As I struggle to transition from my role as Vice-President to that of President, I want to explain to the members how I feel about it. I think most of my predecessors, including Hal, would say that the VP job is more demanding than that of the President. However, for me personally, I had nearly rather "do" the VP job than the President's job. I think I did a reasonably good job in the VP spot, but just because you know how to plan, does not mean you know how to lead! Please don't get me wrong on this – I will certainly take my mother's advice, "Son, do the best you can." Let me end this line of thought by saying: I may not relish the thought of the job of President, but I do want to do a good job. Like my predecessors, I will rely heavily on the advice and help of others including my fellow officers and board members. On that topic, I want to announce for those that do not already know, we have our new team of officers in place. That means the Treasurer and the Secretary – John French and Karan Rawlins respectively – have graciously accepted another cycle/term. Moreover, one of my former students, Timothy Estep from Jesup, has accepted the Vice-President's job. This slate of officers has recently been formally voted in. And – based on a recent 2020 Board decision, if the Coronavirus permits – we'll have the Pilgrimage in the Savannah area in 2021 as originally planned.

Having expressed some reservations above, I am honored to take the helm as President of the Georgia Botanical Society. Back in the January 2020 edition of this newsletter I bore my soul about how I came to be a botanist. If you read it, then you know where I am coming from. In that article, I mention the topic of plant blindness which may be a little thought provoking, or even unpleasant, to some. During my tenure, I plan to push a narrative that counters plant blindness. Another area of emphasis will be to have field trip leaders appoint a volunteer to "do" a trip writeup. I have been in the organization since 2003 and we have gradually allowed field trip reports to fade. With the Coronavirus raging, and the modifications for field trips we are making for safety's sake, this function is more important than ever, especially since the virus is limiting the participation of some. We will help you write the report. So don't worry about plant ID or ecology. Just ask.

Continued on Page 3

President's Message (cont'd)

As Hal pointed out recently, one of the goals of the President is to increase engagement of the membership in the Society's activities. There are numerous committees and positions in the organization that offer opportunities to get involved. At the moment, we have a critical need to fill two jobs that are pillars for our organization – Field Trip Chair and Editor for our Newsletter. We have always stressed field trips – a focus that separates us from many other organizations. Back when I was the Field Trip Chair, I wrote a how-to-do-it description for the job that I can share. So, I implore members that really care about our Bot Soc mission to contact me on this because without field trips, we are in trouble. One of the carrots of the Field Trip Chair is you become the custodian of a wonderful file of GA's best plant havens including what is there and how to get there! And lastly on field trips, please note the new safety procedures for field trips listed on our web site as - Pandemic-Related Rules for Field Trips.

As for the Newsletter Editor job, Ellen Honeycutt has more than done her fair share and it is time for someone else to step up. I know Ellen well enough to be able to say that she will give her replacement all the guidance they need during the transition. So interested members please contact me, Ellen, or any member of the Board of Directors (see list at end of the newsletter).

In conclusion, I want to encourage you to get out and botanize safely (wearing a mask and keeping social distance). As you do, think about the importance of plants in our environment, and pass that on to others, especially non-members.

~ *Bobby Hattaway*



Picture of Wild Radish (*Raphanus raphanistrum*) to go with article on Page 4

Photography Tips (cont'd from Page 1)

and you should be content to learn something new periodically. I want to elaborate on the easier to apply first three tips a little, revisiting #4 as it naturally applies and re-surfaces.

Pick a good subject with average/normal features. When looking for a typical or average subject, you want to look for a specimen with diagnostic features if possible. A diagnostic feature is one that separates the plant from any other plant with which it might be confused. For example, *Astilbe biternata*, Appalachian false goat's-beard in the saxifrage family can be confused with *Aruncus dioicus*, Eastern goat's-beard in the rose family. The false goat's beard has stems that have glandular hairs and flowers that have 2 pistils (the norm for the saxifrage family) and 10 stamens, while the true goat's-beard in the rose family has stems with no hairs or, if any, the hairs are non-glandular and the flowers have 3 (rarely 4 pistils) and more than 10 stamens. Tip #1 (pick a good subject) is often related to Tip #4 (strive for diagnostic photos).

The above example is a more difficult one in terms of diagnostics. Most examples, in terms of #4, are not that tedious to remember the details. For example, identifying most members of the mustard family (Brassicaceae or Cruciferae) require fruit be present. An ideal shot would show the 4-merous flowers and the fruit (a silique). These two features are shown in the average (not great) quality photo of Wild Radish (*Raphanus raphanistrum*) on page 3. The necessity of having fruit is also true when dealing with members of the parsley family (Apiaceae or Umbelliferae). So ideally you'd want to photograph plants that had both flowers and fruit in the same image, if possible.

Watch the background for distractions. If you find something, say a leaf of some unrelated species, remove it. Such unwanted objects can ruin an otherwise good picture. Some folks, including myself, will occasionally use a black velvet cloth as a background. That's unnatural some say, but often it has the desired effect, at least for me.

Fill the Frame. This is the one that I believe beginners often forget. True you can sometimes fix this problem later by cropping, but it is better to address it at the time you take the picture.

One last thing. I have not talked about lighting as a tip; there are differences of opinion about how to use light to the best advantage. I use flash a lot. Some folks don't like that and complain that it makes for a "harsh" image. That perceived harshness is often the strong contrast needed to bring out the diagnostic features you are trying to highlight. A flash also helps with wind problems. Taking pictures in the middle of the day can be problematic because ultraviolet (UV) light is at its worst at that time. If I have to take pictures when UV light is high, I will sometimes use an umbrella or have someone stand where they block direct light. I prefer cloudy days to sunny ones.

To help with plant ID, I have a picture album on Discover Life: https://www.discoverlife.org/mp/20p?list=I_TQBH I am not the designer of the website and it can be difficult to use efficiently unless you know some tricks. I developed a "cheat" sheet that solves some of the searching problems. I will give two of the tips here: 1) rather than scrolling, use the browser's "Find" function from the menu and type in the scientific name and 2) when you get to the desired name, click on (and this is counterintuitive) the number of pictures instead of the plant name. Following #2 will get you to my pictures for sure and not someone else's. I hope this helps. If you have any questions, feel free to email me at botanikman@g-net.net. See you in the field.

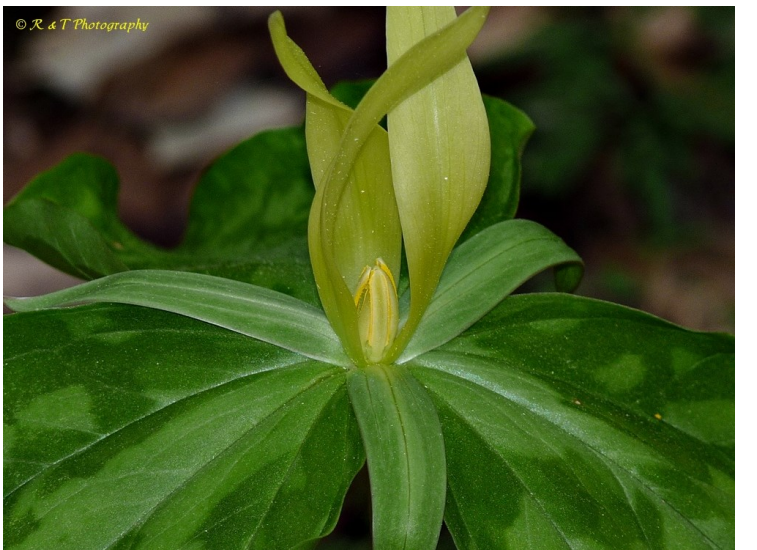
Field Trip Photos from the lens of R & T Ware

With the lack of trips (and the reports that come with them!), we were sorely lacking newsletter material for this issue. Longtime members Richard and Teresa Ware (who watermark their photos with “R & T Photography”) volunteered to send us a slew of pictures from throughout the year. While many of us have stayed home, Richard and Teresa have continued to safely visit some of their favorite sites and these are some of their beautiful photos.

We would encourage you to check out their website of photos for identification: Guide to the Wildflowers & Trees of North Georgia and Adjacent States (<http://ngaflora.com/>).



Left: Virginia bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*), March 21, Pigeon Mountain
Right: Twinleaf (*Jeffersonia diphylla*), March 21, Pigeon Mountain (eastern side)



Left: Shooting stars (*Dodecatheon meadia*), March 29, Carter's Lake Rereg Dam
Right: Yellow trillium (*Trillium luteum*), March 29, Carter's Lake Rereg Dam

Photos (cont'd)



Top left: Coral honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*), April 2, Texas Valley, Floyd County; Top right: Sunnybells (*Schoenolirion croceum*), April 5, Northeast Alabama; Middle left: Red columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*), April 8, the Wares' yard, Floyd County; Middle right: Yellow honeysuckle (*Lonicera flava*), April 21, Northwest Georgia; Lower left: Spotted geranium (*Geranium maculatum*), April 27, Mulky Gap Rd/Lake Winfield Scott; Lower right: Painted trillium (*Trillium undulatum* forma *enotatum*) May 1, Cohutta Wilderness

Photos (cont'd)



Top Left: *Trillium vaseyi*, May 15, NW Georgia
Top Right: *Rhododendron catawbiense*, May 15

Middle Left: Small yellow lady's slipper (*Cypripedium parviflorum* var. *parviflorum*), May 26, Cohutta Wilderness

Lower Left: Speckled Wood-lily (*Clintonia umbellulata*), May 26, Cohutta Wilderness

Lower Right: Indian pink (*Spigelia marilandica*), May 26, Cohutta Wilderness



Photos (cont'd)

Above: Clasp milkweed (*Asclepias amplexicaulis*), May 31, roadside

Below: Climbing Prairie Rose (*Rosa setigera*), May 31, roadside



Photos (cont'd)



Top Left: Gray-headed coneflower (*Ratibida pinnata*), June 2, Coosa Prairies, Floyd County

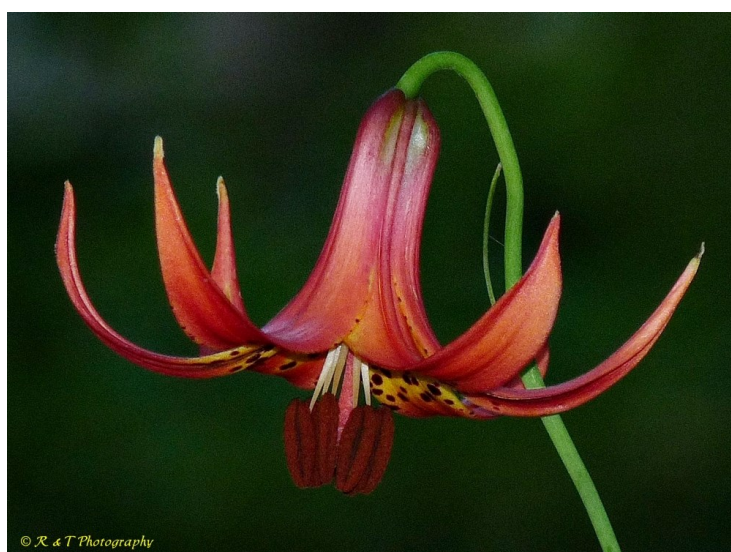
Top Right: Prairie Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea simulata*), June 2, Coosa Prairies, Floyd County

Middle: Orange butterflyweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), June 2, Coosa Prairies, Floyd County

Lower Right: Coosa Barbara's-buttons (*Marshallia mohrii*), June 2, Coosa Prairies, Floyd County



Photos (cont'd)



Top Left: Michigan Lily (*Lilium michiganense*), June 17, Berry College, Floyd County

Top Right: Weak-stemmed leather flower (*Clematis flaccida*), June 19, NW Georgia

Middle Left: Thimbleweed (*Anemone virginiana* var. *virginiana*), June 19, NW Georgia

Middle Right: Canada lily (*Lilium canadense*), June 19, NW Georgia

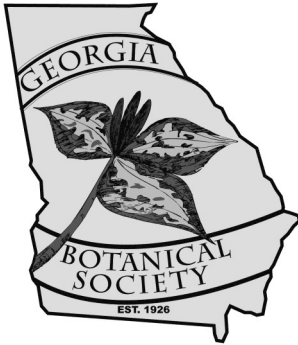
Lower Left: Tall bellflower (*Campanula americana*), July 11, NW GA/AL trip

Upcoming Field Trips

<p>Sept 5 12:00 PM Note: late start time</p>	<p>Southeast Georgia Roadside Botanizing, Part 1</p> <p>We will travel south on HWY 1 toward Folkston. Our first area to investigate will be along GA 177, an area designated as an Ecologically Sensitive Area by Georgia DOT in 2019 due to the vegetation. We will make stops along HWY 1 between there and Folkston and then south along GA 23 towards the Florida line or head into the Okefenokee NWR (fee required) for the Swamp Island Drive.</p> <p>While the flowers will likely be less numerous than spring and early summer, the early September flowers normally put on quite a show. In addition to a host of composites and other late summer/early fall bloomers we should see yellow fringed orchid (<i>Platanthera ciliaris</i>), and crested yellow orchid (<i>Platanthera cristata</i>). Bartram's rose gentian (<i>Sabatia dodecandra</i> – formerly <i>S. bartramii</i>), a star of our early summer trips, usually is still blooming to some degree. We will see pitcher plants and sundews, but most likely not blooming.</p> <p>Note: this trip is full; contact the leader to see if any availability opens up.</p>	<p>Directions: Meet at the Lowe's at 2308 Memorial Drive, Waycross, GA (just off Hwy 1)</p> <p>Facilities: None</p> <p>Difficulty: Short excursions along the roadside; can be muddy or wet.</p> <p>Bring: Water, bug spray, shoes that can get wet. Eat lunch before we meet.</p>	<p>Rich Reaves rich.reaves@att.net 770-827-5186 – cell</p>
<p>Sept 6 8:00 AM Note: this is a Sunday with an early start time</p>	<p>Southeast Georgia Roadside Botanizing, Part 2</p> <p>We will start the day heading east on HWY 82 and stop at interesting locations along the road, do an about-face at the Satilla River and then take GA 301 from intersection in Nahunta down to Folkston. From Folkston, we would return to Waycross via HWY 1 and possibly continue to a <i>Sarracenia flava</i> bog west of Waycross to close out the day. Flowers most likely will be near the same as Saturday, although the Sunday route almost always has the best pine lilies (<i>Lilium catesbaei</i>).</p> <p>Note: this trip is full; contact the leader to see if any availability opens up.</p>	<p>Directions: Meet at the Hampton Inn in Waycross</p> <p>Facilities: None</p> <p>Difficulty: Short excursions along the roadside; can be muddy or wet.</p> <p>Bring: Water, bug spray, shoes that can get wet, and your lunch to eat on the road.</p>	<p>Rich Reaves rich.reaves@att.net 770-827-5186 – cell</p>

For all field trips: **Attendance may be limited and pre-registration is required with the trip leader. Please see guidelines: <https://www.gabotsoc.org/?p=10204>**

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