



# Elk Lick Echo

Spring 2009

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The large, white flower of the mayapple hangs below its showy leaves.

Help us save on printing and postage costs by receiving your newsletter via email and in color! Send an email to [Floracliff@aol.com](mailto:Floracliff@aol.com) and include your name and address so that we can make the changes. Thank you!

## Many thanks to our former president, Bob Wilson

By: Beverly James

Since the passing of our founder Dr. Mary Wharton, in 1991, Bob Wilson has led Floracliff Nature Sanctuary as the president of the Board of Directors. In February he handed the reigns over to our new president, Charles Sither. We would like to thank Bob for all his hard work and dedication over the years.

Bob knew Mary since childhood and served on the board of another organization she founded, the Land and Nature Trust of the Bluegrass. She entrusted him to take over as the leader of Floracliff. In 1996, he oversaw the initiation of Floracliff as the first and only preserve in Fayette County dedicated as a Kentucky State Nature Preserve, giving it perpetual protection. He led the public on many hikes throughout the sanctuary and saw the hiring of the first preserve manager, Carey Ruff, during his tenure. As president, he gave Carey and myself direction and encouragement on a weekly basis, allowing us the freedom to explore our own ideas. More recently, he initiated a plan for the development of our future nature center.

Bob has led Floracliff for 18 years with a positive and steadfast presence. He has served as a sounding board for the other directors, arranged committee meetings, and led the revision of our bylaws. He has guided the preserve in directions that follow the perspectives and wishes of Dr. Wharton. We are thankful that he is still serving on the Board to assist our new president. (On page 3 you will find a letter from our new president.)

## Flora Focus: Mayapple- *Podophyllum peltatum*

By: Althea Wiggs

Mayapple is one of the herbaceous members of the barberry (Barberidaceae) family. It occurs naturally throughout the eastern United States, but also in China and the Himalayas. Mayapples are found in rich, deciduous forests and moist, shaded meadows. It grows up to 20 inches tall and is frequently found in dense patches with creeping underground rhizomes. As a first year plant, the Mayapple has one large leaf on a single stem. In April and May, a large, white flower blooms under and between the two leaves of a second year plant. While some criticize it for its wandering, colonizing ways, most enjoy its ability to make a robust layer of green among the forest trunks.

The medicinal nature of the Mayapple root comes mostly from its content of podophylotoxin, an alkaloid that is found in a synthesized form in many anti-cancer drugs. It contains other valuable constituents such as quercetin, used to treat snake bites, urinary and bowel problems, as well as warts and skin disorders. The whole plant, apart from the fruit, is highly toxic. It has even been referred to as Witch's Umbrella, as lore suggests it was used in poisonous concoctions. Farmers have been known to use it to help protect potato plants from pests.

## Our Wish List

Please contact Beverly James at 859-351-7770 or [floracliff@aol.com](mailto:floracliff@aol.com) if you wish to donate any of the following items. All donations are tax deductible.

- Handheld GPS
- Regional field guides
- Gift certificate to hardware /office supply store
- Tools and work gloves
- Birding binoculars

## Schedule of Events

All events require advance registration. Cost is \$4 per person or \$10.00 per family unless otherwise noted. Most programs last 3-4 hours. Call 859-351-7770 to register or for more information.

### Interpretive Hikes

#### **Saturday, March 28th @ 10:00 a.m.: Pollinators w/ Blake Newton**

Join Blake Newton, UK Extension Specialist for 4H and Youth Entomology, for a program about pollinators and their relationships with the spring wildflowers.

#### **Saturday, April 4th @ 1:00 p.m.: Medicinal Wildflowers w/ Ciara Lockstadt**

Experience the spring wildflowers of the Inner Bluegrass during this hike. The hike is focused on the historical and present day medicinal and useful traits of plants.

#### **Saturday, April 11th @ 10:00 a.m.: Wildflower hike w/ Deborah White**

Join Deborah White, Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission botanist and co-author of *Rare Wildflowers of Kentucky*, for a hike to view and learn about our native wildflowers during the peak blooming period.

#### **Saturday, April 18th @ 10:00 a.m.: Wildflower hike**

Preserve Manager Beverly James will lead this wildflower hike that will pass by Elk Lick Falls and Elk Lick Creek, discussing characteristics for identification and interesting folklore.

#### **Sunday, April 26th @ 1:00 p.m.: Trees as Environmental Historians w/ Dr. Neil Pederson**

Assistant Professor Neil Pederson from ECU will lead this hike to visit the oldest documented tree in Kentucky and scenic highlights of Floracliff including the recently recognized Epicenter— a clump of trees dating to before Daniel Boone. Along the way, Neil will discuss the value of old trees and forests, environmental history of the Inner Bluegrass region and the science of dendrochronology. Hiking level is moderate to difficult.

#### **Saturday, May 9th @ 8:00 a.m.: Birding with Hank Yacek**

Spring migrants and other birds will be identified by sight and sound on this hike led by avid bird watcher Hank Yacek.

#### **Saturday, May 16th @ 10:00 a.m.: Herpetology with Zeb Weese**

Zeb Weese, Eastern Regional Manager from the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission, will lead this hike to find some reptiles and amphibians in the ponds and Elk Lick Creek.

### Volunteer Days - free!

#### **April 4th, May 2nd, & June 6th @ 10:00 a.m.**

Volunteer activities usually involve removing exotic plants from the preserve. This is part of an ongoing effort to protect our native species and we rely on the help of volunteers. Other activities may involve trail work or general maintenance. Please call ahead to register and receive more information. Tools and snacks will be provided.



P.O. Box 4006 ~~~~ Lexington, KY 40544 ~~~~ 859-351-7770 ~~~~ floracliff@aol.com ~~~~

March 20, 2009

Dear Floracliff friends,

It's not easy to begin my tenure asking for money! I know you must be getting lots of letters like these, but please take a moment to see if Floracliff can fit into your charitable plans. Like many not-for-profit private foundations, Floracliff is being seriously impacted by this economic downturn. If we don't find additional sources of income, we will be forced to cut programs.

Two decades ago, Dr. Mary Wharton founded The Mary E. Wharton Nature Sanctuary at Floracliff...

- to preserve a unique example of the Inner Bluegrass and Kentucky River watershed,
- to provide research opportunities and
- to educate the people of Central Kentucky about the values of their natural environment.

Since then, earnings from Dr. Wharton's generous endowment have enabled us to preserve Floracliff's land, fund its operating expenses, and offer a variety of educational and research opportunities. That's why we've always taken a low key, indirect approach to fund-raising. Note that we don't have a "Friends of..." program. Everyone who loves Floracliff is a friend—with no cost associated!

However, we now find that we must turn up the volume and appeal to you. I probably don't need to remind you that there are no safe-havens for investments. The bottom line for us is: our endowment earnings can no longer sustain our accustomed level of preservation activities and public outreach. This is a painful reversal for us because we were planning to expand our programs and, if the opportunity should arise, to enhance the sanctuary's preservation by purchasing adjoining property.

We are especially concerned about the impact this may have on our youngest friends. To illustrate why I believe this is so important, let me tell you a personal story. In my youth, I was a "street-fighter" from the Washington D.C. area. Trees, if you could find any, were for climbing and carving your initials on. But during my summer vacations in Kentucky, an enlightened Aunt taught me to love and appreciate trees, and all the flora and fauna for that matter. Guess where she took me to do this? Along Boone and Elk Lick Creeks which flowed along her farm's boundary—the same territory where Floracliff is today. Were it not for the civilizing effect this experience had on me, I would not have the same concern I have now about the importance of passing these values on to the next generation.

Like Dr. Wharton and my Aunt, I hope you'll want to help preserve and foster a continuing appreciation and understanding of a unique part of Fayette County that we all love. Please find our Floracliff donation form on the back page of this newsletter, and if you have questions about our needs, or if you would like more information, please call the Preserve Manager, Beverly James, at 859-351-7770 or myself at 859-268-8309. We can both be reached by e-mail at [floracliff@aol.com](mailto:floracliff@aol.com).

Respectfully yours,

Charles R. Sither  
President  
Floracliff Board of Directors

**THE MARY E.  
WHARTON NATURE  
SANCTUARY AT  
FLORA CLIFF**

P. O. Box 4006  
Lexington, KY 40544

Phone: 859-351-7770  
Email: floracliff@aol.com  
Web address: www.floracliff.org

Floracliff is a non-profit organization. We rely on support from community members like you. Please support preservation in your region.

Yes! I would like to contribute a tax-deductible gift to Floracliff.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Amount enclosed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

- \$25 - \$49 acorn
- \$50 - \$99 shooting star
- \$100 - \$299 spicebush
- \$300 - \$499 dogwood
- \$500 - \$999 hickory
- \$1000+ old oak tree
- other

Please make checks payable to Floracliff and mail to Floracliff, P. O. Box 4006, Lexington, KY 40544. Thank you!



**P.O. Box 4006  
Lexington, KY 40544**

*Address correction requested*