

THE LEAFLET

newsletter of the West Virginia Botanic Garden



HILL & HOLLOW/ERIC CLUTTER PHOTOGRAPHY

Ramps & Such

Written by Marion Ohlinger, Guest Contributor

Consider, for just a moment, the humble ramp. *Allium tricoccum*, cousin in the Amaryllidaceae family to wild edibles around the planet, but stubbornly solipsistic as only a true Appalachian can be. In the reliquary of Appalachia's cultural and culinary oddities—the ramp stands alone. No other can hope to be so reviled and despised by so many while being fiercely embraced by so many more. The traditional harbinger of spring, the “old wives” say eating the first one you find, dirt and all, right where you stand in the woods, will purge your blood of winter and bring you good health for the rest of the year. It will certainly purge your pores.

Its stench is legendary. Tales abound of churches banning the consumption of ramps the day before service, of schools sending students home because they had ramp fumes steaming from their

(Continued on page 10)

IN THIS ISSUE

FROM THE PRESERVE

HERE WE GROW

SPRING ACTIVITY
SCHEDULE

UNDERGROUND FOREST
EXHIBIT ON DISPLAY

THANKS TO OUR 2023
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SPRING PHOTO CONTEST

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From the Preserve

by Philip Smith, Executive Director

Two key areas of focus identified in the 2023 WVBG Strategic Plan include equitable considerations and developing ways for those with disabilities to better experience the Garden. Our pledge over the years to be purposeful in considering accessibility has been manifested in building construction, bridges, signage, and trail design. We're not perfect, and some recognized barriers present certain costs that we're yet unable to overcome, but that doesn't mean it's not a priority.

In our grant-seeking, there are accessibility objectives baked into several projects. With all that said, we want to hear from you if you've experienced accessibility barriers to WVBG programming or enjoyment of the Garden. This place expands to include new features, plantings, and programs every year. However, we will never be too big to be dismissive of any one person's experience. I invite you to contact me directly if you have suggestions for improving access and hospitality for Garden visitors. You can reach me by email at psmith@wvb主g.org or on the office phone at 304-322-2093.

A close-up photograph of a pink columbine flower with five petals and a yellow center, set against a blurred green background. Other similar flowers are visible in the foreground and background.

OUR MISSION | *The West Virginia Botanic Garden at Tibbs Run Preserve seeks to foster learning, inspiration, and well-being through the beauty and wonder of plants, the natural environment, and culturally enriching experiences.*

Here We GROW

We are happy to announce three new upcoming projects: improvements to the entrance gardens, the addition of solar panels to the Terrace at Tibbs Run, and a new pedestrian trail connecting the Visitors Center to the Hillside Trail. Additional support was also received for recent renovations to the future administrative building, paving project, 2023 Fall Children's Festival, educational staff, programming, and conservation efforts.

WITH HELP FROM

- Appalachian United Solar Fund
- Be ActiveWV
- Chingos Foundation
- Equitrans Midstream Foundation
- Hope Gas
- Monongalia County Parks & Trails Levy
- Vincent Francis Huebsch Foundation
- Weldon Family Foundation
- WV Nursery and Landscape Association
- WV State Legislature | Local Economic Development Act



PERFECT FOR:
GRADUATIONS • THANK YOUS • REMEMBRANCE
BIRTHDAYS • ANNIVERSARIES • JUST BECAUSE

Limited quantities available
THROUGH APRIL 10TH



MARCH

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|------------|
| 2 | Native Plants for Northern WV Yards | 10:00 a.m. |
| 5 | Appalachian Cookery Tutorial | 6:30 p.m. |
| 23 | Woodcock Walk | 7:00 p.m. |
| 28 | Camp: Wonderful Water & Wildlife | 9:00 a.m. |
| 29 | Camp: Fantastic Forests & Birds | 9:00 a.m. |
| 31 | Sonic Bloom: Weavings in Sound | 2:00 p.m. |

APRIL

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------------------|------------|
| 5 | Friday Family Walk & Craft | 10:00 a.m. |
| 6 | Wetlands and their Amphibian Wonders | 10:00 a.m. |
| 14 | Afternoon Tea | 2:00 p.m. |
| 15 | Nature as Nurture Forest Walk | 6:00 p.m. |
| 16 | Appalachian Cookery Tutorial | 6:30 p.m. |
| 20 | Providing Nesting Materials for Birds | 10:00 a.m. |
| 21 | Drum Circle | 4:00 p.m. |
| 25 | Immersive Soundbath | 7:00 p.m. |
| 27 | Spring Bird Walk | 7:30 a.m. |
| 27 | A Season of Good Taste: Libby Nolle | 6:00 p.m. |
| 28 | Woodland Amphibian Wonders | 2:00 p.m. |

MAY

- | | | |
|----|----------------------------------|------------|
| 2 | Gardening with Assistive Devices | 6:00 p.m. |
| 3 | Friday Family Walk & Craft | 10:00 a.m. |
| 6 | Nature as Nurture Forest Walk | 6:00 p.m. |
| 7 | Appalachian Cookery Tutorial | 6:30 p.m. |
| 11 | WVBG Day | 10:00 a.m. |
| 13 | Labyrinth Walk | 6:00 p.m. |
| 16 | Field Journaling Workshop | 6:00 p.m. |
| 19 | Drum Circle | 4:00 p.m. |
| 25 | Young Birders Walk | 10:00 a.m. |

JUNE

- | | | |
|----|--|------------|
| 7 | Friday Family Walk & Craft | 10:00 a.m. |
| 14 | A Season of Good Taste: Burgers & Brews | 6:00 p.m. |
| 16 | Drum Circle | 4:00 p.m. |
| 17 | Nature as Nurture Forest Walk | 6:00 p.m. |
| 21 | Summer Concert Series: Mountain Soul Music | 6:30 p.m. |
| 24 | Forest Wander & Wonder Walk | 6:00 p.m. |

MEDITATION, COMMUNITY, & SUPPORT

10:00 AM Every Sunday at the Education Center

YOGA WEDNESDAYS
6:00 PM

MARCH — MAY 15th @ the Terrace
JUNE in the Garden

SPRING ACTIVITIES

LEARN MORE & REGISTER
AT WVBG.ORG



Underground Forest Exhibit on Display

*Written by, Philip Smith
Executive Director*

Everyone knows that West Virginia has some of the most abundant coal deposits in the U.S. and that coal is often referred to in industrial terms as 'fossil fuel.' However, little thought is given to those fossils being testaments of a rich floral ecosystem millions of years ago. The landscape of Appalachia was once very different, unrecognizable in topography and climate for us today. The plant and animal life were also quite peculiar. Decaying plants stacked thickly in the swampy landscape because bacteria and fungi had not yet evolved to help rot the dead matter. Over time, the plants were fossilized, preserved in stone. Intense heat and pressure further compressed some of these fossils into coal. As West Virginia's Garden, it is appropriate to acknowledge these ancient forests as part of the state's botanical story—so an exhibit was custom designed along the Reservoir Loop Trail as a tribute to this now underground forest.

I once took a paleobotany course in college, which resulted in a lifelong hobby of veering my car onto roadside berms and clawing my way up road cuts to sort through the scree to look for fossils. It's biological archeology and can be very fun. Trying to identify these casts and impressions in the stone has also helped me retain at least some of what I learned so long ago.

This exhibit has been years in the making. As word got out that this was something in the works, a handful of paleobotany

Fossils have richer stories to tell ... than we have been willing to listen to.

~ Robert T. Bakker

professionals and hobbyists offered help. I've often found the tree-sized club moss fossils of *Lepidodendron* on giant boulders or rock cliffs, but none small enough to fit into this exhibit. George Longenecker enthusiastically offered his collection of *Lepidodendron* fossils discovered on Snake Hill to the WVBG. Other display pieces were collected on U.S. 119 road cuts in Logan County, near Mathias in Hardy County, in small Pocahontas County quarries, and other locations around the state.

Fossil collecting can be a fun hobby that helps connect you to a larger plant picture through time. Not to mention, some of the fossils are quite beautiful, and if you're lucky, you might find one large enough to add interest to your ornamental landscaping. There are safety and ethical considerations to understand, including awareness of private land, presence of snakes, eye protection when using a rock pick to break open suspect shale, and others. There are a few books that I would recommend for this endeavor, but my favorite is *Fossil Collecting in the Mid-Atlantic States* by Jasper Burns. It is written in a way that is easy to understand and even provides directions to sites where you may find success.

The WVBG's Prehistoric Garden exhibit is unique and condenses a lot of information about ancient trees, giant plants that resemble modern ferns and clubmosses, and more. One goal of this exhibit is to spark an interest in fossils and a deeper understanding of the coal for which West Virginia is so famous. The WV Museum of Geology and Natural History at nearby Mont Chateau on Cheat Lake also has a great collection. If you have questions about fossils that you find, reach out to WVBG staff. Also, members may find more information in the WVBG library, now located entirely in the Education Center classroom. Contact the WVBG during business hours for access at 304-322-2093.



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including those who wish to remain anonymous

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WE ARE ALSO THANKFUL FOR THE SUPPORT OF

MONONGALIA COUNTY VOTERS

THANK YOU FOR VOTING 'YES' ON THE MON COUNTY PARKS & TRAILS LEVY!

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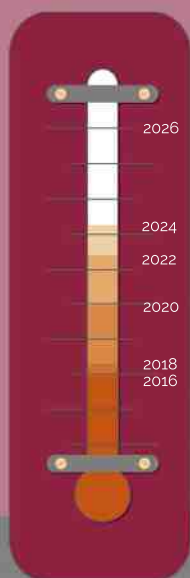
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Contact us at info@wvbg.org or 304-322-2093 to update your account.
* Donor made multiple types of donations

Enter Our Photo Contest This Spring!

This spring we will be hosting a photo contest where participants can enter photos in five categories including: plants, wildlife, landscape, people in nature, and uncategorized. The submissions will be judged by a panel of local photographers and the winning photos in each category will be printed on weather resistant fabric, framed, and mounted to trees along an accessible path at the WVBG. Then, Garden visitors will use QR codes to vote for their favorite photo and the people's choice winner will receive two tickets to the Burgers & Brews dinner in June of 2024. We want to see your nature photos! See the WVBG website for official contest rules and submission guidelines. We will be accepting submissions from March 1st through April 15th and the photos will be on display for the month of May.

MOLLY MORROSE



Membership Goals

We've said it before: our members provide our strength and vitality! So, we continually strive to increase memberships and grow stronger each year. Membership donations provide a significant portion of the Garden's annual operating budget and are essential to Garden operations, maintenance, and growth.

The Garden's goal is to reach 1,000 memberships by 2026, and we are well on our way, with 720 as of January 2024. Last year's membership drive resulted in 67 first-time memberships! We are hoping that with your help, we can increase memberships again this year as we work towards our goal. Please invite your friends, neighbors, and co-workers to join our ranks and become members. We are COUNTING on you!

Ramps and Such

(Continued from page 1)

pores, and of businesses sending memos to employees that ramps were not to be eaten before greeting customers, policies strictly enforced and impossible to dodge. That same stench is also prized by others—the star of many a church social ramp feed, of festivals celebrating their annual arrival, and your grandad's best end-of-winter pot of soup beans.

Over the last twenty years, our restaurants have served tons of ramps to thousands of guests, on our daily menu, our annual Ramparama week, and our 30-course 'This Ain't Your Grandma's Church Social Potluck Ramp Dinner'. We began by digging 15 or 20 pounds a year ourselves, roots and all, and by 2020 we were buying hundreds of pounds every spring, clipped at the top of the bulb to leave the roots in the ground, so they may grow again. Over those years, I've noticed a clear pattern; those born before the 1980s, what I call the 'television line', when cable tv arrived in West Virginia and started telling folks that the old ways were shameful, were raised with ramps, love 'em or hate 'em; while of those born after 1978 or so, most had never had a ramp. Ramps had largely been relegated to the history bin by the turn of the millennium, still regionally relevant, but only in pockets of Appalachia where time had turned at a slower pace.

So, what could have been more surprising when, out of the blue, the maligned ramp became popular. Ironically, it was that same cable television, through Food TV and all the food-based reality shows, that brought the ramp, blinking and stumbling, embarrassed and annoyed by all the attention, into the spotlight. Once they'd run out of more exotic cultures to exploit, the constant search for novelty inevitably led to Appalachia.

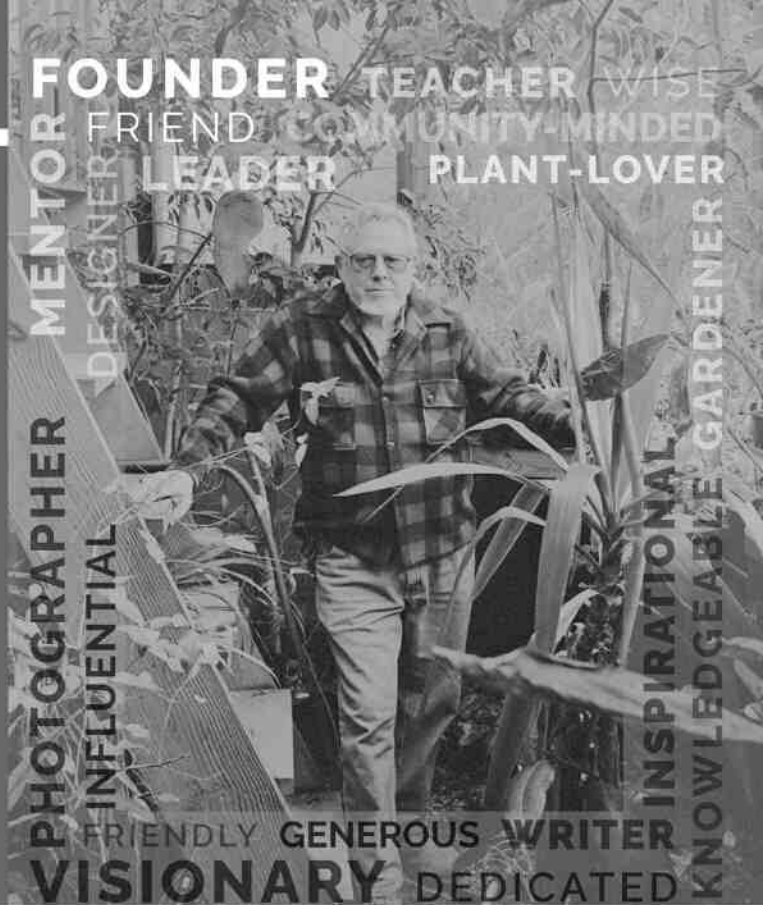
Suddenly, the ramp was hip, and the troubles began. Truckloads of ramps were being shipped to farmers markets in New York City and Chicago, selling for \$40 a pound. By 2015 or so, internet influencers were filming themselves digging ramps while wearing shiny designer welly boots and wielding curiously unscratched shovels, while tattooed millionaire celebrity chefs were putting ramp nori on \$300 tasting menus alongside the ubiquitous mayonnaise ice cream and soon-to-be endangered species ceviche. National forests had to post signs stating that harvesting ramps on public land was illegal, and state legislatures had to pass laws protecting ramps from commercial harvesting. Limiting supply made them hipper and more valuable, and clandestine digging actually increased as the per pound price skyrocketed. And so the cycle goes until the foodies move on to the next fad, when the ramp can settle back into comfortable infamy, like an old outlaw.

Meanwhile, back here in sleepy little West Virginia, folks were picking up the complicated process of figuring out just who we are in this desperately evolving world whirling around us, and the ramp gained a new-found respect. Because, when you think about it, it really does define West Virginia in a nutshell. It prospers when wild but refuses to grow when transplanted or purposely cultivated. Some find it's very existence offensive, but it's that same unique funk that makes it special and rare; it's not just that it refuses to compromise for polite society, it's that it simply isn't capable of compromise. But above all, it is uniquely ours, unapologetically Appalachian; you take it as it is, because you can't tame it, you can't domesticate it, you can't ignore it or hide it, and you definitely won't forget it.

Chef Ohlinger's creations encompass everything from modernist gastronomic ideations of Appalachian classics to deep explorations of the historic roots of our cuisine. Hill & Hollow Free-Range Kitchen now roams the Mountain State and beyond, popping up at farms, fairs, and festivals, bringing their eclectic and untethered take on Appalachian cuisine to the people. Join us for one of Chef Ohlinger's Appalachian Cookery Tutorials at the Terrace this season. See wvb.org for details.

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REMEMBERING GEORGE W. LONGENECKER 1937—2023

It would be difficult to overstate what our founder, George W. Longenecker, meant to the WVBG community and the success of this Garden. His guidance and friendship will be sorely missed.

George's Sweet Legacy *by Nancy Abrams, WVBG Board Member*

If you're lucky, you may be familiar with the George W. Longenecker Shade Garden at the WVBG. It's a quiet and lovely space filled with carefully placed small trees and shrubs, wildflowers and perennials.

If you're really lucky, you were one of George's students, either in a formal setting or an informal one. George taught landscape architecture at West Virginia University for nearly 40 years. He also spent much of that time as advisor for the summer landscape architecture internship program at Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater in Mill Run, PA. He advised many university students from across the US and around the world, not to mention staff members, volunteers, and visitors alike during his years with the West Virginia Botanic Garden.

If you're the luckiest of all, you may also be familiar with George's outstanding culinary accomplishment: his English toffee, a recipe from his father. George shared this delicious candy with his friends, his students, and colleagues. Dave Barnett, WVBG Board president, recalls how George's toffee fueled the early, complicated meetings that birthed the Garden.

George passed away in October 2023. He left quite a legacy. He was the founder of the WVBG, and the driving force at the Garden for more than three decades. In addition to sharing his profound knowledge of landscape architecture and plants, George was always willing to do the work—digging, planting, planning. He led by example.

Much of George's legacy can be found at the WVBG in its lovely trails and gardens, the hemlock forest, and the glorious rhododendron thickets. With care, this beauty will last forever. We can't guarantee that any batch of his toffee will last so long. But, like much of what George did, it will give you great pleasure.

ENGLISH TOFFEE

INGREDIENTS:

3 c. sugar	1 tbsp. light corn syrup
½ lb. butter	(helps get everything into solution)
Pinch of salt	1 cup nuts (pecan pieces or
Chocolate chips	blanched slivered almonds)

With sugar, butter, salt & corn syrup in iron skillet – stir until solution has no grain (it will appear sort of frothy/bubbly before becoming more of a liquid solution).

Stir in the cup of nuts until solution is turning light brown. Pour out on buttered marble slab (or other well buttered enameled metal surface) to cool quickly.

Turn over while warm – before completely set (to get it loose).

Spread chocolate chips directly on the toffee while warm – not hot (if using white chocolate put it on earlier as it has a higher melting point than milk chocolate). You may add salted chopped nuts to topping if desired.

NOTES: The entire process takes about one hour including clean-up. It takes several more hours for the chocolate to get solid depending upon the room temperature. The best white chocolate chips I have found that have cocoa butter are the Kroger Private Selection brand.



LEAVE YOUR LEGACY

Contact us at info@wvbg.org or 304-322-2093 to leave a legacy through your will or trust.



OTE YES
MAY 14th

MONONGALIA COUNTY
Parks and Trails Levy



The West Virginia Botanic Garden, Inc. is incorporated in West Virginia as a tax-exempt, not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Contributions are deductible to the extent allowed by law. West Virginia residents may obtain a summary of the registration and financial documents for the West Virginia Botanic Garden, Inc. from the Secretary of State, State Capitol, Charleston, WV 25305. Registration does not imply endorsement.