



## Carolina Mountain Club - *Since 1923*

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Plants On The Trail

## Ready For Spring?



**By Becky Smucker**

I can't help it. About this time of year I start feeling flutters in my stomach just thinking about the fact that spring is coming! This year, of course, it will be especially invigorating after our very, umm, wintry winter.

For me as a dabbler in botany and a hiker, spring means watching for all the earliest changes in our plant friends along our mountain trails. These include flower buds swelling and opening, leaf buds swelling and opening, herbaceous shoots emerging from the ground, and more subtly, just the change in color of existing stems/foliage. Most plants have been working slowly and out of sight through the winter to get ready for the new year of reproduction and growth.

Predicting when the first flowers will bloom or the first leaves will pop is as difficult as predicting when and how leaves will turn in the fall. This is because the same complex factors interact in different ways on both ends of winter, depending on the species and the situation. Light (day length, slope, cloud cover), temperature (highs, lows, prevailing), moisture (in the soil, in the air, rain distribution), available nutrients, and strength of the plant due to past events and conditions, can all have an impact.

Here are some of my favorite early plant delights:

- Trailing Arbutus blooms as early as late February to early March when growing on rocks in sunny locations. It smells so sweet when the sun warms it that you may actually catch the odor through the air while you're still on the switchback below or above. ●

- Around disturbed areas such as lawns, parking lots, and trailheads, "weeds" such as dandelion, tiny blue speedwell (elegantly beautiful under a hand lens), and the miniature white peppery-tasting cresses pop open by the hundreds and thousands. ●

- Red maple trees bloom quite early, and can put on a colorful red to rusty show across the mountain slopes before any green appears. Many folks don't notice this because the flowers are small and high off the ground, and the color is rather diffuse. Watch for a secondary pulse of color when the seeds set, as the tiny whirly-birds (samaras) are even more colorful than the flowers. ●

- Wild onions, including ramps, surge out of the ground in early spring. Snap off a few leaves and breathe in deeply for a heavenly aroma. ●

- Spicebush, sometimes called Mountain Forsythia, puts on a showy yellow display early on in coves and drainage areas that will very soon be deeply shaded. Be sure to snap off a small twig, and crush it for a yummy spicy (what else?) smell. ●

- I love to watch for early shoots of Mountain Mint coming out of the ground. The leaves are often a rich purple at this stage, and the minty smell can be mouth-watering. ●

- Of course, we all welcome the earliest blooms of Bloodroot, which is probably our most widespread herbaceous spring ephemeral, and has little competition for viewers at ground level in very early spring. The vibrant yellow center against the snowy white really catches the eyes of the relatively few pollinator insects that are out so early. ●

- Along lower elevation creeks, our common Tag Alder's long catkins bloom and hang there, waiting for the wind to come along and swing them around to disperse their yellow pollen to nearby female flowers. ●

And my favorite spring plant production of all is watching the blush of green that moves up the mountains as baby leaves burst the confines of their buds. What a rush!

## *Meet Brenda Worley - Chair of Hiking Committee And Much More*



### **By Danny Bernstein**

Brenda Worley has been an active member of Carolina Mountain Club for over 20 years. Her ancestors have been in the area a lot longer.

"Some of my relatives may have been here since the Revolutionary War," Brenda says.

"I was born in Hendersonville. Though I moved out of the state with my parents for a while, I graduated from

T.C. Roberson High School in Asheville and have lived in the area ever since."

Brenda played basketball in high school but admits to being on the bench most of the time because she was so short. "I don't watch basketball now but I did when my son played. I look forward to watching my grandson, Joseph, playing, but he's only four years old now."

"I wanted to be a secretary after high school so I went to St. Genevieve School for a year for secretarial studies. I couldn't afford to find myself. I had to support myself from the beginning," Brenda says. St. Genevieve, a Catholic girls' school, merged with a boys' school and eventually was folded into Carolina Day School.

Brenda's first job was at CTS, the now polluted Superfund site located in Skyland. The plant manufactured electronic components used in automotive parts and hearing aids, which included electroplating components with heavy metals.

"When you went to the back of the plant, you could smell this strong, caustic smell. When I left, I was the secretary to the plant manager. However, I could tell the plant was deteriorating. I left in 1974." The plant eventually closed in 1986.

"I went to work for NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) as a clerk, then move to the Social Security office in Hendersonville, where I started as a receptionist. I took a pay cut for that job."

You were the secretary to the plant manager. Why take a pay cut for another job?

"If you could go to work with the Federal government, it was a much better job in this area. I got benefits such as a retirement plan. It was a good move."

Brenda married Luther Worley, also a native of the area, in 1970. Luther, a retired electrician, has always been a big golfer. The Worleys visit Hilton Head and Myrtle Beach every year.

Though Brenda started at the bottom of the job ladder at Social Security, she kept moving up that ladder. She was sent for extensive training in Florida.

"I looked into any situations that the claims representatives couldn't deal with. I delved into problems. I'm very proud of Social Security." Brenda retired in 2005 as a technical expert.

Their son, Tracy, is in the logging business. Their daughter-in-law, Jill, is now building a successful career at the same office as Brenda. "I knew there was an opening in Social Security. I could get her in the door but she did the rest."

"My grandmother took care of my son while I worked; she was a young grandmother. I even knew my great-grandmother who had been a cook in a logging camp. She'd tell me stories of painters (panthers) around her cabin. She talked about living in Little Egypt, around Rosman. She was 93 when she died forty years ago.

How did you get into hiking?

My family wasn't into the outdoors. When I was about 40 and our son no longer required constant supervision, I started going out into Pisgah Forest. I asked friends to come along but I kept getting lost. So pretty soon, nobody would go with me."

Then Brenda saw an ad for CMC in a newspaper and showed up for a half-day hike. She remembers that it was from Pisgah Inn to US 276.

In those days, CMC had requirements before you could join as a full-fledged member. You had to go on a half-day hike and a trail maintenance trip. You then had to get a card signed by three CMC members who vouched that you could hike.

Is this a good idea? Should we revive these requirements?

"We'll get more members without these requirements."

While Brenda worked, she hiked on Sundays but not now. She started leading hikes once she retired and is a regular on Wednesday hikes. She's now one of two Wednesday schedulers, along with Ann Gleason. She chairs the CMC hiking committee and is the hiking councilor on the CMC council. "I guess I'm a late bloomer," Brenda says.

What is the difference between Wednesday and Sunday hikers?

"On Wednesdays, you can determine who will show up by the length of the hike. The shorter the hike, the more people. We also have subgroups on Wednesdays. Barth leads a group and so does Jack Fitzgerald. It's good. People should have the hikes they want."

"The hiking committee has approved the concept of Wednesday half-day hikes but we haven't scheduled any yet."

Where do you like to hike?

"I like to go all over. South Carolina in the winter, the A.T., Yellow Mountain."

"I look at the Sunday schedule to get ideas about hikes. We have a good pool of strong hikers. We have people who only hike on Wednesday or Saturday for various reasons. They want to be with family on Sunday or go to church."

How did you get to be the Wednesday Scheduler?

"I was at the hike leaders' dinner. Charlie Ferguson was about to give up scheduling and I volunteered. It's not hard compared to working with people at Social Security."

"People step right up and sometimes take all the days. I wait to see what Wednesdays are left over and volunteer for that hike. I do the same with Ann's schedule. Sometimes I lead two hikes a quarter."

And you travel out of the area?

"Recently I went on a Road Scholar bike trip on the C&O canal. I rode 185 miles in a week. Only another man and I finished the ride. They lent us a mountain bike and it was rough. One woman lost control of her bike and fell in the canal."

Brenda has been to the Grand Canyon with Elderhostel and Glacier with an informal CMC group. Now she has her eye on a Yukon paddling trip. She likes different activities.

Now that you're retired, what do you do besides hiking and volunteering for CMC?

"I work in a bible school. I volunteer at the Fletcher Elementary School. I'm also available to take care of my grandson."

If you had visitors and could only take them on one hike (regardless of difficulty), where would you take them?

"I would take them to Cold Mountain. It's beautiful up there, the wildest place in the area. There are not too many people on the trail. I love the rime ice in March. It's something you don't see every day."

So why do you hike?

"When I walk on a trail and trees close in, I feel comfortable, nourished. It's beautiful any time of the year. It makes me calm and happy."

## Spring Social To Include "Beverages" For First Time

**By Les Love**

The ninth annual Spring Barbecue will be held in the beautiful NC Arboretum on Saturday, April 19, from 2:30 to 8:30. This year for the first time, we will have a licensed bartender for our event and will be providing beer and wine for purchase during our social hour and to begin the meal.

Our program will be celebrating the 50 year anniversary of the Wilderness Act of 1964, and will be presented by Jill Gottesman from The Wilderness Society and Becky Smucker, who leads CMC's Wilderness Trail Crew.

Same times as before, but \$18.00 per person. A registration form can be found in the next *Let's Go*. For more information contact Les Love at [lesrlove55@gmail.com](mailto:lesrlove55@gmail.com)



## Red Lobster Feeds MST Crew Leaders, Donates Money

**By Les Love**

The Asheville Red Lobster recently provided lunch for the CMC crew leaders in a show of appreciation and to get involved in donating to the outdoors here in western North Carolina. The restaurant gave \$1,000 to Friends of the Mountain To Sea Trail (FMST) and they want to do the lunch treat 3-4 times a year.



Nine Carolina Mountain Club Trail Crew Leaders were made to feel "mighty special." The crew also offered to help involve Red Lobster employees in the outdoor activities of the Carolina Mountain Club.



*Solo Travel*

## **Smells, Sites and Sounds Lure Independent Traveler**

**By Janet Martin**

Marrakesh, medieval Fez, the seaside at Essaouira, Roman ruins, camels at oases amid sand dunes; souq markets with ivory trinkets, babouche slippers, kilims, sacks of fragrant spices, wares of silversmiths;

kasbahs encircling medinas with stucco archways framing colorful, carved cedar doors; tiled zellij motifs on floors and walls; towering minarets; berbers strolling in djellabas;

delectable bastilla, vegetable tagines, lamb skewers, couscous, mint tea from silver samovars, olives, almonds, and dates. Morocco sounded different--exotic! But no one was interested in traveling to such a "foreign" place. A glance at tours revealed one including a multi-day trek in the High Atlas climaxed by a hike to the summit of Mt. Toubkal to 13676'. So, off I went to North Africa.

Morocco provided new sights, smells, and sounds. The bazaars and narrow passageways in the old cities are choked with people, donkey carts, and motorcycles. One could be lost for days in the maze of bustling, open market souks with myriad smells and clanging bells; but after a visit to a hamman, one is wholly refreshed by the quiet serenity in the courtyard garden of a riad with the gurgling sounds of a fountain.

The vast emptiness of the countryside changed each day as altitude increased. In the lower elevations, we walked through acres of walnut groves and cherry trees watered by bisses routing the snowmelt. Going higher, steep hillsides were covered with waving wands of brilliantly emerald barley fields near each isolated village. Extensive, ancient terracing provided a level spot for each mud-walled home with solar panels on the flat roof and a plot of brightly colored poppies and irises for fodder. The children wearing backpacks always grinned and waved, while the pairs of women wearing long aprons, babies, and sturdy shoes nodded. Dodging the chickens among adobes, one needed to exercise caution not to get snagged by the thorny branches crowning the stone walls. As we climbed higher, the vegetation became scarce amid grazing goats and an occasional herder. Higher yet, the dry, gritty landscape under the unrelenting cerulean sky was mostly rocky with teeny alpine flowers. In both locales, daily calls to prayer by a muezzin or a PA system emanated from the nearest mosque.

This adventure followed a pattern I've followed on five continents---a trek, with a tour group or a friend, sandwiched between two or three day solo visits to a metro area.

Santiago/Parque Nacional Torres del Paine/Lago Llanquihue next to Volcan Osorno;  
Gothenberg/Jotunheim Mountains in south central Norway/Bergen  
Prague/spine of Tartra Range with Mt. Rysy/Cracow  
Beijing/Yangshuo Nat'l Park with its soaring limestone formations along the broad Li River for cycling, bamboo rafting and spelunking--this is China's most visited park/Shanghai;  
Tokyo/northern Alps of Japan/Kyoto

Maybe psuedo- or hybrid solo traveler is more apt for my adventures, but hiking solo is discouraged even near home. Whatever your dream trip entails, don't let fear, uncertainty, or lack of interest by others keep you at home!

Research any place on the www, read a novel and a history about the place, learn to say "I would like" in the local language so you can just add any infinitive or noun from a phrasebook, and go.

Since the media is filled with news about the Oscars and the Olympics, here are my winners:  
most startling sight - Gran Desert in the Swiss Alps best music - organ at St. Mary's in Krakow  
best natural sound - calving off the Southern Ice Field city not to miss - Rome  
best botanical garden - Leiden best museum contents - Churchill War Museum  
best architecture - Guggenheim in Bilbao  
best food - Tuscany best mountain to view - Denali best mountain to hike - Galdhopiggen  
best everywhere - the local people If I had to live outside the USA - Antwerp.



## Federal Government Investigating NC After Ash Spill

*News and Observer* By Anne Blythe

RALEIGH - The U.S. Justice Department has opened a criminal investigation into the state environmental agency tasked with regulating Duke Energy after a coal ash spill left the Dan River so polluted that people were advised to avoid contact

with the water.

The probe, environmentalists say, might also open a window into the relationship that state regulators have with the country's largest electricity provider, a company that also was a 28-year employer of Gov. Pat McCrory.

Read more here: <http://www.newsobserver.com/2014/02/13/3619273/feds-launch-investigation-into.html#storylink=cpy>



## Undesirable, Illegal Graffiti On The Trail

*Reprint Courtesy of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy*  
**By Becky Smucker**

Jim reel was shocked when he arrived at the top of North Carolina's Bluff mountain in the summer of 2012. "I couldn't believe my eyes," he said, "Someone with a black sharpie had written their trail name and '2012 Ga to me' on the sign. I felt sick to my stomach." Upon further inspection he found three more of the same hiker's autographs along the trail between the summit and Garenflo Gap.

As a Carolina Mountain Club member and the maintainer for that particular section of the A.T., Jim was particularly distressed. Since 1998 he had hiked many miles on the A.T. but had observed graffiti only near trailheads, not at remote locations like Bluff mountain. He had assumed the perpetrators were non-hikers who didn't appreciate the beauty and pristine nature of the trail but this was done by a thru-hiker. "What kind of thru-hiker would leave graffiti on an A.T. sign?" asked Jim's hiking partner that day.



Send eNews articles to [eNews@carolinamountainclub.org](mailto:eNews@carolinamountainclub.org)

The newsletter will go out the last Friday of every month. The deadline to submit news is the Friday before it goes out.

The next issue will come out on Friday, March 28 so send your news by Friday evening at 9 P.M. before the newsletter comes out, that is, by Friday evening Maarch 21 to Kathy Kyle at [eNews@carolinamountainclub.org](mailto:eNews@carolinamountainclub.org). Include your email address at the end of your story. Thank you.

Westgate parking - Park in the northernmost part of the lot - past EarthFare, in the last row of parking spaces.

To join Carolina Mountain Club go to: [www.carolinamountainclub.org](http://www.carolinamountainclub.org). Click on "Join CMC" on the right side. Follow the instructions. Send all address and email changes to Gale O'Neal at [gogalemail@gmail.com](mailto:gogalemail@gmail.com). Do not resubscribe yourself to the eNews. That will be done automatically.

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Kathy Kyle



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