Plants for Pollinators

When we talk about insect pollinators, we tend to mean bees, often honey bees, and butterflies. However, insect pollinators are wonderful in their diversity: flies, wasps, and beetles are three major groups of insect pollinators that visit flowers.

One of the most frequent visitors to flowers are the flower flies, the Syrphidae. While these insects often imitate the yellow and black of bees and wasps, they are distinguished from them by their flight patterns, an ability to hover and then quickly change direction (which has led to another common name, hoverfly), and a single set of wings. Only recently have researchers discovered flies to be efficient and successful pollinators, sometimes equal to bees. The added bonus for the gardener is that many of their larva are predators, controlling aphids and other pests on flowers and agricultural crops.

Wasps, while not as efficient or well-adapted for pollination as bees, are active pollinators. In particular, the tall spiky white compound flowers of Eryngium yuccifolium, or rattlesnake master, are covered in a multitude of wasp species. Look carefully, and you might see a member of the Sphecidae, thread-waisted or grass carrying wasp. This gentle, but predatory wasp, makes nests in hollow stems and then provisions their nests with garden crickets and blades of grass. The largest of the Sphecidae, the pollen-eating Great Black Wasp, Sphex pensylvanicus. At 1” - 1.5” long, with a matte black body and smoky, dark iridescent wings, this wasp visits in the heat of July and August.

Before bees evolved, beetles were already pollinating flowers. Many of the flowers with an ancient lineage, including magnolia and spicebush, are beetle-pollinated, but so are many other flowers. The beautifully named tumbling flower beetles and long-horned beetles are two of the species we have spotted in the Garden. Both beetles are drawn to umbrella-shaped flowers of the carrot family, but can also be found on asters and other composites.

~ Sue Watts, Educator
Dear valued members,

The heat hasn’t put a damper on the beauty at the South Carolina Botanical Garden this summer. I have been on a six-month sabbatical and our staff has done a wonderful job nurturing and growing your Garden during my absence. The McBride Aquatic Garden is complete, and many have already taken note of the spectacular gazebo perched over the Duck Pond. This incredible new facility allows children and adults alike to experience the pond and its life from a very different and exciting perspective. The official opening and dedication is scheduled for early this autumn, but visitors are encouraged to come and stroll out onto the gazebo any time.

Over the past six months, I have been working on a book that shares our philosophy of “gardening for life” with the general public. The book will be titled: Gardening with Wild American Eyes, and should be published during 2020. In it, I share the planting strategy and design philosophy of the SCBG, and these ideas have increasingly influenced other institutions throughout the country, and the globe. Speaking engagements have taken us to the Scott Arboretum/Swarthmore College, The Indiana Native Plant Society, The Grandfather Mountain Foundation, and into a collaboration with the Loki Schmidt Botanischer (The Hamburg Botanical Garden) in Hamburg, Germany.

The philosophy of “gardening for life,” throwing off the shackles of colonialism and planting for diversity in all aspects, has been proven to work. The transformation and results we have documented here at your Garden are astounding to me, and I hope to you as well. We have created an oasis for all life and all people; a safe place where reconnection with our true place and relationship with this world can be felt poignantly. In just 9 short years we have seen our diversity of bird species rise from 127 to 209, our frog and toad diversity rise from 12 to 14 species and our small mammal population explode. All these changes mean that we are a mecca for wildlife and wildlife viewing. I know of no other place where such a density of birds, amphibians and insects can be seen – anywhere. I have travelled to many, many other gardens and through most of this globe and I’m incredibly proud of the work that we have done here to make this the place that I find life abounding. Our visitation shows the same trend as we have risen from around 250,000 visits to over 750,000 visits per year. We see the same growth and impact with the Bob Campbell Geology Museum. Here, leadership that values visitor experience and interaction, as well as incredible talent, has led to a steady stream of visitors throughout the season. Every person that visits the Garden or the Museum is impacted in some way, changed and educated in some fashion, and that is how change occurs.

I am so grateful for all the support of our Friends through the past decade, and you should be proud of what you have accomplished through that support. Because of you, this change and this progress has been possible. I continue to be eternally thankful for each and every one of you and encourage you to continue to spread the news about the SCBG and help to grow our membership so that we may continue to serve and prosper and remain a garden for life! All the best,

Patrick D. McMillan

The Garden’s Gate • 2
We have now had several months to get to experience, and to love, the Susan K. Barr Pollinator Garden. This beautiful garden is a pollinator hot-spot, bringing many native bees, beetles, flies, and a myriad of butterflies for us to enjoy.

In our Junior Naturalist Program, the naturalists have been able to get up-close and personal with our new honeybees, under the watchful eye of bee-keeper, Aric Black (who generously donated the hives).

During summer camp, the children were intrigued by the explosion of milkweed bug nymphs on the milkweed. They spent time watching them grow and change over the week of camp.

~ Sue Watts, Educator

Hot sun and heavy humidity makes for happy weeds! We seem to spend all of our time watering the plants we nurture, so we can pull the thriving weeds. I see a bunch of green tomatoes, and maybe one of these days they’ll start to turn red. Definitely a southern summer!

Through the miserable heat, we still have an amazing group of dedicated volunteers. These wonderful friends are still showing up to help maintain the Garden, although with an earlier start to their mornings to beat the heat. We had a hard-working group of 4-H students, who were visiting Clemson for their 4-H Congress, who gave us an hour of excellent help clearing out the Butterfly Garden. What an amazing group of young students, 14-18 years old, from across the state.

In the next few weeks, we will be installing an underwater fence in the duck pond, to the right of the new gazebo. This will protect our new aquatic plant collection from hungry fish and turtles. There are some beautiful lotus and water lilies ready to go in. Many of these will be planted in the shallower water close to the bank, and we will experiment with different options to keep the plants in deeper water at a comfortable 2 ft depth. I’ll be trying a plant stand, and floating planters, and we’ll see what works best. Challenging, but we will figure it out! That’s what keeps this job fun!

The power line along Route 76 is almost buried, and early this fall they will start burying the line that runs overhead through the Garden. It will be so nice when the power lines overhead are removed for good. Please be patient when this work starts as there may be some road delays when they have to cut under the roads.

All weather considered, I think the horticulture staff has been doing a great job maintaining the Garden. Don’t forget to visit the Plant Sale September 27th and 28th, as fall is the best time to plant.

~ Kathy Bridges, Garden Manager
Summer at the South Carolina Botanical Garden (SCBG) is a fun time filled with summer camps and children laughing and learning. Here are some simple, low cost ideas we used in our Creativity Camp to get children outside, enjoying nature, and tapping into their creativity. These ideas would be easy to implement anywhere, in any season!

One  **Painting with flower petals.** The children discovered this art medium themselves. We went out with the goal of shadow drawing, and they quickly extended this activity to seeing what color petals turned when crushed onto the page. One of the things I learned in this camp is that children have almost infinite ability for innovation and creativity, if given freedom to experiment. Photo: Anna Rapp

Two  **Weaving a “Y” stick.** This required more material (yarn) and a little more dexterity, but even the youngest kids were able to participate with some help. Some very much enjoyed the weaving, others decorating the “Y” with natural materials, and a significant portion wanted to make the “Y” stick into a sling shot (be warned). Photo: Addison Murphy

Three  **Creating nature-based ephemeral sculptures.** Jumping from the example of the SCBG nature-based sculptures (Crucible and Natural Dialog), we spent a morning creating our own ephemeral natural art. This activity included an enormous amount of cooperation, design, experimentation, and engineering. Photo: Madelyn Murphy

Four  **Leaf and flower petal art.** Normally collecting in the SCBG is not allowed. However, for this activity, the children were allowed to gather materials (very judicially) from the Children’s Garden. Then, with a piece of card and bottle of glue, they set out to create magical insects. Photo: Colette Rogers

Five  **Acrostic Poems.** Inspired by the book *The Lost Words*, written by Robert McFarlane and illustrated by Jackie Morris, our children created inspired acrostic poems. If you have a chance, check out this amazing book. This beautiful work of art was conceived as a response to the omission of fifty common words, many to do with nature, from the Junior Oxford English Dictionary. The children in camp were horrified that words such as acorn, otter, and willow, were not thought to be worthy of inclusion into the dictionary. Poetry: Isabella Sharpe

~ Sue Watts, Educator
BIG NEWS FROM THE BCGM!

Big things have been happening at the BCGM lately! Although the BCGM houses over 12,000 rocks, minerals, artifacts and fossils, most items in our collection will fit in the palm of your hand. Recently however, we have added several new items that easily eclipse the average size of most typical museum specimens.

Giant sauropod dinosaur footprints have been added to the Jurassic Garden just outside the doors of the BCGM, which complement the giant sauropod vertebrae chairs we added last year. Visitors can walk on the dinosaur trackway and have their photo taken standing inside one of the footprints. Astute visitors will also notice the smaller theropod dinosaur footprints and fossil plant impressions that adorn the larger sauropod trackway.

Previous visitors to the BCGM are familiar with the beautiful desert garden just outside our doors and the mining exhibits that are sprinkled in among the cacti. Thanks to a generous donation we recently added an antique ‘jaw crusher’ to our mining exhibits (Figure 1A). This 4,000 pound piece of solid steel machinery was made in the 1920’s and was used to crush large blocks of stone into smaller pieces so that they could be further refined. Visitors will also notice that the 2-story tall mining headframe that sits just outside the museum is currently being reconstructed with 12” x 12” cedar timbers—timbers that will hopefully withstand the harsh weather here in Upstate SC (Figure 1B).

Inside the Museum, we have added some impressively sized specimens to both the geological and paleontological displays. Recent acquisitions include a 1,000 pound cluster of quartz crystals from Brazil (Figure 1C), a 250 pound selenite crystal from Morocco, a 150 pound petrified wood stump from Indonesia, a 200 pound giant clam from the South Pacific (Figure 1D), and the nearly 3 foot-long shell of an Alligator Snapping Turtle from Florida! As if all of that enormity is not enough, our Curator, Adam Smith, is busy working on the description of a giant owl from the Oligocene (~33 million years old) of Egypt (Figure 2). At more than a meter tall, this extinct species of owl would have been one of the largest owls ever and is the oldest example of this fascinating group of birds from the African continent!

Figure 1. (A) ‘Jaw crushers’ like the one pictured here were manufactured in NY from ~1900 until 1927; (B) Mining headframes, like the one currently being reconstructed at the BCGM, were commonly used during the 19th century to lift materials up and down vertical mining shafts; (C) Cluster of Brazilian quartz crystals now on display in the entryway to the BCGM; (D) Giant clams such as the one pictured here (and the one now on display at the BCGM) are the largest living bivalves.

Figure 2. A life-reconstruction of a giant Egyptian Owl hunting a large primate along the barren flood plains of Northern Africa during the Oligocene epoch of Earth history (artwork by R. Boessenecker).
**Child & Family Programs**

**Sept. 6, Oct. 4, Nov. 1, & Dec. 6**

**Story Start to Stroller Strut**

We will begin with a story and then we’ll set off on a Garden walk, exploring the day’s theme. These free, monthly programs are ideal for preschoolers, but all ages are encouraged to join in the fun!

- Friday, September 6: Meadow Meander
- Friday, October 4: Trailing Trees
- Friday, November 1: Autumn Amble
- Friday, December 6: Make Way for Winter

**Location:** Meet at Garden Amphitheater

**Time:** 10 - 11 a.m.

**Fee:** Free

**Sept. 25, 27, Oct. 23, 25, Nov. 20 & 22**

**Homeschool Days, Fall 2019**

Join us each month for an exciting, hands-on learning experience! Themes change each month, and activities are designed for children ages five and up. Please register all children that will be participating in the classroom. Please register at least 3 days in advance.

- Wednesday, September 25: Insects
- Friday, September 27 (10-11:30 a.m.): Insects
- Wednesday, October 23: SC Nature Emblems
- Friday, October 25: SC Nature Emblems
- Wednesday, November 20: Life in a Forest
- Friday, November 22: Life in a Forest

**Location:** Hayden Conference Center, lower level

**Time:** 1 - 2:30 p.m., Sept. 27 at 10-11:30 a.m.

**Fee:** $6 per participant (10% member discount)

**Mondays Sept. - Nov.**

**Garden Sprouts**

Discover the wonders of nature with educator, Sue Watts. Garden Sprouts blends the Garden’s unique resources with imaginative and fun ways to learn about plants and animals using stories, arts and crafts, nature walks. Primarily designed for preschool children and their caregivers, younger and older siblings are welcome! Classes held rain or shine – dress for the weather! Please pre-register, space is limited.

**Location:** Hayden Conference Center, lower level

**Time:** 10 a.m. - 11 a.m.

**Fee:** $5/session, $50 for the series (10% member discount)

**Alt. Thurs., beginning Sept. 5**

**Junior SC Native Plant Certificate**

The Junior South Carolina Native Plant Certificate is a pilot program, based on the popular South Carolina Native Plant Certificate. Participants discover the beauty and complexity of South Carolina’s rich botanical heritage through hands-on, field-based classes. Our hope is that as a result of this certificate program, graduates become more aware of environmental issues and become stewards of the natural world. Space is limited.

**Location:** Hayden Conference Center, lower level

**Time:** 4 p.m. - 6 p.m.

**Fee:** $80 for the series (10% member discount)

**Alt. Thurs., beginning September 12**

**Junior Naturalist Club**

The Junior Naturalist Club for elementary students (ages 6-12) explores the exciting habitats of South Carolina. From the mountains to the sea, participants will learn about the animals and plants who call this State home, and the landscapes that define South Carolina. Scholarships available - contact Sue Watts (Watts9@clemson.edu)

**Location:** Hayden Conference Center, lower level

**Time:** 4 p.m. - 6 p.m.

**Fee:** $80 (10% member discount)
Use our ONLINE REGISTRATION SYSTEM at www.clemson.edu/scbg to register. Please pre-register for all programs—call to check for last minute availability.

Join us each month as we explore a different area of Clemson Experimental Forest (CEF). These fun and informal walks expose you to a diversity of natural and cultural resources in the CEF. Meet educator James Wilkins (and special guests!) at a pre-determined location and carpool or follow us on the trail.

- **Saturday, September 14** (close registration 9/12)
- **Saturday, October 19** (close registration 10/17)
- **Saturday, November 9** (close registration 11/7)
- **Saturday, December 7** (close registration 12/5)

**Location:** TBD
**Time:** 9 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.
**Fee:** $7 (10% member discount)

Friday, October 11

**Harvest Celebration**
Why do seasons change, and what is the Autumn Equinox? We’ll explore the answers to these questions along with how the autumn harvest has been celebrated around the world, throughout history. We'll celebrate nature’s bounty ourselves by churning butter, making fresh apple cider in an old-fashioned apple press, and more! Each child will enjoy making a seasonal, take-home craft.

**Location:** Hayden Conference Center, lower level
**Time:** 3:30 - 5:30 pm
**Fee:** $9 per participant (10% member discount)

Friday, December 13

**Handmade for the Holidays**
In this annual program, we’ll let nature’s beauty inspire us as we create several seasonal crafts using natural materials from the Garden and beyond. Adults accompanying children are encouraged to register as well, if interested in making projects themselves. Projects vary each year and make great gifts! Please register at least 7 days in advance. Suggested Age: 8+

**Location:** Hayden Conference Center, lower level
**Time:** 3:30 - 5:30 pm
**Fee:** $13 per participant (10% member discount)

Wednesday, December 4 or Friday, December 6

**Wintry Wreaths**
’Tis the season for wreath making! Join us for this popular annual event to make lovely, fragrant evergreen wreaths to decorate our homes or give as gifts. This program is for both children and adults. Please register at least 5 days in advance.

**Location:** Hayden Conference Center, lower level
**Time:** Wed., Dec. 4, 1 - 3pm or Fri., Dec. 6, 3:30-5:30pm
**Fee:** $25 for large, $15 for small (10% member discount)

**Clemson Experimental Forest Tours**

Join us each month as we explore a different area of Clemson Experimental Forest (CEF). These fun and informal walks expose you to a diversity of natural and cultural resources in the CEF. Meet educator James Wilkins (and special guests!) at a pre-determined location and carpool or follow us on the trail.

- **Saturday, September 14** (close registration 9/12)
- **Saturday, October 19** (close registration 10/17)
- **Saturday, November 9** (close registration 11/7)
- **Saturday, December 7** (close registration 12/5)

**Location:** TBD
**Time:** 9 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.
**Fee:** $7 (10% member discount)

**Full Moon Hikes**
Join naturalist James Wilkins and experience the sights, sounds and sensations of a full-moon night. Please wear shoes and clothing appropriate for walking in the woods. Flashlights are not needed.

- **Harvest** Fri., Sep. 13, 7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. (register by 9/11)
- **Hunter’s** Sun., Oct. 13, 7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. (10/11)
- **Beaver** Tues., Nov. 12, 5:45 p.m. – 7:15 p.m. (11/10)
- **Cold** Thurs., Dec. 12, 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. (12/10)

**Location:** Discovery Center/Museum Parking Lot
**Fee:** $7 family (up to 5)
Nature Center Open Houses
Fun hands-on family-friendly activities. Drop in any time, and stay as long as you like!

- September 28, Splish! Splash!
- October 19, Claws, and Teeth, and Bones. Oh my!
- November 23, Winter is Coming.
- January 25, The Rocks Under Our Feet

Location, Hayden Conference Center, lower level
Time: 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Fee: Free ~ donations appreciated

Hunt Cabin Open House
Discover life in the early nineteenth century with historical interpreters, Mary and Bill McGinn.

- September 28, Homestead Herbal Medicine
- October 19, Preserving the Fall Harvest
- November 23, Family Celebration Foods
- January 25, Soup and Spinning

Location: Hunt Cabin
Time: 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Fee: Free ~ donations appreciated

Lunch and Learn Wednesdays
Join us for a fun and informative lunch and learn with Clemson’s Extension Agents!

- September 4
  Andrew “Drew” Jeffers: Controlling moles, voles, and other pesky vertebrate in your garden.

- September 18
  Kerrie Roach: Learn about the apple industry in South Carolina, and then sample some scrumptious apples.

- October 2
  TBA

- October 16
  Mark Arena: How to raise and care for pecans at home.

- November 6
  Dara Park: Bring your soil and water tests to Dara Park and she’ll help you understand them and translate them into concrete steps you can take in your garden.

Location: Hayden Conference Center, lower level
Time: noon. - 1 p.m.
Fee: $7 (10% member discount)

First Friday Walks with David Bradshaw
October - March 9 a.m.  
April - September 7 a.m.  
Meet: Caboose Parking Area
Fee: Free

Join David Bradshaw for one of his legendary First Friday Walks. His breadth of knowledge, both natural and cultural, makes this an exceptional opportunity. No matter what the season you will always learn something interesting or experience the Garden anew.
South Carolina Native Plant Certificate

In the South Carolina Native Plant Certificate, participants discover the beauty and complexity of South Carolina’s rich botanical heritage. Through hands-on, field-based classes, students learn about the native plants of the state. For more details visit:

https://www.clemson.edu/public/scbg/education/certificate-program.html

**CORE CLASSES**

- **Saturday, September 14**  
  BASIC BOTANY

- **Thursday, September 19**  
  FALL HERBACEOUS PLANT ID

- **Thursday, September 26**  
  FALL HERBACEOUS PLANT ID

- **Saturday, September 28**  
  BASIC HORTICULTURE

- **Saturday, October 5**  
  NATURAL PLANT COMMUNITIES

- **Tuesday, October 22**  
  TREE IDENTIFICATION

**ELECTIVES**

- **Friday, October 11**  
  THE CONGAREE THROUGH A BOTANIST’S EYE*

- **Thursday, October 24**  
  SOILS

- **Friday, October 25**  
  RAIN GARDENS

- **Friday, November 1**  
  MOUNTAIN PLANT COMMUNITIES*

* Off-site classes

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**Wednesday, September 18**

**Garden Creativity: Pumpkins for Home and Garden**

Learn to make one-of-a-kind, hypertufa pumpkins to beautify your home landscape. We’ll also craft pumpkins to add a festive touch to the interior of your home. All materials will be provided. Due to curing time, pumpkins will need to be picked up 5 days after the program. Please register at least 7 days in advance.  
Location: Hayden Conference Center, lower level  
Time: 1 - 3:30 p.m.  
Fee: $35 per participant (10% member discount)

**Friday, November 8**

**Garden Creativity: Bird Nest Necklaces**

Back by popular demand! Be inspired by nature’s avian artists in this fun class. Participants will learn basic wire-wrapping techniques to craft and customize graceful bird nest pendant necklaces. Please register at least 5 days in advance.  
Suggested Age: Adults and children 12+ years.  
Location: Hayden Conference Center, downstairs  
Time: 3:30 - 5:30 pm  
Fee: $25 (10% member discount)

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**Friends Code: Friends2019**
Special Events

September Garden Concert Series
- Sept 6 • WILD PINES
- Sept 13 • ELLA & MARY
- Sept 20 • GYPSY SALLIES
- Sept 27 • JUNE TEMPLETON

7:8 PM
in the AMPHITHEATER

October Tuesdays Tunes and Tastings
- Oct 1 • DAVID DONAR
- Oct 8 • TICKO
- Oct 15 • GYPSY SALLIES
- Oct 22 • JEFF EDWARDS BAND
- Oct 29 • WILD PINES

7:8:30 PM
on the CARRIAGE HOUSE LAWN

Friends Plant Sale
Friday, September 27
2 p.m. - 6 p.m.

Public Plant Sale
Saturday, September 28
9 a.m. - 1 p.m.
**Why Salvia?**

**They are pollinator magnets.** Salvia provide a reliable and long-lasting nectar resource for hummingbirds, butterflies, hummingbird moths, bumble bees and carpenter bees.

**They are long-flowering.** Many species bloom most of the year and it is difficult to find any other plant of such stature that can provide this.

**They have very few insect pests.** The secondary chemicals that give them interesting and pleasing odors and has led to their use as spices also deter insect herbivory.

**They are climate resilient.** Many species of Salvia, particularly those from Texas and Mexico are extremely tolerant of dramatic variations in temperature and rainfall.

**They are almost impossible to kill and difficult to grow without thriving.** If there is one selling point that stands above all others it is this: you can't go wrong with Salvia unless you really, really try to kill it. Clay, sand, dry, nutrient-poor – no problem.

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**In the South at least 30 species are excellent landscape plants. Salvia may be the most climatically resilient and easy to grow group of plants of any popularly utilized in our Southern gardens. They prefer not to be fertilized and thrive on poor soil. It is my hope that Salvia will move from a plant that you see here and there, to a plant staple in our landscape. A list of the species and cultivars we have found to perform best in the South is included here for quick reference.**

**Woody or semi-woody Salvia**

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<tr>
<th>Woody or semi-woody Salvia</th>
<th>Herbsaceous Salvia</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Salvia 'Anthony Parker’</strong></td>
<td><strong>Salvia azurea</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Salvia ballottiflora</strong></td>
<td><strong>Salvia coccinea</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Salvia chamaedryoides</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Salvia regla</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Salvia 'Silke's Dream’</strong></td>
<td><strong>Salvia puberula</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Bold: Patrick’s choices</strong></td>
<td><strong>Salvia reptans var. glabra</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Anthony Parker Sage</strong></td>
<td><strong>Salvia roemeriana</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Shrubby Blue Sage</strong></td>
<td><strong>Salvia uliginosa</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Blue Oak Sage</strong></td>
<td><strong>Nettle-leaf Sage</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Small-leaf Sage</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Mountain Sage</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Silke’s Dream Sage</strong></td>
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Carpenter Bee on Canyon Sage - Salvia lycioides
Once the predominant habitat of the southeastern United States, Piedmont Prairies (vast grasslands and savannas interrupted by thickets of cane) now persist in very few areas such as utility and highway rights-of-way. Historical evidence suggests that these prairies were the products of Native American burning and agriculture. Bison, elk, and wolves roamed the land, while birds and other wildlife sought forage and cover in the native grasses. When Native populations declined from exposure to diseases from the Old World, and European settlers moved in, Piedmont Prairies quickly disappeared giving way to forests of pine, oak, and hickory. Nearly 277 plant species are currently associated with these richly biodiverse areas, but several are now federally endangered.

We have brought the Piedmont Prairie back to life with an expansive 10-acre exhibit, and continue to expand the area. Visitors may have recently noticed a 10-foot long strip of freshly plowed soil running along the backside of the prairie. Student employees and I have been busy planting plugs of native grasses: such as big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*), little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), and South Carolina’s official state grass, Indian grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*). A wide variety of wildflower species will be added to attract diverse species of birds, insects, and mammals. These forbs provide nectar sources for butterflies, native bees, and other pollinating insects. During the fall and winter, wildlife feast on the grasses and forb seeds. Piedmont prairies are still managed through prescribed burns and depend of fire for ecological health. The fire kills invading species, stimulates growth for prairie-loving plants and opens habitat for grassland wildlife. Our prescribed fires at the SCBG usually take place in late winter/early spring.

Keep an eye on our Piedmont Prairie as it continues to grow. Notice how the diversity of native plants brings in a greater diversity of animals and insects. The same holds true for home gardens; expand the plant palette to include species most beneficial to pollinators, and discover biodiversity multiply around your home.

~ Allison Kelly, Natural Heritage Trail Manager