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FLORASCOPE

Occasional News from the Flora of Virginia Project

We have a number of projects in the queue, including upgrading our database infrastructure, continuing the Ambassador Program, and reprinting the *Flora of Virginia*. We can't do any of this work without our donors.

[Please consider giving.](#)

ETH·NO·BOT·A·NY

The study of human-plant interactions

Humans have relied on native plants for in many ways for survival since the beginning of time. This codependence is another reason why The Flora of Virginia's work is so critical.

Check your mailbox for our mailer on [Ethnobotany: The Study of Human-Plant Interactions](#). If you aren't on our mailing list, [send an email to request a copy](#).

Ethnology = study of culture

Botany = study of plants

At its core, ethnobotany is “the science of survival.” Survival in this context is multi-layered – studying a culture’s reliance on plant-based food, medicine, clothing and raw materials, and also considering issues like future food security, genetic diversity of wild crop relatives and introduced crops, and Indigenous wisdom as applied to a civilization’s thriving. Many local agricultural products are rooted in ethnobotany, traditional uses of plants for survival and later, economic benefit.

Maple sugaring in Appalachia



Appalachian sugar house
(east-hill-farm.com)



Tapping scars



Ace

A vivid example of ethnobotany at work is the study of maple sugaring in Appalachia. Colonists learned maple sugaring from Indigenous people and created a thriving industry by the late 18th century.

Today, maple sugaring is a growing agro-industry showcased each spring at the Highland County Maple Festival, drawing thousands for entertainment, a craft fair, pancake breakfasts and maple sugar house tours.

- In addition to sugar maple, red maple, silver maple, box elder and other maples that reach decent sizes are regularly tapped, as well as sycamore, walnut, and birches.
- Professor of botany at UVA Wise and Flora board member Ryan Huish and his students have discovered a very special boxelder individual that is sweeter, more productive, and tasty (like vanilla caramel maple syrup) than any other maple. His name is Ace because he's the best at everything and his genus is *Acer*. He flows for days after only one freeze, which is a promising trait that farmers could utilize for adapting to climate change.
- Ryan and his students believe this is a genetic trait and not environmental. They are cloning Ace by cuttings and air layering.



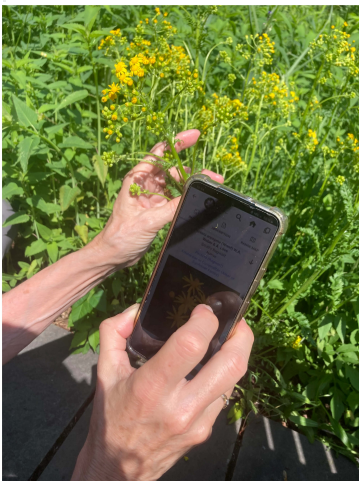
Ginseng

In the late 1800s, rural Appalachians and indigenous people built a multimillion-dollar industry trading ginseng. Used in traditional Cherokee and rural Appalachian herbal medicine, wild American ginseng was preferred over the Chinese species, creating demand that fed a national and international herbal medicine market. Today, wild ginseng harvesting and trade is heavily regulated.



American Basswood

Native Americans in northern hardwood forests relied on all parts of the basswood, most notably the inner bark fiber. It was used to make rope, twine and thread, baskets and straps to carry heavy loads, belts, fishnets, webbing for snowshoes, bandages and even fine thread to suture wounds. The flowers are the source of delicious honey and medicinal teas.



The Flora of Virginia Ambassador Program

The Flora of Virginia Ambassador Program trains experienced Flora App users to educate others on using the App. The program increases educational opportunities for new Flora App users in basic botany, habitats and ecosystems, increasing understanding of the critical importance of protecting and restoring Virginia's native landscapes. In partnership with Virginia Master Naturalists, Blandy Experimental Farm and Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden, the inaugural Spring 2024 program has been incredibly successful. [Visit our website to learn more,](#) and express interest in becoming an Ambassador next spring!

**On Friday, May 17, 2024, the floraofvirginia.org domain
was migrated to Squarespace.**

This created unexpected problems with our donation plug-in which have since
been resolved.

If you attempted a donation between May 17 and May 22 and without success,
please try again!

Support the Flora of Virginia Project

The Flora of Virginia is evergreen, requiring ongoing attention to keep data up-to-date,
add new features and functionality to the App and present new programs. We rely on
the generosity of our users and donors to get our work done.



Buy the App



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Encourage Others



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