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Spring
the season
of nesting

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Seed Saving
Saving and growing heritage



Startup NWNC
Resources for Entrepreneurs



Spring
The Season Of Nesting

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Welcoming Spring

By this time of year, I'm very ready to be outdoors and working in the garden. A time for renewal and growth, planting seeds in the spring has been an important part of living and survival in our area for generations.

A few years ago, my husband and I asked a neighbor if we could explore an old "barn" on their property. The barn, at one time, had been my husband's great grandfather's house. It had served its purpose as a place to live and then as a place for storage. At this time it was neither. It was falling down and would soon be torn down.

There were remnants of rooms, scraps of life and living scattered around; nothing precious, just echoes of prior occupants.



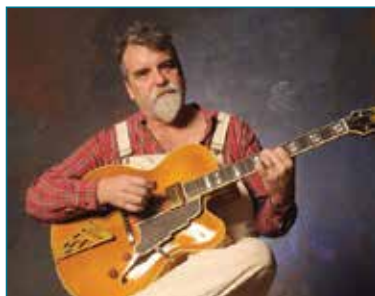
We found an old, tin lard bucket hanging from a nail in the wall. It was scarred with rust but the handle was strong and the lid was still tightly in place.

From the weight of the bucket we could tell there was something inside. We pried the lid off to find a small, carefully rolled up paper bag of several different types of seeds. The handwriting on the bag was worn and illegible. There was also part of a nylon stocking, tied with a knot, holding about a cup of smaller seeds, a bit of string and a wrinkled sweet pea seed packet.

This was a time capsule of utilitarian, necessary things that fed a family. You could tell the contents were part of a life of hard work and the need to be frugal. Sweet peas are a favorite of mine and the empty, wrinkled packet, displaying faded blossoms led me to imagine the colorful pleasure they added to the garden.

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Seed Saving: Grow Your Skills



Harvesting and saving your own garden seeds is such a satisfying way to preserve heirloom varieties of flowers and vegetables and to share your bounty with gardening friends. Economical, too.

“Many heirloom varieties are living history. Most have a story that goes along with the seed,” the Independence Farmers Market Manager, Michelle Pridgen, has blogged. “Some have been passed along in a family, or to friends, for generations.

“Saving your own seed allows you to select plants that meet your needs. You can choose for size, color, taste or growth patterns.”

In fact there’s archaeological evidence from the desert Southwest—based on corn found in cave dwellings—that seed saving existed at least 5,000 years ago.

Here in the gentler High Country climate there are many candidates for seed saving, but some work better than others, and techniques matter. With proper handling many flower and vegetable seeds remain good for several years.

“The main challenges to seed saving in this region are humidity and precipitation as seeds ripen on the plant,” says Richard Boylan, an Area Extension Agent. “This leads to molds and other fungal problems, as well as seed-feeding insects such as weevils, which are particularly bad in beans and sunflowers.”

In general, hybridized seeds aren’t good candidates for saving. That’s because they are bred for certain characteristics – shape or color, height or sweetness –

Written by Nan Chase

and they will revert to an undistinguished type in following generations.

Better, experts say, are seeds from heirloom, or “open-pollinated,” plants that will grow true year after year. Mixing heirlooms and hybrids may not work at all.

Kevin Spurlin of the Virginia Cooperative Extension says, “From personal experience, I would caution beginners from saving seed from plants that are prone to cross-pollination if more than one variety exists in a garden. My grandmother believed in saving seed, and did so very successfully for the most part. One area we had a problem with was with green beans where the dry beans were a cross of two varieties, and the result was basically inedible.”

Another Appalachian farm expert agrees: “Squash and pumpkin seeds are the easiest to save by a mile.

But they cross easily, so you have no idea what you’ll end up with.

In the home garden, plant squash and pumpkins far apart...at least at opposite ends of the garden. To be safe, just plant one or the other.”

So what kinds of flowers, herbs and vegetables work best as seed saving projects?

For the most part, annual plants that take only one year to mature and set seed, and kinds that have well-developed seed heads or pods, or that keep their seeds nestled within their fruit. For vegetables those include tomatoes, peppers, pumpkins and squashes, beans and peas, plus lettuces and other greens.





Favorite flowers: hollyhocks, nasturtium, cosmos, zinnias, sunflowers, poppies and coneflowers. Many herbs have crossover appeal because they offer flowers and seeds as well as culinary value. Try cilantro (the seeds are coriander), bronze fennel and dill, caraway and basil.

Timing is crucial. In most cases it's important to wait until seeds have matured but before seed pods burst allowing the seeds to fall to the ground and can't be collected. That may mean isolating seed heads with paper or muslin bags and then processing the seeds later. Many seed company sell such supplies. Southern Exposure Seed Exchange or Sow True Seed are retailers that carry heirloom seeds and accessories as well as a wealth of information for gardening and seed saving.

Handling and storage are keys to longevity. For tomatoes, add some water to the pulp with seeds; ferment for a few days and when seeds fall to the bottom isolate and dry them, then store. Most others can simply be air dried on paper or plates and then stored in a cool place.

Or do as Michelle Pridgen does and let seeds go wild.

"Last year I let the last lettuce plant bolt in the heat and go to seed in my high-tunnel, and enjoyed volunteer lettuce seedlings," she chuckled.

High Country Seed Swap & Growers Exchange

A great place to get inspired is the annual day-long High Country Seed Swap. in Ashe County, N.C.

This years exchange was held in March and if you missed it, plan to save your own seeds, bulbs and corms to share next year.

Gardeners are encouraged to bring any surplus seeds, bulbs, corms, cuttings, plants, and fruit scion wood they can to exchange. Seed swaps operate on the honor principle that gardeners will bring what they can this year, grow what they get from this swap and other sources, then bring saved seeds from their crops to next year's seed swap.

Read more at: ashe.ces.ncsu.edu/2020/02/high-country-seed-swap-and-growers-exchange.

For more information see www.goblueridge.net.

Saving Pumpkin Seeds

Properly processed and stored, seeds from your favorite pumpkin variety can remain viable – able to germinate – for up to four years.

- Remove seeds from a ripe pumpkin and place them on a dinner plate so that each one has its own space to dry.
- Place the plate in a warm, dry place with good air circulation for a few days: near a heater vent, radiator or wood stove. Run your hands through the seeds occasionally to minimize the sticky "goo."
- When the seeds are dry, place them in an envelope, label and store in a cool, dry place. If you store them in a refrigerator, place the envelope in a jar with a lid to keep the seeds from getting too dry.

PRESERVING & SHARING HEIRLOOM SEEDS

SOCIAL Roots™

Sarah Ross is passionate about the heritage, the hardiness and the nutrition these small treasures provide and she is sharing her open pollinated, open-source heirloom vegetable and flower seeds through her nonprofit seed company Social Roots.

Founded in November 2018, this year Social Roots will be able to give away 27 different varieties of seeds—peppers, beans, tomatoes, okra, winter squash, field peas, marigolds and zinnias.

Seed saving gives Ross the opportunity to address food production concerns like preserving flavor and biodiversity. “Corporations are selecting seed for its ability to produce vegetables that stand up to transportation and look good in the bin,” she said. “I’m growing almost 30 varieties of okra. If you go to the grocery store, you’ll probably see only one.”

Last year, Ross grew almost 500 heirloom varieties of organic vegetables in experimental research gardens at the Wormsloe state historic site, near Savannah, Georgia and on her farm in Alleghany County, North Carolina. “I’m looking for the ones that are resilient in the environment, strong plants that produce vegetables with great flavor,” she said.

In 2016 Ross began compiling heirloom crop seeds—beans, okras, squashes, peanuts—that were either historically grown, or that might have become climatically appropriate. She gathered them from the USDA’s seed banks, more than a dozen local seed companies, and from swaps she has participated in for years.

After researching the varieties’ deliciousness and resilience, she whittled her possibilities down to 470 varieties of fruits and vegetables. Then she began growing the seeds out, “to see which ones

have the widest range of tolerance to erratic weather patterns, so they can adapt,” she says.

Sarah has a deep appreciation of how food connects people in many ways beyond nutrition – from planting to harvest, consumption, traditional meals, and stories shared. She realized she could make a real contribution by growing and sharing open-pollinated seeds.

“These seeds connect us to our history and heritage,” Ross said. “When we control the seeds, we can maintain control of our future.”

“When I sit down with students and we talk about how to make the world a better place, the answer comes down to food and food systems,” says Ross.

Anyone can request seeds through Social Roots’ website with a limit of two per customer—she’s sent packets to people in more than a dozen states. Ross says making



Sarah Ross

money is “almost the antithesis of the point for me,” and that her focus is on empowering local communities to take charge of their own food security.

As Executive Director of the University of Georgia Center for Research and Education at Wormsloe, Sarah divides her time between Savannah, Georgia and Alleghany County, North Carolina.

For more information about Sara Ross, her work and Social Roots visit: www.socialroots.com





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STARTUP NORTHWEST NC LAUNCHES TO SUPPORT ENTREPRENEURS

To fuel the entrepreneurial spirit in our region, Wilkes Community College (WCC) has partnered with several local agencies to launch Startup Northwest NC, an online portal connecting entrepreneurs in Wilkes, Ashe, and Alleghany Counties with

resources, trainings, connections, and inspiration.

The official launch of Startup Northwest NC was held March 10 at the John A. Walker Center on the campus of Wilkes Community College.

The new online portal compiles events and offerings of groups and organizations like the Wilkes County Next Generation Entrepreneurs, Wilkes Economic Development Corporation, Small Business Center, Miles J.O.B. Fund, Inc., area Chambers of



Commerce, Blue Ridge Business Network, Ashe Consulting Group, and other such programs and agencies available to support entrepreneurs on their journey.

The portal also features a series of videos highlighting entrepreneur success stories and making the case for why northwest NC is a great place to be an entrepreneur.

In an effort to highlight the region as a whole and the unique local communities in WCC's service area, Startup Northwest NC has affiliate web pages and videos for Startup Wilkes, Startup Ashe, and Startup Alleghany.

"Entrepreneurs are to the economy what a spark plug is to an engine," said WCC president Dr. Jeff Cox. "If our local economy is going to prosper, our entrepreneurs are the ones who will lead the charge into an increasingly disruptive pace of change—creating the products, services, and jobs we didn't know would exist five years ago."

"We want to celebrate and support our entrepreneurs," added WCC Small Business Center Director, Laurie Brintle-Jarvis. "We want to plant and cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset in our youth and potential entrepreneurs. And we have to make it easy for busy entrepreneurs to find what they need among myriad agencies, events, and resources available to

“*We have to plant and cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset in our youth and potential entrepreneurs.*”

Laurie Brintle-Jarvis

them in our region – even if that's at 2:00 a.m. when they finally get a chance to sit down and plan!"

Startup Northwest NC is one of ten similar initiatives launching throughout Western North Carolina this year, each led by community colleges and their presidents who are members of the NC Rural Community College

Alliance. The alliance was initiated by Dr. Garrett D. Hinshaw, president of Catawba Valley Community College.

Startup Northwest NC was developed in partnership with Supportedly, LLC and made possible through the generous support of the John M. Belk Endowment, as well as numerous local partners, including Ashe County Chamber of Commerce,

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Sep 24, 2020



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Ashe County Government, Ashe County Job Development Fund, Inc., Blue Ridge Business Development Center, Blue Ridge Energy, InfusionPoints, LP, NC IDEA, Piedmont Federal, SkyLine Membership Corporation, Small Business Center Network, Wilkes Communications, Wilkes County Government, and Wilkes Economic Development Corporation.

Though the full web portal will not launch until March 10, you can visit www.startupnwnnc.com to learn more about Startup Northwest NC. You can also reach county-specific portals at www.startupwilkes.com, www.startupashe.com, and www.startupallegghany.com.

Wilkes Community College, a member of the North Carolina Community College System, is

a public, two-year, open-door institution serving the people of Wilkes, Ashe, and Alleghany counties and beyond. Established in 1965, WCC continues to build on a strong history of meeting the educational needs and cultural interests of our students, community, and workforce. WCC prepares learners for success in a dynamic world.



Bringing together entrepreneurial types interested in connecting to share insights, challenges and resources.

Meetings are the First Tuesday morning of the month at 7am and the third Tuesday evening at 6pm.

Find them on Facebook.

Open to everyone!



Networking opportunity for Chamber and non-Chamber members to connect. Meetings are the second Thursday of the month at 7:30 am.

Sponsored by the Ashe Chamber of Commerce.

For more information visit:

AsheChamber.com



As the ambassador arm of the Twin County Chamber of Commerce, the newly-formed Professionals Network has made remarkable strides in a brief period of time-dedicating themselves to engaging in the Twin County Region of Southwest Virginia through service, support and socializing.

For more information visit:

twincountychamber.com



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SPRING

THE SEASON OF

NESTING

By Contributing Writer
Scott Jackson-Ricketts



Spring is the season we celebrate as a time of renewal, regeneration, and promise. For those of us who make time to explore, spring can start quite a bit earlier than our calendar appointment of March

19th.

In this article I want to share a few observations about how birds help describe the advent of another breeding season. The stages are, loosely:

- establishing territory (mostly a male driven event)
- pairing up
- nest construction
- and the eventual reproduction (by egg laying and tending to both the nest eggs and hatchlings)

Depending on the species and their

needs, we are looking at a confusing variety of strategies, chronologies, and success/failure responses. We begin with the raptors, which now must be defined as predatory birds, whose main diet is composed of other animals. This includes falcons, hawks, owls and, oddly, vultures even though vultures are mainly interested in already dead things.

These are all big birds, whose parental duties last much longer than our song birds' efforts. Another large bird, though not a raptor, is the raven, and is included in this category of early pairing-nesting phenomenon that is ours to watch in the Blue Ridge.

Great horned owls are common and widespread. Often in December we can hear these owls calling to one another in the earliest of courtship behavior. It is assumed that because of the length of time from the newly

laid eggs to flight-capable fledglings (up to 14 weeks all told) the earlier they get going the better chance of survival. And in a sense, this is true for many of the larger birds. Great horned owls nest in abandoned hawk and squirrel nests but if a large enough tree cavity is available, will also make that their home.

In early January courting red-tailed hawks can be seen soaring high up in the sky, calling to one another, swooping and diving effortlessly. The pair will share nest building, often adding more sticks and bedding to their old nest, is typically located high up in the fork of a tree that is taller than surrounding trees. Their eggs take four weeks of incubation and then the young need another seven to eight weeks before they can venture forth. The parents stay with the young for several weeks



Red Tail Hawk nest

after they have fledged.

Later in the month similar courtship behavior can be seen from the red-shouldered hawk, a close relative to the red-tailed, but far less common.

The common raven, our largest passerine (or song bird), is next. I have seen them in courtship flight displays as early as January, which are similar to the red-tailed hawks', but even more acrobatic.

Their preferred nesting site is on a cliff or remote rock face ledge, though they will also nest high in conifer trees. Also, like the red-tailed hawks, they reuse nests, sometimes for many years, building upon the old materials.

Incubation period for raven eggs is approximately three weeks, fledging occurring around six weeks. Raven families are known for their fidelity, with the previous year's hatch hanging out and assisting with the current nest and nestlings.

There is a difference between

nesting strategies and timing based on migrants versus year round residents. Migrant birds begin arriving, depending on how far away they wintered, as early as March. Males are usually seen first as they begin to establish territory. Red-winged black birds are a good example of early arrivals. Females begin to show up a week or two after the guys have begun to sort things out.

Some, but not all bluebirds stay the winter. As more arrive, they begin the same process of establishing territory and courting. They often nest early and depending on the length of breeding season, will nest twice and very rarely three times. This strategy is not specific to bluebirds, and in fact, if for some reason a nest fails, such as a result of predation, giving it a second try is not at all uncommon.

Territory for all birds is about access to abundant food sources, shelter and materials necessary to nest building. All species will vigor-

ously defend their territory, which is managed by broadcast vocalizations and actual but rare physical confrontations.

Our beloved spring and early summer dawn chorus is not the joyous celebration we often attribute to it, but rather established males telling the neighborhood, hey, this is my patch and no trespassing!

By mid-April and into early May the spring migration is full on. Those neo-tropical song birds, such as warblers and orioles, are much anticipated.

Yellow warblers arrive about the same time as warbling vireo, Eastern kingbird (not a song bird), orchard and Northern orioles, Louisiana waterthrush, scarlet tanager, and tree swallows. The list is long and exiting.

As mentioned in a previous article, some of these neo-tropics stay in this area while many keep heading further north.

Eventually the serious business of caring for eggs and young

Robin's Nest made of mud and grasses and attached to a road-side bank



consumes all of our feathered friends' time and as summer takes over, the dawn chorus becomes muted.

We have, however, at least one late bloomer, the American goldfinch, whose breeding season coincides with the seeding out of thistle plants. Thistles being their most valued food source, it makes sense.

As far as I know, however, even our seed eating birds must provide a high protein diet to their hatchlings, in order to ensure a rapid and healthy growth rate. So you might see, for instance, a ruby-throated hummingbird (not a seed eater) snatching up spiders and other small invertebrates to take to their tiny nests and nestlings.

For chickadees, nuthatches, cardinals, titmice, and other familiar winter feeder birds, they, too, must seek and provide high protein meals for their youngsters.

In the winter leading into spring, I enjoy watching both house and Carolina wrens initiate their nest building prowess. Both species are known for building more than one nest and ornithologists suggest that why they do this has to do with impressing the females as well as creating confusion among potential predators. Because of our warmer than usual temperatures for late December and early January of this season, Carolina wrens have already begun this energetic exercise. Their nests are a work of art, complex structures that can be found in just about any protected receptacles, such as old shoes, hanging plant pots, eaves, watering pots and so on.

During breeding season, our songbirds are very clever at hiding their nests and often take different routes to and from. I attempt to find nests, though am reluctant to disturb

the birds or give away their location. Once the leaves fall, and nests reveal themselves, I am always astounded by how close some nests were to my gardening or other outdoor activities.

As always I like to recommend a couple of books related to this topic:

Bacich and Hanson's Nests, Eggs and Nestlings of North America

Peterson Field Guides Bird's Nests of Eastern North America by Harrison

A final note: If you are so inclined, keeping field notes for future reference and possibly sharing more widely, consider ebird.org for aligning your observations with others' records. Given that, regardless of your opinion as to why, our climate is changing, birds are really the canaries in the coal mine here. It is interesting to look back at how changes are being understood.



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Leadership Alleghany



"Leadership Alleghany is a positive, impactful program for everyone. Regardless of your status in Alleghany, whether you're a native or have relocated here, you will have the opportunity to learn something you didn't know about our community."

Karen O'Leary
Participant

"I'm glad I had the opportunity to participate and want to thank Wilkes Community College and the Blue Ridge Business Development Center"

Chris Durgin
Participant

On October 1, 2019, the inaugural session of Leadership Alleghany welcomed 14 participants into its five-month program. Meeting twice a month, except for December, this innovative program explores a variety of industries, businesses, and leadership ideas and styles with an end goal of inspiring participants to engage in their community with a first hand introduction into the intricate "cogs of the wheel".

Sponsored by the Blue Ridge Business Development Center in coordination with the Alleghany Center of Wilkes Community College, Leadership Alleghany is designed to meet the county's need for the active participation of informed and educated citizens and leaders.

The goal of the program is to identify potential and current leaders and to provide them with the community information and encouragement needed to spur local action and involvement. Participants are challenged to apply their talents throughout the community by becoming a part of community organizations, public boards, non-profit groups, and civic clubs.

Participants and their employers made a commitment of time to participate in the nine sessions that began with a retreat and closed with a graduation session.

Through the series of half-day sessions/presentations providing information about local businesses,

tours of area businesses, organizations and facilities, attendees were introduced to innovations and issues throughout the county.

The sessions, presented by leaders in the topic areas, offered information and thoughtful analysis about what they do, successes and struggles, and their contribution to the community. Each session was designed to stimulate interest and awareness and included opportunities to interact and facilitate discussion with the speakers.

Topics covered include leadership in areas including government, en-

A few of the businesses that participated with demonstrations and discussions.



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vironment, agriculture, tourism, education/workforce development, technology, manufacturing, and entrepreneurial enterprises.

Participants submit an application that is reviewed by a selection committee. After a thorough review of all applications submitted, participants

are selected in an effort to form a group of geographical, racial, general & occupational balance. To graduate, attendance at all scheduled events is expected.

Program tuition covers all program materials, session refreshments, graduation reception and diploma. Additionally,

graduates received continuing education credits and a commemorative fleece vest.

For more information on Leadership Alleghany, please contact the Blue Ridge Business Development Center, 115 Atwood Street, Sparta, NC 28675, or by email to bdcadmin@blueridgebdc.org.



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Blue Ridge in Bloom

By Maggie Oakes-Chitwood

Imagine yourself walking along in the woods, lush green moss and leaf litter underfoot. It's springtime in the Blue Ridge Mountains and the leaves on the poplars are about the size of a mouse's ear. You've spotted two inconspicuous leaves just penetrating through the humus with a beautiful pink lady's slipper suspended above. If you are lucky enough to have experienced this, then you know how special it is to live here!

Lady's slippers belong to the most biodiverse family of flowering plants on earth, known as the "Orchidacea", or the Orchids. I know what you're thinking, "they don't look anything like the ones sold at the grocery store!" That's because these mountains, the Appalachians, have nurtured biodiversity among its resident plants since their beginnings. The cultivated orchids commonly sold in stores are of tropical origins, but you may not have known that their temperate counterparts grow right here at home.





Photo of Lady Slipper: *Cypripedium reginae* grows in wetlands such as fens, wooded swamps, and riverbanks. *C. reginae* thrives in neutral to basic soils but can be found in slightly acidic conditions. The plants often form in clumps by branching of the underground rhizomes. Its roots are typically within a few inches of the top of the soil. It prefers very loose soils and when growing in fens it will most often be found in mossy hummocks.

A few orchids that commonly grow in our mountains are the lady's slippers (in yellow and pink), rattlesnake plantain, Showy Orchis, and Swamp Pinks. This list could go on for a while. These aren't your "run of the mill" flowers like the dandelions in your flowerbed. They each have unique features. Some grow on a spike with several flowers. Some have a single blossom. Some orchids don't have a drop of chlorophyll! They each bring something special to the table. Did you know Vanilla is an orchid?

Orchids are particularly sensitive. They grow in highly specific habitats where their every need must be met. They are so specific that almost every orchid species has a single insect pollinator that is critical to its survival.

Many factors have put a damper on our native orchid populations, including attempts to transplant, development, and a changing climate.



Downy Rattlesnake Plantain (*Goodyera pubescens*)

Downy rattlesnake plantain is a summer wildflower and one of the most common orchids in the park. It has egg-shaped, evergreen basal leaves found in the shape of a rosette. The leaves are bluish-green with white veins which give it the "snake skin" look. The blossom is dried fruit are round and clustered and resemble the rattle of a rattlesnake.

Swamp Pink (*Helonias bullata*)

Found in wetlands along streams and seepage areas in freshwater swamps. The major threat to the species is loss and degradation of its wetland habitat due to encroaching development, sedimentation, pollution, succession, and wetland drainage. Swamp pink has extremely low seedling establishment, which appears limit establishment of population at new sites. Other threats include plant collection and trampling.



Showy Orchid (*Galearis spectabilis*)

When flowering in the spring and early summer, it produces up to 15 small, conspicuous flowers with a white labellum and pink or purple sepals and petals, which curve together to form a hood over the column. A noticeable spur extends out from behind the base of the labellum. Due to its distinctive flowers and 2 basal leaves, it is unlikely to be confused with any other orchid. It is found in dry to moist forests and woodlands.



A very important point to remember: while you are on your actual walk through the woods, **please enjoy these with your eyes and your camera**, even take a moment just to touch the dainty blossoms or smell the flowers' light aroma, but please leave them where they are. Odds are that they will not survive a transplant, and the blossoms are much more vibrant in the woods than in a vase or in your home garden.

If wildflowers are interesting to you, check out a wildflower Identification guide from your local library, online or bookstore. The Audubon society has great guides with detailed photographs. Peter Newcomb's "Wildflowers of North America" has detailed drawings and descriptions of plants.

Maggie Oakes-Chitwood is a resident of Grant, Virginia and Graduated with a B.S. in Horticulture.

Ladybugs

The ladybug family is HUGE. The typical red or orange ladybug that many of us think of with black spots has lots of cousins; thousands of them!



These ladybugs, ladybirds, or lady beetles as they may be called depending where you are from, can look drastically different than our red and black mascot. Ladybug spot patterns vary widely from species to species and come in a variety of colors.

Some ladybug species have spots and some have none at all—this can happen just within one species. There are some ladybug species that have beautiful metallic colored elytra (the hard shell-like outer wing) while other ladybug species

are covered with little hair-like structures.

Coccinellidae is the scientific name for ladybugs. Other common names are ladybirds or lady beetles. There are six different species of ladybugs. They are Hippodamia convergens, Coccinella

la Septempunctata, Coccinella Californica, Coccinella Triasficata Subversa, Psyllobora vigintimaculata and Harmonia Axyridis.

Convergent Lady Beetle (Hippodamia Convergens) is the most commonly

known found in North America. This type of ladybug has zero to thirteen spots four to seven millimeters in length, white convergent dashes on the pronotum/prothorax, a spherical body shape, and can be found on a variety of crops, weeds, orchards, and flowers.

The 7-Spotted Lady Beetle (*Coccinella Septempunctata*) is the most common ladybug. This ladybug is the official state insect for several states, they are Delaware, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Tennessee. It is very easy to recognize with its red color, black spots, three on each elytra and one spot spanning the both of them where the wings meet. We can find these in large numbers feeding on weeds in feeds or around our homes. Just like the 7-Spotted Lady Beetle the California Lady Beetle or *Coccinella Californica* is red but simply does not have any spots. They are a little bit smaller and have a red-orange color.

Three-banded lady beetle (*Coccinella Trifasciata Subversa*) is the subspecies of *Coccinella Trifasciata* and their color is red-orange and has a single black band encasing white and spanning both elytra. This band sometimes tends to give the appearance of three-spots. This type of species is very hard to find.

Multi-colored Asian Lady Beetle (*Harmonia Axyridis*) is known in other parts of the world by other names depending on what part of the world it is. This names a few, Harlequin ladybird, Halloween la-

dybug, Japanese ladybird, and pumpkin ladybird but there are many more depending on what part of the world they are in. This ladybug *Harmonia Axyridis* is known for invading peoples homes in fall and winter, staining their belongings from their excessive reflex bleeding and even being an agricultural pest to vineyards as they have been known to contaminate grapes and other soft bodied fruits. Even though it seems that this ladybug is a nuisance, it is still considered a beneficial insect because of its being used widely for biological pest control.

The Twenty-Spotted Ladybird Beetle (*Psyllobora vigintimaculata*) is very small and its color is yellowish tan and tends to blend into its surroundings. The twenty-spotted ladybug feeds off of mildew and can be found in North America as far north as Alaska and south to Mexico.

The ladybug that has the look of a tiger is called the Three-banded ladybug. It has large black bands on the orange or pail orange elytra. This ladybug can be found in the north western United States and Canada.

The Eye-spotted Ladybug (*Anatis Mali*), has dark spots ringed in yellow that seem

to take on the appearance of eyes. The eye spots are a defense mechanism to make the ladybug seem larger than it really is. The spots are known to divert predators from attacking their head and any other vital organs. These types of ladybugs can often be found in pine trees.

The Orange Spotted Ladybug (*Brachiacantha ursina*) is black with orange spots and is much smaller compared to other ladybugs. The orange spotted ladybug is rarely seen because they prefer the underground.

The last ladybug species in this group is the Spotless Ladybug (*Cycloneda Munda*).

This ladybug has no spots on their outer wings and can be mistaken for the *Harmonia axyridis*. The difference between the two are the patterns on the head and pronotum. They have a distinct "M" shape on them and are very large while the spotless ladybug have a white rimmed pronotum.

Each one of these ladybugs have similar characteristics to each other, whether it is from their shape or size to colors. They all have six legs and two pairs of wings, with a half ball shape body. Some are smaller than others, but the small ones can have up to sixteen spots on them.



The Ladybug wears no disguises. She is just what she advertises. A speckled spectacle of spring. A fashion statement on the wing.... A miniature orange kite. A tiny dot-to-dot delight.

J. Patrick Lewis

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We Demand: Women's Suffrage in Virginia

Virginia suffragists were a remarkable group of talented and dedicated women who have largely been forgotten. They were artists and writers, business and professional women, and educators and reformers who marched in parades, rallied at the state capitol, spoke to crowds on street corners, staffed booths at state and county fairs, lobbied legislators and congressmen, picketed the White House, and even went to jail. At the centenary of woman suffrage, these remarkable women are at last recognized for their important achievements and contributions.

An enthusiastic crowd turned out on a cold, snowy February day for Grayson Celebrates Women kickoff Suffrage Film Series.

Author, filmmaker Paula Casey, co-founder of the Tennessee Woman Suffrage Monument spoke of the 72-year effort to gain voting enfranchisement for American women. She described the dramatic final days before the critical vote in the TN legislature as depicted in her film "The Perfect 36". (Thirty-six states voting for the 19th Amendment were needed to ratify and certify it into law.) Casey fielded questions from the audience and signed copies of the film's companion book.

The remaining dates of the series will be rescheduled later in the year and will include playwright and screen writer Frank Levering.

For information on upcoming events: visit visit@graysoncountyva.gov or follow on Facebook at Grayson Celebrates Women.



Guest author and film maker Paula Casey from Memphis Paula with Eleanor Roosevelt dress at 1908.



Above: Joyce Rouse in period attire.



Attendees to Grayson Celebrates Women kickoff Suffrage Film Series



Suffrage Centennial Commemorative T-Shirt and CD:

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Blueberry Cream Cheese Bars

Ingredients

3 cups blueberries
1/2 cup sugar
Nonstick cooking spray
1 1/2 cups graham cracker crumbs
6 tablespoons butter melted
2 tablespoons sugar

1/2 cup sugar
2 (8 ounce) packages of cream cheese
1 teaspoon vanilla
2 eggs

Instructions

Combine blueberries and 1/2 cup of sugar in small saucepan. Cover and place on low heat. Simmer for 10 minutes and remove from heat. After pan cools place in refrigerator to chill and thicken for 2-3 hours.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray 9 x 13 inch baking dish with nonstick cooking spray. In small bowl combine graham cracker crumbs, 6 tablespoons melted butter and 2 tablespoons sugar. Press evenly into baking dish.

Mix 1/2 cup sugar and cream cheese until smooth.

Turn mixer to low; add vanilla extract and 1 egg at a time mixing just until incorporated. Pour cream cheese mixture over graham cracker crust.

With chilled blueberry sauce make two thick lines down the length of the pan over the top of the cream cheese. Using bamboo skewers or chopsticks swirl in being careful not to scrap the crust on the bottom.

Bake 40-45 minutes or until set in the center. Chill well before cutting. Refrigerate all leftovers.



EVENTS

Grayson County

April

24: New River Bell Ensemble Concert

7p, Galax Public Library. artsculturalcouncil.org.

26: Women Win the Vote

2:30p, Film Series on Women Winning the Vote, Free, Galax Public Library, 276-773-8002; visit graysoncountyva.gov

26: New River Bell Ensemble Concert

4p, 1908 Courthouse, Independence, VA. artsculturalcouncil.org.

May

2: Kid's Fishing Day

Rugby Fire Dept; Big Wilson Creek, 9a–5p, for info: 276-733-3317

2-3: Grayson Highlands 50K/50 Mile 1/2 Marathon

Grayson Highlands State Park; Run Bum Tours; HIGHEST race in Va. runbumtours.com/grayson-highlandsraces

8: IFM Grand Opening & Mother's Day Craft Fair

9a–1p; Shop locally for Mother's Day; independencefarmersmarket.org; independencefarmersmarket@gmail.com; 276-768-0597

8-10: Spring Mt. Rogers Naturalist Rally

4p on Fri. – 12p Sun. 6315 Whitetop Rd; Troutdale; 276-388-3155; outreach@blueridgediscoverycenter.org

9: Town of Independence Cruise-In

12–3p; Grayson County High School; Concert—"The Attractions"; vendors contact Mary Ann Halsey 276-768-8656 or maryann@independenceva.com

9: Elk Creek Special Needs Fishing

Elk Creek, 9a–1p, 276-768-7171

16: Henry Whitter Spring Festival

Traditional music festival honoring musical legend. Music, food, tradition, arts & crafts. Fries Town Park, Firehouse Dr., Fries, VA. 8:30a–5p. 276-744-2231, willowhaus@yahoo.com, friesfestivals.com

17: Whitetop Mountain Ramp Festival

Mt. Rogers Fire Hall. Ramp eating contest, arts & crafts, Old Time & Bluegrass music, dancing and food! 11a–5p. mtrogersvfd-rs.com or ejcox@naxs.com beckyplpn@aol.com

19-20: Fly Fishing Workshop

5-8p; New River Wildlife Club, 7107 Riverside Dr., Fries; nrwc24330@gmail.com; 276-237-3654

24: Farm Day

2-5p; 1322 Gold Hill Rd. Independence, VA; Free demos, activities, farm tour, sponsored by Independence Farmers Market & Wagon Wheel Farm, 276-768-0597; independencefarmersmarket.org; independencefarmersmarket.org

23: Cruise-In

Fries Town Park. 3p until dark, Fries Town Park, 276-233-1104, willowhaus@yahoo.com

June

5- Oct 2: Cooking Day at Independence Farmers Market

Cooking demos & free samples, 1st Fri of each month, 9a–1p; independencefarmersmarket.org; 276-768-0597

5-6: Blue Ridge Fiber Fest

Sparta NC. Demos, vendors, workshops, animals. 336-649-9950, blueridgefiberfest@gmail.com.

12-20: Grayson Celebrates Women in the Arts

Historic 1908 Courthouse, Independence, 276-773-8002; concerts & art exhibits showcasing local women artists. facebook.com/GraysonCelebratesWomen

13: Making Grayson Glow- Bingo

Independence VFW, Doors open at 5p, games begin at 6p; visit graysoncountyva.gov

7-15: Grayson Celebrates Women in the Arts

Artist Showcase/Exhibit & Free Concerts, Historic 1908 Courthouse, Independence, visit grayson-countyva.gov, 276-773-8002

20: Horse Show

Benefit for Fries VFD, Providence School. 56 Bainbridge Rd. Begins at 6pm. Game & Pleasure Classes. friesfire.com or call 276-744-2141

20: Wayne Henderson Music Festival & Guitar Competition

Grayson Highlands St. Park, 10:30a; 276-579-7712; compete for a Henderson guitar; Youth scholarships awarded & live entertainment, info@waynehenderson.org.

20: Kayaking Workshop

10a–3p; New River Wildlife & Conservation; 7107 Riverside Drive, Fries, nrwc24330@gmail.com; 276-237-3654

27: Go with the Flow Music & Brewfest

Fries Town Park. Craft Breweries, music, food trucks, vendors, 5K & giveaways. 12-8 p. Purchase tickets: flowbrewfest.com. 276-236-2337.

27-28: Family Camping

Blue Ridge Discovery Center; 6315 Whitetop Road, Troutdale, Family camping at Blue Ridge Discovery Center Campground, part of Great American Camp-out; 276-388-3155; outreach@blueridgediscoverycenter.org; blueridgediscoverycenter.org.

26-27: Grayson County Fiddlers' Convention

Old Time & Bluegrass Music Competition, Elk Creek Ball Park, Elk Creek, VA., A Crooked Road Event, ecvfd.net or email at ecvfd@ls.net.

July

4: Town of Fries 4th of July Celebration

Parade at noon, games, music, old timers ball game at Fries Ball Park, Main St, Fries, VA. Fireworks at 10pm. friesfestivals.com, willowhaus@yahoo.com

4: 4th of July Celebration

Parade line-up 9a; Parade "Salute the Troops – Heroes in Our Hearts"; concert, vendors, kids activities; fireworks at dark. maryann@independenceva.com, 276-773-3711

EVENTS

Grayson County

10: Wellness Day

9a–1p; Independence Farmers Market; Local health professionals provide free screenings and information; independencefarmersmarket.org; 276-768-0597.

10–11: Alleghany Quilters Guild Show.

Alleghany Fairgrounds, 1375 US Hwy 21N Sparta, NC, 276-357-4018

July 11: Cruise-In. Fries Town Park

3p until dark, Fries, VA 276-233-1104, willowhaus@yahoo.com

17: Berry Festival

Independence Farmers Market, 9am–1pm. Enter berry pie contest & enjoy everything berry. Food, music & more. independencefarmersmarket.org 276-768-0597

18: Kayaking Workshop

10a–3p; New River Wildlife & Conservation; 7107 Riverside Drive, Fries, nrwcc24330@gmail.com; 276-237-3654.

25: Kids Rock the River

14 & under Fishing Tournament, 9a – 1p, Lunch

& T-shirt provided, prizes, cash prizes for 1st, 2nd, & 3rd place, Fries Town Park, 276-773-8002 or visit@graysoncountyva.gov

July 24-26: Take A Break From the Interstate US-21 Road Market

Making Grayson Glow will set up at the 1908 with vendors. Shop or set up along Hwy 21, Harmony, NC to Wytheville, VA. Yard sales/flea market. us21roadmarket.org

Ashe County

RECURRING EVENTS

Quilt Guild Meeting!

2pm–4pm on the 2nd Thursday of each month
Ashe County Senior Center

Parkway Theater

Showtimes: Mon–Thurs at 7pm, Friday at 7 & 9pm, Saturday at 3, 7, & 9pm, and Sunday 3 & 7pm , Parkway Theater, 10 E Main St, West Jefferson.

Trivia Night at the Brew Haus

1st, 2nd, 3rd Wednesday of the month,
Boondocks Brew Haus

Workshop to Expand Your Creative Voice

2nd Thurs. of each month 12:30 to 3:30PM & 5:30 to 8:30PM. Other times available upon request, 189 Annapurna Drive, Todd, NC 28684

Foraging Fridays

Every Friday (9am), 3899 Todd Railroad Grade Rd., Todd, NC 28684

Essential Oils 101

Every Saturday at 3pm, 3899 Todd Railroad Grade Rd., Todd, NC 28684

The Hotel Tavern Concert Series

Every Friday & Saturday (6:30–9:30pm), The Hotel Tavern, 5 W Main, West Jefferson, NC.

Ashe Outreach Fish Fry & Bluegrass Music

1st & 3rd Friday of each mont, 4–8pm , 11719 HWY 88 W, Creston, North Carolina

Old Time CommUnity Dance and Pot Luck Dinner

‘Teen friday’. Whichever Friday falls on the 13th– 19th, Todd Mercantile, 3899 Todd Railroad Grade Rd, Todd, NC.

Blue Ridge Movie Lounge

See website for movies and showtimes, Blue Ridge Movie Lounge, 17 E 2nd St, West Jefferson, NC

Music Bingo at the Brew Haus

Every Thursday Night BUT the Second Thursday of the Month , Boondocks Brew Haus, Jefferson.

Teaching Tuesdays

Every Tuesday, 11am, 3899 Todd Railroad Grade Rd., Todd, NC 28684

Phipps General Store Jam

Every Friday Night from 7–10pm, 2425 Silas Creek Rd, Lansing, NC 28643

Smart Ashe Team Trivia

1st, 2nd and 3rd Wednesday of each month
Boondocks Brewing’s Brew Haus, Jefferson Ave., West Jefferson

Line Dancing Lessons

Every Thursday night 7–9pm , Blue Ridge Theater & Event Center, 9331 Old Hwy 16 S West Jefferson NC

Greenfield Jam Sessions

Every Friday Evening (7pm–until), Greenfield Campground, 120 Greenfield Circle, West Jefferson, NC.

Bingo!

Every 1st & 3rd Thursday of each month
6:30pm to 7:30pm, Lansing Volunteer Fire Department, 9281 NC HWY 194 N, Lansing, NC

May

8: The Return

7:30 pm – 09:30 pm, The Walker Center
1328 S. Collegiate Drive, Wilkesboro

9: Mothers Day Plant Sale

8:00 am – 2:00 pm, Warrensville community

9: Spring Celebration

10:00 am – 2:00 pm, The Museum of Ashe County History, 301 E Main St, Jefferson

17: 6th Annual Empty Bowls

12:00 pm – 2:00 pm, Ashe County High School
184 Campus Dr, West Jefferson, NC 28694

EVENTS

23: Battle of the Rock Bands

11:00 am - 6:00 pm, Saloon Studios Live
313 Old West Road, West Jefferson NC 28694

24: Music on the Green

3:00 pm - 4:00 pm, The Museum of Ashe County History, 301 E Main St, Jefferson

June

12- 13: New River Marathon, Half Marathon, 4 Mile & 1 Mile Fun Run

7:30 am - 1:30 pm, The Woodshed, 1389 Big Flatts Church Rd, Fleetwood

13: Family Fun Day

10:00 am - 2:00 pm, The Museum of Ashe County History, 301 E Main St, Jefferson

28: Jason Isbell and the 400 Unit

8:00 pm - 10:00 pm, Schaefer Center for the Performing Arts, 733 Rivers St, Boone, NC 28607

July

3: Christmas in July Festival Kickoff- Music & Food

3:00 pm - 9:30 pm, Downtown West Jefferson

4: Christmas in July Festival

9 am - 7:15 pm, Downtown West Jefferson, NC

5: Music on the Green

3:00 pm - 04:00 pm, The Museum of Ashe County History, 301 E Main St, Jefferson

July

4: Christmas in July Festival

9 am - 7:15 pm, Downtown West Jefferson, NC

5: Music on the Green

3:00 pm - 04:00 pm, The Museum of Ashe County History, 301 E Main St, Jefferson

Alleghany County

RECURRING EVENTS

Mondays

Crouse House Jam: Bluegrass and Oldtime Jam. Bring your instrument or just listen, The Crouse House, No charge, Crouse Park, Sparta, 6pm

Tuesdays

Alleghany Jubilee: Live traditional music & dancing, 25 North Main St, 7pm

Thursdays

Trivia Night: Laconia Ale Works, 6pm
Open Mic Night: Muddy Creek Cafe 7pm

Saturdays

Alleghany Jubilee: Live traditional, music & dancing, 25 North Main St, 7pm

May

2: Rotary Club Draw Down

Alexander Hall, 6:00pm

16: Mountaintop Stop for Authors on Tour

Author Jack Grossman, Alleghany County Library
2:30pm, alleghanywriters.com

June

5: Music On Main

First Fridays, June through October, Sparta, NC, 336-372-5473

5 & 6: Blue Ridge Fiber Fest

Livestock, fiber, classes; Alleghany County Fairgrounds, 336-648-9950, blueridgefiberfest.com

5 & 6: 4th Annual Get Outside Mountain Relay

208-Mile Team Relay Race; getoutsidemountain-relay.com; 336-363-4984

13: Tour De Mountains

Mountain Cycling Adventure; Sparta, NC 8:30am
336-372-2944, tourdemountains.com

19-21 Alleghany Community Theatre

"Lend me a Tenor", alleghanycommunitytheatre.org

20: Bark in the Park

Fundraiser for Save-A-Pet Foundation, Crouse Park, 2-6pm, saveapet.com

26 & 27: Backwoods Beat Music and Art Festival

Darrell Scott & Paul Thorn, Songwriting workshops, Art & Concerts, Sparta NC, alleghany-artsCouncil.org

July

2-4: Art in the Barn

Motsinger Farm, 10am-4pm, Dawn Motsinger, artinthebarn.us

3: Music On Main

Sparta, NC, 336-372-5473

4: Fourth of July Fireworks

Alleghany High School, 9pm

4: Independence Day Parade

Sparta, NC, 336-372-5473

4: Lawnmower Race

Glade Creek VFD, Alleghany County Fairgrounds, 7:00pm

10 & 11 Alleghany Quilters Guild Show

Beautiful mountain quilts, Alleghany, County Fairgrounds, 336-372-1779

17 & 18: Alleghany Fiddlers Convention

Alleghany County Fairgrounds, alleghanyfiddlers-convention.com

18: 3rd Annual Olde Beau Trail Race

Olde Beau Resort and Golf Club, 8:30am

24-26: Hwy. 21 Road Market

100-mile yard sale from Harmony, NC to Wytheville, VA, 800-553-2322, us21roadmarket.org

25: Kite Festival

Bluff's Lodge, Blue Ridge Parkway, 336-657-0825, spartalightsandentertainment.com.

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