THE EARTH IN HER HANDS: 75 EXTRAORDINARY WOMEN WORKING IN THE WORLD OF PLANTS

NEW BOOKS, OLD WISDOM

SNOWFLAKES IN SPRING

HEAD, HEART, HANDS, HEALTH, AND HISTORY

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The Earth in Her Hands: 75 Extraordinary Women Working in the World of Plants

Join us on May 12th for a conversation with Jennifer Jewell—host of public radio's award-winning program and podcast Cultivating Place—as she introduces 75 inspiring women featured in her book, The Earth in Her Hands: 75 Extraordinary Women Working in the World of Plants.

Working in wide-reaching fields that include botany, floral design, landscape architecture, farming, herbalism, and food justice, these influencers are creating change from the ground up. Featured women include flower farmer Erin Benzakein; cofounder and codirector of Soul Fire Farm Leah Penniman; worker and owner of Southern Exposure Seed Exchange Ira Wallace; plantswoman Flora Grubb; president and CEO of Atlanta Botanical Garden Mary Pat Matheson; edible and cultural landscape designer Leslie Bennett; Caribbean-American writer and gardener Jamaica Kincaid; garden historian and curator of plants of Monticello Peggy Cornett; soil scientist Elaine Ingham; landscape designer Ariella Chezar; floral designer Amy Merrick, and many more. Rich with personal stories and insights, Jewell's portraits reveal a devotion that transcends age, locale, and background, reminding us of the profound role of green growing things in our world—and our lives.
New Books, Old Wisdom

BY JENNIE OLDFIELD
Librarian/Archivist for the Cherokee Garden Library

Cataloging new contemporary books for the Cherokee Garden Library has always been a refreshing change of pace from processing collections. It is exciting to see what the Acquisitions Committee has selected to add to the Library’s growing book collection.

With the Atlanta History Center’s updated collecting plan now in place, book purchases support the institution’s mission to connect people, history, and culture and to serve, collect, preserve, and engage for inclusive, diverse, and historically underrepresented communities, including Indigenous peoples.

Furthermore, the Acquisitions Committee seeks to build a collection that examines gardening traditions of Native American, African American, and Latinx communities from the Southeastern United States.

Here are a few recent book additions that highlight this area of focus from the collecting plan:


Since 2008, Concrete Jungle, an Atlanta nonprofit organization, has harvested wild-growing fruit trees in the Atlanta area with the mission to share, feed, and empower those in need. With over 40 recipes using 14 varieties of fruit, flower, and nut, this cookbook offers classic Southern recipes with a twist of the local harvest. Recipes include Kudzu Lemonade, Mulberry Smoothie, and Pawpaw Ice Cream. All proceeds from this locally sourced collection support the organization’s growing and foraging for Atlanta food pantries and soup kitchens.


In 2007 Ezeilo founded the Atlanta based Greening Youth Foundation (GYF), to engage and educate underrepresented youth for careers in conservation. Bringing attention to the cultural divide in environmentalism, Engage, Protect, Connect examines environmental efforts that exclude communities of color. The authors debunk the myth that only wealthy white communities are interested in environmental issues and detail ways in which GYF has worked with African American, Latinx, and Native American communities to inspire environmental leaders. This book offers practical guidance, resources, and curriculum for encouraging new young leaders from all communities as the next generation of environmental stewards.
We invite you to explore these books and others in the Cherokee Garden Library of the Kenan Research Center, open by appointment Tuesday through Saturday, 10am to 1pm and 2pm to 5pm.


Through various contributors, Hood and Tada examine the history of Black landscapes and geographies and the widespread elimination or omission of these landscapes through racism and devaluing. *Black Landscapes Matter* includes case studies, critiques, and calls to action that remind us that to appreciate our landscape history we must include multiple narratives and different viewpoints and incorporate these moving forward, striving for equality. As Atlanta struggles to unite through the BeltLine, this book will provide context for bringing communities together through its landscapes.


Kimmerer, a botanist and a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, offers a reminder that plants and animals are our oldest teachers. To realize our ecological goals, one must recognize our reciprocal relationship with the living world. With *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Kimmerer makes a case for a “culture of regenerative reciprocity” in which we restore that balance. Interweaving Western science and Indigenous traditions through poetic and insightful writing, Kimmerer inspires readers to celebrate the gifts of nature and understand the responsibility that comes with it.

**Salmón, Enrique. Iwígara: The Kinship of Plants and People. Portland, OR: Timber Press, 2020.**

Ethnobotanist Dr. Enrique Salmón, member of the Rarámuri tribe, brings the wisdom of North American Indigenous people to this detailed illustrated catalog of native North American plants. *Iwígara*, named for the Rarámuri concept that all life forms are interconnected, describes plants valued by Native American tribes and how they were used historically and used today in food, medicine, and arts and crafts. Also included in the role of these plants in traditional stories and myths as well as useful tips for identification and ethical harvesting.


Author and activist Leah Penniman is the cofounder of Soul Fire Farm, an Afro-Indigenous community farm in Peterburg, New York. Her book, *Farming While Black*, is a comprehensive farming manual for small-scale farms and a thorough examination of traditional farming practices rooted in African American and Latinx heritages. Penniman dives into the history of discrimination and dispossession of Black-owned farms as well as issues of food apartheid neighborhoods and food justice. Through the wisdom of Black and brown ancestors, this book informs the reader of sustainable agricultural methods in all aspects of farming along with support and resources.

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January is a solemn month that gardeners must endure. After weeks of clouds, intermittent rain, and uncomfortably chilly temperatures, the first sight of bright green leaves pushing out of the gray and brown mosaic of the winter ground is startling. The vivid contrast to winter’s monochrome palette is enough to lure any gardener into the cold to gawk at what seems impossible, recalling verdant months of the past and portending what’s to come. This sampling of vibrancy perhaps is also enough to foster patience and contentment to enjoy the latter days of winter’s slumber.

Snow is not guaranteed in the Lower South every year, requiring many of us to head to the higher latitudes of white pines, hemlocks, and rhododendrons to catch a glimpse. Gardeners in the know have a trick to make sure there is something white in the garden each year. Their solution is a bulbous plant with demure bell-shaped flowers named Leucojum aestivum.

The name Leucojum comes from the Greek leukos meaning white and ion for violet. Aestivum comes from Latin meaning “of the summer.” Its common name is summer snowflake, despite it blooming in early spring in the United States. Spring snowflake, Leucojum vernum, is another species that blooms from late winter into spring; however, it is very uncommon in North America. Snowflakes are also often called snowdrops and dewdrops. Yet, botanists have decided that snowflakes are Leucojum, and snowdrops are another genus, Galanthus, which is uncommon in Southern gardens. The mix-up of common names appears to be an old tradition and is not likely to be changed. Elizabeth Lawrence opens her “Snowdrops and Snowflakes” chapter in The Little Bulbs, A Tale of Two Gardens (1986) with “Nearly everyone in the South calls a snowflake a snowdrop.”

The summer snowflake is native to much of Europe, Turkey, and Iran, inhabiting moist soils in meadows and along waterways. In the journal Naturalist from 1851, S. Hannaford observed the summer snowflake growing in the marsh amidst the willows on his botanical ramble along the River Dart in Devonshire, England. Despite the natural proclivity to wet soils, it has adapted well to both the Southern coastal sandy plains and heavy clay soils of the Piedmont. Snowflakes can handle wet feet during the active months of root growth, blooming, and bulb growth but appreciate a dry dormancy during summer. The South’s hot summers and less saturated soils suit its needs well, whether in sand or clay. This gardener can attest to it thriving equally well in the sandy banks of a creek, unamended clay, and organically rich deciduous woodlands.

Species of Leucojum have been identified and cultivated since antiquity in its native Europe. The Greek Theophrastus, c. 371-287 BCE, is credited with naming the genus Leucojum. Carl Linnaeus is credited with naming the summer snowflake Leucojum aestivum in 1759. Exactly when they were brought to North America is unknown, but certainly, they were present by the beginning of the nineteenth century. Leucojum aestivum is listed in an 1807 catalog printed by Bartram and Reynolds, A Catalogue of Foreign Plants, Collected from Various Parts of the Globe. This catalog lists plants grown by John Bartram and Son at Kingsess Botanic Garden in Pennsylvania. In Georgia, the LeConte brothers, Louis and John, included it in their 1813-1815 Woodmanston Plantation bulb list (Stritikus). These were two institutions led by botanists with connections and resources to obtain any plants available at the time. Determining when the bulbs became commonly available to gardeners in this country warrants additional research.
Summer snowflakes are not a popular or fashionable choice for gardeners today. The bulbs can be purchased in many plant nurseries, and an internet search gets you numerous options in seconds. The velvety white pendant bell-shaped flowers are marked with a green dot on each of the six tepals. There are two to six flowers per stem, and the bloom period extends four to six weeks. Summer snowflakes may be passe to most people, but their blooms create a dusting of white in older gardens across the South each spring. They have naturalized in much of the South, reproducing by bulb division and seed. This is fortunate because a large mass provides the most visual impact, especially from afar. Even if your garden does not have large spaces to create drifts, the appeal of the individual bulb is worth making room in the smallest garden.

Much like daffodils, summer snowflakes can become untidy in late spring as the masses of leaves grow two feet long, competing for the sun to build up stores for the next year. This is not a tidy or neat plant staying in its allotted space. It is wild and free, not suited to a formal border. It is more suitable to the open landscape, in places mimicking its natural habitat: woodland borders, creek edges, and meadows. Placement around deciduous shrubs like oakleaf hydrangeas is always useful. Tactically, bare stems of the shrub give the snowflake time to soak up enough sun for next year’s flowers, then the leaves of the hydrangea appear in time to camouflage the dying foliage of the snowflake. Interplanting with a perennial or annual that flushes in summer is another stratagem to consider.

*Leucojum aestivum* is a classic Southern plant that has become well rooted in our landscapes. It has earned its place on the essential Southern heirloom list. It easily grows and multiplies wherever it is planted but is not aggressive. All those extra bulbs ensure it gets shared with friends and family. It is not a flashy or fashionable plant, and perhaps never has been, but it quietly persists and covers gardens in a dusting of white each spring.

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Adam Martin

Adam Martin resides in Atlanta and maintains a garden in Monroe, Georgia. He earned a Master in Historic Preservation from the University of Georgia. Course studies identifying and documenting landscapes led him to research the preservation of plant materials, specifically heirloom bulbous plants. This research culminated in his thesis, “Heirloom Bulbs: Horticultural Rarities, ‘Passalong’ Plants, & Biotic Cultural Resources.” The thesis sought to answer why and how heirloom bulbous plants have been preserved by individuals and organizations in the United States since roughly 1900. Adam continues research focused on historic plant materials and their cultural significance. He is a Georgia Perennial Plant Association member and volunteers with the Georgia Daffodil Society and Historic Oakland Foundation. He also serves on the Southern Garden History Society Board of Directors and as the organization’s Digital Media Director.

RIGHT Plate 40, from Jane Loudon’s *The Ladies’ Flower-Garden of Ornamental Bulbous Plants,* London: William Smith, 1841, Cherokee Garden Library Historic Collection.
Head, Heart, Hands, Health, and History

In 1904, Newton County school superintendent G. C. Adams established the first 4-H program in Georgia—a boys’ corn club that taught best practices to grow and harvest corn.

Adams’ goal was to instruct young men in new farming technologies that were being developed by land grant research universities and to interest them in growing crops other than cotton. A girls’ club followed two years later in Hancock County that focused on teaching food preservation skills through tomato canning. Soon a clover was adopted as the club’s emblem, with the four “H’s” representing Head, Heart, Hands, and Health.

Fast forward over 100 years, and Georgia 4-H has grown and evolved to include 4-H programs in every county within the state. In 2016, Atlanta History Center ventured into a new partnership with UGA Extension and Georgia 4-H to bring a 4-H program to the Buckhead campus. Although 4-H has been in existence in Fulton County for over 100 years, the program could not reach central and north Fulton County due to limited staff and facilities. AHC co-funded the hiring of a second 4-H agent for the county and donated office space on campus to provide a home for the new Atlanta History Center 4-H Club.

What is 4-H?

4-H is the largest youth development organization within the United States, with over 240,000 members just within the state of Georgia. Administered by University of Georgia Cooperative Extension, 4-H provides youth in K-12th grades the opportunity to explore their interests, practice new skills, and develop friendships. 4-H programs are locally administered in partnership between UGA and county governments and are part of the larger UGA Extension county-based programs.

The 4-H program of today looks quite different from the boys’ corn clubs and girls’ tomato canning clubs of the early twentieth century. Although agricultural roots run deep within 4-H, today’s 4-H programs focus on STEM, healthy living, and civic engagement in addition to agriculture. 4-Htailors programs to meet the interests and needs of youth within the local community. Although you may not find any livestock shows in Fulton County, you will discover a wide variety of science and leadership activities along with community service and healthy living initiatives. Hands-on, experiential learning has been a cornerstone of Georgia 4-H since G. C. Adams’ first corn clubs and remains a central component of all 4-H programs today.

Programming

Fulton County 4-H provides a wide variety of opportunities for engagement through community, school, and specialty clubs along with contests, competitions, summer camps, leadership conferences, and workshops. The 4-H Community Club meets once a month at the Atlanta History Center for friendship and fun. Open to youth in K-12th grades who reside or attend school in Fulton County, community clubs include educational activities, recreation, and community service opportunities. Specialty clubs focus on particular areas of interest and have included 3D printing, STEM, gardening, and film. 4-H members can compete in a wide variety of district and state 4-H competitions such as 4-H Project Achievement (a self-directed learning and public speaking competition), 4-H Judging Teams, and Knowledge Quiz Bowls. Overnight summer camps give 4-H’ers the opportunity to explore nature and make new friends at one of Georgia’s five 4-H centers. Specialty programs such as Clovers and Company performing arts group and the Georgia 4-H Technology Team challenge 4-H’ers to hone their skills in specialized content areas.

4-H also provides support and outreach programs for local schools. Partnerships with Atlanta Public Schools and Fulton County Schools allow 4-H agents to teach standards-based STEM and healthy living programming to elementary, middle, and high school students both during the school day and after school. Georgia 4-H also offers residential environmental education programs for schools statewide.

Like many organizations, Fulton County 4-H shifted to a virtual format at the pandemic onset in March 2020. Although the club is not currently meeting in-person, Fulton County 4-H has continued to provide a wide variety of online and activity kit-based programs. Programs have included Harry Potter STEM, a series of magical-themed science experiments via Zoom, and Cheer and Wellness with Fulton County 4-H, a physical activity and dance series led by two high school Fulton County 4-H members. Fulton Fresh Family Chef Night is a monthly program for families to gather and cook together via Zoom with 4-H staff. Adulting 101 is a monthly series for teens to learn essential life skills, including cooking, personal finance, time management, and applying to college.

In addition to Fulton County 4-H youth programing, UGA Extension Fulton County provides expertise and programs in Family and Consumer Sciences and Agricultural and Natural Resources. County Extension Agents lead regular workshops in food preservation, nutrition, gardening, and more. Additionally, Fulton County Extension offices offer services including soil and water testing and pest and plant disease identification for homeowners.
Fulton Fresh

UGA Extension Fulton County’s largest initiative is Fulton Fresh—a multigenerational nutrition education program for Fulton County residents. This year-round program includes cooking demonstrations, nutrition workshops, food preservation classes, and a mobile market, which provides fresh in season produce to areas of the county that are food deserts or have low food security. During the summer of 2020, the Fulton Fresh Mobile Market distributed 45,700 pounds of fresh produce to Fulton County citizens. In lieu of face-to-face nutrition classes and cooking demonstrations, the market collaborated with the University of Georgia’s FoodTalk.org online platform to provide virtual nutrition education during the pandemic.

Despite the challenges of 2020, Fulton County 4-H launched the inaugural Fulton Fresh Kids’ Market—a summer nutrition and science program for youth. The Kids’ Market distributed 9,600 pounds of fresh produce and 2,650 activity kits (containing recipes, science experiments, and activity sheets), and produced 14 educational videos that included follow-along recipes, science activities, and virtual field trips to Georgia farms. Over 1,500 families from 40 zip codes participated in the summer 2020 program.

UGA Extension Fulton County and Fulton County 4-H are the local community’s connection to the resources and expertise of the University of Georgia. UGA County Extension Agents provide expertise for all areas of your home, garden, and family. Whether you are in need of emergency weather preparation tips or looking for advice on how to prepare your garden, or if your family is looking for a wide variety of youth programs, UGA Extension Fulton County and Fulton County 4-H have something for you.

Interested in learning more?
Visit Fulton County 4-H Online.

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*At the time of this publication, Fulton County 4-H programs are meeting virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In-person programs at the Atlanta History Center and other locations will resume when state and county guidance permits.
WELCOME INCOMING ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

Each year the Cherokee Garden Library must bid farewell to our retiring Cherokee Garden Library Advisory Board members. We will continue to call on them for assistance and advice as part of the Cherokee Garden Library family. We are deeply grateful to our Advisory Board members who have generously completed their three-year terms of service. This year, those members are Jeanne Bowden, Lee Dunn, Chris Hastings, Nancy Patterson, and Yvonne Wade. As is our tradition, we honor them and their essential work for the Library by acquiring a significant volume in each person’s name for the collection.

Beginning May 5, 2021, we welcome the Cherokee Garden Library Advisory Board members’ incoming class. We are excited to announce that our new Advisory Board Chair is Melissa Wright. Our deepest thanks to Tavia McCuean for her remarkable service as Advisory Board Chair over the past two years, helping the Cherokee Garden Library navigate the complicated challenges due to the pandemic. Tavia will continue her work on the Advisory Board in her new role as Immediate Past Advisory Board Chair.

ELAINE BOLTON

Elaine Bolton is a Virginian who moved to Atlanta when she married and then to Griffin, her husband’s hometown, where they raised their two children, the fifth generation, on the family property. A former intelligence analyst, a classroom teacher for over twenty years, and an executive director of Macon Heritage, she has extensive volunteer service and board participation. A member of the Garden Club of Griffin, Elaine is also a member of the Garden Club of Georgia Board of Historic Landscapes Initiative Chair. She is a member of the Georgia Daffodil Society, Georgia Perennial Plant Association, Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation, Historic Oakland Foundation, and Southern Garden History Society. Elaine is a graduate of the University of Puget Sound, Tacoma, Washington, and the University of Georgia, where she earned her Master of Education. She received her Specialist degree and completed Ph.D. coursework in curriculum and historic preservation at Georgia State University. Excellent to be back in Atlanta, near her children and five grandchildren ranging in age from 4 to 18, she also enjoys time in Maryland. Her family’s c.1890 home on the water provides beautiful vistas and opportunities to explore historic sites and enjoy the Chesapeake Bay and its bounty.

LARA DRAPER

Laura Rains Draper, a native of Atlanta, grew up in a family of knowledgeable and enthusiastic gardeners in Ansley Park. Laura graduated from The Westminster Schools and holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and Art History from the University of Virginia, where she studied as a Jefferson Scholar. Laura began her professional career in Washington, D.C., as a research and legislative assistant during the early years of foreign investment in Eastern Europe but eventually returned to Atlanta to teach English at The Lovett School and later at Westminster. Over the years, Laura has volunteered in many capacities at Trinity School and The Westminster Schools. She has served on the Jefferson Scholars Foundation’s Regional Sponsorship Committee and Theological Horizons Board at the University of Virginia. Laura is a member of the National Society of the Colonial Dames and served on the board of the Swan Woods Endowment Fund for many years. She completed a term as first vice president of Peachtree Garden Club and is now Peachtree’s Horticulture Chair. Laura’s husband, Clare, is a partner in the law firm of Alston & Bird, and they have three children—Margaret, pursuing a master’s degree in English literature at the University of Oxford; Clare V, a graduate student in Classics also at Oxford, and Rains, a junior at Wake Forest University. Laura’s grandmother, Laura Dorsey, was involved in Swan Woods Trail’s initial fundraising group that provides support to numerous nonprofits in Atlanta. May B. has also held several positions in the Peachtree Garden Club and has led its members on trips to Dordogne in southwest France; New Orleans, Louisiana; Georgetown, Washington; Boston, Massachusetts; and the Okefenokee Swamp in Georgia.

LAURA HOLLIS

May B. Hollis was born in Atlanta, May B. Hollis graduated from The Westminster Schools and Wellesley College. After a stint working in London, England, she returned home and worked for The Coca-Cola Export Corporation. May B. married Howell Hollis III of Columbus, Georgia, in 1976 and was thankfully saved from her financial career by the births of their four children. When the four gained their “on again, off again” independence, she began doing community volunteer work, serving on the boards of the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation, Park Pride, Trust for Public Land, The Park at St. Luke’s, and Ansley Park Civic Association. May B. has worked with the Historic Oakland Foundation for many years, serving as chair of the board during the tornado of 2008. She is an active member of the Peachtree Garden Club, 19th Century History Class, National Society of the Colonial Dames, Jamestown Society, and the Steering Committee of The Event, a fundraising group that provides support to numerous nonprofits in Atlanta. May B. has also held several positions in the Peachtree Garden Club and has led its members on trips to Dordogne in southeast France; New Orleans, Louisiana; Georgetown, Washington; Boston, Massachusetts; and the Okefenokee Swamp in Georgia.
Harriet Kirkpatrick Harriet Kirkpatrick grew up in Cairo, Georgia, with a love of nature and always preferred to be outdoors. She graduated from Emory University with a math degree and then worked as a systems engineer with IBM. She married her husband, Kip, and retired from IBM to raise their three boys and spend her time in the garden. This love of gardening slowly evolved into landscape design, working with her dear friend, Sylvia Attkisson, on the garden at Egleton Children’s Hospital for many years, as well as other projects. She is obsessed with hydrangeas and was blessed to work with Penny McHenry on the American Hydrangea Society Board. Kip and Harriet have taken many trips to England to hike the coast of Dorset and love to tea with their friend, Patricia, a radar operator in World War II who still tends her garden at age 96! Harriet is actively working with THE HEADS at All Saints’ Episcopal Church, Sarabé’s Garden at Respite Care, and serves on Winship Cancer Institute’s Advisory Board. But her favorite pastime is playing with her six grandchildren and teaching them to love gardening.

Blair Robbins Blair Robbins is a native of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and moved to Atlanta after graduating from Vanderbilt University. Her volunteer work reflects her interests in antiques, gardening, historic houses and gardens, interior design, architecture, and American history. Past endeavors have included chairing the Cathedral Antiques Show’s ‘Tour of Homes’ several times, co-chairing the High Museum’s Art in Bloom, and serving on the boards of A Million Matters and the Southeastern Horticultural Society. She is currently serving as Co-Chair of the Atlanta Botanical Garden’s 2022 Flower Show. Blair is an interior designer and was awarded the Philip Trammell Shutze Award by the Southeastern Chapter of the Institute for Classical Architecture & Art in 2013. A Cherokee Garden Club member, Blair looks forward to serving on the Garden Library Advisory Board. She and her husband, James, live in Buckhead and have two sons.

Betsy Robinson Betsy Robinson moved to Atlanta after graduating from Salem College in North Carolina to attend graduate school at Georgia State University, where she received a Master of Education in Learning Disabilities. She worked in both public and private education, including as a board member and teacher at The Schenck School. In 2002 she served as chair of the international Dyslexia Association’s annual conference. After recently retiring from private practice in reading/language therapy, Betsy is active in the Club Estates Garden Club and several committees at All Saints’ Episcopal Church. She works as a volunteer teacher at the Global Village Project, a school for refugee girls. She especially enjoys adding to her gardens in Atlanta and Cashiers and hiking in the North Carolina mountains with her husband, Lee. She and Lee love visiting their three grown children and granddaughter in Richmond, Virginia, and Atlanta. Betsy is excited about the opportunity to continue serving on the Garden Library Advisory Board.

Charlie Sears Charlie Sears is a native Atlantan, practicing landscape architect, and Project Manager with the award-winning landscape architecture firm Land Plus Associates, Ltd. He studied landscape architecture at the University of Georgia, graduating with a bachelor’s degree from the College of Environment and Design. His passion for gardens and design started as a young boy working alongside his dad and younger brother on the weekends at their suburban home. Charlie is the recipient of the Edith Henderson Award for Service to the Georgia Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects. He is active in the Southeast Chapter of the Institute of Classical Architecture & Art. He and his wife live in Roswell, Georgia, with their two daughters, who happen to be excellent helpers in their modest garden.
The American chestnut, *Castanea dentata*, was once one of the most important tree species in forests in the eastern United States. On wet, rich slopes in Appalachian forests, American chestnuts sometimes comprised up to 20% of tree cover and in some areas accounted for nearly a third of all trees. The chestnut was an invaluable source of lumber and edible nuts that fed people, livestock, and wildlife. American chestnuts also grew to great sizes and ages, with some trees reported at 33 feet in circumference at the base and with lifespans of up to 600 years. This tree, which was so much a part of the American landscape for an estimated 40 million years, was made functionally extinct in just forty years.

**Ecological Cornerstone**

The American chestnut played a valuable role in the survival toolkit of Appalachian peoples, both of European and Native American ancestry. Appalachian people collected the chestnuts in vast numbers, selling them to brokers who shipped them to large cities to be roasted and sold. As well as roasting and eating the nuts themselves, Native American tribes who lived in the Appalachians, particularly the Cherokees in Georgia and the Southern Appalachians, ground them and added them to cornmeal to make bread.

Chestnuts also provided food for hogs, who were left free to roam and forage in the forest and fatten themselves on chestnuts. The consumption of chestnuts by wild creatures also benefited mountain peoples who could take advantage of the good hunting and fattened game that came along with the yearly chestnut fall.

Appalachian people used chestnut wood widely for constructing buildings and furniture, as it was strong and rot resistant. It was also a favorite wood for fence posts, because of its rot resistance and the ease with which it could be split. The bark and scrap wood were harvested for use in the tanning industry, as a source of tannic acid. The speed and totality of the loss of the American chestnut removed a significant resource from people who had depended on the trees for generations.
Blight

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a fungus known as chestnut blight (Cryphonectria parasitica) began to spread across the eastern United States. First documented at the Bronx Zoo in 1904, chestnut blight arrived in North America on imported Japanese chestnut trees. Chinese and Japanese chestnuts evolved with chestnut blight, but the fungus was entirely new for American chestnuts, and they had no resistance to its effects. By 1950 – just 46 years after the country’s first documented case – blight had killed an estimated 3.5 billion trees, all but eliminating American chestnuts from the forests of the eastern United States.

Although many of the trees continue to send up new sprouts from surviving root systems, these too are killed by the blight when they each about 20 feet in height. This is what makes them functionally extinct in the wild though the trees are still alive. They cannot reproduce and no longer play a significant role in forest ecosystems.

The American chestnut was devastated before regular scientific investigation of its use by wildlife had taken place, but its disappearance undoubtedly had an effect. Many different animals, including bear, deer, grouse, turkey, and other birds, took advantage of the copious quantities of nuts produced by the trees. It is believed that at least six species of moths depended on the American chestnut to reproduce. Although several species have been rediscovered in small numbers recently, some may now be extinct.

Putting Down Roots at Atlanta History Center

Despite the widespread loss of the American chestnut, some trees survived in isolated populations as individuals whose genetic makeup conferred some form of immunity to the blight. In the late 1980s, the American Chestnut Foundation began crossing American chestnut trees from the remains of the few surviving trees with Chinese chestnuts, hoping that the Chinese chestnuts would convey resistance to the chestnut blight to their American cousins. The resulting hybrids were then bred with pure American chestnuts over multiple generations to produce trees that are almost entirely American genetically but have retained blight resistance from the Chinese trees. These hybrids are known as B3F3 American chestnuts, indicating that the hybrid has been crossed with pure American chestnuts three times. After these crosses are made, the B3F3 hybrids are deliberately infected with the chestnut blight. Only the trees that show the greatest resistance to the fungus are kept for further propagation.

With the help of Dr. Martin Cippolini, Dana Professor of Biology at Berry College, and in partnership with the Georgia Chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation, Goizueta Gardens staff at Atlanta History Center have established an orchard of trial American chestnut hybrids.

Planted in 2015, the History Center’s chestnut orchard is in Swan Woods, Atlanta History Center’s resident Piedmont forest remnant, long protected and maintained with the support of Peachtree Garden Club. The orchard is located at the western side of the meadow, downhill from Wood Cabin.

Sitting American chestnuts in Swan Woods is a nod to the Georgia Piedmont’s ecological past, a region that was once home to native stands of chestnut. Although predominantly a tree of the Appalachian Mountains, the chestnut could be found on some of the higher, richer soil slopes of the Piedmont region.

The forest that comprises Swan Woods began to grow in the decades after the American Civil War, redefining abandoned cotton fields, and is at a stage known as secondary growth. Secondary growth is the second phase of forest growth after re-establishment of the forest. Many of the initial, sun-loving trees that colonized the old cotton terraces around Swan House are reaching old age and dying, making room for the shade-loving trees that have been growing beneath them for the last century and a half.

American chestnuts could have been part of the initial wave of tree growth in Swan Woods, as they were known to be fast-growing trees that could tolerate full sun. Although Atlanta is at the southern edge of the American chestnut’s historic range, it is possible that there would have been stands in the region, especially on some of the steeper slopes and ridges along the Chattahoochee River, where many of the species of the Appalachian Mountains have their most southerly redoubts. If the blight had not decimated American chestnuts from Georgia, they could be growing wild in Swan Woods today.

Georgia was home to some of the largest and most dominant stands of chestnuts. Northeastern Georgia, and the surrounding areas in South Carolina, North Carolina, and Tennessee, were some of the greatest strongholds for this species. The high rainfall and rich mountain soils of this region of the Appalachians were a perfect habitat for the American chestnut, and it was noted historically as having a principal place in the forests of this region.

Although there have been some setbacks for the trees in the History Center’s orchard—a hungry deer population who spied their next meal in Swan Woods—many have reached an appreciable size over the past four years.

There are currently 18 B3F3 chestnuts growing in the orchard, with 13 of those showing promise as vigorous hybrids. With hope, the next few years should see the larger chestnuts flowering and producing nuts. Eventually, once the trees have further established themselves, the chestnut blight will be introduced to the orchard so that the inherited resistance of the hybrid chestnuts planted at the History Center can be evaluated. Once resistance is confirmed, or not, nuts from the resistant hybrids can be germinated and grown into resistant trees.

With a thriving orchard of blight resistant chestnuts, Atlanta History Center can begin distributing nurseries and hybrids to establish more nurseries at other institutions, playing a role in the revival of one of the great American tree species and helping the History Center tell the story of the landscape history of Atlanta, Georgia, and the Southeast.
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1. Georgia, Savannah, Bonaventure Cemetery; Entrance, circa 1940s-1950s.
2. Georgia, Savannah, Bonaventure Cemetery; Entrance, circa 1940s-1950s.
4. Georgia, Savannah, Grindall’s Point, circa 1940s-1950s.
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Postcard Booklets:
1. Alabama, Mobile, Soldiers and Sailors Monument, circa 1940s.
7. Florida, Arbor of Purple Bougainvillae, circa 1940s.
8. Florida, Indian Tree Showing Bud and Fruit, 1944.
18. Florida, Jacksonville, Oriental Gardens, different view, circa 1940s.
20. Florida, Jacksonville, Oriental Gardens, different view, circa 1940s.
22. Florida, Jacksonville, Oriental Gardens, different view, circa 1940s.
23. Florida, Jacksonville, Oriental Gardens, different view, circa 1940s.
26. Florida, Gibbon’s Coast, circa 1930s.
27. Florida, “Boy and Squirrel,” circa 1940s.
28. Florida, Gibbon’s Coast, circa 1930s.
29. Florida, Gibbon’s Coast, circa 1930s.
32. Georgia, Augusta, Julian Smith Park, circa 1940s.
33. Georgia, Augusta, Underwood Gardens, circa 1940s.
34. Georgia, Augusta, Union Station & Park, circa 1940s.
35. Legend of the Spanish Moss, circa 1940s.
36. New Jersey, Trenton, McCook’s Homestead, Washington’s Crossing in New Jersey, circa 1940s.
37. New York, New York, Rockefeller Center, English Gardens, Gardens of the Nations, circa 1940s.
38. New York, New York, Rockefeller Plaza, circa 1940s.
41. Roses, circa 1940s.
42. South Carolina, Charleston, Matefi Gardens, 1948.
43. South Carolina, Charleston, Middleton Place Gardens, Azalea Pool, circa 1940s.
44. South Carolina, Charleston, Middleton Place Gardens, Azalea Pool (different view), circa 1940s.
45. South Carolina, Charleston, Middleton Place Gardens, Great Oak, circa 1940s.
46. South Carolina, Charleston, Middleton Place Gardens, Massholeum, circa 1940s.
47. South Carolina, Charleston, Middleton Place Gardens, Reflection in Great Pool, circa 1940s.
48. South Carolina, Charleston, Middleton Place Gardens, Terrace Facing Riverfront, circa 1940s.
49. South Carolina, Charleston, Middleton Place Gardens, View overlooking Butterfly Lake, circa 1940s.
50. South Carolina, Murrells Inlet, Brookgreen Gardens, circa 1940s.
51. South Carolina, Murrells Inlet, Brookgreen Gardens, Diana Pool, circa 1940s.
52. South Carolina, Murrells Inlet, Brookgreen Gardens, Hancock Oval showing “Boy and Squirrel,” circa 1940s.
53. South Carolina, Murrells Inlet, Brookgreen Gardens, Lion Entrance, 1940.
55. Virginia, Fredericksburg, Monument to General Stonewall Jackson, National Military Park, circa 1940s.
56. Virginia, Warrenton, County, Pope’s Creek Farm (George Washington’s Birthplace), circa 1940s.

Postcard Booklets:
1. Mountain Views, circa 1930s.
3. Tennessee, View of Norris Dam and TVA, Projects, circa 1950s.

D. Donation from The Dekalb County Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc.:
4. Board Meeting minutes, reports, projects, 1960s–1980s.
To be added to existing MSS 667, Habersham Garden Club records:

19. Fellowship reports:

   2. Photographs of members, events, flower shows, and other club activities.
   7. Scrapbook, undated.

   2. Garden Club of Georgia Research Fellowship:
   1. Donation from Bette Hines.
   2. Donation from Penny McHenry Hastings Festival.


   8. Virginia Native Plant Society membership brochure, undated.


   Publication:

   J. Donation from Deborah Hunter:
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   K. Donation from Dr. A. Jefferson Lewis III:

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To be added to existing MSS 1198, Tom Woodham papers:
3. Georgia’s Protected Plants brochure, undated.