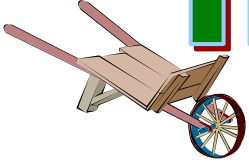


The Wheelbarrow



www.saps.us

Southern Appalachian Plant Society

May 2026

2026 SAPS

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Crafting a Dream in the NC Mountains

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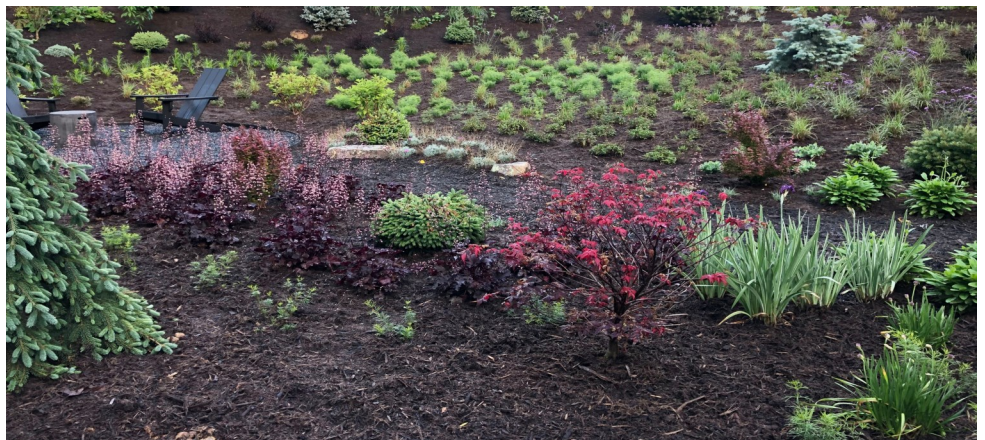
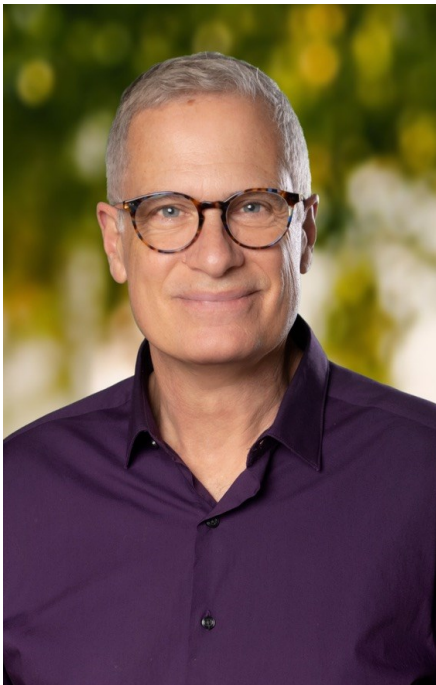
Garden designer, writer and speaker

Thursday, May 21 at 7 pm

Kingsport Higher Education Center
300 W. Market Street, Kingsport, TN 37660

Jay is documenting the crafting of his personal mountain garden in the Appalachian mountains of western North Carolina. Featured in *Fine Gardening* and *Southern Living*, his zone 7a mountain garden continues to reveal new beauty as he experiments with nature's plant palette. Named after the hundreds of rhododendron native to the property when he bought it, this talk shares his seasonal journey in creating this oasis.

Jay Sifford (www.siffordgardendesign.com) is a garden designer, writer, speaker, and frequent podcast guest, who believes great gardens are built on four cornerstones: art, magic, story, and horticulture. He has a love affair with plants, but also approaches garden design from a psychological, philosophical and spiritual standpoint. Named 'North Carolina's Most Outstanding Landscape Designer 2021' by *LuxLife* magazine, he has won numerous awards by Houzz, and a Perennial Plant Association award of merit in 2024 for his personal garden. He has been featured in *Fine Gardening*, *Southern Living*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, and *Country Gardens* as well as in several books. Jay cultivates a 300-square-foot courtyard garden in Davidson, NC, and a mountain escape in the western part of North Carolina where he nurtures a sunny, stylized meadow atop a septic field and a shade garden underneath a canopy of mature rhododendrons.



Upcoming Events

Now through May 9

Late Bloomers' Plant Sale. Monday - Friday 10 am - 4 pm, Saturday 12 - 5 pm. ASD Agriculture Campus at 17444 Singing Wood Lane, Bristol, VA. Vegetable, herb and flower starts. <https://www.facebook.com/asdevelop/photos/the-late-bloomers-plant-sale-is-going-to-start-in-5-days-the-sale-hours-are-mond/1594774785988127/>

May 2

Spring Pollinator Walk. 10-11:30am. Learn what makes a landscape prime for pollinators while you take a stroll through the Garden. Knoxville Botanical Garden and Arboretum. <https://www.knoxgarden.org/events/springpollinator>

May 2

Bonsai in a Day: Learn, Create, Take Home. 9:30 am - 4:30 pm. NC Arboretum, Asheville. Learn basic concepts and skills for novices to begin growing and shaping their own miniature trees. <https://www.ncarboretum.org/event/bonsai-in-a-day-learn-create-take-home/>

May 3

East Tennessee Hosta Society Annual Plant Sale, 11 am - 4 pm. UT Gardens Parking Lot, 2518 Jacob Dr., Knoxville 37966. (678) 662-4383. <https://www.easttnhostasociety.net/>

May 3

Wild by Design: Container Gardening with Natives with Molly Pritchard. 2 – 3:30 pm. Asheville Botanical Garden. \$25. <https://ashevillebotanicalgardens.square.site/classes>

May 7

Herb Saplings meeting. 7 pm. Exchange Place. Topic: Doctrine of Signatures: An introduction to the Doctrine of Signatures, exploring its history and how Appalachian herbalists have understood and used this concept over time. Presented by Charlotte and Timothy Test, Traditional Naturopaths and Master Herbalists who operate Horse-n-Bear Ranch, their herb and goat farm and The Herb Peddler, their farm-based apothecary. Bring an herb snack to share if you have time.

May 9

Shady Oaks Garden Club Annual Plant Sale. 9 am – 1 pm. Fischman Gallery, 133 N Commerce St., JC. <https://www.shadyoaksgardenclub.org/>

May 9

Agroforestry Farm Tour Series 2026: Forest Farming With Alysia Leon of Bird Fork Farm, Dunlap TN. 9 am – 1 pm. Woodland and field-grown herbs for value-added culinary, medicinal, and body care products. Free, registration required. <https://asdevelop.org/event/agroforestry-farm-tour-series-2026-forest-farming-with-alyisia-leon-of-bird-fork-farm/>

May 9

Everlasting Floral Hoops. 11am-12:30pm. Knoxville Botanical Garden. \$50. Play with dried flowers to create two nature-inspired everlasting floral hoops - one to keep and one to share! Children as young as 5 are welcome to register with an adult as a pair. Light snacks. <https://www.knoxgarden.org/workshops-DWE5T/p/hoopsfloral>

May 15 -16

Spring Native Plant Sale. Botanical Gardens at Asheville, 151 W.T. Weaver Blvd., Asheville, NC 28804. Friday noon to 5 pm, Saturday 9 am to 2 pm. Free. <https://ashevillebotanicalgarden.org/plant-sales/>

May 19

Harry Babb: The Forgotten Flora of the Mid-South. 7:30 pm. Free Webinar sponsored by TN Native Plant Society. <https://tnps.org/event/tnps-online-seminar-harry-babb-the-forgotten-flora-of-the-mid-south/>

May 21

SAPS Meeting. 7 pm. Jay Sifford, Landscape designer and operator of Sifford Garden Design of Charlotte, NC. Rhodwood; Crafting a Dream in the North Carolina Mountains. Kingsport Higher Education Center.

May 22- 24

The Asheville-Blue Ridge Rose Society Exhibition. 2 - 4 pm. Most spectacular exhibition of roses in Western North Carolina! Many varieties of fragrant WNC-grown roses will be on display including rare and beautiful blooms from some of the region's most admired gardens. <https://www.ncarboretum.org/event/the-asheville-blue-ridge-rose-society-exhibition/2026-05-22/>

May 23

Shady Oaks Garden Tour. 10 am – 3 pm. Tickets can be purchased at Eventbrite or at 112 Belmead Drive, Johnson City. \$15. <https://www.shadyoaksgardenclub.org/garden-tour/>

May 29 – 30

Spring Plant Sale and Market. 10 am – 3 pm. NC Arboretum Asheville, NC. Unique plants grown in The North Carolina Arboretum's Production Greenhouse and includes over 30 local growers and businesses. Shop an outstanding collection of annuals, perennials and crafts. Live music, children's activities. Rain or shine. The Arboretum's standard \$20 parking fee applies. <https://www.ncarboretum.org/event/spring-plant-sale-and-market-2/2026-05-29/>

June 4

Herb Saplings meeting. 7 pm at Exchange Place. Herbal Salts with Susan Scheer

Add Chinese Pistache to Your Landscape

Contributed by Hugh Conlon

Chinese pistache (*Pistachia chinensis*) is a small to medium landscape tree – 25 to 40 ft - in the botanical family Anacardiaceae. Branching habit is slightly upright creating a narrow tree profile that is ideal for a small patio or a curb-side street tree. The bark of a young tree is silvery gray with a more rugged blocky pattern as an adult. (USDA hardiness zones 6-9).

This lovely small tree is indigenous to China, Taiwan and the Philippines. It grows 1-2 feet a year and is related to the edible pistache nut tree (*Pistachia vera*) but produces nutlets rather than edible pistachios. A variety of birds and yard wildlife consume the nutlets which are not very tasty to humans.

Foliage consists of dark green, alternately arranged pinnate compound leaves to 10 inches long. Each leaf typically has 10-12 lanceolate leaflets to 4 inches long. Tree displays a fine leaf texture with small leaflets that are easy to rake in the fall to be used as a mulch in flower and veggie beds. Foliage is aromatic when bruised. In some years autumnal leaf color can be an eye-catching crimson red, bright orange, and occasionally yellow.

Chinese pistache is dioecious, e.g. any single tree is either male or female. Pistache blooms in April but is rarely noticed among showier spring blooming shrubs and trees. Female flower clusters are nearly twice as wide as males. The non-edible ¼ inch diameter drupe fruits turn red in summer before ripening to bluish-purple in late fall and are a food source for birds. Gray-brown bark on older trees peels to reveal salmon colored inner bark.

This tree grows in moist, compost-rich, well-drained soils in full sun and can also handle full-day part shade. It is a low-maintenance tree tolerant of drought, heat, and heavy clay soils. In most landscape situations Chinese pistache is free from serious pests and disease but verticillium wilt may become a serious disease in poorly drained soils. Annual pruning in early years is essential to develop a desired symmetrical tree with good form.

Chinese pistache is a small specimen tree suitable for patios and gardens. If you are concerned about berries dropping on walkways, select a fruitless male clone, *P. chinensis* 'Keith Davey,' a 35-foot-tall tree with a crown diameter of 30 feet. Female variety 'Sarah's Radiance' produces lovely red fruits and nutlets in the fall. 'Pearl Street' is a very fast-growing seedless variety with an upright form.



Across the President's Desk

By Earl Hockin

After watching the SAPS Zoom presentations in January and February, I have become increasingly convinced that I should really pay attention to including native flowering plants in my yard and garden and, when possible, encourage others to do the same.

Native flowering plants play a vital role in sustaining ecosystems, supporting biodiversity and preserving regional identity. These plants are species that have naturally evolved in a specific area over thousands of years adapting to the local climate, soil and wildlife. Unlike non-native or invasive species, native flowering plants have formed balanced relationships with native pollinators, animals and micro-organisms making them essential for ecological health.

One of the most important contributions of native flowering plants is their relationship with pollinators such as bees, butterflies and birds. Many pollinators rely on specific native plants for nectar and pollen. For example, the monarch butterfly depends heavily on milkweed species for reproduction. Without native flowering plants, native pollinators would struggle to survive, leading to a ripple effect across ecosystems and food chains. By supporting pollinators, native plants contribute to agricultural productivity as many crops rely on pollination.

Native flowering plants are well-suited to their environments making them easier to maintain. Because they are adapted to local conditions, they typically require less water, fertilizer and pesticides when compared to non-native species. This not only re-

duces gardening costs but also minimizes the environmental harms of water waste and chemical runoff. In regions facing climate stress or drought, native plants offer a sustainable landscaping solution that aligns with natural conditions.

Another key benefit is their role in preserving biodiversity. Native flowering plants provide habitat and food for a wide variety of organisms including insects, birds and small mammals. When non-native plants dominate an area, they can outcompete native species and disrupt these relationships. Over time, this leads to a decline in biodiversity and ecosystem resilience. By planting and protecting native flowering species, communities can help maintain the natural balance and ensure that local wildlife continues to thrive.

Native flowering plants that bloom from spring through late summer in NE Tennessee include long-blooming perennials like mouse-ear tickseed (May – Oct), bee balm (summer), and purple-coneflower (May – September). For a continuous season of pollinator support, combine spring-blooming eastern red columbine with summer-to-fall staples such as Joe Pye weed, asters and butterfly weed.

In Northeast Tennessee, planting native shrubs in spring is ideal for establishing root systems before summer heat. Top native choices include witch hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*), red chokeberry (*Aronia arbutifolia*), arrowwood viburnum (*Viburnum dentatum*), and Carolina allspice (*Calycanthus floridus*). These species thrive in TN clay, support local ecology, and are generally low-maintenance.

Garden Tour and Tea

Garden lovers from across the region will gather in Jonesborough for the 30th Annual Garden Tour & Tea on Saturday, June 6. This self-guided walking tour through Tennessee's Oldest Town offers a rare glimpse into some of the area's most stunning gardens.

The Garden Tour runs from 10 am to 3 pm with a tea party from noon to 2 pm. Registration is required at the Jonesborough Visitors Center from 9 am to 1 pm. Tickets go on sale Saturday, April 1, for \$20 and can be purchased online at jonesborough.com/tickets or by calling 423.753.1010. Tickets are limited, so early reservations are encouraged.

The Marketplace Vendors will be set up at the International Storytelling Center Plaza and the Jonesborough Visitors Center from 9 am to 4 pm, featuring a variety of garden-inspired items, including yard art, plants, tools, handcrafted goods and garden-style jewelry.

This cherished event is hosted by The Schubert Club and Tuesday Garden Club, with support from the Northeast Tennessee Master Gardeners and the Southern Appalachian Plant Society. Proceeds benefit local charities, community projects and high school scholarships that are horticulture-based.

Designed as a walking tour, the event also offers bus transportation from 10 am to 3 pm for added convenience.