

Arboretum Set up at Cherokee For Study of Mountain Plant Life

By JOHN PARRIS

Cherokee — Outdoor nature education is receiving a new boost here at Cherokee through the newly-created Cherokee arboretum.

For the first time, visitors to the Great Smoky mountains can study in one concentrated area the fabulous and unequalled variety of plant life native to Western North Carolina.

Sponsored by the non-profit Cherokee Historical Association, the arboretum is now open to the public. No charge of admission is being made.

Although in its infancy, the arboretum has more than 15,000 plants representing 149 native species which flourish along the first three nature trails to be opened on a 30-acre plot.

Eventually, the arboretum will contain what is expected to be the greatest collection of native plant life in America. This goal is expected to be reached within the next five years.

Unlike other botanical gardens, the Cherokee arboretum has been designed to be as naturalistic as possible, with many original features dictated by the location and climate.

In effect, the institution will be a key to the Great Smoky Mountains so far as plant life is concerned.

In Natural Setting

For here, on a forested plot adjoining Oconaluftee Indian Village every tree, flower, plant and shrub native to the Great Smokies will be concentrated in a natural setting so visitors may enjoy them with ease and at first-hand without hours and miles of tortuous hiking.

Botanists who have studied the native wonders of the Great Smokies say they have more than 100 varieties of trees, 150 species of shrubs and more than 150 species of flowers.

All of these, and more — as they are discovered — will be included in the Cherokee arboretum which is a project conceived and executed by the non-profit Cherokee Historical Association.

"We plan to develop the arboretum into the outstanding garden of its type in America," explained Harry E. Buchanan of Hendersonville, association chairman, who originated the idea for the development.

To supervise the long-range development of the arboretum, the Cherokee Historical Association has retained Doan Ogden of Asheville, a landscape architect.

Working with Ogden is Frank M. Crayton of Asheville, an 83-year-old mountain man who probably knows more about plants native to Western North Carolina than any other living person.

Flowers have been a consuming interest of Ogden's since he was 9 years old and his own arboretum near Kenilworth Lake in Asheville is one of the show places of Western North Carolina.

In addition to his work here, Ogden is retained by the Michigan Flower Show in an advisory capacity for the Chrysler Exhibit whose theme next spring will be "In and Around the Smokies." He will truck more than 5,000 native mountain plants to Detroit for the show.

Crayton, a native mountain man, worked with the Vanderbilt nursery in Biltmore for more than 35 years and has collected botanical specimens from the Great Lakes to Florida.

Knows Latin Names

Although he did not go to school, Crayton can spell off the botanical names of plants as if Latin were his mother language. And ironically, he is completely lost if you ask him the common names of native plants.

Crayton says he has collected hundreds of thousands of plants since he became interested in botany some 60-years ago. It was he who collected the 15,000 plants that have been set out in the Cherokee arboretum and he will go right on collecting for the project here "as long as I can get around in the mountains."

His real hobby is searching for rare plants, and a few years ago he re-discovered the Elliottia shrub which had been lost for 75 years.

Crayton claims that he is the only man alive who knows the habitat of the kalmal cuneata, a relative of the mountain laurel.

"I'm not telling where you can find it," he said, "a twinkle in his blue eyes, 'because if I did, then folks would go and tear it up and then soon it would be gone. But you'll see it here in the Cherokee arboretum."

He explained that it would be some time before the Cherokee arboretum would be a flourishing, blooming garden.

To Bloom Next Year

"The flowers we have planted now won't be blooming until next year," Crayton said, "and the trees and shrubs won't go in until the sap goes down. But just as soon as we get some frost we will start putting them in."

Ogden explained that of the more than 150 species of plants now in the arboretum they include seven kinds of trilliums, bloodroot, liverwort, turk's cap lilies, mandrakes, six kinds of violets, orchids, bonser, ironweed, three kinds of goldenrod, two kinds of beard tongue, the rare silver rod, golden aster, the wild geranium wood betony, snow trillium and rare green dragon Jack-in-the-pulpit.

Others now marked along the arboretum's three nature trails include the four-leaved loosenife, wild columbines, showy orchids, dwarf bleeding-hearts, coral root, flowering milk-weeds, squirrel corn, Dutchman's britches, rattlesnake plantain, wild onions, merrybells, showy skullcaps, wood anemones, meadow rue, wild ginger, pink lady slipper, Solomon's seal—both true and false—rattletop, passion flower and blue cohosh.

The plant life along the trails is marked so the visitor can easily

identify the species. The markers carry both the scientific and the common name, and where possible the Indian name.

Ogden explained that the plants have been located according to their natural habitat such as shade and soil and have not been grouped according to families.

"They have been located according to ecology," Ogden said. "That is, to their relation to their environment and to each other."

Both Ogden and Crayton agree that there could scarcely be a better location for such a project than

the plot selected, since the trails rise in altitude almost a thousand feet from its lowest to its highest point.

Contains 30 Acres

A stream winds its way through the 30-acre plot, and rustic bridges cross it at several points.

The objective will be to concentrate living plant life where visitors may examine it carefully and at length. Here, in a few hours, one may gain a greater knowledge and understanding of native plant life than in many weeks of journeying.

Three trails have been designated. One is the Sachem and Squaw trail, another the Tsali Trail and the third, the Sequoyah Trail.

The plant life bordering along these trails will constitute a botanical garden in themselves. There

will be "read-as-you-go" labels and at certain points there will be groupings of every variety of a certain plant, flower or shrub. For example, the various varieties of rhododendron will be concentrated in one spot to give a key to the shrubs later seen growing in their natural habitat elsewhere along the trails with other plants and flowers and shrubs.

It is the feeling of officials of Cherokee Historical Association that the Cherokee arboretum—located in the center of one of nature's last strongholds — will do much to inform citizens of their plant life.

When completed, the arboretum will be one of the leading educational, inspirational and recreational features for residents and visit-

Proper Gear is Must In Enjoying Fall Camping

By DIÓN HENDERSON

The fellow who starts out zestfully to enjoy a u t u m n without proper gear is like the man who sits down at a banquet without any silverware.

ors to Western North Carolina and the Great Smokies.

"It can easily become one of the show places of America," Ogden predicted. "I firmly believe it will become a mecca for nature lovers and for folks who never before have shown much interest in plant life."

And it's harder to see the full platter go by untouched than to miss it altogether.

Proper gear for autumn outdoors involves all the items calculated to prevent blistering, boiling, scratching, freezing and other mistreating of the human body.

The family man particularly should take advance pains to prevent later ones when his flock finds out the weather has changed. After flitting about beach and meadow in summer attire for months, the family ought to be prepared for the

morning when the water freezes in the bucket outside the tent. Autumn calls for clothing that is warm and dry without being heavy. Getting wet in a swim suit and getting soaked in woollens are two very different experiences.

As a matter of fact, this love-liest time of year to be abroad on field, stream and camping ground puts a price on your luggage. No more of summer's living out of the glove compartment. You need the summer wear, and winter wear too — arranged so you can switch clothes twice a day as the sun waxes and wanes. Even the mid South can seem colder than the Arctic by the dawn's chilly light and be hotter than the third ring in Saturn by noon.

Since the fall outings — hunt-See CAMPING, Page 6, Section 2

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