



Hello!

Thanks for picking up an Athens Science Observer zine! In this issue, we highlight some familiar flower faces in the Athens community. Athens is known for its lush gardens, roadsides, and natural wildlife areas - so we hope this quick read can get you familiar with some local plants. Knowing the names of plants around you - be it ornamental, invasive, or native - can give you a new appreciation for your community and the nature around it.

"I looked over at my neighbor, the song sparrow, and thought about how just a few years ago, I wouldn't have known its name, might not have even known it was a sparrow, might not have even seen it at all. How lonely that world seemed in comparison to this one! But the sparrow and I were no longer strangers. It was no stretch of the imagination, nor even of science, to think that we were related. We were both from the same place (Earth), made of the same stuff. And most important, we were both alive."

Jenny Odell, How to Do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy

Athens Science Observer Zine Team

Editors

Max Barnhart Michelle Henson

Simone Lim-Hing Kelly McCrum

Colton Meinecke

Photo & Art Contributors

Brandon Corder Derek Denney

Matt Farnitano Carmen Kraus

Vinnie Warger

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Oakleaf hydrangea

Hydrangea quercifolia

This hydrangea is native to the Southeastern US, and is often planted as a garden shrub. Hydrangeas have a combination of showy but sterile flowers, surrounding smaller fertile flowers.

Spotted! Near the UGA Biological Sciences building

White avens

Geum canadense

Native to the US, this wildflower is pollinated by many different species of flies, beetles, and butterflies. The flowers, which bloom in spring, look similar to those of strawberries and blackberries. However, the white avens fruit is spiky and dry.



Blackberry

Rubus sp.

There are many species of wild blackberry that grow in North America. Flowers have five petals that bloom in late spring and produce fruit in early summer. They can be found growing alongside sidewalks and trails in Athens, but be careful - the stems are thorny and sometimes grow near poison ivy!



Morning glory

Ipomoea sp.

These climbing plants can be found in gardens as ornamentals or growing wild on the roadside. The funnel-shaped flowers can be white, purple, pink, or blue. Morning glories are diverse in their utility for humans, used as a food, a source for latex, and sometimes a hallucinogen.



Spotted! Wo1 parking lot



Daucus carota

The carrots we eat today come from this wild relative - in fact, the roots of this plant have the same distinctive smell of carrots. This plant is very hardy can be found in many disturbed areas such as roadsides and abandoned fields. The cluster of flowers can sometimes have a small dot of purple or red in the center. It's common name come from the spot's resemblance to a drop of blood and lore that Queen Anne of England pricked her finger on a sewing needleand a drop of blood fell on the lace she was sewing.

Spotted! Outside Heirloom Restaurant







Ground clover

Trifolium repens

Native to Europe, this plant is abundant in grassy areas such as lawns and meadows. They have groups of three oval-shaped leaves (four-leaved clovers have been found but are rare!).

Spotted! Memorial Park



Did you know?

Many white-petalled plants are pollinated by moths and bats. The white color reflects light well at night, showing the animals where to go for their flower food.



Yucca

Yucca filamentosa

This desert plant is now a favorite as an ornamental. Their leaves are rigid and spiky, while their flowers are soft and grow on stalks that can reach up to 12 feet high! Yucca and its mutualist pollinator, the yucca moth, depend on each other to carry out their lifecycles.





Rosa multiflora

Multiflora rose can be found in fields, forests, and roadsides throughout Athens. It is pollinated by bees and hoverflies and has dense, white flower clusters. It is a non-native plant that was originally used in the US as a living fence for livestock control but is now considered a highly invasive noxious weed. One plant can produce up to 17,500 seeds!

Spotted! Ben Burton Park

English plantainPlantago lanceolata

Plantain is a non-native plant from Eurasia (Europe and Asia) and is typically pollinated by wind, flies, and beetles. It can be found in lawns, pastures, and gardens, where the seeds are enjoyed by songbirds and the leaves are often eaten by rabbits. In traditional herbal medicine, the leaves are commonly used in tea to treat bronchitis and throat colds.

Amur honeysuckle

I onicera maackii

Amur honeysuckle is a nonnative shrub that has escaped cultivation and naturalized throughout much of the eastern US. In the spring, the white, fragrant flowers bloom and typically turn yellow as they age. Although the rubyred fruits are edible to most animals, they are considered junk food for birds.





Did you know?

Flowers get their vibrant colors from pigments such as anthocyanins and carotenoids. In white flowers, there is either a reduction or absence of floral pigments all together!







Horsenettle

Solanum carolinense

This native perennial plant is not a true nettle, but a member of the tomato family (Solanaceae). Even though it produces tomatolike fruit, all parts of the plant are poisonous! It produces toxic alkaloids, which are the plant's natural defense system against herbivory.

Spotted! Oconee Forest Park



Henbit

Lamium amplexicaule

This small plant is common in all manner of lawns, road sides, and meadows. It can grow to about 16 cm tall and has purple, tubular flowers and a squareshaped stem. Henbit can be eaten raw or cooked, having a peppery taste.







Spotted! Turtle pond near UGA Odum School of Ecology



Common selfheal

Prunella vulgaris

This weedy plant is a fan favorite for many pollinators. The small, clubshaped flowers bloom as a cluster on the tip of the plant in the summer. The common name comes from the indegnous use as a medicinal herb for healing wounds and reducing fevers.

Blue eyed-grass Sisyrinchium rosulatum

Annual blue-eyed grass is a common garden plant that is native to South America and belongs to the Iris family. It can be found in prairies, open fields, and forests.





Butterfly pea

Centrosema virginianum

This butterfly pea is a climbing vine that is native to the Americas. Its showy flowers attract pollinators and make great additions to both gardens and habitat restoration projects. The flower blooms in mid- to late Summer and is pollinated by ants.

What's in a name?

The two plants here are two completely different species, but look strikingly similar and share a common name. This is a great example of why scientific names are so important. Scientific names are arranged by *Genus species* and are used by to identify and distinguish specific organisms. The use of latin binomial nomenclature was founded by Carl Linneaus in the 18th century. In fact, Linneaus was the one who named both of these butterfly peas - *Clitoria mariana* has been thought to be named after a woman he was courting at the time.

Butterfly pea

Clitoria mariana

This butterfly pea is a trailing vine and native to North America. It is often found growing in more rocky and wooded areas. The plant attracts birds but it is self-pollinated and blooms early to mid-Summer.



Common spiderwort

Tradescantia sp.

This genus is well known for being a houseplant, but there are many native species that grow in the wild. The leaves are grass-like and the flowers bloom in throughout the spring to summer. Indigenous people have used this plant for a variety of foods and medicines, although it causes skin irritation for some people.



Chinese wisteria

Wisteria sinensis

Wisteria is prolific in the Athens spring. It is a climbing vine native to Asia and is now considered an invasive. The flowers have a sweet smell and grow in clusters called racemes. The plant produces a compound called wisterin, which is toxic if ingested.

Violet Viola sp.



Violets can come in many different colors, including purple, grey, yellow, and white. It is a small native plant with rounded flowers that often have dark lines radiating from the center. They can be found on lawns, along stream edges, roads, meadows, and forests serving as a food source for many differnt insects and animals



Spotted! Health Science campus



Golden ragwort

Packera aurea
Native to eastern North
America, this aster can be
found near streams, bogs,
and moist soils. The flowers
typically bloom from April to
August, while the leaves can
survive Georgia winters.

Spotted! White trail at the State Botanical Garden







Did you know?

Many plants have evolved a 'landing pad', which allows pollinators to stand on the flower while collecting and spreading pollen. Other plants like the **plains coreopsis** have different colored centers, which directs pollinators to the center of the flower!





Dandelion

Taraxacum officinale

Dandelions are well-known for the "puffballs", which can contain thousands of seeds per plant. Though considered an undesireable weed in some gardens, it is an important food source for pollinators. When blooming, the flower opens after sunrise and closes after sunset!



Hairy buttercup

Ranunculus sardous
This non-native weed has broad leaves and is found on roadsides, ditches, and pastures throughout the southeast US. The genus is latin for 'little frog', thought to have been named because most Ranunculus species like to grow near water, like frogs.





Spotted! Dudley Park



Plains coreopsis

Coreopsis tinctoria
This cousin to the sunflower
can be found on roadsides and
fields. The flowers typically
bloom in late Summer. Native
Americans used the flower for a
dye and tea.

Black-eyed susan

Rudbeckia hirta

Native to North America, these asters can be found blooming from June to October. They make great additions to gardens, since they attract local pollinators and birds and grow tall and bushy.

Spotted! Outside of Indepdendent Bakery



Is that poison ivy?!

In the southeastern US, there are many climbing plants that can be found in disturbed and natural sites. The most common are English ivy, Virginia creeper, and poison ivy. To the untrained eye, these can look very similar, but knowing the difference can save you from a potential rash or allergic reaction!



Poison ivy is native to the Americas and can be found in a variety of habitats, especially forested, disturbed areas, and roadsides. They have three leaflets and often grow on trees as a vine or as a small shrub. The vines of the plant can grow thick and hairy and dead vines can often be seen on tree trunks. Poison ivy contains a compound called urushiol, which serves as deterrent for predators (including us!). Urushiol is also produced in plants related to the poison ivy, such as mango and poison oak. Interestingly, not all people have a reaction to the compound.

Virginia creeper has adhesive pads that helps it stick to surfaces while climbing

Virginia creeper is often mistaken for poison ivy – they both grow in the same types of places and are creeping vines, but Virginia creeper is harmless. The most obvious difference between the two is the number of leaflets. Virginia creeper has five leaflets (it is sometimes referred to as 'five-fingered ivy', while poison ivy only has three. Virginia creeper is native to the Americas but grows so aggressively that it can displace other plants and wildlife. Part of its success is due to their effective climbing roots, which have adhesive pads to grip the surface they grow on.

Leaves of three, let it be! Leaves of five, let it thrive!

English ivy (Hedera helix) is particularly prolific in Athens, since it used largely as an ornamental groundcover. English ivy, however, is an invasive species from Europe and Asia as an escaped cultivar. When growing wild, it can often be found in the same places as Virginia creeper and poison ivy. However, English ivy is a little more distinct looking in that the five leaflets are fused and are thicker.

If you're not positive on an ID though, it's better not to risk a reaction and let the leaves be!

Pink woodsorrel

Oxalis debilis

Woodsorrel is an herbaceous perennial plant native to South America, but escaped as a cultivar and has spread to all continents across the world (except Antarctica). The genus is named after the compound oxalic acid, a

compound that is now used as a natural household cleaning agent.



Chinese fringeflower

Loropetalum chinense Found all over Athens as an ornamental plant, the chinese fringeflower is native to China. The leaves have a slightly rough feel and come in a variety of colors, from green to red, and stay on all year. Depending on how to it is pruned, the plant can be a shrub or a full tree. Spotted! Near UGA Stegeman Coliseum



Lespedeza sp.

Bush clovers belong to the bean family (Fabaceae) and are widely cultivated as ornamentals and forage crops. These plants are very hardy and can be found in a variety of habitats, including fields, gardens, and disturbed areas.



Daisy fleabane

Erigeron sp.
This cousin to the sunflower is a native wildflower that can have pink, purple, or white petals. It can easily be found on lawns, roadsides, and meadows. Like many other daisy-shaped flowers, it attracts a large variety of

insects and is needed by several species of butterflies and moths for the completion of their lifecycle. The common name comes from Old English and refers to the plants odor, which can supposedly repel fleas.

Spotted! Firefly trail

Mimosa tree

Albizia julibrissin

The mimosa tree is native to Asia, but is used all over the world as an ornamental. In fact, it is considered an invasive species in the US. This member of the bean family produces its unique, fragrant and fluffy flowers in the summertime. The genus name, Albizia, is named after the Italian naturalist Filippo degli Albizzia who brought the tree to Tuscany in the 18th century. The species name, julibrissin, originates from its persian common name - "gul-i brisham."



Azalea

Azalea sp.

Azaleas can be found as ornamentals all over Athens. Typically blooming in early Spring, the flowers last weeks and come in a variety of different colors. Despite their beauty and commonality throughout the world, all parts of the Azalea are highly toxic.





Spotted! Bottleworks parking lot

Did you know?

The color pink is named after the name of the genus of flowering plants Dianthus, which are commonly known as pinks. Species of this genus were given their namesake because their petals appeared to have been perforated or cut by pinking shears.



Phlox

Phlox sp.





Where can Hearn more?

Still curious about plants? If so, great! If you'd like to learn more about plants around Athens or plant identification, there are several great resources available that can help you get started or further your botanical knowledge. Resources such as websites, apps, and local botanical societies make learning about plants easier and more accessible than ever!

Apps

iNaturalist: One of the most popular citizen science apps that helps users identify plants and animals by sharing biodiversity observations through a social network. By simply posting your photos on this app, you can help contribute to science and conservation.

Seek: This app helps users identify wildlife, plants, and fungi in real time through photo recognition. Great for kids and plant enthusiasts alike.

Websites

Biota of North America Program-bonap.org

Georgia Botanical Society- gabotsoc.org

Georgia Native Plant Society- gnps.org

Lady Bird Johnson Native Plant Database- wildflower.org/

plants

Southeastern U.S. Plant Identification-southeasternflora.com

Native and Naturalized Plants of the Carolinas and Georgia-

namethatplant.net

USDA Plants Database- plants.usda.gov



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