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FLNPS (founded in 1997) is dedicated to the promotion of our native flora. We sponsor talks, walks, and other activities related to conservation of native plants and their habitats. *Solidago* is published as a colorful online version, and a B&W paper version that is mailed. The online format is posted 3 months after publication. Please see www.flnps.org for details of membership, past *Solidago* issues, and updates about our programs.



Solidago

Newsletter of the Finger Lakes Native Plant Society

Volume 21, Nos. 3-4



Sept.-Dec. 2020

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

Wintergreens and Reds
(Robert Dirig) • 1

COLUMNS, NOTES, & MISCELLANY

Please Contribute to Solidago • 2
*The Finger Lakes Native Plant
Society Steering Committee* • 2
Thank You! • 2

Further Notes on Bogs • 3
Jam Pond—Summer 2018
(Mary Gilliland) • 3

Name That Plant Contest
(David Werier) • 4

Letter (Ken Hull) • 4
Dame's Rocket Survey • 5
FLNPS Nonprofit Status • 5

The Ruined Walled Castle Garden
(Mary Gilliland) • 5

PHOTO ESSAY

*Wintergreens and Reds: Festive
Cheer for Cold, Dark Days*
(Robert Dirig) • 6-16

Wintergreens and Reds

by Robert Dirig



S AUTUMN'S BRIGHT LEAVES DROP, and herbaceous plants are withered by frost, the landscape takes on tones of brown and grey. Landforms that have been masked by foliage are suddenly exposed, revealing ridgelines, hollows, and all the subtle details of relief. And cloudy skies and cold winds may bring the first light snowfalls, icicles, and other hints of winter.

An outdoor revel with wild greenery and bright berries can dispel the gloom of these short December days! Those who look can find a surprising variety of verdure at this season, particularly in wetlands. Complementing these are dazzling red berries and crimson twigs that bring festive cheer to remote swamps and marshes.

A few conifers remain green all year — rugged Hemlocks*, soft resinous White Pines, and occasional American Yews (still hiding in nooks where our resident ungulates cannot reach them). Broad-leaved evergreen shrubs like Great Laurel and Mountain Laurel spread in wonderful tangles, amid the bright twigs of Red Maple and Mountain Maple.

Mosses carpet the ground — including jade Pincushion Moss, the textured weave of Sphagnum, and several fern mosses, among them the elegant Knight's Plume. Fancy Ferns, Christmas Ferns, and Marginal Wood Ferns lend their special grace, while several club mosses add their own pretty forms and designs to the outdoor tapestry. Even the humble tussocks of Common Rush still glow greenly in their centers; while the tiny Sulphur Stubble Lichen spreads its chartreuse dust beneath an upturned tree. The lovely green leaves of Aromatic Wintergreen and Patridgeberry have their own red fruits, and Goldthread's glossy foliage spreads in masses. The brightest scarlet is seen on Winterberry, with a close second in American Bittersweet. And if we stray from the swamp, and are in a forgiving mood, even the Japanese Barberry earns its keep at this season, with cascades of crimson glory! These colorful plants are here, awaiting our greetings at this special season. Enjoy!



[*Please see pages 6-7 for scientific names of many plants mentioned above.]

Please Contribute to *Solidago*

WE WELCOME CONTRIBUTIONS THAT FEATURE WILD PLANTS OF THE FINGER LAKES REGION OF NEW YORK AND NEARBY. We include cryptogams (bryophytes, lichens, fungi, and algae) as "flora," and recognize that green plants provide habitats and substrates for these and many animals, especially insects. We are interested in zoological associations as long as plants are an integral part of the story.

We can use a wide spectrum of material in a variety of writing styles. Our regular columns include **LOCAL FLORA** (plant lists or details of species from specific sites), **OUTINGS** (reports of FLNPS-sponsored excursions), and **PLANT PROFILES** (on specific local plants). We also occasionally publish **APPRECIATIONS** (memorials to local botanists and naturalists), **REVIEWS** (of books, talks, meetings, workshops, and nurseries), **LETTERS** (commentaries and letters to the editor), **ESSAYS** (on botanical themes), **VERSE** (haiku, limericks, sonnets, and poems of less formal structure), **ART** (botanical illustrations, plant designs, pencil sketches, decorations), and **PHOTOGRAPHS** (stand-alone images, photo essays, and full-page composite plates, or originals that can be scanned and returned). We also can always use **FILLERS** (very short notes, small images, cartoons) for the last few inches of a column.

*Please send *Solidago* contributions & correspondence to Robert Dirig, Editor, at editorofsolidago@gmail.com

Deadline for the March 2021 issue is February 15th!

The Steering Committee as listed was elected by FLNPS members via electronic or paper ballots received by 15 Sept. 2020.

THE FINGER LAKES NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY STEERING COMMITTEE

Audrey Bowe: Secretary, Membership

Krissy Boys: Native Plant Gardener

Whitney Carleton: Mailings

Patricia A. Curran: At Large

Robert Dirig: Newsletter Editor*

Diane Florini: Steering Committee Minutes, At Large

Adrianna Hirtler: Publicity

Carolyn Klass: At Large

Rick Lightbody: At Large

Ashley Miller: At Large

Mary Squyres: Plant Sale, Supper Club

Anna M. Stalter: Treasurer, Outings & Education Chair

Robert Wesley: President

Freyda Black: Facebook Page [not on Committee]



ADDITIONAL NEWSLETTER STAFF

Rosemarie Parker: Webmaster & Assistant Newsletter Editor

David Werier: Newsletter Editor Emeritus



Thank You!

SPECIAL THANKS to Gin Mistry, Meena Haribal, & Carri Marschner for their years of dedicated service on the FLNPS's Steering Committee!

MANY THANKS to all who contributed to *Solidago*, Volume 21, Nos. 3-4.

We thank **WRITERS** Audrey Bowe, Betsy Darlington, Mary Gilliland, Ken Hull, Susanne Lorbeer, Anna Stalter, David Werier, & Robert Dirig.

ILLUSTRATIONS were loaned by Mary Gilliland [p. 5], Ken Hull [p. 4], Anna Stalter [pp. 3 & 5], David Werier [p. 4], & Robert Dirig [pp. 6 & 8-16].

LAYOUT and DESIGN by the Editor. **PROOFREADING** by Rosemarie Parker. **PRINTING** of paper copies by Gnomon Copy, Ithaca, N.Y. **ONLINE POSTING** by Audrey Bowe & Rosemarie Parker. And **MAILING** by Whitney Carlton.

ABUNDANT THANKS to Rosemarie Parker & Sol Gruner, who kindly loaned a laptop when my computer died during the preparation of this issue!

BEST WISHES to FLNPS members (and all others in our reading audience) for joyous outdoor revels with wild flora during the Holiday Season and Winter!

— Robert Dirig

FURTHER NOTES ON BOGS

Some very nice feedback came in response to my long article on the Hungry Hill Bog in the previous issue.

♦ **Betsy Darlington** wrote: "Beautiful *Solidago*, Bob! I wonder if [the] photo of RBF [Richard B. Fischer, right] at McLean Bog was taken on our class field trip there in Sept. 1971? We took his course in 1971-72, as you know." —**Betsy** (10 July 2020). [I sent her this reply: "I've wondered the same thing about the photo of RBF. It was recently given to me, with no source information. Thinking about it, I expect that **Gary Richards**, who was a student in the course, might have taken the photo. He used to take pictures of people during these trips. I was glad RBF's field outline corroborated the Red Maple sapling with curved taproot. I hadn't remembered that, but found it in my notes! (We were there on Sept. 14, 1971.) You are one of the few people in Ithaca who can resonate with that Field Natural History class. It was amazing—so well styled, and precise, and information-rich. Dr. Fischer distilled whole subjects into a lecture and outdoor lab. And the artistry of his images and presentations was wonderful." —**Bob** [10 July 2020].

More comments:

♦ "Thanks Bob!! Beautiful newsletter, as always! I love your illustrations in the Hungry Hill Bog article." —**Audrey Bowe** (13 July 2020).

♦ "Hi Bob, I was so happy to see the latest issue of *Solidago*. At this time, it is extra welcome." —**Susanne Lorbeer** (27 July 2020).

♦ "Thank you, Bob. I really enjoyed the extensive long article you had in the last newsletter." —**Ken Hull** (6 August 2020).

♦ And finally: "Dear Bob, I greatly enjoyed your article 'Cherishing the Hungry Hill Bog'—a meld of natural history, field notes, and memoir! Here's a poem you might use for the September issue (*left*). I've been remembering a group walk of 2018, when such delights were part of summer." —**Mary Gilliland** (14 August 2020).

Thanks to all for your feedback. It is always appreciated!

—**Robert Dirig**

[This trip to Jam Pond Bog [*photo at right*; see review in *Solidago* 19(3), p. 7] was led by Robert Wesley on 14 July 2018. Photo by Anna Stalter.]

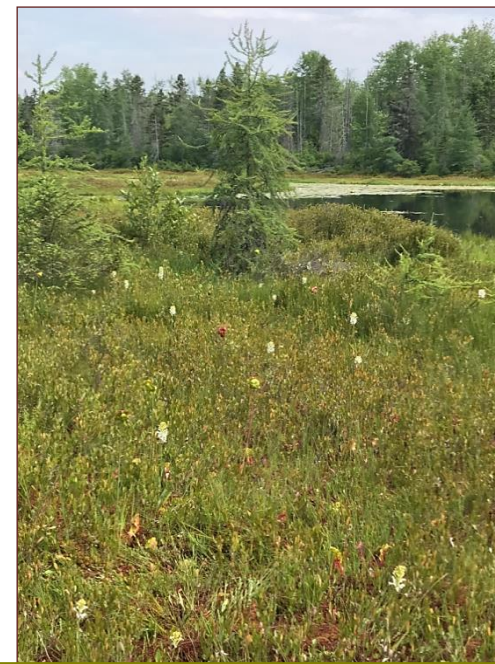
Jam Pond — summer 2018

People like
to learn as they read
so build in the bog
as part of the plotline.
Keep the yarn to 15 lines
so they don't lose the thread.
Bob showed us starflower,
bunchberry, regional tamarack.
Rhododendron prinophyllum
is our native pink azalea
and Virginia cottongrass
a sedge. Walking out
he lent a strong hand to remand
my left shoe along with its foot.

Mary Gilliland (14 August 2020)
[See Mary's new poetry book on page 5.]



DR. RICHARD B. FISCHER,
teaching about bogs at
McLean, ca. 1971.
[photographer unknown].



NAME THAT PLANT CONTEST

The photo from last issue's *NAME THAT PLANT CONTEST* [Solidago 21(2), p. 3] was of **Bloodroot** (*Sanguinaria canadensis*). I highlighted not only the flowers, which do not last long, but also the fruits and fanciful leaves. I find the leaves particularly delightful, the pattern being an original. See if you can find some leaves later this summer, and then return in early spring to see the ephemeral blooms.

Thanks to all who entered the contest, and congratulations to the winners: **Betsy Darlington, Bob Dirig, Mary Gilliland, Ken Hull, Areille Johnson, Susanne Lorbeer, Charlie Smith, and Robert Wesley.**



This issue's mystery plant is shown above.

Hints and suggestions are often provided to contest participants who try. Common and/or scientific names are acceptable, and more than one guess is allowed. Please submit your answers to **David Werier** at

Nakita @lightlink.com

The photographs were taken on 28 May 2020 in Onondaga Co., N.Y., by David Werier.

LETTER

OBSERVING URBAN PLANTS

Bob,

I have passed **FLORAL PARK CEMETERY** on Floral Avenue in Johnson City, N.Y., thousands of times, since I drove this road to work for over 40 years. I never noticed until this summer that the ferns growing on the stone wall were not **Virginia Rock Polypody** (*Polypodium virginianum*) or **Maidenhair Spleenwort** (*Asplenium trichomanes*), which one might expect, but rather the **Ebony Spleenwort** (*Asplenium platyneuron*), and lots of it.

I considered this an unusual fern, since I have seen it locally only at Chenango Valley State Park in Broome County, N.Y. Yet here it is, not five feet from one of the busiest streets in the Triple Cities, at a stop light no less. How many years have they been there, unnoticed by people like me?

Ken Hull,
6 Aug 2020



Please regularly check our website (www.flnps.org) for details and updates about programs and other events.



Ebony Spleenwort (*Asplenium platyneuron*) growing in mortar at **FLORAL PARK CEMETERY** in Johnson City, N.Y.



CORNELL GRADUATE STUDENT **ELIZABETH LOMBARDI**'S DOCTORAL PROJECT is assessing the geographic distribution of **Dame's Rocket (*Hesperis matronalis*)** populations. In analyzing the spatial data, she has found a correlation between plant distribution and human population density. To tease this apart, she's conducted some in-person surveys of human aesthetic preferences for particular floral phenotypes. However, the pandemic curtailed her effort to conduct in-person interviews, and so Elizabeth is asking for participation through this online survey instead. The survey will take approximately 2-3 minutes to complete. Please consider participating, and thank you in advance.



Dame's Rocket (*Hesperis matronalis*) flowers are lavender or white, and occasionally mixed (above). Photos by Anna Stalter.

Link to the survey: https://cornell.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0U2Zh7k7wCDpyBf



DAME'S ROCKET SURVEY



DID YOU KNOW? The Finger Lakes Native Plant Society is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, and as such, donations made to FLNPS are tax-deductible. The CARES Act of 2020 allows individual *taxpayers who don't itemize to deduct up to \$300* in donations made to 501(c)3 nonprofits in 2020. If you file jointly, that allowance doubles. And if you do itemize, the deductible amount of donations to charity has increased for 2020 as well. Here's a link to some more information about these changes: <https://www.501c3.org/the-cares-act-increases-donation-tax-deductibility/>. We hope you'll consider making a tax-deductible donation to FLNPS this year!

17 September 2020

Dear friends, fans, and family,

Joyous news: ***The Ruined Walled Castle Garden*** is available for purchase! Bright Hill Press has it in stock, and is waiting to fill your orders: <https://brighthillpress.org/product/the-ruined-walled-castle-garden/>

It is vitally important not to confuse art and life. It is equally important to fuse them.

How pertinent Lorde's words of years ago: "Poetry is not a luxury —"

Mary Gilliland

[Photos: Dürer on book cover courtesy of The Morgan Library.
Mary's photo by Ben Altman.]

The Ruined Walled Castle Garden



Poems by Mary Gilliland

Wintergreens & Reds Festive Cheer for Cold, Dark Days



by Robert Dirig



This story was written nearly thirty years ago, in 1991. It is set in a sequestered hamlet in the southern Catskills — a place where Victorian attitudes and traditions lingered far into the twentieth century. One of these was the practice of decorating homes (and sometimes churches) with wild plants. Many residents were descended from pioneer European families who settled here in the mid-1800s, and grew to love the flowers, birds, butterflies and moths, and other denizens of the outdoors that abounded in these wild acres. Outdoor occupations (farming, lumbering, quarrying) provided daily opportunities to interact with the local flora and fauna, which most people knew by name. Bouquets of wildflowers were a common decoration on dining tables and other indoor surfaces. Important early industries developed around harvesting Fancy Ferns and clubmosses in autumn [see *Solidago* 19(2), June 2018, p. 21], as well as wild berries and other natural products in warmer months.

The story and photos that follow describe a walk to a nearby Swamp, to observe and gather a few pieces of greenery and red berries to decorate for the Holidays and winter. This happened through the 1980s, but no longer is done. We were always careful to select only a few pieces of common plants. We knew that some of these are legally protected from wanton harvesting; but an attitude of respect has insured us a plentiful supply throughout our lives. Gathering a reasonable amount of material on our own property (or on **others'** with their permission) does no permanent harm to the plants, and their scents, colors, and varied textures lend a welcome, festive cheer to the cold, dark days.

Numbers in the text are page numbers where illustrations appear in the accompanying photo gallery.



EACH YEAR AT THANKSGIVING, my cousin Cathy and I return from cities far away to be with our families at French Woods, a Catskill hamlet in southern Delaware County, New York. When we see one another on Thursday afternoon, we schedule our annual walk to gather greenery for the coming Holidays. Then on Friday or Saturday, flamboyant in red scarves and hats, with deer hunters' guns booming all around, we spend an hour retracing a route familiar since childhood.

Our walk takes us to the *Swamp* (8), a large wetland a quarter-mile from my parents' house. Here grows a surprising variety of plants with verdant beauty that lasts throughout the year.

HEMLOCK (*Tsuga canadensis*, 8) is the dominant conifer of the Swamp and surrounding woods. Its lacy needles are exquisite, its fragrance exhilarating. For years our families used Hemlocks as Christmas trees. They are unsurpassed in charm and graceful asymmetry, although the needles quickly drop. Beneath the Hemlocks grow soft green mounds of **PEAT MOSS** (*Sphagnum* sp., 9). Jade-colored **PINCUSHION MOSS** (*Leucobryum glaucum*, 9) grows a few feet distant.

We quickly approach large clumps of **ROSEBAY** or **GREAT LAUREL** (*Rhododendron maximum*, 10), with stout, upward-arching grey branches ending in clusters of glossy emerald leaves. This plant is very

local in the southern Catskills, where it is often confined to cold swamps or damp shaded slopes. **MOUNTAIN LAUREL** (*Kalmia latifolia*, 10), a close relative with similar, though smaller foliage, is very abundant in oak woods near the Delaware River corridor, but this far into the uplands, it usually grows in swamps or bogs.

In the swales between the Rosebays are attractive brown, bead-like fertile fronds of the **SENSITIVE FERN** (*Onoclea sensibilis*, 10), their coarse but artistic herbage having long since been withered by frost. We are wary of dangerous dead trees drowned by beaver flooding, while making our way toward the west edge of the basin. Here, a variety of ground pines (11) — **SOUTHERN GROUND CEDAR** (*Diphasiastrum digitatum*), **STAGHORN CLUBMOSS** (*Lycopodium clavatum*), **BRISTLY CLUBMOSS** (*Spinulum annotinum*), and **SHINING FIRMOSS** (*Huperzia lucidula*) — grow on acidic hummocks. We also find a fifth species, **PRINCE'S PINE** or **FLAT-BRANCHED TREE CLUBMOSS** (*Dendrolycopodium obscurum*, 11), in different stages of growth. Rooted at the edges of this clearing are **SHINOPPLE** bushes (*Viburnum lantanoides*, 8). Their dark grey speckled twigs are topped by beige leaf buds, like tiny beckoning hands. Here also grow **PARTRIDGEBERRY** (*Mitchella repens*, 9) and **AROMATIC WINTERGREEN** (*Gaultheria procumbens*, 9), tiny, hardy subshrubs with oval leaves and bright red berries. We enjoy the fragrance of a crushed Wintergreen leaf as we move on.

Now Cathy is pointing to the highlight of our journey, for we can see, all the way across the mire, a huge flaming clump of **WINTERBERRY** (*Ilex verticillata*, 8 & 12), a native holly that drops its leaves each autumn. This year the branches are bent with their weight of scarlet fruits. Winterberry is *dioecious*, with fruits only on female plants. This shrub grows in cool swamps, yielding heavily in some seasons, but scarcely at all in others. We never know if we will find berries until we get here. This year's crop is one of the best!

Covering the mossy base of an upturned tree we passed en route to the Winterberries was a small plant with glossy, three-parted leaves. This is **GOLDTHREAD** (*Coptis trifolia*, 9) of the buttercup family, so-called for its bright yellow roots. **FERN MOSSES** (6, 9, & 13-14) cushioned the fallen trunk in a richly textured, emerald tapestry. In the midst of the

swale we also found the **SOFT RUSH** (*Juncus effusus*, 10), with a few stems still glowing greenly in the heart of a tussock.

On our way out of the Swamp, we find a few fronds of the **FANCY FERN** (*Dryopteris intermedia*, 13) in thin woods near the highway, and also clumps of **CHRISTMAS FERN** (*Polystichum acrostichoides*, 10). I used to think the common name of the latter was due to its seasonal availability and beauty in holiday decorations. This is probably as legitimate an explanation as the “official” one, which suggests that the pinnae look like miniature stockings hung along a mantel, with the toes all pointing in the same direction!

Along the highway, we notice the elegant crimson twigs of **RED MAPLE** (*Acer rubrum*, 12), and then make a long detour through the fields south of the road to visit a grove of **WHITE PINES** (*Pinus strobus*, 13), and enjoy their soft, blue-green foliage and resinous fragrance. The **JAPANESE BARBERIES** (*Berberis thunbergii*, 12) in the old fields we traverse have borne well this year, as usual. This naturalized Asian shrub has been almost too successful! In the hedgerow along a crumbling stone fence, we pass a few **AMERICAN BITTERSWEET** (*Celastrus scandens*, 12) vines, with their blazing orange-husked fruits.

On our way, Cathy & I have talked over our lives since we last saw each other, months before. We both left this area for college and employment many years ago. In recent years, a closeness has grown; for we are bonded in a shared childhood of playing together, riding the same school bus, celebrating family birthdays, belonging to the same church and 4-H club, and frequently walking these fields, with their magnificent blue backdrop (11).

A bouquet of Catskill greenery will sit on Cathy's mantel in New York City, and she will tend a piece of Rosebay through February or March, until the pink flowers open. The wild treasures I have gathered will decorate my dwelling in Ithaca for several weeks — a bouquet of varied greenery and berries (13), tiny baskets of Hemlock cones, and a dish garden of mosses accented by small glossy leaves and bright berries (13). No wonder I dislike commercial Christmas trees, when a few cherished reminders from these ancestral landscapes can comfort me in my exile.

~ 8 ~

Wintergreens & Reds

Hemlock leaves & cones (*right & center*), Winterberry (*lower right*), & a Shinhopple twig (*bottom center*) in the Swamp (*left*)

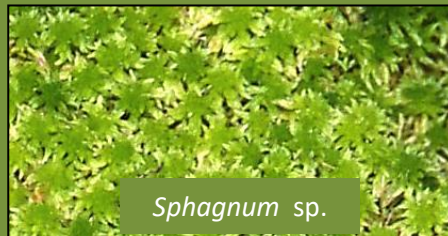
2008





Miniature Wintergreens of the Swamp

Fern Mosses (on downed logs & below), Pincushion Moss & Aromatic Wintergreen (above), Sphagnum (bottom center), Goldthread with Haircap Moss (lower left), & Partridgeberry (center)



Sphagnum sp.



Thuidium delicatulum

~ 10 ~



Flowers
in July



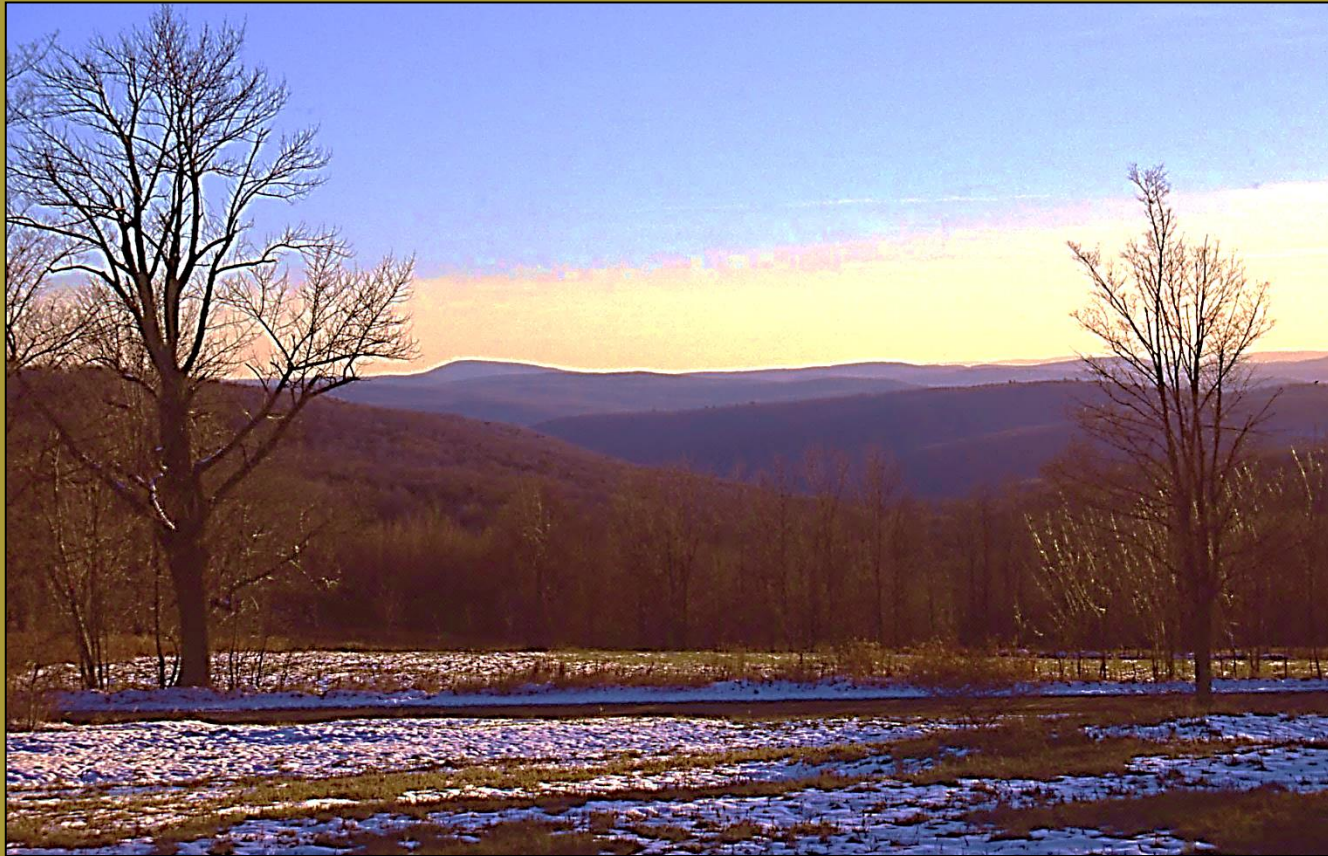
Larger Wintergreens

Rosebay (far left), Soft Rush (top center), Sensitive Fern (bottom center), Christmas Fern with "stockings" (above), & Mountain Laurel (below) in the Swamp



Wintergreens

Southern Ground Cedar (*below*); bottom row, left to right: Staghorn & Bristly Clubmosses, Shining Firmoss, & **Prince's Pine**. Upper left: The magnificent blue backdrop in late afternoon at French Woods.



Winter Reds

Japanese Barberry (*below & bottom left*),
Winterberry (*bottom center*),
Red Maple twigs (*bottom right*), &
American Bittersweet (*top right*)



More Wintergreens: Fern Moss (*Hypnum imponens*, top left), Fancy Fern (bottom left),
& White Pine (bottom right), Below: two arrangements, with components named.

~ 13 ~



An Arrangement with Hemlock, White Pine, & Rosebay foundation, accented by Winterberry, Fancy Fern, Sensitive Fern, Red Maple & Shinhopple twigs, & Soft Rush.

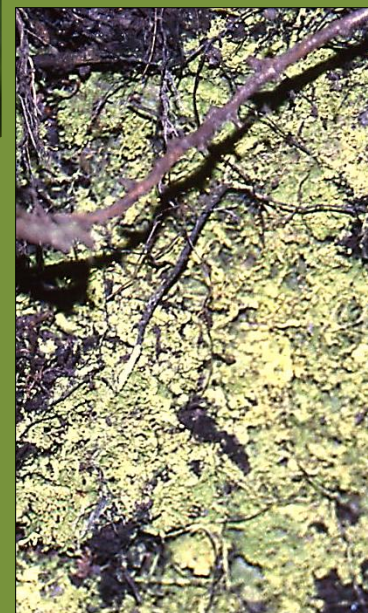
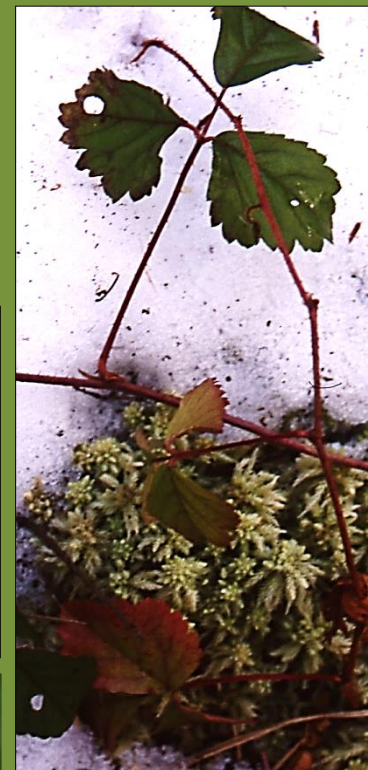


A Dish garden with Tree & Shining Clubmosses, Partridgeberry, Sensitive Fern, Soft Rush, Red Maple twigs, Hemlock, Mountain Laurel, Winterberry, Sphagnum, Goldthread, & Swamp Dewberry



Subtle Wintergreens & Reds

Knight's Plume Moss (*Ptilium crista-castrensis*, left), Swamp Dewberry (*Rubus hispidus*, top center & right), Sweetbrier hips (*Rosa rubiginosa*, left center & bottom; not in the Swamp), Golden Ragwort (*Packera aurea*, bottom center, with inset of spring flowers), & Sulphur Stubble Lichen (*Chaenotheca furfuracea*, bottom right)



Another Wintergreen

Virginian Rock Polypody (*Polypodium virginianum*), growing on sandstone ledges outside of the Swamp



More Winter Reds

American Wahoo (near Ithaca, New York, *top left*); American Holly (New Jersey, *top center*); and Red-osier Dogwood (*top right*), Common Barberry (*bottom left*), & Washington Thorn (*bottom right*), all at Ithaca.

Euonymus atropurpureus

Ilex opaca

Cornus sericea

Berberis vulgaris

Crataegus phaenopyrum

Happy Holidays
& New Year!