

## Thursday, Concurrent Sessions 1 (2:00PM – 3:00PM)

### 1. An American Native Tea: Uncovering the Past and Preserving the Future of yaupon Holly with genetics living collections

Host: Ben Long

Did you know that the Southeast has its own native, caffeinated beverage plant? In this presentation, you will learn how yaupon holly was discovered by Native Americans and almost became the beverage of choice for European settlers — until it had its reputation smeared by British tea importers and Western science. Next, Ben will share how studying yaupon's genetics can help overcome this plant's dark history and bring it back into Americans' cups, as well as the resources he has built for growers, tribes, and others interested in reviving yaupon as a beverage plant and sustainable caffeine source. Finally, Ben will use the population genomics data he has collected to tell a different history of yaupon: how it first made its home in North America millions of years ago and became one of the only coastal-adapted holly species in the world.

### 2. Triangle Connectivity Collaborative

Host: Julie Tuttle

Landscape conservation focuses on ecological integrity – keeping our natural communities intact and functionally connected across scales – and, by definition, relies on collaboration and coordination across human communities and jurisdictional boundaries. This presentation explores the importance of conserving and restoring landscape habitat connectivity for development-sensitive wildlife populations, using as a case study the biologically diverse, but rapidly developing, Upper Neuse and New Hope Creek watersheds in the North Carolina Triangle. Drawing on scientific research, mapping, and the collaborative practices of connectivity conservation, the talk outlines an approach to identifying priority habitats and movement corridors, evaluating existing conservation and planning frameworks, and translating ecological data into actionable strategies to inform land use, conservation, and transportation decision-making. Successful landscape conservation will help ensure the long-term protection and resilience of biodiversity (including both wildlife and plants) and ecosystems, with co-benefits for human communities that support public health, natural and cultural heritage, and local economies.

### 3. Bluestem Conservation Cemetery

Host: Heidi Hanapel, Jeff Masten

Join us and learn how Bluestem Conservation Cemetery, the country's 13th conservation burial ground, is building a resilient healing space for people and for wildlife. Every week, Bluestem volunteers are invited into service opportunities that restore and regenerate ecosystems, protect

waterways and wildlife habitats, promote environmental awareness, and support grieving families in times of loss. At Bluestem, the simple and personal practice of natural burial is integrated into the restoration of 87 acres of native Piedmont prairie and hardwood forest, essential climate-resilient landscapes. Families who choose to support natural burial at Bluestem are inextricably linked to the memories they create on this land, further broadening community support for conservation.

#### **4. Yellow Trout Lily (*Erythronium Americanum*) and the Struggle of Spring Ephemerals in a Changing World**

Host: Clayton Hale

Climate change is driving significant and well-documented changes in the phenology of native plant species across the eastern United States. Many species emerge and flower earlier in spring as temperatures warm with largely unknown consequences. While all species are being impacted, no group is more tightly linked to spring climate and phenology as spring ephemeral forest wildflowers that emerge, bloom, and go dormant in a brief window before the tree canopy closes. In this talk, I will share my work exploring the multi-faceted impacts of warming on Yellow Trout Lily (*Erythronium americanum*) and other spring ephemerals.

#### **5. Native Perennials for the Shady Side**

Host: Shannon Currey

Shady spaces in the landscape often get the mulch treatment or are planted with problematic spreaders like liriope or English ivy. Fortunately, a variety of native, herbaceous perennials offer a powerful combination of visual appeal and ecological function. While few plants grow in the dense shade underneath evergreens, shade-tolerant species have developed strategies that allow them to do well in less than full-sun conditions. This session addresses the nature of shade and some of the physiological adaptations that shade-tolerant plants employ. We'll take a close look at a selection of perennials, grasses, and sedges to understand why they're particularly helpful when gardening on the shady side.

#### **6. Invasive Species Management: A Community Approach**

Host: Trees Atlanta – Lyric Carter

Founded in 1985, Trees Atlanta works to mitigate Atlanta's tree loss, protect its forests, and increase its tree canopy. Empowered by a community of volunteers, Trees Atlanta serves the metro Atlanta area and has grown to become one of Atlanta's most widely known and supported non-profit organizations. The Forest Restoration program at Trees Atlanta manages over 42 green spaces in and around Atlanta. At each of these green spaces we engage with community

members, leaders, and stakeholders and use our expertise to determine the best way to serve the forests in these green spaces. Join us to learn how we engage communities, map invasive plants, mitigate invasive species, and execute management plans.