



# The Shooting Star

## October 2020

# Newsletter

*“Dedicated to the study, appreciation, and conservation of the native flora and natural communities in Illinois.”*

### Inside this issue:

<i>President’s Message</i>	2
<i>Feature Plant of The Month</i>	2
<i>Events Calendar</i>	3
<i>Invasive Species Corner</i>	3
<i>Summary of Past Events</i>	4
<i>Local Events &amp; Announcements</i>	5
<i>Contact Us</i>	6

## *Illinois Nature Preserves Commission Preservation and Protection of Natural Communities Tuesday, October 20<sup>th</sup> 6:30 p.m., virtual meeting*

Have you ever visited an Illinois Nature Preserve and wondered what exactly IS a nature preserve? Join Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPS) biologist, Kevin Sierzega, as he discusses the INPS system, including its mission, history, implementation across southern Illinois, and various successes. The INPS’s overarching goal is the protection of high-quality natural communities and biologically important natural land complexes.

Kevin is the Natural Areas Preservation Specialist in southern Illinois for the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. He received his B.S. at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and his M.S. at Southern Illinois University Carbondale where he studied habitat selection of neotropical birds and food availability differences between successional forest types in the Shawnee Hills. He finds working towards INPC’s goals incredibly rewarding as it intertwines numerous components of conservation, including permanent land protection, stewardship, and scientific research.

Register for this event at <https://tinyurl.com/yxza5vw8>

This program is free and open to the public!



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***Message from the Southern Chapter President***

Hello everyone and happy fall! I want to thank you all for the great response to our recent virtual chapter meetings. We are excited to present more of these and move into some additional in-person programming, like our volunteer workday at Trail of Tears State Forest planned for December. While many of our native plants have finished flowering for the year, a different type of native plant display is starting to develop. October here in southern Illinois is the time for fall colors! The bright reds, oranges, and yellows that develop this time of year really change the landscape. As I type this in my office, I have a beautiful black gum outside my window that is absolutely glowing vibrant red. The sweetgums around here vary from deep purple to scarlet and our sugar maples are already bright yellow. Soon the hickories and oaks will join the show with their yellows and reds.

The science behind fall colors is always fascinating and worth exploring more. I highly encourage everyone to explore some of the many articles written about the chemical changes and ecological conditions behind the annual, colorful phenomenon that happens here in the fall.

While fall colors seem to be a little bit early this year, peak time is usually around the last week in October. We have quite a number of beautiful public sites with expansive vistas to view our fall explosion of color. I would recommend Garden of the Gods, Trigg Tower, Cedar Bluff, Millstone Bluff, and Bald Knob. I am definitely planning on multiple hiking trips to take in this display and hope everyone does the same! ~ Chris Evans



**“explore some of the many articles written about the chemical changes and ecological conditions behind the annual, colorful phenomenon that happens here in the fall”**

<b><i>Feature Plant of the Month</i></b>	<b>Black Gum, <i>Nyssa sylvatica</i></b>
<p>Also called black tupelo or sour gum, it is the cousin to the water tupelo that resides in Illinois’ swamps. <i>Nyssa</i> is Greek for “water nymph” while the species name, <i>sylvatica</i>, is Latin for “of the forest.” It’s a hardy urban tree and well known for its dazzling fiery display of scarlet leaves in the fall. It can tolerate a wide range of soils, found both on dry rocky slopes, yet also near ravines. The flowers in the spring are not showy, though an attractant for bees. The grape like fruits (will need a male and female tree to produce them) provide an excellent food source for birds and small mammals. Leaves are alternate with an obovate/elliptical shape and the bark is a scaly light gray texture.</p>	



2020



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### Calendar of Events

Oct. 20	Kevin Sierzega	INPC Preservation and Protection of Natural Communities on Private Lands	Online, Zoom
Nov. 17	Erin Garrett	Grass Identification	Online, Zoom
Dec. 9	CWMA, IDNR	Invasive Species Workday	Trail of Tears State Forest

CTH = Carbondale Township Hall, 217 E. Main St., Carbondale IL at 6:30 pm; TBD = To Be Determined  
For more information visit <http://www.ill-inps.org/index.php/southern-chapter>

**Explore the Illinois Native Plant Society, Southern Chapter's new YouTube channel! Meeting recordings will be posted here for future viewing.**

<https://bit.ly/35amplZ>

### Invasive Species Corner

Please look at the following resources for the latest in Invasive Species news.



Save the Date, Invasive Species Removal Workday

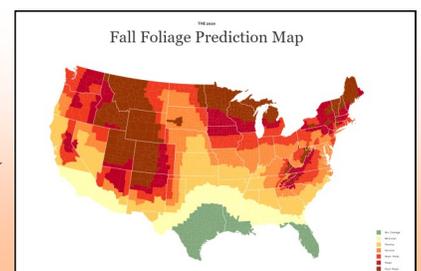
Wednesday, December 9th, 8am-12pm, Trail of Tears State Forest

Illinois Native Plant Society, in partnership with IDNR and the River to River CWMA, will be hosting a workday. Please dress appropriately and bring your own water and snacks. Tools and PPE provided; register by e-mailing Nick Season at [rtrcwma@gmail.com](mailto:rtrcwma@gmail.com) or call at (618) 683-2222.

### Fall Foliage Prediction Map

The 2020 Fall Foliage Map is the ultimate visual planning guide to the annual progressive changing of the leaves. While no tool can be 100% accurate, this tool is meant to help travelers better time their trips to have the best opportunity of catching peak color each year.

<https://smokymountains.com/fall-foliage-map/>





## Summary of Past Events



### September Program, Evolutionary History and Biology of the Prickly Pears (*Opuntioideae*, *Cactaceae*) by Kurt Neubig

Following a series of successful virtual meetings this summer, the chapter hosted a scientific talk on the research by Dr. Lucas Majure on prickly pear cacti. Majure is the Assistant Curator of the University of Florida Herbarium. His talk shed light on the evolutionary relationships of the subfamily *Opuntioideae*, to which *Opuntia* (the prickly pear) belongs. Polyploidy and hybridization events have been common within this group, making reconstructing the evolutionary history complicated and the recognition of species equally difficult.



*Opuntia caespitosa*, photo by Chris Benda

In Illinois, we have several species that are found in different regions of the state. In our area, *O. caespitosa* (with dark red marks on the tepals of the flowers) is the most wide-ranging species in our area and mistakenly called *O. humifusa* in our flora. *Opuntia fragilis* is found only rarely in the northwest corner of the state. While *O. macrorhiza* is purported to be in Illinois, this species (primarily found in the southwestern US) is not clearly in Illinois based on his studies.



*Opuntia fragilis*, photo by the Forest Service

If you missed the talk, check it out on YouTube and subscribe to the INPS Southern Chapter channel! You can also find other past and future talks there:

<https://bit.ly/35amp1Z>

*Local Events & Announcements*

**Giant City State Park**

**Forest Hike**

**Saturday, November 7<sup>th</sup>, 1– 3 pm**

Join community forester, Jennifer Behnken, on the Giant City Nature Trail as she discusses tree identification, Illinois forests, wood products, cultural history, and invasive species. This will be a fun interpretive hike focused on trees and forests. No registration is required. Meet at Shelter #3 parking lot.



**Cache River Wetlands Center**

**Guided Hike at Cedar Bluff**

**Saturday, October 24<sup>th</sup>, 12—3 pm**

Enjoy a fall walk at Cedar Bluff Natural Area, an annex of Ferne Clyffe State Park, utilizing the Big Buck Creek Trail and Bork’s Fall Trail. Be rewarded with 50-foot bluffs, overhangs, a shelter cave, and dramatic views of fall color. Meet at the parking area midway of Happy Hollow Road, Johnson County. For questions, call the Wetlands Center at (618) 657-2064.



**Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Hunt Illinois website**

<https://huntillinois.org/>

Check out this website for the latest hunter information, including plant I.D., conservation importance, maps, and wildlife resources.

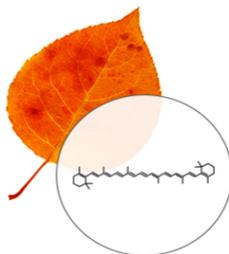


**The Changing Colors**

Chlorophyll is not the only player in the fall leaf-color game. Present in other leaves and trees are the compounds known as Carotenoids and Anthocyanins. As the Fall days begin to get shorter and shorter, the production of Chlorophyll slows to a halt, eventually giving way to the ‘true’ color of the leaf.

<https://smokymountains.com/fall-foliage-map/>

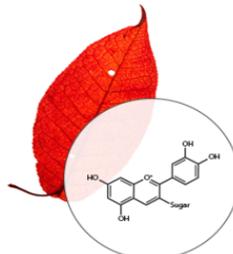
Oranges



**Beta-Carotene**

Beta-Carotene is one of the most common carotenoids present in most leaves. Strongly absorbing blue and green light, it reflects yellow and red light from the sun, giving leaves their orange hue.

Reds



**Anthocyanins**

Unlike the carotenoids, anthocyanin production increases dramatically with autumn. This protects the leaf, prolonging its life on the tree through the Autumn season, and also provides the beautiful red color to the leaf.

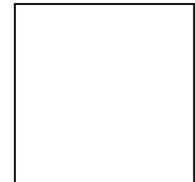
Yellows



**Flavonols**

Flavonols, a part of the flavonoid protein family, are always present in leaves, and also contribute to the yellow color of egg yolks. While always present in leaves, it’s not seen until the production of Chlorophyll begins to slow.

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*Dodecatheon frenchii* –  
French's Shooting Star

**Board Members**

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- Secretary: Erin Garrett
- Treasurer: Nancy Garwood
- At-large: Nick Seaton
- At-large: Kurt Neubig
- At-large: Jen Harris
- At-large: Rhonda Rothrock
- Newsletter: Jennifer Behnken

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- Erigenia* (life).....\$3,000.00

Please make checks payable to: Illinois Native Plant Society, Attn: Dr. Nancy Garwood  
Life Science II—Mailcode 6509 Southern Illinois University 1125 Lincoln Dr. Carbondale, IL 62901

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**Erigenia**, our scientific journal, is now available digitally as well as in print.

Please indicate your preference for receiving the journal.

- Email only
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**Chapter Affiliation**

- Central (Springfield)
- Forest Glen (Westville)
- Grand Prairie (Bloomington)
- Kankakee Torrent
- Northeast (Chicago)
- Quad Cities (Rock Island)
- Southern (Carbondale)
- Other/Uncertain \_\_\_\_\_

**I would like to help with:**

- Leadership & Organization (serving on board at State or Chapter level)
- Leading Field Trips & Tours
- Organizing Workshops &/or Seminars
- Giving Workshops &/or Seminars
- Public Speaking
- Fund Raising
- Website Assistance/Management
- Public Media/Communications
- Writing/Submitting articles
- Photography
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**My area of expertise:** \_\_\_\_\_