

### Fruit Salad

by Lisa Giencke, Research Botanist

Chapel Hill's Battle Park has a rich history extending back to the founding of the University of North Carolina in 1792. Named for Kemp Plummer Battle, a graduate and president of the University, it has been enjoyed as a place for inspiration and recreation for over 150 years.

Battle Park is interesting not only for its history, but also for its location and permanence as a forest. Encompassed by residential neighborhoods and the University campus, it is what Garden Director Peter White refers to as "a forest of continuity." That is, even though it isn't an old-growth forest (generations of Chapel Hill residents were allowed to remove trees for firewood), it has remained a forest for hundreds, or even thousands, of years. These features combine to make Battle Park unique from a botanical point of view.

One facet of a nearly completed 18-month conservation project for Battle Park was to document all of the plants currently growing in the park. That list, combined with voucher specimens collected in Battle Park over the last 120 years and archived in the UNC Herbarium, provides insight into changes in the park's flora over time.

Some of the species for which herbarium specimens exist, lobed tickseed (*Coreopsis auriculata*) and yellow fringed orchid (*Platanthera ciliaris*) for example, were not rediscovered in the park during this recent inventory, suggesting that they may be extirpated from the park. However, almost 200 plants were found that were not previously collected from the park. About 50 of these are new, exotic species that probably arrived in the past few decades, likely coming in from campus or the surrounding neighborhoods. Given that Battle Park sits downstream from these places, it isn't hard to imagine these exotic species arriving

when their seeds washed down the ravines and into the creek known as Battle Branch.

Nearly 20 plant species were found that were not previously known to be established anywhere in North Carolina. Some, like common garden impatiens (*Impatiens walleriana*), seem to have been temporary components

of the park's flora. Others, including Japanese maple (*Acer palmatum*) and kiwi (yes, like you'd find in the grocery store!), may be more permanently established.

As I worked on the Battle Park Flora project, I realized how many of the native and non-native species produce edible fruits: pawpaw, persimmon, raspberries, blueberries, cherries, pears, and the kiwi (*Actinidia chinensis*). I often found myself wishing they would all come into fruit at the same time. I could then have thrown together a fruit salad from that botanical diversity—a botanical/culinary twist on the old saying, "When life throws you a lemon. . ."

### Winter Volunteers Needed in Herbarium

The UNC Herbarium is in need of volunteers to mount, sew, and file pressed, dried plant specimens. Mounting and sewing takes about an hour to learn, and no prior knowledge of botany is required. Filing requires familiarity with the concepts of plant families, genera, and species; anyone who has taken Plant Taxonomy, Local Flora, or similar classes at the Garden is well prepared for filing.

The UNC Herbarium offers volunteers a peaceful work environment, with coffee and tea *gratis*, an eclectic collection of music for you to enjoy, and free parking in the Belltower Lot adjacent to Coker Hall. Contact Carol Ann McCormick at 962-6931 or [mccormick@unc.edu](mailto:mccormick@unc.edu) if you are interested!

### WON'T YOU JOIN US?

Herb Garden Curator Wendy Wenck reports that she would welcome some new volunteers in the Mercer Reeves Hubbard Herb Garden for a variety of activities, including weeding, raking, and pruning. This group returns from winter break on February 15 and meets on Thursday mornings, 9 to 11 am.

Habitat volunteers are also needed. This group meets on Mondays from 1 to 3 pm and helps Curator Chris Liloia in maintenance and improvement of our wonderful Coastal Plain and Mountain Habitat Display Gardens.

The Battle Park Volunteers, meeting on the first Saturday of the month and on Thursdays from 9 am to 12 noon, are eager for more folks. If you like trail maintenance work and the satisfaction of removing exotic invasive plants, this group is for you! The day's tasks always begin at the historic Forest Theatre.

