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tammy greer
USM, tammy.greer@usm.edu

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In 2005, we obtained funding from SEVA to build a garden on the Southern Miss campus as part of our efforts to demonstrate our commitment to natives of the SE American Indian Tribes. Our goal of bringing together people of different cultures and people of different ages to celebrate what is native to our region and to pass along our traditions to the youth is being realized through this garden. We have populated the garden with native plants that were, and are still, used for food, crafts, and medicine. We recently paved the paths to make the garden handicap accessible. This 2,000 square-foot garden will continue to grow and grow us in ways only a garden can, in patience, in perseverance, and in respect.
FROM THE DIRECTOR: OUR GARDEN

In the summer of 2005, just before Hurricane Katrina, the Golden Eagles Intertribal Society (GEIS) applied for and received funds from SEVA to establish a garden on the campus of The University of Southern Mississippi. The chief financial officer at the time, Gregg Lassen, gave us space on campus in back of the International Building to create the garden. Because the GEIS mission involves educating our university and greater Hattiesburg communities about American Indian cultures, we decided to design the garden in a shape that is well-known to our people — that of the medicine wheel. The garden paths face the four directions with each direction represented with a certain color. Initially there were 20 plots in the garden. Individuals who adopted plots were responsible for tending the plots. We planted an Eastern Red Cedar tree in the center of the garden, as cedar is used by native peoples for smudging, ceremonies and other purposes. The cedar tree further enhanced our opportunities to educate our communities about the traditional ways of native peoples and provided cedar for ceremonial smudging as well. The tree toppled during Hurricane Katrina, and we replaced it with a center pole and added four directional poles that flew banners with the word “Peace” written in the languages of several of the tribes of the world. That was phase 1 of our garden.

In 2009 Joe and Merrill Willis from Oxford, Miss., began to transform the garden into a native plant garden. They brought several hundred plants, and we obtained permission from two national forests to collect common species of plants for educational purposes to place into our garden. Areas in our garden were developed into habitats, including a “bog” with pitcher plants, Louisiana irises and cattails as well as a “higher and dryer” area with sumac, asters, mints and button snakeroot. The Mississippi Native Plant Society met here and featured our garden. That was phase 2 of our garden.

In 2012, when the Southern Miss Physical Plant became aware that the garden needed to be accessible to those with disabilities, they paved our paths, circled the trees at the end of each path, and made an entrance from the direction of the east. Charles Provine donated concrete stain and sealer to color our paths. Martina Sciolino, associate professor of English, our GEIS members and numerous students helped with drawing in the concrete paths, painting the paths in the colors of the four directions, moving rocks, planting plants, mulching the plants, and weeding. We extended the reach of the native plants into an area across the sidewalk so that now we have a memorial area with yucca, dwarf yaupons, St. Andrew’s cross and a weeping yaupon behind a bench memorializing fallen military. We have completed phase 3 of our garden.

We are working on phase 4 of our garden. We want to label the rocks. We are always discussing where we want to go next. This garden is like us, never quite finished, always changing, sometimes from day to day and always from season to season. At times those changes are obvious. Sometimes they are planned — like flowers appearing in the spring. At other times, though, progressions are not so obvious — like when seeds germinate in the dark, in secret. Obvious or not something is always happening with our garden, with our students and with ourselves.

It was our intention for this garden to make the campus space, at one time just a grassy field, a special space where people can gather, be nourished by our mother the Earth, and reflect on what it is to be respectful, to be caring, to be honorable, to grow ourselves and one another on this earth as we tend this garden.
Vance Beaver, a friend of the Medicine Wheel Garden, is from the Muscogee Creek Nation of Oklahoma. Beaver made his way to Louisiana as a teenager working for the oil industry. He has stories galore, but the ones I like most are the stories of Houma and the surrounding areas. Beaver tells of a segregated South with Indian and non-Indian bars, restaurants, jobs and communities. He talks about the beautiful Indian women he met (and dated) from the Houma area and about difficult and good times for tribal folks during the time of oil exploration and surveying. Beaver was in our Houma area as an outsider looking in during the era of oil speculation, and his observations are poignant.

Beaver is a Southern straight dancer. He was brought into the circle by his older brother, Don, who also was a Southern straight dancer. At the Gathering of Nations Powwow in 2008, Beaver won third place among 15 straight dancers there. He loves to straight dance. He loves to help out. So when I asked him to step in at the last minute as Head Gourd Dancer, Beaver, an Army veteran, said yes. When we needed wood for Ian Thompson, an Oklahoma Choctaw potter who was teaching us to make and fire pots at our most recent powwow, Beaver and co-conspirator Curtis Waites spent the day hauling and chopping wood for us. When I told Beaver about our efforts to beautify the rock gardens that form a center circle in the Medicine Wheel Garden, he brought us 200 pounds of geodes and crystals and petrified wood for our garden project. And he brought plants.

Beaver is a friend of our garden and of GEIS. We want to thank him for all that he does.

Beaver was born in Broken Arrow Oklahoma and is a graduate of Chilocco Indian School in Chilocco, Oklahoma. He attended jewelry school at Paris Junior College in Texas. He is a U.S. Army veteran who served stateside and in Germany with the second and third armored divisions and with the first medium tank battalion. Beaver is the father of four sons, three daughters, fifteen grandchildren and four great grandchildren. His many hobbies include silversmithing and gemology. Beaver is a volunteer firefighter and rides with BACA (Bikers Against Child Abuse).
OUR MOTHER THE EARTH: YAUPON HOLLY

Yaupon Holly (Ilex vomitoria) is a primarily coastal evergreen plant and can be found in all of the coastal states ranging from Maryland to Texas. The leaves were used extensively to make caffeinated tea, known as “black drink” by Native Americans because of the dark color of the tea. The plant was used as a trade item, and black drink served as a purgative when consumed in large quantities but also as a social and ceremonial drink. It is now used as a native landscaping shrub. The red berries are toxic to humans.

The British explorer and naturalist John Lawson identified the three varieties of Yaupon Holly in his book A New Voyage to Carolina; Containing the Exact Description and Natural History of that Country: Together with the Present State thereof (1709). His account follows:

“Last of Bushes, (except Savine, which grows every where wild) is the famous Yaupon, of which I find two sorts, if not three. I shall speak first of the Nature of this Plant, and afterwards account for the different Sorts. This Yaupon, call’d by the South-Carolina Indians, Cassena, is a Bush, that grows chiefly on the Sand-Banks and Islands, bordering on the Sea of Carolina; on this Coast it is plentifully found, and in no other Place that I know of. It grows the most like Box, of any Vegetable that I know, being very like it in Leaf, only dented exactly like Tea, but the Leaf somewhat fatter. I cannot say, whether it bears any Flower, but a Berry it does, about the Bigness of a grain of Pepper, being first red, then brown when ripe, which is in December; Some of these Bushes to be twelve Foot high, others are three or four. . . The third Sort has the same kind of Leaf, but never grows a Foot high, and is found both in rich, low Land, and on the Sand-Hills. I don’t know that ever I found any Seed, or Berries on the dwarfish Sort, yet I find no Difference in Taste, when Infusion is made. . . This Plant is the Indian Tea. . . They take this Plant (not only the Leaves, but the smaller Twigs along with them) and bruise it in a Mortar, till it becomes blackish, the Leaf being wholly defaced: Then they take it out, put it into one of their earthen Pots which is over the Fire, till it smoaks; stirring it all the time, till it is cur’d. Others take it, after it is bruis’d, and put it into a Bowl, to which they put live Coals, and cover them with the Yaupon, till they have done smoaking, often turning them over. After all, they spread it upon their Mats, and dry it in the Sun to keep it for Use.”

Yaupon Holly from Dodd and Dodd Nursery

Cook’s Corner: Yaupon Holly Tea

1 cup cured* mature Yaupon Holly leaves
1 quart (more for weaker, less for stronger) boiling water

Boil cured leaves in water 5-15 minutes or until water is brown.

*Cure mature leaves by letting them dry (or baking in an oven) until brown in color.

Drink plain or serve with lemon and sugar.
**What’s Going on in the Southeast**


Tennessee: May 18-19. Powwow on the Plateau. Cumberland County Complex, Crossville, Tenn. 931.544.4908 [jcpowwows@g-mail.com](mailto:jcpowwows@g-mail.com) (Linda)

Texas: May 24-25. American Indian Council of Laredo 20th Annual Memorial Day PowWow. Laredo Civic Center, 2400 San Bernardo Ave., Laredo, Texas. 210.461.4798 [lotp13@yahoo.com](mailto:lotp13@yahoo.com) (Xavier Sanchez)

Alabama: June 1-2. Native Solutions First Jacksonville Intertribal Powwow. Germania Springs Park, 540 Roy Webb Rd., Jacksonville, Ala. 256.820.3644 [ravenspiritwalker@yahoo.com](mailto:ravenspiritwalker@yahoo.com) (Mark or Ruth Davis)

North Carolina: June 7-8. 28th Annual Occoneechi Saponi Powwow. Occoneechi Tribal Grounds, 4902 Dailey Store Road, Burlington, N.C. 336.421.1317 [obsntribe@gmail.com](mailto:obsntribe@gmail.com) [www.obsn.org](http://www.obsn.org)

Texas: June 7-8. 45th Annual Powwow Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas. Reservation Ballpark, U.S. Highway 190, Livingston, Texas. 936.563.1131 (Sharon Miller)

Texas: June 7-8. Texas Indian Hobbyist 57th Annual Summer Powwow. Meridian Civic Center, Meridian, Texas. 830.839.4549 (Danny LaGesse)

Kentucky: June 8-9. Metcalfe County’s Annual Powwow. Wisdom Faith Community Church, 365 knob Lick Wisdom Rd., Edmonton, Ky. 270.432.3295 [renegade3295@scrtc.com](mailto:renegade3295@scrtc.com) (Martha Harris)

North Carolina: June 14-16. 38th Annual Eastern Band Cherokee Nation Powwow. Acquoni Expo Center, 1501 Acquoni Road, Cherokee, N.C. 828.554.6471 [howawahn@nc-cherokee.com](mailto:howawahn@nc-cherokee.com) (Howard Wahneta)

Mississippi: July 10-13. 64th Annual Choctaw Indian Fair. Choctaw, Miss.

Tennessee: August 17-18. Turtle Island Native American Association Powwow. USA Baseball Stadium, 4351 Babe Howard Blvd., Millington, Tenn. 901.876.5344 oneida11@bellsouth.net


Alabama: October 9-12. Moundville Native American Festival. Moundville Archeological Park, 634 Mound Park, Moundville, Ala. 205.371.2234, 205.371.8732 [rcrooper@crimson.ua.edu](mailto:rcrooper@crimson.ua.edu)

Louisiana: November 23-24. 47th Annual Louisiana Indian Heritage Association Powwow. Lamar-Dixon Expo Center, Gonzales, La. 985.796.5433 [whiswind@hughes.net](mailto:whiswind@hughes.net) [www.liha.webs.com](http://www.liha.webs.com)
Let’s Get Educated: Native Plants

1. dried leaf tea tastes like black tea but without caffeine
2. sacred tree used for a cleansing smudge
3. use root for snake bites
4. dried leaves and twigs make spiced tea
5. bake leaves for morning tea to give caffeine rush
6. corn, beans and _____ make up these three sisters
7. drink liquid in stem and eat berry
8. put a seed in your pocket for good luck or crush to stupefy fish
9. use the seed down from this sticky plant to make blow gun darts
10. this plant has natural antibiotic properties
11. thorny bush with red seeds have been found near many Southeastern mounds
12. state tree and state flower of Mississippi
13. tiny blooms give this plant its name meaning “a star”
14. rub crumbled leaf on arms and legs to prevent insect bites
15. use this fan shaped plant to make thatched roofs, huts, baskets, fans, and mats
16. use this cool weather plant to flavor soups
17. remove thorns and eat sticky pads or use to set dye in leather
18. put some of this fruit in dumplings or bread or eat raw
19. root of this tree is used to make aspirin
20. use red berries to make pink lemonade
21. use caterpillars that feed on the leaves of this tree for fish bait
22. use berries to make bayberry candles
23. leaves have silica so bundle and use for scrubbing pots and pans

24. use this tall grass to make baskets, blowguns, and fishing poles
25. use the root of this tree for tea or drink cold as root beer
26. leaves digest insects to get nitrogen
27. chew the leaves of this tree to numb your gums
28. use seeds for oil or roast and eat seeds
29. make tea from the vine, stem or leaves or eat fruit raw, use in jam, jelly or pie
30. make soap from the root or use a leaf as needle and thread

(Puzzle answers on p. 7)
ON THE RED ROAD: MEDICINE WHEELS

The oldest Medicine Wheels appear to be the four-inch to thirteen-inch stone disks that were located in and around Southeastern North American Indian mounds. These mounds along interior waterways near the Mississippi River and many other smaller rivers had inscriptions of sun circles, human hands and eyes, and other designs. Serpents like the two in the photo on the right are depicted on several of the disks. The Medicine Wheel disk found in Issaquena County contains a very distinct two-serpent design. These ancient stone disks reveal something about their uses having red ochre, graphite and other paint pigments or dyes on their surfaces. But particular uses remain a mystery.

The Medicine Wheel on Medicine Mountain in the Big Horn mountain range in Wyoming, is one of the largest astronomically aligned Medicine Wheels in the United States. The rock-outlined wheel is 80 feet in diameter and is still considered a sacred space for gathering and prayer, as it should be. N. Scott Momaday wrote in The Way to Rainy Mountain, “Once in his life a man ought to concentrate his mind upon the remembered earth, I believe. He ought to give himself up to a particular landscape in his experience, to look at it from as many angles as he can, to wonder about it, to dwell upon it. He ought to imagine that he touches it with his hands at every season and listens to the sounds that are made upon it. He ought to imagine the creatures there and all the faintest motions of the wind.” Our Medicine Wheel offers that space for all who visit.

Puzzle Answers

1. NEW JERSEY TEA  
2. CEDAR  
3. BUTTON SNAKEROOT  
4. SPICE BUSH  
5. YAUPON HOLLY  
6. SQUASH  
7. MUSCADINE  
8. RED BUCKEYE  
9. THISTLE  
10. WILD GINGER  
11. CORAL BEAN  
12. MAGNOLIA  
13. ASTER  
14. BEAUTYBERRY  
15. PALMETTO  
16. WILD ONION  
17. CACTUS  
18. PERSIMMON  
19. WILLOW  
20. SUMAC  
21. CATALPA  
22. WAX MYRTLE  
23. SCOURING RUSH  
24. SWAMP CANE  
25. SASSAFRAS  
26. PITCHER PLANT  
27. TOOTHACHE TREE  
28. SUNFLOWER  
29. BLACKBERRY  
30. BEAR GRASS
In the center of our garden is written the names of the tribes of the Southeastern U.S. On the paths are Choctaw words for the colors of the paths, the plants and the directions. We have ancient and contemporary Southeastern symbols inscribed into paths with serpent symbols from ancient mounds circling the trees that are planted in the cardinal directions.

For more information about our garden contact tammy.greer@usm.edu, 601.466.0948.

The Southern Miss Medicine Wheel Garden is located behind the International Building. Parking is available (with a parking pass obtainable at the main entrance to the campus) in the International building parking lot.

Okla i maya moma hoki.
We have remained.

Southern Miss

Center for American Indian Research and Studies
The University of Southern Mississippi
College of Arts and Letters
Dr. Tammy Greer, CAIRS Director
118 College Drive #5004
Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001