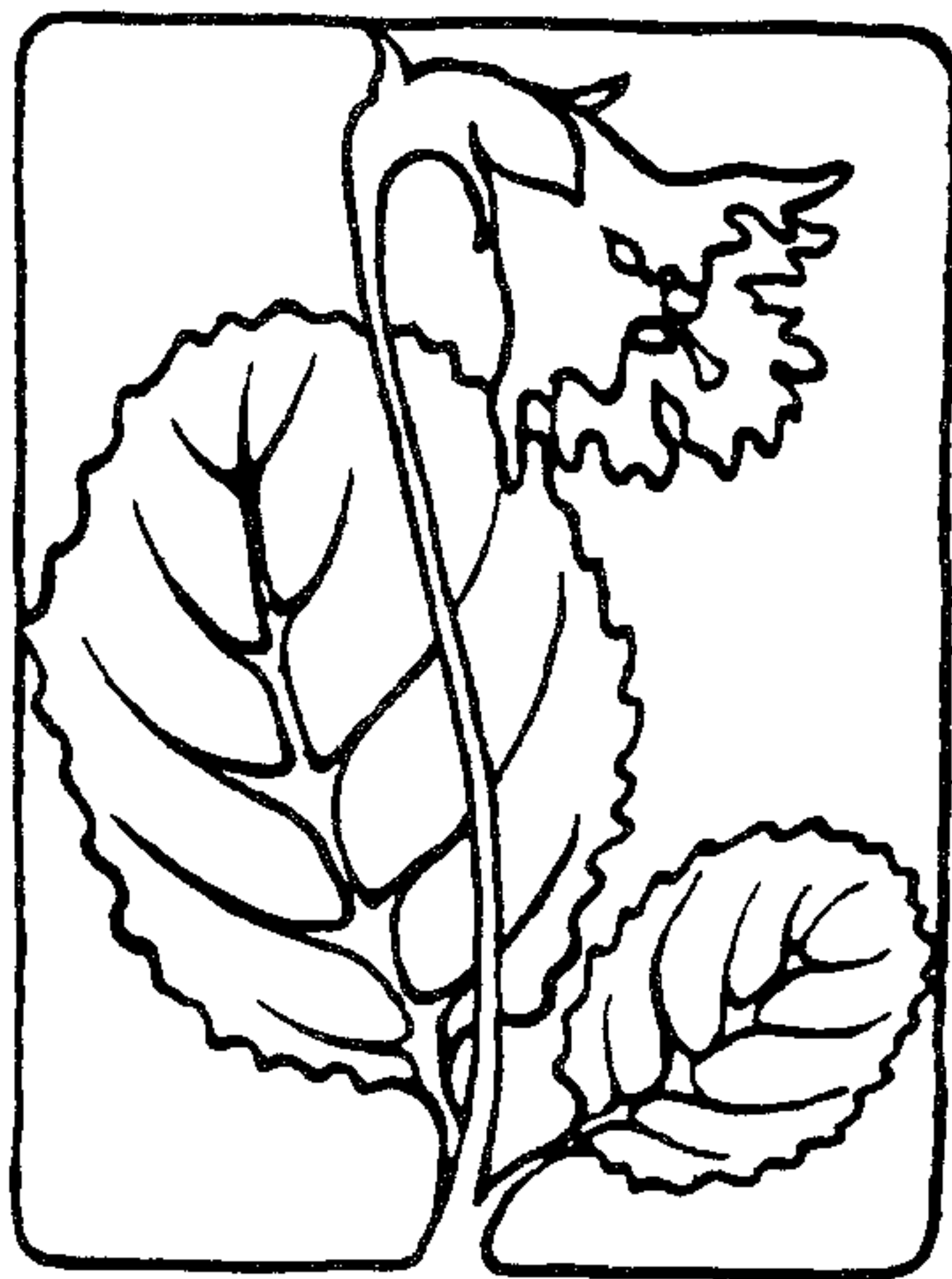


SHORTIA

NEWSLETTER OF THE
WESTERN CAROLINA BOTANICAL CLUB

WINTER 1996-97



ELTON and ALINE HANSENS
Editors

WESTERN CAROLINA BOTANICAL CLUB

President: Don Herrman **Treasurer:** Elaine Montgomery
Vice President: Dean Crawford **Recorder:** Erika Parmi
Secretary: Laverne Pearson **Historian:** Louise Foresman

FROM THE PRESIDENT.....DON HERRMAN

It is a beautiful fall day and I am sitting on the front porch overlooking the peaceful valley below. A steady breeze is beginning to strip leaves from the trees and it is still shirt sleeve weather. I can only hope this weather holds for our remaining hikes.

The Scheduling Committee has just met. Now, this is an informal committee, open to all members. Even though an attractive schedule is in the works, all of the members who met today agree that we need more input from the membership. All you need is to contact your club officers either on a hike, at a winter meeting or by phone.

Sitting on the porch, you realize what a beautiful area this is. One small committee does not know it all. So! lets hear from you.

On our recent hikes it was good to notice the number of walking sticks that were being put to good use. Not only is this a good safety measure, but is also very helpful in pointing out and identifying hard to see plants and flowers. Any "ole" solid stick will do---canes, trekking poles, or hand carved---a walking stick will add to the day.

As the seasons roll around, I have been watching my meadow and sure enough, the ladies' tresses bloomed on October 1. I don't know why I am always amazed by this, but I am. At the same time the red or purple-stemmed aster was in bloom. The longer I looked the more uncertain I became. Is the stem "reddish" or "purplish"?? I am getting conflicting opinions. I would like to get your answer to this question in the next issue of SHORTIA.

Don't forget the **ANNUAL MEETING** of the **WESTERN CAROLINA BOTANICAL CLUB** Friday, January 17, 11:00 a.m. at the Parish House, St. John's Episcopal Church, Flat Rock. See the current WCBC Program Schedule for details.

Special guests at our Annual Meeting will be old-time members George and Opal Lemieux. George has earned a wide reputation as an expert nature photographer, and will exhibit some of his wildflower prints as a feature of the meeting.

Miles Peele's 90th Birthday Party was most enjoyable for all who attended. Miles is now living at Brian Center, P.O. Box 1096, Brevard, NC 28712, Phone: (704) 877-4234. David and Louise Peele thank all who were at the party and write: "he will continue to enjoy seeing you, talking to you on the telephone, or receiving notes or letters."

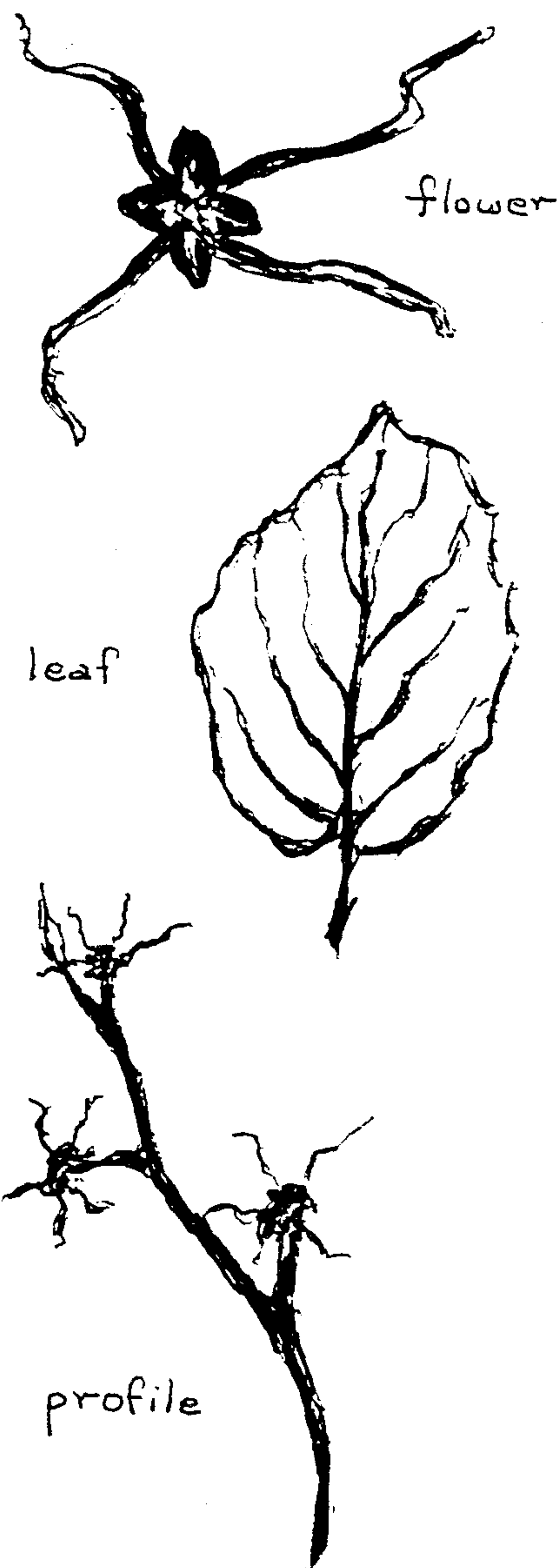
A LATE BLOOMER.....SAM CHILDS

The flowers of Witch Hazel (Hamamelis virginiana) are borne in tight clusters, usually facing outward or downward. Clusters have 3 to 6 blooms. The four petals (yellow, orange, bronze. or reddish) are long and strap-shaped and unfold in a most unusual manner - similar to the uncoiling of fern fiddle-heads. It seems almost incredible that such delicate structures can withstand temperatures near zero degrees F. without damage, but they do this quite well coiling up on very cold days and uncoiling in milder weather.*

The name "witch hazel" is of uncertain origin. It is probably derived from the word wych meaning "to bend" applied because the tough branches of the plants (witching rods) which supposedly bend toward underground water*

Witch hazel is of no value as a timber tree, and its use as an ornamental is limited; nevertheless this species is one of the most widely known southern trees because of its purported supernatural powers when in the hands of "water diviners". Not only is it claimed that the witch hazel fork has the ability to indicate the presence of water when in the hands of such fakirs, but in the past it has also been used by the unscrupulous in attempts to locate buried treasure and precious metals and ores.**

- * Ref. Arnold Arboretum of Harvard Univ.
- ** Ref. Guide to Southern Trees. by E. S. & J. G. Harrar.



"The southern Appalachians...make up the mountainous areas of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee. This is a world where you see mountains rolling like waves, a high, tumbled world fading into the haze, where as many as 130 different species of flowering trees and 11 conifers can be found---more total species than grow in all of Europe".

(from A Field Guide to the Trees and Shrubs of the Southern Appalachians. Swanson, R.E., 1994, p.3.

CAROLINA MOUNTAIN LAND CONSERVANCY

Imagine 600 acres (a square mile) of land lying on the slopes of Little Pisgah Mountain, the highest point in Henderson County, just north of the biologically significant Hickorynut Gorge. Imagine the land covered with trees, uncut for over 60 years, with rich hardwood coves, rock outcrops and a clear running stream with a waterfall running through a deep cleft in the rocks. This land has been owned for 30 years by botanical club members, Tom and Glenna Florence. As they shared the land with family and friends, the forest continued to mature safe from clear cuts, roads and development.

Tom and Glenna were looking for a way to ensure this wooded land would be kept forever in its natural state. In 1994 they began talking with a newly formed local land trust, the Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy (formerly the Natural Heritage Trust of Henderson County). After consulting with their personal attorney and the trust's conservation attorney, they decided to reserve 29 acres of land with two residences for themselves and their children and to donate the surrounding 590 acres to the land trust. On October 1st, Tom and Glenna deeded a one-half undivided interest in the land to the Conservancy. Their plan is to transfer the remaining property within a six year period.

Shawn Oakley, a botanist with the Natural Heritage Program, donated his time this spring and found the rare nodding mandarin (Prosartes maculata) and the uncommon grotto alumroot (Heuchera parviflora var. parviflora) on the property. The Florences have found yellow ladyslipper, yellow fringed orchid, the large whorled pogonia (Isotria verticillata) and the uncommon kidney leaf twayblade (Listera smallii). Biologists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service anticipate that two species of special concern are on the property -- the green salamander and the southern Appalachian wood rat.

With Henderson County and nearby Asheville developing so fast, this land gift has far more significance than its protection of a natural area. It will continue to be a scenic viewshed for residents of neighboring areas and visiting tourists while its thousands of trees will assist in keeping our air clean. Land gifts such as this preserve the quality of life so prized by those of us who live here.

-Anne Ulinski, Chairman, Land Review Committee, Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy

RECORDER'S REPORT FOR AUGUST THROUGH OCTOBER.....ERIKA S. PARMİ

Although our summer and fall weather was generally clear with both warm and cold periods; unfortunately for us several scheduled Fridays were rainy. The Frying Pan Gap trip on Aug. 9 departed from the Ranger Station, but shortly after we arrived on the parkway rain began and the trip was cancelled. Millie Blaha and I, however, continued south on the Parkway and we were doubly rewarded with sunshine and many looks at featherfleece (Stenanthium graminium). We had never seen so many of them along the Parkway. Other trips cancelled because of rain were Lake Issaqueena on Sept. 6, Graveyard Fields on Sept. 27 and Jones Gap on Oct. 18.

There was a magnificent display of coreopsis and black-eyed susans at the Bee Tree Gap meadow on Aug. 2. This trip was held later in the season than usual, so the phlox were past their peak bloom. Unfortunately several of the club members, including the trip recorder, missed this beautiful display, because of clutch failure on the recorder's car. The recorder and her passengers were taken home by other club members.

The mushroom walk on Aug. 16 produced about 30 colorful species, but most members decided the intricacies of identification were too involved to become a collector and consumer of edible mushrooms. The Sky Valley Road trip to Pinnacle Mountain on Aug. 23 was a success with over 50 species seen. The following week's trip, on the other hand, was unsuccessful. It was scheduled as a blueberry picking hike to Ivestor Gap. The leaders found almost no blueberries there, so they changed the destination to Graveyard Fields. It also proved to be less than fruitful and only a few berries were picked by the group. The Blue Ridge Parkway trip south on Sept. 13 was notable--prolific displays of grass of Parnassus, gentians, and turtleheads, all at their peak, plus many other fall flowers. Jackson Park on Sept. 20, Whiteside Mt. on Oct. 11 and Tanbark Tunnel (substituted for Albright Grove) on Oct. 25 were all successfully completed.

The winter indoor meetings will start with a bang with Dick Smith's program "Not Better - But Different". His slide program will highlight the plants of our deserts, seacoasts, cypress swamps and alpine tundra. Let's all support the speaker and get out to Hendersonville and Givens Estates for their programs.

NOTES OF INTEREST

The Editors were pleased and flattered to receive this note from **THE NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN:** "Dan Pittillo gave me your name and address as someone I should contact concerning the newsletter SHORTIA. I am a bryologist at The New York Botanical Garden and am interested in getting it for the Garden's library. I am also interested in obtaining as many of the back issues as are available. I would appreciate any information that you can provide. Thank you. I look forward to hearing from you. Sincerely, (signed) William R. Buck.

We are sending available back issues of SHORTIA.

A biologist, Bambi Teague, from the **BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY** called to request help from WCBC. Bambi and her co-workers Lisa Jamison and Lillian McElrath, wish to meet with interested WCBC members to explore ways to enhance our mutual interests in wildflower preservation. A meeting will be arranged early in 1997. We are also sending them Shortia.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU.....ALINE HANSENS

Ferguson, Ellen: 708 Newfound Rd., Leicester, NC 28748 (704) 683-2485. Has lived in the area since 1980. Recently received her RN degree. Enjoys hiking and learned of WCBC through friend, Susan Isley.



King, Rolland and Francine: 8 Kings Drive, Lake Lure, NC 28746. (704) 625-4130; winter (Nov.-May) 916 Boulevard of the Arts, Sarasota, FL 34236. (941) 365-3426. In the summer months Rolland and Francine reside on their 800 acre farm in Fairfield. Both have an interest in the outdoors and nature. They learned of the WCBC through member Lucie Strayer and have enjoyed several Club hikes.

Merkle, Ralph and Mary: 180 Tranquility Pl., Hendersonville, NC 28739 (704) 692-9248. Ralph, a retired engineer, and Mary, a retired school teacher, have lived in the area 15 years. Their primary interest is in rocks and minerals but enjoy plants and gardening. Mary belongs the Orchid Club in Asheville. They are neighbors of WCBC members Augie and Mary Lou Kehr.

O'Grady, Dana: 7149 Augusta Dr., Green Cove Springs, FL 32043.

FRINGED GENTIAN---A SPECIAL FLOWER.....ELTON and ALINE HANSENS

A beautiful sunny day in late October makes one want to walk, and look, and listen. We went forth following a dirt road that bordered a large marsh in southern Michigan. We found a few asters still in bloom but the fields of goldenrod had become gray stalks. Some of the shrubs were heavy with berries but those attractive to birds were mostly picked clean. The brilliant fall foliage of poison sumac, common in this area, was gone.

Suddenly deep blue color, deeper than the bright blue sky above caught my eye. A few more steps and I stooped down and recognized the beautiful flower of the fringed gentian, (Gentiana crinita).

Fringed gentian is one of the most famous of flowers and is recorded as rare wherever it grows. We have seen it only in Michigan. In North Carolina Radford, Ahles and Bell report them in Ashe, Clay and Macon Counties which appear to be the southern limit for the species.

The plant grows to a height of 1 to 3 ft. Single flowers grow on long stalks. Four delicately fringed petals flare out from the deep corolla tube. As the sun disappears the flowers close to open again with the rising sun. Perhaps this species is rare because it blooms in September and October, bearing relatively few flowers and these have difficulty producing seeds so late in the year. Whatever the reason, fringed gentian is very beautiful and worthy of preservation.

In response to SHORTIA's list of My UN-FAVORITE Plants:

Dear SHORTIA,

How could you?! There on your list of My UN-FAVORITE Plants stand two of my FAVORITES! I am leaping to their defense.

I note that ALL plants listed either feel bad (devil's walking stick, blackberry with thorns, nettles, stick-tights), or taste bad (castor oil), or smell bad (skunk cabbage, but only when the leaf is damaged), or tickle (sneezeweed; does it?), or irritate (poison ivy). Taste, smell, touch--three of the five senses. What about the other two? Plants aren't noisy, so hearing doesn't apply. What about seeing? Do we rule that out when selecting UN-favorites?

The first UN-favorite I defend is poison ivy. Please note: I am highly susceptible to poison ivy. I blister and ooze with the best of the afflicted. But I am also susceptible to beauty.

Consider the wee triplets of leaves poison ivy displays in spring. A close look is easy--buds can be found at any human height--and greatly rewarding. Try a hand lens on them. Surprised? They're handsomely deep red and shiny and veined to perfection.

Consider the dainty flowers. Poison ivy flowers? Prevalent in spring, miniature and green, they blend into surroundings so beautifully that few people notice them, one reason I enjoy them so. They're rather private! Competition for observing is not pushy. One can enjoy them at leisure, unhurried. But of course, picking a bouquet is not recommended.

Consider the vine. It engulfs the ground or climbs a tree and fills all with lush foliage, rich green, shiny, and handsome. How nursery centers and garden catalogs would welcome it if it weren't a do-not-touch species! From spring through fall, it's a great groundcover in shady or sunny spots. Yes, it can get out of hand, but so do pachysandra and periwinkle.

Consider its autumn leaves, one of fall's finest displays. Some leaves turn intense yellow, especially striking against a shadowed background. Some turn red. Watch out for magnificence, the best word to describe the vine's purples, fire-chief reds, and startling red-oranges. Many innocent leaf watchers who enjoy poison ivy's brilliant fall colors would be astonished to know they are admiring, ugh, poison ivy!

Even after leaves drop, poison ivy provides interest. On one autumn beach, Tom and I met a woman gathering sprigs. She told how she enjoyed returning there each fall to gather bayberries. I suggested gently that maybe her bouquet was not bayberries. She announced confidently, "I've been gathering bayberries here for years," implying, emphatically, that she knew them when she saw them. ????. Many bayberry shrubs did surround us, and yes, they were loaded with berries, but that woman had arms loaded with sprigs of poison ivy berries! As she marched off, I tried to suppress a desire for her to break out briefly with a good dose of poison ivy rash just to emphasize my point. But at least she appreciated poison ivy's artistic sprigs, laden with clusters of golden-tan berries, just the size of bayberries!

The second UN-favorite really hit hard, for I had lived 17 years in NJ with a boggy area in my back yard where a fine stand of skunk cabbage thrived. But that could be at least four pages!

Barbara Hallowell

NOTES FROM WHITE SQUIRREL.....CHARLES R. GUNN

As some of you know, I am having trouble walking because of my left leg, especially on hilly terrain. I took an aquatic program this summer, but it has not helped; more slow walking this fall may help. Otherwise, I will be forced to consider an operation. As an arm chair traveller with "you all" this year I have really enjoyed the Recorder's Report by Erika.

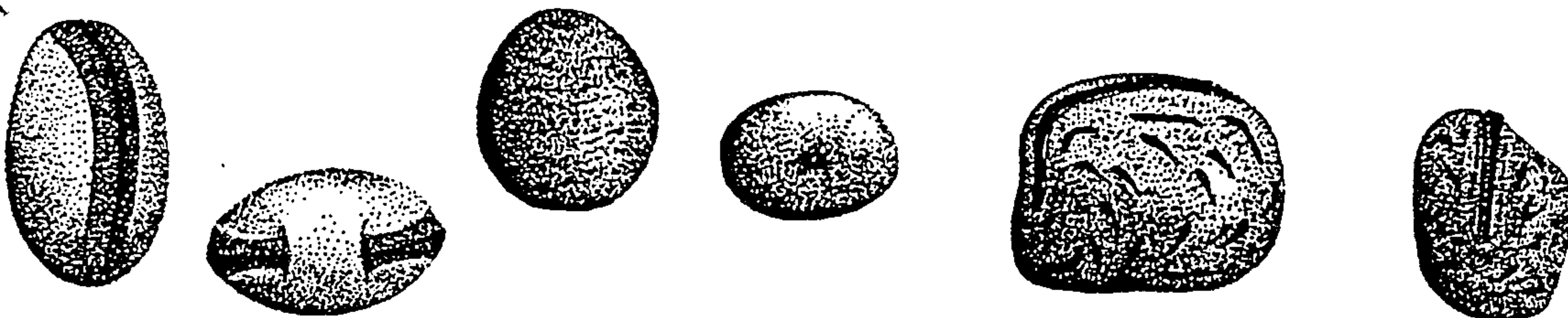
Anne Ulinski's report in the autumn *Shortia* is inspiring and brings back many memories. It reminds me about the vascular-plant checklist I am compiling for Deerlake (our subdivision). I have found about 250 species and have been able to save more than 25 locally "rare" plants from grass cutters, earth movers, tree cutters, etc. Recently I found two plants of *Coreopsis major*, with its false whorled-leaf pattern. It actually has divided opposite leaves. They are growing in the path of a driveway that is yet to be built and they will be moved. I found a small patch of sneezeweed (*Helenium autumnale*) that was not in seed, but alas, they were cut down. Fortunately I found one single young plant on Stone Drive and hope it will not be cut.

I still have some unknowns: One from a patch of small purple-leaved composites was successfully moved from the woods to be identified later. I believe it will be a *Eupatorium*. On the other hand, a single strange plant on a storm drain has such tiny flowers I must use a hand lens to even see them. I hope it sets fruits and seeds. My guess is that it is *Crotonopsis*. Betty is worried about the vine growing over some of our azaleas; it is a monster with heart-shaped leaves and flower heads like a red clover that stayed in bud for weeks. I really want it to bloom before it completely takes over.

One of our joys is finding a new visitor to the naturalized area along our driveway. It is purple milkwort (*Polygala sanguinea*). I have only seen a few of these in Deerlake this year. Our roadside colony of rose-pink (*Sabatia angularis*) was lost this year because of modification of its habitat or the bad winter.

Sue, our artistic neighbor, found a slender ladies' tresses (*Spiranthes lacera*) in bloom in the poorest soil next to her garage. I had just shown her our blooming plant and the next day the blooms were gone.

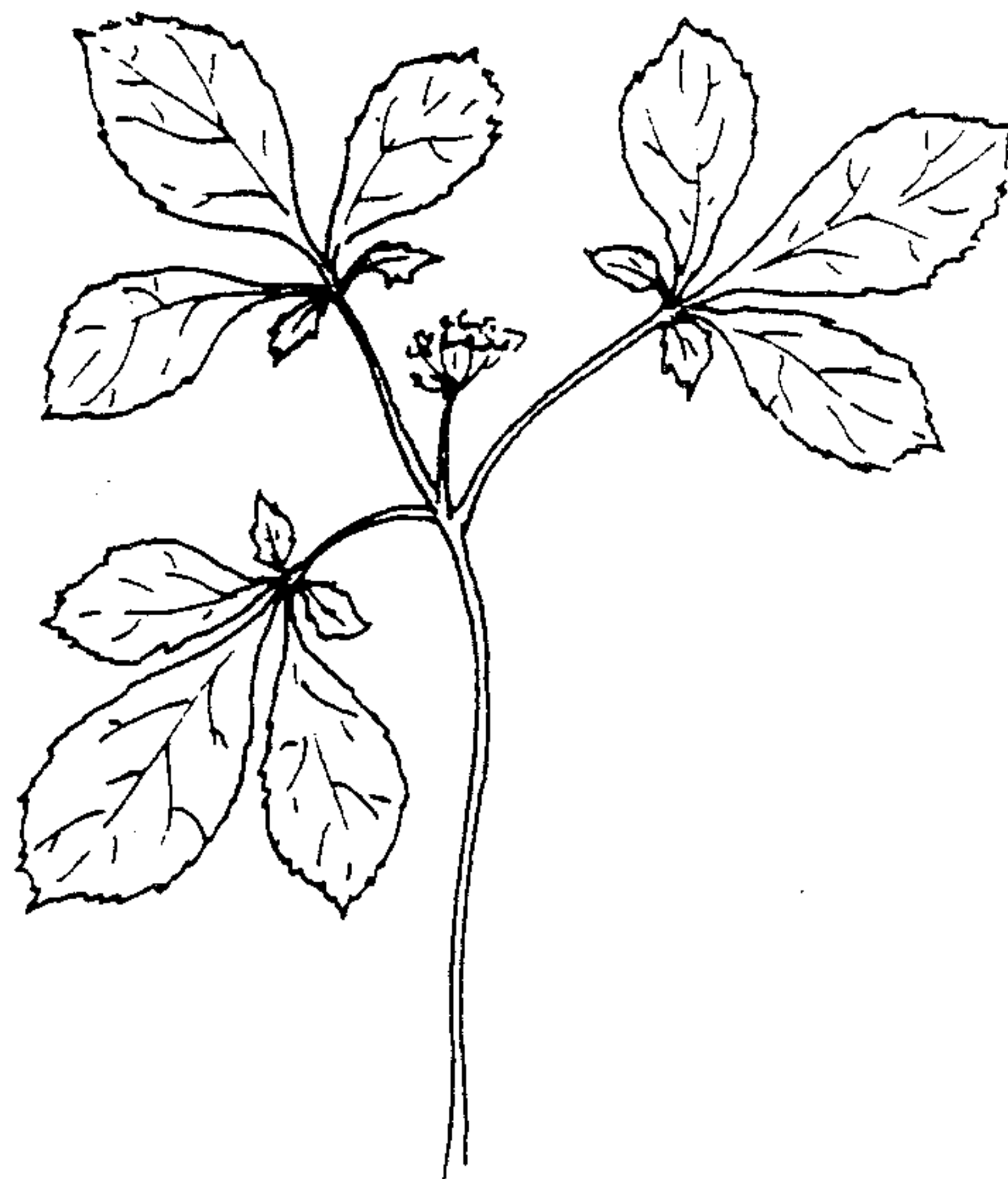
I enjoyed Dick Smith's notes about *Elephantopus*, a favorite of mine. Many thanks to Ruth Hoerich for being so patient with me. (Editor's Note: Dr. Gunn prepares the mailing labels for *Shortia* and Ruth Hoerich does the mailing.)



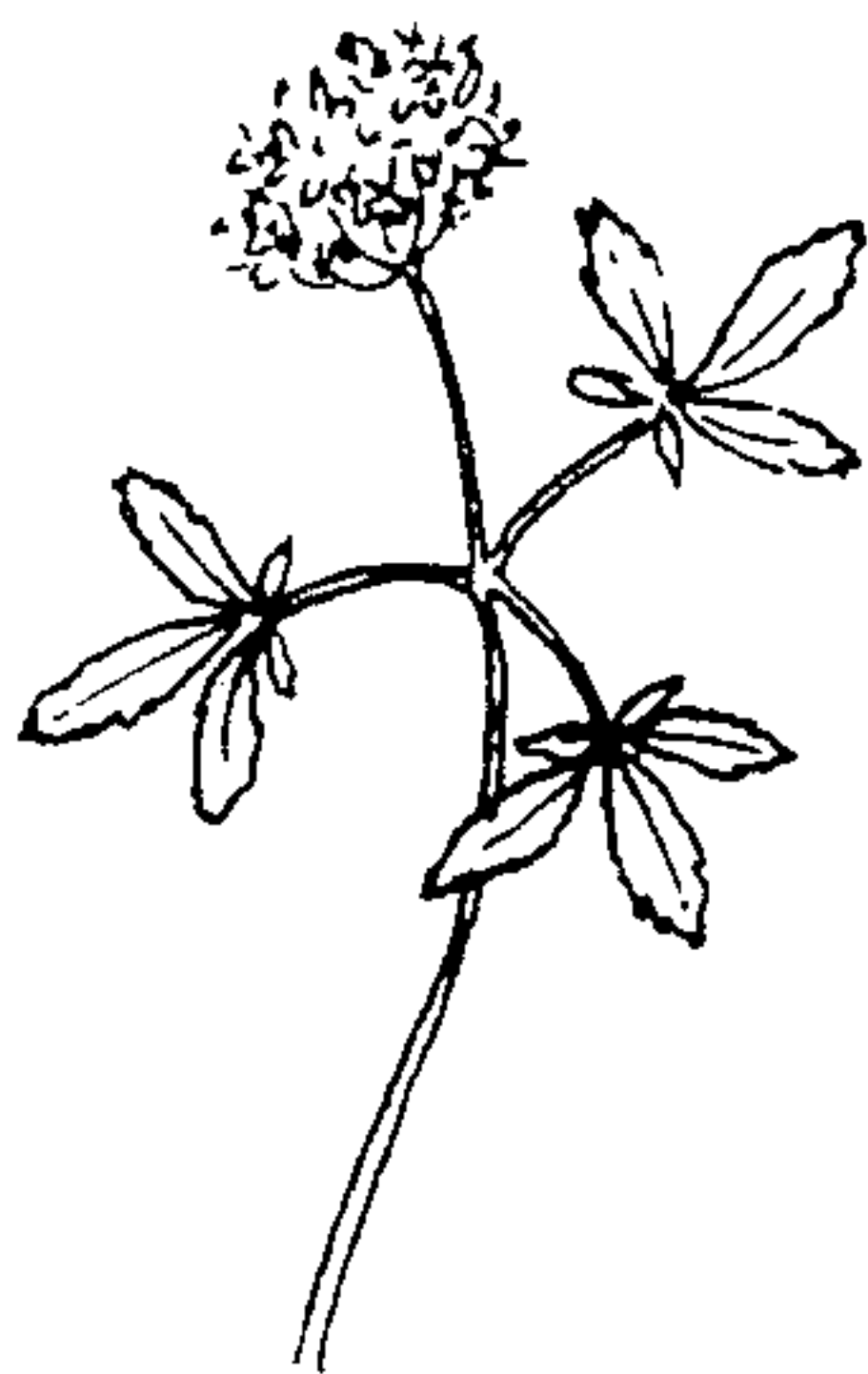
LOOK AGAIN !

It is probably safe to say that anyone who has botanized in the eastern mountains has made at least one conscious attempt at finding Ginseng. The search is made especially tantalizing by the knowledge that there are places where it grows in relative abundance--although perhaps known only to "sang diggers."

When present, the bright red berries make the task easier, but in summer the tiny greenish flowers are insignificant so usually it is the foliage that one must look for. Panax quinquefolius--to give it its scientific name--averages about 15 inches in height. Typically the stem terminates in a whorl of 3 long-stalked, palmately compound leaves each consisting of 5 stalked leaflets with toothed margins, the lowermost pair being conspicuously smaller than the rest. The flowers are borne in a stalked umbel.



P. QUINQUEFOLIUS



P. TRIFOLIUS

Dwarf Ginseng (*P. trifolium*) is common in the north but rather scarce in the southern mountains (but not because of any valuable properties). It is less than 8 inches tall, and its 3 to 5 leaflets are sessile. The flowers are white, crowded in a rounded umbel, and appear in early spring; they are followed by yellowish berries.

Dick Smith

S H O R T I A

Vol. XVIII, No. 4

WINTER 1996

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE WESTERN CAROLINA BOTANICAL CLUB

Editors: Elton J and Aline Hansens Distribution: Ruth Hoerich

Please submit contributions (articles, Letters to the Editors, notes, etc. for the next issue by Jan. 20, 1997 to Aline Hansens, 125 Far Horizons Lane, Asheville, NC 28803.

SHORTIA
c/o Ruth Hoerich
215 Newport Road
Hendersonville, NC 28739

FIRST CLASS
