

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

To help on the
BLACK COHOSH SUSTAINABLE HARVEST STUDY
near
REDDISH KNOB, VIRGINIA

22-24 JUNE 2008

The USDA Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Garden Club of America invite you to participate in monitoring an important native medicinal plant, black cohosh (*Actaea* (= *Cimicifuga*) *racemosa*). Black cohosh root is wild-harvested for use in combating menopausal symptoms. These organizations have been working together as part of the Medicinal Plant Working Group (MPWG; www.nps.gov/medicinal) for more than 5 years to establish long-term sustainable harvest research sites for black cohosh in eastern United States. The sustainable harvest studies are designed to allow volunteers to participate in activities that contribute to the sustainable use and conservation of important medicinal plants on public lands. For more information on the project, visit <http://www.nps.gov/plants/medicinal/projects/2005virginia.htm>

Black cohosh is an erect forest perennial that grows to about 3 feet tall with a two foot spread. The common name comes from the Algonquian Indian word meaning ‘rough,’ which describes the dark, hard, and gnarly rhizome. The plant tolerates a variety of soils, but prefers rich cove habitats – cool, well-drained, moist, semi-shaded woodlands. The USDA hardiness range is 4A to 10A. Vegetative reproduction is by growth of buds from underground rhizomes. Mature plants produce seeds that set as early as June and continue well into August. NatureServe gives black cohosh a secure global heritage conservation ranking, although the group notes that increased market demand has put greater pressures on wild populations. Greater understanding of the impact that harvesting has on plant populations is needed. Volunteers are needed to help collect the data necessary to improve our knowledge of this important medicinal plant.

General Plan: The study is conducted over 2.5 days.

Day 1: Sunday, 22 June, 3 p.m. [tentative time, maybe changed, check with Jim Chamberlain]: Meet for a training session on plant identification, procedures and study protocols. Reception and dinner will follow.

Day 2: Monday, 23 June, approx. 7 a.m.: Caravan/carpool to the study site, to begin data collection. We will eat lunch at the study site [bring your own food]. Time and weather permitting, we may go swimming after work. We will return to the hotel in time for dinner, though it may be late. Plan on working late and through inclement weather. Safety first, though!



Day 3: Tuesday, June 24, approx. 7.a.m.: We will continue to work on the site until all plots have been sampled. Please plan on working as late as possible, as all the plots must get done. If you leave early, then it means more work for others.

Location: The Reddish Knob study site, located on the Dry River Ranger District of the George Washington Jefferson National Forest. It is located in the Shenandoah Mountains, west of Harrisonburg, VA., near the West Virginia border. The site is just off the road, easily accessible and fairly flat.

Accommodations: The closest hotel is the Village Inn (540-434-7355 or 800-736-7355). It is 2 miles North of I-81 Exit #240 on Rt. 11 [4979 South Valley Pike, Harrisonburg, VA 22801]. Other hotels are available in Harrisonburg, but they are less convenient to the study site. Camping is available on the national forest; please check the District's website for information.

What you need: Work boots, long pants, sunscreen, hat, insect repellent, water, lunch, snacks, rain gear [a must]; a sense of adventure and civic duty. No restrooms are available so prepare appropriately.

Questions: Jim Chamberlain, USDA Forest Service, Blacksburg, VA 540-231-3611 or jachambe@vt.edu

