

The logo for the Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont, featuring the text "GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS INSTITUTE AT TREMONT" in white, uppercase letters on a dark grey rectangular background.

Spring 2017

Dear Plant Enthusiasts,

Welcome to the *Southern Appalachian Naturalist Certification Program: Plants*. The Great Smoky Mountains plant communities are blossoming everywhere and will be in full regalia for your arrival in May. We hope this is one of many times we will spend together as we seek naturalist skills and knowledge.

The Smokies are a wonderful place to learn—especially when it comes to plants. This region is a living laboratory known for its biodiversity of plant species and plant communities. By the end of the weekend your head will be full of new information and your heart brimming with a new appreciation for this place through the world of plants. It will be a weekend you won't easily forget!

I hope this finds you getting ready, as it's just around the corner! Since you have registered for an intense weekend full of learning, exploring and seeking out wonders in the botanical world, we want to adequately prepare you for what to expect: (*Please read all of the information in this letter!*)

In Residence:

While in residence we will cover material and skills that could easily take up a semester-long class. If you think this sounds ambitious you are right! In order to accomplish our goals it is necessary for you to do some homework, in the form of readings, to give you the background information needed to take part in discussions and build your toolkit of skills. Be sure to read the document on Basic Botany before your arrival (see the attachment to your email). We will do our best to keep lecture time to a minimum and actually work on learning skills and practicing them in the field. Do NOT feel like you need to have any sort of special skill set related to plants in order to be up to speed—we will learn and practice together and start with plant basics! DO expect to practice the 'sharing' of new knowledge with your new classmates, and do your best to learn a few new terms before you arrive.

Instructor:

I, Jennie McGuigan, will be your instructor for the Plants course. I bring over 20 years of experience teaching and coordinating science programs in the outdoors, most of that in Southern Appalachian ecosystems. I hold an M.Ed in Natural Science/Science Education, which compliments my years of experience as a naturalist and plant enthusiast. During this intense weekend of botanical focus, other guest instructors and I will expose participants to the diversity of plants and plant communities that live in the Smoky Mountains. I am looking forward to learning together in the field, sharing the knowledge I have gained, and

providing a space for each participant to expand their understanding and appreciation of plants.

Field Journal:

As with all of our programs here at Tremont Institute, we model the latest in brain-based pedagogy (the study of how people learn), and will encourage the very best skills in you as a developing Naturalist. As many of you know, keeping and maintaining a field journal of the phenomena you witness in nature, is a long-time Naturalist skill and practice that has much value. We will be making time for ample field journaling during this weekend, so each participant will receive a 6" X 8" blank field journal (no lines) that comes with a weatherproof sleeve. If already have a journal that you would prefer to use, feel free to bring it, but it must fit well in a backpack and it should be in a zip-loc bag, as we will be taking them everywhere during the weekend. Please feel free to get excited about honing this field skill by bringing any colored pencils, watercolors, charcoal pencils, etc.

Arrival and Departure:

Arrival - between 3:00 pm and 5:00 pm on Friday, May 12th

Departure - after the end of class, around 3:00 pm on Sunday, May 14th.

Please be aware of these class times, as they may be different from other workshops you may have taken at Tremont.

Weather:

It may help you to know that over the past five years the average daily high temperature for May was 78° F and the average daily low was 50° F here in Walker Valley. However, weather has been very erratic as of late. Come prepared for cool, moist early mornings and sunny, warm afternoons, with the occasional rain shower. Be prepared to be on your feet, in the hot sunshine or under a rainy canopy. We will also be getting down on our knees to take a look at flowers, plant parts, soil and pollinators. Classes will be conducted outside despite the weather, so be prepared!

Logistics and Preparation:

Please read the "Your Visit to Tremont" link for important packing information. Along with your readings, linens and toiletries, there are a number of things you will need to bring and will make your experience more enjoyable.

DON'T forget to bring:

- Rain gear is always necessary here in the Smoky Mountains.
- An additional layer for cooler mornings and late evenings (*Please do not skimp on the raingear or layers – it will be used everyday, and we will continue all classes, rain or shine!*)
- Sturdy walking shoes/boots (*2 pairs of shoes are recommended*)
- Water Shoes – only if you'd like to explore our streams nearby
- Please also bring a sturdy water bottle or water bladder

- A day pack that has comfortable straps, is big enough to hold Journal, Water bottle, field guide, lunch, and layers. (*So, you can explore hands-free*)
- Clothes you can get dirty
- Hat/sunglasses and sunscreen (if you prefer a specific type)
- A field journal that feels comfortable holding and writing on in the field (to take notes)
- A pen/ pencil
- A sense of adventure!

Additional items you may want to bring

- You may want to bring a mattress pad to ease the firm mattress and perhaps a bedside clip on lamp if you are a late-night reader.
- Bring binoculars if you own a pair and a hand lens for looking at things close up and far away
- Any of your favorite plant guides (*If you don't own any we will have a few to loan when you arrive*)
- We have WiFi in the Activity Center, so you may want to bring a computer/hand-held device for evening research or note taking during indoor lectures. (*However, note that it is a goal of this course to limit the amount of time we spend in doors in lectures, and maximize your hands-on field time*)

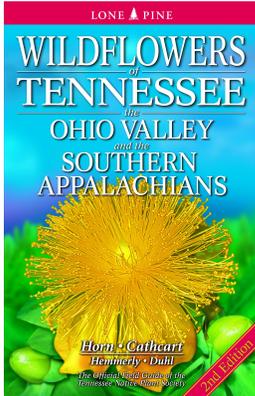
Health & Waiver Form:

Please fill out the Health/Waiver Form and bring it with you to turn in upon check-in. *If you have special needs, dietary, medical, or otherwise, please send in your form two weeks ahead of time so we can prepare for your visit* (go to <http://www.gsmiit.org/Food.html> for more specifics). It will be challenging to accommodate special dietary needs if they are not communicated to us in advance. This form must be filled out and turned in to us for you to participate in the program. Please note that food is not allowed in the dorm, but we will have critter-proof areas for any snack you want to bring (including a small refrigerator in the First Aid Room).

Special Discount for Plants Participants:

During the weekend we will also be offering you a 15% discount in our bookstore. We have a diverse variety of field guides and resources on plants to help you in the field. There will however be little time during the weekend to visit our bookstore, so we will keep the gift store open from 3:00 – 5:30pm on Friday May 6th, which will probably be the best time to visit.

Suggested Field Guide: (To purchase in our book store or ahead of time; Tremont Book store will be open from 3-5 on Friday May 12th and you will receive 15% off)



We suggest that you purchase this excellent field guide to flowers in our region from the Tremont Book Store or prior to attending the workshop! This field guide is used daily by our faculty during the wildflower seasons.

Wildflowers of Tennessee, the Ohio Valley and the Southern Appalachians Paperback (2nd Edition printed in 2013) by: Dennis Horn (Author), Tavia Cathcart (Author)

“A first-rate new guide to more than 1200 species. Photos are easy to use; reproduction quality is excellent.” --Chattanooga Times Free Press

Homework & Pre-Readings:

As mentioned above, please be sure to read your *Basic Botany* homework before you arrive. I hope that this and the rest of the information on our website is helpful to you in planning for your upcoming visit to Tremont. Please tell a friend about us, so that they can learn about the wonders of the Smokies. If you have further questions, please feel free to call me at (865) 448-9732 Ext. 21.

Sincerely,

Jennie McGuigan
School Program Coordinator

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