

Rabbit Tobacco - Silvery splendor and golden memories



Rabbit Tobacco

Winter hikers in rural settings of this area are likely to be rewarded by the sight and smell of a native plant, Rabbit Tobacco, also called "sweet everlasting" because it remains standing long after the growing season ends.

Rabbit Tobacco is unmistakable in appearance: erect, woolly stem with narrow, stalkless leaves, growing to a height of one to two feet, and topped by branched clusters of fragrant whitish/yellow flower heads in late summer into fall. The leaves may grow up to three inches in length, having a smooth upper surface, with woolly hairs underneath. In winter, the upper surface turns black and the dried leaves twist somewhat, exposing the woolly underside, making the plant noticeable for some distance.

Rabbit tobacco is native to most of eastern North America from Canada south to Florida and west to Texas, and north to Nebraska and Minnesota, growing in untended fields, pastures and along road sides.

Upon receiving a plant specimen from European explorers of America in 1756, Linnaeus himself is said to have given the name *Gnaphalium obtusifolium*. The genus name is reportedly derived from a Greek word that means "tuft of wool" and the species name is from the Latin word meaning "dull or blunt," in reference to the rounded leaf (folium) tips.

The fragrant flowers are pollinated by bees, wasps and flies looking for nectar. The plant emits a pleasantly sweet odor somewhat like that of maple syrup, and is the larval host for the Painted Lady butterfly.

Rabbit Tobacco was well known to American Indians who used it to treat cuts, strengthen them for protection in battle, and to prevent bad luck. More recent herbalists have used it as a sedative and mild pain reliever, and in treatment of throat and respiratory conditions like colds, flu, pneumonia and asthma. Form of application varies from chewing and smoking, to applying or drinking a tea made from dried leaves.

Smoking Rabbit Tobacco was somewhat a rite of passage for rural kids in this area.

Do lunch and make a difference

Mountain Regional Arts and Craft Guild, Inc. and ArtWorks, its retail outlet, are thrilled that local restaurant owner/chef James Reaux has decided to donate proceeds from patrons who lunch at The ChopHouse of Hiawassee on Thursday, March 24, 2011, from 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Reaux says "The restaurant is doing well and as part of the community, I feel the arts are an important part of a thriving area so I want to do my part to support it and invite everyone to join in and 'do lunch' to help the Guild out."

The ChopHouse of Hiawassee is located at the bridge on Highway 76 up the hill perfectly situated with views of beautiful Lake Chatuge. By the way, try the she-crab soup and crab cakes, signature dishes, you'll come back for again and again.

Mountain Regional Arts and Crafts Guild Inc. is a private, non-profit organization founded in 1988 to promote and encourage arts and crafts in the mountain region. The Guild has over 70 members, many of whom teach classes and sell their handcrafted items in ArtWorks, the Guild's non profit retail outlet store in Hiawassee that opened in 2006. The store is located at 308 Big Sky Drive, behind the Holiday Inn Express. For more information on the Guild and even membership, see www.mtnregartscraftsguild.org or call ArtWorks 706-896-0932. T(Mar16,FL)SH

The dried leaves were rolled in cigarette papers sneaked from dad's Prince Albert supply or in torn pieces of brown paper sacks. Tales abound!

The exact origin of the common name is unclear. It may be linked to Indian legends regarding the curative properties

of the plant on the wounds of an injured rabbit. Or it may be from the fact that it is a favorite food of rabbits. Perchance gardeners could plant this one among their own favorite plants to deter the rabbits?

For information about activities of the Preservation

Committee, contact Clare Johnston at the Georgia Mountain Research and Education Center (706-745-2655) or visit the website www.gmrec.uga.edu.

By Geri O'Brien,
Preservation Committee

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bers will help serve up eggs, sausage and pancakes. Patrons will have the option of chasing their meals with orange juice or coffee.

Each year, patrons who purchase a breakfast plate at the annual Pancake benefit will help provide monies that provide scholarships for local high school students to allow them to further their education.

Last year, more than 400 persons attended the event and broke bread with the lodge members and their families.

Lodge members know that the economy is tight. For

that reason alone, they don't get many donations. So they come out on a cool, brisk March morning to roll up their sleeves and do what they can to raise money.

The money is wisely spent; locals know where it goes.

Masonic endeavors benefit the community. The lodge not only uses its fundraising efforts on scholarships.

The group also helps out with families at Christmas, they donate to families in dire straits, they give to the Masonic Orphanage Home and they give to the needy on a moment's notice.

"You can count on the majority of the money we raise staying local," Past Master Trance King said. "The economy has been in the ditch and it is times like these that keeping that money local that really means something.

Lodge members do their best to help families who are doing without and have kids that don't have anything to speak of. The Pancake Breakfast is all about making a difference in the local community and the Masons have been doing that for a real long time.

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