

Sassafras Leaves

The Sassafras Mountain Newsletter

Fall 2007

SMEPOA Board Members 2007-2008

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I hope you all are looking forward to the cooling weather and the most beautiful time of year on our mountain. We live in a community that is like a vacation destination. Even the drive up the mountain can be breathtaking this time of year.

You may have noticed the road work that has begun on Upper Sassafras. We should be able to complete this year's road improvement on or ahead of schedule. Your diligence in paying the road assessment on time has improved each year. This year there are less than half the number of late payers than last year, and less than a quarter from 2005. Your attention to this need is commendable and very much appreciated.

I hope to see many of you at the SMEPOA Picnic on October 14th at Amicalola Falls. What could be better than good food and fellowship? Don't forget the Community workday on Nov 11th. Your board will be working on the corner of Cold Stream and Upper Sassafras.

Thanks for all your support!
Anita



Firewise News



The Wildcat Community has had a busy three months improving our Firewise organization. Both Big Canoe and Burnt Mountain Estates have joined with SMEPOA, Monument Falls, Tomahawk Civic Association, Windsong, and Wintermont. With the addition of these two communities we have organized almost all the entire mountain community in our efforts to improve emergency services in this area of Dawson and Pickens counties.

We have increased the awareness of our Firewise efforts with the Dawson County Board of Commissioners. Thanks to Clayton Preble of SMEPOA, Bill Saling, George Thurman, and Bob Crouch of Big Canoe, we were instrumental in convincing the Commissioners to include funds in the SPLOST V initiative for construction of a multi-use community center. We are especially pleased that the Commissioners recognized the need for an emergency shelter in this area in the event of a disaster and included this concept in the design of the structure. Big Canoe has offered to donate five acres on Hubbard Road for this. In addition to emergency management and shelter, the center will provide important services in this area of Dawson County that are not being met today. The center will provide meeting facilities capable of serving up to 500 people, space for a voting station adequate to meet the growing voting requirements of our community, provide a location to offer after school and summer youth programs, and a place for a satellite facility of the existing Dawson County Senior Center that would offer daily programs and activities for seniors.

We are preparing an emergency management plan. We have secured the services of the Georgia Forestry Commission and Emergency Management personnel from Dawson and Pickens Counties as consultants. The plan will contain contact information for emergency services, identify emergency management resources, procedures for alerting residents in the event of emergency conditions, and other information that will help manage disaster events. We will use this plan to identify and prioritize our emergency management needs.

Our Firewise efforts have attracted state and national attention. On October 3 members of the Wildcat Board will meet with U. S. Forest Service personnel and personnel from the Southern Group of State Foresters to learn of success in organizing a large number of communities and gaining the support of both Dawson and Pickens county governments. SMEPOA will be represented by Clayton Preble and John Edwards at this meeting.

We invite anyone who is interested in helping with emergency service development to join with us. For information, contact John Edwards at jsolo@mindspring.com or phone 706.692.4314.

Road Report

On September 24th ditch and shoulder work began on the lower part of Upper Sassafras and should be finished at the time of this newsletter. Hopefully, by the first of November we will have the paving of Upper Sassafras completed, as far as our budget will allow. High reflective white lines and yellow reflectors will be replaced as quickly as possible. Please bear with us on any work being done.

We will have a community clean up day on November 11th.

Clearing brush and undergrowth from around your home is a part of our Firewise commitment.

Also, if you clear leaves and debris along your frontage, especially around your driveway culverts, it will help with maintenance of our roads.

Hope to see you November 11th.



Remember - Set Your Clocks back One Hour at 2:00 a.m. Sunday, November 4th

Don't Leave It Be

Lessons in Mountain Living can be tough, and expensive, to learn. If you're new to life year-round on the mountain, here is a safety tip for driving in the fall. BLOW THE LEAVES OFF OF YOUR DRIVEWAY! ESPECIALLY IF YOU HAVE A STEEP DRIVEWAY! Those beautiful leaves that bring people from far and wide to experience their beauty, can hide a nasty little secret. They are VERY SLIPPERY, ESPECIALLY WHEN WET! One newbie found this out the hard way last year when, innocently leaving for work one misty morning, he was thrown from his driveway by a layer of those colorful leaves into a tree, resulting in over \$2,000 worth of damage to his car! He also lost a tree! This is true not only of driveways, but of the roads as well. When you approach a section of road that is carpeted with leaves, slow down and drive as if you are driving on ice. Even if it has not rained recently, moisture can be trapped beneath the leaves and can create a slippery obstacle. Enjoy the beauty of the leaves; beware the danger they can present!

NOT LIONS AND TIGERS AND BEARS, OH MY!



No, Dorothy, we're not in Kansas anymore! We're here atop Sassafras Mountain, where we've all moved to live amidst the beauty of the North Georgia mountains. So while a Toto (a dog, for those who might not be familiar with "The Wizard of Oz") or two - even up to three Totos - are perfectly legal within the SMEPOA covenants, lions and tigers and bears (except those roaming the mountain of course) are a no-no.



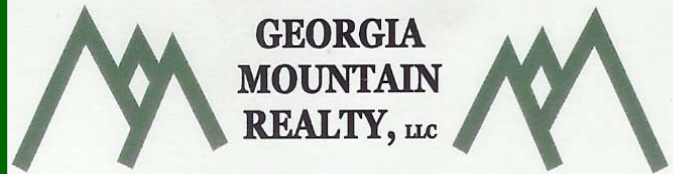
According to the original covenants, ownership of "livestock or poultry of any kind" is strictly prohibited. Also, use restrictions in the Additional Covenants prohibit actions which could reasonably constitute a nuisance, annoyance or health hazard to other property owners, their guests, tenants or invitees. So if your Toto is barking at all hours of the night, if you have a cock-a-doodle-do that rouses your neighbors at the break of dawn, or you're raising a moo-moo, please take steps to comply with the rules. You can find them online at www.smepoa.org. You might not be aware that your special pet is causing a problem for others, and the people who live here are so darn neighborly, that they hate to complain and hurt your feelings. Your neighbors will appreciate it when you ensure that your rights to pet ownership do not infringe upon their rights to a quiet, offensive odor free environment where we live together in harmony. You know, like in the land of Oz! Just prettier!





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The Sassafras of Sassafras Mountain

At first glance, our native northern Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*) appears pretty much like any other rough-barked small tree or shrub. If you look closely it does have variably-shaped leaves that look like green suede in summer and that light the world with flame colors in autumn, and candelabra-like slender branches that look good all winter. Ever year or two, the female trees have a nice crop of pea-sized, bright blue berries on equally bright red stems. Then, of course, there are the fat green and red buds that sometimes look like onion domes before they bust into early season sprays of delicate yellow-green flowers.



Four different leaf shapes can be found on one sassafras tree: three lobed, elliptical, two lobed/right side, and two lobed/left side. The deciduous leaves can grow up to six inches by four inches.

There's a lot to tell about this American native. The story starts back when dinosaurs were running around loose. Some 80 or so million years ago, when a good part of the earth was warm and moist, the *Lauraceae* (Laurel) family was going great guns. There are reports that, in North America alone, fossils have been found for at least 25 laurel clan members. Our sassafras is one of only three surviving species of the subdivision of Lauraceae known as the genus "Sassafras". The cousins of our Sassafras include the cinnamon tree, the camphor tree, the avocado, the sweet bay the popular seasoning leaf which is also the laurel that crowned old-time Greek and Roman heroes and the northeast's spicebush, a wonderful hardy understory shrub; the bark of which is sometimes used as a substitute for the Caribbean's allspice. The growing plant repels mosquitoes and other insects, so it is a beneficial companion plant to have in your yard.

Europeans exploring North America in the early 1500's observed the medicinal use of Sassafras by Native Americans, but thought that the plant was the East Indian cinnamon

tree. This is understandable because, at the time, they thought that they were in India. Whatever, Sir Walter Raleigh, a one-time favorite of Queen Elizabeth I who was later executed for treason, is said to have created a major stir when he brought Sassafras back to England from the "Virginia Colony", in the very early 1600's.

Europeans got the idea that Sassafras was a "wonder drug" that could cure almost anything. Even better yet, the belief somehow developed that Sassafras would retard old age. Sassafras does seem to have antibacterial and antiviral properties that are good, for example, at warding off colds.

So, by the mid-1600's, Sassafras became the Americas' number two export to Europe; number one being tobacco, and number three probably being cane sugar products such as molasses and rum.

Following its stunning European debut, various parts of the Sassafras tree came to be widely used in food and medicine. Sassafras oil, extracted from the root bark, was used to flavor many things. Root beer was named for the beverage's major flavoring agents which, you guessed it, were the roots of our friend combined with fermented molasses. People also ingested gallons of sassafras tea, believed to be healthful as well as delicious. Sassafras leaves were ground up and widely sold as "filè" powder, a major Cajun seasoning and thickening agent.

In later years, as the science of chemistry developed, it was discovered that what made Sassafras oil so tasty was a chemical compound "safrole". While safrole is found in at least 70 plants, what distinguished Sassafras is the unusually high concentration of the chemical in the tree's root bark.

Things went merrily on their way until the 1960's when the FDA banned safrole's use as an additive after safrole was found to cause liver cancer in rats. In the 1970's, sale of safrole-containing sassafras tea was also banned. So much for this age-defying "wonder drug". If you tear or crush the leaves, they smell like root beer. You can make tea with the leaves by pouring boiling water over a handful, letting them sit covered, away from the heat, 20 minutes, then straining out the leaves. The roots of small saplings are even better.

Today, (*Sassafras albidum*) leaves, which are low in safrole are still widely sold as "filè" powder. If you have an unpolluted source of Sassafras, it is said that you can make your own filè for gumbo and the like by drying very young leaves, then grinding them in a spice mill. Sassafras extracts, after being treated to remove all but legally-permitted trace amounts of safrole, are still used in candy, beverages, perfumes, soaps, and the like. However, without the good old safrole, the resulting products just do not have the same aroma or flavor impact. So, it is true: root beer does not taste as good as when we, I, were kids.

As fall approaches, the red, orange, purple and gold leaves of the Sassafras will be enjoyed by all who see them. As you enjoy their beauty, think back to the Native Americans that roamed these woods and enjoyed this native America spice.



Info and tickets at www.pickensanimalrescue.org



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THE LOVEJOY WAY

Bonnie Lovejoy doesn't seem like the kind of person who would threaten someone. And certainly not a neighbor. Quiet, reserved, a former third grade teacher ... Bonnie just doesn't look the type. But oh, how looks can deceive! Simply because I roped her into being the subject of this profile, this mild-mannered, peace-loving, gardening grandmother threatened me! I kid you not! And I have saved that threat on my email. Like a smoking gun. Her words are unequivocal: "Wait till I get my hands on you!"

One must understand: this IS typical Lovejoy behavior. Not the threat, of course, but the desire to remain out of the spotlight; the humble deflection of almost any attempt to publicly recognize her countless contributions and neighborly deeds. Quite simply, Bonnie and her husband, Kris, quietly and graciously give more of their time and energies to this community than most people could ever imagine. Just don't ask them to stand up and be recognized for their efforts. That's not the way it's done; it's not "the Lovejoy way."

What **is** the Lovejoy way is seemingly tireless devotion of one's days to community service. Bonnie, who has been a member of the SMEPOA board for several years, presently serves as its secretary. She never misses a meeting. Ever. For who would take minutes in her absence? She organizes the annual picnic, reserves the facilities, assists (if not single-handedly, then with both hands) in the annual members' meeting, reserves the facilities, hosts board meetings, recruits new members for the association, cajoles some of the older ones, and (although I don't **know** this to be a fact) probably cooks most of the meals in the Lovejoy household. Kris, she explains, loves to be outdoors.

That love has translated into a wonderful benefit for Kris (who is probably somewhere outside while dinner is being cooked) as well as the Sassafras Mountain community. For he, along with Dennis Leath, comprises SMEPOA's fearless two-man road warrior crew. On any given day they can be seen mowing, chopping, edging and sweating their way along Sassafras Mountain's winding roads, making the mountain a safer and more beautiful place for all of us to live.



Bonnie and Kris met many moons ago while at the University of Georgia. How many? I didn't ask, for fear of further reprisal. At any rate, they fell in love (you can still see it in their eyes and smiles), got married, had two girls, Kathryn and Janne, and now have a passel of grandchildren. As Bonnie so aptly puts it, "life happened." While it was happening Bonnie worked as a district sales manager for Avon for 15 years and then taught school in Gwinnett County for 13 years. Kris worked as a land surveyor and then went into management of field crews. They bought their lot on Lower Sassafras in 1996, built their home in 1998, and retired to their "heaven" two years later.

I imagine that on any given night you can smell the sweet aromas of Bonnie's home-cooked meal wafting from the kitchen. Kris, she explains, is a wonderful cook as well, and prepares all the couple's breakfasts, but he really loves to be outdoors.

There is absolutely nothing wrong with this picture. It's just the Lovejoy way.

Editor's Note: This is one in a series of articles profiling the people who live on Sassafras Mountain. We welcome your comments, as well as your suggestions about other people whose interests, industry and involvement create the fabric of our community. Please send your suggestions to Mike Moran at midtownm@aol.com.

Winter Report

This winter, if the weather brings snow or ice, please be very careful if you decide to take the chance of getting out on the road in your car. If at all possible stay home, warm and safe, enjoying the beauty of winter and out of the hazardous conditions.

High nitrated fertilizer like 34-0-0 works great to improve navigability in ice or snow. It is wise to carry two or three bags of either sand, salt or fertilizer in your car(s) at all times during the winter season. Please remember, we do not have a maintenance department to address road obstructions in bad weather, be it storm debris or ice and snow. Neighbors are willing to help if you venture out and become stuck, but they may not always be available, so be prepared.

If you need weather updates from the mountain, feel free to call Joyce or Dennis Leath at 706 692-0217 for

Upper Sassafras or Bonnie or Kris Lovejoy at 706 692-0968 for Lower Sassafras, or check online at <http://www.canoodlenest.com/weather/>



SMEPOA Community Work Day
Sunday, November 11

Workday suggestions:

Clean leaves out of ditches to promote proper drainage from roads

Remove trash and debris from side of road

Ensure that water drains away from the road and not from your property onto the road

Clear leaves and debris from culverts on your property

Remove any clutter from yard

Ensure that equipment (trailers, tractors, mowers, etc.) are stored properly out of sight

Check for dead trees and/or limbs that need removal

Spruce up entry

Plant now for springtime blooms



SASSAFRAS MOUNTAIN PICNIC

Sunday October 14, 2007

Come join the fun and meet your neighbors!



3:00 to 6:00PM

**Amicalola Falls State Park
Group Shelter Building**

*Cost: \$5.00 per person plus a
Park Pass: \$3.00 per vehicle, at the Visitor Center or collection
boxes located throughout the Park*

Please bring a picnic side dish or dessert to share with your neighbors.

Please bring your own drinks.

Provided: Meat, dinnerware and facility rental. There is an electric range in the Shelter, but don't count on any other electrical outlets.

NO PETS and NO ALCOHOL are permitted at the Shelter.

Directions: Hwy. 53W out of Dawsonville (or Hwy. 136E from Jasper) to Hwy.183 to Hwy. 52E. Follow signs to the Park. Once inside the park, go straight, then bear to the right. The shelter is the first one on the right.



RSVP to Bonnie

706-692-0968 or
kbonsassy@hotmail.com