

**New York Flora
Association**

Address: P.O. Box 122
Albany, NY 12201
Phone: (518)250-6054
Email: editor@nyflora.org
Website: www.nyflora.org
Blog: www.nyfablog.org
Editor: Anne Johnson

Articles Inside:

Things Found Botanizing	1
Cardinal Flower	2
Fern Field Trip	3
Milton Baxter	5
Membership Report	7

Editor's Note: In response to the request in the last issue for stories of influential botanists, Steven Daniel has contributed an article on Milton Baxter, Rochester's Botanist. Don't forget – if you too have a favorite botanist that you feel deserves a tribute, please let us know, however long or short an article, if even just a paragraph, all would be welcome!

NYFA Board of Directors

David Werier – President
Steve Young – Vice-President
Joe McMullen – Treasurer
Anna M. Stalter – Secretary
Ed Frantz – Past President

Directors

Michael Burgess
Steven Daniel
Aissa L. Feldmann
Ed Frantz
Eric Lamont
Andrew P. Nelson
Richard Ring
Dan Spada
Connie Tedesco
Priscilla Titus

Things Found Botanizing

By Steve Young from Ted Baim

If you have botanized to any extent, you have probably come across weird or useful things lying around in the woods. Ted Baim, an amateur botanist from Niskayuna, now deceased, and the author of the Flora of Schenectady County, botanized the Capital District and the Adirondacks from the 1930s to the 1990s. During his travels, he kept a list that he called “Some of the things found while botanizing, somewhat strange, useful or otherwise interesting.” I share his list here since it is the only one like it I have ever seen from a botanist. It shows that Ted had a sharp eye for many things in the field in addition to his plants.

- 1 Enfield bayonet – Plotterkill, Schenectady County, 1935
- 1 ax – Plotterkill, Schenectady County, 1936
- 1 dollar – Plotterkill, 1938
- 1 dollar – Town of Rotterdam, Schenectady County, 1957
- 3 dimes – Pennsylvania, 1957
- 4 half-dollars – Niskayuna, 1960
- 1 stolen car, model 1959 – sand plain, 1960
- Pliers – Outlet of Lewey Lake, Hamilton County, 1965
- 1 peavey, about 1900 – near Rocky Falls, Essex County, 1970
- 1 History of the Civil War 8 ¾ x 11 ¾ illustrated with Brady photographs and 16 colored plates published in 1922, the 50th anniversary of the Civil War - southern Montgomery County, 1970
- 1 hatchet – near the summit of Mount Marcy, 1970
- 1 raft shackle – Scotts Clearing, Essex County, 1973
- 5 dollars – Niskayuna, 1983
- 1 dollar – Falls of the Plotterkill, 1983
- 12 cents – Scotts Clearing, 1983
- 1 Dr. Baxter's Mandrake Bitters bottle by Lord Bros., Burlington, VT – Scott's Clearing, 1983
- 3 Renne's Pain Killing Magic Oil bottles – Scott's Clearing, 1983
- 1 Flashlight – Plotterkill, Schenectady County, 1984
- 1 7-power French binoculars in bad shape – no location, 1984
- 5 dollars – Niskayuna, July 8, 1987
- 1 cheap, made in Taiwan, hunting knife with hollow handle and compass set in screw-on top. Contents of the handle: 6 fish hooks, 3 split shot, hank of really thin nylon thread, 17 inch piece of wire with electrical connectors at each end and 6 matches – Plotterkill, 1987
- 1 round bottomed sodapop bottle about 1905 – In gorge at the upper end of the Cascade Lakes, no year
- 1 nickel – Scotts Clearing, no year.

On my next trip up an Adirondack peak I think I could use some of that pain killing magic oil!



The preceding short article made me think about what I have come across in the woods while botanizing. The answer is definitely not as much! The occasional deflated helium balloon or stray beer bottle, sometimes old wood stove parts, but nothing like Ted Baim's finds. (Perhaps because there are fewer people up here in the north country?) If this article has made you think about the strange things you have found in your travels through the woods, send reports to editor@nyflora.org and we will post them in the newsletter.

You can read more about Ted Baim in an article written for the 1997 NYFA newsletter:

http://www.nyflora.org/files/1112/9117/0358/NYFA_Newsletter_Vol_8_2_97.pdf

You may also see an example of his artistic abilities here:

<http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/collections/biology/illustrations/images/baim.html>



Cardinal Flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*) New York's 2014 Wildflower of the Year

How do we select the species?

Each year the board of the New York Flora Association nominates different wildflowers that are voted upon by the NYFA members that attend the annual meeting in the spring.

Criteria for Board Selection

1. Must be an herbaceous flowering plant native to New York
2. Should be a plant that has a wide distribution or a rare plant that needs preservation or represents a habitat that needs preservation
3. Should possess unique or attractive characteristics that can increase the public's awareness of New York's wildflowers

At the annual meeting last May Cardinal Flower was selected to be the wildflower of the year for 2014.

What does the selection mean?

The wildflower of the year will be honored and promoted during all activities of the Association. For common species, members will be encouraged to send us locations and photographs where there are outstanding populations and for rare plants, members will be encouraged to help preserve areas where they occur. Members can send in photos of all parts of the plant that we will post to our web site and to the NYFA Atlas. In the next newsletter, we will publish localities from around the state where people have documented cardinal flower in the past. Don't miss our vote this spring for wildflower of 2015.



Cardinal flower at Indian Lake, photo by Steve Young



Fern Field Trip to Joralemon Park, September 2013

Mark Fitzsimmons and Al Breisch were our excellent guides to this fern hotspot of Eastern New York. Mark and Al have been cataloging the fern species at this Town of Coeymans park for many years and the number of ferns we saw did not disappoint us. Starr Road splits the park in half and on the west side of the road we saw:

<i>Osmunda claytonii</i>	interrupted fern
<i>Botrychium dissectum</i>	cut-leaved grape fern
<i>Botrychium virginianum</i>	rattlesnake fern
<i>Dryopteris marginalis</i>	marginal wood fern
<i>Dryopteris carthusiana</i>	spinulose wood fern
<i>Dryopteris intermedia</i>	intermediate wood fern
<i>Polystichum acrostichoides</i>	Christmas fern
<i>Cystopteris bulbifera</i>	bulblet fern
<i>Cystopteris fragilis</i>	fragile fern
<i>Adiantum pedatum</i>	northern maidenhair-fern
<i>Athyrium filix-femina</i> ssp. <i>angustum</i>	lady fern
<i>Phegopteris hexagonoptera</i>	broad beech fern
<i>Onoclea sensibilis</i>	sensitive fern
<i>Polypodium virginianum</i>	rock polypody
<i>Thelypteris palustris</i>	marsh fern
<i>Thelypteris noveboracensis</i>	New York fern
<i>Asplenium platyneuron</i>	ebony spleenwort
<i>Asplenium rhizophyllum</i>	walking fern
<i>Asplenium trichomanes</i>	maidenhair spleenwort

After lunch we explored the east side of the road and saw:

<i>Athyrium filix-femina</i> ssp. <i>angustum</i>	lady fern
<i>Onoclea sensibilis</i>	sensitive fern
<i>Dryopteris marginalis</i>	marginal wood fern
<i>Dryopteris cristata</i>	crested wood fern
<i>Dryopteris X boottii</i>	Boott's wood fern
<i>Asplenium platyneuron</i>	ebony spleenwort
<i>Asplenium ruta-muraria</i>	wall-rue spleenwort
<i>Polypodium virginianum</i>	rock polypody
<i>Polystichum acrostichoides</i>	Christmas fern
<i>Botrychium virginianum</i>	rattlesnake fern
<i>Thelypteris noveboracensis</i>	New York fern
<i>Osmunda cinnamomea</i>	cinnamon fern
<i>Osmunda regalis</i>	royal fern
<i>Dennstaedtia punctilobula</i>	hay-scented fern
<i>Diphasiastrum complanatum</i>	trailing clubmoss
<i>Pellaea atropurpurea</i>	purple-stemmed cliff-brake
<i>Deparia acrostichoides</i>	silvery spleenwort
<i>Diplazium pycnocarpon</i>	glade fern
<i>Matteuccia struthiopteris</i>	ostrich fern
<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> var. <i>latiusculum</i>	bracken fern
<i>Selaginella rupestris</i>	rock spikemoss

Thanks to Al and Mark for a great day with good company at a very diverse site.





Participants from left to right: Ken Hull, Ruth Schottman, Mike Feder, Al Breisch, Rich Kelly, Connie Tedesco, Joanne Schegel, Andy Greller, Mark Fitzsimmons, Michael Suita, Ingrid Haeckel, Othonio Dominguez, Christopher Graham, and Kevin Bliss. Photo Steve Young.



In addition to the many fern species, we also saw fern allies like this rock spikemoss, *Selaginella rupestris*.



Milton Baxter, Rochester's Botanist 1855-1938

by Steven Daniel

In the last NYFA news there was an interesting biographical sketch of Mildred Faust, and our faithful editor requested that others send in stories about their 'favorite' botanist. Milton Baxter immediately came to my mind. Although largely unknown to most botanists today, Milton played a pivotal role in our understanding of the plants of western New York – Monroe County and vicinity.

I learned of Milton Baxter as I worked through the *Carex* in the Rochester Academy of Science herbarium (ROCH). He was a prolific collector. Of the over 2500 *Carex* sheets from New York, Baxter collected over 1400 – more than 55% of the collections. Looking through other groups of plants in the herbarium – we estimate between 60,000 and 70,000 are from New York - Baxter's collections appear to be represented across all groups. He appears to have been an equal opportunity botanist, though I suspect he may have had a special fondness for sedges. His accuracy was outstanding. Some contemporaries referred to Milton as the 'soul' of the Botany Section of the Rochester Academy of Science. It appears that he never owned a car, so all his many outings were reached by public transportation, or through the kindness of friends and colleagues. Although most of his collections are from the Rochester area, there are several from the Adirondacks, including higher elevations in the High Peaks area, collected when he was in his 60's.

Milton was born in a log cabin in 1855 in Hamlin, NY, in the northwest corner of Monroe County. He spent much of his boyhood in Adams Basin, a hamlet near Brockport. The first herbarium collection of his that I found was from a pond in Adams Basin in 1871, collected at age 16. Self-taught – his collections span over 60 years. The last collection I saw was *Carex capillaris* (a rare species he never collected in New York), collected in 1934 on Ontario's Bruce Peninsula, apparently on a field trip with the Annual Meeting of the Botany Society of America.

Milton clearly had a passion for botany – but, like many of the old-time field botanists of the day, he was an all around naturalist. I have seen a picture of him on a 1931 outing to Bergen Swamp, holding a plant press under one arm, while in the other hand was a stick...holding up a Massasauga rattlesnake, to the amazement of onlookers! Milton also had a keen interest in entomology - he had a butterfly collection - and in local archeology as well. By all accounts he was a humble, quiet man who preferred to be out of the spotlight – yet he was an inspiration to many who sought his botanical guidance.

After Milton graduated from high school in Brockport, he moved from his rural home to the 'big city' of Rochester in the late 1870's – to take a job with the young telephone company that was to become Rochester Telephone, and part of International Bell. He was one of 3 employees (a Chief Operator and two others) and the entire subscriber list was on a single page. In 1880 he was transferred to Zurich, Switzerland, to help oversee the building of its first telephone system. He subsequently went to Amsterdam, Riga, and St. Petersburg. (I was puzzled when I first came upon numerous herbarium sheets of his from Russia, before I learned that he lived there for 11 years.) He remained in Czarist Russia until 1891, when he returned to Buffalo with a young Russian wife and baby daughter. Shortly thereafter he moved back to Rochester, where he lived the rest of his life. He worked for the phone company until 1931 – over 52 years of service.

Milton Baxter was an active member of the Rochester Academy of Science and the Burroughs Audubon Nature Club. He was beloved by those people who knew this intrepid man and joined him on field trips. Baxter was also curator of the RAS Herbarium (then at the University of Rochester), and taught Field Botany at the UR Summer School for several years.

Milton was more of a keen collector and taxonomist than a writer. But he was concerned about the disappearance of species. Shortly before he died he wrote an essay that discussed plants that had been found only a few decades earlier, but had disappeared from the Rochester area, and sometimes the state. Decades before any Natural Heritage program existed, Milton was concerned about species like *Calypso*, *Platanthera leucophaea*, *Buchnera americana*, and many others that have joined the growing list of declining native



species, on a state and regional level.

Though our lives were separated by generations, I feel a kinship with Milton Baxter; in reality he would have been contemporary with my great great grandfather! Perhaps some reminiscences from people who knew him personally may help paint a broader of picture of this man.

From the archives of Rochester's Burroughs Audubon Nature Club, about an outing to "The Gulf" near Leroy, New York, in 1930: *"desiring to clamber over the rocks with Mr. Baxter, [we] crawled along a narrow ledge, half way down the steep side, and were well rewarded by finding the rarest of ferns – walking ferns, purple stemmed cliff brake, and others..."*

Arthur Parker, the Director of the Rochester Museum in the 1930's provided an image that many field botanists relate to, *"I well recall a spring hike with him through the swampy waters of Powder Mills Park where, spying an orchid he waded in with his umbrella under his arm and several of us followed unaware that we were wading in mire up to our knees. We looked at the flower and left it and he felt quite satisfied that it would remain there unmolested to spread its seeds and so multiply."*

From Karl Wiegand, renowned Cornell botanist: *"I would rate Mr. Baxter as one of the most important amateur botanists of New York State during the last generation. He was not only keenly interested in the wild flora of his own region, Monroe County and adjacent portions of New York State, but he was a keen student as well as having a careful analytical knowledge of the plants growing in the region."*

From Homer House, New York State Botanist: *"...As an example of his discerning sight he collected in Russia some specimens of moonwort which are exact matches for the local plant known as the Onondaga moonwort (Botrychium lunaria var. onondagense), known to us from Onondaga and Genesee Counties. The incident is worth mentioning here as it indicates his ability to detect the unusual when afield...we honor him for his services to our local botanical work."*

Certainly we owe a great debt to this man, who so well documented the flora of the Rochester and Genesee Valley region.

References:

- Baxter, Milton S. 1938, *Vanishing Wildflowers*. Member Services Bulletin of the Rochester Museum and Science Center. 1938. V.14, #1-8. p. 21 -24.
- Burroughs Audubon Nature Club. 1930-1931. Secretary Notebooks, and Historical Scrapbook of Amelia M. Heydweiller. M.S. Baxter folder , Rochester Academy of Science. Rare Books/Special Collections. University of Rochester River Campus Libraries. Letters from Homer House, Arthur Parker, Karl Wiegand,
- Rochester Times-Union and Democrat and Chronicle. October 16, 1938. M.S. Baxter obituary.
- The Rochester Telephone Bulletin. Vol VII, #4. April 1929. *M.S. Baxter – 50 Years of Service*.



Milton Baxter, in typical attire, on a field trip to Zurich Bog, near Sodus, June 6, 1926.



Hello, NYFA member, wherever you are!

Anna Stalter, NYFA Board Secretary

You might be surprised to know that not all members of the New York Flora Association live in New York State. Geographically, the NYFA membership extends north into Canada and south to Florida, and from coast to coast.

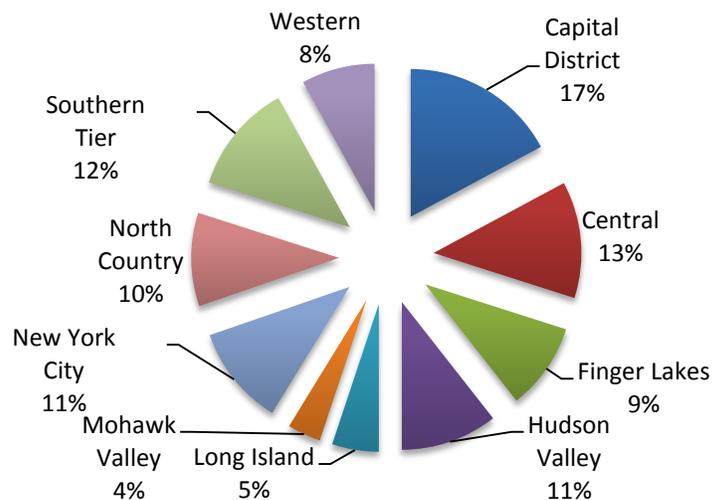
Fully 84% of NYFA members live in New York State, but there are also NYFA members living in New Jersey (6), Pennsylvania (13) and Vermont (8). Also in the Northeast, Connecticut and Massachusetts each have four NYFA members, and there is one each in Maryland and New Hampshire. Three NYFA members hail from the Canadian province of Ontario, and one from Quebec.

Even further afield, one NYFA member lives in Texas, and there is one member in each of Missouri, Iowa, Alabama and Mississippi. Two NYFA members live in Washington state, and there are three NYFA members living in California, and three in Florida. In addition, native plant groups in Ohio, Maryland and Ontario, and both the Missouri Botanic Garden and the New York Botanic Garden are NYFA members.

Within New York State, the largest contingent (24) of NYFA membership comes from Onondaga county, followed by Tompkins (17) and Erie (13). Sadly, there are no NYFA members in these eight NY counties: Cayuga, Genesee, Orleans, Putnam, Schuyler, Sullivan, Tioga, and Wyoming.

Regionally, the Capital District is home to the largest number of NYFA members (47). The least populous region of the state, North Country, is home to almost as many members (28) as the most populous region, New York City (30)! Similarly, though the total population of the Mohawk Valley is small, it has nearly as many members (10) as Long Island (14), the second most populous region in New York State.

NYFA members by region*



*Economic regions. For definitions see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_New_York_Economic_Regions.svg

So there you have it, a profile of where NYFA members live! And, by the way, from north to south and coast to coast, most NYFA members (85%) receive this newsletter electronically, saving the organization hundreds of dollars in printing and postage. If you are not an electronic subscriber, please consider becoming one. If you are already an electronic subscriber, please remember to notify NYFA if your e-mail address changes, so you do not miss a single issue of the NYFA newsletter! For membership details and contact information visit the website: <http://www.nyflora.org>.



NEW YORK FLORA ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP FORM 2013

We are now a 501C3 Tax Deductible Organization!

Annual Membership dues:

New \$20 Make checks payable to the **New York Flora Association**

Renewal \$20 per year

New Student Members Free the First Year. School: _____

Additional donation to support NYFA efforts like botany presentation awards and small grants.

Total \$

Name: _____

Address: _____

Address: _____ County: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

How would you like to receive your newsletter and other correspondence?

Electronic Please enter your email address here: _____

Paper

We are only accepting credit card payments through PayPal at this time. If you would like to use a credit card, please use the link on our website: <http://www.nyflora.org/join-make-a-donation/>

Mail this form to: NY Flora Association, PO Box 122, Albany, NY 12201-0122

Thank you for supporting NYFA and the flora of New York State

**NY Flora Association
PO Box 122
Albany, NY 12201-0122**

