

# BOTANIZING THE BARRENS: INTO THE FOOTSTEPS OF CHARLES WILKINS SHORT I

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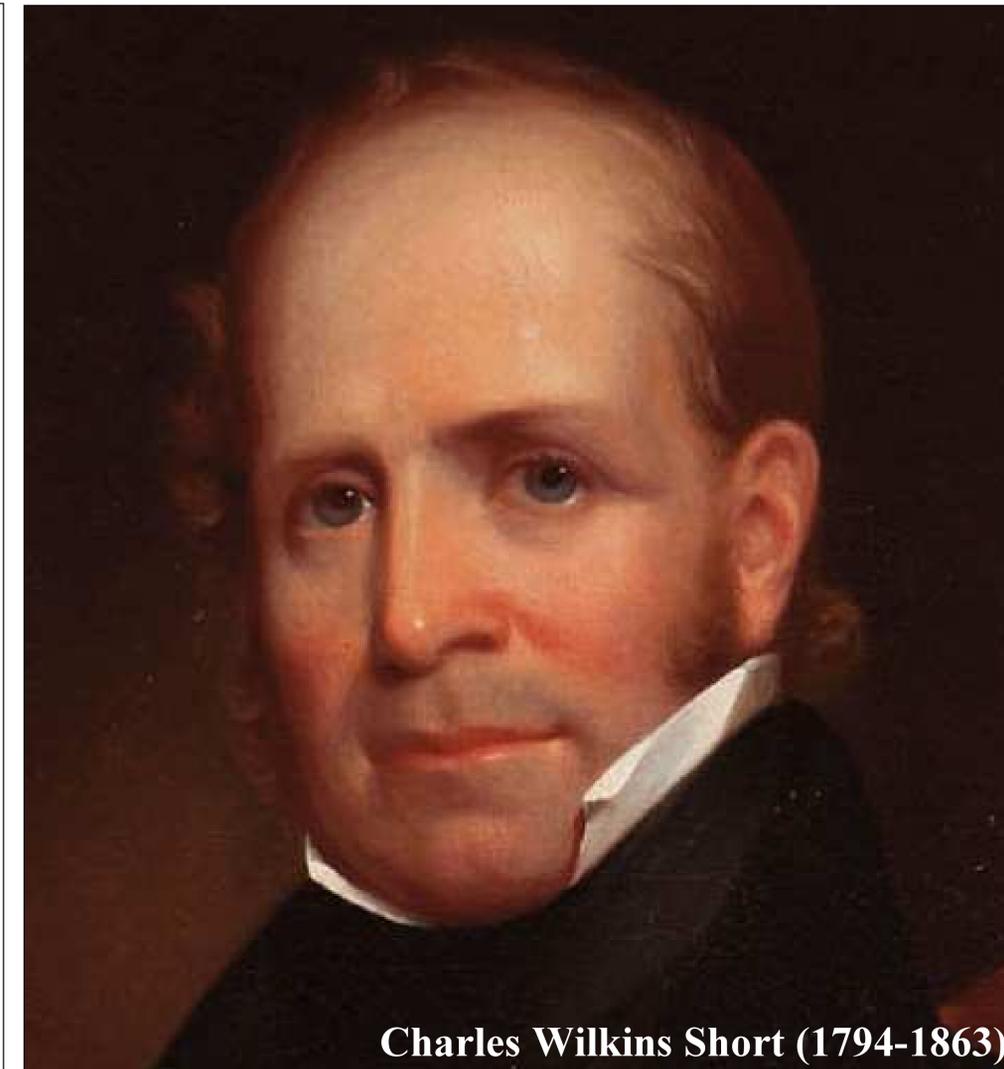
C.W. Short was the first botanist to reside in Kentucky for most of his life, including Hopkinsville in 1818-25. The quote to right is from his: "A sketch of the progress of botany in western America." *Transylvania Journal of Medicine and Associated Sciences* 9: 324-350. Reprinted: 1841. [Hooker's] *J. of Botany* 3: 97-124.



"For the last twenty years we have paid some attention to the botany of Kentucky, and whilst actively engaged in the practice of medicine, in that portion of the State most inaptly called "The Barrens," opportunities were constantly presented for admiring and noting the varied vegetable productions of that interesting region. In many a long and solitary ride through these natural flower gardens, have our fatigues been lightened, and our spirits cheered by their floral charms.

"Here at one point, the ground was carpeted with the flame-coloured flowers of the dazzling *Euchroma* [*Castilleja coccinea*]; and there enamelled with the parti-coloured blossoms of Violets, Gentians and Trilliums. In this spot, from amidst a tuft of humbler beauties, the majestic *Frasera* was seen shooting up its pyramidal head, crowned with wreaths of its very peculiar flowers; and in that, various Sumachs overhung the path, emitting from their clumps of berries a shower of acid on the traveller. Now, would burst upon the view a smooth sheet of water, skirted with the blue and purple hues of the *Pontederia* and *Decodon*, intermixed with the scarlet berries of the *Prinos* [*Ilex verticillata*] whilst its surface was covered over with the large and floating leaves and splendid flowers of the *Cyamus* [perhaps *Nelumbo lutea*]; and then, in endless vista, was stretched before the eye a waving sea of gigantic grasses.

"In such a field as this, none but a recreant to nature and undeserving of her pleasures, could remain indifferent to the charms spread in such lavish profusion around; and, although we were not idle, inattentive or unobservant of them, yet do we now find cause for bitter regrets, that we did not then more industriously avail ourselves of the opportunities thus enjoyed, for studying, examining and collecting the productions of that rich and interesting region."



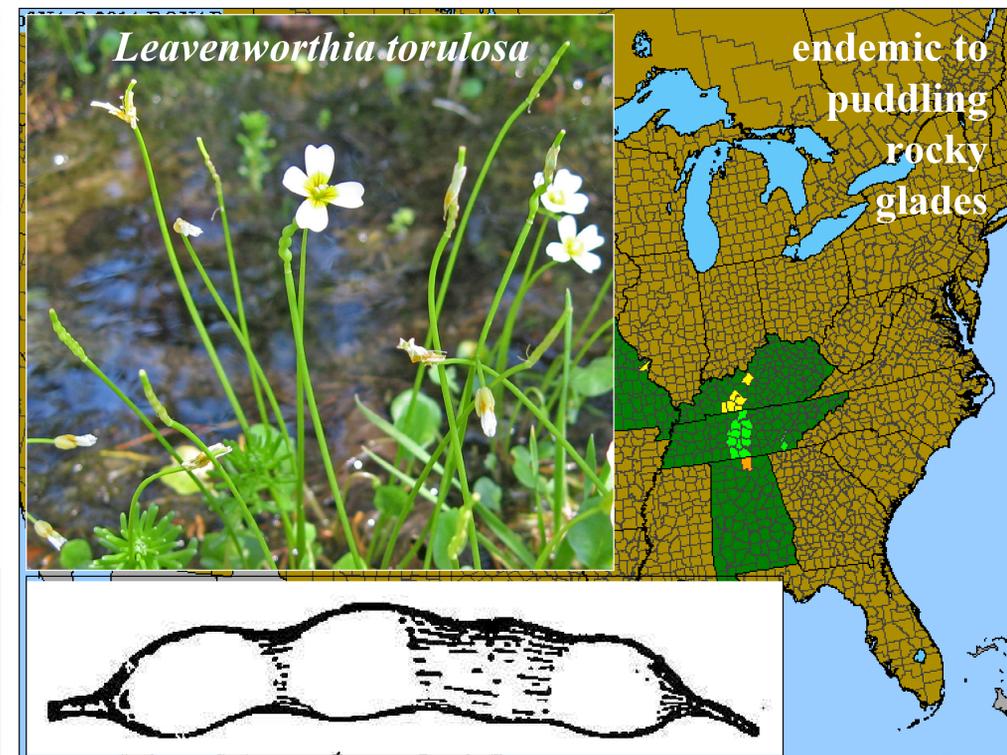
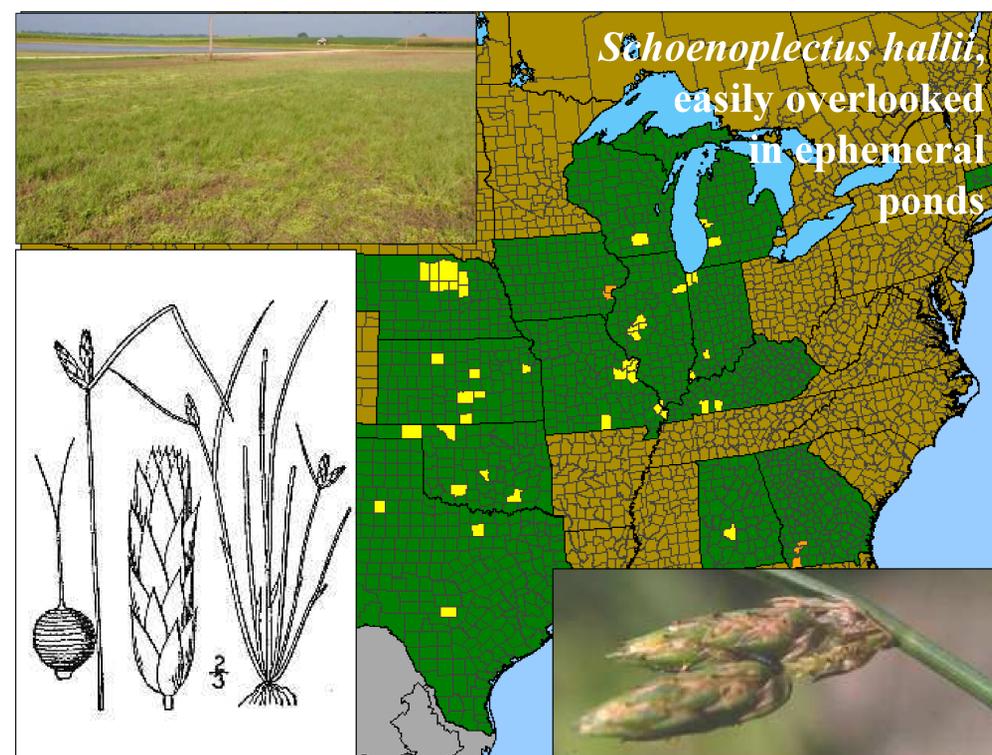
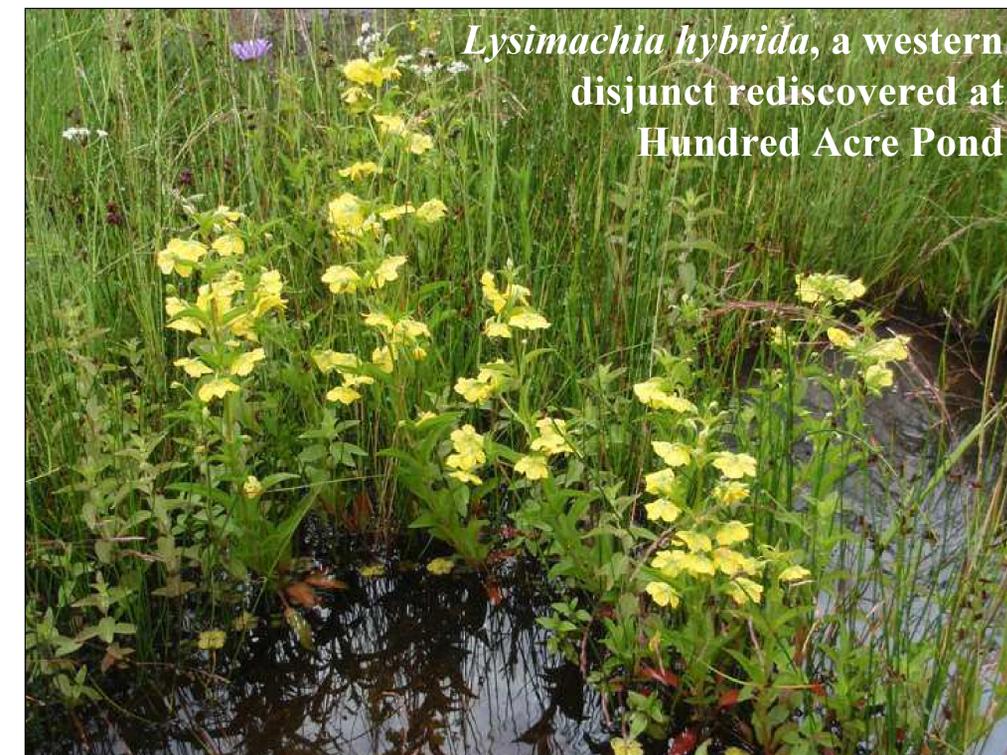
# WETLANDS OF THE BARRENS: INTO THE FOOTSTEPS OF CHARLES WILKINS SHORT II

Notes by Julian Campbell ([bluegrasswoodland.com](http://bluegrasswoodland.com)); photos mostly by Mason Brock (APSU)

Before settlement, grassland prevailed across the Pennyrile Karst Plain, even on ground that was seasonally wet. Today, damper sites tend to be either wooded or ditched for agriculture. There are very few permanent ponds with open water through the year, such as Hundred Acre Pond in Hart Co., partly owned by TNC.

Some openings in wet woods are maintained by rights-of-way, but herbicides have been very damaging. In a few ephemerally ponded cropfields, some rare plants have occasionally appeared, including Hall's Bulrush (*S. hallii*) and *Echinodorus parvulus*. The original condition of karst plain ponds remains rather uncertain.

Since the landscape is relatively flat, even rocky sites can have significant puddling, especially during the winter. At these "xerohydric" extremes, with alternating hydric winters and xeric summers, the native vegetation appears to have been distinct. We need to think of dryness and wetness as somewhat independent gradients.



# BOTANIZING THE BARRENS: IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF SARAH "SADIE" PRICE (1849-1903)

There were almost no resident botanists in Kentucky during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Price lived mostly at Bowling Green and rarely traveled far, but she detailed local plants in her 1893 Flora of Warren County. Her most remarkable site was Chalybeate Springs, on a broad sandy ridge a few miles north of the karst plain, with *Drosera intermedia*, *Ludwigia hirtella*, *Platanthera ciliaris*, *Polygala cruciata* and *Rhynchosia tomentosa*. This boggy habitat has disappeared from the region.

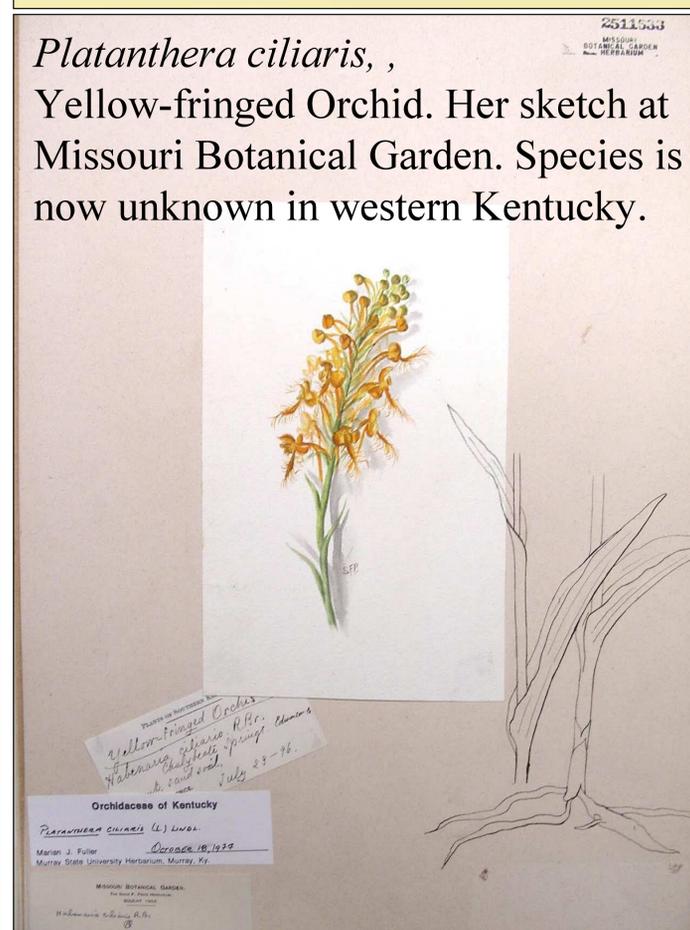
Right: extracts from her posthumous "Perusin the Pennyrile Country" [American Botany 1906-07].

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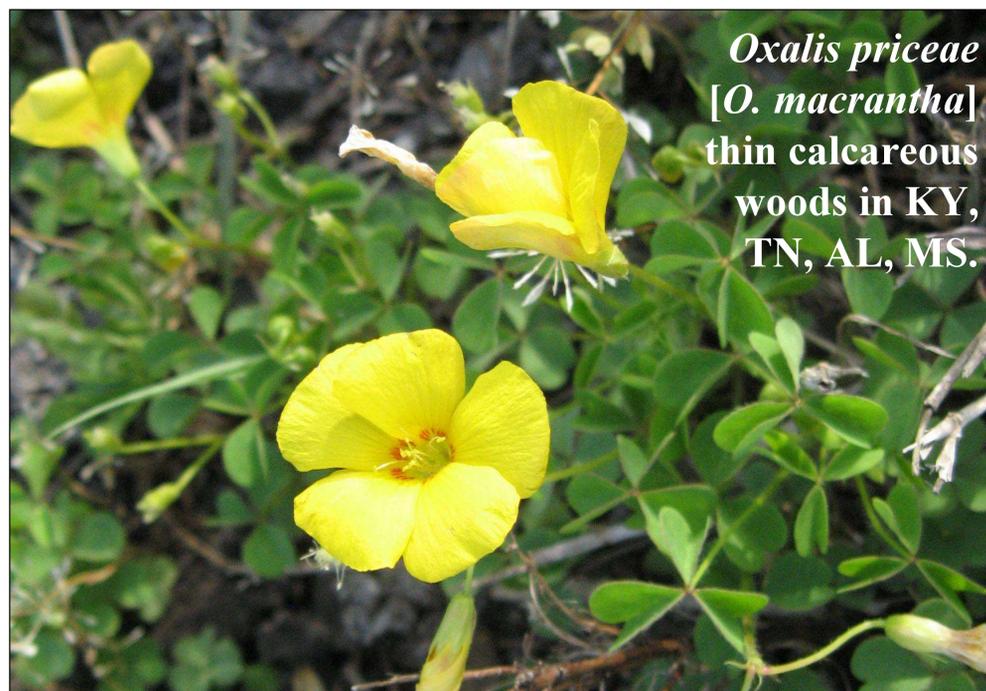
"It is this love of Nature that one must have to endure the discomforts of an excursion through the "ridge country" of southern Kentucky. The State is divided into four parts, known in local parlance, as the bluegrass and the bear-grass countries, the "penny-rile" and the Purchase. Though the people of the "blue grass" may speak disdainfully of the rugged hills and knobs of southern Kentucky,—the "penny-rile",—yet it has a charm and interest for the botanist and the lover of Nature that more cultivated farm lands and level stretches of even the beautiful blue-grass, cannot give...

"A feeling of sadness came over us as we watched our driver turn the horses homeward and we were left in the wilderness, many miles from a railway. Checking, however, any thoughts of the flesh pots we immediately started on a collecting tramp—a sure cure for any of the worries of life—and were soon absorbed in its pleasures. We were prepared to rough it, so were not surprised that our room was of unplanned and unsealed boards. A weed grew up through the floor, a foot or more above the boards. There was no fastening on the door; a chair with the water-bucket on it answered as a bolt at night. The people there were all hospitable and treated us well, but were primitive and quaint in habits and in speech. The members of the dialect society would be pleased at the many obsolete words heard here, many that may be traced to old English and Scotch words. An old woman was "sorry she did not have time to peruse these hills" with us. A thicket of either cane or other under-brush is called a "harricane,"—meaning a place where a hurricane had once passed...

"Our next drive of 20 miles brought us to a little village among the knobs, a village of perhaps a dozen houses. Unfortunately the day of our journey was a rainy one; but the impulse to dash out into the mud and rain when some especially interesting plant was seen, could not be resisted. The beautiful yellow-fringed orchis, a plant not before found in this State, we gathered in this way. It had ceased raining when we reached the town, and as we drove up to a house on a hill, where we had heard we could obtain good board, we were the cynosure of all eyes. Before night it was known to all the town that "a woman that's huntin' weeds," was among them... The forests here are a generation older than those in adjoining countries, and the trees much larger. The country has evidently been burned over at an earlier date than other parts of "the barrens."



*Platanthera ciliaris*, , Yellow-fringed Orchid. Her sketch at Missouri Botanical Garden. Species is now unknown in western Kentucky.



*Oxalis priceae*  
[*O. macrantha*]  
thin calcareous  
woods in KY,  
TN, AL, MS.



*Apios priceae*  
Prices's  
Potato  
Bean

Endemic to southern Interior Low Plateaus

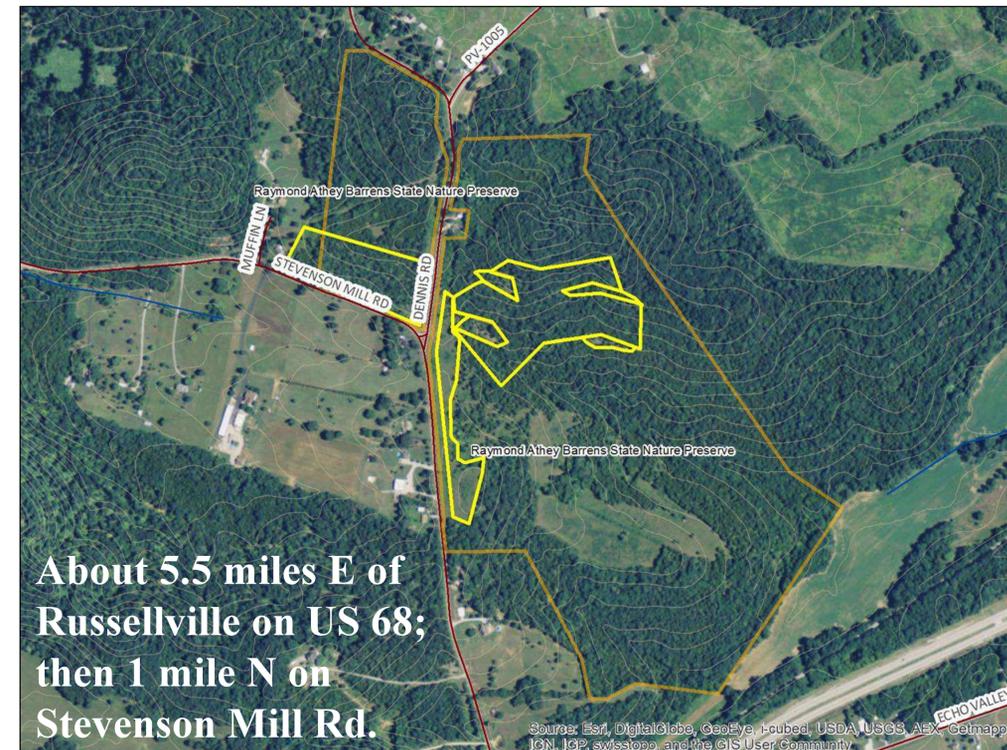
# RAYMOND ATHEY BARRENS STATE NATURE PRESERVE, LOGAN CO., KENTUCKY

## Notes by Julian Campbell (bluegrasswoodland.com) and Ky. State Nature Preserves Commission

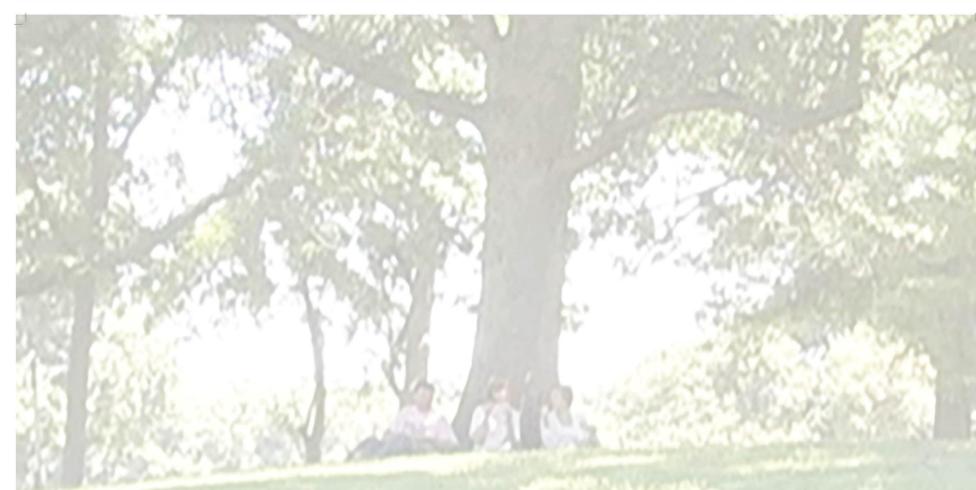
This 156 acre preserve was named in honor of the man who discovered its biological significance. Raymond Athey, a self-taught botanist, freely gave of his extensive knowledge to help in the protection of Kentucky's unique natural areas. The initial 63 acres was acquired with assistance of TNC and dedicated in 1990.

The preserve supports a mixture of grassland and woodland of open-grown post (*Quercus stellata*) and black jack (*Q. marilandica*) oaks. Rocky glades occur as small openings within the woods. Several prescribed fires have been conducted by KSNPC and partners, in order to restore the more open original condition.

The *Gentiana puberulenta* discovered by Athey has reappeared after management. Other rare species here or along nearby roadsides include *Bouteloua curtipendula*, *Buchnera americana*, *Delphinium carolinianum*, *Isoetes butleri*, *Juncus filipendulus*, *Malvastrum hispidum*, *Mecardonia acuminata* and *Symphyotrichum priceae*.



# Mahr Park is a new center for reconnecting mankind and nature at Madisonville, close to the heart of Kentucky's "Shawnee Hills"



## *Guiding Principles for Mahr Park*

- Honor the land and the Mahr legacy.
- Incorporate sustainable practices.
- Create opportunities to improve flora and fauna.
- Provide responsible recreation opportunities.
- Provide opportunities for education for all age groups.
- Promote partnerships and foster stewardship.
- Incorporate the arts throughout the design, development, and programming of the park.
- Respect, celebrate and conserve water as well as enjoy it.
- Provide places for gathering and community development.



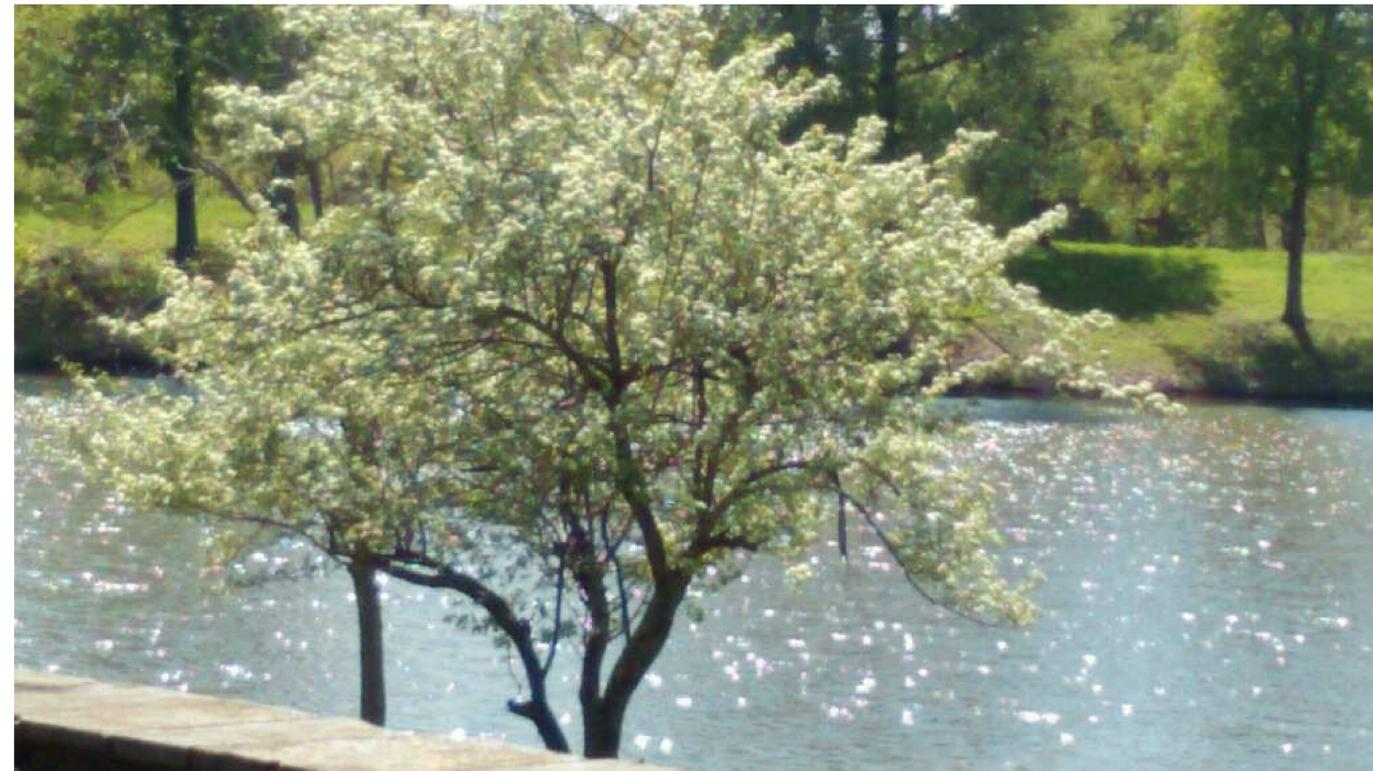
Friends of  
**Mahr Park**  
at Hidden Hills Farm



# Mahr Park

at Hidden Hills Farm

“Mahr Park is a great asset for the City of Madisonville and our community. This multimedia project with Marvo Entertainment Group LLC will not only highlight the key features of Mahr Park for our local community but also give us the opportunity to share the story and legacy of the land nationally. This will be a park for generations to enjoy and leave their footprint, and this multimedia project will be a big part of that footprint.” *David Jackson, Mayor Madisonville, Kentucky*  
“The commitment is already here. This is a project born out of good intentions. The timing is perfect for the Growing Warriors Project (*Kentucky Monthly*, November 2013) and Mahr Park at Hidden Hills Farm. We literally are ready to come in and break ground, and this will in turn bring people back to the land.” *Mike Lewis, Executive Director Growing Warriors*



In 2009 the landscape of Madisonville's park system forever changed when Ms. Glema Mahr bequeathed her 265-acre farm to the City of Madisonville to be used as a park and recreation facility.

Mahr Park is comparable in size to the current Madisonville City Park, which is a 262-acre park located in the Southeast quadrant of Madisonville. Ultimately, the Mahr property will balance out the community's park land, as it is located on the opposite side of town from the existing park. Mahr Park also borders Lake Pee Wee, a 420-acre lake that serves as Madisonville's main drinking water reservoir and also provides some smaller recreational boating and fishing opportunities.

The park is currently in the first phases of development with the entrance road and other necessary infrastructure recently completed. It is anticipated that the park will open in late 2016. The City of Madisonville is so very grateful to have witnessed the life of Ms. Glema Mahr, and we're very proud that our citizens will reap the benefits of her contributions and generosity for many years to come.

