

An Emeritus College Breadth Seminar
Celebrating *South Carolina Native Plant Week*

Oct. 17, 2017, 11:00 a.m.

Native Plants: Good Habitat for People and Animals

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South Carolina Native Plant Society

Do you remember when Spring meant lots of nesting songbirds and flowers covered with butterflies? Well, things have really changed. Songbird and butterfly numbers are plummeting. And pollinators are in real trouble. One factor driving the decline is taking open and wooded land for development, which removes thousands of acres of habitat every year. But, perhaps surprisingly, the more important factor is the widespread use of non-native plants in landscaping. Native plants and native wildlife had been living together and coping with each other for millennia, and became intimately compatible. By replacing native plants with introduced species, a long-established natural food web is disrupted. Some of the introduced plant species are highly invasive. Others are accompanied by damaging insects or pathogens that also spread far beyond the original planting site. Research has now established close linkages between the increased use of introduced plants and steep declines in native insect and animal populations. We can help restore the natural balance by learning those wildflowers, grasses, shrubs, and trees are native here and replacing introduced plants with adapted natives around our houses. We could then sit back and enjoy the rebounding songbird and butterfly communities. That would be a wonderful legacy, and what we learn here will get us started!

A Little About Bill: Bill Stringer was reared on a diversified farm near Jefferson, Georgia. Following BS and MS degrees in agronomy from Georgia and a PhD in agronomy from Virginia Tech, he served for seven years on the agronomy faculty at Penn State. Bill came to Clemson in 1984, where he taught and did research and public service in forage crops until retirement in 2010. Along the way, he began to study the importance of native plants in plant and animal communities; that study led to his passionate advocacy for widespread use of native plants.