

Mississippi University for Women Edible Plant Trail

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Beginnings...

- ▶ 5 different disciplines/majors
 - ▶ Biology
 - ▶ Culinary Arts
 - ▶ Graphic Design
 - ▶ Spanish
 - ▶ History



Students learning cross-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary skills (aligned with the QEP)



Photo Credit: Chris Jenkins.



We also collaborated with *MSMS*



Photo Credit: Chris
Jenkins.

Students presenting their work and new knowledge

**GRAND OPENING OF
MUW'S EDIBLE
PLANT TRAIL**

Join us for a tour of the new Edible Plant Trail!
Come learn about the backgrounds and usages of
all the free food that's growing on campus. If
interested, please email tmdodson@muw.edu, so
we'll know how much food to bring!

**TUE
APR 30
12:15 PM**

**FRIDAY
APR 26
1 PM**

TOUR BEGINS BESIDE SHATTUCK HALL

Hastings
Simmons

Poindexter
Hall

Shattuck Hall



Edible Plant Tasting

- ▶ Smilax
- ▶ Violet
- ▶ Yaupon
- ▶ Pecan
- ▶ Oxalis
- ▶ Mulberry
- ▶ Spiderwort
- ▶ Berries
- ▶ Wild onion and garlic



Greenbriars (*Smilax spp.*)

- ▶ Good for deer
- ▶ Create very good barriers
- ▶ Nice climbing evergreen with
 - ▶ interesting berries (black, blue or red)
- ▶ Can be spread easily
- ▶ Native



Greenbriars (*Smilax* spp.)

Smilax bona-nox



Smilax walteri



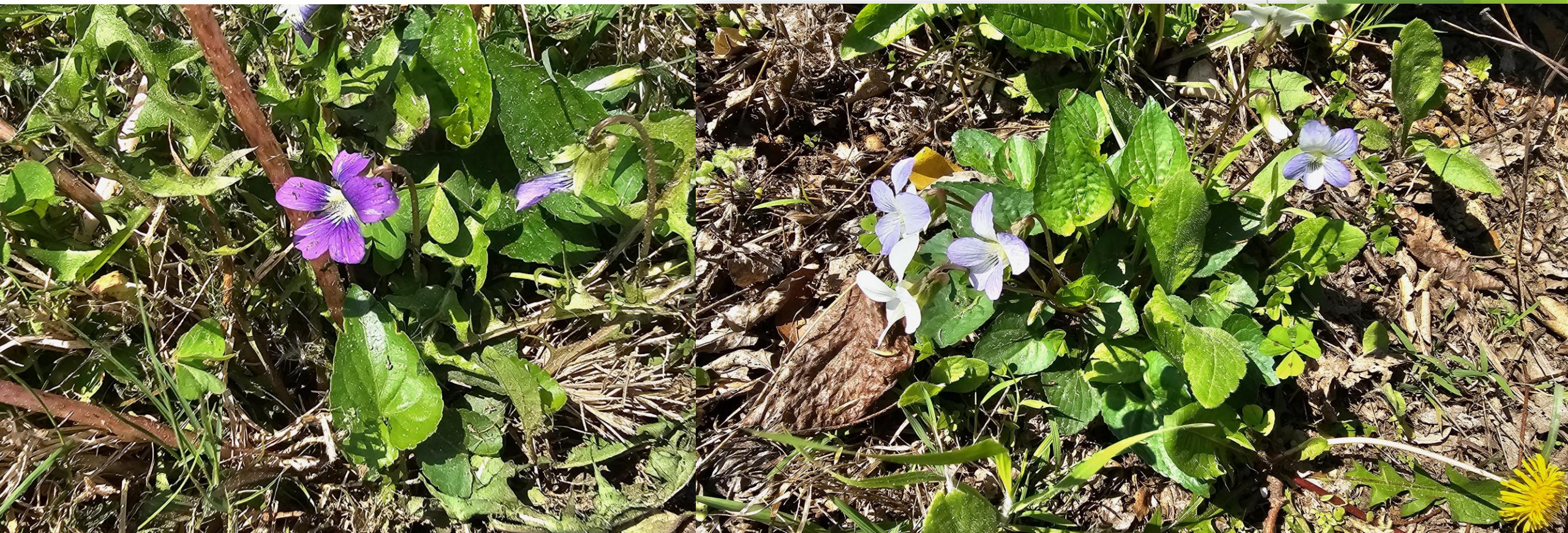
Photos from the Virginia Native Plant Society (2015)

Smilax glauca

Violets (*Viola* spp.)

- ▶ Edible
- ▶ Makes a nice lawn cover to replace grass
 - ▶ Handles being mowed
 - ▶ Doesn't grow fast or tall
- ▶ Native

Common Blue Violet (*Viola sororia*)



The Experience

- ▶ “I have had a transformative experience working with the native and edible plants...This very hands-on experience has equipped me with new skills and more awareness of just how much food is around me. The informational aspects of this project have been as engaging as the tactile parts. Gardening after class provided a level of enrichment that I found myself regularly looking forward to.”
- ▶ “My parent’s yard looks a lot different now! I am recognizing the plants we have on the trail and am trying to get friends to eat them...”
- ▶ :My experience with native and edible plants has been eye-opening. I had the opportunity to engage with a part of nature that was unknown to me, yet so close. Now, I know that these are alternative food sources which taste great. They are also sources of remedies for several common ailments.”

What the students learned

- ▶ They learned from each other
- ▶ They learned skills outside their disciplines
- ▶ They learned soft skills that are transferable



Branching out!

- ▶ “My interpersonal skills are stronger due to working with people outside of my discipline.”
- ▶ “By identifying and relocating the native plants, I was exposed to a level of tactile learning that was refreshing yet educational for me.”
- ▶ “I considered foraging a hobby for years, but I never gave any thought to the implication of it being a hobby. For generations, “gathering” was key to human survival, and the agricultural revolution shifted how humans get food, what we eat, and **who eats what.** “

Being Together

- ▶ “Collaborating with people from different academic backgrounds was useful because together, we added a significant amount of depth to the project. I enjoyed seeing how we were all able to learn from one another. Each discipline helped broaden my perspective in a different way.”
- ▶ “Seeing what my fellow volunteers found important during their presentations on their plants was eye opening. Many people included the medicinal and historical uses by indigenous peoples of the plants. Compared to my focus on native ranges and speciation, which would make sense with my biology education. **My fellow students had a more human focused approach.** That difference feels important to recognize.”
- ▶ “I found that learning how other disciplines work opened my mind and skill set to new possibilities. In my daily academic life, I usually keep my mind brewing analysis pertaining to historical topics. I’d like to believe that my writing reflects this. So, this project allowed me to expand my writing skills into creating work less for academia and more for the public. I also learned to implement different aspects of the disciplines into my research.”

Signage



Future Directions

- ▶ Creating a more complete self-guided trail for visitors to come to.
- ▶ This would include a website and QR codes



Is this a weed or a plant?

- ▶ Common question with an underlying misconception



Violet Woodsorrel
(*Oxalis violacea*)
Native



Broadleaf Plantain
(*Plantago major*)
Non-native

Food Deserts and Food Justice

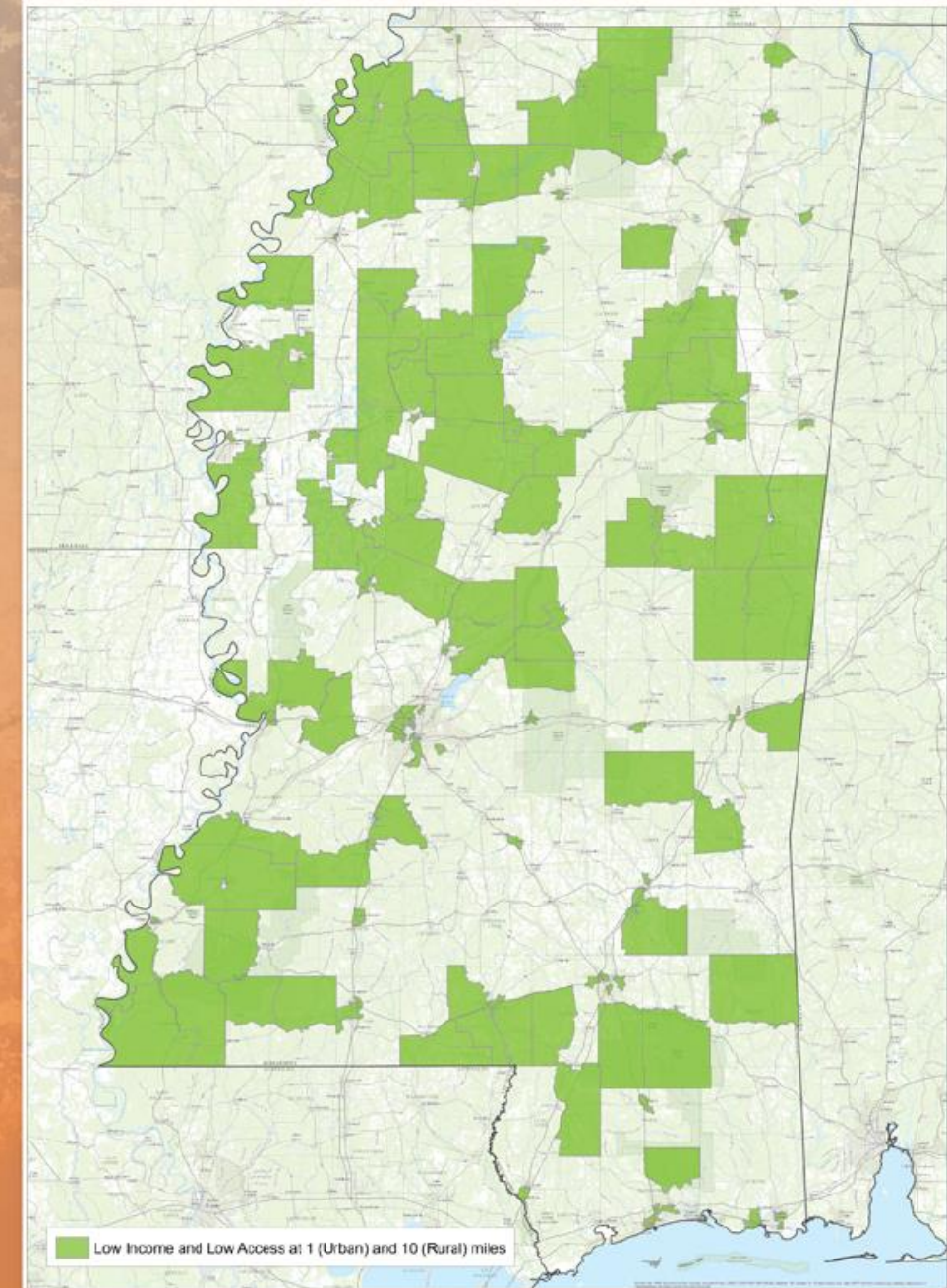
- Food is a right and should be accessible to everyone.

An area is defined as a Food Desert if it meets the following criteria:

- For urban areas, residents live more than 1 mile from a grocery store
- For rural areas, residents live more than 10 miles from a grocery store
- There are increased numbers of convenience stores and gas stations
- 20% or more of an area's residents live at or below the federal poverty line

<https://www.ums.edu/Research/Centers-and-Institutes/Centers/Center-for-Bioethics-and-Medical-Humanities/CBMH%20Education/Food-for-Thought/Food-Deserts.html>

Where are Food Deserts in Mississippi?



* Food Access Research Atlas www.ers.usda.gov

Future Directions

- ▶ Working with local groups outside of MUW to spread awareness
- ▶ Continued Collaboration with MSMS
- ▶ Incorporating Plymouth Bluff



Plymouth Bluff

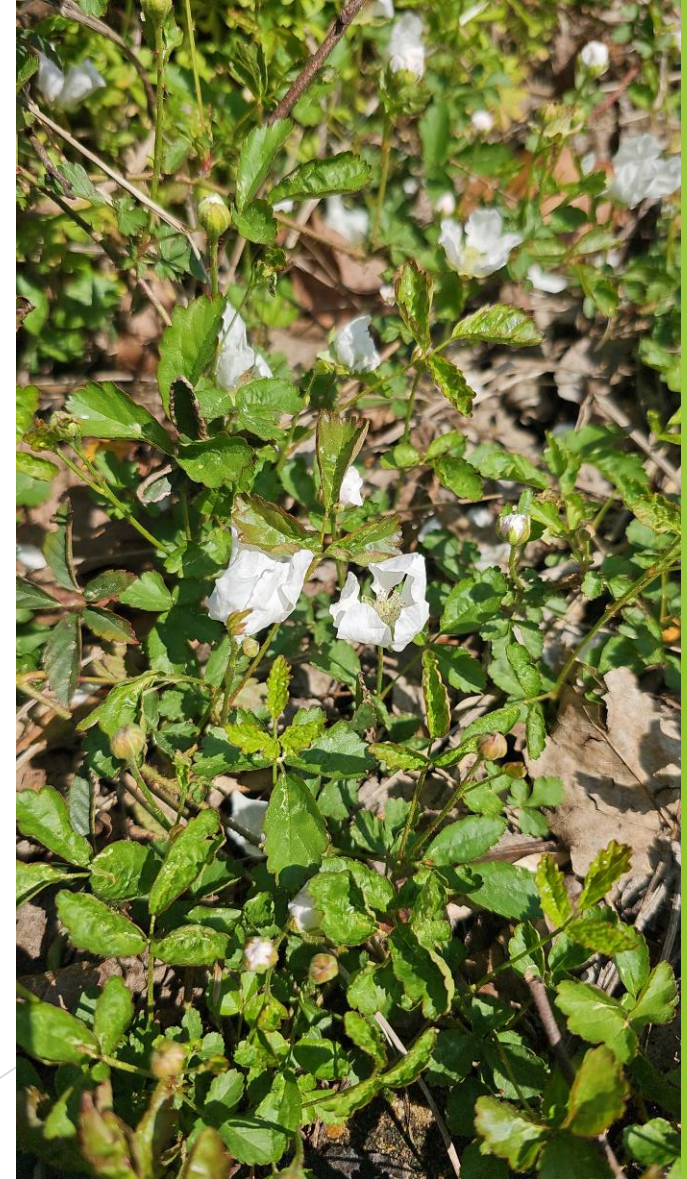
- ▶ Future Tours at Plymouth Bluff on Foraging
- ▶ Sundays (Saturdays) at the Bluff



Berries and Briars

- Amazing berries in late spring/early summer
- Can be used as a vine to drape over a ledge/wall as cover
- Many are native

Dewberry (*Rubus trivialis*)
Native



Spiderwort (*Tradescantia ohioensis*)

- Edible
- Causes no harm to your lawn
- Can flower if not mowed
- Can spread easily
- Native

