

Meet a New ASP Member

by Dr. Diane S. Swaffar

ASP welcomes many new members to the Society this year. We are especially pleased to feature a diverse new member, Dr. Joe-Ann McCoy. She is the new Director of the Medicinal Germplasm Repository at the North Carolina Arboretum and Bent Creek Institute located in the Appalachian Mountains in Asheville, North Carolina. We are grateful to Dr. McCoy for giving us the opportunity to get more acquainted with her.

How did you hear about the ASP?

I attended and presented a poster at the 2004 International Congress on Natural Products Research in Arizona which was joint meeting of ASP, AFERP, GA, and PSE.

Why did you join the ASP?

The 2004 meeting was one of the best medicinal plant conferences I had ever attended. After meeting ASP member Dr. John Cardellina this year at the 7th Annual Oxford Conference on the Science of Botanicals (and ASP Interim meeting) in Oxford, Mississippi, and hearing his enthusiasm about the ASP, I decided to become a member.

Do you belong to any other scientific societies?

Yes, I am a member of American Botanical Council, Society for Economic Botany, Sigma Xi, and the USDA-NPGS-PGOC Medicinal Plants Subcommittee.

What are your current research interests in pharmacognosy?

My specific research interests include identification and procurement of genetically diverse collections of medicinal taxa suitable for research purposes, germplasm collection, distribution, and long-term storage and management, development of germination protocols, tissue culture research, isolation and fungi identification, and the distribution of high quality, reproducible research plant materials.

Can you describe what you do in your current position?

My role here at the Germplasm Facility is to establish diverse collections of native medicinal plant germplasm representing a broad range of taxonomic, genetic, and biochemical diversity and to curate those collections through the long-term storage of seed, DNA, vouchers, and associated passport data. I also identify and provide appropriate species for research projects conducted with collaborative scientists. I am responsible for managing data associated with the collection and conducting research to improve germplasm collection methods. In addition, I develop collaborations with various private and public institutions by identifying appropriate accessions for screening and analysis. Further information on our research projects can be obtained at <http://www.bentcreekinstitute.org>.

What is your scientific background?

I completed my doctoral research in Plant Physiology at Clemson University (CU). This research focused on the development of seed and rhizome propagation protocols for *Actaea racemosa* L. (black cohosh) and analysis of associated triterpene glycosides. My M.S. in Plant Physiology at CU was focused on developing in vitro propagation and HPLC analytical methods for *Hypericum perforatum* (St. John's wort). Prior to my current position, I was in Ames, Iowa where I served as medicinal plant curator for the USDA North Central Regional Plant Introduction Station and the NIH Iowa State University Center for Research on Dietary Supplements. I have worked with various aspects of medicinal plant collection, propagation, and analytical research for the past 13 years.

What would you like to achieve through your membership?

I would love to meet and develop collaborative projects with researchers and companies interested in screening and analyzing our native flora and also keep abreast of new research techniques.

What do you like doing in your spare time?

I enjoy hiking, biking, camping, reading, traveling, music, and plant collecting. I'm also reading "The Winds of Change: Climate, Weather, and the Destruction of Civilizations" by Eugene Linden and "Collapse" by Jared Diamond.



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Dr. Joe-Ann McCoy, taken in The Republic of Georgia on a medicinal plant collection trip in November 2007.