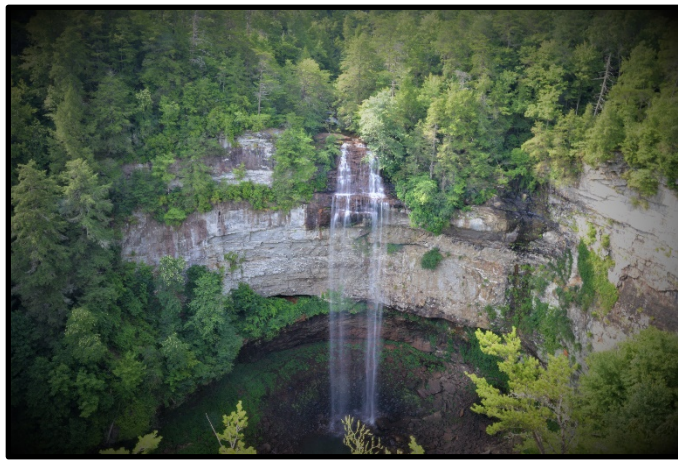


2020 Vacation Travels from Master Gardener Interns

2020 has been a year to remember and it has changed the way America vacations.... at least for this year. Paul and I have taken advantage of the empty nest years to explore many parts of world. Before COVID-19 hit us, we were able to travel to many fascinating places including England, Scotland, Ireland, Norway, Alaska, Austria, Switzerland, China and Germany. But this year we traveled to just two places in the United States: Tennessee and North Carolina. We chose those places because we could see some beautiful flora and fauna and because we felt we could travel safely and avoid crowds, etc. We have always had an interest in plants, gardens and architecture. This years' trip to Fall Creek Falls, Tennessee did not disappoint us!

Part of what drew us to Fall Creek Falls was this beautiful description: "A paradise of more than 20,000 acres sprawled across the eastern top of the rugged Cumberland Plateau, Fall Creek Falls State Park is one of the most scenic and spectacular outdoor recreation areas in the United States.



Laced with cascades, gorges, waterfalls, streams, and lush stands of virgin hardwood timber, the park beckons those who enjoy nature at her finest. While Fall Creek Falls, at 256 feet, is the highest waterfall in the eastern United States, other waterfalls in the park are Piney and Cane Creek Falls and Cane Creek Cascades.

The oak and hickory forest that covers most of the park gives way to tulip poplar and hemlock forest in the gorges. The plants and animals of the moist, protected gorges are not

unlike the species found in southern Canada. Mountain laurel and rhododendron are abundant throughout the park, as are other plants and animals."

We were able to have a private tour with one of Park Rangers who was also a naturalist. Savannah pointed out many of the native plants of North Carolina including Queen Anne's Lace, and native trees including maple and oak species. Here is a picture



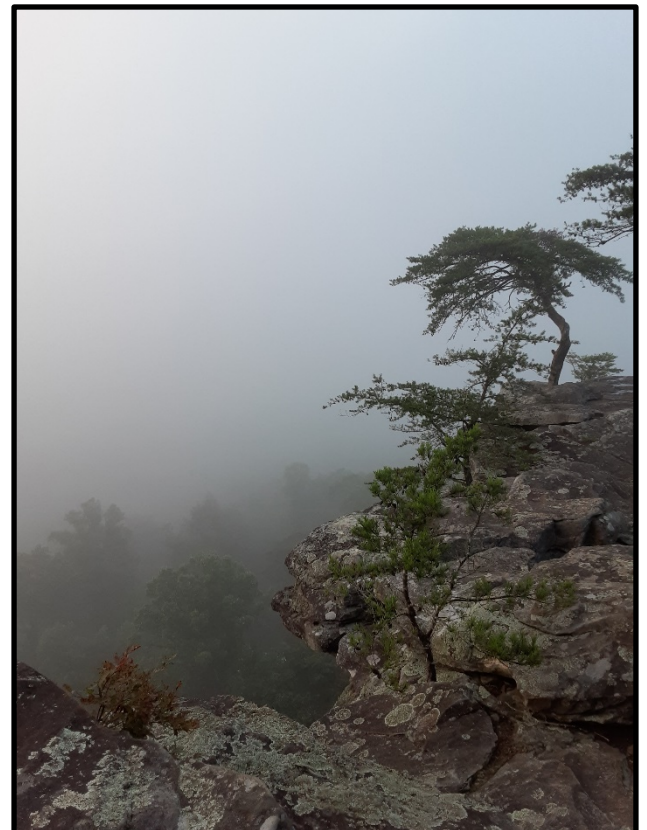
we took of a native sycamore tree (*Platanus occidentalis*). The bark is a key to this tree

species. The hikes to the 12 different waterfalls we went to included traversing over rugged terrain but also rewarded us with



cool canopies of trees and vibrant flowers. At the end of each hike we were treated to a magnificent waterfall.





This was a wonderful trip to Eastern Tennessee and we highly recommend it to anyone who loves the great outdoors. There are wonderful cabins to rent and one interesting fact we learned was the there is a Tennessee State Park within one hour of every resident! We were able to visit 6 State Parks during our 6-day vacation. There are no entry fees to Tennessee State Parks.

We also went on a short three-day trip to the Outer Banks. While we were there we went to an arboretum. The Outer Banks Arboretum and Teaching Garden was created by the Extension Master Gardener Program of the Dare County Center of the N.C. Cooperative Extension. It's free to walk through the garden. The pathways are paved, and it was so interesting to see all the displays of native plants and species. The garden was also beautifully embellished with creative steppingstones. Most of the plants/trees had identification markers.



