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**February 14, 2017**

*Below:* In the middle of horse country; queen city; this tree loves the water; welcome center art; go fish; the underground railroad; delicious delight; Bertha's Kitchen; say cheese.

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**Take a Road Trip to Aiken SC**

Cindy and Dick Rudisill have been living in Aiken for four years, fulfilling long-term dreams and building a new life for themselves in one of the South's most charming towns. A second marriage for both, they've been married for 13 years, and since they found one another, the goal was to move away from the bitter cold of hometown Syracuse, after her children were grown.

"We wanted to live on the East Coast, within a day's drive of the children," said Cindy Rudisill. "We knew we didn't want Florida, and although we owned a townhome on Hilton Head Island, we were looking for something a bit different."

Part of the appeal of the South, in addition to warmer weather, was a lower tax structure.

The couple found a list of master-planned communities and systematically began to consider them all. They wanted to be near a downtown, and decided that living a bit further inland was their preference. Mr. Rudisill was an entrepreneur in the food service business, while Mrs. Rudisill was in nursing.

For both, retirement was more about switching gears than winding down. And then they found Woodside Plantation. Today, they're enjoying their perfect home, as well as the many friends they've met through Woodside.

And then there's golf.

[Learn more.](#)

*Courtesy of Aiken SC photos: Hopelands Gardens; Polo*

**Where in the Carolina World are you?**

### **Gimme Some Sugar.**

That's right, we've got the best of both worlds here – urban chic within view, gorgeous green space where you are. Take a walk or ride through this piece of heaven today. Soon, it will cover 20 miles of trails and walkways in this most royal of cities. [Where are you?](#)

## Good times ahead

Hello Tony,

We're sharing Carolinas' best for the month of February. Winter-friendly getaways for all tastes, including history, culture, year-round outdoor fun, and that's just for starters!

Bookmark recommended restaurants, inns, shops, special events and historic homes to amuse and enlighten.

Now's the perfect time to make plans, because affordable travel beckons and we're out having fun. The festivals are already rolling and the glorious Carolinas weather will entice us all to spend more time outdoors.

Yes to tax incentives, real estate bonanzas -- they sweeten the idea that maybe, with job listings abundant, it's your time to relocate, retire or acquire that Carolina vacation investment deal. And once you arrive, there's so much to do and see here. Seaside, mountain-top, small towns, big cities.

Click here for links to [35 Road Trips](#) to showcase our best.

Then, there's always CarolinaLiving.com showcasing our [best town profiles](#) & [Tax Facts](#) ... all guaranteed to guide you straight.

Wishing you happy travels and just maybe, a new Carolina slice of heaven to call your own in 2017!

**Leyla & Patrick Mason**

Co-Founders

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**Have you been to “Little” Washington?**

## Carolina Home Grown

### River Birch Tree

*By Bob Polomski*

Wintertime flowers provide a happy place for those of us who wish to escape from the short, cold days of winter. Oftentimes, after the blooms fade the shrub or tree disappears in the landscape as it yields the stage to flowering plants that bloom later in the season.

This now-you-see-me-now-you-don't feature

is the result of the ephemeral nature of flowers. If you're interested in year-round ornamental interest, you must consider bark.

One of my favorite native trees that offers 24/7 beauty is the river birch (*Betula nigra*). This frequent denizen of moist areas – banks of streams, rivers, and bottomlands – can reach a mature height and spread of 40 to 70 ft. It's commonly grown as a multi-trunked specimen to showcase its attractive exfoliating reddish to cinnamon brown bark that peels away in large papery sheets. On older trees, the darker grayish-brown bark splits into coarse shredded-looking plates.

The bark of the native species is attractive, but if you're looking for spectacular, consider cultivars of river birch that have been selected for this trait. 'Cully' (Heritage®) is a northern selection that showcases creamy-white inner bark on young trees and cream, orange, gray or lavender on older ones. A lower-growing, heat-tolerant river birch, Dura-Heat® ('BNMTF'), sports chalky tan to beige-colored inner bark and has smaller leaves than the species; it is less prone to drought stress than 'Cully' or the species.

A cute, dwarf selection, 'Little King' (Fox Valley®), showcases bark that's similar to the species, but it only grows 10 to 12 ft. high after 15 to 20 years. A real show-stopper is the weeping form of river birch, 'Summer Cascade,' with its cascading shiny brown branches and cream-salmon-cinnamon-brown peeling trunk.

River birch and its cultivars will show you that bark is beautiful all of the time.

#### OTHER CAROLINA GROWN PLANTS

Learn more about Carolina gardening from Dr. Polomski's new book, [Carolinas Month by Month Gardening](#). Available wherever books are sold.

## Art on the Interstate

During Black History month, consider a visit to Little Washington, NC, a fascinating small town with lots to do and see. Take some time exploring downtown through their Historical Walking Tour. Then, stop in at the Washington waterfront Underground Railroad Museum to learn about how the destination served as one of the main stops on the Underground Railroad.

Learn more about what to do in [Little Washington](#).

### Request the Guide

Updated town information, six fun new Carolina Adventures, and one heck of a good-looking feature showcasing gardens. Order yours today.

[Click here](#) for the official hold-in-your-hand Guide to Carolina lifestyle fun and adventure trips, plus real estate tips, tax & cost-of-living advantages, retirement opportunities and town profiles.

Just share your dream goals and we'll help lead you to smart Carolina life and times.

### Facebook

*Teri Leigh Teed's fine art photograph:  
"Blue Ridge Parkway, Autumn View Waterrock Knob"*

### NC Artists Count

**Teri Leigh Teed**, a multi-dimensional, award-winning artist based in Sylva, North Carolina, has been selected as one of the featured artists in the western North Carolina "Artists Count" project, which is hosting a series of exhibitions to highlight the rich visual contributions made by area artists.

The first of these exhibits will be on display at the North Carolina Welcome Center north of Asheville, (6178 I-26 West, Mars Hill, NC 28754). More than 250,000 visitors come through this facility each year. This first exhibition will highlight the work of artists in Jackson and Swain Counties. Their work will be on view until July, 2017.

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*Note: Visit all 12 first-class, NC Welcome Centers on Interstates just inside NC where experts coach and recommend travel adventures and hospitality solutions. While there, request your complimentary copy of the current CarolinaLiving.com GUIDE*

### Go Fish in SC's Top Ten!

### SC Fishing Lures Anglers

SC State Parks have more than 40 state parks with fishing opportunities. What can you catch? Trout, stripers, large and smallmouth bass, bluegill, crappie, catfish and all kinds of saltwater fish. And there's one more thing. With or without landing the big one, a day spent fishing is guaranteed to lower your blood pressure



For my birthday month (and Valentine's Day) my spouse bought me tickets. That's right, experiences – the best kind of gift in my humble opinion. A special concert, workshop in Bonsai (where less is more), preview to a new exhibit at the museum, and an evening painting at a local paint and sip establishment.

(Not sure about the last one. Sipping, yes; painting? Nothing wall-worthy, I am sure.)

Share your thoughtful-est gift ideas, and like us on [Facebook](#).

## Heading your way

- Let's Take a [Road Trip!](#)
- [Carolina Famous Faces](#)
- [Insider Attractions](#)
- [Adventures](#)

and remind you what's important. Take the family or your best buddies. [Before you go](#).

## Carolina Cuisine

### Perfect Seafood

When you put Carolina pecans and trout together and add a touch of French meunière sauce, something wonderful happens. This may be the perfect fish to introduce meat eaters to the gentle delights of inland seafood.

When you're in the mountains near Asheville, make plans to visit Biltmore Estate.

Before you go, check out their website,

where this [Pecan Crusted Trout](#) and many other great recipes can be found. We're betting they even have a fabulous wine to complement this luscious dish. Try it soon. Then, make plans to visit [Asheville](#) and [Biltmore](#). Good times.

### *Bertha's Kitchen*

On North Meeting Street, the flavors of the Lowcountry boldly emanate from this robin's-egg-blue spot, where Albertha Grant first opened shop in 1980. Her presence is still felt each time a cook hefts a stewpot to the stove and tosses in a seasoning hunk of sidemeat. Vibrant family portraits by Charleston muralist Charles DeSaussure line the walls. Today, her daughters, Julia Grant, Linda Pinckney, and Sharon Coakley, serve fried whiting, fried pork chops, red rice, prioleau rice, stewed chicken neck with gizzards and lima beans. Regulars queue the cafeteria line before eleven each morning. Construction workers exit with foam clamshells of Gullah excellence. Okra soup, a dark garlicky stew, thick with tomatoes, and clods of pork in a richly aromatic broth, is worth the trip alone. This soulful restaurant connects modern diners with traditional food ways and shines as a paragon of the region's living culinary history.

The restaurant is one of five recipients of the James Beard Foundation's 2017 America's Classics award. The America's Classics award is given to restaurants that have timeless appeal and are cherished for quality food that reflects the character of their community.

[www.Jamesbeard.org](http://www.Jamesbeard.org)

*Say Cheese, Please.*

Mark your Calendars

Sunday, April 23 from 12 – 4 p.m. at [Highland Brewing Company](#)

for the third-annual Carolina Mountain Cheese Fest.

Tickets on sale soon - the perfect gift for your Valentine.

[www.wnccheesetrail.org](http://www.wnccheesetrail.org)

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