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Subject: Spotighting: Greenville NC, Charleston, Aiken, Edgefield, Sylva

October 13, 2015

Below: the Holy City, small-town history, we got the milk, a confederate jewel, save the mussels, sport of kings, elegance personified, Crayola time, a bit Defiant

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Take a Road Trip to Charleston

Steeped in its own history like sweet tea, Charleston is South Carolina's oldest city and the scene where the Civil War actually began. Reminders of the past are everywhere.

You'll have to prioritize, no doubt. Many Southerners consider Charleston our unofficial capital, and certainly THE city that epitomizes Southern hospitality at its best. First, Charleston is the recipient of award after award from the world's leading travel sites and magazines. Example: For the third consecutive time, *Travel + Leisure* readers have named it #1 Favorite City in the U.S. and Canada.

Here at CarolinaLiving.com, we're not shy about discussing our favorites. We've all enjoyed the Holy City and will again. So, let's begin with the caveat that we are sharing a small sampling of recommendations.

Insider Tips

Photo: Drayton Hall by Tony Sweet

Where in the Carolina World Are You?

If the courthouse is this charming and historic, just imagine what the rest of the small mountain town in Jackson County has to offer visitors. Shopping, micro-breweries and artists' galleries in a compact and walkable downtown. There's much to see and do, here.

Where are you?

Carolina Home Grown

Confederate Roses

Like aspiring Hollywood actors, there are some lesser known fall-blooming garden plants that perform brilliantly in our gardens, but are rarely found in the marketplace. These plants have beauty, talent and the ability to make passersby stop for a longer look.

Some have even been around for a long time. Nevertheless, they aren't as easily recognized from the street as garden mums, asters, or goldenrods.

As a self-appointed publicity agent for lesser-known plants, I would like to promote the Confederate rose today. Confederate rose (*Hibiscus mutabilis*) was new to me when I arrived in South Carolina. I first heard about it from the late Jim Wilson, the former cohost of PBS' *The Victory Garden*. Mr. Wilson told me that this Chinese native has been passed along over the years by generations of southern gardeners.

When I first saw this plant in bloom one October morning several autumns ago, I had to stop the car to take a closer look.

Standing over 10 feet tall and taking up more than five feet of lawn, this woody, multi-stemmed shrub had red, pink, and white peonylike flowers – all on the same plant. I was awestruck.

True to its species name – *mutabilis* – which means “changing,” Confederate rose flowers open up white and then change to pink and then to red before they begin to fade.

Some cultivars of Confederate rose, such as ‘Plena,’ have double-flowers that change from white to pink. ‘Flore-plena’ is a common cultivar that has double pink, camellia-like flowers. Two cultivars with single flowers include raspberry-red flowered ‘Raspberry Rose’ and the scarlet colored ‘Rubrus.’

Confederate rose prefers full sun to partial shade in a well-drained location. In the Piedmont, the woody stems die back to the ground when temperatures drop to 15 degrees F. However, new shoots slowly emerge in the spring.

Confederate rose may never get the lucky break it deserves to become famous, mostly because it spends most of the growing season looking rather ordinary with large, fuzzy, sycamore-like leaves. It's also relatively pest-free, and so demands little attention or interest from gardeners for most of the time. It's not until late September and October when Confederate rose makes its debut that people take notice. Believe me, it's worth waiting to see her in bloom.

Unfortunately, Confederate rose is not very common in the nursery trade. It's probably because it's difficult to sell a plant without flowers. Thankfully, we can always find the opportunity to befriend someone who's already growing a Confederate rose with the hope of receiving a handful of pass-along cuttings.

With the owner's permission (who has now become your new best friend), take a few cuttings now and root them in water. Jim Wilson said that his wife, Jane, used to over-winter cuttings in a pail of water. In the spring she potted them up and passed them along to friends and acquaintances. I've rooted a few cuttings in water and found that they're perfect confidence-builders for people who are timid or inexperienced at rooting garden plants. There's nothing to it. Just put them in water and stand back.

One piece of advice that Jim Wilson shared with me: “Don't plant Confederate rose in the backyard unless you like havin' lots of company.”

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

Like a Box of Crayons

Fall color in the Mountains

The brilliant annual show of reds, oranges and golds has begun in the Western North Carolina Mountains. It begins at higher elevations and works its glorious way down. Weekdays to find foliage work best. Remember, this is one of Mother Nature's finest shows and **those in the know**, want to see.

Photo courtesy ExploreAsheville.com

Cool and Colorful

Hello Kester Clan!

Hope all is well with you in the Columbia region these days.

One look at this COMPASS eNews and you'll know Fall is here.

A new Carolina resident once told us that she now knew why there were so many colors in her child's Crayola box – all those colors live in Carolina foliage. It's true.

Blue Ridge mountains are especially appealing now til December. Then, so is the coast. And the heartlands lakes and rivers. Check out the Road Trip to our Holy City – always magnificent.

Seems like yesterday (1983) when we were recruited to the Carolinas. The charms and easy living continue to beguile us and so many friends who've made the move.

Explore the memorable and affordable getaways. Ramp up the adrenalin with our Outdoor Thrills featured in the next [CarolinaLiving.com GUIDE](#) – at the printer now. Put down roots with super real estate values (and we've got insider tips to help). Time to build your small palace, or secluded retreat.

Got Milk?

Near the tiny, historic town of Edgefield, SC, farmland owned (since 1764) by the Dorn family is now one of only 62 dairy farms in South Carolina. Schedule a visit soon, to show your children what it's all about and let them taste their luscious chocolate milk at the source.

They've got another claim to fame. Their milk is used to help create the famous Clemson Blue Cheese and Blue Cheese dressing. For the little ones, however, it's the chocolate milk that calls out to young palates.

Lucky for us, there are tours available., and during the month of October, on Tuesdays, visitors can take the tour, enjoy a horse-drawn wagon ride, hear a bit of live music, and of course, enjoy a cold pint. Take your cooler, because you'll want to grab some blue cheese and moo juice for later.

The next phase of life begins now – Retire? Unretire? Whatever the mode, enjoy the ride.

Your feedback and ideas are always welcome!

Leyla & Patrick Mason
Co-Founders

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Carolina Animals at Risk

Carolina Heelsplitter (*Lasmigona decorata*)

Note: Our ongoing feature shares information about Carolinas endangered animals. Some are cuddly, others – not so much. All are important and the Wildlife Federations of both Carolinas are working hard to raise awareness of these important creature assets. Enjoy!

The Carolina heelsplitter is a mussel with a trapezoid-shaped shell that was first discovered in 1852. They once flourished in several locations in the Catawba and Pee Dee river systems, but due to declining water quality and habitat conditions, only a small number remain.

Mussels are soft-bodied animals enclosed by a shell and anchor themselves to streambeds with a foot-like organ. They take up and feed on organic particles, like algae and bacteria, from the water, which helps maintain clean water. Mussels can filter up to 40 liters of water a day.

www.Hickoryhillmilk.com

Waltz Into Winter

Most Fridays and some Saturdays you can trip the light fantastic in Greenville, NC.

The dances offered (with instruction) are varied and include Salsa, contra, square and more. But the one that caught our nostalgic, *Dancing-With-The-Stars* eye is "Waltz Into Winter," held December 4, from 7-9pm at Crave, a popular restaurant in the downtown area.

The last time we saw waltzing in person was in a small town in southern Portugal, where a group of German tourists whispered to the musician at our hotel and moments later, began to waltz to the notes of "The Blue Danube." Shoulders straight, arms perfectly extended, solemn looks all around – except for our party, which grinned, snapped photos and loved all of it.

If it's been awhile since you "tripped the light fantastic," you might want to schedule a weekend visit to Greenville, NC. You'll find lots to do, especially on Uptown Art Walk nights, when you'll want to pack your dancing shoes. [Learn more.](#)

The Galloping Game

The Sport of Kings Polo at historic Whitney Field, Aiken, SC

Now this is a party! The Aiken Polo Club is one of the oldest and most historic polo clubs in the United States. The club held its first game on Whitney Field in 1882 and joined the United States Polo Association before the turn of the 19th century. Enjoy a match at the historic field every Sunday afternoon in Aiken.

Mussels also help stabilize sediment at the bottom of lakes and rivers and provide shelter for smaller organisms. When the Carolina heelsplitter larvae are fully developed, they disperse and attach to gills of a fish host until ready to sink to the bottom. Since mussels are not very mobile, they are very sensitive to water quality changes, pollution especially. Chemicals commonly found in wastewater, agriculture, and construction runoff can poison or even suffocate mussels. Erosion off the stream buffers, where the mussels live, also damages their habitat and the population.

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It's Festival time in the Carolinas.

High-brow or down and dirty, we've got food festivals (Okra Strut, anyone?), harvest festivals, arts events and so much more. What's your gotta-go-to-this Carolina public party?

Please [share](#).

Heading your way

- Let's Take a Road Trip!
- Carolina Famous Faces
- Insider Attractions
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Date:

Every Sunday at 3pm
from September 20th - November 8th, 2015

Cost:

\$5 General Admission; \$30 VIP Pavillion
(includes free food and drinks)

Contact:

Aiken Polo Club
803.220.1853
www.aikenpoloclub.org

Carolina Cuisine

Defiantly Delicious

The folks at Huffington Post love this stuff. I do, too. And although I have it on good authority that drinking Defiant whisky straight is addictive, the distillers were nice enough to share their [Defiant Chocolate Martini](#) recipe for your cool weather sipping pleasure.

Let's just say that your guests will have options – from neat to holiday pizzazz. Award winning and made with just four ingredients, in the heart of Western North Carolina.

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