

COMING BACK TO LIFE

Have you all seen the daffodils? They are blooming everywhere we look. Beautiful little yellow heads with the bright orange eye. One day it was dismal dead grass and mud and the very next the spunky little yellow flowers. AMAZING! We have hidden ourselves, not below a frozen ground but cloistered inside our homes barely peeping out the door for so long and now we all seem to be, like the daffodil, coming



Peggy's Take

out and showing up at places we have not been in a very long time. Oh yes, Covid is still rearing its ugly head in places and we still have to shield and fortify ourselves from the attack and assault of this deadly beast of a disease, but I see so many people I have not seen in a year in the grocery store, and other businesses in town and they seem more at ease than I have seen people in a long time. My people are planning spring and summer vacations again, small family gatherings for Easter, (Yeah, I can sit down with all my children once again), and everybody's attitude has returned to its familiar disposition. I have told my friends and

family it has seemed to me as I am sure the people of World War 2 felt when they were emancipated. They could once again walk the streets without fear of being endangered to the way they had been for so long. We are still in a holding period of somewhat as the virus has not been completely annihilated but we now have a weapon to use against this perpetrator. My husband and I have both had COVID and we have had our two shots,

and one set of our children, so we feel somewhat freed from the paralyzing fear that once held us so tight.

Last year at this time, we were on the Mississippi Gulf Coast when the very first case of COVID was revealed in Mississippi, in Hattiesburg. We had to go through there to come home and I remember one of my grandsons saying, "I'm going to hold my breath as we go through here."

Little did we know then that we would all be holding our breaths for over a year and more breath holding to come.

Yes, we are going on spring break back to the Mississippi Gulf Coast this year.

Conservation Corner

by James Cummins
Executive Director
of Wildlife Mississippi

Mayapple

The mayapple is a herbaceous plant. It is found primarily in woodlands and partially shaded hillside seeps. This plant goes by several names including: duck's foot, Devil's apple, wild lemon, hog apple, love apple, Indian apple, and umbrella plant.

Mayapple grows to between 1 and 2 feet in height. Some plants produce a single

Yes, we will probably go to a restaurant. But I assure you we will not be as carefree as we were this time last year, but we will be enjoying our lives again without the horrific fear of the past year.

My husband is a 'meat and potatoes man' and it seems I never plan a meal without some potato dish. I think this came from his days in the army when he ate them nearly every meal, and peeled most of them. This is a good side dish.

TATERTOT CASSEOLE

1 pound of ground beef, or ground chuck, completely cooked. Salt and pepper. Stir in one can of condensed cream of mushroom soup and pour into a 9 x 13 inch pan. Top with a bag of frozen tatertots and sprinkle 2 cups shredded Cheddar cheese on top. Bake in a 350* oven for 40 minutes.

Peggy Sims is a life-long resident of Attala County and columnist.

leaf from a long stalk and no flower. Mayapple plants with two leaves produce a single nodding flower that blossoms below the leaves. The plant typically bears lobed leaves that span up to 1 foot across and 1 foot in length. There are between 5 and 9 lobes per leaf that are deeply divided. The flower that is produced is about 1.5 inches across and has between 6 and 9 white petals. The blooming period occurs from mid to late spring and lasts about 3 weeks. Each flower is replaced by an egg-shaped berry that resembles a lime, is fleshy, and contains several seeds. Two inches long and yellow when ripe, this berry is produced only when cross-pollination of the flower occurs. Mayapple often produces dense vegetative colonies that exclude other spring flowering plants.

All parts of the plant, except the fruit, are poisonous. Even the fruit, though not dangerously poisonous, can cause unpleasant indigestion. Ancient records show that American ethnic groups drank a ferment prepared from the dehydrated and crushed rhizome of mayapple as a medication to cure worms in the intestines. They also used the substance as a remedy for snakebites and as a laxative to clean the bowel.

Later, mayapple was used as an ingredient for prepar-

ing a laxative and sold over the counter as a medicine called "Carter's Little Liver Pills." Today, herbal practitioners use different parts of the mayapple to treat things such as warts or moles and have used them to combat some skin cancers.

According to researchers, podophyllotoxin, (the fatal ingredient of the herb), stops cell division and also possesses the ability to restrain tumor production. Of significant note, the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) has approved two drugs—etoposide and teniposide—prepared from podophyllotoxin for use in the United States.

Etoposide is administered as a treatment for testicular and small-cell lung cancers and rheumatoid arthritis. Teniposide is used for conditions including brain tumors, infancy leukemia, a variety of lymphomas, and other neoplastic diseases. However,

er, the FDA has banned the use of mayapple as a laxative due to the highly toxic nature of the plant which makes dosing difficult to calculate.

Podophyllotoxin is too toxic for home use due to its caustic nature and products for oral use have been withdrawn from the market for safety. Topical preparations of podophyllotoxin require professional application and must be rinsed off after 1 to 4 hours. Because human poisoning can result from topical application, as well as ingestion, it is important that you be able to identify this plant in order to avoid contact.

James L. Cummins is executive director of Wildlife Mississippi, a non-profit, conservation organization founded to conserve, restore, and enhance fish, wildlife, and plant resources throughout Mississippi. Their web site is www.wildlifemiss.org.

Food benefit fraud leads to arrest

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — A Mississippi woman faces charges after an investigation found she had received more food benefits than she was due, authorities said.

Investigators with the Mississippi Department of Human Services, in a news release Wednesday, said Rhonda Luckett, of Greenwood, has been arrested after receiving an over issuance of SNAP benefits in the amount of \$28,362 after she incorrectly reported her

household composition and income.

Luckett failed to report that her children's father was living in the home and working from January 2015 through October 2019, the department said.

A Leflore County grand jury indicted Luckett on a charge of food stamp fraud, leading to her arrest. It was unknown if Luckett has an attorney who could speak on her behalf. If convicted, she faces up to three years in jail and a \$10,000 fine.

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