



Preserving the Past to Protect the Future

Established in 1994, The Nature Foundation at Wintergreen (TNFW) grew out of 25 years of research and education about the unique and historical setting of the community of Wintergreen, Virginia, located atop the Blue Ridge Mountains. After plans were made in 1975 to develop this 11,000-acre community, field biologist Douglas A. Coleman (now Executive Director of TNFW) began to lay the groundwork for an organization which would, through competent field research, documentation, and education, increase awareness of and responsibility for these ancient Blue Ridge gardens.

TNFW's efforts have been highly successful, gaining the strong support of the community dedicated to maintaining 6,000 acres of undeveloped land. The educational programs and the work done to ensure responsible stewardship of the land garnered TNFW the National Environmental Achievement Award in 1987. Some of the country's top field scientists have developed and continue to maintain close ties with the Foundation.

As with urban science organizations, which attempt to familiarize visitors with nature through photographs and exhibits, the Foundation operates in such a way as to achieve its best work where the need is the greatest. However, its unique relationship to the community and strong connections to science and educational institutions offer the Foundation an ideal position from which to achieve its mission.

One of the Foundation's most unique programs, for example, is that of preserving and propagating plants native to the area. In 1998, The Foundation began work with Pam Gallery, collector of Central Blue Ridge Mountain flora, to study and document the propagation requirements of the area's wildflowers. Today, volunteers collect and germinate seeds, study the many varieties of wildflowers found throughout the mountains and valleys of the central Blue Ridge and educate visitors and residents about the plethora of wildflowers which exist in the area.

TNFW is unique in that it:

- Is a living sanctuary, preserving nature in the midst of potentially destructive elements
- Operates in the midst of the natural resources of its stewardship vision, where it can measure its laboratory by the square mile, not the square foot
- Offers interactive exhibits both in Trillium House and on the grounds of the open spaces it manages
- Facilitates the interaction of scientists and teachers to bring current research directly into children's learning experiences
- Follows established and traditional natural science approaches in an organization unhampered by unwieldy size and cumbersome bureaucracy

Today, The Nature Foundation's mission is to protect the heritage and beauty of the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia by encouraging the understanding, appreciation, and conservation of its natural and cultural resources. TNFW facilitates research and education for its membership and visitors, and serves as a host site for regional, national and international conservation and education efforts through seminars, study programs, nature walks and other informative group sessions.

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