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Geology and Native Plants Talk January 22 at Woodlands Garden

Two authors will team up on Sunday, January 22 to reveal the geology of Georgia and how it influences native plants. The program at 3:00 PM is hosted by Woodlands Garden, 932 Scott Blvd, Decatur. Geologist Dr. Bill Witherspoon, co-author of *Roadside Geology of Georgia* and biogeographer Dr. Leslie Edwards, co-author of *Natural Communities of Georgia*, will present a slide talk, "Geology's Lessons for Preserving Georgia's Native Plants," followed by a book signing. Both books "take the general reader to Georgia's natural wonders and explain the science that lies behind the scenery," according to Witherspoon.

The program explains how the regions of Georgia, including the Piedmont surrounding Atlanta, differ in their rocks and geologic history. The Piedmont has a history of volcanic islands and fragments of continent, scattered across an ancient ocean. From sparse deposits of silica beach sand, to deep-water piles of aluminum-rich mud, to magma bringing calcium and magnesium up from Earth's mantle, different rock components yield different soil chemistry. These in turn lead to a spectrum of plant associations, from the pines and blueberries that grow in acidic sites to the sugar maples and shooting stars of nutrient-rich soils.

The event is free, but due to limited seating, registration at <http://georgiarocks.us/events#Register> is required.

Witherspoon, who taught geology to K-12 teachers and their students for 17 years at DeKalb County Schools' Fernbank Science Center, says *Roadside Geology of Georgia* appeals to families who travel in Georgia. "If you've visited an overlook in north Georgia, left tracks in the sand on Tybee Island, or floated the Chattahoochee, you've had a rock adventure. This book lets you spice those adventures up with a little science, by understanding the geology behind the landmarks we encounter whenever we go outside in Georgia."

Natural Communities of Georgia teaches the public to recognize and protect Georgia's many treasures of the natural world. "You will be amazed to learn of Georgia's diversity, from high mountain peaks that host species that are typically found much farther north, to the incomparable Okefenokee Swamp, where alligators and plants combine to form a lush, tropical feel," according to Edwards, who retired in 2014 from Georgia State University.

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