

# A boyfriend from the woods

By Ginny Gregory

The winter blast of frigid air was punctuated by the surprise ending of a nine-year wait.

Nine years ago when we built our house, my garden was an evolution of a life time of dreams. My dreams had rock walls with tumbling plants everywhere. It was alive with activity, color and texture throughout the year. It had gates and arches that lured you through and around the corner. It had art filled with whimsy snuggled in every unexpected corner. It had a tiny place to sit in chairs surrounded by the garden ... to look out and dream more dreams while enjoying the romping of dogs and grandkids. DONE.

In these nine years the one absolute disappointment that has really gotten away with me is my Ilex verticillata 'Sparkleberry'. It has failed to sparkle. Deciduous hollies need to be outstanding. They need to be back lit by the sun. They need to be at the edge of the woods so that the birds feel safe enough to enjoy them. But most of all they need a boyfriend. Well, for some reason all planted boyfriends have really failed to thrive so I decided that certainly the native hollies that fill our woods could do the trick. I have just a bit of mule in me.



Who wouldn't fall in love with a Sparkleberry?

As fall crept into the garden and leaves began to turn and beautyberries began to twinkle, I started to see the berries on the Ilex verticillata starting to puff up and turn a hot orangey red. The leaves slowly took flight and the berries began to really shine. All through the holidays, as I sat in my blue chair with my puppies Chloe and Jackson watching the birds, I felt an inner glow. The Sparkleberry was making me feel warm inside as its arms were becoming more weighted down with plump glowing berries. The birds seemed to love to hang out on it, but not eat anything. The frigid air seemed punctuated with the berries and my heart sang. Finally the long awaited day had arrived!

Then one day as Isaac Michael (my 3-year-old grandson) and I sat in

the blue chair drinking coffee and water, Isaac chirped, "GG, look at the wood peppers. They are hugging the trees. And GG, the birds with the yellow butt are allll over the berry tree." I could not believe my eyes. I had waited for this moment for nine years. (In Fearington, every winter there would be a moment when the cedar wax wings would swoop in and spend one week devouring the deciduous holly berries. It was so amazing and eerie at the same time because it was almost a Hitchcock event.) Well, behold it was happening in my garden and I was seeing it with Isaac. Then Chloe and Jackson climbed on the chair. Lizzie came over with the bird book and furiously thumbed through it to make sure it was truly wax wings that we were seeing. BINGO!

After Isaac was settled back into snow country (home in Massachusetts) and I was having coffee with just the hounds one morning I shirked with delight to see a bird I had never seen before... a yellow bellied sap sucker. It is in the wood "pepper" family and so grand. It turns out that it really liked the berries also.

You know, if the outdoors don't rock your boat I know all of this is going to sound really lame. I have been taking just a little time each morning over the past nine years to enjoy my birds and I promise you that my life is richer. When I start my day from the window, I am a calmer gardener greeting the world. I import the strangest things into my life to bring in pleasure when pure joy is waiting to

be discovered outside my living room window. My morning show is free. If the birds find me and enjoy my garden, then I must be giving something back to the earth that has given me so much. That thought really makes me happy. My Isaac, my Chloe and Jackson and my Lizzie and I all enjoy the morning show at Blue Moon. I'll be willing to bet there is a show outside your window that you have yet to discover. Tune in the great outdoors.



This piece is dedicated to Samuel Saavedra who was murdered at the end of December in Hillsborough while standing in line to enter a club. His brother, Esrai, was my "detail man" in the garden. Samuel's death will not be forgotten. He was a hard working 19-year-old. His family will never be the same. Esrai escorted his brother's body home. He lost his brother, I have lost him. It has changed my life. He had become a very important part of my every day world ... of my family. People from "away" have changed my life in such a rich and positive way. This death, this sorrow makes every bird, every laugh, every breeze felt on my face precious to me.

Ginny Gregory is the owner and creative energy behind "Beyond The Pail: Creating Gardens and Beyond". She is starting "Beyond The Crate: Finding simplicity out of chaos," a de-cluttering and down sizing business. For more information, please check [www.beyondthepail.net](http://www.beyondthepail.net)

**Body Therapy Institute**  
LEARNING THAT CHANGES LIVES

Did you know... one of the nation's leading massage schools is right here in Chatham County! At its beautiful campus, BTI offers:

**One-day Introductory Massage Workshop • Massage Therapy Diploma Program • Continuing Education for Professionals • Spirit of Learning® Teacher Training Program**

300 Southwind Road, Siler City NC 27344  
888-500-4500 (TOLL FREE) | [www.massage.net](http://www.massage.net)

**North Chatham Auto Care Inc.**

- Full Auto Repair
- North Carolina Inspection Center
- Air Conditioning Service
- Tires, and More...

919-967-9515 office  
919-967-9516 fax

96 SAM JONES RD. CHAPEL HILL, NC 27517 MON-FRI 8am-6pm  
4 miles from Cole Park Plaza, 2 1/2 miles down Lystra

Expand your outdoor space into living space

SCREENED PORCHES AND DECKS

**Walter Lane**  
Office 919.933.4044  
Mobile 919.730.3124  
Fax 919.933.6246  
[www.screenporchanddecks.com](http://www.screenporchanddecks.com)

Ask About Outdoor Kitchens!

**Authentic French and African Arts, Crafts and Fabrics**

- African Baskets and Beads
- French and African Fabrics
- French Pottery
- Carvings
- Fine Antiques

Incredible Variety!

**FRENCH CONNECTIONS**

178 Hillsboro Street, Pittsboro  
919.545.9296  
SHOP ONLINE! [www.french-nc.com](http://www.french-nc.com)

*Why settle for less than happiness?*

**Manage stress and enjoy life!**

**Betty W. Phillips**  
PhD, Psychologist

*Counseling and Life Coaching*

Forest Garden Office, Chatham County  
(919) 967-1860  
[www.BettyPhillipsPsychology.com](http://www.BettyPhillipsPsychology.com)

*expanded local hours!*

