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Introduction

What a time to be alive – oft we ignore that we are at the very forefront of history. As I live and breathe, things are different than they have ever been. But, we've remained the same mostly. We're still humans, foundering after our lives one day at a time. Or, in my case, one cup of coffee at a time.

These days I'm doing a lot of intense intermingling with my community. I'm doing things that, as a younger man, I thought would take at least a million dollars. But no, for all it's worth, *The Press* has been a wonderful investment. It has taken me places I've never imagined, and it's a treat to share them with y'all.

We all redefine who we are every day. We're always learning, falling in love, and looking tirelessly for cheese, berries, and food. Food is what I mean.... (I have a great fondness for cheese, I must confess.)

Right now, for this moment, it is all before us. We have the means to do as much or as little as we wish for the most part. There's great work to do in the cases of those who don't have the means to do as they wish and those who are stranded in the heat and cold. For them, we must fight, for those without voices, we must fight. That's the unfortunate truth about a future defined by the day. Day by day.

It's hard work but we can certainly do it. I believe that this paper does something like that. Together we're able to better understand each other, which is hard work. It is hard work to pick up a stranger on the street, and it's also hard work to ask a stranger for a ride. Still, comfort and ignorance do us few favors, and hard work brings us closer together.

Thank you for reading thus far,
Hopefully we'll hear from you for the next issue!

We would also like to thank Esther Sitver for the wonderful front cover, you can find more of her excellent [art here!](#)

Zeke Streetman

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Zeke Streetman". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style with a horizontal line crossing through the middle of the name.

Jo Ann's Corner

By Jo Ann Bullard

Let's talk. You know, there is an interesting situation going on in the Smokies.

The Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians is considering a resolution asking that Clingman's Dome be changed back to its original name of Ku wa hi, which it held before the Cherokees were forcibly removed from their land.

In 1859, Arnold Guyot, a surveyor and professor, was responsible for the name change. It was a result of an argument between Thomas Clingman, a Senator from North Carolina, and Elisha Mitchell, a professor at the University of North Carolina.

They were arguing about what the highest peak was in the area. Guyot discovered that what is now Mount Mitchell was 39 feet taller than what is now Clingman's Dome. Guyot named the highest peak after Mitchell and the losing peak after Clingman. That is how Clingman's Dome was named.

Now, here's a little information about Thomas Clingman. Clingman served as a Senator from North Carolina but had no ties to the Cherokee Nation. He left the Senate in 1861 and became a Confederate General.

He received amnesty after the war. Now, the Cherokee Nation is seemingly unhappy with the name Clingman's Dome. The Cherokee Nation has a long-standing history associated with Clingman's Dome.

When it was Ku wa hi, medicine men and members of the tribe would go there to receive spiritual guidance. Many Cherokees sought refuge there to escape removal from their land. A Cherokee Legend states that the White Bear, the Chief of all bears, and the Bear Council live there. Another Cherokee Legend claims that the enchanted lake of Atagahi, the lake of healing waters, is located between Ku wa hi and the headwaters of the Oconalafee River to the East.

Ku wa hi is a rich part of the Cherokee Nation's culture and history. The tribe is going to vote on whether the resolution to request the name change goes forth later this month. It will be interesting to see what happens next.

Having said that, let's share a breakfast beverage and a Native American Proverb. Today's Proverb goes like this, "Take only what you need and leave the land as you found it." Thanks

for coming. Enjoy your gift of today, and have a great day. We look forward to seeing you tomorrow.

The Opioid Crisis Is Not the Opioid Crisis

By Amanda Collins

Most folks who talk about “Appalachia” have never actually visited. They romanticize us all as Loretta Lynn or Dolly Parton, growing up in isolated log cabins surrounded by tall trees, with scruffy but wise and kind moonshiners in every holler. They think the air is full of the sounds of church choirs or trains passing us by for more cultured locales.

The simple truth is that Appalachia is a study in contrasts, with subtleties that the uninitiated can not see. For every log cabin, there are two dozen trailer homes. For every moonshiner holler, there are tens of malls and dozens of flea markets. For every church choir, there are business meetings and revitalized downtowns and tourist traps and historic neighborhoods and microbreweries.

The *very* simple truth is that Appalachia is much less a place than a people.

If you ask an outsider what they know about Appalachia these days, one of the top three answers usually relates to the opioid crisis. We are well known for our addictions to heroin, synthetics (e.g., fentanyl, methadone), and prescription painkillers (e.g., oxy, hydro, morphine, codeine), plus the extremes that we will go to get our fixes, and the money we can make by fixing others.

And boy, do we need fixing.

Compared to everyone else in the US, Appalachians struggle significantly more—and I do mean *clinically significantly* more—with poverty, chronic medical conditions, unemployment, disabilities, injuries, suicides, depression, substance addictions (though interestingly *not* alcohol dependence). We work longer hours and travel farther for jobs (when we can get them), depend more on Medicare than private insurance, and experience more Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). But none of this is particularly dependent on whether we live in a lonely mountain holler or on a fancy downtown street with historic homes; wherever we are, we suffer from big barriers to being mentally and behaviorally healthy.

The problem with focusing on the opioid crisis as *the* problem in Appalachia is that we truly face unique and disproportionate challenges, compared to the rest of the US. Some of these certainly stem from trying to build productive lives in the mountainous, difficult-to-travel terrain, but many of these originated with historically disenfranchising and undermining treatment of Appalachia by corporations looking for a workforce to

control and politicians using us as profitable pawns in whichever chess game was foremost at the time (today, it's tourism and poverty fetishizing, both urban and rural, fyi).

The *real* “real problem” is that Appalachians have never been provided the mental and behavioral health resources we need to reinforce us as we push against the wind—literally and figuratively. Sometimes this was because outsiders came and stayed a few days and found us unenthusiastic for outside help, misreading hesitance and even bravado as refusal rather than resignation. Other times this was because we are our own worst enemies, trying (but failing) to present our best, self-sufficient selves to the world, in an absolute farce of addicts brushing off intervention because we don't want to ask for help (but do actually want help all the same). In any event, Appalachia was labeled as a too-difficult diva who did not immediately express improvement and gratitude for the things that could have shored up a robust but hurting people, ignoring the very different sets of challenges faced here.

Even today, we are brushed off as too independent for outside help, yet we sustain widespread, deep connections to family and community, even over hundreds of miles—where is our independence then? We are chastised for superstitiously using OTC and home medical remedies “off label,” yet our creativity and co-existence with nature is celebrated. We are scorned for unemployment when there are no jobs available that are easy to get to and that pay a living wage, yet we are feted for our handicrafts and resilience. These are the contrasts. These are the subtleties that outsiders can't see.

When most people look at the opioid crisis in Appalachia, they overlook real issues with how and why we are introduced to opioids and then develop dependencies on them. Some factors not considered:

- There is a shortage of available mental/behavioral healthcare providers and facilities across the entire region.
- The ones that are available are not easy to travel to for much of the population, and they are incredibly crunched for appointments and usually overbooked.
- Many providers have no-show dismissal rules that might be reasonable in parts of the country with reliable and affordable public transportation or non-profit transport organizations, but in Appalachia these rules disproportionately harm the most vulnerable, whose lengthy and difficult roads are exacerbated by less access to reliable vehicles...or reliable drivers.
- These providers experience excessive staff turnover, meaning that clients must “start over” more frequently, and treatment plans are not properly implemented and evaluated.

- Appalachians legitimately experience more chronic medical conditions and more chronic pain, for a wide variety of reasons, including higher rates of heart disease, cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), injury, stroke, and diabetes. These are all associated with increased risks for depression, anxiety, and substance abuse—putting risk on top of risk.
- Many Appalachian clients are prescribed opioids as pain intervention methods, particularly when other options such as massage, physical therapy, or regular in-office procedures are not widely available.
- Pain management with opioids might not be closely monitored and titrated due to a lack of providers and appointments.

Ultimately, the opioid crisis in Appalachia is like everything else about us: very complicated and very simple at the same time. We are in a healthcare crisis, and widespread opioid addiction is a symptom of a much bigger problem. Until the corporations, businesses, and politicians who have the means come together to advocate for more healthcare resources—in spite of low profits—we will not be fixed. Until our developer partners find a way to provide infrastructure without destroying the beauty that makes people want to live, work, and shop here, we will not be fixed. And until those from outside stop buying into fatalist stereotypes about us, we will not be “fixed”.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Amanda Collins, EdS, MEd, is a school psychologist, speaker, community organizer, and mother of three school-age children and five cats with her husband, Dan. She grew up in the foothills of the Appalachians in northeast Alabama and has only ever lived in ARC-served Appalachian counties, including in Georgia and Tennessee. Amanda has degrees from Berry College (Rome, GA) and Georgia State University (Atlanta, GA). In 2021, Amanda founded KCS Parent Advocates for School Safety, and she is the 2022 Democratic candidate for Tennessee State House Representative for District 14, in Knox County, Tennessee.

Ways To Make Good Fortune Come Your Way

By Banjo

We all want good fortune, and sometimes we might feel like we are not getting our fair share from the universe. With times as they are today with high gas and food prices, anything extra would help, right? I thought a little write-up on some superstitions that might increase our good luck game would be fun. Superstitions, sometimes called “old wives’ tales,” are longstanding, traditional beliefs that aren’t based on logic or fact.

Knocking on wood, carrying a good luck charm such as a four-leaf clover, lucky dice, or a particular gemstone, and making a wish on a stray eyelash, falling star, wishing well, rainbow, or birthday candles are all superstitions.

Of course, we can do things to increase our good luck, such as maximize opportunities and keep trying new things. Listen to hunches. Trust your intuition, especially if it's an area where you have some experience. Expect good fortune, and be an optimist. Turn bad luck into good, and don't dwell on the bad.

Be positive, and you are already winning. Some of us like to attract all things good, like health, wealth, and love. To do that, we must be grateful for what we already have.

The belief that some days bring luck and others don't is beyond location and culture.

Old astrologers believed there were six days that you never did anything important on. Those days are January 3rd, April 30th, July 1st, August 1st, October 2nd, and December 31st. Many religious folks believe the last Monday in December is unlucky because Jesus was betrayed that day. Many think, too, that ANY Friday is unlucky because Jesus was crucified on a Friday.

Some other beliefs include not moving into a new home on a Friday. Monday or Wednesday are your best days to move.

Carrying a crust of bread in one's pocket is considered lucky and brings prosperity. If in eating you miss your mouth and the food falls, it is unlucky and denotes illness. To find an old flint arrow is considered lucky. To find nine peas in a pod is a forerunner of luck. If your palm itches, you will soon receive money.

If you scratch it, your money will never come. Right to receive; left to pay out. Many people believe if you spill salt, it's bad luck. However, taking a quick pinch and tossing it over your shoulder counteracts the bad juju.

Why? Since salt has historically often been a valuable resource and even used as money, it's thought that spilling it attracts evil spirits who want to steal from you and tossing it over your shoulder wards them off.

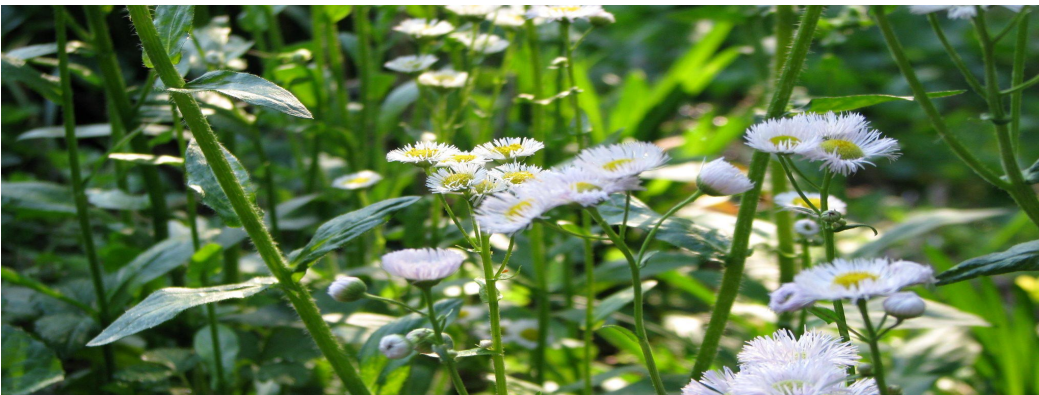
Throwing rocks into the wind makes bad luck. When a coyote crosses your path that's bad luck. An owl flying over your house, you guessed it, bad luck. Seeing ravens or crows is considered bad luck*.

For good luck in your house, Scatter Solomon's seal on the floor to banish serpents and venomous creatures from the room. To protect your house from lightning, gather hazel tree branches on Palm Sunday and keep them in water.

Never carry a hoe into the house. If you do so by mistake, carry it out again, walking backward to avoid bad luck. Never walk under a ladder, which is Satan's territory. If you must do it, cross your fingers or make the sign of the fig (closed fist, with thumb between index and middle fingers).

Nail an evergreen branch to new rafters to bring good luck. An empty hornets' nest, hung high, also will bring good luck to a house of any age. When you move to a new house, always enter first with a loaf of bread and a new broom. Never bring an old broom into the house. Hope you enjoyed reading. Remember to keep a positive attitude and you are winning! Good luck!

****The editors would like to note that they respect the crows and ravens, and know they are both brave and noble creatures. May our bird overlords have mercy upon us.***



Mountain Folk Forage: Kudzu

By Aimee LaFon

***Disclaimer: I am not a doctor, nor do I pretend to be. This article is informative and only covers the traditional uses for forageable plants commonly found in the Appalachian region. It's always best to consult a health care professional or medical doctor when suffering from any ailment, disease, illness, or injury before trying any traditional folk remedies. ***



This summer, I've been having tons of fun on my days off playing with kudzu. As a child, I used to pretend that the dense patch of kudzu near my dad's house was a city that had been swallowed by foliage. I'd hide in the patches and force him to find me, which he wasn't particularly happy about.

However, even now that I'm an adult, I still see something akin to the lost city of Atlantis every time I spot kudzu. Although these vast vines may not be hiding ruined homes and abandoned towers, they have many secrets to share as long as you are willing to listen.

About Kudzu

Folk Names: Chinese arrowroot, Japanese arrowroot

Medicinal Properties: antioxidant

Here in the Appalachian south, most everyone has heard of how Kudzu is a dangerous and invasive plant that has threatened the entire ecosystem. However, there are more perspectives on this plant than just one, which is why I am so excited to talk about it today.

Kudzu, a Japanese-native trailing vine, first appeared in the USA at the 1876 World's Fair in Philadelphia, PA. It then reappeared at the New Orleans Exposition from 1884 to 1886. Introduced as a novelty ornamental vine for trellises and pergolas, kudzu quickly became a desirable exotic plant similar to English ivy.

In the early [1900s](#), some farmers in Appalachia began to grow kudzu as a food source for their farm animals. As a rapid-growing plant, it was a cheap way to cut down on feed costs and also helped keep the soil moist and fertile for crops.

It remained an ornamental garden vine and animal food source until the US Soil Conservation Service (now called the Natural Resources Conservation Service) stepped in.

In the 1920s, overfarming had created dust storms in the American south, and the government was searching for a plant that could help fertilize fields and fight erosion. Their solution was Kudzu.

From the early 1920s to the 1950s, the Soil Conservation Service [encouraged](#) people to plant kudzu on any clear land they could, and the government even [paid](#) farmers up to \$8 per acre to plant it. While planting this voracious vine ultimately resolved the dust storms and overharvesting issues in the South, it created another problem altogether.

The enthusiasm with which people had planted kudzu before the mid-century had gotten out of hand. Abandoned land falling into neglect made the ideal spot for kudzu to take over and eradicate the native plants.

However, with the proper amount of care, it is possible to eliminate or control kudzu's growth. The overgrown fields "swallowed" by kudzu that have become such a common sight in southern Appalachia today are a symptom of improper care for the land.

The remedy for this overgrowth, however, is within sight. Kudzu has always been a useful plant, and it is edible. It also makes lovely fiber for sustainable and compostable textiles. To eliminate our kudzu problem, we just have to start harvesting it.

How To Identify and Harvest Kudzu

Kudzu leaves have three lobes and grow in clusters of three leaves. According to horticultural experts from The University of Alabama, kudzu vines can grow [1 foot](#) per day in the summertime, and each vine can reach up to 60 feet long!

Kudzu vines have a deep green color and transparent to orange-colored hairs all over them. The young shoots are very floppy and have the most hair. On these shoots, you'll notice that the young leaves look velvety.



Me and my bouquet of gigantic kudzu leaves.

How To Prepare and Use Kudzu

Eating Kudzu

Every part of the kudzu plant is edible except for its seed pods. Some scientific studies have tested and found [evidence](#) that kudzu:

- Helps curb cravings for alcohol in alcoholics.
- Helps to lower blood sugar.
- Aids the immune system.

However, the scientific studies behind kudzu's medicinal benefits are scarce, and this plant needs more testing to discover the benefits that it has in store for us.

Still, as a member of the bean family of plants, kudzu is safe to eat for animals and humans alike – it just has a very bitter taste that many people do not appreciate.

Still, even for those who might not appreciate kudzu's bitter, strong bean-like flavor, the root offers many promises. Kudzu's roots are massive, and they look a bit like sweet potatoes. In Japan, these roots are ground into a powder, which you can use as a thickening agent, like wheat or corn.

Some popular dishes made with the root include kudzu glass noodles, sauces and stews thickened with kudzu, and desserts like puddings, jelly, and hot chocolate.

While the root seems like the best option for consumption, processing it and powdering it is a process that takes several repetitions of shredding and boiling. For that reason, most people choose to purchase kudzu powder, which is widely available at health food stores.

If you want to learn more about kudzu for culinary purposes, I recommend reading this book, *The Book of Kudzu: A Culinary & Healing Guide* By William Shurtleff, and Akiko Aoyagi. It has been my go-to source for everything kudzu, and I believe it deserves a spot on every Appalachian's bookshelf.

Kudzu Fibers

My primary interest in Kudzu this season has been in the preparation of baskets and fibers (shoutout to my best friend Mary, who sparked my curiosity). As a fiber artist, I have always appreciated sustainable, compostable fibers, but these often come at a very high price. However, the kudzu surrounding almost every commercial property in Knoxville is abundant and cost-free.



Preparing kudzu for fiber can be as simple or complicated as you want it to be. First, you'll need to strip the leaves. Then, you can make rope, mats, hats, or baskets from kudzu by splitting the woody runners (longer, thicker vines) into sections with a knife and twisting or weaving the sections as you see fit.

Here's an example of a basket I made in just an hour or so. While I'm not the best at basket weaving yet, it's quite a

functional make, and the fiber dries out to be incredibly strong and sturdy.

However, if you want a strong, thin thread for spinning, sewing, or weaving, there are quite a few steps to follow before you get a workable material.

Kudzu contains a bast fiber, like flax, jute, and hemp. Bast fibers are closer to the plant's thin bark, and these plants usually contain a spongy white center (pith). To separate these fibers from the pith, bark, and other parts, you need to ret them, which is a fancy word for letting them sit in a tub of water for about a week.

As you soak these plants, the fragile plant matter decays, leaving behind the tough fiber.

You can tell if the stems are done retting by running your fingers along the wet vines. If the outer bark feels slimy and rubs right off, it's time to isolate and wash the fibers.

During this phase, you will want to pull the vines through your pinched fingers to remove the decaying plant matter and separate the fibers. As you do this, you will notice that you have two separate types of fiber to work with.

The first ones are very slimy, almost transparent, and very delicate. These are the bast fibers, and that's what we are looking for if you want to make a thin thread with which you can sew or weave a functional cloth. These become tangled as you pull them off, so I recommend peeling them straight into a tub of water, then working out the tangles while they're submerged.

The second type of fiber you might end up with is the dense, straw-like fiber from the plant's xylem and phloem. These woody fibers are perfect for making baskets, hats, mats, or utilitarian twine. However, they become very brittle when dry, so they are best for projects that need a tough fiber, and that will have a dense weave/stitch pattern. They can also be quite challenging (but not impossible) to spin since they feel thick and woody.

From here on out, you will need to keep your fibers wet when working with them. Kudzu fibers, like linen, are stronger when wet, and the thicker fiber will be very brittle when it becomes dry. So, give the fibers a soak before working with them to make your life easier.

Once you have removed the gooey plant matter from these fibers, rinse them well. Traditionally, Japanese fiber workers would do this in a running stream, carrying away all of the gunk and helping them separate each fiber. However, you can use hose water and a plastic tub if you don't have a stream in your backyard.

After this phase, you can separate each fiber. These fibers are all connected, but they are pretty easy to split with a fine comb or your fingers. However, ensuring that you split them all evenly might be challenging. Don't worry about it too much if you end up with some pieces that are thicker than others. It'll all even out eventually.

After this phase, you can do several things depending on how you want to use your fiber:

1. Tie the ends of each fiber together to create one long string.
2. Spin the fibers together and join as you would with any bast fiber.
3. Leave your fibers in the state they are currently in and use them as a thread for sewing, weaving, crochet, knitting, or embroidery.

I went the spinning route and found that spinning your fiber will help to even out poorly-split threads. Spinning the bast fiber is simple, and the resulting material comes out incredibly soft and strong.

Here's my finished result:



Spun thread from the bast fiber (on the white bobbin to the left – look how shiny and fine it is!) and spun cord from the xylem/phloem fiber (to the right).

I am incredibly happy with the thread I produced and plan to weave some fabric once I refine my technique and accumulate enough fiber!

If you are interested in learning more about making cloth or other textiles with kudzu, please feel free to reach out to me at naturasumma@gmail.com. This is the beginning of a new practice for me, and I would love to share any knowledge I have or work together to spread awareness of how to use these techniques. Also, if you know anything I don't, I'd love to hear about your experience processing natural fibers.

Sources

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