

**The Merritt Lyndon Fernald Award
For Best Paper published in *Rhodora*
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presented to

**Lucas C. Majure, JoVonn Hill, Chris Doffitt, & Terrence C. Majure
for
for their paper entitled
"The vascular flora of
Lauderdale, County, Mississippi, U.S.A."**

This year's recipient of the New England Botanical Club's Merritt Lyndon Fernald Award are Lucas C. Majure, JoVonn Hill, Chris Doffitt, and Terrence C. Majure for their paper, "The vascular flora of Lauderdale, County, Mississippi, U.S.A." published in *Rhodora* 113 (956): 365–418 (October 2011).

This paper documents the flora of a botanically rich area of the southeastern United States. Much more than just a checklist, it is a comprehensive investigation of the flora of an under-studied region of the country. The fact that their field work added two new species to the flora of Mississippi and a new sedge to the flora of North America is noteworthy, as was their focus on species' range shifts, distribution patterns, and biogeography. Their provision of a natural communities framework was also a strength of the work.

Abstract

A floristic survey of Lauderdale County, Mississippi was undertaken from the spring of 2004 through the fall of 2009 in order to document the flora and describe plant communities from this poorly studied region within Mississippi. A total of 1175 vascular plant species (1206 taxa altogether, including species and infraspecific taxa) was recorded from the county. *Oenothera sinuosa* and *Geranium molle* were collected for the first time in the state of Mississippi, and *Carex breviculmis* was recorded from North America for the first time. One hundred and eighty-six introduced species were recorded in the county. Forty-seven rare and uncommon species, according to the Mississippi Natural Heritage Program special plant tracking and watch lists, were recorded from Lauderdale County and many range extensions and species disjunctions were discovered. We describe nine primary plant communities in the county and discuss the biogeographical importance of the flora of Lauderdale County relative to the rest of the state.