



## TO PROTECT IT, FIRST NAME IT

*NameThatPlant.net is the creation of Janie Kirkwood Marlow '72, a citizen scientist whose website has assisted thousands in identifying native plants.*

BY JERRY SALLEY '90

**F**ew expected the invader to come this far south. While it had run rampant in northern parts of the U.S., it had never been documented in South Carolina before. But Janie Kirkwood Marlow '72 saw the fig buttercup coming.

"It's a pretty yellow flower," she says. "It's very attractive, but it was taking over acres

and acres and acres in the Northeast. Anything else that was supposed to live there doesn't live there anymore."

When patches of the flower – known to botanists as *Ficaria verna*, aka lesser celandine or pilewort – were discovered in 2013 along the Reedy River floodplain in Conestee Nature Preserve in Greenville County, Marlow

was one of the first to sound the alarm and help launch a campaign to eradicate the invasive species. She documents the fig buttercup and thousands of other flowers found throughout the Carolinas and Georgia on NameThatPlant.net, the website she has tended for nearly two decades.

After majoring in art at Furman, Marlow worked for several years in printing before joining her husband, Steve, in his graphic design and marketing business. In the mid-'80s, the Marlows opened The Map Shop, a retail business that operated for more than 20 years on Coffee Street in Greenville as well as a branch in Charlotte, North Carolina.

To keep track of The Map Shop's stock, Marlow developed an inventory management program on her Macintosh.

The Map Shop closed in 2007, but Marlow's graphic design career continued as she pursued her interest in plant life. Five years earlier, for a course requirement in the South Carolina Master Gardener program, she began work on a collection of photographs of native plants but noticed a lack of relevant information online for citizen scientists like herself.

"At that time, there were some very rudimentary sites, and there were other sites that were put out by universities that were so intimidating that

they were just not helpful. And so, I turned in the project at the end of the year and turned right around and purchased the URL NameThatPlant.net."

Her experience with her store's inventory management program helped her design the website, but she still needed help gathering more pictures and information – and she got plenty from the South Carolina Native Plant Society.

"I'm not an expert on plants, I'm not an expert on databases or websites," she says. "But I have enough knowledge and enough passion to just push through."

The site, officially titled "Native and Naturalized Plants of the Carolinas and Georgia," went public around 2008. Today, visitors can search by scientific name, common name, family, description or location.

Marlow has compiled information from dozens of authoritative sources and over 100 nature photographers. The photos show a plant during several stages of its growth to help visitors recognize it in any season. Audio files offer the correct pronunciation of the plant's full Latin name.

A quote by Jacques-Yves Cousteau is displayed on the website: "People only protect what they love, but they can only love what they know."

Adds Marlow: "It seems like just learning the name of something changes the value you put on it." ♦