

Dr. Lindsay Durham Herb Walk



A 19th Century Physician's Use of Native Plants
and other herbs provided on Nature trails and
Island Circle
A Self-guided Tour



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For a self-guided tour of the Durham Herb Walk, begin here and take the **Heartleaf Trail** leading into the woods on the right. Several trails have been developed that include plants most likely used by Dr. Lindsay Durham and/or his sons in their receipts (**Yellow Labels**). Many other plants have been identified by UGA botanist Dr. Glenn Galau (White Labels).

1. **Heartleaf-Huckleberry Trail**- This woodland trail parallels the forest road and then leads down into a small cove. It is named for a native population of Heartleaf located along the first part of the trail. Durham used Heartleaf in a mixture for snakebite, whooping cough, and for women's problems.. You might see Indian Turnip, Stoneroot, Mayapple, Yellowroot, Spicewood and more. You could continue on the new trail or return to the entrance road. The new trail constructed by an Eagle Scout is called the Huckleberry Trail, extending from the existing Heartleaf Trail to the Sweat Lodge. You might see Chinquapin, Hazelnut, and Winter Huckelberry which is the signature plant as the trail goes from hard woods back into a dominant pine forest.

2. **Entrance Road**- The entrance road is lined with trees and shrubs that Durham used in his receipts. Look for Spanish Oak at the entrance on the left. As you climb up the drive you will notice Short-Leaf and Loblolly Pine. Pine was the most commonly used plant in the Durham receipts. Look for Dogwood, Black Sumac, and Sourwood. Sourwood leaves were the main ingredient in Durham's blood pills, which were used to treat many lingering disorders. Yellow Poplar, Cedar, Sweetgum, Red Maple, Southern Blackhaw, species of Hawthorn and Wild Cherry are also

located along the entrance road. The road becomes a circle around the **Island** at the top of the hill.

3. **Island** – This area has been planted with trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants that the Durham doctors used. Some trees were already native to the area such as Persimmon, Sweetgum and Loblolly Pine. Look for White Ash, Green Ash, Buttonwood (Sycamore), and American Holly. Durham would use the inside of the bark from many of the tree species or the roots or root bark. Look for the important small shrub Red Root, also known as Red Shank, used for venereal disease and regulation of menses. Butterfly Root was used for kidney and bladder problems. Look for Southern Prickly Ash which was used for skin problems, venereal disease, and also to regulate menses.

4. A **Summer House** has been constructed as a local Eagle Scout project. It is a reproduction of the Summer House built by other scouts at the Bethabara Hortus Medicus site near Winston-Salem, NC. Durham used several medicinal European herbs that were also used at this 1761 Moravian physic garden near Old Salem. See the "4 by 4 garden" near the Summer House for these herbs.

5. A **Sweat Lodge** has also been constructed as a local Eagle Scout project. Many Native Americans used sweat lodges for curing illnesses by purging toxins through sweating, helping aching muscles, cleansing the body, and for cultural identity. Durham undoubtedly had interactions with the Native Americans and several of the receipts promoted sweating. Creek Indians historically inhabited this area.

6. **Behind the Sweat Lodge** are several native trees which the Durham doctors used such as Slippery Elm, Lime, White Sumac, and a nice size Sourwood.

7. On the other side of the circle from the Sweat Lodge is **Pipsissewa Loop**, which leads to the Macedonia Road side of the property. Pipsissewa was used for menses and an eye wash. The path crosses over a utility line into a hardwood forest, highlighted by several nice White Oak's whose bark has astringent (drying) properties. The trail crosses the utility line again and goes down into an old road bed which has Sourwood, Beech and other species. This trail eventually leads back to the **Island** circle.

8. Behind the island circle is a short spur leading to a nice Dogwood tree, Wild Cherry, and Devil's Walking Stick, sometimes called Prickly Ash.

History of Dr. Lindsey Durham

The Durham family stems from Durham County in England and Lindsey Durham's father and grandfather immigrated to Virginia with their families in 1750. Since Lindsey's father, Samuel Durham, served in the Revolutionary War and the government did not have the funds to compensate many of the soldiers, they were offered land grants. This enticed Samuel to move his family to this area in a wagon train in 1786. This was the wild and sparsely settled Western frontier. Three years later, Lindsey Durham was born.

It must have been a hard life on the frontier. To survive, he dabbled in teaching school, farming, tending a tavern, and eventually medicine. The details of his medical training are fuzzy in an era when there were no medical colleges in Georgia and adjoining states. He learned much by apprenticing with area doctors and presumably absorbed knowledge from the medical literature of his time. His family papers include many medical formulas or "receipts" that suggest he drew his medical approach from a variety of sources including not only conventional medicine, but also folk medicine, herbal medicine, and Native American medicine.

Over time, Lindsey Durham became one of Georgia's leading physicians. Many of his patients came from great distances and stayed in cabins he had built in the woods. He was aided in his practice by his wife, Martha, and five of his six sons. These young men went to medical school in Philadelphia and brought back the newest ideas. Dr. Durham in his later years had a sizable plantation with many slaves. His practice was aided by a large herb garden and native plants he would take from forests like the one you are in.

To learn more about specific receipts you may purchase the book "*Dr. Durhams Receipts: A 19th Century Physician's Use of Medicinal Herbs*" by Debbie Cosgrove and Ellen Whitaker, from the Oglethorpe Echo in Lexington, State Botanical Gardens or Home Place in Athens.