

Torrey Monograph Award Recipient Dr. Harvey E. Ballard, Jr. Department of Environmental and Plant Biology Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, USA

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TORREY MONOGRAPH AWARD RECIPIENT
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About the Award Recipient:

A series of serendipitous events quickly brought me to taxonomy and violets. At 14 years old, a self-poisoning event with wild iris—mistaking it for cattail—while foraging for wild edible plants challenged me to devote serious study to plant taxonomy (against my parents’ desperate pleas to give up plants and study medicine or law). A visit to a nearby university herbarium in my early Kalamazoo College days introduced me to a Prairie Bird’s-foot violet (*Viola pedatifida*) hybrid from a local prairie site I often visited. The specimen bore a violet specialist’s annotation, naming it a disjunct location for Appalachian *V. “palmata.”* My senior thesis focused on those violets in Michigan. I’ve been hooked on violets ever since. I started a Master’s degree at Western Michigan University and later finished it at Central Michigan University, studying North American violets at both institutions, with employment at the Michigan Natural Features Inventory and The Nature Conservancy in between. I completed a Ph.D. degree at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, examining *Viola* groups worldwide from morphological, cytogenetic and molecular phylogenetic perspectives, and I simultaneously initiated taxonomic studies of Latin American violets (research directions that I have

continued). Obtaining my dream job of a faculty position at Ohio University, I have eagerly taken opportunities to study other vascular plant groups (usually with students), but I have never managed to escape the orbit around my first love. In 2012, new fieldwork on violets in the mountains of Virginia and a frenzy of rereading literature on North American violets, species concepts, and evolutionary theory led me to rethink my taxonomic approach to violets. Since then, my students and I have reexamined eastern North American violets and other plant groups using a more diversified and integrative taxonomic approach. Our results in every case reveal significantly greater taxonomic diversity and more species deserving formal recognition than previously proposed. This “monograph,” accomplished with colleagues John Kartesz and Misako Nishino, summarizes our current knowledge of violet diversity in the northeastern United States and adjacent Canada. We hope this contribution inspires you to study these fascinating and often challenging plants and to join us in resolving taxonomic and other questions concerning our violet flora.

About the Torrey Monograph Award:

The editors of *The Journal of the Torrey Botanical Society* periodically identify a prominent botanist

or ecologist to receive the Torrey Monograph Award. This individual is awarded \$500 and a one-year membership in the Torrey Botanical Society. In addition, the awardee is invited to author a peer-reviewed monograph or taxonomic review to be published in the Journal, and to

present his or her research as a part of the Torrey Botanical Society's Seminar Series. Nominations of scientists as future Torrey Monograph Awardees may be sent to the Editor-in-Chief, Dr. Carolyn A. Copenheaver, at ccopenhe@vt.edu.