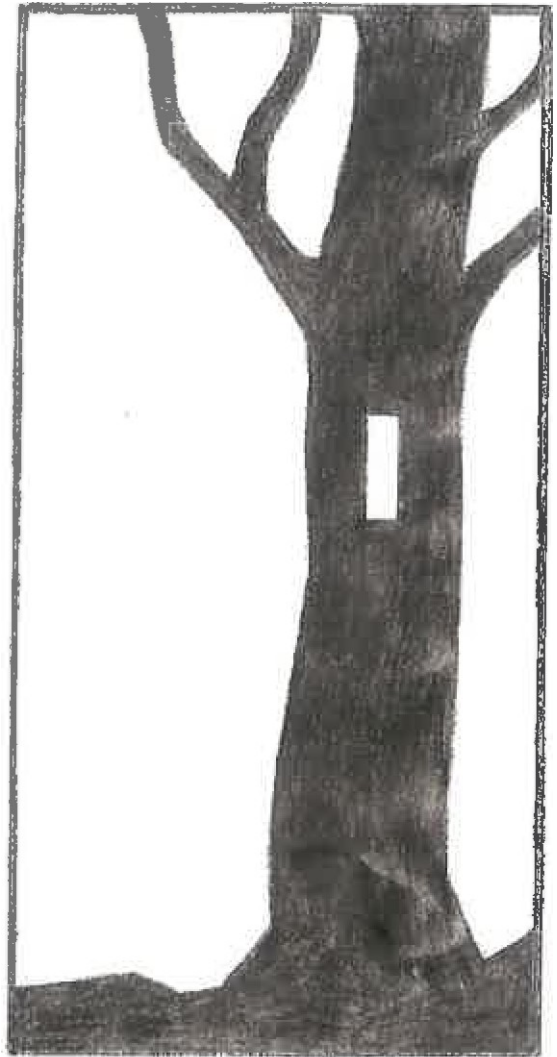




Georgia Appalachian Trail Club

Guide for New Members



The Appalachian Trail White Blaze

Welcome! You have joined one of the 31 clubs that maintain the Appalachian Trail from Georgia to Maine, the largest and longest-serving volunteer project in the world.

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Introduction

This manual provides new GATC members with information about the GATC. We are an active club and look forward to including you on our hikes, trail work trips and adventures.

A message from GATC President Don Converse

Thank you for joining the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club. You have joined an organization that has been maintaining the Appalachian Trail for nine decades. We hope you will become an active member of our club and will find time to participate in our trail maintenance work trips, our hikes and our various outreach programs. You will be able to read about upcoming events in our monthly newsletter, *The Georgia Mountaineer* and learn about our members on our Facebook page and other social media. Welcome to our club.

GATC Mission

The Georgia Appalachian Trail Club was formed in 1930 by a small group of dedicated people who were inspired by the vision of the A.T.'s creator, Benton MacKaye, and the man who more than any single person made that great idea become a reality, Myron Avery. Printed below is the formal mission statement the pioneers of GATC adopted. Neither the language nor the mission itself have changed for more than 90 years.

“The purpose of this organization shall be to provide for the protection, management and maintenance of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, associated side trails, and designated trails primarily within the state of Georgia; to bring together persons interested in hiking and camping, and to conduct outings for their recreation and enjoyment; to foster in its members and in the general public an appreciation of the outdoors; to teach and encourage public observation of conservation ethics; to collect and publish information concerning regions of interest to hikers in Georgia; to encourage the preservation of wilderness areas; to provide such advice and assistance as may be requested by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, Inc.; and to encourage and assist the national and state governments in the preservation and conservation of our forests and natural resources.”

Where to Begin

Orientation

The club holds five or six orientations for new members each year. Orientations are generally held in January, spring, first weekend in June, late summer, and at the October business meeting. At the orientation new members learn about various aspects of the club, its philosophy and how to become more involved in club activities.

Trail Maintenance

Trail maintenance reflects the essence of the organization. Simply, the purpose of the GATC is the maintenance, protection, preservation and conservation of the Appalachian Trail. Trail Maintenance in groups happens on the third Saturday of each month with the details announced to members in advance. By participating on this Saturday, new members not



only contribute to the maintenance of the A.T. but also experience the organization, skills and hard work necessary for its maintenance. Find out how to get involved with trail maintenance by emailing the GATC Trail Supervisor at trails_supervisor@georgia-atclub.org.

Other Activities

New members are encouraged to participate in whatever GATC activities may interest them. The club does much more than work on trails. *The Georgia Mountaineer* and the GATC Yearbook can be found on the GATC website and are good sources of information about club activities. The list of committees and sub committees listed in the yearbook will provide the names of the chairs to contact for more information and to find ways for new members to become involved. Another good source is the Appalachian Trail Sections & Maintainers directory in the Yearbook. GATC always welcomes and needs volunteers to maintain sections of our trails. Member contact information can be found in the Yearbook Member Directory.

Some GATC activities and roles require training and/or certification before a member can participate. GATC Trail Ambassadors attend a training session each year. The club's Chain and Crosscut Sawyer Team members are trained and

certified in safety procedures. The GATC Search & Rescue Team and the GATC Rock Crew also are trained for the work they do. New members can contact the leaders of these groups to learn how to attend the trainings and participate.

Hiker's Code

My recreational standards shall be such that while hiking, either with the Club or independently, I shall strive to enhance the pleasure of others who walk the Trail with me and leave no sign of my passing for those who follow.

I shall conduct myself in such a manner as to bring no inconvenience or embarrassment to my fellow hikers or no discredit to the good reputation of the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club.

I shall obey all Club rules as well as the regulations of the Forest Service and the National Park Service in areas where they apply.

I shall use discretion in my hiking and camping activities so as to minimize my impact on the environment and protect nature's beauty and wildlife from damage and destruction.

Club Rules

1. All members and guests shall recognize the authority of the trip leaders and abide by any additional rules the leaders set up for their outing or activity. A trip may be cancelled or modified at the discretion of the trip leader.
2. Trip leaders and co-leaders must be members of the club.
3. Firearms are prohibited on all Club outings. Pets are prohibited on group activities.

The use of cell phones and other electronic devices on Club outings is discouraged. In general, all members and guests of the GATC should conduct themselves at all times in such a manner as not to detract from the enjoyment of the outing for other people.

4. All members and guests will leave a clean trail and a litter free camp.
5. No member will make any statement as being official GATC policy unless that member is authorized by the Board of Directors to do so, or unless that policy has been published at the direction of the Board of Directors.

6. Non-members may participate in club activities as guests of members, or after applying to the Membership Director. If a guest attends with a member, it shall be the duty of that member to register the guest with the trip leader and inform the guest of Club rules including the Hiker's Code. Spouses of active members may be extended guest privileges without limitation.
7. Any participant in a club activity under the age of 18 must be accompanied by a responsible adult.
8. Members and guests shall share equally with the driver in gasoline expenses when traveling as passengers to and from Club activities. It shall be the responsibility of all members and guests to provide for his/her transportation to and from GATC activities.

Suggestions for new GATC Hikers

- ☺☺ Sign up early for club hikes if you can. Some trips, especially backpacks, have limits and may fill up. (Wilderness areas and national parks have limits on group size. Some hike leaders may choose to impose limits for environmental or safety reasons.)
- ☺☺ Ask the Hike Leader questions before you sign up for a hike to see if the hike is a good match with your interests and abilities.
- ☺☺ Be on time for the hike. The group cannot wait long past the meeting time for no-shows. Delays sometimes happen so be sure you have the Hike Leader's cell number and call if you expect to be delayed. Be aware cell service is sometimes limited at the trail head so you may not get through.
- ☺☺ If you must cancel before a hike, let the leader know as soon as possible in case there are people on a waiting list.
- ☺☺ Although they are not obligated to arrange carpools for the group, the leaders may be willing to put you in touch with other hikers going on your hike.
- ☺☺ If you are a minor or plan to bring a minor with you on a hike, let the leader know ahead of time so that you can have the proper release forms signed.
- ☺☺ Observe GATC Club Rules and the Hiker's Code on your trip.
- ☺☺ Follow Leave No Trace principles.
- ☺☺ Most importantly, have fun!

Suggested Items for Day Hikes

Spring/Summer/Fall

1. Water bottle(s) (figure on at least a couple of quarts on an average day hike)
2. Day Pack
3. Lunch and/or snack
4. Boots/Suitable Footgear and good socks
5. Light jacket (fleece recommended)
6. Raingear
7. Bandana
8. Toilet paper & Ziploc bag (You can carry 2 baggies, one for clean and one for used)
9. Personal medication (such as bee sting kit if you are allergic, asthma medicine, etc.)

Optional: Map, compass, sunscreen, bug repellent, hat, poison ivy treatment or pretreatment, first aid kit, Moleskin for blisters, camera, sunglasses, whistle, extra clothes in car, orange vest or cap in hunting season.

Winter

Avoid cotton clothing in warm and cold weather. Polypro (Coolmax or wicking fabric) will keep you more comfortable. Layer up in winter with long underwear, shirt, fleece jacket and wind breaker. Wool or heavy hiking socks will make your feet happy. Don't forget a warm hat and mittens or gloves in very cold weather. Remember, the temperature can be much lower in the mountains and weather conditions are often different than in Atlanta. Be prepared for windy, wet and/or cold weather.

In addition to the items you'd carry for warm weather hikes, consider these items:

1. Warm clothing (not cotton)
2. Fleece jacket & wind breaker
3. Extra food with lots of calories
4. Warm socks and pack an extra pair
5. Lip balm
6. Thermos with something warm to drink
7. Hat
8. Mittens or gloves
9. Raingear
10. Water (hydration is as important in winter as it is in summer)
11. Extra set of clothes in car

Tools of the Trade

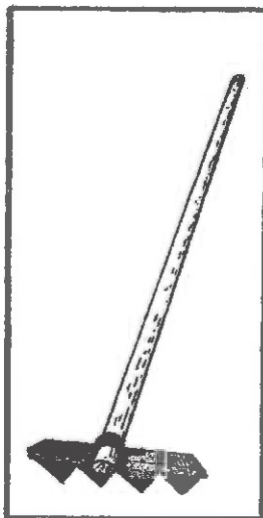
Any trail is only as good as the maintenance it receives. The GATC is the trail maintenance organization for the AT and associated trails in Georgia, almost 130 miles. The Club depends on its volunteers to provide the necessary maintenance on the trail. The Appalachian Trail is maintained to a certain set of standards, which change depending on whether the portion of trail you are working on is located in a designated wilderness area or not.

Should you decide to get involved in trail maintenance, training will be provided. Contact the Club's Trails Supervisor for more information on volunteering for trail maintenance.

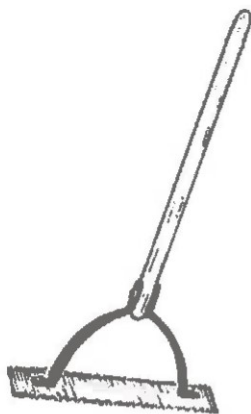
In addition, the Club maintains a tool locker where you can check out a variety of tools with which to work. Some of the tools used routinely for trail maintenance are pictured on the next page.



Trail maintenance and construction tools:



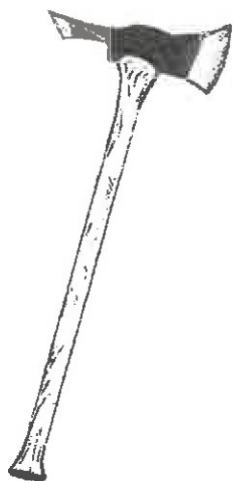
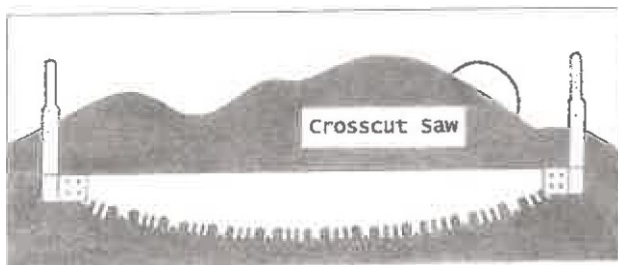
Fire Rake



Sling Blade



Drainage Dip



Pulaski



McLeod



Trail

Drawings by Ginny Smith

Leave No Trace

What is Leave No Trace and why is it important? The Georgia Appalachian Club endorses and adheres to Leave No Trace principles, or more commonly LNT, during its events and activities. It is a set of outdoor ethics designed over the years to help you and the others who follow you enjoy the outdoors.



The basic concept and goal is to leave things as you find them. By becoming familiar with and observing these seven principles during your outdoor adventure, you'll have a lot more enjoyment and help to preserve the resources so that others can enjoy them as much as you have, too.

An important thing to remember is that these are principles that may be applied in different ways depending on where you are recreating. The way we apply the principles here in the southeast would be different in the southwest or in another part of the world.

- **Plan Ahead and Prepare**
 - Know the rules of the area you'll visit, the weather forecast, have a map, repack food in reusable containers and wear proper clothing.
- **Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces**
 - Hike on established trails, no shortcuts, and avoid fragile vegetation. Camp in established sites away from water sources.
- **Dispose of Waste Properly**
 - Pack out everything. Protect wildlife with proper food storage.
- **Leave What You Find**
 - Leave all as you find them, avoid introducing non-native species, and do not build structures or dig trenches.
- **Minimize Campfire Impacts**
 - Use established fire rings, wood smaller than your wrist, and make sure the fire is completely out.
- **Respect Wildlife**
 - Keep pets on a leash. Do not get close to animals.
- **Be Considerate of Other Visitors**
 - Allow nature's sounds to resonate by avoiding loud noises and voices.

If you'd like to learn more about LNT, the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club occasionally holds Instructor classes that you may enroll in. You can also learn more at these websites:

- The GATC website: <https://georgia-atclub.org/hike-the-a-t/hike-the-georgia-appalachian-trail>
- The ATC website: <https://appalachiantrail.org/explore/plan-and-prepare/leave-no-trace/>
- The Leave No Trace website: <https://lnt.org/>

More Information

There are a number of resources available where you can find more information about the club, our activities, how to get involved, hiking and backpacking resources and more. Here are a few:

- ☺ Attend an orientation session. You can learn more about the GATC, its leadership, how to get involved and more by attending one of the Orientations that are offered through the year. Watch for them and attend one to learn a lot more about the club.
- ☺ The GATC website has an abundance of information available to the public about the trail in Georgia, but there is a lot more that becomes available to you as a member by locating the “Member Resources” tab after you log in.
- ☺ The GATC has its own YouTube channel where you can get tips on all things related to hiking and the Trail in Georgia.
- ☺ As a new member, you will receive a copy of “*Friendships of the Trail – The History of the Georgia Appalachian Trail Club, 1930-1980.*” This is a product of the GATC History Committee.
- ☺ You will receive the latest issue of the GATC Yearbook. In it you will find the Club Officers and Committee Chairs. If you want to really plug into the Club, join a committee or two. It also lists the year’s activities, but they will change.
- ☺ So, keep an eye out for the *Georgia Mountaineer*. This is a monthly publication that includes the latest news of interest, information about upcoming activities and how to sign up for them, and recaps of recent trips.

Compiled by Jay Dement and Alicia Odette. August 2015. Updated by Rick Dicks, Ron Hamlin and John Turner, June 2021.