

# Head over

heads!

## for fall color.



**FOR THE JOURNAL:**  
Marcy and Patricia Linkon made a yearly habit out of enjoying the foliage and nature before Marcy's untimely death from a battle with cancer.



Last year in November, the foliage was past peak at Table Rock State Park.

**P**ICKENS — It's here again. Fall. The perfect time to get in the car and drive up the mountains or simply around town to view nature's personal kaleidoscope of color.

Foliage is a free show as our environment annually offers a full and vibrant array of hues for local enthusiasts. Another great year is expected for fall "peepers."

Curtis Stuks, assistant manager of Table Rock State Park on Highway 11, said everything is on line for a spectacular viewing season.

"We are looking at the next two to three months as our peak time for color," he said. "Now, there is lots of bright green."

The annual transformation is attributed to mild autumn days coupled with cool, crisp, but not freezing evenings. During the months of September, October and November the green leaves of spring and summer alter their appearance, before falling to the ground ... a sheer sign that winter is around the corner.

Altogether, temperature, precipitation and wind will greatly impact fall foliage.

"Ideally, the best foliage happens when autumn days are mild and the evenings are cool and crisp, but stay above 32 degrees. However, if daytime temperatures are too warm for a good period of time in the fall, the colors may be less brilliant," said Pete Fallon, Clemson foliage enthusiast. "The foliage season may also last one to two weeks longer. When it comes to frost, that will inhibit the production of anthocyanin, a pigment producing various shades of red. This is why having temperatures above freezing is exactly what we should be hoping for."

Annual precipitation,

which provides moisture for soil and plant life, also plays a role in fall foliage, Fallon added.

"A late spring, which delays the release of moisture through snow melt, may push back the color change by a nearly a week, sometimes longer in extreme cases. Severe drought often causes the leaves of distressed or young trees to drop their leaves early too. This year, we've been pretty lucky with it all," he said.

Except maybe one thing, according to Stuks.

"If any wind storms roll through like they have in the past, that will take a lot of leaves off of our trees," he said. "We aren't too worried, but wind can definitely put a damper on fall foliage if it keeps up."

Currently, Stuks said sourwoods, such as cottonwoods, are already starting to change, and Maple trees won't be far behind.

Patricia Linkon, Clemson resident, said it's important for her to take advantage of the foliage when it does start happening around the Upstate.

"My mother was sick with cancer for about six years before she died in 2000," Linkon said. "Each fall weekend, we'd drive up and take pictures of the foliage and hike. I could always tell those were some of my mother's most peaceful moments. I don't care where you live, if you can experience fall in all its glory, it's the best time of the year."

"She would always say to me, 'Patricia, my darling, you must always appreciate this wonderful gift that God gave to all of us. You must always love nature.' And with that, the changing of the leaves completely makes me think of my mother just painting a different picture on her canvas from

above," she added.

According to Table Rock State Park experts, the change of season promotes the gradual color change of vegetation. Decreasing amounts of daylight and lower temperatures will continue to slowly usher the foliage peak around the end of October.

Currently, the forest has not shown any major changes. The intense dark green of summer has faded some, but significant color change is isolated and scattered among individual

trees. A few tulip poplars here and there have begun to show some yellow and the reds of the under story dogwoods and sourwoods are the main sources of color now.

"The highly anticipated change will eventually gain momentum as the days of October slip away. For now, the yellow goldenrods, purple ironweed, and the other roadside flowers and few trees are on display. These early changes are refreshing, but the best is yet to come."

jsibley@dailyjm.com | (864) 682-2375



In Pickens County, Whitewater Falls is always a big attraction for fall foliage junkies.