

Foliage season could offer best

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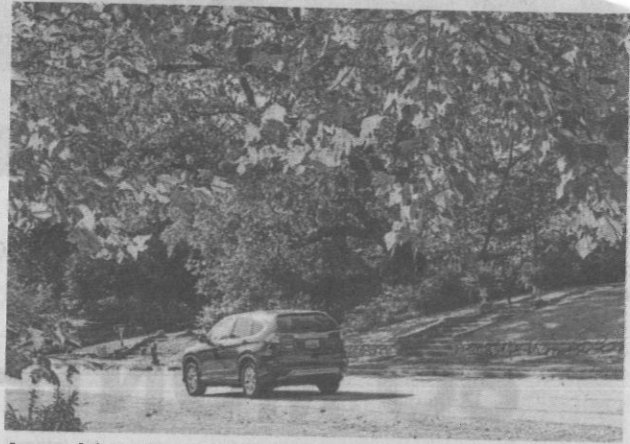
For those waiting for the perfect weekend to make a foliage-admiring drive in the Upstate, time is running short.

An unusual fall foliage season will likely offer its best colors this weekend, Clemson University assistant professor of forest ecology Don Hagan said Friday.

"I'd say you'd better see it while you can," Hagan said of the show, which usually reaches its peak on Upstate hillsides in October.

Noting "a very unusual fall color season" that has unfolded later and less dramatically than in most years, Hagan said the erratic weather and rainfall events have created a "subdued" foliage season.

"Some (species) were on schedule, and some are still green," Hagan said. "Because of a cool stretch, the poplar trees were yellow in August, and it looked like an early fall season, but then it got warm again and things stalled out. We had a lot of warm days and nights in September, and the colors were on hold, particular the oak trees.



A car drives by Linley Park walking track in Anderson, where leaves are beginning to change.

KEN RUINARD/INDEPENDENT MAIL

"In a good year, you have all the varieties turning at the same time. This year, the color has been spread out over three months. The oak trees are just now starting to turn," Hagan said.

views this weekend

The leaves on maple and hickory trees have turned color in recent days, which makes Hagan expect more colors among the hardwoods this weekend.

"I'm told that in the mountains, at 2,000 feet elevation and more, the trees were in full color this week. Here at about 1,000 feet (the elevation for much of Anderson, Greenville and Pickens counties), I think we'll see the peak very soon."

While the foliage season has not been as spectacular as in previous years, Hagan said it will offer hillside color deeper in November.

"If you're looking at the glass half-full, you can enjoy a longer period of color, although the color is more subdued," Hagan said. "But once the oaks start to turn, it's remarkable how quickly they can turn. I've noticed a big difference in the past two days."

This weekend might be as good as it gets, Hagan said.

"In terms of weekend days, I'm telling folks to see it while you can — there won't be many left," Hagan said. "And be willing to drive a little further than in past years. The patchy nature of the color means viewers will need to explore a bit."

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