

Fred Hamilton Gardens

The magic time here is mid-April through May. That is when the 400 varieties of rhododendron are in full bloom. But...if you miss this peak viewing season you will want to go to the gardens anyhow. You will find dogwoods, magnolias, azaleas, trillium, and other wildflowers. Hamilton Gardens is a true community project. Every year thousands of man-hours are contributed by local enthusiasts. A recent renovation has made this a definite stop for photographers and lovers of nature. Entrance is \$3.00.

Notes for the photographer: Of course the big hint for the photographer is to visit during the blooming season. But, if you miss those dates (and this is definitely non-technical) do this: Visit anytime. One's photography often improves when the photographer finds himself in a calm, laid-back, gentle, and non-hurried environment.

Directions: From the center of Hiawassee, travel northward on US 76 about a mile and a half (cross the bridge) to a right turn onto Music Hall Road. This is the entrance to the Georgia Mountain Fair Grounds and the Towns County Park. Take the first right into a large parking area and make your way to the back of it. You can park there or in the smaller lot at the entrance. GPS coordinates for the parking lot entrance: 34°57'57.9"N 83°46'15.8"W

Interesting fact: Fred Hamilton was an executive with Sears Roebuck. He and his wife donated their personal collection of rhododendrons to Towns County in 1982. Eventually it was re-located to the spit of land protruding into Lake Chatuge where the soil and environmental conditions are excellent for supporting this Georgia mountain gem.

