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Newsletter of the John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

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Deborah Waller will present “Insects and Native Plants” at our May 20 meeting



Our speaker, Deborah Waller, in the field

Deborah Waller, Associate Professor of Biological Sciences at Old Dominion University, received her undergraduate degree in zoology from George Washington University and a Ph.D. in zoology from the University of Texas, Austin. Her research focuses on insect-plant interactions, including the foraging ecology of ants and termites and mosquito attraction to plant volatiles.

The reproductive success of native plants depends on their interactions with insect pollinators and seed dispersers. These insects are threatened by habitat loss and competition with introduced species. Herbivores may feed on native plants, but healthy ecosystems support parasites and predators that keep herbivores in check. This talk will focus on the insects associated with thriving native plant populations.

Join us at 7 pm at the Yorktown Public Library at Route 17 and Battle Road.

From the President

What a great plant sale! When you see Lucile Kossodo and Joan Etchberger, give them a big thank you! They have worked tirelessly for months putting it all together. And “Many Thanks” to all who potted and transported, and moved, and cashiered, and advised customers and cleaned the site during the two days of the event. This was a very successful fundraiser—we netted over \$3200!!



Check out our field trip list—once again, Phillip has constructed a comprehensive, area-wide list of plant walks. The best way to learn about plants is to follow a field trip leader; these folks know the common and scientific names of the plants growing naturally in their habitat. So, to know if a plant will grow in your garden, look at where it is naturalized, and try to duplicate the environment.

See the article on Page 5 about an upcoming field trip to view blooming pitcher plants, near Waverly. Registration is necessary for this event, a first for our chapter!

Helen Hamilton

Eight new members

We welcome Mary Claire Aston, Cliff Henderson, Jerre and Marilyn Johnson, and Phyllis Putnam from Williamsburg, Zack Loesch from Gloucester Point, and Linda Panganiban and Bruce Peachee from Newport News.



Photo: Jan Newton

Cynthia Long and Melinda Webb look over our Chapter's display at the Horticultural Extravaganza at York High School on March 13.

March 18 Chapter meeting



Photo: Jan Newton

Jim Orband, longtime extension agent in York County, spoke to us about landscaping with ferns and their culture. His was an engaging and informative presentation!

Jim Orband seemed to enjoy himself as much as his audience did.

We also heard from Isabella Downey, one of our sponsored Nature Camp attendees, about her experiences there and what she learned.



Photo: Jan Newton

Isabella describes her Nature Camp experiences.

Plant Sale 2010: another big success!



Photo: Denis Boudreau

Charlotte Boudreau, Lucile Kossodo, Joan Etchberger, Terri Cuthriell, Bharati Lakshmi and Cynthia Long at work on March 20 at Charlotte's house.

Potting party hostess Ada Lou Turner, Cynthia Long and Lucile Kossodo take a break from their labors on March 30.



Photo: Jan Newton

On Friday, April 23, we arrived at 11 am at the Williamsburg Community Building to begin the big setup. The Master Gardeners and our members were revved up and jumped into preparing for plant deliveries. We covered tables, put the Shade, Sun, Sun/Shade, etc. signs in place; we finished just in time, because here came the first wave of plant deliveries. Our volunteer force was wonderful and worked very hard to have everything in place for our members only pre-sale at 4 pm. Another success. We sold a great many plants on both sides of the building. At 6 pm, we made plans for Sale day and went home.



Photo: Jan Newton

Bill Morris and Pat Baldwin do a last-minute check before the sale on Saturday.

On Saturday, the first volunteer showed up at 8 am. With some fine-tuning, we were ready to let the eager public in at 10 am. Even though it was a cloudy day with a threat of showers, we had many shoppers. Our volunteers were great salespeople, being visible both outside and inside the building, answering questions, guiding them to specific plants, and carrying their purchases. The atmosphere was full of energy, everyone smiling and excited about the plants. It was heard by several members that comments were made that this year's display and variety of plants looked our best.



Photo: Jan Newton

Happy customers Laura Rabbit, Jennifer Taylor and Patty Wilson with their purchases.

By the day's end, there were few plants left. What plants remained were divided and donated to various wildlife habitats, including the Williamsburg Library, York High School, Botanical Garden, and the Quail Habitat Restoration project at New Quarter Park.

We had a successful sale and we sold \$5,375 worth of plants, in spite of the fact that it was a dark, cool gray day. Our net profit was \$3,240. These funds will be used to send students to nature camp as well as to continue with our Chapter's mission.

We worked hard, had fun, got to know some of our newer members and learned a lot about the plants we sold. Our **volunteers** are the reason our sale is successful, from the first seed that is planted, through the potting parties, to the end of the sale. A huge thank you goes out to all of them.

And now the planning starts for next year...

Joan Etchberger

Four field trips in March and April...

Gloucester's Tripetala site March 20

This early walk in calcareous woods showed the naked splendor of hardwoods and the *always* surprising spring ephemerals. Bloodroot, hepatica and toothwort bloom in the



Photo: Seig Kopinitz

Purple roundlobe hepatica (*Hepatica nobilis*)

rich soil that forms in calcareous woods where an ancient shell layer produced the sweet soil, so different in feel from the sandy, acid soils below the 50-foot contour. (After many years, I'm still fascinated how

various woods can be on 2 sides of a stream, ditch, road or old property line, having distinct profiles of species. I'm sure several of you tire of my going on about this.)

We saw *Magnolia tripetala*, with its large, pointed leaf buds showing green, large poplars, northern red oaks, beech and hickory, especially the state champion mockernut hickory (*Carya tomentosa*, a.k.a. *C. alba*?). Unfortunately, no one was able to take good shots of the tall and odd trees while their structure and majesty were unconcealed by foliage.

About seventeen kind folk made this an enjoyable outing.

Mary Hyde Berg

Seig has many more photos he took during this walk at: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/askop/sets> (NPS Walk 3/20).



Photo: Seig Kopinitz

Lesser rattlesnake plantain (*Goodyera repens*—an orchid)

York River State Park April 3

Phillip Merritt led a group of native plant lovers through York River State park on this Saturday morning. We were treated on our way into the park to a carpet of bluets (*Houstonia caerulea*) growing in the grass along one side of the park's entrance road—just gorgeous *en masse*! Phillip had brought examples of golden ragwort and pawpaw



Photos: Louise Menges

in bud for us to see, as he was afraid neither would be in full bloom in the park this cooler-than-usual season. We did see serviceberry blooming on a bank overlooking the York River, spicebush, Virginia saxifrage, mayapples (no blooms yet), a viburnum coming into bloom, and

many trees in flower: sassafras, red oak, red maple, redbud (whose flowers, Phillip informed us, are edible!), dogwood and bitternut hickory in bud, and some just-beginning-to-open pawpaw flowers. (And don't let anyone tell you ticks are not yet prowling for victims in early April!)

You'll find a much better account and more photos of our visit to the park on Phillip's blog at www.howitgrows.com. Look for York River State Park under "Past Field Trips".

Louise Menges

Summerfield in Gloucester County April 10

The arbutus walk at Summerfield Wild Area had very little arbutus to show, with climatic conditions run amok, but... bloom *du jour* kept our band of eight more or less on the trail for 4 hours, 20 minutes. Who knew? Come to our trip early April 2011 and just see.



Photos: Seig Kopinitz

Swamp Azalea (*Rhododendron viscosum*)

Just now I can't give a list of species blooming because we are replanting the butterfly garden, begun in 2000, building on the heroic root removal of member Charlie Vanetter and plant contribution of Patrick Richardson. Both of these members have crossed



Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*) bloom



Dovefoot Geranium (*Geranium molle*)

the Mississippi to pursue their dreams. I hope they'll let us hear what special things befall.

Remember: a perfect lawn is death by the square foot!

Mary Hyde Berg

Again, many more of Seig's photos of this field trip can be viewed at: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/askop/sets> (NPS Walk 4/10/2010).

Sandy Bottom Park April II

Phillip was disappointed to find very little in bloom at Sandy Bottom Park on that day, but I think you'll enjoy his description of his search and looking at what he did find; on www.howitgrows.com, look for Sandy Bottom Spring 2010 under "Past Field Trips". **Louise Menges**



Those versatile violets

(from an article by Paula POUNDY in the Spring 2010 newsletter of the Northern Neck Chapter)

"Violets are well-loved spring flowers with distinctive, colorful blooms"

(Phillips and Burrell, 1993).

I distinctly recall picking violets in my Aunt's shady back yard during a time when lawns included whatever grass would grow, along with clover, broad and narrow-leaved plantains, chickweed, etc. A lawn without broad-leaved plants was not yet the standard, it was 'back in the day' and I yearn for those days sometimes. But I've digressed from my subject—violets, to many gardeners or lawn growers, a broad-leaved weed to be eradicated. During the planting for my new home, I purchased a *Viola pedata* (birdfoot violet) from a nursery that had included it in their shady plant selections. That's where I put it (and we did experience a wet spring that year); but *V. pedata* prefers full sun to part shade and very good drainage, so it died, or appeared to have. Lo and behold what then appeared but my 'back in the day' flower *Viola sororia*, aka *V. papilionaceae*, wooly blue or common violet. There are abundant species of native violets begging to be grown in our sustainable landscapes. Once invited in, they quickly make themselves at home. Plant (or leave) some where you can let them be. Like many native plants they provide ecological benefits to wildlife. Their foliage is larval food for fritillary butterflies, the flowers are attractive to small butterflies such as the spring azure, and the seeds are eaten by Northern bobwhite. In woodland gardens, wild turkeys will forage on certain species' tuberous roots. In addition, the flowers are irregular (botanically), gorgeous, child friendly, fragrant, edible or charming as a garnish when crystallized with sugar. My landscape is mostly

sunny and well drained, so my quest for *V. pedata* continued to the lamp post area where I planted some from a mail order source last March. Much to my delight, the darlings bloomed much showier than the common violet! I watched them last summer and fall, and now during the winter they are evergreen and have the deeply lobed, five or more "birdfoot" leaflets that give this species its name. Perhaps once they have grown for another season, my violets may even re-bloom in the fall and spread. (Many more than the five that I planted will be needed for them to have any impact as a ground cover!) This year I'll be watching for the fritillaries.

Contact me by e-mail for source or other information:

paula.boundy@va.metrocast.net

Paula Boundy, Horticulture Chair



Photo: Jan Newton

Jan Newton made this delectible salad from common blue violet leaves (with flowers for color), Bosc pears and smoked Gouda, and reports that Cynthia Long tops deviled eggs with violets in season. They sound wonderful!

NQP Bobwhite Habitat update

Members of John Clayton Chapter, Williamsburg Bird Club and Virginia Master Naturalists gathered on Sunday, March 21 at the Bobwhite Habitat at New Quarter Park to celebrate spring and sow some wildflower seeds on a freshly plowed section of the bobwhite habitat.



The Seed Queen

After Cynthia Long (the "Seed Queen") learned that a York County landscape team had plowed the area on March 19 and offered any help the group requested, she started calling friends and scheduled a brief work session for the warm sunny Sunday afternoon.

Cynthia related to the volunteers the history of the seeds sown that afternoon: "Most seeds used today had their origins in Melissa's Meadow, located near the tennis center at William and Mary. Melissa's birthday was March

15. That occasion and the warm weather plus the new battery and spark plugs in Bob's truck called for a celebration. Seeds from Melissa's Meadow went to Stonehouse Elementary School where Jan Newton started the wildflower/native plant garden. Yesterday Jan brought over bags of seeds from that garden and I added seeds saved from my own gardens to create the unique mix of seeds strewn over the Bobwhite habitat." Cynthia gave the volunteers a list of the species of wildflowers and plants: 13 tall meadow species, 22 short meadow species, and two grasses: split beard blue stem and switchgrass. If you want a full list, contact Cynthia Long at cynthialongw@cox.net or Shirley Devan at sedevan52@cox.net.

When asked where the seeds for Melissa's Meadow originated. Cynthia said that many were raised in the greenhouse at William and Mary, and many plants had been donated by friends and purchased at native plant sales.

Melissa's Meadow was created to honor Bob and Cynthia's daughter Melissa, who died in 1996. Melissa was a William and Mary alum and enthusiastically supported the meadow. She worked there planting it before she died, and the meadow was named in her memory when it was dedicated in 1999. John Clayton Members, Master Gardeners and the College established it in 1994 and volunteers continue to maintain it.

Sara Lewis told the group that while she had been wielding the rake she "had been channeling the spirit of the African-Americans who farmed this land. A new park sign will be installed near the archeology site commemorating those who lived and died as slaves on the plantation quarter. Historian Lorena Walsh researched the slaves who worked here and provided names for many. Their names will be included on the sign."

Sara provided more history about NQP: "The park was once one of six Burwell farms attached to Carter's Grove. NQP was part of a 2,140-acre farm. Other Burwell farms were attached to Rosewell, Kingsmill, King's Creek, and Fairfield plantations. In the mid-18th century, the farms grew tobacco and field crops and were part of the 'Triangle Trade' that shipped food crops to the Caribbean to feed the slaves working the sugar plantations."

Be sure to visit the Bobwhite habitat periodically to listen for bobwhite and enjoy the other wildlife thriving there. Many thanks to Cynthia and Bob Long for getting us organized!

Shirley Devan

Join a field trip to see pitcher plants and longleaf pines on June 5

Inspired by Pat Baldwin's enthusiasm for the project, early this spring Gus and I visited the Meadowview Biological Research Station and talked with Phil Sheridan, who is responsible for this initiative. We were very impressed. Phil has donated his house and property near Woodford for use by the Meadowview Biological Research Station. A Board of Directors and volunteers grow plants for sale, many of them pitcher plants, to finance the project, which is to restore populations of pitcher plants and longleaf pines. Seed was obtained from small populations of pitcher plants, grown into seedlings, and planted in suitable habitats, one being the **Joseph Pines Preserve near Waverly, Virginia**.



Purple (top) and yellow (bottom) pitcher plants bloom near Phillip's office, where there is plenty of sun.

Photos: Phillip Merritt

We have an opportunity to visit this site and see the last of the yellow pitcher plants (*Sarracenia flava*) in bloom with striking leaves, and the purple pitcher plant (*Sarracenia purpurea*) in full bloom. Check the website for lots of information about the research station and its projects: www.pitcherplant.org.

From the website:

Meadowview Biological Research Station is a non-profit IRS 501(c)(3) organization that was started in 1995 to preserve and restore the remaining fragments of Virginia's imperiled longleaf pine-pitcher plant ecosystem. Many pitcher plant habitats have been lost in Virginia through drainage, development, fire exclusion, agricultural and sil-

vicultural practices, urban expansion, or neglect and most of the associate plants found in these unique ecosystems are threatened with extinction. The rarity of these habitats is further highlighted by the state rarity ranking of many of the plant and animal species found in these sites. Many of these species are extremely state rare in Virginia and reach the northern limit of their range in southeastern Virginia.

Less than 100 clumps of the yellow pitcher plant, *Sarracenia flava* L., remain in the wild in 2 natural sites in southern Virginia (Sheridan and Karowe 2000). The yellow pitcher plant is a fascinating, carnivorous plant that attracts, captures, and digests insects. The plant evolved the carnivorous habit to compensate for the lack of nutrients in its native soil. The significance of these sites is further highlighted by the fact that southern Virginia is the northern limit for *S. flava* and the associated longleaf pine, *Pinus palustris* Miller, ecosystem. The longleaf pine ecosystem has emergent

properties that support the pitcher plant community. One of the major properties provided by longleaf pine is mediation of natural, lightning caused fires.

Directions to the Pine Preserve from the website:

Drive south on 460 through the town of Disputanta and across the Prince George/Sussex County line. If you end up in the town of Waverly you have gone too far. Within a few miles you will be making a right hand turn on route 602 towards the Sussex County landfill and Sussex I & II prisons. Cross the railroad tracks after entering route 602 and drive ca. 5 miles. The Joseph Pines Pines Preserve is directly across from Colonial Hunt Club and is on your right hand side. The address is 22759 Cabin Point Road. There is a gate at the entrance with a sign for Joseph Pines.

Distance to the Preserve is over 60 miles, and the tour will start at 10:00 am. Carpools can be arranged—meet at 8:30 am at CVS Pharmacy on Jamestown Road, Saturday, June 5. Bring water, lunch, and appropriate foot wear —hiking boots are recommended—for a one-to two-mile walk. Phil is offering a tour to this area on this date via his newsletter, and will need to know the number of participants. Contact Helen Hamilton to register 757/564-4494, helen44@earthlink.net. **Helen Hamilton**

Note: Please do not attempt this trip alone! Insurance regulations specify that visitors *must* be accompanied by a representative from Meadowview Biological Research Station.

Lots of field trips in May and June...

There are so many opportunities sprouting up to see Spring flowers and foliage that the Calendar for this issue wouldn't quite fit on the last page! (See the bottom of Page 7 for some interesting-sounding field trips sponsored by other VNPS chapters.)

John Clayton Chapter's Calendar

- Saturday, May 15**  **10 am at the Tripetela Site in Gloucester:** Join Mary Hyde Berg on a trip to see umbrella magnolias in bloom. Other plants we may see include *orchis spectabilis* and maidenhair fern.
To register, call Mary Hyde Berg at 804/693-3568.
- Thursday, May 20**  **1–4 pm: Calcareous ravines on Wormley Pond near Yorktown.** Donna Ware will lead a tour of calcareous ravines on Wormley Pond near Yorktown. Plants we may see include puttyroot orchid, leatherwood and maidenhair fern. Donna adds that it may include some difficult walking (moderately steep slopes and getting under, over, or around a few fallen trees).
Contact Donna Ware at 757/565-0657 or dmeware@verizon.net to register and for details.
- Thursday, May 20** **7–9 pm: John Clayton Chapter meeting at Yorktown Library.** Our speaker will be **Deborah Waller**, Associate Professor of Biological Sciences at Old Dominion University, who will talk about the insects associated with thriving native plant populations. (More on Page 1.)
Yorktown Public Library at Route 17 and Battle Road.
- Sunday, May 23**  **Phillip Merritt will possibly be taking a road trip to see Cherry Orchard Bog Natural Area Preserve, Sussex and Prince George Counties.** Cherry Orchard Bog Natural Area Preserve features a seep that supports a remarkable assemblage of rare plants, including large-flowered camas, bog-buttons, large white fringed orchids and purple pitcher plants.
If anyone is interested in tagging along, email Phillip at vnpsfieldtrips@gmail.com.
- Saturday, May 29** **10 am: Join Phillip Merritt for a trip along the wetland boardwalk at Newport News Park.**
To register and get directions, email Phillip at vnpsfieldtrips@gmail.com or call 757/604-1026.
- Saturday, June 5** **8:30 am: Meet at CVS Pharmacy on Jamestown Road for a field trip to the Joseph Pines Preserve near Waverly, Virginia with Phil Sheridan** to see blooming pitcher plants and longleaf pine. (See Helen's article about this trip on Page 5.)
Contact Helen Hamilton for more details and to register at 757/564-4494 or helen44@earthlink.net.

Membership Form for John Clayton Chapter, VNPS

(Place checks in the boxes below next to your selections.)

I am a **new member** of the John Clayton Chapter **renewing member** of the John Clayton Chapter

Name		
Address		
City	State	Zip
email	Phone	

Membership dues

Individual (\$30) Family (\$40) Patron (\$50) Sustaining (\$100) Life (\$500)

Student (\$15) Associate (\$40) —for groups who designate one person as delegate

I wish to make an additional contribution in the amount of \$ to John Clayton Chapter to VNPS

This is a gift membership; please include a card with my name as donor.

I have time a little time no time to help with activities.

I do not wish to be listed in a chapter directory.

Please Note: John Clayton Chapter does not distribute any of our membership information to other organizations. It is used only by the officers and chairpersons of our chapter.

Make your check payable to **VNPS** and mail to: VNPS Membership Chair
400 Blandy Farm Lane, Unit 2
Boyce, VA 22610

Interesting trips a little further afield

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Saturday, May 8 | 9:30 am: Friends of Dragon Run field trip. Mark Chittenden will lead a wildflower walk on the Big Island Preserve. Meet at in the Food Lion parking lot, Route 17 in Saluda, at 9:30 am. Bring a lunch and something to drink. There are about 3 miles of forest roads and trails in this preserve.
<i>To sign up contact Mark at (804) 642-6060, or email at markc@vims.edu</i> |
| Thursday, May 20 | 10 am: Northern Neck Chapter Field Outing to see woodland natives, led by Gary Chafin (VNPS members only)
<i>For more information, contact Joan Hattersley, 804/529-5467 or hattersley4@gmail.com</i> |
| Saturday, May 22 | 10 am: Northern Neck Chapter Field Outing to see Kentucky yellow ladyslippers at Hickory Hollow Natural Area Preserve (public welcome)
<i>For more information, contact Joan Hattersley, 804/529-5467 or hattersley4@gmail.com</i> |
| Thursday, June 10 | 10 am: Northern Neck Chapter Field Outing to Hilda Wilson's summer garden at Mt. Holly (VNPS members only)
<i>For more information, contact Joan Hattersley, 804/529-5467 or hattersley4@gmail.com</i> |
| Saturday, June 19 | 10 am: Northern Neck Chapter Field Outing to see hardwood forest and forested wetland at Westmoreland State Park (public welcome)
<i>For more information, contact Joan Hattersley, 804/529-5467 or hattersley4@gmail.com</i> |

(You'll find the Calendar on pp. 6 & 7)

Cultivars and the Food Web

In response to a series of VNPS emails on the subject of a Tech/Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association (VNLA) initiative on developing native plant cultivars, I wrote to Doug Tallamy, author of *Bringing Nature Home* and professor at University of Delaware. The proposed criteria for consideration of cultivars was/is:

1. They should be plants that are not restricted to growing in narrow environmental conditions or geographic areas.
2. They should be plants that “present” well--so they catch the eye of the consumer..
3. They should not be too “tricky” to grow.
4. They should grow well in containers.
5. They will be grown for gardening, not for restoration projects in the wild.

I posed the following question to Dr. Tallamy in an email:

“I have suggested that the plant’s function in an ecosystem/food web should be added as a criterion. In addition, is there any way to make an educated guess about what cultivars would be most beneficial? I note in your book that you mention avoiding making berries bigger (so that

birds can still eat them), but wonder if anything else is worth considering. Kathi”

Here’s his reply, verbatim:

“Good questions. Most often we play with flower color or shape when developing a cultivar. That typically messes up our pollinators, but may not impact leaf feeders at all. Changing leaf color (green to purple, or variegated, for example) will certainly change the leaf chemistry, which is a *no no* from the food web perspective. Breeders should remember that the primary benefit native plants have over non-natives is their contribution to food webs. So don’t mess with that. I can tell you that every place I go people are asking how to get more straight species into the market. They don’t want cultivars!”

So, there it is. Some guidance and principles (flower shape, leaf color/chemistry) that will impact cultivars’ ability to function in the food web. In summary, I have to ask why the criteria proposed for the project include “5. They will be grown for gardening, not for restoration projects in the wild.” Are these mutually exclusive? Not in my yard.

Kathi Mestayer