



Claytonia

Newsletter of the John Clayton Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society

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vnps.org/johnclayton

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Denise Greene of Sassafra Farm will be our speaker on Jan. 21. Her topic will be "Using Native Plants to Attract Pollinators."



Since 1994 Denise has been propagating and growing herbaceous perennials native to the Eastern U.S. and designing landscapes with an emphasis on creating low maintenance, wildlife friendly gardens. Her experience and knowledge of perennials and how

to plant them so they thrive is an important step for each of us to learn. The conditions, challenges, and variety of places to grow natives varies greatly in the Coastal Plain. As a landscape designer, she has planned and planted gardens at Westmoreland State Park Visitor's Center, NASA Langley Research Center Employee Cafeteria, as well as Belle Island State Park Visitor's Center. A visit to any of these places would impress the most experienced gardeners among us.

In this area, we are fortunate to be able to purchase her plants from the Williamsburg Farmer's Market in the Spring and Fall. Learn what flower blooms when, so that rather than infilling with annuals that bloom continuously, we can count on our natives to host and feed the pollinators that depend on them for their survival.

The meeting begins at 6:45 at the **Queen's Lake Clubhouse, 234 East Queen's Drive, Williamsburg, VA** (in Queen's Lake subdivision). See you there—and note this new location!

From the President

I would like to wish all of you a Happy New Year. I hope that this year will be a good one for all of you. I am very thankful to the Board for all their good work with our John Clayton Chapter—I am lucky to have such a wonderful group working with me.

You will no doubt be puzzled by the changes in our meeting sites. Unfortunately we have had setbacks in trying to schedule our meetings at our regularly used locations. The Yorktown library did not have rooms available for us in January. The James City Rec Center is holding athletic intramurals in their meeting site locations in the winter evenings, and even if one were available it would be much too noisy for us to meet there, so please check our newsletter carefully to see where we will be meeting. It also means that we will have to pay for some of our meeting locations, so I am hoping the weather will be good and the buyers ready to buy our plants at our Spring Sale!

The initiative to produce a Regional Native Plant Guide for Hampton Roads had its first meeting in November in Virginia Beach. The large group of people who are working is made up of landscapers, ecological specialists, plant growers, and me. The areas to be included are Virginia Beach, Norfolk, Chesapeake, Suffolk, Isle of Wight, Surrey, James City, Hampton, Newport News, York County, Williamsburg, and Gloucester. It will not include King and Queen or Matthews as they will be included in another Regional Guide. As you can see it is not all of our chapter area, and will include South Hampton Roads Chapter as well as some areas that at present have no chapter. Thanks to the work that four previous chapters produced, we have reaped the benefits of their knowledge and hard decisions. The four and a half hour meeting was very productive; we made many decisions about our Hampton Roads Guide. The first is that the guide should consider the homeowners as the target audience. The introductions would answer the following questions: why use natives, where to use the natives, and how to have native plants in the landscape. In the guide, we would like to include host and nectar plants, alternative native plants for invasive plants, and note if a plant is edible, non-edible, or poisonous. We would try to include spread, not just height, as that is important to homeowners; we would also like to include layering and density as well as well as the right use in the right place. We decided to separate plants into the following categories: Perennials, Groundcovers, Grasses, Ferns, Vines, Shrubs, and Trees. In the right use in the right place area we would like to divide it between dry shade, street side places, wet places, and small places. Many decisions await us, such as what plant



to include in the logo emphasizing a plant and animal, plants to list in every category, and other decisions which will come up. Our next meeting will be in January.

After our potting parties this Fall, we had a partial plant rescue at the former Eco Discovery Park in November under the direction of Patti Gray. There were 15 or more participants; it was awesome to have so many come to help us and we all worked hard to remove plants we could still see and pot them—I hope they were all correctly identified. Eco Discovery donated the plants for our April 30, 2016 Plant Sale. This rescue gave us many plants for the sale and some of them are larger than those we generally offer, which will greatly benefit the buyers. We will need to have another plant rescue in spring for those plants that already had disappeared by November. I hope that many of you can come and help us there also, as well as at other potting parties for our 2016 sale.

Lucile Kossodo

Here are five upcoming walks—

Saturday, January 23, 1pm: Skunk Cabbage Walk

Come look for skunk cabbage in **Longhill Swamp** with **Helen Hamilton**, and **Gus Hall** will lead a walk through nearby upland woods. Meet at the Christian Life Center on Longhill Road across from Lafayette High School at 1 pm (and wear waterproof footwear).

To register, call Helen at 757/564-4494 or email her at helen48@cox.net.

Saturday, February 6, 10 am: Evergreen Walk

Join **Gus Hall** and **Helen Hamilton** at 10 am on a quest for everything green on the **Wahrani Nature Trail** in New Kent County. Expect to see a lot of over-wintering plants—there are two species of orchids, several species of mosses, lichens, sedges, ground cedar, clubmoss, ferns, a grass or two, and a few herbaceous leaves. Dress for the weather and expect uneven trails and some muddy areas along the trail.

Please register so that, in case the walk has to be re-scheduled because of inclement weather, we will be able to let you know. To register, contact Helen Hamilton at 757/564-4494 or helen48@cox.net.

Directions from the east (Williamsburg): Take 64 west towards Richmond, then take the 2nd West Point exit (Exit 220). Travel approximately 4 miles on Hwy. 33 towards West Point; trail entrance will be on the right hand side.

From the north (West Point): Take Hwy 33 across the bridge at West Point towards New Kent and travel approximately 3–4 miles on Hwy. 33 past the bridge; trail entrance will be on the left hand side.

For more information and a map, visit www.hikingupward.com/ovh/wahrani.

Saturday, February 13, 10:00 am:
Nude Tree Walk in the College Woods

Walk with **Charlie Dubay** to learn about identification of trees in winter conditions. At the top of the hill is a nice comparison of 3 Virginia pines—loblolly, Virginia, and shortleaf. Participants may park in the William and Mary Hall parking lot, which is open to the public on weekends. Meet Charlie at the Sports Center, 400 Brooks Street, to walk to the College Woods.

And remember—although most trees will be nude at this time of year, decency suggests that walk participants be clothed!

Contact Charlie Dubay at 757/870-0284 to register, in case of bad weather.

Saturday, April 16, 9:30 am–noon: Weeds and Orchids

Join **Donna Ware** for a walk at **Freedom Park** to see native and non-native weeds such as bluets (*Houstonia* spp.) and *Veronica* spp. of early spring in the big fields near the Interpretive Center and to visit a calcareous ravine to see Showy Orchis (*Galearis spectabilis*) and other species that prefer high-nutrient soils. Meet at the Freedom Park Interpretive Center parking lot. For information and to register contact Donna at 757/565 0657 or dmeware@verizon.net

Saturday, April 23, 10 am: Wildflowers and Orchids

Environmental consultant **Meegan Wallace** will be the leader on this walk in the **Grafton Ponds** area. Showy Orchis (*Galearis spectabilis*) should be in bloom as well as many other spring wildflowers. Traveling east on Fort Eustis Blvd (VA-105) from Rte. 143, after you pass Richneck Road on the right, look for a small parking area on the left marked with VNPS signs.

Contact Meegan at 757/291-1099 to register and for more information.

A Stonehouse Habitat Garden Report

The school courtyard habitat garden at Stonehouse Elementary School on Rochambeau Drive in Toano is recovering well from the severe pruning it suffered in late August. Last summer, in spite of regular visits tending the garden, Phillip Merritt and his occasional helpers could not keep up with the rapid growth. When the new principal arrived in mid-August, she was not aware that our VNPS chapter tended the garden, and she enlisted help from some unknowing volunteers to bring the garden under control by cutting down many plants. Unfortunately this happened just before we were

Sue's photos of the scene she and Phillip found on their arrival:



the stems of severely pruned Habitat Garden plants;

planning to prune and clean up the garden before school started.

As soon as Phillip and I discovered the damage, we surveyed the situation and began a recovery plan. We have done some proper pruning and relocated many plants. Some native plants do grow aggressively, especially with lots of rain. In retrospect, some of the severe pruning was probably good for the garden. In the last 3 months the garden has recovered very well and plants continued to bloom into December. Since the October plant sale potting party was cancelled due to rain, there still are plenty of plants to be removed. There is a work-day at the habitat planned for Saturday, January 16. We'll hope for warm weather and welcome helpers to come in the morning between 9 and 11 am—you may even take some plants home if you wish.

Sue Voigt

Plant Profile: Winter Orchids

Well, you can't see their flowers, but these orchids' leaves are distinctive in winter's brown leaf litter. Very common in our area is Crane-fly Orchid (*Tipularia discolor*), and less common here is Putty-root Orchid (*Aplectrum hyemale*).

Sometimes a single Crane-fly Orchid leaf is seen, but more often several leaves are seen together, as this orchid usually occurs in colonies. The top of the leaf is deep green, often spotted with purple, and the underside is an intense purple. With shade from the canopy of tall trees absent, the purple underside concentrates the sun's rays to allow photosynthesis to occur in deep winter.



a large pile of cut foliage;



some debris already bagged for disposal.



Louise Menges

Crane-fly Orchid's pleated leaf

When the orchid blooms in mid-July, no leaves are visible. The inconspicuous flower of Cranefly Orchid is pale green and pale purple to beige, no more than ½ inch across, and is easily overlooked, unlike the leaf, which signals the presence of this orchid in winter. The delicate flowers are only noticed when a shaft of slanting fall sunlight highlights what reminds some people of a swarm of small insects—hence “cranefly.” Another common name, “Crippled Cranefly,” also refers to the flowers, which incline slightly to the right or left. This is necessary for pollination by night-flying moths, when the pollen-bearing sacs become attached to the moth’s eye.

Growing naturally in nearly all counties of Virginia, Cranefly Orchid is found in rich damp woods from Massachusetts to southern Michigan, Florida, and east Texas. The species name *discolor*, “of different colors,” refers to the leaf surfaces. Cranefly Orchid is not usually available in nurseries since, like all native orchids, it is dependent on fungi in the ground. This genus has a complex geological past; its three species are located in the Himalayas, Japan, and here in the eastern U.S.

The genus of Putty-root Orchid is represented by only two species, one in Japan and one in eastern North America. The single large oval leaf is uniquely pin-striped, with parallel silvery-white veins alternating with green stripes. Like Cranefly Orchid, the plant maximizes the winter light with purple on the underside, but here the color is dull and brownish. By late May or early June, no leaf is visible when a flower stalk emerges carrying several small purplish-green blossoms.

Putty-root Orchid is less common in our area, found only occasionally in calcareous ravines and in woodlands with beech and maple trees. This orchid is more frequent in the Piedmont and Mountain regions of Virginia, and ranges throughout the eastern and central U.S and Canada, usually at higher elevations. The alternate common name “Adam and Eve” refers to the basal corms that are usually in pairs connected by a rhizome. Clones of this plant can form from the fibrous roots spreading out from these bulbous corms.

“Putty-root” refers to a mucilaginous substance which can be removed from the tubers when they are crushed. When it was mixed with water, the resulting sticky substance was used to mend broken crockery by early European settlers. Native Americans made a paste from the roots to treat boils and a tea was used to treat bronchial troubles. *Aplectrum* comes from the Latin, meaning that the flowers are “without spurs.” The species name *hyemale* means “winter” and refers to the fact that this orchid’s solitary leaf persists all winter. **Helen Hamilton**



Louise Menges

A leaf of Putty-root Orchid

A fungus among us

In late December, Lucile Kossodo found this huge polypore fungus (likely a variety of Sulfur Shelf) growing from the stump of a dead white oak that had been cut down in her yard. Lucile measured its circumference and reported that it was 73½ inches around!

That is one big mushroom, folks.

Editor



John Clayton Chapter Calendar

- Saturday, January 16** 9–11 am: **Stonehouse Habitat Garden workday**—come lend a hand!
Stonehouse Elementary School, 3651 Rochambeau Drive, Williamsburg, VA 23188
- Thursday, January 21** 6:45 pm: **John Clayton Chapter meeting** at the **Queen’s Lake Clubhouse, 234 East Queen’s Drive, Williamsburg, VA** (in Queen’s Lake subdivision). Our speaker is **Denise Greene**, whose topic will be **“Using Native Plants to Attract Pollinators.”** (See Page 1.)
- Saturday, January 23** 1 pm: **Skunk Cabbage Walk** in Longhill Swamp with **Helen Hamilton**, and **Upland Woods Walk** with **Gus Hall**. Meet at the **Christian Life Center on Longhill Road** across from Lafayette High School (and wear waterproof footwear). (See Page 3.)
To register, call Helen at 757/564-4494 or email at helen48@cox.net.
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Contact Meegan at 757/291-1099 to register and for more information.

There may be walks in the works which did not make this issue, so keep a lookout for announcements about additional walks and other events on our website at www.claytonvnps.org and in the local newspapers.

Below is a membership renewal form. Please contact Membership Chair **Fred Blystone** at 757/229-4346 or at fredblystone@gmail.com with questions about your membership.

Membership Form for John Clayton Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society

(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*	

I would like to receive my newsletters electronically at the email address above.

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