



Claytonia

Newsletter of the John Clayton Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society

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www.claytonvnps.org

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“Climate Change and Plants” is the topic at our March 16 meeting



Ecologist Molly Mitchell at work in a coastal marsh

Our speaker, **Molly Mitchell**, is a coastal ecologist at the Center for Coastal Resources Management, Virginia Institute of Marine Science. She holds a B.S. in Biology and Environmental Science and a M.S. in Marine Science from the College of William and Mary. Her research addresses impacts to marshes and shoreline systems from human and natural stressors with an interest in the synergistic effects of sea level rise on these resources. The wetlands advisory program is an ongoing program that has been around for 30+ years! CCRM staff support the Commonwealth’s management programs for both tidal

and nontidal wetlands. This work involves review of individual permits in the tidal program, development and implementation of assessment and monitoring protocols for the nontidal program, and issue-driven investigations in support of both.

Plant communities respond to shifts in climatic conditions, such as temperature and precipitation, resulting in changes in species distributions, the timing of blooming and competitive interactions between plants. Along Chesapeake Bay shorelines, sea level rise is also an important driver of changes in the plant communities, altering the composition of aquatic and wetland communities. She will explore some of these changes and the consequences of the alteration for the larger ecosystem.

The meeting begins at **6:45** at the **James City County Rec Center, Room A**, 5301 Longhill Road, Williamsburg 23188. See you there!

From the President

It looks like spring, feels like spring, but it is supposed to be winter. My backyard and front yard is all yellow and the camellias are beautiful. Our zigzag temperatures are confusing all the native plant seeds I have planted out of doors and left for winter stratification. Some are in my garage under lights as they began sprouting in January. I even have had to pot some of them in larger pots as they have their second set of leaves. Now this week, Feb 24, there are more sprouting. I shall have to really watch for freezing temperatures and rush them into the garage. I walk the area of pots with planted seeds in each day to check on what has sprouted. I guess I am afraid of very cold weather coming back. This has been a strange winter for us. One of our warm days, I spoke to my sister in Switzerland and she asked why I only had a T-shirt on. Here she was in warm woolens. I have already started doing pruning for spring. I began with the grasses, as I could see the green shoots beginning to come up. I hesitate to clean the native perennials, as I fear I might kill the beneficial insects still dormant in the hollow stems, or maybe they have emerged. It is hard to know what to do in this changed climate.

I hope you have been going to the naked tree walks in February—they are so interesting and I find my knowledge has to be refreshed after a couple of years. Soon Donna Ware will lead us on a “Ravine Exploratory.” Then will follow all of the April and May walks to see some of our lovely natives bloom and grow. One thing I have done to improve my own yard’s welcome to Monarch Butterflies is to have an area cleared of ivy on the right side of my driveway. I plan to fill it with common milkweed seeds I have planted this winter. As they say, “if you plant them, they will come.” I do not have space in my front yard for this rather aggressive plant, but this space on the other side of the driveway is going to be just for them. After all, what use is ivy?

Our next big event is the Plant Sale on Saturday, April 29, 2017 from 10 am–2 pm. As you know, this is our one and only moneymaker. For the past two years, it has allowed us to send three students to Nature Camp. It is also the way we earn money to help pay for the speakers at our meetings. This is our first time to hold the sale on our own. We are returning to the Williamsburg Community Building where we last had a sale in 2008. We need to be successful if we want to continue our aims to teach about native plants. We need you, our members, as we try to set up, sell, and clean up, all in one day. Please consider helping us and volunteer. One thing is important for you to know: we love to have you bring plants from your gardens to sell. Please bring them



to our potting party on April 13 at Joan Etchberger's home: 100 Woodland Street, Williamsburg, VA 23188 (see the potting party information elsewhere in this issue) and if you are unable to come on April 13, drop them off at my house, 229 West Queens Drive, Williamsburg, VA 23185. We absolutely cannot accept plants on the day of the sale since there will be no time to label, price, and place them. We also have a Plant Sale List and if you bring plants on the day of the sale, we cannot include them in the list.

We had to have an extra Board Meeting because right after our January Board Meeting, I received a call from the VNPS President, Nancy Vehrs, asking us to host the 2018 Annual Virginia Native Plant Meeting in Williamsburg. It is our turn since we had the previous one about 10 years ago. We met at my home on January 19, 2017. It was a good meeting with much discussion about what hosting the Annual Meeting entails. After more phone calls to find all I could from other chapters who hosted meetings recently, we all voted to hold the meeting here. Thank you so much to Cortney Langley for Volunteering to chair the Annual Meeting VNPS 2018 Committee. We will need to find a hotel, food, walks and speakers for this event. We will all have to pitch in and help. So far, we have chosen Friday (PM), Saturday and Sunday (AM) September 14–16, 2018 as the dates for the meeting. Please save that date—I know you will want to be a part of this event and to enjoy it with us.

Lucile Kossodo

Our January meeting

An account of the meeting's program

As promised, historian **Martha McCartney** brought our chapter namesake, John Clayton, up close and personal Thursday evening in a highly detailed and interesting presentation. Ms. McCartney is the author of eleven books on local history and her depth of knowledge on the subject was evident. Her pleasant and accessible manner made for an atmosphere that welcomed questions and discussion.

While it is generally known that John Clayton's collection of herbarium specimens that he sent back to England were the basis of *Flora Virginica*, it was interesting to hear what Martha has been able to glean from the available records about the personality, lifestyle, and values of the man himself. As one of several members of the graduating



Helen Hamilton

Chapter Vice-president Donna Ware and our speaker, historian Martha McCartney.

cohort of Virginia Master Naturalists present at Thursday’s meeting, I am working on researching and preparing our group presentation on a naturalist of our choosing. I have discovered that the more you “dig in” and uncover any little piece of information, the clearer the picture becomes of the person and of the era in which he or she lived.

I began the evening knowing very little about John Clayton. I soon learned, however, that a fire in the County Clerk’s office where John Clayton worked had unfortunately made the job of a historian just that much harder. But Ms. McCartney had a lot to say based on lists of items John Clayton ordered for his household. To begin with, we know John Clayton owned numerous slaves. We even know their names, as he had them baptized and therefore records of their names are available. I was surprised, as when I have encountered census records of 1800 and before, there were only hashmarks for slaves. In fact, the only one named was the male head of household, and all others by hashmark. Martha has enabled these records to become available—a good thing for descendants and historians to know. As Martha named many household items such as large room sized rugs, glassware, pewter, plenty of Clayton’s favorite snuff, a quantity of size five shoes that she said rivaled Imelda Marcos, and—to Martha’s great surprise—six chamber pots, the contrast with only plain white cotton ordered for his slaves hit hard. Unfortunately, Martha also described Mr. Clayton’s demeanor as terse and very unpleasant.

I applaud Martha for her attention to detail, for getting at the truth, and for sharing her research with us.

Cathy Flanagan

... and some meeting highlights

At the meeting, Cortney Langley, at right in this photo taken during the meeting, received two John Clayton Chapter awards. The Botany Award recognizes her work with the Williamsburg Plant Rescue Team, whose members move native plant material from building sites to public places. Additionally, Cortney’s award recognizes her work as Secretary to the Board of Directors. Awards Committee Chair Donna Ware presented the awards to Cortney.



Helen Hamilton

President Lucile Kossodo distributed copies of *Native Plants for Southeast Virginia* to all chapter members at the meeting. Lucile served on the development committee and did much of the writing; chapter members Jan Newton, Phillip Merritt, Lucile Kossodo, Seig Kopinitz, and Helen Hamilton contributed photographs. Lucile and Helen are pictured with the publication.



New Members

We welcome **Ginny Carey** and **David Lebel**, both of Williamsburg, and **Marsha Mood** of Roanoke.

From Cortney...

Williamsburg Native Plant Rescue Team update

Even before the weather started to warm, activity for the rescue team began to heat up. Thanks again to the organizing efforts of Lise Schioler and other members in Newport News and Hampton, the team pulled off a very successful rescue in Hampton near the National Institute of Aerospace in January. Among the material identified and rescued were soft rush, netted chain fern, goldenrod, hearts-a-bustin', highbush blueberry, partridgeberry, ebony spleenwort, wax myrtle, grapefern, crane fly, laurel oak, spicebush and a super-charming carex of some type. The attendance at this rescue was fantastic, thanks in no small part to the able help provided by volunteers from the Peninsula Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists.



Meegan Wallace and Lise Schioler scout plants in Hampton in advance of January's rescue.

January and February also brought us welcome new partnerships and strengthened older partnerships. Team members met with Bain Schultz, landscape specialist at the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, who is educating visitors about how Virginia's Native Americans used area flora for food, medicine, clothing, transportation, shelter, and more. The team is identifying and donating plant material for her exhibits.

We also have a new partnership, thanks again to Lise Schioler, with Bluebird Gap Farm in Hampton. In late February, team members toured the municipally-owned property and its varied habitats. Hampton's Master Gardeners have a number of demonstration plots at the farm, but the actual property is much larger than most visitors realize, with semi-wild areas both inside and outside its fencing. Manager Josh Froneberger is hoping to improve the habitat over time with the introduction of more native plants, especially along the trail system and in a shoreline restoration area. Lise will be working on that in the coming months.

We have worked in the past with York County and Poquoson schools and are excited to learn from Jody Turner, 4-H Schoolyard Habitats Outreach and Virginia Cooperative Extension, that five different habitat garden projects are being planned or completed at local elementary and middle schools. Unfortunately, many of these gardens will be in full sun, so the rescue team has limited material to offer. If you have plants in your full-sun gardens that you'd like to divide and donate to the schools, please let me know and I'll arrange it with Jody.

The team has recently developed a unique partnership with the Virginia Living Museum regarding some of the more sensitive plant material we rescue. Sometimes we get the opportunity to rescue flora that, in the wild, suffers moderate to severe poaching pressure. Naturally, the team has to be particularly careful about where we donate these plants. So we are immensely grateful to VLM Horticulture Curator Darl Fletcher, who has agreed to display these sensitive species in educational exhibits in secure areas of the museum. A win for the public and a win for the plants!

On the last Sunday in February, three team members joined William & Mary's Student Environmental Action Council at a work day removing invasive bamboo, honeysuckle and English ivy from around the iconic Crim Dell bridge. If you've not visited the area, I highly urge you to. The students, wittily calling themselves "The No-Ivy League," have radically transformed the area, logging more than 600 volunteer hours in the past couple of years to remove noxious species and to plant more than 100 native shrubs and perennials. It's a stunning success.

And finally, some exciting news. The Virginia Living Museum has invited the rescue team to display at its annual Earth Day celebration. Come see us there on Saturday, April 22! **Cortney Langley**, Co-chair

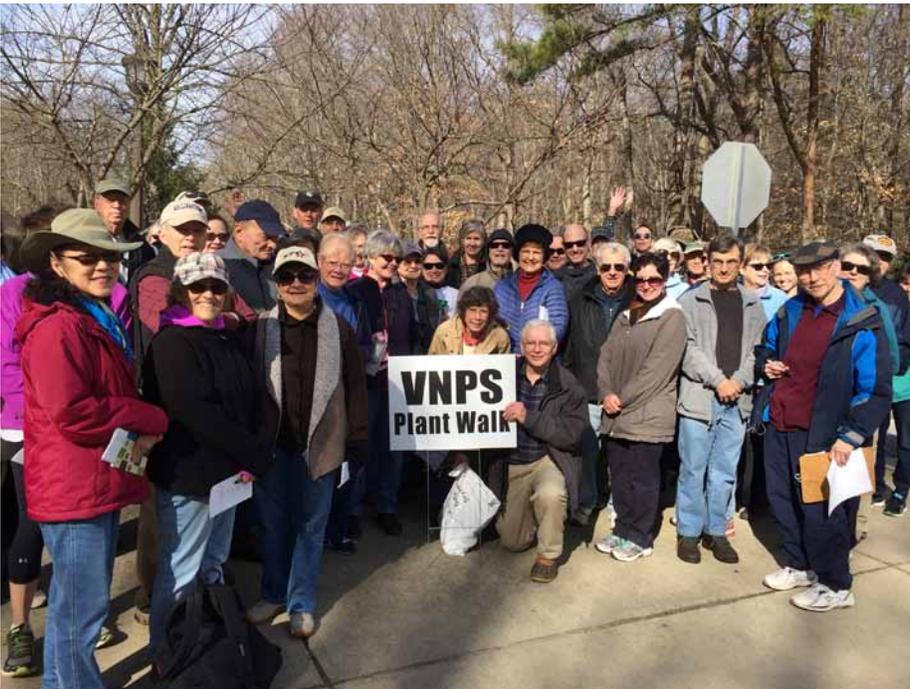
Recent plant walks

January 28th's Skunk Cabbage Walk



Helen Hamilton's photo of the (mostly) warmly dressed participants on the Skunk Cabbage walk

February 18th's Nude Tree Walk



Helen got this shot of our large group before we began the Nude Tree walk in William & Mary's College Woods.

Upcoming walks

Saturday, March 18, 1:30–4:30 pm: A Ravine Exploratory

Donna Ware will lead a walk in **York River State Park** to look for early woodland plants, expecting to see hepatica and bloodroot and possibly leatherwood, rare in the Coastal Plain but here in a few places. Meet in the parking lot at the Visitor's Center where Donna will identify early spring weeds. The walk will be uneven, somewhat hilly and muddy in places.

To register contact Donna at dmeware@verizon.net or 757-565-0657.



Teta Kain

Sunday, April 2, 2:00 pm: A walk at Stonehouse Schoolyard Habitat

Susan Voigt will lead a plant walk around the **Habitat at Stonehouse Elementary**. There are over 70 species of small trees, shrubs, and herbaceous native plants growing in the courtyard outside the classrooms of the lower elementary grades at Stonehouse Elementary School. The garden was established in 2003/2004 by Jan Newton, a Stonehouse parent and member of the John Clayton Chapter, VNPS. Since she moved away in 2013, other members of the chapter have continued to care for the garden. During the plant walk we will look for signs of spring in the approximately 3400 square foot habitat garden and search for blooms, creatures, and missing plants (some spring plants that we thought had disappeared). If time allows, we might do a little weeding. Please park in the school bus parking lot at the far end of the school building.

Contact Susan (svoigt1@cox.net, 804-966-8487, or cell 804-815-6085) for more information.



Saturday, April 22, 10:00 am: Sinkhole Ponds and Orchids

Join environmental consultant **Meegan Wallace** to visit **Grafton Ponds**, which are Virginia's best remaining example of a coastal plain pond complex (about 2 mi round trip to ponds). We will also see Showy Orchis (*Galearis spectabilis*) in bloom as well as many other spring wildflowers and ferns. From I-64, travel east on Fort Eustis Blvd (VA-105), pass Richneck Road on the right, and look for a small parking area on the left, marked with VNPS signs.

Contact Meegan at clm003@verizon.net to register and for more information.



Saturday, May 6, 10:00 am: Spring Flowers at Newport News Park

Peninsula Master Naturalist **Susie Yager** will lead a walk through this lakeside woodland area to see Pink Lady's-Slipper Orchid, Partridgeberry, Yellow Star-Grass, Putty-Root Orchid, Pickerelweed, and numerous other spring flowers as well as several ferns. Meet at **Newport News Park's Discovery Center, Constitution Way**. Use the NNPark entrance at Constitution Way. From Jefferson Ave, turn onto Constitution Way; drive 0.9 mile; the Discovery Center will be on the right (GPS coordinates 37.181682, -76.537173); additional parking nearby along Constitution Way if needed. The round-trip walk will be about 2 miles. The Discovery Center has restrooms.



Contact Susie Yager to register at soozigus@cox.net.

Habitat Garden workdays announced

Sue Voigt has Habitat Garden workdays planned for the second Saturday each month this spring: **March 11, April 8, and May 13**, plus some extra days in May and June (TBA). The Saturday workdays start about 9:00 am and usually go until 11:00 or 11:30, but you are welcome to come for part of the time between those hours.

Your help in maintaining this valuable resource is much needed and greatly appreciated!

An April 13 Potting Party

We will meet at **1:30 pm** at **Jim and Joan Etchberger's** home at **100 Woodland Rd., Williamsburg**, to repot the plants into larger containers so they will look good for our plant sale. Your help is needed to get ready for the sale, and it is a great way to meet other members. Bring water, insecticide, and gloves, and let's have a good time!

Contact **Lucile Kossodo** at lkossodo@cox.net or 757-784-2882.



Plant Profile: The Araceae

The recent (January 28) search for Skunk Cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*) in a swampy area off Longhill Road led me to think about its relatives. There are a lot of them, over 100 genera and almost 4000 species, mostly tropical. The *Flora of Virginia* describes 9 plants familiar in our area; 5 are aquatic and 4 grow on land.

The Araceae (the Arum Family) are monocots—flowering plants with parallel veins in the leaves and flower parts in threes. A club-like spadix that carries the male and/or female flowers is partially enclosed by a leaf-like bract, the “spadix.” Many plants in this family produce heat, possibly to attract early pollinating insects or to protect the growing plant from the cold. The temperature of Skunk Cabbage flowers has been measured at up to 100 degrees F, enough to melt the surrounding snow. They also give off a nasty smell, resembling decaying meat, that will attract flies.

We found Skunk Cabbage flowers emerging early in January and in full bloom by the end of the month. They are unmistakable in swampy muck, with a striped purple-red spathe covering the roundish spadix inside, where a close look revealed the yellowish flowers, perfect with both male and female parts. Some plants had withered spathes that surrounded a brown globular fruit that will release seeds. All parts of this plant have a skunk-like odor, not noticeable to most of us standing in the soggy leaf litter around the plants. By March all evidence of this flower will disappear, replaced by large cabbage-like leaves seen throughout the growing season.

Jack-in-the-Pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*) is common in the Coastal Plain, growing in many moist habitats, often in woodland gardens. In this species the leaves appear along with the flowers—they are divided into 3 parts, the two lower leaflets more or less horizontal to the third leaflet. Jack-in-the-Pulpit leaves could be confused with those of trillium, but the 3 leaflets of trillium are all equidistant from each other. The name of this plant comes from the striped green and purple canopy (spathe) that curves over the spadix (the “Jack” or preacher in his canopied pulpit). After the flowers are pollinated, probably by flies attracted to the odor and the heat, they are replaced by shiny green berries which ripen to a bright red cluster carried on a tall stalk into winter.

Jack-in-the-Pulpit is an excellent choice for a shade or woodland wildflower garden where it will thrive in rich soil and partial to full shade. It is very easy to cultivate and requires little care, growing under a variety of conditions, partnering well with columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*) and foamflower (*Tiarella cordifolia*).

While birds and mammals eat the berries of this plant, all parts produce intensely irritating calcium oxalate crystals. Native Americans



Flowering Skunk Cabbage



Jack in his “canopied pulpit”

knew that cooking and drying eliminated the bitter taste; roots were used as a vegetable, ground for bread doughs, and used for a variety of medicinal purposes.

Arrow-arum (*Peltandra virginica*), also known by the Algonquins as “Tuckahoe,” was an important food source for Native Americans. Throughout the winter the women dug into shallow waters to collect the carbohydrate-rich roots that they cooked and ground into flour. Like most members of this family, the roots contain calcium oxalate crystals. Capt. John Smith said “Raw is no better than poison,” and “it will prickle and grate the throat extremely” unless roasted, sliced, and dried in the sun.

The genus *Peltandra* has only 2 species, both found nowhere else in the world but eastern North America. Arrow-arum is easily seen in marshes and ponds, recognized by large, strongly arrow-head-shaped leaves that appear before the flowers. From May through June the plant is in flower as narrow green spathes that surround the tubular yellow spadix. By summer they have been replaced by a globular fruit that lies in the mud and releases numerous black-green berries. Golden Club (*Orontium aquaticum*) is a striking plant, especially when seen against dark swampy waters. Blooming in spring, its spathe is white and covers the golden yellow fleshy spadix, the “golden club.” Bluish-green leaves are crowded in a cluster at the base of the plant; they are water repellent, with a waxy, powdery surface that allows them to float in deeper water. The plant is found throughout Virginia, can be common locally, but is not as frequent in our area.

The 5 aquatic species of this family in the Coastal Plain are very small plants, usually floating in large masses on shallow ponds. Four species of the genus *Lemma* known by the common name Duckweed are distinguished by characters of their tiny leaves.

Duckmeat (*Landoltia punctata*) and Water Lettuce (*Pistia stratiotes*) are introduced species. Watermeal (*Wolffia* spp.) and Bogmat (*Wolffiella*) are other really tiny floating aquatic plants.

Other members of this family from the tropics are grown as familiar house plants. Peace Lily (*Spathiphyllum*), *Philodendron*, and *Dieffenbachia* are sold locally in garden centers and nurseries. Another relative, *Caladium*, also known as Elephant Ears, is grown for its colorful foliage and is often planted in woodland gardens



Phillip Merritt

Arrow-arum's foliage, above, and an opened seed-pod, below



Phillip Merritt



Ellis Squires

Golden Club in bloom

Helen Hamilton



**You're
Invited!**

Dear Friends,
For the first year our Chapter is flying solo in this annual sale. Months and months of work have already been done. In April, we need YOU to get us to the finish line.



John Clayton Chapter
of Virginia Native Plant Society

ANNUAL PLANT SALE

Saturday, April 29th, 10am to 2pm
at
Williamsburg Community Building
401 North Boundary Street

What we have -

150+ native perennials, shrubs, trees, ferns, and vines.

Expert advice on choosing & planting

What we need -

Volunteers Come join the fun of a successful plant sale. Help display plants, advise customers, tally sales, collect the funds, and clean-up.

Volunteer for all day from 7am to 3pm, or for as many hours as possible.

Contact: Joan Etchberger
jetchberger@cox.net

Patti Gray
patriciagray67@gmail.com

Customers Please encourage your friends to come.

John Clayton Chapter Calendar

- Saturday, March 11** Stonehouse Habitat Garden workday (More info on Page 8)
- Thursday, March 16** 6:45 pm: John Clayton Chapter meeting at the James City County Rec Center, Room A, 5301 Longhill Rd., Williamsburg. Our speaker is coastal ecologist **Molly Mitchell**, whose topic will be “Climate Change and Plants.” (See Page 1.)
- Saturday, March 18** 1:30–4:30 pm: A Ravine Exploratory with **Donna Ware**, looking for early woodland plants in York River State Park. Meet in the parking lot at the Visitor’s Center where Donna will identify early spring weeds. To register contact Donna at dmeware@verizon.net or 757-565-0657. (See Page 8.)
- Sunday, April 2** 2:00 pm: Plant walk around the Stonehouse Schoolyard Habitat, led by **Sue Voigt**. Contact Sue at svoigt1@cox.net or 804-966-8487 for more information. (See Page 8.)
- Saturday, April 8** Stonehouse Habitat Garden workday (More info on Page 8)
- Thursday, April 13** 1:30pm: Potting Party at the Etchberger’s home at 100 Woodland Rd., Williamsburg (See Page 9.)
- Saturday, April 22** 10:00 am: Sinkhole Ponds and Orchids. Visit Grafton Ponds with **Meegan Wallace** to see Showy Orchis (*Galearis spectabilis*) in bloom as well as many other spring wildflowers and ferns. Contact Meegan at clmoo3@verizon.net to register and for more information. (See Page 8.)
- Saturday, April 29** 10:00 am–2:00 pm: John Clayton Chapter’s Annual Plant Sale at the Williamsburg Community Bldg, 401 Boundary St., Williamsburg (More on Page 12.)
- Saturday, May 6** 10:00am: Spring Flowers at Newport News Park. **Susie Yager** will lead a walk through this lakeside woodland area to see Lady’s-Slipper Orchid and numerous spring flowers as well as several ferns. Meet at Newport News Park’s Discovery Center, Constitution Way. Contact Susie at soozigus@cox.net to register. (See Page 9 for directions and more info.)
- Saturday, May 13** Stonehouse Habitat Garden workday (More info on Page 8)

Keep a lookout for announcements about additional walks and other events in the local newspapers and on our website at www.vnps.org/john-clayton.

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