



Claytonia

Newsletter of the John Clayton Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society

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www.claytonvnps.org

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Mary Hyde Berg	804/693-3568
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Our November 15 Meeting: "Identification of Native Grasses in the Mid-Atlantic Region"



Our speaker, **Dr. Douglas DeBerry**, is a Senior Environmental Scientist at VHB | Vannasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. He is also Visiting Assistant Professor of Biology at the College of William and Mary for the 2012-2013 academic year, teaching Introduction to Environmental Science and Wetland Ecosystems in Fall 2012 and Restoration Ecology in Spring 2013.

Dr. DeBerry received his B.A. in Environmental Sciences at the University of Virginia, followed by a M.A. in Biology at W&M and a Ph.D. in Marine Science from VIMS. He also has 20 years of professional environmental consulting experience, and is a certified Professional Wetland Scientist and Professional Wetland Delineator. His presentation will focus on the characteristics of grasses that help ID grasses to species in the Mid-Atlantic Region (characteristics like grass flowers, leaf structure, root composition, etc.). He will use many native grass species in his presentation, and also talk about introduced species (which of course are relevant to conservation and restoration, since many of our invasive species are grasses). He hopes attendees will come away with a decent understanding of the "language" of grass identification (which is really the major barrier for most people who try to key out grasses in published manuals).

The meeting begins at **6:45 pm** at the Yorktown Public Library at the intersection of Battle Road and Route 17 in Yorktown. **See you there!**

From the President



Wow, I don't think I was back from my year in Florida for more than 2 minutes before I was somehow steered back into helping out the John Clayton Chapter. I appreciate everyone's encouragement in running for president...I'm definitely looking forward to doing what I can to get people excited about natives!

I'll be working with a new lineup on our Executive Committee, including long-time member Lucile Kossodo as Vice President, Phyllis Putnam as Treasurer and Cortney Langley as Secretary. Other members joining the Board of Directors are Sue Voight as Plant Sale Chairperson and Martha Smith, who will be taking care of Hospitality. Thankfully, Patti Gray will continue to work her magic with Membership. And where would we be without Louise Menges' terrific work on the newsletter?

We will have a couple of vacancies, though, as some long-serving members ease up a bit on their duties. Mary Hyde Berg is stepping down as Field Trip Chairperson, but she will still be representing the interests of the general membership as Member-at-Large. And though Jan Newton will continue on as our Web Master, she's stepping down from her duties as the Publicity chair.

We could certainly use your help with these positions, so give it a thought. Publicity is crucial to our chapter. Meetings are a much more fun when lots of people show up. If you decide to help out as Publicity Chairperson, you'll be contacting local papers and websites to publicize our meetings and other chapter events.

The Field Trips Chairperson is responsible for scheduling walks throughout the year. Don't be intimidated; you don't have to be a botanical expert and you'd have a lot of help. We know all the places to go and who might be willing to lead trips.

Finally, I want to give special thanks to several members who are leaving the board after many years of invaluable service: Judith Kator, Treasurer; Mary Turnbull, Secretary; Joan Etchberger, Plant Sale Co-Chair; and Pat Baldwin, Historian for (almost) forever. The chapter wouldn't go on without people like you!

Phillip Merritt

Our September annual meeting

One important item of business at the September meeting was the presentation and vote on a slate of officers for 2013–2014 presented by the nominating committee. Here is a photo of our new officers:



From left: President Phillip Merritt, Vice-President Lucile Kossodo, Treasurer Phyllis Putnam, Secretary Cortney Langley

Beth Chambers, the speaker at our meeting, described for us the differences between Old and New World asters and explained that the genus *Asteraeae* has been split into ten different genera, with our native asters renamed and placed in the genus *Symphyotrichum*.

We learned that the lovely native aster we're enjoying is no longer an Aster, taxonomically speaking. What used to be the largest, most diverse genus of 600 taxa has been split into ten different genera. To complicate this for the lay botanist, these new names are polysyllabic and unfamiliar. Asters can be difficult to identify because of the large variation and diversity of species (about 50 in the upcoming *Flora of Virginia*), and due to the complex nature of the aster flowerhead. **Louise Menges**

2012 Botany Award goes to Helen Hamilton

During September's annual meeting, **Helen Hamilton** received the **John Clayton Botany Award** "in recognition of her untiring advocacy for Virginia native plants and for her generous spirit and botanical expertise which have forever enriched our community and enhanced our habitats." Helen served as



Helen displays her award and a framed plaque bordered with her own photos of native plants. Also pictured are Cynthia Long, left, and Jan Newton.

chapter president for 7 years, served on the VNPS board of directors, presented numerous lectures on native plants, wrote monthly native plant articles for area newspapers, led plant walks, organized and volunteered for numerous events and chapter activities, and is in the process of writing a field guide with Gus Hall about wildflowers and grasses of Virginia's coastal plain.

Recent JCC field trips...

September 22: Native plant walk at Newport News Park

On a beautiful Saturday morning in September, **Charlie Dubay** led us up and down and around a lakeside trail in Newport News Park to find shrubbery. In the parking lot, we were treated to an illustrated (with the leaves) talk about the distinction between Florida maple, or Southern Sugar Maple (*Acer barbatum/floridanum*), and red maple (*Acer rubrum*). With the leaves in hand it is easy to see that red maple has uneven teeth whereas the margins of Florida maple are relatively smooth. With Pat Baldwin's hand lens, we were able to see the fuzz along the margin on the underside of the Florida maple leaf, lacking in red maple. Florida maple is found growing naturally only in the extreme southeastern region of Virginia, the counties of James City, York, and the city of Newport News, and west to Halifax and Amelia counties.



A side-by-side comparison of the leaves of Florida maple, left, and red maple, right.



Helen took this photo of the walk's participants. From left are Patty Kipps, Frances Knight, leader Charlie Dubay, Timothy Estep, and Pat Baldwin.

As with all events led by Charlie Dubay, this walk was well organized, and we were provided with much information about each plant, and tricks for remembering names. E.g., Huckleberry Finn was looking

for gold, so species of *Gaylussacia* (huckleberries) have golden resin dots on the back of the leaves. Again with a hand lens (and without) we saw these glistening dots on a species of *Gaylussacia*, absent on the highbush blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum*). Finding examples of all three, we were strongly warned about the invasive character of privet, multiflora rose, and Russian olive.

Charlie had a detailed list for us, and he brought twigs of shrubs not easily found in Newport News Park—sweet pepperbush (*Clethra alnifolia*), shining sumac (*Rhus copallinum*), and silverling or sea myrtle (*Baccharis halimifolia*). He urged us to stop on the way out to see the devilwood, (*Osmanthus americanus*), a holly look-alike but with opposite leathery leaves. Obviously planted in the Park, this shrub is native only in the Virginia Beach area of Virginia.

Don't miss a walk by Charlie Dubay! Look for the next one during next year's growing season.

Helen Hamilton

October 6: A walk around Little Creek Reservoir

Helen Hamilton and **Gus Hall** led a very informative walk along many of the paved and unpaved paths at Little Creek Reservoir—a scenic James City County Park with a 996-acre reservoir. Through the knowledge of both of the leaders, our group of about 25 received much information about grasses, vines, flowers, trees, and shrubs. Most of the plants were native, but plants that have been introduced to Virginia were also on our list to identify.



A group of nodding lady's tresses orchids (*Spiranthes cernua*) growing near the reservoir. At right, a closeup view of their blooms.



I was quite taken with this tiny member of the Scrophulariaceae Family growing in cracks along the parking area's curbing, only to learn that it is an alien (*Mazus pumilus* or Japanese Mazus)! Louise Menges

A big part of Helen's focus were the many grasses we saw along the paths and reservoir. Often Gus was near the end of the group and was able to share with us additional information about the plants. Pat Baldwin was especially pleased to find three *Ludwigia* species growing on the site: *alternifolia*, *decurrens*, and *leptocarpa*.

Everyone stopped to admire a small colony of Indian Pipe where a bee was busy taking care of pollination. Unlike most plants, it is white and does not contain chlorophyll. Instead of generating energy from sunlight, it is parasitic, more specifically a myco-heterotroph. Its hosts are certain fungi that are mycorrhizal with trees, meaning it ultimately gets its energy from photosynthetic trees. Since it is not dependent on sunlight to grow, it can grow in very dark environments, as in the understory of dense forest.

Mary Turnbull

River Oats: Wildflower of the Month for October 2012

River Oats, or Inland Sea Oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*), is notable for its large, graceful seed heads. This is a 2–4 foot clump-forming perennial grass with flat, drooping, flower spikelets along slender, arching branches. In May the plant is a vivid green; by mid-summer the seeds turn ivory, then brown before dropping off in the fall. The blue-green, bamboo-like leaves appear in early spring, fading to tan over the winter.

This striking ornamental grass prefers part shade and moist sands, loams, and clays. It will tolerate poorly drained soils and is one of the few grasses that does not do well in full sun; without adequate shade, the leaves turn yellowish. The plant reseeds easily and can expand aggressively within a couple of years, and blooms from June through September.

Native to most counties in the state of Virginia, River Oats is found in moist woods and streambanks from New Jersey to Georgia and northwest Florida and west to southern Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Kansas, and Texas.

November–December 2012



A bee hard at work pollinating Indian pipe (*Monotropa uniflora*).



River Oats is a larval host for several skipper butterflies. The seeds are eaten by small mammals and birds and the stems and leaves are used as nesting material by birds. The plant is highly resistant to deer browse.

Helen Hamilton

New York Aster: Wildflower of the Month for November 2012

New York Aster (*Symphyotrichum novi-belgii*) is a stunning plant in late fall, the violet-blue ray flowers with yellow or reddish disk flowers, contrasting with blooming goldenrods. Numerous flower heads are borne on slender stems with narrow leaves. A definitive characteristic is the whitish green bracts under the flower heads with spreading or backward-curling tips. The plant can grow to 3 feet tall with branching stems. There are many cultivars and color forms.



Seig Kopinitz

New York Aster grows along shores and in damp thickets and meadows, occurring in every county in Virginia, but only in the coastal states of the U.S. and Canada. The range is from Newfoundland to South Carolina, found often in salt marshes. Blooms September–November.

The species name is Latin for “of New Belgium”, which was the early name for New York.

Helen Hamilton

From the Historian’s archives...

*Approximately 20 years ago, **Cynthia Long** and **Pat Baldwin** (now Historian Emeritus) presented a program to the chapter with text and slides. What follows is the written text from that program. (The slides? Well, chances are they were 35 mm slides—you remember, the analog kind you loaded into a slide projector to view!)*

This evening we will be admiring, observing, and discovering, as did the newcomers to Virginia’s shores almost 400 years ago. Virginia has always been recognized as one of the richest botanical areas in the world, with an overlapping of life zones and a temperature range that includes the northern limits for many southern plants and the southern limits for some northern species.

The coastal plain, which is today synonymous with Tidewater, holds many riches. The woodlands feature gently rolling to flat uplands and

deep-bottomed valleys with steep walls. The many streams that dissect the woodlands meander into swamps and eventually into brackish marshes. The soils include sand, clay, and shell beds. Within this variety of terrain we find a limitless variety of life forms.

The first habitat we encounter in our explorations is the margin of sea and land, sandy beaches and tidal mudflats, where grasses and a few showy flowering plants are found. American beach grass, sea oats, yucca, and prickly pear cactus can be found here. Wax myrtle, sea oxeye daisy, and seaside gerardia are found in the salt marshes. Local examples can be found at Virginia Beach and the Eastern Shore, as well as at local beaches on the tidal rivers on either side of our peninsula.

Further inland we can explore a brackish marsh subject to the tides, but with salinity decreasing as fresh water blends with the salt water from the Chesapeake Bay. The dominant grasses here are salt meadow hay, big cordgrass., and saltgrass.

We begin to find more flowering plants like marsh loosestrife, narrow leaf cattail, and mallows, both rose and halberd leaved. Among the margins marsh elder and saltbush are common. *Kostelyskya*, saltmarsh fleabane, and sneezeweed can also be seen here. Examples of this habitat can be seen around Jamestown; a fine habitat has also been preserved off North Henry Street in Williamsburg, in a roadside park frequented by fishermen and picnickers.

Fresh water marshes are plentiful. One of my favorites is along the Chickahominy River in New Kent County, where I first saw wild rice growing as we explored from a canoe. Arrow leaved arum and sagittaria grow in shallow water; here you will also find broad leaved cattail along the edges as the land begins to emerge. Jewelweed and pennywort are common here, along with golden club, swamp milkweed, monkey face, and swamp loosestrife. Captain John Smith, the hero of the Jamestown colony, described many Virginia plants in records he sent to England in 1608. "The chief root they have for food is called tuckahoe. It groweth like a flag in low muddy freshes. In one day a savage will gather sufficient for a week. These roots are much of the greatness and taste of potatoes...in summer they use



Pat Baldwin points out a small *Symphyotrichum* in bloom in the marsh along the edge of Little Creek Reservoir in October of this year.

this ordinarily for bread.” Both peltandra and pickerel weed have been described as the tuckahoe of Indian diets.

As the elevation from sea level increases, fresh water marshes gradually give way to swamps characterized by dominant hardwoods. Red maple, black gum, green ash, and bald cypress are found here. Other trees in this habitat include elm, sycamore, sweet bay magnolia, hornbeam, black alder, and pawpaw. In early spring you will want to follow your nose to skunk cabbage—one of the best stands is in Lafayette Swamp, across from the high school, in Williamsburg. Here you might also encounter marsh marigold. Our namesake, *Claytonia virginica*, blooms in this habitat. Among the many ferns here, look for netted chain fern; you might also discover the rare dwarf trillium in this habitat. As the season progresses you may discover lizard’s tail and lobelia, both cardinal flower and the great blue lobelia. Turtlehead, dwarf ginseng, and pinxterflower azalea also live in this habitat.

Another type of forest habitat is characterized by pine trees mixed with hardwoods—generally speaking, a younger forest that was dominated by hardwoods. In addition to loblolly and Virginia pine, sweet gum, red maple, and sourwood are found in the understory. Shrubs include deerberry and highbush blueberry. This is orchid country; both pink and yellow ladyslipper can be found here, as well as large and small whorled pogonia and twayblade. You might also find showy orchis, puttyroot, and crane-fly orchids, whose leaves stay through the winter. May apple carpets the ground in early spring, and running cedar gives the effect of a miniature forest at ground level.

One of the richest habitats is the upland mixed forest, where you will discover the giants of the forest; white oak, tulip poplar, hickory, beech, and a variety of red and black oaks. This is the climax vegetation, which has replaced earlier plants in this habitat. Dogwood and American holly fill in the understory. Here you will find the classic woodland wildflowers associated with Spring in Virginia; most bloom in the sun before deciduous trees have developed their dense canopy of shade. Crane-fly orchids, rattlesnake plantain, partridgeberry, Jack in the Pulpit, wild ginger, bloodroot, and both Solomon’s seal and false, or Solomon’s plume, as it is often called. Ferns include Christmas, New York, and Lady. Indian pipe shows its ghostly blooms surrounded by fallen leaves.

Fossil shell outcrops found in ravines here provide a variation in soil condition. The increased alkalinity encourages columbine, shadow

witch orchids, redbud, hepatica, and showy orchid. *Iris cristata* blooms here, and you can also find maidenhair fern.

If the land were undisturbed by man, we would find little open land. Fields and roadsides that are kept mowed prevent the trees from overtaking the land. In these meadows and dry roadsides we enjoy sun-loving species like ruellia and sensitive fern, Joe-pye weed and goldenrod, birdsfoot violet, lupines, blue-eyed grass, and goats rue. Summer brings black-eyed susan, butterfly weed, liatris, Joe-pye weed, ground cherry, sunflowers, skullcap, and bluecurls, which give way to goldenrods, asters, and goldenasters in the fall.

Wet roadside ditches are an ideal habitat for rhexia and sabatia. Here you might also find *Spiranthes* orchids, as well as yellow fringed orchids. Milkwort is another colorful species here. Ferns include cinnamon and royal. Jamestown lily is locally abundant at Jamestown Island.

Most of our members not only observe native plants but also grow these treasures and are active in the conservation of plants and habitats. Many feel compelled to spread wildflowers where the public can enjoy them—in parks and along roadsides. Additionally, our members are always planting seeds for wildflower conservation in the schools, libraries, and garden clubs on the Peninsula. We look forward to continuing our activities on behalf of Virginia's native plants and we encourage all of you to join us in the cultivation, conservation, and educational projects which promote these priceless treasures.

Cynthia Long and Pat Baldwin

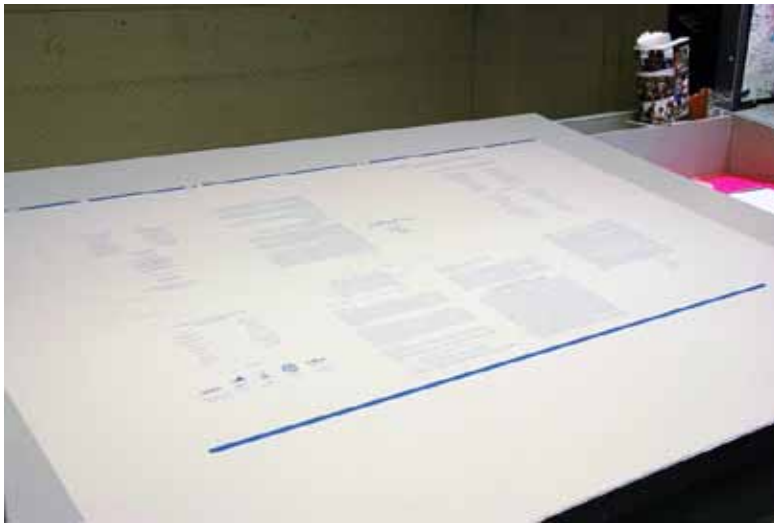
The Flora of Virginia Project

Recently we got word from **Nicky Stanton**, VNPS representative on the BOD of the Flora of Virginia Project, that **the Flora has gone to press!** Nicky also forwarded some photos from Bland Crowder taken on site at BRIT (Botanical Research Institute of Texas) Press, where the book is being printed; here are a few, with captions supplied by Bland.



Mighty Heide. One of two Heidelberg presses running 16 hours a day, side by side, to print the Flora. One prints the black-and-white signatures, two sides at once. The other prints four-color, one side at a time.

Louise Menges



November–December 2012

A color signature, straight on. In foreground is our final, Dylux proof of the section that includes the photo of Smart and group at the University of Richmond, in the History chapter, with Post-it notes sticking out that flag corrections for the printer. Note scissors (probably considered “small” in Texas). They are nothing compared to a blow to the head by a blunt copy of the *Flora of Virginia*, which will weigh **6.8 lbs.**

A full plate. This is a printing plate for an all-black, 16-page “signature,” which, when folded, will become one of 100 such sections of the Flora. This side shows a list of Flora Project board members and partners, some leadership donors, some acknowledgments, some of the introduction, and the opener of the chapter by Nancy Hugo and Donna Ware on the history of botanical exploration in Virginia.



Dust Jacket. On the cover, *Claytonia virginica*, a watercolor by Lara Call Gastinger.



Three lovely bouquets of native wildflowers graced the tables at September's annual meeting.

At top is one arranged by Cynthia Long;

center, one by Jan Newton;

bottom, a cooperative effort by Martha Smith, Phyllis Putnam, and Jan.

Photos: Jan Newton

If your renewal date is **June 30, 2012 or earlier**, this is the last issue you will receive until you renew. Contact Membership Chair **Patti Gray** at 757/645-4164 or at patriciagray67@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

Calendar

Thursday, Nov 15 6:45 pm: John Clayton Chapter meeting at the Yorktown Public Library at the intersection of Battle Road and Route 17 in Yorktown.
Our speaker is **Dr. Douglas DeBerry**, whose subject will be **"Identification of Native Grasses in the Mid-Atlantic Region."** (See Page 1)

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