

Blue Ridge Wildflower Society

A CHAPTER OF THE
VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Vol. 10, No 4

October, 1993

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- October 23** Fall Foliage at the Peaks. Meet at 8:00 A.M. at the Peaks Restaurant for breakfast or at 10:00 A.M. at the Visitor Center for our field trip. Bring a bag lunch.
- October 25** General Membership Meeting, 7:00 P.M., Center in the Square. Bobby & Frieda Toler will present a program on their trip to Alaska. A seed exchange will follow the program, so please bring any extra seeds you are willing to share.
- November 22** An Evening of Shared Memories. Members are invited to bring 5-10 of their favorite slides to show during this General Membership Meeting. A reception will follow.

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Seed Exchange

There will be a seed exchange at the October General Membership Meeting. If you have extra seeds you would like to share with other members, please bring them to the meeting. All seeds need to have the containers clearly labeled; common names are fine. Fall is a good time to sow wildflower seeds and this is an excellent opportunity to increase the variety in your or a friend's garden at no expense. If you haven't been raising wildflowers, this is a good time to try a few of the ones which are easier to grow. There will be expert advice to help in your selections.

FALL FOLIAGE AND PICNIC

DATE: October 23, 1993

TIME AND PLACE

8:00 A.M. at the Peaks Restaurant for Breakfast
or
10:00 A.M. at the Visitor Center for the Field Trip

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### **GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING**

**DATE:** October 25, 1993      **TIME:** 7:00 P.M.

**PLACE:** Fifth Floor, Center in the Square

#### **SPEAKER & PROGRAM**

Bobby & Frieda Toler — Alaska Experience

*Seed Exchange Will Follow*

*Come and Bring a Friend*



## Letter From The President

by Frank W. Coffey

It hardly seems possible that one year has passed since I took office as our Blue Ridge Chapter President. I would like to express my appreciation to all officers, our Chapter Board, and all members for their hard work, participation and support. I look forward to another year of excellent programs, good field trips, and appreciation and enjoyment of our wildflowers.

Did you know that of the some 250 species of asters growing around the world, at least 150 are natives of North America? This little tidbit of information came to me via *Hedgemaids and Fairy Candles* by Jack Sanders. This book is subtitled *The Lives and Lore of North American Wildflowers* and it is filled with interesting material about our wildflowers. Pam has ordered copies and, because of her library affiliation, it is available to our members for \$16.00. Please call her (H-703-343-8596; O-703-772-3665) to get a copy.

*Noah's Garden* by Sara Stein, subtitled *Restoring the Ecology of America's Backyards*, is a wonderful book that vividly describes what has happened to much of our wildlife habitat. Reviews of this book have been excellent.

*This book could revolutionize gardening. Sara Stein offers us a reasonable (and ultimately enjoyable) way out of our self-created wilderness.*

—Jim Wilson

Author of *Landscaping with Wildflowers* and host of PBS's "Victory Garden"

*A delightful chronicle of the unmaking of a gardener. In setting out to restore some of the original ecology to a small plot of land, Sara Stein has dug deeply into natural history, past and present, and in the process unearthed many of the origins of gardening itself.*

—Roger B. Swain

Science editor of *Horticulture*  
(cont., column 2)

## MILL MOUNTAIN GARDEN CLUB

We would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the Mill Mountain Garden Club and Betty Boxley, chairperson of the Wildflower Garden, for their gracious donation to our chapter. Through the years they have used a large number of our plants in the Garden and we, in turn, have been privileged to enjoy the results as we visit the Garden.

Both the Mill Mountain Garden Club and a number of their members have been strong supporters of our wildflower sales.

If you did not have an opportunity to visit the Garden this year, plan to do so next spring. Their plants, many of which have been labeled, span the bloom season from early spring through late fall.

## FLORA OF SIBERIA

Ruth Douglas of the Jefferson Chapter made a trip to Russia this summer and while there, studied the flora of the area. On Wednesday, November 10, at 7:30 P.M., she will present "Siberian Cousins of our Native Wildflowers," comparing their native species with ours.

The program will be at Branchlands Manor House in Charlottesville. From Route 29N, turn east onto Greenbrier Drive. Travel to the bottom of the hill and turn left onto Branchlands Drive. For additional information, contact Gay Bailey, H-804-293-8997; O- 804-979-6060.

## President's Letter

(continued)

This book is available for \$15.68 from:

Piedmont Chapter of VNPS

P. O. Box 336

The Plains, VA 22171

Please call Effie Fox at 703-347-4090 to check on availability and shipping costs.

Permission is hereby given to reprint.

Please give credit.

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## COLD MOUNTAIN FIELD TRIP

Sandra Elder

Participants on the field trip to Cold Mountain on August 7 were treated not only to the beauty of wildflowers but also the insects and birds that depend on them.

We stopped a few times along the road to admire the beautiful fields of Joe-Pye weed with a host of butterflies surrounding them. There were tiger and black swallowtails, monarchs and fritillaries. Green-headed coneflowers were numerous and their splashes of yellow were quite attractive mingled with the pink of the Joe-Pye weed. Bees were busy pollinating the blossoms of virgin's bower which was cascading over the roadside shrubs. We watched with delight as a ruby-throated hummingbird visited each flower of the jewelweed.

As the trail first begins to ascend Cold Mountain, it passes through open woods where the forest floor is carpeted with ferns: hay-scented, interrupted, Christmas, ebony spleenwort, bracken and maidenhair. Interspersed among the ferns were the showy white blooms of starry campion.

Further up the mountain the populations of vipers bugloss, butter-and-eggs and nodding wild onion have increased in recent years mainly due to the efforts of the George Washington National Forest and the Natural Bridge Appalachian Trail Club. They have cut trees and bushhogged in order to keep the top a bald. They have left select trees that provide food for wildlife. One such tree was the alternate-leaf or pagoda dogwood which presented a pretty picture with its green leaves and dark blue berries atop red stalks.

Another lovely sight we were fortunate to see was a luna moth newly emerged from its cocoon.

We identified 56 different species of flowers in bloom and 7 species of ferns. Add to those the butterflies, bird songs and beautiful mountain scenery and you have one great field trip.

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*The ignorant man marvels at the exceptional; the wise man marvels at the common; the greatest wonder of all is the regularity of nature.*

George Dana Boardman



# Extending Landscape Interest Into Winter

J. Lee Hipp

Associate Professor of Horticulture, Virginia Western Community College

In the past, many Blue Ridge Gardeners accepted fall foliage as the end to color in the home landscape. Now with more emphasis being placed on year-round color and interest in the home grounds, plants with attractive bark, fruit and foliage are extending the beauty and enjoyment of the landscape through the flower-void seasons of late fall and winter.

Any discussion of trees with beautiful bark would be incomplete without the stewartias (*Stewartia pseudocamellia* and *S. koreana*). Several years ago I met my first stewartia on a November walk through the National Arboretum in Washington. Without a single leaf, flower or fruit to decorate its branches, the tree with its cinnamon-colored bark still deserved all the praise that preceded our planned encounter. The stewartias are hardy to Zone 6, freezing out at temperatures below 0 degrees Fahrenheit.

Several birches can be used to provide exceptional bark color and texture. The river birch is one of my favorites, offering beautiful russet-tinged exfoliating bark. It prefers moist, acid soil and full sun to partial shade. Some white-bark birches to consider are cutleaf weeping birch (*Betula pendula* "Gracilis") gray birch (*B. populifolia*) and paper birch (*B. papyrifera*). The white-bark birches grow best in the cooler parts of the Blue Ridge, suffering from heat stress in areas prone to having long, hot, dry periods.

For fruit color in the landscape, most gardeners immediately think of the hollies. While the American and Chinese hollies are well known and commonly used, the blue hollies (*Ilex meserveae*) are relatively new and worthy of praise. Their large, dark-red berries contrast beautifully with the glossy blue-green foliage and purplish stems. As with other hollies, a male blue holly ("Blue Prince") is needed to ensure fruit set for the female ("Blue Princess" or "Blue Angel").

If you are looking for a fruit-bearing alternative to the hollies, try Laland firethorn (*Pyracantha coccinea* "Lalandei"). It is hardier than most pyracantha and a guaranteed bright spot in the landscape with orange-red berries hanging on into winter. The Skogsholmen bearberry cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster dammeri* "Skogsholmen") is another holly alternative that in addition to its bright red berries offers an unusually attractive growth habit for winter interest. Often categorized a ground cover, this cotoneaster displays early pendulous form, eventually developing into a carpet of evergreen creeping stems.

The final group of plants that I highly recommend for spectacular late fall interest is one that has received much press of late—the ornamental grasses. Among an endless number, here are a few suggestions for your Blue Ridge garden.

The rose fountain grass (*Pennisetum alopecuroides*) is an excellent accent plant for the perennial garden, possessing silvery rose plumes suitable for dried flower arrangements. This

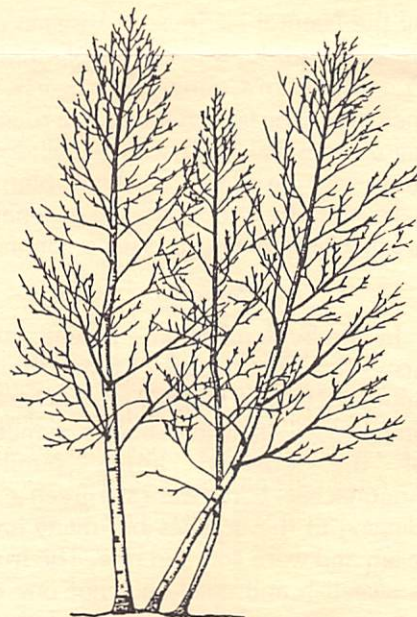
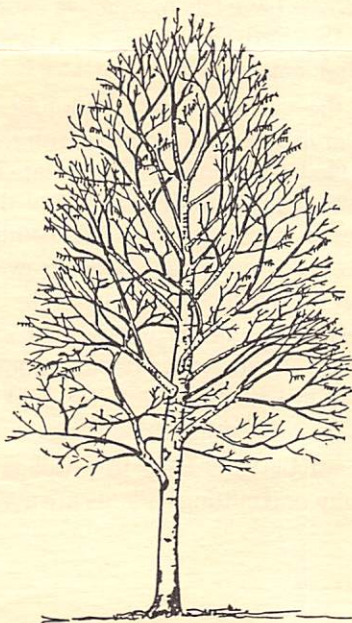
grass reaches a mature height of two feet, tolerates poor soil and prefers full sun.

Maiden grass (*Miscanthus sinensis* "Gracillimus") is a taller grass, reaching a height of four to five feet. It makes a dramatic statement when mixed in a shrub and perennial border or used for massing. The summer's rich green foliage and tall spikes of feathery white flowers take on a golden cast in winter.

Another superior ornamental grass is ribbon grass (*Phalaris arundinacea variegata picta*). Offering an impressive display of five-foot arching variegated foliage, this plant deserves specimen treatment. Unlike most ornamental grasses, ribbon grass prefers moist soil and withstands shade.

Using trees with interesting bark, shrubs with colorful berries and grasses with superb foliage and flowers can extend the beauty of your landscape well into winter.

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# Lynchburg Area Members

by Dorothy C. Bliss

At the recent Annual VNPS meeting in Manassas, I had the opportunity to visit the James Long Park in Prince William County. A two acre portion of this park, containing a wet meadow and an upland woods, has just been registered as our newest registry site. A substantial population of bottle gentian, *Gentiana clausa*, occurs in the wet meadow and curly-heads, *Clematis ochroleuca*, and stiff aster, *Aster linariifolius* are found in the uplands. The display of bottle gentian was not as showy as last year, but I have just learned that we were too early, as on October 2 there were more than 50 blooms.

Following an afternoon field trip to the Big Cut in Manassas Battlefield at an inpromptu stop in a nearby parking area, we came across a flower unknown to all of us which, on identification, proved to be blue hearts, *Buchnera americana*, a rare plant listed



by the Natural Heritage of Virginia as S1 and not known previously from Prince William County. Blue hearts, a member of the figwort family, is a rough hairy perennial herb with a spike of deep purple flowers. This plant, believed to be a root parasite, has pale green foliage that turns black on drying.

## Pawpaw

In late September on a recent walk around Otter Creek Lake, there appeared to be a bumper crop of fruits on pawpaw, *Asimina triloba*, a member of the custard apple family, Annonaceae. Some were still green and clinging to the branches but many had fallen and were soft and ripe. The fruit is sweetish and edible but not one of my favorites. This yellow to brown

fruit, technically a several seeded large berry, is sold in the markets and at various roadside stands in West Virginia.

## Witch Hazel

A familiar sight along our roadsides and stream banks is the fall-blooming shrub known as witch hazel, winterbloom or snapping alder. The latter name refers to the fact that the seeds may be forcibly expelled for distances of 20 or more feet. The alternate leaves have a scalloped margin and an uneven base and at first hide the yellow clusters of showy 4-petal flowers. During October and

November, look for these bright spots of yellow that are conspicuous against the bare branches of our other trees and shrubs. A short article on witch hazel can be found in the Fall-Winter 1993 issue of the Parkway Milepost newsletter.

## December Meeting

A special program is planned for the evening (7:30) of **Thursday, December 2**, at Randolph-Macon Woman's College. Bobby and Frieda Toler will show us their superb slides on their recent Alaskan trip with emphasis on orchids. Hope to see you there. More later.

# BEAUTYBERRY

*Callicarpa americana*

The aptly named beautyberry's vivid magenta berry clusters would be beautiful at any time of year but are especially appealing because of their appearance in October and November as the gardening year is winding down. A member of the Verbenaceae family, beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*) grows naturally in woodlands, old fields and woods edges throughout the southeastern United States. In Virginia, it grows along the coastal plain but is easy to grow in gardens throughout the state. *Callicarpa* comes from the Greek *kallos* meaning beautiful, and *karpas* for fruit.

This multi-stemmed shrub grows four to eight feet tall with a spread of about six feet. Opposite, bluntly toothed three-and-a-half to six inch long leaves are light green through the summer. Clusters of light pink to lavender tubular flowers that are about one-third inch long are borne in the leaf axils from June into August. As fall approaches, the leaves turn yellow, green berries change to an unusual shiny dark "hot pink" or magenta. The one-third inch berries are arranged in one-and-a-half to two inch clusters that encircle the stems. Berries show up best after the leaves have fallen, which is usually around mid-October. They remain attractive until the birds eat them or a hard freeze shrivels them, which can be as late as Thanksgiving.

In the garden, locate beautyberry where its berries will be most effective. It can serve as a background shrub through the summer and then be a star performer in the fall when combined with late blooming goldenrods and asters and ornamental grasses with an underplanting of the pinkish "Burgundy Glow" ajuga. The berries show up best against a background of evergreen shrubs or trees or a suitably colored fence or wall. Keep it away from colors with which it will clash such as red or orange leaves and berries.

Berry production will be best when beautyberry is grown in full sun in deep, organic-rich soil with adequate moisture. However, it is adaptable to poor soil and thrives in half-shade. It is drought tolerant after the first year or two. Cut stems back in early spring since flowers and fruit appear on new wood.

Beautyberry is easy to propagate by seed (which needs no pre-treatment) or by softwood cuttings. Plants are available by mail from several native plant nurseries.

Nancy Arrington

Prince William Wildflower Society

Wild News, November-December, 1991, Issue