

# Blue Ridge Wildflower Society

A CHAPTER OF THE  
VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Vol. 11, No. 1

January, 1994

## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- February 28** General Membership Meeting, 7:00 P.M., Center in the Square. Gary Crawford will present, "Wildflower Portraits."
- March 18** "Forests of Costa Rica" will be presented by Nancy Cowden at Randolph-Macon Woman's College, Room 225 Martin Science Building, at 7:30 P.M.
- March 26** Arcadia Field Trip. Meet at 8:00 A.M. at the Peaks of Otter Restaurant for breakfast or at 10:00 A.M. at Arcadia by the bridge over Jennings Creek on Route 614. Bring your lunch. A rich area for spring wildflowers.
- March 28** General Membership Meeting, 7:00 P.M., Center in the Square. Hugh Smith will present a program on New Zealand.
- April 9-10** Overnight trip to Roosevelt Island in the Potomac River. We'll plan to work Saturday helping clear the invading vegetation and enjoy the trails on Sunday.
- April 16** Glen Maury Park Field Trip in Buena Vista. Meet at 2:00 P.M. in the pavilion inside the park. Bring your supper. Dot Bliss, leader.
- April 22-24 & April 29-May 1** Twenty-fifth Annual Wildflower Pilgrimage by the Science Museum of Western Virginia; cosponsored by the Blue Ridge Wildflower Society. Friday evening, the 22nd, Ritchie Bell will be the special speaker. Tom Krakauer, founder of the Pilgrimage, will speak Friday the 29th.
- There will be no General Membership Meeting in April due to our involvement with the Pilgrimage.
- April 23** Earth Day at Explore Park from 10:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. BRWS will be participating.
- May 14** Tenth Annual Plant Sale. Virginia Western Community Arboretum on the campus of Virginia Western Community College, from 10:00 A.M. until 2:00 P.M. Rain or shine!
- May 21** Bottom Creek Gorge Field Trip. Details will follow.
- May 23** General Membership Meeting, 7:00 P.M., Center in the Square.
- June 11** Rhododendron Day on the Parkway. Our annual Rhododendron Day will begin with breakfast at the Peaks of Otter Restaurant at 8:00 A.M. or meet at 10:00 A.M. at the Visitor Center. Bring your lunch.
- June 18** Altavista Field Trip to our newest Registry site, recognized for its stands of Rosebay Rhododendron. Limited to 15 people. Sandra Elder, leader.

### GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

**DATE:** February 28, 1994

**TIME:** 7:00 P.M.

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

**SPEAKER:** Gary Crawford

**PROGRAM:** Wildflower Portraits

*Come and Bring a Friend*



## Letter From The President

by Frank W. Coffey

Our first board meeting of 1994 was held on Sunday afternoon, January 9th. Several new ideas for projects were discussed and a variety of interesting programs and field trips were scheduled. Please see the schedule of events in our Newsletter for particular dates and events.

Dr. Gary Crawford, a member of our Chapter, will present "Wildflower Portraits" at our February general membership meeting. Many of you viewed some of Gary's fine slides at our November, '93, meeting. Please plan to attend and bring a friend.

Our March general membership program will be presented by Dr. Hugh Smith, past president of our Chapter. His program is titled "New Zealand" and will feature nice slides and information gathered during one of Hugh and Bunny's recent trips.

This year will be the "Twenty-fifth Annual Wildflower Pilgrimage" sponsored by the Science Museum of Western Virginia. In honor of this, the Museum is sponsoring the event over two weekends, April 22, 23 & 24 and 29, 30 & May 1. As you know the Blue Ridge Wildflower Society is a co-sponsor and helps organize and lead walks during this event. Many of our members will be called upon to help in some capacity. I know all of you will be willing to help out.

April is quite busy this year. In addition to the Pilgrimage programs, we will need some chapter volunteers to man a display at Explore Park during "Earth Day Celebration" activities. If you can help, let me know at the February meeting.

Our Annual Plant Sale is scheduled for Saturday, May 14th. This year will mark the Tenth Anniversary of this annual fund-raising project; let us all work together to make it special and our most successful ever. The board has also scheduled a fall plant sale for Saturday, September 17th. This will be our "First Annual Fall Plant Sale" and we are all very excited about it. There are a number of nice plants, bulbs and seeds that could be available at this time. This sale will be in Lynchburg and will in no way take away from our very successful spring sale. You will be hearing more about this later. (cont. in col. 3)

## Peaks of Otter Field Trip

A group of nineteen members and guests met October 23, 1993, at the Peaks of Otter Visitor Center. It was a clear, crisp morning that only became better as the day progressed with a cloudless blue sky and warm sunshine.

Dorothy Bliss was the leader and she first explained how leaves change color. During the growing season leaves are green because of the presence of pigments known as chlorophyll. It uses the sun to manufacture the plant's food. As fall approaches, the supply of chlorophyll decreases and other pigments present in the leaf reveal the yellow colors. A sunny day followed by a cool night concentrates the sugar in the leaf cells from which the red pigments are manufactured. The browns reflect the presence of tannins in the cells and the death of the leaf.

It was essentially a tree and fruiting structure identification field trip. The first to be mentioned was the sourwood at the front of the Visitor Center. Along the trail to the Johnson Farm were Jonathan apples to eat and wild grapes for the tasting. The Jack-in-the-Pulpit and doll's-eye berries were beautiful. The dogwood, deciduous holly and spicebush were laden with their red berries. The purplish-red berries of coralberry were ripe and some of the cones of the cucumber magnolia had fallen.

There was some discussion about the spicebush. Some plants had berries and some did not. This was cause to ask the question, "Are they dioecious?" The Flora of West Virginia lists them as polygamous-dioecious which means that the stamens and pistils may occur in the same flower or the two kinds of flowers may be borne on separate plants.

It was mentioned that striped maple has a tendency to change sex from year to year depending on the amount of energy it stores

in the growing season. Research is being conducted at the Mountain Lake Biological Station on this subject.

Three ferns were identified. They were grape fern, marginal shield and the Christmas fern which is evergreen.

The old fall favorite, witch hazel, was in full bloom and would remain so for several more weeks. Along the creek that bordered the open field (the former site of Hotel Mons), winterberry or black alder displayed clusters of shiny bright red berries on nearly bare branches.

\* \* \* \* \*

A video, "Fall Color, Trees of the Eastern Forests," by Ritchie Bell and Anne H. Lindsey is available at Parkway Visitor Centers. This video details the changes from the uniform green of the summer forest to the yellows, brilliant reds and browns of our autumn woods.

## Moneta Garden Club

We would like to express our appreciation to the Moneta Garden Club for their gracious donation to our Chapter.

Janet Hill, cochair of the Garden Club's Landscape Committee, felt the entrance to Smith Mountain Lake State Park would benefit from more flowers. Tom Witowski, Chief Ranger for the Park, felt both the entrance and Visitor Center needed landscaping. Janet and Tom discussed ideas and the result was that the Moneta Garden Club took on the project of providing a wild flower garden at the Park.

Peggy Stancer, a member of BRWS and the Bedford Garden Club, put Janet in touch with Sam & Dora Lee Ellington. Once that happened, things started falling into place.

The result of this cooperative effort is a garden of neatly labeled native plants which is not only attractive but can also be used as a teaching tool.

## President's Letter

(Continued)

The VNPS Annual State Meeting will be in Charlottesville this year and because of a big football weekend, it had to be moved to the fourth weekend in September, the 23rd, 24th and 25th.

You will be hearing more about other projects later. Please continue to make our Chapter great through your participation and support. Always feel free to make suggestions to officers, board members and, of course, at meetings.

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Please give credit.

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# WILD OR PROPAGATED? WE NEED ANSWERS

Faith Thompson Campbell, Ph.D.

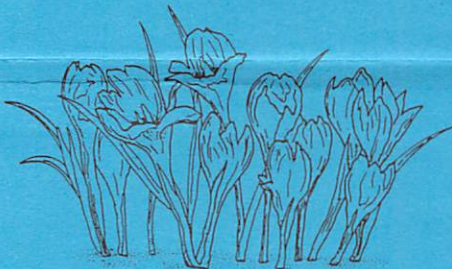
Senior Research Associate, Natural Resources Defense Council

Environmentally concerned gardeners wish to avoid buying plants that have been dug from the wild, but governmental regulations make it difficult to determine plant origins.

Because of the lack of regulation of plant collecting at the state or federal level, we don't know exactly how many wild-collected plants are sold by U.S. mail-order nurseries and roadside garden centers. However, when all types of plants are considered, the total number taken from the wild may well reach several million plants each year.

Unfortunately, the Federal Trade Commission's *Guides to the Nursery Industry* actually encourage nurseries to label plants taken from the wild as "nursery grown"—as long as they are maintained for as little as one growing season.

The length of time wild-collected plants remain in a nursery—a single growing season or several years—is irrelevant to the impact of the original collection on wild populations. Over-collection can threaten the survival of some native plant species or make them much more difficult to find in the wild.



To correct this situation, nine environmental organizations, nurseries and a professional nursery association, petitioned the FTC in 1991 to amend the *Guides*: Natural Resources Defense Council, California Native Plant Society, Environmental Defense Fund, Garden Club of America, Mt. Cuba Center for the Study of Piedmont Flora, National Audubon Society, Native Plant Society of Oregon, New England

Wildflower Society, TRAF-FIC (USA), Native Gardens of Greenback, Tennessee, Niche Gardens Nursery of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, Montrose Nursery of Hillsboro, North Carolina and the American Association of Nurserymen.

The Petition asks that the guidelines be amended to:

- \* Eliminate confusion and possible deception about the original source of the plant material

- \* Make guidelines conform with standards applied to international law—and the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITIES)

- \* Eliminate the unfair competitive advantage enjoyed by nurseries that sell relatively cheap wild-collected plants instead of more expensive propagated ones.

The FTC has not acted on the petition, perhaps because staffers don't believe that there's strong enough interest in learning the true origin of plants offered for sale. Environmentalists and gardeners must convince them otherwise.

To some extent, voluntary agreements have helped fill the void. The Dutch bulb industry now labels bulbs as wild-collected or propagated and the Mailorder Association of Nurserymen has adopted a labeling code of ethics. But neither agreement can be legally enforced in the United States, so American dealers remain free to make misleading claims about the origin of the bulbs and wildflowers they sell.

In the mid-1980's, U.S. dealers annually imported between 100,000 and 150,000 wild-dug cyclamen. In 1987 alone, the U.S. imported 4 million snowdrop bulbs, probably 70 percent of which had been wild-collected in

Turkey. By 1991, U.S. imports of wild-collected snowdrops had dropped another 45 percent—to 387,000 bulbs; but imports of wild-collected cyclamen rose 80 percent.

It's clear that efforts to educate the public not to buy wild-collected plants are working. If you think it's time that the U.S. Government helped rather than hindered gardener's efforts to find out if plants have been propagated or dug from the wild, write to the FTC and urge action.

*From Wildflower Notebook July/Aug. 1993  
National Wildflower Research Center*

## Thank You

Last spring, one of our members, Patrick O'Hara, requested wildflower seeds for distribution to the Cork [Ireland] Garden Club. Their climate is much like ours so hopefully the success rate will be high.

In appreciation, Patrick has sent a donation to our Blue Ridge Chapter and we would like to thank him for this gift.

More information about Patrick can be found in this Newsletter in the article "Meet Our Overseas Member."

## In Memoriam

On January 10, 1994, William Grady Spiegel, Jr., passed away. He and his wife, Peggy, were co-owners of For the Birds on the Roanoke Market.

He was an active member of the Roanoke Valley Bird Club and has been a member of the BRWS for a number of years.

Our sympathy is extended to Peggy and other members of his family.



## Lynchburg Area Members

by Dorothy C. Bliss

### Witch Hazel

Recently There have been several articles on witch hazel, *Hamamelis virginiana*, a fall flowering shrub that is conspicuous in our mountains in October and November. I was intrigued by an article published in the *Providence Journal* that came to my attention while I was visiting relatives in Rhode Island. More than 100 years ago, the Indians used an extract of this shrub's bark as a tonic and a treatment for everything from ulcers to bug bites. Today it is still used as an aftershave and as an astringent and skin cleanser. In addition, many companies use it in lotions and eye care products. With the current interest in natural and herbal remedies, the demand for these products has increased by more than ten percent each year.

The witch hazel shrubs are cut to the ground and the branches, twigs and bark are put through a wood chipper, then steam is used to remove the oils before they are mixed with alcohol. The shrubs regenerate and in 7 to 10 years can be cut again. Only two companies are known to manufacture these products from witch hazel, the American Distilling and Manufacturing Company and the E. E. Dickinson Company, both in Connecticut.

### Invasives

"Exotic plants are choking out Native species and contributing to soil erosion." Sound familiar? This was a subtitle to another article in the same *Providence Journal*. Some of the plants that were highlighted were autumn olive, purple loosestrife, Oriental bittersweet, Japanese barberry, Japanese knotweed and multiflora rose. Even Norway maple, a popular shade tree, grows in such thick stands in New England, its dense shade crowds out all ground cover, making the soil subject to erosion. These are the same introduced plants that are invasive in our area.

### Spring Comes Early to Florida

While visiting the Kanapaha Botanic Gardens west of Gainesville, we encountered a large population of *Trillium*

*maculatum*, a deep-red flowered species with the three petals nearly upright. A magnificent sight.

### A Very Special Place

A Rosebay Rhododendron site in Campbell county has just been rescued from destruction by a proposed sewer line. Following an article in the Lynchburg News by Thelma Dalmas and some active campaigning by Dr. Gwynn Ramsey and myself, the site has been saved from this intrusion. A description of some of the unique plants in this area, which is our latest VNPS Registry Site, will appear in our next Newsletter.

### Two Early Spring Events

Our Lynchburg Spring Meeting will be held in Room 225, Martin Science Building at Randolph-Macon Woman's College on **Friday, March 18** at 7:30 P.M. Dr. Nancy Cowden will present a program on the "Forests of Costa Rica."

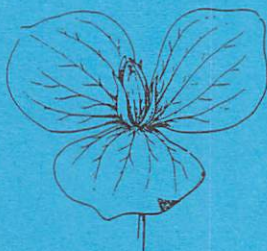
On **Saturday, April 16**, at 2:00 P.M., let's get together for a wildflower walk and picnic supper in Glen Maury Park in Buena Vista. We'll meet at the large pavilion inside the park then walk some of the trails at the last picnic area.

## Gardening For Wildlife

VNPS and the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden will cosponsor a workshop **Saturday, March 19**, at the University of Richmond on "Gardening For Wildlife."

Topics will include restoring habitats, natural landscaping, wetland gardening and attracting wildlife while maintaining a formal garden.

Members will receive information from VNPS about this program. Participation is limited and is on a first-come basis.



## Meet Our Overseas Member

Dora Lee Ellington

Patrick O'Hara, a member of the BRWS, lives in the tiny village of Currabinny on the coast of Ireland's County Cork and is well known all over the world for his botanical sculptures. His truly one-of-a-kind, life-size sculptures are all based on his own personal observations in the wild and are dedicated to the successful conservation of our natural heritage.

In March of 1990 the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden in Richmond had the opening of "The Collection of Virginia Wildflower Porcelain Sculptures" at Bloemendaal House. These were done by Patrick and portray a range of habitats within Virginia and introduce visitors to the wildflowers and butterflies to be seen in their natural environment in the State's parks and wild places.

In April 1989, Patrick was visiting in our area searching for wildflowers native to this region to sketch, measure and photograph. After successfully finding wildflowers suitable for his research, he returned to Roanoke to spend the night. The BRWS was holding their April meeting that evening and Patrick was invited to attend. He joined BRWS that night and has continued his membership.

Upon returning to Ireland, he made the lovely piece called "Blue Ridge Fire" which is one of five pieces in the collection at Bloemendaal. The VNPS board members who met there last December were privileged to see the collection and our President, Frank Coffey, proudly proclaimed Patrick as one of our members.

In the spring of '93, Patrick requested some seeds (or the source of wildflower seeds) native to Virginia to be given to members of the Cork Garden Club following a presentation he was making comparing Virginia's wildflowers with those of Ireland. Our chapter sent 25 packets of seeds last fall which he received and distributed to the Garden Club members.

Patrick wrote a nice letter thanking us for the seeds and enclosing a generous donation for our chapter.

We wish the members of the Cork Garden Club success with our Virginia wildflower seeds. Again, thank you, Patrick O'Hara.



# Winter is the Time For Sowing

*Janie Bryan, Seed Technician, North Carolina Botanical Garden*

Many of you have collected some seeds on pleasant walks outdoors in the crisp fall air. Some may have received a gift of seeds from a friend's garden. Perhaps you ordered seeds from North Carolina Botanical Garden's seed list for members. Whatever their source, as you sort through your seeds now, think "sow." The easiest—and probably most successful—strategy is to sow them outdoors...now.

With little work and a few materials you can make an outdoor seedbed. At the Garden, we have beds that are 8' long x 3' wide x 1' deep. But they can be any size or shape—whatever fits your space and needs. Whatever the size of your seedbed, here are a few tips:

- \* Fill your seedbed with a commercial seed-sowing mix or other loose garden soil or compost. (If using compost, watch for weed seeds!) The sowing medium needs to be able to hold some moisture but also drain well.

- \* Broadcast the seeds over the surface and sprinkle a thin cover of loose soil over them. Recommended cover depth is 2-3 times the diameter of the seed.

- \* Mulch with a very thin layer of composted leaves.

- \* You may want to cover the entire bed with chicken wire or hardware cloth to keep the squirrels and cats out.

Many seeds require a cold, moist treatment to break dormancy and begin germination. Sowing seeds outdoors in December exposes them to cold and moisture, readying them to germinate in the spring when the temperature warms up. It is much simpler to let Mother Nature handle this process than to try remembering to take seedflats in and out of the refrigerator at the right times.

Please note that very small seeds, such as cardinal flower and foamflower, are less suited to this method due to

the splash factor of heavy rains. Try sowing them in flats indoors in early spring.



Sowing seeds outdoors in winter is a very simple way to handle perennial and winter annual seeds. Save your plant lights and indoor sunny windows for propagating annuals and vegetables this spring, or for the tiny perennial seeds. And enjoy the satisfaction of watching Nature's efficiency at propagating her own!

*Illustration by Sandra Brooks  
Staff Editor, NCBG*

*From November-December, 1993  
North Carolina Botanical Garden  
Newsletter.*

## Oh, To Have Too Many!!

### Looking Back Over 1993

*Dora Lee Ellington*

Having a wildflower garden is fun and how thrilling to watch your plants grow and begin to increase. However, after a few years you find your flowers are outgrowing all the space you have available. What are you to do with this abundance of plants? The following are a few things our Chapter members did with their surplus wildflowers in 1993.

- \* Provided wildflowers for our annual plant sale. There was a very nice selection of wildflowers which were soon sold.

- \* Wildflowers were donated to the Mill Mountain Garden Club for use in their lovely Wildflower Garden, located on Mill Mountain, which is open to the public.

- \* Donated and planted wildflowers in the Community Arboretum area designated for a wildflower garden. This is located at Virginia Western Community College. We will be adding more wildflowers this year.

- \* Provided some wildflower plants to Fishburn Elementary School and helped the Principal, teachers, and pupils plant them. In 1992 this school received the Governor's Environmental Excellence Award. They are very involved in many environmental projects in their school and on their large school grounds.

- \* Donated wildflowers to the Moneta Garden Club whose members have planted wildflower gardens around the

Visitor Center at Smith Mountain Lake State Park.

- \* Sent over a pound of purple coneflower seed plus ironweed seeds to Dr. Robert Lyons at Virginia Tech for research.

- \* Sent a variety of seeds to Patrick O'Hara, our member in Ireland. He is hoping to establish larger populations of some plants common here but uncommon there.

Another highlight in growing wildflowers is the pleasure you have in sharing plants with others.

*[Ed note. Most of these plants came from Sam & Dora Lee's garden which is an outstanding example of how much can be done on an ordinary city lot.]*



## Containers to Use

There are endless possibilities for planting containers—a coffee can, peat pot, Jiffy flat, flower pot, cheese box, milk carton, plastic tray or other holder, wood florist flat. Whatever you use should be clean, have room for at least two inches of soil, and have good drainage in the bottom.

## Seed Starting Materials

### North Platte Mix

1 part Sphagnum Moss, Screened  
2 parts Perlite

2 parts Vermiculite

Mix and moisten before sowing seeds.  
Seedlings will need gentle feeding with liquid fertilizer.

### John Innes Mix

2 parts Pasteurized Loam

1 part Peat Moss

1 part Coarse Sand

To each bushel, mix in

1 1/2 oz. 20% Superphosphate

3/4 oz. Hydrated Builders' Lime

### All Purpose Mix

1 part Pasteurized Soil

1 part Peat Moss

1 part Sand

An easy standby for simple seeds like lettuce, cabbage.

### Straight Sphagnum Moss

Use sieved form. Seedlings will need gentle liquid feeding. Transplant seedlings within 4-6 weeks or roots will form a dense sod.

### Straight Vermiculite

Use horticultural grade. Seedlings will need gentle liquid feeding. Do not reuse vermiculite.

### Soil With Topping

To container half filled with garden soil, add layer of half and half peat moss and sand. Do not use beach sand. Plant seeds in the topping. Being fairly free of fungus spores, it cuts down damp-off.



# SEED STARTING

## What To Do About Damping Off

Damping off is a fungus disease at soil surface that causes seedlings to die. To control, use a sterile or pasteurized starting medium or drench soil with a special liquid soil drench fungicide. Provide seedlings with good light and air circulation.

## SIX STEPS TO SEED STARTING

### Step 1

Fill planter to within 1/2" of rim. Thump to settle medium.



### Step 2

Use just one kind of seeds to a planter. Sow as directed on packet. Label as you go with name, date, source.



### Step 3

Set pot in water until surface is moist. Cover with clear plastic or insert in plastic bag.



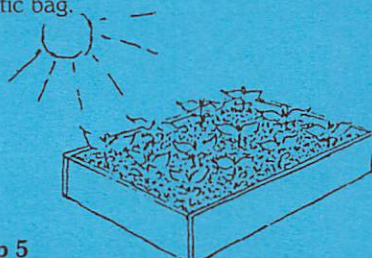
### Step 4

Transplant seedlings when they have second set of leaves. Space 1 1/2" to 2" apart in larger container. Keep shaded two days after transplanting.



### Step 5

Harden off toward time to plant out. This means exposing gradually to fresh air and bright sun to minimize shock. Easiest way is to set plants outdoors on mild days.



## How To Pasteurize Soil

Dump good humusy garden soil into a clay pot that will fit into your deepest kettle. Put a rack in bottom; add water, keeping level below bottom of pot. Cover kettle and place on stove. Bring water to a boil. Check soil temperature with a meat thermometer and when it reaches 180 degrees keep it at that point for 10 minutes. Have teakettle of hot water at hand to replace that which boils away. Do not over-steam. Dump soil onto a clean surface to cool.

A cruder but simpler method is to place a covered pan of moist soil (such as a small roaster pan) in the oven along with a small potato. When the potato is baked, the soil will be pasteurized. Dump it onto clean paper to cool.

This is always a smelly operation but the odor may be reduced if the pan of soil is placed in an oven cooking bag (the kind used for roasting meats and poultry). Use as directed.

### Step 6

Finally, transplant to ground. Water-in with mild liquid fertilizer (by container directions). Ask your county extension office for local safe frost-free date. Shade transplants for first few days.

