



# Blue Ridge Wildflower Society

A CHAPTER OF THE  
VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Vol. 11, No. 4

October, 1994

## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- October 16** Fall Foliage at Staton Creek Falls. Meet at 2:00 P.M. at Ham's Store at the intersection of Route 60 and Coffeytown Road in Oronoco. This is in Amherst County and can be reached by taking the Route 60 East exit from the Blue Ridge Parkway, near milepost 47. Bring your picnic supper. Frank Coffey, coordinator. A board meeting will follow this event.
- October 24** General Membership Meeting, 7:00 P.M., Center in the Square. The program will be "Special Habitats in the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests" presented by Steve Croy. A seed exchange will follow the program, so please bring any extra seeds you have and are willing to share.
- November 28** An Evening of Shared Memories. Members are invited to bring 5-10 of their favorite slides to show the group during this General Membership Meeting. A reception will follow.
- December 2** Friday evening in Martin Science Building on Randolph-Macon Woman's College campus in Lynchburg, 7:30 P.M., Butch Kelly will present a slide program, "From the Headwaters of the James River to the Bay."

\* \* \* \* \*

## 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 sufficient. 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 have not been growing wildflowers, this is a good time to try some of the more easily grown varieties.

### FALL FOLIAGE AND PICNIC

**DATE:** October 16, 1994

#### TIME AND PLACE

2:00 P.M. at Staton Creek Falls



### GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

**DATE:** October 24, 1994

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

**PROGRAM:** Special Habitats in the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests

**SPEAKER:** Steve Croy

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

*Seed Exchange Will Follow*

*Come and Bring a Friend*

## Letter From The President

by Frank W. Coffey

I hope all of you have had the opportunity to enjoy an early morning walk recently. The cool fall-like nights have made the early mornings especially enjoyable. Native plants like Sumac, Dogwood, Sourwood and Black Gum are showing their beautiful crimson foliage. These things remind me that fall is just around the corner and it is almost time to install our new BRWS officers.

It hardly seems possible that my two year term as President of the Blue Ridge Wildflower Society has almost come to an end. It has been an honor serving as your President and I will always treasure our many enjoyable experiences together. I want to thank our officers, board members and entire membership for always being so supportive and giving so freely of their time, talents and resources. The tenure for our new slate of chapter officers will begin after the October meeting and I know that incoming President Butch Kelly and his officers and board can count on support from our wonderful membership.

Beginning in November, Bob Eubank and I will be assuming new responsibilities in our Virginia Native Plant Society. I hope that many of our chapter members can become more involved with wildflowers at the state level. VNPS and all of its chapters offer the wildflower enthusiast many great opportunities. We all are fortunate to live in a state like Virginia with so much habitat diversity. Let's all get more involved.

Permission is hereby given to reprint.

Please give credit.

Frank W. Coffey, President

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## Autumn Along the Outer Banks of North Carolina

Dorothy C. Bliss

As fall approaches, the reds and purples of Dogwoods, Sumacs and Red Maples break the expanse of summer green that clothes our mountainsides. The yellows of sunflowers and goldenrods and purples of asters liven the highways. In mid-September at the Outer Banks, North Carolina, where I am writing this article, the evergreen Wax-myrtle, *Myrica cerifera*, is laden with clusters of whitish-gray berries reminding me of candle-making years ago in New England. There in late summer I gathered the waxy fruits of the deciduous Bayberry, *Myrica pensylvanica*, and made fragrant bayberry candles by repeatedly dipping a wick in the molten wax. In the gravelly soil along roads and sandy beaches of our northeastern coast the northern Bayberry grows prolifically. Both shrubs occur in the Coastal Plain of Virginia but the southern Wax-myrtle is more common.

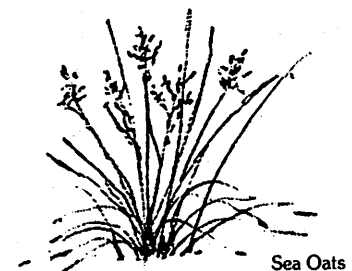
Some of the autumn flowers found on the sand dunes and roadsides of the Outer Banks are the scattered blossoms of *Gaillardia pulchella*, considered an escape from cultivation, and the yellow of Goldenrods, *Solidago* spp., the Duney Aster, *Heterotheca gossypina*, and Camphorweed, *H. subaxillaris*. A late blooming yucca, *Yucca filamentosa*, is much in evidence with very narrow panicles of creamy white flowers. Normally, this yucca blooms in May and June, so why now?

Sea Oats and American Beach Grass, both resistant to wind and salt spray, are rooted in the shoreline dunes. On the bare sand are small clumps of the flat jointed pads of the Prickly Pear Cactus, *Opuntia drummondii*, the yellow flowers of June now ripened to the purplish-red edible pear-shaped fruits.

The taller shrubs and evergreen trees make a green backdrop for these fall flowers and fruits that dot the sandy hills. Live Oaks, Persimmon with its still unripe fruits, American Holly, Red Cedar and Loblolly Pine fill the hollows and the large compound leaves and

huge clusters of tiny ripening fruits of Hercules Club, *Aralia spinosa* form conspicuous masses in the foreground. Grape vines and Virginia Creeper clamber over the ground vegetation and reach up to the canopy.

Although some of these species differ from the familiar ones of our mountains, there is a similarity in the gradual slowing of summer growth and the appearance of fall flowers and ripening of fruits.



Sea Oats

**They Came!  
They Saw!  
They Bought!**

Sandra Elder

\$1,577.85 worth to be exact. Our first fall plant sale in Lynchburg was a big success.

This would not have been possible without the help of everyone who donated plants and/or offered assistance at the sale.

There were a few minor glitches. Like the hill between the parking lot and the pavilion that seemed to get longer and steeper with each trip. Then there was the confusion with our plant sale sign and the balloons. It seems after we put up our sign at an intersection, someone came along and put up balloons leading the way to a birthday party. Some people looking for us followed the balloons to the party.

It was wonderful to see so many people show an interest in our sale, especially since there were many other activities taking place in Lynchburg on that same day.

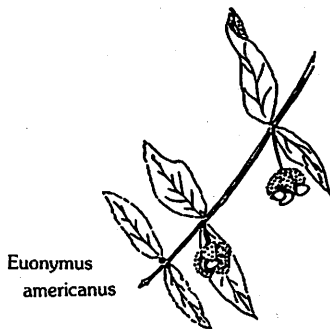
Thanks to everyone who made this sale a success.

# *Euonymus americanus* Strawberry Bush

Marion Blois Lobstein, Associate Professor, Biology, NVCC

One of the most colorful native shrubs to set fruit in the fall is the strawberry bush or hearts-a-bursting (or bustin', if one's grammar slips). In September and October, *Euonymus americanus* sets bright red fruits that resemble a strawberry or a heart with three seeds bursting out of it. It is a member of the Celastraceae, the Stafftree family, and is found in damp rich woods and on stream banks. Its range is from New York state south to Florida and west to Texas and Illinois. The genus *Euonymus* is from Greek "eu" meaning "good" and "onoma" meaning "name" and the species *americanus*, of course, means "American."

The strawberry bush blooms in May and into June. One to three flowers form on pedicles at leaf axils. The one-third inch wide flowers have 5 sepals, 5 yellow-green (sometimes with a touch of purple) petals, 5 stamens, and a fleshy disk-like pistil. The nectaries at the base of the pistil secrete copious nectar, and the flowers give off a sweet fragrance that attracts short-tongued bees and flies that serve as pollinators. The fruits that form by September or October are red capsules just less than an inch in diameter. These warty capsules split open to reveal three oval orange seeds which are often eaten and dispersed by birds.



## Strawberry Bush in the Garden

Nancy Arrington

Even in these days when much emphasis is put on "all season" plants, *Euonymus americanus* is worth growing for its autumn fruit alone. Pinkish-red warty pods opening to reveal bright orange seeds are sure to elicit a curious "What's that?" from anyone seeing it for the first time. A heavily fruited shrub is truly spectacular. Almost as colorful are its common names, strawberry bush and hearts-a-bursting, referring to the shape of the fruit and the way it opens to expose the seeds.

Strawberry bush grows in woodlands from New York to Illinois and south to Florida and Texas. It occurs throughout Virginia except for a few mountainous counties where a more northern species, *E. atropurpureus*, is found. It is a widely branching 3-6 foot shrub with green stems and branches and narrow lanceolate opposite leaves. Small clusters of greenish flowers in May and June are followed in September and October by the colorful fruit.

Like many other natives, strawberry bush responds well to cultivation. In its native habitat, where it competes with trees and other shrubs for moisture and nutrients it tends

Strawberry bush is usually a straggly shrub that can be up to six feet tall. The stems are four-sided and are green, which means they are photosynthetic, an unusual condition for a woody plant. Opposite bright green leaves are one to three inches long, one-half to one inch wide, finely toothed, smooth, and lanceolate to elliptical.

This native shrub was used by American Indians for a variety of purposes such as an antiseptic, expectorant, astringent, diuretic and laxative as well as to reduce fever, to induce vomiting, to treat female ailments and venereal disease, to relieve sinus, even to treat dandruff and scalp problems. The powdered bark or the root are the plant parts usually used; however, the seeds can be used as a strong laxative.

*Euonymus atropurpureus*, known as wahoo or burning bush, is another member of this genus found in our area, although much less commonly. *Celastrus scandens*, native climbing bittersweet, and *C. orbiculatus*, Asiatic bittersweet, a naturalized species from the Orient, are also found in our area. All of these family members have interesting fruits that split open in a manner similar to that of the strawberry bush.

This fall, you may have already missed the bright red fruits of strawberry bush, but you can find its green, woody stems this winter. Once you have located a site for strawberry bush, next year enjoy the understated beauty of its flowers and then watch the handsome fruits develop in late summer and early fall.

to be sparse and lanky with some stems even trailing along the ground. When given a deeply prepared, humus-rich soil, adequate moisture, and morning sun or light shade, it becomes denser and more attractive, and produces a more abundant crop of fruit. However, one of its attributes is its ability to flower and fruit in fairly heavy shade.

Strawberry bush adds fall color to a naturalistic woodland garden and is lovely with the late blooming heart-leaved aster (*A. cordifolius*). A more structured autumn and winter garden with morning sun might feature it with other late bloomers including ornamental grasses, calico aster (*A. laterifolius*), 'Autumn Joy' sedum and for contrast, the intense blue flowers of leadwort (*Ceratostigma plumbaginoides*). Strawberry bush's green stems would add color through the winter.

Strawberry bush can be propagated by cuttings or division, or by seed sown after collection in the fall. Plants are available from mail order nurseries specializing in native plants and occasionally at our [Prince William] spring plant sale.

(From *Wild News*, Prince William Wildflower Society, November-December, 1990.)

# Lynchburg Area Members

by Dorothy C. Bliss

## A Botanic Garden

I begin this column with the announcement of the fulfillment of a long held dream, a Botanic Garden at Randolph-Macon Woman's College. Last winter the hillside adjacent to Martin Science Building on the campus was cleared for the establishment of a wildflower garden. The tangle of weeds, English Ivy and clumps of overgrown Autumn Olive trees — all invasives — were eradicated in the spring and compost, topsoil and shredded mulch now cover the area.

The two biology pools enclosed by low rock walls and shaded by a large Sweet Gum, two Ash trees and a Ginkgo tree are included in the area. A multi-trunked China Fir (exotic) and several flowering Dogwoods also remain. Two main walkways will lead in to the garden, one from the sidewalk beside the library and the other from the Norfolk Avenue entrance while smaller paths that wander through some of the plantings will be added later.

Throughout the garden, the emphasis will be on native plants and especially those that flower in spring and autumn. Some shrubs will be selected for fruits and seeds that are attractive to birds as well as nectar-bearing plants that entice butterflies and hummingbirds. A representative variety of plant families and genera will be included for the study of the botany classes. Students in several biology classes are already planning to take an active role in the development and maintenance of the garden.

It is envisioned that the terrace above the upper slope will be planted with native Rhododendrons, Azaleas, Mountain Laurel, Hollies and *Pieris floribunda* if available. In the damp areas surrounding the lower pond, ferns, Cardinal flowers and other wetland plants should do well. Plants of especial interest such as *Oconee Bells*, *Shortia galacifolia*, and *Franklinia alatamaha*, will also be included.

The first plants are expected to be in place this October and as the garden develops it is hoped that it will be an

oasis of beauty on the campus that will entice students and visitors to wander along the paths and pause to enjoy those examples of our native wildflowers.

## Notes on Upcoming Events

I am looking forward to seeing many of you at our **Fall Outing and Picnic** at Staton Creek Falls on Sunday afternoon, October 16. Autumn colors should be at their peak. Details on cover.

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An **Evening Meeting** will be held in Lynchburg at Randolph-Macon in Martin Science Building on Friday, December 2, at 7:30 P.M. The program will be "From the Headwaters of the James River to the Bay" by Butch Kelly.

## 1995-96 Officers

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## Spreading the Word

Pat Polentz

This year's focus topic for the 7th Annual Master Gardeners Advanced Training at Virginia Tech June 23-26 was gardening with natives.

For the social mixer Tuesday evening, the Blue Ridge Wildflower Society had a display table with Bobby Toler's beautiful photographs of wildflowers.

The handouts included the recent VNPS *Bulletin* with the inserts on both Hedgerows and invasive exotics and the lists of local and mail order nurseries that sell native plants. Many picked up the handouts. Hopefully, some of the 122 participants will become new members of the Virginia Native Plant Society and participate in the activities of their local chapters.

## Smith Mountain Lake Picnic

Evelyn Walke

Those of you who weren't at the picnic August 28th really missed a most enjoyable time. Vi and Al Sheridan have a lovely lake home nestled into a cove at Smith Mountain Lake. They've worked hard at landscaping the grounds, making a pond for water lilies and beds for a variety of flowers and shrubs. There are also wooded undeveloped areas. We enjoyed touring our surroundings and socializing with those present before the delicious potluck picnic.

Al grilled the hamburgers to perfection and Vi added all of the trimmings including lemonade and iced tea which really hit the spot. We couldn't have had a better variety of potluck dishes.

All of us went home at dusk pleasantly full, happy and relaxed after an afternoon spent with good wildflower friends.



*Euonymus atropurpureus*

## Board of Directors

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