



Blue Ridge Wildflower Society

A CHAPTER OF THE
VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Vol. 12, No. 1

January, 1995

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- February 11 Winter Tree Identification Workshop. Join us at 1:00 P.M. in Explore Park as we learn to identify trees by their bark, buds and growth patterns. A hand lens and field guide such as Peterson's will be helpful. Inclement weather cancels this event. If in doubt, contact Butch Kelly, leader, at 703-384-7429.
- February 27 General Membership Meeting, 7:00 P.M., Center in the Square. Tim Williams will present a program entitled "Virginia's Unique Shale Barrens".
- March 17 Friday Evening Program at Randolph-Macon Woman's College in Lynchburg. Meet at 7:30 P.M., Martin Science Building, as Dorothy Bliss gives a slide presentation entitled "The Great Smoky Mountains, a Botanist's Paradise".
- March 18 Botanical Gardens Workshop Day, 1:30-4:30 P.M., Randolph-Macon Woman's College. Meet on Norfolk Avenue next to the greenhouse. See the Lynchburg Area column on page 4.
- March 26 Buffalo Creek Field Trip. Expect trout lilies and hepatica; perhaps some bluebells will be in bloom. Meet at 1:30 P.M. at the Nature Trail which is two miles east of Evington and just beyond the Bedford-Campbell County lines. It is one of the sites on our VNPS Registry.
- March 27 General Membership Meeting, 7:00 P.M., Center in the Square. Emily Owen will present "Bent Mountain, My Love". There will be a board meeting at 5:30 P.M.
- April 1 Botanical Gardens Workshop Day, 1:30-4:30 P.M., Randolph-Macon Woman's College. Meet on Norfolk Avenue next to the greenhouse.
- April 9 Staton Creek Falls Field Trip. Meet at 1:00 P.M. at Ham's Store at the intersection of Route 60 and Coffeytown Road in Oronoco (Amherst County). This 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.
- April 15 Dry Run Branch Field Trip in Catawba. Meet at 1:00 P.M. at the Homeplace (Restaurant) on Route 311 and we will carpool from there. After the field trip, we'll plan to have supper at the Homeplace. Bring footwear appropriate for wet areas. Butch Kelly, leader.
- April 21 Westvaco will have an 11th Anniversary Celebration in honor of the Buffalo Creek Nature Trail. Contact them for more information.
- April 28-30 Twenty-sixth Annual Wildflower Pilgrimage by the Science Museum of Western Virginia. Cosponsored by the Blue Ridge Wildflower Society.
- May 5-7 Overnight Field Trip to the Great Smoky Mountains. Information will be forthcoming as details are confirmed.
- May 13 Eleventh 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. Members may begin purchasing at 9:00 A.M. Rain or shine!
- May 14 Ladieslipper Walk at Bearwallow Gap followed by a picnic. Meet at 2:00 P.M. at milepost 90.9 on the Blue Ridge Parkway.
- May 22 General Membership Meeting, 7:00 P.M., Center in the Square. Bill Opengari will present a program on the James River.
- June 10 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 join us at 10:00 the Visitor Center. Bring your lunch.

Letter From The President

by Richard "Butch" Kelly

Winter is really here with ice on the trees and a chilly wind whipping around our necks. While this is true, the miracle of life is stirring in the soil. Before we know it, the woods and meadows will be green and sprinkled with color.

I am looking forward to serving all of you as president. This is the time of year we must plan carefully for a successful and fun-filled year.

Last year we accomplished a lot. Our programs were of superb quality. Our field trips were diverse and yielded some pleasant surprises.

Let's make this year even better. The other officers and I need help from all members. We will be asking you to help with our fund raisers, wildflower pilgrimage, leading walks, etc. We also need help with programs and field trip ideas.

It is my hope our programs and field trips will all be overcrowded with enthusiastic botanists.

Wildlife Guidebooks Available

Want to know what you can see where and when? If so, VNPS has the answer in *Virginia Wildlife Viewing Guide*. This softcover book, from Falcon Press, contains information gathered from a number of Virginia wildlife, environmental and conservation agencies. It is available for \$8.00 (which includes shipping) from Catharine Tucker, 302 Danray Drive, Richmond, Virginia, 23227.

Permission is hereby given to reprint.

Please give credit.

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Notes on Alaskan Spring Flora

Dorothy C. Bliss

In my mid-June trip this past summer, many of the Alaskan spring flowers were just emerging from the long winter cold. There was much that was the same concerning the flora and much that was different. Most of the genera were similar to those in Virginia but the species were frequently unfamiliar. For example, Bluebells, also called Languid Lady and Chiming Bells, *Mertensia paniculata*, were frequently encountered in Southeastern Alaska and the Yukon. This species, however, had fewer blooms and was not so robust as our Virginia Bluebells, *M. virginiana*. Different species of Goats Beard, Yarrow, Pyrola, Mountain Ash and many others were common.



Mertensia paniculata

Among similar species that occur in Alaska and Virginia were several Lycopodiums and ferns. In wet woods, the Ostrich Fern, *Matteucia struthiopteris*, covers extensive areas. Its fiddleheads are edible and prized by the native Alaskans. Although I was aware that horsetail was world-wide in distribution (Eurasian), I was surprised to find large populations edging highways and disturbed areas. Among the poisonous plants were the familiar False Hellebore, *Veratrum viride*, and Baneberry, *Actaea rubra*. As in Virginia, the wild strawberry, *Fragaria virginiana*, was found in meadows and fields scattered among other wildflowers and grasses. The berries are eaten raw and made into jams and jellies while the young leaves and flower buds are used in salads. With its bright yellow flowers, one to one and a half inches across, Shrubby Cinquefoil or Tundra Rose, *Potentilla fruticosa*, found both in coastal and central Alaska and frequently included in ornamental plantings, was very attractive wherever it occurred.

An interesting species frequenting roadsides and open forests was Eskimo Potato, *Hedysarum alpinum*. The pink to purple pea-shaped flowers are produced in one-sided racemes. The large root is cooked or eaten raw by Alaskans, but the edibility of another species in this genus is considered questionable.

One of the most beautiful flowers that carpeted woodlands was the Dwarf Cornel, *Cornus canadensis*, a subshrub with four white bracts that surround the central cluster of greenish flowers. This species is found in three counties in Virginia, in West Virginia and northward. However, in spite of diligent searching it has not been located in the Smoky Mountains which would seem to offer suitable habitat. The flowers are followed by a cluster of shiny red berries which are questionably edible. It is reported that the Pilgrims made a pudding from the fruits but some people complained of stomach upsets after eating large quantities. Another Dwarf Cornel species displaying dark purple flowers occurs not only across Canada and in Alaska, but also in Eurasia.

The depressed trailing heath, Common Bearberry or Kinnikinnick formed extensive mats on the forest floor and open slopes. It was especially attractive with its shiny evergreen leaves and small pinkish-white urn-shaped flowers. A variety of this plant occurs as far south as Massachusetts. I wonder if it would thrive in a shaded area in Randolph-Macon Woman's College's Botanic Garden?

The above are only a few of the interesting species I encountered this past June from Ketchikan to Denali. Alaska beckons me to return and explore further its world of forest and tundra.



Hedysarum alpinum

Propagation of Woody Plants

Bob Eubank

Many books have been written about propagation and most of their authors will advise that you use whatever hormones they use for encouraging rooting. I have used several hormones in the past but now I use none and have just as good or better results in some cases. I'm sure most hormones probably will help to encourage rooting; however, I believe that all you really need for success is a chamber with high humidity, warm ground temperature, proper soil mixture and patience.

I built a cold frame which was four feet high, six feet long and four feet wide and covered it with two layers of four mil opaque plastic. I turned the plastic inside at the bottom on all sides except the front and placed bricks around the inside walls to hold the plastic down. Bricks were placed on the outside of the front of the cold frame allowing entrance for watering and checking on the plants. I cut a small hole in the top and toward the back of the unit to allow venting if the temperature got very high and covered the hole with a flat stone on very cold nights. The bricks on the inside collected heat during the day and radiated heat at night.

The soil for propagating woody stems should be moist and well drained. Two years ago I used a mixture of half peat and half pine soil for propagating roots but last year I switched to a mixture of two parts sand and one part peat and have had better results. This mixture was recommended

by Bill Fontenot who is past president of the Louisiana Native Plant Society.

Bill's cold frame consists of a three-gallon black plastic pot three-quarters of the way filled with his sand/peat mix so that his cuttings won't stick out of the pot very high. He covers the whole thing with an opaque plastic grocery bag (Kroger bag) which fits just right. He can have as many cold frames as he wishes and can also move them wherever he wants.

This pot/bag method works for me in the summer months but I still prefer a larger cold frame for year-round use.

Before I stick the cuttings into the soil mixture in containers, I prepare them by using approximately six to ten inches of the current year's growth. I cut them just below a bud or leaf scar and double wound, taking care not to remove the bud or leaf scar. Then I make small holes in the soil and stick the fresh cuttings into them. After filling the containers, I water well and put the pot into the cold frame in indirect light.

The optimum time for propagating cuttings is June and July with roots usually developing in two to eight weeks for most plants I have tried. Cuttings taken in October and November may root before very cold weather and develop good roots during the winter; however, I will root plants whenever I can acquire the specimens I have been wanting.

Gwynn W. Ramsey et al. Award Recipients

Dr. Gwynn W. Ramsey, Charles H. Leys, Robert A. S. Wright, Douglas A. Coleman, Aubrey O. Neas and Charles E. Stevens are the recipients of the 4th annual Richard and Minnie Windler Award for their paper entitled, "Vascular Flora of the James River Gorge Watersheds in the Central Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia," which appeared in *Castanea* 58 (4):260-300.

Using standard systematic and floristic techniques over a period of fifteen seasons of field work, the team documented 963 taxa representing 468 genera and 119 families from collections made in the 3,585 hectare research area. It was determined that this area of exceptional diversity contained about one third of the plant species found in Virginia, and over one third of the genera that occur in the Blue Ridge Mountain Physiographic Province. Eleven taxa were discovered in the James River Gorge which were localized, uncommon or rare in Virginia.

The Windler Award recognizes the best systematic botany paper published in *Castanea* the preceding year. Dr. Gary Dillard announced the award at the 1994 annual meeting of the Southern Appalachian Botanical Society.

This year's awardees each receive framed certificates, and Ramsey, the senior author, receives a monetary award in recognition of this valued contribution to our science.

Castanea, The Journal of the Southern Appalachian Botanical Society September 1994, Vol. 59, No. 3

WINTER TREE IDENTIFICATION

DATE: February 11, 1995

TIME: 1:00 P.M.

PLACE: Explore Park

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

DATE: February 27, 1995

TIME: 7:00 P.M.

PROGRAM: Virginia's Unique Shale Barrens

SPEAKER: Tim Williams

PLACE: Fifth Floor, Center in the Square

Lynchburg Area Members

by Dorothy C. Bliss

Spring! It is almost here and many of us are thinking of gardening and excursions in search of spring wild flowers. Several short trips are scheduled near Lynchburg and I hope many of you will take advantage of these strolls to refresh your mind and spirit, to learn more about our rich flora and to gain an appreciation and inspiration from our nearby mountains and woods.

December Meeting

Our Lynchburg meeting on December 2nd brought out more than 30 members and friends. The program necessitated a last-minute change and, consequently, we wandered far afield with slides of my recent Alaskan and Yukon trip. Some of the slides shown that evening are mentioned in the article that appears elsewhere in this bulletin. Denali National Park with Mt. McKinley towering in the distance not only is a naturalist's paradise but an awe inspiring sight to all who witness its majesty. I would love to return for a longer stay in the park. Maybe someday.

Randolph-Macon Woman's College Botanic Garden

Since the article concerning the R-M.W.C. Botanic Garden appeared in our October Newsletter, the garden planting has proceeded well with dozens of native Catawba and Carolina Rhododendron, *Kalmia* and *Leucothoe* on the upper hillside and many herbaceous plants below. A few special trees and shrubs including *Franklinia*, *Itea* (Sweetpire) and *Chionanthes* (Fringe Tree) have been added. In an article on the garden found in the R-M.W.C. Alumnae Bulletin for January, I mention a wish list that may be procured from the Biology Department at R-M.W.C. (Nancy Cowden) or from me (322 Sumpter Street, Lynchburg, VA 24503). Copies will also be available at our two chapter meetings in March.

Two Botanic Garden Workshop Days have been set aside this spring, March 18 and April 1, 1:30-4:30 P.M. I hope that several of you will meet me at the garden (Norfolk Avenue next to the greenhouse) where we can learn more about the present plantings, help

with needed work and offer constructive suggestions for future development. Perhaps some of my excitement will be contagious.

Westvaco Celebration

On April 21, Westvaco is planning its 11th year celebration of the Buffalo Creek Nature Trail. Since this is one of our chapter's three registry sites as well as one of our favorite spring walks, many of you will want to come out to support Westvaco in their dedication and effort through the years that have made this area and these trails available to the public.

Great Smoky Mountains Wildflower Trip

May 5-6-7

Those of you who participated in this trip in previous years and those who have never had the pleasure will want to join the group on May 5-6-7 in the Smokies. The wealth of spring flowers that await us is unparalleled in eastern North America. Don't miss it. Details will be available at the March meetings.

Spring Meeting

Our Lynchburg Spring Meeting will be held on the evening of March 17 at 7:30 in Martin Science Building at R-M.W.C. I will give a slide presentation entitled "The Great Smoky Mountains, a Botanist's Paradise".

If you have any questions about our busy spring schedule do not hesitate to write or call me at 804-845-5665.

MEMBERSHIP DUES

Our current membership dues are as follows:

Individual	\$ 15.00
Family	25.00
Patron	50.00
Student	10.00
Sustaining	100.00
Life	400.00
Associate (Group)	40.00
Associates need to designate a delegate.	

Please check your mailing label for current expiration date and renew at the appropriate time. If you wish to make an additional donation, please indicate if it is for the State treasury or for our Blue Ridge Chapter. All undesignated donations go to VNPS. Checks should be made payable to VNPS and sent to P. O. Box 844, Annandale, VA 22003.

Fall Foliage Walk

Quintin C. McClellan

This year's fall foliage walk was a well attended, color filled extravaganza. A finer day could not have been chosen. Everyone, 13 in all, met at Ham's Store on Route 60 just a few miles east of the Blue Ridge Parkway. From there, a convoy of curious flower enthusiasts meandered up and down State Road 634 then forked over to 633 where we parked our vehicles at Staton Creek Falls.

Although the majority of plants were winding down for the year and preparing for winter, we were treated to a glorious witch hazel, *Hamamelis virginiana*, in full bloom. Also in bloom at the crest of the falls was a large patch of forget-me-nots, *Myosotis laxa*.

At first glance, where forest and roadside meet, one does not see much in the way of floral diversity. And maybe so since we often do not expect to see much diversity. But a second glance would reveal that in fact, the opposite is true. The forest edge with its protruding rocks and hemlock roots was home to a fine assortment of some of the more primitive plants like mosses. Also, at ground level it became evident that partridge berry, *Mitchella repens*, was quite successful on the cool north slope of the mountain. The forest floor was adorned by its fruit in anticipation of the Christmas holiday.

Over 30 species of wild flowers were recognized, representing more than 20 families. Some of the less common species found included bluebead lily, *Clintonia borealis*, which is typical of high elevation coniferous forests, and gooseberry, *Ribes rotundifolium*, which is also found in high elevation woodlands. Many of the plants were new to the participants and great appreciation goes out to those experts who helped identify many of the flowers.

Our BRWS Identity Obscured

Con conversationally we refer to ourselves by a number of names — BRWS, BRC, Blue Ridge Native Plant Society. However, there have been several occasions recently when we have been listed as sponsoring or participating in various events and our name has been misstated to such a degree we might seem to be another organization.

Let's help establish our identity with nonmembers by the use of our correct title—Blue Ridge Wildflower Society.