

Blue Ridge Wildflower Society

A CHAPTER OF THE
VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Vol. 12, No. 2

April, 1995

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- 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 28-30** Twenty-sixth Annual Wildflower Pilgrimage by the Science Museum of Western Virginia. Cosponsored by the Blue Ridge Wildflower Society. On Friday evening, Phil Shelton will be presenting "High Elevation Communities" at Virginia Western Community College. For a schedule of events, contact the Science Museum at 703-342-5727.
- There will be no General Membership Meeting in April due to our involvement with the Pilgrimage.
- May 5-7** Great Smoky Mountains Weekend Trip. Please see both the article on The Great Smoky Mountains and lodging information elsewhere in this *Newsletter*.
- 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** Ladyslipper 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. Bobby Toler will present a program on Newfoundland and Nova Scotia.
- 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 at the Visitor Center. Bring your lunch.
- June 17** Alta Vista Field Trip for Rosebay Rhododendron at a VNPS Registry site. Details will follow.
- July 8-10** Cranberry Glades Weekend Field Trip. Tentatively scheduled; details will follow.
- July 15** Cold Mountain Field Trip. Details will follow.

DRY RUN BRANCH FIELD TRIP

DATE: April 15, 1995 **TIME:** 1:00 P.M.

PLACE: Homeplace Restaurant, Route 311

TWENTY-SIXTH ANNUAL WILDFLOWER PILGRIMAGE

PROGRAM: High Elevation Communities

SPEAKER: Phil Shelton

PLACE: Whitman Auditorium, Virginia Western Community College

A Reception Will Follow Come and Bring a Friend

Letter From The President

by Richard "Butch" Kelly

I'm sure all are pleased to see an early spring. With good blooms of trout lily, hepatica, coltsfoot, etc., at Arcadia, it must be real and not a mirage.

We are off to a good start this year. On February 11, we had a winter tree identification walk. Twenty one people attended. Hopefully, people realize we can enjoy plants even when they are not in full bloom.

The Spring Wildflower Pilgrimage is being planned. We will need lots of leaders. The next weekend many of us will journey to the Great Smoky Mountains. Both of these events are exciting but so are the many other trips we have planned. Mark your calendars and enjoy the beauty and majesty of spring.

On May 13, we will have our spring plant sale. If you have plants, bring them. If you don't, come on out and buy some plants and help in many other ways. We need all the help we can get.

Scholarships Awarded

Two students were honored at our March General Membership Meeting as recipients of our BRWS Scholarships.

Michael Donahue is a student at Virginia Western Community College working toward a degree in biology. He is a self-taught naturalist and lives in the Roanoke area. Many of you know Mike from his involvement with our local bird club.

James Houk is from the Back Creek/Bent Mountain area. He, too, is a student at Virginia Western and is working toward a degree in horticulture with an emphasis on landscape design.

Permission is hereby given to reprint.

Please give credit.

Richard J. "Butch" Kelly, President
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P. O. Box 20385
Roanoke, VA 24018

Annual Spring Plant Sale

Our Eleventh Annual Plant Sale is scheduled for Saturday, May 13, at the Community Arboretum at Virginia Western Community College. The sale is from 10:00 A.M. until 2:00 P.M., but Blue Ridge Chapter members may be purchasing at 9:00 A.M.

Now is the time to begin potting your plants. They need three to four weeks to become established before the sale. As you thin or divide your garden plantings, be thinking of what you might like to share for our sale. If you need pots or have questions, contact Rich Crites, 703-774-4518, or Paul Cowins, 804-239-4884.

All plants need to be at the Arboretum no later than 8:30 A.M. **PLEASE HAVE THEM LABELED.**

Although taxonomic names are preferable, they are not necessary. However, please at least have the common names.

This is an excellent opportunity to not only share what you have but also to purchase plants for yourself and for friends.

Remember, our sale takes place rain or shine, so don't let cloudy skies or a sprinkle deter you from attending or from bringing your plants.

Your help is needed, whether donating plants, helping with arranging and pricing prior to the sale or helping people make their selections and carry those selections to their vehicles during the sale. **Can we count on you?**

The Plant Puzzle

Neal Fletcher

Can you identify these wildflowers? Unless you think you recognize the description of the plants, then use the keys found in a wildflower guide such as *Newcomb's Wildflower Guide*. Once you think you know what the plants are, then look for the answers elsewhere in this issue.

Mystery Plant Number 1

Blooming from April to June, this low growing plant has yellow daisy-like solitary heads of flowers on stalks 3 to 6 inches tall. There are usually 5 rays of petal-like flowers and these are toothed at the tip. The center of the "flower" is made of many disc flowers. The flower heads are about one inch across. The plants are hairy with opposite long-stemmed (petioled) leaves. The leaves are ovate (broader at the bottom end) to oblong; the edges have rounded teeth. The plant can act as a ground cover.

Mystery Plant Number 2

This plant is not a native but came from Europe with the colonists. It is an herb with a pungent watery sap. It has cross-shaped regular, perfect flowers about 1/4 inch across. There are 4 deciduous sepals, 4 white petals that start from the receptacle below the ovary. The petals are not attached to the ovary nor to each other. There are 2 pistils (carpels) and 6 stamens in two lengths. Two are shorter and begin deeper in the blossom.

The seed pod (silique) is an elongated cylinder held upright. The pod is two-parted (2 locular) with a thin membrane (septum) separating the halves. There are many seeds.

The compound leaves are alternate with 3 to 11 entire leaflets. The terminal leaflet is largest and is nearly round. With us, this plant can bloom from April to October. Where it grows is part of the puzzle.

Good luck!

(Answer on page 4)

The Great Smoky Mountains

A Botanist's Paradise

Dorothy C. Bliss

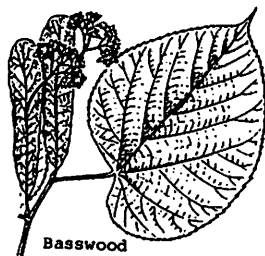
The program given in Lynchburg on March 17 to an audience of nearly 40 attempted to show in words and slides the grandeur of the Great Smoky Mountains and some of the variety and abundance of spring flowers found there. The Park, which lies half in Tennessee and half in North Carolina, was authorized by Congress in 1926 and formally dedicated by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1940. The term Smoky Mountains probably refers to the smoke-like haze and low lying clouds that hang over the mountains.

There are many reasons for the diversity and richness of species in this region. The mountains are very old and have never been glaciated and thus plants have had thousands of years to develop. There is an elevational difference from around 1500 feet to over 6600 feet which results in temperatures that are 10 to 12 degrees cooler on higher slopes. Also, north facing slopes are cooler than the south and southwestern facing slopes. In addition, the rainfall increases with elevation and may reach over 90 inches a year on Clingman's Dome, 6642 feet, the highest peak in the Park. These and other factors have resulted in diverse habitats and their consequent special plant and animal communities.

Some of the communities that were illustrated were the dry oak and oak-pine forests, the rich cove hardwood forests, the former spruce-fir and fir forests of the highest elevations, the beech gaps and the heath and grassy balds.

Fraser fir, *Abies fraseri*, an endemic of the Southern Appalachians, has virtually disappeared from the high elevation spruce-fir and fir forests. The fir trees weakened by air pollution and

acid rain have nearly all succumbed to the invasion of the woolly adelgid. This former magnificent forest that capped the highest peaks in the Smokies has been replaced by dead snags. The future is so dim for the regrowth of this canopy that the park service has considered establishing stands of this tree in the Rockies or Great Lakes regions.



Basswood

The most diverse forest type is the Cove Hardwoods found in sheltered areas at mid-slope. Among the canopy species are magnolias, tulip poplar, buckeye, silverbell, basswood, etc. Many of these trees are of record size. The forest floor is moist with a wealth of spring wildflowers and ferns. It is here that one finds trilliums, rosy bells, creeping phlox, fringed phacelia, showy orchis, fairy bells and many, many others. These are the richest forests of North America and of the world exclusive of the tropics.

On the steep crags and sharp ridges, Heath Balds, Laurel Slicks or Hells have developed. There is no timberline in the Southern Appalachians and it has been theorized that the absence of trees in these areas may be due to periodic fires, windfall or landslides. In early summer, these balds present a magnificent display of Catawba rhododendron, mountain laurel, doghobble and other heaths. One of the most easily accessible Heath Balds is at Alum Cove Bluffs.

The Grassy Balds on the other hand, occur on more level or rounded mountain tops around 5000 feet in elevation. Here the dominant plants are grasses, sedges and other herbaceous

plants. The most spectacular of these is Gregory's Bald reached via a 5-mile trail from Cades Cove. In mid-June, the brilliant floral display of a hybrid population of azaleas (*Rhododendron calendulaceum*, *R. viscosum* and *R. arborescens*) that have penetrated this grassy area is breathtaking. The variation in color from white to yellow to orange to red is almost unbelievable. Grazing may have been an important factor in maintaining these open areas and in future years with the exclusion of cattle, there may be further evidence of invasion by woody species.

I hope you will agree with me that the Great Smoky Mountains are a botanist's paradise.

Wintergreen Wildflower Symposium

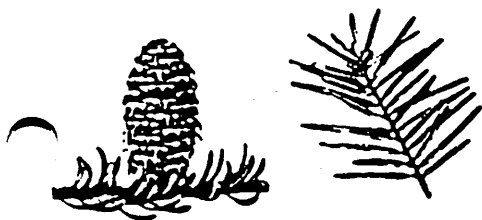
The Annual Spring Wildflower Symposium at Wintergreen Resort will be May 12-14 and will continue their recurring theme of offering something for every wildflower enthusiast.

The Friday evening program will feature a lecture by Cinder Staunton on "Thomas Jefferson as a Naturalist" and a lecture by Dr. Stanwyn Shetler on "Botanical Adventures in the Northwest Passage."

There are programs on photography taught by Hal Horwitz and sketching taught by Barbara Stewart. There are bird walks plus walks and lectures on mosses and ferns, mushrooms, shrubs, forests and on alpine plants. Dr. Jim Duke will present a slide-lecture, "Aromathermatics: Medicinal Plants" as well as one on edibles and medicinals. Caren Caljouw will present a slide-lecture "Fire in the Virginia Landscape: Its History and Impact on Wildflower Ecology."

The Jefferson Chapter of VNPS will have volunteers teaching field identification techniques.

For information, contact Stephanie Allen at Wintergreen, 804-325-8169.



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Lynchburg Area Members

by Dorothy C. Bliss

Spring was ushered in today, March 20, 1995, and with its arrival we look forward to many Blue Ridge Wildflower Society great field trips and programs that will help us appreciate and enjoy the rich flora of our mountains. Already I have noted buds of blood root, columbine and creeping phlox that will be in full bloom in my garden this week. The bluebells displayed a few early flowers a week ago. The white or pale pink of shadbush dots the mountain sides to be followed soon by the masses of magenta-colored flowers of redbud.

Two events of this past week in Lynchburg brought members and friends together for a preview of the scheduled field trip to the Great Smoky Mountains on May 5 to 7 and a workshop in the Botanic Garden at Randolph-Macon Woman's College on March 18. (See the article on The Great Smoky Mountains on page 3 of this Newsletter.)

R-M.W.C. Botanic Garden

On a beautiful Saturday afternoon nine hardy workers gathered at the site of the R-M.W.C. Botanic Garden for our first workshop. Several hours of diligent work resulted in the removal of untold clumps of field garlic, *Allium vineale* (an offensive exotic from Europe) and several species of chickweeds. The pile of compost was moved from the garden to near the greenhouse. Discussion on projected design for the garden resulted in some excellent suggestions which will be helpful in our future planning. My thanks to everyone who made this first garden workshop a great success!

On our next workshop, we hope the pile of silt loam will also be moved which will free up the rest of the area for planting. Most of the evergreens set out last fall appear to be doing well and the herbaceous early spring flowers are poking up their leaves and buds. An article on the garden and a wish list were available at the Roanoke meeting in March. If some of you wish to donate plants to the garden this spring, just call me when you would like to bring them (804-845-5665).

The Two Fawn Lilies

An article in the Naturalist Club News of Martinsville by Bob Tuggle reminded me again of the confusion between two species, *Erythronium americanum* and *E. umbilicatum*. The pointed ovary of *E. americanum* or Northern trout lily and the indented ovary of *E. umbilicatum* or Southern trout lily plus the observation that the fruit of the latter usually bends to the ground and the flower appears earlier are among the distinguishing characteristics between the two species. Both trout lilies are recorded as occurring over much of Virginia in the *Atlas of the Virginia Flora III*, but the Southern trout lily is not recognized by Fernald in *Gray's Manual of Botany* nor in the early edition of the *Flora of West Virginia*.

If any fawn lilies are in bloom or in fruit when you observe them in the field would you inspect them closely and let me know the species identified and its location? Thank you.

In Appreciation

We would like to offer a very special THANK YOU to the ladies who provide refreshments, usually homemade, for our General Membership Meetings. Bunny Smith and Evelyn Walke, aided by Carol Whiteside and Vi Sheridan, do a terrific job.

We are appreciative of the time and labor you so generously give for us.

In Memoriam

On March 24, 1995, Carl D. Cress, Jr. of Lynchburg, passed away.

As a plant enthusiast and an active member of the BRWS, he had many interesting and unusual plants in his gardens.

In addition to being an architect, Carl was very active in community affairs.

Our sympathy is extended to his family.

Great Smoky Mountains Weekend Field Trip

A weekend field trip is planned to the Great Smoky Mountains for May 5 to 7.

Johnson's Inn in Gatlinburg, TN, is holding a block of rooms for us at a discount rate. To reserve your room (1 to 4 people per room), contact the Inn at 615-436-4881 or 800-842-1930 and ask for Mike.

Reservations, transportation, etc. are on an individual basis. Some people plan to go a day or two earlier or stay an extra day or two.

There is one major street in downtown Gatlinburg; the traffic lights are clearly numbered and used as directional references. To reach the Inn, turn south at Light #6. Johnson's will be the first motel on the left after turning.

Answer to The Plant Puzzle

The beautiful plant described in puzzle number 1 on page 2 is *Chrysogonum virginianum*, Green and Gold.

The second mystery plant, though far less showy but quite tasty, is *Nasturtium officinale*, Watercress.

Did you recognize the descriptions or were you able to key them out correctly?

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 nondesignated donations go to VNPS. Checks should be made payable to VNPS and sent to P. O. Box 844, Annandale, VA 22003.