

Blue Ridge Wildflower Society

A CHAPTER OF THE
VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Vol. 19, No. 4

October, 2002

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

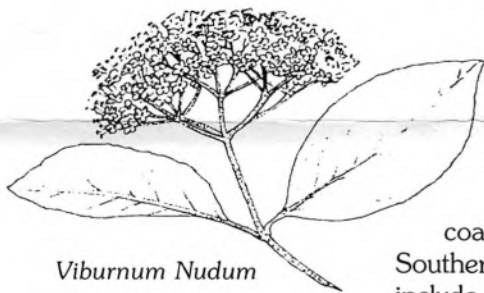
Oct. 28 **General Membership Meeting,** 7:00 p.m., Center in the Square.
Mike Leahy with the Division of Natural Heritage will be our speaker.
We encourage you to come and bring a friend!

Nov. 23 **Lynchburg Evening of Memories.** Bring a few of your favorite slides or photos for the group to enjoy. Meet at 7:30 p.m., Room 225, Martin Science Building, Randolph-Macon. Come and bring a friend. Dot Bliss, 434-845-5665.

Nov. 25 **An Evening of Shared Memories.** Bring 5 to 10 of your favorite photos or slides or a short video from the past year for us to share. A seed exchange will follow. Bring a friend and meet at 7:00 p.m., Center in the Square.

Viburnum Attracts Birds

Bob Eubank



Viburnum Nudum

Smooth witherod (*Viburnum nudum*) with its waxy deeply lustrous wine colored leaves and abundant damson blue fruit will make your wildlife garden the choice spot for birds and birders to visit during October and November.

Viburnum nudum is a deciduous shrub native from Connecticut down the east coast of Florida and as far west as Kentucky, Arkansas, and Texas. It is often called Southern witherod because of its range. Besides smooth witherod, other common names include possum haw viburnum and shining viburnum (due to the waxy leaves). Smooth witherod is the common name of choice today but can present a problem when shopping for this plant because a related species, *Viburnum cassinoides*, is commonly known today as just witherod. (*V. cassinoides* was once called wild raisin [berries look like raisins] and known as Northern witherod because it ranges from Newfoundland to Ontario and south to Delaware through Alabama, and into the region of the Great Lakes). When shopping for smooth witherod always ask for *Viburnum nudum*.

Both species are called witherod because they have supple wand-like branches that were used in earlier times for basketwork and caning. Although both species are beautiful and attract many birds, *Viburnum nudum*'s vase-shape and waxier leaves make it much more ornamental than *V. cassinoides*. *Viburnum nudum* 'winterthur,' discovered by the late Hal Bruce of Winterthur Gardens, is a superior variety and is the one most often sold at garden centers.

Viburnum nudum grows to about twelve feet under cultivation with rich waxy dark green leaves during the summer which become a wine red color in the fall. The berries begin as green/white in the summer then turn a salmon color before finally becoming blue/black in the fall when they are relished by bluebirds, cardinals, mockingbirds, robins, and cedar waxwing. People can also eat the berries - if they can beat the birds to them as they ripen.

President's Letter

Julie Alexander

If you missed September's meeting, you missed a wonderful program. Lee Hipp of Virginia Western Community College presented a program updating us on the Arboretum, Greenhouse, and Natural Science Center. Projects of interest to Blue Ridge Wildflower Society members are renovations to the wildflower area and a sensory garden. Allen Austin will be helping with changes to the native plant area at the arboretum and any volunteer help would be appreciated. If you think you can help, please contact Allen.

A new area called a "sensory" garden is planned for the space between the greenhouse and the parking lot. This is a garden area that appeals to all the senses. It is designed to allow those who are visually impaired (as well as others) to fully appreciate the garden experience. The garden will include gates, benches, a stone wall, a water feature, and a sculpture. It will include small trees, shrubs, perennials and annuals as well as some native vines on trellises. Everything in the garden is intended to create a full sensory experience for the visitor. Work on the garden will begin soon, but they are still accepting donations for it.

Finally, just a word of farewell since this is my last article as president of the Blue Ridge Wildflower Society. I have enjoyed serving you for the last two years. I can safely say that I have learned far more than I have taught. A couple of times, I was frustrated and came close to quitting but everyone was so nice, I just couldn't. So thank you for your support and encouragement.

Permission is hereby given to reprint original material. Please credit author, if named, and source.

Julie Alexander, *President*
(540) 427-0117

Pamela M. Wieringo, *Editor*
(540) 343-8596

P.O. Box 20385 • Roanoke, VA 24018



butterflies feasting on the common milkweed - even better, take a field guide and try to identify them.

Butterflies

Wildflowering is even better when you go to an area where there are plants that the butterflies especially like.

Bent Mountain is a good spot. First there is a meadow behind the post office. Turn on Tinsley Road where there are many plants beside the road and a pull-off to really enjoy the meadow. Go to the top of Poor Mountain past the TV towers for more wonderful butterfly plants.

Route 311 is good and at Paint Bank, turn on Route 600. Just ride and enjoy a lot of common roadside wildflowers.

Thistle, ironweed, cardinal flower and joe-pye weed are only a few of the late summer flowers that the butterflies like. Anywhere you go, be sure to stop and count the

Please read the following information about the Bond Referendum that will be on the ballot this year. If you are interested in seeing plants and special habitats this information should get you fired up. Please, if you support it talk to all your friends and get behind it. Protection of land and habitats protects native plants and makes for a healthier Virginia.

by Butch Kelly

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA PARKS AND NATURAL AREAS BOND MAJOR POINTS

Overview

Election Day: Tuesday, November 5, 2002

- On Election Day, Nov. 5, 2002, Virginians will vote on a \$119 million Virginia Parks and Natural Areas bond referendum.
- If approved, funds will be used to buy three new state parks, more land for 11 existing parks, 10 new natural area preserves and additions to eight existing preserves. Money will also be used for specific, much-needed construction, improvement and repair projects throughout Virginia's 34 state parks. Bond funds will not be used for operating costs.
- There are no tax increases associated with this bond. The annual payback is so small a fraction of state revenues that no tax increase is necessary to make bond payments, which will take place over many years. Current real estate prices offer the chance to cost-effectively acquire land from willing sellers only.
- Our state park system is considered the nation's best run despite ranking 50th in percentage of state budget spent on parks and 49th in per capita state park spending. Failure to approve the bond would hurt our parks' status as among the finest. Severe shoreline erosion threatens several parks. Passage of the bond would enable staff to redirect time now spent maintaining aging infrastructure to enhancing the visitor's experience at the park.
- State biologists have identified 1,450 critical natural areas. Only 36 have been dedicated Natural Area Preserves. Money from the bond will help protect additional natural areas.
- Park visitors, nearly 40 percent from outside the state, contributed \$144 million to the state's economy in 2001. Bond money would help stimulate our still sluggish, post-9/11 economy, particularly in rural areas.
- Voter approval of this bond will
 - **Protect more of Virginia's unique and threatened land resources for future parks and natural area preserves**
 - **Improve recreational offerings throughout Virginia, allowing families to spend time together in a healthy, natural setting**
 - **Stimulate our post-9/11 economy**

Enjoying the Blue Ridge Parkway

Frieda Toler

On a lovely day in early June, Dora Lee Ellington, Esther Atkinson and I spent a day on the Blue Ridge Parkway.

The concept of the Blue Ridge Parkway began in 1933 during the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Ground was broken 9-11-1935 at the Virginia-North Carolina border and in 1987 the "missing link", Linn Cove Viaduct, was completed. It is 470 miles long and was America's first scenic Parkway. It is an example of landscape management at its very best.

We left Roanoke early because we knew there would be a lot to see. Just before entering the Parkway from Route 460, Read Mountain is visible. Today efforts are being made to save the upper slopes from development. We stopped briefly at Harvey's Knob, MP 95.3, to see if there were any interesting birds overhead. Two dedicated bird club members were there and assured us it was a quiet day. We knew the best of our day was ahead of us, so we wished them "good birding" and drove to our next stop.

The view of the Great Valley is a very special place for Sam and Dora Lee. It is here that you can look over the valleys from both sides of the Parkway. We were excited about the spectacular views and the large number of trees, shrubs and wildflowers we counted - 34 in all, including plants of pink lady's slipper that were not in bloom, firepink, New Jersey tea and Chestnut in bloom.

Spreading dogbane was especially pretty along the Parkway. We passed Powell's Gap, MP 89.1 but it was not easy to do since that is a wonderful area for wildflowers. We decided to save that trip for another day.

The Peaks of Otter, MP 85.6 is always a "must stop". Sharp Top Mountain looms over Lake Abbott, named for Stanley Abbott, the first landscape Architect for the Parkway. The Peaks form the headwaters for Otter Creek.

We stopped at Floyds Field which is just a few miles past the Peaks. We were especially interested in the large twayblade, *Liparis lilifolia*. The road had been scraped so that dirt and gravel covered a spot where we normally see them but they were growing just beyond the pile of dirt. Squarerooot and striped maple were also in bloom.

Then on to Onion Mountain Overlook, MP 79.7. The Catawba rhododendron and mountain laurel were past their peak of bloom but they were beautiful. We ate our lunch and chatted about what we had seen. Peanut butter & jelly sandwiches even taste better when shared with good friends and on such a great day.

As we rode past Thunder Ridge, MP 74.7 we talked about how thick the mayapple leaves were in the wooded area and that there were not as many large-flowered trillium. Read "Where Have All The Trillium Gone" by Dorothy Bliss in the July 2002 issue of the Blue Ridge Wildflower Society Newsletter.

We left the Parkway at Petite's Gap, MP 71.0. Originally John Poteet settled at the foot of the mountain. Over the years, the name has had various spellings until today it has become Petite. Route 501 winds through Glasgow, Arnolds Valley and Cave Mountain Lake. We were surprised to see some of the earlier spring flowers in bloom including columbine and geranium. Twenty or more plants were easily recognized from the car but when we saw goat's-

rue, *tephrosia virginiana*, we just had to stop. It was in full bloom and they were deep pink & white.

As we passed Cave Mountain Lake a helicopter came and hovered over the lake. It had large buckets that were filled with water to fight forest fires. Little did we know that the day before, on June 6, there was a lightning strike at The Devil's Marblyard that began the blaze. Several days after we were there, Route 501 and the James River Face Wilderness area were closed. About 600 acres burned before the fire was contained over a week later.

We ended our Parkway trip at Natural Bridge Gift Shop where we treated ourselves to dessert which was cones of ice cream.

There is no accurate count but we probably saw 80 to 90 plants. There are those plants you would never spend a special day on the Parkway searching to find. They include hop clover, sour grass, cinquefoil and of course dandelion. I should mention that we also saw deer, turkey and several different butterflies.

All part of the world of wildflowers. Good friendships enjoyed and good memories made. What a great day!!!

Wonder of Youth

Betty Kelly

Last summer I promised to baby sit Butch's four nieces and nephews, ranging in age from 2 to 11 years old. I pondered on how to keep them busy and not let them get too homesick. So each day I had a theme for activities. One theme overlapped into several mornings.

My 4 year old godson, Luke, recently developed an interest in birds. He really enjoyed the hummingbirds that came to our back porch. So early in the mornings, I took binoculars and a bird book on our walks. There wasn't much bird activity in our area that week. One day his young sister got up on a chair on the porch and flipped through one of our bird books.

So then we went into the woods. He noticed every flower and loved them. He would be somewhere behind me and yell, "Aunt Betty, What's that

flower?" Most times it was a heal-all that impressed him. He did notice several others, such as black eyed Susan and rattlesnake plantain. I tried to get him to learn Queen Anne's lace because it was his grandmother's favorite. He also found mushrooms, a turtle, saw a deer hoof print and heard a frog pounce into the water.

Then he wanted to pick blackberries. So we all went to look for them carrying our baggies in hopes to bake some goody. They were very scarce in our area. He got too close to (perhaps) a spider and got several bites and had a reaction. His leg swelled and that ended our morning trips for awhile.

My only regret is that he lives in Maryland. Every chance I get, I will stimulate his love of the outdoors. His enjoyment of it is infectious.

Lynchburg Area Members

Dorothy C. Bliss

The Randolph-Macon College Botanic Garden

In spite of drought, extended hot weather and damage by deer, the R-MWC Botanic Garden is colorful with late fall flowers and fruits. During the month of August, the *Franklinia* tree has produced hundreds of large showy white flowers and the cardinal flowers, the blue lobelias and the pink and white turtleheads have brightened the area by the lower pool. Now in mid September a few cardinal blooms still cling to their stems among the many seed capsules.

Until the past week, the attractive and intriguing passion flowers have been a point of interest above the upper pool. Hanging nearly hidden by the spreading foliage was a large smooth green fruit, a berry about two inches in diameter. Later this will ripen to a yellow color at which time it is edible according to the literature. Never planted in its present location, this plant which is actually a sprawling woody vine, simply appeared a few years ago and now grows prolifically, rambling over nearby plants.

The asters and goldenrods are beginning to bloom and the *Boltonia*, also called false aster, is already a cloud of tiny white flowers. The trumpet honeysuckle which blossoms sporadically throughout the summer still displays a few clusters of red and yellow flowers. The mountain mint continues to bloom profusely, attracting large black wasps among other pollinators.

On the hillside, the winterberry and chokeberry shrubs are laden with red berries which usually remain until late winter or spring when they are consumed by the birds. Along the main path, as I paused by the clump of native beautyberries, I was amazed to see several stems with clusters of white fruits, not lavender, which is the normal color. These branches were definitely like the native species in other characteristics, size and shape of the leaves and the nearly stalkless clusters of fruit. Nearby is a white-fruited

Oriental beautyberry with long-stalked clusters of white fruits and narrow leaves. Could the white-berried native plant be a hybrid or is it a somatic or genetic change occurring within the individual branch? A geneticist could probably help me out with this.

Because of the unusual weather many of the plants are under stress and some may not survive. All the devastation may not be evident until spring with the emergence of new growth, especially the development of those ephemerals which are now underground. The jewelweed or touch-me-not which has volunteered in scattered places in the Garden has disappeared. This is not surprising since they generally are found growing in nature in damp roadside ditches and along woodland paths and streams. They may appear again next summer if the weather is more favorable. However, if the drought conditions and elevated summer temperatures continue we all may decide to grow these native plants that are known to flourish or at least survive under dry conditions. In William Cullina's book, *Growing and Propagating Wildflowers*, he lists in the appendix native plants that can tolerate dry sunny or dry shady conditions. This is an excellent reference. Several of the herbaceous species in the Garden that are apparently unharmed by the extreme conditions of this past summer are green and gold, Canada ginger, Columbine and butterfly milkweed. The latter actually prospered after barely clinging to life for several years.

A few weeks ago the Garden was bright with a profusion of black-eyed Susans but now only some of the basal leaves remain. The leaves of the stemmed violets have been systematically eaten throughout the Garden and the stem leaves of the tall New England asters have been bitten off leaving ragged edges and the buds at the summit. The deer have nibbled on other plants but these three appear the ones on which they prefer to dine. Milorganite, a fertilizer that has been promoted as a deer deterrent was spread around some of the beds and the edges of the Garden but there has been no indication that this has been effective.

- Activities -

If any of you would like to take a stroll on a sunny fall afternoon in October or November perhaps along Blackwater Creek or the Blue Ridge Parkway, please call me at the number below. The following two events are scheduled for this fall.

October 12, Saturday, 9:00 - 11:00 a.m. Fall Work Day, Randolph-Macon Woman's College Botanic Garden. Bring gardening tools. October 19 is the rain date.

November 23, Saturday, 7:30 p.m. Lynchburg Evening of Memories. Bring a few of your favorite slides or photos for the group to enjoy. Please come and bring a friend or two. Room 225, Martin Science Building, R-MWC.

If you have any questions, call Dot Bliss, 434-845-5665.

Fall Plant Sale

Sandra Elder

The success of the plant sale, in Lynchburg on September 21st, was due to many people. From those who came to the garden on August 10th and helped pot up plants for the sale to those who helped on the date of the sale. Special thanks to Dorothy Bliss, Elizabeth Henderson and Robert Ferrell for taking plants home and caring for them until the sale. This was a difficult task because of the drought. Thanks also to the Cowins for bringing plants and to everyone who worked in the garden on September 7th to make it look good for the garden tours.

September 21st was not a day just to sell plants. It was also a day to share knowledge of and experiences with native plants. An exhibit and many informative brochures were available.

The Botanic Garden at Randolph-Macon, started by Dorothy Bliss in 1994, is a delightful place for our sale and a learning experience for everyone.