

BLUE RIDGE CHAPTER

OF THE
VIRGINIA WILDFLOWER PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Vol. 1, No. 1

Fall 1984

LET'S GET TOGETHER AND ENJOY THE FALL FOLIAGE AND WILDFLOWERS

WHEN

Sunday, October 14, 1984

WHERE

Picnic Area, Peaks of Otter
Blue Ridge Parkway

ACTIVITIES

Lots of trails nearby for informal hikes

Group picnic at 2:00 p.m.

Meeting and announcements at 3:00 p.m.

Some intend to get to the Peaks in the morning and enjoy the area, others plan to arrive after Church, do as you please, but do plan to be back at the picnic area at 2:00 p.m. No formal group hike is planned. You should bring food, drinks and utensils for your group.

So get out the "ole picnic basket" and let's enjoy the fall treats nature provides for us along the parkway!



Fringed Gentian



Cardinal flower

LETTER FROM CHAPTER PRESIDENT

It is with great pleasure that I welcome each and everyone of you, our Charter members in this our first newsletter. Your enthusiasm and support is overwhelming. Back in the spring when we first starting talking seriously about forming a local chapter of **VWPS**, little did I realize how much work, time and effort would be required to make this dream come true. Thanks to you, here we are some eighty members strong, growing rapidly and what an exciting group! Take a look down our membership list and see all the wonderful talent and expertise coming from many varied backgrounds. This is where our strength lies and as a unit we can make a lasting impact with our plant conservation efforts.

We are in the process of forming our Board of Directors and establishing the various committees necessary to gear up for the work that lies ahead. We must choose our directions carefully and be supportive within the frame work of our society. Needless to say, its a bit scarry when we look at all the many areas that we should actively be involved in and this is where your support becomes so meaningful.

Let us look ahead with the joy of commitment, the thrill of meeting the enormous challenges conservation efforts bring and the hope that our efforts will save our wonderful native plants for future generations.



Evening-primrose

NEW MEETING LOCATION

We are pleased to announce arrangements have been made with the Roanoke Valley Science Museum to use their multi-purpose room for our meetings. We have reserved the first Thursday in each month for this purpose. At our last meeting, we agreed on quarterly meetings for the general membership and in between we will use this date for board and committee meetings. The Roanoke Valley Science Museum is located in Center In The Square, One Market Square, Roanoke, Virginia 24011. Our special thanks to Dr. Tom Krakauer for his assistance.

COLLECTING WILDFLOWER SEEDS

Sam & Dora Lee Ellington

Now is a good time for collecting seeds of wildflowers that are blooming along the edges of woods, roadsides and meadows. This can be fun and is a nice way to enlarge your wildflower garden. Most wildflowers produce an abundance of seed so there are no conservation problems. If you gather a handfull of seeds, be sure to leave a good supply on the plant for nature to sow.

Seeds should be collected as soon as they mature. Those in a dry pod or capsule are usually mature when they begin to turn brown and open at the top or on the side. Seeds having fleshy covers will change color and usually have a softening of the fruit when mature.

If unable to check ripening of seeds frequently, you can tie a piece of nylon netting or a piece of old nylon stocking over the flower head after they bloom. This will prevent loss of seeds.

Carry paper bags and envelopes for collecting seeds. Large flower heads can be shaken into a bag and the loose seeds will fall to the bottom. Small seeds may be picked and placed in the envelopes. Label with name, date and other important information such as dry, moist, sunny or shady locations.

Seeds from Bleeding Heart, Bloodroot and Twinleaf have a bit of white matter attached to them called an aril. These seeds should be planted as soon as they mature. The aril helps the freshly planted seeds to absorb moisture needed for germination. If these seeds dry they may take a year or more to germinate.

Pulp from fleshy seeds such as Jack-in-the-Pulpit, can be easily removed by placing 1/3 cup seeds with 1/3 cup water in a blender and running at very low speed, (beat) for just a few seconds. Rinse and place cleaned seeds on paper towels out of sunlight to surface dry. These seeds are best planted right away but can be stored in jars or plastic bags in the refrigerator at 34-40° for planting in the spring.

Try to duplicate nature on storage of seeds. Those that mature dry can be left for several days in open paper bags or on paper towels at room temperature.

After the seeds have dried, remove the chaff and debris. This may be done with your fingers, screening or by putting the seeds in a pie pan and gently blowing the chaff away. Place the dry seeds in marked envelopes and store at room temperature until planting time.

If you have surplus seeds, how about giving or trading with other VWPS members?

HAPPY COLLECTING!

EXCERPT FROM A LETTER TO PAUL JAMES FROM SOCIETY PRESIDENT, MARY PAINTER

August 31, 1984

Dear Paul,

The VWPS Board of Directors was pleasantly overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of many fine new memberships submitted along with your petition for chapter affiliation! The Board unanimously approved your petition and extend a hearty welcome to our fifth society chapter. Your Name as proposed: Blue Ridge Chapter of the Virginia Wildflower Preservation Society. Charter Date: August 30, 1984. Chapter Area: All Counties Proposed Were Approved (The next run of VWPS membership flyers will feature those four counties not presently featured).

We are aware that your beautiful area host many terrific plant species to consider as candidates for your wildflower logo. We will be very interested to hear which one you finally decide on!

Our Corresponding Secretary, Donna Kreitz, who normally takes great pleasure in extending a warm letter of "official" welcome to our new chapters, recently underwent surgery. Given the circumstances, I am, in this capacity, filling in on her behalf so that our enthusiastic response to your chapter establishment would be in no way delayed. We are very proud and fond of our Blue Ridge members and friends, and look upon your chapter as covering a very significant area, botanically speaking. Above that, we are quite aware of the collective expertise, commitment to purpose and solidarity which will undoubtedly distinguish your chapter membership. Personally speaking, I already feel a real bond with Blue Ridge, since the earliest days of chapter development efforts, I particularly commend you, Paul, and those other special friends/early leaders who have provided the real support and impetus behind the formation of Blue Ridge. We salute your interim Board members and offer you every bit of assistance which we can provide to further develop the chapter.

INTERIM BOARD OFFICERS

**BLUE RIDGE CHAPTER
VWPS**

President - Paul S. James

Vice-President - Richard W. Crites

Secretary - Frieda Toler

Treasurer - Sam Ellington

SHALE BARRENS

by Richard W. Crites

Southwest Virginia offers a wide variety of habitats for the wildflower enthusiast to study. The mountains and valleys with various altitudes and the slopes facing different directions, all present unique climate conditions for a variety of plant species. And when one adds in the various types of soils and rock formations, what a paradise for the plant enthusiast that ventures out to become acquainted with his environment.

One such area you might want to study in this part of Virginia is the shale barren. It is often referred to as a desert--yes, that's right, a desert! A desert, however, typically receives less than 10 inches of precipitation per year. So our shale barrens do not qualify on this characteristic as most receive 40+ inches of precipitation in a year. However, their unique location and soil formation causes many of the plants to take on dry or xeric area plant characteristics in order to survive. Such things as extensive root systems, waxy and sometimes small leaves, hairy or pubescent leaves, and succulent stems are characteristics often observed on the plants.

The shale barren is not really a barren area as there is a variety of plant species there and often in good numbers. But certainly, the variety is not the same as encountered in some of our other mountain communities. The shale part of the name comes from the shaly aspect of the soil. Very little organic material is found in the soil as the barrens are usually on a slope of greater than 20° on southern slopes and greater steepness on other exposures. The shale, which breaks off in small pieces and slides down the slope, forms a shingle effect as on a roof. Precipitation readily runs off and the slope/sun interaction allows for rapid evaporation, especially on southern exposures. Slopes of less than 20° will tend to allow organic matter to accumulate and better soil composition results giving rise to a different type of plant community. Shale barren communities are found in Pa., Md., W. Va., and Virginia (locally in Montgomery, Roanoke and Botetourt counties.) The proper combination of geology, soil, topography, and climate are required for their formation.

A partial listing of plants expected to be found there are; *Trees*; chestnut oak, scrub pine, red oak, scrub oak, red cedar, dwarf hackberry, serviceberry, table mt. pine and sumac (staghorn, smooth and dwarf). *Shrubs and Vines*; blueberry, N. Jersey tea, poison ivy, Virginia creeper, greenbrier. *Herbaceous plants*--Some of these are endemic. yellow buckwheat, evening primrose, leatherflower, Kate's Mt. clover, pusseytoes

ragwort, shale bindweed, hairy lip fern, goat's rue, rock twist butterfly pea, prickly pear cactus, and wild pink.

For a more complete listing of the plants and additional information on shale barrens, check **The Appalachians** by Maurice Brooks and **An Ecological Study of the Mid Appalachian Shale Barrens and the Plants Endemic to Them** by Robert Platt in the *Ecological Monographs* Vol. 21, no. 4, Oct., 1951, pp. 269-300.

So if you are not familiar with this special area and treasures it holds for you, it is time to get out and become acquainted. One word of caution--the barrens get very hot during the afternoons of the days of summer.



Purple
Coneflower

FIRST LIFE MEMBER

Dorothy C. Bliss, 322 Sumpter Street, Lynchburg, Virginia became our Society's first life member and we are so pleased to have her in our chapter. She is a widely acclaimed botanist, ecologist and taxonomist. We look forward to working very closely with her and drawing from her knowledge and experience.



Common Sunflower

"Surely the amateur botanist has one of the finest hobbies in the world--a hobby which brings him close to nature--a lifetime hobby which provides a never failing interest--a pastime which takes him out in the wide-open spaces during the Sumertime, and gives him ample occupation on Winter evenings when he sits at a table, mounting and classifying his specimens and living again in spirit the rambles and hikes of the previous Summer."

Thomas H. Everett, 1929

NEXT MEMBERSHIP MEETING

DATE: November 1, 1984

TIME: 7:30 p.m.

PLACE: Roanoke Valley Science Museum

Center in the Square

Roanoke, Virginia 24011

PLEASE MAKE YOUR PLANS AND ATTEND

BRING A FRIEND

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**LET'S ADD
MANY MORE**