BLUE RIDGE CHAPTER
OF THE
VIRGINIA WILDFLOWER PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Vol. 2, No. 1 **Spring 1985**

PROPOGATION LAND

by Dora Lee Ellington

One area for propagation of wildflower plants and wildflower seeds has been made available to our Blue Ridge Chapter. It is a beautiful piece of bottom land at the foot of Cahas Mountain Maggodee Creek flows boldly by and over the years has deposited dark, rich soil that is the consistency of meal and a pleasure to work.

Six beds have been readied. Two are planted with wildflower seedlings and divided plants from gardens of our members. Some of these are: Wood-poppy, Great Bellwort, Penstemons, Monkey-flower, Jacob's-ladder, Bleeding-heart, Cardinal-flower, Chrysogonum, Columbine, Sundrops, Black-eyed Susan, Ox-eye Daisy, Nine-bark, Blue-dogbane and Pale Corydalis.

One and a half beds have been planted with the following wildflower seeds: Monkshood, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Red Columbine, Bleeding-heart, Bloodroot, Twinleaf, Dutchman's-breeches, Addisonii Clematis, Climbing Milkweed, Butterfly-weed, Blue Dogbone, Shortia, Fly-poison, Musk Mallow, Maryland Golden Aster, Fairy-wand, Partridgeberry and Geranium. If all goes well some of these should be ready in time for our native Plant Sale.

You are welcome to come visit this area and if you have extra wildflower plants and seeds, you can plant or scatter seeds to your hearts content. It is just a hop, skip and jump from Roanoke. You can be there from Tanglewood in ten minutes. If interested call Paul at 1-334-5783 for further information.

Blood Root

BLUE RIDGE CHAPTER TO CO-SPONSOR SPRING WILDFLOWER PILGRIMAGE

We are pleased to have the opportunity to work with the 16th Annual Spring Wildflower Pilgrimage sponsored by the Roanoke Valley Science Museum. We need the support of all our members to help make this the best pilgrimage ever. Mark your calendar now for April 26-28th, 1985 and plan on coming out for as many of the activities as you can.

MARCH FIELD TRIP PLANNED

Our first year as a chapter is getting under way with our first field trip planned for March 16, 1985. What better way to get the adrenaline flowing than to think of the first spring outing. We hope to have at least one per month so that we may follow the succession from early spring throughout the seasons. All too often we miss the very early bloomers and with summer, completely miss the mid and late season offerings. This year let's not miss any!

NEXT MEMBERSHIP MEETING

DATE: February 7, 1985
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

THE WOODS IN WINTER

by Dorothy C. Bliss

You are all familiar with conifers such as pines and hemlocks and broad-leaved shrubs such as Rhododendrons and Mountain Laurel that are evergreen and thus conspicuous even in our winter months but are you aware of the multitude of ferns and flowering plants that overwinter on the forest floor as rosettes or tufts of leaves? A study in Ohio identified nearly 300 herbaceous plants that remain green throughout the year. What are some of the more common ones that can be identified in January and February?

One of the frequently encountered evergreen ferns is the Christmas Fern *(Polystichum a crostichoides)* whose large frouds, more than a foot long,, are easily recognized among the fallen leaves. Each leaflet or pinna resembles a miniature Christmas stocking. The common name is probably derived from the fern's use for Christmas decorations by early New England settlers.

On rocky out croppings the evergreen Rock Polypody *(Polypodium virginianum)* with bright green fronds, 6"-8" long, may form extensive mats. The Resurrection Fern *(Polypodium polypodiodes)* is somewhat smaller but the lower surface of the frond is covered with grayish scales. These fronds curl up when dry but revive after a rain and occur on trunks and branches of trees or spread over rocky ledges.

On shaded limestone ledges or other rocks may be found the simple undivided fronds of the Walking Fern *(Camptosorus rhizophyllous)*. These fronds taper to a slender elongated tip that frequently takes root, hence the common name. The Ebony Spleenwart *(Asplenium platymeuron)* has a readily recognized dark petiole extending up through the very narrow frond. Look for these ferns both on the forest floor and in the crevices of rocks. The deeply and repeatedly cut triangular blades of the Grape Ferns *(Botrychium spp.)* are common but scattered in rich deciduous or mixed woods.

Some of the fern relatives or club masses such as Princess Pine and Running Cedar *(Lycopodium spp.)* cover extensive areas beside trails and in dry woods. The Shining Club Moss *(L. lucidulum)* is conspicuous along stream banks and in soil rich in humus. All of these are sometimes used in wreaths and garlands especially at Christmas and New Years.

Among the easily identified rosettes of leaves of flowering plants are those of the Rattlesnake Orchid *(Goodyera pubescens)*. These clusters of gray-green leaves are clearly marked by a white network of veins. Frequently last summer's flower stalk will still be present. Because of its small size and interesting markings these plants may be exploited in some areas for use in terrariums. The Putty Root Orchid *(Aplectrum hyemale)* produces a solitary oval wrinkled leaf with prominent pale veins whereas the Cranefly Orchid *(Tipularia discolor)* has a single dark green leaf that is purple beneath. These three orchids are never numerous but their overwintering leaves are scattered throughout most of our forested areas.

Partridgeberry

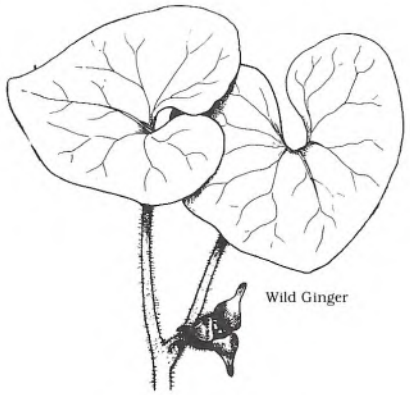
Several plants only a few inches high may form couspicuous green patches, especially under hemlocks and pines. Partridgeberry *(Mitchella repens)*, a trailing evergreen with small egg-shaped leaves is a good indicator of acid soils. The bright red fruits are eaten by several birds as well as raccoons and foxes. These berries are edible but dry and insipid. The creeping stem of Wintergreen or Checkerberry *(Gaultheria procumbens)* produces a cluster of thick shiny oval leaves on upright stems. The leaves are slightly toothed and spicy when crushed. The berries are edible and tasty and make a pleasant nibble for the hiker and the leaves are sometimes used to make an aromatic tea. The foliage yields the familiar oil of wintergreen. Grouse, partridge and other birds consume these berries and deer relish both leaves and fruits. Another tiny creeping shrub is Trailing Arbutus or Mayflower *(Epigaea repens)*. Forming mats in sandy woods and clearings especially under oaks and pines, the hairy-edged leathery leaves are borne on brown hairy twigs. The clusters of tiny white to pale pink flowers appearing in late February or March are delicately fragrant.

Trailing Arbutus

Slightly larger than the above is the Spotted Wintergreen *(Chimaphila maculata)* with dark green leaves that are white-mottled along the veins. Terminal groups of dry capsules are reminders of last summer's waxy white flowers. Much less common and somewhat larger is Pippsissewa *(C. umbellata)* with dark green glossy leaves. Whereas Spotted Wintergreen occurs as scattered individuals, Pippsissewa may form large mats.

Two dwarf irises, the Vernal *(Iris verna)* and the Crested *(I. cristata)* may be distinguished easily in winter although the flowers are not present. The Dwarf Vernal Iris with slender, nearly grass-like leaves frequents wooded slopes with strongly acid soils, while the Crested Dwarf Iris with lanceolate leaves occurs in rich woods in more neutral soils.

Most members of the lily family lie dormant below the soil but the basal rosette of smooth leaves of Devil's Bit or Fairy Wand are evident through the winter in rather rich soil in damp open woods. Also scattered throughout these woods are the thick mottled heartshaped leaves of Heart Leaf or Wild Ginger *(Asarum virginicum)*. The glossy roundish evergreen leaves of Galax or Beetleweed *(Galax aphylla)* may form extensive patches in open deciduous woods.



Wild Ginger

Although its leaves do not appear until March or later, the large fleshy spathe which envelops the flower cluster of Skunk Cabbage *(Symplocarpus foetidus)* may be conspicuous in wet soil in woods or open swamps. This green to purple-brown hood appearing in February is soon followed by the large coil of leaves. The latter are considered as a possible emergency food if cooked in three changes of water for a total of 45 minutes!

Exclusive of grasses, sedges and weedy species, the list of winter-hardy plants that can be easily identified by their evergreen parts is nearly endless. Identification of many buttercups, goldenrods, asters, mustards and violets may be difficult because of similarities of the various species in each family. Phloxes, Pinks, Alum Roots, Saxifrages also present problems.

I hope this brief listing of some of our commc evergreen ferns and wildflowers will encourage all of you to look more closely at the forest floor in winter time. It is not barren but alive with the evergreen leaves of many herbaceous plants just waiting for the warm days of spring to put forth renewed growth and displays of flowers.

SKUNK CABBAGE

by Frieda Toler

When the blustry, cold days of winter begin to fade and the warm, cheerful days of spring shine on us, the signs and sounds of new life are everywhere.

Skunk Cabbage *(Symplocarpus foetidus)*, a member of Arum family is one of the earliest wildflowers to promise us that spring really will come. The cone-shaped spathe forces through the frozen ground and often through ice and snow to bloom as early as February, but always March, in our area. It grows in open fields and woods where there are low spots that have ample water in the soil.

The spathe is purplish, streaked with green. Hidden inside the spathe is the cylindrical spadix with its inconspicuous flowers. The simple leaves are large, up to 24 inches in width and are deeply veined. When they appear, which is after the flowers, they are tightly coiled and gradually unfold to produce a very showy plant. After the flowers fade, a brown fruit forms at the base of the plant.

Bruise the flowers or leaves and there is no doubt about the plant's name. The smell is very unpleasant much like that of a skunk. The odor attracts carrion flies which pollinate the flowers.

Indians used skunk cabbage in medicine, boiling the roots which are hot to the taste. It was used in a syrup for bronchial coughs and asthma. The growing range of this plant is from New England south to Georgia and west to Mississippi.

SPRING IS COMING!

WINTER BOTANY

by William Hunley

Learning to identify deciduous trees and shrubs in winter can be a challenging passtime for the native plant enthusiast. Listed below are several of our native tree species and some of their distinguishing characteristics.

Red Oak Group

Black Oak *(Quercus velutina)* - Bark is black, ridged and furrowed. Inner bark layer is yellowish.

Northern Red Oak *(Quercus rubra)* - Bark is gray and smoother than Black Oak. Inner bark is reddish. More often found in moist soil than Black Oak or Scarlet Oak.

Scarlet Oak *(Quercus coccinea)* - Similar to Red Oak but prefers dry soil of south facing slopes and ridge tops. The base of the trunk on mature trees often appears to be swollen. Lower branches of forest trees are often dead due to intolerance to shade.

WHITE OAK GROUP

White Oak *(Quercus alba)* - Bark is pale gray and flaky. Grows in a wide variety of soil moisture conditions.

Chestnut Oak *(Quercus prinus)* - The most abundant oak of dry mountain slopes in our area. Bark is gray and deeply fissured. Inner bark is red.

HICKORIES

Shagbark Hickory *(Carya ouata)* - Bark peels in large plates giving the tree a shaggy appearance. Terminal bud is large (½ inch). Grows in moist soil.

Bitternut Hickory *(Carya cordiformis)* - Twigs are small (for a Hickory) with mustard yellow terminal buds. Grows in bottomland soils.

MAPLES

Silver Maple *(Acer saccharimum)* - Twigs have opposite growth pattern (like all maples) and give off rank odor when broken. Bark is shaggy in appearance. Grows in river flood-plains.

Striped Maple *(Acer pensylvanicum)* Branches opposite, greenish, with vertical white stripes. Grows in moist soils.

MAGNOLIAS

Tulip Poplar *(Liriodendron tulipifera)* - Grows very tall and straight. Cone-like fruit is reminiscent of a tulip.

Cucumber Magnolia *(Magnolia acuminata)* - Straight growth form. Very large terminal buds (¾ inch).

TUPELOS

Black Gum *(Nyssa sylvatica)* - A medium sized forest tree with rough, gray bark and branches that grow at 90 degree angles from the trunk.

BIRCHES

Sweet Birch *(Betula lenta)* - Bark is dark brown with horizontal lines (lenticels). Twigs have strong aroma of wintergreen.

Yellow Birch *(Betula lutea)* - Bark is yellowish, papery and peeling. Twigs have wintergreen aroma like Sweet Birch, but not as pungent. Grows at high elevations.

Suggested Reading

Woody Plants in Winter *by Earl L. Core and Nelle P. Ammons*, Boxwood Press 1958.

A Guide To Nature in Winter *by Donald W. Stokes*, Little, Brown & Co. 1976.

Winter Tree Finder *by May Theilgard Watts and Tom Watts*, Nature Study Guild, 1970.

Trees and Shrubs of Kentucky *by Mary E. Wharton and Roger W. Barbour*, University of Kentucky Press, 1973.

NEW MEMBERS

Harris C. Gardner, Jr.
1026 Ardmore Drive
Lynchburg, Virginia 24501

Loueen Leonard
2121 Windsor Ave., S.W.
Roanoke, Virginia 24015

Greg C. Lipscomb
7035 Irondale Circle, N. W.
Roanoke, Virginia 24019

Robert & Carol Sharp
6133 Saddleridge Circle
Roanoke, Virginia 24018

Elizabeth M. Weiland
Richard Bland College
Petersburg, Virginia 23805

CHAPTER MEMBER INTEREST QUESTIONNAIRE

Old and new members: In order to serve your interests and best direct your talents in conserving and promoting native plants, we need to stay up-to-date on you. Please take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire and return it to the BLUE RIDGE CHAPTER of the Virginia Wildflower Preservation Society, P. O. Box 12246, Roanoke, Virginia 24024.

Name _____ Telephone: Home ( ) _____ Work ( ) _____
(please indicate area codes)

Address _____

1. What kind of participation fits your interests and time?

Involvement in ongoing activities (**in order of preference**)

_____ Mobilizing appropriate responses to local conservation issues.

_____ Planning/conducting education programs.

_____ Propagating wildflowers/learning to propagate "difficult" species.

_____ Working on publications

_____ Recruiting new members

Occasional help as needed

_____ Landscape projects

_____ Rescue

_____ Plant sales

_____ Fund-raising

_____ Developing/maintaining wildflower plantings

_____ Rescuing plants from habitats scheduled for destruction

_____ Identifying potential rescue sites

_____ Surveying targeted sites to identify plants for rescue

_____ Rare plant inventory

_____ Leading or participating in field trips

_____ Transporting plants, using my

_____ pick-up

_____ station wagon

_____ car with large trunk

Other _____

_____ Support only through my membership and interest (If you check here, you will not be called with requests for help, but of course you will receive word through the **News** of chapter activities.)

2. What's the best time for you to attend programs or participate in activities?

_____ Weekdays _____ Evenings _____ Weekends

3. Specific skills: _____ Photography _____ Art _____ Writing _____ Publicity

_____ Telephoning _____ Public speaking Other _____

4. Experience and affiliations related to VWPS and chapter purposes:

5. Do you have your own wildflower garden or plentiful wildflowers on your property?

_____ No _____ Yes If so, please list species that you could make available:

Seeds _____

_____

Stock plants for use in propagation _____

_____

A limited number of plants for semi-annual plant sale _____

_____