

BLUE RIDGE CHAPTER

OF THE
VIRGINIA WILDFLOWER PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Vol. 2, No. 3

August 1985

VWPS STATE FIELD TRIP

by Richard Crites



On June 1-2, 1985, the State Board of the VWPS met at the Peaks of Otter. On Saturday afternoon while the Board was in session, the spouses, friends, and members of the Blue Ridge Chapter were lead on a wildflower walk at Arcadia by Richard Crites and Sam and Dora Lee Ellington. The Prickly-pear cactus, which was at its flowering peak, really put on a spectacular show. Approximately 100 species of ferns, trees and flowering plants were found in the area near the first bridge. Other interesting flowering plants found were Wild Petunia, Partridge Berry, Varigated Milkweek, Venus Looking Glass, and Green Dragon. On Sunday, Dorothy Bliss lead a drive/walk for our weekend visitors. The trip started at the

Visitors Center at the Peaks and moved north along the parkway to the James River Visitors Center. There were several stops, including Thunder Ridge, where short walks were taken to observe the plants and the deciduous forest "summer green". However, the show stopper was the beautiful display of the Mountain Laurel and the Rhododendron. If you have not seen this display, be sure and mark your calendar for next year. As Sam would say, "that's the prettiest thing I've ever seen in my life"! After the group walked the trail at the James River Visitors Center, a picnic was enjoyed by all. Even though a spring shower moved in, shelter was found under the bridge.

MAY FIELD TRIP

On Saturday, May 4, 1985, fourteen people attended the field trip to Thunder Ridge which is at Milepost 74.7 on the Blue Ridge Parkway. Dorothy Bliss was the leader and she took the group for a walk on the Appalachian Trail. About seventy trees, flowers and ferns were identified. One of the prettiest was the Clove Scented Azalea. It was very fragrant and the dark pink flowers were at their peak of bloom. Lunch was eaten at the picnic tables at Thunder Ridge. After lunch, the group walked some more and enjoyed the flowers, the beautiful mountains and the bright, sunny spring day.

It was a most enjoyable and educational day because everyone in the group was well informed and shared their knowledge with others.

FLOWER POTS

In the May Newsletter, we asked all members to bring flower pots to the general membership meeting. The response was great and the propogation committee would like to thank everyone for their help. Please continue to save them.

OUR THANKS

So many of the Blue Ridge Chapter Members contributed much time and talent to the Science Museum Wildflower Pilgrimage. The plant table was just beautiful and everyone who attended the programs Friday and Saturday nights commented about them. Also, having name tags for each plant was very nice, especially for those just beginning the joys of wildflowering. The programs presented by Dorothy Bliss entitled, "Endangered Plants of the Southeast: Our Responsibility" were interesting and informative. The leaders of the walks did a super job. It is impossible to list each one individually but we do thank **one** and **all** for your help.

MEMBERSHIP MEETING

DATE: August 1, 1985 TIME: 7:30 P.M.

PLACE: Multi-Purpose Room - Center in the Square

**PROGRAM: Ann Ragan, of Blue Ridge Parkway will be our guest speaker.
This is the 50th Anniversary of the Blue Ridge Parkway**

PLEASE ATTEND AND BRING A FRIEND

LETTER FROM CHAPTER PRESIDENT

by Paul James

Can you believe that in just a couple of weeks our chapter will have its first anniversary? It's hard to realize that we are a year old but let's look at where we are in just a short period of time; Blue Ridge is now the second largest chapter in the state, has within its membership the first life member, the state Botany Chairman, has hosted a state Board of Directors meeting, a state field trip and has given lectures and slide talks to various groups promoting wildflower conservation, has had monthly field trips and plant propagation for our upcoming plant sale.

As a group we are diverse and we hope to have our committees formed by our next general membership meeting. We need your help and input if we are to become a viable force within the area we serve. We must continue to work on key issues such as protection of critical plant habitats, updating county records and making wildflowers more visible to the public through education and public awareness. Our first year has gotten off to a good start. Let's keep the momentum going by talking up our organization and participating in as many activities as we can. If you have any suggestions or questions on what you would like to see us do, I would like to talk with you. Remember, membership renewal is due in October. Let us continue to have your support.

NEW MAILING LIST

We now have our mailing list on a computer. This is the first mailing so if you will check your name and address carefully and ask others you know to be sure they are on the list. If some one has been left off or finds any mistake please call or notify Bobby Toler, 7005 Greenway Drive, Roanoke, Virginia 24019. Home Phone 366-0239, Business 366-9180 or the Chapter President Paul James, Route 2, Boones Mill, Va. 24065. Phone 334-5783.

LOOK FOR

August issue of Better Homes & Gardens will have an article on "Landscaping with Wildflowers". Sounds interesting.

TREASURY

We now have \$587.62 in the Treasury.

HUCKLEBERRIES OR BLUEBERRIES?

by Dorothy C. Bliss

The Ericaceae or Heath family contains many of our most beautiful flowering shrubs, among them, Rhododendron, Azaleas, Mountain Laurel, Fetterbush and the tiny fragrant Trailing Arbutus. Of the 17 genera and 53 species of woody plants comprising this group in Virginia (Atlas of Virginia Flora. Part II) all are shrubs except for the Sourwood tree. Huckleberries, Blueberries and Cranberries are classified in the *Vaccinium* and *Gaylussacia* genera. Of the 13 species of *Vaccinium* (9 in the Blue Ridge Mountains) occurring in Virginia, 6 will be discussed here. Of the 4 species of *Gaylussacia* only one is frequently enough encountered in our mountainous section to warrant mention.

What is the difference between huckleberries and blueberries? The names are frequently used interchangeably although in some local areas the black-fruited varieties are known as huckleberries and the blue-fruited are known as blueberries. The genus *Gaylussacia* is usually reserved for the true huckleberries and *Vaccinium* for the blueberries and cranberries. Huckleberries bear fruits which contain 10 seed-like nutlets in 10 cells and have leaves with resinous dots or waxy particles that are easily seen when the leaves are held in the light. In contrast true blueberries produce many tiny seeds within 5 (or 10) cells in their fruits and no resinous or shiny dots on their leaves. The fruits of these true blueberries are considered more desirable as they do not taste "seedy". The common huckleberry, *Gaylussacia baccata*, named in honor of the French chemist, Gay-Lussac, is found on dry rocky outcrops, clearings and open woods in every county. It is a low, much branched, rather stiff shrub, rarely more than 3 or 4 feet in height. The leaves have many shining resinous dots and the bell-shaped flowers are white, pink or reddish in one-sided racemes. The juicy fruits are generally black (blue-fruited varieties are known) and sweet but seedy with the 10 nutlets (in each berry) referred to above.

There are 6 species in the genus *Vaccinium* that I would like to comment upon. The first, the Large Cranberry, *Vaccinium macrocarpon*, may seem out of place with the blueberries and huckleberries but its floral structure shows that it is closely related. These small sprawling shrubs grow in swampy and boggy areas of four of our mountain counties. The name Cranberry is derived from Craneberry which was given to this plant because of a fancied resemblance between the flower and the head of a crane. The cranberry is an evergreen creeping shrub with small wedge-shaped leaves that are green above and whitish below. The nodding pinkish flowers, borne on upright branches, are followed by at first green, later turning red or dark red, acid fruit, ripening in late summer or fall.

The first commercial cranberry growing regions were on Cape Cod and later spread to New Jersey, Wisconsin and other states. In

Virginia Duncan Porter of V.P.I. lists the cranberry as one of our threatened plants because its boggy habitats are vulnerable to drainage. We are all familiar with the many uses of the cranberry in jellies, drinks, sauces "mock cherry" pie, etc. One author suggests that the addition of a teaspoon of salt to a quart of berries counteracts the acidity and reduces the amount of sugar required for sweetening by one-half. These berries are eaten by Grouse, Bob-white, Mourning Dove, etc.

The Mountain Cranberry, *Vaccinium erythrocarpum*, is a much larger shrub, up to 7 feet in height, that is endemic to the Southern Appalachians. It grows in rocky woods on slopes and summits of mountains. The flowers are solitary in the axils of leaves, the corolla deeply cleft nearly to the base into 4 recurving white or pink narrow lobes. The long anthers are exerted. The fruit is a red to brownish-black berry that may be tasteless or sweet. While on a field trip with some of my students a few years ago in the Spruce-Fir area of the Great Smoky Mountains, I introduced them to these berries. All of us found them pleasantly tasty.

The Squaw Huckleberry or Deerberry, *Vaccinium stamineum*, is a tall shrub, up to ten feet, with variable foliage occurring in well-drained oak and pine stands throughout Virginia. It is sometimes known as "Gooseberry" but it is unrelated to the true gooseberry genus, *Ribes*. The open bell-shaped flowers are greenish-white or purplish with prominent exerted stamens. The fruit is a greenish to purplish sour berry that is rather inedible when eaten raw. Mountain people stew and sweeten the fruit and consider it excellent when served cold. It is also used in the making of jams and jellies. These fruits are relished by Ruffed Grouse, Bob-white and the Gray Fox.

In our area the two most frequently encountered true blueberries are the Early Low or Sweet Blueberry, *Vaccinium vacillans*, and the Common Highbush Blueberry, *V. corymbosum*. These two species bear sweet blueberries that are eaten raw or made into pies, cakes, jams and many other tasty treats. Indians dried blueberries in the sun for a week to 10 days. These dried berries are immune to decay and may be used in recipes such as cakes, puddings and pemmican. The Low Blueberry, a shrub less than 3 feet high, is common in sandy soil of dry oak and pine woods and along roadsides in every county. The rather stiff branches produce dull colored leaves that are whitish below. The pink or greenish-white bell-shaped blossoms are followed by the dark blue fruits that have a faint bloom. Frequently the berries may be stripped off by the handful and are often collected in large quantities by mountain folks. The Highbush Blueberry, *V. corymbosum*, is encountered much less frequently in most Virginia counties in the Mountains, Piedmont and Coastal Plain. This tall shrub may reach 12 or more feet in height. The whitish or greenish or pinkish flowers are densely clustered at the extremities of the branches of the previous year's growth. The fruits are blue to blue-black with a whitish powder. They are juicy and sweet and favored by both man and birds. Many cultivated varieties have been derived from this stock.

Another highbush blueberry, *Vaccinium constablei*, occurs in 9 southern mountain counties of Virginia, generally at fairly high elevations. In the Smoky Mountains a specimen was measured at 26 feet in height, the tallest *Vaccinium* recorded in North America. These latter two highbush blueberries are very similar but the leaves of *V. constablei* are usually sharply serrate (toothed) on the margins and frequently long-acuminate where as the leaf margins of *V. corymbosum* are entire or smooth. The flowers differ in size, with those of Constable's Blueberry somewhat larger, frequently over one-half inch in length. For a more detailed description of these shrubs, I suggest either Petrides' "Field Guide to Trees and Shrubs", Strausbaugh-Core's "Flora of West Virginia" or Newcomb's "Wildflower Guide".

JULY FIELD TRIP

Once every other year the Mountain Lake Biological Station of the University of Virginia holds Open House. It was July 7, 1985 and thirty members and guests of the BRC/VWPS attended this open house.

Classrooms were open showing displays, projects and experiments by the students. Burns Garden, which has many wildflowers, was open. A self guided Nature Trail winds through the woods for a nice leisurely stroll. There were two slide programs in the Auditorium. One was about wildflowers and one was about birds of the Mountain Lake area. Refreshments were served in the new Walton Pavilion.

Hope all of you saw the Round-leaved Orchid, *Habenaria orbiculata* by the parking lot, just a short distance from the Pavilion.

After the open house, the group formed a caravan, continued on Route 700 to Route 635 then to White Rock Campground for a picnic-supper.

PLANT SALE IN SEPTEMBER

Plans are being made for our first native plant sale sometime in early September. This gives those who have wildflower gardens or some wildflowers plenty of time to pot surplus seedlings and division of wildflower clumps which need dividing. Use only perennial native wildflowers and ferns. **No plants removed directly from the wild.** Please use plastic or clay pots, 3" or larger in diameter. Plants should be potted about six weeks before sale to allow development of good root systems and to become acclimated.

Over two hundred plants have been potted by some of our members but since this is our only fund raising event many more are needed. If you have any questions or need pots, call Paul James 1-334-5785, Ellington's 989-4742, Tolers 366-0239.

A definite time and plans will be discussed at our August meeting. Please plan to attend. We need your help and suggestions.

NEXT FIELD TRIP

Place: Rakes Mill Pond

Date: August 17, 1985

Time: 9:30 A.M.

Meet at Mick or Mack Store
4504 Brambleton Ave., S.W.

Bog Area - Bring appropriate footwear.

Bring your lunch.

Note: No further Notice will be sent to you about this field trip.

EPIPACTIS HELLEBORINE

It is always a thrill to find a wildflower you have never seen, especially when it is an orchid in a city lawn. John Walke was called by a neighbor in S.W. Roanoke to identify a plant which has a spike of dull lavender and green florets, rising on a single erect stem with deeply veined, ovate leaves. With the use of Luer's Orchids of N.A., John was able to identify the plant by the common name of broad leaf helleborine. He discovered that this orchid has handsome leaves. The blossoms are an interesting shape and have beautiful markings. It is an alien from England and rather common in the New England States. According to Peterson's "Field Guide of Wildflowers", it is out of its range in this area. The next time you mow your lawn look for this orchid especially if you have oak trees nearby.

JUST A DROP IN THE BUCKET

On May 13th Lynn Kunze and the Ellington's went to a wooded area in Botetourt County to gather seed pods of bloodroot which were sent to N.C.B.G. (North Carolina Botanical Garden) at Chapel Hill. The garden is working on a "Conservation Through Propagation" project and need 400,000 seed pods. Our collection was only a drop in the bucket, but we received \$17.40 for our efforts. The funds were placed in our Blue Ridge Chapter treasury. We are pleased that our Chapter was able to participate in this project.

CONGRATULATIONS SHARON

One of our new members, Sharon Morris Kincheloe, was the guest artist for the 1985 Science Museum Wildflower Pilgrimage. She has a five page spread on "Summer Lilies" in the June issue of Virginia Wildlife Magazine. Sharon's wildflower paintings will be featured in the National Wildlife Federation Building, for the month of May 1986.



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

New membership Renewal

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Phone(s): Home () _____ Work () _____

Membership and fiscal year is Nov. 1 — Oct. 31 and dues are renewable by Oct. 15 **each year**. Dues submitted during September and October will apply toward membership for the coming full membership & fiscal year.

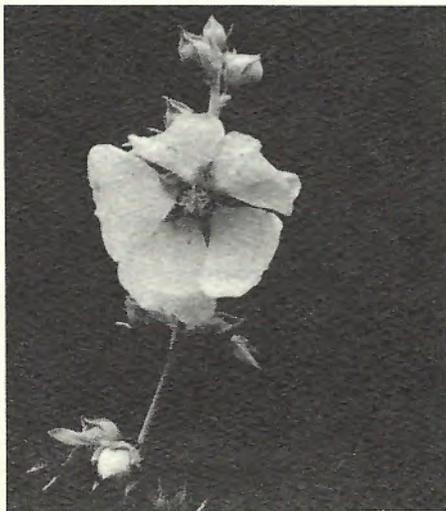
Please check membership category:

____ Student/Senior \$5.00 ____ Individual \$10.00 ____ Family \$15.00 ____ Patron \$25.00 ____ Associate (groups) \$25.00 ____ Supporting \$50.00
____ Sustaining \$100.00 ____ Corporate Sponsor \$125.00 ____ Life \$250.00

Gift Membership. Your Name: _____

**Make check payable to V.W.P.S. and mail to: Paul James
Route 2, Boones Mill, Virginia 24065**

KANKAKEE MALLOW



Kankakee Mallow, *Iliamna remota* is an erect perennial whose leaves are palmately lobed and somewhat resemble maple leaves. The flowers are pink with five petals and bloom in the upper axils in spike-like racemes. Generally it grows in gravelly soil. This is one of those rare plants that is known to grow in only a few places in the Continental United States. It can be found in a remote area of Botetourt County and because of its rarity, the land is protected by the Nature Conservancy.

WILDFLOWERS FOR MEDICINE AND FOOD

by Leza Crozier

This time of year everyone that even likes wildflowers a little is out trying to find the beautiful blooms. But for many, many years the wildflowers were more than a pretty little flower. The Indians and the Pioneers used the wildflowers for medicine and food! Some of the different things they were used for were:

Coltsfoot

By boiling the *fresh* leaves and adding sugar to the resultant extract, you can make an excellent cough syrup or a hard candy cough drop. The *dried* leaves can be steeped to make a fragrant tea.

Trout-lily

The very young *leaves* can be boiled for 10-15 min. and served with vinegar, or with butter as a vegetable. The bulbs were often stored in root cellars to be used as winter food. A trout-lily tea was supposedly a cure for the hiccups. Roman soldiers used it on foot sores and corns.

Hepatica

Was once thought to cure liver problems. It was also thought to cure lung diseases. Farmers knew it was almost time to start planting when they saw the small blooms of hepatica.

Bloodroot

The Indians used the sap from this plant as a war paint and as a dye for cloth and baskets. Pioneers put a drop of sap on a lump of sugar as

cough medicine. The sap had to be used sparingly when taken internally, because the roots are slightly poisonous. The Indians also used the juice as an insect repellent. It was also used as a medicine for sick mules.

Spring Beauty

The root can be eaten raw or baked. When eaten raw they have a sharp taste of radishes. When baked it has a taste and texture of a baked potato.

Cut-leaved Toothwort

The crisp root stocks are peppery-pungent; mixed with vinegar, and a pinch of salt, they can be substituted for horseradish. When chopped up they are a lively addition to salads. It was also thought to relieve toothaches, because the roots looked like teeth.

Heart leaf Ginger

Was used as a ginger flavoring. Mountain women used the root to ease aches and pains of pregnancy. A tea was often used to treat whooping cough. A candy was also made from the root.

Partridgeberry

Cherokee Indian women made a tea from the plant and drank it for a week before having a baby. They believed it would make labor easier. Coughs and colds were also treated with this tea.

As you can see from these examples, wildflowers have played an important role in the history and development of our country. Beautiful and useful, our wildflowers continue to be a subject worthy of study and preservation.

NEW MEMBERS

Loyd F. Allison
Route 2, Box 158-AB
Ferrum, Virginia 24088

Julia W. Ames
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Roanoke, Virginia 24015

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Lynchburg, Virginia 24503

Mary V. Blackwell
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Amherst, Virginia 24521

Becky Bondurant
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Betty Branch
118-A W. Campbell
Roanoke, Virginia 24011

Martha B. Brown
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Paul & Genevieve Bryant
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Hazel & Buddy Cash, Jr.
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Dianne Davison
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Lynchburg, Virginia 24503

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Ron & Alice Hanawalt
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4120 Woodridge Drive
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Gail R. MacFarland
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Salem, Virginia 24153

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2013 Burnt Bridge Rd.
Lynchburg, Virginia 24503

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Montvale, Virginia 24122

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This is a total of 135 members.

Our apologies to any members whose names have not been listed in previous newsletters.