

BLUE RIDGE CHAPTER

OF THE

VIRGINIA WILDFLOWER PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Vol. 3, No. 2 & 3

June and September 1986

JUNE PLANT SALE



On Saturday June 14, 1986 the BRC held its Second Annual Wildflower Plant Sale at the home of Paul James. This year the sale was open to the public. There was a paid advertisement in all four sections of Neighbors of the Roanoke Times & World News on Thursday 6-12-86. Also, there was a notice in the Roanoke Times & World News Calendar of the Week and What's Happening. Irvin Sharp and Ted Rogers both gave free TV and Radio advertising. This year members were given a 10% discount.

Bobby Toler made color prints of most of the plants that were for sale and had them laminated. They were hung over the plants for easy identification. Last year the members spent a lot of time locating them in Wildflower Guides so that customers could see what they were buying. So having a picture with the plant was a big help.

Dora Lee Ellington assembled the information and Bobby Toler prepared a computer print-out of the Plant Guide that was given to each person who bought plants.

Gail MacFarland, Carol & Bob Sharp, John & Evelyn Walke, Sam & Dora Lee Ellington, Ken & Pam Wieringo, Rich Crites, Buddy & Hazel Cash, Walter Bell, Bobby & Frieda Toler helped publicize, sell, carry plants to the cars, direct traffic and cashier. Esther Atkinson provided boxes. Thanks to each of them for their help.

Paul and Barbara James were gracious hosts and we appreciate their generous hospitality.

Thanks to Robert Eubank, Frank Noftsinger and Louie Eggleston, Bunky and Dana Markham for donating many of the nice plants that were sold. Many members gave flower pots, Walter & Barbara Bell gave potting soil and pots. Paul James, Sam & Dora Lee Ellington have been working since our plant sale last August (1985). They have taken cuttings, rooted plants, grown plants from seed, watered and given over 1500 plants the "Tender Loving Care" they need to grow and be the beautiful plants we had in the sale.

Thanks again to everyone for their wonderful support and encouragement.

MEMBERSHIP MEETING

DATE: October 2, 1986 TIME: 7:30 P.M.

PLACE: Multi-Purpose Room - Center in the Square

PROGRAM: Orson K. Miller, Jr.
well known mycologist of VPI-SU
will present a program about "Fall Mushrooms".

Election of Officers and Seed Exchange

Bring any seed you have from either cultivated or wild flowers. Have them in a container and properly labeled.

PLEASE ATTEND AND BRING A FRIEND!

Letter From The President

In January several of our members attended the first meeting of The Virginia Wilderness Resource Council held at Smith Mountain Lake. Here for the first time all special interest groups who use the national forest land came together for the purpose of developing a plan on how the new wilderness areas of Virginia would be managed. As a result of this meeting we are developing an excellent relationship with the Jefferson National Forest particularly the Blacksburg District. We have met several times with Mr. Terry Tipple and Mr. Ed Leonard of that office and they have been wonderful to work with. Not only have we agreed on several projects involving critical plant habitats but when Appalachian Power Company applied for a spraying permit to use herbicide spray to clear rightway along Little Stony Creek area in Giles County we were contacted about possible harm to the plant life that exist there. A meeting was set up and we met with Appalachian and Jefferson National Forest and visited the site and identified the areas we were concerned with. I am happy to report that we were able to save several orchid communities that occur along this distribution line and spraying will not occur in these areas.

This is the kind of co-operation that we hope to maintain and we are indeed pleased with the efforts on their behalf. We will continue in the months ahead to work to build a working relationship with the various highway departments and state and local governmental agencies so that when an area containing native plants of significance comes in jeopardy we will be able to respond.



LOBELIAS

by Virginia Nathan

Lobelias are among the most beautiful native wildflowers which bloom in mid to late summer. *Lobelia cardinalis*, cardinal flower or Indian pink, has long been the most popular. Its long spires of scarlet flowers can grow up to 4' tall. Plants are adaptable to sun or light shade but must have moist, well-drained soil. They have a shallow root system and benefit from a year-round layer of organic mulch. Plants will self seed when located in a favorable spot but individual plants tend to be short-lived perennials. For gardens, they should be propagated by sowing seed in fall or early spring, or by rooting offshoots in spring. Stem cutting can also be rooted in midsummer.

In the wild, cardinal flower is found in moderately acid soil in damp places, often along stream banks. The 1½ inch tubular flowers are chiefly pollinated by hummingbirds. Two cultivars are noted in Bailey's Hortus Third: 'Alba' which displays white blossoms and 'Rosea' with pink blooms.

More tolerant of shade and drier soil is *L. siphilitica*, the great or blue lobelia. Deep blue flowers are borne on stems usually somewhat shorter than those of cardinal flower and plants tend to be longer-lived. To establish plants, sow seeds in early spring or fall.

Because blue lobelia is adaptable to many sites, it self sows readily. Where it is not intended to spread, faded blossoms can be removed before seeds mature. Native sites for blue lobelia include swamps, lowland woods and fertile meadows. Two cultivars of note are 'Alba', white and 'Nana', a dwarf plant.

The floral show of *L. spicata*, palespike or spiked lobelia is earlier than that of the other two perennial lobelias. From late spring into early summer, small bluish violet or white flowers unfold on slender spikes up to 4' tall. The plants have a perennial or biennial habit and may be confused with a native annual *lovelia*, *L. inflata*, Indian tobacco. Palespike tends to be a simple plant with soft, erect hairs on the stem and few branches, whereas Indian tobacco is covered with rather coarse hair, is usually brached, and grows somewhat shorter (to 3'). Look closely at the base of the calyx tube to help distinguish them. The calyx tube of palespike is about ¼ inch long, scarcely inflated and not enclosing the fruit capsule. In Indian tobacco, the calyx tube is inflated to about ½ inch and it encloses the fruit capsule.

The native habitat of palespike is dry sandy soil in meadows or forests. Indian tobacco is found in a variety of sites often in poor soil. Look for it in fields, open woods, or along the roadside.

FERN PROPAGATION RECIPE

by Bob Tuggle

INGREDIENTS:

1. Gardners Charcoal (inexpensive, from K-Mart, etc.)
2. Vermiculite or Perlite
3. Potting Soil
4. Wardian Case (any closable glass or plastic container that you can get your hand into to remove small plants such as a wide mouthed peanut butter jar, etc.).
5. Fern Spores
6. Water
7. Indirect Sunlight

1. To the wardian case add a ½" layer of Perlite or Vermiculite; a ¼" layer of charcoal; and a 1" to 1½" layer of potting soil in that order. Saturate soil with water but not to the point that water is standing above the charcoal layer.
2. Sprinkle spores evenly on the top of the soil layer.
3. Put top on jar.
4. Time period for germination is from 10-days to 6-months depending on the species and condition of spores. Don't give up on a fern case until after the 6-month period. Small wardian cases are beneficial since they don't take up much room. Aspleniums are generally quick to germinate while dryopterids take longer.
5. Control moisture by removing the top of the fern case for evaporation or by misting. Do not pour water directly on the spores or developing ferns.
6. First you'll see cell division (green stuff). Second will come gametophytes (flat, round green things). Then tiny fronds. Transplant when the plant gets about an inch tall into another protected environment either a wardian case or a flat that can be kept moist. The plant is most easily lifted out by a small metal hook possibly formed from a paper clip. Expect differential development, you may be transplanting from a wardian case that still has cell division going on in it. Transplant outside when you think the fern looks strong enough. I usually set out in pots first so I can bring them back inside if required.
7. I don't sterilize soil, pots, wardian cases or anything else. I use bagged potting soil which should not contain contaminants. If you suspect contamination avoid using the material or sterilize it in low heat.

**We apologize for the delay in
publishing this newsletter.**

THE BACK WOODS

by Bruce Boteler

Over fifteen years ago, I stood on the back porch of my present home and watched a February snow slowly settle on the back woods. The only sounds heard through the silent snow were from a small creek at the bottom of the hill. I had already decided that I wanted to buy this house, but for some strange reason, my wife wanted to see the inside. The back yard area went out level for fifteen or twenty feet and the remainder was woods. The woods sloped down the hill about twenty feet to the creek and then up the side of Sugar Loaf Mountain. The woods were made up of large oaks, maples, tall straight poplars and a few enormous white pines. On the bank near the yard were dogwood, sassafras, witch hazel and some wild cherry trees.

The creek at the bottom of the hill ran steadily and only during periods of extreme dryness did the creek dry up. There were times when the water rushed and swirled down the creek from thunderous rainstorms. However, there were always enough pools of water along the bed to sustain a community of toads and peepers. This availability of water for satisfying thirst, and bathing attracted a profusion of birds to the back woods. For a number of years a pair of robins and blue jays chose our back porch for their home site. The blue jays built their nests mainly from sticks, twigs, and similar materials. The robins were lavish in the use of mud in their nest building. We have watched the robins labor long and hard making numerous trips from the creek carrying materials for their nests. Every three to four trips, the robin would rotate its body in the nest molding and forming the nest cavity. As they performed this task the nest took on its final shape and the robins orange breast feathers became encrusted in mud. The final nest structure was very solid. One year, because of the weight, the entire nest fell from the wisteria vines to which it was anchored. Fortunately no eggs had been laid. I fastened a small board in the vine, retrieved the nest, which surprised me by its weight, and set it on the board. It didn't appear to bother the robins, the female laid her eggs within a couple of days and began the task of rearing a family.

A number of years later in early summer we noticed numerous rivulets of water coming down through the woods on the back hill into the creek. From this point on the creek never ran dry and much more water flowed in the creek. There was so much water coming down through the back woods that it eroded the soil, carrying much of it further down the hill. The water at various points went underground only to emerge four or five feet further down. Areas of the back woods turned in to bog-like conditions. Many plants could not survive this excessive moisture and began to die. As spring arrived the next year, many trees had very few leaves or none at all. These trees were literally drowning. Woodland plants from previous years did not appear at all. Within a number of years after the woodland plants disappeared, other plants moved in such as swamp buttercups, jewelweed, and grasses. The canopy overhead had opened up and plants that liked moist sunny places thrived. Asters and coltsfoot moved in with

blackberry briars. All of this created excellent cover for birds.

The bird population increased. As well, the spring peepers set up a chorus in the spring and early summer. There was a variety of salamanders to be found in the rotting leaves along the waters edge. After a number of years, the variety and number of woodpeckers greatly increased. The many large, dead trees offered numerous opportunities for nesting cavities and a feast fit for any woodpecker lay just under the bark of the trees. A pair of ladder-backed woodpeckers took up residence and each year drilled out a hole and raised a family. These are very attractive birds and are easy to spot with the red coloring on the back of their head. Their call makes them easy to find. In addition to the ladder-back or red-bellied woodpecker as it is sometimes called, other woodpeckers enjoyed the abundance of dead trees. The hairy, the downy, the pileated, and the yellow-shafted flicker took up residence in the many dead trees. A few years ago a red-headed woodpecker made an appearance but only stayed for a few days.

In the evenings I started to hear the low quavering call of a screech owl. The owls may have been attracted by the availability of field mice in the open woods. I saw one of the owls on a few occasions. One summer evening near dusk I was sitting on the porch looking at the woods when my eye caught some movement and an adult screech owl and three offspring flew silently onto a nearby tree. They all sat there for a few minutes and then flew off in noiseless flight.

This spring I watched the yellow-flickers prepare for raising a family. They selected a tree and started to bore out a perfectly rounded hole for the nest cavity. The male flicker did most of the work. The female would fly in every fifteen to twenty minutes with calls of encouragement. As the cavity developed she would go inside and spend three or four minutes housecleaning. The woodchips and sawdust would fly out of the hole as she cleaned. On almost every occasion when the female returned, her calls of encouragement were not so much for the male's nest-building expertise but love calls. The male had no problem recognizing this love talk and quickly flew to the female for mating. Their nest-building and mating continued for the three or four days it took to finish the cavity.

When I thought the flickers had finished, they moved to another tree and proceeded to work on a hole in that tree. They appeared to finish this new nesting cavity in two to three days under the same rules as the first cavity. They can truly be described as taking their working and loving very seriously; there was not time to rest.

A number of weeks later I saw the parents feeding one youngster who had his head poked out of the nest. As soon as one of his parents came into view he would make all of the noise he could muster up to get fed quickly. Shortly after the offspring left the nest I could spot him in the woods with his parents.

Years ago when the taller trees were killed off by the water, I noticed that a lot of dogwoods, witch hazel, and a few other species were surviving in some places. Within a few years the dogwoods started to flower and small dogwoods started to appear where the soil was not too moist. By this time many of the large dead trees had fallen. They fell because of insect infestation, decay, high winds, or ice storms. They were down but not finished. They now provide good feeding areas for both insects and birds, mostly the woodpeckers. I have watched pileated woodpeckers tear away chips of wood from some of these fallen trees like a good Canadian lumberjack. On a few occasions I investigated the potential food supply hidden in these dead trees by tearing out some chunks of wood. Underneath one to two inches there is usually a veritable feast of larva, eggs, and insects. It is not wonder the pileated expends the energy to rip open the trunks of dead trees.

After eleven to twelve years of water running down the hill, the source dried up. Now the back woods had to depend on normal rainfall. When this happened I noticed fewer birds inhabiting the area. As well, I noticed grasses starting to take over the open areas, choking out the plants that thrived in the very wet conditions. Small trees started to spread into the open areas. The dogwoods seemed to have a head start. Because dogwoods had flowered for a number of years they produced seeds in profusion.

Now the back-woods are thick both with mature flowering dogwoods and many smaller trees. But now the competition is also coming in; the poplars and maples are starting to reach up with the younger dogwoods for sunlight. The oaks and other hardwoods appear to be growing slower. I suspect that the younger dogwoods will hold their own and flower for a time. But, within twelve to fifteen years the future belongs to the oaks, maples and poplars as they claim the upper canopy and the dogwoods flower less and thin out.

Years ago when I realized the numerous springs and flow of water on the hillside was going to mean the end of a lot of our trees, I was very upset. The backwoods at that time had many beautiful, mature trees. The very thing that had so attracted me to this home was now being destroyed. These woods were a source of beauty and enjoyment to me, but loving nature as I do my dismay soon turned to interest as I watched the many changes that were to take place in the coming years. I now realize I had the privilege to observe from my home Nature's succession in my own back-woods. I observed changes in the numbers and varieties of birds, wildflowers, and wildlife that depend on creeks and streams. All life is dependent on water and in this situation the factor which decimated a mature woods is the same life-sustaining gift from our Creator that will sustain new life. As the availability of water changed so did a phase end and a new one begin.

Science Museum of Western Virginia Wildflower Pilgrimage



BLUE RIDGE WINS AWARD

This year our chapter provided the wildflower display for the Roanoke Valley Wildflower Pilgrimage and won an award for the Best Educational Display presented by the National Council of State Garden Clubs, Inc. We hope many of you were able to see this display and we are proud that all plants displayed were cultivated by our members.



20 Questions - Quiz

What wildflower has a name that is the same or sounds the same as the following descriptions?

1. Ladies footwear _____
2. The "Achoo" plant _____
3. A preacher in an old-fashioned church _____
4. A valuable weed _____
5. What a fox needs on a cold day _____
6. A Hollander's trousers _____
7. A place where money is made _____
8. What an outfielder on a baseball team should do _____
9. The symbol of a Biblical king _____
10. A fabric made by a woman of nobility _____
11. A celestial phenomenon _____
12. What race drivers do _____
13. Name of Blondie & Dagwood's son _____
14. What a single man might wear in a coat lapel _____
15. A girl with blue eyes _____
16. A container to store seed _____
17. First lady member of the British Parliament _____
18. An intelligent weed _____
19. What Mr. Jacob used to paint the house _____
20. No more questions so _____ have to do

1. Lady's slipper; 2. Sneezeweed; 3. Jack in the pulpit; 4. Moneywort; 5. Foxglove; 6. Dutchman's breeches; 7. Mint; 8. Catchfly; 9. Solomon's seal; 10. Queen Ann's lace; 11. Shooting star; 12. Speedwell; 13. Alexander; 14. Bachelor's button; 15. Blue-eyed Mary; 16. Seedbox; 17. Aster; 18. Smartweed; 19. Jacob's ladder; 20. Thistle

NEW MEMBERS

Allen Austin
Route 1, Box 127-A
Bent Mountain, Va. 24059
Bill Bradley
Route 2, Box 289
Christiansburg, Va. 24073
Mrs. John D. Carr
2412 Robin Hood Road, S.W.
Roanoke, Va. 24014

Jenny Kidd
8216 College Dr.
Hollins, Va. 24019
Patty King
Route 2, Box 387
Fincastle, Va. 24090
Mary Susan Lane
Route 1, Box 127-A
Bent Mountain, Va. 24059
Frank and Dan Noftsinger
2437 Lincoln Ave., S.W.
Roanoke, Va. 24015

Robert and Elizabeth Peckham
Route 1, Box 253
Hardy, Va. 24101
E. F. Sprague
Box 31
Sweet Briar, Va. 24595
Mrs. Edward C. Suhling
1521 Arrow St.
Lynchburg, Va. 24503

BOOKER T. SURVEY

On March 29, several members of the chapter met at Booker T. Washington National Park to begin a floral survey project. Part of the survey is to identify and catalog the herbaceous plants found in the park. The other part involves running transects through the forest to determine the present composition of the forest and to see what changes can be expected in the future. Enough help was present to complete the forest transects. The data collected is being worked up by Greg Hinkle, a work study student in the biology department at VWCC. Two groups identified the herbaceous plants that were observed on this trip. However, additional trips will be needed to complete the survey of the plants.

BITS & PIECES

A Reminder — It is time to renew your membership in the VWPS. Membership and fiscal year is November 1 through October 31 and dues are renewable by October 15 each year. We need your continued support, ideas and interest in the VWPS and the Blue Ridge Chapter.

Annual Meeting and Auction — Thanks again to each of you for your generous donations to the auction. For those of you who attended hopefully it was a fun, relaxing weekend at the Mountain Lake Hotel.

From the Propagation Committee — The committee has asked for suggestions of plants members would like to have available to them to buy at the plant sales. They will try to obtain seeds and grow these plants.