

# **BLUE RIDGE CHAPTER**

OF THE

## **VIRGINIA WILDFLOWER PRESERVATION SOCIETY**

Vol. 4, No. 2

October 1987



### **AUTUMN NATURE WALK**



Fall Colors and Tree Identification

**OCTOBER 18** (SUNDAY) 2:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.

**LEADER: DOT BLISS**, retired Professor of Biology  
Randolph Macon Woman's College

Meet at Hollins Mill entrance to the Blackwater Creek Natural Area.  
Sponsored jointly by Friends of Lynchburg Stream Valleys and  
the Blue Ridge Chapter of the Virginia Wildflower Preservation Society

(See enclosed Map)

### **GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING**

**DATE:** October 26, 1987      **TIME:** 7:30 P.M.

**PLACE:** Multi Purpose Room - Center in the Square

**PROGRAM:** "The Arboretum at Virginia Western Community College"

Lee Hipp, Associate Professor of Horticulture  
Virginia Western Community College



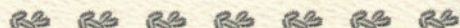
## Letter From The President

As the summer winds down, I hope you are getting ready to enjoy "Mother Nature's" colorful handiwork with our deciduous forest. How about making this season more interesting by keeping track of the different kinds of trees and their characteristic colors? Then, as you drive around, note the locations (habitats) of these different species. (A good way to study forest ecology in the fall.)

Thanks to Bobby and Frieda Toler for the display boards. We have used the display at the Appalachian Trail Conference in Lynchburg, The Blue Ridge Parkway Roanoke Mountain Campground and the Booker T. Washington National Park. The theme of the pictures on the display boards has been "The Orchids of Virginia".

I hope you were able to attend our fall outing to the Peaks of Otter on September 27. In addition to a picnic, there was time for some walks and general visitation with each other.

A special thanks to all who donated items for the auction. Also, thanks to the Peckhams for allowing us to help in the plant rescue at their place.



## SEARCH AND RESCUE

Extensive development is resulting in the loss of natural habitats for more and more of our plants. If you are aware of the impending destruction of areas containing rare or endangered species, please contact our Plant Rescue Committee. Members are Virginia Nathan, Blacksburg area; Sandra Elder, Forest; Bob Eubank, Lynchburg; Sidney Nash & Bob Tuggle, Martinsville; Sam & Dora Lee Ellington, Paul James & Ken Wieringo, Roanoke.



## ATTENTION Membership Renewal Due In October



I would like to take this time to remind each of you that the state organization is set up so that membership runs from October to October. I know that many of you renewed only a short time ago, however, I am asking that ALL members of the Blue Ridge Chapter please renew your membership at this time. Our local chapter chose not to drop members last year and waited for your renewals to come in all through the year. In order to bring our membership files in check with the state, we will be more strict about renewals this year. In order to be a member in good standing, please renew your membership promptly in October.

## Green or White Ash?

by Greg Lipscomb

The white ash, *Fraxinus americana*, and the green ash, *F. pennsylvanica*, are easily confused with one another. The genus tends to hybridize frequently and separate characteristics between the two species may be further altered because of their location. Elevation may also cause their characteristics to change.

There is disagreement among botanists as to whether green and red ash are one in the same tree or if green ash is a variety of red ash. The principal difference between the two is that red ash has densely hairy twigs, leafstalks and undersides of leaves. However, green ash seems to be the preferred name, or at least, the name used most often.

There is also the Biltmore ash which is either a variation of white ash or a true separate variety of white ash. The principal difference, again, being densely hairy twigs, leafstalks and undersides of leaves.

I have made a list of characteristics that will hopefully enable you to tell one from the other.

### WHITE ASH:

The white ash is generally an upland tree found in mountainous woods. It is the most common ash in our area and the most widely distributed in North America. The bark is furrowed with interlacing ridges that form a somewhat diamond-shaped pattern and may become slightly blocky and corky, as in var. Biltmore.

The leaves are opposite compound with 5 to 9 stalked, individual leaflets. They may be irregularly toothed or entire and may be obtuse or acute at their base. The terminal buds are blunt, brown and hairy, and the side buds are barely visible when the tree is leafed out. The twigs are somewhat green and have raised vertical lenticels. The rachis is usually deeply grooved on the upper side. Fruits or samara do not have long tapered seed.

### GREEN ASH:

The green ash is a lowland tree and not very common in our area. However, it is probably the second most widely distributed ash in North America. The bark is deeply furrowed with interlacing ridges that become shaggy with age. Even on upper branches, the bark may become slightly shaggy. The leaves are opposite compound with 5 to 9 leaflets. The leaflets are short stalked or often sessile, narrow, even almost willowlike at times. The leaves are always sharply toothed and very shiny, glabrous above. Terminal buds have a longer point than white ash and side buds are easily visible when the tree is leafed out. Twigs are brownish with raised vertical lenticels. Fruits or samara have a long tapered seed. The green ash is used more often in landscaping. Some places around Roanoke to see green ash are First Dominion Bank (Peter's Creek and Cove Road intersection, in back), the Roanoke Athletic Club (Starkey Road, S.W., near Tanglewood), and on the Hollins College Campus.

## STATE MEETING AND AUCTION

by Frieda Toler

Five members of the Blue Ridge Chapter attended the Annual VWPS State Meeting and Auction. These included Bob Eubank, Rich Crites, Connie Crites, Bobby Toler and Frieda Toler. The George Washington Hotel was headquarters for the activities. Each chapter had a display of wildflowers. While our chapter had only a small display, on Saturday evening Rich Crites showed slides of some of the past chapter activities. This was well received and a similar program probably will be presented again at future meetings.



Bob Eubank checks on wild rice.

The Friday evening program consisted of a slide-lecture of "Flowers of Tidewater Virginia". It is a different terrain with different and interesting plants from what we enjoy here in the mountains of southwest Virginia. The Saturday evening dinner-meeting was followed by a delightful program presented by Laura Martin.

Again this year the "What's It" slides were shown by Elaine Haug with lots of puzzling shots. Participation was good and was enjoyed by everyone.

One bit of state news — Cole Burrell is leaving the Washington area for an Arboretum directorship in Minnesota. He has been a very active VWPS member and will be missed by everyone.

It was a good meeting and the John Clayton Chapter Members were gracious hosts. It is always nice to renew friendships from across the state and naturally make a few new ones in the process.

## Peaks of Otter Picnic

by Frieda Toler

Sunday, September 27, 1987 was the perfect sunshine and clear sky day for a picnic. Thirty-one members of the Blue Ridge Chapter met about 2:00 p.m. for a picnic, followed by a short business meeting conducted by President Rich Crites. Some members met for breakfast at the Lodge and hiked before the picnic. Others enjoyed their wildflowers after the picnic. There were several stops along the Parkway to see Ladies tresses orchids, Stiff gentian, several goldenrods and asters. The fruiting structure of the Dutchman's-breeches were seen at Thunder Ridge. Also, deer were seen in several places to add to a most pleasant day.





## Bird Gardening

by Bob Eubank

Birdwatching has become a favorite hobby for people of all ages. Both those of us who watch birds for the pure joy of it and those who make work out of it end up trying to attract birds to our properties. The obvious method of attracting birds is to use thistle, sunflower seed, wild bird seed, and peanut butter and oatmeal mix feeders, but a better way is to use the feeders plus a landscape design that incorporates numerous food-producing flowers, shrubs, and trees.



Native plants are highly recommended for attracting birds because they have adapted to our climate and soil conditions and are already known to the birds. Many non-native plants have pest and disease problems that require constant attention.

Some of my choices of flowers to use in a bird garden are coreopsis, sunflower, chrysanthemum, marigold, California poppy, coneflower, columbine, cardinal flower, blue lobelia, evening primrose, tiger lily, and spider-flower. Flowering vines that provide food include morning glory, trumpet honeysuckle, Virginia creeper and trumpet-creeper. The tubular flowers will attract hummingbirds; the California poppy and spider-flower seeds will attract ground feeders such as doves; marigold seeds will attract goldfinches; and the sunflower seeds are eaten by nearly 45 species.

My shrub choices are Russian olive, Oregon grape, leather leaf viburnum, tea leaf viburnum, shrubby St. Johnswort, pyracantha, beautyberry, winter honeysuckle, and European cranberry. Using these shrubs near feeding stations provides protective cover, additional food, and draws more species of birds. For

example, the European cranberry is used as emergency food in mid to late winter by 32 species, including bluebirds and mockingbirds. I have also seen some great battles between bluebirds and a mockingbird over the tea leaf viburnum berries. Pyracantha and Russian olive are favored by about 20 species and can add cedar waxwings to your yard list.

Trees can also be planted which will attract birds other than the usual feeder types. Red cedar not only feeds 50 species, but is also used for nesting by the brown thrasher and chipping sparrow. Oak and black cherry should attract red-headed woodpecker; serviceberry should add hairy woodpecker; tulip poplar and American holly will add cedar waxwing; dogwood feeds 36 species, including pileated woodpecker; and white pine seeds are eaten by red crossbills.

Following are some plants whose fruits attract game birds: blackberries attract turkey, grouse and bobwhite; black cherry attracts grouse; and shrubby St. Johnswort and beautyberry feed bobwhite.

If you have water on your property, plants such as birch, oak, wild grape, and pickerelweed provide food for mallards and wood ducks. Redwing blackbirds and water fowl nest in cattails. Goldfinches are usually seen in alders, but this plant is also used by pine siskin. Let a mixture of wild grapes, Japanese honeysuckle and grasses run wild and the towhees will love it.

I have mentioned only a few plants that were already in place at Timberlake as well as others that the late Ruskin Freer and I have added to our properties there to attract birds, but there are many more. Plants that won't provide food but will provide cover and act as a windbreak are also very important. Scatter wild bird seed under shrubs in the winter, and you can observe typical feeder-box birds such as titmouse, chickadee, cardinal, purple finch and house finch dining alongside ground feeders such as song sparrow, white-throat sparrow, fox sparrow, towhee, and maybe even a tree sparrow.

An effective landscape design for the bird garden, especially the winter garden, will be pleasing to the eye and provide an enjoyable environment for both the birder and that very rare species when it pays a visit.

## CONFERENCE ON CONSERVATION OF RARE PLANTS

In Nov., 1986, the California Native Plant Society hosted the first-ever conference on the conservation of rare plants. The four day event, held in Sacramento, was cosponsored by, among others, the Nature Conservancy. More than 700 participants heard presentations on all facets of conservation & management, with particular emphasis on the legal aspects.

Information on the proceedings will be available by Fall, 1987. For details, contact California Native Plant Society, 909 12th Street, Sacramento, California, 95814.

## ATTENTION LYNCHBURG MEMBERS

There will be a meeting December 2, 1987 for members of the Blue Ridge Chapter in the Lynchburg area. The group will meet at Randolph Macon Woman's College, the Martin Science Building, Room 215 at 7:30 P.M. Dorothy Bliss will present a slide program on wildflowers.

The meeting is open to all Blue Ridge Members and anyone interested in joining the Virginia Wildflower Preservation Society is also invited.

## BOOKS

### Blue Ridge Parkway Collection

These are several books about the Blue Ridge Parkway that may be of interest to members.

**Blue Ridge Parkway: The First 50 Years** by Harley Jolley.

This anniversary edition is fitting tribute to an important milestone in the history of one of America's great motor roads. It commemorates the people and communities that contributed to the road's design, construction and development and tells the story of recreation and relaxation which is so much a part of the Parkway. Included are twenty four black and white photographs from Parkway archives and forty color photographs by William Bake. 45 pages.

**Blue Ridge Parkway: Agent of Transition** edited by Barry Buxton and Steven Beatty.

A compilation of presentations by scholars from across America at the Blue Ridge Parkway Golden Anniversary Conference ranging from plants and ecology to history and folklore. It is an important reference for those interested in alternative roadways. Many illustrations, 292 pages.

**Painting With a Comet's Tail: The Touch of the Landscape Architect on the Blue Ridge Parkway** by Harley Jolley.

Stanley Abbott, the first Resident Landscape Architect for the Blue Ridge Parkway, said that the Parkway project would be quite a challenge because he had to work "with a ten-league canvas and the brush of a comet's tail." That challenge was met and accomplished in one of the most traveled National Park areas of the United States. It is a story of reshaping the land, of blending man's needs into nature's system. It explains the importance of the touch of the landscape architect to the design of the Parkway. Illustrations, 48 pages.

**A Naturalist's Blue Ridge Parkway** by David T. Catlin.

A compact guide to the features of the Parkway including geology and natural inhabitants from the plants, insects, and fish to the reptiles, amphibians, birds and mammals. Milepost numbers and the points of interest are included. Photos and illustrations, 208 pages.



# Goldenrods

by Virginia Klara Nathan

Many wildflowers have to be searched out; consequently, they are known only by native plant enthusiasts. This is not the case with the goldenrods, *Solidago* spp. Bright yellow plumes wave gracefully along roadsides and in vacant areas from July until November drawing the attention of all passers.

Such a showy plant should be a prime candidate for late season color in perennial plantings, but goldenrods have been maligned and therefore shunned by most American gardeners. Goldenrod is so conspicuous it usually gets the blame for fall hay fever. Actually, ragweed, *Ambrosia* spp. is the major culprit of nasal distress. Ragweeds bloom at the same time as goldenrods, but their small, dull, yellow-green flowers do not attract the eye of humans, nor many insect pollinators. For fertilization, ragweeds produce large quantities of light pollen which is carried by the wind to other plants. By comparison, the pollen of goldenrods is too heavy to be airborne long, and bees are the principal pollinators.

North American gardeners have also branded goldenrod as a roadside weed further reducing its acceptance in landscapes, but Northern Europeans have recognized the ornamental properties of plants for years. They use goldenrods liberally to enliven gardens in autumn. Unlike many tall flowers, goldenrods grow sturdy and upright, thus requiring no staking. Plant forms tend to improve under cultivation but some

goldenrods can become aggressive and weedy in rich soil. Flower heads make long lasting cut flowers and can be dried for winter bouquets. Recently, dried sprays have been showing up in herbal wreaths and fall wall ornaments. Luckily, goldenrods are in heavy supply in meadows and on waste lands throughout the country.

Over 125 species of *Solidago* grow in the U.S. Many interbreed readily making it difficult to differentiate species. Some of the common natives have good ornamental qualities.

*Solidago rugosa*, rough-leaved goldenrod, occurs in low woods and meadows. Its long, arching flower sprays are displayed on four foot tall stems. Plants spread by rhizomes and need plenty of room (at least 3' in all directions) to avoid crowding out other plants.

*S. rigida*, coarse goldenrod, develops dense rounded or flat-topped flower heads. Three to five foot flowering stalks develop from deep-rooted clumps.

*S. speciosa* is called showy goldenrod because it forms large, club-shaped, terminal flower clusters on 5-6' stalks.

*S. altissima*, tall goldenrod, and *S. gigantea*, giant goldenrod, can fill out an area rapidly as their rhizomes extend. Both can grow to 7' tall and are excellent for naturalizing sunny banks. *S. altissima* blooms several weeks before *S. gigantea*.

*S. caesia* bears the common name of wreath or blue-stemmed goldenrod because a white

bloom covers its smooth purplish stems producing a blue cast.

*S. odora*, sweet goldenrod, a native of open woods and dry meadows, exudes an anise scent when bruised. It is a short species (2-3') which blossoms early. Tea has been made from the fragrant leaves.

*S. bicolor*, silverrod, is a species easily overlooked. Its white ray flowers visually dominate the yellow dish flowers producing cream-colored inflorescences.

Garden catalogs feature a few goldenrods for sale. Most of these are hybrids of *S. canadensis*, native to eastern North America, and *S. Virgaurea*, a species found in Europe, Asia and northern Africa.

Mid-autumn is seed collection time for goldenrods. Seeds remain on the stalks several weeks after the first frosts. Seeds should be left on plants until they turn from white to off-white or gray. Germination is often poor as less than 5% of the seed fully develops and is viable on most plants. Collect enough to sow thickly to account for poor germination and transplant losses. Plants grow from seed bloom in the second year.

Divisions of mature plants can be made every 3-4 years in early spring. Big plants will separate into 30 or more pieces, making division the easiest way to increase one's supply of goldenrods.

When identifying goldenrod, follow this basic information.

First, decide about the type of bloom as shown in the following illustrations.



plumelike,  
graceful



elm-  
branched



clublike,  
showy



wandlike,  
slender



flat-  
topped

Second, note the type of leaf structure as shown below.



parallel-veined (or nerved)



feather-veined