

Blue Ridge Wildflower Society

A CHAPTER OF THE
VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Vol. 20, No. 2

April, 2003

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- April 26 Green Hill Park Field Trip.** Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the park. Take West Main Street in Salem to just west of the Old Virginia Brick Company. Turn onto Duiguid's Lane, cross the bridge and turn into the park. Rich Crites, 540-774-4518.
- May 3 Curry Mountain Field Trip.** Meet at the Daleville Park & Ride at 10:30 a.m. This area, while good for botanizing, does not have a place to enjoy lunch. Cindy Burks, 540-977-0868.
- May 10 Nineteenth Annual Spring Plant Sale,** Community Arboretum at Virginia Western Community College, 9:00 a.m. - noon. No plants may be selected or sold prior to 9:00. Rain or shine! If you need pots to prepare for your donations to the sale, contact Paul Cowins in Lynchburg, 434-239-4884, or in the Roanoke area, Cindy Burks, 540-977-0868.
- May 17 Hopalong Cassidy Trail and Roaring Run Field Trip.** Meet at 9:30 at the Daleville Park & Ride. After botanizing the shale barren, we will go to Roaring Run. Esther Atkinson, Dora Lee Ellington and Frieda Toler will lead the Cassidy walk and Cindy Burks will lead the Roaring Run walk. Cindy, 540-977-0868.
- May 19 General Membership Meeting,** 7:00 pm., Center in the Square. Matt Chumbley, Supervisor for the Discovery Center at Mill Mountain, will be our speaker. Please note the change of date to the third Monday of May. We will meet in the classroom down the hall from our regular meeting room.

There will be a board meeting at 5:00 (same location). Bring your supper.

OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST

- April 22 - 29 Great Smoky Mountains 53rd Annual Wildflower Pilgrimage.** The program will include a week's worth of activities, lectures and field trips. Contact them at Great Smoky Mountains National Park, 107 Park Headquarters Road, Gatlinburg TN 37738, 865-436-1290 or go to <http://www.goldsword.com/wildflower/pilgrimage.html>.
- May 9- 11 Wintergreen Nature Foundation 20th Annual Spring Wildflower Symposium.** Lectures, workshops and field trips. Contact them at Wintergreen Nature Foundation, P. O. Box 468, Wintergreen VA 22958, 434-325-8169 or www.twnf.org.
- July 24 - 26 Cullowhee Native Plant Conference.** Western Carolina University, Cullowhee NC. Contact Elaine Nash, 770-992-7292 or einash33@bellsouth.net.

President's Letter

Butch Kelly

Hurrah! We have survived a wild and cold winter. The wildflowers are on a more normal schedule this year. I have just completed a trip to Smoky Mt. National Park. It was quite interesting traveling down I81 and watching spring unfold before my eyes. It only took a small change in elevation to see the change in floral development.

Once I arrived at the park, elevation became even more evident. Gatlinburg is in a valley. Rain and more rain fell as the days flashed by. The temperatures were in the low 40's at night and 50's during the day. On Thursday night I thought I was about to meet Noah. Everything was flooding. Our group was planning on a trip to Newfound Gap to photograph the sunrise on Friday morning. 10 inches of snow and the closure of U.S. 441 altered the plans. Mt. LeConte received 13 inches of snow. On Saturday morning we were able to climb the mountain and witness a beautiful sunrise. It was the first view of the sun in 5 days.

The descent from Newfound Gap revealed a drastic change in season. The snow cover on the mountain slowly changed to a carpet of spring ephemerals. The rain had beat and battered the usual floral splendor. Photo shooting was anything but ideal. The last stop was The Chimneys. I did get a good shot of Squirrel Corn. Most flowers were droopy and soggy. From there I changed my perspective. I sat on a rock and just took in the whole scene. The trees were budding out and a gentle breeze on my face made me appreciate the place. I just sat and tried to feel the surroundings with my senses.

The moral of the story is nature can be very satisfying even if the conditions are not perfect. Try and take some trips from the Roanoke Valley to some of our higher elevations. A trip up the Parkway, a hike up a mountain on the Appalachian Trail, or a ride up to Bent Mt. will allow you to experience our spring several times over. Get out in the rain and see the flowers in a different light. The petals of flowers become translucent. By all means get out and enjoy spring. Its time is so fleeting.

Annual Spring Plant Sale

Our Nineteenth Annual Spring Plant Sale is scheduled for Saturday, May 10, at the Community Arboretum at Virginia Western Community College. The sale is from 9:00 a.m. until noon or until the supply is exhausted. No plants will be selected or sold before 9:00 a.m.

Now is the time to begin potting as plants need three to four weeks to become established before the sale. As you divide your garden, be thinking of what you might like to share for the sale. If you need pots or have questions, contact Cindy Burks, 540-977-0868 or Paul Cowins, 434-239-4884.

All plants need to be at the Arboretum no later than 8:30 a.m. PLEASE HAVE THEM LABELED.

Don't miss this opportunity to share what you have or to purchase plants for yourself and for friends.

Your help is needed not only donating plants but also arranging and pricing prior to the sale and helping people make selections or carry their purchases to their vehicles. We hope to see you there.

Scholarships

Once again, the Blue Ridge Wildflower Society has awarded scholarships to two biology students and two horticulture students.

Emilee Cox, a biology student, took Rich Crites' summer wildflower class and is signed up to take the spring class. She has maintained a 3.0 GPA. Her brother received one of our scholarships last year and he is now at VPI.

Jason Thompson took Rich's wildflower class last summer and his (Rich's) Biological Problems in Contemporary Society class in the spring. He has maintained a 3.3 GPA.

Last fall both Jason and Emilee took Mrs. Holtman's ecology class, thinking to transfer to VPI.

Paulette Chitwood is a transfer student who entered the horticulture program in spring, 2002. She currently has a 3.9 GPA and is taking four courses this spring semester. After completing four additional courses this summer she will be awarded the AAS degree with a specialization in landscaping. Paulette plans to seek employment as a landscape designer specializing in historic properties.

Greg Hudson entered the horticulture program in fall, 2002, also majoring in landscaping. He has a 3.6 GPA and plans to complete his degree requirements by the end of the fall, 2003, semester. Greg will seek employment in the landscaping industry.

Our congratulations to these students. We wish them well as they pursue their careers.

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Blackhaw Viburnum

Bob Eubank

If you want a plant to help attract birds and butterflies in mid-spring, *Viburnum prunifolium* (Blackhaw viburnum) is an ideal choice. Its spectacular blooms reach their peak during May. Although this large native shrub begins blooming in late April, it becomes very noticeable in May when its horizontal branches are covered with large flat-topped creamy white cymes.

The rigid horizontal branches and thorn-like twigs resemble hawthorn, which is why the common name Blackhaw was given to this viburnum. The leaves are glossy green in the spring and resemble those of wild cherry, thus the assigning of the name *prunifolium* (leaves of *Prunus*) to this plant.

Blackhaw viburnum is native from Connecticut to Florida and west to Michigan and Texas. Bark from the roots was used by North American Indians to heal stomach, intestinal track, mouth and throat ailments. The Indians made decoctions to alleviate chills and fever and to relieve heart palpitations. Blackhaw berries also seemed to be the choice medicine for ulcers. Thomas Jefferson used this plant at Monticello two centuries ago, and it is among the natives grown there today.

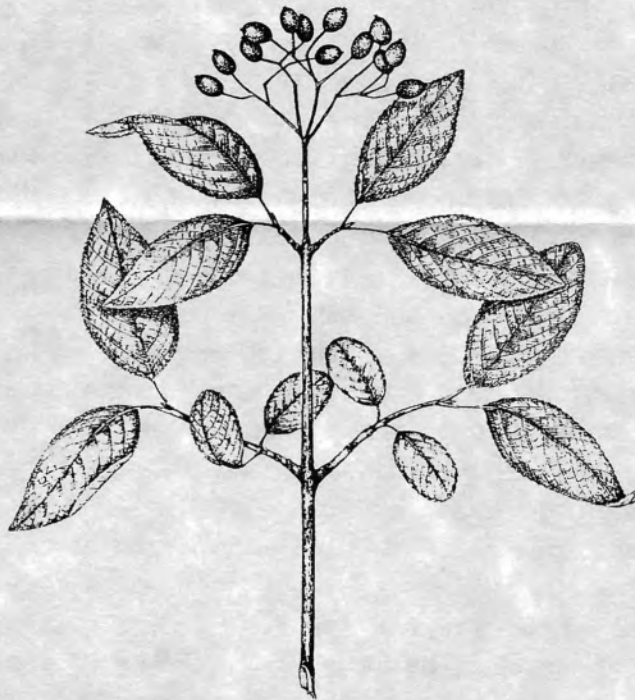
Although Blackhaw is still very common and one of the most beautiful shrubs along the East Coast, I receive many calls each year to identify a strange, never-before-seen shrub or small tree that turns out to be Blackhaw viburnum. This shrub

has no major disease or insect problems, is mildew resistant and can be used not only in hedgerows but is so exceptionally ornamental that it can stand alone. Blackhaw will grow well in many types of soil from dry to damp, poor to rich, in sun or shade. Dr. Ruskin Freer planted Blackhaw at the edge of his lake property more than a half century ago, and it is still performing today as are specimens planted in much drier woodland soils on higher ground.

The beautiful flowers are a nectar source for butterflies and humming-birds, and the bluish-black fruit in September is eaten by numerous species of birds and mammals, including man.

I tried eating the fruit many years ago at the suggestion of Dr. Freer and continue to enjoy doing so every chance I get.

Blackhaw viburnum transplants easily and can be propagated from softwood cuttings, root cuttings and layering.



Blackhawa Viburnum
Viburnum prunifolium L.

BRWS Website

Tom Brock, our chapter vice president, has been working to develop a website for us.

If you have access, visit us at

http://members.tripod.com/blueridge_wildflower

or e-mail to

blueridgewildflowersociety@cox.net.

We appreciate the time and effort Tom has put into this project.

(I do not have computer access, so cannot be contacted by this method.-Ed.)

Lynchburg Area Members

Dorothy C. Bliss

Just a week after spring had officially arrived, a fast-morning snowstorm transported our world into the depths of winter. Masses of white snow clung to the trees and quickly changed the landscape into a fairyland of branches bowed down under a deep mantle of wet snow. By nightfall most of the snow had disappeared and soon the spring flowers and developing leaf buds once again emerged, most undamaged from the unexpected snow cover. Spring rains and winter ice and snow will help replenish the soil with moisture which has been severely depleted by the continued drouth of the past few years.

Most of the early spring flowers in the R-MWC Botanic Garden appear to be thriving and I was pleased to note recently that the yellow lady slippers are putting up several stalks and the shooting stars have broken the soil and will soon be in bloom. Many of the ephemerals have made their appearance in the Botanic Garden. Among the earliest blossoms emerging in late March were those of bloodroot, bleeding heart, Greek Valerian, rue anemone, shortia, Dutchman's Breeches and shale barren phlox. This is only the beginning of the floral display for new flowers will make their appearance in rapid succession during the upcoming months.

Most of the nearly 200 species originally planted in the Botanic Garden have thrived but since its inception in 1994 there has been a loss of a few plants. Among those that have vanished are fire pink, showy aster, spring beauty, hepatica and bluets. There are probably many reasons why these and a few other plants did not persist more than a few years. Unsuitable soil condition and the continued drouth may have taken their toll but perhaps even more significant especially for *Echinacea* spp. is the increasing shade as the shrubs and trees have matured. This spring *Silene virginica* has been re-introduced to a relatively sunny hillside spot and more ferns have been added to some of the shadiest parts of the Garden.

Following a successful spring work trip in March, the Garden was impressive with its clearly defined paths and mulched beds. I give special thanks to those faithful volunteers who have made this Garden possible. We can always use more volunteers since weeding is a never-ending task. Already I have noted thousands of tiny ash seedlings that are sprouting in every nook! If you would like to join the volunteers for a few hours of work and fellowship a month, please contact me at 434-845-5665.

I hope you will stop by and enjoy the beauty and quiet of the Garden soon. The gate is always open.

Plant Invaders

Dorothy C. Bliss

I would like to recommend the booklet "Plant Invaders of Mid-Atlantic Natural Areas" published by the National Park Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2002. This illustrated publication includes some very helpful information concerning more than 50 invasives, herbaceous plants, shrubs, trees and vines. Each is illustrated and described as to origin, ecological threat, biology, prevention and control. Most importantly, several native alternatives are described and pictured. This latter is especially helpful to the gardener or homeowner who wishes to replace an invasive exotic with a suitable native plant. For example six plants - spicebush, northern bayberry, arrowwood, blackhaw, gray dogwood and winterberry are suggested as substitutes for the aggressive autumn olive. Garlic mustard unfortunately is thriving in many of our wooded areas where it is fast displacing the native wildflowers. As replacements the authors suggest Canada ginger, foam flower, creeping phlox, lady fern, evergreen wood fern and/or New York fern.

I believe this informative booklet would be a great source of helpful suggestions for anyone trying to solve an invasive problem.

In Memoriam

We were saddened to learn of the death of Virginia T. Meloy on March 12, 2003. She was a long-time member of the Blue Ridge Wildflower Society and was also involved with the Fincastle Garden Club and the Blue Ridge Embroiderers Guild. Virginia was the sister of our late members Bobby Toler and Tom Toler.

Our sympathy is extended to her family.