

# Blue Ridge Wildflower Society

A CHAPTER OF THE  
VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Vol. 20, No. 1

February, 2003

## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- March 8 VNPS Winter Workshop.** Biodiversity: Virginia's Keystone is the subject of this year's workshop. University of Richmond, Biology Department, Gottwald Auditorium. You should have received details and a registration form directly from VNPS.
- March 15 Randolph-Macon Woman's College Botanic Garden Spring Work Day.** Come help prepare the garden for the upcoming seasons. Please bring hand tools. We will work from 2:00 - 4:30. **Rain date is March 22.** Dot Bliss, 434-845-5665.
- March 15 Virginia Western Community Arboretum Work Day.** Come help with spring cleanup at the Arboretum. Please bring hand tools. We will work from 2:00 - 4:30. There is no rain date. Rich Crites, 540-774-4518.
- March 22 Pedlar Hills Natural Area Preserve.** Mike Leahy, with the Division of Natural Heritage, will lead a joint walk with the Sierra Club and the BRWS. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the Salem Public Library to carpool to Elliston. Four mile moderately strenuous (500' elevation change) walk. Bring your lunch. We expect to be back in Salem before 5:00 p.m. Butch Kelly, 540-384-7429.
- March 24 General Membership Meeting,** 7:00 pm., Center in the Square. Rich Crites will share slides of his trip out west.
- March 29 Catawba Field Trip.** Meet at the Homeplace (Restaurant) at 1:00 p.m. We will go to Dry Run and other areas then return to have a meal at the Homeplace around 4:30 p.m. Butch Kelly, 540-384-7429.
- April 12 Waid Park Field Trip.** Meet at 10:00 a.m. Take Route 40W out of Rocky Mount, turn onto Six-Mile Post Road (Route 640) at the traffic light by Forty West Food Faire. Go to Route 800 then turn left. The park is part of the original Carolina Road. Bring your lunch. Al & Vi Sheridan, 540-721-8189.
- April 13 Glen Maury Park Field Trip in Buena Vista.** Meet at the park entrance at 2:00 p.m. Bring your supper and we will picnic at the pavilion. Wonderful area for spring flowers. To carpool from Roanoke, meet at the Daleville Park & Ride at 1:15 p.m. To carpool from Lynchburg, meet at the BB&T bank in Boonsboro Shopping Center at 1:15 p.m. Paul Cowins, 434-239-4884.
- April 19 Arcadia Field Trip.** Rich Crites has invited us to join his class on this trip to the Peaks and Arcadia. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the Peaks of Otter Visitor Center. Rich, 540-774-4518.
- April 19 Birds and Blooms.** This will be a joint field trip with the Roanoke Valley Bird Club. Meet near Bo'jangles at the Botetourt Commons Shopping Center in Daleville at 8:00 a.m. Bring your lunch. Butch Kelly, 540-384-7429.
- 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 26 General Membership Meeting,** 7:00 p.m., Center in the Square.

**Please Note: We will continue to meet at Center in the Square. We will not be moving to Virginia Western Community College as discussed at the November 2002 General Membership Meeting.**

## President's Letter

Butch Kelly

Soon the skunk cabbage will poke its head through the snow from a long winter's nap. This will be followed soon thereafter with the emergence of spring ephemerals. That means another spring of colorful forest floors. Insects will be buzzing and we will all be out and about celebrating the opportunity to botanize.

I want to thank the membership of our society for giving me the opportunity to serve you as president once again. Hopefully, there will be new places for finding wildflowers and enjoying our favorite pastime. The society needs new blood and more folks to become active. Our membership has waned somewhat. I need your help with suggestions on wildflower trip possibilities and program ideas.

I plan on a great year for us to enjoy spring's rebirth and to find our favorite haunts full of color and growth this year.

## In Memoriam

We were saddened to learn of the death of Kent Summers on October 7, 2002.

Kent was a longtime member of the Blue Ridge Wildflower Society. He was also an active member of the Roanoke Valley Bird Club, the Virginia Society of Ornithology and the Butterfly Society of Virginia, Woodpecker Ridge Chapter.

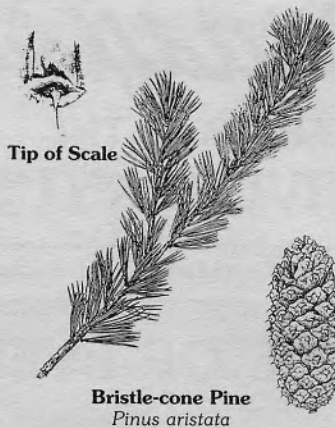
Our sympathy is extended to Kathy and the family.

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## The Bristlecone Pine - The Oldest Known Tree

Dorothy C. Bliss

A recent article in our Lynchburg News concerned cloning of the world's oldest known tree. For many years the General Sherman sequoia in the High Sierras of California was considered the oldest living thing on our planet, at 3800 years. The age of a tree can be accurately calculated by extracting a core through the woody tissue to the center, then counting the yearly rings with the aid of a microscope. This past December, members of the Champion Tree

Project collected six cuttings and some pinecones from a bristlecone pine, *Pinus aristata* v. *longaeva*, growing at an elevation of over 10,000 feet in the Inyo National Forest on the California-Nevada border. Scientists in a laboratory at the University of California will attempt to propagate this tree by means of tissue culture of microscopic cells from the shoot tips. These, it is hoped, will develop into clones of this ancient tree.

Rutherford Platt in *Our Great American Forest* writes "The bristlecone trees are gaunt runts. Many which died more than a hundred years ago are still standing, their skeletons silver gray, splintered, burnished by blowing sand. They do not rot because even bacteria of decay cannot tolerate such aridity and because oxygen is at a premium at such an altitude. But thanks to the seepage of water from the snowpatch and a breath of moist air in the night, this sparse relic of a forest not only lives but produces sturdy embryos, as shown by a number of young trees scattered about."

## 2002 - 2004 Officers

President	Butch Kelly	540-384-7429
Vice President	Tom Brock	540-774-9021
Secretary	Betty Kelly	540-384-7429 540-562-3900 x 288
Treasurer & Editor	Pam Wieringo	540-343-8596 540-772-3660

## Board of Directors

Propagation	Paul Cowins	434-239-4884
Plant Sale	Rich Crites	540-774-4518
Site Registrar	Sandra Elder	434-525-8433
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Historian	Frieda Toler	540-366-0239
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	Vi Sheridan	540-721-8189

## Also Serving

Cindy Burks	540-977-0868
Lucille Cowins	434-239-4884
Dora Lee Ellington	540-989-4742
Al Sheridan	540-721-8189
Hugh Smith	540-774-8392

## Swamp Rose

Bob Eubank



Swamp Rose  
*Rosa palustris*

*Rosa palustris*, also known as swamp rose, is one of our native wild roses that not only provides beauty in the landscape but also serves as a source of food for birds.

It blooms for more than six weeks, beginning about mid-spring, with beautiful, fragrant magenta blooms and also provides one of the prettiest winter scenes in nature and in gardens with its purplish red bark and abundant scarlet rosehips. The rosehips, which measure 1/2 inch in diameter, provide important winter food for birds beginning about mid-winter but especially in late winter when food is scarce. Bird species such as cardinal, mockingbird, robin, thrush, bluebird, bobwhite, towhee, white throat, and many others eat the delicious vitamin-rich rosehips.

*Rosa palustris* is a tough and disease-resistant plant that, unlike pampered hybrid roses, does not require chemical controls that endanger birds, bees, and butterflies. It is called swamp rose because it grows naturally in wet or damp spots such as floodplains, margins of swamps, and

along streams and springs in eastern North America and into Canada. It cultivates easily and though it doesn't like extremely dry conditions, it does not need to be grown in a swamp. Yards and gardens with poor drainage areas are also ideal for this plant. Try using it around birdbaths or water features to create a natural scene.

The canes usually grow to around six feet tall, but some of my plants have grown to approximately eight feet, with arching canes, which give the plant a nice shape. When massed, the effect of *Rosa palustris* is breathtaking, not only when it is in flower, but also in winter with its striking bark and rosehips.

*Rosa palustris* can be propagated easily from stratified seed, softwood and hardwood cuttings, layering, and root division. My collection came from successful cuttings and layering, although *Rosa palustris* and close relative *Rosa virginiana* (another great native shrub) are also available at various native plant nurseries.

## Doing Something Right

Esther Atkinson

Having the right habitat for birds and butterflies can be a challenge. It takes planning, decisions and lots of work. The results aren't often what was planned on paper before the actual work began, especially after very dry weather conditions. In spite of this, most of the flowers in my garden were beautiful. Lots of newspaper was used as mulch.

Plans were to have flowers to attract hummingbirds and butterflies. The butterfly bushes had been planted in three different locations. After seeing these bushes in other gardens, with more than one color of blossoms, a huge hole was dug and all three plants were put together. It makes for a more colorful shrubbery plus the hummingbirds and butterflies add even more color. Cannas were another favorite for the hummers. It was interesting to watch goldfinches taking seeds from the evening primrose. The monarchs and other butterflies delighted the observer by feeding on the red zinnias, cosmos and phlox.

Trying for years to have bluebirds

nest in your yard can be rewarding when it does happen. Watching them checking out the neighborhood, I placed a new house in an appropriate location. Several times they checked the house but didn't move into it. House sparrows had their eyes on it, however, and moved in quickly. They were evacuated three times, trying to encourage the bluebirds. It was noted a new nest was being built and shortly a wren seemed to be taking up residence. Wrens start several nests before the female can decide where she wants to live. The wren was considered a good tenant and the nest was not destroyed until it was certain that she was not returning.

Finally, Mr. and Mrs. Bluebird had reached a decision to build. In the meantime, the owner, with the help of a friend, put an extra piece of wood at the entrance of the house. This has been designed to give depth to the entrance so that long-beaked birds cannot reach in and destroy the eggs or little ones. For weeks it was exciting to watch flashes of blue as they

gathered food for their brood of five. The thrill of watching their busy lives was neat. They did not return to raise a second family.

One day while taking a lunch break, partially concealed by the butterfly bush, I watched the squirrels speeding along the utility lines as if they were on Interstate 81. It was an extremely hot day and five or six sparrows were at the bird bath for a communal bath while another was drinking the same water. Butterflies, looking like flying flowers, were checking for the best nectar from flowers which had received TLC especially to provide for them and for the birds. All of this, plus the bluebirds, makes you realize you must be doing something right.

There's a little bunny and a chipmunk who think this is home; a raccoon, though an uninvited guest, thinks it is okay to trespass on the front porch. The squirrels can be a nuisance and thank goodness, there is only one rabbit.

One can revel in all the beauty when time is taken for it.

## Lynchburg Area Members

Dorothy C. Bliss

### A Success Story – The Tennessee Coneflower

In recent years the coneflowers have become familiar to us in the home garden landscape and as a source of herbal remedies. Extracts of the underground rhizomes have been shown to stimulate the immune system but in general, research data do not back up claims of curative powers and benefits from these plants and, as a result, in 1946 coneflowers were removed from the pharmacists' reference book.

The *Atlas of Virginia* lists *Echinacea pallida* for two southwestern counties and the extreme northwestern portion of Frederick County and *E. purpurea* (not distinguished from *E. laevigata*) in 12 counties in mid-to-southwestern Virginia. This flower attracts both butterflies and goldfinches. The latter perch on the stems and consume the ripened seeds.

The Tennessee coneflower, *E. tennesseensis*, is a rare species, endemic to the red cedar glades and balds of central Tennessee. The rays of these beautiful rose-colored flowers are not reflexed but held in a cupped or upright position. It is drought-tolerant and requires ample sunshine. It was thought to be extinct but was discovered by Dr. Elsie Quarterman in 1969 and placed on the Endangered Species List. In its native haunts, the Tennessee coneflower is now flourishing due to the efforts of various conservation groups. In fact, the population of this species is abundant and secure and she has made a formal request to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that it be removed from the Endangered Species List.

We have tried to grow the Tennessee coneflower in the Randolph-Macon Woman's College Botanic Garden but all efforts have been unsuccessful. This plant is drought tolerant but in each instance it has died within two or three years, probably because of the extensive shade in the Garden.

## Deer Population and Our Deciduous Forest

Within the City of Lynchburg and the surrounding area, we are all too aware of the devastation of shrubbery and other garden plants by marauding deer. My hosta plants and pansies around the foundation of my home disappeared several years ago. I no longer attempt to grow either of these, but Christmas fern, non-native Nandinas, some white azaleas and a few other species survive. If food is scarce, few plants are immune to deer activity.

Several interesting but devastating articles on the explosion of the deer population in eastern U.S.A. appeared in the Science Times section of the New York Times for November 12, 2002. Today the population of the white-tailed deer has reached 20 million and there are more than 100 human deaths a year and a billion dollars in damage resulting from vehicular collisions with deer.

The effect of the out-of-control deer population was dramatically brought to my attention in the comparison of several research experiments that involved 8' fenced and adjacent unfenced forested areas over a period of several years. Outside the fenced area in Posey Hollow in the Blue Ridge near Front Royal, the only plants left unharmed were the mature oak trees. Tree seedlings and most of the wildflowers had disappeared. The dominant vegetation was Japanese barberry and other non-native flora. The protected beds had abundant wildflowers including Trilliums. Similar changes have occurred in a forested area near Pittsburgh that had been

fenced off. Photographs of the protected and non-protected areas dramatically illustrated the difference. The open areas were nearly barren of ground vegetation while the fenced plots showed abundant wildflowers and seedlings.

You may recall that in a recent article in this newsletter, I had described the near disappearance of Trillium at Thunder Ridge on the Blue Ridge Parkway and its replacement by mayapple. This region bordering the Parkway is not open for hunting and deer are able to roam freely. Perhaps this is a possible explanation for loss of Trillium.

If the eastern forest is to continue without drastic changes, more effective and diverse methods of control of the deer population must be instituted. In the past, predators of deer, such as wolves, have been eliminated. Drawn by the ever-expanding deer population, cougars or mountain lions are gradually moving eastward. This may present other problems. Except in a few instances many attempts at lowering the deer population – hunting, sharpshooting, trapping, birth control, repellants, etc. – have not made a great impact. I do not know the solution but hope that our mixed deciduous forest will be able to continue in all its diversity.

### Spring Work Day

Saturday, March 15, 2:00 - 4:30 p.m. Spring work day in the Randolph-Macon Woman's College Botanic Garden. Please join us to prepare the Garden for the coming year. If possible, bring hand tools. Rain date is March 22, 2:00 - 4:30 p.m. Dorothy Bliss, 434-845-5665.

## Other Events of Interest

**March 22**

**Garden Fair at Discovery Center at Mill Mountain.** From 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. BRWS will be represented.

**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](http://www.twnf.org).