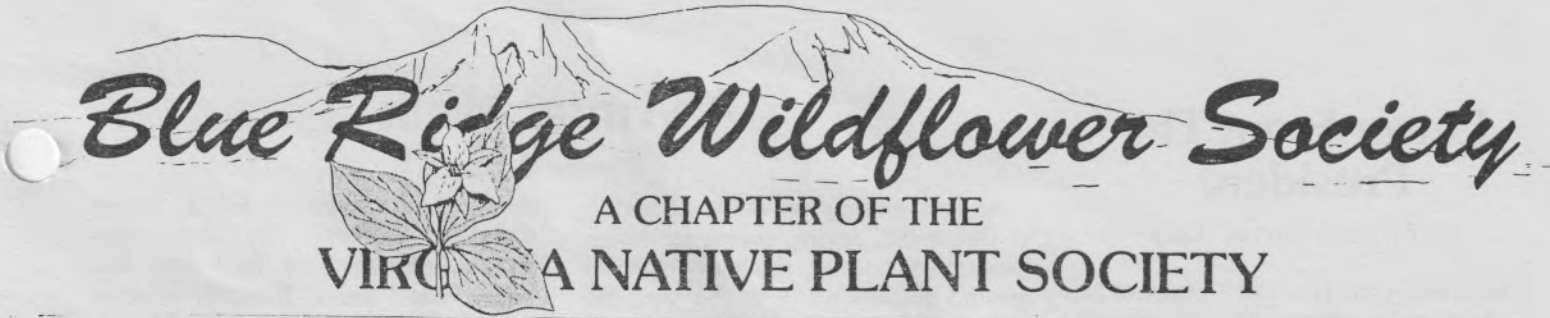




Blue Ridge Wildflower Society

A CHAPTER OF THE
VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Vol. 13, No. 1

January, 1996

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- February 26** General Membership Meeting, 7:00 P.M., Center in the Square. Bob Eubank will present a program on Wildlife Habitat Design.
- March 15** Friday evening program in Lynchburg. Jocelyn Sladen and our VNPS Education Chair will present a program on VNPS Site Registries. Meet at 7:30 P.M. in Room 225, Martin Science Building, Randolph-Macon Woman's College.
- March 23** Woodpecker Ridge Nature Center Work Day and Field Trip. Meet at 10:00 A.M. The Center is located at 815 Stoney Brook Road in Troutville. Parking is limited so please carpool if you can. Bring your lunch.
- March 25** General Membership Meeting, 7:00 P.M., Center in the Square. Ted Scott will present a program on Invasives.
- March 30** Spring Ephemerals Field Trip to Arcadia. Meet at 10:00 A.M. by the bridge over Jennings Creek on Route 614. Bring your lunch.
- April 6** Dry Run Branch Field Trip in Catawba. Meet at 1:00 P.M. at the Homeplace (Restaurant) on Route 311 and we will carpool to Dry Run. After the field trip, we'll plan to have supper at the Homeplace. Bring footwear appropriate for wet areas.
- April 13** Botanizing Green Hill Park in Salem. Meet there at 10:00 A.M. From West Main Street turn onto Duiguid's Lane (just west of Old Virginia Brick Company) and follow it to the Park.
- April 14** Randolph-Macon Woman's College Botanic Garden Open House and walk along the Alpine Trail in Rivermont Park in Lynchburg. Meet at the Garden, next to the Science Building, at 2:00 P.M.
- April 20** Buffalo Creek Field Trip. Meet at 10:00 A.M. at the Nature trail which is two miles east of Evington, just beyond the Bedford-Campbell County line. This property, owned by Westvaco, is one of our VNPS Registry sites and is noted for the diversity of its flora.
- April 26-28** Twenty-seventh Annual Wildflower Pilgrimage by the Science Museum of Western Virginia. Cosponsored by the Blue Ridge Wildflower Society. Our involvement with this event takes the place of our April General Membership Meeting.
- May 4** Shale Barrens Field Trip. Details later.
- May 11** Twelfth Annual Plant Sale, Virginia Western Community Arboretum on the campus of Virginia Western Community College from 10:00 A.M. until 2:00 P.M. Members may begin purchasing at 9:00 A.M. Rain or shine!
- May 20** General Membership Meeting, 7:00 P.M., Center in the Square. Please note the **change of date** to the third rather than fourth Monday of the month in order to avoid conflicts with Memorial Day plans.
- June 8** Rhododendron Day on the Parkway. Our annual Rhododendron Day will begin with breakfast at the Peaks of Otter Restaurant at 8:00 A.M. or join us at 10:00 A.M. at the Visitor Center for the field trip. Bring your lunch.

Letter From The President

by Richard "Butch" Kelly

I hope everyone has had a pleasant as well as white winter. The snows will bring about a spectacular spring. By mid-April we will all forget about the winter of '96 while looking at Spring Beauty, Coltsfoot and Hepatica.

With some winter remaining we will all be performing the miserable yet inevitable task of filing our 1995 tax returns. While this is usually unpleasant there is a way to make it more pleasant.

On line 27 of your Virginia Income Tax Form 760, there are two spaces which can help you lower your tax burden in 1996. Line 27(b) is the VA Non Game Wildlife Program. Money from this program goes to the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. This money is used to manage nongame, threatened and endangered species in Virginia. Some money is also used to educate children about these species. All other funds the Game Department receives comes from hunter and fisherman fees. All those funds are used to manage game animals.

Line 27(f) refers to the Open Space Recreation and Conservation Fund. One half of the money from this fund goes to **conserve natural habitats** in our fair state.

By donating to these programs we help conserve the very resources we hold so dear. If all of us could donate to these programs, Virginia's future quality of life would be improved and protected.

Permission is hereby given to reprint.
Please give credit.

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A Winter Walk

Dorothy C. Bliss

As I am writing this in New England in December, spring seems far away. Here in the country the snow covered ground glistens white in the sun, the surface broken only by the tracks of rabbit and foxes. A walk through a portion of a Coastal White Cedar swamp rewarded my brother and me with a glimpse of an owl that flew silently away as we approached and was soon followed by a group of crows breaking the stillness with their raucous calls. Several small brooks still murmured beneath the drifts of snow, making walking rather treacherous.

In this swamp the dominant canopy trees are the Coastal White Cedar, *Chamaecyparis thyoides*, and Red Maple with an understory of Rosebay Rhododendron, Mountain Laurel and Poison Sumac. This cedar occurs in Virginia in three counties within the Dismal Swamp. Poison Sumac is also encountered (!) there. Today there are relatively few undisturbed White Cedar swamps left in Rhode Island. Although some of the cedar had been cut in this swamp fifty years ago, we encountered many trees that were 8"-10" in diameter and more than 65' tall.

In the summer I had noted many ferns and flowering herbs that are also common in our Virginia woods, among

them, giant Cinnamon Ferns, Skunk Cabbage, Bluebead Lily, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Solomon Seal, both True and False; Star Flower, *Trientalis borealis*, and False Lily-of-the-Valley, *Maianthemum canadense*, although frequent in this swamp, only occur in our mountainous woods. The only Trillium observed was the Nodding Trillium, *T. cernuum*, which is recorded from three Virginia counties.

Among the mosses I spotted Goldthread, *Coptis groenlandica*, a member of the buttercup family that is unknown in Virginia. The solitary star-shaped white flowers arise from shining evergreen leaves that resemble those of the wild strawberry. Another common name, Cankerroot, is derived from its use by the Indians and early settlers who made a brew from the yellow rhizome that was used as a remedy for ulcerated mouths and sore throats and as an eyewash. The roots and rhizomes contain the alkaloid, berberine, which is a mild sedative.

Because of the rarity of Coastal White Cedar swamps left in Rhode Island, a representative of the Rhode Island Nature Conservancy will be walking these paths in a few days and may be interested in acquiring this property for a nature preserve.

BearBerry or Kinnikinnick

Dorothy C. Bliss

One of the interesting plants that has been added to the R.-M.-W.C. Botanic Garden is Bearberry, *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*, a trailing evergreen member of the heath family. This vine is also known as Bear's Grape, Crowberry, Foxberry and Hog Cranberry. The scientific name is derived from the Greek *Arctos* —a bear and *staphyle* —a bunch of grapes. Bearberry is Eurasian in distribution, occurring from Alaska and the Arctic to Newfoundland and southward. In Virginia it is extremely rare, being found only in Page County. With its small leathery leaves and its clusters of pink or white urn-shaped flowers it forms an attractive ground cover in many northern sandy and rocky woods. The fruit is a dull red berry borne in clusters

at the ends of branches. These berries (drupes) furnish survival food for birds, bears and other animals during the lean winter months. The berries are nourishing but rather mealy and bland.

The Indians and colonists mixed the drier leaves with tobacco, hence the name, Kinnikinnick, which means mixture. Because the leaves contain arbutin, a powerful astringent, it has been used to treat kidney and bladder infections. The leaves also contain tannins which are used in tanning leather.

Several clumps of this interesting plant are being established in the R.-M.-W.C. Botanic Garden where it is anticipated that they will spread to form a lush ground cover.

The Hazel Alder

Among the earliest of winter-blooming plants, often found before even Skunk Cabbage, is the Smooth or Hazel Alder shrub, *Alnus serrulata*. Alders are a genus of the *Betulaceae* or Birch family which contains about 100 species of trees and shrubs. In addition to Birches and Alders, the Hazels, Hornbeams and Hop Hornbeams are all represented by native species.

This shrub, also called the Tag Alder, normally grows 6 to 12 feet tall and has one to two inch trunks. It may also take the form of a small tree and have a single trunk up to four inches in diameter and a height of 25 feet. Only about six species of *Alnus* routinely reach tree size.

The bark is dark and generally uniformly or smoothly colored (hence the name Smooth). There may, however, be some speckling with white bar-like markings similar to those of Speckled Alder, *A. rugosa*. The twig bark may range from hairless to moderately hairy — a characteristic shared by many alders. The reddish buds are stalked.

Most of the alternate leaves are elliptical or oblong with pointed tips and narrow bases. They are two to four inches long and the undersurface may be smooth or velvety but will consistently be prominently veined; they are held erect, not pendent. Leaf margins are shallowly and irregularly toothed, producing a wavy appearance. As is typical of alders in what appears to be an effort to keep us guessing, any branch may have a variety of leaf sizes and shapes.

Before the leaves appear in spring, the plants will flower, producing both staminate, or male, and pistillate, or female, flowers in separate inflorescences. As with most *Betulaceae*, the staminate flowers are developed the previous

season and grow into drooping, tassel-like catkins four to six inches long. It is this preformed flower which allows the exceedingly early blooms. Among the smallest of flowers, they would be noticed by only the most avid botanists were they not massed together. As the catkins open, the stands of Alders form a pastel haze from the shedding pollen. Shortly after releasing their pollen they fall from the shrub.

The female flowers are in strobiles (structures which resemble little hemlock cones) from one-half to one and one-half inches long. These fruiting bodies are green when fresh but darken and become woody as they age. After releasing their seeds, they remain on the plant until the following year at which time they will normally begin to disintegrate. The seeds are too dry and hard to attract wildlife. However, deer will eat the twigs when food is scarce.

Commonly found along the margins of ponds and streams, these alders may also be found growing in shallow water. Although short-lived, alders grow rapidly, often forming thickets. Companion plants often include Spice Bush, *Lindera benzoin*, Sweet Pepperbush, *Clethra alnifolia*, Button Bush, *Cephalanthus occidentalis*, Silky Dogwood, *Cornus amomum*, and Virginia Willow, *Itea virginica*.

When you are out doing some winter botanizing, take a look at these plants. It is during the winter we are more likely to take time to appreciate those plants with flowers which are less spectacular, less eye-catching, but essential not only as wildlife habitat but also for the stability of our soils. And, if you don't routinely carry a hand lens, you might want to consider doing so. A closer look at buds, flowering and fruiting structures will leave you amazed by their intricacies.

Ginseng

Dorothy C. Bliss

Two species of ginseng occur in Virginia, Dwarf Ginseng, *Panax trifolius*, a relatively large population of which grows in the Buffalo Creek Nature Area, and the large or True Ginseng, *Panax quinquefolius*, which is found in the mountains but in ever diminishing numbers. Dwarf Ginseng has no market value but the larger species is widely sought by the ginseng hunters who sell the dried root to southeast Asia, especially China, where it is highly valued for its acclaimed aphrodisiac properties. In 1995, the price per pound for the wild dug roots increased two-fold to around \$500 for first quality dried roots. This has spurred more people to search for these roots and harvest younger roots so that the plants very existence is threatened in the wild. Ginseng is cultivated but the Asian market values it at a much lower price, from \$25 to \$40 a pound. Permits for digging and selling this root are required in many states, including Virginia. A book, *American Ginseng: Green Gold*, by W. Scott Persons might be worth reading if it is available in local and college libraries.



GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

PROGRAM: Wildlife Habitat Design

SPEAKER: Bob Eubank **DATE:** February 26, 1996, 7:00 P.M.

PLACE: Fifth Floor, Center in the Square

Lynchburg Area Members

by Dorothy C. Bliss

"If winter comes, can spring be far behind?" With nearly two feet of snow on the ground, it is difficult to think of spring. Following a second storm of four to six inches and temperatures until now below freezing, the world outside is blanketed in deep drifts. For several days as I looked out on this white world, the only tracks were those of deer who appeared to approach each evidence of green growth, ivy climbing a tree trunk or the leaves of shrubs protruding from the snow, then swerve away in an arc as the vegetation evidently proved distasteful. With their food supply cut off, birds have been flocking to my feeders in increasing numbers. Have faith and with the poet believe that spring with its resurgence of leaves and flowers will soon be here.

R.-M.W.C. Botanic Garden

During the fall months with the help of volunteers and the generous donations and gifts of native plants from many of your wildflower gardens, the Botanic Garden has developed rapidly. I wish to take this opportunity to thank Paul James, our first Blue Ridge Wildflower Society President, for his gifts of more than one hundred native plants. The list of other donors is too long to include here but your gifts have added much to the beauty and diversity of the garden. A sign designating the area as the R.-M.W.C. Botanic Garden and a bench have been installed. A plaque in memory of Franklin F. Flint will be placed at the base of the *Franklinia* tree in early spring.

The Garden includes more than 91 species of native flowering herbaceous plants, 35 species of woody plants and 7 species of ferns. Included among these are several endangered or rare species, Canby's Mountain Lover, *Pachistima canbyi*, Smooth Coneflower, *Echinacea laevigata*, Tennessee Coneflower, *E. tennesseensis*, Kankakee Globe-Mallow, *Iliamna remota*, Dwarf Trillium, *T. pusillum*, *Franklinia*, *F. alata*, and Bearberry, *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*. (See short article on this latter species in this newsletter.)

You are always welcome to visit the garden and wander along the

meandering paths. It should be specially beautiful this April and May with the many native spring flowers that have been set out. If you would like to join our volunteers in working in the garden, please call me at 804-845-5665 or drop me a note at 322 Sumpter Street, Lynchburg, VA 24503.

Lynchburg Evening Program

An evening meeting is scheduled for March 15 at 7:30 in Room 225 in the Martin Science Building on the Randolph-Macon Woman's College campus in Lynchburg. We expect to present a slide show depicting our eleven VNPS Site Registries. Our State VNPS Education Chairman and Jocelyn Sladen are developing this program from slides and text material sent in by each site registry preparer. Come out on March 15 and bring a friend or two.

Field Trips

Sunday, April 14, Open House, 2:00 P.M. in the R.-M.W.C. Botanic Garden followed by a walk along the Alpine Trail in Rivermont Park in Lynchburg. Meet at the garden next to the Science Building on R.-M.W.C. campus.

Spring Field Trips in April and May are planned for Buffalo Creek Nature Area, Arcadia and possibly Glen Maury Park in Buena Vista. All of these areas are rich in wild flowers.

Lynchburg Fall Field Trip

Carolyn Bates

On Saturday, October 7, 1995, six people gathered at R.-M.W.C.'s Martin Science Building to observe the progress of the developing Botanic Garden before moving on to the Blackwater Creek Area.

We found that a few plants had not survived the prolonged dry spell, despite efforts to water them, but most had simply finished their bloom for the year or gone underground in natural response to the season. Still blooming were such plants as the rare Tennessee coneflower, *Echinacea tennesseensis*, Narrowleaf Golden Aster, *Heterotheca graminifolia*, Sweet Goldenrod, *Solidago odora*, and the common violet, *Viola papilionacea*, the latter left in abundance in the hope of attracting a

hungry groundhog and distracting him from the rarer plants. Under the *Franklinia* tree, *Franklinia alata*, dedicated to the memory of Franklin Flint, a long-time member of the R.-M.W.C. Biology Department, lay the last bloom of the season, recently fallen and still white.

Among the showy fruits in the garden, a new American Beauty-berry, *Callicarpa americana*, gave an interesting contrast in color, with its magenta berries, to two nearby Japanese Beauty-berries, one a decided purple and the other white.

A short drive took us to the nearest entrance to the Blackwater Creek bicycle path. As might be expected from a heavily used public path, a former railroad bed, many alien plants abound—*Galinsoga* or Quickweed, *Galinsoga ciliata*, Spanish needles, *Bidens bipinnata*, Indian Strawberry, *Duchesnia indica*, Gill-over-the-ground or Ground Ivy, *Glechoma hederacea*, (not blooming), etc. but there were also many Spicebushes, *Lindera benzoin*, in full red fruit. Bur-cucumber, *Sicyos angulatus*, with its spiny fruit, White Snakeroot, *Eupatorium rugosum*, and a few unidentified asters in bloom, as well as both Wingstem, *Verbesina alternifolia*, and Crownbeard, *V. occidentalis*.

The foot trail within the Freer Nature Preserve yielded more natives, such as White Wood Aster, *Aster divaricatus*, Indian Pipes, *Monotropa uniflora*, Lobelia, *Lobelia spicata*, in fading bloom and Crane-fly Orchid, *Tipularia discolor*, in fruit.

Ferns of several kinds presented themselves—most prominently, Christmas Fern, *Polystichum acrostichoides*, but also Ebony Spleenwort, *Asplenium platyneuron*, Maidenhair, *Adiantum pedatum*, and two or three Grapeferns, *Botrychium* spp.

There were also mushrooms in a range of colors—white, brown, blue, purple, orange and red—and a variety of shapes. A large box turtle was busy making a meal of one of them.

Congratulations!

Roger Dalton has been selected as the new President of the Roanoke Bird Club. He will assume the position from Mike Donahue. Mike was one of our BRWC Scholarship winners last year.