



Blue Ridge Wildflower Society

A CHAPTER OF THE
VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Vol. 22, No. 4

October, 2005

Calendar of Events

- October 22** **Fall Work Day**, Randolph-Macon Woman's College Botanic Garden, 2:00-4:00 p.m. This will be a general clean-up, with dead heading, adding mulch etc. Please bring your own tools. Dorothy Bliss, 434-845-5665. Rain date is October 29.
- October 24** **General Membership Meeting**, 7:00 p.m., Roanoke Church of Christ, 2607 Brandon Ave., S.W. Leonard Adkins will be our speaker. His latest book, Wildflowers of the Blue Ridge and Great Smoky Mountains, was released this spring.
- November 28** **An Evening of Shared Memories**. Members are encouraged to bring 5-10 of their favorite slides or photos from the past year for us to enjoy. A seed exchange will also take place. Bring a friend and meet at 7:00 p.m., Roanoke Church of Christ. Refreshments will be offered. Please feel free to bring finger foods.

Fall Plant Sale

Sandra Elder

The success of the Fall Wildflower Plant sale in Lynchburg on September 10th can be attributed to a number of factors.

The News and Advance ran an almost full page article on the sale and the botanic garden three days before the sale.

It was an absolutely gorgeous day.

Then there are the wonderful people who provided plants either from their own garden or took care of plants they potted-up from the botanic garden. Thanks ever so much to Lucille and Paul Cowins, Thelma Dalmas, Margaret Wenning, Malcolm Black and Rudy Albert. Special thanks to Vickie and Roger Spofford who are new to the area and signed up at last year's sale to work in the garden. They are terrific workers and this year they brought plants and helped with the sale. Special thanks also to Cindy Burks who I can count on every year to bring plants from people in the Roanoke area and stay to help people with their plant selection. Extra credit goes to Robert Ferrell for coming early to help set up and furnishing

lots of nice plants. And to John Snead who every year pots up many plants from the botanic garden, brings many from his own garden and also does a super job collecting the money at the sale. After deducting sales tax, we made \$1,365.00 this year. Also, thanks to Elizabeth Henderson for many hours of garden maintenance, furnishing lots of plants and making posters and handouts for our educational display. And of course Dorothy Bliss, without whom none of this would be possible since she is the person responsible for creating this wonderful botanic garden. She also provides plants each year from her own garden and spends more time than she should have to spend making labels for the plants that come to the sale without labels. Knowing Jim was in the hospital recovering from bypass surgery, good friends Bland and Leonard Johnson came to help me with the sale.

I am grateful for everyone who helped make this sale the most successful one we have had in five years.

President's Letter

Cindy Burks

Many thanks to Evelyn Walke for hosting our chapter's annual August picnic. On the deck before the meal, we had a chance to visit with each other as well as with new members. The woods around Evelyn's home are beautiful, as was the view of Smith Mountain Lake. The food, as always, was delicious.

On Labor Day weekend BRWS had a field trip to Bent Mountain. We started out at the butterfly garden at the school, and walked along the edge of the swamp for a ways. (We didn't go quite far enough to see the Gray's lilies, which I found out about later.) On Poor Mountain the milkweed had finished blooming, but other wildflowers on the backroads were quite showy – New York Ironweed, cardinal flower, sunflowers, tall phlox, Joe Pye weed. Butterflies were abundant around these plants. Malcolm and Jimmie Black graciously invited us to their home for lunch. What a beautiful place! There were more plants in bloom around their yard and it was easier to walk to them. I went to Bent Mountain again at the end of September and found unbelievable quantities of goldenrod in bloom. Without a doubt, Bent Mountain is one of the most wonderful places I know. Only 12 miles from Cave Spring Corner, it is also easier to get to than many other sites in this part of Virginia. Malcom offered to host a spring wildflower walk at their home. I can hardly wait!

The VNPS Annual State Meeting was held in conjunction with the Coastal Plains Native Plant Conference sponsored by VNPS. Old Dominion University and Norfolk Botanical Garden. The conference was held at the Norfolk Botanical Garden, a lovely place with all types of plants and wildlife. I observed snowy egrets from a

relatively close distance. In the native plant area of the garden were clumps of long-leaf pine saplings. They look like fluffy green long-haired balls. I attended a program on the New American Garden from the 1930s to the present. Other programs included Reasons to Use Natives in Your Landscape, Fire Ecology, Terrestrial Orchids, Ecology and Landscape Design. Among the handouts at the conference was a full-color book of alien invasive plants with suggestions for eradicating them. I took the field trip to Fisherman Island, a wildlife preserve near Virginia's Eastern Shore, seldom open to the public. The hike on the island was about a mile and a half long through heavy vegetation. We saw rainbow heron, ospreys and other birds, gorgeous spiders with fascinating webs, and coastal native plants, including a type of bee balm I had never seen. It smelled more like peppermint than our bee balm. Among the trees on the island was a toothache tree. There is a possibility that the annual state meeting will be held there again in 2007. If so, don't miss the chance to learn more about coastal flora and fauna. I am awed by what I saw and learned. The "beach" will never be the same for me!

On Sunday afternoon while driving back from the state meeting, I had a telephone message that my 10-year-old granddaughter was bitten by a copperhead snake. Emily went to visit a neighbor, started home at dusk, and stepped on the snake which was stretched out across the neighbor's sidewalk. She was transported by ambulance to the hospital where she was given intravenous Benadryl and morphine, then released about 24 hours later. She had to use crutches for

several days and keep her extremely swollen foot propped up for most of the week. In Emily's words, "It didn't really hurt when the snake bit me. It was like something hit my foot and it felt like getting scratched by a briar. Later it hurt a lot!" From A Guide to the Snakes of Virginia: "Copperheads feed during the day and night on mice, birds, amphibians and lizards. They prefer sunlit areas with abundant sources of prey. The venom of the copperhead is the least toxic of the three venomous snakes in Virginia." (The three venomous snakes are the copperhead, timber rattlesnake, and cottonmouth moccasin. Only the copperhead and timber rattlesnake are found in our part of Virginia.)

Sympathy

Our sympathy is extended to Connie and Richard Crites at the loss of Connie's mother, Mrs. Lucille Liss. She passed away June 4, 2005. Mrs. Liss was a resident of Wisconsin.

Seed Exchange

If you have extra seeds you would like to share with other members, please bring them to our November General Membership meeting. All seeds need to have the containers clearly labeled; common names are fine.

Fall is a good time to sow wildflower seeds and this is an excellent opportunity to increase the variety in your or a friend's garden at no expense. Indeed, feel free to bring a friend so he or she can make some selections. If you have not been growing wildflowers, this is a good time to try a few of those which are easy to germinate and to grow.

Ginseng – An Update

Dorothy C. Bliss

Have you seen ginseng or sang, *Panax quinque-folius* lately? My last encounter was near the Blue Ridge Parkway many years ago. This species is classified in the Araliaceae family which also includes spikenard, sarsaparilla and the dwarf ginseng, *Panax trifolium* which grows on the banks of the Buffalo Creek in the VNPS Registry Site and also occurs scattered over Virginia in about 20 counties. This species has no known medicinal properties.

The genus name *Panax* is from two Greek words "pan" which means "all" and "akos" which means "cure", thus "cure all".

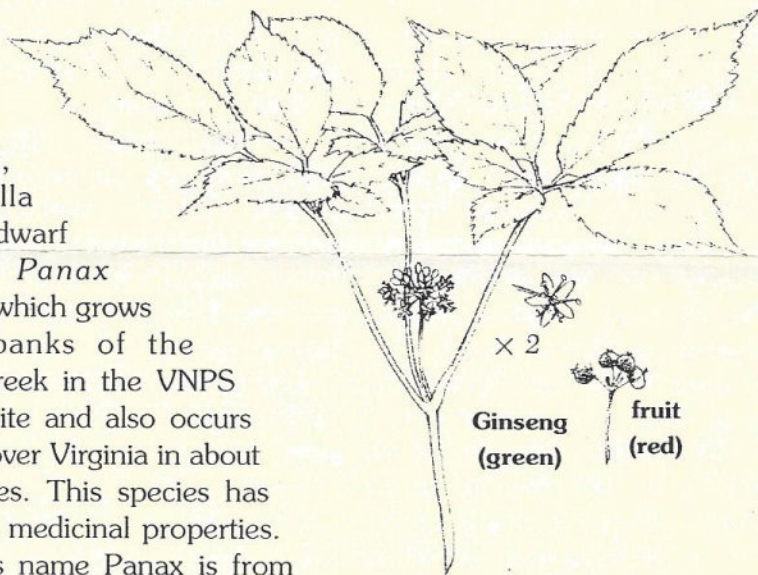
The medicinal ginseng is known by many names and among these are dwarf ground nut, five fingers, man's health, redberry, tartara root and in the mountains as sang. The Virginia Atlas lists ginseng as having been found in nearly all counties except in the Piedmont. This species has been disappearing rapidly and may no longer be found in these sites because of overharvesting.

The branched roots of ginseng often resemble the body of man and the closer the resemblance the higher the value since many believe the curative powers will be greater. The dried roots are shipped to Hong Kong and China where they have been valued as an aphrodisiac and cure all for centuries.

The aromatic compound leaves of a mature plant are made up of

5 palmately arranged leaflets. The small greenish-white flowers are produced in a cluster from the base of the leaf petioles. Sang is easily spotted in the fall by its golden leaves and crimson red berries.

Previously this plant could be



harvested when 5 years old but the species has been nearly exterminated. Consequently now the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is increasing the age limit for ginseng roots for export from 5 years to 10 years. It is hoped that this change will protect the plant from extermination.

Wisconsin has been successful in raising ginseng for the overseas market. Overall this has not been profitable since roots of garden-grown plants are smooth, not knobby and rough which is characteristic of those from the moist coves and rich woods in the mountains. The latter are more highly valued. The News and Advance mentioned that the dried roots are bringing \$250 a pound at the present time.

In addition to the article on Ginseng in the Lynchburg News and Advance for August 7, 2005,

I found the following references informative.

1. **Wild Flower Folklore** by Laura C. Martin.
2. **Growing and Propagating Wild Flowers** by William Cullina
3. **The Appalachians** by Maurice Brooks

September*

Helen Hunt Jackson

Helen Hunt Jackson (1831-1885) was an American poet. She was born in Massachusetts, but she spent much of her life in California.

1

The golden-rod is yellow;
The corn in turning brown;
The trees in apple orchards
With fruit are bending down.

2

The gentian's bluest fringes
Are curling in the sun;
In dusky pods the milkweed
Its hidden silk has spun.

3

The sedges flaunt their harvest
In every meadow-nook;
And asters by the brookside
Make asters in the brook.

4

From dewy lanes at morning
The grapes' sweet odors rise;
At noon the roads all flutter
With yellow butterflies.

5

By all these lovely tokens
September days are here,
With summer's best of weather,
And autumn's best of cheer.

From an old school reader,
circa 1911

Lynchburg Area Members

Dorothy C. Bliss

In early September at the time of the Plant Sale in the R-MWC garden only a few of the autumn flowers were in bloom or so I thought. As expected, everywhere I looked were the white blooms of the woods aster which fails to remain in the neat circle under the Kentucky coffee tree, its designated home. Several other plants are noted for moving "at will" around the garden. As one approached the upper pool several flowers of the Maryland golden aster were evident and just above was a lone bloom of the roseate New England aster. There were several fruits on the passion flower vine nearby but none of the intriguing flowers were evident. This vine is invasive and we will need to keep it cut back where it has grown over the Christmas ferns.

The obedient plant *Physostegia virginiana* was in full bloom but the effect of the drought was already evident in the wilting of the leaves. One of the nursery catalogs included the common name "Miss Manners." What is the meaning of the two common names? Some of you may have challenged the plant by moving the position of a flower and noting that it remains in the new position; try this the next time you see these flowers. The nursery catalog We-Du describes this native plant as invasive and sells a clumping form that is non-invasive. So far this has not been a problem with our garden specimens.

As I walked along the main path I could see a few of the beautiful white "magnolia like" flowers on the highest branches of the Franklinia tree and on the ground were the remains of many earlier blooms intermingled with the wintergreen or teaberry plants with their abundant crop of berries. Still partly green and pink, these will

be bright red later in the fall. You may recall I wrote about the poisonous properties of wintergreen oil and suggested that it is not advisable to consume many of these fruits.

One of the species planted along the edge of the main path, mist flower or wild ageratum, had disappeared a few years ago and I had removed the permanent sign. On this day there it was in full bloom about five feet away from the Franklinia. It appeared to be satisfied with its new home and now has its name sign back in place.

Just below the path three clumps of Andrew's gentian were in full bloom. This species is a closed gentian but if you look closely you will see the tiny fringed edges of the petals poking through the tip. I was surprised and pleased to see a fourth clump blooming across the path. This habit of establishing themselves in new areas is evidently a common phenomenon of several of the Botanical Garden plants which are now scattered far away from their original homes. (More about this at a later date.)

A few cardinal flowers and blue Lobelias along with the pink and white species of turtlehead gave a touch of color to the border of the lower pond. The cardinal flowers were a mass of bright red flowers in August but now only an occasional bloom was observed including a few stray plants clinging to the rocks of the pool with their roots in the water.

Of course there were black-eyed Susans scattered throughout the garden but many flowers had been eaten by the deer and some of the plants had been trampled. This species and jewel weed appear to be two of their favorite sources of food.

Only a few blooms at this time? I was mistaken! The above species that I noted are only some that you will see while wandering along the paths. Visit the garden in October and November and you will be rewarded with the many asters and goldenrods in bloom and also colorful fruits of several shrubs.

Join the Volunteers

Saturday, October 22, 2-4 pm.
Fall workday in the R-MWC Botanic Garden-general clean-up, dead-heading fall flowers, adding mulch, etc. Bring tools.

Rain date: October 29th, 2-4 p.m.

If questions call Dorothy C. Bliss
(1-434-845-5665).

BRC Makes Contributions

This year as in the past few years, the Blue Ridge Wildflower Society has made contributions to several worthy causes.

The Board of Directors approved donations of \$300 to *The Flora of Virginia Project*, \$200 to Woodpecker Ridge Nature Center and \$200 to the Virginia Western Community Arboretum. The Randolph-Macon Woman's College Botanic Garden will receive \$200 plus half the proceeds from our fall plant sale.

Hopefully, our donations will both demonstrate our support of these organizations and projects and encourage other donors.

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