



Blue Ridge Wildflower Society

A CHAPTER OF THE
VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Vol. 22, No. 3

July, 2005

Calendar of Events

- August 6** **Plant Sale Potting Day**, 8:00 - Noon, Randolph-Macon Botanic Garden. Rain date is August 13. See article in this Newsletter for details. Sandra Elder, 434-525-8433.
- August 7** **Smith Mountain Lake Picnic With Evelyn Walke.** Bring a covered dish. Evelyn will provide the meat, lemonade and coffee. We will eat around 4:00 p.m. Call her at 540-776-2137 by July 31 if you plan to attend.
- There will be a board meeting at 2:00 p.m.
- August 13** **Paint Bank and The Bog Field Trip.** We will travel Routes 600 and 635 to a bog area at Interior, Jefferson National Forest. We can expect to see cardinal flowers, yellow fringed orchid, cotton grass, sundews and grass of Parnassus. Bring your lunch and meet at 9:00 at the Orange Market at Hanging Rock (near where Route 311 meets Route 419). We plan to be back in time to eat at the Homeplace Restaurant around 3:30 or 4:00. Butch Kelly, 540-384-7429.
- September 3** **Bent Mountain Butterflies and Wildflowers.** See goldenrod & butterflies galore. Bring your lunch and meet at the Bent Mountain School at 9:00 a.m. Cindy Burks, 540-977-0868.
- September 10** **Fall Plant Sale** at the Randolph-Macon Botanic Garden 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Please label all plants and have them at the Garden in time for us to arrange them for the sale. Sandra Elder 434-525-8433.
- September 16** **VNPS Annual Meeting hosted by the South Hampton Roads Chapter.** This year's meeting will be a joint venture with the Coastal Plain Native Plant Conference. General information was in the June Bulletin; details will follow from VNPS.
- September 26** **General Membership Meeting**, 7:00 p.m.. Don't forget our new meeting location at the Roanoke Church of Christ at 2607 Brandon Avenue.

President's Letter

Cindy Burks

Recently the Virginia Native Plant Society board members have been working on the VNPS Position Paper on Plant Rescues. Discussion concerned whether or not to rescue plants, risks involved – such as the unintentional spread of alien invasives that may be growing alongside rescued plants – and what to do with rescued plants. Some rescued plants are planted in public or private gardens. Our VNPS President, Sally Anderson, pointed out one advantage of using plants this way is that people learn to recognize a wildflower when it is not in bloom.

This spring I recognized the leaves of robin's plantain in a large section of my yard, where I normally mow. I mowed around them, allowing them to grow and bloom. The result was a beautiful large area of wildflowers. My neighbors admired them and asked where I'd gotten them. I smiled and said, "They were a gift." (I was also smiling because I didn't have to mow that area anymore.)

For several years I've done the same with Queen Anne's lace, common milkweed, and wild raspberries. It takes only a little effort to mow around them, but the reward for that effort is well worth it. I'm enjoying those raspberries right now! I wonder what else is out there?

This spring we've had great participation on our wildflower walks and have been fortunate to see hundreds of plants – most in bloom. The walk leaders pointed out and identified, by their leaves, many wildflowers not in bloom. Even though the leaves of a trout lily or hepatica, pretty as they are, are not as beautiful as the blooms, I hope that we've helped people be able to identify them, as well as other wildflowers. Next spring when plant leaves emerge, if you're

curious, mow around them. Give them a chance to grow. If they turn out to be wildflowers, lucky you! You may have the gift of a very easy wildflower garden, too.

We have additional walks planned for August and September. We expect to see a number of late season wildflowers. I hope you will join us.

Spring Wildflowering

Frieda Toler

Early in April, I spent a warm, sunny afternoon with friends to look for Wildflowers. We followed the road next to Lipsley Run. We were sure we would see a few of the early flowers but we were rewarded with a real show of plants. Redbud was just opening. The dogwood was full of buds and we saw one serviceberry in full bloom. Buckeye leaves were easy to identify and there were some beautiful arborvitae trees. Spicebush was easy to identify from the car. The Rue-anemone was all along the roadside including white and pink. Also, spring beauty, hepatica, ginger and toothwort.

There were a few large – flowered trillium (*T. grandiflorum*) and red toadshade (*T. sessile*). We saw one firepink and one set of skunk cabbage leaves. There were a lot of twinleaf and dutchman's breeches. We were a bit early but a few bluebells were open. In another week, several places will be a mass of blue flowers. Shooting stars were up but not in bloom. It was a real delight to find puttyroot orchid leaves.

The creek was full because of the recent rains and the falls were beautiful.

Just before we turned around, we passed the remnants of an old iron furnace. Early migrants from Rockbridge County to Botetourt

County settled in this area where water was plentiful and the soil was rich for raising crops. The area offered employment at the iron ore mine and harvesting timber. There were businesses, churches and schools established. In later years, families moved again and today the area is sparsely settled and the wildflowers flourish.

Along Elbernell Road we saw bluets and hoary puccoon.

Remember – spring is a season of hope, joy and cheer. It is all around us to see, touch and hear.

Editor's Note: This was received a few days too late for the April Newsletter, but we think you will enjoy it nevertheless.

Oatmeal Chocolate Chip Cookies

1 c shortening
1½ tsp vanilla
1½ c flour
1 tsp baking soda
1 tsp salt
2 c quick cooking oatmeal
1 (12 oz) bag chocolate chips
¾ c brown sugar
¾ c granulated sugar
2 eggs

Mix in order given. Using a mixer is ok. Be sure ingredients are thoroughly mixed. Drop by spoonful or roll into balls by hand. Bake at 375° for 10 minutes or less.

Jason O'Brien

We have received numerous requests to print this cookie recipe since Doris Flandorffer brought them to our March meeting. Enjoy!

Permission is hereby given to reprint original material. Please credit author, if named, and source.

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Poisonous or Non-poisonous

Dorothy C. Bliss

Leaflets three, let it be
Leaflets five, let it thrive

or

Berries white, poisonous sight
Berries red, have no dread

I'm sure you recognize that the leaflets three and berries white refer to the notorious poison ivy, *Rhus radicans*, and the leaflets five let it thrive refers to the harmless Virginia creeper or woodbine, *Parthenocissus quinquefolia*. Perhaps the berries red may have puzzled you as the Virginia creeper has blue fruits. The red berries above apply to fragrant sumac, *Rhus aromatica*. The genus *Rhus* belongs to the *Anacardiaceae* family. Several other species with pinnately compound leaves and known as sumacs also are included in this family. You may be familiar with staghorn, smooth and winged sumacs which are very colorful in the fall. Poisonous sumac, *Rhus vernix*, does not occur in this section of Virginia. In the following, I will discuss the two or three species of *Rhus* with palmately compound leaves with three leaflets.

You may have had the misfortune to suffer a rash upon coming in contact with the bruised leaves of *Rhus radicans* which contain the poison "urushiol", or even from smoke from the burning plants. I was not surprised to read that century-old herbarium specimens have produced this rash on handlers.

Several years ago Randolph-Macon Woman's College students collecting and identifying plants along Blackwater Creek came into my office dragging a long woody branch entangled with a vine displaying compound leaves with 3 leaflets. I calmly informed them that the branch was that of ash-leaved

maple or box elder, *Acer negundo* and the vine was poison ivy. Fortunately, none of the students developed the rash. Later they presented me with a pressed specimen under glass. I used this for many years to demonstrate the key characteristics of poison ivy.

How can one be sure whether or not a plant is poison ivy or a harmless shrub or vine? Poison ivy is found in all states except Nevada and California. You could move to one of these states where this plant does not occur but it would be easier to learn how to identify it and thus to avoid contact. In Virginia this species is found in all but two counties and these are in the extreme southwestern part of the state. Poison oak, *Rhus toxicodendron*, is so similar to the shrubby ivy, but never a vine, that I am not separating for this discussion. It is poisonous and always a shrub with three leaflets that are coarsely toothed or may be deeply lobed.

Another shrub similar to poison ivy but non-poisonous is *Rhus aromatica*, fragrant sumac. The first time I saw this shrub was while I was walking along the creek under Natural Bridge when I spotted a clump along the bank. Several years later in Canada in a field below the Niagara Escarpment I saw masses of these shrubs clambering over some meadow grasses. Fragrant sumac is found in about a third of the counties in the western portion of Virginia. If you have looked closely at the upper hillside in the Randolph-Macon Woman's College Botanic Garden you may have noticed this shrub. The leaves are palmately compound with three leaflets that are somewhat coarsely toothed and may be velvety or hairy. The end leaflet has a very short stalk in fragrant sumac but a longer stalk in poison ivy. The leaves of the sumac are aromatic when crushed but until you are certain of your

identification you will not want to check the aroma! Its fruits are red hairy drupes, globose in shape and clustered in dense spikes whereas those of poison ivy are brownish white berry-like fruits. In winter the fruits of these two species are consumed by more than 60 species of birds including flickers, pheasants, Bob-whites and others.

Another difference between these two species is that poison ivy may be a vine, high-climbing by means of rootlets that give older stems a hairy or shaggy appearance. Fragrant sumac is always a shrub, never a vine.

When you are in the Botanic Garden look for clumps of fragrant sumac just below the winter berries. Can you identify the key characteristics that separate these shrubs from poison ivy? Good luck!

Plant Sales Past and Future

Cindy Burks

Our spring plant sale was held at Virginia Western Community College on May 14th. Dora Lee Ellington arrived early with plants from her garden. Shortly afterward, Joan Derenge pulled up with a car full of plants and showed us where she'd stashed some plants the night before, since they wouldn't all fit in her car at once. With help from Dora Lee and Joan, we quickly got set up. Soon more helpers and more plants arrived. THANK YOU! to everyone who helped make the sale successful.

Our fall plant sale will be held at the Botanic Garden at Randolph-Macon Woman's College in Lynchburg on September 10th. The garden itself is worth the drive to Lynchburg and there are always plants for sale that we don't normally have at the spring plant sale. If you need directions, please call me at (540) 977-0868.

Lynchburg Area Members

Dorothy C. Bliss

A stroll through the Randolph-Macon Woman's College Botanic Garden on a muggy hot Sunday June afternoon was rewarded with several early summer blooms. Beard tongue, *Penstemon smallii*, displayed large patches of pink and lavender flowers. Although planted near the upper path, now there are several colonies established near the lower pool. The cascading blooms of Virginia sweetspire, *Itea virginica*, were at their peak on the nearby mound. Several less conspicuous blossoms were those of partridge berry, *Mitchella repens*, and three-toothed cinquefoil, *Potentilla tridentata*. Both of these two plants have diminished in coverage and I surmise that, since we do not add fertilizer and since these plants have been in the same spot for eight or more years, they should be moved to new areas of the Garden.

Movement unaided by humans was very evident in early spring by the many-too many-places where the wild geranium, *G. maculatum*, is now thriving. How have stationary plants accomplished this? Perhaps birds, squirrels or other animals have deposited the seeds after consuming the fruits or rainwater may have washed some of the seeds to lower regions or perhaps winds may have been the culprit. These are the only explanations I can imagine. Can you think of any others? At flowering time, the dozens of geraniums scattered throughout were beautiful but we are not aiming toward a geranium garden but one with a variety of native plants. Some of these will be removed and some will be reserved for the September plant sale.

Below the upper brick wall the red and yellow flowers of trumpet

honeysuckle, *Lonicera sempervirens*, were abundant on the vine which is no longer attached to the bricks but clambers over the ground. An arbor would make these beautiful flowers more visible to us and to the hummingbirds that frequent them. On this visit, there were many other species in bloom but those mentioned above are the ones that made me pause and savor their beauty.

Have any of you considered joining our volunteers in helping in the Garden? We are in dire need of more help in weeding, mulching, etc. If you are interested, would you call me, Dot Bliss, 434-845-5665, or Sandra Elder, 434-525-8433

Fall Plant Sale

Sandra Elder

The Fall Wildflower Plant Sale will be held on Saturday, **September 10** at Randolph-Macon Botanic Garden in Lynchburg.

There is much work to be done before the sale and volunteers are needed.

On **August 6** between 8 am and noon we will be potting up seedlings from the botanic garden to sell. If you can help please bring a digging tool. Soil and pots will be furnished.

We want the garden to look nice for the sale so we need volunteers to help with weeding, dead heading and mulching.

Many native plants are needed for the Plant Sale so please find some nice **NATIVE** wildflowers from your garden to share. Get them in pots at least a month before the sale to assure they are well established.

Clubmosses

"Primitive is Beautiful"

"Prehistoric plants give the gardener much fodder for conversation, and some of them are useful in the most modern garden," writes *Thomas Powell*, editor & publisher of the *Avant Gardener*, a monthly Horticultural News Service. In particular, he cites the clubmosses (*Lycopodium*) as "unusually distinctive ground-covers for shade and moist, humusy acid soils. Dating back at least 300 million years, clubmosses are allied to the ferns and mosses that covered much of the temperate earth before flowering plants appeared." Powell singles out ground pine (*Lycopodium elavatum*) and princess pine (*Lycopodium obscurum*) as especially suitable for woodland and rock gardens. He also notes that

"lycopodium have a long history of use in herbal medicine and for making fish nets, baskets, dye fixatives, and upholstery stuffing . . . (and) some species produce spores so inflammable they were used in early fireworks." If kept moist, "a transplanted clump from an area that is being developed should establish in a year." A mail-order source is Orchid Gardens (2232 139th Avenue, N.W., Andover, MN 55304; catalog \$1.)

From Wild News, the newsletter of the Prince William Wildflower Society, No. 2005-03, May-June 2005.