

# Blue Ridge Wildflower Society

A CHAPTER OF THE  
VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Vol. 22, No. 2

April, 2005

## Calendar of Events

- May 14** **Twenty-first Annual Spring Wildflower Sale.** Community Arboretum at Virginia Western Community College 9:00 a.m. - Noon. No plants may be selected or sold prior to 9:00. If you need pots to prepare for your donations, contact Paul Cowins, 434-239-4842 or Cindy Burks, 540-977-0868.
- May 21** **Parkway South Field Trip.** Meet at 10:00 a.m. at Buck Mountain Overlook, Blue Ridge Parkway milepost 123.2. We will have lunch at Tuggle's Gap Restaurant. Butch Kelly, 540-384-7429, leader.
- May 23** **General Membership Meeting,** 7:00 p.m., Roanoke Church of Christ. Sandra Elder will present a program on Terrapin Mountain. This was originally scheduled for our February meeting which had to be cancelled due to snow. See the article in your February Newsletter for additional information about Terrapin Mountain. PLEASE NOTE OUR NEW MEETING LOCATION.
- The Board of Directors will meet at 5:30. Bring your supper.
- June 4** Parkway North Field Trip. Meet at the Peaks of Otter Restaurant at 8:00 a.m. for breakfast or at the Visitor Center at 9:30. We will go North along the Parkway for high elevation wildflowers. Bring your lunch. Rich Crites, 540-774-4518, leader.
- September 26** **General Membership Meeting,** 7:00 p.m., Roanoke Church of Christ.
- October 24** **General Membership Meeting,** 7:00 p.m., Roanoke Church of Christ. Leonard M. Adkins will present our program.
- November 28** **An evening of shared memories.** Bring 5 to 10 of your favorite slides or photographs or a short video from the past year to share with the group. A seed exchange will follow the program. Bring a friend and come meet at 7:00 p.m., Roanoke Church of Christ.

## New Location for BRWS Meetings

We are happy to announce a new location for Blue Ridge Wildflower Society meetings. Beginning in February, BRWS meetings in the Roanoke area are being held at the Roanoke Church of Christ fellowship hall. There is ample parking close to the entrance.

### Directions

From the Lynchburg area: Take I-581 South to the Colonial Avenue/Wonju Street exit (near Towers Shopping Center). Turn right onto Colonial. At the next traffic light, turn left onto Brandon Avenue

and drive 2.3 miles. The church is on the left at 2606 Brandon Avenue, SW.

From the New River Valley: From I-81, exit 141, take Route 419 south to the intersection with Apperson Drive (there will be a Sheetz gas station on your left). Turn left onto Apperson Drive and continue to the intersection with Mud Lick Road. Continue straight (the street name changes to Brandon Avenue). The church is several blocks ahead on the right (past Rosalind Hills Baptist Church).

## President's Letter

Cindy Burks

On Monday, March 28<sup>th</sup>, the Blue Ridge Wildflower Society held our first meeting at our new location - Roanoke Church of Christ. The meeting room is spacious and comfortable. Rich had the fireplace stoked and ready for us. Despite the rain, attendance was terrific! Mike Leahy's program on the heath family, wild blueberries in particular, was very informative. Thanks to everyone who made the evening enjoyable.

Heavy rains and high winds prevented our scheduled field trip to Roaring Run. Fortunately I did get to visit that area the day before and saw hundreds of trout lilies, hepatica, star chickweed, trailing arbutus, violets, spicebush and partridgeberry. If you have an opportunity, Roaring Run is well-worth the trip. It's relatively convenient and a fairly easy walk (1½ mile loop on a well-defined trail).

Why is it I forget? I know there are wildflowers all over this part of Virginia but each spring when I get out on field trips, I am caught once again by surprise. Awed by the beauty of those dainty trout lilies and the multi-colored hepatica (which, to me, resembles finely-painted porcelain), it's as if I'm seeing them for the very first time. I will have the same sense of wonder as each flower blooms, all through the year, right on through the goldenrods, asters and witch hazel. What a fabulous pick-me-up!

Our Spring wildflower Sale will be on Saturday, May 14<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 AM until 12:00 noon at the Virginia Western Community College Arboretum. If you have plants to donate, we have labels and 3½" and 6" pots available. Call me (540 977-0868) and I will make arrangements to get these supplies to you.

Our next meeting will be on May 23<sup>rd</sup>. Sandra Elder will present the program, which was postponed from February due to snow. Her topic is Terrapin Mountain in Bedford County.

## Scholarships Awarded

The Blue Ridge Wildflower Society has awarded scholarships in both biology and horticulture again this year.

Kerri Huffman, a graduate of Virginia Western Community College, completed her Bachelor's Degree in biology at Virginia Tech. Kerri is pursuing a Master's Degree in plant biology with an emphasis on a group within the mustard family. Kerri has received the award two times before.

Before coming to VWCC Lynn Ward completed a bachelors degree at Wake Forest University and worked many years as a marketing specialist. Her former employer had to close his business due to import competition, and as a result Lynn qualified for Trade Act benefits. This gave her the opportunity to pursue a career in her lifelong interests - plants and gardening. Lynn will graduate summa cum laude this spring with her AAS degree in Landscape Horticulture. She is one of the most active members of the Horticulture Club, serving as Vice-President and Chairman of the Program/Social Committee.

Gary Lynch is the former owner of the Franklin Restaurant in Rocky Mount and like Lynn has lifelong interests in plants and gardening. He will complete his AAS degree requirements in Landscape Horticulture at the end of the summer '05 semester. If he maintains his current GPA, which I am sure he will, Gary will also graduate summa cum laude. He plans to transfer to either Va Tech or Ferrum to pursue his BS degree and then on to graduate school. He currently serves as President of the Horticulture Club.

## Wildlife Habitat For Those Who Suffer From Pollen Allergies

by Bob Eubank

Each year, I teach a series of classes on how to create a backyard wildlife habitat. The class focuses on landscaping to attract birds and butterflies.

Another of my interests is creating a wildlife habitat for those who suffer from pollen allergies. According to research by Thomas Ogren, allergies are on the increase in the USA and urban areas worldwide. Allergy

problems are probably due to a combination of exposure to man-made chemicals and to the overuse of so-called low-maintenance or seedless plants that are usually all male and produce many airborne pollens.

Pollen seems to be the main trigger of allergies with molds running second. Some pollen allergies show up immediately when sufferers are exposed to the allergens while others don't show up until hours later, making it hard to know which plant may have caused the problem.

When designing a wildlife landscape, it is important to choose plants that are bee pollinated rather than wind pollinated. Mr. Ogren suggests using plants with perfect flowers (male and female parts inside the same flower) because they usually cause fewer pollen problems and most are bee pollinated.

Monoecious plants, which have separate male and female flowers on the same plant, are usually wind pollinated. Oaks and cryptomeria are good examples.

Dioecious plants, such as hollies, have male flowers on one plant and female flowers on another, thus the plants are either all male or all female. By using only female plants pollinated only by insects and hummingbirds you can have plants that cause few allergy problems.

By choosing the right plants, preferably native trees, shrubs, vines perennials and wildflowers, you can drastically reduce your exposure to pollen and still have a bird and butterfly friendly yard and enjoy being outside.

A few recommended plants for allergy sufferers include dogwood, redbud, sourwood, beautyberry, chokeberry, ninebark, viburnum, clematis, trumpet honeysuckle, mallows, iris, columbine, butterflyweed, purple coneflower, lobelia, monarda, phlox and violets.

To learn more about low allergy plants consider reading Allergy-Free Gardening by Thomas Leo Ogren.

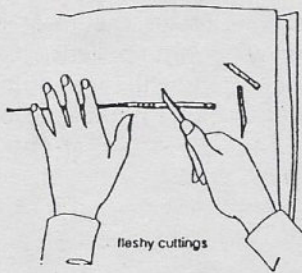
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## Propagation by Root Cuttings



Root cuttings are an easy technique for the beginner as well as the experienced gardener. When working with native plants, reproduction of the same species is fairly certain. This is not true when working with cultivars, many of which are the product of grafting or hybridization, and the resulting plants may be undesirable.

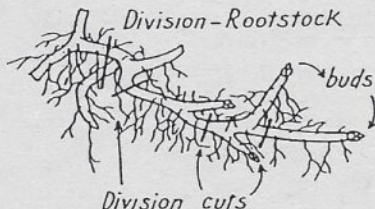
Spring is a good time to take cuttings because the plants will have much needed nutrients stored in their root system, awaiting spring and summer growth. Several techniques are described here.

### HERBACEOUS PERENNIALS

Lift the stock plant from the ground and shake off excess soil. It is best to take cuttings from the previous season's growth, so select and trim roots from near the crown. Rinse the cuttings and place on towels or newspapers to absorb excess moisture. Reset the stock plant.

Cut the root into 3-4" lengths. To help ensure the pieces will be planted "right-end-up" make a flush cut at the crown end and an angled cut at the root end of each piece. If making multiple cuttings from one root, simply straighten the angle from the previous cut as you continue toward the root tip. For plants with finer roots, this is not necessary as the cut pieces can be planted horizontally. Make these cuttings about 1½" - 2" long.

Before planting, dust the cuttings with a fungicide to inhibit both fungus growth and rotting. Do not, however, use a rooting hormone.



Cuttings from plants which do not tolerate much handling should be placed in individual pots. However, most cuttings can be placed several to a container. Using a dibble or other slender instrument, make holes in the soil about ½" deeper than the length of the cuttings. Insert the pieces, keeping the flush-cut end upright. For the finer root cuttings, simply sprinkle them over the soil in flats. Cover lightly with ¼ to ½" of a light soil mixture.

Keep the cuttings away from drafts and direct sun and try to maintain the temperature at 65 - 75° F. Cuttings will need to be kept moist but never wet. Covering the pots with glass or plastic may provide all the moisture needed until the new plants are established. Do not fertilize at this stage. When stem growth begins, uncover the pots and gradually give the plants more light. After the root system becomes more established and plants have nice top growth, harden them off, readying them to be placed in the garden when danger of frost has passed.

After transferring plants to the garden, water them well but do not soak the soil. Do not fertilize until they are settled into their new location.

### TUBEROUS OR RHIZOMATOUS PLANTS

These are among the easiest of plants with which to work. After lifting the plant, shake off excess soil. Gently pull or cut apart the tubers or rhizomes. Usually these will have been growing horizontally, near the soil surface. The divisions should be planted the same way in which they were growing.

If done carefully, most plants will suffer little setback from the process. Any pieces with no top growth should be handled much the same as herbaceous perennials.

### SURFACE CREEPERS

Surface creepers include partridge-berry, trailing arbutus and many others with prostrate stems. Often the stems will have already rooted to some extent. After cutting apart, bury these roots carefully, positioning stems in the direction in which they were oriented. Lightly cover with a mixture of equal parts sand and leafmold.

### RECOMMENDED MEDIUM FOR POTTING WILDFLOWER SEEDLINGS

(from North Carolina Wildflower Association Newsletter)

- 4 parts Peat
- 2 parts Horticultural Grade Pine Bark
- 1 part Vermiculite
- 1 part Sand (do not use sand from a beach area)

### SEED FLAT MIXTURE FOR STARTING SEEDS OF WILDFLOWERS

Equal parts of peat, sand and vermiculite. (Be certain beach sand is not used.) A light sifting of milled sphagnum moss is helpful in retarding damping off.

*Collected rainwater (no salts) is best for both potted seedlings and seed flats.*

### ALL PURPOSE MIX

- 1 part Pasteurized Soil
- 1 part Peat Moss
- 1 part Sand

An easy standby for simple seeds like lettuce, cabbage.

*This was last published in our April, 2000, Newsletter. We have had a number of requests for this information recently and thought it time for a reprint.*

## Other Events of Interest

May 13-15

### Twenty-second Annual Spring Wildflower Symposium

presented by the Wintergreen Nature Foundation. Programs include lectures, slide shows, field trips, designing, sketching and drawing and are not limited to wildflowers. Contact them at PO Box 468 Nellysford VA 22958 or e-mail to [info@twmf.org](mailto:info@twmf.org). You can visit their website at [www.twmf.org](http://www.twmf.org).

## Lynchburg Area Members

Dorothy C. Bliss

The official beginning of spring is March 20 but even by April 1st, spring seemed to be waiting to make its appearance. One of the earliest trees or shrubs to bloom is the pussy willow, *Salix discolor*. In late February this treesize specimen in my yard was in full bloom. To me these furry catkins are signs that spring is on its way. The only pussy willow listed in the *Atlas of the Virginia Flora* is a shrubby species, *S. humilis* that occurs in nearly two thirds of the counties. I believe this is the beautiful shrub I saw and photographed on Mt. Pisgah near milepost 409 on the Blue Ridge Parkway a few years ago on April 12.

Several of the introduced trees and shrubs in Lynchburg were in flower before the first of April. Among these were the star magnolia and saucer magnolia. The yellow blooms of the non-native winter jasmine, *Jasminum nudiflorum* appeared in January and February long before those of *Forsythia* sp. which are also yellow but appear in late March or April. The simple leaves of *Forsythia* are toothed on the margin and may be 2"-5" long, whereas those of winter jasmine are composed of 3 slender 1" leaflets and the branches are green. Some native woody plants that are frequently encountered in our mountains that also bloom before April are service berry or shadbush, *Amelanchier arborea*, spice bush, *Lindera benzoin* and red maple *Acer rubrum*.

A stroll through the Randolph-Macon Women's College Garden on March 29 and April 1 revealed only a few plants in early flower. The most conspicuous blossoms were those of bloodroot with several dozen plants in full bloom scattered throughout the beds. The golden ragwort displayed a few bright yellow flowers but most were still in tight bud. One lone flower of green and gold had made its appearance; some of the Greek valerians and a few rue anemones were making a valiant effort but the overall picture was one of late winter rather than early spring.

How do these flowerings compare to former years? As I look over my

Journal of the Botanic Garden for the past several years it appears that 2005 is one to two weeks behind. In the year 2000 on March 10, bloodroot and golden ragwort were in full bloom and also Greek valerian. The Virginia bluebells were up with conspicuous buds and the redbud was coming into flower. In the year 2002 the records were similar but with the addition of Dutchman's breeches on March 27. This year as late as April 1, only a few Virginia bluebells were showing their leaves and bloodroot was the only plant in full bloom.

## Global Warming

Dorothy C. Bliss

The entire April-May 2005 issue of National Wildlife, a publication of the Wildlife Federation is devoted to the problem of Global Warming. We hear and read much about this environmental issue but it is difficult to separate fact from fiction. For a scientific, factual presentation with supporting evidence

of this concern I suggest that it would be rewarding to check the above magazine which you will find in most libraries or the internet at [www.nwf.org.globalwarming](http://www.nwf.org.globalwarming).

## Spring Work Session

Dorothy C. Bliss

The Spring Work Session in the Botanic Garden scheduled for March 12th in the afternoon was postponed because of inclement weather and was moved to Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> in the morning since the rain was predicted for the p.m.! A group of nine volunteers spent the morning picking up branches, raking leaves, weeding and mulching some of the Azaleas and by noon most of the beds were in excellent shape. The remaining beds must be cleared soon to enable the ephemerals to emerge. A fervent thank you to all of you who gave of your time and energy on March 19. Your help is greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Volunteers are always needed and especially in the spring months. If you are interested please contact me at 434-845-5665.

## Spring Plant Sale

Our twenty-first Annual Plant Sale is scheduled for Saturday, May 14, 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 sold before 9:00 a.m.

We hope you have been potting your plants as you have been thinning your garden plantings. Plants do better if allowed three weeks to establish themselves prior to the sale. If you are just potting them and need additional pots, call Paul Cowins, 434-239-4884, or Cindy Burks, 540-977-0868.

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

Although taxonomic names are preferable, they are not necessary. However, please at least have the common names.

This is an excellent opportunity to not only share what you have but also to purchase plants for yourself and for friends.

Remember, our sale takes place rain or shine, so don't let cloudy skies or a sprinkle deter you from attending or from bringing your plants.

Your help is needed, whether donating plants, helping with arranging and pricing prior to the sale or helping people make their selections and carry those selections to their vehicles during the sale. Can we count on you?