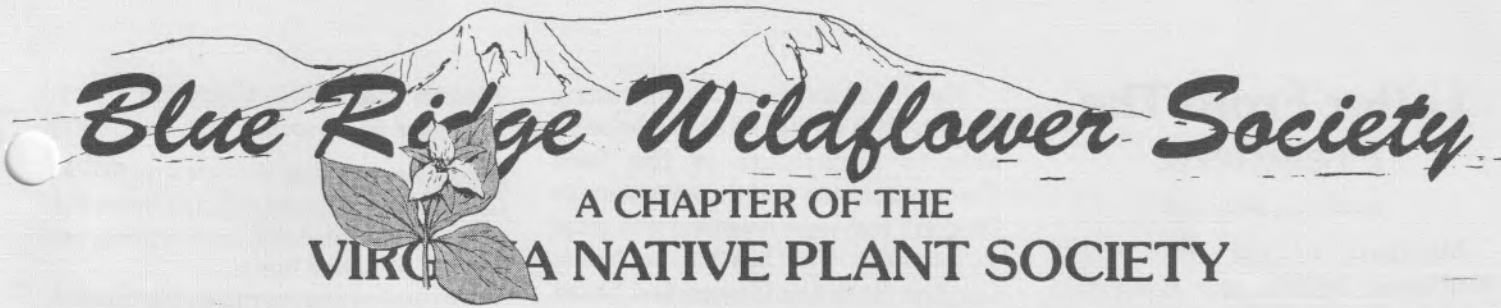




Blue Ridge Wildflower Society

A CHAPTER OF THE
VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Vol. 15, No. 3

July, 1998

Schedule of Events

- July 18** **Parkway Plunge Field Trip.** Meet at 9:00 a.m. at Buck Mountain Overlook, BRP milepost 123.2. Bring your lunch as we plan to eat at Groundhog Mountain. This trip will focus on composites. Butch Kelly, leader, 540-384-7429.
- August 23** **Picnic at Smith Mountain** at the home of Al & Vi Sheridan. Bring a covered dish. The Sheridans will provide the meat, lemonade and coffee. We will eat around 5:00 - 5:30 but feel free to come any time after 2:00 p.m. to play or sit by the lake. A map is enclosed. **Please call Vi at 540-721-8189 if you plan to attend.**
There will be a board meeting at 2:00 p.m. at the Sheridans.
- September 5** **Fall Plant Sale** at Randolph-Macon Botanical Gardens in Lynchburg from 10:00 till 2:00. Rain or Shine! Please see article in this Newsletter for additional information.
- September 18-20** **VNPS Annual Meeting in Alexandria.** The keynote speaker will be James Duke, author of **The Green Pharmacy** and coauthor of **Peterson's Field Guide to Medicinal Plants**. Details & registration forms will be in the August Bulletin.
- September 28** **General Membership Meeting.** 7:00 p.m., Center in the Square.

North Carolina Garden Tour

On Saturday, June 13, a charter bus from Great American Vacations met 23 people in Roanoke at 7:00 a.m. then traveled to Lynchburg to meet 7 additional people just after 8:00 a.m. With 30 people aboard, Joe Riggins, our driver, began the second bus trip the BRWS has done. Our destination, as before, was the North Carolina Botanical Garden at Chapel Hill and the Sarah P. Duke Gardens at Durham. When not snoozing everyone enjoyed the opportunity to chat, catching up with news from old friends and making new friendships. (Why are bus rides so conducive to napping?)

Our first stop was Chapel Hill where Dora Lee Ellington had arranged for guides to meet us. We were split into three groups and started covering the paths from different directions so each group was able to

hear the guide and see the plants or areas being discussed.

Hearing about the development of different areas proved educational as well as interesting. For example, in the Coastal Plain area, soil was brought by the truckload from the coast so plants would flourish in their quasi-natural habitat rather than having to adapt to a modified growing medium. The area is subjected to a controlled burn each spring, replicating the frequent fires caused by lightning strikes along the coast. As expected, a variety of aquatic plants were included here. There were areas representing the Piedmont and mountains, as well as shade, rare plant, fern and native perennial areas. There were arbors, carnivorous plants and plants displayed by family as well as an extensive herb garden.

A Horticultural Therapy Program is included in the Garden's services. Raised beds and large containers provide accessible gardening and demonstrate gardening may be enjoyed by those whose physical abilities are limited. Different beds can be dedicated to habitats as readily as can those at ground level. They have one with bog plants, including such carnivorous specimens as pitcher plants and venus fly-traps (one of which enjoyed a snack as we watched a poor, hapless bee get trapped). There is also an aquatic bed with a small fountain. These small beds also demonstrate the potential for gardening in small spaces or on non-soil surfaces.

A cabin was moved to the Garden in 1991 and restored to its original

continued on page 2

Letter From The President

by Karen Shepard

Members of the Blue Ridge Wildflower Society rate a standing ovation for their hard work and generosity. It is great working with an organization where so many people give so much of themselves: from leading field trips, giving programs, having a garden as a pilgrimage site, working the plant sale or donating food and plants. The list goes on and on; however the bottom line is the biggest gift of all: TIME. For that, I want to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation.

We had a great start to the Wildflower Pilgrimage weekend with the outstanding Friday evening program presented by Dorothy Bliss. A special thanks goes to Judy and Bruce Botler for organizing the reception and to Rich Crites for coordinating the leaders. Without the help of so many this event would not be possible. If you have ideas for different field trips, speakers, or suggestions for the 1999 Pilgrimage; come to the planning meetings. The first meeting is usually in October and is open to EVERYONE.

The combination of good weather and good plants made for a successful plant sale. Once again Mrs. Helen Barringer allowed us to obtain many plants from her wildflower garden. Mary Dalton took time out of her busy schedule not only to dig the plants but also to pot and care for them. By noon we had sold most of the plants, acquired many new members, visited with old friends and felt good about a job well done.

We offered some new and interesting field trips this spring. All of us who were able to participate in the Salu Conservancy trip and the adventure to Dragon's Run were rewarded with great experiences. The bus trip to North Carolina Botanical Garden and Sarah P. Duke Gardens was a day filled with wonderful gardens and good friends. Credit goes to Butch Kelly, Bob Eubank and Rich Crites for arranging for these events.

There are a number of activities to look forward to over the next months. Our annual picnic at the Sheridans is scheduled for August. The Potowmack Chapter in Alexandria will host the VNPS State meeting in September. Please check the schedule of events for details.

Betty Winfree Honored

In April the Garden Club of America honored Betty Winfree with their Achievement Award during a ceremony in Williamsburg.

More than 20 years ago she conceived the idea for a wildflower garden on Mill Mountain. As a result of her untold hours of labor, we, as a city, can enjoy this garden at our pleasure and convenience. The Mill Mountain Wildflower Garden is a regularly featured walk during the Wildflower Pilgrimage. It was the site of the Young Botanists Walk this year.

Betty has been a member of the BRWS for many years. We are pleased she has been selected as a recipient of this award.

Blandy Honors Stauntons

On a lovely April afternoon at the Blandy Foundation Virginia State Arboretum, two swamp oaks, *Quercus bicolor* were planted in honor of Nicky and (the late) Loren Staunton. Nicky, as some of you may recall, is a former VNPS President.

A reception was held in the library following the dedication.

If you visit Blandy you'll find their trees by the ephemeral pond.

North Carolina Garden Tour

Continued from page 1

appearance. It was in this cabin North Carolina Poet Laureate Paul Green did much of his research and writing on the use of native herbs.

Several of our members purchased plants before leaving the Garden. Dot Bliss found Oconee-bells to add to the Randolph-Macon Botanical Garden.

Then it was on to the Sarah P. Duke Gardens where a wedding party was leaving just as we arrived. Here we would see many of the same plants as well as a number of new ones. The 55-acre garden has many pathways designed for those with limited mobility or wheelchairs and includes a wide variety of cultivars.

From entering the beautiful gothic-style gates until leaving the premises, there is never a moment visitors are not surrounded by beauty, whether in the Asiatic Arboretum with its structured aesthetics or the Blomquist Garden of Native Plants. Formal and informal gardens blend smoothly into a work of art.

Broad Italian-style steps leading from a wisteria covered pergola to a fishpond highlight the Gardens. The terraced areas are replanted seasonally to provide masses of color. Designed by Ellen B. Shipman in the late 1930's, this is of particular interest to architectural historians. Ms. Shipman is considered a pioneer in American landscaping and this is her only public garden.

There is a graciousness here, befitting the tribute given by Mary Duke Biddle — "In memory of my mother [Sarah], in whose life were blended the strength of the soil and the beauty of flowers."

Two very different gardens, each fulfilling its intended purpose and design. In this writer's opinion, NCBG would make a fine day trip for a person. The Duke Gardens however, are not a place to visit alone. They, as with most things in this life, need to be shared.

Thirsty, hungry and pleasantly tired, we boarded the bus for the trip home. A stop at Western Sizzlin' in Danville took care of the hunger. The remaining trip gave us time to discuss the delightful day and express a desire for more excursions by bus.

Permission is hereby given to reprint.
Please give credit.

Karen Shepard, *President*
(540) 772-2733

Pamela M. Wieringo, *Editor*
(540) 343-8596

P. O. Box 20385
Roanoke, VA 24018

Danco Garden Opened For Pilgrimage

Frieda Toler

On Sunday afternoon of the Science Museum Wildflower Pilgrimage, Bill & Marion Danco opened their garden for a tour. There are several areas of this large garden to enjoy. Mature azaleas add a lot of color and form a beautiful background for hostas and many cultivated flowers.

A water garden features a fountain, water plants set in pots in the stone pool, lily pads and circulating water. Frogs and a peeper sang for the group.

But the main attraction was a delightful walk at the back of the property. Mature pines and a native dogwood forest provide the perfect canopy for their wildflower garden. In bloom were several species of trillium, dwarf iris, geranium, Jack-in-the-pulpit, various ferns and much, much more.

The deck on the upper level of the contemporary home gave an absolutely stunning view of the Roanoke Valley. The mountains - Tinker, Read, McAfee's Knob, Catawba, Green Ridge to name a few - grace the skyline. On a clear day Apple Orchard Mountain near the Peaks of Otter is visible.

The Bonsai garden was most interesting. It is a real art to prune and shape trees and shrubs into dwarf dish garden size plants.

A lot of team work goes into a garden like this one. The Dancos were gracious hosts and we thank them for allowing the group to enjoy several hours with them.

What a wonderful treat!!!

For the Children's Bookshelf

BIRDSONG

by Audrey Wood, Illustrated by Robert Florczak, 1997.

This beautiful book is sure to inspire a new generation of bird enthusiasts as well as win the hearts of some of the more "experienced" birders. Readers are introduced to eighteen North American wild birds - from the northern cardinal to the red-tailed hawk - each presented as four children from around the United States spend a typical day on adventures from eating lunch in a treehouse to doing farm chores. The distinctive call of each bird is also introduced in a way that children will remember, with a little help from their experienced birder friend! The sheer beauty of this book is enough to win a place on any naturalist's bookshelf. Ages 6-12.

SECRET PLACES

Poems selected by Charlotte Huck. Illustrated by Lindsay Barrett George, 1997.

At some time in our lives everyone of us has found refuge in a secret place. It is a natural part of growing up, learning to be alone, appreciating solitude and privacy. Celebrate this universal experience with a young listener as these eighteen poets describe special places from under a tree to an overturned chair. First share these lasting words and magnificent pictures, and then, share your own memories of your special places with your listener. Ages 3-8.

MOONSTICK; THE SEASONS OF THE SIOUX

by Eve Bunting. Paintings by John Sanford, 1997.

A young boy comes of age under the thirteen moons of the Sioux year. With each notch made by his father in the moonstick, the boy marvels at the world around him, and so does the reader. The text helps the reader to take notice of the subtle, yet remarkable changes in each season through the eyes of this young boy. Readers appreciate the Sioux' dependence on the land and respect for mother nature's ways. It is a decent lesson for all. Ages 7-12.

—Sue Talbott, Vandalia Educational Services 1 (800) 675-1840.

From "West Virginia NonGame Wildlife & Natural Heritage News" Fall/Winter 1997.



PHOTO BY BOBBY TOLER

Attendees included (not in pictorial order),

Carolyn Bates, Dorothy Bliss, Laura Bliss, Rich & Connie Crites, Dora Lee Ellington, Doris Flandorffer, Simone Fraser, Dawn Gill, Linda Hall, Elizabeth Henderson, Frances Higgins, Debbie Hughes, Butch & Betty Kelly, Evelyn McMinn, Pat Malotte, Bren Piller, Janet Rathbun, Cindy Sandberg, Joe & Karen Shepard, Hugh & Bunny Smith, Warren Stoutamire, Bobby & Frieda Toler, Pam Wieringo, Frances Williams and Carol Womble. Included in photo is Joe Riggins, our driver.

God Almighty planted the first garden and it is indeed the purest of pleasures. — Frances Bacon

Engraved on the Dogwood Medallion at the Sarah P. Duke Gardens

Lynchburg Area Members

by Dorothy C. Bliss

While in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park this past April, several of us extended our trip to include a visit to the Corneille Bryan Nature Center in Lake Junaluska, NC. This garden with many interesting plantings of native trees and shrubs is maintained by Maxilla Evans. Carolyn Bates, who was with us, and Maxilla are friends. In this naturally forested ravine, the stream bed included several small springs and rock formations that added to the interest and diversity of the Center. Among the shrubs in bloom were two relatives of witch hazel in the genus *Fothergilla*, *F. gardenii*, less than 1 m. tall (grows in the R-MWC Botanic Garden) and *F. major*, a somewhat larger rare species. This latter species was in full bloom displaying many densely flowered spikes of creamy white blooms which were actually masses of stamens as there are no petals. Both species occur naturally in N.C. but neither is included in the *Atlas of Va. Flora* although in *Petrides Field Guide to Trees and Shrubs* *F. gardenii* is listed as occurring in VA, GA and AL.

Among the many unusual and beautiful shrubs in flower was the exquisite pink-shell azalea. The high point of our tour of the garden to me was a large bed of *Shortia* or Oconee-bells, a flourishing colony screened from the sun. Among the mass of evergreen, shiny leaves were a few of the attractive pale pink flowers nearly an inch long with five irregularly toothed lobes, unlike the tiny white flowers of *Galax* which is a member of the same family, *Diapensiaceae*.

Maxilla Evans invited us to her home in the nearby mountains following our tour of the Center. She generously offered the Cowins and me several clumps of *Shortia* which are now thriving in the RMWC Botanic Garden and the mountain farm of Paul and Lucille. In the R.M. Garden the plants were placed in a shaded area on a moist slope among maidenhair ferns under a canopy of dogwoods. I have wanted a

specimen of Oconee-bells for the Botanic Garden but had been unable to locate this species in any nursery catalog although it has been sold for many years.

My First Encounter With *Shortia*

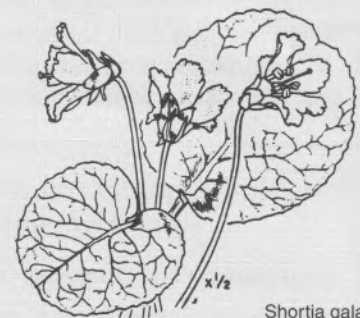
My first encounter with *Shortia* was nearly 40 years ago when returning from a hike, Sam Roller mentioned that he had a beautiful pinkish-white flower on his property in Amherst and wondered if I could identify it for him. There, growing in his woods on the banks of a clear spring were many delicate pink blossoms among a carpet of shiny evergreen leaves. I had never seen this plant before but took a sample home for identification purposes. I checked Fernald and several other taxonomic works and in each I ended up with *Galax* which although its leaves are similar, its tiny flowers are in a dense spike. Finally, in our college library in *Britton and Brown*, I came across *Shortia galacifolia*. The mystery was solved but how did a plant known only from remote mountain valleys in the Carolinas and Georgia occur in Amherst? Investigation of literature offered no explanation. Finally, contact was made with a former Amherst resident who had moved to California, but recalled seeing similar flowers while horseback riding through these woods in 1905 or 1906. Since this plant was marketed by several nurseries (undoubtedly dug from its native habitat) an early owner of this property must have purchased the plant and because of the ideal habitat it grew and multiplied.

The Saga of *Shortia*

Shortia galacifolia or Oconee-bells has intrigued botanists ever since its discovery in the 18th century by André Michaux. While searching for plants in the Southern Appalachians in 1787 (1788?) Michaux discovered an

unknown plant that he later placed in a folder of unidentified plants and deposited it in the *Jardin des Plantes* in Paris with a notation "high mountains of Carolina". The American botanist, Asa Gray, visited Paris in 1839, examined this material and determined that it was a species new to science. He bestowed the name *Shortia* in honor of botanist Charles Short of Kentucky. Gray and other botanists searched the high mountains of Carolina — Grandfather, Roan, Mitchell etc. — but were unable to locate any specimens. Gray discovered a picture of a Japanese relative that indicated the unknown specimen belonged to the *Galax* family, *Diapensiaceae*.

There is a discrepancy in the literature about the rediscovery of this elusive herb with *Galax*-like leaves. In one account (Core), 17 year old George Hyams in 1877 found *Shortia* in McDowell Co., N.C. growing in the Oconee area of the Southern Appalachians. In another reference (Maurice Brooks), Charles Sprague Sargent in 1886 is credited with locating this plant. Whichever is the true version of its rediscovery, nearly 100 years had passed since Michaux had come across the first specimen in the vicinity of mountain streams, in the high mountains but not high in the mountains. The beauty of these flowers attracted many florists to market them in the late 19th and the 20th centuries. Because of its limited distribution along mountain streams in the Southern Appalachians, any disturbance in the environment of this rare plant threatens its existence.



Shortia galacifolia

Dragon Run Field Trip Report

by Bob Eubank

On Saturday, April 18, fifteen members of The Blue Ridge Wildflower Society met Teta Kain and David Clements from Friends of Dragon Run to explore the unique swampland environment of Dragon Run and experience the magnificent diversity of a cypress swamp.

Members who chose to canoe from Ware's Bridge on Rt. 602 to the Big Island found the current in the stream rather swift, enabling them to make the trip in just over an hour, considerably less time than it took other Native Plant Society members who made the same trip last September. At the landing the canoeists joined those members who had hiked from the parking lot.

With the use of the canoes and Teta's mighty Dragon Queen (her boat), we all made it over to the Big Island to walk its nature trail and observe the plant and animal life there.

The weather behaved itself so we did not have to deal with rain, spring bird migration was in full swing, and many unusual plants were waiting to greet us. As we walked along the trails (wet and dry), Teta, a top VSO birder, identified songs of many species of birds such as Ovenbirds, Yellow-throated Vireos, Louisiana Waterthrushes, Wood Thrushes, White-eyed Vireos, Hooded

Warblers, Prothonotary Warblers and Northern Parulas while Jim Bush spotted a Great Blue Heron and Sandra Elder pointed out a Black and White Warbler. Teta also discovered female wolf spiders carrying their egg sacks in the leaf litter and the Basilica and Filmy Dome spiders waiting for lunch in their tangled webs.

Plants observed on this adventure included the magnificent bald cypress, serviceberries, winterberry holly, inkberry holly, waxmyrtles; St. Johnswort and the wild azaleas were in full bloom. Princess pine was growing along the trail with running cedar, and the leaves of rattlesnake plantain were outstanding. Ferns seen included netted chain, Christmas, sensitive, lady, bracken, royal and Massachusetts.

After the walk, we crossed back over to the landing to eat lunch and photograph wildflowers such as columbine and mayapple. More wildflowers, observed by members walking from the cars to the landing, were pointed out to the canoeists as we walked back to the cars and included pink lady's-slippers, blue toadflax, birdfoot violet and sweet white violet.

Back at the cars at the end of the adventure, our president Karen Shepard presented Native Plant Society t-shirts

to Teta and David, and we all thanked them for a wonderful experience that we will always remember.

Board Member Resigns

In a letter addressed to Karen Shepard:

"My time to serve as a Vice President for the Blue Ridge Wildflower Society is coming to a close with your term. Due to my increasingly busy schedule, I cannot continue to serve as an officer. It has been a pleasure to be a part of this wonderful board, not only during your direction but beginning with the term of Frank Coffey and also through Butch Kelly.

I have appreciated the opportunity to learn and grow. You are all great and wonderful teachers.

*Sincerely,
Carol Whiteside"*

Carol has been an asset as a board member and we regret losing her. We do, however, look forward to seeing her at our meetings and, perhaps on some of our field trips.

Arcadia Trip

Anonymous

The earth is just waiting to burst! I feel the energy! These or similar words were spoken by our president, Karen Shepard. This, most assuredly, did happen for us as more than 30 people met on March 28 at Arcadia to view this eruption.

We were not disappointed as we excitedly strolled along the road, climbed the hillside and maneuvered around downed trees on Cove Mountain Trail. There, dancing in the breeze, was a great show of hepatica, trout lily, bleeding heart, bloodroot, colt's foot, cat's paw, and toothwort. Several ferns were identified along with other wildflowers. One first time viewer of these ephemerals was especially impressed with wild ginger and I can't disagree with that. How about you?

Events of Interest

August 23

Picnic at Smith Mountain at the home of Al & Vi Sheridan. Bring a covered dish. The Sheridans will provide the meat, lemonade and coffee. We will eat around 5:00 - 5:30 but feel free to come any time after 2:00 p.m. to play or sit by the lake. A map is enclosed. **Please call Vi at 540-721-8189 if you plan to attend.**

There will be a board meeting at 2:00 p.m. at the Sheridans.

Visit to Registry Site

by Sandra Elder

On Monday, June 15th, a group of eight BRWS members visited our Registry Site in Altavista. After first signing in at Ross Laboratories, owners of the property, we proceeded to the site. The access road was quite overgrown but still drivable. Walking downhill toward the creek, we began to catch glimpses of Rosebay *Rhododendron* blossoms. By the time we reached the creek we knew we had timed our visit to coincide with the peak of blooming season. The *Rhododendron maximum* that line the creekbanks were covered with pale pink to almost white blossoms.

As we walked upstream the sound of thunder could be heard and soon drops of rain made their way down through the tree canopy. We quickened our pace and soon reached the area where a variety of ferns provide a lush groundcover. The

population of Chain Fern, *Lorinsenia areolata*, disjunct from the coastal plain of Eastern Virginia, was thriving.

We were excited to discover that one of the featherbells, *Stenanthium gramineum*, had produced a flower stalk. I plan to return near the end of July to photograph the flowers of this plant normally found at much higher elevations.

By the time we turned around to head back to our cars, the drizzle had become a steady rain. And by the time we reached our cars, we were all quite wet. But the rain did not dampen our spirits or the enthusiasm we have for this special place.

Before leaving Altavista, three of us went to visit Ruth and Frank Knight, the former owners of the Registry Site property. They are always glad to get our report on the condition of the place they still hold dear.

Pilgrimage A Success

Jennifer Austin-Hollandsworth opened the 29th Annual Wildflower Pilgrimage with a warm welcome to those in attendance.

As keynote speaker, Dorothy C. Bliss, Professor Emerita, Randolph-Macon Woman's College, took us on an excursion to the Great Smoky Mountains during a slide/lecture program. Dorothy received her Ph.D. from the University of TN based on work done in the Smokies. So great is her love for the area and her appreciation of the diversity of its flora, she has returned almost every year since then. The combination of this intimate knowledge and her interest in photography were evident — much to the delight of her audience.

The program was followed by a lovely reception organized by Judy Boteler. Judy has a special gift for this and we appreciate her talent and her willingness to help. Elaine Williams provided the floral arrangement. Individual members contributed refreshments. Thank you all! During the reception, those attending shared

a camaraderie and enthusiasm for the upcoming field trips.

Some new field trips were included this year, one of which, the Danco garden, is discussed in a separate article in this Newsletter. There were special walks for young people, some of whom were working on school projects. A list of names for plants expected to be seen was distributed to the students; this helped with both spelling and pronunciation.

Special thanks to Jennifer for all she does for the Science Museum in organizing and coordinating the Pilgrimage. Only when you have done something similar to this can you appreciate all the details she must handle. With mixed emotions we wish her well as she returns to school this fall and regret the loss to the Science Museum.

Special thanks also go to those who served as leaders for the walks. Rich Crites coordinated the leaders. Linda Corey with the Roanoke Valley Bird Club provided leaders from their group. Without all of you, the walks could not have been successful.

Fall Plant Sale and Garden Tour

by Sandra Elder

Our annual Fall Plant Sale will be held on September 5th from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. beside the Randolph-Macon Botanic Garden in Lynchburg. This Kaleidoscope event will also include guided tours of the Botanic Garden.

Help is needed to make this event a success.

We need plants to sell. I would especially appreciate the donation of Columbine, *Aquilegia canadensis*, the 1998 wildflower of the year. Since one of the goals of our plant sale is to encourage the use of NATIVE wildflowers in home gardens please contribute natives rather than exotics. LABEL ALL PLANTS. Including the scientific name would help avoid confusion. If you have plants to contribute but need pots and labels call Rich Crites at (540) 774-4518 or Paul Cowins at (804) 239-4884.

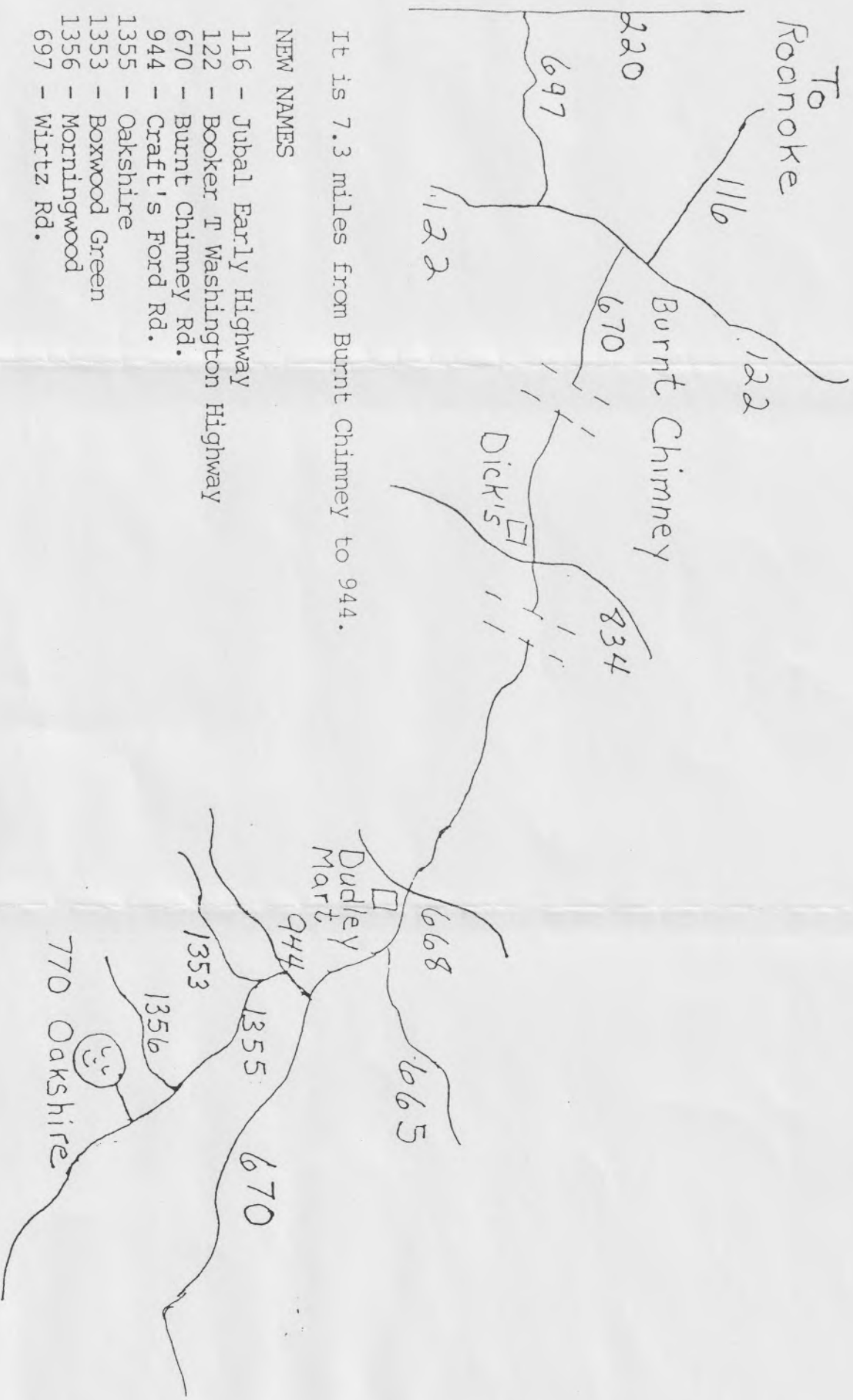
Come see the Botanic Garden that Dorothy Bliss dreamed of for many years and finally become a reality four years ago. With Dorothy's supervision and the dedication of volunteers most of the 200 species of native plants are thriving.

If you have any questions or can offer your help call Sandra Elder at (804) 525-8433.

Spring Plant Sale

On May 9, the BRC held its annual spring wildflower sale at the Community Arboretum. There were many customers eager to purchase the large variety of plants. We have built a reputation for healthy, reliable plants and that reputation helps us sell plants quickly. The majority of our sales are to people who have purchased from us in the past.

The real reason our sales are so successful is because so many of you are willing to share your garden wealth and your love for wildflowers with others. So to all who donated plants, time and/or labor, we say THANK YOU!



MAP TO THE SHERIDANS