

Blue Ridge Wildflower Society

A CHAPTER OF THE
VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Vol. 17, No. 4

October, 2000

Schedule of Events

- October 21** **Buffalo Creek Nature Area Field Trip.** Meet at 11:00 a.m. at the Nature Trail which is two miles east of Evington near the Bedford-Campbell County line. This property is one of our VNPS Registry sites. Bring lunch. Sandra Elder, 804-525-8433.
- October 23** **General Membership Meeting,** 7:00 p.m., Center in the Square.
- October 28** **Randolph-Macon Botanic Garden Work Day** from 2:00-4:30 p.m. Bring gardening tools. Rain date is November 4th. Dot Bliss, 804-845-5665.
- November 27** **An Evening of Shared Memories.** This is our time for sharing photographs, slides or short videos from the past year. Bring five to ten of your favorites for us to enjoy. A seed exchange will follow. Meet at 7:00 p.m., Center in the Square.
- December 2** **Lynchburg Evening of Memories.** This Saturday evening program will be similar to the November program in Roanoke. Bring a few of your favorite slides or photographs for the group to enjoy. Meet at 7:30 p.m., Room 225, Martin Science Building on the Randolph-Macon Woman's College Campus.

Fall Plant Sale

Sandra Elder

The seventh Lynchburg area Wildflower Plant Sale took place on September 9th. This event is part of Lynchburg's Kaleidoscope and also includes tours of the Randolph-Macon Botanic Garden.

The Botanic Garden was a huge success. The growth of this garden has amazed us all. It must be that Dorothy Bliss green magic. Many people strolled the garden paths reading the signs that identify the plants and asking questions. Children delighted in the exploding seed pods of the touch me nots, *Impatiens capensis*. Red berries of the deciduous hollies, *Ilex decidua* and *Ilex verticillata*, golden solidagos and asters of white and lavender provided a colorful scene.

The plant sale was disappointing. Attendance was down but of more concern was the small number of plants provided by members. The efforts of members that helped was greatly appreciated.

Thanks to: Mary and Roger Dalton who came from Roanoke, brought plants and stayed to help us set up, Rudy Albert also from Roanoke who sent some beautiful plants, Vi and Al Sheridan from Moneta for providing plants and staying to help with the sale.

Thanks also to the following Lynchburg members: Dorothy Bliss for providing plants, helping with labeling and pricing plants and tours, Lucille and Paul Cowins for bringing plants and helping with the sale, John Snead for getting there early with balloons (to help people find the garden) and serving as cashier, Elizabeth Henderson for bringing plants and helping at the cashiers table, Margaret Wenning for helping maintain the garden and with tours, Carolyn Bates for helping with tours of the garden.

President's Letter

Cindy Sandberg

The weather has turned cool. It will soon be the end of October and I will "turn over the gavel" to a new president. The past two years have gone so quickly. Looking back through my notes, many delightful memories come to me. I remember being nervous as the new BRWS president, but former president Karen Shepard made and gave me an excellent "guidebook." I took Rich Crites' class, Plant Life in Virginia, to be more knowledgeable about wildflowers. Rich patiently taught me to recognize over 200 plants. Bobby Toler guided me through planning meetings for the 1999 Spring Wildflower Pilgrimage. Bobby was there at every meeting, offering helpful insights and steering me right. Connie and Rich Crites graciously offered their home for our winter board meetings and Vi and Al Sheridan shared their home and beautiful gardens for our picnics. On a very windy April day, Hugh Smith brought Bobby Toler's mounted photographs to our Earth Day booth and helped me, literally, hold down the display — all day. Evelyn Walke has faithfully set up our after-meeting refreshments and cleaned away our messes. Butch and Betty Kelly — what would I have done without you? You always have terrific ideas, you've engaged speakers for our major events, you've led walks, you're always there to help. Sandra Elder and Dorothy Bliss have kept the Lynchburg part of our chapter active, and done a fabulous job with the Randolph Macon Woman's College Botanic Garden. Paul and Lucille Cowins have given so much — thousands of plants, leading walks, and recently they hosted an impromptu field trip to their mountain property. Frieda Toler keeps impressive scrapbooks for our chapter. Malcolm Black made special Wildflower of the Year bells as fund-raisers for us, and brought a variety of plants to our sales. Dora Lee Ellington — what can I say? She makes a field trip special. She spots flowers from yards away, names them all, and tells heart-warming stories of their walks on other days. I will not soon forget seeing the multitude of glorious plants or the joy of Dora Lee and Sam (oh! that smile!) as they shared their garden and knowledge of plants. What a gift from Paul James, inviting us into his gardens and inspiring some of us to

start gardens of our own. The field trips have made me feel a closeness to BRWS members, enjoying the beauty of this earth in rain, wind, blazing sun. I remember sharing a bottle of slow-melting ice with Bunny Smith after leaving the Sarah Duke gardens. She held the bottle between her neck (to cool down) and the sunny window of the bus (to melt the ice), then I drank the water. How do I describe Pam Wieringo? Where would we be without her? She cheerfully keeps our finances in order, makes our chapter's newsletter the best in the state, serves on the state Board of Directors, keeps the lines of communication going, offers encouragement, and listens to me ramble. So many other members have brought plants for our sales, helped with the pilgrimages, programs, field trips and the state meeting. Each of you are a thread that makes the Blue Ridge Wildflower Society a beautiful, warm, loving, comforting quilt. Thank you all for making these past two years so precious. Thanks for wrapping me in your quilt.

Please join me in welcoming our new BRWS president, Julie Alexander. Julie is a teacher of Roanoke city and also teaches outdoor education for the Parks & Recreation Department. With two jobs and two kids, Julie stays busy, but still finds time to pursue her interest in edible and medicinal plants. Her favorite wildflower is whatever is blooming right now. If you have information to share or want information on BRWS activities, please contact Julie at (540) 427-0117.

Lynchburg Area Members

Dorothy C. Bliss

In our last VNPS State Bulletin, Ted Scott wrote glowingly about *The New England Wildflower Society Guide to Growing and Propagating Wildflowers of the United States and Canada* by William Cullina. I agree that the book is a pleasure to read. It is extremely informative with a wealth of information much of it not usually found in a book on propagation. I know you will enjoy reading this publication which can be ordered from the Internet.

R-MWC Botanic Garden Open House

Details of the plant sale are found elsewhere in this newsletter but I'd like

to add a few notes on the Garden. It was a beautiful day and many of the visitors enjoyed a stroll in the Garden. The Franklinia tree had been in bloom most of August and I was pleased to find at least a dozen flowers nearly hidden in the uppermost branches. The winterberries and chokeberries gave brilliant splashes of red on the hillside and the white wood's aster was present nearly everywhere. Some of the goldenrods and other asters were beginning to flower but many more will open later this month. Several of the children and a few adults were amused by the sudden explosive opening of the capsules of the jewelweed or touch-me-not when they were touched. Probably next summer there will be a population explosion throughout the garden! It is difficult to believe that the first plant of these species appeared as a volunteer in the Garden.

Trillium simile

In our last newsletter I asked for information concerning the relationship between *Trillium simile* and *T. erectum*. I am indebted to two readers, Emily Allen of Winston Salem, North Carolina, and Carol S. Womble of Blacksburg, who sent me several reprints with supporting evidence. *T. erectum* is a very variable species and *T. simile* by some researchers is considered a separate species while others consider it a variety of *T. erectum* and a relationship to *T. vaseyi* is also a possibility. The following descriptions have been gleaned from publications by Fred and Roberta Case, Don Jacobs and Peter White.

Sweet white Trillium, *T. simile* may be distinguished from Stinking Willie, *T. erectum* by the former's creamy white large flower size and broadly ovate petals that spread out so that the flowers appear rather flat and conceal the ovary in side view. It occurs chiefly in the Smokies on the Tennessee side. On the other hand the petals of *T. erectum* are lanceolate, spreading from the base in the same plane as the sepals, exposing the ovary in side view. The masses of Trilliums we have observed in the Smokies especially along the trails at the Chimney Tops Picnic area and Ash Hopper would fit the description of *T. simile*. Some experimenters could not detect any sweet odor although the common name would indicate that this is one of its characteristics, but this may not be consistent in all populations.

A Belated Fern Foray

Dorothy C. Bliss

Because a severe thunderstorm on the afternoon of August 27 cancelled our scheduled fern walk, several of us met at the James River Visitor Center and walked along Otter Creek and around the Lake on September 10. We identified 15 species of ferns and fern allies including healthy populations of polypody on a large rock along the creek and small patches of interrupted fern and royal fern. Probably the two most interesting ferns were the tiny mountain spleenwort, *Asplenium montanum* and lobed spleenwort, *A. pinnatifidum* although only a few specimens of each were observed growing on overhanging rock ledges along the lake trail. For convenience and ease of use I would recommend the inexpensive *Fern Finder* by Anne and Barbara Hallowell available at BRP Visitor Centers, etc.

Among the many flowering plants displaying colorful fruits were Solomon's plume and Jack-in-the-pulpit with their clusters of bright red berries. The wintergreen or teaberry plants were just beginning to develop red color but their taste was as pleasant as when fully ripe. The fruits of the paw-paw trees were still dark green and hard and would not be fully ripe for several weeks. The banana-strawberry flavor of this edible fruit is pleasant but most fruits are quickly consumed by wildlife. We encountered a specimen mountain holly, *Ilex montana* which is usually found at higher elevations being common along Thunder Ridge and Apple Orchard trails.

All was going well until we come to a tributary of Otter Creek and discovered the bridge had been washed downstream. While some of us were debating about walking further north along the creek to locate another bridge, one of our members made a temporary bridge and the day was saved. Surprisingly the BRP had not been notified of the damage to the bridge.

As the afternoon drew to a close the group enjoyed a picnic supper along the banks of the James River.

Memories of Samuel E. Ellington

When I think of Sam, I remember a man with a kind, a caring and a tender heart. He tried to make everyone feel like they were welcome and important to our organization.

— Rich Crites

I cannot remember when Bobby and I first met Sam and Dora Lee. It seems we have always been friends. We braved the winter cold and ice to see skunk cabbage on Bent Mountain in February. We marveled at the miracle of spring when we saw the first Trout lily at Arcadia. We forgot the heat in July to see the array of flowers in the meadow at Rakes Mill Pond on the Blue Ridge Parkway and, oh the times, we ate a simple picnic lunch beside a small creek and considered ourselves most privileged.

Our Blue Ridge Wildflower Chapter was formed in June 1984 and from the very beginning we shared wonderful times on field trips, work days and plant sales.

Sam enriched our lives with his humor, expertise and genuine love of nature. To borrow a line from a favorite poem that says, "There is beauty all around us to see, touch and hear", I can only say - Thank you, Sam, for many fine memories and teaching us to appreciate our beautiful world

— Frieda Toler

We were on a field trip along Jennings Creek at Arcadia one day. I came across Sam just sitting there, staring at a yellow ladyslipper. He said, "Isn't that the most beautiful thing you've ever seen". I agreed. He sat there a little while longer and, again, said, "Isn't that the most beautiful thing you've ever seen". It was just an example of his deep appreciation of all nature.

— Hugh Smith

The first field trip I went on, I was apprehensive as not only did I not know much about wildflowers, I also didn't know any members. Sam put me right at ease. He was quick to

make me feel welcome and to make sure that I saw everything. Sam was a quiet unassuming man who was always generous with his smiles and his knowledge.

— Karen Shepard

Sam, a dear and loyal friend. Always a smile, always a hug, always a Tootsie Roll.

— Evelyn Walke

Sam gave me violets — the sweetest, most cheerful flowers I know. A couple of years ago I visited Sam and Dora Lee at their home. We talked about wildflowers and the BRWS. I asked for advice on what book could guide me, as a novice, in establishing a wildflower garden. As I prepared to leave, Sam asked me to wait. He went into another room and returned with a painting of violets. He smiled and said he thought I would enjoy the painting. I had not told him violets are my favorites! Now when I look at these violets, I enjoy both the flowers and the memory they bring.

— Cindy Sandberg

As I recall the life of Sam, many happy memories crowd out the sadness of his passing. Even on a cloudy morning, when Sam arrived to join a group on a field trip, his warm exuberant greeting to all suddenly brightened the day. He delighted in sharing with us the discovery of many an elusive flower or fern. Each time I see the lovely lily-leaved twayblade, I recall his joy at pointing out this beautiful orchid growing on a mossy rock on Apple Orchard. His love and knowledge of nature and his very joy of life is a heritage that he leaves as a challenge to us all.

— Dorothy Bliss

A lovely compliment together with a lament. Almost exactly what had been spoken by his dear friend, our beloved John Walke three and a half years earlier. A precious, priceless gift, a sweet solace. A gift to cherish throughout life.

— Anonymous

Observations From The Field

Mr. Dent

Esther Atkinson

Late July, Frieda Toler and I gathered Queen Anne's Lace from a vacant field off Dent Road. (Dent Road is often called Thunder Road from the movie starring Robert Mitchem in which he rode on a very curvy road hauling moonshine.) My project was to dry the flowers to use on my Christmas tree for the snowflake effect.

While sorting the blooms for drying, I found a monarch caterpillar about one inch long. The manual states that swallowtails feed on the carrot plant but does not mention monarchs doing so. Later Frieda told me monarchs do feed on plants other than milkweed. I left him to munch on the flower and he ate almost the entire blossom in two days and doubled in size. Making sure he had plenty to eat, I picked several more Queen Anne's lace. Frieda came by and we had a show-and-tell. She said I had to give him a name. Since I collected him on Dent Road, he became Mr. Dent.

Hoping to watch the cycle of Mr. Dent becoming a butterfly, I checked on him daily. By the fourth day, he disappeared. I'm inclined to believe a bird had a feast. My hopes deflated! Mr. Dent was an exciting experience. Recently I've been accused of looking for his relatives.

On September 9, Frieda discovered five monarch caterpillars in her yard on the swamp milkweed.

Incidentally, Tinsley Lane on Bent Mountain circles a field where there are lots of butterflies. Jennings Creek at Arcadia is a good location for seeing them, too. I've seen pictures taken at the Peaks of flocks of Swallowtails.

Roses Love Monarda

Anonymous

Over the years, I have read about companion planting. *Carrots Love Tomatoes* by Louise Riotte is an excellent book on the subject. It was not until this summer that I learned firsthand about companion planting and it was completely by accident.

I have never grown roses because of the problems with insects and powdery mildew. I was given a rose bush for Mother's Day, so I wanted it planted where I could enjoy it when it bloomed. I chose a spot by the patio and my family planted it for me.

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As you know, in May many plants are in the growing stage and bloom later in the summer. Such was the case of the flowers by the patio. The rose bloomed beautifully beside the purple bergamot, *Monarda media*.

The rose has bloomed constantly all summer without insects or mildew. The monarda attracted the hummingbirds also, making it the best of companion planting.

In Memoriam

It is with great sadness we learned of the death of Samuel E. Ellington on August 23, 2000.

Charter members of the BRWS, Sam & Dora Lee have been actively involved in every aspect of the Society. A naturalist, Sam was active in the Roanoke Valley Bird Club, the Science Museum, the Roanoke AT Club, and Woodpecker Ridge Nature Center.

Our sympathy is extended to Dora Lee and their son & daughter-in-law, Charlie and Carolyn.

Revelations of the Franklinia Census

Dorothy C. Bliss

Last spring to commemorate the 300th birthday of John Bartram, the Historic Bartram's Garden conducted a survey of the known living *Franklinias*. As you will recall all Ben Franklin's trees are descendents of the specimens John Bartram grew in his Philadelphia garden since this species was never seen in the wild after 1803. The *Franklinia* in the R-MWC Botanic Garden was registered in the spring of 1999 and recently I received a portfolio which contained the results of the census as well as a pamphlet on the tree's care and propagation and a series of articles on the *History of Franklinia (Part I)* published by the John Bartram Association.

Thirty-eight states and Washington D.C. reported 1896 *Franklinia* trees with most of the trees in the eastern states: 559 in Pennsylvania, 181 in North Carolina, 157 in New Jersey, and 120 in Virginia. Outside of the United States, Canada reported 40, Great Britain 50 and New Zealand 36.

The majority of these trees were 1-10 years old but nearly 20 were thought to be around 100 years old. In the Harvard University Arnold Arboretum two *Franklinias* are known to be at least 95 years old. These trees appeared to prefer a well-drained clay or loam soil and sun or part-shade. In the brochure on growing and caring for this tree, it is recommended that the pH of the soil be 6 or lower and that a mulch of composted pine needles or shredded leaves extending out beyond the drip-line be added. During periods of drought adequate water should be added but good drainage is essential.

If you didn't register your *Franklinia* in the past year you still may do so as the *Franklinia* Census is being continued indefinitely through the Historic Bartram's Garden web site (www.libertynet.org/bartram).