Blue Ridge Wildflower Society

A CHAPTER OF THE

VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Vol. 17, No. 2 April, 2000

Schedule of Events

April 28-30 **Thirty-First Annual Wildflower Pilgrimage** by the Science Museum of Western Virginia. Cosponsored by the Blue Ridge Wildflower Society. Dr. Kenneth Stein will be the keynote speaker Friday evening. His program, "Appalachian Flora and Scenic Vistas", will be presented at 7:00 p.m. in Hopkins Planetarium.

To register or receive a brochure with details, contact the Museum at 342-5727 or sgarst@smwv.org.

May 6 **Big Spring Day,** Woodpecker Ridge Nature Center. Contact Barry Kinzie, 992-2743.

May 13 **Sixteenth Annual Spring Plant Sale,** Community Arboretum on the campus of Virginia Western Community College from 9:00 a.m. until noon. No plants sold before 9:00 a.m. Rain or shine!

May 20 **Buffalo Mountain Field Trip.** Meet at 10:00 a.m. in the bank parking lot behind the Floyd County Courthouse. An alternate meeting location is Cave Spring Junior High School on Chaparrel Drive, off Route 419/Electric Road, at 9:00 a.m. Someone will be there to meet you. Bring your lunch.

May 21 **Claytor Nature Center Field Trip.** Meet at 2:00 p.m. This working farm is located between the Peaks of Otter and Bedford. From Route 43, turn onto Cloverlea Lane. From the Peaks this will be a left turn; from Roanoke or Bedford it will be a right turn. There are no actual turns after you get on Cloverlea but there are some slight forks. Anywhere there is a choice, bear left and you will come right to the Nature Center. Bring your supper.

May 22 **General Membership Meeting,** 7:00 p.m., Center in the Square. Paul Clarke will present a program about the Natural Heritage Program.

A board of directors meeting precedes the membership meeting.

June 2-4 **VNPS Annual Meeting,** hosted by the Blue Ridge Chapter. This year's theme is the forests. A wide range of field trips is planned in addition to the Friday evening program and the Saturday evening dinner program. Friday's program will feature Leonard Adkins' "Wildflowers of the Appalachian Trail". Saturday evening Chris Bolgiano will speak on the Appalachian Forests.

Full information and a registration form are in the March issue of the VNPS Bulletin.

June 10 **James River State Park Field Trip.** Meet at 10:00 a.m. at the Park. Additional details will be provided prior to the event.

Annual Spring Plant Sale

Our Sixteenth Annual Plant Sale is scheduled for Saturday, May 13, 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.

Now is the time to begin potting your plants. They need three to four weeks to become established before the sale. As you thin or divide your garden plantings, be thinking of what you might like to share for our sale. If you need pots or have questions, contact Rich Crites, 540-774-4518, or Paul Cowins, 804-239-4884.

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?

Letter From The President

Cindy Sandberg

In January I moved to a different home. The house is 45 years old, with an established yard. With the coming of spring, I felt a sense of disappointment. The floral display would likely be nice, but not as spectacular as spring on Bent Mountain. Here I would find the typical spring bulbs, phlox, etc. There I would find wildflowers. When I mowed the lawn for the first time, I was delighted to find bluets — lots of them! At the second mowing I found pussytoes. I mentioned my "finds" to a librarian, who replied, "Aren't they really just weeds?"

Are they? Is that how you see them?

Come to our meetings or on our walks and talk to BRWS members. Bob can give you information on landscaping with native plants. Dora Lee and Paul can give you tips on growing wildflowers in your yard. Group walks at private gardens will show you the plants in backyard settings. Mary, Robin and Allen can tell you where to obtain wildflowers or seeds. Many varieties will be available at our spring plant sale. Rich can tell you about classes where you can learn to identify wildflowers. Field trip leaders can show you native plants growing in their natural habitats.

Come join us at meetings, on field trips, and during our 31st Annual Wildflower Pilgrimage. Decide for yourself if the plants you see are weeds or beautiful, wonderful wildflowers!

VNPS Annual Meeting

The Blue Ridge Chapter of the VNPS is hosting the annual meeting for members from all over the state. There are plenty of opportunities for everyone to help. If you are interested and have a little time, please contact Betty Kelly, 540-384-7429, Cindy Sandberg, 540-977-0868, or Pam Wieringo, 540-343-8596. Your willingness will be very much appreciated.

We are considered one of the most active chapters. (We think they mean we have the most fun!) So plan to attend the evening dinner program as well as other weekend events. Let's demonstrate our abilities as hosts.

Events of Interest

April 22 — **Earth Day** will be celebrated in Roanoke at Explore Park. Our chapter will have a display booth.

April 27-29 — **50th Annual Spring Wildflower Pilgrimage,** Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Gatlinburg, TN. Fittingly, these dates are identical to the dates of the first pilgrimage held in 1951. At that time, Art Stupka gave the original Friday evening talk, "Wildflowers of the Great Smokies", to 300 people and 150 attended the Saturday walks. This year more than 1000 people are expected each day and more than 100 walks or classes will be offered.

May 12-14 — **Wintergreen Nature Foundation Spring Wildflower Symposium.** Details were in the January VNPS Bulletin. You may contact them at 804-325-8172.

May 12-13 — **An Environmental Weekend at Ferrum College.** Friends of the Blue Ridge Parkway, Ferrum College and the Virginia Museum of Natural History have joined for a weekend of programs of interest to all ages. There are a variety of programs for ages 5-12 as well as adult offerings. For information, contact Friends of the BRP, P. O. Box 20986, Roanoke VA 24018 or visit brpinfo@aol.com or Ferrum College's website, www.ferrum.edu.

May 19-21 — **Women's Wildflower Weekend** at the Jessee cabin in Franklin County. Details were in the January VNPS Bulletin.

Lynchburg Area Members

Dorothy C. Bliss

Early Spring

In preparation for a photographic album on the flowers and ferns of the R-MWC Botanic Garden that will depict the garden through the seasons, I have been recording the blooming dates since late winter. Spring came early this year and on March 10 bloodroot, golden ragwort, Greek valerian, shale barren phlox and Shortia were in bloom and were followed two weeks later by Virginia bluebells, red bud and sand myrtle. It will be interesting to compare this year's dates with previous records.

Botanic Garden Work Day

On the afternoon of March 25, nineteen enthusiastic workers gathered in the R-MWC Botanic Garden to prepare the beds for spring and remove the ravages of winter. The accumulation of fallen leaves were removed, overgrown shrubs cut back, dandelions and wild garlic dug up and a few plants were set out. These included Carolina rose, *Rosa carolina*, bluets, *Houstonia caerulea*, blue-eyed grass, *Sisyrinchium angustifolium* and the yellow purple coneflower, *Echinacea paradoxa*. Mulch was added where needed and landscaping timbers were laid down, continuing the main path to the bench under the oak tree. The cultivar of our mountain hydrangea, *H. arborescens* "Annabelle" with its showy snowball flowers was so unlike our native species, that it was removed and a specimen described as having flat clusters of flowers was put in its place.

At the end of the afternoon the garden was ready for spring. Thanks are extended to all the workers. Their work is greatly appreciated by the regular volunteers.

After the completion of their afternoon of hard labor, many of the workers enjoyed a potluck dinner at my home. This was so successful that we may try it again after our fall clean-up. This is how traditions begin!

Scholarships Awarded

Three Virginia Western Community College Students have been selected as recipients of our annual scholarships. Each of these students maintains an A/B+ average.

Mary Fochtman is an outstanding horticulture student. She spends much of her time as a volunteer in the Arboretum.

Kerri Mills Huffman will graduate this semester. She plans to pursue a degree in biology, possibly at Roanoke College.

Morgan Sink is a general biology student who plans to pursue a four year degree. She will be taking a wildflower class this summer under Rich Crites.

It is a pleasure to be able to offer our scholarships to these deserving students. We wish them well.

Flora of Central Virginia

Dorothy C. Bliss

Dr. Gwynn Ramsey, Professor of Biology, Emeritus of Lynchburg College, presented an interesting and informative program on "Surveying the Flora of Central Virginia" on the evening of March 25, at Randolph-Macon Woman's College. Through slides and narration the audience journeyed from the Peaks of Otter and the Blue Ridge Parkway to the James River Gorge and Wilderness Area to Nelson County and Percival's Island, an island in the James River that has become part of Lynchburg's city park system. In each of these research regions, Dr. Ramsey highlighted some of the rare and special plants that occur in varied habitats and enhanced his presentation with numerous references to historical and human interest events.

One interesting plant that he included was the Carolina hemlock, *Tsuga carolina*, that reaches its northernmost distribution at the James River. Populations of mature trees occur on the ridges of the Peaks of Otter and at Thunder Ridge Overlook. Mountain sides with stands of defoliated pines clearly showed the ravages of the pine bark beetle perhaps intensified by the effects of acid rain and other pollutants. The extremely rare flower in Virginia, Clammyweed, *Polanisia dodecandra*, a member of the Spider Family was discovered in a survey of Percival's Island. The disjunct mock orange or snowbell is a coastal plain species that was found far distant in Amherst County. One of the ponds in Augusta County presented a magnificent sight with hundreds of flowers of Golden club, *Orontium aquaticum*, dotting the surface. The Star-flowered Solomon's seal, *Smilacina stellata*, uncommon in Virginia and the endangered Kankakee mallow, *Iliamna remota*, occurring in Snowden and in Illinois were among the many unusual plants depicted in slides. I'm glad I didn't miss this exceptionally fine program. Thank you, Dr. Ramsey.

Bunny Smith Honored

One of Bunny Smith's special projects at the Science Museum was the development of a geology gallery. She worked diligently to make the dream a reality.

At their January meeting, the directors of the museum voted to dedicate a portion of the gallery to her.

In February, Phase One of the project was opened. There are areas explaining the various types of rocks, such as sedimentary and metamorphic, a mural depicting bones from the Saltville, Virginia, digs, a display of fluorescent rocks showing both long and short waves. And colors, colors, colors. More colors in rocks and minerals than you can imagine. In addition, there are some fossil samples.

There is a plaque in the Life Through Time area honoring Bunny.

We believe she would be pleased. We know Hugh must be proud to see the fruition of her dream.

In Sympathy

We were saddened to learn of the death of Benjamin (Bennie) Lewis Cowins of Lynchburg on March 28, 2000.

He was the brother of Paul Cowins. Our sympathy is extended to Paul and Lucille and other members of his family.

Chokeberries

Dorothy C. Bliss

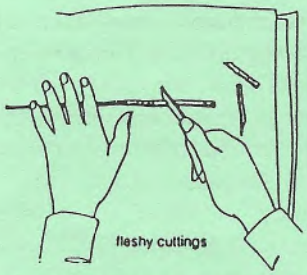
At the Lynchburg Bird Club meeting a few weeks ago I was introduced to a new drink, "Aronia Berry". The label reads "a real cranberry alternative returns to America after a century of acclaim in Europe". Today on your grocery shelves you can find several blends of chokeberry (Aronia) with raspberry, strawberry and blueberry in addition to grape.

Many of you are familiar with the common red-berried chokeberry, *Aronia arbutifolia* which occurs over much of Virginia in swamps and wet woods. The black-berried species, *A. melanocarpa* is found chiefly in the mountains and western counties of Virginia and is the basis of the commercial drink. A third species, the purple-berried, *A. prunifolia* is scattered over the state. This red-fruited shrub is extremely rare in the Great Smokies National Park while the black is more common there. The West Virginia Flora lists these shrubs under the genus *Pyrus* and I have found them classified under *Sorbus*. *Aronia* is a member of the Rose family, *Rosaceae*. Clusters of attractive white or pink-tinged flowers are followed by either red, black or purple berry-like pomes.

A. arbutifolia is an outstanding colonial shrub for the home landscape, the beautiful pinkish white flowers opening in early April are followed by the red or scarlet leaf color and attractive red fruits that persist through much of the winter. The "berries" may be somewhat distasteful to birds as they are consumed only in late winter when other foods are scarce. An especially fine specimen of *A. arbutifulia* "Brilliantissima" is thriving in the R-MWC Botanic Garden.

Aronia melanocarpa

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.

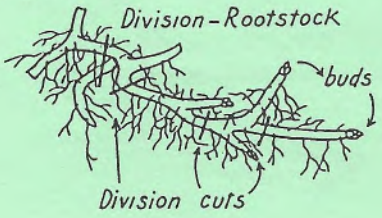
Spring is a good time to take cuttings because the plants will have much needed nutrients stored in their root system, awaiting spring and summer growth. Several techniques are described here.

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 partridgeberry, 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 Newsleter**)

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.

Dr. Kenneth J. Stein

The guest speaker for this year's Wildflower Pilgrimage Kickoff will be Dr. Kenneth J. Stein. Dr. Stein is a Division Leader in the Invertebrate Research Division of the Conservation Management Institute at Virginia Tech. He does extensive research on ecology, soil, invertebrates and land restoration.

He and a colleague have recently developed a CD-ROM entitled *Appalachian Flora and Scenic Vistas* which includes over 900 plant pictures (350 species) and over 250 scenic vistas.

A reception will follow Dr. Stein's presentation.

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

Cindy Sandberg, *President*
(540) 929-4459

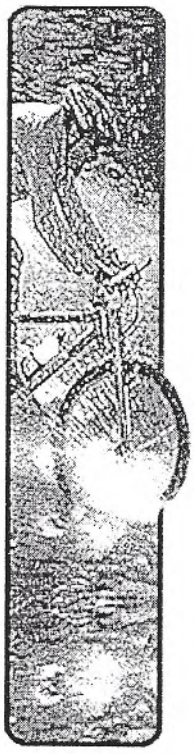
Pamela M. Wieringo, *Editor*
(540) 343-8596

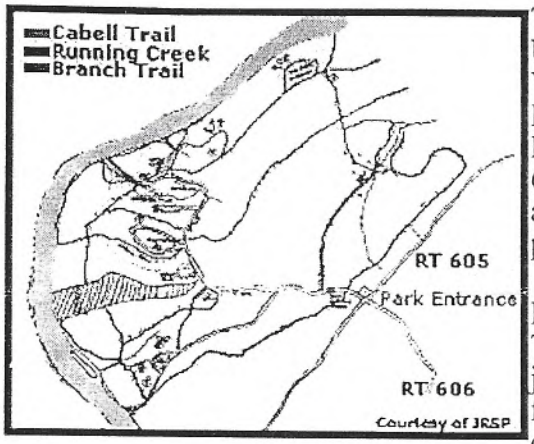
P.O. Box 20385 • Roanoke, VA 24018

June 10, 2000 - 10:00

Field Trip

James River State Park





The James River State Park is nestled between U.S. Highway 29 and U.S. Highway 60 in central Virginia. Take U.S. Highway 60 to the town of Bent Creek (approximately 27 miles east of Sweet Briar College). In Bent Creek, turn onto Route 605 at the James River Bridge, proceed 7 miles and turn left on route 606, this will take you to the park entrance.

From Charlottesville:
Take U.S. Highway 29 South for 45 miles to junction with U.S. Highway 60. Take US 60 for 27 miles to Bent Creek. Follow above directions from Bent Creek.

From Lynchburg:
Take Route 622 Northeast from Madison Heights to Gladstone. Follow Route 622 to US 60 East and take US 60 East a few miles to Bent Creek. Follow above directions from Bent Creek.

From Farmville:
Take US Highway 460 West to US Highway 15 North. Follow US 15 North to Sprouse's Corner (22 Miles). From there, take US Highway 60 West to Bent Creek (35 miles). F Bent Creek follow the directions above.

From Roanoke:
Take US 460 to Lynchburg Then RT 29 North to Route 60 East.
Cross the James River bridge Then turn Left onto Route 605.
Go approximately 7 miles and turn Left onto Route 606.

To CARPOOL from Roanoke:

Meet at The Food Lion parking lot at the stoplight/intersection of US 460E and Laymantown Rd (State RT 659) at 8:00 A.M

For more information, contact:
James River State Park
804-933-4355
Route 1 Box 787
Gladstone, VA 24553