

Blue Ridge Wildflower Society

A CHAPTER OF THE
VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Vol. 17, No. 1

February, 2000

Schedule of Events

- February 26** **Catawba Field Trip.** Meet at the Homeplace (Restaurant) parking lot on Route 311 at 2:00 p.m. We'll search for skunk cabbage and take a look at trees in winter then return to the Homeplace around 4:00 p.m. for supper there. Bring footwear appropriate for wet areas. Butch Kelly, 384-7429.
- February 28** **General Membership Meeting,** 7:00 p.m., Center in the Square. Ted Scott will present "Four Seasons Close Up."
- March 25** **Randolph-Macon Botanic Garden Work Day** from 2:00 - 4:30. A potluck supper will follow. Bring gardening tools (pruners, rakes, etc.) Rain date is April 1. See Lynchburg Area column.
- March 25** **Lynchburg Evening Program.** Meet at 7:30 in Room 225, Martin Science Building, Randolph-Macon Woman's College. This program will be held even if rain cancels the Garden work day.
- March 27** **General Membership Meeting.** 7:00 p.m., Center in the Square. Program to be announced.
- April 2** **Waid Park Field Trip.** This park, about 8 miles out of Rocky Mount, is part of the original Carolina Road. Meet at 2:00. Take Route 40W out of Rocky Mount. Turn right at the Route 40 Food Fair (there's a traffic light) onto Six-Mile Road and go about 1½ miles to Route 800 then turn left. Al & Vi Sheridan, leaders, 540-721-8189.
- We can bring a bag supper or plan to go to a BBQ restaurant in Rocky Mount. Let us know your preference by March 25 so if the majority prefer the restaurant, we can make reservations. Contact the Sheridans or Pam Wieringo, 540-343-8596.
- April 8** **Spring Ephemerals Field Trip to Arcadia.** Meet at 10:00 a.m. at the bridge over Jennings Creek on Route 614. Bring your lunch. Rich Crites, 774-4518.
- April 15** **Green Hill Park Field Trip.** Rich Crites is taking one of his classes on this trip and has invited us to join them. Meet at 9:00 a.m. Take West Main Street in Salem to just west of Old Virginia Brick Company. Turn onto Duiguid's Lane, cross the bridge and turn right into the park.
- April 28-30** **Thirty-First Annual Wildflower Pilgrimage** by the Science Museum of Western Virginia. Cosponsored by the Blue Ridge Wildflower Society. Keynote speaker and details are being finalized.
- 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. Bring lunch.
- May 21** **Claytor Nature Center Field Trip.** Meet at 2:00 p.m. This working farm is located near the Peaks of Otter. More information will be in the April Newsletter.
- May 22** **General Membership Meeting,** 7:00 p.m., Center in the Square. Paul Clarke with the Natural Heritage Program, will present the 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 along with the Friday evening program and the Saturday evening dinner program. Details are being finalized and full information will appear in the next Bulletin.
- June 10** **James River State Park Field Trip.** Meet at 10:00 a.m. at the Park. Details will be in the April Newsletter. Bring lunch.

Letter From The President

Cindy Sandberg

Wow! It's the year 2000. Sounds like something newer than a usual "new year," doesn't it? Do you have new adventures planned for this year? Have you considered visiting sites you haven't visited before? What different plants have you considered adding to your gardens? Have you thought of introducing a friend or neighbor to the wonders of native plants?

The Blue Ridge Wildflower Society has planned programs, field trips, spring and fall plant sales, and a picnic for the upcoming months. In April we will cosponsor the 31st Annual Wildflower Pilgrimage with the Science Museum of Western Virginia and the Roanoke Bird Club. Several new walks have been added. In June our chapter will host the Virginia Native Plant Society's annual state meeting. Members and guests of other chapters of the VNPS will join us for two evening programs, a banquet, and field trips. It's our opportunity to share the treasures of this area with people from other parts of Virginia. Let's make this a truly memorable state convention by showing our own enthusiasm and support. Please contact me if you can help in any way - registration, walk leaders, reception, hospitality room, displays, etc. We do need the assistance of as many members as possible. Details of state meeting activities will appear in an upcoming issue of the VNPS Bulletin.

It is with sadness I report the passing of Bobby Toler. Bobby's photographs and slides have been beautiful additions at many BRWS events. Bobby's guidance and gentle humor were also cherished gifts. He helped whenever he could with whatever was needed. His creativity was inspiring! He was a teacher, an artist, a very special friend. We will all miss him.

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

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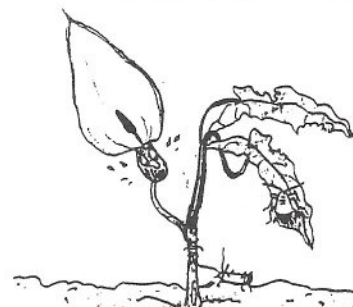
P.O. Box 20385 • Roanoke, VA 24018

Dot Bliss read this poem at a slide program she presented last fall. The audience enjoyed it and asked if it could be printed in our Newsletter. We have received permission to do so and hope you will enjoy it also.

Why Did My Plant Die?

Geoffrey B. Charlesworth

You walked too close. You trod on it.
You dropped a piece of sod on it.
You hoed it down. You weeded it.
You planted it the wrong way up.
You grew it in a youghurt cup.
But you forgot to make a hole'
The soggy compose took its toll.
September storm. November drought.
It heaved in March, the roots popped out.
You watered it with herbicide
You scattered bonemeal far and wide,
Attracting local omnivores,
Who ate your plant and stayed for more.
You left it baking in the sun
While you departed at a run
To find a spade, perhaps a trowel.
Meanwhile the plant threw in the towel.
You planted it with crown too high;
The soil washed off, that explains why.
Too high PH. It hated lime.
Alas it needs a gentler clime.
You left the root ball wrapped in plastic.
You broke the roots. They're not elastic.
You walked too close. You trod on it.
You dropped a piece of sod on it.
You splashed the plant with mower oil.
You should do something to your soil.
Too rich. Too poor. Such wretched tilth.
Your soil is clay. Your soil is filth.
Your plant was eaten by a slug.
The growing point contained a bug.
These aphids are controlled by ants.
In early spring your garden's mud.
You walked around! That's not much good.
With heat and light you hurried it.
You worried it. You buried it.
The poor plant missed the mountain air;
No heat, no summer muggs up there.
You overfed it 10-10-10.
Forgot to water it again.
You hit it sharply with the hose.
You used a can without a nose.
Perhaps you sprinkled from above.
You should have talked to it with love.
The nursery mailed it without roots.
You killed it with those gardening boots.
You walked too close. You trod on it.
You dropped a piece of sod on it.



From *A Gardener Obsessed* by Geoffrey B. Charlesworth
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Kentucky Coffee Tree

Dorothy C. Bliss

The specimen of coffee tree in the R-MWC Botanic Garden, a gift of Paul James in March 1995, is thriving and is now nearly 20 feet tall. Because I was not familiar with this species, I have been interested in learning more about it.

The scientific name of the Kentucky coffee tree, *Gymnocladus dioica*, is derived from the Greek and the generic term means "naked branch", perhaps referring to the stout branches that bear few twigs and sparse foliage. Just as likely, to me, is the possibility that this refers to the 2 to 3 foot long bare leaf-stalks that litter the ground in autumn. The common name refers to the former use of the seeds as a substitute for coffee said to have a bitter taste.

The tree is relatively slow growing and may reach a height of 90 feet



and may live for 50 or more years. The most distinctive feature of this tree is its enormous bipinnate (twice compound) leaves which may attain a length of three feet, among the largest leaves borne on any American tree. These leaves bear 40-100 small leaflets

giving a fern-like open appearance and casting a light filtered shade.

A member of the pea family, the coffee tree produces small star-shaped fragrant flowers in terminal racemes in early summer. The tree is dioecious, having staminate and pistillate flowers on separate trees. The blooms are followed by reddish-brown pods up to 10" long.

In Virginia this tree occurs in five southwestern counties and also grows naturally further west and as far north as southern Ontario. Frequently used as a street and yard planting, it is pest free and is said to produce a substance that is poisonous to flies.

I have not observed any flowers on the Botanic Garden specimen but as each summer unfolds I'll be anxiously watching to see if this tree is pistillate or staminate.

Mountain Laurel?

Dorothy C. Bliss

To those of you who subscribe to the magazine, Blue Ridge Country, have you noticed the photograph in the Jan-Feb 2000 issue on page 39 labeled "Ice on Mountain Laurel"? When I saw it, I did a double take as the fruit pictured - bright red clusters of berries - are not the fruit of *Kalmia* or Mountain Laurel. This shrub produces fruits which are globose many seeded capsules. Also the leaves appear to be compound not simple as in *Kalmia*. If it is not Mountain Laurel, what shrub is in the photo? I believe this is a cultivar of *Nandina domestica*. The most likely candidate is the cultivar "Richmond" which produces dense clusters of fruit. If anyone has more information, I would be interested in receiving it.

322 Sumpter St.
Lynchburg, VA 24503-4430

??????????

Do You Know The Answer?

(ANSWERS ON PAGE 6)

I'm sure you know Virginia's state flower and state bird but can you name the state butterfly, state fish and state dog? You will find the answers elsewhere in this newsletter.

??????????

Other Events of Interest

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

Finding Natives on the Internet

Phil Stokes, Glen Metzler contributor

At this time of year with only a bleak and inhospitable landscape to observe, browsing nature indoors is a welcome option. Besides perusing books and those perennial-like garden catalogues that sprout this time of year in your mailbox, consider plant searching on the internet. You may be surprised to discover all that it can offer. For example, I had never been able to find ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*) in a nursery or mail order catalogue. Utilizing the internet I was finally able to locate a source.

If you're not computer connected to the internet yet, use a friend's or a computer at the library. They can easily get you started even if you know nothing about computers. The internet offers an overwhelming wealth of information on any subject, including native plants. From weeding through the multitude of plant related internet sites, Glenn and I have compiled a list of a few of our favorites with excellent natives content.

Especially useful are sites with helpful links to other internet sites with related subject matter. These sites allow you to select from the greatest variety of sources. In other words, you are more likely to find what you want. Try these sites to cast the widest net in locating your topic of interest.

Sites with excellent links:

www.gardenweb.com/
If gardening is your desire, this internet local covers every aspect. Particularly good are the forums it hosts on over a hundred subjects including several on native plants. Here anyone can review questions posted by users and follow-up replies. Other strong suits of this site are its plant and seed exchange, calendar, and directories.

<http://www.for-wild.org/index.htm> Best site for the native plant purist. Sponsored by Wild Ones -

Natural Landscapers Ltd. which is a non-profit organization based in the midwest similar in mission to VNPS. Here you will find links taking you to a couple dozen native plant organization's sites including VNPS. Also lists numerous sites addressing control of invasive plants. Links also to a handful of sites having descriptions and photos of natives.

<http://www.botany.org/bsa/www-bot.html> Scientifically oriented site suited for research and teaching provided by The Botanical Society of America. Excellent site with scads of botany links containing a wealth of information.

A few niche sites narrowly focused in subject matter might stir your interest. These off the main road places that cater to a smaller following, but are worthy of viewing for the native plant enthusiast.

Features such as Registry of Natural Areas in Virginia with rare and interesting Native Plants is worth a look.

<http://plants.usda.gov/> The USDA Plants National Database. Includes distribution maps showing counties within state containing a particular species. Threatened & Endangered plant classification searchable.

<http://www.csdl.tamu.edu/FLORA/gallery.htm> Contains a comprehensive vascular plant image gallery.

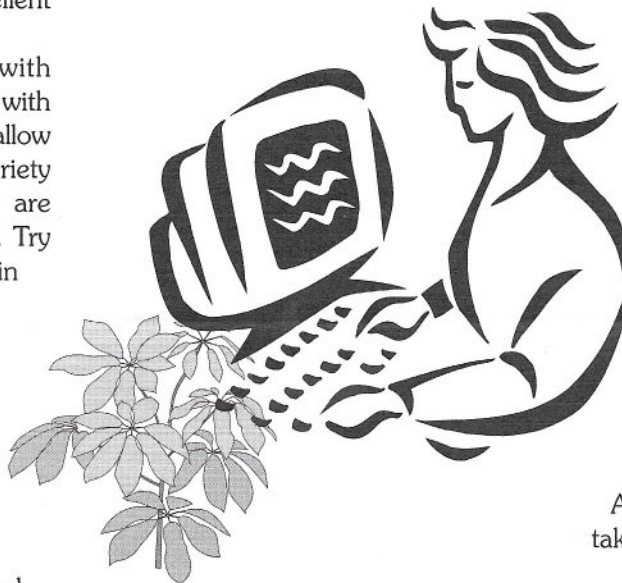
<http://www.bonap.org/> Site for the Biota of North America Program.

www.fw.vt.edu/4h/bigtree/index.htm Statistics on Virginia's and the nations biggest trees. How to measure and nominate a big tree. Program that Nancy Hugo spoke to club about last year.

www.gardenweb.com/sunshine/ Want to find out what Cyber-Plantsman Barry Glick, a featured speaker at our chapter last spring, is up to. He writes about plants he's promoting now, not always natives.

www.herball.com If you're still wondering where I found the ginseng planting roots - this is the place. Site shows photos and describes plants as being grown in nursery beds. Assuring to know roots were not taken from the wild.

Hope that trying these sites will prove rewarding. A computer screen is no substitute for real world viewing, but can certainly enhance it.



Specialty sites:

<http://www.vnps.org/> How could I overlook our own organization's site? Very impressive in scope of information presented including pages on seminars, workshops, field trips, plant sales, plant sources, and excerpts from newsletters including our own.

Jefferson Chapter,
Spring 2000 Newsletter.

*"The woods were made for the
hunter of dreams
The brooks for the fisher of song
To the hunters who hunt for the
gunless game
The streams and the woods
belong."*

- Sam Walter Foss

When I first joined the Blue Ridge Wildflower Society, I attended meetings and learned from and enjoyed the slide programs, speakers and members. I listened to tales of field trips, but was hesitant to actually participate in them. I felt so ignorant — I knew so few wildflowers, most of them from photographs. Finally I did go on a spring ephemeral walk. I was like a treasure hunt — with lots of treasures to be found! As we wandered along the forest road, different flowers were spotted, pointed out to other participants, and names called by whoever knew them. I found myself caught up in the "hunt" and repeatedly asked, "What is this?" "How about this one?" I saw many of the flowers from my field guide, but they were alive, growing in their native habitat. I could not believe how many I saw for the first time that day! The afternoon was nearing an end when Bobby Toler quietly said to me, "There's spring beauty," and pointed out an exquisite little flower I probably would have overlooked. I remembered reading about it, but the description and photograph in my book didn't begin to convey the loveliness of that tiny flower on the edge of the forest. That was memorable. I have looked into the woods differently ever since.

If you are considering joining us for a wildflower walk, please do so. You never know just what you might see, or how you might see it.

Cindy Sandberg

New Conservation Journal

Conservation, restoration, landscaping and similar uses for native North American plants is the focus of the new Native Plants Journal from the University of Idaho. It gives practical advice on planting and growing as well as when and where to use these plants.

The first year's subscription is free and available from <http://www.its.uidaho.edu/nativeplants/>

In Memoriam

It is with great sadness we report the death of George Robert Toler on October 15, 1999. At that time, Rich Crites wrote a tribute to Bobby which he has shared with us.

As I recently said at a ceremony for Bunny Smith, "We find ourselves visiting that room called our "memory room". We like to spend time there . . . it's often a comfortable room . . . maybe we can feel like we are still in the presence of individuals that have left us". Anyway, as we get older we often spend more time in our memory room. I would like to take you to my memory room where I can still be with "Bobby". It is difficult to talk about Bobby without including Frieda. They were like a hand and glove. (I don't know which was the hand and which was the glove!) I suspect Frieda could clear that up for me.

My first memories of Bobby and Frieda are when they started taking my spring flora class at Virginia Western, some 20 + years ago. I remember Bobby telling me that his doctor told him that he had better stop and smell the roses or he was going to be pushing them up. So he thought if he was going to smell them, he might as well know their names. They audited my class several times always interested in the field trips and seeing the flowers. However, I soon found myself saying "Come on Toler", as Bobby was lying on the ground behind me moving this twig or that leaf so he could get the perfect picture. After some time, he finally convinced me I needed to be taking some of my own slides to use in my classes. He helped me find the right camera and taught me how to take reasonable slides. He could have and would have taught me much more about photography if I had had the patience! Later Bobby and Frieda came to me with a box of his "old" slides and asked me if I wanted them to use in my classes. I still use some of his "old" slides in my lectures. Many of his "old" slides are better than my "new" slides. Bobby was continually trying to better his collection of slides of plants using new lighting, new backgrounds, new equipment and even new plant specimens.

Bobby was active in several organizations and groups — one of which was the Virginia Native Plant Society. He and Frieda were involved from the beginning and have remained active to the present. Bobby and Frieda always had a gift of making people feel like they were important in the organization. I have often described the organization as one large family. Bobby and Frieda have contributed much to making the organization have a family atmosphere. They could be counted on for help or to see that things were done in a sensible and timely manner. They showed concern for the members and often went out of their way to accommodate others.

Another thing I find in my memory room of Bobby, is that he seldom brought his "dirty laundry" out for everyone to see. Yes, they had problems like everyone else in their business and family lives, but these problems were left behind when they were out on field trips. His personality was positive and up beat and not negative. In other words, he was a person you enjoyed being around! This type of person is a real blessing to all of us!

Yes, Bobby was a "people person". He was the kind of person who makes everyone feel better and in a real sense a better person. He cared about his family. Small children had a special place in his heart . . . especially his grandson! He always had a recent photo of his grandson to share. Also, he frequently talked about the children in his Sunday school class . . . They were also a special part of his life. Over the years, I saw wildflowers become an important part of Bobby and Frieda's lives. In more recent years, they planned vacations around the flowering times of plants and enjoyed locating those special flowers so they could get the unusual slide. They had a real love for and appreciation for wildflowers. But, even as flowers became more and more important in Bobby's life, he still did not forget the source of the flowers and the source of their blessings in our lives. He kept his priorities straight. Thank you Bobby . . . we will miss you!!!

Rich Crites

Lynchburg Area Members

Dorothy C. Bliss

The R-MWC Botanic Garden in Winter

On a recent wintry day as I approached the garden from the main campus, my eye first noticed a new sign that indicated the garden lay below the railing. On this January day with the temperature in the 40's, as I looked down on the terrace and hillside, there was much in evidence that gave promise for spring. Among the evergreen shrubs that dominated the hillside below were the Rhododendrons with their large flower buds and the mountain laurels with masses of tiny buds. Several species of *Leucothoe* and ground covers such as green and gold and the shiny leaves of gold ragwort added colorful green patches. Scattered red berries still clung to the deciduous hollies while those of the chokeberry, *Aronia arbutifolia*, appeared plentiful. Directly below me the cross-vine still struggled to cling to the brick wall.

As I entered the garden from Norfolk Avenue, I was greeted by a large Botanic Garden sign, that had been placed there by the college. As I walked among the beds I noted the foliage of several of our formerly bright green ground covers, especially 3-toothed cinquefoil and *Shortia*, had responded to the cold temperatures by turning a reddish color, an indication of the production of anthocyanins. Peeking from underneath the green leaves of *Chrysogonum* or green and gold and defying the wintry elements was a lone bright yellow bloom. The only other flowers were those of busy aster, *A. dumosus*, which still bore several branches with tiny lavender flowers somewhat browned by the cold nights.

Birds had consumed the purple berries of the American beautyberry but those of the Oriental species were still clinging to the branches. Is there some subtle difference between the two species that one is definitely preferred as food by the birds or other wildlife?

The quiet in the garden was suddenly broken by the noisy honking of a flock of Canada geese. Undisturbed the garden

below lies patiently waiting for warmer weather that will herald the coming spring.

Inventory in the Smokies

In order to have a complete picture of the living organisms found in the Great Smoky Mountain National Park, scientists from the University of Tennessee are aiding in a long-term research program. The Smokies were chosen for this project because here are found one of the most diverse arrays of habitat in North America. Groups of scientists have roped off one acre plots (why acres and not square meters?) and are endeavoring to count every living organism above and below the ground. This includes not only the plants and animals that one can see but also microscopic organisms in the soil such as bacteria and protozoa. This research is called the All Taxa Biodiversity and is a monumental task that will take at least 10 years. The following quotation is from the brief article in UTOPICS (Tennessee Alumnus Winter 2000): "Biologists estimate there are 100,000 species of plants and animals in the park, less than 10% of them known — Goals are species preservation and education. The study will also serve as a model for similar future studies in other national parks and protected lands throughout the world."

FIELD TRIPS AND PROGRAMS

Great Smoky Mountain Trip

Several of us are planning to visit the Smokies during the week of April 9-16. We are staying in Maggie Valley, south of the G.S.M.N.P. Since we usually stay in Pigeon Forge which is north of Gatlinburg, this year we will have an opportunity to explore new areas such as the Heintooga Ridge Road and Balsam Mountain (BRPMP. 458.2), Waterrock Knob on BRP (MP 451.2), investigate trails along the Oconaluftee River and perhaps take a scenic trip on the Great Smoky Mountains Railway.

The fabulous Biltmore Estate & Gardens are only a few miles away. We would love to have others join us for all or part of that week.

Spring Work Day in the R-MWC Botanic Garden

A work day is scheduled for Saturday, March 25, from 2:00-4:30 p.m. (rain date April 1). With your help we can repair some of the ravages of winter. Needed work includes a general clean-up, trimming of some shrubs, adding mulch, etc. May I see you in the garden?

Following the afternoon's work a potluck supper will be held at my home. (Dorothy C. Bliss, 322 Sumpter St.)

Evening Program

An evening program will be held on March 25 at 7:30 p.m. in Room 225 in Martin Science Building at R-MWC. Program to be announced.

Claytor Nature Center

On Sunday, May 21, we plan to meet at 2:00 p.m. at the CLaytor Nature Center, the recently acquired property of Lynchburg College. Located off Route 43 below the Peaks of Otter, this is a new area for us to explore. More information in our spring newsletter.

James River State Park

On June 10, Saturday, at 10:00 A.M. a field trip is scheduled for the James River State Park, located a few miles east of Amherst off Route 60. Since many of us have not had an opportunity to see this new park, it will be an interesting adventure to observe the various plant communities along some of the trails. Bring a picnic lunch.

For additional information on the above trips please contact Dorothy C. Bliss 804-845-5665.

Answers to Quiz (ON PAGE 3)

State Flower	- Dogwood
State Bird	- Cardinal
State Fish	- Brook Trout
State Butterfly	- Tiger Swallowtail
State Dog	- Foxhound