



Blue Ridge Wildflower Society

A chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Fall 2022 VOL 43, No. 3

Fall events and topics: Hike, tree walk, farming, fish

The Field Trips and Programs Committee has been working hard to put together varied and interesting activities and speakers for our Fall monthly membership meetings. Read on to learn about them and mark your calendars. Don't miss a one!

Field Trip

Saturday, Sept. 24
9:00 a.m.

Meet at Cave Spring Middle School to carpool to Poor Mountain Natural Area Preserve. The walk will be led by Alina Herron, an enthusiastic new member with a lot of valuable outdoor experience. The Preserve is part of the state-wide system of 66 Natural Areas, and is well-known for its population of pirate bush (*Buckleya distichophylla*), a globally rare shrub. To learn more about the preserve, its plant species, and its hiking trails, go to <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/document/pgpoormtn.pdf>.

Dedication

Sunday, Sept. 25
5:00 p.m.

We will dedicate our water feature in the wildflower garden at the **Community Arboretum on the campus of Virginia Western Community College**. We are inviting some of the early members of



Photo courtesy of Bramble Hollow Farms

Bramble Hollow Farms and a resident (below)



BRWS and we'll talk a bit about the history of the club. Park in the VWCC parking lot above the Arboretum. See the article on Page 4 for more information.

Membership meeting
Monday, Sept. 26, RCGC
7:00 p.m.

Our speaker for this meet-

if you missed it last time! Meet at 10:00 a.m. at the Explore Park Visitor Center off the Blue Ridge Parkway at Milepost 115.

Membership meeting
Monday, Oct. 24, RCGC
7:00 p.m.

Our speaker will be Brent Wills from Bramble Hollow Farms, telling us about "Biological Farming and Soil." Since 2004, Brent and his family have used livestock rotations, composts, and soil-building techniques in their pasture-based operation in Bedford County where they specialize in raising heritage breed cattle, pigs and chickens. He serves as President of the Virginia Association for Biological Farming and is the owner of Wills Soil & Stream in Montvale where he provides ecological land management services for farmers and land managers.

Membership meeting
Monday, Nov. 21, RCGC
7:00 p.m.

"River Ecology" is our topic tonight, presented by Dr. Steven Powers, associate professor of Biology at Roanoke College. Dr. Powers' research area is the evolution and ecology of stream fishes in the southeastern U.S. He has recently published work on the habitat and ecology of suckers, darters, daces, and jumprocks in the Roanoke River.

Field trip
Saturday, Oct. 8
10:00 a.m.

Back by popular demand! Heather Butler will again show us "50 native trees in **Explore Park**." Members who were there with her last fall pronounced it a great trip, so come again, or certainly come

Photos by Kaye Brandt and Ellen Holtman



The Liatris field along Craig Creek Road near Blacksburg



Great Spangled Fritillary



Liatris attracted lots of butterflies

July butterfly field trip

On July 24 several members of BRWS were lucky enough to enjoy a beautiful walk in the liatris field on Craig Creek Road near Blacksburg. Bruce Grimes led the walk with help from Judy and Mac McCord, all from the New River Chapter of Master Naturalists. It was a hot day like many we had this summer, but the liatris was gorgeous, and along with bee balm and a few other species of wildflowers attracted many butterflies. Check out the list of butterflies we saw and a few other insects that caught our eye. We will have a chance to enjoy a program by Bruce with some of his gorgeous photos at our March meeting!

— Ellen Holtman



Eastern Tiger Swallowtail

Here are the butterflies we spotted

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Diana Fritillary | Orange Sulphur |
| Great Spangled Fritillary | Clouded Sulphur |
| Variegated Fritillary | Summer Azure |
| Common Buckeye | Pearl Crescent |
| Eastern Tiger | American Lady |

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Swallowtail | Other insects |
| Spicebush Swallowtail | Snowberry Clearwing |
| Pipevine Swallowtail | Moth |
| Silver-spotted skipper | Ebony Jewelwing |
| Sachem (another small skipper) | (a damselfly) |
| Eastern Tailed-blue | Red-footed Cannibal Fly (a robber fly) |



Jennifer McCarthy

Blooms have a sweet fragrance

A delicate rarity

Franklinia, The Franklin tree (*Franklinia alatamaha*)

Just over a year ago, a fellow Blue Ridge Wildflower Society member mentioned an opportunity to purchase a Franklin tree. It sounded interesting, although at the time I did not truly understand the significance of trying to raise this rare and beautiful tree. A year later, I am happy to share that the tree has survived and even produced blooms!

**President's
Pick**

The Franklin tree is a small tree in the tea family that was native

to the southeastern United States when it was first identified in 1765 by American botanist John Bartram and his son William in Georgia, along the Altamaha River. Bartram named the tree in honor of his friend Benjamin Franklin and the river where it was discovered.

The Franklin tree has snow white, camellia-like, cup-shaped flowers that boast a fragrant, sweet smell, blooming from mid-summer until the first frost. The slender leaves are five to six inches long and about three inches wide, starting off as shiny green and changing to a bright red/orange during late summer. It may grow up to 30 feet in height. Franklin trees also were referred to as shrubs, when found growing with several smaller trunks, rather than one large trunk.

Unfortunately, Franklin trees disappeared from the wild and have not been documented in their native habitat since 1803. Searches in the Georgia area where it was initially discovered



Roger Holtman

Deer like Franklin trees too — hence the protective fencing

have yet to turn up any new trees. Theories on its disappearance from its natural habitat include disease, habitat destruction (cotton farming), over-collection, root rot, and/or changing conditions (drought).

Luckily, John Bartram collected plants and seeds of many of the species he identified and propagated several specimens at his home in Philadelphia. The Franklin trees that exist today are descendants of the trees planted by Bartram and the tree now lives on through cultivation. They are reported to be fickle trees, often dying for no apparent reason, while others live on for 30 or so years. I'm hopeful I'll be able to report more growth next season, along with other members who help this fascinating tree survive!

Each newsletter highlights one of the planet-friendly organizations that share our goal of protecting healthy ecosystems. Any member who has a favorite group is encouraged to send in a blurb

The Nature Conservancy began when

Spotlight: The Nature Conservancy

scientists and dedicated citizens came together beginning in 1915 with a shared vision to protect and care for nature. Chapters formed across the country and in the 1960s the TNC pioneered the use of conservation easements, started acquiring large tracts of land by purchasing and by donation, and began partnering with public

agencies to co-manage property. In the

1980s it extended its reach to international conservation and today its staff, members and partners impact conservation in more than 70 countries, dealing with water shortages, climate change, biodiversity loss, and food security while saving 125 million acres of land. TNC has established and manages many properties in Virginia,

including Falls Ridge Preserve and Bottom Creek Gorge Preserve in our area. Volunteers including local Master Naturalists are stewards on their properties and most of the preserves are open to the public with permission.

Read more and join at nature.org. And read about the TNC's work in Southwest Virginia in the September National Geographic.

— Ellen Holtman



Kathy Sink

BRWS fountain dedication

In 2019, the Blue Ridge Wildflower Society donated a water feature (left) in memory of the founding and early members of our club and it was installed in the wildflower garden of the Virginia Western Community Arboretum. A sculpture, “Sassy Sally,” (pictured below) by BRWS member and past president Lou Greiner, is part of the feature. A dedication of the fountain was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic. **On Sunday, Sept. 25, at 5 p.m.**, the fountain will be dedicated. All members are invited.

Virginia Western Community Arboretum also will be celebrating its new gazebo that day, 3-5 p.m., with food and music by the Roanoke Symphony Orchestra. We are all invited to that as well but you must RSVP by Sept. 15 to events@viriniawestern.edu or (540) 857-6962. The BRWS dedication will follow immediately after.



Roger Holtman

Find us online!



[fb.com/blueridgewildflowersociety](https://www.facebook.com/blueridgewildflowersociety)



[@blueridgewildflower](https://www.instagram.com/blueridgewildflower)



[Blue Ridge Wildflower Society](https://www.youtube.com/BlueRidgeWildflowerSociety)

Follow along for chapter news, educational plant posts, botany news, virtual plant walks and more!

Become a member!

Are you seeing our newsletter for the first time and would like to join the Blue Ridge Wildflower Society? Are you already a member and it's time to renew?

The quickest way to do either of those things is to go to www.vnps.org, the Virginia Native Plant Society website. Find the Membership drop-down menu, select the appropriate choice (Join or Renew) and take it from there!

And while you're on the VNPS site, be sure to check out all the great resources that are available: information about native plants and invasives, past newsletters and much more.

It's time to elect new club officers

Our club elects new officers for two-year terms at the October meeting of even-numbered years. Below you will find the slate of officers the nominating committee has recommended.

Please plan to attend the meeting on Monday, Oct. 24, at 7 p.m. at the Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs Center. We need a quota for voting.

Slate for 2023-25

President — **Jennifer McCarthy**

Vice president — **Marilyn Lerch**

Secretary — **Kaye Brandt**

Treasurer — **Heather Butler**

Welcome new members!

Amy Bonheim, Bedford
Kim Cherry, Roanoke
Eric Fauerback, Staunton
Sue Foote, Middleburg
Lisa Gabriel, Goode
Patricia Goodson, Roanoke
Sue Guelich, Roanoke
Alina Herron, Roanoke
Jessica Hilbish, Roanoke
Tess Hipps, Appomattox
A. Victoria Kavalaskia, Roanoke
Eleanor Knowlson, South Boston
Beverly Lorig, Fairfield

Please keep your contact information up-to-date!

Blue Ridge Wildflower Society relies on email to share information about upcoming events and to distribute our newsletter. Please update any changes to your contact information with the Virginia Native Plant Society at vnps.org@gmail.com and BRWS at brws.membership@gmail.com

You can also find Blue Ridge Wildflower Society information on the Virginia Native Plant Society website [Home - Blue Ridge Wildflower Society](#) and on Facebook at

<https://www.facebook.com/blueridgewildflowersociety>

Meet a member

Editor's Note: As you will learn in the item at left, this year we elect new officers. Below are profiles of two new members who also are on the slate of candidates.



Kaye Brandt

I am a retired teacher who enjoys writing, creating art, and nature. I moved to Roanoke roughly a year ago and bought a home with a beautiful garden. I love my home, the community, my garden, and the mountains. I moved here from Minnesota, so the flora were all new to me. There are so many beautiful flowers and plants to become acquainted with and learn to care for. I've already learned to spot poison ivy -- fortunately not the hard way. I love hiking the Blue Ridge mountains and enjoy the wild flowers, so VNPS and BRWS are a

perfect fit. My first trip with the group was to The Quarry Gardens at Schuyler and it was really enjoyable. I even went back for the opera performed there. I have found the members of this group to be delightful and welcoming so joining was a no-brainer. I attended a board meeting and was impressed by how much work goes on behind the scenes to make this group dynamic. I'm looking forward to getting to know more people — and better.



Heather Butler

I am an Assistant Professor of Biology at Virginia Western Community College, where I teach General Biology, Dendrology, Plant Science, and Plant Life of Virginia. I'm originally from Charleston, WV, and earned my B.S. and M.S. in Forest Resources from Virginia Tech and Penn State, respectively. I worked for several years in environmental consulting and industrial forestry before making the switch to teaching. I enjoy spending time with my husband and two college-age kids (whenever they're

home), gardening, hiking, and running. My whole family shares a love of native plants, and I've had so much fun joining BRWS and spending time with like-minded folks!

Two clubs join together again for annual picnic

After two COVID years without social gatherings, we were ready to celebrate!

Fifty-seven members confirmed and 42 attended the Blue Ridge Wildflower Society--Roanoke Valley Bird Club annual picnic August 13. This meant we ordered meat for 15 extra people -- all the merrier for those who took home the leftovers!

To make everyone feel comfortable we made COVID adjustments like offering hand sanitizer, disposable gloves and fresh air flow with open windows and doors on such a beautiful Saturday. More than a dozen volunteers helped with setup and wrap-up making everything run smoothly within our allotted time.



Carol Whiteside

42 folks turned out for the first joint picnic in two years

These volunteers set up 10 tables (six chairs each) with tablecloths and centerpieces that reflected both clubs. There were three tables of potluck food plus two tables of desserts – an abundance of deliciousness!

We enjoyed getting together to catch up, a sense of belonging in our friendly social atmosphere, and meeting others we hadn't previously met, including new

members. To the surprise of many, there was a drawing for parting gifts as is the tradition of the Bird Club.

We extend a huge “thank you” to everyone who attended and thus contributed to the picnic's success! I made notes for even better options next year. This annual picnic tradition has thrived for

many years through the hard work and dedication of Betty and Butch Kelly. We truly missed them this year as Butch was the guest of honor elsewhere for his milestone birthday celebration. Congratulations, Butch!

We are already looking forward to next year's picnic. See you all then!

-- Carol Whiteside

Free plants! Now is the time to divide perennials

The days are getting shorter, the weather is crisp. It is time to start dividing your hardy perennials. Even the novice gardener can master plant division. Do you have a perennial that is large and unwieldy? This is the time to divide it to make new plants for your garden or to share with others. Plants actually can be divided any time that the ground is not frozen solid, but if done in the fall it gives them a chance to become established a bit before winter.

First, gather the tools needed. Usually, a shovel or trowel is the best, though if the plant is really big and the soil is compact, one can even use a pick ax. Then, decide if the divisions are going to be replanted in the ground or in containers to grow until spring. If planted in the ground, pick areas where the plants will thrive -- most likely an area similar to where they are growing at the time of division. If they are going to grow in pots, use pots not much bigger than the division. You can always pot them up to

bigger pots as they grow in the spring.

Making your own homemade potting mixture is easy using a combination of cheap (non-fertilized) potting soil and vermiculite or perlite for a light soil blend. This will enable the new small plants to focus on growing strong roots, not leaves. Use the shovel or trowel, depending on size of plant, and dig the plant up to make divisions. Sometimes, bigger plants can be directly divided in the ground by piercing through the middle of the plant and digging up half of it. Cut back the leaves to about half or, if applicable, down to the florets at ground level. From there, you can make multiple divisions or just leave it as one division for planting elsewhere. If you continue to divide into smaller pieces, just be sure to keep a few roots and leaves if possible. Keep some leaves for photosynthesis, but not a lot so the new plants do not need so much water to get established.

At this point, go ahead and plant the new divisions into the ground or into their new pots. Place the pots in a protected spot usually near a building or in a sunroom/porch with indirect sunlight. Even sun-loving plants in pots will benefit from indirect light until they are stronger in the spring. Water the new plants in the ground every day for a week or so to help get the roots established. Even on a rainy day, watering the plant is essential for

initial root/soil contact. At this time of year, they should not need water more than that before they go dormant for the winter. Natural winter precipitation should be enough while they are dormant.

If divided in the winter when the ground is not frozen, a long drink of water is all that is needed when first planted in the ground. For potted divisions, folks often put a clear plastic bag over the pots, or even put them under an old aquarium after the divisions have been watered well. If this is done, the plants will not need water again until spring when they are moved to their final destination or potted up to a bigger container. The key, especially for pots, is not to drown them but be sure to keep them moist. That is why covering them is a good method. Keep the water from condensing by removing the plastic occasionally and shaking off the excess water if needed. If the potted plants are stored under a shelter and not covered in plastic, then be sure they do not dry out during the winter. If they are outside or covered in plastic, then no extra watering should be needed through the winter.

That is all that there is to it. There are other ways to make new plants, too, but this is an easy method for hardy perennials in the fall. You will get hooked on how easy it is to grow lots of new, free plants!

-- Rodelin Palmer

BRWS MEETINGS

7 p.m., fourth Monday of the month (unless changed)
Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs headquarters
3640 Colonial Avenue, Roanoke, VA

Meetings are held the last Monday during the months of September, October, November, February, March, April, and May, unless changed or canceled due to inclement weather and/or Roanoke County School closures. We plan to continue providing Zoom options to view programs, with links provided by email, when available.

Virginia Native Plant Society

Website: www.vnps.org

The Virginia Native Plant Society (VNPS), founded in 1982 as the Virginia Wildflower Preservation Society, is a nonprofit organization of individuals who share an interest in Virginia's native plants and habitats. The Society and its chapters seek to further the appreciation and conservation of this priceless heritage.

Our Mission: The Virginia Native Plant Society is dedicated to the protection and preservation of the native plants of Virginia and their habitats, to sustain for generations to come the integrity of the Commonwealth's rich natural heritage of ecosystems and biodiversity for purposes of enjoyment, enlightenment, sustainable use, and our own very survival. To this end, we advocate and follow practices that will conserve our natural endowment, and we discourage and combat practices that will endanger or destroy it. We are committed to do all we can to slow the accelerating conversion of natural landscape to built and planted landscape and to reduce its damage to natural ecosystems.

Our Purpose and Services

State Level:

- Working for measures to protect endangered plant species, and preserve habitats and plant communities of special interest
- Learning and teaching about native plants and their special needs
- Encouraging the appropriate use of nursery or home propagated native plants in public landscapes and private gardens
- Assisting in writing and updating *Flora of Virginia*
- Providing money for graduate botanical research
- Working with nurseries to protect native species
- Offering a spring workshop on timely botanical subjects
- Offering field trips state wide and some in surrounding states
- Conducting the annual meeting with speakers and field trips provided

Local level, Blue Ridge Chapter:

Counties of: Appomattox, Bedford, Botetourt, Campbell, Craig, Franklin, Henry, Patrick, and Roanoke **Cities of:** Roanoke, Salem and Lynchburg

- To present meetings in spring and fall that offer informative programs concerning a variety of areas and plants they support
- To lead free field trips to a wide variety of local habitats spring through fall
- To conduct an annual native plant sale in May
- To provide outreach to public groups in the way of speakers and guided walks
- To donate money to local conservation efforts

Blue Ridge Wildflower Society

*Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs
3460 Colonial Ave. SW,
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Treasurer
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Rebecca Ross
Alina Herron

Garden Coordinator
Linda Harrison

Membership
Rodelin Palmer

Plant Sale
Michael Belcher

Newsletter Editor
Roger Holtman

The BRWS newsletter is published three times annually: spring, summer and fall. Photos and articles for publication are welcome (and encouraged). Please send them via email to the address above.

Thank you!



Blue Ridge Wildflower Society
Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs
3460 Colonial Ave. SW,
Roanoke, VA 24018

VNPS 40th anniversary annual meeting is in Natural Bridge



Photo courtesy of Alltrails.com

This month, we have a better-than-usual opportunity to attend the Virginia Native Plant Society's annual meeting. Our parent organization is marking its 40th anniversary in 2022 and the meeting is being held just up the road at the Natural Bridge Hotel & Conference Center.

Registration is required for one-day outdoor event **Saturday, Sept. 17, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.** The event will feature a business meeting in the morning (breakfast snacks and box lunch provided) and election of board members.

After the business meeting, Devin Floyd, Executive Director of the Center for Urban Habitats, will present his research on Native Grasslands in the Piedmont, covering a nine-county area in the center of Virginia. His work includes intensive plant survey and has documented pollinator associations.

Field trips in the surrounding area will be conducted after the business meeting and speaker's presentation.

Further information on registration, field trips and accommodations are available at the VNPS website or <https://vnps.org/events/2022-annual-meeting/>