

Blue Ridge Wildflower Society

A chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Spring 2025

Vol. 46, No. 1

President's Message

Hints of color from tree tops during a recent winter storm were a warming sight! As days lengthen and the first signs of spring push through the earth, we're reminded of the resilience and beauty of the natural world - a world we, as members of the BRWS, are passionate about preserving. Spring is a time of renewal, a time when trees and plants awaken from their winter slumber, ready to paint our landscapes with color and life. From delicate redbud blossoms to the early-blooming bluebells, spring offers a spectacular display of nature's artistry!

As we welcome the arrival of spring, I'd also like to remember one of the founding members of BRWS, Butch Kelly. Butch was a true champion of native plants, whose passion and dedication were instrumental in establishing our organization. His dedication to the preservation and promotion of our local flora continues to inspire us today. He will be deeply missed, but his legacy





lives on in every field trip, picnic, plant sale, and our opportunities to gather. My friend, Alex Newmark, beautifully noted what it was like being on a walk with Butch, "Butch led a tour that gave us more memories than a 1-week cruise ... He was good natured, adaptable, and knowledgeable. He left his mark and blessed memories that will be forever."

As we move into the growing season, I encourage each of you to get involved in our upcoming activities. We have a number of exciting events planned, including informative speakers, a native plant sale, guided walks, and a workshop on using the Flora app. These events offer fantastic opportunities to learn more about native plants, connect with fellow enthusiasts, and contribute to our mission of protecting our local ecosystems. Let's embrace the energy of spring and work together to create a brighter future for our native plants and the environment we all cherish.

Wishing you all a joyful and blooming spring!

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photo credit J. McCarthy

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Spring Programs, Speakers, and Field Trips

PROGRAMS & SPEAKERS

Meeting and Program location: Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs 3640 Colonial Ave, Roanoke 6:00 p.m. social and business 6:30 p.m. speaker and program

March 24, 2025

"Invasive Plants" by Dr. Robyn Puffenbarger. A program on invasive plant species in our area and their impact on our natives. Dr. Puffenbarger, biology department chairat Bridgewater College, also teaches ornithology and genetics. Since 2021, she has been a part of the "Virginia Home Grown" team, filming aspects of gardening for Virginia Public Media PBS.

April 28, 2025

"Urban Forestry and Plans for Roanoke City Reforestation" by Samantha Matson. Ms. Matson is the supervisor of the Roanoke City Urban Forestry Dept. She manages over 20,000 trees in the Roanoke City parks and rights-of-way. She will also lead our Forest Bathing Walk on May 15.

*After this meeting, there will be a 30 minute workshop on using the "Flora of Virginia" app. If you wish to participate, please download the app to your phone, prior to the program or come to social time for assistance. The one-time cost is \$20 to purchase the app, paid thru the app. Ellen Holtman and Gail Steele will lead this workshop.

May 19, 2025

"Creating Wildflower Pollinator Fields and Meadows that Enhance Wildlife Populations" by Andrew Rosenberger, a biologist with the Virginia Dept. of Natural Resources and U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Conservation Services.

June 9, 2025

"Wildflowers of Castle Rock Gorge: by Dr. Bob Pohlad, retired professor of biology and horticulture, Ferrum College, will share his beautiful images and knowledge of wildflowers. Dr. Pohlad is also a senior scientist for the Water Quality Monitoring Program at SML.

FIELD TRIPS

April 3, 2025 at 1:00 p.m.
Dorothy Crandall Bliss Botanical Garden
Randolph College, Lynchburg
Entrance gate on the Norfolk Ave. side of RC (off
Rivermont Ave.) across from Rivermont Pizza, and
between Martin Science Bldg and Lipscomb Library.
Sandra Elder will lead us through this hidden treasure of
over 200 species of plants native to Virginia and the
Southeastern U.S. The garden includes rare and
endangered plants and was established in 1994 by Dr. Bliss,
a biology professor and BRWS member, with support from
VNPS and BRWS. Contact Jennifer McCarthy at
jenhuntmc@yahoo.com for questions or to sign up.

April 6, 2025 -2:00 p.m. Stadium Woods Old Growth Forest at Virginia Tech, Blacksburg 1:00 p.m. meet at Park & Ride at Exit 140 in Salem

Master Naturalists Beth and Ken Umberger will lead our walk. The Umbergers, along with other volunteers, saved this area from being leveled. This land is populated by many 100 year old oak trees! They have removed many invasive plants, revealing lots of spring wildflower ephemerals. Parking lot is next to VT police station. Meet there at 2:00 p.m., if not carpooling. Contact Ellen Holtman (540) 797-2350 for more details or to sign up.

April 8, 2025 - Green Hill Park Start between 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

2501 Green Hill Park Road, Salem Meet at picnic shelter at end of road Amember-assisted, self-guided walk along a trail marked with flags and list of corresponding plants, The trail features a hillside of large trillium and riverbanks packed with Virginia Bluebells. For questions, contact Ellen Holtman at (540) 797-2350.

April 12, 2025 Meet at 9:00 a.m. to carpool Plant Communities & Wildflowers at Fenwick Mines, Craig County 9:00 a.m. meet at Exit 140 Park & Ride in Salem

Chris Bryant, Master Gardener and President of Roanoke Tree Stewards, will led this engaging walk. Bring water, field guides, and insect repellent! Contact Rebecca Ross at wingsross@aol.com or (540) 855-4713 to sign up.

(Contínued on page 3)

Programs and Field Trips

(continued)

April 26, 2025 "Wildflowers of Arcadia" Botetourt

9:00 a.m. meet at Exit 140 Park & Ride in Salem Dr. Michael Wise, professor of Environmental Science at Roanoke College, will lead us on this adventure into

the Jefferson National Forest in Arcadia. where we expect to see late-April botanical highlights, such as wild columbine, fringed polygala, bleeding heart, showy orchid, and yellow lady slipper. Bring water, lunch or snack, field guides and binoculars. Space is limited to 15 members! Contact Rebecca Ross at wingross@aol.com or (540) 855-4713 to sign up or with questions. Travel details: We will meet at 9:00 a.m. at the Exit 140 Park & Ride in Salem and travel to Arcadia Exit 168 on I-81N. Once in the National Forest, we'll pull off along Jennings Creek Road and North Creek Road. We plan to return to Salem by 2.00 p.m.

May 8, 2025

Wood Thrush Native Plant Nursery, Floyd 9:00 a.m. meet at Cave Springs Baptist Church parking lot on Rt. 221, across from the middle school By popular request, we return to this native nursery, owned by Ian Canton, which specializes in plants of the Appalachian region, with a focus on new and rare native plants. Mr. Canton is a popular speaker at BRWS programs and a very knowledgeable botanist and native landscaper. Contact Rebecca Ross at wingsross@aol.com to let us know you're attending.

May 15th Forest Bathing Walk Carvin's Cove Reservoir, Roanoke 9:00 a.m. meet at Exit 140 Park & Ride in Salem Space is limited and free for members. \$10 guest fee. Much has been written about the health and mental benefits from walking in the forest. Urban Forest Supervisor, Samantha Matson, will guide us on a leisurely and quiet walk, while we commune with the trees. Please bring water, bug repellent, and field guide. Space is limited and free for BRWS members. Guest fee is \$10 per person. Please contact Ellen Holtman at (540) 797-2350 or at eholtman@comcast.net, to sign up for this walk.

2025 Native Plant Sale May 3rd at RCGC

by Heather Butler

It's Plant Sale season and a group has been busy getting ready for the big day on Saturday, May 3, 2025! It's a bit earlier due to availability at RCGC. I'd like to give a big thank you to Nancy Reid for taking the time to update all of our plant labels and cross-referencing the common names and scientific names, removing duplications and matching scientific names to the Flora of Virginia. It was a timeconsuming, tedious job and we so appreciate her time and attention to detail. This will make set up to assisting shoppers much easier!

Here are some items to be thinking about:

- Plants, trees, and shrubs will start shipping late February and into March, so please look for upcoming announcements for "potting parties" at the Virginia Western hoop house.
- Based on feedback, we'll have a few more volunteer needs on the day of the sale. We will set up an online Sign-Up as an easy way for members to volunteer for specific tasks.
- Native plants you would like to donate to the sale are very much appreciated. Some desirable natives are not available or affordable so member donations are important. We ask that plant identities and nativity be confirmed according to the Flora of Virginia Project and/or The Digital Atlas of the Virginia Flora.
- Please complete digging and potting of native plants you plan to donate by April, 12. This gives plants time to overcome transplant shock and help them survive after the sale.

Fortunately, Butch Kelly and Michael Belcher created a well-organized process for setting up our annual plant sale, making this transition easier than expected! I hope Butch's memory and decades of dedication to BRWS continue to live on through our on going work.

"CALLING ALL GARDNERS" for our spring garden clean-up day!

MARCH 29, 2025 at 1:00 p.m. (Rain date: April 5th)

It's time to clean up our wildflower garden in the front of RCGC's facility. To support wildlife, like our pollinators, we leave last year's dead stems, leaves, and other plant debris in the garden over the winter. Garden volunteers will gather, for an hour or two, to help with the clean up effort. Please come with a garden tool (i.e., rake, hand pruner), work gloves, and water.

Everyone is invited and welcomed to help. No experience necessary - we'll teach you!

For question or to help, please contact Linda Harrison at <u>lindaharrisonO6195O@gmail.com</u> Rodelin Palmer at brws.membership@gmail.com

We really appreciate all the time and help you are able to provide. We hope to see you at the garden on March 29th! (rain date: April 5th)

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Christine Boran, Woolwine
Audrey Clark, Eagle Rock
Valinda Dyer, Meadows of Dan
Patricia Jackson, Roanoke
Russ Lescault, Lynchburg
Stephanie Lescault, Lynchburg
Amy Maiolo, Roanoke
Tony Maiolo, Roanoke
Al Maxey, Lynchburg
Dan Miles, Forest
Karen Turner, Goodview



We look forward to seeing you at programs, walks, and other chapter events!

We want to meet you!

Member gatherings include:

Four programs for learning and sharing Seven informative and fun field trips Shop the Native Plant sale Enjoy Fellowship & Food at the Picnic Volunteer with us at community events

Everyone is welcomed to participate!

SAVE THE DATE!

Annual Summer Picnic SAT., JULY 19, 2025

5:30 p.m. social 5:30 p.m. welcome & dining

Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs 3640 Colonial Ave., Roanoke

Join friends and meet new ones!

Blue Ridge Wildflower Society and the Roanoke Valley Bird Club will provide fried chicken, BBQ, soft drinks, and ice. Door prizes, too!

Members, please bring a side dish or desert to share. Also include a serving utensil and a notecard with ingredients(for allergy inquiries).



The First Flowers of Spring Might be on a Tree

by Kathy Fell

April showers bring May flowers, but our native trees bloom even earlier. Here are some curious facts about our native spring blooming trees:



Redbud (Cercis canadensis) photo credit Kathy Fell

Deciduous trees have photoreceptors (called phytochromes) under the bark of stems and twigs which monitor sunlight. These photoreceptors detect two specific waves lengths of light: Red Light (from direct sunlight) and Far-Red Light (at dawn, dusk and in the shade). As the daylight shortens in fall, red light decreases and far-red light increases. When there is no longer enough red light to support photosynthesis at the level required to sustain the tree, a hormone called abscisic acid is released. Abscisic acid triggers the plant to enter dormancy by dropping its leaves, closing stomata, sequestering water and nutrients, and stopping growth.

In spring, when sufficient daylight is available for sugar production, the tree releases hormones to trigger roots to grow and search for water. New roots produce a hormone to trigger buds to form and open. Native trees are not "tricked" out of dormancy by a warm spell in winter. Trees must be old enough to bloom. The age for first bloom is different by species and is also influenced by the health of the tree. Oak trees typically must be over 20 years old before they will bloom for the first time. Dogwoods need to be at least 5 years old.

Tree pollination is not the same for all species. Tree flowers can be hermaphroditic, monoecious, dioecious or polygamous. Hermaphroditic species have male and female structures on a single flower and can self-pollinate. Examples are Cherry, Magnolia, Elm, Apple and Dogwood. Monoecious species have male and female flowers on the same tree. Examples are Oak, Walnut, and Cedar. Dioecious species have separate male and female trees. Examples are Willow and Holly. Polygamous species have some of everything and include Ash, Mulberry and Red Maple. How pollen, the male contribution to the reproductive process, gets to the female parts of flowers differs as well. Some trees are wind pollinated while others rely on pollinators such as birds, bees, or flies. Tree species that rely on pollinators may produce nectar in addition to pollen. Nectar is the sugar-rich reward that attracts pollinators. Here are some examples of our spring blooming native trees:

- Redbud (Cercis canadensis) first blooms around 4 to 7 years, living 40 to 80 years. Profuse pink flowers bloom March to May. Pollination by bees produces long seed pods
- Black Cherry (Prunus serotina) first blooms around age 10, living from 100 to 250 years. Small white flowers bloom in drooping clusters from April to May. Pollination by insects produces small purple-black cherries.
- Red Maple (Acer rubrum) first blooms around age 8 and can live 130 to 300 years. Trees can be male, female or hermaphroditic. Small red flowers bloom from January to May. Flowers are wind or insect pollinated and produce nectar. Seeds are winged samaras.



Black Cherry (Prunus serotina) photo credit Kathy Fell

The First Bloom of Spring Might Be on a Tree!" (cont.)

- Pawpaw (Asimina triloba) can take 8 years to bloom, living about 40 years. Maroon to purple flowers bloom March to May with a fetid smell.
 Pollination by beetles and flies produces large yellowish-green fruits. Pawpaw flowers first open as female for a few days and can be pollinated with pollen from another tree. Then, male components open and produce pollen that can be transported to a different tree.
- Flowering Dogwood (Cornus florida) first blooms around age 5, living about 125 years. Small, green flowers surrounded by showy, white or pink, petal-like bracts bloom March to May. Pollination by insects produces red fruits in late summer.
- Northern Red Oak (Quercus rubra) may reach 40 years of age before first bloom and can live 200 to 400 years. Male catkins and small female flowers bloom on the same tree in April. Wind pollination produces biennial acorns.
- Sourwood (Oxydendron arboretum) first blooms at 4 to 5 years, living 100 to 200 years. Small, white flowers resembling tiny bells hanging in rows bloom June to July. Flowers are pollinated by bees, producing tiny seeds inside small capsules.



Pawpaw (Asimina triloba) from the collection of Rich Crites



Flowering Dogwood (Cornus florida) from the collection of Rich Crites

Annual BRWS Scholarship honoring founding member Richard Crites now available at Virginia Western Community College!

Start spreading the news! The BRWS scholarship is ready for student applicants at VWCC for those studying in a Horticulture, Environmental Studies, and/or Biology program of study. VWCC will share the scholarship information campus-wide. Additionally, program-placed students will receive text message alerts, encouraging them to apply. Scholarship funds, of \$1,000 per semester, will provide assistance for tuition, books, and other related fees.

Applications are scored both quantitively and qualitatively, under the supervision of the VWCC Educational Foundation's Scholarship and Foundation Grants Committee. Mathematical calculations regarding GPA, enrollment, etc. are combined with assigned ranking in reviews of personal statements and references to determine the awardees. The Foundation hosts an annual scholarship awards ceremony, celebrating the recipients. This scholarship, honoring BRWS founding member and biology professor Rich Crites, was made possible through the generosity of our members' continued support of our annual plant sale. Thank you!

REMEBERING RICHARD "BUTCH" KELLY By Michael Belcher

A disruption occurred on the forest floor of our wildflower community. Longtime member, leader, and friend Richard "Butch" Kelly died after a fight with cancer.

In nature, a keystone individual refers to a single organism that has a disproportionately large effect on its environment and plays a critical role in maintaining the balance of an ecosystem, despite not being the most abundant species.

There may be no better words to describe Butch Kelly and his wife Betty. They have been members of the Blue Ridge Wildflower Society since the 1980s. From the start, they have been leaders with outsized influence in our plant community.

For years, Butch led walks, gave talks, helped organize plant sales, and shepherded our group by serving as board president, vice president, and newsletter editor. He often traveled to other groups and schools to tell them about nature and what our club does. He volunteered for field work with rare plants, such as pirate bush (Buckleya distichophylla) and turkey beard (Xerophyllum asphodeloides) for Virginia Tech and the National Forest System. At the same time Betty served as secretary, historian, and board member, and helped organize and lead walks. The married duo almost became one entity with people always saying "Butch and Betty." Butch often led a field trip, while Betty made sure everyone was keeping up, had water, sunscreen, and offered words of encouragement.

A disruption refers to any significant disturbance that alters the natural composition and dynamics in an ecosystem. Disruptions can be large scale, such as a fire or a landslide. They can be small scale, such as an insect damaging part of trunk but not hurting the entire organism. In the beginning, the change is painful and unsightly, but that change also offers new opportunities and creates new beauty over time. It would be fitting if we treated Butch's passing as nature responds when a giant emergent oak, that towers above the canopy, is blown down in a storm. We should each see the light opening and the disturbed soil as an opportunity to race into the space and fill a niche in our club. You might ask, "How can I help? I'm not a teacher. I'm not a biologist."

But remember, we are all volunteers choosing to be here out of love for nature and gardening.

- If you are a photographer, offer your photos to the club for presentations or for use on the website, or newsletter. Even a few pictures, would help.
- If you walk part of a greenway regularly, keep note of what is blooming over the years and then offer to help lead a walk. You don't have to be an expert. You, simply knowing where the plants are and when they are blooming, can be expertise enough. Others can help with the details.
- If you love to bake, offer to bring snacks to a meeting.
- Suggest topics for presentations on subjects you want to know more about. If you are curious about something, chances are so are the rest of us.
- If you experiment with propagating plants, offer to give a presentation.
- Participate with the BRWS board or a committee. All are welcome!

Everyone has something to contribute and each contribution adds to the beauty and diversity of our native plant community!



Butch Kelly, Great Smokies Nat'l Park 2017

Please Share! We'd love to see what you're seeing.

Post fun finds from a walk or field trip, garden successes, and tips on nurturing natives at:



Facebook.com/ blueridgewildflowersociety



blueridgewildflower

You've asked, so we're recommending!

Guides and resources for walks, field trips, and home.

Flora of Virginia app (\$20)

Newcomb's Wildflower Guide by Lawrence Newcomb



The Audubon Society's Field Guide for North American Wildflowers (Eastern Region)

Wildflowers of Tennessee: The Ohio Valley and the Southern Appalachians by D. Horn, T. Cathcart, T. Hemmerly

Native Plants for Virginia's Southern Piedmont and A Guide to Gardening with Southwest Virginia Native Plants Hard copies free to members, while supplies last, or download at www.PlantVirginiaNatives.org

Coming soon:

 Plant Invaders of Mid-Atlantic Natural Areas by the Mid-Atlantic Invasive Plant Council (\$5 at BRWS programs and plant sale)



Butch Kelly, 2017

Plan a Field Trip: Mill Mountain Wildflower Garden

The Mill Mountain Wildflower Garden is a 50+year-old wildflower garden located at the top of the highest peak of Mill Mountain, near the Discovery Center in Roanoke, Virginia. It has several kinds of trillium, wild phlox, ginger, bloodroot, spring beauty, spiderwort, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, dwarf iris, flame azalea, and other native species, in addition to shrubs and trees.

Visit www.millmoutaingc.org for operating hours, accessibility, and other details.

Blue Ridge Wildflower Society

Meeting held at Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs headquarters 3640 Colonial Avenue, Roanoke, VA 6:00 p.m. Social & Business / 6:30 p.m. Program

Meetings are generally held on the fourth Monday during the months of March, April, May, September, October, and November. unless changed or canceled due to holidays, inclement weather and/or other related closures. Our picnic is held in July. Club business is presented at membership meetings, followed by a program beginning at 6:30 p.m. Currently, members must be present (in-person) to vote. We welcome and encourage members to bring guests to club activities. Membership is open to everyone!

News and events are posted on our chapter webpage at www.vnps.org/chapters. We also shared updates via email and post information on our Facebook page. Members are invited to post pictures, share sightings, helpful tips, and other fun facts, related to wildflowers in our area, on our Facebook page or submit for our newsletter.

BRWS is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. EIN #54-1288977

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 eco-systems 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 land-scape 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; and,
- Conducting the annual meeting with speakers and field trips provided.

Local level: Blue Ridge Wildflower Chapter:

Counties of Appomattox, Bedford, Botetourt, Campbell, Craig, Franklin, Henry, Patrick and Roanoke, and the cities of Lynchburg, Roanoke, and Salem

- To present meetings that offer informative programs concerning a variety of areas and native plants they support;
- To lead free field trips to a wide variety of local habitats spring through fall;
- To conduct an annual spring native plant sale;
- To provide education and outreach to individuals and public groups by way of speakers, guided walks, and community events; and,
- To donate money to local conservation and related education efforts.

Blue Ridge Wildflower Society

P. O. Box 20011, Roanoke, VA 24018

A chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Follow us on Facebook at Facebook.com/blueridgewildflowersociety

Member inquiries, events, submissions: brws.membership@gmail.com

General information and requests: info.blueridgewildflower@gmail.com

Officers and Board Members

President
Jennifer McCarthy, Lynchburg

Vice President Rebecca Ross, Roanoke

Treasurer Kathy Sink, Roanoke

Secretary vacant

Advocacy vacant

Field Trips and Programs Ellen Holtman, Salem Rebecca Ross. Roanoke

Garden Coordinator Linda Harrison, Salem

Membership Rodelin Palmer, Roanoke

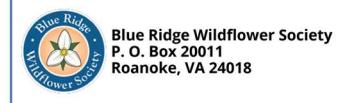
Newsletter Editor Lissa Paulson, Lynchburg

Picnic Coordinator Carol Whiteside, Roanoke

Plant Sale Heather Butler, Fincastle

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 brws.membership@gmail.com.

Thank you!



At a Glance: Spring 2025 activities

(Please see details on page 2)

March 24 March 29 April 3 April 6 April 8 April 12 April 26 April 28	6:00 p.m. Meeting / 6:30 p.m. program at RCGC 1:00 p.m. Garden work day at RCGC (April 5th rain date) 1:00 p.m. Wildflower Walk, Dorothy Bliss Wildflower Garden, Lynchburg 2:00 p.m. Field Trip to Stadium Woods at Virginia Tech, Blacksburg 1:00 p.m. Wildflower Walk, Green Hill Park, Salem 9:00 a.m. Field Trip to Fenwick Mines, Craig County Wildflower Walk, Jefferson National Forest, Arcadia, Botetourt Co. 6:00 p.m. Meeting / 6:30 p.m. program at RCGC
May 8 May 3	9:00 a.m. Field Trip to Woodthrush Nursery, Floyd 9:00 a.m. Annual Native Plant Sale at RCGC
May 15	9:00 a.m. Forest Bathing Walk at Carvin's Cove Reservoir, Roanoke
May 19	6:00 p.m. Meeting / 6:30 p.m. program at RCGC
June 9	6:00 p.m. Meeting / 6:30 p.m. program at RCGC
July 19	5:00 p.m. Annual Picnic with RVBC at RCGC