



Blue Ridge Wildflower Society

A chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Fall 2026

Vol. 47, No. 3

Our Dedicated Members and Volunteers

In our Spring newsletter, I shared a few thoughts on why I choose to volunteer with the Blue Ridge Wildflower Society. If you attended any of our wonderful events or programs this spring and summer, you undoubtedly saw that passion in action across our entire community.

Behind every aspect of BRWS, there are dedicated members making it happen. Volunteers edit and distribute our newsletter, keep our membership updated with event reminders, and manage our budget. Volunteers also keep our organization running behind the scenes by serving on the board and providing delicious snacks at our meetings.

They make our annual native plant sale a success—potting and re-potting plants, hauling supplies, setting up, guiding shoppers, and tackling the post-sale cleanup. Our educational field trips and speaker programs exist because members take the time to research, coordinate, and host them.

This year alone, BRWS volunteers have represented us across the region:

- Providing native plant information to the public during Clean Valley Earth Day at Grandin Village and Explore Park
- Hosting a native tree walk and native plant vendors at Lynchburg's Old City Cemetery
- Discussing native and invasive plant topics with the Hill City Master Gardeners
- Serving as Flora of Virginia Ambassadors
- Maintaining the Dorothy Bliss Botanic Garden and the BRWS wildflower garden at the Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs
- Forming our new Archive committee
- Co-hosting special presentations, such as Preston Montague's talk
- Organizing a special annual picnic for all members and guests to enjoy!

Everything we accomplish is powered by people who care about native plants and our local ecosystems. If you've been thinking about getting more involved, we would love to have you jump in anytime! Whether you want to lend a hand at a single event, share a specific skill, or take on a recurring role, there is always room for you.

I'd also love to hear from you: What brings you joy in volunteering with the BRWS?

Drop me a line or share your story at our next gathering!

-Jennifer McCarthy

In this issue:

President's
Message
page 1

Annual Picnic by
Carol Whiteside

BRWS Archive
Committee Update
by Sophia Fonseca
page 2-3

Fall Events,
Speakers, and Field
Trips
page 4-5

Welcome to
New Members!
Announcements
Newsbites
page 6

Membership
information
page 7

Calendar of Events
page 8

Blue Ridge Wildflower Society & Roanoke Valley Bird Club 13th Annual Picnic, July 18, 2026



Carol Whiteside, Chairman
Drew Daniels and Carol Whiteside, Photographers



*This was the most successful, well attended picnic that we have on record with 71 responding to the invitation and 63 attending this year, which included 35 RVBC members, 12 BRWS members, 11 members of both clubs, and five welcomed guests. The Wildflower Society provided barbeque, the Bird Club provided fried chicken, and everyone brought the most delicious sides, salads, and desserts. RVBC President **Drew Daniels** and BRWS Vice President **Rebecca Ross** graciously welcomed everyone. RVBC member **Nancy Brattain** won the gift drawing of a BRWS annual membership, and RVBC member **Tom Johnson** won the RVBC annual membership.*

Carol Whiteside displayed a photo-board of our first combined picnic on August 11, 2013. We were pleased to have **Betty Kelly** (the original combined picnic organizer) in attendance with her daughter, **Marlene Craig**, who are wonderful volunteers. We missed BRWS President **Jennifer McCarthy** and greatly appreciate her dedication and devotion to this annual event.

Gratefully, we thank all the volunteers who made this event rewarding, enjoyable and relaxing, especially **Drew Daniels** for managing the opening setup and the closing cleanup; the committee chairs: **Allen and Robin Austin** (drinks), **Mary Lou Barritt** (food tables), **Michelle Buonocore** (greeter food placement), **Connie Crites** (front greeter), **Linda Harrison** (barbeque), **Ellen Holtman and Rebecca Ross** (wildflowers for tables' center pieces), and all the tireless volunteers who assemble for the clean-up afterward. We give a heartfelt thank you to everyone in attendance for making this a fun and very successful social event. We're already looking forward to gathering again next year!





BRWS Archive Committee Update

The BRWS Archive Committee met for the first time on October 4, 2025. The committee was created to digitize records from the last four decades. This work has included typing plant lists and field trip records in our current Wildflower Walk format, reviewing old maps and brochures, and scanning photographs. We even found some foraging recipes and a leaf ID game.

Since October, seven members have consistently met every month or so to review progress and discuss ideas. No documents have been added yet to the BRWS or VNPS websites, but discussions are in the works! For now, almost 70 documents have been digitized and over 150 orchid photos have been uploaded. As a completely volunteer group, we are excited about our progress and hope to share more soon.

-Gophia Fonseca





Fall Events, Speakers, and Field Trips



Saturday, SEPTEMBER 5

9 a.m. Field Trip: Buffalo Farm-Late Summer and Early Fall Wildflowers–Craig County, VA

Led by **Dr. Michael Wise**, Professor of Environmental Science at Roanoke College. Meet at the Park and Ride at Exit 140 in Salem at 9 a.m. to carpool. **Contact Rebecca Ross at 540-855-4713 to sign up.**

Saturday, SEPTEMBER 12

9 a.m. Field Trip: Bald Knob Natural Area Preserve–Rocky Mount, VA

Led by **Dr. Michael Wise**. Visit this preserve to walk through the 1.2 mile loop trail to see the vivid rose-pink fame flower, known as “rock pink,” a rare plant globally that is only found in Franklin County and in North Carolina in the US. Meet at Tanglewood Mall at 9 a.m. under the mall sign near Popeye’s to carpool. **Contact Sophia Fonseca at 1-954-240-8703 to sign up.**

Friday, SEPTEMBER 18

10 a.m. Field Trip: Fall-blooming Field Wildflowers, Claytor Nature Center–Bedford, VA

Led by **Lindsay Tomlinson**, Director of Claytor Nature Center and President of the Virginia Association of Agricultural Educators. **Contact Lissa Paulson at 1-917-767-3117 to sign up and get detailed directions to the Center, located at 1844 Woods Road, Bedford.**

Monday, SEPTEMBER 28

6 p.m. meeting & 6:30 p.m. program “Mycology of the Appalachians”

Directions: Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs, 3640 Colonial Avenue, Roanoke, VA

Neil Vaidya is a Southern Appalachian Wilderness Steward and currently serves as the Trail Specialist for Pisgah National Forest and Instructor for the Wilderness Skills Institute held each year in North Carolina. After receiving degrees in Sociology and Environmental Science from the University of Cincinnati, he spent several years exploring public lands west of the Mississippi, where he discovered his fascination with Mycology. He previously worked as a Wilderness Ranger in the George Washington and Jefferson National Forest in Botetourt County.

Sunday, OCTOBER 4

2 p.m. Field Trip: Tree Walk at Fishburn Park, Roanoke, VA

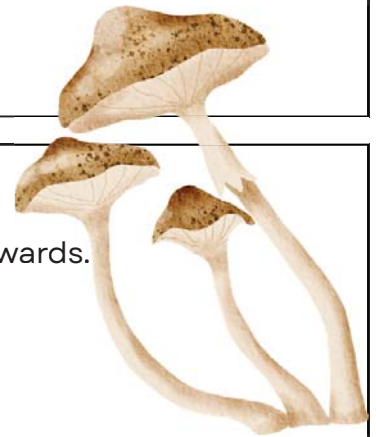
Led by **Chris Bryant**, Master Gardener and President of Roanoke Tree Stewards. Meet at Fishburn Park in Roanoke, 2304 Brambleton Avenue.

Contact Rebecca Ross at 540-855-4713 to sign up.

Sunday, OCTOBER 11

1 p.m. Field Trip: Mycology Walk at Bottom Creek Gorge Preserve, Bent Mountain, VA

Led by **Derek Pantel** of Virginia Tech Biology Dept. Meet at Cave Spring Baptist Church at 1 p.m. and carpool to Bottom Creek Gorge. **Contact Ellen Holtman at 540-797-2350 to sign up.**



Fall Events, Speakers, and Field Trips

Thursday, OCTOBER 15

12 p.m. Event: Lunch at Peaks of Otter Lodge, 85554 Blue Ridge Parkway—Bedford, VA

Meet the group at the Peaks of Otter Lodge at 12 p.m. While there you may want to hike around Abbott Lake, visit the Visitor Center, or hike one of the peaks: Harkening Hill, Flat Top, or Sharp Top. **For more details and to sign up contact Rebecca Ross at 540-855-4713.**

Monday, OCTOBER 26

6 p.m. meeting & 6:30 p.m. program “Summer and Fall Wildflowers”

Directions: Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs, 3640 Colonial Avenue, Roanoke, VA

Presenter **Alaina Krakowiak** is a Field Botanist for the Virginia Natural Heritage Program of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation based in Roanoke, and works in the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests. Prior to this position, Alaina worked as an ecologist for the Southeastern Grasslands Institute for 3 years. Alaina holds a Master’s in Biology from Colorado State University and two undergraduate degrees from the University of Tennessee.

Monday, NOVEMBER 23 (please note time change!)

6:30 p.m. meeting & 7:30 p.m. program “Forest Herbs and Medicinal Plants”

Directions: Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs, 3640 Colonial Avenue, Roanoke, VA

Dr. Shannon Bell is an Environmental Sociology and Appalachian Studies Professor at Virginia Tech and Founder of the Forest Botanical Region Living Monument in Norton, Virginia. Her Master’s and PhD are from University of Oregon. Her research focuses on environmental and climate justice in Appalachia, and the economic importance of native herbs and medicinal plants to the people of the region and the herbal supply chain.



...in case you missed it!



BLUE RIDGE WILDFLOWER SOCIETY co-sponsored the free program “Bringing Ecology Home” by Preston Montague, on August 13th at the South County Library auditorium, along with the Roanoke Wild Ones, Roanoke Master Gardeners, and Mill Mountain Garden Club. The auditorium was full and there was lots of interest in the use of native plants, both in formal and backyard landscape design. The movement is growing!

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Greg Corman, Roanoke



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

ALL ARE WELCOME!
Feel free to bring friends to any of our events.



Please Share!

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



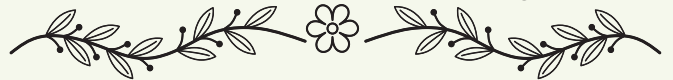
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Hands-on and Board member opportunities coming soon!

Heather Butler, Coordinator of the plant sale and Linda Harrison, Coordinator of the wildflower garden at Roanoke Council Garden Club, are planning some events in winter. Stay tuned for opportunities to join us in cultivating seeds for the upcoming 2027 native plant sale, and in re-establishing a diversity of plants in our native plant garden. We will share these announcements at our meetings and by email. We will also hold elections for board positions this fall. Hope to see everyone at our Fall 2026 meetings!



How many species of Goldenrod are in your yard?

There are around 100 species of Goldenrod native to North America. Goldenrods as a group support the greatest number of pollinators of any herbaceous plant, approximately 114 in all, according to the recently published **Plant Virginia Natives** guide for the Southern Piedmont (see link to your left).

Take note that Canadian goldenrod (*Solidago canadensis*) is allelopathic. Bluestemmed (*Solidago caesia*) and Zigzag (*Solidago flexicaulis*) goldenrod can grow in the shade, and none of these fall beauties cause allergies though they are often misidentified as ragweed. American poet Mary Oliver aptly describes these fall time heroes as growing in “rumpy bunches.”

- a native
newsbite
from your
editor,

Ligga



Blue Ridge Wildflower Society

Meetings 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. Club business is presented at membership meetings, followed by a program at 6:30 p.m. Currently, members must be present (in-person) to vote. Our picnic is held in July. 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 <https://vnps.org/chapters>. We also share 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 native wildflowers in our area on our Facebook page or submit them to our newsletter.

BRWS is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

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: Virginia Native Plant Society

- 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](https://www.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

Acting Secretary

Sophia Fonseca, Roanoke

Archive Committee Chair

Michael Belcher

Field Trips and Programs

Committee Chairs

Ellen Holtman, Salem
Rebecca Ross, Roanoke
Michael Wise, Roanoke

Garden Coordinator

Linda Harrison, Salem

Membership/Digital outreach

Rodelin Palmer, Roanoke

Newsletter Editor

Lissa Paulson, Lynchburg

Picnic Coordinator

Carol Whiteside, Roanoke

Plant Sale Coordinator

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.
Deadline for next issue: Jan 30



Blue Ridge Wildflower Society
P. O. Box 20011
Roanoke, VA 24018

At a Glance: Fall 2026 activities

Sept 5 th	9 a.m.	Field trip: Buffalo Farm, Craig County
Sept 12 th	9 a.m.	Field trip: Bald Knob Natural Area Preserve, Rocky Mount
Sept 18 th	10 a.m.	Field trip: Claytor Nature Center, Bedford
Sept 28 th	6 p.m.	Meeting: "Mycology of the Appalachians"
Oct 4 th	2 p.m.	Field trip: Tree Walk at Fishburn Park, Roanoke
Oct 11 th	1 p.m.	Field trip: Bottom Creek Gorge Preserve, Bent Mountain
Oct 15 th	12 p.m.	Event: Lunch at the Peaks of Otter
Oct 26 th	6 p.m.	Meeting: "Summer and Fall Wildflowers"
Nov 23 rd	6:30 p.m.	Meeting: "Forest Herbal and Medicinal Plants"

