



Blue Ridge Wildflower Society

A chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Spring 2024 VOL 45, No. 1

Are you ready for some wildflowers?

Well, it's almost Spring again! Time to appreciate those beautiful Spring ephemerals. Time to mark your calendars for the upcoming club activities. The Field Trips and Programs Committee has been busy securing speakers for our meetings and organizing the season's wildflower walks and other outdoor activities. Read on to learn more!

**Chapter meeting
March 25
6:45, RCGC
in person only**

Our speaker tonight is our local native plant grower and retailer, Ian Caton. His topic is "Spring Wildflowers." Ian and his wife, Elizabeth, own Wood Thrush Native Nursery at 1097 Beaver Creek Road, NW, Floyd, about two miles up the road from Route 8. The mission of the nursery is on the website at <https://woodthrushnatives.com>: "Our nursery is dedicated to discovering, growing, and promoting rare and unusual plants that are native to the Appalachian region. These plants are the foundation of the ecosystems that give us clean air and water while also supporting all the birds, butterflies, bees, and other wildlife that enrich our lives and on which we ultimately depend."

Wood Thrush is open to walk-in visitors April through October 1 p.m.-5 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. They also



Ellen Holtman

Trilliums on display at Green Hill Park

offer online shopping and shipping beginning in March.

**Wildflower Walk
Tuesday, April 9
Green Hill Park, Salem**

Our annual wildflower walk at Green Hill Park always features a hillside of

large-flowered trillium and riverbanks packed with Virginia bluebells! By popular request, the walk will again be self-guided and at your own pace. The plants will be marked with numbered flags, and we will provide a list of corresponding numbers with plant names and a little information on each plant.

Leaders this year are Linda Ardrey, Linda Harrison, Ellen Holtman and Rebecca Ross. Inside the park, turn right and follow the road along the river. You will find us with lists at the picnic shelter at the very end of the road. You may begin the walk anytime between 1:00 and 3:00, and the leaders will begin to pack up and take down flags around 4:00. Call Ellen Holtman with questions, (540) 797-2350.

**Wildflower Walk
Saturday, April 20
Bottom Creek Gorge**

Leading this walk will be Dr. Bob Pohlada, a retired Professor of Biology and Horticulture at Ferrum College and now Professor Emeritus. Dr. Pohlada's teaching interests focused mainly on plants and fungi in

the agriculture, horticulture, biology or environmental science programs. He is a strong proponent of experiential learning and the use of technology in teaching. Dr. Pohlada also is a senior scientist for the 36-year Water Quality Monitoring Program

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on Smith Mountain Lake that was co-founded and coordinated by his late wife, Dr. Carolyn Thomas.

Meet at 9:00 am at Cave Spring Baptist Church on Route 221 to carpool. Turn in to the first lot coming from town.

**Earth Day Observances
Saturday, April 20**

BRWS will be participating in Earth Day observances in two locations on April 20. We will have a table at Elmwood Park in Roanoke. If you can help with the table and handouts, please contact Linda Harrison at lindaharrison061950@gmail.com. Also, Campbell County has invited BRWS to participate in the Earth Day activities at the Timbrook Library, 18891 Leesville Road in Lynchburg. If you would like to join Jennifer McCarthy and help her at our table there, contact her at jenhuntmc@yahoo.com.

**Chapter meeting
Monday, April 22
6:45, RCGC
in person only**

This month we will be treated to some stories and pictures that are part of Rich Crites's legacy. Rich was a founding BRWS member in 1984 and a much-loved friend and president. His photos, 2x2 slides that date from the 1960s through the early 2000s, were painstakingly converted into digital format by Butch Kelly and Michael Belcher and donated to the VNPS. There are beautiful photos of the flowers that were a big part of Rich's life, and also some that show members of the club enjoying the flora with him.

Butch, a pillar of our club and Rich's longtime friend, will be sharing the photos and stories with us.



Joyce Sims

***Antennaria solitaria* at Pandapas Pond**



Judy Kniskern

**Joe-pye Weed at
Pandapas Pond**

**Wildflower Walk
Sunday, April 28, 2 p.m.
Pandapas Pond
(just outside Blacksburg,
in the National Forest)**

The leader for this walk will be Mary Rhoades and we'll be joined by friends from the New River Chapter. Mary served two terms as president

of the New River Chapter, and has led flower walks for her chapter and as a volunteer at Claytor Lake State Park. Mary found *Antennaria solitaria*, a lesser-known species of pussy-toes, blooming at Pandapas Pond last spring. It is the only species of that genus that has a single flower, about 1 inch in diameter. Although it occurs in many counties in Virginia, it is listed as infrequent in the Digital Atlas of the Virginia Flora. We also hope to see a colony of birds foot violet (*Viola pedata*) among other delights. Nothing is guaranteed when on an outing to see wildflowers, but Pandapas Pond is a very rich area, so there should be plenty of blooms to find. This Forest Service Day Use Area offers a hardwood forest, a pollinator garden, lots of birds, a boardwalk, and a wheelchair accessible trail.

Those who want to carpool should meet at the Park and Ride lot on Thompson Memorial Drive / Virginia 311 / I-

81 Exit 140 in Salem at 1 p.m. Those not carpooling will meet in the lower the lower parking lot at Pandapas Pond for the 2 p.m. walk.

**Mill Mountain
Wildflower Garden
Thursday, May 9
10 a.m.**

Meet on Mill Mountain at the first parking lot, the one near the zoo and the Discovery Center. The garden is a magnificent community project of the Mill Mountain Garden Club. It covers two and one-half acres of land carefully planned, weeded, planted and maintained by members since 1971, and includes ponds, a small amphitheater, and well groomed trails. A visitor can see work in progress any Thursday morning as these ladies arrive with their tools to get their hands dirty.

We will wander around the top of the mountain on very nice trails and enjoy the spring flowers, the views, and the fresh air. Call Ellen Holtman with questions, (540) 797-2350.



One of our flower flies

**Chapter meeting
Monday, May 20
6:45, RCGC
In person only**

Tonight we'll hear again from our favorite "butterfly guy," Bruce Grimes. His topic is "The Other Pollinators: Flower Flies." Bruce is a long-time Master Naturalist and a member of the New River

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September butterfly walk at Pandapas Pond



Judy Kniskern

A large group of BRWS and New River Chapter members gathered September 2 for a butterfly walk led by Bruce Grimes. Bruce will be giving a talk on "The Other Pollinators: Flower Flies" at our meeting on May 20.



Kris Sokol

Continued from Page 2

Chapter of VNPS. He has been studying and photographing insects since 2006.

BRWS Plant Sale Saturday, May 25 9 a.m.-Noon, RCGC

Mark your calendars now for the annual wildflower and native plant sale! "Doors" open at 9 but folks come early to get a good place in line. This is the club's annual fund-raiser and always offers a great opportunity to stock up on those wildflowers you've been wanting for your gardens. Come early and invite your friends!

Garden Visit Sunday, June 2 901 Oakwood Drive, Roanoke

Meet at the home of Sharon Burnham at 2 p.m. for an informal tour of her yard and gardens. Sharon, a BRWS member and local native plant advocate, has a wonderful collection of native plants, among them hazelnuts! Parking is available on the street just past her house where the street widens. We'll

meet in Sharon's driveway by the gates. Hope to see you there!

Chapter meeting Monday, June 3 6:45, RCGC In person only

The program tonight is on "Ticks." Our speaker, Dr. Elizabeth "Liz" Gleim, Associate Professor of Biology at Hollins University and chair of the biology department, is a wildlife disease ecologist. Her particular area of expertise is in tick



-borne disease ecology, and her research has explored the long-term impact of fire on tick populations. Liz teaches several courses at Hollins, including Plant Biology, Conservation Biology, Ecology and Wildlife Disease.

Professor Gleim received her B.A. in Biology from Hollins and earned her Ph.D. at the Warnell School of Forestry & Natural Resources, University of Georgia.

Zoom help needed!

We need someone with knowledge and experience with Zoom to help set up before each monthly membership meeting. We have been unable to provide Zoom connection to members because of technical difficulties and lack of experience in Zoom setup. We need a volunteer who can get things ready during the business meeting at 6:45 and be ready for the speaker at 7.

If you are this person, please contact Jennifer McCarthy at jenhuntmc@yahoo.com.

President's message



Blue Ridge Wildflower Society is looking forward to the exciting activities planned for our members this spring and early summer! Program topics include Spring Wildflowers, Flower Flies, Ticks, and a presentation that includes anecdotes and conversation based on the wildflower photograph collection of Rich Crites. Rich was a biology professor at Virginia Western Community College and a founding member of our club who was active until his death.



There also will be wildflower walks and Earth Day events on the calendar, along with our popular annual native plant sale. Wrapping up this season will be a fun, late afternoon of fellowship and food at the annual picnic!

My husband and I have enjoyed the programs, walks, the resources available at VNPS.org, plus the opportunity to meet other members, who gladly share information that helps us learn more about local native plants and strategies for removing invasive ones.

This past year, we enjoyed the rewards of our mini meadow, created to replace a section of

grass. Months of delicate flowers and little blue stem grass provided ever-changing color, along with the constant sight of small birds, butterflies, and moths. Not mowing that area was nice too! Our first attempt at a meadow wasn't perfect, when we realized not all wildflower seed mixes are all "natives" and we soon discovered that the "Coreopsis" contained *Coreopsis tinctoria*, in addition to some native varieties. We are getting better at reading the fine print and checking names against the Flora of Virginia app.

In anticipation of expanding our little meadow, we covered another area with cardboard and mulch. Little did we know, our puppy would find digging up the cardboard a really fun game. She enjoyed weaving through the meadow and stirring up the birds, who fluttered into a nearby cedar tree as temporary retreat. She's finally moved on to other activities so my next meadow hopefully has a chance!

It's been nice to gather seeds from my yard, while still leaving plenty for the birds and other wildlife. The yard is not completely native and may never be, but we still try. We continue to replace non-natives with natives and tackle the invasive plants

and shrubs that we inherited with our home -- or that wander over from neighboring properties. Why do we all enjoy this so much?

I share this story to let you know I have a lot to learn about Virginia native plants, so joining the board was a little intimidating. However, the opportunity to learn from other members continues to be very rewarding. It's my hope that you will participate on a BRWS committee in 2024. This fall, it will be time to nominate and elect new officers and fill committee positions for the next two years. We need member support in order to continue offering the programs that we've all come to enjoy. All are welcome!

I am grateful to serve alongside each of our members who volunteer their time to serve on the Blue Ridge Wildflower Society board. They help create, organize, and lead activities. They work behind the scene managing our funds and membership communications. They serve on VNPS committees on our behalf, as we continue of our mission of making a positive impact on our local environment through education and sharing resources on the benefits of native plants.

-- Jennifer

Welcome new members!

- Ruth A. Johnson, Salem
- Jeanne Hildenbrand, Salem
- Denise Alexander, Roanoke
- Brenda Ferguson, Roanoke
- Florence Hayes, Boones Mill
- Jessica Watts, Lynchburg
- Susanna McIlwaine, Christiansburg
- Sheri Hollingsworth, Lynchburg
- Sara Lissa Paulson, Lynchburg
- Gavin Lower, Cullen
- Rhonda Swanson, Moneta
- Beth Buchanan, Buchanan
- Judy Jenks, Radford
- Judith Lee-Frantz, Lynchburg
- Guy Swartwout, Troutville

Calling all gardeners!

It's almost time to "clean up" our wildflower garden at the Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs facility. We purposely leave last year's dead stems, leaves and other plant debris for insects and other critters that over-winter there.

The folks who maintain the garden will be gathering March 30 at 1 p.m. to clear out the old to make way for the new. They would really appreciate some help with the cleanup effort which should take only an hour or two depending on the number of helpers.

If you'd like to help and learn more about the garden, just show up with hand pruners, work gloves and some water. If you have questions, contact Linda Harrison at

lindaharrison061950@gmail.com. Hope to see you March 30!

Throw some (native) shade

The Virginia Department of Forestry is partnering with retail nurseries to offer discounts on eligible native trees and shrubs. The program, called "Throwing Shade VA," offers customer discounts of \$25 on eligible trees valued at \$50 or more.

The purpose of the program is to encourage customers to purchase native species of trees and shrubs, and for nurseries to promote native species. Planting native trees helps expand biodiversity. Native trees and shrubs provide food and habitat for wildlife, especially important pollina-

tors. Because they evolved in Virginia's different ecosystems, native trees and shrubs are better adapted to their natural environment than ornamentals and more likely to thrive.

A list of nurseries participating in 2024 is available at <https://dof.virginia.gov/urban-community-forestry/urban-forestry-community-assistance/throwing-shade-va-program/>

If you have a favorite nursery closer to home, why not mention your interest in the program (an in natives) to the proprietor?

Just imagine a turtle, stretching its head

“White Turtlehead”

Chelone glabra

The Virginia Native Plant Society has crowned *Chelone glabra*, commonly known as White Turtlehead, its 2024 Wildflower of the Year. This lovely white perennial herb gets its name from the striking resemblance its outermost petals, the corolla, shares with a turtle’s head

President’s Pick

stretching out of its shell. Its genus name was derived from the

Greek word for “a tortoise.” It is native to most of the Commonwealth and its habitat includes moist, well-drained areas such as stream banks, low woods, wet thickets and ditches with part sun to sunny conditions. Showy, white flowers appear late summer and continue into September. The tubular 1.5-inch bloom is part of a cluster of tight, two-lipped flowers on the tip of un-branched, leafy stems.

There are two other turtlehead species -- *Chelone obliqua* and *Chelone lyonii*. To help with identifying *Chelone glabra* can be found by looking inside the tube to find the four fertile stamens and a



Photos by John Hayden

The outermost petals resemble a turtle’s head stretching out of its shell. Bees are attracted to the tubular blooms.

fifth, sterile, one. This sterile stamen in the White Turtlehead is green. Check carefully! The bloom’s tube is a favorite hangout for bees!

Additional information about our 2024 Wildflower of the Year, will be available at the March 25th membership meeting and program. If you are growing *Chelone glabra*, please share your pictures and experience with the Virginia



native on our group’s Facebook page and/or Instagram site. We’d love to know how it’s doing at your home!
-- Jennifer

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 American chestnut tree was destroyed by an imported fungal blight, *Cryphonectria parasitica*, early in the 20th century. At the time, the tree played a significant role in the economy of its broad range — from Maine to Mississippi. It provided strong, rot-resistant lumber and an important source of food for humans and animals of the Eastern forests. The loss of this tree was catastrophic.

The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF) was founded in 1983 by a group of plant scientists and lay persons who recognized the severe impact of this loss. TACF has played the lead role in rescuing the American chestnut through breeding and

Spotlight: The American Chestnut Foundation

genetics research for more than three decades. The organization’s long-term goal is for nature to take over and create self-sustaining populations, with blight-resistant trees growing stronger with each succeeding generation.

According to the TACF website, this involves a two-pronged approach: cross-breeding and the use of transgenic technology. The breeding program began by crossing Chinese chestnut trees, which are naturally resistant to the blight, with their American cousins. The result was trees that were 50 percent American, 50 percent Chinese.

These trees were then backcrossed to the American species, resulting in trees which were 75 percent American. The procedure was repeated to produce an American chestnut tree that retains no Chinese characteristics other than blight resistance.

The most promising of TACF’s second approach, transgenic technology, involves inserting a wheat gene that encodes an enzyme, oxalate oxidase (OxO), that degrades oxalic acid, the toxin by which the pathogen kills.

More information about the TACF’s work, as well as information on joining and receiving trees to propagate, can be found at www.tacf.org.

BRWS MEETINGS

Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs headquarters
3640 Colonial Avenue, Roanoke, VA

Meetings are held the fourth Monday of the month in September, October, November, (no February meeting), March, April and May, unless changed or canceled due to inclement weather and/or Roanoke County School closures. Club business is presented in-person at membership meetings, from 6:45 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., prior to our program. Currently, members must be present (in-person attendance) to vote. We also will share club news and updates on our webpage at www.vnps.org/chapters and via email.

In-person presentations and programs begin at 7:00 p.m.

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 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,
Roanoke, VA 24018

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brws.membership@gmail.com

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Newsletter Editor
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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

Calendar of Spring 2024 Events

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|-----------------|---|
| March 25 | Membership Meeting and Program |
| April 9 | Wildflower Walk, Green Hill Park, Salem |
| April 20 | Wildflower Walk, Bottom Creek Gorge |
| April 22 | Membership Meeting and Program |
| April 28 | Wildflower Walk, Pandapas Pond |
| May 9 | Walking tour of Mill Mountain Wildflower Garden |
| May 20 | Membership Meeting and Program |
| May 25 | Annual BRWS Native Plant Sale |
| June 2 | Garden and Yard Visit at the home of Sharon Burnham |
| June 3 | Membership Meeting and Program |
| July 13 | Annual Joint BRWS / Roanoke Valley Bird Club Picnic |