

# THE DECLARATION

SPRING 2022



## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Chapter Meetings	2
Member Contributions	3
Partner Events	6
Learn More About VNPS	7

## Join Us for the Chapter's Annual Plant Sale

By: Phil Stokes, Plant Sale Chair

The Jefferson Chapter **Annual Native Plant Sale** is just around the corner! Mark your calendars and support the Ivy Creek Natural Area, **Sunday April 24 at 1:00 PM.**

Looking for more ways to get involved with the Spring 2022 Native Plant Sale? Volunteering opportunities are available for a pre-sale potting event in late-march and the weekend of the plant sale.

Volunteers are critical to the success of the sale. With your help we can pull off this one-day event to provide affordable, high quality native plants to the community and support our local Chapter.

Volunteers of all skill levels welcomed. Events are casual, and time slots flexible. Drinks and snacks will be provided for the **pre-sale potting event (March 24 at 10:00 AM)**. Look for more details inside.

*Continued page 3*



*Toothwort (Cardamine diphylla) ready for this year's sale.*

---

## The Spicebush Swallowtail Butterfly, Its Host Plants, and the New Threat They Face

By: Mary Lee Epps

A new disease has recently appeared that may soon extirpate spice bush, sassafras, and most other members of the laurel family in Virginia. Sadly, since these are the host plants of the spicebush swallowtail butterfly, it too is at risk of disappearing from the state.

*Continued page 4*

## Chapter Meetings & Plant Walks

Jefferson Chapter will be offering our usual monthly talks through May and starting again in September. Plant walks will continue through the spring, summer, and into the fall. Preliminary information is below. Watch for more details via email in the upcoming weeks.

### **Wednesday, April 13, 7:00 PM -9:00 PM | Quarry Gardens**

Neither Armand nor Bernice Thieblot has any formal education in botany, environmental science, or garden design. Armand was a professor at the University of Maryland's School of Business and Bernice ran a company that consulted with and provided creative services for the marketing programs of a national clientele of colleges and universities. They lived over the company's store in a converted firehouse in downtown Baltimore until 2013.

Their native plants education has been a slow process, begun when they purchased land in Schuyler in 1990. Since 2015, they have had a continuing relationship with Charlottesville's Center for Urban Habitats, which surveyed the quarry site's biota and designed the plant galleries. Both Armand and Bernice are Master Naturalists and QGs' tour guides. They know they are stewarding more than 500 species of native plants—and are still learning new identifications every day.

### **Wednesday, May 11, 7:00 PM -9:00 PM | Ecological Landscape Design**

JJ Towler will speak about her work with the Natural Garden, Shenandoah Valley's source for living landscapes. The Natural Garden specializes in ecological landscape design— living landscapes—, which means working primarily with native plants to feed the pollinators and the greater food web. They add edible, herbal, and medicinal plants to nourish both human and wild inhabitants.

### **Saturday Mornings 9:00 AM – 11:30 AM | Plant Walks at Ivy Creek**

From March through November, Jefferson Chapter, V.N.P.S. and Ivy Creek Natural Area will co-sponsor monthly plant walks, usually on the third Saturday morning of each month.

The first walk is scheduled for Saturday March 19<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 AM to 11:30 AM. Join Mary Lee Epps and Sabine Scholes to search for early signs of spring. Some wind-pollinated trees will be waking up, and with luck we may find the opening blooms of spicebush, sassafras, hepatica, and trailing arbutus. Co-sponsors: Jefferson Chapter, VNPS, and Ivy Creek Natural Area. Meet by the kiosk near the parking lot. Free and open to the public.

## Member Contributions



### **Join Us for the Chapter's Annual Plant Sale**

*By: Phil Stokes, Plant Sale Chair*

*Continued from Page 1*

#### **Volunteer for the Pre-Sale Potting Event Thursday March 24**

Join us on Thursday March 24 at 10:00 AM at Chapter member, Susan Hall's house. Address is 419 Burchs Creek Rd., Crozet, VA 22932. Directions? Call Susan at 540-256-6313. No need to sign up in advance.

Already potted, mostly at the Oct. 10 potting event, are plugs and bare roots totaling nearly 1,400 plants representing 22 different species. To offer the sale's typical variety of species there's still more potting to do and we need your help!

We have deep plug trays with 50 plants each of 14 species and a few hundred bare root favorites. Volunteer will have the opportunity to work preparing soil, labeling, watering, and moving flats. The event is casual, with volunteers free to tailor their schedule around other commitments. Drinks and snacks will be provided.

#### **Volunteer for the Annual Plant Sale Sunday April 24**

##### *Donate plants*

Needed for March potting are divisions of good selling natives that also establish quickly in pots which include Celandine Poppy, Green and Gold, Robin's Plantain, Wild Petunias, Wild Blue Phlox, Spring Beauty, Jacob's Ladder, Golden Ragwort, White Wood Aster, Blue Flag Iris, and Wild Basil. Other divisions on the wish list but highly unlikely to be member provided are Twinleaf, Ginseng, Jack-in-the-pulpit, Goldenseal, and Bloodroot. We would also welcome for potting other natives that customers would desire and could look robust by sale date.

##### *Host a potting event and care for plants*

We're in need of such member-dug-up native species that will sell well at the sale and are ones we haven't already potted. Preferably these could be potted at small gatherings held at member homes where pottings could be cared for until sale date.

##### *Volunteer on the sale weekend*

Join our team of volunteers on the sale weekend and lend a helping hand to transport plants, greet customers and fill orders. Sale will be held Sunday April 24 1:00 PM at Ivy Creek Natural Area.

Your help with the March potting, label making, and volunteering for sale weekend will be much appreciated! Members plant donations are also well received. If you are interested in volunteering or making a plant donation, please call (434-293-4217) or email Phil (philipfs@embarqmail.com). Check your email for additional information. Mask requirement to be determined in advance of the event.



Dorsal view of wings of spicebush butterfly



Underside view of wings



Early instar in leaf hideout and camouflaged as bird dropping

## The Spicebush Swallowtail Butterfly, Its Host Plants, and the New Threat They Face

By: Mary Lee Epps

*Continued from Page 1*

The spicebush swallowtail butterfly (*Papilio troilus*), which at this time is common throughout Virginia, is a large and handsome swallowtail with a wingspan of 3.8-4.8 inches. Viewed from above, the forewings are black; the hindwings are washed with light blue. The underside of the hindwings is also very dark, with two rows of bright orange spots, the rows separated by light splotches of powdery blue.

The ranges of both the butterfly and its two most wide-spread host plants, sassafras and spicebush, roughly coincide, extending throughout the Eastern U.S. except Maine and including the mid-West as far as eastern Texas and north into Iowa and Michigan.

One of the most interesting aspects of the butterfly is its various defense strategies. The adult is a mimic of the toxic pipevine swallowtail while the caterpillar has a range of defenses. The caterpillar makes a shelter by folding a leaf over, spinning silk to stitch the edges of the leaf together. It hides in this shelter during the day and to molt, emerging to eat at night. It also sports something of a disguise. The small, early instar larvae resemble bird excrement—brown with white markings suggesting the uric acid deposits on bird droppings. The mature caterpillar is green with bulging false eyes, looking a bit like a small green snake or frog. In addition, like all swallowtails, the butterfly has an osmeterium—a small, forked projection that it keeps obscured within the body most of the time, but if threatened by some insects, it can raise the osmeterium and spray the threatening insect with a foul-smelling substance.

In Virginia, the butterfly has four host plants: sassafras, spicebush, redbay and pondspice, but the latter two are limited to a small corner of Southeast Virginia. In the rest of the state, including our area, sassafras and spicebush are the only hosts.

Both sassafras and spicebush are dioecious with male and female flowers on separate plants. The spidery flowers have no petals, only yellow sepals, pistils, and stamens, but these are effective in attracting various insects. Both sassafras and spicebush have leaves and twigs that give off a spicy fragrance when crushed. Like the avocado, which is in the same family, both have fruits with a high oil content and a single large seed.

## The Spicebush Swallowtail Butterfly, Its Host Plants, and the New Threat They Face

By: Mary Lee Epps

Continued from Page 4

Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*) is a tree growing 20 to 60 feet tall and sporting three different leaf shapes: a simple oval, a mitten with one thumb and a two-thumb mitten. In the fall leaves turn a variety of colors including yellow, orange, pink and red while female trees sport handsome clusters of berries born on colorful red stalks shaped something like golf tees. Various medicines were made from the tree by both the Indians and early settlers and sassafras was an important early export to Europe where it was viewed as a miracle cure-all. More recently sassafras root oil was the main flavoring in root beer until the 1960s when safrole, a component of the oil, was labeled a carcinogen by the FDA. Happily, the leaves contain very little safrole. Chewing on a leaf stem has long been a spicy, root-beer-flavored treat in our family, a practice we passed on to our children and which their children now enjoy; and the ground leaves, which have a mucilaginous quality, continue to be used as the thickener for gumbo.

Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), the butterfly's second caterpillar host plant that is widespread in Virginia, blooms in early spring before the leaves are out. In the fall the leaves turn bright yellow before falling off and the female shrubs have bright red, ovate berries that are rich in oil, making them a nutritious food for migrating birds. During the American Revolution, colonists removed the seeds, dried the berries, and ground them to powder, which they used as a substitute for allspice.

Today, many members of the Laurel family including all of Virginia's host species for the spicebush caterpillar are under severe threat from Laurel wilt disease. Laurel wilt disease is a vascular disease caused by a fungus which is carried to the tree by the tiny, 2 millimeters long, redbay ambrosia beetle.



Mature 5<sup>th</sup> instar caterpillar

Both fungus and beetle are from Asia. The disease first showed up in 2002 in Georgia, but since then has spread rapidly throughout the Southeast. In September 2021, one diseased sassafras tree was discovered in Scott County in far Southwest VA.

The ambrosia beetle relies on the fungus as a food source. When it finds a healthy host, it bores into the wood of the tree, carrying the fungus, which then germinates and spreads, clogging the water-conducting vascular system of the tree. As less water reaches the foliage, the leaves begin to wilt and discolor. Another typical symptom is dark vertical streaks in the sapwood running with the grain. Since sassafras is clonal, the disease can spread through the roots to new stems without the beetle. The disease is inevitably fatal, and one beetle can kill a tree, typically within a few months or at times within a few weeks.

Management options are limited. Avoiding transporting firewood or other wood products from infected areas can slow the progress of the disease. Also, particularly valuable trees and shrubs, e.g., avocado trees, can be protected by root-flare injections of the fungicide, propiconazole, but the treatment must be repeated annually. Good sanitation practices can also help; however, while these may be feasible for avocado orchards, they are not practical for sassafras and spicebush that grow wild in natural settings.

## Partner Events

### **Festival of the book**

Please join us at Ivy Creek Natural Area on Sunday, March 20 at 11 am for the festival of the book. “Preserving and Using Native Plants”- Authors Georgann Eubanks (Saving the Wild South), and Kat Maier (Energetic Herbalism) discuss ecological stewardship and resources for medicinal plant uses from many traditions. Much more than guidebooks, these authors trace their own research and travel toward a deep appreciation for sensitive ecosystems.

### **Flora of Virginia Videos Now Available**

Get a jump on Spring wildflower season with new videos from the Flora Project. The series breaks down the wealth of information in the Flora of Virginia Manual and its App into understandable chunks. VNPS members Marion Lobstein and Sally Anderson and other Flora board members tackle the subjects with enthusiasm and humor that will appeal to both novices and experts. Each hour-long presentation stands alone and is divided into 3 or more sections. Timestamps and descriptions allow viewers to navigate to specific topics and areas of interest. Visit <https://floraofvirginia.org/> to learn more.

**Program Now Available on How to Report Spotted Lanternfly Egg Masses** The Blue Ridge PRISM has teamed up with the Virginia Department of Forestry and Virginia Working Landscapes to host a training about the spotted lanternfly and how to survey for and report spotted lanternfly egg masses. This free training covers the biology and identification of the spotted lanternfly, its current distribution, how and where to conduct egg mass surveys, and how to record data. Presentations are given by Lori Chamberlin and Katlin DeWitt with the Virginia Department of Forestry. Watch the presentation at <https://blueridgeprism.org> and start reporting today!

**Blue Ridge PRISM** will be hosting its Spring Workshop Series in early March as a blend of two virtual sessions and an optional in-person field session. Register for the virtual sessions or the field session or all. Registration details are at <https://blueridgeprism.org/prism-register/>

**Plant Northern Piedmont Natives** This past summer Plant Northern Piedmont Natives partnered with the Piedmont Master Gardeners (PMG) to develop the Garden Liaison program. PMG volunteers trained to advocate and promote native plants to retail nurseries in Charlottesville and Albemarle County. PMG Garden Liaison volunteers provide information on native plants for the public, help the retailers showcase their locally native plants in stock, and assist retailers to better meet the demand for Virginia native plants. The Jefferson Chapter has been a wonderful supporter and partner in this effort by providing the funding for the printed materials used by PMG volunteers. PMG Garden Liaison Volunteers are gearing up for a busy spring and the response from local retailers has been enthusiastic and welcoming. When you visit your local garden center, look for red stickers on plants that say, Virginia Native, and banners with the Plant Northern Piedmont Plants logo. Make sure to let the retailer know you appreciate their selling Virginia native plants, thank them, and tell them you want more!

The Virginia Native Plant Society is dedicated to the protection and preservation of the native plants of Virginia and their habitats, in order 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.

The Jefferson Chapter serves the counties of Albemarle, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa, Madison, Nelson, Orange, as well as the City of Charlottesville.

*Submissions of articles, events, photographs, and other information of interest to the chapter are welcome. Please submit them by email to Annemarie Abbondanzo at: [annemarie@ecosystems-services.us](mailto:annemarie@ecosystems-services.us) with the subject line "Newsletter Submission".*

**Virginia Native Plant Society, Jefferson Chapter**

P. O. Box 6281  
Charlottesville, VA 22906

**Contact:**

Mary Lee Epps  
Chapter President  
(434) 973-8172  
[mse5e@virginia.edu](mailto:mse5e@virginia.edu)

Conserving Wild Flowers  
and Wild Places