

THE DECLARATION

WINTER 2020



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The Mourning Cloak, A Later Winter Butterfly

By: Mary Lee Epps,
Chapter President

Several years ago, I was walking in the woods in late February or early March when I saw a large, handsome butterfly. I was quite surprised to see a butterfly out so early.

Not long afterward, I ran into Michelle Prysby, Director of the Virginia Master Naturalist program, who has done research on monarchs and is quite knowledgeable about butterflies. I mentioned to her seeing this remarkably early butterfly. She simply smiled and said, "It must have been a mourning cloak."



Mourning Cloak Photo By Drew Chaney

My jaw dropped. How could she possibly be able to name the species when I had given her no description? Well, of course she was right, and she was able to identify it so easily because the mourning cloak overwinters as an adult and in our area, it is the main butterfly active that early in the spring.

The mourning cloak, *Nymphalis antiopa*, is in the family, *Nymphalidae*, subfamily, *Nymphalinae*. The *Nymphalidae* are sometimes called the "brush-footed" butterflies because their often greatly reduced front legs frequently appear hairy or brush-like.

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Pawpaws in the Limelight

By: Annemarie Abbondanzo

Known as the river fruit or the hillbilly banana the Pawpaw is in the limelight as the favorite candidate for the official state fruit of Virginia. The largest edible native fruit, the pawpaw has a long history in Virginia.

Pawpaw fruits sustained many settlers and natives before them.

Once a favorite dessert of both Washington and Jefferson, the fruit fell out of popularity and became largely overlooked as a local food source.

That is until now. The introduction of HB 592, which proposes to designate pawpaw as the Virginia state, marks a renewed interest in the fruit. Virginians are celebrating and embracing the tasty fruit. Pawpaw breads, puddings, and pies are back in demand. It's even splashing onto the craft-beer scene as a sought-after ale.



Chapter meetings featuring an educational speaker are held the second Wednesday of the month from 7:30-9:00 PM at Ivy Creek Natural Area Education Bldg., 1780 Earlysville Rd. just south of Woodlands Rd. intersection on north side of Charlottesville, VA. Bring a friend or two, visitors are always welcome.

Jefferson Chapter Meetings and Events

Mark your calendars for our upcoming opportunities to meet members of the Jefferson Chapter and to learn about native plants. Member meetings are held the second Wednesday of the month and feature an educational speaker. Meetings are from 7:30-9:00 PM at Ivy Creek Natural Area Education Bldg., 1780 Earlysville Rd. just south of Woodlands Rd. intersection on north side of Charlottesville, VA. Bring a friend or two, visitors are always welcome.

Chapter Meetings

Wednesday, February 12th | 7:30 PM *Invasive Plants in State Parks*

Al Cire will join us to discuss invasive plant removal and related issues in Virginia State Parks. The presence of exotic invasives is an increasing problem in our parks, posing management challenges in need of creative solutions. Al has been a Conservation Officer with the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation since 1989. Currently, he serves as Operations Coordinator for the Division of Natural Heritage.

Wednesday, March 11th | 7:30 PM *Native Plants in North American Culture*

Steve Pullinger will discuss the use of native plants in Native American culture, touching upon the roles some of our local flora play in food, medicine, and other applications. He will talk about basic survival needs and emergency supplies, in case one of us is hurt or lost while looking for that elusive plant. Steve has taught survival and primitive living skills for the past 30 years. He and wife Deborah, both Master Naturalists, introduce these skills to the Jr. Naturalist groups that they lead at Ivy Creek and in Fluvanna County. Steve was a street EMT for 20 years and certified in SOLO Wilderness first aid. He and Deborah homesteaded for 20+ years, producing roughly 80 percent of their food, and Steve has been an avid organic gardener and beekeeper for the past 40 years.

Wednesday, April 8th | 7:30 PM *Shale Barrens*

Much of Virginia west of the Shenandoah Valley is composed of Devonian age shale. Where the shale slopes face south, the daytime temperatures can exceed 120°F and moisture is exceedingly rare. These slopes are mostly barren of plant life and are given the name of Shale Barrens. Even so, about 30 species of plants occur mainly or exclusively on these barren slopes. Their closest relatives live in the deserts of Utah and the American Southwest. Well-known local botanist Tim Williams features these plants in his presentation. They range from asters to clematis, pinks, umbels, mints, clover, wall flowers, evening primrose, and even ferns and club mosses.

Native Plants Walks

Ivy Creek Natural Area | 9:00-11:00 AM | **Third Saturday of each month** | March – November | Co-sponsored by Ivy Creek.

Join Virginia Native Plant Society members and explore native plants on a guided walk through the Ivy Creek Natural Area. The Ivy Creek Natural Area is a 215-acre preserve bordering the South Fork Rivanna Reservoir in Charlottesville, Virginia. With six miles of trails traversing a mix of upland woods, pine stands, fields, streams, and shoreline, it is an ideal site to learn about the rich flora characteristic of Central Virginia.

Meet by the kiosk near the parking lot. Free! All are welcome.

The Jefferson Chapter has a small cadre of volunteers who have been leading these walks, but we can always use new leaders. (You can ease in gradually if you like by teaming up with an experienced leader for the first walk). Please email Mary Lee Epps (mse5e@virginia.edu) if you are willing to lead a walk or two. Upcoming dates: 3/21, 4/18, 5/16, 6/20, 7/18, 8/15, 9/19, 10/17 and 11/21.



Virginia bluebell buds
seen at Ivy Creek

Native Plant Potting Party

Friday, April 3rd | 1:30 PM | 2505 Holkham Drive, Charlottesville (Ivy Area)

Get your hands dirty while enjoying the company of native plant enthusiasts! We need more help potting plants for our annual native plant sale. Fran always finds some well-rooted native favorites from her spectacular garden that become exceptional plants by sale date. Chapter members may also bring divisions of desirable natives (please label with species name) that can be potted and ready for this year's sale. We always appreciate recyclable pots, square or round with openings of 4" to 5" and trays.

Jefferson Chapter Annual Native Plant Sale

Save the date! Sunday, April 26th. Shop the Annual Native Plant Sale and join the largest crowd of the year at Ivy Creek Barn for the Annual Native Plant Sale sponsored by the Jefferson Chapter. Chapter members will have potted over 1,500 native plants with an emphasis on spring favorites: Virginia bluebells, toadshade trillium, Dutchman's breeches, toothwort, butterfly weed, monardas, coreopsis, heuchera, creeping phlox, wild stonecrop sedum, Mayapple, wild ginger, wild geranium, and others. Summer and fall flowering pollinator attractors will also be featured. Uncommon native trees and shrubs will be offered too. A large portion of the profits are donated to Ivy Creek Foundation, while other educational and conservation activities are also supported. These very affordably priced plants have sold out quickly

A large portion of the plant sale profits are donated to Ivy Creek Foundation, while other educational and conservation activities are also supported.



Virginia Native Plant Society State Workshop: Earth's Climate: Present, Past and Future

Saturday, March 14th, 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM, v. Earl Dickenson Building, Piedmont Virginia Community College, 444 College Drive, Charlottesville.

Registration is open now! To learn more visit: <https://vnps.org/vnps-annual-workshop-2020/>.

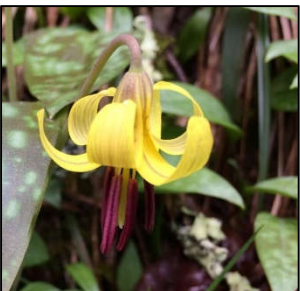
Member Contributions

Winter's Wane

Poem and Photos By Annemarie Abbondanzo



Spring Beauty



Trout Lily



White Trillium

In the still unpredictable cold
 Is when spring begins to take hold
 February and March mark the start
 And skunk cabbage is happy to take part
 While the soil is still damp and cold
 Tough blooms of Hepatica, and Viola take hold
 The sight of a spicebush flower
 Tells us of the changing hour
 While last year's leaves hang on young beech trees
 Silver maple flowers shiver in the breeze
 As the calendar pages turn
 The warmth and light begin to burn
 When the songbirds finish feasting on loblollies
 And the last berries from hollies
 Once the chirping of spring peepers is steady
 And the maple buds leap forth at ready
 Start to look around
 And be sure to look down
 For the race to bloom will be well underway
 And the blossoms of bluebells and bellworts invite us to play
 As the spring ephemerals creep forth and take their place in line
 The flowers of spring beauty, rue anemone, bloodroot, and toothwort give us their time.

The Mourning Cloak, A Later Winter Butterfly Cont'd From Page 1

Two other butterflies in the same subfamily also may overwinter as adults in our area: the question mark, *Polygonia interrogationis*, and the comma, *Polygonia comma*, but the mourning cloak is probably the one you are most likely to see flying very early in the spring.

Mourning Cloaks have a remarkably wide range including most of North America as well as Europe and Central Asia. They are able to survive as adults in quite cold areas including much of Canada with some migrating to warmer areas for the coldest months while others tolerate bitterly cold conditions by sheltering in protected places such as inside tree cavities or under loose bark, where they produce special antifreeze proteins and/or sugars that prevent the water in their bodies from forming large ice crystals that would damage their internal organs.

Mourning cloaks may emerge from their winter shelters quite early in the spring, basking in the sun until they are warm enough to fly and seek a mate. After mating, the females lay a mass of eggs surrounding a twig, probably dying shortly after laying their eggs. Once the eggs hatch, the caterpillars stay close together, sharing a communal web when not feeding. If they deplete the host plant they are on, they will move together to a new host plant.

Caterpillars' main food sources are almost always trees and shrubs. Favorite hosts include willow (especially black willow in our area), American elm, slippery elm, cottonwood, aspen, and hackberry.

Once they reach their fifth and final instar, they will leave the host plant, where damaged leaves and deposits of frass could alert predators and travel up to 50 yards searching for a protected place to pupate. There they will form a small pad of silk and hook onto it, hanging upside down while they form a chrysalis. After 10 or 15 days, they emerge from the chrysalis, hang upside down for another hour or so, pumping their wings to dry them and then fly off to seek a mate and begin the cycle again.

These new adults estivate (i.e., remain dormant) through the hot, dry periods of summer. In the fall they will feed. Seldom nectaring on flowers, they prefer tree sap, rotting fruit, and the like, finding the nutrients and building up the energy they will need to overwinter as adults. Because of this life cycle, they may live 10 or 11 months, being one of our longest-lived butterflies.



Mourning Cloak Photo
By Nancy Weiss

“The mourning cloak overwinters as an adult and in our area, it is the main butterfly active that early in the spring.”

Plant Sale Preparations

BY: *Phil Stokes, Plant Sale Chairman*

Our fall potting for the Jefferson Chapter's Annual Native Plant Sale (Sun. Apr. 26, 1:00 PM at Ivy Ck. Natl. Area) moved into high gear starting at Pat's Willis's accommodating Louisa Co. home/greenhouse on both Oct. 13 and Nov. 10. The second date is necessary because our bare root order didn't ship when promised.

With about ten hard-working volunteers on each date we were able to pot and partially label a bountiful 1200+ of ordered bare root and plug plants consisting of 25 different species.

Emphasis remains on spring ephemerals such as VA blue bells, Mayapple, and wild geranium that have always sold well.

Species being offered for the first time in large quantities are fire pink, Virginia mountain mint, large blazing star, Culver's root, and woodland sunflower.

The first gathering's potting crew were rewarded with a selection of delicious soups Pat had prepared and treats members brought. Thank-you to all who helped with the potting and to Pat for hosting!

To aid us in our potting Beth Mizell created illustrated planting instruction sheets which were provided to planters. Unfortunately, they were not closely followed by all, we're still having green leaved rosettes as well as green rhizome sections buried beneath the potting soil.

We were pleased to find among the ordered bare root plants some species with unusually large root system, in particular the twinleaf and wild bergamot. To accommodate the ones with larger root systems we're now using 5" round pots. Potted items are being cared for until sale day by Will Shaw and Phil Stokes.

The chapter purchased a 10' x 15' animal pen enclosure to protect sale plants from deer and squirrels, which has been very effective.

The chapter has scheduled a final potting event on Fri. Apr. 3 starting at 1:30 at Fran Boninti's spectacular garden (2505 Holkham Dr. in Ivy area). Fran and Phil will raid their gardens for last minute sale additions for members to pot.

If you have well-developed divisions or volunteer native plants of sought-after species that could be sale ready in three weeks please bring them for potting. We also welcome member grown and potted plants that can be dropped off on sale weekend behind the Ivy Ck. Natural Area's barn. Be sure to provide species name for labeling.

The sale is being publicized by Emily Byers on Facebook and at the Feb. 6 Piedmont Landscape Assoc. Annual Seminar where the Jefferson Chapter's display table will have samples of sale plants and flyers.

A chapter display table is also being planned for the Mar. 20 Shenandoah Valley Plant Symposium.

On sale weekend help will be needed to finish labeling, set up tables, conduct the sale, and clean-up. Watch for e-mailed monthly announcements with volunteering info. Sale volunteers can purchase five plants before the sale begins.

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, and other information of interest to the chapter are welcome. Please submit them by email to Annemarie Abbondanzo at: annemarie@ecosystems-services.us with the subject line "Newsletter Submission".

Virginia Native Plant Society, Jefferson Chapter

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Conserving Wild Flowers
and Wild Places



We're on the Web!

<https://vnps.org/jefferson/>

Items of Interest From our Friends

Piedmont Master Gardeners' Garden Basics Free Workshops

Events are on the following Saturdays, 2:00-4:00 pm, Trinity Episcopal Church, 1118 Preston Avenue, Charlottesville:

February 15th: Soil, Mulch, and Composting

March 21st: Grow Your Own Vegetables

April 18th: Gardening with Annuals

May 16th: Gardening in Containers

All workshops are free of charge, but registration is required.

One-Day Botanical Painting Retreat

Friday, February 21st, 9:00 am-4:00 pm, Montfair Resort Farm \$150
<https://www.laracallgaster.com/classes/one-day-botanical-painting-retreat>

Conservation and Culture - A Necessary Convergence: An Evening with Dr. Drew Lanham Thursday, February 27th, 7:00-9:00 pm, Sweet Briar Chapel.

Piedmont Master Gardeners: Spring Lecture Series | Thursdays (3/5, 3/12, 3/19, 3/26)
7:00-8:30 | Room A, Albemarle County Office | piedmontmastergardeners.org/events

McIntire Botanical Garden's 3rd Annual Ian Robertson Legacy Lectureship Sunday, March 8, Farmington Country Club

Montpelier's Nature Exploration: Magnificent Trees of Montpelier | Saturday, March 14th, Montpelier Station