



Clayton-ee'-uh

Newsletter of the John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

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Claytonia virginica

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Botanical Latin 101

At our March 19 chapter meeting, plant taxonomist Donna Ware and chapter member Lee Bristow combined forces to provide a workshop on the origins, pronunciation and meaning of the scientific names for our native plants, which incorporate Latin and Greek words and occasionally some Native American ones. Lee explained that botanical Latin is static and has not evolved as spoken Latin and Greek have (well, Latin hasn't changed much recently!).



Photo: Jan Newton

Our speakers, Lee Bristow and Donna Ware

An example of this nomenclature is the scientific name of a **rhododendron** familiar to most of us, identified by the **genus** to which it is assigned, *Rhododendron* (from the Greek words *rhodos*, "rose", and *dendron*, "tree"—a reference to its flowers and large size); and **specific epithet** (its species), *catawbiense* (named after the Catawba Native American tribe). Another example is the **scarlet oak**, *Quercus* (Latin for oak) *coccinea* (from the Latin word meaning deep red). Together the genus and species provide a unique plant identification, unlike a plant's common name, which may vary from locality to locality, and is sometimes used for entirely different plants!

Lee recommended two books he considers helpful for learning more about botanical names: *The Names of Plants*, by David Gledhill, and *Stearns Botanical Latin*.

Donna gave us the following basic guidelines for pronouncing Latin scientific names (which she hastens to say are not comprehensive):

- 1.) **Say all potential syllables:** *Silene* = si-lee-ne, *Cardamine* = car-dam-i-nee.
- 2.) **If the suffix of a specific epithet begins with an "a", accent it and say it as in "hay":** *serrulata* = ser-ru-lay-tuh; *virginiana* = vir-gin-i-ay-na; *americana* = a-mer-i-cay-na.
- 3.) **Say the family name suffix "-aceae" by accenting the first letter and saying the final "ae" as though it were "ee":** "ay-cee-ee" [not "ay-cee-uh"].
- 4.) **Pronounce "oi" as in "boy":** *thalictrioides* = thal-ik-tree-oy-dez; *medeoloides* = med-ee-o-loy-dez.
- 5.) **Pronounce "oe" as a long "e" at the beginning of a word:** *Oenoothera* = Ee-no-theer-uh and as "oe" at the end of a word: *Kalanchoe* = Ka-lan-ko-ee; *Leucothoe* = Loo-ko-tho-ee.
- 6.) **Pronounce "ch" as "k":** *Chionanthus* = kee-o-nan-thus; *Amelanchier* = Am-el-an-kee-er.
- 7.) **Don't disguise/distort the name of a person for whom a genus or species has been named:** *Halesia* = Hales-ee-uh, *Forsythia* = Forsyth-ee-uh, and [hold your hat!] *Claytonia* = Clayton-ee-uh! This recommendation (not a rule) in the Code of Botanical Nomenclature is generally ignored. However, perhaps you can have some fun tormenting your friends with it!
- 8.) **Most botanists today pronounce the "h" in herbarium (from the Latin herba, meaning plant or grass).** Either pronunciation is permissible, but the silent "h" was dropped from regular use in the early 19th century.
- 9.) **Imitate the pronunciation of those you know who have learned their pronunciation from professional botanists.** Theirs may not always be the preferred pronunciation, but it is more likely to be.

She also recommended the pronunciation guide for botanical names on *Fine Gardening's* website at www.finegardening.com.

The meeting drew a crowd of 50 people, and there were a number of requests for another workshop/meeting on the same topic to cover different plants...so stay tuned.

Louise Menges

President's Letter

Spring has arrived when the bloodroots, spring beauties, and marsh marigolds appear. Phillip Merritt has arranged a very active field trip agenda, going out twice monthly, including weekday mornings and afternoons as well as weekends. Phillip leads an outstanding plant walk, sharing his notebook with photos of the plants throughout the growing season, if only visible with a few leaves and buds on a walk. And the Flickr website is growing exponentially with his marvelous photographs (labeled!) of native plants in Williamsburg as well as other locations throughout the state. Many thanks, Phillip!

Donna Ware, Mary Hyde Berg, Pat Baldwin and Carolyn Will are also leading outstanding plant walks. We are fortunate to have five botanists who can identify a plant from a few leaves—thanks for sharing your knowledge with us! Many of our chapter members propagated and potted plant seedlings for our native plant sale on April 25th. Many thanks to our co-chairs, Lucile Kossodo and Joan Etchberger, for a **LOT** of work organizing and potting and preparing plants for sale.

Many talks have been given over the past two months on “Low Maintenance Gardening” (ie, with native plants!), to local groups: to Christopher Wren members, a group at the King of Glory church, residents at Colonial Heritage, members of Wellington Garden Club, and a few residents at Windsor Meade.

Additionally a display of “Drought Tolerant Plants” was on view at the Yorktown Horticultural Extravaganza, thanks to Charlotte Boudreau, Bev Holmberg and Louise Menges, who manned the table, and at the Waller Mill Park Earth Day, staffed by Mary Turnbull, Beth Chambers, Jan Newton and Lucile Kossodo.

Marie Minor, President of our sister chapter, Northern Neck, provides this thought:

“If we could get many people to just respect native plants, the attitude change would go a long way in protecting our wonderful botanical heritage. Even if you cannot find a public project to work on, don't despair. You can set an example for your neighbors by using native plants in your gardens and landscape. In this economically challenging time, you can emphasize the cost-savings in the use of native plants. They do not require a lot of fertilizer, and after they are established, do not require a lot of water.”

Outreach and education are major purposes for our chapter, and each of us can provide a lot of instruction by example.

Helen Hamilton

Congratulations, Helen!

Helen Hamilton is a 2008 winner in the Virginia Cooperative Extension's first annual volunteer recognition program. She was commended for her work to decrease the negative impacts of invasive species in Virginia, and especially for incorporating both education and stewardship in her efforts, and was also awarded a copy of *Remarkable Trees of Virginia*.

John Clayton Chapter, Holly Society award three full scholarships to Nature Camp



Isabella Downey



Gavin Baker



Summer Chambers

Two 5th graders from Williamsburg, Summer Chambers (Matthew Whaley) and Isabella Downey (home schooled), and Gavin Baker, a 6th grader from Hampton's Thomas Eaton Fundamental School, have received full scholarships to the Summer 2009 session of Nature Camp in Vesuvius, Virginia. These scholarships have been awarded by the John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society, together with the local chapter of The American Holly Society. Nature Camp emphasizes education in natural history and environmental studies in a setting of mountain forests and streams. Campers attend class daily, gaining 15 hours of instruction in one area of major interest, exposure to several other subject areas, and experience in report writing. All three awardees will include a course in botany among those they choose to take. Each applicant wrote an essay describing why he or she was interested in attending Nature Camp.

Summer Chambers noted that conservation is a “BIG” interest of hers, and that she hopes to use what she learns to help save the planet. Isabella Downing studies nature inside and outside a lot in her extra time and would love to share what she learns at camp with other kids. Gavin Baker believes that knowledge about nature is necessary for our survival, and he also looks forward to this opportunity to help prepare for high school and college classes. Each of these students will be invited to speak at a chapter membership meeting this fall to share some of their favorite camp experiences. For more information about Nature Camp visit www.naturecamp.net.

Donna Ware

Peninsula's big trees Feb. 28

Members of John Clayton Chapter and other hardy tree lovers met at the Virginia Living Museum on a chilly, drizzly Saturday morning to set out for looks at champion trees in Newport News and Hampton. Our tour, organized by Mary Hyde Berg, was led by "The Big Tree Guy", Byron Carmean. Nancy Ross Hugo, co-author of *Remarkable Trees of Virginia*, was among the tour members. A couple of the trees we saw were growing in the back yards of private homes, and others were on or near Hampton University's campus.

We started out with a visit to the state champion butternut (*Juglans cinerea*) on a beautiful site overlooking the Warwick River and Mulberry Island. Many of us had never seen a butternut, much less one this large! It is believed that this tree was planted in 1897.



Participants are dwarfed by the state champion butternut in Newport News.

Space doesn't permit including it here, but the Shenandoah Chapter provides an interesting plant profile of the butternut in their Feb. 2008 newsletter available online at www.vnps.org/chapters/shenandoah/Feb2008.pdf.

Our caravan then took us to the national champion swamp bay (*Persea palustris*), in a cozy neighborhood close to Shoe Lane in Newport News. The owner was surprised by the number of people who came to see the tree, and laughed a bit while taking a picture of us taking pictures of the tree!



We took a look at three trees on the campus of Hampton University. The first one was the famous Emancipation Oak; *The Tidewater Gardener* has a great posting about this tree. In the photo below, Byron Carmean measures the tree's canopy.



We also went to the Hampton National Cemetery to see an American holly (*Ilex opaca*). Although not the state champion, it is the biggest specimen with a single trunk, according to Byron.



On campus near the shores of Hampton Roads was an impressively large Japanese maple (*Acer palmatum*)—perhaps not a native, but well worth seeing!

The last tree we visited was the national co-champion dogwood (*Cornus florida*), in Hampton's Olde Wythe neighborhood. At first sight it might not seem a national champion, but you will find it in the National Register of Big Trees, where it tops the list at 153 points, as does another dogwood in Tennessee.



Louise Menges
(but almost entirely borrowed from Phillip Merritt's *How it Grows* blog!)

Horticultural Extravaganza

Along with Helen Hamilton, Louise Menges and Bev Holmberg, Charlotte Boudreau (below) represented the John Clayton Chapter at the Horticultural Extravaganza held at York High School on March 14, where our display featured drought-tolerant native plants.



W&M Wildlife Refuge walk March 14



Another cold, wet day, evidently enough to keep most wildflower enthusiasts inside, but not Dorothy Whitfield, pictured here examining blooming leatherwood (*Dirca palustris*).

You can read Phillip's descriptions and see photos of the plants they saw that day at www.howitgrows.com.

New Quarter Park walk March 29



Now, the day of this walk was lovely and the event well-attended. The participants had looks at a number of wild plants, among them rattlesnake plantain (*Goodyera pubescens*), a native orchid.

Visit www.howitgrows.com for a complete description and many more photos of this walk's discoveries.

Longhill Swamp walk April 2

Though no account of this walk was submitted for the newsletter, here is a lovely photo from Jan Newton of one of the plants participants saw that day.



Dwarf trillium (*Trillium pusilla*)



Grafton Ponds April 15

Vernal ponds are temporary pools of water which form in depressions after snow melt and spring rains (hence the name *vernal*, which is derived from the Latin word for spring). In most years, they dry up during the summer.

This 375-acre preserve of woodlands and vernal ponds is managed by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation.

One of the vernal ponds for which Grafton Ponds is named

Our walk was led by the Department's Rebecca Wilson and Darrin Loomis, with the assistance of Steve Living of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. We met at a gated entrance and drove into the preserve to our starting place perhaps a half-mile further in.

There is a long-abandoned section of road which traverses this tract (it may be an old portion of Richneck Road), but most of our walking was on unimproved trails and through the woods surrounding the many ponds we visited. This was yet another damp, chilly day, but the rain managed to hold off until the walk was over.

Walking along the roadside and trails, we saw pussytoes (*Antennaria sp.*), cypress swamp sedge (*Carex jooi*), highbush blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum*), azure bluet (*Houstonia caerulea*), pond spice (*Litsea aestivalis*), many lichens and small fungi, ferns, and some very interesting fauna!



Highbush blueberry



Marbled salamander (a silver and black fellow)

Steve Living wanted to show us a Mabee's salamander, and he overturned many a dead log in his search! He was successful, and in addition found marbled salamanders and a tiny redback salamander. The leaf litter also yielded a variety of "bugs"—beetles, true bugs and millipedes (to name just a few I remember).

All photos are by Phillip Merritt, who took many pictures of plants and critters during this walk. Look for them in the Photo Gallery on our website at www.claytonvnps.org.

Louise Menges

Report from the Flora of Virginia Project Foundation

Chris Ludwig, President of the FOVP Foundation and co-author of this first Flora of Virginia reported to the Virginia Native Plant Society Board on February 27 that he is optimistic the 2012 publishing date will be met. Despite some reduction of funding due to current financial stress in Virginia, generous donations have been received to complete just about half of the copy preparation to date. Anticipated potential funds from both continuing donors and as-yet-untapped donation sources lead the Board to believe that the yearly budget can be met. (Nicky Staunton, FOVP Director-VNPS)

Flora of Virginia donors giving \$1,000 or more to the Flora of Virginia Project will be listed in the Flora, and for a donation of \$4,000 or more, family sponsorships are available. Since John Clayton Chapter has donated a total of \$10,000, we are eligible to sponsor two families. The JCC Board of Directors immediately chose the *Portulacaceae*, which includes our chapter flora insignia *Claytonia virginica*.

A subcommittee of Donna Ware, Pat Baldwin, and Mary Hyde Berg subsequently agreed on the *Gentianaceae* as our chapter's second family. It gives us commemoration of another Colonial botanist, Mark Catesby, who lived in Williamsburg, in the name of the drop-dead-gorgeous *Gentiana catesbaei*, plus the genus *Bartonia* named for Philadelphia botanist Benjamin Smith Barton who botanized in Virginia and once aspired to revise *Flora Virginica*. So that gives us some more historical connection, not to mention seven fascinating genera.



Gentiana catesbaei
(from Smithsonian's Dept. of Botany website)

Among the 14 VNPS Chapters, John Clayton Chapter has made the most generous donation to the Flora. We are extremely fortunate that our own Donna Ware, JCC Vice President, is also a member of the Flora of Virginia Board. In addition to providing our chapter with outstanding programs during her tenure on the JCC Board, Donna's botanical contributions across the state of Virginia are immeasurable, as is her leadership in the Williamsburg Botanical Garden. Thanks, Donna! We so appreciate all you do for native plants in Virginia!

Helen Hamilton

The color purple

In early spring, fields and roadsides are blanketed with a haze of purple, from native and non-native wildflowers. In old fields and farmlands Purple Dead Nettle (*Lamium purpureum*) and Henbit (*Lamium amplexicaule*) are the first signs of spring. These two non-natives can be distinguished by the spacing of the flowers and the leaf character.



Photo: Louise Menges

Purple dead nettle

The uppermost leaves of henbit clasp the stem while most leaves of purple dead nettle are stalked and have a purplish tinge; the leaves of both plants have blunt teeth.

Along roadsides and disturbed ground, Dwarf Bluets create a splash of pale blue. A closer look reveals a tiny ground-



Photo: Helen Hamilton

A mass of dwarf bluets

hugging plant, its four purple-violet petals, no more than ¼ inch across, with a reddish-orange center. The flowers grow out of opposite leaves, also very small, ½ inch long.

Dwarf Bluet is the first of three bluets to appear in this area. Two similar perennial species grow naturally in the coastal plain in Virginia: Bluets, *Houstonia caerulea*, have light blue flowers centered with a yellow eye; and Woodland bluets, *Houstonia purpurea*, have light blue flowers with a light center cluster at the ends of stems up to 18 inches tall. These two species bloom later than dwarf bluet, and are found in woodland habitats, not roadsides and disturbed soils.



Photo: Helen Hamilton

Field pansy blossoms

Field pansies (*Viola bicolor*) appear alongside Dwarf Bluets, slightly larger, with five petals blue-white and cream-colored, often with yellow markings. Field pansy is related to the European pansy, *Viola tricolor* (flowers purple-blue, yellow and white), and was once thought to be an American variety of the Eurasian *Viola kitaibeliana*, but has more recently been recognized as the only native American pansy.

Field pansies are most commonly known as Johnny-jump-ups, so named for the plant's quick growth in the spring. The alternate leaves are spoon-shaped; paired stipules grow alongside the leaf and are deeply toothed. Tolerating

soils ranging from sandy to clay to limestone, Field Pansy is found in most of eastern U.S. except the extreme north. This species has been used to create some of the pansy cultivars sold in nurseries as annual garden plants.

Then the violets—the deep blue Common Violet (*Viola papilionacea*) is common in meadows and moist woods, often popping up in local gardens from wind-borne seeds or the bird distribution



The lovely common blue violet (*Viola papilionacea*)



Confederate violet

network. The Confederate Violet is a pale, variegated form of this species. Other native violets appearing in woods, meadows and clearings are Woolly Blue Violet (*Viola sororia*), Marsh Blue Violet (*Viola cucullata*), Lance-leaved Violet (*Viola lanceolata*) and Bird's-foot Violet (*Viola pedata*).

Blooming all over fields, meadows, roadsides and disturbed land, these blue-purple plants are familiar, welcome signs of spring.



Bird's foot violet (*Viola pedata*)

Helen Hamilton

A successful 2009 Plant Sale!



Joan Etchberger, Cynthia Long and Dorothy Geyer potted up and labeled plants at one of three potting parties held in preparation for this year's sale.

A big **Thank You!** to John Clayton Chapter members who grew, dug, divided and potted hundreds of plants for our April 25 sale, and to all those who provided their expertise and labor on the day of the sale. We are especially appreciative of the efforts and guidance of Lucile Kossodo and Joan Etchberger, our plant sale chairs.

Chicago bans 14 plants to protect local flora

The City of Chicago has banned 14 plants as "invasive species" that threaten native plant life.

These 14 plants will join the list of restricted flora and fauna established in Chicago's Invasive Species Regulations of May 2007.

"Invasive species cause great harm to our environment," said Kay Havens, director of plant science and conservation at the Chicago Botanic Garden. "And when they have been demonstrated to do so in our region, regulation becomes necessary."

According to the agency, invasive plants are those that are not prevalent in an area, but threaten to alter the native ecology and overrun

- Chocolate Vine
Akebia quinata
- Elegans Porcelain Berry Vine
Ampelopsis brevipedunculata
- Wild Chervil
Anthriscus sylvestris
- Oriental Bittersweet
Celastrus orbiculatus
- Japanese Hops
Humulus japonicus
- Lyme Grass
Leymus arenarius
- Privet
Ligustrum spp.
- Amur Silver Grass
Miscanthus sacchariflorus
- Princess Tree
Paulownia tomentosa
- Amur Corktree
Phellodendron amurense
- Japanese Corktree
Phellodendron japonica
- Japanese Knotweed
Polygonum cuspidatum
- Sawtooth Oak
Quercus acutissima
- Lesser Celandine
Ranunculus ficaria

native species in competition for resources.

"There have been cases in the past where other plants from different areas of the world have been major pests," said Steve Meyer, a horticulturalist at the Lincoln Park Conservatory. "They compete for food, light and water." Global climate change makes an ecosystem particularly vulnerable to invasive species because new flora could be better suited to Chicago's milder winters and hotter summers.

"Many invasive species thrive under disturbance," said Havens "They do better under global climate change because ecosystems become unstable."

Businesses caught selling invasive species in Chicago face a fine of between \$1000 and \$5000, while a private grower can be charged between \$100 and \$500.

Excerpted from *Medill Reports* (written and produced by graduate journalism students at Northwestern University's Medill school) and contributed by **Kathi Mestayer**

Musings from Mary Hyde Berg



Photo: Phillip Merritt

The mystery of the tripetalas

There is, so far as I can discover, **one** small but growing population of *Magnolia tripetalata* in Gloucester. In 1993, Dr. Donna Ware led me to the place where probably fewer than twenty grew along part of a hillside. With her wonderful smile, she said, “Look up!”

There are many now, some a thousand or more feet from the largest. One reasons that they must have come from another county, and not long ago, but where, and how?

Tripetalas occur in Williamsburg’s calcareous slopes, and probably nearer spots, but I surmise the founding seed crossed the York River in the “cargo bay” of a bird.

What do *you* think?

No hypothesis is needed to see the improbable stems, huge leaves and lovely white blossoms. If the May 2 date is a conflict for you, call for a day that suits. No one should miss these lovely trees!

“Who planted all these trees, Ed?”

... asked a visiting merchant seaman from the midwest, after a long drive in Gloucester County.

Restoration or replenishment? Ninety years ago the woods at Summerfield were timbered for lumber to build the present house. When I was a child, my family’s Sunday walk was through our not-much woods, across the creek to neighbor’s woods that were much, much richer, with wildflowers and large trees. Gradually, our trees gained years and grandeur, and flowering shrubs and herbs increased in number, size and diversity.

Thirty years later the beautiful woods across the creek were timbered. Birds, beasts and wind returned the gift of nuts and seeds, and with the surviving roots and seed stock both tracts have, with time, regenerated.

How fortunate we are to live in a climate so nurturing and so often worked as small tracts... fortunate, too, that sometimes time is kind.

Membership Form for John Clayton Chapter, VNPS

(Place checks in the boxes below next to your selections.)

I am a **new member** of the John Clayton Chapter **renewing member** of the John Clayton Chapter

Name		
Address		
City	State	Zip
email	Phone	

Membership dues

Individual (\$30) Family (\$40) Patron (\$50) Sustaining (\$100) Life (\$500)

Student (\$15) Associate (\$40) —for groups who designate one person as delegate

I wish to make an additional contribution in the amount of \$ to John Clayton Chapter to VNPS

This is a gift membership; please include a card with my name as donor.

I have time a little time no time to help with activities.

I do not wish to be listed in a chapter directory.

Please Note: John Clayton Chapter does not distribute any of our membership information to other organizations.

It is used only by the officers and chairpersons of our chapter.

Make your check payable to **VNPS** and mail to: VNPS Membership Chair
400 Blandy Farm Lane, Unit 2
Boyce, VA 22610

Calendar

- Saturday, May 2**  **10:00 am: Gloucester Tripetala Site** See *Magnolia tripetala* in bloom, maidenhair fern, state champion mockernut hickory.
To register, email Phillip at phillipmerritt@hotmail.com or call him at 757/604/1026.
- Saturday, May 9** **10:00 am: York River State Park** Helen Hamilton will lead this walk along marshes flowing into the York River, which should yield mountain laurel, partridge berry, and trailing arbutus, and is fairly rugged with some hills. To get to York River State Park, take the Croaker exit off of I-64. After about 0.9 mile turn right on Riverview Road and continue about 1.6 miles, then turn left on York River Park Road. Meet in front of the visitor's center (There is a park entrance fee of \$3 so carpooling is recommended).
For more info, contact Helen Hamilton at 757/564-4994.
- Thursday, May 21** **5:00 pm: John Clayton Chapter annual picnic at New Quarter Park** (near the Queens Lake area of York County). A short walk will precede the potluck picnic and Chapter meeting. Mountain laurel is expected to be in bloom. Please bring a dish to share.
For more info visit www.claytonvnps.org or call 757/566-3646.
- Saturday, June 6** **4:00 pm: Take a tour of two Williamsburg gardens** belonging to Phillip Merritt and Mary Turnbull, with lots of native plants. Refreshments will be served after the tour.
Space is limited so please call 757/ 604-1026 to register.
- Saturday, June 20** **10:00 am:** Take a walk with Phillip along the river at **Chickahominy Park.** *Call 757/ 604-1026.*

Nine new members!

We welcome **Lee Bristow**, **Gary Driscole**, **Mary Eggers**, **Frances Knight**, **Susan Powell** and **Monica Schaffler**, all of Williamsburg; **Mary Greene** of Gloucester; **Chris Gwaltney** of Newport News and **Randi Trestrail** of Poquoson.