Claytonia

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

Volume 26, Number 4 *July-August 2010*

July 15 meeting at the Yorktown Public Library: *The Calcareous Endeavor!*

Jerre Johnson lays the walls for the habitat.

Donna Ware explains mountain disjuncts at the display.

Donna Ware, Jerre Johnson and Helen Hamilton will combine efforts to describe to us the work involved in planning and installing the calcareous ravine display at the Williamsnurg Botanical Garden in Freedom Park. The display is now home to a selection of "mountain disjunct" plant species found growing locally in scattered ravines where soils are more alkaline than the typically acid soil of this area. These alkaline soils are the result of calcium carbonate leached from fossils of sea shells deposited in the shallow prehistoric seas which covered the area millions of years ago. And why are populations of mountain plants like wild coffee, alternate leaf dogwood and American bellflower established in habitats so far from the mountains? Our speakers will explain this and much more!

Join us at 7 pm at the Yorktown Public Library at Route 17 and Battle Road.

From the President: *Where can they go?*

In our over-developed, over-landscaped, paved-over-with-asphalt shopping centers, where is the space for the birds, and butterflies? We all have a responsibility to provide a landscape that encourages wildlife.

No space is too small. Recently an article in the Virginia Gazette featured a couple who have created a wildlife habitat, certified by the National Wildlife Federation, on their 0.35 acre house lot. The Williamsburg Botanical Garden maintains a two-acre site in Freedom Park, where most of the plants are native to coastal Virginia. Throughout the day, pollinating insects cover the blossoms and many bird species feed on the seeds in the meadow and find food among the wide assortment of insects the garden supports. As workers groom and cut back overgrown plants, the consideration is always: "does this plant support insects, feed birds, offer cover?"

If the plant is not native, it's taking up space needed by native plants that feed our native insects that feed our birds. If you have not read Doug Tallamy's book *Bringing Nature Home*, please get a copy. I found it to be life-changing. **Helen Hamilton**

Welcome to eight new members!

We are pleased to welcome James Cole from Newport News, and Tim Costelloe, Madilyn Larkin, Hallie Nelson, Kendra Swann, Carol Talbot (welcome back, Carol!), Karen Whitehead and Gale Roberts, all from Williamsburg.

May 20 Chapter meeting

The partnership of insects and native plants was the focus of Dr. Deborah Waller's presentation at the May 20 chapter meeting in the Yorktown Public Library. She is an Associate Professor of Biological Sciences at ODU, and shared some of her insights gleaned from her research on insect-plant interactions: pollinators (bees, butterflies, skippers and hummingbird moths), herbivores (considered plant pests by gardeners, including mites, scale, and insects that suck, chew, cut or roll leaves, or cause galls), soil modifiers (termites, beetles and ants), and insects that help disperse and protect the seeds of native plants by burying in nests or away from predators or underground in fire-prone areas.

Prof. Waller showed wonderful slides of the insects and plants, including some unique to specific species, like the Pixie Moss Moth and the Pitcher Plant Moth. She also mentioned insects who are guardians of plants and feed on the herbivores that feed on plants, including spiders, ladybug beetles, predatory flies, parasitic wasps and ants that tend aphids. Her love for insects was clearly conveyed, and we all came away with more respect for our native insects and renewed concern for preserving their habitat in our native plant species. **Susan Voigt**

May and June's field trips

...to Cherry Orchard Bog May 23

Phillip Merritt, Seig Kopinitz and Pat Baldwin traveled to Cherry Orchard Bog Natural Area Preserve, south of the James, on the border between Prince George and Sussex Counties. As Phillip says on his blog… "It's home to several seeps and springs which flow through the gently rolling terrain. The low ph/ low nutrient water creates habitat for several uncommon plants including bog buttons, large flowered camas, and white fringed orchids".

Phillip took this photo as Pat examined a blunt-leaved milkweed bloom *(Asclepias amplexicaulis)* and Seig got a shot.

A closeup of a blunt-leaved milkweed bloom (left) and the blunt, wavy leaves for which it is named (right)

Photos: Phiullip Merritt

This was Phillip's second visit to the site this Spring; visit www.howit grows.com and click on "Cherry Orchard Bog" under "Past Field Trips" in the right-hand sidebar to see Phillip's photos and read his commentary.

Kidney-leaf rosinweed *(Silphium compositum)*. As Phillip says in his blog, with its red veins and stalks, it does look a little like Swiss chard!

...to Newport News Park May 29

About a dozen field trippers joined Phillip Merritt for a plant walk along Newport News Park's wooded trails and boardwalks. (According to Wikipedia, Newport News Park is one of the largest city parks in the United States.) The birders among us brought their binoculars along and we did a little birding, too.

The first sighting of the day along the trail was a cluster of indian pipes *(Monotropa uniflora)*, a saprophytic plant with no chlorophyll (all parts are snow white), which gets its nourishment from decayed organic material through a relationship with fungi associated with its roots. As we continued, Phillip pointed out spotted wintergreen *(Chimaphila maculata)* coming into bloom, with a pair of as yet unopened downturned white flowers at the top of each stalk like tiny street lamps, hyssop skullcap *(Scutellaria integrifolia)*, and rattlesnake weed *(Hieracium venosum)*. Also in the understory we identified numerous colonies of pawpaw *(Asimina triloba)* saplings along the paths, as well as persimmon, green ash, tag alder and American hornbeam.

From boardwalks crossing the freshwater marshes of the reservoir we were able to see blooming lizard's tail

(Saururus cernuus); swamp dogwood *(Cornus foemina)* in bloom, with wood vamp *(Decumaria barbara L.)*, a vining member of the hydrangea family, climbing over it; swamp smartweed *(Polygonum coccineum)*, some plants with dodder *(Cuscuta gronovii)*, a parasitic vine, draped over and coiled around their stems; lots of arrow arums *(Peltandra virginica)*; and swamp loosestrife or water willow *(Decodon verticillatus)*. There were many swamp rose *(Rosa palustris)* bushes, with their lovely single pink blooms, growing in the shallows on either side of the boardwalks.


Photo: Phillip Merritt

As for birds, we identified an orchard oriole, an osprey being harassed by a crow (what a suprise!), a redheaded woodpecker, a prothonotary warbler and a huge great blue heron quite near us (no binoculars needed here!).

Seig Kopinitz was also photographing insects, and we were all excited to see a gorgeous luna moth *(Actias luna)* near the ground on the edge of our path. It appeared to have recently emerged from its cocoon and was slowly expanding and drying its wings, allowing us up-close views and great opportunities for photos. **Louise Menges**


Photo: Shirley Devan

You can see all of Phillip's photos of this field trip at www.flickr.com/photos/claytonsnatives/. Look for "Newport News Park Spring 2010" in the righthand sidebar.

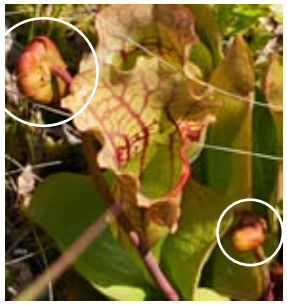
And Seig's photos of plants (and a lot of critters) are at http://www.flickr.com/photos/askop/sets (NPS Walk 5/29/2010).

...to Joseph Pines Preserve on June 5

Pitcher Plants—what sort of picture does your brain conjure? I see these stately plants with their tubes standing tall with insects buzzing around and just falling in the tubes. To have an opportunity to see masses of them *in situ* sounded like a great trip. It was!


Yellow pitcher plant flowers(left) were nestled between the tall charteuse pitchers (right).
Photos: Phillip Merritt

There were approximately 35–45 guests of the preserve eager to see not only the pitcher plants (yellow *Sarracenia flava* and purple *Sarracenia purpurea*), but also native longleaf pines *(Pinus palustris)*. Phil Sheridan was our guide for the walk along a bush-hogged path that had been cleared. Because of the restoration work in progress, this area is not often open to the public.


The more compact purple pitcher plants had flowers (circled) on stalks about as tall as the colorfully veined and ruffled pitchers.
Photo: Seig Kopinitz

Phil provided both historical and current information about the ongoing program at the preserve. The native pines were extensively used by early settlers for turpentine, tar and pitch as well as lumbering. Over time, in most areas of Virginia, loblolly pines and hardwood trees replaced longleaf pines. Longleaf pine is resistant to fire, but needs periodic burns to survive; the burning keeps competing trees and shrubs in check and lowers the soil nutrients, all of which helps the pines. Interestingly, the pitcher plants evolved in this same low nutrient soil.


This longleaf pine sapling has survived at least one burnoff—look at its blackened trunk!
Photo: Louise Menges

This land has been used for lumbering as well as farming. One of the interesting "artifacts" resulting from a lumbering period of the land is a sawdust pile dating from 1937. What facts will this pile reveal? More research is needed.

A lack of stumps from the old logging operations was observed. This was puzzling, since the stumps are very resinous and slow to decay, but Phil told us that Continental Can Company ground up the stumps for dynamite production, and only one lone stump remains, possibly because of its location.


A solitary longleaf pine stump, from a tree probably cut more than 70 years ago, slowly weathers away.
Photo: Phillip Merritt

Phil reminded us that all of the longleaf restoration is done with grants and donations. The workers and volunteers do prescribed burns, logging or chipping out hardwood. They search for longleaf pine trees, gather the pinecones, plant the seeds and raise the seedlings—there is no big company backing this operation.

ODU grad student John McCleod explains the strata in a fresh core sample from a bog in the Preserve. *Photo: Phillip Merritt*

A graduate student from Old Dominion University who is working on the hydrology and geology of the preserve spoke to us about his research. In one bog there is a small rise in the land, but the results of water flowing over that small rise are very large. He showed us a core sample taken from the bog, containing four feet of silt that has accumulated over the original bog. Phil has even found an intact carrot seed in the original layer. With more research, including carbon dating, what else will the bog reveal?

There are many questions about longleaf pines and pitcher plants and much research still to be done. This trip provided us a window on the history and the current work under way. Many thanks to Helen Hamilton for arranging this field trip. **Alice Kopinitz**

Jan Newton takes photos to accompany an article she has written about this field trip for our website.

Visit www.claytonvnps.org. and click on "Chapter News" in the left-hand sidebar to read Jan's account. *Photo: Phillip Merritt*

Terri Cuthriell also contributed an article about the Joseph Pines Preserve and the Meadowview Biological Research Station's efforts there, which the Editor of the *VNPS Bulletin* has accepted for publication—look for it in an upcoming issue!

Phillip has posted his photos of the participants and what we saw that day on www.flickr.com/photos/claytonsnatives/; look for "Joseph Pines Preserve" in the righthand sidebar.

From Cynthia...

Please remember to save seeds for the quail habitat, to be planted in the fall. We especially need warm season native grasses. **Cynthia Long**

Wildflower Spots for June and July

(Published in the Gloucester-Mathews Gazette Journal)

June: Lizard's tail *(Saururus cernuus)*

These white nodding spikes of tiny, fragrant flowers growing in wet places are instantly recognizable. The heart-shaped leaves grow beneath a flower spike on stems 2–4 feet high. The foliage when crushed has a pleasant aroma like sassafras.

Found in coastal and piedmont regions of Virginia, and most states of eastern U.S. and Canada, Lizard's Tail requires wet soil and partial shade, and is common in swamps, shaded marshes and stream margins. The plant can tolerate saturated soils with up to 4 inches of water.

Lizard's Tail is a great spreading groundcover for moist soils, shallow water, and containers. The plant is well-suited for wetland gardens, bogs or pond areas, and is deer resistant. Blooming June-September, it will colonize large areas. It is both wind- and insect-pollinated.

The young shoots and leaves provide forage for cattle and sheep, but when overeaten this plant may be toxic, and should not be ingested by humans. The flowers attract birds, especially wood ducks.

From the Greek *sauros* (lizard) and *oura* (tail), both the common name and the genus name refer to the long, finger-like spike of flowers that appear during the summer months.

Lizard's tail contains several novel compounds with sedative effects. American Indians used a tea from the whole plant for general illnesses, and the root as a poultice for wounds and inflammations. **Helen Hamilton**

July: Flowering spurge *(Euphorbia corollata)*

Flowering Spurge is distinctive, with a whorl of bright green leaves surrounding the stem where several flowering stalks branch off. The stems grow erect to 3 feet, forming large, loose, long-lasting, flat-topped clusters of flowers. What

appears to be a single flower with five white petals is actually a cluster of flowers with one pistillate flower (which consists solely of one stalked ovary) and several staminate flowers (each of which consists solely of one stamen). The five white "petals" are lobes on the margin of the cup that contains the cluster of unisexual flowers.

The linear leaves are hairless, 2–3 inches long and ½ inch wide with smooth margins. They occur along the stem alternately except at the top of the plant where the leaves form whorls of three beneath the flowers. When broken, the stems produce a milky sap.

Preferring full sun, this plant will tolerate almost any kind of soil, and poor soil is actually preferred because of the reduction in competition from other plants. Flowering Spurge is drought resistant and not subject to diseases.

This native perennial grows in dry fields and open woods, and is abundant in western prairies. Found in every county in Virginia, the plant ranges from Massachusetts and New Hampshire to Minnesota, and south to Florida and Texas, blooming from June through October.

The flowers attract wasps, flies, and bees. Ants may help distribute some of the seeds because of a small edible appendage at their base. Each flower produces 3 seeds which are usually ejected mechanically. The seeds are popular with wild turkey, bobwhite and mourning dove. Flowering Spurge is rarely eaten by mammalian herbivores because of the toxic white latex in the leaves and stems, which can kill cattle.

The common name "spurge" comes from the Latin expurgare (to purge)—the plant has been used as a strong laxative, but large doses can be poisonous. The milky sap may cause blistering on the skin. **Helen Hamilton**

VLM Mother's Day Event

Helen received a nice note of appreciation for our participation in the Virginia Living Museum's Mother's Day event in May:

Dear Helen,

Thank you for taking your time on a special day and sharing your talents, smiles & messages with a very appreciative audience. I saw many people engaged with your folks and display and interested in learning more about the John Clayton Chapter and the importance of native plants. The day would not have been as delightful without you and your group being here. I've attached some pictures for you.

Please let me know if you have any suggestions or ideas for the future events here.

Have a wonderful and prosperous summer,
Rock
Terry "Rock" Moeslein
Assistant Education Director/Interpretive Naturalist
Virginia Living Museum

Terri Cuthriell, Helen Hamilton and Jan Newton were among the John Clayton members staffing our booth.

At the Williamsburg Botanical Garden on Saturday, August 28, 10–11 am:

Continuing with our 3-part program series at the Williamsburg Botanical Garden in Freedom Park (intersection of Centerville and Longhill Roads) on "Flying with Monarchs", experienced leaders will show how to create a monarch waystation. Participants will learn how to plant a monarch butterfly garden and obtain certification by the Monarch Watch. The program is free and open to the public, and of special interest to children. Rain Date Saturday, Sept 4.

Contact Programs Chair Barb Dunbar for information: 757 880-8875, twotac@cox.net.

Helen Hamilton

Native plants are rescued!

Early this spring Lise Schioler of the National Institute of Aerospace in Hampton alerted the Virginia Native Plant Society about the planned construction of a new building on adjacent property. The Williamsburg Wildflower Rescue Team sprang into action, and Carolyn and Ralph Will, with Helen Hamilton, walked the site with Lise where Carolyn identified many interesting native plants (often from only two small leaves!) that should be rescued.

With the necessary permissions obtained from the Institute, the first rescue was held on June 2. Seven hearty plant rescuers entered the woods at 100 Exploration Way in Hampton, fortified with bug spray, and shovels in hand —Cortney Langley, Alice and Seig Kopinitz, Jan Newton, Ralph and Carolyn Will, and Lise Schioler. Carolyn Will functioned as the team leader, outlining rescue rules and procedures, pointing out plants to be rescued, determining rescue priority, and assigning rescue tasks. In just four hours, the following plants had been dug and loaded into the Newton and Will vehicles:

Herbaceous plants		
1	Blue Wood Sedge	*Carex flaccosperma*
10	Goldenrods	*Solidago sp.*
3	Soft Rush	*Juncus effusus*
12	Jack-in-the-Pulpit	*Arisaema triphyllum*
Shrubs and Trees		
5	Hearts-a-Burstin'	*Euonymus americanus*
2	High-bush blueberry	*Vaccinium sp.*
15	Spicebush	*Lindera benzoin*
Vines		
4	Coral Honeysuckle	*Lonicera sempervirens*
2	Yellow Carolina Jessamine	*Gelsemium sempervirens*
Ferns		
3	Netted Chain	*Woodwardia areolata*
3	Sensitive	*Onoclea sensibilis*
12	Southern Lady	*Athyrium asplenioides*
9	Cinnamon	*Osmunda cinnamomea*
10	Royal	*Osmunda regalis*

Jack-in-the-Pulpit
Photo: Phillip Merritt

Hearts-a-Burstin'
Photo: Phillip Merritt

Yellow Carolina Jessamine
Photo: Louise Menges

Cinnamon Fern
Photo: Phillip Merritt

The plants are being relocated to the Williamsburg Botanical Garden, William and Mary Wildflower Refuge, Stonehouse Elementary School Habitat, and York River State Park.

Another plant rescue at the Aerospace Institute site was held on Saturday, June 19th at 10:00 AM. The goal of this rescue was to dig plants which will be held in pots/beds until the Institute building is completed. The plants will then be returned and used for landscaping the site, especially in the wooded buffers between the roads and the building.

On July 10 the Hampton Roads Master Gardeners will dig the remaining plants and then install them at Sandy Bottom Park and Bluebird Gap Farm.

A special thanks is due to Lise Schioler for recognizing the need to rescued plants about to be destroyed by building. And thanks to all the rescuers for a job well done!

If you are interested in joining the rescue team, contact Carolyn Will at 565-0306 or *c.will@juno.com*.

Carolyn Will

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

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

Work days at the Ellipse Garden

Usually every Friday morning throughout the year, a small group of dedicated workers are grooming and weeding and watering plants in the Ellipse Garden at Freedom Park. One of the regulars is JCC Chapter member Dorothy Whitfield, who recently passed her 90th birthday! Other chapter members who are dedicated to enhancing this garden are Donna Ware, who loves the Wetlands; Gary Driscole, maintaining the Herb Garden and the Patio; and Carolyn and Ralph Will, who work in the Pine Woodlands and Native Garden.

Dorothy Whitfield at work.
Photo: Helen Hamilton

Ralph Will and Donna Ware water plants placed in the wall surrounding the calcareous ravine display.
Photo: Helen Hamilton

With no water on site when the Williamsburg Botanical Garden started construction of the Ellipse Garden in 2005, the decision was made to use native plants. This summer, the Garden has accessed the water line running through Freedom Park to the new schools on Jolly Pond Road, and at last, hoses have replaced the 5-gallon buckets workers have carried to water new installations. Horticulture Chair Joanne Chapman and her husband have set up sprinkling towers, and hoses are regularly used by the work crews.

Nonetheless, this garden remains a demonstration of plants that survive our environment—over 80% are native coastal Virginia plants. They will survive a drought, but of course are looking much better with a little water now and then. Our chapter has been responsible for constructing and installing the plant labels, which list the common name, scientific name, and usually the notation "Va Native."

Come on out and join these folks — you will learn a LOT about plants and gardening from these experts! Call 564-4494 for confirmation of work days.

Helen Hamilton

Calendar (…check our website, too.)

Saturday, July 10	**10 am: Native plant rescue at the Aerospace Institute, Hampton,** led by Ralph and Carolyn Will. (See Page 6 for details.) *If you are interested in joining the rescue team, contact Carolyn Will at 565-0306 or c.will@juno.com.*
Thursday, July 15	**7 pm: John Clayton Chapter meeting at Yorktown Library.** (See Page 1.) *Yorktown Public Library at Route 17 and Battle Road.*
Sunday, August 8	**1 pm: Plant walk at the State Arboretum of Virginia near Boyce, VA.** VNPS President Sally Anderson will lead a walk through a 30-acre meadow at the Arboretum. Bring friends and family and a picnic lunch (the walk will follow lunch and is free). *To RSVP and for more details, please contact Sally at rccsca@comcast.net.*
Wednesday, August 11	**1 pm: Northern Neck Chapter Field Outing to historic Menokin**. Ted Munns lectures on how and why to replace non native invasive plants with native plants. Free. *For more information please contact Pam Narney at pnarney@menokin.org.*
Saturday, August 28	10–11am: "Flying with Monarchs" at Williamsburg Botanical Garden (see Page 5). *Contact Barb Dunbar for info at 757/880-8875 or twotac@cox.net.*