



Claytonia

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

Volume 26, Number 2

March-April 2010

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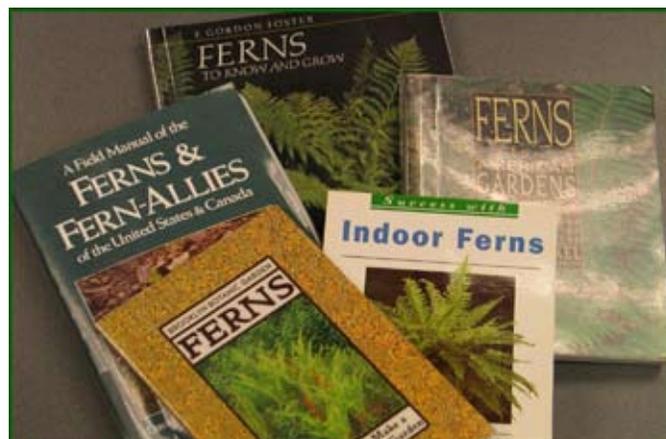
Landscaping with ferns is the topic at our March 18 meeting



Our speaker at the March meeting will be **Jim Orband**, who has served as an Extension Agent in York County since 1978. His knowledge and experience in horticulture on the Peninsula are shared with citizens through news articles, classes, and educational opportunities, as well as one-on-one, and he administers an extensive horticultural program with an army of efficient volunteers. With both a B.S. and M.S. in Horticulture from Virginia Tech, Jim has been gardening since a young age, and continues to

enjoy it. Jim and his wife live in Yorktown.

Jim will talk about using native ferns in landscaping, with an emphasis on those suited to our hardiness zone. Ferns are very adaptable, and can be used as specimen plants as well as understory plants in the landscape. Some ferns are deciduous, while others are evergreen, with a palette of frond color that is very appealing in the garden. He recommends these books about ferns to anyone interested in their culture:



A Field Manual of the Ferns and Fern-Allies of the United States and Canada, David B. Lellinger, Smithsonian Institute, 1985.

Ferns—Wild Things Make a Comeback in the Garden, C. Colston Burrell, Brooklyn Botanical Garden, 1995.

Ferns for American Gardens, John Mickel, Macmillan Publishing Company, 1994.

Ferns to Know and Grow, F. Gordon Foster, Timber Press, Inc. 1984.

Success with Indoor Ferns, Susanne Amberger-Ochsenbauer, Landoll's Inc., 1997.

Jim has also provided us with some information about ferns, including descriptions of their botany and recommended species, which he thinks may be helpful for listeners to have on hand during his presentation. You can download his handout from our website at www.claytonvnps.org/Meetings/fern_handouts_mar18mtg.pdf. (Be patient; it's a multipage document and may take several seconds to load.)

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



From the President

Well, the daffodils are blooming in the El-lipse Garden at Freedom Park! Purchased from Brent and Becky's Bulbs, 'Early Sensation' blooms in January. These bulbs were installed 3 years ago, and last December, a group of hardy workers finished planting the ring outside the deer fence. I know daffodils are not native, but most of us native plant people enjoy other species which we hope never become aggressive. We are warned by Doug Tallamy, however, that Japanese honeysuckle behaved itself for 80 years before the vine became wildly invasive!

The problem with planting nonnatives like some of our favorite old-fashioned plants is the lack of evolutionary history with insects in this country. Plants brought here from Europe, Asia and Australia left their insect predators and butterflies back home. No insects nor fungi nor disease organisms in this country feed on kudzu, and the plant grows 12 inches each day, all over our native trees and shrubs, preventing photosynthesis in the leaves and uprooting small trees.

So why are we giving valuable land space to nonnative plants, when we have squeezed our native birds and butterflies into less and less habitat as more and more developments and shopping malls and asphalt parking lots destroy their homes?

While we embrace species diversity, and have planted our gardens with a variety of shrubs, vines and wildflowers to provide as many habitats as possible for wildlife, could we do even better by reducing our non-natives? (If any of you out there have a 100% native landscape, we salute you!—and let us know who you are!) **Helen Hamilton**

January 21 meeting: Coal and its environmental impact

The meeting got under way with a report by Summer Chambers on her activities at Nature Camp 2009 in Vesuvius, Virginia.

Photo: Zachary Loesch



Summer Chambers

Our first speaker, Emily Francis, Chesapeake Bay Foundation's Outreach and Advocacy Manager, explained the effects of coal pollution on the health of the Bay. Chapter member Patti Gray, also of Williamsburg Climate Action Network, discussed alternatives to coal.



Photo: Jan Newton

Our speakers, Emily Francis and Patti Gray

Skunk brunch was a success!

By Jan Newton's count, about 35 people (and at least one dog) turned out on this chilly but sunny Saturday morning in January. Our leader, Phillip Merritt, explained to us what we could expect to see during our trek around Longhill Swamp—but first, we had brunch. The photo below was taken *after* our attack on the delicious doughnuts, bagels with smoked salmon and cream cheese, fresh fruit, hot coffee and cocoa.



Photo: Phillip Merritt



Photo: Jan Newton

Here, Phillip stands on the bed of his truck to talk to us before we set out into the swamp. In his right hand are brown catkins of river birch (*Betula nigra*) and in his left, the longer, yellow ones of American hazelnut (*Corylus americana*).



Tag alder catkins

Inside the swamp we came across another *Betulaceae* member, tag alder (*Alnus serrulata*). Behind Phillip are his photos of some other native plants found in Longhill Swamp.



Photo: Louise Menges

The object of our search, flowering skunk cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*), turned out to be abundant, and we had to be alert to keep from treading on the maroon and pale green-striped spathes poking up through leaf litter as we walked through the wet woodlands. I didn't catch a whiff of its notoriously unpleasant

smell (which attracts pollinating flies and gives skunk cabbage its name), but perhaps warmer temperatures might have made it more noticeable, or maybe I was just afraid to bruise a spathe enough to release it (you know—the “let sleeping dogs lie” principle)!



A cluster of “field trippers”, as Phillip likes to call us



Photo: Louise Menges

A view of Longhill Swamp during the walk

Visit www.howitgrows.com to read more about this excursion into Longhill Swamp and the plants we saw there. There are even more photos on John Clayton Chapter’s website at www.flickr.com/photos/claytonsnatives. If you make it a habit to check both sites regularly to see what Phillip has seen and photographed, you’ll be rewarded!

Thank you, Phillip.

Louise Menges

New Chapter members

Welcome to **twelve** new members! They are: Annette Clark, Susan Dexter, Mary Grogan, Linda Miller, Bill Morris, Barbara Ramsey, Karen Tate and Mary Ellen Williams, all of Williamsburg; Elizabeth Lowe, Newport News; Joyce McKelvey, Port Haywood; Barbara G. Shipes and Melinda Webb, Hampton.

Gardening tips for March

Get ready for spring gardening with these tips for tools:

To remove salt residue from crusty pots and to clean dirty tools, scrub with a mixture of 1/3 white vinegar, 1/3 rubbing alcohol, and 1/3 water. Use worn-out toothbrushes for small cleanup tasks.

Keep a bucket with sand and a light oil mixture nearby your gardening tools. After cleaning the tools stick them in the mixture to prevent them from rusting.

Attach a soap dish with soap and a nail brush to the side of a wooden shelf. Dig your fingernails into the soap before you begin working in the garden. Mount a paper-towel dispenser near your work area.

Use grapefruit knives for weeding container gardens and transplanting seedlings.

Keep heavy-duty paper clips and clothespins in your work area for hundreds of uses, from sealing opened seed packets to clipping gloves closed as a precaution against spiders.

Fill a used lotion or hand-soap dispenser bottle with mineral oil and squirt metal tools every time you use them or to remove sticky sap, grime or sawdust, then wipe with fine steel wool. To keep your string trimmer from breaking or sticking, coat the line with mineral oil.

Paint inch and foot marks on the wooden handles of hoes, shovels, and rakes and use these whenever you need to measure in the garden.

Make a heavy duty garden scooper from a bleach bottle; just trim the bottom when it’s empty, after rinsing thoroughly.

Dry flowers or herbs quickly in your car! Cover flat surfaces with paper, spread a layer of blooms and park in the sun.

Before working an area in the garden for early spring planting, check the soil. It should be dry enough to crumble in your hand before you work it. The temperature of the soil should be at least 50 to 60 degrees before adding new seeds or plants.

Look for bloodroot this month



Photo: Helen Hamilton

Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*) is one of the earliest and most interesting flowers in the spring. Sometime in March, a brown tip emerges from the soil with a leaf inside wrapped around the stalk. Delicate white flowers appear above the still-folded leaf. Sometimes two flowering stems will sprout from only one underground stem, or rhizome. After the flower is done, the petals drop and the leaf with 5–7 wavy lobes slowly opens. Once expanded, the bright green heavily veined leaf shades the developing

fruit. The appearance and actions of the leaf are as interesting as the satiny white flower petals.

Bloodroot is named for the red juice that can be extracted from the rhizome. The root juice or powdered root can destroy tissues and has been used to treat skin conditions such as ringworm, warts, fungal growth, etc. Researchers are investigating the root's value in cancer treatment. An extract has long been used in toothpaste and mouthwash to fight plaque and gingivitis, a use now sanctioned by USFDA. Native Americans used the juice as warpaint and to dye fabrics.

Bloodroot is found in moist but well-drained woodland soil in all but a few counties in the state of Virginia. Populations of bloodroot are somewhat limited to soils containing high amounts of calcium from fossil shells. Growing 6–8 inches tall in part shade, this plant is one of the spring ephemerals, appearing for only a short time in early spring. Bloodroot will self-sow to form larger colonies each year. The plant goes dormant in mid-summer, and is a good companion to ferns which emerge later in the spring.

The range of bloodroot extends throughout the mid to eastern states.

Helen Hamilton

Tree huggers on City Council?

Williamsburg City Council has proposed an effort to identify and preserve some of the city's more notable trees through a "Heritage Tree Program", according to recent articles in the *Daily Press* and *Virginia Gazette*. The city, Colonial Williamsburg and William and Mary have put together an initial list of 17 trees in three categories: **heritage trees**, with historic significance; **specimen trees**, rare to the area or particularly large examples of their species; and **street trees** integral to the location where they are planted.

The Historic Area has at least one national champion, the **Compton oak**, a naturally occurring live oak-overcup oak hybrid (*Q. virginiana* × *Q. lyrata*), on Market Square across from the St. George Tucker House, and several others of exceptional size, including some state champions.



Photo: Louise Menges

The immense spread of Market Square's Compton oak

Between the city, CW and the College, the area has 23 state champion trees, not all of which are on this initial list, but the list is expected to grow, and plans are in the works to give residents a say on other trees to add to it, so stay tuned.

Also, visit www.howitgrows.com and click on **See How It Grows** near the top of the right-hand content column to view a Google map Phillip Merritt has created with locations of noteworthy trees and places to see in the Tidewater area and beyond, where I discovered another national champion, a water elm (*Planera aquatica*) on the W&M campus.

Louise Menges

Botanical Art Lecture Tuesday, Mar 16



Rosa malmundariensis, by Belgian painter and botanist Pierre-Joseph Redouté (1759–1840)

On **Tuesday, March 16 at 7:30 pm**, American Society of Botanical Artists members **Juliet Kirby** and **Linda C. Miller** (also a John Clayton Chapter member) will present a lecture at the Williamsburg Regional Library about the history of botanical art.

Their topic will range from the first prehistoric drawings found in caves, to how the first printed books depicted amazing illustrations of herbals found in 15th century medicinal gardens that changed the world, to how today's contemporary artists are painting and exhibiting new works to help educate the public about our native endangered plants and pollinators.



From Cynthia

The first Melissa's Meadow work day this year will be on Thursday, March 18 (any time in the morning beginning at 8 am, weather permitting).

The sunny meadow, established in 1994, was one of the first community projects of John Clayton Chapter. It is adjacent to the parking lot of the McCormack/Nagelson indoor tennis center at the College of William and Mary on South Henry Street. We partnered with the College and the Master Gardeners to plant the garden in a low lying spot that was unsuitable for development. The Master Gardeners and the College landscape staff continue to support this project. Many of the seeds we distribute come from the meadow. It was named in memory of Melissa Long Etchberger, a W&M alum, who helped plant and maintain the garden until her death in 1996. The meadow has been a great teaching garden, with a wonderful display of drought tolerant native plants.



The stone marking Melissa's Meadow was designed and carved by Bland Blackford.

There will be plants to take home as we thin and redistribute. Other school and community gardens in Williamsburg have benefited from seeds and plants grown here. Bland Blackford and I would be most pleased to see our

members there for a few hours every third Thursday of the month during the growing season. **Cynthia Long**

Come help with the April 24 Plant Sale!

Important changes for this year...

John Clayton Chapter VNPS and Master Gardeners will again host a joint plant sale on **Saturday, April 24th**. The most important change is that **the sale will begin at 10 am**. The sale will end at the same time as in previous years: 4 pm, and clean-up will occur between 4–5 pm. The second change is that **the set-up will occur on Friday, April 23rd from 1 am–4 pm**. It is a bonus for us to be able to do most of the set-up the previous day. Therefore **all plants need to be delivered to the Community Building on Friday, April 23rd between the hours of 11 am and 2 pm**. Please call Lucile Kossodo @ 757/565-0769 (cell 757/784-2882) or Joan Etchberger @ 757/7844728 if there are any questions concerning plant deliveries. We hope the new earlier sale hours will encourage more sales.

For us, the Plant Sale is a very important event. This is the main source of funding for our programs, our scholarships and our Nature Camp participants. It is also a great way for all of us to meet and share our knowledge of native plants with the public. Our outreach will encourage the public to include more native plants in their yards.

Plant deliveries: **Friday, April 23 between 11 am and 2 pm.**

Sale: **Saturday, April 24—open to the public from 10 am–4 pm**

Where: **Williamsburg Community Building
401 North Boundary Street, Williamsburg**

How you can help:

1. Bring plants to pot at one of the four potting parties being held (see the second part of this article).
2. Attend a potting party and help plant and label the pots.
3. If you have extra native plants and need help getting them into pots, please call Joan Etchberger at 757/566-1884 or Lucile Kossodo at 757/565-0769.
4. Help us transport plants to the sale.
5. Volunteer on Friday, April 23rd from 11 am–4 pm to help set up for the sale. We will set up the interior of

the building and store the plants that will be outside. All these volunteers will be able to buy 3 native plants before the sale opens on Saturday.

6. Volunteer for the sale from 7 am to 4 pm: we will set up the outside of the building before the sale; the sale will begin at 10 am, and you can volunteer for the clean-up from 4 to 5 pm. If you arrive prior to the beginning of the sale, you will also be able to buy 3 native plants before the sale opens to the public.

Let's make this the greatest plant sale ever. **We need your help!**

If you have any questions regarding the plant sale, contact Lucile Kossodo at 757/565-0769 or Joan Etchberger at 757/566-1884.

Join us at the potting parties now planned...

This year our members are hosting four potting parties: one in the Gloucester area, two in the greater Williamsburg area and one in the Newport News area—wherever you live, there will be a potting party near you! We offer those who host a potting party the choice of a free native plant from our John Clayton sale before the sale begins.

We hope that you can come and help us plant and label at one of the potting parties now planned. Please bring some native plants for the sale; it would help us very much. If you have native plants but cannot come to the potting party, contact Joan Etchberger at 757/566-1884 or Lucile Kossodo at 757/565-0769, and we can pick them up. If you need help digging them up, please call one of us and we can help dig.

☞ **Newport News area** Hostess: Charlotte Boudreau.
Date: **Saturday, March 20th at 10 am** (rain date Monday, March 22nd at 10 am.) Her address is 28 Oakland Drive, Newport News. Her phone number is 757/596-2524.

☞ **James City County area** Host: Al Davidoff.
Date: **Thursday, March 25th at 2 pm** (rain date Monday, March 29th at 2 pm). His address is 100 Westward Ho (in Ford's Colony), and his phone number is 757/345-5034.

☞ **Williamsburg area** Hostess: Ada Lou Turner.
Date: **Tuesday, March 30 at 10 am** (rain date Wednesday, March 31 at 10 am). Her address is 401 Yorkshire Drive, Williamsburg. Her phone number is 757/220-0929.

☞ **White Marsh area of Gloucester County**
Hosts: Hayes and Joyce Williams. Date: **Thursday, April 1st at 1 pm** (rain date Saturday, April 3 at 1 pm). Their address is 6135 Brookwood Lane, White Marsh. Telephone is cell 804/694-6235 and home 804/693-4417. Call them to find directions to their home.

We offer our deepest thanks to those who have offered to host a potting party. Their help makes this sale possible.

Lucile Kossodo

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

Another aggressive alien alert!

We learned about this invasive, which was discovered in Virginia within the last ten years (first in Madison County and subsequently in Fauquier County), from a recent issue of **Potowmack News**, the Potowmack Chapter newsletter. It was originally an article in the Piedmont Chapter's newsletter, **The Leaflet**.

The name of this "monster" is wavy-leaved basketgrass (*Oplismenus hirtellus* ssp. *undulatifolius*). Here is a photo by Geoffrey Mason downloaded from www.invasive.org.



As you can see, this plant bears some resemblance to another already locally pervasive alien, Japanese Stiltgrass

(*Microstegium vimineum*), and it invades the forest floor even more quickly. It is a perennial, tolerates dense shade, has a highly effective seed dispersal system and remains green longer than most other woodland plants, even after a light frost.

Here is how wavy-leaved basketgrass is described for identification in the *Potowmack News*:

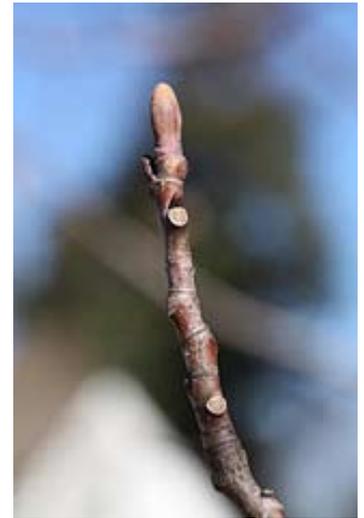
In the wild, Wavy-leaved Basket Grass grows only about a foot tall. It is delicate, like Japanese Stiltgrass. Its leaves are light green, ½ inch wide, 1½–4 inches long, like wavy corrugated tin, with short, scattered hairs on both surfaces. The leaf sheaths and stems are noticeably hairy. The plant produces fine stolons (horizontal, rooting stems) along the ground. Sticky seeds appear in September—although they have been seen as early as July—and persist through November on racemes with 3–7 stalklets. When Wavy-leaved Basket Grass starts, it is often seen growing within beds of Japanese Stiltgrass. As the invasion matures, Wavy-leaved Basket Grass overtakes Stiltgrass and a distinct boundary appears between the two.

Please be on the lookout for wavy-leaved basketgrass; if you find it, notify Kevin Heffernan, Staff Biologist at the Division of Natural Heritage at Kevin.Heffernan@dcr.virginia.gov or 804/786-9112.



deciduous, alternate, not climbing,
not spiny, with round leaf scars,
bundle traces many, stipules encircling the twig, buds not pointed;
large and flattened.

Sorry, no clues for this one!



Spring's abustin' out all over!

Here are recent photographs Phillip Merritt took of budding foliage on four native trees, accompanied by notes he included with them. Can you identify them from their buds?

You can check your IDs at www.flickr.com/photos/claytonsnatives.



deciduous, alternate, not climbing,
not spiny, bundle traces distinct,
narrow leaf scars; ring-like and nearly encircling bud,
stipule scars encircling twig, buds large with a single cap like scale, end bud lacking.



alternate buds

Calendar

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Saturday, Mar 13 | 8:15 am–3 pm: 2010 Horticultural Extravaganza at York High School. Address: York High School, 9300 George Washington Hwy, Yorktown
<i>See www.claytonvnps.org for more details, registration forms and class schedule. Deadline for registration is March 8.</i> |
| Thursday, Mar 18 | 7–9 pm: John Clayton Chapter's March meeting. York County Extension Agent Jim Orband will talk about landscaping with native ferns. Yorktown Public Library at Route 17 and Battle Road, Yorktown. (See Page 1.) |
| Saturday, March 20 | 10 am: Field trip to Gloucester's Tripetala site Expect to see Spring ephemerals such as bloodroot, hepatica and <i>Dentaria laciniata</i> (cut-leaved toothwort). (Rain date: April 3) For directions, call Mary Hyde Berg at 804/693-3568. |
| Saturday, April 3 | 10am: Field trip to York River State Park We'll be looking for trailing arbutus and other early spring bloomers like paw paw, dogwood and golden ragwort. There's a small charge for entrance into the park, so carpooling is suggested.
<i>Email Phillip Merritt at phillipmerritt@hotmail.com for details.</i> |
| Saturday, April 10 | 10 am: Field trip to Summerfield's Wild Area in Gloucester County to search for arbutus (rain date: April 17)
<i>For directions, call Mary Hyde Berg at 804/693-3568.</i> |
| Sunday, April 11 | 1pm: Field trip to Sandy Bottom Park We'll be looking for the blooms of sweetleaf as well as Jack-in-the-pulpit and houstonia.
<i>Email Phillip Merritt at phillipmerritt@hotmail.com for details.</i> |
| Saturday, April 24 | John Clayton Chapter's 2010 Plant Sale at the Williamsburg Community Building, 401 N. Boundary Street
<i>(More on Page 5.)</i> |
| Saturday, May 1 | 10 am: New Quarter Park quail habitat planting day. Bring your own shovels and work gloves; we will be digging in established perennials. This is a joint project of New Quarter Park, Williamsburg Bird Club, Master Naturalists, Soil and Water Conservation District, and John Clayton Chapter.
<i>Cynthia Long, 757/229-9559</i> |
| Wednesday, May 5 | 5:30–8:30 pm: "Vines and Wines"—The Williamsburg Botanical Garden Party at the Rockefeller Garden/Spa in Colonial Williamsburg. Food, wine, music, and special activities in a lovely garden setting.
<i>For more information and to register, see www.williamsburgbotanicalgarden.org/events.</i> |