



# Claytonia

Newsletter of the John Clayton Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society

[www.claytonvnps.org](http://www.claytonvnps.org)

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Lance Gardner with his son and the family dogs during a camping trip.

## Our January 20 meeting: "Planting Wild—Healthier Plants, Critters and People"

Our speaker, **Lance Gardner**, is currently a Ph.D. student at VIMS, with a M.S. in Limnology and Oceanography from the University of Wisconsin-Madison Center for Limnology, and B.A. in Chemistry and Biology from Skidmore College. He is a member of the Gloucester Master Gardeners and has been gardening since he was about 10. He continues to try new

gardening techniques, with the goal of limiting maintenance while still maintaining a healthy balance in his environment.

Lance's main emphasis will be on low maintenance, native plant wildflower gardens. This type of gardening will attract a variety of beneficial and colorful critters, such as hummingbirds and butterflies, predacious and parasitic insects, and a variety of birds. This sort of landscaping benefits us, as well, as there is less need for pesticide/herbicide applications in all of our gardens, irrigation, lawn mowing, and other costly, time consuming, hazardous maintenance. He will also include ideas on getting the entire family out and enjoying the great outdoors, even if it is your own yard. There will be a limited section on how to deter unwanted critters as well, although Lance admits that he is better at attracting than deterring animals.

The meeting begins at **6:45 pm (note new time!)** at the Yorktown Public Library at the intersection of Battle Road and Route 17 in Yorktown.

See you there!



## From the President: Fall gardening

Who knew? Not me, not until Lucile suggested fall potting parties, and I began to participate. Carolyn and Ralph Will also educated me, showing me plants that are forming vigorous rosettes for overwintering.

So I took a closer look at my own small garden, completely neglected since August, and started removing dead vegetation, and thinking about whether I really wanted that plant here, and this

plant there. It's easy to dig and move and re-design when the growth is less rampant than in the spring. And while doing so, the extras go into six-inch pots, labeled, to be stored in the backyard until the plant sale.

With our mild late fall/early winter weather, it's the perfect time to evaluate how the garden appeared in the growing season and to move and remove where feasible. And this is a good time to dig out the compost which has been fermenting all summer and create new beds.

It's been a lot of fun, and a lot more agreeable to work in 50–60 degree weather than 90–100!

**Helen Hamilton**

## New members

We welcome new members Robert J. Bohls, Sr., Sharon Goodrich and Joli Huelskamp, all from Williamsburg.

## Our November meeting: Native plant habitats on Virginia's Eastern Shore



Photo: Zack Loesch

**Dorothy Fields**, Eastern Shore Region Steward for the Virginia Natural Heritage Program, took us on a guided tour of the State Natural Area Preserves of the Eastern Shore, with a focus on the native flora they were established to protect. Dot had

received some bad news earlier in the day—her office and its contents, along with the rest of the main research building at VIMS's Eastern Shore Lab at Wachapreague, had been completely destroyed in a predawn fire that very morning! That disaster didn't prevent her from giving us a fascinating look at the ecology of Virginia's portion of this peninsula which separates our Chesapeake Bay from the Atlantic Ocean.

Although the Eastern Shore of Virginia is only 50 feet above sea level at its highest point and is extremely narrow, it has three distinct habitat zones, corresponding to the sandy Atlantic shore, the interior forest and the Bay-fronting marshes, and we were shown examples of how each is colonized by different native plants. We especially enjoyed a video in which a stand of seaside goldenrod (*Solidago sempervirens*) was covered with successive clouds of Monarch butterflies in migration—it was a memorable sight! **Louise Menges**



Photo: Zach Loesch

Patti Gray and Jan Newton reported on Nature Camp 2011.



Photo: Jan Newton

Gloria Diggs, Louise Menges, Lucile Kossodo and Phyllis Putnam look through *Native Plants of Accomac and Northampton* while they munch on refreshments.

## A plant rescue report from Carolyn Will

The final tally of plants rescued from the National Aerospace Institute site is 464 plants of 28 different species, and does not include the two truckloads of plants we helped the Hampton Master Gardeners rescue. The vast majority of these plants are sitting at our place awaiting return to the NAI buffers. Several dozen ferns and a large high-bush blueberry were planted at the Williamsburg Botanical Garden, 8 large spicebushes went to York River State Park, and some Elliott's Goldenrod went to the Stonehouse Elementary School Habitat. Plans are being made for some additional plantings this fall.

### Plants Rescued From Aerospace Institute Site (Final Total: October 2010)

#### Herbaceous Plants

2 Avens	<i>Geum sp.</i>
3 Bedstraw, sweet scented	<i>Galium triflorum</i>
6 Blue Wood Sedge	<i>Carex flaccosperma</i>
102 Crane-fly Orchis	<i>Tipularia discolor</i> >
81 Goldenrod, Elliott's	<i>Solidago elliotii</i>
5 Goldenrods	<i>Solidago sp.</i>
27 Jack-in-the Pulpit	<i>Arisaema triphyllum</i>
4 Skullcap-Hyssop	<i>Scutellaria integrifolia</i> >>
3 Soft Rush	<i>Juncus effusus</i> >
5 Spikegrass	<i>Chasmanthium laxum</i>

#### Shrubs and Trees

1 American Hornbeam	<i>Ostrya virginiana</i>
4 Hearts-a-Burstin'	<i>Euonymus americanus</i>
7 Hickory	<i>Carya sp.</i> >>
3 High-bush Blueberry	<i>Vaccinium fuscatum</i>
3 Paw-paw	<i>Asimina triloba</i> >
4 Serviceberry (Shadbush)	<i>Amelanchier canadensis</i> >>
35 Spicebush	<i>Lindera benzoi</i>

#### Vines

2 Coral Honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera sempervirens</i> >
3 Grape vine	<i>Vitis sp.</i>
5 Moonseed	<i>Menispermum canadense</i>
1 Yellow Carolina Jessamine	<i>Gelsemium sempervirens</i> >>

Photo: Denis Boudreau

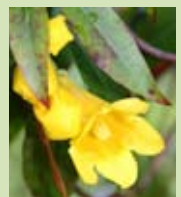
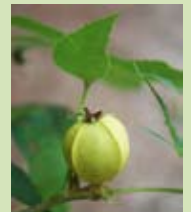


Jan Newton and Ralph Will at work removing native plants from the site.

Photo: Denis Boudreau



A full load of rescued plants!

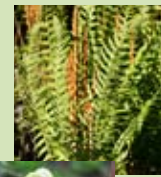


## Ferns

- 15 Cinnamon
- 24 Grape
- 28 Netted Chain
- 12 Royal
- 10 Sensitive
- 67 Southern Lady
- 2 Virginia Chain

- Osmunda cinnamomea* ▶
- Botrychium* sp. ▶▶
- Woodwardia areolata*
- Osmunda regalis* ▶
- Onoclea sensibilis*
- Athyrium asplenoides*
- Woodwardia virginica*

Carolyn Will



Most photos by Phillip Merritt

## JCC met with Courthouse Commons developer and county staff on Nov. 17

JCC members Helen Hamilton, Phillip Merritt, Jan Newton, Jerre Johnson and Louise Menges were on hand for this meeting and site tour.

Below is an excerpt from Cortney Langley's article about the meeting in the Nov. 27 *Virginia Gazette*:

"Representatives from the John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society met last week with the Courthouse Commons developer and county staff about clearing and landscaping. The meeting was scheduled after society members expressed concern over clearing in the buffer and wanted to review the landscaping plan.

President Helen Hamilton and other members met with developer Chris Henderson, Planning Commission member Jack Fraley and county landscape planner Scott Whyte, each of whom explained a different aspect of the project. They all toured the shopping center site off Monticello, across from Settler's Market."



We looked over landscaping plans before our tour of the site. From left are Phillip Merritt, Jan Newton, Chris Henderson, Barbara Phieffer and Jerre Johnson.

After reviewing the proposed landscaping plans, John Clayton Chapter submitted its recommendations for native alternatives on November 30:

### Landscape Recommendations for Courthouse Commons from John Clayton Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society

Using regional native plants reduces necessary fertilization, watering, maintenance and replacement costs. Additionally, our recommendations provide significant benefit to our native wildlife.

#### Large deciduous trees

*Betula nigra* 'dura heat' (river birch): May be stressed from low water.

*Carpinus betulus* 'fastigiata' (European hornbeam): Reduce number and replace with *Amelanchier arborea* (shadbush) or *Quercus phellos* (willow oak)—the tree will be too large for the suggested site; the shadbush will

provide beautiful white flowers in the spring, red berries in the summer, and fall color of the leaves. The willow oak will provide a canopy and the tree will require no maintenance at all.

*Salix babylonica* (Peking or Babylon willow): Replace with *Amelanchier arborea* (shadbush—spring flowers and early summer red berries), *Viburnum nudum* (possumhaw) or witherrod (*Viburnum cassinoides*—summer flowers and fall berries). The weeping willow is sited in the back where no water will be easily available.

#### Evergreen trees

*Pinus thumbergiana* (Japanese black pine): Replace with *Pinus taeda* (loblolly pine). The native loblolly pine provides more wildlife benefits.

#### Small deciduous trees

*Magnolia x 'Shirazz'* (New Zealand hybrid): Replace with *Ilex glabra* (ink-berry), an evergreen shrub which produces black berries in the winter to benefit wildlife. Reduce numbers of all plants in the median strip; we do not recommend plantings under these trees. Violets would be acceptable.

#### Shrubs

*Callicarpa americana* (beautyberry): Reduce number of plants—they grow larger than 6' x 6' and would be overcrowded in the present landscape plan.

*Hydrangea macrophylla 'Nikko blue'*: Replace with *Viburnum acerifolium* (maple-leaf viburnum) or *Hydrangea quercifolium* (oak-leaf hydrangea) or *Euonymus americanus* (strawberry bush). Placed at the entrance of a building, the Hydrangea will not furnish as much winter interest as the suggested native plants, which produce spring flowers and fall color with leaves and fruits.

*Ilex x Aquipernyi 'Dragon Lady'* (Dragon Lady holly): Omit; current landscaping plan would result in overcrowding.

*Ilex crenata 'Green Luster'* and *'Hetzi'* (Japanese hollies): Replace with *Viola sororia* (common blue violet) because the trees in the median landscaping plan require the available water and additional plantings will be stressed.

*Itea virginica 'Henry's Garnet'* (Virginia sweetspire): Reduce numbers of the plant (blooms in the spring) and add *Clethra alnifolia* (summersweet), which blooms in the summer and *Hibiscus coccineus* (scarlet hibiscus), a summer and fall blooming perennial plant with interesting foliage.



Henderson explains plans for the tree buffer and entrance on Monticello Avenue.



Another view of the construction site seen through a portion of the Monticello buffer.

Photos: Louise Menges

*Juniperus chinensis* 'Sargentii' (Sargent's Chinese juniper): Omit and use seasonal annuals: Spring—violets; summer—*Rudbeckia triloba* (brown-eyed Susan), *Phlox paniculata* (summer phlox); fall—*Muhlenbergia capillaris* (purple muhly); winter—pansies. Annual plantings would suffer from the water requirements of the suggested shrubs.

*Rhaphiolepis umbellata* 'minor' (Yeddo hawthorn): By parking lot hedge; replace with 2–3 *Muhlenbergia capillaris* (purple muhly) in each grouping. The purple muhly grass adds beautiful late summer/fall seedheads which persist throughout the winter.

#### Other

*Liriope masacara* 'Big Blue': Add cinnamon fern and/or Christmas fern for additional interest in the ground cover.

Add where appropriate clusters of *Panicum virgatum* (switchgrass). 'Shenandoah' grows to 3 feet tall; other cultivars are taller.

### From our Plant Sale Chairs

**Hey, every member out there...** We need you to step forward and help educate and spread the word about how important it is to go Native. Think about what plants you can divide and dig up from your yard, or even your neighbors' yard (with their blessings) for our annual plant sale to be held on April 30th. We need potting party hosts! We hope someone from Gloucester could hold a potting party and have surrounding friends pot together. Charlotte Boudreau, in Newport News, has agreed to be a host, so friends in the area, put on your calendars to join her on her selected day. We need someone in the Williamsburg area to host a party, as well. If you don't have plants, please consider volunteering your time to help us with other activities such digging plants for members who cannot, transporting plants, and working the day of the sale.

The sale location has moved to an all-outdoor venue, so we have new challenges to meet. That is why it is important that we start our recruitment for your help and your plants **now**. It's the members who come together and form a team who make the plant sale a success. Lucile and Joan are available to answer questions, as well as provide pots and soil.

We will be ordering plants again for the sale, but in order to keep our costs down so that we can allocate funds towards sending students to Nature Camp and other worthwhile causes, we are looking for members who may have the following plants they could donate to the sale. If you have these plants and want to donate them, contact **Lucile Kossodo** at [lkossodo@cox.net](mailto:lkossodo@cox.net) (757/565-0769) or **Joan Etchberger** at [jetchberger@cox.net](mailto:jetchberger@cox.net) (757/566-1884).



*Butterfly weed*

*Purple milkweed*



*Cardinal flower*

*Ironweed*



- Butterfly Weed
- Swamp Milkweed
- Purple Milkweed
- Fern-Leaf Bleeding Heart
- Joe-Pye Weed
- Cardinal Flower
- Wild Bergamot
- Horsemint
- Ironweed
- Black Eyed Susans
- Jacob's Ladder
- Purple Coneflower
- Sneezeweed
- Smooth Beardstongue
- Aster (please identify the kind you would like to donate)
- Ferns (please identify the kind you would like to donate)
- Heartleaf Alexander
- Wild Blue Phlox
- Foam Flower
- Virginia Spiderwort
- Virginia Bluebells
- Red Switchgrass
- Blue Switchgrass
- Bluestem Grass
- Native Azaleas
- Any other interesting natives you would be willing to donate.
- *These plants need to be potted before they disappear this winter, as they emerge too late in Spring.*

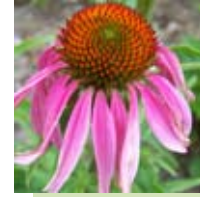
**This is a team event and we need your help—please sign up now!**

**Joan Etchberger** and **Lucile Kossodo** *Plant Sale Co-chairs*

### **Doug Tallamy's "Bringing Nature Home" on Nov. 4: a report from Charlotte Boudreau**

Phillip and I attended his talk in Chesterfield County, and I wanted to share some of his insights. We missed the very beginning of his talk, but could understand his emphasis on our disappearing habitat.

He shared that we have converted our natural world into cities and suburbs: 41% of our country is in agriculture, 54% in cities, and 5% is pristine, and most of that is too high and dry to be helpful habitat. Studies have been done to determine the fate of imperiled species, and in



*Purple coneflower*



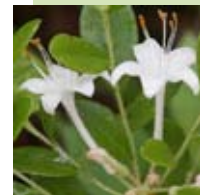
*Sneezeweed*



*Wild blue phlox*



*Virginia bluebells*



*Swamp azalea*

*Photos: Phillip Merritt*

looking at only one eighth of them, they found that 4,262 species were imperiled. About half of the bird population is in decline. He emphasized that biodiversity is essential and nonrenewable; when we shrink a habitat, we lose niche space, and tiny populations are most susceptible to decline. I have also learned from my Master Naturalist training that species with limited food sources are susceptible to decline.

He explained that our natural areas such as national parks are not large enough to sustain nature, and that we need to renew our landscapes by adding native plants. All plants are not equally good at supporting wildlife. He gave the example of Black Cherry as opposed to Autumn Olive—the olive tree is only supportive of Asian wildlife, while the cherry is supportive of our native wildlife.

He added that there is a great reduction in caterpillars without native plants, and our bird population decreases without insects. Most insects can develop and reproduce only on plants with which they share an evolutionary history. He gave the example of the Monarch caterpillar. Their specialization in feeding on a few plants limits them. He cited the statistic that 90% of phytophagous insect species can eat plants in only three or fewer families. If you don't have native plants and take the insects away, there will be a drastic effect on our birds—96% of birds depend on insects to reproduce, and insects have twice the protein that is needed for baby birds to develop as is found in beef. Birds also need to feed on the snails found in leaf litter to obtain calcium for their eggs. Finally, he mentioned an interesting fact: birds look for holes in plant leaves to find caterpillars to eat.

He concluded by stating that in his suburbs study 92% was lawn, 74% alien species and 69% alien plants. He is concerned that the horticultural industry has promoted alien plants so that a sense of place is no longer evident where we live, and that 85% of our invasive plants have come from nurseries. (He gave a handout on what plants to buy to replace invasive plants from the nursery.) Invasives tend to have a lag time, then they take off, and gave the example of Porcelain Berry.

To share suburbia with wildlife, he suggested that we:

1. Create corridors connecting natural areas.
2. Reduce the area in lawn.
3. Begin to transition from alien species to native species.

**Charlotte Boudreau**



Photo: Phillip Merritt

Black cherry  
(*Prunus serotina*)



Autumn olive  
(*Elaeagnus umbellata*)

Photo: Wikipedia



Porcelain berry  
(*Ampelopsis brevipedunculata*)

Photo: Wikipedia



## December's Wildflower of the Month

### Sugarcane plume grass

Sugarcane plume grass (*Saccharum giganteum* or *Erianthus giganteus*) is a very showy, dramatically tall grass with a spreading vase of wide blades, drooping at the tips. Tall stems to ten feet bear billowing plumes that open peach-rose and dry to coppery silver. Each flowering unit has a long, straight awn, giving the entire seedhead a feathery look. The plumes are gorgeous when planted where the sun furnishes backlight.

Sugarcane plume grass can be seen along wet ditches and in marshy ground in early fall through winter. Preferring moist, sandy soils and full sun or light shade, this plant does best at the edge of ponds, streams or water gardens. Although a very large plant, plume grass is not aggressive. The clumps will enlarge but the roots can be divided when the plant is dormant. The size of this grass should be considered when placing in a garden—it would be overwhelming next to a narrow walkway, but makes a good screen or backdrop for a border.

Plume grass is native to eastern counties of Virginia, and has a range from New Jersey to Kentucky and Arkansas south to Florida and Texas. This grass combines well with moisture-loving, fall blooming flowers such as joeyweed, swamp sunflower, cutleaf rudbeckia, wild ageratum, New York aster, and cardinal flower. Throughout the winter, the dried seed-heads and tan stems and leaves much enhance the landscape.

The genus name *Erianthus* is derived from the Greek *erion*, “wool”, and *anthos*, “flower”, referring to the long silky hairs in a tuft around the base of each spikelet in the flower. *Saccharum* is the genus for the true sugarcane.

**Helen Hamilton**

### Where does our money go?

Do you ever wonder what happens to the thousands of dollars that the John Clayton Chapter raises through the annual plant sale? Many of you have helped to dig, pot and sell those plants, but you may not realize the end result of your greatly appreciated labors.

For many years, our John Clayton Chapter has been financially supporting endeavors related to the study and propagation of native plants in Virginia. In particular, the Nature Camp of Virginia and the Flora of Virginia have been the beneficiaries of our largest contributions.

Since 1942, the Nature Camp has existed as a non-profit, co-ed summer camp for youth from the 5th to 12th grades who are interested in natural history and environmental science. It is located in the George Washington National Forest, not far from Lexington VA—an area rich



Photo: Helen Hamilton

Sugarcane plume grass in the Williamsburg Botanical Ellipse Garden.

in forests, mountains, streams, flora and fauna. The stated goal of the camp is to train a corps of youth “to conserve and protect the environment and to become wise stewards of the earth’s natural resources.” In recent years, our chapter has been able to support two or three students in the two-week sessions for a very modest cost of \$700 per student. The students usually attend one of our meetings following their experience to tell us of their adventures. For more information, please see [www.naturecamp.net](http://www.naturecamp.net).

We are also proud to support the Flora of Virginia Project which plans in 2012 to publish a 1400-page manual describing and aiding in the identification of 3,500 taxa of plants native to Virginia or naturalized here—the first such manual since the *Flora of Virginia* that was researched and published in the mid-1700s. The efforts of individuals and costs of producing the new *Flora of Virginia* are large, and support has come from government, universities, individuals, and organizations such as the Virginia Native Plant Society which will be primary audiences for the publication. For a fascinating description of the project, please see [www.floraofvirginia.org](http://www.floraofvirginia.org).

Despite the valiant efforts of all our plant sale workers, in recent years the proceeds from the sale have decreased—we are tempted to blame the economy, but we also know that there are more organizations selling native plants in the area. The Board of the Chapter decided at our last meeting to mention to all our members that we would be grateful for any donations to the Chapter that would allow us to continue our levels of support to these two organizations. Thank you for your consideration.

Patti Gray, Membership Chair

## Glad you’re better, Edie!

As some of you know, Edie Bradbury has been suffering for months because of vertebrae pinching the nerves to her right leg. She is happy to report that she had successful back surgery just before Thanksgiving, and that she looks forward to getting back to her usual activities.

That’s wonderful news, Edie—best wishes from all of us for a speedy recovery!



## Cynthia’s Corner

### Free to a good home!

65 gallon rain barrel, including attachments. You pick up and install. 105 Bowstring Drive, Williamsburg, VA 259-9559

Cynthia Long

## MHB has the last word...

### Joy to the World! We have a Treasurer!

Most members may have thought little about it, but the members of the Board have been concerned. (You know, that list of people on every newsletter, Chair of this or that.) You might imagine each chair has a committee, but most don’t.

We have a lively hour and a half every other month. Unless you’ve been to one you can’t imagine how busy, but genial, these meetings are. What do we do? More about that later, I hope.

Happy New Year!

Mary Hyde Berg

## Calendar

There are no John Clayton Chapter walks scheduled for January and February.

Thursday, Jan. 20 6:45–8:45 pm: (Note earlier time—the Library has requested that we be out by 8:45)  
**John Clayton Chapter meeting at Yorktown Public Library:** Lance Gardner presents  
 “Planting Wild—Healthier Plants, Critters and People” (See Page 1.)

*The Library is located at the intersection of Battle Rd. and Rt. 17 in Yorktown.*

## Membership Form for John Clayton Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society

(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

## Where should we meet?

The John Clayton Chapter Board is trying to decide what would be convenient locations for our bimonthly meetings. By answering the following questions, you will help us choose.

1. Would you prefer meetings in Yorktown? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_ No Preference\_\_\_
2. Would you prefer meetings in Williamsburg? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_ No Preference\_\_\_
3. Would you prefer 3 meetings in Williamsburg and 3 meetings in Yorktown? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_ No Preference\_\_\_
4. Do you attend at least 2 or 3 meetings each year? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_
5. Do you attend meetings based on location? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_
6. Do you attend meetings based on subject? Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_
7. Comments?

Please reply by email to: [ltmeng@verizon.net](mailto:ltmeng@verizon.net).

Please respond by leaving a telephone message with your answers at: **757/645-4164**.

Parting shots...



**Jamestown Island,  
November 15**

Weren't 2010's fall colors especially beautiful?