



Claytonia

Newsletter of the John Clayton Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society

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www.claytonvnps.org

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Our September 19 meeting: "Telling the Story of Longleaf Pine Restoration in Virginia"

The story of the longleaf pine forest in Virginia is one of opportunity, hubris, loss, and hope. This talk outlines the aspects of history and ecology necessary to understand how Virginia's Founding Forest went from dominance to near extinction and what it will take to bring it back.

Rebecca Wilson is the Longleaf Pine Restoration Specialist, Prescribed Fire Manager, and Regional Supervisor for the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation's Natural Heritage Program. She has been with the agency since 1999. Previously, she worked as a seasonal biologist and wildland fire fighter for the National Park Service for 9 years. She earned a B.S. in Environmental Science from Mary Washington College and a M.S. in Natural Resource Management from Virginia Tech.



The meeting begins at **7:00 pm** at the **York County Public Library, 8500 George Washington Memorial Highway (U.S. Rt. 17) at Battle Road** (immediately north of York Convalescent and Rehabilitation Center).

See you there!



From the President

Suddenly we have fall coming into focus. It is time again to vote for new leadership. The following positions are still unfilled: Vice-President and Treasurer. Cathy Flanagan has done an excellent job as temporary Treasurer, but we really need to find someone to take on this job. With every voting cycle, we increase the number of positions not filled, and this is a death knell for an organization. We also need a Hospitality Chair. The hospitality chair brings refreshments to our meetings. The refreshments can be simple, no need to be fancy. It means six times a year. Refreshments are important—how, you wonder? The social time after the speaker finishes is a good way for us to talk to one another, meet new friends, and talk about plants. The Bird Club has a very successful attendance at their social time after their speakers. Could you help us this way? The Vice President is the person who plans the speakers for the six meetings a year. It is an enjoyable task and one that allows us to have informative meetings—please consider doing this job. We need volunteers; if you love native plants, help us continue our mission to educate members and the public about native plants and their important role in our environment.

The long and winding road to the sale continued this past two months with the two potting parties in July. It was unique in that we offered free native plants to all who came to work, and many members did come and left with plants. We also potted some plants for the sale next year. In addition, our Newport News and Hampton members Susie Yager and Meegan Wallace held a “southern” potting party and were able to add more than 120 plants, increasing not only numbers of plants, but adding different species to our Plant Sale 2020. Thank you so much for an excellent job. I am still spraying the plants I have with rabbit repellent—boy, are they voracious eaters but also, incredibly, love to eat milkweeds even though they are poisonous. It does not affect rabbits, apparently.

This week I have been removing Japanese Stilt Grass from the front of my house. It is very invasive and predatory. Many in my neighborhood are not aware of this so I see it all around me. We may think that we are alone in fighting invasive plants that are exotic and sometimes look very pretty. In Shropshire (Great Britain) they are now waking up to the fact that this is what is happening to them; there the plant is Himalayan Balsam. I read an interesting article by Lisa Walden that appeared on July 29, 2019 in *Country Living*, UK magazine. They are trying to make landowners aware of the danger in ignoring the exotic Himalayan Balsam, which was brought to England in 1839. Now it is choking fields, watercourses, and roadsides. It not only threatens native plants but also water wildlife, such as water voles and otters. When this plant blooms between June and October with pretty flowers—imagine a pink orchid-like blossom—people fall in love with it. Unfortunately, each flower has 800 very viable seeds, spreading this plant very fast. It usually grows about

three and a half feet tall, but has now begun to grow twice as high. In some places, it has begun to fill waterways. A landscape company is trying to help people safely remove the plants with chemical and non-chemical means.

On Saturday, August 10, the Master Gardeners did their annual butterfly count in my area, and they came to my yard. I had planted Mexican Sunflower, not native, to help attract and feed butterflies. In my garden natives are there to help the butterflies lay eggs and feed their caterpillars. Mexican sunflower is an amazing butterfly magnet. I love all the butterflies in my garden: Pipevine Swallowtail, Yellow Swallowtail, Yellow and Orange Sulfurs, and Zebra Swallowtails, to name a few easy to see. I recommend growing this plant next year.

I just read a wonderful article by Patrick Barkham in *The Guardian*. He is urging all Britons to join in the annual Big Butterfly Count because an increased migration of Painted Butterflies from Europe landed in England. “The painted lady migration is one of the wonders of the natural world,” said Barkham. “Travelling up to 1km in the sky and at speeds of up to 30 mph these seemingly fragile creatures migrate hundreds of miles to reach our shores each year. This butterfly undertakes an extraordinary 7,500-mile round trip from tropical Africa to the Arctic Circle every year—almost double the length of the famous migrations of the monarch butterfly in North America.”

Lucile Kossodo

New Members

We welcome new members **Jill and Robert Burruss** of Toano, **Mary Galloway** of Hartfield, **Carol and Bryan Marshall, Debe Sineath,** and **Linda and Mark Wenger,** all of Williamsburg, to the John Clayton Chapter!

Upcoming Plant Walks & Other Events

🌸 Saturday, September 14, 10:00 am: Plants and Butterflies

Join butterfly experts **Adrienne Frank** and **Gary Driscoll** for a walk around the **Warhill Tract** (4725 Stadium Road, Williamsburg 23188) to watch butterflies collecting nectar from native plants. From the meadow of dogbane and pearl crescents, the walk continues around the pond near the stadium with grasses, sedges and skippers. Returning to the parking area, the meadow will be blooming with late summer perennials, sulphur butterflies, and many others. Park in the last area past the WISC center, near the power lines and community garden A. For more information, contact Adrienne or Gary at adrienne-gary@cox.net.



Nancy Barnhart

A Pipevine Swallowtail visits a Mexican Sunflower in Lucile's yard.



A Sphinx Moth caterpillar

🌸 **Saturday, September 28, 10:00 am: A Walk in Waller Mill Park**

Donna Ware will lead a walk to identify plants along the park trails. Expect to see several species of fall goldenrods and asters, along with oaks and hickories with maturing fruits that will help identify them.

Meet in the parking lot at Waller Mill Park, 901 Airport Road, Williamsburg.

Contact Donna at 757-565-0657 or dmeware1001@gmail.com for directions or questions.

🌸 **Saturday, October 5, 10:00 am: Botany Blitz at 3663 Sherwood Place, Suffolk**

Calling all botanists and plant enthusiasts to meet at the home of **Maria** and **David Nissen** to help identify plants on their 7-acre wooded property on Bennett Creek in Suffolk. Lots of goldenrods and asters should be in bloom. Take I-664 S to exit 11 A, VA 337/W. Portsmouth Blvd. Turn left onto Sportsman Blvd. Cross train tracks and turn left onto Sherwood Place. Go to the end of the road, turning left at the horse corral and continuing around it. There is limited parking near the house.

Email Maria at MLnissen916@gmail.com or Meegan Wallace at clm003@verizon.net if you have questions.

🌸 **October 9, 12 & 16: Botanical Workshops at Freedom Park**

Helen Hamilton's two-hour workshop on mosses and liverworts will allow participants to identify these plants by their appearance and with a hand lens/magnifier. Some classroom instruction with slides and examples will be followed by short walks nearby to observe and collect samples.

The program will be at the **Freedom Park Interpretive Center**, 5537 Centerville Road, Williamsburg, VA.



Snakeskin Liverwort

To provide a quality hands-on learning experience, the class must be small.

Three dates are available: **Wednesday, 9 October** 9:30–11:30

Saturday, 12 October 9:30–11:30

Wednesday, 16 October 1:30–3:30

When you register, please indicate which date is your 1st choice, which your 2nd choice, and which your 3rd choice. (Please register soon—when the enrollment approaches 15 for each slot, Helen will close registration for that date.)

Contact Helen at 757-564-4494 or helen48@cox.net **by Sept 27** and be sure to supply your name, phone number, and preferred email address.

🌸 **Saturday, October 12, 9:00 am: Stonehouse Elementary Habitat Workday and Walk**

Join **Sue Voigt** on Saturday morning at 9:00 am for a Stonehouse Elementary School workday at the Stonehouse Habitat Garden at 3651 Rochambeau Dr. in



Toano. Sue will then lead a walk around the Habitat **starting at 10:00** to see fall flowers and many bees and butterflies. Park in the school bus parking lot near the far end of the building. Contact Sue Voigt at svoigt1@cox.net for more information.

Recent Plant Walks

New Quarter Park Walk on July 13

On July 13th, a group of 15 plant enthusiasts (those pictured here as well as a couple camera-shy folks) braved the mid-July heat and humidity to enjoy the ~2-mile round-trip walk along the woodland trail to the New Quarter Park butterfly habitat and back. During the woodland portion of the walk we focused on tree species and used bud and nut characteristics to tease apart the hickories (bitternut [*Carya tomentosa*] and mockernut [*C. tomentosa*] specifically), and leaves and bark to distinguish between oaks (southern red [*Quercus falcata*] and northern red [*Q. rubra*] in particular).



The New Quarter Park plant enthusiasts

Farther along the trail, we used bark and needle characteristics to differentiate Virginia pine (*Pinus virginiana*) from loblolly pine (*P. taeda*) and were startled to find masses of red-headed pine sawfly caterpillars (*Noediprion lecontei*) covering the branches of the Virginia pine.

A few woodland herbs we saw included two bedstraws, wild licorice (*Galium circaezans*) and cleaves (*G. aparine*); white avens (*Geum canadense*), Virginia heartleaf (*Hexastylis virginica*), and lots of ferns, including sensitive fern (*Onoclea sensibi-*



Pine Sawfly caterpillars

Keith Navia

lis), New York fern (*Parathelypteris noveboracensis*), Christmas fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*), broad beech fern (*Phegopteris hexagonoptera*), and Cut-leaf Grape Fern (*Sceptridium dissectum*).

At the butterfly habitat we were treated to zebra and tiger swallowtails, lots of skippers, honey bees, and wasps, all having at the clustered mint (*Pycnanthemum muticum*), yellow crownbeard (*Verbesina occidentalis*), and blue vervain (*Verbena hastata*).

After a long walk down to the butterfly garden, a final surprise was waiting for us along the gravel road back—two rose pinks (*Sabatia angularis*) in full bloom!

Meegan Wallace



Meegan Wallace

Clustered Mint had many insect visitors.



Keith Navia

Those blooming Rose Pinks



Keith Navia

Blue Vervain

July 27th's Freedom Park Walk

Saturday I had the chance to attend my first "Plant Walk," hosted by the VNPS at Freedom Park. It was perfect weather to walk in the woods—sunny and not too hot. **Donna Ware** was our guide, welcoming us with a warm smile and complimentary bug spray for anyone who needed it. At 9 am, we all squeezed together for a picture before heading onto the trail.



A panoramic shot of the Freedom Park walk's big group

Donna gave us a brief overview of what plants to expect, and then we were off.

Not 20 steps onto the trail, we were introduced to two understory trees: Sourwood, with its characteristic slanting growth habit, and Black Gum. Later on in the walk, we were able to see a Sourwood in bloom. Next we met New York Fern in a small colony right along the trail side, along with Carolina Jessamine (sans flowers) and an example of Devil's Walking Stick in full bloom. It is actually very striking and pretty in bloom! I never thought I'd call that plant pretty...and we were only 10 minutes into the walk!

A few bends in the trail later, there was Cinnamon Fern, Royal Fern, Interrupted Fern, Huckleberry, Meadow Beauty, and Elephant's Foot, each growing right up against the other. I felt a little burst of satisfaction with each plant named. Like a mystery had been solved!

I've always loved learning the names and habits of the plants that surround me, anyone who's ever taken a walk through the woods with me will tell you, and we don't get very far very quick. Every few feet I'll see a plant that I don't know, then out come the pocket guides and phone! Sometimes I am successful at identifying it, sometimes not, but most of the time my companions get tired of standing there, listening to me talk to myself while searching for a name to put to said plant.

This Plant Walk was like a wish of mine come true! Every time one of the group asked "what's this?" without hesitation Donna had a name for it! I felt like a kid in a candy store, being able to put names to plants I recognized all the time but never knew the name of. It was a great exercise in self restraint. I had to remind myself that there was a plan to this walk, with specific plants to see and meet, and bit my tongue to keep from constantly asking "what's this? And this? Ooo, what about that one?!" The feeling of satisfaction gained from spending a beautiful morning in the woods with some very knowledgeable people has me hooked. I'm already excited for the next one!

Stacy Petteys

August 10 Walk at White Oak Trail

Eighteen walkers met at the Newport News Park Ranger Station. From there we carpooled to the site of the Butterfly Pea colony (*Clitoria mariana*). A good portion of the stand had been damaged by Park heavy equipment driving off the road to dispose of fallen limbs and trees.

Butterfly Pea is a low-growing plant with delicate, subtle blooms, not bright and showy, so it's easy to understand that workers could disregard what they are driving over. But overlooking and damaging a native treasure is



White Oak Trail walkers gather for a photo.

something that any of us could do during seasons when a plant is not at its showy best or is dormant. It was a lesson that something special and deserving of care can be right underfoot.

Nevertheless, the edges of the colony remained and we did get to see Butterfly Pea in bloom. As we admired the unique white and lavender blossoms, walker Jim noticed a small pink flower. Using the iNaturalist app, walker Maria identified it as Pink Fuzzybean (*Strophostyles umbellata*).



Butterfly Pea...



...and Pink Fuzzybean



Cranefly Orchid

We carpoled on to the White Oak Trail. Such a large group got really strung out and we were fortunate to have JCC member Meegan Wallace to bring up the tail end of the walkers. As we got more and more spaced out, one group had Meegan to listen to and the other group had Susie Yager. The different groups may not have focused on all the same plants, but there was plenty to see and discuss. Along the trail we found Hairy Elephant's Foot and Cranefly Orchid in bloom; also New York Fern, Southern Lady Fern, Christmas Fern, Broad Beech Fern, and Pawpaw. Wild Comfrey had seed heads.

The swamp bridge offers great viewing of a diverse array of native plants. We found Common Milkweed, Climbing Hempweed, Arrow Arum, and Ebony Spleenwort from the swamp bridge. Swamp Smartweed and Swamp Loosestrife seem to have taken over where in previous years Jewelweed ruled.

From the swamp bridge we also found Groundnut Vine, Cardinal Flower, and a huge specimen of Devil's Walkingstick, all in bloom. Silky Dogwood, Beauty Berry, and Swamp Rose were bearing fruits still green.

On the return walk, we found a lonely Monkey Flower plant (*Mimulus ringens*) in bloom at the lake's edge—a great find to end with.

Walker Debe emailed afterward:

“As a newcomer to the area I found VNPS most welcoming, amazed at the number of native plants and thrilled I was able to retain a bit of what we saw. It was so cool and rewarding to recognize the butterfly pea, pawpaw, cranefly orchid, and hairy elephant's foot on a hike a few days after your tour. I am now a new member of VNPS and can't wait for more opportunities to learn about our native plants.”

Susie Yager



A Monkey Flower's blossom

From Helen...

Verbenas

This is a large family of annual and perennial plants that grow in warm regions of North and South America. Cultivars of many colors and shapes are in garden centers and they are favorites for hanging baskets and garden edges, where they will self-seed. Bees and butterflies are attracted to their clustered flowers for their nectar. Several species are native to Virginia—two are common throughout.

Verbenas have an “indeterminate” growth pattern, where older flowers at the bottom of the stem are now making seeds and the flowers are blooming in sequence at the top of the stem. Black-eyed Susans (*Rudbeckia hirta*) have the same pattern, with goldfinches feeding on the seeds where most of the disk flowers have bloomed while bees are collecting pollen on the emerging flowers near the center of the flower. Plants with determinate growth produce flowers at the tip of the stem—the stem no longer elongates but other flowers may appear below.

Blue Vervain (*Verbena hastata*) has pencil-like spikes of blue 5-petaled flowers clustered at the ends of the branches. The tiny flowers bloom a few at a time, advancing toward the pointed tip throughout the summer. The plant grows from 2 to 6 feet tall, pumping out flowers as the stem elongates. This native perennial has an exceptionally long blooming season, producing flowers from June through October.

Blue Vervain has small lance-shaped leaves with teeth that make the leaf feel rough. They grow opposite each other on grooved 4-sided stems that are very stiff—the plant remains upright throughout the growing season and does not require staking.



Blue Vervain's flower spikes

Easily grown in average to wet soils in full sun, this plant will form colonies by rhizomes and self-seeding. The range is from Nova Scotia to British Columbia south to Florida and Arizona, growing in moist thickets, meadows, and roadsides. It occurs naturally in the Piedmont and Mountain areas of Virginia and in a few counties in the Coastal Plain.

Insects love this plant. Many species of bees, wasps, and flies feed on the nectar and collect pollen. Blue Vervain is a host plant for the Common Buckeye, and other small butterflies, skippers, and moths visit the flowers. Most animals avoid the plant since the foliage is bitter-tasting.

White Vervain (*V. urticifolia*) is common in all counties of Virginia, growing in roadsides, woodland edges, old fields, and pastures. Tiny white flowers bloom a few at a time on long sprawling branches from May through November.

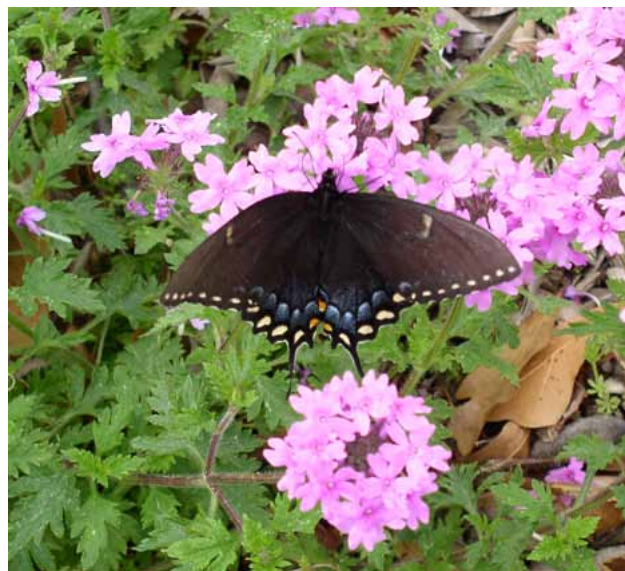
The species name “urticifolia” refers to its leaves that resemble those of nettles. The leaves have coarse teeth along the margin and are often hairy beneath, but do not cause the stinging allergic reaction of true nettles (*Urtica* sp.)



White Vervain in bloom

White Vervain has high ecological value for wildlife. The inconspicuous white flowers are a nectar source for many species of bees, wasps, butterflies, moths, and flies, and the seeds feed songbirds.

Rose Verbena (*V. canadensis*, now *Glandularia canadensis*) is a popular ornamental widely used as ground cover and in rock gardens and hanging baskets. Species of this genus grow in the southern U.S. as well as Central and South America. If found in the wild in eastern Virginia, the plant has probably escaped from cultivation. The cultivar “Homestead Purple,” with rounded deep purple flowers, is available in local nurseries.



A Spicebush Swallowtail on Rose Verbena

Brazilian Vervain (*V. brasiliensis*) is an introduced species with blue flowers in tight clusters, not in spreading, candelabra-like groups. Leaves are elliptical with toothed edges and hairy on the undersides. A native of South America, Brazilian Vervain is considered an invasive weed in southeastern U.S. It has been recorded growing wild in Newport News and in York, Charles City, Isle of Wight, and neighboring counties. Another Brazilian Vervain (*V. bonariensis*) is popular in the nursery trade for its stiff growth habit and clusters of tiny violet flowers.

The genus name *Verbena* has an obscure derivation, generally used to describe plants used as healing or sacred herbs. Native Americans and 19th century physicians brewed a leaf tea from Blue Vervain as a “female tonic”; Cotton Mather recommended a decoction with honey as a remedy for consumption. Plants in the genus *Verbena* have been documented as medicinal herbs used during the Revolutionary War when medicines were scarce.

Helen Hamilton



Brazilian Vervain (photo Robert H. Mohlenbrock, USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / USDA SCS)

John Clayton Chapter Calendar

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(More on Page 3)

Thursday, September 19 **7:00 pm: Our September meeting—"Telling the Story of Longleaf Pine Restoration in Virginia"**
Speaker **Rebecca Wilson** is the Longleaf Pine Restoration Specialist, Prescribed Fire Manager, and Regional Supervisor for the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation's Natural Heritage Program.
The meeting will be at the **York County Public Library, 8500 George Washington Memorial Highway (U.S. Rt. 17) at Battle Road** (immediately north of York Convalescent and Rehabilitation Center). (See Page 1.)

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October 9, 12, & 16 **Botanical Workshops at Freedom Park**
Helen Hamilton will offer a workshop on mosses and liverworts at the **Freedom Park Interpretive Center** on three days, or any two of these, depending on enrollment: **Wed, Oct 9** and **Sat, Oct 12** from **9:30–11:30**; **Wed, Oct 16** from **1:30–3:00**. Contact Helen at 757-564-4494 or helen48@cox.net to register. (See Page 4 for more details.)

Saturday, October 12 **10:00 am: Stonehouse Elementary Habitat Workday and Walk**
Join **Sue Voigt** on Saturday morning at 9:00 am for a Stonehouse Elementary School workday at the Stonehouse Habitat Garden at 3651 Rochambeau Dr. in Toano. Sue will then lead a walk **starting at 10:00** around the Habitat to see fall flowers and many bees and butterflies. (More info on Page 4.)

Keep a lookout for announcements about additional walks and other events in the local newspapers and on our website at www.vnps.org/john-clayton.

Below is a membership renewal form. Please contact Membership Chair **Cathy Flanagan** at 757-879-1997 or at flanagan.catherine@gmail.com with questions about your membership.

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*	

I would like to receive my newsletters electronically at the email address above.

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