

Claytonia

Newsletter of the John Clayton Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society

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www.claytonvnps.org

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From the President

For the first time in my memory of being in the Native Plant Society, there were no plant walks in this area. It was with sadness that we entered the summer with Covid-19. What could we do but take a new look at our gardens, and many of us sent photos to Facebook and to our newsletter of the natives in our gardens. In this issue, I am including photos of some of my favorite native plants blooming now, hoping it might inspire you to add these lovely flowers to your yard.



Lucile's photos of three native plants currently in bloom at her house: Left, Common Yucca (*Yucca filamentosa*); center, Canada Lily (*Lilium canadense*); right, Purple Milkweed (*Asclepias purpurascens*)

For the first time I took out a long path-shaped swath of native plants from the middle of my native plant area, no, not for a future plant sale, but for a vegetable garden. The plant bed I ordered was made of organic cedar and measured 8 feet by 2 feet and about 10 ½ inches in height. Well, after waiting for a month for it to arrive, I was informed that it got lost somewhere. Then I tried to order one at a big box store and it was unavailable. Another big-box store said they had one. Nevertheless, when I got to the store, I learned it was on order, and would be there some time later. Covid-19 has made us learn to improvise; looking at the pots I had available from past Plant Sales, I found several deep and large pots where I planted each vegetable. I placed these pots on top of landscape cloth and so it went. After growing my vegetables in the pots for over a month, I gave up on the plant bed. I will do with what I have this year. I hope to have nice fresh vegetables this summer.

In Great Britain, as elsewhere, wildlife has been venturing into towns. I am sure many of you may remember the photos of the herd of wild goats all over the streets in Llandudno, Wales last winter. It made news all over the world. As Steven Morris of the *Guardian* wrote, the orca, the cuckoo, the owls, and the peregrine falcon have been able to enjoy the quieter world, and badgers in Northern Ireland are venturing out in daylight. Not all loved the solitude. One bird did not enjoy this quiet. The peacocks at Powis Castle in Wales are now following the gardeners who work there—they are lonely without the visitors. In the US, Terrence McCoy wrote in the *Washington Post*, updated on April 15, 2020, about Bruce Borowsky, a videographer in Boulder, Colorado. “He was walking through the main pedestrian strip of the college town last week when he experienced that magical moment.” Up near the top of a tree by the side of a building, he spotted a mountain lion, asleep, back paws hanging down. Down below, Pearl Street, which normally teems with restaurant patrons, shoppers, and University of Colorado students, was a “ghost town.” Nothing was waking the mountain lion up anytime soon. The same article goes on to say that in Barcelona, Spain, wild boar have descended into the city. Now that everyone is “reopening” parks and towns, we all need to be careful of the wildlife that have been free to roam.

Finally, a follow-up about storks, about which I wrote in a previous From the President essay. I mentioned that there was a big effort to re-introduce storks into Great Britain. In May, an article in the *Guardian* announced that one of the three nests at the Knepp estate in West Sussex was successful—all of its five eggs hatched. Now Great Britain has storks again.

Lucile Kossodo



Dianna Bailey sent Lucile this photo of a **huge** Jack-in-the-pulpit growing in a pot at her home. It measures 43 inches in height and dwarfs the others in the pot!

New Members

We welcome new members **Janice Towne** of Onemo, **Gail Asher** of Newport News, **Amy Nichols** of Newport News, **Atsuko** and **Paul Fameli** of Williamsburg, and **Tela Thomason** of Williamsburg to the John Clayton Chapter!

From Cathy...



Our Mission: Made possible by the Annual Native Plant Sale!

The mission of the Virginia Native Plant Society, broadly stated, is “To promote the conservation of Virginia’s native plants and habitats.” You can read the full mission statement here:

<https://vnps.org/about/mission/>

Over the years, the mission has expanded and evolved, and each chapter has its own ways of serving that mission. For example, our chapter educates our members and the public by providing native plants to the community for homes, parks, and schools. These plants also provide support for the pollinators that are vital to the very survival of our native plants.

What we do in support of our mission:

As education is a primary focus, we raise funds and receive donations to send 1–3 children each summer to Nature Camp in Vesuvius, VA. Thanks to one generous and long-standing member, **Ralph Will**, we were able to provide funds for three Nature Camp scholarships this year. Our thanks also to **Libby Oliver** for coordinating this important project.

Last year, our Board authorized a \$1000 donation to support a William & Mary student conducting Herbarium research. The student research comprises digitizing herbarium specimens to make the images available worldwide for teaching and research. We have also contributed to the Plant VA Natives initiative and the Virginia Flora Project.

Our General Meetings are held six times a year and member contributions support expert presentations. These are special opportunities for our members to deepen their knowledge of the native plants and habitats we strive to protect. These meetings are posted in local event calendars and social media, and are free and open to the public.

Seasonal plant walks, led by local experts with specific knowledge, are conducted in a variety of habitats. These are small groups where one on one instruction is possible. The walks are also free and open to the public.

The Stonehouse Elementary school garden is a showcase for our chapter. The native plants are labeled, and Eagle scout projects have contributed garden borders, benches, and a whimsical wooden bridge. The plants are a source of plant material for our sale. Chapter members, parents, and students help with weeding, pruning, digging, and potting plants. **Sue Voigt’s** championing and leadership of this event has brought outstanding publicity for our chapter.

Members contribute articles that cover our events with photos and commentary in our newsletter, *Claytonia*. **Helen Hamilton**, our very own well-known plant expert, continues to contribute scholarly articles despite having spent time in the hospital this year! The *Claytonia* is beautifully presented in an expert layout, and is contributed entirely by long-standing and hard-working volunteer and board member **Louise Menges**. It is published six times a year and is available online and in print by request. A few printed copies are used for informational display at events such as meetings, symposiums, plant sales, and at the farmer's market.

We maintain a social media presence on Facebook and our own chapter website. As Website and Facebook coordinator, I can report that Helen Hamilton's contribution of her "June Wildflower of the Month" article reached 527 people, received 26 "likes", was shared 7 times, and generated 122 engagements!

Our double sided "rack card," available in public libraries and parks, outlines what we do and the benefits of native plants. This helps bring the message to the public and invites them to join us and learn more.

Last year, despite the setback of an impending hurricane, we hosted a successful and profitable state-wide Annual Meeting which involved an itinerary of two days of speakers, meals, field trips, and workshops. Volunteer and board member **Cortney Will** contributed many tireless hours coordinating this event. It gave us networking opportunities with other chapters and ideas for our organization going forward.

The major event of every year is our spring plant sale (see Sue Voigt's article in this newsletter). It is our only fundraiser, and how we pay for all the things we do as a chapter. However, the event itself is equally important. It is an opportunity to give our community something of value.

It provides education and promotes the use of natives. The plant list that is created is packed with information. In just a few pages, the list contains the common and botanical name for each plant offered, along with its light and soil requirements and the pollinators and other wildlife it supports.

Educational handouts are also made available, including a list of deer resistant plants, salt tolerant plants, and a list of host plants that support our native butterflies. This year's plant list included 122 varieties and a total of 841 individual plants! Chapter and Board member **Adrienne Frank** contributed much effort into keeping the list current, accurate, and manageable.

President **Lucile Kossodo's** leadership, knowledge, dedication to the care and selection of plants, and innumerable hours of her own time cannot be overstated.

Our two sales indicate there is a healthy demand for native plants. Perhaps having two plant sale dates and locations or combining our sale with another group may be something to consider for next year. Hopefully, next year's sale will be open to the public and Scout Troop 103 can participate again. They are always a big help and very considerate.

As a member of the plant sale committee, I know firsthand that work is ongoing all year in preparation and numerous hours are invested by the committee (Sue, Lucile, Adrienne, and myself). Volunteers are recruited from membership to dig plants in the fall and pot them for sale in the spring. We purchase small starts or “plugs” from reliable native plant nurseries and grow them until they are of suitable size for sale. Although there is always a risk of plant loss due to unexpected frost or damaging storms, we have found that demand is consistently strong, and we consistently make a profit. It is how we make carrying out our **mission impossible!** A sincere thank you to all members for your support.



Two easy ways to help our chapter:

Sign up with Amazon Smile for the benefit of VNPS!

Amazon contributes ½ percent of the amount of your eligible orders to the non-profit of your choice. I have been testing it out for the last 8 months. For the first time, our May bank statement showed an Amazon Smile deposit of \$7.47. This was based on my 34 orders. A small amount, but with more contributing, more is possible. Amazon reports that they have contributed about \$170 million to charities through this program.

Contribute your ideas!

The chapter board wishes to hear from you—please contribute your comments, questions, or suggestions to this email address:

jccvnpswmbg@gmail.com

From Sue...

Our “Limited” Plant Sales were a great success!

Thanks to our members and friends for coming and participating in our two “limited” plant sales in early May. Our chapter raised \$5,260!

Although the Chapter’s Annual Plant Sale scheduled for May 2 in the Williamsburg Community Building had to be cancelled due to the Covid-19 Virus Pandemic, we were able to hold two sales: one in Newport News and one in James City County. Both sales were incredibly successful, despite the challenges.

Since several hundred potted plants had been collected and tended, both in Croaker at the home of **Joan and Jim Etchberger** and in Newport News at the home of **Meegan Wallace and Chuck Deffenbaugh**, the plant sale committee, with consent of the hosts, decided to hold “limited” plant sales for members and friends of the chapter at the two sites where the plants were located. May 2 was selected for the Newport News sale (particularly convenient to VNPS members from Gloucester and the Peninsula) and May 9 for the sale in Croaker, near Williamsburg. Both sales were held outside with ample space to maintain social distancing.

An announcement of the “Limited Sale” and a list of plants available for sale at each of the sites were sent to VNPS/JCC members and local Master Naturalists along with registration requirements. Entry to each sale site was restricted to about 6–8 registered persons in 20-minute intervals. Payment by check was requested.

Special thanks to members who volunteered as cashiers, greeters and helpers: **Susie Yager, Alicia Garcia, Joanne Sheffield, Joan and Jim Etchberger, Julie Kelly, Claudia Kirk, Gary Driscole, and Bob Voigt**. Shoppers selected plants, tallied the cost, paid, and helpers carried purchases to their cars. A surprise bonus was Susie Yager’s hand-made facemasks that sold out!

After the May 9 sale, representatives of local school gardens from York County and Williamsburg/James City County were invited to select free plants from those remaining. Then all the rest of the plants, including trees, shrubs, and some perennials, were sold at a reduced price to the Williamsburg Botanical Garden to be added to their honor box, on-going native plant sale. This helped to get the plants into the ground and enhanced our community outreach.

The 2020 sale expenses were much lower than normal: no rental fees for building and tables, no printing or publicity costs, and fewer plants were purchased from commercial growers. The additional proceeds will provide funds for future chapter programs and more Nature Camp Scholarships for young people next summer.

Thank you to all who helped by donating plants, digging, potting, and caring for plants, as well as to those who helped at the sales and all who purchased plants.

VNPS/JCC 2020 Plant Sale Committee:
Cathy Flanagan, Adrienne Frank, Lucile Kossodo, and Sue Voigt

The John Clayton Chapter wishes to thank **Joan and Jim Etchberger** for the use of their property, their support, and their hard work.

Here are a few of the activities they carried out to facilitate our 2020 Plant Sale.

They...

- offered their yard for our Fall Potting Parties.
- stored our plants in their wooded area.
- cared for the plants in Fall, Winter, and early Spring.
- provided a greenhouse to keep our milkweeds warm in the springtime.
- offered their property for our 2020 Limited Plant Sale.
- volunteered at the Plant Sale itself.

For all of this and more, they deserve our deepest thanks and a big “Hooray”!

We couldn’t have done it without them.

Here are some photos Cathy took during our May 9th Native Plant Sale at the Etchberger's...



JCC members hard at work:
top left, Sue Voigt;
top right, Adrienne Frank;
above, Donna Ware



Our rack cards



Susie Yager's beautiful facemasks

More photos from the sale...



The greenhouse



A yardful of native plants potted for the sale



Judy Jones with her purchases



March 14th's Naked Tree Walk at Freedom Park

The JCC regular plant walks have been postponed until the VNPS board makes a decision on policy and until we all feel comfortable and safe congregating in groups again. The last plant walk held before the Covid-19 shutdown was the March 14th Naked Tree Walk. The walk was led by **Charlie Dubay**, volunteer Environmental Science competition team (Envirothon) coach and retired Science teacher from Jamestown High School, with an additional forestry measurements demonstration by a Jamestown High Senior Environmental Science student, **Sophia Liu**. Sophia taught the group forestry measurement techniques using a Biltmore stick, Clinometer, Prism, and how to measure distances by “pacing.”

It should also be noted that another of today's participants, **Judy Kinshaw-Ellis**, also a member of Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, and a Tree Steward, planted all the trees found in this area of the park listed as “**PLANTED**” and shared much about this program with our group—her contributions were also much appreciated!!

Here is a list of most of what we saw during the March Naked Tree Walk:

1. Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*)
2. Flowering Dogwood (*Cornus florida*)
3. Sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*), White Oak (*Quercus alba*), Northern Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*)
4. Southern Red Oak (*Quercus falcata*)
5. Water Oak (*Quercus nigra*)
6. An unusual-appearing, but probable Green Ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*)
7. Sourwood (*Oxydendrum arboreum*)
8. Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*)
9. Yellow Poplar, Tulip Poplar, or Tulip Tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*)
10. Mockernut Hickory (*Carya tomentosa*)
11. Loblolly Pine (*Pinus taeda*) Most of the large trees in this park are this species! Loblolly Pine is a swamp-tolerant species, indicative of the fact that this area of the park, anyway, is often swampy.
12. Virginia Pine (*Pinus virginiana*)
13. Sweetbay Magnolia (*Magnolia virginiana*) **PLANTED** A true locally native Magnolia, it is common in wetlands.
14. Longleaf Pine (*Pinus palustris*), grass stage **PLANTED**
15. Red Osier Dogwood (*Cornus stolonifer*) **PLANTED** According to the Virginia Digital Atlas, the nativity of this species in Virginia is questionable.

16. Yellow Jasmine or Carolina Jasmine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*) native vine
17. Serviceberry (*Amelanchier* spp.) **PLANTED**
18. Black Walnut (*Juglans nigra*) A native Allelopathic species, it exudes a toxin to kill off nearby competing species.
19. Common Persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*) **PLANTED**
20. Bluets (*Houstonia caerulea*) Saw some white varieties, a favorite of Donna Ware!
21. Small white Violets (possibly *Viola blanda*)
22. Broomsedge grass (*Andropogon virginicus*) is an historically important member of early land succession in our area; this led to a short discussion of the value of having a “soft edge” of grasses, weeds, and shrubs on the edge of a forest for wildlife habitat.

Included was a short discussion of what constitutes an invasive species: from another location, reproduces out of control, causes expensive damage to local environments, displaces native species, and reduces important biodiversity!

Invasive species noted were:

1. Japanese Honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*) from Eastern Asia
2. Royal Paulownia, Princess Tree, or Empress Tree (*Paulownia tomentosa*) from China—attractive, but must be checked for its rapid reproduction!

The value of using Native Plants was also discussed. These species favor local conditions without need for extra care, water, or nutrients, while benefiting native pollinators important to agriculture, gardeners, and native wildlife!

Meegan Wallace



Leader Charlie Dubay is at left in this photo of the the Naked Tree Walk participants.

From Helen...

Wildflower of the Month for June:

Spiderwort (*Tradescantia virginiana*)

A long-blooming native perennial like Spiderwort can fit into a lot of spaces in the home garden. Three-petaled flowers form a triangle—they are violet-blue with vivid yellow stamens, growing in a 3-ft-tall clump. Each flower is open for only a day, in the morning, but they bloom in succession from buds at the ends of stems from April through July. The flower stems are surrounded by arching green leaves up to one foot long and one inch wide that are erect early in the season but are somewhat drooping in summer.



Spiderwort is not fussy about growing conditions—part shade, medium water, low maintenance—and tolerates clay soil as well as dry or wet soil. It would fit in a woodland or native garden, naturalized or as a border, along with other perennials that hide the sprawling leaves late in the season. The plant can self-seed and spread, but dead-heading will prevent seed set. Spiderwort's blue-violet flowers are attractive with yellow flowers like Green and Gold (*Chrysogonum virginianum*) and Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*). Bumblebees are the principal pollinators.

Two other species of *Tradescantia* grow in Virginia, differing in the appearance of the leaves and flowers. *T. ohiensis* grows in Virginia Beach and the western mountainous counties; *T. subaspera* has been located in the southwestern counties; *T. virginiana* grows west of Richmond and in some southeastern counties.

The plant's genus name honors John Tradescant, gardener to Charles the First of England and a subscriber to the Virginia Company. John's son traveled to Virginia in the 1630s and sent spiderwort back to England, where it became part of the English cottage gardens. It is called Spiderwort because the stems when cut secrete a sticky secretion that becomes threadlike and silky as it hardens, like a spider's web. "Wort" is an old English word for plant.

Hybrids are available in the nursery trade with red-purple, pink, or white flowers.

Wildflower of the Month for July: Mountain-mints (*Pycnanthemum tenuifolium/muticum*)

What's not to like about a native perennial that is attractive to bees and butterflies, does not spread aggressively, and is deer-resistant? Mountain-mints bloom from June through August, with small white flowers rich in nectar that is food for many kinds of insects—butterflies, skippers, bees, beetles, flies, and especially wasps. Flowers are tightly clustered on the ends of stems and their structure allows wasps and other short-tongued insects to feed easily.

Two species are common in our area. With very narrow leaves, Slender Mountain-mint (*P. tenuifolium*) has a delicate, somewhat airy appearance. This native perennial plant grows 1–3 feet tall, branching frequently to create a bushy effect. The leaves are up to 3 inches long and ¼-inch across. Each leaf is hairless, with a prominent central vein and smooth margins. Small white to lavender 2-lipped flowers are in dense clusters in the leaf axils or at the ends of slender, hairless stems.



A skipper at lunch on a Slender Mountain-mint

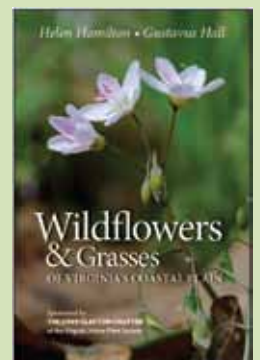
The dark green leaves of Clustered Mountain-mint (*P. muticum*) are not thin (up to 2 inches wide) and have a strong spearmint aroma when crushed. The flowers are similar—the 2-lipped tubular flowers, each up to ½-inch wide, are in dense flat-topped clusters at the ends of the stems. Each cluster has a pair of showy silvery leaf-like bracts at the base. The entire plant looks like it has been dusted with powdery snow. Massed in groups, the effect is stunning—a clustered plant with tiny pinkish flowers buzzing with insects, surrounded by dark green leaves and snowy bracts.

Both Mountain-mints are easy to grow in the home garden in full sun or part shade. Slender Mountain-mint prefers soils that are somewhat drier than the bogs and wet meadows where Clustered Mountain-mint occurs.

The flowers have no scent, but the leaves have a minty odor and taste. Deer usually don't browse on Mountain-mints because of the minty taste; the foliage may contain anti-bacterial substances that disrupt their digestive process. The tiny seeds are disseminated by wind—they are too small to be of much interest to birds.



Wildflowers and Grasses of Virginia's Coastal Plain will soon be out of print—less than 100 copies remain in the BRIT warehouse. In an effort to clear their shelves, we will sell the book at cost (\$10), which covers my discounted price and S/H. Send a check with your return address to: Helen Hamilton, 119 Reserve Way, Apt. 408, Williamsburg, VA 23185; I will mail you a signed copy.



John Clayton Chapter Calendar

There are no Chapter events planned for July and August.

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](http://www.vnps.org/john%20clayton).

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