Claytonia

Newsletter of the John Clayton Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society

Volume 38, Number 6 November–December 2022 www.claytonvnps.org

Officers

President Lucile Kossodo
757-565-0769
lkossodo@cox.net

Vice President Vacant

Treasurer Cathy Flanagan
757-879-1997
flanagan.catherine@gmail.com

Secretary Cortney Will
757-291-1500
clangley@plantrescue.org

Committee Chairs

Awards Donna Ware
757-565-0657
dmeware@verizon.net

Hospitality Vacant

Publicity Emilia Godwin
571-286-8893
emigodwin@hotmail.com

Membership Cathy Flanagan
757-879-1997
flanagan.catherine@gmail.com

Nature Camp Libbey Oliver
757-645-7143
lholiver55@gmail.com

Newsletter Louise Menges
757-229-4346
louisemenges6@gmail.com

Plant Rescue Cortney Will
757-291-1500
clangley@plantrescue.org

Plant Sale Co-chairs
Adrienne Frank
757-566-4009
adrienne-gary@cox.net
Sue Voigt
804-966-8487
svoigt1@cox.net

Plant Walks Scott Hemler
757-243-6759
sahemler@yahoo.com

Stonehouse Garden
Jennifer Meyers
jennifernaglemeyers@gmail.com

Webmaster Cathy Flanagan
757-879-1997
flanagan.catherine@gmail.com

Our Zoom meeting at 7 pm on Nov. 18: Adrienne Frank on "Butterfly Identification"

The Williamsburg Area is home to more than 90 species of butterflies, and recently local experts have found species not previously recorded. Eleven families of butterflies come in a variety of sizes and shapes. This presentation will help you to distinguish physical characteristics and behavior such as flight patterns, life cycle, and use of nectar and host plants.

Adrienne Frank has lived in Williamsburg since 1978 with her husband Gary Driscole. They both enjoy gardening, birding, butterflying, and all things nature. She is a board member of the John Clayton Chapter of the Native Plant Society and the Friends of Dragon Run. Since 2008, they both have been members of the Historic Rivers Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists. Adrienne's mother was a botanist, and she learned early about plants and ecology. Her professional career was as an Occupational Therapist and program administrator at Child Development Resources for 40 years. Even before retirement, she began learning a lot about butterflies by participating in butterfly counts, collecting data on local butterflies, and educating others about identification, behavior, host plants, and habitat. Every year in August, she coordinates the Annual Williamsburg Area Butterfly Count and submits that data to the North American Butterfly Association.

From the President

At the end of last summer, my friend adopted a rescue dog. We were ignorant of the fact that it was an experienced runaway. Sure enough, he ran off and we had to contact the Lost Dogs site in this neighborhood. They were very good and were able to get him back to her. As the rescuer walked in my yard near the lake, she noticed that someone had cut three trees from my property without my permission! In addition, a member of the lake committee saw that the boundary of my property was larger than I thought because of a rule

about the distance of one dock from another dock. Well, property marked with no trespassing signs, boat owners in my property moved away, and I realized I needed to plant trees in the bare area. This fall there were many oak acorns falling from the oak trees. I have embarked on an experiment. I have been collecting different kinds of acorns and planting them. If they grow into little oaks, I will plant them in that area. I am aware that I will not live to see any of them grow into the giants they could become. However, I will have contributed more oaks to the wooded area. As I studied the acorns, I realized I have White, Southern Red or maybe Scarlet, Black, and Bluejack oaks. I hope I identified them correctly. I will write in the January newsletter and let you know if they have sprouted….

Lucile's photo of acorns and "lids" from her yard

While reading the *Guardian*, I saw the title of an article by Phoebe Weston, "Bee bus stops first appeared in the Dutch city of Utrecht. Now the UK is planning for more than 1,000 and there is growing interest across Europe". Wondering what that meant, I had to read it all. It seems that the Dutch town made growing platforms on top of the bus stop roofs in its city. They planted native plants that could survive this environment and plants that would attract bees. Utrecht was the first city to do this, and now with over 300 of these living bus stops, the results were excellent. Because of these plantings, the decline of native bees has greatly reversed, the flowers were beautiful, and ridership increased. Yes, a special construction is necessary for these bus stops. The bus shelters last for about 20 years. The roofs are specially built to support the weight of the soil as well as the weight of the water when it rains or is watered. Then Britain decided to include these special shelters in their cities. The creators of these special bus top roofs planted native British flowers such as kidney vetch, thyme, selfheal and wild marjoram, wild strawberries, and pansies to attract a range of pollinators including common carder bees, buff-tailed bumblebees, peacock butterflies, small tortoiseshell butterflies, and chequered hoverflies. As well as the wildlife benefits, the roofs also absorb rainwater and make a small contribution to offsetting the urban heat island effect. Britain has lost 97% of its garden meadows since World War II and insects have declined

by 60% since 2004. These bus stops will be in the middle of cities, so their importance to the environment is great. Here is a list by Phoebe Weston of the insects attracted to these planted British bus stops:

Bees
Common carder bee
Buff-tailed bumblebee
Early bumblebee
Red-tailed bumblebee
Hairy-footed flower bee

Butterflies
Gatekeeper
Meadow brown
Common blue
Small tortoiseshell
Peacock

Hoverflies
Marmalade hoverfly
Common dronefly
White-footed hoverfly
Chequered hoverfly
The Footballer hoverfly

Some towns had huge petitions from the citizens requesting these bus stops. The article also mentions Clear Channel, the company that is building them in Britain. These bus stops planters exist in France, Denmark and Sweden, and more countries are getting in on the act. Another attraction is that unless there is a drought, they need little maintenance. Now some people are wondering if maybe they could have one on top of their garages. How much nicer our inner cities would be!

When I lived in Britain, I thought those endless lawns in parks were beautiful. Now, Patrick Barkham has written an article in *The Guardian* in which he says that the summers in UK are getting hotter and so it is time to rethink the future of such large expanses of grass. In his article in the Guardian he states, "Half of Britain's green and pleasant land is covered by grasses—pasture, meadows, moorland, parks, and lawns. Grassland managed for livestock grazing is the UK's largest crop by area. Most of our animal protein is fed with grasses: pigs and chickens eat corn (a grass) and sheep and cattle directly graze grass." Yet these grasses have diminished greatly as farmers' yields of grain have fallen. This past hot, dry summer the grasses turned a dusty brown and were inedible to animals and unusable for people. Climate change has made grass vulnerable. He asks the question: "Can grass still thrive" in this era? Some botanists recommend allowing the grass growth to grow longer. The ryegrass used in British parks is less resilient because it

has short roots. Many parks are growing more wildflowers and bulbs rather than large swaths of grass. The question asked by the author is "How must grass change, how must we change, and is this the end of the lawn?" In England, the ryegrass with its short roots is a monoculture. With different grass mixtures and wild plants, the lawns will continue to be green. In Kew Gardens, the grass area that has native African, American (south) and Asian grasses did not suffer during the hot drought-filled summer. Historically British lawns included wildflowers. Now with warmer season grasses and wildflowers included, English lawns can handle the droughts better and they have returned to their original plant combinations. This is a lesson for our gardens and parks also.

Best wishes to all of you for the upcoming holidays! **Lucile Kossodo**

New Members

We welcome **Donna Benson**, **Chloe Harner**, and **Sarah Warner**, all of of Williamsburg, and **Sky Tilley** of Newport News, to the John Clayton Chapter!

No Plant Walks are scheduled for November and December… but we now have a Plant Walks Chair!

Stay tuned—**Scott Hemler** will be scheduling walks for 2023.

From Out in Left Field

It's Fall…Kill the Evil Trees!

A workshop by the Blue Ridge PRISM (Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management) about controlling nonnative invasives in the fall was broadcast on October 12, 2022. I'll share a few of the interesting points here, but if you'd like to click through the powerpoint slides, go to: https://blueridgeprism.org/training-materials/ and scroll down to the Control of Invasive Plants 2022 Fall Workshop (not the Identification workshop, which is also good). A recording of the Workshop should be on the site in a week or so.

Why Fall?

Fall and winter are the best times to kill nonnative invasive trees. In autumn, I always have a few in the cross-hairs...an autumn olive, some ailanthus (tree-of-heaven) and pawlonia. Blue Ridge PRISM conducts season-specific invasive plant webinars because there are "best" seasons to control different kinds of plants. Fall and early winter (through the end of February) are particularly good times to control invasive shrubs and trees. That's because their sap is flowing down into their roots, and will bring the herbicides with it, which makes it more effective than when the sap is rising.

Now, of course, you can manage nonnative invasives without herbicides, and the Fall PRISM workshop provided lots of information on those techniques. One exam-

ple was that ailanthus can often be effectively pulled out when it's up to 3–5′ "tall." I tried this recently, at a corner of my neighborhood, and they came up pretty easily, with lots of roots attached.

Some of the small alianthus saplings before Kathi pulled them out by hand

Their roots a week or so afterward

Another thing that surprised me was that, in some cases, if you damage a tree (like ailanthus) but don't kill it, it may respond with a vengeance. "Cutting down or girdling ailanthus causes it to sprout roots from its entire structure, requiring long-term maintenance." (ppt slide #32 on PRISM site) WHOA! SCAREY!

Hack and Squirt

One of the techniques the workshop described for trees, shrubs and vines that are over 1–2″ in diameter is "hack and squirt." If used carefully and correctly, it can be very effective (take my word for it). It consists of using a hatchet (or something like it) to make spaced cuts in the bark around the trunk. The appropriate herbicide is carefully sprayed into each hacked cut. It's important to leave spaces in-between the hacks, to keep the vascular system functioning. If the trunk is hacked all the way around, root sprouting could result (see above, ailanthus).

Again, this technique is best used in fall and winter, through February, so that the herbicide will be drawn down into the tree's roots by its sap.

Here's a photo of a recent hack-and-squirt of an ailanthus tree. I made a few vertical hacks in one spot, getting used to the hatchet. I'll be keeping an eye on it for the next few months, to see how it goes.

A Positive Note!

A couple of yummy-looking ripe persimmons

Just a few months ago, I discovered a couple of native persimmon trees near the corner of a street in my neighborhood. I started keeping an eye on them, to see if they bore fruit. YES! As I write this, on Halloween day, there are probably 50 persimmons hanging on their branches, waiting to ripen and drop. It's hard to believe that they take this long to get yummy! Anyway, saw a couple with fruit near the trail at New Quarter Park, as well. Watching and waiting.

Additional Resources on nonnative invasives:

1. "Controlling Invasive Plants Effectively and Safely with Herbicides"

https://blueridgeprism.org/wp-content/uploads /2021/09/How-to-Control-Invasives-w-HERBICIDES-2021-9-9-FINAL.pdf

2. "Non -native Invasive Plant Species Control Treatments" fact sheet from Va Department of Forestry

https://blueridgeprism.org/wp-content/uploads /2019/06/2018_Nonnative-Invasive-Plant-Species-Control-Treatments_pub.pdf

3. PRISM fact sheet on Ailanthus, in case you're wondering just how bad it is:

https://mcusercontentcom/14f106d040bc4a19e9b83a704/files/9e02c0e8-7b86-47c5-a0bd-dc30556389af/Ailanthus_Factsheet_August_8_2020_Final.pdf

Kathi Mestayer

From Betsy Washington, Northern Neck Chapter…

September 2022 Plant of the Month:
Little Bluestem, *Schizachirium scoparium*

Fall is the time when flowers begin to fade but it's the season when many of our native grasses are at their best. The low-angled fall sun backlights the fine textured grass foliage providing autumnal tints and luminous seedheads which seem to glow and sparkle as they move in the wind. Little Bluestem is one of our finest native grasses and was once one of the dominant grasses of the vast Tallgrass Prairies that covered much of central North America. This beautiful warm-season perennial is one of the most widespread grasses in our area and found in nearly every county in Virginia. It is adapted to a variety of natural habitats including open forests, riverside prairies, barrens, fields, meadows, and roadsides.

Growing during our warmer months, this grass typically reaches only 2–4′ tall and 1.5–3′ wide and grows in upright clumps, with fine-textured, slender arching leaves less than ¼″ wide. Its common name, Little Bluestem, derives from the lovely blue tints of the foliage and stems in summer as well as its compact size. As

summer progresses, the foliage takes on reddish and even lavender tints before turning a rich copper-orange to orange-red in fall. The handsome bronzy-orange color persists through the winter, adding welcome color to fields and gardens. In August, purplish bronze flowers emerge on 3″ long racemes held on branched stems above the foliage. These ripen into clusters of beautiful fuzzy, silvery-white seedheads that catch the fall and winter sun and are particularly lovely against the striking coppery-orange fall foliage.

The fine textured, upright foliage of Little Bluestem makes it a standout in any landscape.

Little Bluestem is easy to grow and adaptable to a wide variety of soils from sand to clay and even poor soils, as well as tolerant of heat, humidity, drought, and slightly salty conditions. It is also deer and pest resistant and grows best in full sun. Its fibrous roots often extend 5′ or more into the soil, making it an excellent upper bank stabilizer, preventing erosion and shrugging off dry soils and droughts. These deep roots, like those of most Tallgrass Prairie grasses, allow it to adapt well to our late summer drought periods. Little Bluestem is the perfect beautiful compact grass, whether planted as an accent plant or in a perennial border where its fine blue green foliage and upright form contrasts beautifully with other perennials. And it is likewise outstanding when planted in masses within coastal, cottage, rain gardens, or as the backbone of meadows. It even shines when planted in containers. The only care it needs is an annual cutting back in late winter and avoiding overly rich soils and excess mulch around the roots. It can be planted from containers, landscape plugs, or from seed.

Little Bluestem will bring year-round beauty, drama, and life to the garden as it supports a diversity of butterflies, moths, and winter songbirds, including sparrows and juncos. It is the larval host for several small skipper butterflies as well as the beautiful Common Wood Nymph butterfly.

As a testament to how exceptional this grass is, Little Blue Stem is the 2022 Plant of the Year for the Perennial Plant Association, the trade association for plant growers, retailers, landscape designers, contractors, and educators, who are increasingly taking note of our beautiful and adaptable native plants.

October 2022 Plant of the Month:
Blue-stemmed Goldenrod, *Solidago caesia*

At our recent fall plant sale a number of shoppers requested shade tolerant perennials that bloom in shady woodland gardens in late summer and fall, long after spring bloomers have faded. The October Plant of the Month, Blue-stemmed Goldenrod, *Solidago caesia*, fits the bill beautifully and like other Goldenrods has the added benefit of supporting a large variety of pollinators and butterflies.

Lovely Blue-stemmed Goldenrod is blooming now in our woodlands and clearings. Yes indeed, a shade loving goldenrod with showy yellow blooms that provides high wildlife value even in shade! It grows naturally in dry upland and moist woodlands and openings throughout Eastern North America and occurs in nearly every county in Virginia. Sometimes called Woodland Goldenrod, this well-behaved goldenrod is the perfect plant to light up a woodland garden or path in fall, as it does in nature.


Denise Green

Showy flower clusters and leaves of Blue-stemmed Goldenrod

Blue-stemmed Goldenrod is aptly named, with its smooth arching stems that tend to have a blue or purplish cast from a whitish waxy coating or "'bloom". Reaching only 2 to 3 feet high, it features dark green slender lance-shaped leaves that alternate up the stems. From late August through October, loose clusters of small bright yellow flowers occur in the leaf axils (where each leaf meets the stem) along the entire stem in contrast to most goldenrods that feature feathery plumes at the top of the branches. Additionally, these clusters of tiny flowers completely encircle the stems creating a showy display and give rise to other common names, Axillary and Wreath Goldenrod. Like many members of the Aster Family, they have ray and disk (composite) flowers. If you look closely, each tiny yellow "flower" actually consists of two kinds of smaller flowers: 3 to Blue-stemmed Goldenrod 5 tiny ray florets encircle a central disc composed of tiny tubular florets creating a "composite" flower. These tiny flowers are rich in pollen and nectar and support an extremely diverse array of pollinators and bees. Goldenrods also provide critical late season nectar for migrating butterflies such as Monarchs, Painted Ladies, and Common Buckeyes. At least ten species of Fall specialist bees depend on the pollen from goldenrods to feed and raise their young, emerging only when goldenrods are in bloom. And readers that follow the eminent author and entomologist Doug Tallamy already know that Goldenrods host over 100 species of butterflies and moths, more than other herbaceous perennials. And if that is not enough wildlife value, goldenrod

seeds are favored food of numerous migratory and grassland birds like goldfinches and other finches, juncos, indigo buntings, and pine siskins, to name just a few. Despite their reputation for causing hay fever, goldenrods are pollinated by insects and have sticky pollen, not the windblown pollen that causes fall allergies. That nefarious honor goes to Ragweed (*Ambrosia* sp.), with its insignificant greenish yellow flowers that bloom at the same time.

Blue-stemmed Goldenrod is an adaptable plant and is easy to grow in gardens. It will tolerate full sun but prefers partial shade and is ideal when planted along woodland edges, paths, shady borders, and openings. It is tolerant of a variety of soils from sandy to clay and from moist to dry, and is quite drought tolerant once established. It has no serious pests or diseases and is even somewhat resistant to deer. It is well behaved and will not spread aggressively but instead expand slowly into handsome 2 – 3′ wide clumps. This is the perfect perennial to alternate along a woodland path or border, where the arching stems and showy clusters of yellow flowers will add welcome color in late summer and fall and attract a wealth of pollinators and songbirds—migrators and residents—to your garden. Consider combining it with the equally lovely fall blooming White Wood or Blue Wood Asters (*Eurybia divaricatus* and *Symphyotrichum cordifolium*) with frothy masses of white or blue flowers respectively, to further light up your woodlands and attract even more pollinators.

John Clayton Chapter Calendar

Thursday, Nov. 18 **7:00 pm: Our November Zoom Meeting— Adrienne Frank on "Butterfly Identification"**

(Details on Page 1)

There are no walks scheduled for November and December.

Keep a lookout for announcements about any additional walks or other events in the local newspapers and on our website at **www.vnps.org/johnclayton**.

Renew online at **www.vnps.org** or use the membership renewal form below.
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