



# Claytonia

John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

September-October 2023

[vnps.org/johnclayton](http://vnps.org/johnclayton)

**Thank you Louise!**

*For 16 years of dedication to the Claytonia.*

The members of John Clayton Chapter

**Lucile Kossodo**  
President  
757-565-0769

**Cortney Will,**  
Secretary

**Cathy Flanagan**  
Treasurer

**Emilia Godwin**  
Communications

**Adrienne Frank**  
Plant Sale

**Jennifer Nagle- Myers**  
Stonehouse Garden

**Libbey Oliver**  
Nature Camp



## Preserving Oak Diversity & The Benefits of Native Lawn Alternatives in Preserving Remnant Canopy Oaks

**Please join us on Zoom**  
**Thursday, September**  
**21st, at 7:00 PM.**

Rod Simmons will review how environmentally friendly alternatives to traditional lawn and turf cultivation benefit remnant canopy trees. These alternatives help with tree preservation as well as other native vegetation, soil microorganisms, and insects and pollinators.

Rod will also discuss the great diversity of oaks in Virginia and their importance in the natural

landscape. We will also discuss upland native oaks and their natural hybrids, including their identification and sources of digitized, online collections of all the oaks and hybrids of our region. Also discussed will be an update on what is affecting certain upland oak species throughout our region over the last few years, i.e., White and Chestnut oaks, and what local species can easily withstand the negative effects of climate change and how maintaining a



Rod Simmons Natural Resource Manager and Plant Ecologist for the City of Alexandria, VA

healthy "lawn"/forest floor can help preserve all of our upland canopy



### From The President—Maui Fire

All of us were saddened by the destruction and death caused by the Lahaina, Hawaii fire. I was in Lahaina about 9 years ago and I remember well how friendly and charming the town was. Then, I came

across an article in the Smithsonian magazine entitled *How Swaths of Invasive Grass Made Maui's Fires so Devastating*. The article written by Reporter Shi En Kim was dated August 15, 2023. While there

were many factors that started the fire, it was apparently the invasive grasses that made it so deadly. These invasive grasses were imported from Africa in the late  
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## From The President –Maui Fire continued

**“Those fire-prone invasive species fill in any gaps anywhere else-roadsides, in between communities, between people’s homes, all over the place ”**

18<sup>th</sup> century by European ranchers who wanted a steady supply of drought-resistant grasses to feed the cattle. These grasses were named guinea grass, molasses grass, and buffel grass. For 200 years, Hawaii’s income had been dependent on pineapple and sugarcane. According to a report that Simon Romero and Serge F. Kovaleski made for the *New York Times*, these plantations declined and by 2016 - there were no more plantations and the Hawaiian economy transitioned to a tourist dominated economy. The acres of plantation fields now abandoned were invaded by these grasses.

“Those fire-prone invasive species fill in any gaps anywhere else-roadsides, in between communities, between people’s homes, all over the place” says Elizabeth Pickett, co-executive director of the Hawaii Wildlife Management Organization.

How does that happen so easily? They grow and spread easily during the rainy season and dry out. At this point they are flammable. After the fire burns, some of the grasses are able to recover quickly. They then crowd out the native grasses.

Has this happened before? Yes in 2018 a fire destroyed 21 homes in western Maui. After that University of Hawaii plant ecologist Clay Trauernicht published a letter saying that such invasive grasses could destroy the area by fire. In 2021 Maui County was in the middle of its dry season, facing global warming and 80-miles per hour gusts which sucked moisture creating a pocket of low air pressure that contrasted with the high pressure area from a storm in the north of the island.

This made the fire a probability and indeed it destroyed the town of Lahaina. Trauernicht told *Spectrum News* reporter Michelle Broder Van Dyke what needs to be done to remove this risk of fire: 1) Let grazing animals graze and reduce the grass species, 2) Plant rows of pineapples, bananas, dragon fruit or taro to cut off a fire’s potential path.

We hope Maui survivors and residents of other towns will take responsibility to prevent such future destruction.

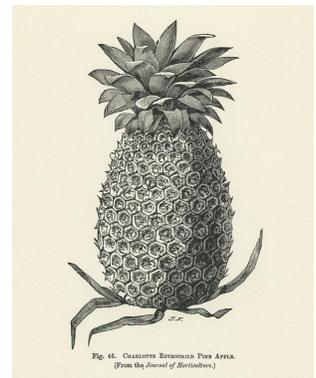


Fig. 46. CHARLOTTE BERNARDINI PINE APPLE.  
(From the *Journal of Horticulture*.)



## Stonehouse Garden Renovation Jennifer Nagel-Myers

Over the course of four days in the brutal August heat, Collin McPherson led his Boy Scout Troop 103 as his Eagle Scout Project, to completely rehab the overgrown garden at Stonehouse Elementary School. Together they pulled out weeds and thinned beds, allowing the native plants to thrive again and be fully appreciated.

They also power washed all the wooden structures, including the picnic tables, edging around beds, and the bridge, and stained it all a very nice red. The boy scouts put new gravel on all the paths after cleaning and re-doing the metal edging. The work they accomplished is amazing,

the garden looks fantastic and is very useful for students, teachers, and the community to visit, enjoy, and learn. The final touch were the signs that accompany many of the native plants in the garden; now the garden looks complete and inviting.

The garden at Stonehouse will be reconnected more directly to the school and activated by teachers as an outdoor classroom with updated curriculum,

outreach, and many other events throughout the school.

Thanks to Collin McPherson, his brother Evan, mom Jennifer, dad Chris, and to Troop 103 and their families who worked so hard!!! The project, including gravel for paths, materials and supplies, tools, and garden signs, was financially supported by the John Clayton Chapter VNPS.



## The Ravine Cathy Flanagan

My backyard ends in a steep ravine, at the bottom of which, a stream sometimes runs. Deer - literally by the dozen - run through the path of the stream and often come up the slope to eat whatever plants I've tried to grow. The slope down to the ravine is populated mostly by huge tulip polars *Liriodendron tulipifera*, and

an undergrowth of pawpaw *Asimina triloba*. It is a wild place that I have ventured into to cut vigorous, invasive, Japanese honeysuckle vines *Lonicera japonica*.

At the edge of the slope, from late summer and into October, Yellow crownbeard *Verbesina occidentalis* and Bear's Foot or Hairy Leaf cup

*Smallanthus uvedalia*, grow tall and weedy, but there is much to love about this wild area.

The tulip poplars are host plants for the Eastern Tiger Swallowtail butterfly, the pawpaw for the Zebra Swallowtail, and a variety of bees and butterflies come to the Yellow crownbeard and Bear's foot. It's a great place to bring a camera.



*Smallanthus uvedalia*

## New! Member Chat

Connect with members in your local area

Share information about gardening with natives.

See a booklist

### Interested? Email:

jccmemberchat  
@googlegroups.com

### Questions?

jccvnps1@gmail.com

## SAVE THE DATE!

May 4, 2024

It's not too early to start thinking about next year's Native Plant Sale. Let us know whether you want to volunteer, grow plants for the sale, or tell us what plants you'd like to see at the sale.



All John Clayton videos are recorded and posted to the link below :

<https://vimeo.com/showcase/8054025>.

PO Box 1128  
Williamsburg, VA 23187

We welcome new members **Chris Dombrowski** and **Laura Cote** from Williamsburg, **Carolyn Evans** and **Joanna Yeomans** from Gloucester, **Deborah Smith** from Newport News, and **Cameron Garret** from Toano to the John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society.



## The 2023 Plant Sale is a Success to Celebrate!

Emilia Godwin



What do native plants and students have in common? Besides the fact that they both need care and protection to grow and thrive.

Our plant sale earlier this year was successful in finding loving homes for many native plants and educating people in the community about the plants' important role in maintaining a healthy environment, beneficial to all.

Equally important is that the over \$9,000 raised through the sale have allowed the Chapter to direct funds to meaningful opportunities such as funding four scholarships for students to attend Nature Camp and financial support for the redevelopment of the Native Habitat Garden at Stonehouse Elementary School.

It takes a village to prepare for and host the Native Plant Sale. We owe a debt of gratitude to over 50 members and volunteers who helped with potting and

caring for plants through the winter and up until the sale!

Then, on the day of the sale, they assisted with set-up, cashiering, display, welcoming customers, providing advice, table monitoring, clean up and more!

Parallel to that, the Chapter Board and a few plant sale volunteer leaders planned and coordinated every aspect of the sale, including plant purchases, research, gathering materials, organizing volunteers, and more. Critical was the assistance of 17 boy scouts and their leader who tirelessly helped customers move their selected plants to a holding area, and then through check-out.

The Plant Sale taught us a lesson too. More people in the community are eager to find and cultivate in their gardens native plants, and we are gearing up to meet that outpouring of commitment to native plants through the 2024 Annual Plant Sale on May 4!

