Photo by Seig & Alice Kopinitz

Wild Petunia
Ruellia caroliniensis

Claytonia

John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Welcome Summer!

May-June 2024 **vnps.org/johnclayton**

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757-565-0769

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Emilia Godwin
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Plant Sale Chair

Jennifer Nagle-Myers
Stonehouse Garden

Libbey Oliver
Nature Camp

VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

John Clayton Chapter
PO Box 1128
Williamsburg, VA 23187

Please join us!

Thursday, July 18, 7 PM

Link to Join Zoom Meeting:
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2274484759

Ethnobotany is the study of how people relate to, and use plants in their lives, be it for food, medicine, tools, and so many other ways. Learn about plant folklore, how people used locally native and commonly available plants in their lives and historically. The natural history of various plants will be discussed, along with some additional references to finding out more about the various native plants which will be the focus of the presentation.

Alonso Aabugattas

Alonso Aabugattas, (the Capital Naturalist) is an award winning naturalist, storyteller, and environmental educator, who shares some of the wonders of the natural world using his own photography.

Mr. Aabugattas has held several offices for the Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society, including President. He is also Co-Chair for the Beltway Chapter of the National Association for Interpretation (NAI), the professional organization for naturalists, historians, and others who interpret resources.

Through NAI, Alonso is a Certified Heritage Interpreter, and has received regional and national awards, including the Regional Interpretive Award for his social media outlets.

The Audubon Naturalist Society (now called Nature Forward) gave him their Regional Environmental Champion award at their 2020 Naturally Latinos Conference.

In 2022, Alonso was inducted into the Washington Biologists' Field Club, one of the oldest and most exclusive biology clubs in the nation, founded in 1900, and now with only 65 active local members.

Alonso also serves on the advisory board for Capital Nature, and is the "On the Wing" column writer for the Bay Journal.

With numerous mentions and appearances on television, radio, podcasts, and the press, Alonso also invites us to check out his award winning social media platforms: the Capital Naturalist Facebook Group, with over 30,000 members, the "Capital Naturalist" Blog, and the Capital Naturalist You Tube Channel with over 800 videos!

John Clayton Chapter Draws a Big Crowd at its 39th Annual Native Plant Sale!

by Adrienne Frank, Plant Sale Chair

Our 39th Annual sale was incredible! with numerous Virginia Native plants for sale at reasonable prices, at least 50 member volunteers, dozens of Boy Scouts, and hundreds of participants.

The sale was held Saturday, May 4, 2024, at the Williamsburg Community Building from 9:30 until 2:00, with the majority of the sales taking place in the first hour or so. The goals of our sale were to provide the public with native plants appropriate for the Coastal Region of Virginia, to educate the community about the importance of native plants in the landscape and how to care for them, and, it is our only fund raiser of the year. The sale brought in over $14,000 with the funds being budgeted for Nature Camp Scholarships, school and public gardens and other educational projects we support.

Survey- For the first time, one of our volunteers gave out, and then collected, 56 surveys from participants. A few of the results suggest the following:

-about half the participants were new to the sale

—most (37/56) people found the plants that they wanted to buy.

-more than 50 people bought plants that were new to them.

—plants were available, well organized, and staff was knowledgeable.

—we could make some improvements in checkout and perhaps the holding area.

If you have not given comments about the sale please let us know your thoughts!

Participants – The plant sale was full of buyers from our JCC VNPS chapter, the Historic Rivers Chapter of the Master Naturalists, and many others from the community mailing list. There were many questions asked, and advice given, but participants seemed well informed and understood the role of native plants in supporting pollinators . It was wonderful to hear all of the knowledge shared.

Plant Numbers & Diversity

We estimate that there were 2,000 plants, with 1500 sold and others donated. Because the Native Plant of the Year was White Turtlehead, we offered a large selection of plants that prefer moist habitats. There was a large selection of asters and other plants preferred by pollinators. There were approximately 160 species, most of them appropriate for our Coastal region. A list was made available prior to, and during the sale that included the scientific and common names, , moisture and sun preference, and other attributes.

39th Annual Native Plant Sale

Plant Sources-The majority of plants were donated from home gardens. Many of our trees and shrubs were donated by a Fish and Wildlife Biologist from Gloucester. American Wisteria plants were donated from the Colonial Williamsburg Nursery. The Plant Sale Committee purchased some plants from North Creek, Pinelands, and Izel nurseries.

We encourage *YOU* to grow plants to donate next year. Try growing plants from seed. To all of you who donated, dug, and/or potted the many plants –thank you for your hard wok!

Plant Prices-Each plant was hand-labeled with the name. To minimize the work for those potting many plants, the majority of plants in the gallon size were $9 each.

At a local nursery, one of the same perennial plants in the same size pot was selling for $12-$16. The shrubs and trees were priced much lower in comparison to the retail market. Our sale had a few flowering Dogwood priced at less than $30. The same sized plant was being sold for $120.

Volunteers- Preparing and conducting the JCC VNPS sale takes an army of volunteers. Our volunteers help by planting, digging, potting, and caring for plants throughout the year. We have a few leaders who purchase plants, gather materials, organize volunteers and much more.

Plant Locations -This year we had two locations for caring for plants. Joan and Jim Etchberger's home, and Jennifer Myer's home. Without these volunteers watering and caring for the plants, there would be no sale. We can't thank them enough.

Also this year, we rented two box trucks to move plants. On Friday afternoon, volunteers loaded the trucks and drove them to the sale location. The Boy Scout Troup 103 unloaded most of the plants, while other volunteers set up the tables, sorted the plants and prepared for buyers.

The Big Day-On Saturday during the sale, there were greeters, table monitors, experts to help buyers, talliers, cashiers, and set-up and clean-up volunteers. The Boy Scouts and their leaders were an enormous help by holding and moving plants throughout the day.

Lots of information and expert advice was given by several long-time members of JCC VNPS. Their combined years of knowledge of native plants was an enormous help to buyers. Other volunteers learned a lot by listening during the sale and studying prior to the sale.

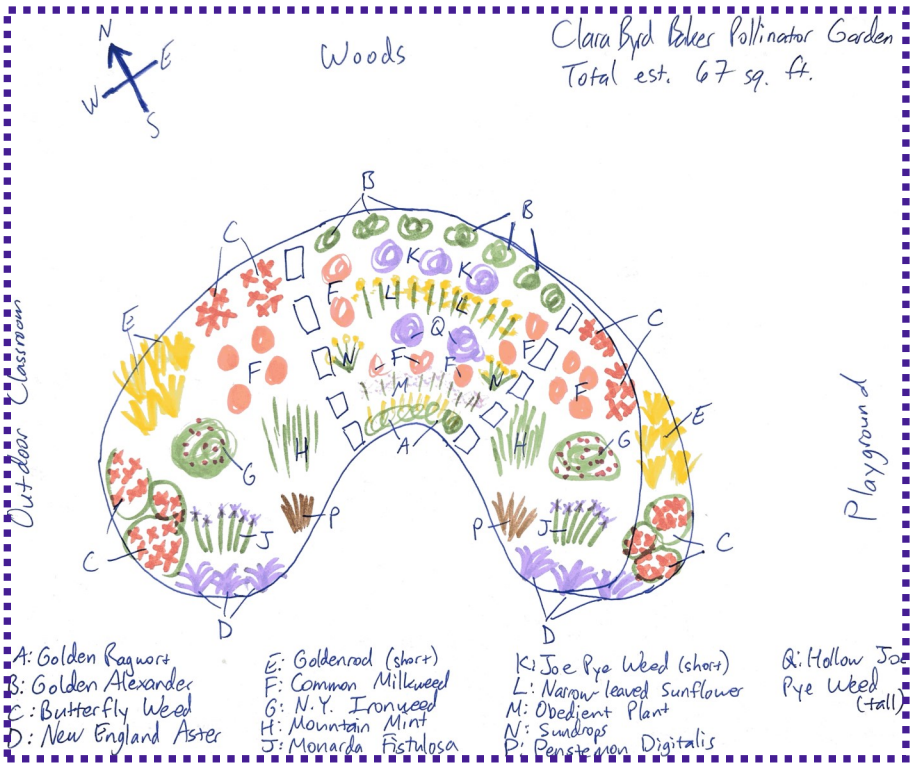
Buyers were able to pay with cash, credit or check. However, due to poor signal, our square devices were not able to be paired leaving us with one phone for manually entering data The all volunteer cashier team had to work quickly to keep the line moving - all the while keeping order, reviewing checks for accuracy, and making change.

What a huge, rewarding undertaking!

We could not do it without the enormous effort of all of our hard working and dedicated volunteers!

Photos by David Janesko

With the support of numerous groups and individuals, a new pollinator garden was established this spring at Clara Byrd Baker elementary school, near Five Forks in James City County. The school backs up to the Powhatan Creek trail, but had no native perennials on the school grounds before this garden was created. Students learn about the monarch butterfly life cycle in 2nd grade, and about Virginia natural resources in 4th grade. The new pollinator will provide hands-on learning opportunities for students at the school, as well as for any community members that visit the garden.



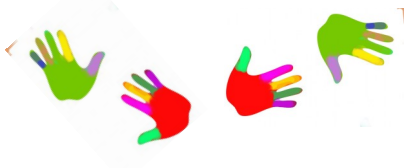
The garden is located between an outdoor classroom/learning area and a fenced-in playground, next to the bus loop and within view of classrooms. The garden has an imperfect kidney shape to it, and the border is made of logs from trees that were cut down in the last six months. The logs range from 8 to 18 inches in diameter, protecting the garden from any mowing vehicles. As they decompose, the logs will provide nutrients for the garden and serve as an example of how decaying organic matter is important for regenerating the soil.

During the school year, volunteers from the Historic Rivers Chapter (HRC) of the Virginia Master Naturalists lead a Nature Explorers club for students in grades 3-5. The spring group of 16 students helped plant 15 different native perennials during their last club meeting on April 23rd. While digging holes and watering the plants, students were excited to find grubs in the soil, and a green tree frog on the outdoor spigot next to the garden. Five HRC volunteers, including JCC chapter members Robert Ambrose, Marie Robertson, and Mike Whitfield, helped the students with the planting.

The garden was designed by Marie Robertson, with input from fellow JCC members Adrienne Frank, Jennifer Myers, Keith Navia, and Kim Owens. Advice was also given by Brian Taber, president of the Colonial Virginia Wildlife Observatory and an experienced pollinator garden caretaker. The school PTA funded the topsoil that was delivered to enhance the garden, while JCC members and HRC volunteers Rick Brown and Keith Navia assisted Marie Robertson with spreading the topsoil in preparation for planting. Members of the Williamsburg James City County Master Gardeners, especially Gail Weaver and Herman Hatchett, who maintain a vegetable garden at the school also provided support (finding and delivering logs to the perimeter, cutting and placing the logs, and sharing mulch from their mulch pile). Project Monarch Watch donated plugs of common milkweed for the garden.

As the garden becomes more established, it will serve as a learning garden for the students and teachers, as a source of native plants for our annual plant sale, and as a site for annual butterfly counts conducted by the HRC. The HRC-led Nature's Explorers club will use the garden to demonstrate the importance of native plants, host plants, and pollinator plants, as well as the relationship between them. Signs identifying the plants and their purpose (nectar or host plant) will be placed in the garden in the fall. The signs are being funded by a grant from the state Master Naturalist office. Many thanks to the HRC committee that applied for the grant to

See the complete plant list on page 5 ➡



Garden Sketch by Marie Robertson

Spring

Ragwort, golden (*Peckera aurea*)
Golden Alexander (Zizia aurea)
Indigo, false,blue *(Baptisa australis)*
Yarrow, common *(Achillea millefolium)*
Violet, common *(Viola sororia)*

Summer

Butterfly weed *(Asclepias tuberosa)*
Milkweed, common (*Asclepias syriaca)*
Joe Pye Weed, hollow *(Eutrochium fistulatum)*
Joe Pye Weed, sweet *(Eutrochium purpureum)*
Sundrops, Narrow-leaf (*Oenothera fruticose)*
Brown-eyed Susan *(Rudbekia triloba)*
Passionflower, yellow *(Passiflora lutea)*
Bergamot, Wild *(Monarda fistulosa)*
Mint, Mountain, *(Pycnanthemum muticum)*

Fall

New York Ironweed *(Vernonia noveboracensis)*
Goldenrod, blue-stemmed *(Solidago caesia)*
Goldenrod *(Solidago rugosa)*
Aster, Aromatic *(Symphyotrichum oblongifolium)*
Aster, Smooth Blue *(Symphyotrichum laeve)*
Aster, Small White *(Symphyotrichum racemosum)*
Obedient Plant *(Physotegia virginiana)*

Donations:

Adrienne & Gary **—** Golden Alexander
Kim Owens– Yarrow, common Goldenrod, rough
Donna Benson **–** Butterfly weed
Project Monarch Watch & Adrienne– Milkweed, common
JCC Native Plant Sale –Aster, smooth blue, Aster, small white

Spring:
Golden Alexander
(Zizia aurea)

Summer:
Butterfly Weed
(Asclepias tuberosa) &
Zebra Swallowtail

Summer:
Wild Bergamot
(Monarda fistulosa) &
Silver spotted skipper

Fall
New York Ironweed
(Vernonia noveborocensis)

Fall
Obedient Plant
(Physotegia Virginiana)

Photos by David Janesko

From the President Lucile Kossodo

One of my favorite sights in summer is seeing fireflies flashing in the evenings. But there is a time when they all light up at once. They are called the Annual Synchronous Fireflies. It is an event in which fireflies, in large groups, all light up at once. Thr fireflies of three species all create a magical light show as they look for a mate.

There are two places where you *could have* seen this event in the US. One is the Congaree National Park in South Carolina, and the other the Great Smokies National Park in North Carolina. At Congaree this year one of the species, *Photuris frontalis*, also known by the common name of Snappy Sin Sync, flies and flashes every 0.65 seconds.

At the Smokies National Park, the species *Photinus carolinus* can fly 3-7 feet high with 4 to 11 flashes with a 6-9 second pause. They are said to be a magical sight.

There are other fireflies that put on a show there, but unfortunately there was a lottery system already in place before this newsletter was printed. Even later shows in Richmond sold out. If you happened to get a chance to see a show, perhaps you can share your experience in the next newsletter.

Another insect we will likely not see are the much discussed Periodical cicadas —they are the ones that look sort of like cockroaches with red eyes, and together they can make as much noise as a revving motorcycle!

We were expecting Broods XI and XIII in Virginia. In the Guardian, Oliver Milman authored a lengthy article about them which hinted that we may see the two types of broods in a hybrid version.

Cicadas may be ugly, but they are not dangerous to humans or pets, but Milman cautions that "if provoked, they will eject urine" which does not sound like fun. No mention if it is dangerous or just not amusing.

However, if you like red-eyed insects this could be a fun entomological experience. If you wish for a quiet summer, the beach would be a better place to visit until they disappear after mating. Or, just enjoy some great photos of local cicadas . Notice the difference between the periodical and annual types.

Firefly -*Photuris sp*

Black Firefly, *Lucidota*

Cicada Magicicadas septemdecem
17 year

Cicada magicicada
13 year

Cicada magicicada
Nymph shell
13 year

Cicada Tibicen davisi

Annual Cicada

Photos by Seig & Alice Kopinitz

On Sunday, May 19, Phillip Merritt and Jack Martin welcomed about 25 visitors to their beautifully situated property near Chickahominy Haven. The property is about three acres, half-wooded ad half lawn and gardens, with a small dock overlooking a community pond. Phillip works as a landscape architect for VHB, is a former John Clayton chapter president and served on the board for many years. As a landscape architect, he has worked on projects at senior living communities, high-end residences, and public institutions, including William & Mary.

Phillip and Jack have lived at their current house for twelve years, which has allowed Phillip to collect a wide range of native perennials, shrubs, and trees. On the tour, Phillip passed out a list of approximately 130 native plant species that could be found on the property (not counting tree species). Some of these were nativars, and others were native to the Carolinas and the Midwest. The garden was a couple of weeks past its early spring peak, but still in bloom were Carolina bush pea and coral honeysuckle, among others.

The tour started in the pool area. The fences around the area offer protection from deer and allow for more delicate

natives as well as some "unmentionables" such as hosta and mophead hydrangeas. Among the standard native perennials a few slightly more unusual plants can be found around the pool including Mountain Indian-physic (*Gillenia trifoliatus*), spikenard (Aralia racemose) and leatherwood (*Dirca palustris*) purchased from the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden.

While walking around the garden, Phillip mentioned that in his own designs for clients, he aims for 80-90% native. He pointed out that as the popularity of natives has grown, it has also become more challenging to deal with some client's aversion to "nativars", and the lack of evergreen screening shrubs that meet the planting size requirements of county ordinances. If you ever have to design a screening hedge around a parking lot and

suggest inkberry, be prepared for an avalanche of client complaints that might come your way. With challenges like these, why stress about 100%purity when you've got plenty of other natives in the design?

From the pool area, the group moved to a long border on the outside of the fence which consists exclusively of natives. The area is challenging because of its poor, swampy, soil and deer browsing. Native wisteria covers the highest portion of the fence, and below that are different varieties of Baptisia, flag iris, Jerusalem artichoke, amsonia, milkweed, and giant coneflower. While the cup plant frequently gets chewed to the ground, all the other plants hold up well to the deer.

Guests touring the woods seemed to enjoy seeing a 25 foot Big-leaf Magnolia that Phillip got years ago when the Greener Side was closing (remember that?) It grew for a couple of years at his house in Walnut Hills before being moved to its final location here. Phillip notes that he is interested in growing umbrella magnolias, so if anyone knows of a local tree that might have seeds, please let him know

The woods stretch down to a pond The area around the pond is mixed pine, maple, hickory, beech, and tulip poplar, with an understory of mountain laurel, huckleberries, and

Green Tree Frog

blueberries. There wasn't much plant diversity when Phillip moved in, but over time he has introduced pickerel weed, marsh enryngo, swamp milkweed,

Mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*)

skunk cabbage, flag iris, and lizard's tale. Some American lotus seeds he planted last year are just starting to reappear.

Flag Iris *(Iris virginica)*

Jack and Phillip enjoyed having visitors. Send Phillip a note if you'd like to visit again– he might even have a few plants to share!

Photos by Emilia Godwin

Corridors by Helen Hamilton

Just finished *Song of the Dodo,* (1996), David Quammen's masterpiece of how we have created islands of national parks, national forests, nature preserves, woodlots confining animals and plants in discrete areas separated by farms, roads, housing developments, mining operations and industrial complexes. A gifted science writer, he traces extinctions over the centuries, and follows Alfred Wallace and Charles Darwin on their travels as they observe differences in species in adjacent islands. This book, and those by Edward O. Wilson and others examine the differences in animal and plant species with changes in habitat, elevation, latitude and isolation.

In *Nature's Best Hope,* (2019), Doug Tallamy expands the views of other writers on island insularity of our own personal spaces –lawns, backyards, vacant lots, sidewalk medians. While national parks are large preserves of habitat, animals, and plants, they are surrounded by cities, farms, strip malls, and developments, allowing no contact between these segments. No new food sources, no genetic transfer, and populations too small to survive extreme weather events.

We need corridors, he says—ways to connect small patches with each other giving animals and plants more space to forage, grow and reproduce. While such links are not possible with large parks and preserves, small passages with our neighbors can give plants, insects and larger animals more room.

Small steps, such as converting part of the front lawn to native plantings, allowing lawn strips to define wildflower gardens, and installing native plants in sidewall strips will bring pollinating insects to spread flowers and provide food for more birds. The "Homegrown National Park" will create biological corridors that connect each small habitat.

In *Nature's Best Hope,* each chapter is filled with examples, personal experiences, and historical accounts of how our meddling with nature is causing the rapid extinction of wildlife. The book concludes with two very useful chapters "What Each of Us Can Do" and "Frequently Asked Questions"

Both *Song of the Dodo* and *Nature's Best Hope* remain as fresh as when written. Nature preserves are smaller, corridors are fewer, and turf lawns are still

Pollinator Garden DWR Headquarters

For more info on related topics, check out the links below!

https://dwr.virginia.gov/wildlife/corridors/

https://vnps.org/post-wild-planting-solutions/

https://vnps.org/how-to-start-a-native-plant-garden/

https://dwr.virginia.gov/blog/celebrate-pollinators/

https://vnps.org/the-right-kind-of-pollinator-garden/

https://fb.watch/ss7AyK-7Qj/

Do you know someone who would like to join our chapter? You can also give a membership as a gift. It's easy online:

http://vnps.org/select-membership-type/

Welcome New Members!

Terry Deer	Williamsburg
Caroline Fetter	Williamsburg
Camille Fisher	Williamsburg
Diane Howerton	Williamsburg
Justin Carey	Newport News
Lacie Madison	Hampton
Mary Nelson	Newport News
Jennifer Campbell	Williamsburg
Alex Fenton	Gloucester
Dave Koenig	Williamsburg