



Claytonia

Newsletter of the John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

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From the President

At our next board meeting on September 4, members will be discussing how best to use the funds generated from our dues and our annual plant sale. Our major donations this year were to the *Flora of Virginia*, four Nature Camp scholarships, books to the William and Mary Herbarium and the York County Library, and the purchase of an LCD projector to be used by members to present talks to local groups. Our members are currently working with the Master Naturalists on two projects at New Quarter Park—a teaching garden, with Laurie Houghland, and a quail habitat restoration with the Williamsburg Bird Club.

Outreach continues, thanks to several of our members. Jan Newton interacted with four groups of children at Rawls Byrd, teaching them about local plants and conservation issues. In this fiscal year, I have given 15 talks to garden clubs, Master Gardeners, a W.A.L.T. class (in which Phillip Merritt also presented), a program on the tallgrass prairie trips to our chapter meeting, and two upcoming classes at Christopher Wren Association. I was very grateful for the convenience of using the small projector, now owned by John Clayton Chapter. Chapter members (Lucile Kossodo, Louise Menges, Kathi Mestayer, Sara and Ray Nugent, Martha Smith, Ada Lou Turner, Mary Turnbull, and Sue Voigt) staffed a table at Farmer's Market on "Drought-tolerant Plants", a timely subject this summer. We will be staffing a similar table at an event at the Virginia Living Museum on Sept. 20.

This level of activity should continue, as members respond positively to requests for speakers. But there are many other areas which we should consider. A recent plea for ideas from JCC members produced the following suggestions for future activities:

- ▶ Invasive species removals
- ▶ Children's activities at the Stonehouse Habitat
- ▶ Donations to Nature Conservancy
- ▶ Stipend for out-of-town speakers
- ▶ Assist local schools with native plantings
- ▶ Scholarship funding for board members' attendance at meetings
- ▶ Establishing another small native plant garden in a local area

If there are other areas in which our chapter should become involved, please contact me. We want to continue to function as good stewards of our income from dues and the plant sale, while furthering education about the benefits of installing native plants in local gardens.

At the September board meeting we anticipate making some changes to committee assignments, in addition to, regretfully, accepting Hayes' resignation as Treasurer. Pat Gibbs will be appointed to fill Hayes' unexpired term. The two-year term of all the elected officers is completed October 31, 2009. Patti Gray is moving to Membership Chair, Phillip Merritt will be Field Trip Co-chair with Mary Hyde Berg, and the Plant Sale Chairmanship will be shared by Lucile Kossodo and Joan Etchberger.

Still open are the important committees chairs of Outreach and Conservation. Please call if you can help! 564-4494.

Helen Hamilton

Back by popular demand—The Big Tree Drive Around!

Note: Your garrulous words and woods wandering correspondent only wishes she could communicate how much fun this was!

The Big Tree Drive Around on July 12 was led by Byron Carmean and Gary Williamson. These affable and entertaining naturalists constantly search out, measure and report champion trees. Champion trees are the largest in the state, and sometimes in the nation. Records are kept for every species and updated as trees are discovered, grow, decline or die.

The state data base can be found online at <http://www.cnr.vt.edu/4H/BIGTREE>, but sitting at lunch hearing the heights, diameters, locations and interesting particulars of these amazing trees individualizes these magnificent living things in an irresistible way.

Last year we toured record trees on Gloucester's east side. This year's trip was to see record trees on the west side. The state champion willow oak (*Quercus phellos*) in Wicomico (the Powhatan word for village) was even bigger than our pictures will suggest. This species is said to have a life expectancy of 250 years, but this one, beside a road that was probably in use from early settlement times, looks like it could have been valuable shade during the Revolution. It was hard to leave, but we wanted to search in Coke for a giant walnut seen by Gloucester's Jim Greaves, who did the Gloucester plant survey in the 1970s. We couldn't find that tree, but saw some amazing tall, straight cypress, and agreed that we would return after leaf fall when more can be seen and measured.

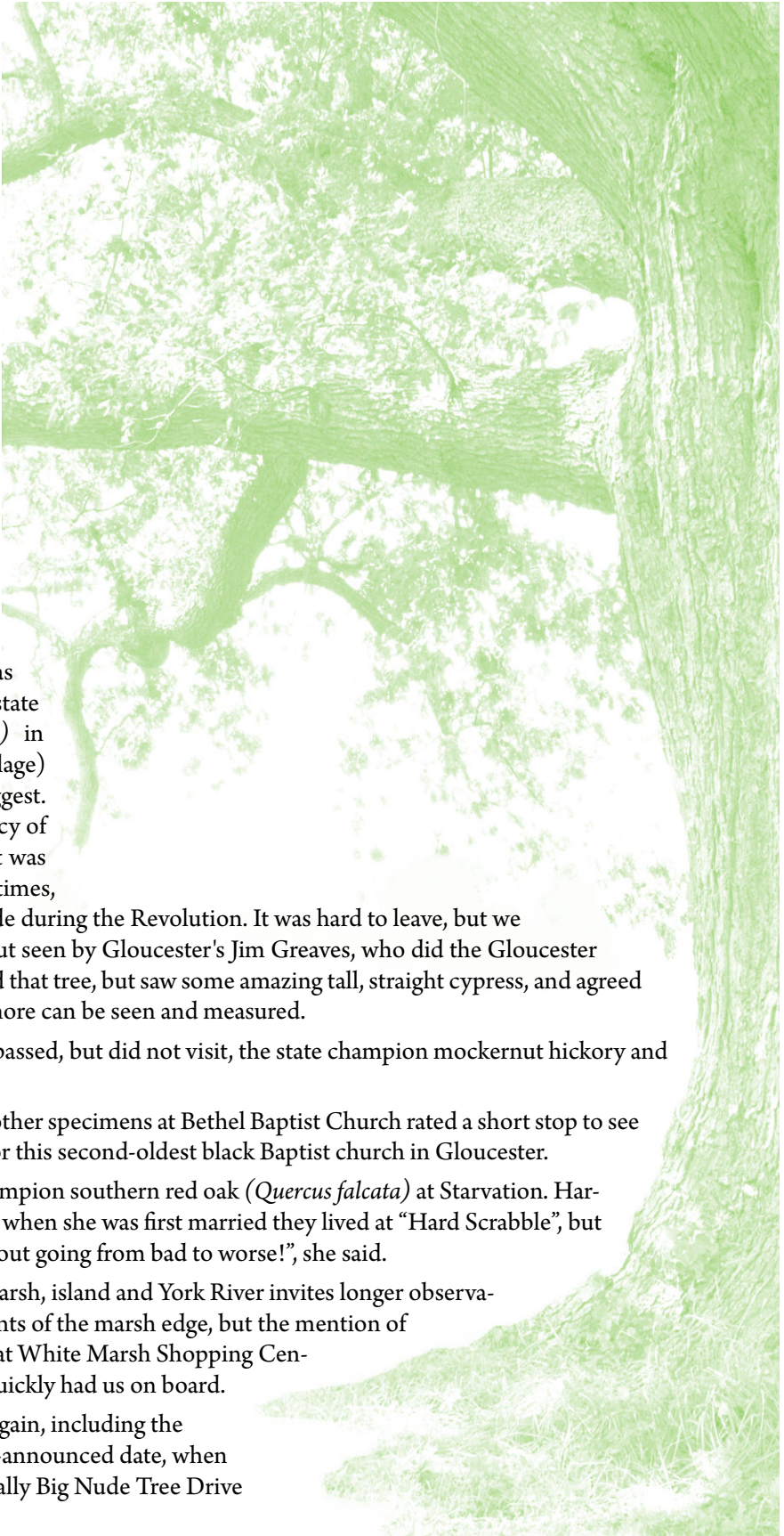
Driving north on Hickory Fork Road we passed, but did not visit, the state champion mockernut hickory and domestic pear.

The large, historic southern red oaks and other specimens at Bethel Baptist Church rated a short stop to see trees as well as the new highway marker for this second-oldest black Baptist church in Gloucester.

Our fourth stop took us to the county champion southern red oak (*Quercus falcata*) at Starvation. Harvey and Jimmy Morgan's mother said that when she was first married they lived at "Hard Scrabble", but they soon moved to "Starvation". "Talk about going from bad to worse!", she said.

The tree is impressive, the view of inlet, marsh, island and York River invites longer observation, as do the diverse small blooming plants of the marsh edge, but the mention of Kaine's, a newly-opened small restaurant at White Marsh Shopping Center, where we had left the extra vehicles, quickly had us on board.

Everyone agreed they wanted to do it all again, including the choice of restaurant. Join us at a yet-to-be-announced date, when The Nude Tree Walk morphs into The Really Big Nude Tree Drive Around!



Mary Hyde Berg



Our group gathers under the state champion willow oak (*Quercus phellos*) in Wicomico. Participants were Mary Berg, Byron Carmean, Lucile Kossodo, Louise Menges, Jay Smith, Lorna Wass and Gary Williamson.



Lucile Kossodo, Byron Carmean and Gary Williamson, who is hidden behind the tree, measure the circumference of the Gloucester champion southern red oak (*Quercus falcata*) at Starvation. (For the purposes of these photos, we could establish the *Lucile* as a unit of measurement; this tree would then have a circumference of more than 21 *Luciles*!)



We did not see the old black walnut (*Juglans nigra*) still standing at Coke, but did find likely descendants in fruit.



A very large black cherry (*Prunus serotina*) spotted at Starvation; for scale, compare to a *Lucile* near its base.



This group of baldcypress (*Taxodium distichum*) could be seen from some distance towering above other trees in a swale across the road.



A large multi-trunked tulip poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) spotted near the grove of baldcypress

Photos by Louise Menges

Drought-resistant natives at the Farmer's Market

John Clayton Chapter set up a booth at the July 26 Farmer's Market with the theme of encouraging use of native drought-resistant plants in home landscape planning. Members Kathi Mestayer, Ada Lou Turner, Martha Smith, Sue Voigt, Sara and Ray Nugent, Lucile Kossodo, Mary Turnbull and Louise Menges spent the morning there fielding questions. We were all very grateful for the shade of our tent!

Wes Greene kindly lent us for display pots of yaupon holly, coral honeysuckle, redbud, sassafras, christmas fern and *Amsonia* from his colonial garden a couple of blocks down DOG Street, and Ada Lou and Sue brought blooming butterfly weed, *Coreopsis*, *Rudbeckia hirta*, joe pye and ironweed. Our display board with Helen Hamilton's photographs of natives provided a colorful backdrop.



Our booth, with potted natives on the left and cut blooms and literature on the table in front of the display board. Mary Turnbull is behind the display.

A few examples of members' interactions with visitors: Sue had a conversation with VNPS member Bland Crowder of Richmond, recipient of a recent Chapter grant for his work on the *Flora of Virginia* project. A



Sue Voigt and Bland Crowder consult *Growing Solutions: A Homeowner's Guide to Protecting the Environment*.

photographer asked for ways to identify the plants he has photographed while he captures birds and butterflies with his camera. Several visitors from out of town asked for advice on natives, and we encouraged them to seek out their local chapters.

A number of people wanted to know where to buy natives, which allowed us to promote our Spring sale as well as Wesley's colonial garden and other places.



Kathi Mestayer answers a visitor's questions.

Although no one kept track of the numbers, visitors were steady (perhaps 70–80 people over the course of the morning) and many of them spent some time talking with different members for information. It was a good day.

Louise Menges

2008 VNPS Annual Meeting Sept. 12–14 in Alexandria “The Potowmack Experience: Flora along the Fall Line”

The 2008 VNPS Annual Meeting will focus on the diversity of plant communities along our national river, the Potomac. The Potowmack Chapter lies in the fall line region, where the Piedmont meets the Coastal Plain. Despite our area's urbanization, spectacular local and national parks line the river and protect dramatic falls, fascinating geologic features, meadows, bogs, and marshes - all along a surprisingly short section of the river. During the weekend, we've lined up a variety of field trips to some outstanding natural areas, gardens, and herbaria. On Friday evening, enjoy a dessert reception followed by a presentation. Saturday night features the annual meeting, a buffet dinner, and our keynote speaker. We hope you will join us.

Accommodations

Rooms are being held until Friday, August 29th at the Courtyard by Marriott, Alexandria Pentagon South, 4641 Kenmore Ave., Alexandria, VA 22304; \$99/2beds/night plus tax and \$10 parking fee. Call 703/751-4510 and mention VNPS Annual Meeting. Other local hotels include the Comfort Inn 703/642-3422, Econo Lodge 703/979-4100 and Best Western 703/979-4400. Field trips will leave across the street from the Marriott and it is the banquet location; we encourage you to stay there.

For maps and directions, information on restaurants and links to field trip sites, visit www.vnps.org or contact the VNPS State Office at Blandy (vnpsoc@shentel.net).

Our 2008 annual membership meeting at VIMS Sept. 19—a remarkable opportunity to learn about remarkable trees!

Our speaker for the 2008 annual membership meeting on September 19th is Nancy Ross Hugo, outdoor writer and lecturer who coordinated the Remarkable Trees of Virginia Project. This project was an initiative to locate and celebrate Virginia's oldest, most historic, largest, and most interesting trees. With co-author Dr. Jeffrey Kirwan and fine art photographer Robert Llewellyn, she visited over 100 of Virginia's most remarkable trees in order to describe them in *Remarkable Trees of Virginia*, a large-format book illustrated with Llewellyn's photographs. Signed copies of the book will be available at the meeting, which takes place at 7:00 p.m. in Waterman's Hall of Virginia Institute of Marine Science, Gloucester Point.

Using Robert Llewellyn's photographs, she will tell us about the four-year search to find Virginia's most remarkable trees, as well as important community trees, unique trees, fine specimens, and culturally significant trees. The program includes species-specific information about the trees described and provides insight into what trees are and why they matter.

Donna Ware

John Clayton will be at the Virginia Living Museum Sept. 20

John Clayton Chapter members will have a table at the Virginia Living Museum for the "Go Green-Save Green" event sponsored by the Newport News Master Gardeners on Saturday, September 20 from 8:45 to 12 noon, during the VLM's Fall Native Plant Sale. The program offers homeowners earth-friendly landscaping, lawn care and water use techniques that are money saving and practical. Our display will focus on drought-tolerant native plants.

Plant survey in King & Queen Sept. 21

On Sunday, September 21, John Clayton Chapter members will be conducting a plant survey on diverse habitat of freshwater seeps and streams, brackish tidal marsh and mixed upland hardwood forest. This is 62 acres of a colonial homesite and features the oldest graveyard in King and Queen County. Expect to see asters, arrow arum, *Monarda*. **Meet at 2 pm.**

Directions

From West Point travel Route 33 East toward Saluda. At Shackleford turn right onto Rt. 14 East toward Adner; travel approximately 5 miles to Plainview, go ½ mile further past Plainview, look for Oliver's Barber Shop on the right and VNPS sign, turn right onto Poropotank

Drive (gravel road), meet at the cul-de-sac. Address is 565 Poropotank Drive.

From Gloucester/Mathews, take Rt. 17 north to Adner, then Rt. 14 West toward Shackleford, go 1.5 miles to Oliver's Barber Shop on the left.

To register, call Patrick Richardson, 339/223-0243 or Helen Hamilton (after Sept. 11) 757/564-4494.

Event is free and open to the public. Be prepared for biting insects, poison ivy and uneven terrain.

Helen Hamilton

More about drought-tolerant plants

(from an article for the Master Gardeners Newsletter)

What a dry summer we have had! Bringing a lot of gardeners to think about next year's plantings to include plants that will survive on very little water. My garden looks lush, mostly because in 400 square feet, I am growing six different cultivars of the native switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*). So, one answer to drought-resistant plants are native ornamental grasses. Popular cultivars are the 8-foot tall 'Heavy Metal' and 'Northwind', both with metallic blue foliage and stiff stems and leaves. Six-foot cultivars like 'Dallis Blue' and 'Prairie Sky' are a little more floppy, but the enormous powder-blue seedheads waving in breezes are a delightful background for golden-rods, black-eyed susans, and tickseeds, all drought-tolerant natives as well. Several cultivars of switchgrass have red leaves or stems, one of which is 'Shenandoah', which grows only five feet tall.

All these grasses are clump-forming, which means they stay in one place, and only occasionally self-seed. But beware—in my small garden, these clumps have outgrown their space. These are prairie grasses, the roots go wide and deep, and in a garden will need periodic division. It will take a strong man with a heavy metal implement to carve the roots into manageable grapefruit-size pieces for replanting elsewhere.



My garden also supports the gorgeous purple muhly (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*), which initially enthralled me with its unbelievable

Purple muhly (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*) beauty, growing in sand dunes on

Portsmouth Island. In late summer through late fall the tiny purple seeds on 12-inch seedheads wave gently on rounded stems, creating a purple cloud, especially striking when backlit by autumn sun. The photo shows a purple muhly in full bloom in my garden.

If you don't mind aggressive self-seeding, river oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*) will reward your garden with the interesting drooping seedheads, resembling very closely sea oats (*Uniola paniculata*), a salt-water species growing on the Outer Banks. River oats prefers a little shade and moisture, and grows well along stream banks. I have it in pots on my deck where it requires very little care.

All these native ornamental grasses do not want fertilization, otherwise they will droop and grow less vigorously. The dead stems and seedheads provide winter cover for birds and small animals, as well as structural dimensions and striking contrasts to evergreens in the winter garden. Although in nature, the new growth emerges among the dead stems, which eventually disappear, most home gardeners prefer to remove the dead plant material in March, when the new leaves begin to appear. If cut into 12-inch segments, they form a natural mulch for early spring plants.

Other native plants that do well with little water are joe-pye-weed (*Eupatorium dubium*), blanket flower (*Gaillardia pulchella*), coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*), cup plant (*Silphium perfoliatum*), soldier mallow (*Hibiscus militaris*), sneezeweed (*Helenium autumnale*), bonesets (*Eupatorium perfoliatum*), swamp sunflower (*Helianthus angustifolius*), downy sunflower (*Helianthus mollis*), milkweeds (*Asclepis* spp.), ironweed (*Vernonia* spp.).

Native ornamental grasses are not widely sold in local nurseries, who often stock non-natives such as silvergrass (*Miscanthus sinensis*) and the popular pampas grass (*Cortaderia selloana*).

Below are two local sources for native ornamental grasses, or try mail order via the internet:

www.sandysplants.com

The retail outlet is in Mechanicsville.

www.pinelandsnursery.com

Wholesale/retail—located in Lanexa.

Helen Hamilton

Claytonsnatives on Flickr

Have you ever taken a look at claytonsnatives? Begun in 2007, it's our online photo gallery of native plants,



Photo: Sally Anderson

The Emancipation Oak in Hampton

taken in locations throughout Virginia and beyond. Claytonsnatives is hosted by Flickr, the popular photo-sharing website. We currently have over 1800 photos

of native plants, covering several hundred species. The photos are organized into many informative sets. You can browse pictures by date, location, or category (trees, ferns, or invasive plants for example). Do you ever wonder what happens to be blooming today? Go to the photo set "what to see now" and find out what's flowering or in fruit throughout the area. You can even download the full-sized photo for your computer wallpaper.

Many of the plants are located on an online map. Have you ever had the urge to smell skunk cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*)? Find the photo in the herbaceous plant set and click on "map" to find out where you can go sniff one.



Almost all the photos so far have been taken by member Phillip Merritt, but we would love to have other members



Photo: Phillip Merritt

Yellow lady's slipper (*Cypripedium calceolus*)

document the plants in their area. If you have some nice digital pics send the full-size file to claytonsnatives@yahoo.com (preferably with the species name!) and we'll post it along with your name. Once posted, the photo can be seen by people all over the world. We've made lots of contacts with other Flickr members and have gotten many great comments on our pictures. Flickr members have also been a big help in identifying all those mystery plants that don't quite seem to match the descriptions in our field guides!

Visit claytonsnatives at

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/claytonsnatives>.

Phillip Merritt



Photo: Phillip Merritt

Spotted horsemint (*Monarda punctata*)

New John Clayton Treasurer

Much to our loss, Hayes Williams wants to step down as Treasurer at the end of this fiscal year, October 31, 2008. Fortunately, Cynthia Long suggested Pat Gibbs as a possible new board member, and to our great relief, she has accepted. The Executive Committee/Board will be accepting Hayes' resignation and appointing Pat to fill his unexpired term.

Hayes: Many, many thanks for 3 years of dedicated monitoring of our funds—enjoy your free time!

Here's a brief bio from Pat:

She has been a resident of Williamsburg since the mid-1960s when she began work on her Master's in American History at William and Mary, and worked as an historian at Colonial Williamsburg for over 30 years before retiring several years ago. Pat has previously served as treasurer for the Garden History Society of Williamsburg and for her church.

Helen Hamilton

A word from Cynthia...

Please save seeds for our habitat project at New Quarter Park; we are working on habitat enhancement for bobwhite quail with the Williamsburg Bird Club. All species of native perennials and annuals are to be used, including native grasses, and we especially need native legumes such as partridge pea, *Baptisia*, and *Thermopsis*.

Questions? Call **Cynthia Long** at 259-9559.

and from Mary...

(written on the back of the recycled envelope in which she submitted her article on Page 2)

Butterflies will now show you what to plant for summer bloom. Give them the muddy place they need. Be kind to caterpillars. Collect seed for wild gardens-to-be.

Be a good earth servant.

New members

Welcome to **Karen Berquist** of Williamsburg and **Anne Graber** of Yorktown!

Membership Form for VNPS (Place checks in the boxes below next to your selections.)

Yes, I want to ☐ **join** ☐ **renew** my membership in ☐ the John Clayton Chapter.

Name		
Address		
City	State	Zip
email	Phone	

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 VNPS ☐ to John Clayton Chapter

☐ 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

Calendar

Saturday, Aug. 30	10 am: College Creek in James City County. The walk begins at College Landing Park in Williamsburg, a small park on South Henry St. about a mile from Colonial Williamsburg, which has a nice boardwalk to see lots of brackish marsh plants as well as native shrubs and trees. Afterwards we'll make a stop along the Colonial Parkway where the creek meets the James River. Expect to see persimmon, wild rice, pickerel weed, climbing hempweed, partridge pea, and evening primrose among the many native plants. Call 757/259-0386 to register or email claytonsnatives@yahoo.com .
Thursday, Sept. 4	7–9 pm: John Clayton Chapter Board Meeting in Room C, Williamsburg Regional Library
Saturday, Sept. 6	10–11 am: Drought Resistant Plants for Homeowners. Helen Hamilton will present this program at the Williamsburg Botanical Garden, in Freedom Park (corner of Centerville and Longhill Roads). For more information call 757/229-1995 or log onto www.williamsburgbotanicalgarden.org .
Thursday, Sept. 18	Beginning at 8 am: Work day for Melissa's Meadow. The meadow is adjacent to the William and Mary indoor tennis center parking lot off South Henry Street, just past the law school and dorm. Come any time after 8; we work as long as people can stay. Bring gardening tools and gloves as needed. Contact Cynthia Long , 757/259-9559.
Friday, Sept. 19	7–9 pm: John Clayton Chapter annual meeting at the Waterman's Auditorium and lobby of VIMS, at Gloucester Point. Speaker is Nancy Ross Hugo, outdoor writer and lecturer who coordinated the Remarkable Trees of Virginia Project. More on Page 5.
Saturday, Sept. 20	10 am: Photo expedition to Waller Mill Park to document the park for our online photo gallery "Claytonsnatives". Call 757/259-0386 to register or email claytonsnatives@yahoo.com . Waller Mill Park is off Airport Road just north of Williamsburg. Bring your digital cameras!
Saturday, Sept. 20	8:45-12 noon: John Clayton Chapter will have a table at "Go Green-Save Green" at the Virginia Living Museum's Native Plant Sale ; see Page 5 for more details.
Sunday, Sept. 21	Beginning at 2 pm: Plant survey of diverse habitat in King & Queen Co., including freshwater seeps, tidal marsh and mixed upland forest. To register, call Patrick Richardson , 339/223-0243 or Helen Hamilton (after Sept. 11), 757/564-4494. Read more details on Page 5.
Saturday, Sept. 27	10 am: A walk through Freedom Park. Some of the blooming plants we are likely to come across as we wander through the woods include jewelweed, goldenrods, Maryland golden aster, Indian pipe, and crown-beard. Call 757/259-0386 to register or email claytonsnatives@yahoo.com . (see Sept. 6 above for directions).