



Claytonia

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

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Larry Griffith to speak at our November 19 meeting

Larry Griffith, curator of plants for the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, conducts ongoing research in dating of period plants, their cultivation, and their use. He presents historical plant data to tour guides, volunteers, and master gardeners and is involved in the development of the annual Garden Symposium. Larry is a former columnist for the *Daily Press* and lives on the Middle Peninsula.

He will be speaking on the native species treated in *Flowers and Herbs of Early America*, his book published last year.

Note the location of this meeting—the Main Street Branch of the Newport News Public Library (directions are below)—which begins at 7 pm.

Directions to the Newport News Public Library on Main Street, Hilton Village

If you are coming from Williamsburg, take the Rt.17 exit from Interstate 64 going west toward Newport News (not the one going to Yorktown). Continue about a half mile down 17 (J. Clyde Morris Blvd.). Go straight through the intersection at Jefferson (Casey Chevrolet will be on the right). Continue past Riverside Hospital and turn left onto Warwick Blvd. where the big propeller faces you. Follow Warwick about a mile and turn left onto Main Street in Hilton Village, where you will see old townhouses. The Baptist Church is on the left corner as you turn. Take a quick right in front of the firehouse and turn to the left to find parking (second driveway). The meeting room will be to the right of the entrance in the library.

From the President

Where have they gone?

The butterflies, that is. Most have finished their life cycle by depositing eggs on plants that will nourish larvae (caterpillars). Many of these plants are our native trees. Black cherry supports the tiger swallowtail and red-spotted purple; oaks are hosts for dusky-wings and hairstreaks and over 500 other species of butterflies; elms, redbud, cedar and willows are other favorite host plants.

Some butterflies are very fussy about choosing a home for their young—the hackberry emperor uses only the hackberry tree, while others such as the mourning cloak butterfly, will lay eggs on willows and many other trees and shrubs.

Grasses are preferred habitat for the larvae of most skipper butterflies, and all the satyr butterflies. Fritillaries prefer violets and passionflower vines, the black swallowtail chooses any member of the carrot family—parsley, carrot, fennel; the zebra swallowtail likes pawpaw and the spicebush swallowtail uses spicebush and sassafras for their larvae food. (Information from Brian Taber, Coastal Virginia Wildlife Observatory, www.cvwo.org).

And of course milkweeds are the exclusive habitat of the monarch butterfly. The butterfly garden in the Williamsburg Botanical Garden in Freedom Park was recently designated a Monarch Waystation by Monarch Watch at the University of Kansas (www.monarchwatch.org).

The swamp milkweed, covered with blossoms in the summer, was decimated down to bare stems by late September. As a native perennial, it will come back strong next year.

While the paragraphs above focus on the beautiful butterflies, and their need for native host plants, the caterpillars are also food for our native birds. Doug Tallamy's book *Bringing Nature Home* makes a compelling argument for installation of coastal native plants here in the Williamsburg area. His research shows that our native birds require insect protein to manufacture eggs and sperm and feed young. And the preferred insects feed on our native plants.

A lot of folks in our area are just beginning to learn about native plants; as chapter members, it is surely our responsibility to educate, proselytize, encourage, and spread the word wherever and whenever we can, about the necessity of using our native plants as much as possible. **Helen Hamilton**

New members

Welcome to six new members: **Theresa Denby** of Gloucester, **June James** of Hayes, **Kathy Merithew** of Cobbs Creek, **Evi Oakley** of Williamsburg, **Charlie Vannatter** of Goochland and **William Walker** of Dutton!

Our 25th anniversary party

What a great time was had by all! Thanks to Joan and Jan and Lucile and Bharati and Sara for all the running around and fixing things, to Libbey and Cynthia for the flowers and to Donna for bringing us such a thought-provoking program. And Doug Gill was certainly generous with his time, staying to discuss issues. **Helen Hamilton**



Photo: Jan Newton

Cynthia presents Helen with a thank you bouquet of native flowers for all of her work for the chapter and in promoting native plant conservation and education.



Photo: Jan Newton

The birthday cake!

Two September walks...

Beaverdam Park on September 12

The John Clayton fall schedule of field trips got back in gear this weekend after a summer hiatus. On Saturday, Sept. 12, longtime member Pat Baldwin lead a small group of people around the edges of Beaverdam Lake in Gloucester, Virginia. Beaverdam Lake is a great spot for plant hunting, especially around the shoreline. The wet areas make for a great diversity of herbaceous plants.

Pat is a self-taught amateur botanist who really knows his stuff, and has been a member of the John Clayton Chapter of the VNPS since it formed around 25 years ago—how's that for dedication!

He started the field trip off by showing us an amazing fossil his son found somewhere in western Virginia. The



Photo: Phillip Merritt

Pat Baldwin's fossilized tree fern

big hunk of rock is actually the remains of a huge tree fern that predated the dinosaurs! Walking only a few feet into the woods, we came across several specimens of jumpseed and American lopseed. Most were setting seed, but there was one still in bloom, which was taking on a nice chartreuse color for the fall. This might be nice in a corner of a woodland garden (depending on how aggressive it is).



Photo: Phillip Merritt

Closer to the shore were some typical area plants including skullcap, swamp smartweed, and Virginia bugleweed. A nicely flowering ground nut was growing in and out of the bushes nearby. A more unusual plant was growing at the edge of the water—a large hazel nut shrub with nuts almost ready for eating.

Hazelnuts (*Corylus americana*)

As we wandered back towards the forest interior we came across a couple of lobelias: *puberula* and *siphilitica*. Farther along the trail, Pat led us to a hillside seep home to two vigorous patches of *Phlox paniculata* and jewelweed. Growing next to them was some obedient plant, which Pat said was not previously recorded growing naturally in Gloucester County.

The trail wound back to the water, where we came across some three-way sedge, small water plantain and swamp loosestrife.

Freshwater marshes make Beaverdam Park a really lovely spot, especially on pleasant days like this. Its small bridge provided a nice great spot to see what was left of this year's cardinal flower, growing in a large patch of sedge. After the bridge we came across a couple of species of tick trefoil and this nice specimen of lion's paw.

We ended the walk at an rather interesting spot. This small pond had a large colony of our native waterlily, but unlike the familiar white ones, these were a rich pink color. Unfortunately we could not get close enough to get a good picture.

Borrowed entirely from Phillip Merritt's blog at www.howitgrows.com!

Denbigh Park on September 20

About 8 chapter members and guests attended the September 20 Denbigh Park native plant walk, led by Phillip Merritt. The park, located at the end of Denbigh Blvd. in Newport News, is small with a nice boardwalk for viewing its marsh and it also contains a boat ramp. We spotted trumpet creeper still blooming by the parking lot and poison ivy blooming near the beginning of the trail. Seaside goldenrod (*Solidago sempervirens*) was blooming, as was saltmarsh daisy (*Pluchea odorata*).

After smelling the awful smelling, deer resistant *Pluchea foetida* that Cynthia Long was giving away at the chapter



Saltmarsh daisy blooms

annual meeting, we were pleasantly surprised to find that *Pluchea odorata* has a pleasant smell, which explains its other common name of sweetscent. Phillip pointed out the similarity between Jesuit's bark and groundsel bush, and that male groundsel bush has creamy, yellow blossoms instead of the white blossoms of the female plants. In the marsh, blue sea lavender was almost through with its performance, as only one plant was still blooming, providing a delicate solo. Black needlerush, with its silvery grey hues, was dotted with white marsh aster in some places and with big cordgrass in others. Occasional red stems of water hemp also decorated the marsh. Thanks to trip leader



Phillip shows daytrippers photos of flowering plants they saw which were not currently in bloom.

Phillip Merritt for providing a binder with flower photos of the plants that were not currently blooming. He also shared some photos of butterfly pea (*Clitoria mariana*) and spurred butterfly pea (*Centrosema virginiana*) to help us differentiate between the two species.

Jan Newton

A visit to Grafton Ponds in October

On October 13, Phillip Merritt, Jan Newton, Patricia Buck and Jenifer Hochstrasser, a DCR volunteer, joined Rebecca Wilson of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation on a return trip to Grafton Ponds Natural Area Preserve to take a look at some fall-blooming grasses and wildflowers, and to explore some of the plant communities growing around its unique coastal depression ponds.

Visit www.howitgrows.com for Phillip's photos and commentary about this fascinating area.

September's VNPS annual meeting

A report from Lucile Kossodo

September 25, 26 and 27 of 2009. It was that time of the year again, the annual meeting of VNPS, which was held at the Civic Center in Salem, Virginia. Six of our members attended the meeting: Jan Newton, Shaune Reams, Lynn Allison, Edie Bradbury, Lucile Kossodo and Kathi Mestayer, our Representative-at-Large. The meeting this year was hosted by two chapters, the Blue Ridge Wild Flower Society and the New River Chapter. About 120 members in all attended this great meeting.

Friday night it all began with interesting selections of unusual native plants for sale grown by Peter Heus, owner of Enchanter's Garden Nursery in West Virginia and expert propagator. Some of the offerings were geared to the mountain ecosystems, but some were native to our coastal area. Peter also had brought several plants which could not be offered for sale because they were endangered plants he had succeeded in growing from seed and were to be offered to the lucky winners of Saturday's door prizes. Peter Heus was the speaker on Friday, and we quickly found out why he is an extraordinary plant propagator. Since our newsletter has already covered the perennial propagation talk given by Denise Greene, I am only writing some of the details which he presented. His demonstration reminded me of Denise's and his wit was amusing. The first thing he does is plant seeds in recycled styrofoam containers in which grapes are shipped and which he gets from supermarkets. He uses a Promix BX mixed with more perlite so it is very well drained. Sometimes he adds wood humus so as to add some of the micronutrients the plants need to grow in nature. Then he plants the seeds, and indicated that the planters, which remain outside during the winter months, need to have a layer of white pine needles to protect them from heavy rains and heaving. Yes, white pine needles are preferred because they are finer than loblolly pine needles. If that is all you have, then use them. He believes that plants get better roots and are healthier if grown this way and are easier to separate than those grown in little pots. His humor came when after planting seeds he said, "Oops, I just planted stealth grass!" We were really intensely interested when he said that *Asclepias* and *Trifolium virginicum* need fire in order to really germinate. We have all had seed germination failure with the *Asclepias*, so we listened up. Fire, how? He grows these seeds in old wooden drawers (don't use plastic or Styrofoam for this!) which he thoroughly waters. Then he adds dry grasses or pine needles and sets them on fire. Apparently the smoke and ashes contain nutrients these genera need in order to germinate. (Of course, you need to be careful not to burn the seeds.) Also, he smokes cigars when he is in his planting shed, which

he believes is very healthy for the seeds, but he did not ask us all to start smoking ... Have you ever dreamed of growing native orchids? Well, the answer lies in the soil. The best method is to wait until a tree topples in the forest (hurricanes or winter storms will do), then in the fresh soil that was under the tree's roots, he grows his orchid seeds. Want to grow ferns? You need to create moist terrariums in which to grow the spores. Want to grow Viburnums? Then keep the seeds wet so they will rot and then, when they smell nasty, use a colander to clean the outer husk under water before planting. Want to divide plants? Use a big kitchen knife like Julia Childs—yes, he really said that. I wondered what his wife thought about this. One of the unusual plants he grows is the native Coffee Plant (not the Starbucks variety—sorry, did not catch the Latin name) which needs between 4–9 years to germinate. It has a beautiful red flower in the leaf axils. He does not offer any for sale at this time. Why does he prefer to grow seeds rather than divide the many plants in his huge property? Because he is too lazy to dig and pot and there are always interesting variations and sometimes a rare one, such as the white monkshood he found last year among his seedlings. His website is www.enchantersgarden.com. (By the way, he looks like John Denver.)



Photo: Jan Newton

A red-spotted salamander seen near a wetland area at the bottom of Bottom Creek Gorge Preserve.

Saturday's walk of Bent Mountain-Bottom Creek Gorge Nature Conservancy Preserve was chosen by all five members. It was so foggy and drizzly that we never saw the mountain at all. First we learnt that Bent Mountain is full of wetlands, which seemed like a contradiction. The wetland was full of lobelia, dogwood, and sedges, and we also saw a red salamander. We enjoyed looking at everything, but it was too rainy to take notes and most of us, regretfully, left our cameras locked in our cars.

Then we went to the Bottom Creek Nature Preserve, where we were amazed by the beauty of a forest covered in rhododendrons. We noted beautiful striped maple and chestnut oaks. We passed a pond surrounded on three sides by rhododendron and on the other side sneezeweed in bloom. We saw the very poisonous mushroom, Angel of Death (*Amanita virosa* or *Amanita bispora*?), and climbed up and down past beautiful ferns, but our leader was a hiking leader, and he walked too fast for plant observation and did not really know plants. Some of our fellow hikers did, but we were too wet to take notes. We had lunch at a beautiful torrent where the water rushed down and around huge rocks with pockets of plants on them. It was an impressive picnic site. Then we climbed up and around to look at a beautiful 200-ft fall across a deep mountain divide. The last hour of the walk

was not so hilly, but oh, so rainy. Even though we were wet, we would do it all again because of the beauty of the site.

Saturday evening began with a silent auction. Saturday's evening eye opening and thought provoking talk was given by Doug Tallamy after an excellent dinner. His talk was addressed to today's dwellers of suburban landscape and how we can, by adding a great number of native trees, bushes and herbaceous plants, bring Nature home again. It is not just for the sake of the plants but for the sake of our survival (see Kathi Mestayer's article about the speech). He suggested looking at two websites for gardening:

www.wilflower.org/alternatives/index.php and

www.namethatplant.net. His final note was "Gardening is a way of showing you believe in tomorrow". I think it was inspiring to see that he signed his book *Bringing Nature Home* with the following inscription: "Garden as if life depended on it, because it does." After the talk Jan Newton won a door prize, a rare coastal sunflower (*Helianthus schweinitzii*) which is native to North Carolina.



Photo: Jan Newton

Piratebush (*Buckleya distichophylla*) in fruit

Sunday morning was the exact opposite of Saturday, a beautiful cool, sunny day with a deep blue sky, and we finally saw the beautiful mountains all around us. Several of us set off to see the piratebush (*Buckleya distichophylla*) at the Poor Mountain Natural Heritage Preserve. The name of the mountain comes from the fact

that it has soil that is poor for agricultural use. Poor Mountain is a 590 acre preserve which was set aside by landowner Grace Terry. There is only one circular trail but more are about to be constructed.

Piratebush, which is in the sandalwood family, is deciduous and grows to a height of 15 feet, exists only in NC, TN and VA, and is endangered. The greatest concentration of piratebush is at the Poor Mountain site. It is called piratebush because it does not only survive on photosynthesis but exists by attaching itself to the roots of other plants. It was thought that it existed by attaching itself only to hemlocks, but when



Jan Newton, Shaune Reams, Edie Bradbury and Lucile Kossodo pose for a photo at Poor Mountain Natural Area Preserve.

those trees began to disappear and it still existed, scientists were able to determine that it can survive on other plants such as Mountain pine (*Pinus pungens*). It likes xeric mountainous areas with bent gnarled trees which have survived fires, and exists in areas that have huckleberry (*Gaylussacia*), fetterbush (*Pieris floribunda*) and mountain laurels (*Kalmia latifolia*), all of which we saw. Piratebush has pale green leaves somewhat similar to fetterbush, a lovely flower we did not see, and lots of pale green fruit in the shape of dates. It is very popular with deer but they kindly left many for us to see.

One thing we all could say about this area of Virginia is that there were many other field trips we would have loved to take. Our state is indeed beautiful. **Lucile Kossodo**

...and an account of Doug Tallamy's keynote address from Kathi Mestayer

The Virginia Native Plant Society had its Annual Meeting this past weekend near Roanoke. Attendance was well over 100 (did I hear 130?! I drove out with a new VNPS member, and ran into several others from the Clayton Chapter. The weather was dreadful, but in perfect VNPS/Master Naturalist style, we didn't let it keep us indoors.

A highlight, however, was the (indoors) keynote speaker on Saturday night, Doug Tallamy, author of *Bringing Nature Home* (and U. of Md professor in his spare time). If you don't have this book, get it now. It's out in paperback. I have bought four copies so far and only kept two; one went to Hugh Beard (environmental sciences high school teacher), one to Carol Heiser at DGIF. Hugh said it was mind-blowing.

Doug spoke eloquently about the problems in modern society and their impacts on the environment. At one point, he summed it up by saying that most of us feel that "Nature is well and happy someplace else." While we, in contrast, are well and happy in the center of our "sterilized" lawns and (mostly nonnative) landscapes.

I'll just summarize a few of his best (IMHO) points:

1. In healthy ecosystems, there is a lot of redundancy; niches and positions in the food web are covered by more than one species or organism. However, with the lower biodiversity of most of our suburbs and developed areas, the redundancy is lost; when one species or niche disappears, the whole food web crashes.
2. Where there is more plant diversity there is more animal diversity. Biodiversity is an essential, non-renewable resource.
3. There is such a thing as "functional extinction" when population numbers of a particular plant/animal in an area get so low that they are not able to perform their function in the food web/ecosystem. If one were to claim that because there are no documented examples of extinctions

due to nonnative invasives, that claim would be not only largely irrelevant, but also wrong (Tallamy says that there are, indeed such examples on islands). So there.

4. Only native plants are part of the food web. He defines "native" as being an organism that shares an evolutionary history with the species in a given area. For example, many caterpillars can only survive and reproduce in the presence of three or fewer plant types! That's because those caterpillars have co-evolved in the presence of a specific plant to be able to digest its leaves despite the defensive toxins that the plant has developed to protect itself!
5. When we buy and plant nonnatives, we are depriving wildlife of food; a "pest-resistant" plant is a food-free plant. For example, the "butterfly bush" only supports ONE species of butterfly. Sure, more species feed on the nectar, but when it comes time to reproduce and make more butterflies, the butterfly bush is virtually useless. Oaks, on the other hand, support over 500 species of butterflies.
6. Moving up the food chain, this matters because birds need insects (incl. caterpillars) to feed their young. They cannot raise their nestlings on seeds and nectar. The protein in insects is very high quality and absolutely essential for baby birds. So, says Tallamy, without (native) insect host plants, "we feed the birds all winter and then starve them in the summer."
7. In general, woody plants support far more biodiversity than herbaceous plants. But both are necessary for habitat.
8. Regarding nonnative invasives: Japanese honeysuckle, for example, was used in landscaping for 80 years before it started to become invasive. It's not known how/why that happened, but it means that we can't know in advance if something will eventually cause problems.
6. Finally, in answering my last-minute question, Tallamy confirmed that the notion of "keystone" species is of only limited usefulness in protecting habitat/food webs. "Anything can be a keystone species in the right circumstances."

In an hour-long presentation, he gave us more information (and ammunition, frankly) than we could really take in. The room was so quiet you could've heard a pin drop. He ended with several slides about how we need to take these messages to our suburban environments and turn them back into places that we share with nature and wildlife. A suggestion was to take 50 percent of the lawn acreage of every yard and plant it with natives (and do a good job if possible; leaf litter, variety of plants, habitat elements, etc). Connect the yards with hedgerows and contiguous planted areas. It won't obviate the habitat fragmentation/edge impacts, but it could be a huge improvement over what we have now. And conserve a heck of a lot of water in the bargain. And provide living outdoor spaces for us and our children. Amen. **Kathi Mestayer**

Grasses in the Fall landscape



Photo: Helen Hamilton

Purple Muhly grass

Purple Muhly

Few plants rival the breathtaking beauty of purple muhly in the fall. Now blooming with beautiful clouds of tiny purple wisps waving in the autumn sun, muhly grass

(*Muhlenbergia capillaris*) grows no taller than a few feet, and will reward the home gardener with a widening clump of stunning flowers each fall. From March until mid August, the thin spiky blades add interesting contrast to broad-leaved blooming perennials and annuals and evergreen shrubs. In early fall, the seed heads begin to form where the blade bends at a right angle, and by the end of September, the tip of each blossoms into a 10 x 6-inch filmy purple haze. In winter the purple stems and seed heads dim to tan, providing a lovely contrast to evergreens.

The stems can be cut back in March when the new growth emerges, and the spent blades dropped as mulch and groundcover.

Muhly grass is tough and loves the heat; many nurseries are now offering this plant for sale. This grass is a native of moist pine barrens near the Atlantic coast and parts of Mississippi and Texas. In Virginia it will grow in full sun or light shade and prefers well-drained soil, since it is often found growing on sand in the beach areas of southern Virginia and North Carolina. "Capillaris" means "hair-like or delicate," referring to the tufted purple flowers.

Switchgrass

These native clump-forming grasses are in full bloom in October, with showy loose flower clusters. Switchgrass was one of the dominant species of the tallgrass prairie that once blanketed the middle of the continent. As such, this North American native is extremely easy to grow and is well adapted to the vagaries of our climate, tolerating both wet and dry sites. Switchgrass will withstand poor drainage and flooding, so it makes a great erosion control, and can tolerate salt spray.

Growing 3 to 7 feet tall in narrow, erect clumps, these sturdy plants can screen undesirable views. They also add rich, long-lasting fall color and winter interest to perennial borders. This grass is simply magnificent in the fall after a touch of frost, and the seedheads make great additions to dried bouquets.

As perennials, when switchgrasses are planted in the fall, they can make root growth over the winter, and form nice growth the first year. Subsequent years will see an increase in the height and width of the plant. In March when the new growth appears, the tan stems and leaves can be cut off, and left as mulch around the plant.



Photos: Helen Hamilton



Two cultivars of switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*); top, 'Dallis Blue'; bottom, 'North Wind'.

Many cultivars can be found in local nurseries. The shortest and most colorful is the 3-foot tall 'Shenandoah' with reddish leaves and stems; other red cultivars have originated in Germany, with foliage from orange-red to deep burgundy.

Taller cultivars like 'Heavy Metal' and 'North Wind' grow in straight columns of blue-green foliage and yellow fall color, and maintain their form all winter. The seedheads of 'Dallis Blue' are a feathery, powder blue that is stunning against a pine woodlands or a white fence.

Helen Hamilton

Fall Harvest at YRSP October 24



Edie Bradbury is ready for questions from visitors.

John Clayton members manned a native plant display at the Fall Harvest event at York River State Park, focusing on long-blooming native plants. Thanks go to Edie Bradbury, Lucile Kossodo, Elizabeth Lowe, and Jan Newton for volunteering for this event

and to Helen Hamilton for organizing it all. **Jan Newton**

Membership Form for John Clayton Chapter, VNPS

(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	

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

The August NPS workshop on pesticides

Dorothy Geyer, Landscape Architect/Natural Resource Specialist at Colonial National Historical Park, attended a National Park Service 5-day workshop on pesticides in Shepherdstown, West Virginia in August, and sent this thought-provoking message to Helen Hamilton on the first day.

“Oh my, I am totally appalled at how many birds die at the hand of pesticides from one way or another. Most of it is agricultural pesticides, but some of it comes from homeowners. They estimate that **67 million birds die each year in the US alone due to pesticide poisoning**. The US is taking a number of bad boys off the market, but then they are used in the other parts of the world. According to scientists, data coming out in South America, where they use pesticides pretty heavily, indicates that a main reason for the decline in tropical migratory songbirds is that they die of pesticide poisoning down there. Oy. I am afraid of what they will say about Glyphosate. I am getting so depressed! I will try to remember this when I complain about how expensive organic foods are: I will try harder to go 100% organic.”

Dorothy Geyer

Denise Green’s State Fairgrounds project

Denise Green, owner of Sassafras Farms in Gloucester, has taken on the task of landscaping with native plants at the Virginia State Fairgrounds in Richmond. This past August,

Helen asked how our chapter might assist her work there, and here is Denise’s reply:

“Yes, we’re looking for both plants and money. We’ve planted a large portion of the area. Gwynn Hubbard, the horticulturist there, with help from the VA Green Industry Council and the Master Naturalists, is working very hard to keep everything watered, so we probably won’t do any more planting until fall. Then I’ll be looking for perennials that are shade and drought tolerant, not more than 2–3 feet tall, and look good in late September. Also, fothergilla would be good in that area. And native grasses for a hillside. I’ve already put in some big swaths of *Panicum* ‘Shenandoah’ and *P.* ‘Cloud Nine’. It would be nice to come up with 2 or 3 more groupings of 15–20 grass plants. Also, there’s plenty of room for more drought tolerant later-blooming perennials for that hillside. So far we have *Aster laevis*, *Helianthus mollis* and I’m probably going to donate some *Erygium yuccifolium*.”

Helen Hamilton

We have lost a dear friend...

Sadly, I must report that Pat Gibbs passed away on October 17th. We will certainly miss her as our Treasurer and a vital force on our board, and most of all, as a good friend.

Helen Hamilton



A photo by Dorothy Geyer of Phillip Merritt's garden, taken during a second plant walk there on Oct 10.



Sea lavender (*Limonium latifolium*) in bloom in Denbigh Park (Photo: Jan Newton)



Blue stem goldenrod (*Solidago caesia*) blooms along a trail at the VNPS Annual Meeting in September. (Photo: Jan Newton)



Participants on the Denbigh Park walk pause for a picture. (Photo: Jan Newton)

Calendar

- Sunday, Nov 1** **1 pm: Sandy Bottom Park Nature Park.** Phillip Merritt will lead a tour of fall foliage and wildflowers. The park is located in Hampton at the corner of Hampton Roads Center Parkway (West) and Big Bethel Road. *To register call 757-604-1026 or email claytonsnatives@yahoo.com.*
- Saturday, Nov 21** **10: am William & Mary Herbarium.** Join Beth Chambers for a tour of the new William & Mary Herbarium. *To register and get directions call 757-604-1026 or email claytonsnatives@yahoo.com, or contact the herbarium at 757-221-2213 or email willi@wm.edu.*
- Saturday, Jan 23** **10 am: Longhill Swamp Skunk Brunch.** Join Phillip Merritt as he looks for the winter blooms of the skunk cabbage, the 2009 VNPS perennial of the year. Hot drinks and refreshments provided! *To register and get directions call 757-604-1026 or email claytonsnatives@yahoo.com.*

Stonehouse Habitat now has a website!

Jan Newton has created a website for the Stonehouse Elementary School's Habitat garden. You can find a link on our chapter's website (www.claytonvnps.org) under "Habitats and Education, Stonehouse Elementary School."

A "classified ad" from Cynthia: Free to a good home, plastic pots, all sizes. Call Cynthia Long at 259-9559.

Buy one, get one free!

When you join or renew your membership with any chapter of the VNPS during 2009, you can sign someone else up for a year's membership for free. Join the John Clayton Chapter or renew your membership today!

(Note that this opportunity is available only until the end of 2009!)