



Claytonia

Newsletter of the John Clayton Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society

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www.claytonvnps.org

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Our September 20 Annual Meeting—Election of Officers

Beth Chambers on “From Aster to Symphyotrichum: New Names for Our New World Asters.”



On September 20, 2012, the Annual Meeting of the John Clayton Chapter will hear Beth Chambers of the College of William & Mary’s Biology Department discuss “From Aster to Symphyotrichum: New Names for Our New World Asters.”

Beth Chambers is curator of the Herbarium of the College of William

and Mary. Her interest in botany began in Florida, where she graduated in Environmental Studies from New College. She surveyed flora along the west coast of Florida at Mote Marine Laboratory before coming to Virginia, where she studied the ecology of tidal freshwater marshes and obtained a master’s degree in Environmental Science at the University of Va, later obtaining a second master’s degree in Media and Educational Technology from Fairfield University. In addition to running the Herbarium, she manages the Biology Department’s website and is Instructor of the EcoAmbassador course at William & Mary. Beth looks forward to working with the JCC as part of its new Education Committee.

Beth’s talk will cover the differences between Old World and New World asters, and whittle down the genera located in Virginia. She will cover the specialized morphology of flowers in the Asteraceae family to help with identifying these flowers in the field, highlighting asters likely to be found on the coastal plain of Virginia.

According to Beth, fall is a great time to find asters blooming. The lovely native aster you’re enjoying is no longer an Aster, taxonomically speaking—what used to be the largest, most diverse genus of 600 taxa has been split into ten different genera! To complicate this for the lay botanist, these new names are polysyllabic and unfamiliar. Asters can be difficult to identify because of the large variation and diversity of species (~ 50 in the upcoming Flora of Virginia), and due to the complex nature of the aster flowerhead.

The meeting, which begins at **6:45 pm**, will be held at the **James City County Recreation Center, 5301 Longhill Road, Williamsburg.**

Here are some directions to the Rec Center for folks driving from outside the Williamsburg area:

Approaching on Interstate 64, take Exit 242A to Route 199 toward Williamsburg. Follow 199 to the Longhill Road (VA 612) exit and turn right onto VA 612 S/Longhill Road. Continue (it becomes Longhill Connector Road) a short distance and turn left on Ashbury Rd. (Rt. 322), then right into the Rec Center parking lot.

From Gloucester and Mathews, whether traveling on the Colonial Parkway or via Route 238 and Route 143, get onto Route 199 toward Williamsburg, following the directions in the previous paragraph once on Route 199.

New members

Welcome to rejoining member **Susan Walton** of Newport News.

Our July Meeting: “A History of Botanical Art— An Artist’s Perspective”

Our speaker was **Linda Miller**, a botanical artist who lives in Williamsburg and whose work is currently on exhibit at the New Town Art Gallery and at York Hall in Yorktown. She brought several of her prints to the meeting for us to enjoy after her presentation.

Linda led her audience through botanical art’s history, beginning with the first drawings of plants and the first woodcut illustrations of medicinal herbs, and through the artists of the Age of Discovery, including Marie Sybilla Merian (1647–1717), a native of Germany and the first person to study and depict the life cycle of insects; Mark Catesby, an Englishman who compiled the first comprehensive survey of the flora and fauna of Southeastern North America, visiting Virginia from 1712 to 1719; Jane Colden Farquhar (1724–1766), whose Botanic Manuscript is one of the earliest American local floras, depicting the plants near her home in the Hudson River Valley of New York; Franz Bauer (1758–1840) of Austria, first botanical illustrator at England’s Royal Botanic Gardens, and his brother Ferdinand (1760–1826), also a talented artist, who produced beau-



Linda Miller has donated a print of her painting of Jack-in-the-Pulpit to the Chapter for a raffle during September’s Annual Meeting.

tiful engravings of plants and animals seen on his trips to Australia and Norfolk Island; and Belgian Pierre Redouté (1759–1840), official court artist in the court of Marie Antoinette, who contributed more than 2,100 plates depicting over 1,800 different plant species.

Louise Menges

Recent JCC field trips...

July 7: Native Plant Walk at the Wahrani Trail



A spike of soft agrimony, a yellow-flowered member of the Rose Family.

About 8 or so folks ventured out for a native plant and geology walk led by **Jerre Johnson** and **Jan Newton** at Wahrani Nature Trails in New Kent County in spite of the hot, humid weather on July 7. Jerre pointed out terraces of varying heights, remnants of when the York River was on site. He also talked about limestone, fossil shells and calcareous soils that are seen throughout the park. Jan pointed out 11 of the 14 species of ferns that have been identified so far at Wahrani, including adder's tongue fern. Native plant member



Jerre Johnson explains the geology of the area; on the ground behind him appear to be some exposed fossilized shells.

and master naturalist Meegan Wallace found a purple/maroon crane fly orchid stem with developing buds, a delightful sight, indeed! The most abundant plant among those blooming at the time was naked-flowered tick-trefoil (*Desmodium nudiflorum*), but blooms were spotted on a few of the following as well: fewflower tick-trefoil (*D. pauciflorum*), soft agrimony (*Agrimonia pubescens*), and spotted St. John's wort (*Hypericum punctatum*). Leaves and a few seed pods of pink lady slippers could be seen, as were leaves of a couple of lily-leaved twayblade orchids (*Liparis lilifolia*).

If you have not been to Wahrani Nature Trails, you are missing nice hiking paths that parallel and cross meandering streams and seeps, as well as climb up and down hills, making you think you are in the foothills



Naked-flowered tick-trefoil growing along the trail. Note the absence of leaves on its flower stalk of pale lavender blossoms.

of the mountains. A walk is planned for the fall, so keep a watch on the website, look for an email notice, and hope for cooler weather! More photos can be seen on the chapter's website at www.claytonvnps.org (click on photo gallery, and then “new” photo gallery). **Jan Newton**

August 4: A walk through William & Mary's Wildlife Refuge

The walk was led by **Beth Chambers**, who introduced our group of six to the William and Mary Wildlife Refuge, established in 1974 in an effort to preserve an area of the campus that was slated for development and would have been destroyed by the building of academic structures. The area is a rather small calcareous ravine habitat that supports native Virginia plants. Beth explained that some plantings have been rescued from other areas scheduled to be cleared. The area is open to everyone for exploring any season of the year. It was suggested that early spring and fall are the best time to explore this easily accessible Wildlife Refuge on the W&M campus. For a handout with a map and other information, contact Beth Chambers, Curator of the W&M Herbarium: willi@wm.edu.

Phyllis Putnam

A note from Beth Chambers: I really enjoyed leading the group and was happy to have a small crowd; it led to a great shared conversation among those present. We all agreed it would be nice to have another walk during April when more plants are flowering.

Field trips scheduled for September and October...

A shrub walk at Newport News Park on Saturday, September 22

Join **Charlie Dubay** at **9:30 am** for a tour of the local aquatic and terrestrial shrubs around the fishing area of Newport News Park.

Be sure to enter from Jefferson Ave. (Route 143) at the Park Headquarters (NN Visitor's Center) on Constitution Way immediately west of Ft. Eustis Blvd. (Rt. 105), *not* the camping entrance. Take the first left past the Park Headquarters at the “Fishing Area” sign and park in the small parking lot there. You will find Charlie Dubay at the the far end of the



Beth took these photos in the Wildflower Refuge on another occasion.

Left, Will Ozbun, a W&M student who has worked with Beth in the Herbarium, stands next to the sign at the Refuge's entrance.

Below, the ripening fruit of *Callicarpa americana* (American beautyberry).



parking lot in front of the small boat rental building with his cell phone on (757/870-0284) in case you have any problems..

Email questions to dubaycimm@verizon.net, but there is no need to register—just show up!

Little Creek Reservoir on Saturday, October 6

Helen Hamilton and **Gus Hall** will lead a walk around Little Creek Reservoir near Toano, where we can expect to see ladies-tresses (a late-blooming orchid), three species of meadow-beauty, and creeping rattlesnake master, along with other aquatic and woodland fall plants.

Meet at the Visitor Center at 1 pm. Contact Helen Hamilton at 757/564-4494 or helen48@cox.net to register and for more information.

Directions to Little Creek Reservoir, 190 Lakeview Dr, Toano, VA 757/566-1702:

- From I-64 West toward Richmond, merge onto VA 607 S/Croaker Rd via Exit 231A toward VA 30/Norge/Toano, for 1.5 miles
- Turn right onto Richmond Road (US 60W) for 1.7 miles
- Turn left onto VA 610 (Forge Rd); travel 2.2 miles.
- Turn left onto Lakeview Dr (VA 776) for 0.5 miles; the park entrance is on the right.

Hairy Elephant's Foot: Wildflower of the Month for August 2012

The common name of this branching perennial refers to the wide oval leaves clustering at the base in a rosette. Blooming August through November, the small bluish-purple flower heads are surrounded by small, triangular bracts and grow at the top of a long stem up to two feet tall.

Two other species of this interesting plant can be found in our area. Smooth Elephantsfoot (*E. nudatus*) is very similar to Hairy Elephant's Foot (*Elephantopus tomentosus*), differing in the arrangement of hairs on the midrib under the leaf and the width of the widest leaf. The leaves of the third species, Carolina Elephant's Foot (*E. carolinianus*), are mostly on the stem, not at the base. The flowering stems of all 3 plants have small leaf-like bracts at the junction of the stem and flower stalk.

Hairy Elephant's Foot grows in open, sandy woods on the Coastal Plain from southeast Virginia to Florida and Texas and north to the interior of Kentucky. Carolina Elephant's Foot is widespread across Virginia, while Hairy and Smooth Elephant's Foot are concentrated in the central and eastern counties.



Nodding ladies-tresses (*Spiranthes cernua*) in an October 2006 photo by Phillip Merritt.



Helen Hamilton

The scientific name of these plants is composed of the Greek *elephas*, “elephant,” and *pous*, “foot,” a translation of an ancient name.

Helen Hamilton

Virgin's Bower: Wildflower of the Month for September 2012

A fine-textured vine, Virgin's Bower (*Clematis virginiana*) features aromatic, pure white flowers, each with 4 narrow petal-like sepals. Growing in clusters in leaf axils, the flowers are profuse enough to cover the foliage. In late summer the female flowers give way to showy, feathery plume-like seed heads. Without tendrils, the leaf stalks twist and wrap around other plants. Bright green leaves are compound, with 3 sharply-toothed or lobed oval leaflets, each about 2 inches long.

The introduced Sweet Autumn Clematis (*C. terniflora*) has similar flowers, but the dark-green leaves, usually of 5 leaflets, are leathery, shiny and smooth, without teeth or lobes. Native to Japan, this plant is commonly cultivated, often escaped, and is considered invasive in some areas. Both the native and introduced species bloom July through September, and both produce feathery seed heads. The leathery, unlobed leaves are distinctive for the introduced plant.

Virgin's Bower is easily grown in average, medium to wet, well-drained soils in full sun to partial shade. Occurring in moist low woodland areas and thickets bordering streams, ponds and fence rows in most counties of Virginia, the plant ranges from Nova Scotia and Manitoba, and south to Georgia, Kansas, and Louisiana.

Although toxic and irritating to skin, the leaves have been used medicinally.

Helen Hamilton



Virgin's Bower

Phillip Merritt



Sweet Autumn Clematis Helen Hamilton

What are “plants of waste places”?

Editor’s note: What follows is an email exchange last year between Kathi Mestayer and Stewart Ware, uncovered and sent to me by Helen Hamilton.

1. Kathi:

Okay, here’s a theory about native plants.

Ever notice how some of the natives in Newcombs are described at “plants of waste places?” My theory is that those natives are the first-successional plants, which show up in disturbed areas first. It always bothered me to see them described as if they were somehow undesirable. But do you think there’s anything to my theory?

2. Stewart’s reply:

I haven’t looked at Newcomb recently, so I don’t remember what species he lists as “plants of waste places.” However, in general, “plants of waste places” are not truly early successional; they are in fact “ruderal” or “disturbance-requiring” or, as it is sometimes said, “weedy.” While sometimes folks say “A weed is anything growing where you don’t want it to grow,” in fact, there is actually an ecological category called “ruderal” (or weediness) for plants that have specific adaptations to an open, uncrowded, disturbed habitat. These are not the same thing as early successional plants. Early successional plants like old field fleabane, old field aster and old field goldenrods are sometimes called “weeds,” but they can grow in dense stands and persist for several years until something larger overtakes and overshadows them, and then they die out. They are also mostly fairly tender plants, easily damaged by trampling. True “weeds” in the ruderal sense usually grow in sparse stands, can’t tolerate shading even by their own species, and persist more than a year or two only if repeated disturbance excludes all fast-growing competitors and keeps the vegetation very sparse. Most of them are quite tolerant of being stepped on, run over or otherwise abused. Some were native, but many were Old World plants that naturalized in this country. The Old World had a much longer history of anthropogenic disturbance for plants to adapt, and also much larger areas that were regularly disturbed by people, so there were many more species of these ruderal plants there than in the New World. When Europeans and Africans came to this country and increased the frequency and area of disturbance, many European weeds quickly naturalized.

In the days when highways didn’t have wide paved shoulders, there would be a strip of dirt between the roadbed and the ditch that was run onto by tires at various times during the season, and this strip was

sparsely occupied by what were called “roadside weeds.” Most of these plants could easily recover if run over by a mule and wagon or an occasional rubber tire. Chicory and pathrush are examples of particularly damage-resistant plants. I would guess that a lot of the plants billed as “plants of waste places” fit this truly weedy category.

3. Kathi:

It was one of my many theories that turned out to be wrong, but even that can be a learning process (see quote below).

I was seeing fireweed and tall blue lettuce in the back yard where none had been for at least ten years, until Isabel. Then, they gradually disappeared/stopped blooming as the shade came back, so I started planting the tall blue lettuce in the front yard in the sun (it’s 12 feet tall now). We loved the fact that you had to use binocs to see the flowers... And then, when our huge red oak tipped over last year in Irene, we now have some...fireweed coming up.

Is it possible that there is something about the disturbance itself that causes the seeds in the seed bed to germinate?

I guess it did bother me that they used the “Plants of waste places” phrase, which implies that the plants are no darn good, but I think I understand the meaning now. Still, unfortunate choice of words (“waste”). Thanks to the Wares for their answer (and the many others I found in my file).

“This is not right. In fact, it’s not even *wrong*.”

Wolfgang Pauli, criticizing a student’s paper.

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Fortunately, there are large parts of the country with those same kinds of ungroomed roadsides, which we find so much more attractive than grass....DGMS (Don’t Get Me Started).

Message from the Seed Queen



Please continue to save your native plant seeds in brown paper bags marked with the name of the seeds. I will be glad to package and label them for distribution at our club events. Call me at 757/259-9559 if you have questions.

Cynthia Long

A state-record mockernut hickory is gone

Mary Hyde Berg has reported the loss of a huge mockernut hickory (*Carya alba*) on her Tripetala site in Gloucester which went down in a storm this summer. It had been the holder of the state record for that species.



Louise Menges

Mary's hickory, still standing during a native plant walk on her Tripetala site in March of this year. For scale, notice Lee Bristow on the right-hand side at its base.

A thank you from Martha Case, Director of the William & Mary Herbarium

Dear members of the John Clayton chapter of the VNPS,

The purpose of this letter is to express my sincere thanks for the \$1000 donation to the herbarium last January to be used for student research. I would also like to provide you with information on how these funds are being used.

First, let me say how important your gift is to our research program. At William & Mary, student mentorship is one of our primary missions, particularly student research experiences that transcend the classroom. Such experiences are arguably the best way for students to understand science and develop reasoning skills that promote strong inference. These experiences also allow them to develop expertise in a specific research area and practice science from the development of a scientific question to the publication of a research paper. Frequently, research experiences at W&M profoundly influence their career choice, discipline and organisms of interest. For example, over 80% of the students who have conducted research through the herbarium subsequently continue in the botanical sciences for their careers, contributing to plant science in innumerable ways.

Research projects are costly and departmental budgets are not a major source of funds for research. Instead, faculty must continuously look for external funding to support student research, which means dedicating significant time to grant writing. Having money predictably available for students is very important because we do not always have available funds at the times when students express interest. In addition, grant writing is a slow and unpredictable process. Your gift allows more students to get into research and gives them more opportunities for projects.

Herbarium-sponsored research always involves native plants and their protection. Thus, the VNPS and the herbarium share many of the same goals. A small project for a student could begin a career's worth of societal benefit. I cannot think of a better investment for the continued protection and understanding of our native flora.

I could not be more pleased that you have decided to donate funds for herbarium-sponsored student research, and I hope you think of us again in the future. My attachment briefly reviews the projects supported by these funds.

Projects supported by a \$1000 gift to the herbarium from the John Clayton Chapter of VNPS January 2012–July 2012

1. Native plants and their pollinators

Student: **Stephanie Wilson, Class of 2012**

Project Description: Stephanie's project had two components: (1) To investigate a fall plant/pollinator relationship that would be appropriate for addressing questions like the impact of global warming on the synchrony of insect emergence and plant flowering, and (2) to locate the nests of a particular species of native bee (*Andrena perplexa*) that pollinates yellow lady's slipper orchids. The latter would enable examination of how the abundance of bees is related to the successful recruitment of orchid seedlings.

Expenses funded by the gift

- Insect collecting gear including pinning stations, pins, professional insect storage boxes and nets, bug spray, deer off to protect plants and other small items
- A student trip to Maryland to meet with the bee expert, Sam Droege, to help with bee identification

Other information

Stephanie has graduated but the project is ongoing and I anticipate getting new students this year. Stephanie made tremendous progress in identifying many native bees that pollinate important fall-flowering native plants. In addition, she located many nests of native bees that will be important for the continued success of the yellow lady's slipper orchids in the college woods.

To learn more about my research on lady's slippers and see Stephanie talking about her project, visit:

<http://www.wm.edu/news/stories/2012/in-search-of-ladys-slippers.php>

2. "Oasis in a sea of development" (working title)

Student: **Alex McGrath, Class of 2013**

Project Description: This summer, Alex is making a short documentary film on the importance of the College Woods to the university's mission, to the public community in Williamsburg, and to the plants and animals that live there. The goal of the film is to inspire a culture and mindset of permanent protection of the woods. This project's expenses come from a variety of sources including the John Clayton Chapter's gift.

Expenses funded by the gift

- A high capacity external hard drive to store high definition film images for editing

3. The impact of deer in the College Woods

Student: **Andrew Koons, Class of 2015**

Project Description: This fall, Andrew Koons will start a project to investigate changes in the floristic abundance of the College Woods since the last comprehensive survey, conducted by Jenny Crouch in 1990. This survey will help to identify critical areas for protection against deer.

Expenses funded by the gift

- The remaining funds will be used for some of these project's expenses, which will include high quality deer fencing to examine the impact of deer on specific species and track species recovery.

We would more than welcome additional funding next year which would help continuance of these and other projects.

Martha A. Case, Associate Professor of Biology & Director of the William & Mary Herbarium

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

Calendar

- Thursday, Sept 20 6:45 pm: John Clayton Chapter Annual Meeting** at the **James City County Rec Center at 5301 Longhill Road in Williamsburg.**
Our speaker is **Beth Chambers**, W&M Herbarium Curator, whose subject will be **“From Aster to Symphyotrichum: New Names for Our New World Asters.”**
(Directions to the Rec Center are on Page 2.)
- Saturday, Sept 22 9:30am: Join Charlie Dubay** for a tour of the local aquatic and terrestrial shrubs around the fishing area of Newport News Park.
Email Charlie with questions at dubaycimm@verizon.net. There is no need to register.
(See Page 3 for directions.)
- Saturday, Oct 6 1 pm: Plant walk around Little Creek Reservoir** near Toano, led by **Helen Hamilton and Gus Hall**; meet at the Visitor Center.
Contact Helen Hamilton at 757/564-4494 or helen48@cox.net to register and for more information.
(See Page 3 for directions.)

There may be more walks in the works which did not make this issue, so **keep a lookout for announcements about additional walks** on our website at www.claytonvnps.org.