



Claytonia

Newsletter of the John Clayton Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society

Volume 29, Number 2

March–April 2013

www.claytonvnps.org

Officers

President Phillip Merritt
352/727-1994
phillip.merritt@gmail.com

Vice-President Lucile Kossodo
757/565-0769
kossodo@cox.net

Treasurer Phyllis Putnam
757/229-8035
phylputnam@cox.net

Secretary Cortney Langley
757/291-1500
clangley@plantrescue.org

Committee Chairs

Awards/Historian OPEN

Field Trips Helen Hamilton
757/564-4494
helen48@cox.net

Hospitality Martha Smith
757/566-0127
martha@hollyforks.com

Membership Patti Gray
757/645-4164
patriciagray67@gmail.com

Newsletter Louise Menges
757/229-4346
ltmeng@verizon.net

Plant Rescue Co-Chairs

Cortney Langley 757/291-1500
clangley@plantrescue.org

Ralph Will 757/565-0306
ralphandcarolynwill@gmail.com

Plant Sale Susan Voigt
757/229-6513
svoigt1@cox.net

Publicity OPEN

Web Jan Newton
757/566-3646
jnewton110@cox.net

Board Member-at-Large

Mary Hyde Berg 804/693-3568

Our March 21 Meeting: Don Hyatt on “America’s Treasure: Our Native Azaleas”



The rich flora of North America boasts seventeen species of native azaleas. Although highly prized by settlers and early plant explorers, many modern gardeners are not aware of these wonderful garden treasures. Don Hyatt,

a noted authority on native azaleas, will first introduce the various species showing the range of flower color and form he has observed in the wild. He will also identify species that are well suited for gardens in the Williamsburg area.

Don will then shift to a series of visual tours to the scenic places where our native azaleas often grow. Join him in the Southern Appalachians when rare native azaleas and wildflowers herald the arrival of spring. Experience breath-taking vistas along the Appalachian Trail near Roan Mountain in high season when the flame azaleas and rhododendrons turn entire mountaintops ablaze with color. Climb to the top of Gregory Bald in the Great Smoky Mountain National Park to see one of the most impressive floral displays of them all. Share his appreciation of gorgeous scenery, native azaleas, and wildflower companions as Don photographs these spectacular plants throughout the season.

Don Hyatt has been gardening at the family home in McLean, VA, since early childhood. His undergraduate degree was in horticulture but he also earned a Masters in computer science, both from Virginia Tech. Professionally, Don was a mathematics and computer science teacher in Fairfax County for 33 years, retiring in 2002 after spending the last half of his successful education career as the Director of the

Computer Systems Lab at the Governor's science magnet school, the Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology in Northern Virginia. The students he coached won many science and technology awards including a million-dollar supercomputer for the school in 1988.

The meeting begins at **6:45 PM** at the Yorktown Public Library at the intersection of Battle Road and Route 17 in Yorktown. **See you there!**

From the President

Exciting news! As some of you know, past president Helen Hamilton has been working on a native plant field guide for some time. Well, after a lot of hard work, it has finally found a publisher and will be available later this spring. And I can't wait to get my hands on a copy! The project grew out of Helen's Wildflower of the Month columns, which she has updated and expanded to include over 250 species. They'll each have a short informative description that will be very accessible to the average plant enthusiast. The book will be especially useful for John Clayton Chapter members because it focuses on plants of Virginia's Coastal Plain, though it will also be useful to people to the north and south of Virginia.



Helen's been assisted on this project by several of our chapter members, including Donna Ware, and by Gus Hall, who is coauthor. They've gone over every word and photo with a fine tooth comb to make sure it's 100% accurate. It's also been peer reviewed by John Hayden, University of Richmond botanist, and copy edited by Bland Crowder, who also edited the *Flora*. The book is beautifully illustrated with Helen's own pictures as well as those of Jan Newton, Seig Kopinitz, Teta Kain, Louise Menges, myself, and others.

Helen's book will be published by BRIT publishers (Botanical Research Institute of Texas), the publisher of the *Flora of Virginia*, and will make a handy addition to that very weighty book. I think I'll be taking Helen's book out in the field with me and will leave the *Flora* in the car to check on things at the end of the day. **Phillip Merritt**

New members

Welcome to **George and Patricia Allison**, **Carolyn and Robert Gibbs**, and **Alan Wubbels**, all of Williamsburg.

The new *Flora of Virginia* was the topic at our January meeting

Donna Ware spoke to us about the efforts leading to the publication of the 2012 edition of the *Flora of Virginia*, the second in 250 years and the first to be published in English rather than in Latin! Although work on the new edition was begun in 1924, it was not until the creation of the Foundation of the Flora of Virginia Project, Inc. that this effort gained real momentum. Donna Ware has been a member of that group's board of directors since its inception in 2001.

As Donna told us, the two main requirements for using this book are a strong back (it has more than 1500 pages and weighs in at over eight pounds) and the ability to read small print (larger print would have resulted in a volume requiring an even stronger back)!

The *Flora* describes 3164 species of plants found in Virginia. Those chosen for inclusion had to meet the following criteria:

- they were vascular plants;
 - they were reproducing in Virginia;
 - their descriptions had been published in a scientific journal and were based on “retrievable” specimens in a herbarium collection.
- Included non-native plants also had to meet the above criteria, with the additional requirement that they had been found on at least ten sites or were determined to be rapidly spreading.

Donna explained how to use the book's keys to identify an unknown plant, and as a “keying” exercise, handed out to her audience plastic bags each containing an oak twig, leaf, and acorn. She explained the terms used in the keys and helped us through the choices with slides of keys from the *Flora*. Some details required magnification to see, for which we used hand lenses Donna also provided. The mystery specimens, which she had gathered near her home in Windsor Forest, keyed out to be from a Shumard Oak (*Quercus shumardii*), considered rare in our area, but a species that has probably been overlooked because of its resemblance to Scarlet Oak. Donna has observed it growing in her subdivision for the past two to three years.

After the meeting, we all enjoyed pieces of a celebratory cake decorated with the *Flora's* cover design, a line drawing of *Claytonia virginica*, as well as balloons emblazoned with numbers that added up to 250 years.

Louise Menges



Donna Ware displays a volume of the *Flora of Virginia* next to its edible replica.

Photo: Jan Newton

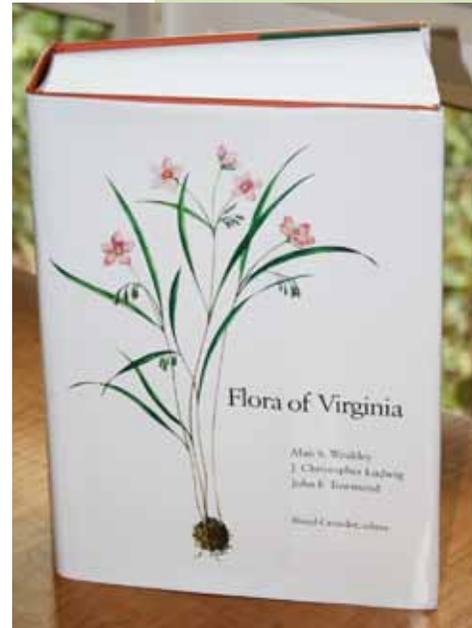
...and more from Donna on using the *Flora of Virginia*

Unlike the *Flora Virginica* published in the 18th century, our precious tome is also a *manual* of the flora. It is a flora manual because it offers us a much greater breadth and depth of information and more ways to access that information than did its predecessor. Among other things, our book provides **keys** and **detailed descriptions** of species and their habitats in Virginia, plus handsome pen-and-ink **illustrations!** Furthermore, our brand new *Flora of Virginia* is even in English instead of Latin!

I think perhaps the most important thing to do to prepare to use this manual *efficiently* and *effectively* is to very carefully read the **Introduction** and also the section titled “**Approaching the Keys**” (pp. 87–92). Those sections tell us which species are believed to be native and which not, which non-native species have been included and why, and about the various conventions used in the descriptions (such as those pertaining to measurements). There is also a discussion on how to “sleuth” characteristics; that is, how to recognize when a characteristic, such as number of petals, can be deduced even when the petals are absent. Be sure to study the figure on p. 3 of the Introduction. It shows the anatomy of a species entry and explains the symbols used for the various portions of it.

The *heart* of our manual, though, is made up of almost 1300 pages of keys and descriptions for 189 families and 3164 species. Chris and Alan labored mightily to create a key to plant families that avoids unnecessary terminology (or defines the terminology within the key itself), and that avoids the need for magnification greater than a 10× hand lens. The keys to woody plants are particularly user friendly. It will be very helpful to set-aside time to study the keys and to learn the “handles” for the ones you will use most frequently; for instance, I have committed to memory that “KEY P” is where I need to go to identify “herbaceous dicots with alternate simple leaves.” Once you have keyed a plant, the next step will be to carefully check it against its description, an illustration, and photographs on the website for the *Digital Atlas of the Virginia Flora*. These are vital steps to help us determine whether we have correctly keyed the specimen-in-hand.

At the front of the manual there are two information-loaded chapters, one on **ecology of plant communities** and another on **botanical his-**



tory, and at the end of the family treatments, you will find **Taxa not Treated in this Manual** (and why they were left out), the **Glossary**, and an **Index of Common Names, Scientific Names, and Synonyms for Those Names**. If we find ourselves searching for an “old” scientific name learned previously (such as *Viola rafinesquii*), this index will quickly lead to the updated name used in this volume (*Viola bicolor*). In addition to all the features I’ve mentioned, immediately following the plant communities chapter there awaits a special gift to each one of us: “Learning the Virginia Flora: 50 Sites for Productive Field Botany.” This carefully selected list of natural areas from throughout Virginia has been included to help us experience the full spectrum of major habitat types in Virginia and the vast array of species that they host. Indeed, visiting these stellar places will nourish our souls—and give us ample opportunity to exercise our long-awaited *Flora of Virginia*!

Donna Ware

Recent JCC walks...

January 19’s Evergreen Walk

In January, I had the opportunity to take the Evergreen Walk at Wahrani Nature Trails led by **Gus Hall** and **Jan Newton**. Even though I had taken the same walk with the same leaders last year, I learned even more by repeating the walk. While one might think that plants without leaves in the winter are difficult to identify, Jan and Gus make it easy for us—especially with the orange flags marking the best samples.

As evergreens, the colonies of Southern Ground Cedar and Princess Pine stood out amidst the brown leaves in the forest, and the British Soldier Lichen was a rather unique plant to identify. In the late 1700s, the lichen earned its name because its red caps resembled the red caps worn by the British Redcoats during the Revolutionary War.

With a list of 4 trees, 2 shrubs, 3 vines, 4 ground covers, 7 herbaceous plants, 3 ferns, 8 lichens and mosses, and 2 grasses, my review session was complete. By

11:00 am when we returned to our cars, the colonies of Ground Cedar and Princess Pine had thawed out and really put on a show in the forest as their green leaves unfurled.

Mary Turnbull



Southern Ground Cedar (*Diphasiastrum digitatum*)
Photo: Louise Menges



A troop of British Soldier Lichen (*Cladonia cristatella*)
Photo: Phillip Merritt

A Nude Tree Walk on Feb. 2 with (clothed) Charlie DuBay

On February 2, **Charlie DuBay** led the now-becoming-traditional Nude Tree Walk. The turnout was very good; about 30 people gathered behind William and Mary Hall for the event.

Charlie led us down the side of the parking lot and then along the road to the first marked trail in College Woods.

He had placed labels on trees quite a way along the trail, so those who wanted to hike ahead of the group could do our own self-guided tour. Each label gave the tree name and gave some keys to identifying it in winter, such as: bark, leaf shape (for looking at the leaves under the tree on the ground), bud configuration, and others. When I first drove past the trail head and saw a couple of sheets of paper tacked to tree trunks, I just assumed that someone had lost their dog.

Even though the group was spread out, you could catch up with Charlie for “mystery leaf” i.d.s and other questions. We looked at a tree that had been colonized by poison ivy, which Charlie touched with his bare hand, giving many of us the shivers. Under a beech tree, we found some bug nests (→); Charlie thought they might be ground bees.

He discussed interbreeding among different trees in the red oak and white oak family, and clarified that a leaf is only a red oak leaf if it has the tiny hairlike extension (bristle) at the tip of each lobe. A tree with pointed lobes, but without the bristles, is a white oak. And one with rounded lobes and bristles, appearances to the contrary, is a red oak.

Those of us who were smart enough to bring our hand lenses (I was not in that group) showed each other some of the bud details, like the tiny white tip on the buds of the dogwood. The mnemonic MAD (maple, ash, dogwood) is useful for remembering the trees native to this area with opposite leaves (as opposed to alternate). Charlie identified one “mystery leaf” as a black oak. Helen Hamilton was at the end of the trail segment that the tour covered, and shooed us back when we got that far.

It was a great way to spend a Saturday afternoon in January, and many of us left thinking that maybe it is easier to identify trees in the dead of winter. At least you don't have to check yourself for ticks afterward. Thanks to Charlie for another fun learning experience!

Kathi Mestayer



Before we began our walk, Charlie pointed out features of species we could expect to see.

(Photo: Louise Menges)



Kathi Mestayer



One of the labeled trees on the trail. This one is a white oak.

(Photo: Louise Menges)

Upcoming walks...

A walk around the 'Burg on Sunday, March 24 at 1 PM

Join **Phillip Merritt** on March 24th at 1:00 for a plant walk in downtown Williamsburg. We'll focus on native trees, some of which may be beginning to bloom. Meet at the corner of Prince George Street and N. Henry Street near the downtown parking garage.

You can contact Phillip at 352/727-1994 or email him at phillip.merritt@gmail.com to register.

A walk at Mary Turnbull's home on Saturday, May 25 at 9 AM

A walk through **Mary Turnbull's** wooded property off Jamestown Road in Williamsburg should provide glimpses of eighty-four identified native plant species, forty of which were present when the Turnbuls built their home; one tree species on their property not often found in this area is alternate-leaf dogwood (*Cornus alternifolia*). The terrain is somewhat hilly, but alternate paths are available. Refreshments will be served after the walk.

The Turnbull's address is 109 Woodmere Drive, The Woods. To register, contact Mary Turnbull at petalpower@verizon.net or at 757/810-8382.

JCC was at the Hampton Roads Home and Garden Show on Feb. 9 and 10

There was a steady stream of traffic around our chapter's native plant display table, and over 40 sales were made of the "Native Plants for Wildlife Habitat and Conservation Landscaping" booklet. Visitors left with seed samples (thanks, Cynthia Long!), brochures, newsletters, and information about our website, plant walks and plant sale in April.

Jan Newton gave a talk in the "Green Thumb Theatre" titled "Native Plants for Butterflies and Birds" which was very well attended. In addition, children enjoyed stamping decorations on coin envelopes in which they took home seeds for native plants that attract and feed butterflies and birds. On Sunday, seed packets were given to adults when they made a small donation to the chap-



Helen Hamilton, Chris Gwaltney, and Jan Newton were among JCC members staffing our display.

ter. Four packets for a \$1 donation—what a deal—and our expenses were covered. The adults were happy to get native plant seeds and Jan was thrilled to be spreading native plant seeds in the community! We think this could be done more often at indoor displays (or have a good variety of pre-made seed packages to offer for a donation at other venues inside or out).

Thanks to Phyllis Putnum, Jan Newton, Charlotte Boudreau, Chris Gwaltney, Melinda Webb, Bharati Lakshmi, Mary Turnbull, Meegan Wallace, Ray Nugent, Helen Hamilton, David Murphy, and W&M Sharpe Scholar student Katherine Oliver, who staffed the tables throughout the day on Saturday and Sunday.

Helen Hamilton and Jan Newton

Pennywort—Wildflower of the Month for March 2013



Phillip Merritt

Often hidden in leaf litter, this delicate little perennial can be overlooked until it achieves its 6-inch height. Pennywort (*Obolaria virginica*) is a low, fleshy, purplish-green plant with dull white or purplish ½-inch-long flowers, usually densely crowded in groups of 3 at the top of the stem and in the axils of the upper leaves. At the bottom of the stem the leaves are reduced to small scales; the upper leaves are opposite, stalkless, ½ inch long, thick, and round. There is some evidence the plant is dependent

on mycorrhizal fungi for nourishment.

Look for this plant in late February and early March, just before the spring ephemerals appear. Pennywort likes rich moist woods and thickets, and grows throughout the Coastal Plain and elsewhere in Virginia. The range is from New Jersey and Pennsylvania to Ohio, southern Indiana, and southern Illinois and south to Florida and Texas.

The common name refers to the coin-like shape of the leaves. Greek *obolos*, meaning “a small coin,” provides the genus name.

Helen Hamilton

Six hundred, and still counting

Each fall, I start pulling up English Ivy seedlings in my half-acre, wooded back yard. We're talking little-bitty, first-year sprouts, like the one in the photo. And each fall, I think, "Gee; I must've pulled up a hundred of these things!"

But I was never sure until this year, when I decided to count. So far, I have pulled up six hundred (600.00) of the little darlings. I count in batches of 25, so it's easier to track. And I can still go back there and find a couple more when I'm in the mood to kill something. In case you're wondering where they all came from, my neighbors on two sides have ivy growing up several trees to 80 feet in height. Birds eat the berries in the winter, when other food is scarce, and then "plant" them shortly thereafter. The berries are mildly toxic to birds, so they go through the digestive system quickly enough that they are still viable when they hit the ground.

Kathi Mestayer

From Lucile Kossodo...

We need your help—please volunteer at one of our 3 potting parties!

1. James City County area: Sunday, March 17 @ 1 PM

Stonehouse Elementary's Habitat, 3651 Rochambeau Drive, Williamsburg, VA 23188.

Host: Jan Newton (757-566-3646-h/Cell: 757-291-8760).

We will dig at Stonehouse and then we will go plant nearby at our plant staging area at Joan Etchberger's home (757-784-2882), 100 Woodland Road (Woodland Farms).

If you plan to attend, please contact either Jan or Lucile Kossodo (email lkossodo@cox.net, cell 757-784-2882, or home 757-565-0769) so we can contact you if there is inclement weather or another problem, and we have to change the date.

2. James City County area: Saturday, March 23 @ 9:30 AM

124 Pintail Trace (Season's Trace neighborhood).

Host: Dorothy Geyer (757-564-7944).

If you have plants to donate, you may bring them to this potting party. Any number of natives are very welcome.

If you plan to attend, please contact Lucile Kossodo (email lkossodo@cox.net, cell 757-784-2882, or home 757-565-0769) so she can contact you if there is inclement weather or another problem, and we have to change the date.



Kathi Mestayer

One of Kathi's 600 "little darlings," before its untimely end.

3. White Marsh/Gloucester area: Friday, April 5 @ 9:30 AM

6135 Brookwood Lane, White Marsh.

Hosts: Hayes and Joyce Williams (cell 804-694-6235 home 804-693-4417). Call for directions to their home.

If you plan to attend, please contact Lucile Kossodo (email lkossodo@cox.net, cell 757-784-2882, or home 757-565-0769) so she can contact you if there is inclement weather or another problem, and we have to change the date.

A successful plant sale needs plants to sell and volunteers to help plant them. The plants we sell are mostly from our own yards.

Here is another great opportunity to support the goals of the John Clayton Chapter, VA Native Plant Society. Funds raised from the sale of these plants will help fund **Nature Camp** scholarships and others, conduct educational programs with speakers you enjoy, and other projects that are important to the Chapter.

Potting Parties are a **great** opportunity for networking and socializing! What could be more fun than volunteering for a potting party and getting into the real dirt with friends, and the opportunity to make new friends. Let's pull out the gloves, spades, shovels and hats and dig in. Not only do we need volunteers to do the potting, but we need volunteers to bring plants. Instead of your being a solo act, everyone at the party will help pot your plants; now that is a good deal! Send your name to Lucile Kossodo at lkossodos@cox.net so she has your name on the list for the party you will be attending. If you can attend one or all three please know that you can help; the more hands to pot the quicker we're done.

Lucile Kossodo

A message from the Seed Queen...



Cynthia Long is running out of seeds!

Cynthia wants to let us know that she has packaged all the seeds for this growing season members have given her and needs *more*, so if you have seeds collected, now is the time to get them to her to be packaged for handing out at events. Thank you to all our members who have already done so!

You can reach Cynthia at 757/259-9559.

Nature Camp 2013 scholarships awarded

The Selection Committee for Nature Camp has chosen the following students for scholarships:

Stephen Council, Berkeley Middle School, Grade 7, Williamsburg, VA

Michaela Van Wicklin, Hornsby Middle School, Grade 8, Williamsburg, VA (awarded the Carolyn Will Memorial Scholarship)

Mitchell Sillery, Boy Scout Troop 103, Grade 11, Williamsburg, VA

They have all accepted with gratitude, and the letters encourage them to help at the plant sale in April. Just to give you the flavor of the strong applications and recommendations we received this year, here is an excerpt from Mitchell's essay:

“When I go to college I plan to major in the sciences. I am currently taking AP Biology as well as AP Environmental Science. I am an active member of the Boy Scouts of America on my way to the rank of Eagle.”

He has never attended Nature Camp, but has helped at our plant sales.

Patti Gray

Calendar

- Sunday, Mar 17** 1 PM: **JCC Potting Party at Stonehouse Elementary's Habitat**, 3651 Rochambeau Drive, Williamsburg. Host: Jan Newtown (757/566-3646-h/Cell: 757/291-8760). (See Page 9.)
- Thursday, Mar 21** 6:45 PM: **John Clayton Chapter Meeting at the Yorktown Public Library** at the intersection of Battle Road and Route 17 in Yorktown. Our speaker is Don Hyatt, whose subject will be “America's Treasure: Our Native Azaleas.” (See Page 1.)
- Saturday, Mar 23** 9:30 AM: **JCC Potting Party at 124 Pintail Trace** (Season's Trace neighborhood, Williamsburg). Host: Dorothy Geyer (757/564-7794) (See Page 9.)
- Sunday, Mar 24** 1 PM: **Phillip Merritt will lead a plant walk around Williamsburg**, with a focus on native trees. (See Page 7.)
- Friday, Apr 5** 9:30 AM: **JCC Potting Party at 6135 Brookwood Lane, White Marsh, Gloucester**. Hosts: Hayes and Joyce Williams (cell 804/694-6235, home 804/693-4417. Call for directions to their home. (See Page 10.)
- Saturday, May 25** 9 AM: **A plant walk on Mary Turnbull's wooded property in Williamsburg**. (See Page 7.)

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

If your renewal date is 10/30/12 or earlier, this is the last issue you will receive until you renew.

Contact Membership Chair **Patti Gray** at 757/645-4164 or at *patriciagray67@gmail.com* with questions about your membership.

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