

# Claytonia

Newsletter of the John Clayton Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society

Volume 30, Number 1

January–February 2014

[www.claytonvnps.org](http://www.claytonvnps.org)

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## Our January 16 Meeting: Rod Simmons will speak on "Heath Diversity in the Mid-Atlantic Region"



Early Azalea (*Rhododendron prinophyllum*) in Garrett County, Maryland. Photo by Deep Creek Cellars, Friendsville, Maryland.

Much like oaks (*Quercus* spp.) and pines (*Pinus* spp.), with which they are typically associated, ericaceous plants (members of the Heath Family) are especially dominant in terms of total area covered and occur throughout most

of the physiographic provinces in Maryland, Virginia, and the mid-Atlantic region. Sixty species of heaths, including infraspecific taxa and hybrids, are known to occur naturally in Virginia, with many restricted to particular physiographic regions and habitats.

Rod Simmons is a plant ecologist with a background in biology and geology who has extensively surveyed the flora and natural communities of the mid-Atlantic region, especially the inner coastal plain and piedmont of the greater Washington, D.C. area. Rod is a Research Collaborator with the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution; a member of the Virginia Botanical Associates; contract botanist for NatureServe and the National Park Service; a botany/dendrology instructor and field trip leader for the Arlington Regional Master Naturalists (ARMN); works closely with the Virginia and Maryland natural heritage programs, is the author of numerous technical reports, papers, and articles, and has published in scientific journals. He is a member and a past president of the Botanical Society of Washington and serves on the boards of the Maryland and Virginia Native Plant Societies; he is a regular field trip leader for all of these organizations. He is a Natural Resource Specialist and Plant Ecologist for the City of Alexandria, Virginia.

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!**

## President's letter

### News on the Flora of Virginia Project

The Virginia Flora Project continues to go very well. The first printing of 3,500 books has sold out and a 2nd printing of 3,000 copies (with a few corrections) is out now. If you haven't had a chance to look at this amazing book, stop by the Williamsburg library to peruse the copy that our chapter donated.

In conjunction with the publication of the *Flora*, the Library of Richmond is preparing an exhibit illustrating the diverse botanical resources of our state. For their 2013 fundraising project, the Virginia Native Plant Society set a goal of raising \$15,000 to support this exhibit. In response the John Clayton Board of Directors voted to donate \$1,000 to the project. The exhibit, curated by Bland Crowder, will run from March 17 until September 13, 2014. With the library's beautiful display space and prominent location in downtown Richmond, this will be great exposure for Virginia's native plants.

The exhibition takes a broad look at the history of botany in Virginia, covering collecting, describing, taxonomy, and the junction of art and science (with a historical perspective) in this process. It uses books ancient, old, and new, prints, drawings (many from the *Flora*), models, charts, sculptures (some being done just for the exhibition), photos, etc. etc., including a papier-mâché model of a flower's reproductive parts, from Italy, 1700s (as a result of its age, it is now apetalate). As Bland says, "We are HOPING to have some of John Clayton's own specimens, but this is still not confirmed, since they are in London and more than 250 years old".

Bland tells us that gifts from the VNPS are partly earmarked for travel expenses, as panel exhibits will travel the state visiting libraries and museums. It is hoped that the exhibit will move to the Virginia Museum of Natural History in Martinsville after it closes in Richmond. Be sure to stop by the library to see it later this year!

By the way, I do a bit of botanical art myself. As many of you know, I'm a landscape architect with Hertzler & George in Williamsburg. For the past several years, when we send out our annual service renewal package, I've created a native plant illustration for the envelopes.



Here is Phillip's lovely illustration for this year's renewal package.

This year I drew a picture of ‘Ruby Spice’ clethra, a pink cultivar of the white-blooming shrub that is fairly common in damp soils in our area. As an added touch, I added a Summer Azure butterfly on the blossom. Now, some of the Master Naturalists who belong to our chapter may notice that I drew the butterfly a bit larger than it should be, but I was kind of in a hurry to finish it, so I hope you’ll be forgiving.

Phillip Merritt

## Our November 21 meeting

Our speaker that evening was Dennis Whigham, Senior Botanist at the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center, whose topic was “North American Native Orchids—Ensuring Their Survival.”

Included in his presentation was an exploration of the role of fungi in the life cycle of terrestrial orchids, either directly or through their interaction with the roots of trees with which some fungi have mutually beneficial “arrangements.” One the orchids he spoke about is considered the one of the rarest terrestrial orchids in Eastern North America (*Isotria medeoloides* or Small Whorled Pogonia), and can be found growing on our own Coastal Plain!

Dennis is involved in establishing The North American Orchid Conservation Center (NAOCC), which is hoped will help conserve the genetic diversity of native orchids. You can find out more about the organization’s efforts at [goorchids.northamericanorchidcenter.org](http://goorchids.northamericanorchidcenter.org).

Louise Menges

## Planned JCC walks

### Charlie Dubay’s Nude Tree Walk on February 8

Charlie will begin with a PowerPoint talk (with specimens) **from 10:00 to 11:30 am at the James City Rec Center on Longhill Road**, and then will lead a walk through the **College Woods from 1:30 to 3:00 pm**. Parking for the walk is in the William and Mary Hall parking lot near their Student Rec Center.

Bad weather date is the following **Saturday, February 15**.

To register and for directions call 757/870-0284.



The extremely rare Small Whorled Pogonia (*Isotria medeoloides*)



Charlie Dubay shows us a Black Oak leaf during last year’s nude tree walk.



### A call for contributions from members!

No, not financial contributions, but articles and photos for the newsletter about walks you've participated in, or native plant-related topics and activities you think we would enjoy knowing about—that sort of thing. Your editor would be very happy to receive more help with newsletter content from members—she's tired of seeing her name under too much of it! Please don't hesitate to call me at 757/229-4346 or send me an email at [louisemenges6@gmail.com](mailto:louisemenges6@gmail.com).

Thanks, **Louise Menges**

### The pines of Virginia (*Pinus* spp.)

Five of the eight species of pines native to Virginia range into the Coastal Plain, three of them to every county, two only to its southeastern corner.

**Virginia Pine** (*P. virginiana*) is a small or medium-sized tree with thin, scaly bark and short (up to 5 inches) needles in twos, twisted.

The needles of **Loblolly Pine** (*P. taeda*) are in bundles of 3, not twisted, much longer, to 10 inches, and the bark is thick, blocky and rectangular. The mature seed cones of Loblolly Pine are 4–6 inches long and narrow, with stout, sharp prickles. Both of these species are common in our area; Virginia Pine occurs in dry old fields, scrubby edges, and forests, while Loblolly Pine is found in swamps, old fields, and upland forests.



Virginia Pine  
(*Pinus virginiana*)



Loblolly Pine  
(*Pinus taeda*)

**Shortleaf Pine** (*P. echinata*) also grows in dry upland forests, with bark similar to that of Loblolly Pine, but the needles are only 5 inches long, not twisted, and in bundles of 2, occasionally 3. In both this species and Virginia Pine, the mature seed cones are 1.5–2.5 inches long; the scales of Virginia Pine are thin, with a slender, sharp prickle, whereas the scales of Shortleaf Pine have weak, often deciduous prickles.



Shortleaf Pine  
(*Pinus echinata*)

Less common is **Pond Pine** (*P. serotina*), confined to the southeastern Coastal Plain, in only a few counties of Virginia. Growing in wetlands along with Shortleaf Pine, Pond Pine is a southern relative of **Pitch Pine** (*P. rigida*), which is native to the mountains of Virginia.

The leaves of Pond Pine occur 3 or 4 in a bundle, and are almost as long as those of Loblolly, whose leaves are 3, rarely 2 in a bundle. The bark is very different—Pond Pine has small, scaly plates, usually with numerous tufts of needles along the trunk. It grows 40–70 feet tall, with gnarled and twisted branches and trunk; Loblolly forms a tall, straight trunk. Young cones of Pond Pine appear March–April, but the mature seed cones may remain closed on the tree for up to 10 years. They will open following a fire.

The species name *serotina* comes from the Latin *serus*, meaning “late.” Pond Pine is known as a “serotinous” species, since the cones open in response to a hot fire, which burns off undergrowth, allowing seedlings to germinate. Fire suppression in the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge has encouraged the growth of Pond Pine forests.



Pond Pine (*Pinus serotina*)  
Photo: Will Cook for Carolina Nature



**Longleaf Pine** (*P. palustris*) occurs in Virginia only in Brunswick, Southampton, Suffolk, Isle of Wight, and Virginia Beach. The habitat for this species is largely gone, due to overharvesting and commercial forestry practices. Restoration efforts are ongoing at the Meadowview Biological Research Station near Fredericksburg and elsewhere, where seedlings have been planted in suitable habitat.

This tree grows in moist or dry sandy soil, largely on the Coastal Plain south to Florida and Texas. Extremely fire tolerant, when young its bud is protected by the compact arrangement of needles, hence the tree is adapted to frequently burned environments. Historically, frequent fires ignited by lightning and Native Americans sustained this species by eliminating competitors.

Longleaf Pine is well-named, with evergreen needles 10–18 inches long, 3 in a bundle. Densely crowded at the ends of branches in a distinctive arrangement, they form large round clusters, often drooping. Twigs are very stout, over ½ in diameter and orange-brown in color. In winter, the ends of branches have large buds up to 5 inches long covered with silvery-white, fringed scales, known as “candles” when elongating. Cones are large, over 8 inches long, with short prickles. When young, the bark is gray-brown, thin and scaly; with age the bark shows flat, scaly, reddish brown plates. The tree grows tall and straight, to 90 feet, with sparse branches.

Longleaf Pine is valuable for lumber, tar, pitch and turpentine. Several species of birds prefer its forests, including the critically endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker, and perhaps the (extinct?) Ivory-billed Woodpecker.

**Helen Hamilton and Gus Hall**



Longleaf Pine (*Pinus palustris*) seedling at the Joseph Pines Preserve in Sussex Co.

### Notes from left field...

There I was.....doing a little yard maintenance (*not* lawn maintenance), checking for uninvited guests like english ivy, japanese honeysuckle and their ilk, when I saw a little sprout sticking its leaflets out of the ground near the blueberry bushes. I didn't like the looks of it. Just had a bad aura.

So, I pulled on it, and found that its shallow root extended underground, with no additional presence above, easily 20 feet along



the property line (how clever!). At this point, I was getting a really bad vibe. It used to be that a plant was innocent until proven guilty in our yard, but after 25 years, the burden of proof has tilted the other way.

So, I continued the investigation! After ~20 feet, I came to a node where a couple of “sister” (sinister?) sucker roots branched off. At that point, the pattern became clear. We were headed straight to the next-door-neighbor’s chinese wisteria trellis.... that’s what that tiny little leaf was! The suckers were amazingly patient in looking for a new place to sprout; perhaps their parent had told them it was time to go out on their own....and not too close by. The arrow in this photo shows the parent plant hanging on the neighbor’s fence, looking innocent.

So I gathered the suckers, braided them (there were three, after all), tied them together (okay, maybe a little too tight) with a twist-tie, and hung them up so I could keep an eye on them. Oh, yes, and I painted them with Roundup, using my sponge applicator. I check on them every now and then (they are satisfyingly crispy), and am still deciding how to talk to the neighbors about the parent plant.

Here they are, left out as an example to any of their siblings who might try to follow in their footsteps.....

**Kathi Mestayer**



## News about ongoing efforts to restore American Chestnuts

On December 13, 2013 the Ford Nature Center, the Friends of Dora Kelley Nature Park, Earth Sangha, and RPCA Natural Resources Division co-sponsored an American Chestnut ecological restoration planting at Dora Kelley Nature Park in Alexandria, VA.

In Alexandria, American Chestnut is known to occur rarely in only 3 locations (all near each other at the western edge of the City); Dora Kelley Nature Park, Rynex Natural Area, and the Winkler Botanical Preserve. The Oak-Heath Forest type dominated by Chestnut Oak (*Quercus montana*) and Mountain Laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*) and Central Appalachian/Inner Piedmont Chestnut Oak Forest (*Quercus*



*montana/Quercus coccinea, Quercus rubra/Kalmia latifolia/Vaccinium pallidum*) Forest are the natural communities where American Chestnut grows in our region.

Of the 90 saplings, all 100% pure American Chestnut (*Castanea dentata*) trees locally-sourced (Fairfax County and northern Blue Ridge in Virginia) and grown by Earth Sangha, approximately 30 saplings each are set aside for Alexandria, Arlington, and D.C. These saplings are especially valuable because they are not artificial hybrids (non-native)—elements we would not introduce to our natural lands and parks.



Old-age American Chestnut, West Virginia, 1924. Photo courtesy Forest History Society, Durham, NC.



Lumberjacks stand beside old-growth American Chestnut trees in North Carolina c. 1909/1910. Photo courtesy Forest History Society, Durham, NC.

A total of 20 saplings were planted at Dora Kelley Nature Park on December 13, 2013. Seven saplings were planted at the edge of upland oak forest on the left side of the main trail entrance at the western end of Sanger Avenue. Several large, non-native invasive White Mulberry (*Morus alba*) and Bradford Pear (*Pyrus calleryana*) trees were also removed from this area prior to the planting. Thirteen American Chestnut saplings were planted along the main trail on the upland Oak-Heath Forest terrace where American Chestnut and Chinquapin (*Castanea pumila*) naturally occur at the park. Saplings were mainly planted at the stumps of old, fallen oak trees and amidst the cut trunk of a Scarlet Oak (*Quercus coccinea*) that was blown down during the derecho of a couple of years ago.



MNPS member Meghan First with *Castanea dentata* in Oak-Heath Forest on bluffs above the Chesapeake Bay at Downs Park, Anne Arundel County, MD.



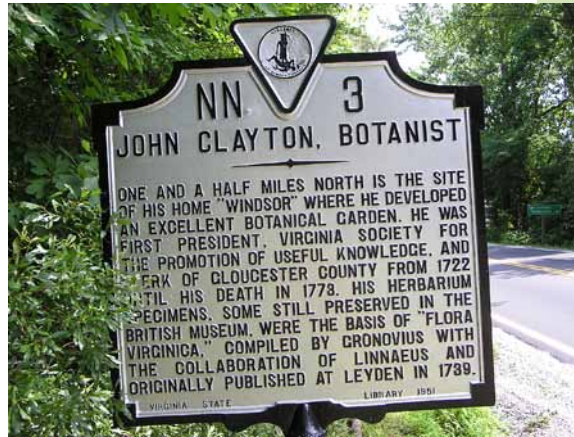
The remainder of the Alexandria trees will be planted in similar areas at Rynex Natural Area.

In all locations, no native vegetation was displaced or damaged during the plantings.

**Rod Simmons**, Natural Resource Specialist, Plant Ecologist for the City of Alexandria, Virginia  
(and our January speaker)

### From Mary Hyde Berg...

John Clayton Chapter members might like to know that the state highway marker honoring John Clayton on Windsor Road (Route 3) has been moved to a more accessible location near Fort Nonsense. It is on the right shortly after making a left turn onto Route 3 from Route 14 going towards Mathews.



*Photo: Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Historical Highway Markers*

### Wanted—your photos for our May exhibit!

We have the month of May reserved at the Williamsburg Library Gallery for our display of photographs taken by chapter members. With the growing season at an end, now is the time to sort through the summer's crop of plant images for those suitable for the library walls.

We hope to hang 15 to 20 photos. Louise Menges has volunteered to process them for exhibition, and the Historic Rivers Master Naturalists have generously offered to lend us frames they use for their annual members' photography contest. We plan to have 8 × 10 prints made, and believe submitted image resolution should be somewhere between 1920 × 2400 pixels and 2400 × 3000 pixels to display best at that size.

So, please send your photos of wildflowers or other native Coastal Plain plants to Louise at [louisemenges6@gmail.com](mailto:louisemenges6@gmail.com) **by April 1, if possible**. If it proves necessary, she can create a folder for submitted images in our Dropbox account and invite you to upload them there.

**Helen Hamilton**



Common Name  
(Botanical Name)  
[Your name!]

## John Clayton Chapter Calendar

**Thursday, January 16**    **6:45 pm: John Clayton Chapter meeting** at the Yorktown Public Library. Our speaker is **Rod Simmons**, whose topic will be **“Heath Diversity in the Mid-Atlantic Region.”** (See Page 1.)

*The Library is located at the intersection of Battle Rd. and Rt. 17 in Yorktown.*

**Saturday, February 8**    **Nude Tree Walk** with **Charlie Dubay**  
**Meet at James City Rec Center at 10 am** for a PowerPoint talk; the **tree walk through the College Woods begins at 1:30**. Register at 757/870-0284.  
 Rain date Saturday, Feb 15. (Details on Page 2.)

There may be walks in the works which did not make this issue, so keep a lookout for announcements about additional walks and other events on our website at [www.claytonvnps.org](http://www.claytonvnps.org) and in the local newspapers.

## Other upcoming events:

### Williamsburg Garden Club Speaker Series

**Monday, January 27**    1:30pm: Garden designer, lecturer and author **Gordon Hayward** will speak on “Art in the Garden” at the W&M School of Education, 301 Monticello Ave., Williamsburg. Admission is free.

### Norfolk Botanical Garden

**Saturday, February 15**    **8:30am–4pm: Norfolk Botanical Garden** presents **Dr. Douglas Tallamy**, Professor of Entomology at University of Delaware. Norfolk Botanical Garden, 6700 Azalea Garden Road, Norfolk, VA 23518-5337.  
 (go to [www.norfolkbotanicalgarden.org](http://www.norfolkbotanicalgarden.org) for more info.)

**Sunday, February 23**    **2 pm: Winter Meeting.** Panel of local speakers TBD. Norfolk Botanical Garden, Rotunda Building, 6700 Azalea Garden Road, Norfolk, VA 23518-5337.  
 (go to [www.norfolkbotanicalgarden.org](http://www.norfolkbotanicalgarden.org) for more info.)



Below is a membership renewal form. **If your renewal date is 10/31/13 or earlier**, this is the last newsletter issue you will receive until you renew.

Please contact Membership Chair **Fred Blystone** at 757/229-4346 or at [fredblystone@gmail.com](mailto:fredblystone@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