



Claytonia

Newsletter of the John Clayton Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society

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www.claytonvnps.org

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Teta Kain will speak about “The Moths Among Us” at our meeting on March 19.



Our speaker and one of the subjects of her talk, the elegantly garbed Luna Moth.

When most of us think of moths, we think of ugly little brown things flying around our porch lights or furtively munching on our favorite sweater or dress. That's when we reach for the insect spray or moth balls with mass slaughter on our minds, giving little thought about what these animals do and how they affect many aspects of our lives. Even though they can cause great angst, you may be surprised just how intriguing and beautiful these interesting insects are and how important they can be to our everyday existence.

Teta's presentation focuses on the many species of moths found right here in Virginia, and she includes many surprising facts she has learned and strange adventures she has experienced while studying these interesting insects. She will delve into some of the good, bad, and mysterious aspects of moths that affect our lives.

An avid student of the natural world, Teta has studied birds, butterflies, spiders, fungi, and many other nature subjects over the past 40 years. She describes herself as a self-taught naturalist, avid photographer, and world-wide adventurer. She presents her skills as a lecturer and entertainer, aiming to inspire her audiences to get outdoors and discover the intriguing world of nature.

Come discover how colorful and interesting moths can be and how many different kinds can be found right in your own back yard here in 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!**

From the President

Hope that by the time you are reading this you are feeling as if spring were just around the corner instead of listening to stories about Polar Express coming back. On those occasions when I am shivering outside from the howling wind, I tell myself that plants are waiting to spring back to life. I imagine the leaves and flowers opening again like a flower show. I also keep looking at the seeds I planted for the 2016 sale and my garden. Imagine my surprise to see that one of the asters already put out tiny leaves, and after all this cold they are still tiny but green. How magical is that? So I guess I must be more patient, a hard lesson for me.

In the last newsletter I asked you to plant more native *Asclepias* for butterflies. Now I suggest that if you love birds and want to have lots of them in your yard, you should plant more native shrubs. As our last speaker, C. Colston Burrell, noted, healthier plants abound if you have layered plants, that is higher, middle, and lower plants such as trees, shrubs, and perennials, because the native insects will be present in greater numbers and will eat problem insects. In fact, he stated that if you have this arrangement, you are less likely to have such problems in your azaleas and other plants. There are beautiful native shrubs—if you are not familiar with them, check out those we have at our sale; you will find many shrubs that will appeal to you. If you have lost many trees during recent storms this message from Doug Tallamy might appeal to you: <http://durablehuman.com/plant-native-trees-that-turbocharge-nature-after-superstorm-sandy/>

On another note, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Division of Natural Heritage, has just released a newly revised list of invasive plants to our state. It is worthwhile to study that list so that you can remove them from your yard. They are ranked as high danger and medium danger. You will also find a new section of invasive plants that are new to Virginia. They are labeled “Early Detection Species, not yet established in Virginia.” To find this information go to http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural_heritage/documents/nh-invasive-plant-list-2014.pdf. There is now also a list of noxious weeds at <http://leg1.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp504.exe?000+reg+2VAC5-317-20>. Check out these newly discovered noxious invasive plants as they appear in your yards before they invade it completely.

Lucile Kossodo



Notes from the Board, January 2015

Hello, native plant enthusiasts. I hope this finds you well and warm, dreaming of all of the native plants that will soon be carpeting our local forests.

The Board had an unusual meeting Jan. 8; we met at Judith Kator's house, where she provided a delicious dinner. Way more posh than the library meeting room.

The Board reviewed projects they'd discussed in November for possible funding, and voted to disburse \$1,150 between three projects: \$400 to the Meadowview Biodiversity Center, \$250 to developing a mobile app for the Flora of Virginia and \$500 to state VNPS for its partnership with the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation to catalog rare plant communities.

Already the John Clayton Chapter is making plans for the spring plant sale, held jointly with the James City County Master Gardeners and Williamsburg Botanical Garden. We will need volunteers to help with the late-night "critter shift," the overnight shifts that make sure deer don't browse the plants before the sale opens the next day. Shifts range from 7–11 p.m., 11 p.m.–3 a.m., and 3–7 a.m. Please let Joan Etchberger know if you can help.

As many of you know, the full membership voted later on Jan. 22 in favor of amendments to the chapter by-laws outlining some reasonable guidelines on chapter projects. For example, the Board must be notified and approve projects, and projects must be within the chapter's geographical area. These amendments passed unanimously, with 29 votes in favor, and none opposed. **Cortney Langley**, Secretary

New members

Welcome to new members **Caitlin Cyrus** and **Hope Yelich**, both of Williamsburg, and **Shirley Ferguson** of Richmond.

Upcoming JCC Spring walks...

"What is that weed?" Saturday, March 14 at 1:30 pm

Helen Hamilton will lead this walk in the Freedom Park area to identify emerging spring weeds and wildflowers. Learn which weeds are welcome and why others should be eliminated, and expect to see the first flowers of spring! Meet at the Freedom Park Interpretive Center parking lot. Contact Helen at 757/564-4494 or helen48@cox.net for more information.



One less weed!

A walk at the Williamsburg/James City Co. Rec Center on Tuesday, April 14

Join **Donna Ware** at the James City Co. Rec Center (5301 Longhill Road) to see blue-flowered bluets, white-flowered bluets, wild forget-me-nots, water-blinks (related to *Claytonia*!), and many other small plants that bloom in lawns and ditches in the springtime.

The walk will begin at 5:15 pm and last until 7:00 (or whenever you need to leave)—no need to register. Please bring a hand lens if you have one, and park in the portion of the parking lot closest to the wing of the building where our membership meetings are held.



A botanical drawing of *Montia fontana* (water-blinks), provided by Donna

A walk on the Nature Trail at Lafayette High School on Sunday, April 19

Join **Helen Hamilton** and **Gus Hall** to look for blooming pawpaw, spring beauty, pink lady's slippers, and many ferns, including adder's tongue.

Meet at 1:30 pm in the parking lot at the front of Lafayette High School, which has easy access to the school's Nature Trail. Register with Helen Hamilton, 757/564-4494 or helen48@cox.net.



Louise Menges

Pawpaw's burgundy and pale green flowers

A tour of the William and Mary campus on Saturday, May 9

Join retired Botany Professor **Dr. Marty Mathes** for a walk around the campus of the College of William and Mary. Dr. Mathes was responsible for many of the plantings on campus and will have some interesting stories about the trees.

Meet at 9:30 am in front of Phi Beta Kappa Hall (parking is free on weekends).

Register by calling 757/564-4494 or helen48@cox.net.



A Dawn Redwood grows near the College's Sunken Garden.

Recent plant walks...

Naked Trees at the Williamsburg Botanical Garden on February 8

It was a beautiful Sunday afternoon with temperatures in the high 60s and plentiful sunshine when a large group assembled on the Freedom Park Interpretive Center patio to hear **Charlie Dubay** talk about trees in

winter condition. They kept coming...we counted over 63 assembled in one place, all very attentive to Charlie.

Over my objections about excess paper, Charlie distributed copies of his Key to Oaks and, reaching into his ever-present plastic bag, found a few oak leaves. He led the group through his key with a leaf of pagoda oak, and with a few comments about urban forestry, we were off to the woods.

Earlier in the day, Charlie had marked several trees in the area with numbers, and on the back, a sheet with descriptive characters and the name of the tree. Two of his Environthon students had joined us, with clipboards of information they were to note on today's walk.

The baldcypress in the parking lot was one of the first stops, followed by southern bayberry, sweetgum, and red maple. Crossing the road and into the woods we went on a multi-use trail to see the pines and black gum. A mountain biker caused us to break ranks so he could use the trail.

We crossed the parking lot to the reconstructed cabin area, where a sweetbay magnolia stood in the grassy area, and a lone princess tree at the edge of the woods. This tree is highly invasive, and fortunately it seemed to be dying. More trees were seen in the woods—hickories, blueberries, oaks.

Charlie moved the group quickly from tree to tree, and everyone gathered close to hear his running comments. Particularly impressive is his knowledge of urban forestry, a focus for the Environthon team from Jamestown High School that he coaches. Who knew that the removal of one tree in the front yard of a homeowner would cause the basement and first floor to flood?

Several members of the group followed our instructions about locating the bigtooth aspen on the Colby Swamp trail. Easy to find while looking for the distinctive leaves, about halfway from the start of the asphalt.

While I was listed as leader as part of my partnership with James City County Parks and Recreation, which allows the sale of our wildflower book in the Freedom Park office, Charlie did all the talking and all the preparation. Retired from teaching biology and environmental science



Helen Hamilton

A participant checks out the info posted on Tree #4.



Helen Hamilton

The group listens to Charlie's comments about a tree he has pointed out.

in Lafayette and Jamestown High Schools, Charlie has not stopped talking and teaching. I am immensely grateful that he has been so willing to share his enthusiasm for all things in nature with members of the John Clayton Chapter and many other visitors. **Helen Hamilton**

Out in left field ...another take on that “nekkid” tree walk

Well, I was proud of myself for remembering to show up clothed this year, and found **Charlie DuBay** and **Helen Hamilton** (outfitted like she was trekking in the outback, as usual) already moving among the tree signs at Freedom Park.

Charlie was scolding (*in absentia*) the grounds crew for putting the mulch too deep and too close (!) to the tree base. After a little sighing and eye-rolling, we moved on. I made a mental note to go back and fix the mulch; I’ll let you know if I get arrested.

The pignut and mockernut hickories got a fair amount of attention, and Charlie said that there are a few actual shagbark hickories in the area....somewhere. I had to google them to remind myself of which is which, and found this quote: “there are several other perfectly respectable hickories besides the shagbark, and one of them is the mockernut.”¹ So, it’s official—the mockernut is perfectly respectable. But the author of the site is silent on the respectabilty of the pignut. We’ll just have to give them the benefit of the doubt. Every time Charlie would mention the very thin casing of the pignut, a few of us would dutifully scramble around looking for one, but none were found. A mystery—who stole those nuts? Locavore? Paleovore? Sciuravore?

The featured nonnative invasive tree was the *Pawlonia*, or “Princess Tree.” It was so named because in Japan, it was planted when a girl was born, and then the wood was used when she married to make a wedding gift. Charlie tells of chopping one down in his father’s yard only to find that it sent up hundreds (so says DuBay) of shoots from its roots. So, when we saw a *Pawlonia* half an hour later, I eagerly offered to kill it, and had to be reminded that it will.....send up hundreds of shoots. Just checking...



Squirrels are well-known thieves, like this one that stole a turtle shell from my front stoop.

Kathi Mestayer

I am always amazed by the corky outgrowths on sweetgum branches, but not on all of them. Stewart Ware reports that the “corky” growths are, in fact.....cork!² Let’s get out there and gather wine stoppers.....and sell them to Williamsburg Winery! Business model!

¹ <http://homestead.org/DGlennMiller/Trees2/TutorialTwo2.htm>

² “The outgrowths are true cork—groups of dead cells with their walls composed mostly of suberin, the waxy, waterproof substance that is used in the walls of bark cells produced by the cork cambium.” (Email from S.Ware)

Kathi Mestayer

Plant Sale news

Double Plant Sales this Spring: Saturday, April 25 at Jamestown Beach Park ...and Saturday, May 2, at New Quarter Park

How, you may ask, did we end up with two plant sales this year and both in spring? You are probably wondering if we are just seeing double or maybe a little crazy. Maybe it is both of those thoughts, but it is all for a good cause and will help us teach more people about natives.

We will first have our usual large plant sale with the Master Gardeners and the Botanical Garden on Saturday, April 25, 2015 from 9 am until 2 pm. We expect to have the sale at the Jamestown Beach Park as in the last two years. At 8 am on Friday, April 24, we will need volunteers to set up the tables and tents. Some volunteers are also needed on April 24 at 8 am at Joan and Jim Etchberger’s yard to place the plants in the trucks so that all plants can be transported to the sale site. After the plants arrive at the site, volunteers will unload them and we will arrange them on the tables, sorting them by sun, part-sun, shade, butterflies, vines, shrubs, and trees. On Friday after the sale is set up we could use a couple of volunteers for one of the two night shifts to protect the plants from deer and other critters. It is not fair for Master Gardeners to do all the night watches. We will return on Saturday, April 25 for the sale. On Saturday, April 25 beginning at 8 am, volunteers will help with the sale, which ends at 2 pm. We will also need volunteers on Saturday, April 25 to clean up after the sale ends. We hope to have many of you participate and help in this major annual event. It is our major fundraiser; it allows us to offer nature camp scholarships and pays for the speakers



Louise Menges

Fire Pink (*Silene virginica*)



Jan Newton

Sundrops (*Oenothera fruticosa*)

who come from all areas of Virginia, as well as giving donations to native plant projects in Virginia. Please save some time for us either on Friday, April 24 or Saturday, April 25, we need you.

The second plant sale will offer only plants from the John Clayton Chapter of Virginia Native Plant Society. It will be held on Saturday, May 2, at New Quarter Park in the Queens Lake Neighborhood of York County. On Saturday, May 2 New Quarter Park is celebrating its 30th anniversary and they wanted to have us sell native plants as a way to encourage their visitors to plant natives—how could we not agree to help in this endeavor! Plants will be transported from our first sale to New Quarter Park at the end of our April 25 sale and they will take care of them and will set up tables for us. On Saturday, May 2, 2015, we will arrive at 8 am to set up the plants. The sale will begin at 10 am and end at 2 pm. We hope some of you can help at this sale also, even though it is a smaller sale; the Plant Sale Committee cannot do it alone. If there was a plant that you regretted not buying in April, come and get it on May 2 at New Quarter Park.

We always are asked for donations of plants left over from the sale. This year because of the two plant sales no donations will be given until after the May 2 plant sale.

Lucile Kossodo

Spring Potting Parties are coming—we need you!

Spring is coming, although today is cold and wintry, and we have already arranged two potting parties.

A SUCCESSFUL PLANT SALE NEEDS PLANTS TO SELL AND VOLUNTEERS TO HELP PLANT.

The first potting party will be in the Williamsburg/James City County area on **Saturday, March 28 at 9:30 am**. Host: **Judith Kator** (757-229-0714), 119 Rich Neck Rd, Williamsburg, VA 23185. We will dig plants in her garden and then we will pot the plants at her home. If you want to donate plants to the sale from your garden, please bring them to Judith's home.

The second potting party will be in the James City County area on **Tuesday, March 31 at 2 pm** (this date is tentative depending on when the plants are ready; I will send a email later confirming or changing the date). It will be at **Joan Etchberger's** home (757-784-2882), 100 Woodland Road (Woodland Farms). We will only be repotting the plants in bigger pots for the sale.

Lucile Kossodo



Freeloading plants



Mistletoe

Plants that depend upon other plants for some or all of their nourishment are wide-ranging and certainly opportunistic. Some are fully parasitic (obligate) and others only partly parasitic (hemiparasitic). While dependent upon the water and minerals from trunks and branches of woody plants, American mistletoe (*Phoradendron leucarpum*) is only partially parasitic. The leaves photosynthesize to produce most of the plant's carbohydrates.

Some plants in the Broomrape Family (*Orobanchaceae*) are also partly parasitic, and some (beechdrops and squawroot) are wholly parasitic on the roots of host plants.

Two familiar hemiparasitic plants are purple false foxglove (*Agalinis purpurea*) and the louseworts (*Pedicularis* sp.).

With leaves, these plants can photosynthesize and produce carbohydrates

while depending upon the roots of host plants for water and nutrients.



Purple false foxglove



Corpse flower (*Rafflesia arnoldii*)

Fully parasitic plants are without chlorophyll and wholly dependent upon the stems or roots of host plants for water, minerals and carbohydrates. One of the most bizarre is the “corpse flower” of Malaysia and Indonesia, with a blossom over 3 feet in diameter. It smells like rotting meat to attract flies as pollinators, and rodents spread its sticky fruit. With no leaves at all, this plant is an obligate parasite, stealing its nutrients from the roots of neighboring vines.



Squawroot

Several species of obligate parasites are found locally. Squawroot (*Conopholis americana*) is parasitic on the roots of oak trees. This curious plant looks like a mutant pine cone or corn-cob, growing unbranched 4–8 inches tall, its stout stem covered and concealed by fleshy, overlapping scale-leaves. Through the sum-

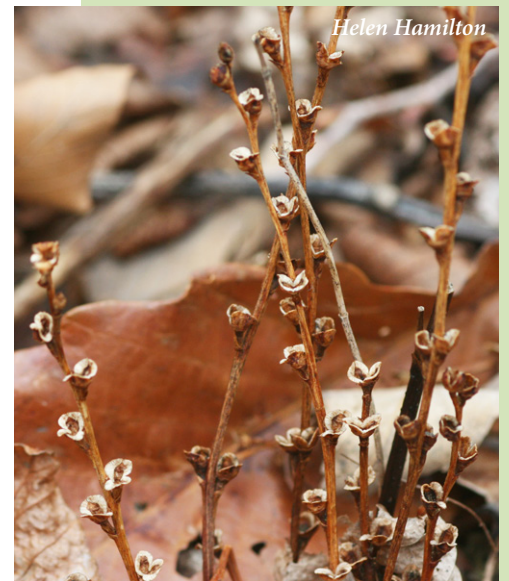
mer flowers are densely crowded in a spike on the shoot, which then withers and persists into the winter as a shriveled black stalk. With no ability to photosynthesize, squawroot grows in deep shade or in full sunlight in dry to moist rich woods. More common in the mountains than in the Coastal Plain, the plant is found in a few southeastern counties and in the Piedmont.

Beechdrops (*Epifagus virginiana*) is another obligate root-parasite. Found only around the trunks of American beech (*Fagus grandifolia*), the many-branched stems of beechdrops are pale brown, 6–18" tall, with leaves as dry, brownish scales. Tiny white flowers at the top of the stem appear in September through November. Dried stalks often persist under trees throughout the winter and into spring.



Indian pipe

Blooming in March through April and again in October through November, tiny sweet pine-sap (*Monotropsis odorata*) is only 1–4 inches tall and is parasitic on soil fungi. The plant can often be located by its strong fragrance, like violets or cinnamon, nutmeg, or cloves. Indian pipe (*Monotropa uniflora*) is a close relative, obtaining nourishment from specific mycorrhizal fungi in symbiosis with



Beechdrops

the roots of trees, usually pines and oaks. Also known as “Ghost Plant” for its waxy-white translucent color, Indian pipe grows 12 inches tall, the stem covered with reduced leaves as scaly bracts. At the top is a single nodding flower, blooming in June through October.

Common dodder is easily recognized by the yellow-orange stems that look like a tangle of threads, often completely covering a host plant. Unlike other, host-specific parasitic plants, common dodder attacks a variety of plants, and can do damage to crops of clover, alfalfa, flax, hops, and beans. Observations suggest the plant will aggressively seek hosts with highest nutritional value. Four species of dodder are found on the Coastal Plain in Virginia, distinguished by minute differences in their generally dense clusters of small white bell-shaped flowers blooming August through October.

Jim Westwood, a researcher at Virginia Tech, has published a paper and a video of common dodder (*Cuscuta spp.*) as the seeds germinate and search for a nearby host. Upon contact, the dodder wraps tightly around a tomato stem and penetrates it by extending haustoria, highly modified stem cells, into the water and nutrient-bearing tissues of the host plant. Studies have shown the haustoria are responding to volatile chemicals from the tomato plant or other hosts, and once inside, thousands of messenger RNA molecules are being exchanged between both plants. Dr. Westwood is trying to discover exactly what information is being transmitted.

With no chlorophyll of their own, the young seedlings of dodder must find a host before they run out of energy from their seeds. Sci-fi writers could not design a more fantastic organism!

To check out the video, Google “virginia parasitic plants” and click on the item in the resulting list titled “Parasitic Plant Time lapse-Virginia Tech Vimeo.”

Helen Hamilton



Dodder

A card of thanks from The Seed Queen

Thank you to the many friends who donated wildflower seeds to the John Clayton Chapter. They have all been packaged and labeled for distribution. (And a special thanks to the benefactor who donated an entire grocery bag filled with neatly labeled smaller bags of *cleaned* seeds—please remind me who you are!) All these seeds are available to our members for their local projects. **Cynthia Long** (757/259-9559)



Sad news

We have lost one of our chapter's first members, Dr. Charles W. McComb of Bena, who passed away at 84 on January 1. Charles was an entomologist at the Maryland Department of Agriculture before retiring, after which he and his wife Margaret moved to Gloucester. There he also became a founding member of the Colonial Virginia Chapter of the American Holly Society.

John Clayton Chapter Calendar

Saturday, March 14	1:30 pm: "What is that weed?" , an emerging weed and wildflower identification walk led by Helen Hamilton in Freedom Park . (See Page 2.)
Thursday, March 19	6:45 pm: John Clayton Chapter meeting at the Yorktown Public Library at the intersection of Battle Road and Route 17. Speaker Teta Kain's topic will be "The Moths Among Us." (See Page 1.)
Saturday, March 28	9:30 am: First Spring potting party at Judith Kator's home, 119 Rich Neck Rd. in James City Co. (757-229-0714). (See Page 4.)
Tuesday, March 31	2 pm: Second potting party at Joan Etchberger's home, 100 Woodland Rd. in James City Co. (757-784-2882). (See Page 5 for additional information.)
Tuesday, April 14	5:15–7 pm: A Spring walk with Donna Ware at the Williamsburg/James City Rec. Center , 5301 Longhill Rd., Williamsburg. (Details on Page 2.)
Sunday, April 19	1:30 pm: A Spring walk on Lafayette High School's Nature Trail with Helen Hamilton and Gus Hall . (Details on Page 2.)
Saturday, April 25	9 am–2 pm: John Clayton Chapter Spring Plant Sale at Jamestown Beach Park in James City County. (See Page 4 for more information about both Plant Sales.)
Saturday, May 2	10 am–2 pm: Second John Clayton Chapter Spring Plant Sale at New Quarter Park in the Queens Lake Neighborhood of York County. (See Page 4 for more information about both Plant Sales.)
Saturday, May 9	9:30 am: A tour of the William & Mary campus with Dr. Marty Mathes . (See 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 and in the local newspapers.

Below is a membership renewal form. Please contact Membership Chair **Fred Blystone** at 757/229-4346 or at 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