



Claytonia

Newsletter of the John Clayton Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society

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vnps.org/johnclayton

Officers

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

Vice-President Judith Kator
757/229-0714
jandhkator@cox.net

Treasurer Patty Kipps
757/564-3221
pattyk1943@widomaker.com

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

Committee Chairs

Awards Donna Ware
757/565-0657
dmeware@verizon.net

Historian/Plant Walks (acting)
Helen Hamilton
757/564-4494
helen48@cox.net

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

Membership Fred Blystone
757/229-4346
fredblystone@gmail.com

Newsletter Louise Menges
757/229-4346
louisemenges6@gmail.com

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

Plant Sale Co-chairs
Joan Etchberger
757-566-1884
jetchberger@cox.net
Patti Gray
757/645-4164
patriciagray67@gmail.com

Publicity (acting) Judith Kator
757/229-0714
jandhkator@cox.net

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

Back by Popular Demand!

At our September 17 Annual Meeting, Dr. Shawn Dash will speak about "Pollinators and Native Plants."



Bumblebee on Coneflower by Josh Mayes

Swawn Dash is from Baltimore, Maryland, where as a youngster he spent time exploring the natural world, devoting many hours to becoming familiar with the flora and fauna of the Maryland and surrounding areas, and making collections of rocks, pinecones, insects, skulls, and footprint casts. Shawn's passion for nature followed him through middle and high school and as an undergraduate at the University of Delaware (majoring in both entomology and wildlife ecology). His Master's degree (Louisiana State University) was the first formal survey of the ants of Louisiana. Shawn completed a Ph.D. at the University of Texas (El Paso) in evolutionary biology on the systematics of an understudied Neotropical ant genus (*Hypoponera*) and continues to work on ants and soil invertebrates in the context of evolution and ecology. He has given numerous outreach programs on insect ecology for audiences ranging from elementary to college students as well as nature club programs, and is finishing a paper on the ants of the Delmarva Peninsula and a project on the ants of Virginia. Shawn brings his passion for learning and understanding of biodiversity as a faculty member at Hampton University.

The meeting begins at 6:45 at the **James City County Rec Center at 5301 Longhill Road, Williamsburg 23188.**

From the President

It is August, it is hot, humid and the summer is flying fast. My yard looks and feels like a jungle. Plants are appearing everywhere! Where did they come from? Some are happy surprises, like the five Soldier Mallows I never planted, but there they are blooming! I hope to pot them for the sale, as they are too tall for their location. Also there is a Sneezeweed plant with its winged stem and a Black-eyed Susan plant. Among these newcomers there are many horrible weeds I try to remove each year. It may be without any positive results but the weeds will be greatly diminished by late Fall.

The butterfly situation is good and bad news. The bad news is that I have not seen any monarchs despite my flowering butterfly weeds and common milkweeds. Now the swamp milkweeds are blooming without them. The good news is that the other butterflies, including Swallowtails like Zebra, Black, Spicebush, and Yellow, are more plentiful this year after last year's low quantities. There are many other smaller butterflies all over the garden. On the Hoary Mountain Mint, there were so many butterflies and other beneficial insects having a happy reunion! My cup plants have as many as four yellow Swallowtails on one flower. The Boneset, Joe Pye Weeds and Obedient Plants are most popular. I shall know more about the many kinds of butterflies seen as well as the quantities when the Master Naturalists come to my garden on their annual butterfly count. It is no mystery that butterflies prefer native plants and that having the correct host plants for each butterfly will help them propagate.

At this time our chapter looks forward to our Fall activities. Our Vice-President, Judith Kator, has been busy organizing our speakers. The unfortunate fact is that we do not have anyone willing to serve as Hospitality Chair. I know we all like the refreshments and the short social time after our talks. Please volunteer, if you can, to serve with us. Our Plant Sale Committee is getting ready for the 2016 Plant Sale. The Committee members are planning on two potting parties in the Fall. The first will be at Joan Etchberger's yard in September and the second will be in early October at Stonehouse for the plant dig and will continue at Joan Etchberger's home for potting. Please see the details on the potting parties in the article in this issue. We ask you to help since this is our one and only fundraiser. It supports many of our efforts and includes allowing four students from our geographical area to go to Nature Camp, as well as helping our educational and preservation efforts.

I look forward to seeing all of you this Fall.

Lucile Kossodo



Cortney's notes

The summer's fading now, and soon goldenrods will line our trailsides and roadsides with their long, cheery yellow stems. Helen maintains it's the best time of the year to plant, and that's certainly true for native shrubs. Giving them a chance to overwinter without the stress of the summer heat seems to really increase their chances of survival.

The board met the first week of July and didn't take significant action, but discussed a number of things. There is a new state noxious weed regulation, and while it is an improvement, it has some flaws. Its main drawback is that it aims to curtail the establishment of new noxious weeds. It doesn't address the invasives that have already eaten Virginia. If you're interested, the City of Arlington has some good information on it. Check online at <http://bit.ly/1LM8Rwl>.

This fall, keep your eye on the Gloucester Public Library for a chance to see the traveling Flora of Virginia exhibit, from Oct. 5–Nov. 14. From the Flora of Virginia website: "The exhibition ... focuses on our plants, from European contact through the present, the representation of plants in science and in art, and the history of botanical exploration in Virginia." After Nov. 14, it'll be another year before it's again on the Peninsula. The exhibition is scheduled to show at the Hampton Main Public Library in October 2016.

Also watch for some opportunities to help at fall potting parties. The parties support the spring plant sale. Members dig and pot extra plants growing in either home gardens or the Stonehouse Elementary School Habitat Garden for sale next year. It isn't arduous work and it's a great way to get involved and meet other members.

Enjoy the (hopefully soon) cooling weather! **Cortney Langley**, Secretary

New members

We welcome **Tanya O'Conner** of Newport News to our Chapter.

Two recently joined Chapter members, in their own voices

We received this email in August from the Potowmack Chapter's Membership Chair:

The recent *Claytonia* mentioned two new members who were descendents of John Clayton. As a follow-up, I was reviewing the June postings of VNPS membership records, and want to make sure you saw the handwritten note Melanie and her mother Marlene included with their membership forms (see attached).

Bob Yacovissi, Potowmack Chapter Membership

My mother + I are direct descendants of John Clayton "The Botanist". We were in Gloucester last month + picked up the VNPS flyer. He is my mother's 7th great-grandfather + my 8th g.g.f.

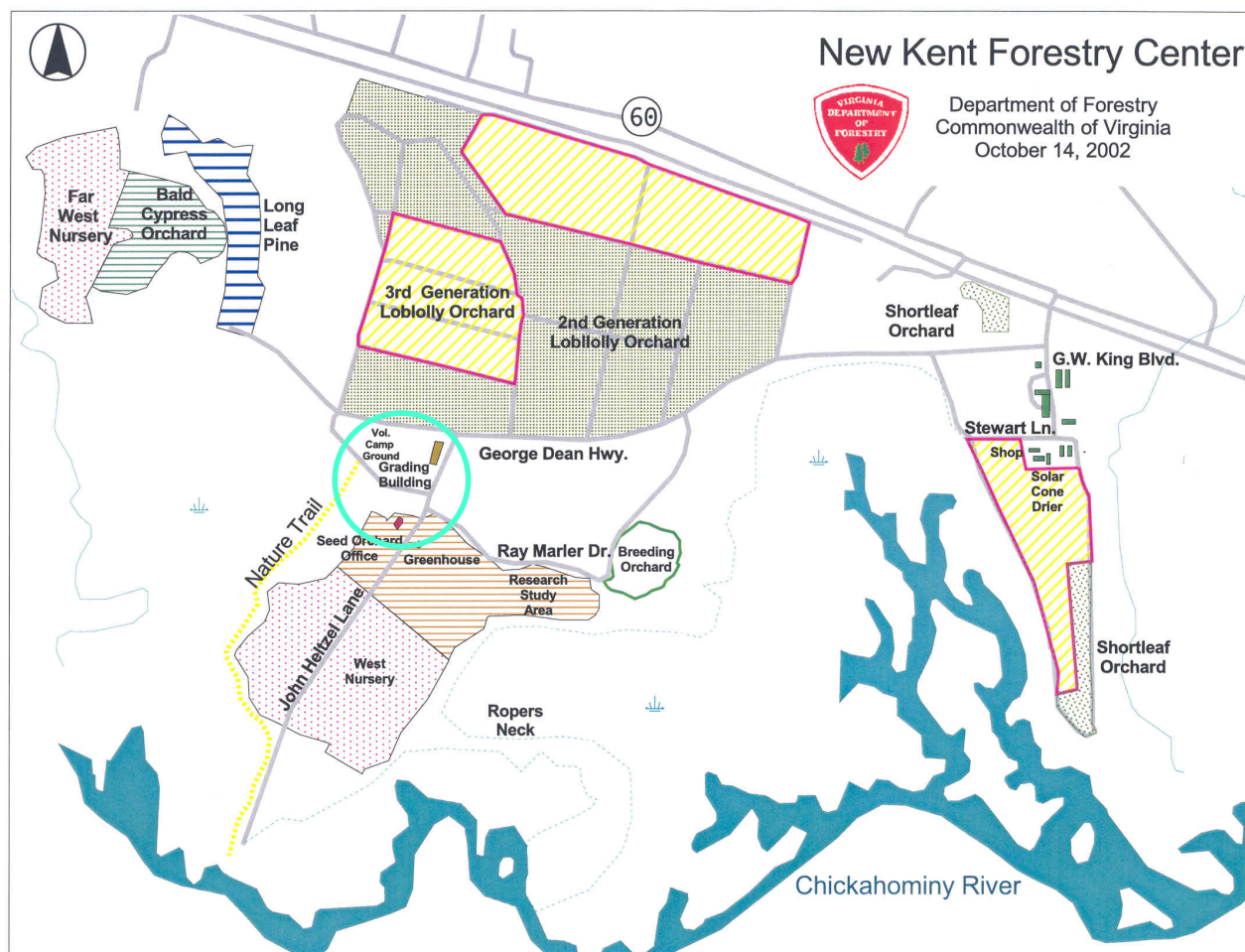
Melanie

Upcoming JCC walks...

On Saturday, October 3, 10 a.m (Note new date!) Unusual plants at the New Kent Forestry Center

Lisa Deaton, Forest Education Specialist, will lead a walk on the one-mile trail at the New Kent Forestry Center. We can expect to see sweetleaf/horse sugar, prickly-pear cactus, farkleberry/sparkleberry, sand hickory, arrow arum, frog's bit, American chestnut, longleaf pine, and others. Meet at the Education Center's Grading Building at 11301 Pocahontas Trail, Providence Forge. For more information, contact Helen Hamilton at 757-564-4494 or helen48@cox.net.

Note from Lisa: It usually takes about 2 hours to hike the 1 mile trail if we are looking at plants along the way, then we usually walk a one-mile road back to the Education Center. I've attached driving directions and a map of the Forestry Center. Our Education Center is the **circled building** labeled **Grading Building** on the map below.



From Richmond and points west of the Center:

- Take I-64 East to Exit 205 (Bottoms Bridge).
- Turn right at the end of the exit ramp onto VA-33 W.
- Turn left at the stoplight onto Rt. 60 (Pocahontas Trail) East.
- Follow Pocahontas Trail for 12.6 miles. You will pass through two stoplights at Rt. 106 and Rt. 155. (At Rt. 155 you pass through the town of Providence Forge.)
- You will see Virginia Department of Forestry signs marking the entrance on the right.
- Turn right at the entrance onto Route 409/G.W. King Blvd.
- Continue down G.W. King Blvd. a short distance and take the first right turn onto George Dean Highway, a dirt road. You will pass through a red farm gate.
- Follow George Dean Highway for one mile, bearing left at the fork in the road just as you reach the Forest Education Center.
- The parking lot is on your left across the road from the building.

From Hampton Roads and points east of the Center:

- Take I-64 West to Exit 231A for Norge.
- The exit ramp puts you onto Croaker Rd./VA 607 South.
- At the first stoplight, turn right onto Rochambeau Dr./VA-30 North.
- Follow Rochambeau Dr. for 3 miles, then travel straight through the stoplight onto Rt. 60 West.
- Follow Rt. 60 for 10.6 miles, and you will see Dept. of Forestry signs marking the entrance.
- Turn left onto Route 409/G.W. King Blvd.
- Continue down G.W. King Blvd. a short distance and take the first right turn onto George Dean Highway, a dirt road. You will pass through a red farm gate.
- Follow George Dean Highway for one mile, bearing left at the fork in the road just as you reach the Forest Education Center.
- The parking lot is on your left across the road from the building.

...and a couple of recent ones

Donna Ware's "expanded" account of species seen during her April 21 Weed Walk

After work-hours (5:15 p.m.) on Tuesday, April 21st, a group of ten "weeders" gathered to forage through the lawn of the James City County Recreation Center where a high diversity of weedy species, mostly annuals, reside. A few of these species are native, but most are immigrants from Europe, Eurasia, and northern Africa. Before we left the parking lot, we discussed several characteristics of the "ideal" herbaceous weed. These included a preference for open, sunny habitats where the soil has been disturbed (usually by humans), a quickly completed life cycle, production of high numbers of fruits/seeds that disperse widely, and a high level of chromosome duplication. The latter characteristic significantly increases adaptability and competitive edge. Some weeds can self-pollinate, but if they are cross-pollinated, it is usually by wind or generalist pollinators. Most annual weeds (in contrast to perennial weeds that invade natural habitats) are problematic only for gardeners and those wishing to have a purely grassy lawn, golf course, or other landscape. There are exceptions, however; for instance, our native Virginia plantain (*Plantago virginica*) is listed as a serious agricultural pest in China.

Six of the weed species we saw were native to Virginia: purple cudweed (*Gamochaeta purpurea*), Virginia dwarf-dandelion (*Krigia virginica*), Virginia plantain (*Plantago virginica*), field pansy (*Viola bicolor*), and two species of bluets, tiny bluets (*Houstonia pusilla*), and southern bluets (*H. micrantha*). All but a few tiny bluets (a blue-flowered species) already had passed into the fruiting stage, but the small white flowers of the southern bluet, which is not listed in the new Flora of Virginia, were profuse. Southern bluets also differ from tiny bluets in having smaller flowers with a short flower-tube about the same length as the sepals (instead of a longer floral tube that is usually distinctly exerted above the tips of the sepals). In the past few years, I have also observed extensive occurrences of this bluet at Freedom Park, James City Co. Sports Complex, Matoaka Elementary School, Lafayette High School, and Chickahominy River Park, all in James City Co., and Richard Bland College in Petersburg. The previous known range for southern bluet was from Texas east to Florida plus Georgia, Missouri, and Tennessee. After voucher specimens are submitted to the Virginia Botanical Associates, perhaps southern bluets will be counted as a new element of the Virginia flora!

In addition to the two native species of bluets already discussed, two non-native members of this same plant family, the Rubiaceae, were abundant in the lawn, too—blue field madder (*Galium sherardia*) and Piedmont bedstraw (*Galium pedemontanum*). Piedmont bedstraw was not listed from Virginia in the 8th edition of *Gray's Manual of Botany* (1950), but it had been documented from a dozen counties by 1981. Today the *Digital Atlas of the Virginia Flora* shows it in forty counties, mostly in the mountain and Piedmont provinces. However, its occurrence at the James City Co. Recreation Center will be its first report from the Peninsula.

Water-blinks or water miners-lettuce (*Montia fontana*), which formed yellowish clumps in the wetter portions of the ditch between the sidewalk and Longhill Road, was the “star” among the introduced weeds we saw because it is a close and edible relative of Spring Beauty (*Claytonia virginica*). In fact, it was once classified as a *Claytonia*! Its common name is a reference to its consumption by miners during Gold Rush Days. Although it has an extremely broad worldwide distribution, in the U.S. it is known from only five western states plus three eastern states, including Virginia. However, it is not yet considered an established member of the Virginia flora. In the past two years I have also seen it in wet lawns or ditches at Stonehouse and Matoaka schools.

In addition to water-blinks/miners lettuce, we saw another introduced weed that is also edible as a salad ingredient, lamb's lettuce (*Valerianella locusta*). Its winter rosette leaves are marketed as “Mache” (sometimes available at Trader Joe's). All species of *Valerianella* have stems that repeatedly fork dichotomously; this species bears clusters of small, light violet-blue flowers surrounded by blunt-tipped bracts at the tips of the uppermost forks of the stem.

About 15 other introduced weeds were featured on the trip, most being familiar ones like bulbous buttercup, henbit, and sticky mouse-ear chickweed. But upon a closer look after the field trip, the small-flowered forget-me-not that I had listed on our handout as *Myosotis discolor* was actually *M. stricta*, which is infrequent to rare in the Piedmont and coastal plain of Virginia.

A REQUEST: if you encounter new populations of southern bluet and/or water-blinks next spring, please notify me at dmeware@verizon.net.

Donna Ware

July 25's Longhill Swamp Walk

Editor's note: I didn't receive photos or a description of this walk, also led by Donna Ware, but below is a list of plants (and a few critters) participants saw that day, compiled by Dot Bryant and vetted by Donna.

Trees

Oaks—white, willow, swamp chestnut, cherrybark, shumard

Others—red maple, green ash, American elm, American holly, black walnut, black gum, persimmon, black willow, sycamore

Small trees & shrubs

American hornbeam, swamp dogwood, sweetbay magnolia, pawpaw, possum-haw, spicebush

Vines

Climbing hydrangea, Japanese honeysuckle, trumpet-creeper, summer grape, common greenbrier, poison ivy

Ferns

Christmas, cinnamon, lady, marsh, netted chain, New York, royal, sensitive, ebony spleenwort

Herbaceous Plants

Asian dayflower, wild comfrey, crane-fly orchid, false nettle, ridged yellow flax, golden ragwort, Indian cucumber-root, jump-seed, lizard's-tail, panic grass (*Dichanthelium* sp.), soft rush, hyssop skullcap, dotted smartweed, bur-reed, St. Andrew's Cross, dwarf St. John's-wort, spotted St. John's-wort, weak stellate sedge, fringed sedge, blunt broom sedge (probably *C. tribuloides*), Virginia dayflower

Misc.

Sphagnum moss, Appalachian brown butterfly, box turtle, crayfish chimney, damsel fly

A walk on Aug. 29 to see Shadow Witch Orchids

This walk, on **Hayes and Joyce Williams'** property in Gloucester, was another for which I have no description of the walk, but Shirley Ferguson and Seig Kopinitz each sent me photos they had taken. Apparently the shadow witch orchids hadn't heard about our group's planned visit and their buds were not yet opened, but among the other blooming plants seen that day were New York ironweed (*Vernonia noveboracensis*) and turtlehead (*Chelone glabra*), as well as the leaves of Virginia heartleaf (*Hexastylis virginica*).



Shadow Witch orchid (*Ponthieva racemosa*) in bud



Shirley Ferguson



Shirley Ferguson

A patch of *Hexastylus virginica*
(Virginia heartleaf)

Before the walk began, Hayes Williams pointed out the spots the group would visit.

Keep these dates open for two Fall Potting Parties on Sept. 19 and Oct. 10

Please save some time on these two dates for our two Fall Potting Parties. The first potting party is scheduled on **Saturday, September 19, 2015, at 9 a.m. at Joan Etchberger's home.** The address is **100 Woodland Rd., Williamsburg, VA 23188.** Please let her know that you are coming so we can notify you if the weather is unfavorable. Her phone number is **757-784-6870.** In case of rain, we will reschedule the potting party to the following Saturday, Sept 26, 2015 at 9 a.m. We will help her dig and pot native plants for our 2016 plant sale.

The second party is scheduled on **Saturday, October 10, 2015 at 9 a.m. at the Stonehouse Habitat Garden.** The address for the Stonehouse Habitat Garden is **3651 Rochambeau Drive, Williamsburg, VA 23188.** We will dig plants at Stonehouse Habitat Garden first and then take the plants we have dug to **Joan Etchberger's home at 100 Woodland Rd.,**



and there the plants will be potted. Please call Joan Etchberger at 757-784-6870 or Lucile Kossodo at 757-784-2882 to let one of them know that you are coming so we can notify you if the weather is unfavorable. In case of rain, we will reschedule the potting party for the following Saturday, October 17, 2015 at 9 a.m.

Please bring a spade, gloves, water, and some insect spray. Wear a hat for the sun. The work should be rather easy and a great way to get to know your native plants when they are young. It's also an opportunity to see under what conditions to grow a particular plant and a chance to meet other members. You will greatly help our efforts to accumulate the plants needed for the Plant Sale. Many hands will help this job go fast—it takes a whole Native Plant Chapter to make this sale a success!

Lucile Kossodo

Plant profile: Plantains (*Plantago* spp.)

These common garden weeds have some surprising benefits: they host the caterpillars of butterflies, provide seed for small wildlife, and many species are highly nutritious for us humans. Found in lawns, roadsides, fields, woodland edges, and wet habitats almost all year in our area, different species appear in spring, summer, fall, and late winter. Some are native, some are introduced.

All plantains have more or less parallel-veined leaves in a circle around the base of the plant; they can be close to the ground or somewhat erect. The narrow or broad leaves, smooth or hairy, and the length of the flowering spike, with or without bristle-like bracts, distinguish species. The tiny, scaly flowers are densely packed in a cylindrical spike borne directly from the base of the plant on a long, leafless stalk. Most plantains are pollinated by the wind, some by small flies and beetles.

Two natives appear in early spring and finish flowering in summer. Slender Plantain (*Plantago heterophylla*), blooming from March through May, occurs only in a few counties south of



Slender Plantain

Newport News. Virginia Plantain, often called Dwarf Plantain, (*P. virginica*), blooms from March through July and is common in all counties of Virginia in dry fields, clearings, and open, disturbed habitats. These two annual plants can be distinguished from each other by their leaves, which are smooth, narrow, and upright in Slender Plantain, whereas the leaves of Virginia Plantain are softly fuzzy and are less upright.



Virginia Plantain

Other plantains bloom from April through November. Two species introduced from Europe seem to grow everywhere. The leafless flower stalk (scape) of English or Buckhorn Plantain (*P. lanceolata*) can be 2 feet tall, tipped by a short flower spike an inch or so long, with prominent stamens, their filaments ending in large, white anthers—very distinctive in lawns and roadsides. Narrow, ribbed leaves are spreading or upright. A perennial or biennial, in dry weather or after mowing the plant is much shorter.



English Plantain's distinctive flower head

English Plantain

The leaves of the introduced Common Plantain (*P. major*) are egg-shaped with 5–7 prominent parallel veins from the base. The floral stalk and the flower spike each are up to 12 inches or more. While more often seen close to the ground, along the edges of paths and woodlands the entire plant can be over 2 feet tall. Common Plantain is a perennial, sometimes annual.

Two other species bloom into early winter. The native perennial Broad-leaved (or Blackseed) Plantain (*P. rugelii*) is very similar to the introduced Common Plantain; the two are distinguished by differences in the fruits and in the leafstalks (petioles). Usually those of Common Plantain are green and slightly hairy and the petioles of the native species are smooth and somewhat red.

The introduced annual Bracted or Bottle-brush Plantain (*P. aristata*) is unmistakable—between each tiny flower in the flowering spike is a long, thin bract. Narrow, linear leaves are up to 8 inches long, much shorter than the flowering stalk, which grows up to 15 inches tall. This species is native in the American Midwest.

Many members of the genus *Plantago* are found all over the world. Some native to this country have been introduced to Europe and Asia. Attractive to wildlife, some are larval host plants to Buckeye and Checkerspot butterflies.

Young leaves of many Plantains, extremely high in vitamins and minerals, are used in salads or as cooked greens. “Psyllium seed” is an old-fashioned laxative, derived from the mucilaginous seeds of a plantain species.

Helen Hamilton and Gus Hall

(Photos Helen Hamilton)

John Clayton Chapter Calendar

Thursday, Sept. 17 6:45 pm: John Clayton Chapter Annual Meeting at the **James City County Rec Center**, 5301 Longhill Rd., Williamsburg 23188.

The speaker is **Dr. Shawn Dash**, and his topic will be **“Pollinators and Native Plants.”**

(See Page 1.)

Saturday, October 3 10:00 am: Lisa Deaton, Forest Education Specialist, will lead a walk on the one-mile trail at the **New Kent Forestry Center** to look for unusual plants. Contact Helen at 564-4494 or helen48@cox.net for more information. (See Page ? for a map and directions.)

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 vnps.org/johnclayton 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