Claytonia

Newsletter of the John Clayton Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society

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Bill Portlock will speak about "Wetlands of the Chesapeake Bay" at September 18's Annual Meeting

His program will feature Portlock's photography and describe the Chesapeake Bay's important wetland habitats and some of the charismatic species that live in them.

Bill Portlock is Senior Educator for the Bay with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. He teaches about the Bay, using canoes, kayaks, skiffs, workboats, and CBF's Island Education Centers as tools for engaging others in learning about the Bay. A naturalist, environmental educator, and nature photographer, he has been working with teachers, students of all ages, and the public for over 30 years to make Virginia's natural history and ecology understandable, meaningful, and accessible to all. He began the popular Teachers on the Bay marine ecology course 25 years ago with this organizing statement: "The Chesapeake Bay is a natural resource that needs a knowledgeable and caring public to restore its health and manage it wisely."

Portlock says, "In the field, I prefer to stalk the edges, where water meets the land. Through my photographs I try to enable others to see our connections to the natural world. Photographs do not take the place of a field experience, but by sharing pieces of the outside world I hope to instill not just a better appreciation of the world but to begin discussions into how our actions affect all the inhabitants of the world we share."

The Chapter will hold elections to the 2014-2016 Executive Board at this meeting. Below is the nominating committee's report:

The nominating committee presents the following proposed candidates for the Executive Board 2014–2016. Elections will be held during the annual meeting September 18, 2014.

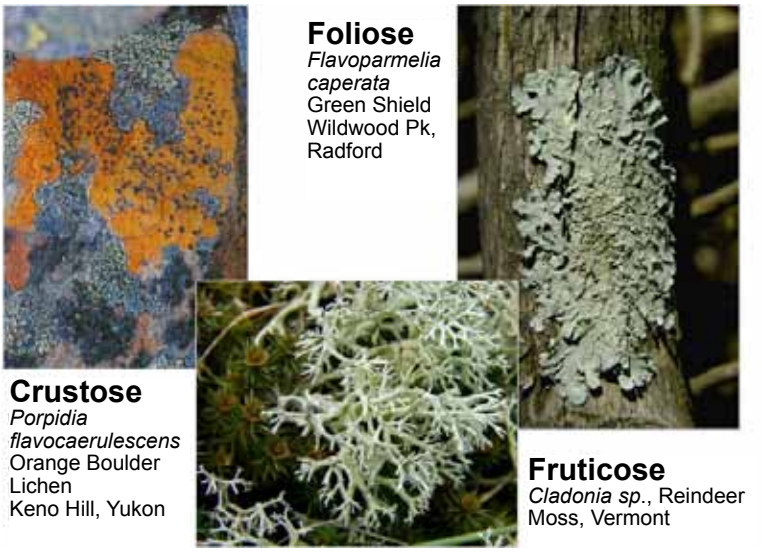
President: **Lucile Kossodo** *Vice-President:* **Judith Kator**
Treasurer: **Patty Kipps** *Secretary:* **Cortney Langley**

Respectfully submitted,
Helen Hamilton, Donna Ware, Cynthia Long

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!**

Lichens were the topic at our July meeting

Our speaker, Gary Cote, a professor of Cell Biology at Radford University, reminded his audience that lichens are only "honorary plants." A lichen is a composite organism consisting of a fungus and a green alga or cyanobacteria in a symbiotic relationship. While many of us (or at least those who are not biologists) may be accustomed to thinking of fungi as plants, they are actually more closely related to animals; for instance, they do not photosynthesize and reproduce via spores. Lichens are found from Arctic to temperate regions on a wide variety of media, including the wood, bark or roots of trees and on soil, as well as on rocks and other hard surfaces. Here are just a few of the lichens Professor Cote described for us. **Louise Menges**



Three types of lichens

The title slide; the lichen shown was labeled *Cladonia spp.*, Vermont. This genus includes British Soldiers *(Cladonia christatella)*, seen on walks in our area.

Xanthomendoza weberi, Weber's Sunburst Lichen, Radford

Pseudevernia consocians, Common Antler Lichen, Grayson County

This one was spotted in Radford and tentatively identified as a *Flavoparmelia*. (A metal street sign wouldn't seem to be a very hospitable surface, would it?)

We welcome some new members

Welcome to new members J. Michael Johnson, Tom Mills and Patrick Teague, all of Williamsburg.

Recent plant walks—

A summer woodland walk on the Warhill Trail with Pat Baldwin on June 28

Ten of us met and walked approximately one-half of the woodland trail surrounding the Warhill Sports Complex off Longhill Road in James City County. During this time of year, populations of plants decrease. Below is a list of plants we found.

wild petunia *(Ruellia caroliniensis)*
white vervain *(Verbena urticifolia)*
bedstraw *(Galium circaezana)*
Maryland meadow beauty *(Rhexia marina)*
moth mullein *(Blattaria verbascum)*
common mullein *(Verbascum thaspus)*
spotted wintergreen *(Chimaphila maculata)*
narrow-leaved mountain mint *(Pycnantheum tenuifolium)*
Deptford pink *(Dianthus armeria)*
daisy fleabane *(Erigeron annuus)*
crown vetch *(Securigera varia)*
common yarrow *(Achillea millefolium)*

Ferns found included cinnamon, royal, southern lady's, sensitive, netted chain, bracken and ebony spleenwort. We also saw a few species of butterflies and other insects. **Pat Baldwin**

Some of the wildflowers participants saw on the walk: top, wild petunia; center, narrow-leaved mountain mint; bottom, daisy fleabane. *(file photos)*

A walk on Bassett Hall's Nature Trail on July 26

It was one of the warmer and more humid days of this summer, but our group of native plant enthusiasts was quickly embraced by the cooling forest as we set out on the Bassett Hall Trail. I was surprised that this was the first time that many had even been aware of this trail that winds through a small part of the 585 acres of woodlands that lie behind the lovely 1750s Bassett Hall. Both the woodlands and house were generously given to Colonial Williamsburg by the family of Abby and John D Rockefeller, Jr. in 1979. I'd discovered it shortly after moving to Williamsburg in 1980 and had loved the variety of terrain and plant life and, best of all, how I felt fully immersed in the peacefulness of the forest although just minutes from the hustle and bustle of Duke of Gloucester Street. So upon seeing a notice of this walk

A portion of the shady trail

in the newspaper, I seized the opportunity to learn more about the trail that I'd treasured for so many years.

I was torn between being within hearing distance of our leaders, **Gus Hall** or **Donna Ware**, as both were not only identifying plants and trees along the way but also sharing interesting background information. I learned from Donna Ware that a notable feature of the Bassett Hall Trail is that it has a number of native species that are known as mountain disjuncts. These are species that have their primary range in the mountains and western Piedmont of Virginia and are found in only a few places here in the Coastal Plain in deep ravines with calcareous soil. The Bassett Hall Trail winds along the edge of some of these spring fed ravines where the fossil layer of seashells beneath the soil provides the limy soil that alkaline loving plants such as umbrella magnolias, marsh marigolds, yellow lady slippers, bishop's cap, dog violets and mountain camellias thrive in.

Gus Hall pointed to the tulip poplar, a member of the magnolia family, as an example of one of a number of plants, including sassafras, hickory, Carolina silverbell, mayapples, jack-in-the-pulpits and skunk cabbages that grow only in eastern Asia and southeastern U.S. It is thought that these disjunct genera of eastern Asia and eastern North America are remnants of ancient plants that once were broadly distributed throughout the Northern Hemisphere but were wiped out by the extensive glaciers that stopped short of eastern Asia and our southeast. Gus pointed out that the north to south orientation of our Appalachians and mountains in eastern Asia also contributed to the survival of these genera as they didn't create barriers to expansion.

We saw quite a few of one of the mountain disjuncts, the umbrella magnolia *(Magnolia tripetala)* so named for its umbrella-like cluster of large shiny deciduous leaves at the ends of the branches. Donna pointed out that one usually finds the common pawpaw trees around umbrella magnolias, as deer won't browse on pawpaws, which gives the magnolia (while little) a chance to grow. And sure enough, every umbrella magnolia we saw had pawpaws for protective companions.

A bee visits the blooms of a sweet pepperbush.

A peek inside Indian pipe flowers—although the rest of the plant is nearly devoid of any color, the flower's reproductive parts are golden yellow (pollen?).

The huge leaves of an umbrella magnolia are hard to miss.

I was particularly delighted to see crane-fly orchids *(Tipularia discolor)* in bloom, as I'd previously only known them by their distinctive leaves with deep purplish undersides, which by now had disappeared.

Because of adequate rainfall there were quite a few fungi. My favorite was the shiny bright red conical cap of the witch's hat *(Hygrocybe conica)*. We also learned how to differentiate between several ferns: southern lady, sensitive, broad beech, Christmas, New York and rattlesnake.

Witch's hats poke through the leaf litter.

We continued under the canopy of hardwood trees and over a footbridge crossing a small clear stream until we got to trail marker 14, where the star of the plant walk resided: the mountain camellia *(Stewartia ovata)*. This relative of the evergreen camellia of Asia has a very limited range, growing as an understory small deciduous tree usually in the low to mid elevations of the Southern Appalachians and is considered rare. But here we saw two bush size specimens…a star example of mountain disjunct! Alas, it had already bloomed, but we were shown a picture of its lovely 3-inch wide flower with white waxy petals and yellow stamens.

A mountain camellia growing next to the trail.

As a guest on this field trip, I am grateful to the John Clayton Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society for offering its activities to the general public. Thanks to the impressive and easily accessible expertise of Donna Ware and Gus Hall, I now have a much more intimate knowledge of a dear friend, the Bassett Hall Trail.

Cathy Millar


The walk drew a big crowd; Helen Hamilton took this photo of the group before we set out. It included:

Donna Ware and Gus Hall (co-leaders), Alice and Seig Kopinitz, Virginia and Henry Long, Chris Gwaltney, Margaret McMillen, Betty Bigley, Frances Knight, Cathy Millar, Bob Fichter, Sherry and John Brubaker, Louise Menges, Jean Babb, Patty Kipps, Maynard Phelps, Bruce Glendening, Phyllis Putnam, Kathryn Peterson Lambert, Mary Lib Puller, Mary Lou Ward and Patricia Paquette.

Upcoming walks…

A walk on the Colby Swamp Trail in Freedom Park on Saturday, September 20

Donna Ware will lead this walk to see butternut in fruit, log fern, and bigtooth aspen, among other sights. Meet in the Freedom Park Interpretive Center parking lot at 9:30 am; the trip will involve walking about ¾ mile.

Freedom Park is at 5537 Centerville Road 23188, in James City Co. To register contact Donna at (757)565-0657 or at dmware@verizon.net.

We need your help: please volunteer at one of our four Fall 2014 Potting Parties!

1. Williamsburg area: Saturday, September 20 at 9:30 am

Host: Cynthia Long (757-259-9559), 105 Bowstring Road, Williamsburg, VA 23185, in Queens Lake. We will dig some ferns and other perennials from her yard. If you plan to attend, please contact either Cynthia 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. (Please note: Cynthia asks that if you wish to take a fern home with you for your own garden, you will need to bring soil to fill the hole.)

2. James City Co. area: Stonehouse Elementary's Habitat Garden, Saturday, September 27 at 9:30 am

Host: Lucile Kossodo (757-565-0769-h/Cell: 757-784-2882) at Stonehouse Elementary's Habitat Garden, 3651 Rochambeau Drive, Williamsburg, VA 23188. First we will dig at Stonehouse and then we will go pot the plants nearby at our plant staging area at Joan Etchberger's home (757-784-6870), 100 Woodland Road, in Woodland Farms. 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.

3. James City Co. area: Stonehouse Elementary's Habitat Garden, Saturday, October 4 at 9:30 am

Host: Lucile Kossodo (757-565-0769-h/Cell: 757-784-2882) at Stonehouse Elementary's Habitat Garden, 3651 Rochambeau Drive, Williamsburg, VA 23188. First we will dig at Stonehouse and then we will go pot the plants nearby at our plant staging area at Joan Etchberger's home (757-784-6870), 100 Woodland Road, in Woodland Farms. 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.

4. James City Co. area: Saturday, October 18 at 9:30 am

Host: Joan Etchberger (757-784-6870) 100 Woodland Road, Williamsburg, VA 23188, in the Croaker area. We will dig perennials from her garden. If you plan to attend, please contact either Joan 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.

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 lkossodo@cox.net so she has your name on the list for the party you will be attending. Whether 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**

Help in the Stonehouse Habitat Garden

Maintenance work is ongoing at Stonehouse Elementary's Habitat Garden, with most of the recent effort provided by Phillip Merritt and Sue Voigt. On August 9, I joined Phillip, Sue, and Jack Martin to help with weeding, removal of "intruders," and general sprucing up—many wheelbarrows-full went to the compost heap that day!

The garden's lushly growing foliage and plants in bloom.

I'm sure they would welcome your help, too; you can contact Phillip at phillip.merritt@gmail.com or Sue at svoigt1@cox.net or by phone at (804)966-8487 to volunteer. **Louise Menges**

Jack hacks out some uninvited growth from the garden.

The other three gardeners—a little reminiscent of a Grant Wood painting, except that we are smiling (well, two of us are).

Trumpets are sounding

The trumpet plant *(Sarracenia flava)*, also known as yellow pitcher plant, has become my favorite means of rodent control ever! Large rats have been found inside this bright yellow to pea green colored perennial. Although Linnaeus is listed as the *Sarracenia* species authority from 1753, he was well known for his work in organizing the world, wishing for things to be very orderly, nothing out of place. He insisted for the longest time that plants could not be carnivores—it just defied his idea of the "natural order". But, of course, as I have joked, that pitcher bogged. Charles Darwin encountered the sundew, *Drosera,* a carnivorous plant species, in 1860, and began running a series of experiments, noting that the plant would react to the light weight of a human hair but not to water or other weight. The theory is that an electric charge carried by all living DNA is sent up inside the leaf once the insect gets too close. A bee might brush a leg or even one of its tiny hairs against the leaf surface and then the insect becomes surrounded as enzymes are unleashed that eat away at the fly or bee's insides. Culturally, people associate the sound of trumpets as an announcer of a calamity. After spending time researching this plant, it seems aptly named for flies and rodents.

The trumpet shaped leaves, 3–10 dm in length, are tubular, with hoods depressed-ovate to rounded, apiculate, and margins reflexed and erect on a stipelike base, with a narrow winged extension along one side up to 5 mm wide, reaching to over a meter under full sun in remote bogs and wetland areas, growing less leaves in late summer. Since the plant becomes dormant, it requires a freezing period at some period during winter. *Flava,* with another common name of Huntsman's-horn, reaches its northern limit in the Coastal plains and southeast region of Virginia. The trumpet belongs to the Sarraceniaceae family; all are pitcher plants found in the warm temperate region of the southeast USA except *Sarracenia purpurea*, which is found all along the east coast up into Canada. The family contains trapping mechanisms varying among the species, but they are all traps constructed from a rolled leaf. First reported in the northeast and north-central USA and Canada, it is difficult to say when this group first evolved, because there are three highly evolved genera with no hierarchy of features. I agree with the hypothesis that these consist of remnant populations of one species that became fragmented rather recently in the scheme of things.

Sarracenia has a one-way route for pollinators to follow. Pollinators are primarily common eastern bumblebees, *Bombus impatiens*, which have hairs all over their bodies that collect and trap pollen, which the bees carry from one flower to the next, although pollinators include several other species of flies and bees, but not honey or carpenter. Bumblebees push past the stigma to enter the cavity created by the expanded style, then take all the pollen and exit under a petal.

The pitcher plant requires "wet feet" in the bogs of the swamp pine savannas and wetland areas of Tidewater. The yellow trumpet flower was common in Tidewater coastal plains until the early 1980s, but is very rare in this area now due to loss of both pollinator and habitat. Historically, the early southeastern native indigenous tribal peoples used the pitcher plant's root as a treatment for smallpox and other skin disorders, and physicians used the herb as a stimulating tonic. The trumpet may now be found only in sphagnum power-line seeps, boggy clearings and hidden areas. The next time you happen to spy a ravine with a group of trees and underbrush with water draining into it, please stop and take a look and see what you can find, even though you might get a "look" from a passer-by. Our roadside plant areas are still waiting to be discovered. **Kathryn Peterson Lambert**

References: *Wildflowers & Grasses of Virginia's Coastal Plain*, Hamilton, Hall; *Wildflowers of Tidewater Virginia*, Gupton, Swope; Kathryn Peterson Lambert's notes from field trip, Wakefield, 2013; www.deq.states.va.us/coastal/benefits -coastal native plants; *Flora of Virginia*, Weakley, Ludwig, Townsend; Inbreeding, outbreeding and heterosis in the yellow pitcher plant, Sheridan, Karowe; *Ameican Journal of Botany* 87:1628–1633; Systematic relationships of Sarraceniaceae inferred from nuclear ribosomal DNA, Neyland, Merchant; ngn,nationalgeographic.com; *Wild Flowers and Flora of the Americas*, Walters, Lavelle; www.carnivorousplants.org; *Encyclopedia of Herbs*, Brown.

Some useful info from the *Potowmack News*…

gleaned from the late summer 2014 edition of the Potowmack Chapter's newsletter:

Correcting some errors in the *Flora of Virginia*

It was great having the brand-new *Flora of Virginia* hot off the press. But in spite of all their proofreading, some errors weren't caught (the editor of this newsletter can identify with that experience)*. Now you can download 17 pages of errata and make corrections to your first edition-first printing copy of the *Flora* from floraofvirginia.org/errata-3/.
*(*Claytonia's editor can identify, too!)*

An accessible field guide for grasses

If you cannot face the grass keys in the *Flora of Virginia*, or just want to supplement them with more pictures, take a look at *Grasses of Washington, D.C.*, by Kamal Ibrahim and Paul M. Peterson, Smithsonian Contributions to Botany, No. 99. It takes a field guide approach, and can be downloaded for free from opensi.si.edu/index.php/smithsonian/catalog/book/66.

You can access the entire *Potowmack News* on the chapter's website at http://vnps.org/potowmack/potowmack-newsletter/. *Editor*

Prickly plants

Plants with sharp prickles on the stem, leaves or around the flowers are often called "thistles." Among these that are found in our area are Russian Thistle *(Salsola kali)* in the Amaranth Family and Musk Thistle *(Carduus nutans)* and Spiny-leaf Sow Thistle *(Sonchus asper)* in the Aster Family. It is thought that the spiny projections are an adaptation that protects the plant from animals that might feed on them.

But the term "thistle" is usually reserved for members of the genus *Cirsium* of the Aster Family. Three of these occur here and are easy to distinguish by growing season and characteristics of the leaf and flower. These plants are usually biennial (bloom the second year of their lives, then die). The leaves are alternate on the stem, bearing terminal globe-shaped flowers, purple, yellow or white. Flower heads are "gumdrop" shaped and spines extend all around the base. Most are considered weeds.

Native Americans used these plants for food and medicinal purposes. The roots, inner stems, young leaves and young inner parts of flower buds and seeds are all edible.

Yellow Thistle *(C. horridulum)* is the first to appear, blooming March through June. The leaves of this native are broad, lobed and very spiny and narrow spiny-toothed leafy bracts surround the base of the yellow, sometimes red-purple, flower head.

This is a coastal species, frequent in the outer southern and central counties of Virginia but rare westward and southern Piedmont. The plant grows in dune grasslands, sandy clearings and roadsides, sandy or gravelly waste ground.

The species name refers to the very prickly leaves. A host plant for the Painted Lady butterfly, all thistles are very attractive to insect pollinators.

Bull Thistle *(C. vulgare)* blooms June through November. This is the only *Cirsium* with conspicuous spiny wings on the stems. The leaves are narrow and very spiny and the base of the purple flower is spiny, but not leafy. The stems are not winged.

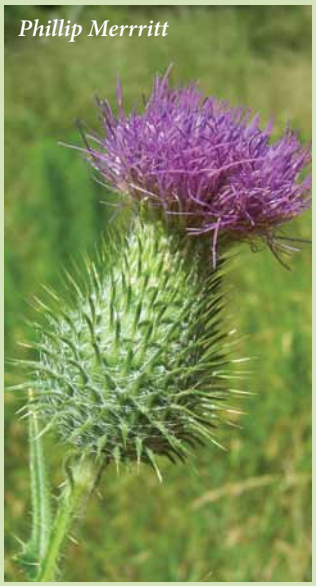
A native of Eurasia, Bull Thistle is now widely established in North America and occurs in almost every county of Virginia. Preferring sunny, open areas and tolerant of a wide range of conditions, from moist to dry soils, the plant grows in roadsides, fields, pastures and other open, weedy habitats. It is listed as invasive in many states.

Several Native American tribes used this plant for various medicinal purposes. As food, the flower heads were chewed for the nectar and the roots cooked in stews. The Cherokee used the down as the tail for blow darts. There have been reports of hummingbirds perishing after being impaled on the spines of this plant.

Field Thistle *(C. discolor)* blooms in late fall, from August through November. While similar in appearance to Bull Thistle with an overlapping growing season, there are two differences. This native species has slender golden spines around the base of the purple flower head, and the green leaves are powdery white below. The stems are not winged.

Field Thistle grows in roadsides, meadows, upland forests and fields in every county in Virginia and throughout eastern and central U.S. and Canada. The American Goldfinch eats the seeds and lines its nests with "thistledown," tufts of hair on the seeds. The caterpillars of the Painted Lady feed on the foliage and bumblebees and butterflies visit the flowers for nectar and pollen. **Helen Hamilton**

Yellow thistle



Bull thistle

Field thistle

John Clayton Chapter Calendar

Thursday, September 18	**6:45 pm: John Clayton Chapter Annual Meeting at the Yorktown Public Library**. Our speaker is **Bill Portlock**, Senior Educator for the Bay with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, whose topic will be **"Wetlands of the Chesapeake Bay."** (See Page 1.) *The Library is located at the intersection of Battle Rd. and Rt. 17 in Yorktown.*
Saturday, September 20	**9:30am: Donna Ware** will lead a walk on the **Colby Swamp Trail** to see butternut in fruit, log fern, and bigtooth aspen. Meet in the **Freedom Park Interpretive Center** parking lot; the trip will involve walking about ¾ mile. (See Page 6.)
Saturday, September 20	**9:30 am: First Fall Potting Party at Cynthia Long's** house, 105 Bowstring Dr., Williamsburg, 23185. (See Page 6 for contact info and more details.)
Saturday, September 27	**9:30 am: Second Fall Potting Party: a dig at Stonehouse Elementary's Habitat Garden**, 3651 Rochambeau Dr., Williamsburg, 23188, then potting at **Joan Etchberger's** home, 100 Woodland Rd. in nearby Woodland Estates in the Croaker area. (See Page 6 for contact info and more details.)
Saturday, October 4	**9:30 am: Third Fall Potting Party: a dig at Stonehouse Elementary's Habitat Garden**, 3651 Rochambeau Dr., Williamsburg, 23188, then potting at **Joan Etchberger's** home, 100 Woodland Rd. in nearby Woodland Estates in the Croaker area. (See Page 6 for contact info and more details.)
Saturday, October 18	**9:30 am: Fourth Fall Potting Party: dig and pot perennials from Joan Etchberger's garden**, 100 Woodland Rd., Woodland Estates in the Croaker area. (See Page 7 for contact info and more details.)

There may be walks in the works that 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