



Claytonia

Newsletter of the John Clayton Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society

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www.claytonvnps.org

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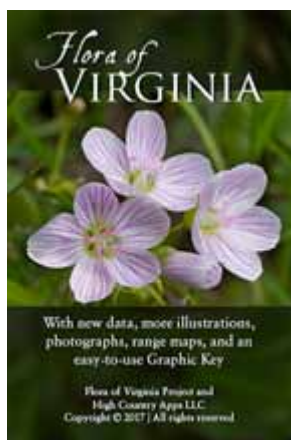
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Our July 19 meeting: Bland Crowder will present "An Introduction to the Flora of Virginia Mobile App"



Bland Crowder is executive director of the **Flora of Virginia Project**, having been with the Project since 2007. He manages development and public relations for the Flora Project and oversees creation of the **Flora App**. He copyedited and was liaison with the publisher of the *Flora of Virginia*, for which he compiled many taxonomic descriptions and the glossary. He has B.S. and M.A. degrees in biology from William and Mary, and is a former coordinator of education, volunteers,

and publications with the Chesapeake Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve in Virginia at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science. He is publications chair of the board of the Virginia Native Plant Society and a member of the John Clayton and Pocahontas chapters. The meeting begins at **7:00 pm** in **Room C** of the **James City County Recreation Center**, 5301 Longhill Road, Williamsburg, Virginia 23188-2700.

See you there!



From the President

On September 14–16, 2018, we will host an annual meeting of the Virginia Native Plant Society (please save this date). Our subject will be sustainability. Our annual meeting chair, Cortney Will, and her group have been extremely involved in the preparation of this meeting. Their amazing efforts will result in exciting opportunities and events. Make sure to let Cortney and her group know how proud we are of their work. More information about the annual meeting will be forthcoming in your VNPS newsletter.

This year we will need to have elections of our board again. The terms are for two years. We are looking for a new treasurer and vice president to lead us into the future. The responsibilities of a treasurer are to keep the books and inform the board about the state of our chapter's finances; the treasurer also helps with the checkout at the plant sale.

This job is much easier now, thanks to the hard work that our current treasurer, Alicia Garcia, put forth to have this chapter exempt from the Solicitation Tax. Now it is a simple one-page form with a small fee of \$10. Gone are the long forms of 20 pages and the information we had been sending each year. The treasurer attends the board meetings, held at the Williamsburg Regional Library at five p.m. on the first Thursday of every other month. The vice president's job is to find speakers for our meetings on the third Thursday of every other month, and introducing the speakers at those meetings. The vice president also attends the board meetings and is there in case the president is unable to fulfill his/her duties. Both jobs are critical for our chapter's existence—we cannot function without them. If you could volunteer to do either job, that would be important. Please help us continue our mission of educating the public on the significance of native plants and our environment.

In an effort to help our plant sale generate more income, I took an unusual step this year, and decided to buy 5-inch plugs of the best-selling native plants and pot them into large 1-gallon pots. The 5-inch plugs are much cheaper than plants purchased in the spring. The reason I am only buying the more popular plants, such as milkweeds, is that we can only buy the plugs in quantities of 38, 50, or 100. We do not sell such large quantities, except in the milkweed family. Suddenly, I had 114 plants to pot! Amazingly, 11 members of our chapter came to help. Now, my yard is full of pots, and the plants keep growing. This way, I hope we will contribute to the financial stability of our chapter.

I wish all of you a happy and relaxing summer!



The five-inch plugs are getting ready to bloom after three weeks!

Lucile Kossodo

New Members

We welcome **Ronald Davis**, **Joan** and **Charles Dunton**, **Pamela Reilly** (all of Yorktown), **Erin Halleran** of Williamsburg, **Lynn Trott** of Toano, **Christina Cramer** of Newport News, and **James Proffitt** of Newport News to the John Clayton Chapter.

In Review: "Grafton Ponds"

At the May meeting, **Zach Bradford**, DCR Chesapeake Bay Region Steward, gave an in-depth presentation on the Grafton ponds complex, discussing its early geological history and its status today as home to many rare plants and natural communities surrounded by dense urban development.

The geology of the coastal plain, Zach explained, is a stair step of scarps, and between the scarps are flat plains. The Grafton ponds are on the Grafton plains, which are estuarine and characterized by a flat topography with Chuckatuck formation sediment overlaying a Yorktown formation fossil shell layer. The ponds are surface depression ponds formed by rain filtering through the sediment and dissolving the shells. As seasonal ponds, the fluctuating water levels support biodiversity by providing breeding and feeding grounds for amphibians, reptiles, insects, and birds. The fact that the ponds draw down completely means fish are eliminated as predators, which is very important for amphibians.

In 1995, the Department of Conservation and Recreation dedicated 375 acres to protect this biodiversity and provided the expertise for its management. Newport News Water also partnered in its conservation, as the area provides a buffer for the reservoir.

Still, some of the rarest plants in Virginia, such as Harper's Fimbristylis (*Fimbristylis perpusilla*), Pondspice (*Listea aestivalis*), Pine Barren Sand Reed (*Calamoviola brevifolia*), as well as natural plant communities such as the state-listed Swamp Tupelo/Overcup Oak (*Nyssa biflora/Quercus lyrata*), Cypress Swamp Sedge (*Carex joori*), and the fire-adapted Swamp Loosestrife (*Decodon verticillatus*) all face threats from the effects of increased urbanization. For example, the hydrology of the ponds is affected by an increase in impervious areas, the proximity of the surrounding homes prevents performing beneficial fires on fire-adapted species, and white-tailed deer leave an obvious browse line on the native vegetation yet won't eat the invasive and destructive Japanese stilt grass which exudes an acidic compound from its roots!

We will have an opportunity to learn about these and many more of the special and rare plants of the Grafton Ponds by exploring them with Zach Bradford when we host the VNPS 2018 Annual Meeting September 14–16 at the William & Mary School of Education.

Cathy Flanagan

Recent Plant Walks

Baptist Run Walk on May 5

A group of 10 VNPS members, Peninsula Master Naturalists, and friends attended the native plant walk at the Baptist Run area of Newport News Park on May 5th, ostensibly guided by **Meegan Wallace**. However, because of the skill and education level of the group, it ended up being largely self-guided, and lots of interesting facts and information flowed freely. Most of the group was not familiar with this part of Newport News Park and its extensive trail system. I encourage you all to check it out.



May 5 walkers, from left: Claudia Kirk, Larry Lewis, Ken Carroll, Scott Hemler, Tammy Smith, James Proffitt, Charles Deffenbaugh, Susie Yager, Gary Wright, and Scott Bartram.

Highlights of the walk included carpets of Golden Ragwort (*Packera aurea*) mixed with Spring Beauty (*Claytonia virginica*) and Violet Wood Sorrel (*Oxalis violacea*), two small Showy Orchids (*Galearis spectabilis*), and a large number of ferns; Southern Ad-ders Tongue (*Ophioglossum pycnostichum*), Sensitive Fern (*Onoclea sensibilis*), Broad Beech Fern (*Phegopteris hexagonoptera*), New York Fern (*Parathelypteris noveboracensis*), Christmas Fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*), Cinnamon Fern (*Osmundastrum cin-namomeum*), and others. But the show stopper was the mass of



Spring Beauty



Coral Honeysuckle

by the Digital Atlas of the Virginia Flora. Both of these species prefer rich, mesic to dry-mesic upland forests and well-drained floodplain forests.

We also enjoyed trying to catch a tiny Eastern Cricket Frog (*Acris crepitans*) and watching a Northern Water-snake (*Nerodia sipedon sipedon*) bask.

native Coral Honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*) we found draping the trees in at least four areas. Several of us admitted to never having actually seen this honeysuckle in the wild before. Other species of particular interest were clusters of Wild Ginger (*Asarum canadense*) and Sweet Cicely (*Osmorhiza claytonii*), which are noted as rare in the coastal plain by the *Flora of Virginia*. They have been recorded in York Co., where we were, but not in Newport News,



Showy Orchid



A Northern Watersnake

One focus of the walk was to discuss the importance of native vegetation in supporting native wildlife, so I provided a handout highlighting the benefits of several species and the number of larval moth and butterfly species supported by each. The information was largely pulled from a National Wildlife Federation website, which was on the bottom of the handout. In case any of you have not seen it, here is the website: <https://www.nwf.org/NativePlantFinder/>.

Text and photos: Meegan Wallace

Mountain Laurel Meander on May 12

We met at the Mariners Museum Park field on Warwick Blvd. to shorten the trek to our desired destinations. JCC member and Peninsula Master Naturalist **Susie Yager** led the walk, assisted by Peninsula Master Naturalist **Larry Lewis**. We found Christmas Fern, Lady Fern, Sensitive Fern, and Netted Chain Fern along the old, little-used trail, keeping our eyes mostly on the ground for the many exposed roots, soft spots, fallen trees, and low branches. Reaching the Mountain Laurels, we had to look up for the blooms. Mountain Laurel is native but uncommon in the outer Coastal Plain. There are many along Lake Maury, brought in and planted over 80 years ago. Also along this path we began to see sprouts of Galax, another plant infrequent in our area.

Leaving the Mountain Laurel, we found Partridge Berry, with pale pink buds and tiny, bright white blooms. We passed through masses of Broad Beech Fern and Christmas Fern, and an extensive patch of Pawpaw with a few late blossoms remaining. An observant walker noticed unusual scratch marks in the bark of a Beech tree. Based on the size and height of the scratches, some deduced probably a bobcat. The

scars were not fresh, however, so possibly the bobcat is no longer in the Park.

As we emerged onto the improved trail, we found Rattlesnake Fern beside the trail. That hadn't yet appeared when the trail was scouted to plan the walk. Crossing Bridge 6, we visited a well-established colony of Galax which



Mountain Laurel in bloom



Broad Beech Fern, left, and Christmas Fern, right



Rattlesnake Fern



Galax

had just begun to bloom. Galax seems to prefer banks, as does the Trailing Arbutus which managed to hold a couple spots here. This bank also had Azalea, Huckleberry, Cinnamon Fern, and Fetterbush (or Swamp Dog-hobble)...and we had a skink, a frog, and ID practice at Bridge 5.

Completing a circuit back to the field where we were parked, we passed Wild Strawberry and Lyreleaf Sage amongst the grass.

Text and photos: Susie Yager

Campus Tree Walk on June 9

There was a good turnout for this walk on William & Mary's Old Campus, led by **Beth Chambers** and ably assisted by two other Biology Dept. people, **Randy Chambers** and **Bill Saunders**. A community publication had mistakenly listed the walk's starting time as 9 am, and a number of participants arrived an hour earlier than its actual 10 am start, so Beth wound up leading two walks that morning!

There were several blooming Southern Magnolias (*Magnolia grandiflora*) near the Wren Building to see and sniff. As we strolled toward Crim Dell under the American Beech (*Fagus grandiflora*) allée on the north side of the Sunken Garden, Beth explained that in the 18th century, "garden" was used to describe a grassy lawn like this, not a planting of flowers or vegetables. Between the foot of the Sunken Garden and Crim Dell is a pair of towering Dawn Redwoods (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*) planted from seeds Biology Professor J.T. Baldwin acquired in 1948. Beth also pointed out a Black Walnut (*Juglans nigra*), a Bald Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*), Loblolly Pines (*Pinus taeda*), a Sweetbay (*Magnolia virginiana*) in flower, and the dark, blocky bark of a native Persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*).



Our group poses for a photo in the Wren Yard.



The Dawn Redwoods at the foot of the Sunken Garden



A dead bamboo stump, with new shoots at right



We admire that big American Elm.

Although the bamboo (*Phyllostachys*) at Crim Dell's east end has been “eradicated” at least once, it is persistent, and we could see new growth near the cut stubs of old canes. Crim Dell's pond, below, undergoing its periodic draining and dredging, is presently just a muddy depression.



Crim Dell's pond, temporarily reduced to a puddle

On our way back to our starting spot, we saw a Longleaf Pine (*Pinus palustris*), a huge sprawling old White Mulberry (*Morus alba*), a pair of Windmill Palms tucked into a protected south-east corner of Ewell Hall, and the large American Elm (*Ulmus americana*) nearby, which underwent treatment for Dutch Elm disease many years ago, apparently successfully!

Text and photos: Louise Menges

Plants of a Salt Marsh on June 16, led by Alicia Garcia

A list of plants to be seen that day...

Red Maple	<i>Acer rubrum</i>
Yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>
Field garlic	<i>Allium vineale</i>
Groundsel Bush	<i>Baccharis halimifolia</i>
Trumpet creeper	<i>Campsis radicans</i>
Queen Ann's Lace	<i>Daucus carota</i>
Climbing hydrangea	<i>Decumaria barbara</i>
Persimmon	<i>Diospyros virginiana</i>
Salt Grass	<i>Distichlis spicata</i>
Purple everlasting	<i>Gamochaeta purpurea</i>

Marsh Elder	<i>Iva frutescens</i>
Soft rush	<i>Juncus effusus</i>
Black Needle Rush	<i>Juncus roemerianus</i>
Juniper	<i>Juniperus virginiana</i>
Sweet Gum	<i>Liquidambar styraciflua</i>
Wax Myrtle	<i>Myrica cerifera</i>
Black gum	<i>Nyssa sylvatica</i>
Virginia Creeper	<i>Parthenocissus quinquefolia</i>
Phragmites	<i>Phragmites australis</i>
Black cherry	<i>Prunus serotina</i>
Southern red oak	<i>Quercus falcata</i>
Winged Sumac	<i>Rhus copallinum</i>
Sassafras	<i>Sassafras albidum</i>
Salt marsh bull rush	<i>Scirpus americanus</i>
No common name (legume)	<i>Serica lespedeza</i>
Smooth cordgrass	<i>Spartina alterniflora</i>
Salt meadow cordgrass	<i>Spartina patens</i>
Poison Ivy	<i>Toxicodendron radicans</i>
Muscadine grape	<i>Vitis rotundifolia</i>

... Alicia's field notes

Low tide 6:03 AM /High tide 12:03 PM—we may get to see some Diamondback Terrapins.

Diamondback Terrapin fun facts: skin is impermeable to salt, to get fresh water will float in marsh with open mouth during rainstorm. Separate subspecies in America (total range from Cape Cod to Florida). Sub speciation or segregate populations are based on ocean current. We have Northern diamondback.

Salt marsh plants of the east coast are close cousins of western salt desert species. These separate groups of plants share a common history. As you may already know, during the Paleozoic era (about 500 million years ago), much of the east coast and western desert were underwater. Salt marsh type plants were the main ground cover during that time.

Now in the modern era, they are under threat from a reversing trend. Here at Langley and in the Hampton area, sea level is rising and the land is sinking. Salt marsh plants cannot retreat as quickly as the groundwater moves in. As a result, we are losing salt marsh coverage when we really need the protection it can provide us more than ever.

The high marsh is often far more salty than anywhere else in the marsh due to the salt pan effect.

Fiddler crabs actually help marsh plants because they aerate the mud, which stimulates plant growth.

...and a few photos she took during the walk



An overall view of the marsh



Black Needle Rush



Groundsel Bush



A juvenile Diamondback Terrapin

Some Upcoming Plant Walks...



Saturday, July 14, 9 am: Ferns, Mosses, and Forest Plants

Join **Helen Hamilton** to look for summer forest plants, ferns and mosses, on a short trail in **Freedom Park**. The Historic Rivers Chapter of Virginia Master Naturalists was involved in developing a path that leads to a deep ravine heavily covered with low herbaceous plants. Bring a magnifier to look at tiny plants and a camera to photograph the larger ones. Park by the playground near the Go Ape facility. Contact Helen at 757-564-4494 or helen48@cox.net for information.

✿ Saturday, August 4, 9:00 am: Clothed Trees

Join **Stewart Ware** for a fun and informative walk all about trees. The woods around **Wellspring United Methodist Church** have most of our common upland trees, and Dr. Ware will show how to identify them, as well as some rarer ones. Meet in the parking lot at Wellspring Church on Longhill Road, just east of the junction with Old Towne Road.

Contact Stewart at 757-565 0657 or saware@wm.edu for more information.

Stonehouse Habitat Garden News

A big thank you to Ryan Rivas

The John Clayton Chapter thanks **Ryan Rivas, Boy Scout Troop 300**, for selecting the Stonehouse Elementary Schoolyard Habitat Garden for his Eagle Scout Project. Ryan spent **168 man-hours** in 2017 and 2018 enhancing this courtyard garden used by students and staff at the school. He removed rotted wooden raised bed borders, rebuilt and painted boxes, replaced wooden seats and backs on two benches, and even replaced the wooden bridge that forms a focal point of the courtyard.



Ryan sits on the rebuilt bridge.

Stonehouse Garden needs to be revamped!

On June 26, Sue Voigt and I received an email from Stonehouse Elementary School Principal Melissa White informing us that the school had determined our native plant garden at Stonehouse to be a security concern due to the height of our plants there and its close proximity to the school building and walks. She told us that a crew would begin to raze the area on July 30 in order to prepare it for grass or sod prior to the start of the school year!

After returning from travel, on July 2 Sue was able to speak with the principal, who agreed that we can keep a native plant garden within the courtyard if we make sure the plants are low and maintain a line of sight through larger shrubs. Trailer classrooms are to be installed in the field adjacent to the building, and the paved walkways must be clear of plant materials since many students will be using the walks daily.

This is not the first time the school has voiced some safety concerns, and we do understand its position, so we will spend the month of July removing some plants and redesigning the garden with stricter conformance to the height and safety constraints, including clear “line of sight” above or through plantings.

I have scheduled an **Emergency Potting Party** at **Stonehouse Elementary** at **9 am** on **Friday, July 6** in order to rescue all the native plants we can, with a **rain date** of **Saturday, July 7**. Please come and help, and bring water, a snack, and mosquito repellent. The school's address is 3651 Rochambeau Drive, Williamsburg, VA 23188.

We will announce another potting party at a later date, and hope those who cannot come on Friday, July 6th can help out then.

Lucile Kossodo

Beetles or Butterflies?

The Swamp Milkweed Leaf Beetle (*Labidomera clivicollis*) is a voracious feeder on milkweed leaves, and somehow the milkweeds in my small yard have been chosen as their favorite habitat. I started early this year trying to control their population, but it seems the battle is only beginning. Here's my story.

Several years ago we were traveling during the season when milkweed plants were thinking about blooming. When we returned two weeks later, the blooms were finished and so were most of the leaves, the stems covered with shiny black and orange beetles happily chewing away. All 3 milkweed species, each with maybe a dozen plants, were down to bare stems.

Next year, same thing...we were traveling in the spring but returned to see the start of the milkweed leaf beetle invasion. I tried picking them by hand, but there were too many, and lots of larvae on the underside of the leaves. Soap spray or horticultural oil spray only stopped them for a day or so and back they came. Another disastrous year.

Sent an email to Dr. Doug Tallamy, asking how I could control these beasts. He questioned my identification, so I sent him photos, he agreed, and told me I was fortunate to have a native beetle in my yard, since he does not see that species in Delaware. Not to worry, he said, the milkweeds are perennials and will return next year. This was not the response I was seeking from Dr. Tallamy, but realizing he is an entomologist, I gave up and tried very hard to save the few remaining stems, with not much success.

This year we were home in early spring, and a lot of milkweeds, mostly *Asclepias syriaca*, appeared all over the front garden, into the pathways, and out into the asphalt roadway. As they grew, I went on patrol, and when the flowers appeared along with bees, wasps, and flies, I inspected each plant at least once and often three times daily. The first sighting was of a pair of beetles eating and mating; very bad news, as they lay a lot of eggs that grow into ugly brown larvae on the underside of leaves. The pair was not very well attached and fell off before I could kill them.

So, the beetles appeared, one by one, allowing me to pick them off by hand, squishing them underfoot, and the larvae as well. In the past I have dropped them into jars of oil or soapy water and watched them die, but a quick death is better for them and easier for me. Any fresh cuts on the leaves meant there were adults or larvae on the underside—a telltale sign of their activity.



Seig Kopinitz's photos
of milkweed beetles:
Top, adult beetles mating
Center, young larvae
Bottom, an older larva

But there were only a few each day, and sometimes none, so all the plants grew vigorously with multiple blooms. Now the blooms are fading, and here come the beetle larvae. Out on patrol this morning (June 16) I found dozens of larvae in different stages. I found only one small adult, possibly the second generation just emerging.

These beetles have 4 stages in their life cycle. They overwinter as adults, emerging in the spring to lay orange tubular eggs on the underside of milkweed leaves (I have not yet found these). As the eggs hatch, the larvae go through 3 stages, chewing milkweed leaves down to the stems; the last instar drops to leaf litter to pupate. They range over eastern North America to New Mexico, making only one generation each season, but usually two generations in the south.

The only control is hand-picking, as any chemical applied will affect other insects, and many are predators of this beetle. The battle is far from over, but each leaf that I save will be food for a swallowtail larvae.

Helen Hamilton

John Clayton Chapter Calendar

Friday, July 6

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Thursday, July 19

7 pm: John Clayton Chapter meeting in Room C at the **James City County Rec Center**, 5301 Longhill Rd., Williamsburg. Speaker **Bland Crowder** will present "An Introduction to the Flora of Virginia Mobile App. (See Page 1.)

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9 am: Clothed Trees. Join **Stewart Ware** for a fun and informative walk all about trees in the woods around **Wellspring United Methodist Church**. Meet in the parking lot at Wellspring Church on Longhill Road, just east of the junction with Old Towne Road. Contact Stewart at 757-565 0657 or saware@wm.edu for more information. (See Page 10.)

Keep a lookout for announcements about additional walks and other events in the local newspapers and on our website at www.vnps.org/john-clayton.

Below is a membership renewal form. Please contact Membership Chair **Cathy Flanagan** at 757-879-1997 or at **flanagan.catherine@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