



# Claytonia

Newsletter of the John Clayton Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society

Volume 35, Number 1

January–February 2019

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

## Officers

**President** Lucile Kossodo  
757-565-0769  
[lkossodo@cox.net](mailto:lkossodo@cox.net)

**Vice President** Caitlin Cyrus  
410-693-6829  
[ccyrus@vhb.com](mailto:ccyrus@vhb.com)

**Acting Treasurer** Cathy Flanagan  
757-879-1997  
[flanagan.catherine@gmail.com](mailto:flanagan.catherine@gmail.com)

**Secretary** Cortney Will  
757-291-1500  
[clangley@plantrescue.org](mailto:clangley@plantrescue.org)

## Committee Chairs

**Awards** Donna Ware  
757-565-0657  
[dmeware1001@verizon.net](mailto:dmeware1001@verizon.net)

**Hospitality** Vacant

**Membership and Publicity**  
Cathy Flanagan  
757-879-1997  
[flanagan.catherine@gmail.com](mailto:flanagan.catherine@gmail.com)

**Nature Camp** Libbey Oliver  
757-645-7143  
[lholver55@gmail.com](mailto:lholver55@gmail.com)

**Newsletter** Louise Menges  
757-229-4346  
[louisemenges6@gmail.com](mailto:louisemenges6@gmail.com)

**Plant Rescue** Cortney Will  
757-291-1500  
[clangley@plantrescue.org](mailto:clangley@plantrescue.org)

**Plant Sale Co-chairs**  
Adrienne Frank  
757-566-4009  
[adrienne-gary@cox.net](mailto:adrienne-gary@cox.net)

Sue Voigt  
804-966-8487  
[svoigt1@cox.net](mailto:svoigt1@cox.net)

**Plant Walks** Helen Hamilton  
757/564-4494  
[helen48@cox.net](mailto:helen48@cox.net)

**Stonehouse Garden** Sue Voigt  
804-966-8487  
[svoigt1@cox.net](mailto:svoigt1@cox.net)

**Webmaster** Phillip Merritt  
352-727-1994  
[phillip.merritt@gmail.com](mailto:phillip.merritt@gmail.com)

## Our January 17 meeting: “Mechanisms of Native Shrub Encroachment on a Virginia Barrier Island”



Joey Thompson

Our speaker will be **Joey Thompson**, who will describe the recent history of wax myrtle (*Myrica cerifera*) increasing in cover on several barrier islands in Virginia. Joey’s research looked at the short term effects of shrub encroachment. At a small scale (of about 20m) changes in ground temperature, soil nutrients, and species composition were investigated as well as several physiological measures, and Joey

found that the shrubs caused winter warming, increases in soil nutrients, and decreases in species abundance, forming monocultures.



A wax myrtle/beach grass interface on one of Virginia’s barrier islands

Joey has had a love and curiosity for the natural world since he was young. He started studying plants in high school with the help of regional field guides and a few great teachers, and graduated from William and Mary with a degree in biology in 2014, going on on to get his Master’s in biology from VCU in 2016. Joey has worked on a variety of research projects, from geo-locating sturgeon in the James River to inventorying birds, butterflies, and ticks in the VA coastal plain. He currently works at an engineering firm called VHB, where he con-

ducts natural resource surveys for rare plants, natural communities, wetlands, and more. Joey enjoys hiking with his girlfriend Sarah and dog, and visiting a few local breweries on the weekend.

The meeting will be held at **7:00 p.m.** in the fellowship hall of **King of Glory Lutheran Church, 4897 Longhill Road** (between the entrances to Williamsburg West/Ford's Colony and Wellspring United Methodist Church and a short distance east of the 7-Eleven at the Longhill/Olde Towne Rd. intersection). **See you there!**

## From the President



I wish all of you a Happy New Year for 2019. May it bring you happiness, good gardening and good health! Our chapter survived an eventful year in which we planned the annual meeting and then had to change the date due to the hurricane, the first time that a hurricane changed the date of the meeting. It was a great meeting and the theme of bringing more diversity to our Native Plant Society

was of great interest to all chapters. VNPS held a workshop on Saturday, December 1, 2018 after the Board Meeting. Three of our members—Cortney Will, Caitlin Cyrus, and Cathy Flanagan—attended the workshop. Cortney is writing about the workshop and Cathy will write about the VNPS Board Meeting.

I regret to inform you that Sara Nugent resigned this January. She was a fantastic hostess—we will miss her great roast beef sandwiches! She fulfilled her duties with great care, diligence and reliability. I would like to thank her for a job well-done. We all wish her the best in her new endeavors.

Our chapter is strong and healthy with many active members, as was evident at our sale last year and the meeting. However, we still desperately need several Board members to make our chapter function at its most efficient level. We need a treasurer who will lead us into better solvency and help us direct our financial efforts into constructive directions. We also need a person to organize our plant walks. This person will work with the plant walk leaders and organize the walks. The plant walks are the most popular item that our chapter offers. Each year several persons who enjoy our walks become interested in our native plants, decide to plant native plants, and join our chapter. In addition, we need a host for our chapter meetings. This person brings beverages and snacks to our meetings, and is important because the snack portion of our meeting allows the attendees to meet and greet each other and members at each meeting. The social aspect helps bring new members and allows us to know one another. So we have lost three board members, and we need board members as they bring new ideas and perspectives to our board so we can grow and develop as a chapter.

In other native plant news, there are efforts at the University of Richmond to propagate a specimen of Basswood (*Tilia americana*), the largest tree on the University of Richmond campus. This tree, estimated to be about 150 years old, though still in good appearance from a distance, has extensive rot at the base of the trunk, and is also in the way of a planned addition to the athletic facilities. There is widespread interest on campus to propagate the plant so that its descendants can continue to grace the UR campus. To that end, earlier this week graduate students of John Hayden's class at the University of Richmond prepared nearly 200 hardwood cuttings and planted approximately the same number of freshly collected seeds. They hope to be able to replace this tree when it will have to be cut down.

VNPS Botany Chair John Hayden and Winnifred Hebb are involved in a huge effort to repair collected plant specimens that have been infested by cigarette beetles. VCU purchased a special  $-40^{\circ}\text{F}$  freezer that could kill these beetles and their eggs after two weeks. They cleaned up the area where the specimens were kept and added new insulation and gaskets. In addition to this cleaning is the ongoing digitization of 19,000 specimens by John Hayden and several graduate students.

Another great project has been completed at the Petersburg Garden Club Herbarium (PGC), also maintained at the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden. This small collection was initiated in the 1930s when the federal Works Progress Administration (WPA) established Lee Memorial Park. Starting in the 1990s, Donna Ware, our former Vice-President and Professor at the College of William and Mary, added specimens to PGC as a part of her effort to document plants in the park and the adjacent Wilcox Watershed area. Together, WPA workers' and Donna Ware's collections number 1,104 specimens. In addition to the usual plant specimens, this herbarium also includes numerous pieces of botanical art. When John Hayden first started working with the VCU collection, Donna Ware's specimens were packed in cardboard boxes sitting on the herbarium floor. With the assistance of the aforementioned VMN/VNPS volunteers, they opened the boxes containing Ware's specimens, froze them for two weeks, then sorted and filed the specimens by family. They also arranged the purchase of bar codes for PGC specimens. As things played out, there was some down time in July when Elizabeth McMurchie was at the digitization work station for VCU, and there was just enough time to digitize the PGC herbarium collection. Bettie Guthrie and volunteers from the Petersburg Garden Club helped attach barcodes on the PGC specimens. After providing volunteers with brief training, William and Mary Herbarium Curator Beth Chambers and Donna Ware were able to run the entire PGC collection through the digital photography and skeletal data capture phase of the digitization process. Reading about all these efforts is impressive. I shall not complain that I have so many tasks to do when I read about all these projects and the many participants it took to accomplish them. Please consider volunteering to be part of our chapter's board.

**Lucile Kossodo**

## VNPS December Board Meeting

I attended the December VNPS Board meeting in Richmond, and was joined by fellow JCC chapter members Caitlyn Cyrus and Cortney Will for the workshop that followed the meeting. Hearing from active members of other chapters and about the broader issues across the state was uplifting and interesting. Nancy Vehrs called our attention to the fact that VCN (Virginia Conservation Network) was sponsoring an event with live meeting areas around the state about how to lobby the General Assembly and what issues we should be pushing for in 2019.

For more information: <http://www.vcnva.org/learn/>

We also were asked to consider the request from DGIF for comments on the new elk management plan. Johnny Townsend (DCR Natural Heritage) suggested we get more information than what was presented, and Kevin Howe, President of the Northern Neck Chapter, volunteered to write the opinion. Interested? Visit the elk cam website <https://www.dgif.virginia.gov/elk-cam/> and follow the link to the elk management plan. During the discussion I jotted down the title of a book being mentioned about the megafauna that used to exist in N. America in the south, such as the ground sloth and capybara—*Forgotten Grasslands of the South* by Reed Noss. You can find it on Amazon.

In other topics, an exciting field trip was mentioned for June 2019 to see orchids on the Bruce Peninsula in Canada between Lake Huron and Georgian Bay. No further details were noted. A member reported on her observation of a decline in yellow lady's slipper orchids on the roadside that she attributed to salt. No further discussion followed. Karen Hendershot from the Piedmont chapter was interested in using Natural Heritage data, as Loudon Co. data can't stay ahead of developers and she would like to know what plant communities are affected and where the communities are.

As the meeting moved to regular business, the discussion of board vacancies—and the membership vacancy in particular—captured my attention. As membership and publicity chair for John Clayton Chapter, I've learned how hard it is to recruit and retain members who have the time and resources to hold regular volunteer positions. As we discussed at our annual meeting, growing and diversifying our membership seems key to having the strong volunteer force required to accomplish our mission goals. In my opinion, recruiting members requires some commitment of funds and a marketing strategy for outreach. I also think the prescription for retaining members may come from diversifying our membership to enrich it with new perspectives and ideas. We were very fortunate that during the board meeting, Alex Fisher was enthusiastically approved for the position of Conservation Chair; I believe his youth and background will be a great asset. Alex works for an engineering firm and is a graduate of UNC Wilmington with a major in botany and ecology.

The workshop that followed was a good and meaningful effort that expanded on what we learned at the annual meeting from the keynote speakers. Here's hoping that in the upcoming year we all can join in to generate enthusiasm for what we do. Cheers!

**Cathy Flanagan**

## New Members

We welcome new members **Sharon Springfield** of Carrollton; **Joseph Thompson** of Midlothian; **Susan Allen** of Topping; **Jennifer and John Boag, Julie Bradshaw, Rhona Flehinger, Charles Hamm and Clara Massey, Robert Lewis, and Heather Power**, all of Williamsburg, to the John Clayton Chapter!

## In Review: Virginia's Vanishing Orchids was the topic at our Nov. 15 meeting

We were fortunate to welcome Zach Bradford to our chapter again. Zach is the Chesapeake Bay Region Steward for the Natural Heritage Division at Virginia DCR. Zach's work puts him on the frontline—striving to locate, document, and protect our native plants and natural habitats. He points out that in the Natural Area Reserves system, there are over sixty-three properties to protect Virginia's plants, animals and geological resources.

Zach began with some numbers. Virginia has 62 native orchids and one introduced orchid, a broad leaved helleborine. Four species are likely extinct in Virginia; one was recently restored. There are three recent additions and twenty-seven species are rare. Thirty species can be found on the Peninsula and six more could be.

It is important to note that "rare" has an objective meaning. Zach reviewed the ranking abbreviations. Rankings are for the State (S) as well as Globally (G); X= extinct or extirpated, H= presumed extinct or extirpated, 5 = most secure, and 1= critically imperiled.

He gave an example: the pink lady slipper is ranked G5 S5 which means it is secure both state-wide and globally. The yellow lady slipper, however, is ranked G3 S1 (globally vulnerable and critically imperiled state-wide).

The orchids Zach selected for his discussion were divided into three groups: the Northern species, which reach their southern limit in Virginia; the Southeastern species; that reach their northern limit in Virginia; and species from the Central Appalachian region, which is a botanical hotspot. Those listed below are from notes taken on individual species during his presentation.

### Northern species: these are found mostly in higher elevations.

Lily leaved twayblade (*Liparis lilifolia*)—documented in York County

Bog twayblade (*Liparis loeselii*)—documented on the Naval Weapons Station

Early coralroot (*Corallorhiza trifida*)—found on a single site in 2015, very tiny flowers

Dwarf rattlesnake plantain (*Goodyeara repens*)—found associated with hemlock

Shining lady's tresses (*Spiranthes lucida*)—found in calcium-rich soil

Showy lady's slippers (*Cypripedium reginae*)—a golf course was built on top

Large purple fringed orchid (*Platanthera grandiflora*)—favors Shenandoah area

Yellow nodding lady's tresses (*Spiranthes orcholeuca*)—abundant

Appalachian Ladies' tresses (*Spiranthes arcisepala*)— named as a new species. Identified in 2017.

### **Southeastern species: these are Zach's favorites and grow in areas that receive fire.**

Pale grass pink (*Callipodon pallidus*)—very fire dependent

Eaton's Lady's tresses (*Spiranthes eatonii*)—rediscovered in 2016

Pyxie moss (*Pyxiedanthera barbulata*)—adapted to fire and minimizes the heat damage and spreading of fire by forming dense mats of stems. Fire stops when it reaches them.

Large spreading pogonia (*Cleistesiosis divaricata*) \*Zach's favorite—restricted to two boggy powerline corridors in Suffolk

### **Central Appalachian species:**

Two orchids are new to science—a mountain version of small spreading pogonia (*Cleistesiosis bifaria*) rare in N. America and Virginia, and Bentley's coralroot (*Corallorhiza bentleyi*) Zach says is the "weirdest." It has no leaves and both its stem and flowers are reddish yellow.

Shriver's pale frilly orchid (*Platanthera shriverii*)—new in 2008, it is a natural hybrid between *P. lacera* and *P. grandiflora*.

Small white Lady's slipper (*Cypripedium candidum*) —found only in Montgomery Co and dolomite woodlands in Virginia

Great Plains Lady's slipper (*Spiranthes magnicamporum*)—found in Montgomery Co. and the Cleveland Barrens Natural Area Preserve in Virginia

Grass pink (*Calopogon pallidus*)—found in the Coastal Plain in both purple and white

Small whorled pogonia (*Isotria medeoloides*)—population tends to ebb and flow. Dr. Donna Ware is our local expert.

Small white fringed orchid (*Platanthera blephariglottis*)— fire adapted and thrives in sphagnum

Purple fringeless orchid (*Platanthera peramoena*)—seeds are difficult to germinate and the species is designated critically imperiled in our state. Researchers at Longwood Gardens are trying to determine the right germination requirements.

Three birds orchid (*Triphora trianthophora*)

Kentucky Lady's slipper (*Cypripedium kentuckiense*)

Unfortunately, habitat destruction, fire suppression, and invasive orchid species such as shadow-witch (*Pontheiva racemosa*) and Florida adder's mouth (*Malaxis spicata*) threaten our native orchids. Further, most orchid seeds will not germinate without the help of mycorrhizal fungi. It is thought that the fungus acts on the roots, perhaps as a growth hormone, or in a symbiotic germination. There are other germination requirements that we haven't been able to determine for some species such as the purple fringeless orchid mentioned above. Perhaps, if fire were re-applied, it would stimulate germination for such species as the heart-leaved twayblade or yellow fringeless orchid. For further reading, I found the information on the Longwood Gardens website helpful and interesting at <https://longwoodgardens.org/>. Type "Native Orchid Conservation" in the search bar.

**Cathy Flanagan**

## Upcoming events

 **Thursday, January 24 at 7:00 pm—a special Nature Conservancy lecture at The Mariner's Museum, 100 Museum Drive in Newport News**  
**Tapping History: The Untold Story of Longleaf Pine, Naval Stores, and a Vanished Forest, presented by Harry Warren and Brian van Eerden**

The South once dominated the naval stores industry, which tapped vast longleaf pine forests for resin and ultimately decimated them. This lecture will uncover history and explore how conservationists are bringing back majestic longleaf in Virginia.

**Harry Warren** holds a BA degree in history from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington and an MA in history and museology from East Carolina University and boasts a 34-year museum career.

**Brian van Eerden** received his BA in plant science from Pennsylvania State University and his MS degree in botany from the University of Georgia. He is currently Director of The Nature Conservancy's Virginia Pinelands Program.

 **Saturday, February 23, 10:00 am—Nude Tree Walk**

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, as well as some rarer trees, and Dr. Ware will show how to identify them in winter condition. 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](mailto:saware@wm.edu) for more information.



Stewart at work during an earlier nude tree walk.

## Saturday, March 23, 10 am—Early Spring in the Forest on the Wah-rani Nature Trail, New Kent

Join **Helen Hamilton** and **Gus Hall** searching the ravines, slopes, and streams for everything green in the different habitats in this park. Expect to see orchid plants, ferns, lichens, clubmosses, and many interesting moss and liverwort species, including the flat forms with visible reproductive bodies. Spring flowers should be emerging—we may see spring beauty, pennywort, and early “weeds” in the front lawn such as henbit, bluets, speedwell, bittercress, and dwarf dandelion. Dress for the weather and expect uneven trails and some muddy areas along the trail.

Please register so that, in case the walk has to be re-scheduled because of inclement weather, we will be able to let you know. To register, contact Helen Hamilton at 757 564 4494 or [helen48@cox.net](mailto:helen48@cox.net).



A liverwort



Dwarf dandelion

For more information, directions, GPS coordinates and a map, visit [www.hikingupward.com/ovh/wahrani](http://www.hikingupward.com/ovh/wahrani).

## Nature Camp News

**Charles Palermo**, one of the John Clayton Chapter's 2018 Nature Camp scholarship recipients, attended our fall meeting to thank the chapter and tell us about his classes, hikes, and experiences as a first-time camper. He also participated in the spring plant sale which raises the money to sponsor a camper.

Two students have been selected to attend Nature Camp in the summer of 2019. **Ashley Kullberg**, a seventh grader at Hornsby Middle School, received the scholarship in memory of Carolyn Will, and **Lynne Eader**, a fifth grader at Stonehouse Elementary, was awarded the chapter's scholarship.

**Libbey Oliver**



Cathy Flanagan took this photo during Charles' presentation.

## A State Record!

Last fall **John Bunch**, Master Naturalist in Suffolk, posted a photo of a flat (thalloid) liverwort with fluffy edges that he found in the Dismal Swamp area of Suffolk. Easy to identify, the genus *Fossombronia* has ruffled edges, a pale green color, and purplish rhizoids. This unusual liverwort appears in summer and makes its spores in the fall, then disappears—it's an annual that depends upon numerous spores for reproduction.

So John installed the plant in peaty soil in his greenhouse, and a month later the spores appeared. *Fossombronia* can be identified to species only by the characteristics of the spores, so as they matured, John sent me some spores glued to a microscope slide. The spores produce elaters stiffened with spiral or annular wall thickenings that aid in spore dispersal. The elaters on these spores seemed to be more band-shaped than spiral.

This led to discussion on the Facebook page “VNPS Ferns, Fungi, Lichens and Mosses,” principally by Tom Wieboldt, retired Curator of the Massey Herbarium at VPI. So we (John and I) sent all material to Tom, who has firmly identified this plant as *F. cristula*, never before seen in the state of Virginia. Tom has posted photographs on the website of the Virginia digital atlas at [vaplantatlas.org](http://vaplantatlas.org), and has accessioned this collection in the VPI herbarium.

According to [bryophyteportal.org](http://bryophyteportal.org), there are only 77 records for this species in the United States, from New Jersey south to Alabama and east to Michigan. Tom suggests some records for *F. cristula* could be hidden in reports for the synonym, *F. foveolata*, and there are many more records for *Fossombronia* without species identification. There are 7 records for *F. cristula* in North Carolina, and those are from counties in the western part of the state, nowhere near Suffolk.

Often a state record of a vascular plant can indicate movement of the plant into new habitat (i.e., climate change?), as Donna Ware indicated in her article on the *Houstonia micrantha*, a southern species now seen in our area. But a state record for a moss or liverwort usually occurs because no one has collected the plant—there are not many working “bryologists” out there bent over hand lenses viewing tiny plants, but John Bunch is one of them.



Top, John Bunch's photo of the liverwort  
Bottom, a photograph of its spores from Helen

**Helen Hamilton**

## Wildflower of the Month

### British Soldier Lichen (*Cladonia cristatella*)

A bright spot in the woods and meadows in winter is this little lichen with its red caps, named for the red uniforms of the British soldiers during the Revolutionary War. The surrounding material is gray-green, a color characteristic of lichens, reflecting their dual lifestyle. A green alga, *Trebouxia erici*, supplies nourishment by its photosynthesis while the fungus, *Cladonia cristatella*, furnishes necessary water and nutrients.

Lichens are not plants, but an association, often called “mutualism” of two, and sometimes three, different organisms. Often gray-green in color, their growth form can be shrubby, as is this species, leafy, or crusty, among others. Certain lichens live on leaves, as parasites. Sexual reproduction is by spores, formed in ascospores, the red caps of this species, and bowl-shaped structures in other lichens. They reproduce asexually when a fragment is broken from the main body, and by producing microscopic dust-like particles distributed by the wind.



British soldier lichen

These are extremely important organisms ecologically. They can transfer nitrogen from the air to the soil in a form usable by plants, they break down old wood, returning nutrients to the soil, and can grow on bare rock, eventually dissolving the rock and creating minute bits of soil. They are very sensitive to air pollution, and a lack of lichens in an area indicates an unhealthy atmosphere.

British Soldier is usually found on mossy logs, tree bases, and stumps. Native to North America, this species is widespread in Virginia, common in moist exposed roadside soil and rotting wood, especially in sunny openings.

**Helen Hamilton**

## Call for nominations for John Clayton Chapter Awards:

✿ **JCC Botany Award**

✿ **JCC Community Service Award**

Please send your nominations to **Donna Ware** at [dmeware1001@gmail.com](mailto:dmeware1001@gmail.com) by February 15th, 2019.

## From Out in Left Field—a Plant Detective Story

About a year ago, on a walk along the James River near Jamestowne, an odd object appeared. Just lying there, minding its own business, near the path. Here it is:

What on earth? Or not? I picked it up and looked more closely at the orbs, chambers, tentacles, and little bumps. I was completely mesmerized—what was it? My first guess was that it could be related to the *Spartina* rhizomes that I had found on the



*Spartina* rhizome

shore nearby. They have similar tentacles, and look pretty odd. But the body of the new creature was really different. So, the investigation began. First, tons of googling about *Spartina*, rhizomes, Virginia, etc. I didn't find anything

even remotely resembling the object of my obsession. I emailed a few people with photos, which led to additional googling, but still nothing even close. At that point, I contacted Donna Ware, whose curiosity was also kindled. She kindly offered to go on a walk to the place where it was found. So, we went back to the exact spot. It was on a short bluff, maybe 4 feet above the water level, on the edge of the sandy beach. We walked around on the bluff a little, then checked out the beach. We got our hands dirty (now we're having fun!) looking at clumps of saltmeadow cordgrass, *Spartina patens*, and tried to dig up some big cordgrass, *S. cynosuroides*. Then we examined the rhizomes of the saltmarsh cordgrass, *S. alterniflora*. Soon, we were digging with our hands into the bluff, and found the root of a greenbrier vine. Donna looked closely at it, and said that it had some resemblance to the form of the mystery object. But she was not 100% convinced it was a match. So, home again, home again... and get out the nail brush. Another symptom of my obsession was drawing it. I looked really, really closely, and picked out the most interesting areas to try and capture with pencil and paper. But if I was going to spend all this time studying (and then possibly framing) it, I had to know what to call it!



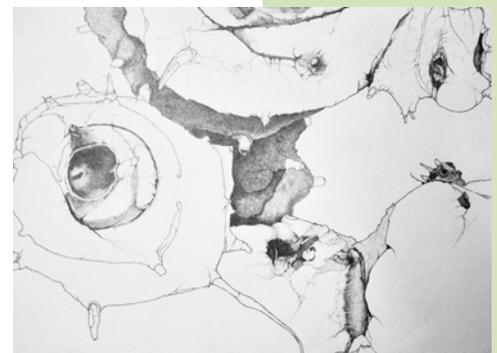
Seriously

But the body of the new creature was really different. So, the investigation began. First, tons of googling about *Spartina*, rhizomes, Virginia, etc. I didn't find anything

even remotely resembling the object of my obsession. I emailed a few people with photos, which led to additional googling, but still nothing even close. At that point, I contacted Donna Ware, whose curiosity was also kindled. She kindly offered to go on a walk to the place where it was found. So, we went back to the exact spot. It was on a short bluff, maybe 4 feet above the water level, on the edge of the sandy beach. We walked around on the bluff a little, then checked out the beach. We got our hands dirty (now we're having fun!) looking at clumps of saltmeadow cordgrass, *Spartina patens*, and tried to dig up some big cordgrass, *S. cynosuroides*. Then we examined the rhizomes of the saltmarsh cordgrass, *S. alterniflora*. Soon, we were digging with our hands into the bluff, and found the root of a greenbrier vine. Donna looked closely at it, and said that it had some resemblance to the form of the mystery object. But she was not 100% convinced it was a match. So, home again, home again... and get out the nail brush. Another symptom of my obsession was drawing it. I looked really, really closely, and picked out the most interesting areas to try and capture with pencil and paper. But if I was going to spend all this time studying (and then possibly framing) it, I had to know what to call it!



Close, but no cigar. Yet.



*Smilax rotundifolia* (up close and personal)



Fortunately for me, the VNPS Annual Conference was just a few weeks away, right here in the 'burg! Why not bring the object to the meeting, and see if anybody could identify it? There would likely be more experts at that meeting than I'd ever run into otherwise. So I packed it up—and headed out.

In between sessions, I surreptitiously placed it on a table in one of the workshop rooms. Then, I ventured out into the break area, where people were chatting and having coffee in small groups. At the first group, when there was a break in the conversation, I asked whether anybody might be willing to help me identify a plant part that I had found on the James River bank.

A young guy said “sure!” and followed me into the other room. He picked it up, studied for a moment, and said, “Oh. It's *Smilax*. Greenbrier.” And he told me it's a root, not a rhizome, and explained the difference. Just like that. I wrote *Smilax*, and his name (Joey Thompson) and email on a piece of paper. My blood pressure spiked as I eased it back into its carrying case, thinking, “Greenbrier? I see that everywhere. In my yard, on the roadside...could it really have such bizarre roots?”

Yes. Later that day, Donna confirmed the identification, and that she knew Joey. In fact, Donna had been on a walk led by Joey earlier that day at the conference. So, mystery solved. I emailed Joey and thanked him again for the i.d.

So, another example of how curiosity, in addition to killing cats, can fuel an exciting discovery. You just never know. Until you do.

**Kathi Mestayer**

## John Clayton Chapter Calendar

**Thursday,  
January 17**

**7:00 pm: John Clayton Chapter meeting** in the fellowship hall of **King of Glory Lutheran Church, 4897 Longhill Road** (between the entrances to Williamsburg West/Ford's Colony and Wellspring United Methodist Church and a short distance east of the 7-Eleven at the Longhill/Olde Towne Rd. intersection).

Our speaker is **Joey Thompson**, whose topic will be "**Mechanisms of Native Shrub Encroachment on a Virginia Barrier Island**," about the effects of increasing wax myrtle cover on several of Virginia's barrier islands. (See Page 1.)

**Thursday,  
January 24**

**7:00 pm: A special Nature Conservancy lecture at The Mariner's Museum, 100 Museum Drive in Newport News—**

**"Tapping History: The Untold Story of Longleaf Pine, Naval Stores, and a Vanished Forest",** presented by **Harry Warren and Brian van Eerden** (See Page 7 for details.)

**Saturday,  
February 23**

**10:00 am: Nude Tree Walk** with **Stewart Ware** in the woods around **Wellspring Methodist Church** on Longhill Road, Williamsburg

(For directions and details, see Page 7.)

**Saturday,  
March 23**

**10:00 am: Early Spring in the Forest**

**Helen Hamilton** and **Gus Hall** will lead a walk on the **Wahrani Nature Trail** in **New Kent**.

Please register so that, in case the walk has to be re-scheduled because of inclement weather, we will be able to let you know. To register, contact Helen Hamilton at 757-564-4494 or [helen48@cox.net](mailto:helen48@cox.net). (More info and details are on Page 7.)

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](http://www.vnps.org/john%20clayton).

Below is a membership renewal form. Please contact Membership Chair **Cathy Flanagan** at 757-879-1997 or at [flanagan.catherine@gmail.com](mailto: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