



# Claytonia

Newsletter of the John Clayton Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society

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

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## Our May 16 meeting: “Managing Invasive Plants”

Our speaker will be **Ashton Stinson**, who graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2011 and has spent the last eight years working in the nonprofit sector. Early in her career, she spent six months in rural Kenya implementing a sustainable nutrition program with HIV positive community members. Since then, she has devoted her career to having an impact in the both the environmental and humanitarian sectors. Her experiences include working for Ashoka, social enterprise incubator, working as Director of Communications for an international nonprofit focused on basic needs for children, and specializing in invasive plant management for a conservation corps in the Southwestern United States.



The meeting begins at **7:00 pm** at **Coleman Nursery**, which is situated at **3000 Ironbound Road** between its intersections with Route 5 (John Tyler Highway) and Jamestown Road.

**See you there!**

**Note this meeting's new location!**

## From the President



The Native Plant Sale was a great success. I am overwhelmed with thanks and admiration of all of you who worked so hard volunteering to do everything from planning, driving vans and/or trucks with plants to the sale, carrying plants, greeting customers, keeping the floor clean, answering questions, and cleaning up the Williamsburg Community Center. A huge thank you and “high-fives” to the chairs of the Plant Sale: **Sue Voigt**, **Adrienne Frank**, and **Cathy Flanagan**, who worked for so many hours on our Plant Sale. It was a great challenge as we did it all in one day, albeit a

tiring one. By using images, Adrienne Frank and Cathy Flanagan were able to reduce the legal-size Plant Sale list page to a normal-size one, thereby saving printing costs. They all four organized and synchronized the preparation so well that we were able to set up and deliver the plants to their appropriate color-coded tables by means of color tags we had placed in the pots next to the prices, and we were ready to sell even before the 9:45 am sale start time; every detail was ready to go. What a wild ride it was! For me, it was an even wilder ride. The night before we had a storm that was supposed to be extremely powerful, and we were so afraid of having hail come down and destroy the plants we had nurtured for months. However, it seemed to be a lucky day and there was no hail. The storms did not seem so strong, but electricity went out at 8:30 pm the night before. Indeed, ignorance is bliss. When I got up at 6:00 am there was still no electricity and so no coffee. Ugh. My kind neighbor made some for me—she knew I did need some. A friend phoned from out of town to let me know that several trees had fallen and at some point there was no way in or out of my neighborhood. Another neighbor and volunteer at the sale who stopped to pick up recent tree and shrub donations told me I had to go via East Queens Drive, because West Queens was closed because the many trees that fell and electrical cables on the ground made that side impassable. When I got to the sale, I saw the many volunteers working everywhere moving the carpets out of the way and the tables in the right spots. Then the caravans of vehicles arrived and the Scouts quickly carried plants to the correct tables. A huge thank you to Jim Etchberger for the traffic signs, the entrance signs, and the covered trailer he created so that he could safely transport plants without windburn. Kudos to Boy Scouts, they were fantastic helpers! They put up traffic signs for customers, helped carry the plants to set them up for selling, and helped carry the plants for the customers who came to buy. We also had three high school biology honor students who worked with us to make our sale a success. A very special thanks to our cashiers: **Shirley Devan, Libbey Oliver, Judy Jones, Alice Kopinitz, Joanne Sheffield, Pat Murphy**, and of course our treasurer, **Cathy Flanagan**. They did a fabulous job. It was as if we had all rehearsed this choreography ahead of time, in spirit if not in fact. Our transportation director, **Tim Costelloe**, deserves many thanks for getting all the plants loaded and driven to the sale so quickly. What a smooth operation. Once customers arrived, the plants flew out the door. The photo I am sharing with you, taken by Cathy Flanagan, shows a little toddler looking at the plants. Her mother told Cathy that she heard her mom tell her they were going to a plant sale. The toddler kept repeating “plant sale” often at home and was excited by this new activity, and it turned



out that she really did like looking at the plants—a wonderful new Nature Camper or future “customer.”

After the sale, we donated the few leftover plants to four groups: a new native garden at Toano Middle School, the Meadow in New Quarter Path Park, Hospice House, and the Stonehouse School’s newly redesigned Habitat Garden. When I arrived home at 3:30 pm, electricity suddenly came back on! What a day!

**Lucile Kossodo**

## New Members

We welcome new members **Lisa** and **Rob Garris** of Newport News and **Ken Goldsmith**, **Jude Marston**, and **Katherine Preston**, all of Williamsburg, to the John Clayton Chapter!

## Upcoming events

✿ **Saturday, May 25th, 10:00 am—**  
**Join Donna Ware to see a Wonderland of Weeds at the James City County Recreation Center, 5301 Longhill Road, Williamsburg.**

Park in the westernmost part of the lot and walk across the road to the large field where we will begin our weed walk. Some of the weeds we will see will be native plants, such as purple cudweed, Virginia dwarf-dandelion, and Virginia pliantain; the majority will be non-native members of our flora, such as forget-me-not, lamb’s lettuce, Piedmont bedstraw, blue field madder, water-blinks and parsley-piert.

Your garden kneeling pad would prove handy on this field trip, as would a hand lens if you have one.

Register with **Donna Ware** at [dmeware1001@gmail.com](mailto:dmeware1001@gmail.com) or at 757-565-0657 so you can be contacted, if necessary, in regard to the trip.

✿ **Saturday, June 8, 9:30 am—Plants Near Water**

At **College Landing Park**, many interesting flowering plants, grasses and sedges grow along the shoreline of College Creek, and there are mature trees around the lawn and in the upland woods. We should see camphorweed, pickerelweed, buttonweed, bitternut hickory, honey locust, mistletoe, arrow arum, and many others.

Meet in the parking lot at the park, 2100 S. Henry Street, Williamsburg, for a walk around the area and on the boardwalk. Contact **Helen Hamilton** at 757-564-4494 or [helen48@cox.net](mailto:helen48@cox.net) to register and for information.

## Recent Plant Walks

### March 23 Wahrani Trail Walk

Members of the John Clayton Chapter of the VNPS met Saturday morning, March 23, for a walk on the Wahrani Nature Trail in New Kent Co. Around sixteen members joined **Helen Hamilton** and **Gus Hall** as they led a two-hour meander that



focused on mosses. The trees were barely starting to bud and the forest floor was covered in last autumn's leaf litter, but colors of the mosses stood out in golden, green, bronze, and blue-green hues throughout the woodlands.

Even before we gathered for a group photo at the start of the walk, Helen pointed out two types of ephemeral mosses that were growing in the gravel parking lot.

The gathering then split into two smaller groups—one took the high road with Gus and the other started down a path along the creek with Helen. When we met up at the trail junction, the groups traded and the leaders retraced their paths before we adjourned.

Along the creek path, Helen pointed out over a dozen types of mosses, as listed in her book, *Ferns and Mosses of Virginia's Coastal Plain*. Upon closer observation, especially with a hand lens, the different structures, shapes, and colors of the different types of mosses became apparent. The names broom moss, fan moss, oil spill moss, and fern moss give an indication of the various appearances. The clubmosses were represented by mixed stands of princess pine and running cedar. Christmas fern and ebony spleenwort were also noted.

Not to be outdone, several wildflowers were also on display. Spring beauty and pennywort gentian were blooming. The leaves of crane fly orchid and rattlesnake orchid were seen sprouting from the leaf litter. Wild ginger, partridge berry, and wintergreen were identified along the path.

The group traded notes along the way and seemed to enjoy the crisp but sunny morning stroll. After Gus's invitation to "tune our minds down" to enjoy the smaller plants, I personally was astounded by the variety of mosses inhabiting the tree trunks, creek banks, downed logs, and even gravel parking lot at the Wahrani Nature Trail. I have since noted and appreciated the variety of mosses growing around my own home.

**Kurt T. Kunas**



Helen's photo of the Wahrani Trail group

### **April 27 Spring Woodland Flowers on White Oak Trail, Newport News Park**

The day was very windy but pretty nonetheless. We had a small group of walkers because there were so many other nature-related activities scheduled that day, but the walk participants were interested and enthusiastic. Since the group was small, everyone could hear all that was said. A bonus!

We found several colonies of Pink Lady's-slipper, Wild Comfrey, and Yellow Star-grass in bloom. Other items of intrigue included Downy Rattlesnake Plantain,



Wild comfrey



Early-growth cinnamon fern

had printed these out and brought them along; they checked off what we found along the way. We checked off most of the ferns, including Mosquito Fern. If you count Adder's Tongue as a fern, then that's a new one Newport News Parks should add to their Fern list.

### May 4 Lafayette Nature Trail Walk with Helen Hamilton and Gus Hall

On Saturday, May 4, Mike Whitfield and I were treated to a tour of the nature trail at Lafayette High School led by **Helen Hamilton** and **Gus Hall**. The trail runs by a swamp and is filled with ferns, mosses, and other woodland plants, including pawpaw trees, jack-in-the-pulpit, and highbush blueberry. We learned to differentiate grasses from sedges by observing that grasses have nodes (or joints, as Helen tells children), whereas sedges do not. We saw many kinds of ferns,



Susie's walkers

Spotted Wintergreen and Adder's Tongue. And this year we were lucky to catch Wood Violet (*Viola palmata*) in bloom. Along the trail we encountered ferns of many types. From the swamp Bridge we observed Milkweed, Cattails, Climbing Hempweed, and Jewelweed emerging. Arrow Arum was already lush and vigorous.

The registered walkers had received Newport News Parks Fern and Wildflower lists by email prior to the walk. Some walkers

**Susie Yager**



Mike Whitfield and Claudia Kirk



including royal, New York, lady, netted chain, cinnamon and rattlesnake. Helen offered us her hand lens so we could see the difference between the creeping mosses and the cushion mosses. As we stepped off the path and into the woods, Helen cautioned us to watch our step. I thought she was worried about snakes, but no—she was concerned that we might step on a pink ladyslipper!



*Claudia Kirk*

A pink ladyslipper



*Claudia Kirk*

A liverwort

All in all, it very an educational and enjoyable morning. If you want to explore this trail, it is to the left of the bus parking area at Lafayette High School. It is accessible when the school is closed.

**Claudia Kirk**

## Other Events

### Cryptogam Workshops

During the month of March, **Helen Hamilton** held three workshops in Freedom Park Interpretive Center about cryptogams, really tiny plants without true flowers. In a 3-hour period, participants learned about the structure and life cycles of bacteria, algae, slime molds, fungi, lichens, ferns, and gymnosperms. Using dissecting microscopes borrowed from Lafayette High School, participants got up-close and personal looks at the tiny mosses and liverworts supplied at the start of class, and those collected outside. Here are some photos taken during the workshops—



*Joanne Sheffield*

Keith Navia, left, and other attendees listen to Helen's descriptions of cryptogams' features.



*Rose Sullivan*

Helen points out details of a specimen.





David Lauthers

Dorothy Geyer, right, and another participant examine liverworts on tree bark.



David Lauthers

A group shot

### April 27th's Celebrate the Park at the Mariner's Museum

Meegan Wallace, Chuck Deffenbaugh, and Lucile Kossodo, assisted by new members Jim Cooper and Anne Negus, staffed a JCC table at this event. They had a number of native seeds for people to choose from and plant in small pots to take home. The wind was a problem and kept blowing their seed bags and signs away, but Meegan reports that it was great fun. Jim and Anne donated soil and pots as well.

Chuck took these photos of some of the day's younger participants.



## April's Wildflower of the Month: Virginia Bluebell (*Mertensia virginica* or Virginia Cowslip)

Virginia Bluebell is a beautiful spring wildflower that produces funnel-form pendant flowers beginning as pink but then turn blue as the flowers open. They are pollinated by bees that are large enough to push their way up the tube, and more commonly by butterflies and moths.

This native perennial is a spring ephemeral—the leaves first appear in March as deep purple, quickly turning green. They are large, 2–8 inches long and somewhat fragile, as the stems are nearly hollow. Clumps grow up to 2 feet tall and go dormant by early summer after the flowers fade and seeds are formed. With no remnants of the plant remaining, it's easy to assume it is gone, making the mistake of digging and planting in the same location. Installation of other shade-loving perennials should be done while the plant is still visible. A stunning combination for the spring is with yellow daffodils and pink tulips. Native ferns, Solomon's Seal, trillium, and Foam Flower would work well also.

It's difficult to move these beautiful plants. Small seedlings can be transplanted, but they will take several years to bloom. Mature plants have a long taproot and once established, they don't like to be moved. If necessary larger plants can be moved when dormant into areas with abundant moisture. Bluebells have few pests and deer don't bother them.

The natural range of Virginia Bluebell is New York to Michigan, and south to Alabama and Missouri. It is a plant of Virginia's mountain and piedmont areas, rather than coastal regions, so it must be given a moist, shady environment.

Early on this lovely flower made the trip to Europe, where it quickly became a regular in English gardens. William Robinson, writing in *The English Flower*: "...handsomest of all is the Virginia cowslip. It is a charming old garden plant, and one which unfortunately has never become common."

The genus is named in honor of F.K. Mertens, a professor of botany at Bremen, and the species honors Virginia.

**Helen Hamilton**



Helen Hamilton



## Our April 20 Plant Sale

**The 2019 Native Plant Sale was a huge success thanks to your help! We very much appreciate all of the time that you invested in our sale.**

### The great news is...

- ✿ More than 40 volunteers were incredible, including members of the John Clayton Chapter, Historic Rivers Master Naturalists, Boy Scouts, and students. It takes a village!
- ✿ We took two photos with 19 JCC members and 13 Master Naturalists volunteers. Several folks belonged to both.
- ✿ We had a line of about a hundred people waiting at the door at 9:45 and a high volume of plants was sold in the first hour.
- ✿ Our treasurer reported that we made approximately **\$4700** after expenses, a higher profit than last year.
- ✿ The plants left over went to the New Quarter Park wildflower meadow, Hospice House gardens, Toano Middle School Native Plant Beds in their new Outdoor Classroom, and Stonehouse Schoolyard Native Habitat and Butterfly Gardens.
- ✿ Tried a few new things that worked well. Each perennial plant was given a color label that matched a table assignment, so that the people setting up could easily bring plants to the correct table. Multiple people suggested that we use more colors next year. We also had a list of plants that were included on each table.
- ✿ Of course, we can always do better. If you have a recommendation, please let us know.

### Here are a few of the jobs that were filled by volunteers:

- ✿ Planning—the Sale committee met regularly throughout the year.
- ✿ Potting —parties were held to pot and label plants
- ✿ Collecting pots—pots of similar size were collected to for plants
- ✿ Storing plants—special thanks to the Etchbergers for long-term caring. This year, especially because the Plant Sale was earlier than usual, the Etchbergers built a temporary greenhouse, which was perfect for our needs.
- ✿ Tending to plants—members cleaned, sorted, and moved plants as needed during the months prior to the sale.
- ✿ Collecting boxes—members collected 100 tray-type boxes from Grocery stores to use at the plant sale.
- ✿ Transporting—a fleet of trucks and cars were used to load and move plants to the sale, including all of the Boy Scouts.
- ✿ Picking up plants—some nurseries delivered plants, and some were picked up from garden centers.

- \* Preparing plant lists, forms, and handouts—a new smaller size plant list with symbols on it was used and saved a little on expenses.
- \* Creating plant signs with photos and other helpful signs for participants
- \* Greeting people during the sale
- \* Monitoring the tables and providing guidance
- \* Answering questions—several expert members answered questions about plants.
- \* Tallying costs of plants
- \* Cashiering and helping customers
- \* Setting-up and cleaning up
- \* And more...

Thank you all for your contributions. The Plant Sale Committee (**Sue Voigt**, **Lucile Kossodo**, **Cathy Flanagan**, and **Adrienne Frank**) could not do it without all of your help.

### Some photos taken during the sale—



We double-check everything before the onslaught.



From a sapling to a mighty oak someday!



Customers looking for the right plant for the right place





Everyone helps; here is a scout leader or dad.



Plant Sale organizers Lucile Kossodo, Cathy Flanagan, Sue Voigt, and Adrienne Frank; Edie Bradbury is behind them.



John Clayton Chapter volunteers gather for a group photo.



Historic Rivers Master Naturalists were also volunteers. (You may recognize many of the the same faces in both photos!)

## John Clayton Chapter Calendar

### Thursday, May 16 7:00pm: Our May meeting— "Managing Invasive Plants"

Our speaker will be **Ashton Stinson**, who graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2011 and has spent the last eight years working in the nonprofit sector, including specializing in invasive plant management for a conservation corps in the Southwestern United States.

The meeting begins at **7:00 pm** at **Coleman Nursery**, which is situated at **3000 Ironbound Road** between its intersections with Route 5 (John Tyler Highway) and Jamestown Road.

**Note this meeting's new location!**

(See Page 1.)

### Saturday, May 25 10:00 am: Wonderland of Weeds, James City County Recreation Center, 5301 Longhill Road, Williamsburg

Park in the westernmost part of the lot and walk across the road to the large field where we will begin our weed walk.

Please register with **Donna Ware** at [dmeware1001@gmail.com](mailto:dmeware1001@gmail.com) or at 757 565-0657 so you can be contacted, if necessary, in regard to the trip.

(More info and directions are on Page 3.)

### Saturday, June 8 9:30 am: Plants Near Water at College Landing Park

Many interesting flowering plants, grasses and sedges grow along the shoreline of College Creek, and there are mature trees around the lawn and in the upland woods

Meet in the parking lot at the park, **2100 S. Henry Street, Williamsburg**, for a walk around the area and on the boardwalk.

Contact **Helen Hamilton** at 757-564-4494 or [helen48@cox.net](mailto:helen48@cox.net) to register and for information.

(More on Page 3)

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-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