

# New River News

January 2020

New River Chapter, VNPS

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## A word from the president

It is a new year and the middle of winter. But in less than two months the weather will start warming up and we will begin to see the earliest wildflowers and trees start to bloom. And the wonderful spring will begin.

2019 was a great year for our chapter. We had 18 new members join and 33 members renew. Every time someone joins our chapter or renews their membership, the chapter receives 35% of the dues. We have a total of 80 members as of January 1, 2020.

Members volunteered to guide five wildflower hikes including Shawsville for the bluebells, at Claytor Lake state park, at Wildwood Park in Radford, the Mill Creek Spring Preserve outside Blacksburg, and at Deborah Hamilton's wildflower meadows. Some of them will be repeats this year but anyone can suggest and/or lead a hike to a different place this year.

Members also volunteered at five different outreach venues to spread the word about native plants. These included the SEEDS spring festival in April, the Virginia Society of Ornithology annual conference in May, the National Forest Appreciation Day in June, the Heritage Festival in August, and the Bugfest in October. We hope to have a table at Sustainability Week in September and possibly the City Nature Challenge in April.

Speaking of tables. Not all the above venues can provide a table and chairs at their events. I would like to **make a list of chapter members that would be willing to loan a folding table, two chairs, and a canopy (to protect against the rain)** for venues that don't offer them. It does not have to be the same person for every item and it may be only one day a year. Please contact Brenda Graff at [graff\\_brenda@hotmail.com](mailto:graff_brenda@hotmail.com) if you are willing to loan any of the above items.

Our chapter will be partnering with the SW Virginia area of the PlantVirginiaNatives.org campaign. We still need people to help create our regional native plant guide which will show people which native plants are good for planting in our area. If you are interested in helping (you can be a member or non-member), contact either Nicole Hersch at [nicole@nrvc.org](mailto:nicole@nrvc.org) or [graff\\_brenda@hotmail.com](mailto:graff_brenda@hotmail.com).

For the first time, our chapter had a native plant sale. It was called "Fall is for planting native plants" and was held during September. Carol Schwobel grew some beautifully potted spiderwort and celadine poppy and offered bare root of may apple and wild ginger. A total of \$265 was raised which will be used to fund grants for native gardens in our local public school community. Carol is forming a committee for future native plant sales. If you would like to help (details on how you can help can be found in the October 30, 2019 post in our chapter list-serve), contact Carol at [shadeperennial@gmail.com](mailto:shadeperennial@gmail.com)



“Fall is for planting native plants” plant sale at Wong Park  
taken by Brenda Graff

Six members attended the annual VNPS conference in Front Royal on September 27-29. There were plenty of great speakers and field trips to attend. We all learned a lot. I attended a native plant seed propagation workshop and came away with several ideas I want to try this year. The 2020 conference will be held in Abingdon on September 25-27. Since this is so close to us (but not as close as when we hosted it in 2016), I hope to see many of you there. Details are not available yet but keep checking at <https://vnps.org/events/2020-vnps-annual-meeting-and-conference/>.

The annual workshop of the VNPS will be held on March 14 in Charlottesville. The subject is on climate change. More details can be found at: <https://vnps.org/events/2020-vnps-annual-meeting-and-conference/>

The chapter list-serve is open to everyone. Members will be added when they join the VNPS and non-members may contact [graff\\_brenda@hotmail.com](mailto:graff_brenda@hotmail.com) to be added. This is a moderated list-serve so your post must be approved before it can be added.

Submitted by Brenda Graff

# Winter/Spring Programs

Please mark your calendars now. **ALL** of our meetings for winter/spring 2020 will be on the **2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month and start at 7 pm.** Keep in mind we do not hold a meeting in January and that our last meeting for the spring will be held in April. We will again be meeting at the Karr Activity Center at Warm Hearth (located at 2603 Warm Hearth Drive, Blacksburg, VA).

We welcome any suggestions for topics or speakers for this coming fall. Please contact Brenda Graff at [graff\\_brenda@hotmail.com](mailto:graff_brenda@hotmail.com).

## **February 11 – Certified Wildlife Backyard Habitats (Rebekah Paulson)**

Rebekah Paulson will explain how to create a certified wildlife habitat. As soon as she bought her new house in Blacksburg five years ago, she ripped out the invasive exotic plants and replaced them with native plants. She will also give details on the four requirements needed to certify her 1/5 acre by the National Wildlife Federation.

## **March 10 – Edible wild plants (Dr. Shawn Askew)**

Dr. Askew of VT will give a talk on edible native plants.

## **April 14– Native Wildflowers (Ian Canton of Wood Thrush Natives Nursery)**

Ian will give a talk on wildflowers.

He will also bring wildflowers to sell to us. I will send you details in March on how to reserve them for your pickup during this meeting.

## Winter/Spring Outings

Why is this list so short? We can only schedule outings when we have volunteers to lead them. The year is still young, so we have plenty of more time to plan more walks. Think about a favorite place of yours ie. your own land or a neighbors, one of the county parks, a Nature Conservancy park, a state park or natural area, or a federal area. Contact Brenda Graff at [graff\\_brenda@hotmail.com](mailto:graff_brenda@hotmail.com)

### **April date unknown yet – Wildflower hike in Shawsville at 2 pm**

Carol Schwobel will lead a hike along the bank of Spring Branch to see the beautiful Virginia bluebells and other ephemeral wildflower blooming at that time. More details will be sent via the VNPS-NRV list-serve around April 1.



Bluebells along Bonner's Run in Shawsville  
taken by Brenda Graff

### **Mid-April – wildflower walk at Wildwood Park in Radford, time unknown**

Would anyone be interested in leading this hike to see the many wildflowers in bloom at this time including larkspur, trillium, dutchman's breeches, bloodroot, hepatica, wild ginger, blue cohosh, and spring beauty. If no one can lead it, we can go ourselves as a group and id them as we find them. More details will be sent via the VNPS-NRV list-serve around April 1.



Dutchman's breeches at Wildwood Park  
taken by Brenda Graff

### **April 14 – Wildflower hike at Claytor Lake State Park, time unknown but in afternoon**

One of the hikes at the Hike for Hospice at Claytor Lake State Park will be on wildflowers. Mary Rhoades and Brenda Graff will lead hikers along several of the trails. Brenda Graff will give you more details when she gets them.

### **May 10 - Wildflower hike at Claytor Lake State Park, hours to be determined**

Brenda Graff ([graff\\_brenda@hotmail.com](mailto:graff_brenda@hotmail.com)) will lead this walk. Most spring wildflowers will be past their peak, but in mid-May the pink lady's slippers are in bloom and they are always a joy to see. Unless the deer eat their flowers like they did last year. Only one was left when we got to the park.

### **Mid to late spring - Hungry Mother State Park**

Brenda Graff will be contacting the park ranger to see if someone can lead us on a wildflower walk. I would like to also set one up in late summer/early fall since they have nice fall flowers too.

# Volunteer projects and Outreach Programs

The mission of the VNPS is to save the native plants and their habitat in Virginia. To this end our chapter is spreading the word to the public by various means. Our monthly meetings are open to the public. We have donated copies of the Flora of Virginia to our local libraries and have contributed money to the digital version of the book. We have helped out at the National Forest Appreciation Day which was created in 2017 by the Blacksburg government. Our members have held talks at local libraries. We have helped out at the local Hokie Bugfest.

In the coming months, Brenda Graff will provide information on how chapter members can volunteer with local projects at pollinator gardens and with invasive plant removal. And how we can partner with local organizations ie. Virginia master naturalists and public schools and libraries to give presentations, lead hikes or offer other help.

If you know of a local organization that is interested in knowing more about wildflowers or native habitat, please let Brenda Graff ([graff\\_brenda@hotmail.com](mailto:graff_brenda@hotmail.com)) know before April 1 and she will develop a list of these organizations and pass them along to the chapter members.

## First Day Hikes—A Big Success

by Brenda Graff

Several members of the New River Chapter came out to Claytor Lake State Park on January 1 to participate in the First Day Hikes, or just to enjoy some time at the park. All state parks in Virginia are free each year on Jan. 1. The hope is that folks will start the new year right and get outdoors and exercise.

Brenda Graff and a master naturalist led a hike to a vernal pool and 33 people attended that hike. They also identified the trees and ferns along the way. The weather was great so no one was in a hurry to leave. About 87 folks joined in on all four guided walks.

## Virtual Plant Tour for Claytor Lake State Park

by Mary Rhoades

Next time you are at the state park use your smart phone or tablet to try the Virtual Plant Tour that features 20 species you can find along the Lakeview Trail (yellow blazes). The tour starts at the Howe House, and goes for a little less than 2 miles (round trip). The majority of the plants included are trees. Although there are no gps coordinates associated with the tour, you will see numbered tags on a map of the park which you click on to move from one plant picture and associated text to the next. They correspond to the location of the plant as you walk along the Lakeview Trail toward the cabins. The tour was created by Kaitlyn Hogarth, with help from park staff, when she was an Americorps volunteer at the park.

The nice thing about a “virtual” tour is that you can also take the “tour” from the comfort of your home! Check out the tour at the website: [tinyurl.com/yavr84ah](http://tinyurl.com/yavr84ah)

# Propagating wildflower websites

by Carol Schwobel and Brenda Graff

<https://www.prairiemoon.com/seeds/>

<https://www.finegardening.com/article/starting-wildflowers-from-seed>

<https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/Portals/0/Shaw%20Nature%20Reserve/PDFs/horticulture/Propagation.pdf>

There are plenty more websites out there but these are our favorites.

## Two poems on Christmas ferns

contributed by John Marshall

### **The Christmas Fern - *Polystichum acrostichoides***

by W. N. Clute

"When frost has clad the dripping cliffs  
With fluted columns, crystal clear,  
And million-flaked the feathery snow  
Has shrouded close the dying year;  
Beside the rock, where'er we turn,  
Behold, there waves the Christmas fern.

No shivering frond that shuns the blast  
Sways on its slender chaffy stem;  
Full-veined and lusty green it stands,  
Of all the wintry woods the gem.  
Our spirits rise when we discern  
The pennons of the Christmas fern.

With holly and the running pine  
Then let its fronds in wreaths appear,  
'Tis summer's fairest tribute given.  
To grace our merry Yuletide cheer.  
Ah, who can fear the winter stern

While still there grows the Christmas fern." Page 7

**“They’ll fit on elves’ feet”**

**by Maxwell C. Wheat, Jr.**

“Come see the Christmas stockings,”  
Says Grandmother, taking our hands  
Leading us to the stream in our back woods  
There on the bank  
She shows us fronds of ferns lined with leaflets  
Each shape like a fat “L”

“They’ll fit on elves’ feet, Nanny.”

“They’re upside down,” my brother laughs  
“The elves’ll fall out.”

“Why, Edmund,” Grandmother chuckles  
“don’t you know why elves’ feet  
Are pointed and curled?”

## **Selected Events for February thru July 2020**

(more details will be in the monthly list of events  
sent via our chapter list-serve)

**February 11 – Regular monthly chapter meeting, 7 pm**

**March 10 - Regular monthly chapter meeting, 7 pm**

**March 14 – VNPS annual workshop, 9 am to 3 pm**

Many of us are concerned about climate change and no longer need to be convinced that it is real. But we can always learn something new about the study of climate and its changes and impacts on Earth’s ecosystems. This workshop will focus on climate changes at different periods of time, and how it might relate to our current climate and inform our thoughts about today’s changes. The workshop will be held in Charlottesville and there is a fee. Details are available at: <https://vnps.org/events/2020-vnps-annual-meeting-and-conference/>

**March 20 – Shenandoah Valley 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Plant Symposium, 8 am to 4:15pm**

Two of the speakers talk about native plants. There is a fee and it is located in Waynesboro, Va. Several people from this area may attend so there is a possibility to carpool. For more details, visit <https://www.waynesboro.va.us/971/Shenandoah-Valley-Plant-Symposium>. Contact Brenda Graff at [graff\\_brenda@hotmail.com](mailto:graff_brenda@hotmail.com) for possible carpools. Page 8



**April 14 - Regular monthly chapter meeting, 7 pm**

**Mid-April – wildflower walk at Wildwood Park in Radford, time unknown**

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**April date to be chosen yet – Wildflower hike in Shawsville at 2 pm**

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**April 19 – Hike for Hospice at Claytor Lake State Park, time unknown but in afternoon**

An event to raise money for Good Samaritan Hospice of the New River Valley. There is a cost for this event, and participants should sign up ahead of time online. The cost includes music, food, games, a T-shirt, and a choice of several hikes at the state park. Mary Rhoades and Brenda Graff will be leading a wildflower walk. Details for this year are not posted yet, but you can read about last year's event by going to: <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/blog/4th-annual-nrv-hike-for-hospice-at-claytor-lake-state-park>

**April 22 to 25 - Great Smoky Mountains National Park Wildflower Pilgrimage, all day**

For more details and the pricing of this wildly popular wildflower pilgrimage see:  
<http://www.wildflowerpilgrimage.org>

**April 23 to 25 – Hahn Garden plant sale, all day**

Hahn garden will be selling all kinds of native and exotic wildflowers, shrubs and trees at 200 Garden Lane on the Virginia Tech campus. More details can be found at their website at [www.hort.vt.edu](http://www.hort.vt.edu) .

**April 18 to 25 – Virginia Historic Garden Week, all day**

Roanoke generally has a tour of their city. Details are not yet available but keep checking <https://www.vagardenweek.org>.

**May 9 - Blue Ridge Wildflower Society native plant sale, 9 am to 12 pm**

There will be at least 50 species for sale. They include various native ferns, solomons seal, bleeding heart, Virginia bluebells, cardinal flower and various milkweeds. All will be in pots and there will be people available to give advice on the plants and their needs. Location is at the Virginia Western Community College Arboretum parking lot at 3094 Colonial Avenue in Roanoke. For more information contact Ellen Holtman at 540-389-1514.

**May 9 – Montgomery county Master Gardener plant sale, 9 am to 2 pm**

Lots of plants, outdoor, indoor and vegetables will be available including native flowers. Location is at the Montgomery County government center at 755 Roanoke Street, Christiansburg

**May 10 – Mother's day hike at Claytor Lake state park, time unknown**

Join Brenda Graff to spot wildflowers along our meandering trails on Mothers Day. Discuss the wildflowers native to the park and learn how to identify them. Be the first to spot pink lady slippers, trilliums and more. Meet at the DGIF Public boat ramp on Bear Drive which is the road before the contact station (where you pay to enter the state park). Parking fee is not required at this location.

**May 25 to July 31 - Mountain Lake Biological Station summer courses, all day**

Four intensive summer courses will be presented this summer. One of them is titled “Natural history of the Appalachians”. There is a price and courses may be audited. For details see: <https://mlbs.virginia.edu/summercourses>

**June 27 - National Forest Appreciation Day at Pandapas Pond, 10 am to 1 pm**

Always the last Saturday in June, NFADay is a relaxing time when members of our Chapter man a table next to the pond for about 3 hours and interact with any visitors that come by. We talk to people and share our knowledge and love of native plants and animals.