

New River News

January 2021

New River Chapter, VNPS

A word from the president

It is finally a new year. 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 again.

2020 was a very tumultuous year with the covid-19 pandemic, the economy tanking, black lives matter protests, and the presidential election happening. 2021 will get better but it may take time before it is safe enough to meet together in person for our chapter meetings and our field trips. Meanwhile we will continue having zoom sessions for our meetings and practicing social distancing anytime we get together outside for walking together, working in pollinator gardens or other volunteer opportunities. Being outdoors certainly is better than being cooped up indoors.

Last year a total of 26 people joined our chapter which is eight more than joined in 2019. We had a total of 98 members as of January 1, 2021 and 80 members as of January 1, 2020. So our chapter is slowly growing each year.

In order for people to get to know each other better, I propose that anyone that is interested let me know (e-mail me at graff_brenda@hotmail.com) what your interests are with our chapter and I will publish that information in our list-serve with our February list of events along with contact information such as your phone and/or e-mail address. For instance I am interested in helping with local pollinator gardens, with the Plant SW Virginia natives campaign, and our fall is for planting natives plant sale. Your interests can include volunteering at Claytor Lake state park, walking in the local parks, removing invasive plants, or any other topics you can think of.

Last year we added a youtube channel that will have recorded videos of our chapter meetings that were held on zoom. Our youtube channel is listed in our chapter website at vnps.org/newriver/ so anyone that is not able to attend a chapter meeting can view it later. Recently the state VNPS switched their videos from youtube to vimeo which is located at <https://vimeo.com/vnps/> and their social media symbol is on most pages of their website. There are ten videos so far and include the one from last week by Chris Ludwig on “Conserving Virginia's native plants” and another one on the “spring wildflowers of the mid-Atlantic region”.

We were not able to hold any field trips last year but were able to help out with a limited number of projects following social distancing guidelines. These included a very successful Fall is for planting natives plant sale in September, planting wildflower gardens at Claytor Lake state park in May, pulling invasive plants at Claytor Lake state park in July, and volunteering at Stadium Woods, Depot Park and Pandapas Pond. We also started two pollinator gardens at the YMCA in Blacksburg. Some events

that we usually volunteer for went virtual last year such as the Hokie Bugfest and Forest appreciation day but we did help out with them as usual.

Our treasurer, Carol Schwobel, reminds members that they can find their renewal date on their address label of their print newsletter from the state. Each member that joins or renews has 1/3 of their payment sent to this chapter. That is the main source of income for our chapter. The board is currently working on several perks for members only. But we are always grateful for new members who can easily join by filling out an application at: <https://vnps.org/select-membership-type/> or they can contact our treasurer at nrchaptervnps@gmail.com

Jackie Brown has volunteered to be the webmaster for our website at vnps.org/newriver/. She has added several improvements. For all contacts, including board members, she has removed their e-mail addresses (so they can't be hacked which two of us have been) and replaced them with a contact form that goes directly to the person or our nrchaptervnps@gmail.com address. She has added a donate to our chapter page and a form if people want to send newsletter articles to me.

We hope to add a section this spring that will list local pollinator gardens, invasive plant pulls, and other projects that need volunteers. And the form for local youth and school organizations to apply for our pollinator garden grants whose money comes from our Fall is for planting natives sales.

Meanwhile I will continue sending out a monthly list of events. In addition you are welcome to send posts to our list-serve about flowers you see at local parks which you would like to share. And send photos of various native plants to place in our chapter website.

Brenda Graff

Everyone please stay safe and healthy in the new year.

Winter/Spring Programs

These are the New River chapter programs for 2021 so far. Note that we usually end with April but have decided to include a May meeting this year. If you have any ideas for speakers for this fall or for 2022, please send details to Brenda Graff at graff_brenda@hotmail.com. Until it is safe to do so, we will continue to hold these meetings via Zoom. The Zoom password details will be sent to members about two weeks before each meeting. Non-members will have to send a request for the Zoom password to nrchaptervnps@gmail.com.

January 12 Use of Flora of VA App

We will watch a prerecorded powerpoint presentation titled “**The Flora of Virginia Mobile App Overview with Marion Lobstein & Sally Anderson**”. Both presenters are members of the [Flora of Virginia project](#) and will show us how to use this app more effectively. The app itself costs \$20 but it is worth it and will be updated regularly. There

was a major update the last week in December 2020. If you missed this meeting, the powerpoint can be seen at: <https://vimeo.com/vnps/>

February 9 San Diego Botanic Garden – Virtual Tour

We have arranged a winter treat for you—via Zoom we will visit the SDB Garden at our regular program time (7 pm). Don't know exactly what to expect, or how it will go, but it will be interesting. The SDBG started making videos featuring parts of their collection when pandemic restrictions cut down on visitation. All programs are one hour. These videos are not based on walks through sections of the garden, but more on topics. We chose "California Natives (19 min.)," and "Proteaceae (30 min)." The family Proteaceae is prominent in the Southern Hemisphere, especially Australia and South Africa, but also India, and SE Asia. The format for this program will be: a docent will give a short introduction to the SDBG, then we will view the videos, and the session will end with a question and answer exchange with the docent (if there is time).

March 9 Students Report on Stadium Woods Research

Presentation by Allen Milby, Chrissie Herzog, and Jordan Metzgar

Cryptogams such as mosses, liverworts, and fungi are very understudied compared to their vascular counterparts, especially in urban forest habitats. We documented the bryophyte floras for two on-campus forests at Virginia Tech through exhaustive collecting, including 22 new records for Montgomery County. We then compared and contrasted the bryophyte flora of Stadium Woods, an old-growth stand that has been used extensively by the university, with that of Center Woods, a secondary growth forest that has experienced less frequent disturbance. Currently, we are also creating a mushroom flora for Stadium Woods and will contrast our results with other published mushroom floras. This project will document the mushrooms growing in our local forests and improve our understanding of Virginia's fungal flora. Our fungal collections are being uploaded to iNaturalist. You can view them, add your own observations, or help us ID specimens at this link: <https://bit.ly/VTfungi>.

April 13 How to Choose a Good Garden Sign

So—you have invested time and money to make a pollinator garden. Now how do you get your message across? Did you remember to put money for some signs in your budget? What type of signs will last?

May 11 Ian Canton—Propagation of Native Plants: How To

This lecture is an introduction to the techniques and challenges of collecting, storing,

sowing and growing your own native plants. Growing your own plants from seed can be a fun and rewarding way to produce large numbers of plants for your garden for relatively little cost. But many people are not familiar with the best ways to do so successfully. How to time collection and sowing properly in order to overcome seed dormancy. How to properly store seeds so they do not lose viability. What tools will be needed and what to do after you have successfully germinated your seeds.

Board Meeting held on November 14, 2020

We decided we will have chapter meetings in January and May but still skip the summer months of June to August. The status of the following programs was given: side 2 of the Wong Park sign, Plant SW Va natives campaign, and the grants for local pollinator gardens for youth based on the money we received at our Fall is for planting native plants sale. Beth Umberger reported that the VNPS states that if you rescue plants from construction sites, you must propagate them before you can sell them so people don't reduce the populations in the wild. Several ideas were discussed to give members only perks. Only nine members completed the poll for social media used and it was decided that we will continue placing photos into the chapter website and not into Instagram. A new project for "no mowing" in Blacksburg was proposed and more details will have to be looked into before we can discuss it again. Several board members volunteered to help with four different committees ie. program, publicity, members and invasive plant removal. The next board meeting will be in February. Contact Brenda Graff at graff_brenda@hotmail.com if you have any input for the board members.

Status of Planting SW Virginia Natives Campaign by Nicole Hersch

I gave a brief talk during the December chapter meeting on Tuesday, December 8. I mentioned that the campaign is partnering with the Hale Community Garden in Blacksburg to create and share propagation tables for the use of our campaign, the local master gardeners and anyone else that would like to use them. I have applied for a \$200,00 grant from Virginia Outdoor Foundation to be used for our regional plant guide and should learn later this year if we got it. My December talk can be viewed from minutes 8 to 12 on our youtube channel at:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCC0xV2LLc4XjltHhAlpdtug>

The main product of our campaign will be a regional plant guide similar to others across the state which can be viewed at: <https://www.plantvirginianatives.org>. I used the 277 species listed in the Virginia Mountain region version of the brochure created by the Virginia Dept of Conservation and Recreation and the VNPS titled "Native Plants for Conservation, Restoration and Landscaping (available at <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/document/mtn-nat-plants.pdf>). I would like to get help reviewing those 277 plants and get your opinion about which ones should be included and

which should be excluded. A spreadsheet is available from graff_brenda@hotmail.com which you can edit and send back to me at nicole@nrvc.org before the **deadline of February 15**. I found a class at Tech that is going to build out the plant guide for us based on the vetted short list of plants our local experts have identified and they need time to finish this project before their class ends this semester.

So, here is what I need from you:

1. Scroll to the right and write your name at the top of a column (I have done mine as an example).
2. Scroll down the plant list and make notes about any plants you want included. You can use any method of notation you deem appropriate. I just put an x, because I am still getting to know these plants, but if you have additional info or ideas please include it.
For instance if you think a whole genus should be highlighted like Solidago--note it. Or if you think a species is easy to propagate (or are for advanced gardeners only) or easy or hard to find in nurseries, or local provenance seed stock is easily accessible, please note it. If you know specific insects or other wildlife that feed or nectar on the plant, list it along with their common and scientific names. If you have photos and are willing to share them, make a note.
3. Feel free to share this spreadsheet and list with other plant experts.
4. If a key plant for our region is not covered in this list, please add it with a note at the end of the list.

Propagation tables at Hale Community Gardens by Nicole Hersch

You may or may not have heard that I applied for a \$500 Master Gardener Grant to build a series of propagation tables at the Hale Community Garden. The tables are for the native plant propagation program, but will be open for other groups to use as well.

I just heard that the campaign will be awarded the funds!!!

I have been given several suggestions of groups or individuals who might be interested in designing the tables and leading the build of them. This would be as a volunteer as the funds are only for materials. So hopefully someone will start building the propagation tables this spring.

Donations needed for live stakes farm by Nicole Hersch

Dormant season is an exciting one because it means it is live stake season. Live stakes are a great and inexpensive way to propagate native riparian species from dormant cuttings of native trees and shrubs! The Plant SWVA Natives Campaign is interested in propagating a select group of native species that do particularly well as live stakes. We are looking to start collecting these species this winter.

Have questions about live stakes? Check out [this video](#) put together

by the New River Conservancy and Foggy Mountain Nursery at <https://www.newriverwatershed.org/allies>

We are interested in collecting local provenance (as much as possible) of the following species:

Black Willow (*Salix nigra*)
Silky Dogwood (*Cornus amomum*)
Silky Willow (*Salix sericea*)
Nine Bark (*Physocarpus opulifolius*)
Elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis*)
Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*)

Do you have any of these plants growing wild in your yard? Do you know of any wild sources? Do you have any of these plants that you purchased? That is great too! I just want to make sure we label as wild vs cultivated varieties. If you need help identifying these species, visit the Virginia Tech Dendrology Factsheets website at <http://dendro.cnre.vt.edu/dendrology/factsheets.cfm>

Live stake cuttings are taken from mature plants during the dormant season. Cuttings are ideal at 1/2" - 1" diameter and 6" - 12" or more in length.

Please reach out to me if you have any plant stock to share or know someone who might. Cuttings can be taken from now until about bud break. Please reach out via email (nicole@nrvc.org) or phone/text (619-379-4354). Contact Nicole before you take cuttings as there are a few things to remember--like noting which side of the cutting is "down" and making sure the branches don't dehydrate after cutting. If you do happen to take some cuttings, stick them in a pot of moist soil or wrap the bottoms in moist newspaper.

Thanks in advance for your help contributing to this project.

Pink, Yellow, and Blue. And New.

By Mary Rhoades

Here is a short review of the three new wildflowers I have spotted in Pulaski County. If they grow here, they probably will soon be seen in neighboring counties, so these lovely plants are something to look for when you are out and about this spring and summer.

I found the first two flowers at Claytor Lake State Park, and both had never been reported west of the Piedmont before. Their habitats could not be more different! All three of the flowers mentioned here now have voucher specimens in the Massey Herbarium at Virginia Tech, and The Digital Atlas of the Virginia Flora shows them occurring in Pulaski County.

Houstonia pusilla (Tiny Bluet), was the first find. Its flowers range from deep pink to white--with a maroon center. Bloom time is late March to early April. The easiest place to see it is in front of the

Meeting Facility at the park. It has probably escaped notice because it is very small, and grows in areas of mowed grass. Most of us don't go looking for wildflowers in lawns.

This past summer I saw a new plant growing abundantly on various sizes of driftwood in one of the coves at the park. It was a challenge to identify because there were flowers with 5, 6, and 7 petals. With the help of Jordan Metzgar this flower was determined to be *Ludwigia leptocarpa* (Angle-stem Primrose-willow). Flowers are bright yellow, and about 1/2 to 3/4 inch across, and the plants grow about a foot high. Bloom time is August into September. I talked about this flower during our December chapter meeting which you can view at our youtube channel at:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCC0xV2LLc4XjltHhAlpdtug>

The third flower was a new record for Pulaski County, but no surprise because it has been recorded from both Montgomery and Wythe Counties. It was *Phacelia purshii* (Miami-mist), with pale blue petals that are fringed on the edges. Bloom time for it is May to June. Over several years *Phacelia dubia* has been increasing in abundance at the state park, but I have never seen *P. purshii* there. I found *P. purshii* while I was walking on the Dora Highway Trail. That trail goes from the train depot in Pulaski out to connect with the terminus of the New River Trail. If you haven't walked on this trail, do try it. The trail goes along Peak Creek and is quite pleasant. However, the Town of Pulaski has done major work on this trail within the past year, including regrading several sections which are often washed out when Peak Creek floods, so I am not sure if *P. purshii* is still there.

Three photos of the wildflowers listed above are in the photos section of this website.

Donations for local native plant charities

Many of our local research stations such as the Mountain Lake Biological Station and other plant-related organizations such as the Hahn horticulture garden at VT are struggling to survive after having shut down from the covid-19 pandemic last year. If you have ever visited them and are able to donate something to them please do so at either <https://mlbs.virginia.edu/thepowerofplace> or <https://mlbs.virginia.edu/thepowerofplace>. Or any other native plant organizations you feel close to.