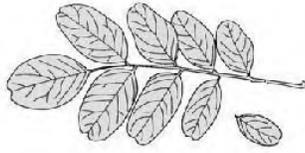


The



Leaflet

2024 VNPS Piedmont Chapter Annual Meeting

WINTER 2024

article by Nan McCarry and photos by Nancy Vehrs

We had beautiful, if dry, weather as 28 members of the VNPS Piedmont Chapter convened at the State Arboretum of Virginia at Blandly on October 19. Emily Southgate was re-elected as chapter president, and a slate of directors was approved by the membership (listed on page 2).

While socializing and enjoying appetizers, we learned about projects happening in our chapter. Once again, Emily and Tim Faltemeier of Three Fox Winery have underwritten grants to benefit native plants in Fauquier County. Grants this year were awarded to Clifton Institute (local-ecotype propagation), Mountain Vista Governors' School (student native plant projects), and the Friends of Sky Meadows and Faire Meddow farm (seed drills for both).

This year the Chapter sponsored two rare plants through the Center for Plant Conservation in memory of Jocelyn Sladen. The plants are Torrey's Mountain Mint (*Pyncnanthemum torreyi*) and Addison's Leatherflower (*Clematis addisonii*), both federally listed. You can still donate to increase these endowments at <https://vnps.org/piedmont/jocelyn-sladen-memorial-fund/>.

The Piedmont chapter led popular walks throughout the year and hosted the Winter Speaker Series. This year we co-sponsored a showing of Hometown Habitat at Blandly and made donations to three summer nature camps. More details of the year's activities can be found in the Annual Meeting Report.

The Society wants to reach a more diverse population, and with that in mind, members are invited to participate in state-level Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice (DEIJ) meetings on the last Wednesday of each month from 6:30 to 7:30 pm. Melody Starya Mobley, a member of the Piedmont chapter, is the Chair of the society's DEIJ committee, and said a few words at the meeting about her work. Read more about Melody's journey as the first African American female forester with the U.S. Forest Service at https://vnps.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2022/07/Sempervirens-Summer-2022.pdf. The state committee has budgeted \$1,000 to spend by the end of this year; Emily challenged chapter members to create a project.



T'ai Roulston (r.) leads walk



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The Virginia Native Plant Society (VNPS), founded as the Virginia Wildflower Society in 1982, is a non-profit organization of people who share an interest in Virginia's wild plants and habitats and a concern for their protection.

The Piedmont Chapter is a sub-group of VNPS in the northern point of Virginia east of the Blue Ridge Mountains. It includes Loudoun, Fauquier, Culpeper, Rappahannock, Warren, Clarke, and Frederick counties.

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The Leaflet can be seen online in color at www.vnps.org/piedmont

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2024 VNPS Piedmont Chapter Annual Meeting (continued)

T'ai Roulston, Arboretum Curator, gave a talk on Blandy's history, projects, and partnerships. A highlight was the history of the Pawpaw Trail. Only recently has it become known that Blandy's first director and plant geneticist Dr. Orland E. White put in a pawpaw orchard that contains highly prized cultivars. Blandy will be increasing signage and highlighting their Pawpaw Trail in the upcoming year.

T'ai also told us about work on Butternut (*Juglans cinerea*). Butternut is threatened in two ways: by hybridization with the Japanese walnut, and by butternut canker disease. His team has collected nuts from local farms, had the leaves of these trees genotyped to find out which ones are pure, unhybridized butternut, and is growing the nuts in a test orchard at Blandy. These trees will be monitored to see which ones do not succumb to canker, thus allowing selection for canker-resistant pure butternut trees.

Afterward, T'ai led a walk featuring the Native Plant Trail and the new local-ecotype native plant bed installed this past year by Jack Monsted and volunteers. Along the Native Plant Trail, which Sally Anderson has worked on, we saw beautiful fall foliage on the Cucumber Magnolia (*Magnolia acuminata*) and American Hornbeam (*Carpinus caroliniana*).

An Afternoon Nature Journaling by Lori Kesner

Our spirits were sunny on, September 26, an overcast day as our group met Eleanor Harris for a class on Nature Journaling. The backdrop was a 900-acre field station, which includes forests, grasslands, shrub fields, and wetlands that are permanently protected under a conservation easement known as the Clifton Institute.



Eleanor stated she has learned more about plants through nature journaling than through any other means. She encouraged us to

- Slow down
- Reconnect with Nature (unleash the curious child inside all of us)
- Document what you observe

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An Afternoon Nature Journaling (continued)

Eleanor believes anyone can harness this powerful tool to make lasting memories and learn about plants. This was evident by the journal masterpieces produced by those who attended the class.

If you were unable to attend her class in person, Eleanor has some journaling information on the Clifton Institute website and some YouTube videos available.

Stay curious and enjoy...

"Between every two pines is a doorway into a new world." John Muir Laws

Wenger Cove Forest Walk, September 14 text and photos by Sally Anderson

Many thanks to our hosts Mike and Joyce Wenger for a wonderful event. They have preserved and created trails on the edge of The Peak, a Rappahannock County landmark. There are also multiple native plantings around the home, and a great deal of work has been done on invasive plant removal throughout the property.

We had a larger-than-normal group with the intention that people could choose to walk the area around the house or the steep trail up the hillside, and there were ways to peel off of the hill when a person's limit was reached. The whole thing was one of the harder hikes we have done, but extremely rewarding. The trails were marked with painted stone slabs, and some small boardwalks crossed rocky or wet places.

The day was sunny and lovely, as fall can be in our counties. While many of the blooms seen were members of the Aster family, we also found leaves and fruits from spring and summer seasons, and many tree species, including an enormous Black Birch (*Betula lenta*). The trail crosses through multiple natural community types based on steepness, aspect, and geology. These conditions mean that a plant list would include nearly everything that grows in the woods!

The walk was ended at a beautiful terrace looking out at native plantings and some refreshments.



Pawpaw



Black Birch



Great North Mountain Walk, November 9 by Natalie Izlar

The VNPS Piedmont Chapter facilitated a walk on the Eagle Rock section of the Tuscarora Trail. Board members Sally Anderson and Natalie Izlar led the group up to the overlook and observed alive and dead parts of the leftover understory along the way including Panicked Hawkweed (*Hieracium paniculatum*), Striped Wintergreen (*Chimaphila maculata*), Trailing Arbutus (*Epigaea repens*), and Running Cedar (*Diphasiastrum digitatum*).

We also worked at identifying trees and shrubs once the leaves are gone or on the ground, including the difference between a Chestnut Oak (*Quercus montana*) leaf and an American Chestnut (*Castanea dentata*) leaf. We looked at Witch Hazel



Trailing Arbutus



(*Hamamelis virginiana*), a treat this time of year with its blooms, buds, fruits, and galls. We saw Pitch Pine (*Pinus rigida*) with a tuft of epicormic sprouts around its base and compared it to Table Mountain



Pitch Pine

Pine (*Pinus pungens*) with its overlarge, spikey cones. When we reached the top, we saw the remnants of a wildfire that had swept through the week before.

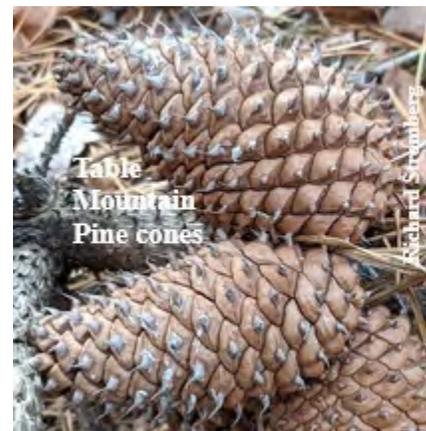


Table Mountain Pine cones

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Registration notices for Chapter events will be sent out three weeks before the event.

Tuesday	Dec 3	2-4pm	Piedmont Chapter Business Meeting
Clarke County. Blandy Experimental Farm Library. All Chapter members are welcome to join the Chapter Board at these Meetings.			
Saturday	Dec 14	1pm	Walk at Sweet Run State Lunch
Fauquier County. Identifying plants in winter. For more information contact piedmontvnps@gmail.com			
Tuesday	Jan 7	2-4pm	Piedmont Chapter Business Meeting
Clarke County. Blandy Experimental Farm Library. All Chapter members are welcome to join the Chapter Board at these Meetings.			
Saturday	Jan 11	1pm	Warren Memorial Hospital Trail Walk
Warren County Walk on the Andreae Family Wellness & Recreation Trails.			
Sunday	Jan 26	1pm	Winter Speaker Series: Seedlings
Fauquier County. Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Delaplane. Animal patterns tend to dominate our interest and our fashions, from leopard spots to zebra stripes, but those are just for show. The patterns found in plants are much more interesting! By learning about patterns in the plant kingdom we can better understand what problems plants are trying to solve, from how plants package their seeds to how trees share space in the forest, and just how "smart" they really are. In this talk Eleanor Harris, Co-Director of the Clifton Institute and mathematical enthusiast, will share some of her favorite mathematical patterns in nature and where you too can find them.			
Tuesday	Feb 4	2-4pm	Piedmont Chapter Business Meeting
Clarke County. Blandy Experimental Farm Library. All Chapter members are welcome to join the Chapter Board at these Meetings.			
Saturday	Feb 8	1pm	Skunk Cabbage Walk
Place to look for blooming Skunk Cabbage is still to be determined			
Sunday	Feb 23	1pm	Winter Speaker Series: Identifying Plants
Fauquier County. Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Delaplane. Master Naturalist Richard Stromberg will talk about tools to help you identify plants and how the identifications can be used.			
Tuesday	Mar 4	2-4pm	Piedmont Chapter Business Meeting
Clarke County. Blandy Experimental Farm Library. All Chapter members are welcome to join the Chapter Board at these Meetings.			

Great North Mountain Walk (continued)



**Eagle Rock
Overlook**



Wildfire Experiences article & photos by Richard Stromberg

When the VNPS Piedmont Chapter wanted to do a flower walk on Great North Mountain, I suggested the section of the Tuscarora Trail from Dry Gap to Eagle Rock. It has become one of my and my wife’s favorite hike since we moved to Winchester. The view from Eagle Rock, about a mile from the parking lot at Dry Gap is spectacular. The trail is floristically interesting. The way up to the overlook has many Downy Rattlesnake-plantain orchid (*Goodyera pubescens*) plants, though the white-veined leaves were covered with leaf litter in November. In spring Pink Lady's-slippers (*Cypripedium acaule*) show up. Continuing past the overlook a couple of miles two years ago, my wife and I counted 53 blooms. In summer, just before the overlook, a large population of Whorled Loosestrife (*Lysimachia quadrifolia*) blooms. Two miles beyond the overlook is a broad powerline opening. Besides views to both sides, it has a large clump of Bristly Sarsaparilla (*Aralia hispida*), that is listed as imperiled (S2) in Virginia.

On November 1, my wife and I started up the trail, but, three quarters of the way to the overlook, a large off-road vehicle came towards us. It was a West Virginia Division of Forestry vehicle. The two foresters in it told us there was an active wildfire at the overlook. So, we turned around. When we got back to the car, a fire truck from Mountain Falls, Va., was there. We hiked the other way on the trail. When we got back to the parking lot, we found a huge, temporary, water tank filled with water—and no one there.



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Wildfire Experiences (continued)

We went back to Eagle Rock two days later to see what happened from the wildfire. We made it to the overlook where the fire had been stopped, but some spots on the ground were still smoking. Virginia Foresters turned us back. The trail follows the state line most of the time. The fire was entirely on the right (east) side of the trail, so the burn was in Virginia.



We went back to see the remnants of the fire November 9. This time we could continue past the overlook. The trail had served as a fire break, and a couple hundred meters beyond the overlook we saw where the firefighters had cleared a break through the woods to the right. The ground was blackened. As with most fires here, the fire had not gone up into the canopy. The understory is filled with Mountain Laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*). Strangely to me, Mountain Laurel leaves several feet off the ground were not burned black, but were completely brown. On the other side of the trail, they were still green. Looking east from the overlook, we saw smoke billowing in Fort Valley in the Massanutten Mountains. Shortly thereafter, I got a notice on my phone about the fire there. The Eagle Rock fire burned 25 acres; the Massanutten fire, eventually, 195 acres. On our way back from the overlook, we encountered the Piedmont Chapter walkers.





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Curlyheads (Clematis ochroleuca)



**Witch Hazel leaf with nipple galls,
made by the witch hazel gall aphid
(*Hormaphis hamamelidis*)**

Richard Stromberg

Witch Hazel blooms, buds, and fruits



Richard Stromberg