

The



Leaflet

Piedmont Chapter Annual Meeting by Sally Andereson

WINTER 2025

Our Piedmont Chapter Annual Meeting takes place in October each year. We find a venue that has picnic facilities and a place to walk a little afterwards and look at plants.

This year our meeting place was at Three Fox Vineyards and Farm Brewery in Delaplane, a venue owned by Dr. Emily Faltemier. She is the generous funder of our Fauquier County grants program, as well as a native plant enthusiast who has landscaped the grounds around the main building with native species and was available to speak to the meeting about the grant finding and her own landscape priorities. She then handed our checks to the grant recipients.



Recipient Mary Ashton from the Warrenton Antiquarian Society described her previous work from a grant in 2023 that produced documentation and brochures of native plants at Weston and the Department of Wildlife Resources' adjacent Weston Wildlife Management Area near Casanova, and her plans for a video on the subject using the current grant. (continued on page 2)



Piedmont Chapter Annual Meeting (continued)

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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Bert Harris

Richard Stromberg

Bert Harris of Clifton Institute gave a recap of projects supported by the Piedmont Chapter so far at Clifton Institute near Warrenton (both from grants and other projects) and the plans for demonstration meadow plots using the new grant.



Mary Ashton

Richard Stromberg

As part of our regular business, a Treasurer's report, financial statement and budget for the upcoming year were presented. President Emily Southgate gave a report of the activities of our chapter in the previous year, including grants to nature camps, walks, programs, outreach events and the interesting discussions we have added to liven up our monthly business meetings. Elections were held for our new and returning slate of board members, whose 2-year terms run with the administrative year from November 1 to October 31 (see list a bottom left).



Spiderwort

Nancy Years

Meanwhile, we picnicked on BYO lunches and tucked into a table full of treats provided by board members. Then we walked the grounds identifying plants like Milkweeds (*Asclepias* spp.) and the many clumps of Little Bluestem grass (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) by their seeds, but one



Little Bluestem

Richard Stromberg

Spiderwort (*Tradescantia virginiana*) was still blooming.

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Native plants around building

Richard Stromberg



The Andrae Family Wellness and Recreation Trail by Karen Hendershot

The Andrae Family Wellness and Recreation Trail adjoins the grounds of Warren Memorial Hospital in Front Royal. The trail was a gift to the community and medical workers, providing a space for respite and exercise in nature. On a warm November 8, seventeen walk participants were led by Natalie Izlar, botany specialist with Virginia Working Landscapes, with Chapter President and historical ecologist, Emily Southgate, and botanist extraordinaire, Sally Anderson, providing additional support for our large group.

We weren't yet out of the hospital parking lot when Natalie spotted a planted Serviceberry (*Amelanchier sp.*), most likely a hybrid. She prompted us to look closely at the buds and see the white fuzz resembling eyelashes around the scales, an identifier of the genus.



Toward the beginning of our path, stood a solitary American Holly (*Ilex opaca*). Its specific epithet means dull, referring to leaves that are not shiny like those of some nonnative or cultivated hollies. It was also a sign that we were likely in acidic terrain, something confirmed by the shrubs throughout. Mountain Laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*) brightened the path with green, waxy evergreen leaves and was accompanied by Northern Low-bush Blueberries (*Vaccinium angustifolium*), some of whose slender green branches still retained a few fading leaves. Sally Anderson also found Maleberry (*Lyonia ligustrina*), another acid-loving shrub, with fruits that persist through the winter (a toughness from which its name is derived, although women may not agree).



The forest was amazingly clear of invasives and full of mature, as well as very young trees. The young deciduous trees still held their leaves, allowing a close look at Northern Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*), Chestnut Oak (*Q. montana*), and Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*), the last notable for having both big and small teeth. Emily explained that the process of abscission (shedding) of the leaves requires a lot of energy, not yet fully developed in the younger trees.



Almost as if we were walking on ball bearings, we negotiated a path strewn with acorns, as Oaks (*Quercus spp.*) were dominant in this forest. Clustered buds at the twig tips characterize Oaks. We found members of both White and Red Oak subgenera of the Oak genus.

White Oak subgenus leaf lobes and buds are rounded and acorns sprout in the fall. Many acorns were already sinking roots into the soil. Chestnut Oaks, a species fond of acidic soil, were abundant. Its leaves are similar to American Chestnut (*Castanea dentata*) but somewhat broader with round-tipped lobes. (continued on page 4)





The Andrae Family Wellness and Recreation Trail (continued)

Chestnut leaf lobes are pointed. Chestnut Oak bark is deeply ridged. The White Oak species (*Quercus alba*) has clearly lobed leaves and shaggy bark.

Red Oak subgenus leaves are pointed with bristles at the tips, described by Natalie as claw-like. The acorns sprout in the spring. Sally Anderson pointed out a Northern Red Oak with bark that looks like ski trail running vertically. We also saw a large Black Oak with rough scaly bark, and we believe we saw Pin Oaks (*Quercus palustris*) deeper in the woods with twigs looking like pins on the branches. Pin oaks are happiest in damp conditions (the descriptor of the Latin names means “of marshes or swampy”) but occasionally find a place on drier ridges.



Bill Moore asked Emily roughly how old she thought the forest to be and she suggested about 80 years, lacking truly large trees. Another sign that it was relatively young was the presence of numerous Virginia Pines (*P. virginiana*), which are an early successional species. They have small female cones (less than 2-3/4 inches long), two slightly twisted needles per fascicle, and scaly bark. (continued on page 5)





Registration notices for Chapter events will be sent out three weeks before the event. Business meetings will conclude with a discussion of a current topic. Members are encouraged to join us.

| | | | |
|--|---------------|--------------|--|
| Saturday | Dec 13 | 1pm | Lichen Walk |
| Fauquier County. Walk at the Wildcat Mountain near Warrenton looking for lichen led by Clifton Institute Director Bert Harris. | | | |
| Tuesday | Jan.6 | 3-5pm | 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 10 | 1pm | Blandy Tree Walk |
| Clarke County. Walk at the State Arboretum led by Julie Olechnicki, Arboretum Specialist | | | |
| Sunday | Jan 25 | 2pm | Winter Speaker Series: Reading Forests |
| Fauquier County. Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Delaplane. by Jack Monsted, Assistant Curator, Native Plant Trail at The State Arboretum at Blandy. | | | |
| Tuesday | Feb. 3 | 3-5pm | 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 14 | 1pm | Sweet Run State Park Walk |
| Loudoun County. Look for Skunk Cabbage in Sweet Run State Park | | | |
| Sunday | Feb 22 | 2pm | Winter Speaker Series: Reading the Grasslands |
| Fauquier County. Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Delaplane. Charlotte Lorick, Head of Biodiversity Conservation, at Oak Spring Garden Foundation. | | | |
| Tuesday | Mar 3 | 3-5pm | Piedmont Chapter Business Meeting |
| Clarke County. Blandy Experimental Farm Library. All Chapter members are welcome to join the Chapter Board at these Meetings. | | | |

The Andreae Family Wellness and Recreation Trail (continued)

Black Gum (also called Black Tupelo or Sour Gum -- *Nyssa sylvatica*) favors acidic conditions though it tolerates many soil types. Its dark blue berries and shiny oblong leaves, bright red in Fall, were gone, but Natalie pointed out the furrowed bark and alternate branching at almost a 90-degree angle from the trunk. In the distance we saw what was likely Beech tree (*Fagus grandifolia*), only beginning to turn from green to yellow. Emily noted that the Beech is a northern tree at the southern end of its range in our area. More tolerant of shorter days and colder temperatures, it drops its leaves later in the Fall. A couple of Sassafras trees (*Sassafras albidum*) also graced the forest, their three types of leaves (oval and two-or-three-lobed mitten shapes).



Black Gum

Karen Hendershot



Yellow Wild Indigo

Richard Stromberg

A forest community consists not only of trees and shrubs, but also forbs (broad-leaved flowering plants), graminoids (grasses, sedges, and rushes), and vines. Natalie found a Yellow Wild Indigo (*Baptisia tinctoria*), with pea-like leaves characteristic of its family. It will have bright yellow flowers in the spring/summer.



Sassafras

Richard Stromberg

(continued on page 6)



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**The Andraea Family Wellness and Recreation Trail
(continued)**



Curlyheads (*Clematis ochroleuca*)



Poverty Oat Grass

Karen Hendershot



Witchgrass

Karen Hendershot

Witchgrass (*Dichanthelium* spp.), happy in woodland settings, dotted our pathway. Sally also noticed some clumps of Poverty Oat Grass (*Danthonia spicata*), fun to see for its curlicue strands.

Striped Wintergreen (*Chimaphila maculata*) peeked up through the fallen leaves in several places. While its dainty white blossoms hang downward, the fruit points straight up. Common Greenbrier (*Smilax rotundifolia*), happy in a wide range of habitats, wound its way among the trees and shrubs with sharp thorns on green vines. Its black berries and a few yellowed leaves were still visible. As we finished our walk, we enjoyed a few more interesting bits of botany. Tall Boneset (*Eupatorium altissimum*), Frost Aster (*Symphotrichum pilosum*), and Gray Goldenrod (*Solidago nemoralis*) were still in bloom at forest edge. Ed Clark even ventured into a ravine to investigate the evergreen leaves of Trailing Arbutus (*Epigaea repens*).

The Andraea Trail is not just for wellness and recreation but is also a delight for botany enthusiasts.



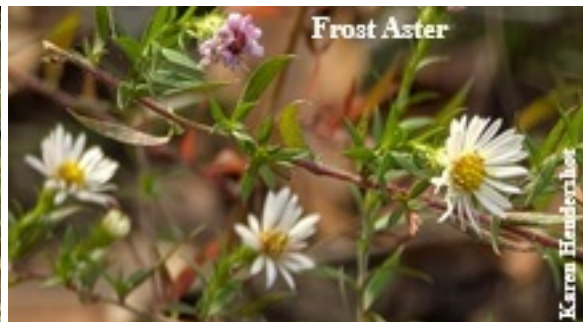
Striped Wintergreen

Karen Hendershot



Tall Boneset

Karen Hendershot



Frost Aster

Karen Hendershot