

The



Leaflet

The President's Corner—Marjorie Prochaska

SPRING 2011

Is it my imagination, or has this winter been colder than last? We've had a brisk three months, and I, for one, am happy to greet the longer, warmer days.

I was in Shenandoah National Park in February on a trail I had never hiked on before—up the Thornton River to the site of the old Hull School. We saw numerous leaves of *Hepatica americana*, and one sharp-eyed hiker found one in bloom. The trail is an easy hike up an old road bed, and the woods were full of beech trees, so we saw many clusters of Beech Drops (*Epifagus virginiana*). However cold the winter has been, conditions must have been pretty good for Puttyroot (*Aplectrum hyemale*), because we saw its leaves everywhere. I intend to repeat this hike in a few weeks when I have my 12-year-old grandson visiting during his spring break.

Last summer several of us pressed plants collected from the meadow at Blandy Farm. This was part of a Virginia Master Naturalist project to contribute to the establishment of a herbarium at Blandy. Beginning in January, under the direction of Blandy curator T'ai Roulston, ten of us began mounting the plants. We each experienced our own learning curve, as we grew more confident in arranging and securing the plant on archival paper. Now we are into the fun stuff—correctly identifying what we have collected. Brenda Crawford, Mary Keith Ruffner, Robin Williams, Cathy Mayes, Sally Anderson, Kristin Zimet, Carrie Blair, Laure Wallace and Blanca Vandervoort have all participated. This is an on-going project which we may have to put on hold for a few months while we are enticed out-of-doors to view the spring blooming.



Kristen Zimet & Carrie Blair
identifying pressed plants

Several of us drove down to Charlottesville to attend a seminar sponsored by the Piedmont Landscape Association, a trade group. The draw for us were two of the speakers: Doug Tallamy and Michael Dirr. Professor Tallamy continues to make a convincing case for planting natives in the domestic landscape. Dirr, author of *Dirr's Hardy Trees and Shrubs*, spoke to what he referred to as “noble” trees, trees that no yard, no town, no campus, no landscape ought to be without. These are the grand trees, the forever trees, the trees that if you could only plant one, are the trees to consider. There were many natives among what he recommended. He spoke again after lunch, this time devoting his talk to the breeding and marketing of new shrubs so appealing to the nursery trade. They were gorgeous, but not native, so we have our work to do. For every hybrid or cultivar out there, there is a native which can perform as well or better. It is up to us to never flag in our zeal to promote the use of natives in the domestic landscape.

Earlier this year, your Board was pleased to donate \$3000 to the *Flora of Virginia* project. Combined with previously donated monies, this action permits us to sponsor another family in the *Flora*, this time *Cornaceae*. The Piedmont chapter also sponsors *Ranunculaceae*. Lastly, your Board has committed the Piedmont Chapter to conduct a plant inventory of the herbs and shrubs at Sky Meadows State Park and to develop plant lists. Like the plant mounting, this will be a multi-year project. The trees there have already been inventoried and will be the subject of our Second Sunday hike March 13. Join us then.



Native Planting for Butterflies—Robin Williams

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 geographically defined 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 in color online at www.vnps.org/piedmont

The Chapter's email address is piedmontvnps@gmail.com

The Leaflet Editor
Richard Stromberg

If you love to see butterflies flitting about your yard and garden, you may want to plant a few of the native host plants that are vital to the survival of each butterfly species. Each butterfly has a host plant or plants that are the essential requirement for its life stages. The Monarch would not exist without our native Milkweeds. Some that do well in the Piedmont are Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*), Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*), and climbing Milkvines (*Matelea obliqua* and *M. carolinensis*). Because of the urbanization of America we are losing many plants necessary to sustain butterflies and other insects.

Spring Azures, one of the earliest butterflies to emerge, rely heavily on native Dogwoods, Cherries and Viburnums. The Summer Azure is also a feeding generalist, but is particularly fond of New Jersey Tea (*Ceanothus Americana*) and native Meadowsweet (*Spirea alba*). Appalachian Azures are highly specialized, requiring a diet of Black Cohosh (*Actaea racemosa*) and is only found in the westernmost, mountainous regions of Virginia.

Some beauties of the Virginia butterfly population, the Question Mark, Eastern Comma, Mourning Cloak, Hackberry, and Tawny Emperor, feed on our native Hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*) but are generalists using a few other native plants. However, where there are Hackberry trees you will often find these colorful species. Put out some rotten fruit and you will increase your chances of seeing the Emperors and Question Marks.

The effect of exotic and hybridized plants on our native butterfly populations is not fully understood. An article in the *Butterfly Gardener*, *Pipe-Dreams Can Come True* by Beverly Z. Bowen (Vol 10, 2005) finds that exotic Pipevines (*Aristolochia* species: *A. elegans*, *A. Gigantea*, and *A. Rigens*) are toxic to the Pipevine Swallowtail caterpillar. Instead plant our native Dutchman's Pipe (*A. macrophylla*), which is the main host plant for this beautiful but highly specialized butterfly. One must wonder if the use of exotic instead of native plants has caused the loss of butterfly species such as the Regal Fritillary in our area.

Sources:

- [Butterflies of the East Coast](#) by Rick Cech and Guy Tudor
- [Butterflies through Binoculars](#) by Jeffrey Glassberg
- [Bringing Nature Home](#) by Douglas W. Tallamy

Carrie's Ren scent: a short autobiography

Carrie Blair is a major cog in the Piedmont Chapter operation: tree tour leader, board member, and chapter president 1996-7 and 2007-9. (See if you can find the one page in this newsletter that doesn't mention her name.)

Carrie Blair's grandmother predicted the little girl would grow up to be a teacher. Carrie did not agree, preferring to be outside climbing trees, riding horses, and snow and water skiing with her three sisters and parents. But teacher she is, after growing into a career as riding instructor and horse trainer, teaching children and adults the basics of classical riding and educating horses on manners in hunt field, polo games, and carriage driving. (continued on page 3)

Carrie's Renáscence (continued from page 2)

In spite of having the privilege of riding horses all over the farms, fields, and forests wherever she lived in seven states before moving to Middleburg, Virginia in 1973, she knew nothing about plants. The revelation was a mention by a horsewoman of the *Trillium grandiflorum* display over acres of woodland near Linden. She was astounded and captivated that nature could design and manage something so beautiful. When she realized her ignorance, she got busy learning.

Before retiring as a professional rider, Carrie pursued other interests, becoming a massage therapist from 1985-95, learning and teaching *tai chi* since 1983, and studying trees since 1985. Her love of trees grew into learning how to identify most of the local trees, shrubs, vines, wildflowers and weeds. She took courses in deciduous forest ecology, wetland plants, and seasonal wildflower identification at Northern Virginia Community College with her beloved professor, Marion Lobstein. Carrie became a Fauquier County Master Gardener and docent at the State Arboretum in 1995. Many hikes, lectures, and field trips fill her calendar. In 2010 she took the Virginia Master Naturalist two-month course and the Front Royal/Warren County Tree Steward course. She maintains five acres of forest and meadow around her house in Marshall, VA.

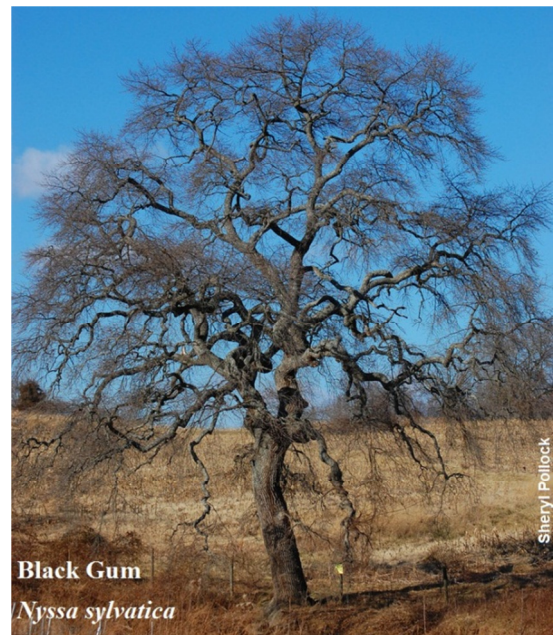
Giant Trees of the Piedmont—Marjorie Prochaska

Past President and long-time Piedmont Chapter Board member Carrie Blair advertised a “giant tree” tour for one Sunday in early January. The event was so well subscribed that she arranged for a second tour a week later. Both days seventeen participants gathered in Middleburg to form a car safari to drive to some of the large trees Carrie has noticed over the years. Because of her background as a horsewoman, Carrie has access to many of the private farms in Loudoun and Fauquier counties. With the landowners' permission, Carrie was able to take us to see some remarkable trees.

First we drove to a private estate on the heights overlooking Middleburg. Built by the owner of Mr. Chinn's Tavern (now The Red Fox Inn), mid-point on the turnpike between Alexandria and Winchester the house dates from the mid-eighteenth century. The front of its pale yellow facade is dominated by a huge Chinese Chestnut (*Castanea mollissima*). I had never seen a Chinese chestnut so large before, its breadth exceeding its height. The tree was formed by eight trunks rising from the same point and then leaning out from the center. We puzzled. Had the original tree been felled, and were these eight trunks successor sprouts which grew and thrived? Hard to say. Moreover, the tree is healthy, with no signs of decline.

We rounded the house to see the long dark green needles of a China Fir (*Cunninghamia lanceolata*), another multi-stemmed exotic where a single trunk is the norm. Some had seen this species in the conifer collection at Blandy. We wandered the property to discover other fine specimen trees, the benefit of growing undisturbed for two centuries—Tulip Poplar, Silver Maple, European Linden and Hackberry. We descended through a boxwood garden whose shrubs towered over us and emerged to climb back up to a marvelous barn and Civil War era outbuildings sheltering the kitchen garden. Along the way we passed a rare White Walnut also known as Butternut, (*Juglans cinerea*). For all its grandeur, one could imagine living in this place, so well-integrated into the landscape.

(continued on page 6)



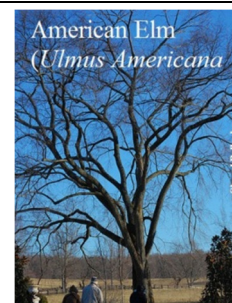
Black Gum
Nyssa sylvatica

Sheryl Pollock

Calendar of Events



Sunday	March 13	1 pm	Sunday Walk
Sky Meadows State Park, Clarke County. Master Naturalist Chris Lewis will lead a walk on the winding trails through meadows and woodlands while enjoying spectacular views of the Piedmont. For more details, please contact Carrie Blair at 540-364-1232.			
Tuesday	March 22	7pm-9pm	Bringing Nature Home
Ida Lee Recreation Center, Leesburg, Loudoun County. University of Delaware entomology professor Doug Tallamy will discuss the importance of native plants to the insect population and their effect on the entire food chain. Sponsored by the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy. Contact Laura McGranaghan at lmcgranaghan@loudounwildlife.org . FREE			
Sunday	March 27	10am-2pm	Garlic Mustard Pull
Warren/Fauquier Counties. At the Marjorie Arundel Trillium Trail, a VNPS registry site at G.R. Thompson WMA. Participants are asked to come for any time period they have available to help eradicate Garlic Mustard. IT IS HELPING! If you plan to spend the day, pack a lunch. First 15 participants to sign up will receive a complimentary wine tasting voucher from Fox Meadow Winery next to the WMA. To sign up and for directions, please contact Richard Stromberg at 540-631-0212 or risy@embarqmail.com .			
Saturday	April 16	10am-noon	Annual Calmes Neck Bluebell Walk
Clarke County. A VNPS registry site, Calmes Neck bluffs offers a rich mesic forest and ravines with spectacular masses of Bluebells and other spring wildflowers along the Shenandoah River. Gary Fleming, Vegetation Ecologist with the Natural Heritage Program, will lead the walk. The walk is moderate but expect to climb over downed trees. Bring a bag lunch and a chair and join us by the river after the walk. To RSVP and get directions, call Blanca Vandervoort at 540-837-1637 or cvanderv@nelsoncable.com .			
Sunday	April 17	9am	U.S. National Arboretum Walk
Join Carrie Blair for a walk through this living museum. Participants will be carpooling. Meet at 9:00 am at Bloom grocery store in Marshall. Bring your own lunch & beverage. For details and to sign up, contact Carrie at 540-364-1232. FREE			
Saturday	April 30	10:15am-3pm	Fox Meadow Winery Trillium Celebration
Fauquier County. VNPS will lead an easy, one-hour hike, starting at the winery at 10:15 and carpooling ½ mile to the trailhead. Upon returning to the winery, there will be time for wine tasting and purchasing. At 1pm VNPS will present a slide show about the Trillium and other wildflowers in the area. \$1 will be donated to VNPS for every bottle purchased this day. There will also be a few artists selling their plant life focused artwork. Contact the winery for more information: 540-636-6777 or info@foxmeadowwinery.com .			
Sunday	May 1	1-3pm	G. R. Thompson Wildlife Management Area Trillium Walk
Fauquier/Warren Counties. This VNPS registry site contains an exceptional diversity of native plants. A population of Large-flowered White Trillium is the most outstanding in Virginia. For details contact Sally Anderson at (540) 722-3072 or rccsca@comcast.net or Carrie Blair at 540-364-1232			
Saturday & Sunday	May 7-8	9am-4:30pm	Blandy Garden Fair
Clarke County. State Arboretum at Blandy Farm. Look us up at our booth and receive great information, handouts and expert advice. NOT TO BE MISSED! Directions online at www.virginia.edu/Blandy .			
Wed-Sat	June 1-4		Native Plants in the Landscape
Millersville University, Lancaster, PA. This conference provides essential information and networking for gardeners, teachers, and students, as well as landscape, nursery, botanic garden, and environmental professionals. For more information see www.millersvillenativeplants.org/ .			



Editor's Corner

Marjorie is right. This was the coldest winter I can remember. So I was delighted to see Skunk Cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*) blooming on February 19. We saw them in a moist area beside Gooney Manor Loop south of Browntown in Warren County.

We soon left the road and climbed up Sterdley Run to see waterfalls. The climb was difficult, but we were happy not to have snow and ice underfoot. Plenty of ice still encased the falls.

Another botanical treat appeared on the meta-basalt around the falls, Walking Fern (*Asplenium rhizophyllum*). Most people think of a fern as feathery. Walking Fern does not fit that picture. It's leaf is entire—no divisions—just a long, smooth leaf narrowing to a long point. When the point of the arching leaf touches the ground, it roots and starts another leaf, so the plant seems to walk along the surface.

When I caught up to the hike leader at Skyline Drive, he was talking to a Park Ranger. A fire was blazing into the Park on this very windy day. The ranger did not want us to go back into the woods, so she took four of our drivers in her car to where we had parked near Browntown. The rest of us walked south on Skyline Drive, away from the fire. They had to drive over 30 miles to get out of the park and back to our cars, so we walked five miles before we gratefully saw them coming to get us.

When I had looked back down the valley from the falls, I had seen smoke, but didn't think anything of it, but it took a week to put the fire out and 2,000 acres burned.

— Richard Stromberg

Bull Run Mountains Conservancy

—Brenda Crawford



Geology was the focus of interest at the BRMC headquarters in Thoroughfare Gap on Feb. 13. We learned that the plants we love to look at tell stories about the rocks on which we walk. The second-Sunday walk took six Piedmont Chapter members and a dozen guests, including Master Naturalists and friends, up a muddy slope and through former farmland and pasture. We were able to see how the underlying rock formations influence plant diversity and uses of the land.

Michael Kieffer, executive director of BRMC, explained the geology of the Blue Ridge and this particular park, an outcrop which forms the eastern edge of the Blue Ridge. He called most of the rocks “metasedimentary”. In his newsletter about the park he characterized the rocks of Bull Run Mountains as, “metamorphic sandstone called quartzite.” Kieffer invited us to hold various kinds of rock in our hand to see their structure.

The geology of these mountains means that some coastal plain disjunct species, such as Netted Chain Fern (*Woodwardia areolata*), live close to Blue Ridge disjuncts. Where related species live close together, Kieffer said, there is always the hope of finding unusual hybrids. Seventy years ago, a Smithsonian botanist made a detailed record of plants in these mountains, and the Conservancy is looking for helpers now as they take stock of how all the biota—from lichens to bears—has changed since then.

Our climb of about 300 feet in elevation was up a gentle slope toward the crest of the path that leads to the 1400-foot summit. Kieffer pointed out the indicators of geologic and historic importance. The forest we walked through is classified as “pine-oak/heath woodlands” by the “Natural Heritage Technical Report” of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Division of Natural Heritage (see www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural_heritage/documents/comlist04_10.pdf). Pines and Oaks abounded at the lower part of the path and Heath family (*Ericaceae*) representatives Black Huckleberry (*Gaylussacia baccata*), Upland Low Blueberry (*Vaccinium pallidum*) and Mountain Laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*) at the top of our walk. As evidence of farming he pointed out the locust trees that had grown on the land that once had been cleared for pasture.

In this winter-brown scene, we were happy to see a few spots of green: Spotted Wintergreen (*Chimaphila maculata*), Crane-fly Orchid (*Tipularia discolor*), Christmas Fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*), and Club Moss (*Lycopodium dendroideum*). We also enjoyed pausing at the ruins of a historic mill and ice house and good close-up sightings of a red-shouldered hawk gliding through the trees and perching on a low branch.



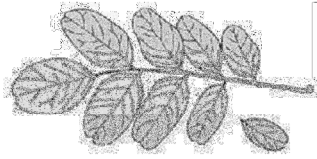
Giant Trees of the Piedmont (continued from page 3)

On the northern outskirts of Middleburg we stopped to see a solitary Black Gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*). Large and healthy, its winter silhouette revealed the curly contours of its branching which produced a surprisingly symmetrical outline. It grew along a stream, and although black gum does well in moist situations, we worried about erosion and the impact of nearby development.

We next drove west towards Upperville and turned south on Atoka Road into an area of some large horse farms. On a hill overlooking a barn devoted to horses bred for the steeplechase, we saw an even larger, solitary *Nyssa sylvatica*. A small hollow high up the main trunk could signal that this tree is in decline.

Carrie led us on winding country roads to reach Old Denton, a Civil War era house famous for having shielded Colonel John Mosby from Union troops. At the back corner of the red brick house a huge Black Walnut (*Juglans nigra*) grows. One of its thick branches is growing perilously close to the house. When Union troops came looking for him, Col. Mosby climbed out on such a limb (in his night shirt!) and was able to escape. Also on the site were the largest Sweet Gum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) many of us had ever seen and a rare, healthy American elm (*Ulmus americana*). We were pleased to see that arboriculture continues around the house, with plantings of *Magnolia grandiflora* and the charming exotic Persian Ironwood (*Parrotia persica*). We repaired to Carrie's sewing studio for food and warmth, heartily pleased with the treasures we had seen.

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**PIEDMONT CHAPTER
VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 336
THE PLAINS, VA 20198**



Skunk Cabbage
Symplocarpus
foetidus