

The Leaflet

Chapter Annual Meeting—Mary Keith Ruffner & Blanca Vandervoort

WINTER 2015

The Piedmont Chapter Annual Meeting was held on October 4th at Wetland Studies and Solutions in Gainesville. After a potluck luncheon we held a brief business meeting to elect chapter officers. The list of officers is on the bottom left of page 2. New to the list are Edwin Tobias, Ellie Daley, Marie Majarov, Ron Hughes, and Brenda Crawford. The board would like to acknowledge David Roos as he comes off of the board after serving two terms and to thank him for his service.

Harry Glasgow spoke with us about our host facility, filling us in on many details including that this is a dog friendly work environment. Then Barry Duncil, landscape designer and certified arborist, led us on an informative tour of the property. We were fascinated by the "Green Roof" which included native plants and had two wetland areas. We also enjoyed the native plants in the gardens and woods around the building, including a Fringetree (*Chionanthus virginicus*) full of fruit that show it is a member of the Olive family (*Oleaceae*).

VNPS members visit WSSI green roof



Richard Stromberg



Fringetree
Chionanthus virginicus

WSSI's site uses a fully integrated Low Impact Development (LID) design to reduce storm water volumes and peak flow rates through detention, retention, and evapotranspiration. In contrast, a "traditional" site would utilize curb and gutter practices to remove storm water as quickly as possible with no provision for reducing the volume that is discharged. WSSI's LID design employs a myriad of small-scale Integrated Management Practices to closely mimic the hydrology of a forested site. In addition to the green roof, WSSI's site includes an indoor cistern (used to flush toilets), an underground outdoor cistern (used for irrigation), a rain garden, four types of

pervious parking surfaces, a bioswale, and extensive native landscaping. The office was the first facility in Virginia to be certified at the Gold level LEED for commercial interiors.

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 subgroup 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 on-line in color at www.vnps.org/piedmont

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The Leaflet

Piedmont Mafic Prairie Walk—Emily Southgate

The Chapter's September 20th Walk was along Raccoon Ford Road, south of Culpeper. When we think of power line rights-of-way, we often visualize thickets of autumn olive and multiflora rose, with an understory of weedy, non-native plants. Roadsides, too, are often over-mowed and herbicided, leaving only a few, sometimes colorful, "weeds." What a pleasure, then, to find this assemblage of prairie plants, many native, under a power line along this roadside. An enthusiastic group of VNPS members and friends strolled through this site for a couple of hours, covering, to be generous, probably less than 10 acres (the area is much larger than that). At this botanist's pace, we identified 30-40 species of lovely blooming wildflowers, the majority native to Virginia and many quite showy.

Our leader, Sally Anderson, explained that this is the southern end of what is called the Triassic Basin, a physiographic province that extends north to Connecticut and includes here red shale and sandstone and diabase (volcanic) formations of rock that date to the days of the dinosaurs. The rock is "mafic," which means that it is enriched in magnesium ("ma") and iron (fic) which makes it richer and less acid than soils derived from granite. The internal drainage is poor, as we could see by slight depressions where the surface was dry and cracked after the month-long drought, but with moisture at the bottom of the cracks. Farmers did not find this a good place to plough, so many native plants here survived the period of intensive agriculture in the last century.

The vegetation is characterized in the National Vegetation Classification system as a Little Bluestem Piedmont Patch Prairie, which is found in Virginia and



Narrow-leaved Mountain Mint
Pycnanthemum tenuifolium

West Virginia, often in areas that have frequent disturbances such as fires or mowing. We saw the characteristic species, Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), Indian Grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*) and Narrow-leaved Mountain Mint (*Pycnanthemum tenuifolium*). We did not identify the characteristic early Goldenrod (*Solidago juncea*) probably because it had already flowered, but did see several other species of *Solidago*, and a beautiful small stand of Grass-leaved Blazing Star (*Liatris pilosa*). We added 15 species to the list made last year, making a total of 54 species. Some of the newly added species are Flowering Spurge (*Euphorbia corollata*), the very fragrant American Pennyroyal (*Hedeoma pulegioides*) and the lovely little Summer Bluets (*Houstonia longifolia*). This is a beautiful site, worth visiting any time of the year.



Grass-leaved Blazing Star
Liatris pilosa



Summer Bluets
Houstonia longifolia





Page County Big Tree Tour—Richard Stromberg

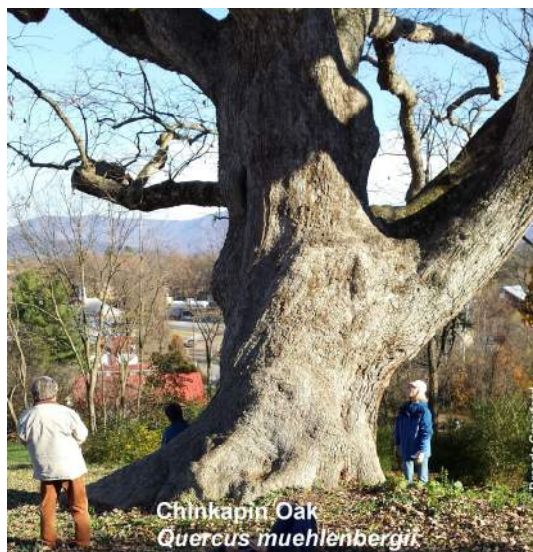
Sixteen tree lovers gathered near the Skyland Conference Center in Shenandoah National Park on November 8th to start an auto caravan to look at big trees in Page County. Bigness is specified by “points” calculated by adding trunk circumference (inches) 4½ feet from the ground + tree height (feet) + ¼ crown spread (feet). Virginia Tech has a website listing the top trees in the state for each species. Tour leader Richard Stromberg loaded coordinates from the website to locate the trees we visited.

First we went left of the Conference Center to see the second and third largest Fanleaf Hawthorns (*Crataegus flabellata*) in the state. At 25 feet tall and 10 inches in diameter, they are large for their species. The leafless trees had red fruit and long spines. We found fan-shaped leaves on the ground.

Next we walked back past the Conference Center into the Judd Garden down the road that was the original route to Skyland Resort before the National Park was formed. George and Marion Judd were long-time lot/cabin owners before the Park was formed and were strong supporters of the Resort and, later, the Park. They created a twelve acre garden with a wide variety of native and non-native trees, shrubs and flowers and maintained it until 1950.

We looked at a Blue Spruce (*Picea pungens*) rated at 168 points, seven points short of the biggest one in the state. It is not native in our part of the country and has only half the points of the national champion in Utah. A few feet from it was a native Eastern Redcedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) almost as big as the Blue Spruce but not rated in the state as the state champion in Southampton has 304 points. Also close by were two large European (aka Copper) Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) trees, not quite big enough to be listed. On the way back up the hill we saw the third largest American Cranberrybush (*Viburnum opulus*) in the state and the largest Japanese Yew (*Taxus cuspidata*).

Then we drove to the Page County Government Office Building in Luray to see a Chinkapin Oak (*Quercus muehlenbergii*) in a park next to the building. This is a tree to ooh and ah over: 96 feet tall, 122 feet crown spread, and 79 inch diameter. Its 374 points are only thirteen points behind the state champion in Rockingham and thirty points behind the national champion in Kentucky. It is featured on page 74 of Remarkable Trees of Virginia by Nancy Ross Hugo and Jeff Kirwan. The County Building architect adjusted the design of the Office Building to accommodate the tree. We were happy to see that the situation has improved since the picture in the book was taken: the shed in front of the tree has been removed and English Ivy has been taken off the tree.



Next we drove west out of Luray, crossed the South Fork of the Shenandoah and turned north for several miles up the west bank to the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' Fosters boat launch parking lot where a large Persimmon tree (*Diospyros virginiana*) stands alone. It is not on the big tree list, but has been very impressive in past years when it produced thousands of persimmons. Production was down this year with only a few hundred. Nearby along the river is a copse of American Bladdernuts, tree-form here rather than shrubs. Among them are the two largest in the state. The biggest is 22 feet tall and five inches in diameter. Looking up at the mass of three-pronged, puffy fruits made up for the reduced crop of persimmons.





Birds, Butterflies and Wildflowers at the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship (BRCES)–Emily Southgate

On September 6th Robin Williams and Emily Southgate joined Joe Coleman of the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy to lead a joint walk in the fields at BRCES near Neersville. The fields we visited are all cut annually to prevent succession to shrubs and trees and range from well-drained to quite wet to stream-banks. They also include some power line rights-of-way which Dominion Power has seeded with a native plant mixture. We found a remarkable diversity of plant species (about 90), many of which were blooming and/or in fruit, attracting large numbers and diversity of butterflies. A highlight was finding Southern Wild Senna (*Senna marilandica*) with its associated Sleepy Orange butterflies (*Eurema nicippe*). The pods of Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) were very distinctive with a little twist to the stalk. We learned some of the different species of Goldenrod, identifying at least three: Canada Goldenrod (*Solidago Canadensis*), Rough-stemmed Goldenrod *S. rugosa*, and Gray Goldenrod (*S. nemoralis*). And we identified the two ragweeds: Common Ragweed (*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*) and Giant Ragweed (*Ambrosia trifida*). We also saw an 8-foot tall, native sunflower, appropriately named Giant Sunflower (*Helianthus giganteus*). This 900-acre property which is open to the public is well worth a visit.



The Habitat Game–Brenda Crawford

The Habitat Game that members of the VNPS Piedmont Chapter developed last year was very



successful, so Kristin Zimet, Emily Southgate, Mary Keith Ruffner, Brenda Crawford, Ed Tobin, Robin Williams, and Sally Anderson returned to the Clarke County Conservation Fair to lead Clarke County



4th graders through the instructive game again this year. Emily and Kristin cleverly used the un-mowed area behind our tables to demonstrate that the birds had eaten all the berries of native plants but left the berries of the alien species.



Online Virginia Native Plant Finder

The Virginia Native Plant Finder allows you to find native plant species that suit your needs. The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Natural Heritage's new Native Plant Finder provides search capability at <http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/np>, based on their "Native Plants for Conservation, Restoration and Landscaping" brochures. You enter either the name or part of the name (common or scientific) or characteristics you are looking for, and the system will come back with a list of plants that meet the specifications. The resulting list shows the information that you would find on the brochures. For example, if you enter common name "rose", the system lists three species:

COMMON NAME

SCIENTIFIC NAME

Scientific Name	Common Name	Duration	Max Height (ft)	Uses				Region			Light			Moisture			Grassland Species	Riparian Buffer Species
				W	H	C	D	M	P	C	S	P	F	L	M	H		
Herbs																		
Hibiscus moscheutos	Eastern rosemallow	Perennial	8	x	x	x		x	x	x			x			x		x
Shrubs & Small Trees																		
Rhododendron prinophyllum	rose azalea	Perennial	12	x	x			x			x	x	x	x			x	
Rosa carolina	pasture rose	Perennial	3	x		x		x	x	x		x	x	x	x			

If you enter "Herbs", "Shade", and "Low Moisture", the system lists nine species:

REGION

PLANT TYPE

USES

LIGHT

MOISTURE

Scientific Name	Common Name	Duration	Max Height (ft)	Uses				Region			Light			Moisture		
				W	H	C	D	M	P	C	S	P	F	L	M	H
Herbs																
Anemone acutiloba	sharp-lobed hepatica	Perennial	1		x			x			x			x	x	
Anemone americana	round-lobed hepatica	Perennial	1		x			x	x	x	x			x	x	
Clitoria mariana	Maryland butterfly pea	Perennial	3		x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x		
Desmodium paniculatum	narrow-leaf tick trefoil	Perennial	3	x		x		x	x	x	x			x		
Heuchera americana	alumroot	Perennial	3		x			x	x	x	x			x		
Micranthes virginensis	early saxifrage	Perennial	2		x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
Penstemon canescens	gray beardtongue	Perennial	2		x			x	x		x			x		
Polygonatum biflorum	Solomon's seal	Perennial	3		x			x	x	x	x	x		x	x	
Pycnanthemum incanum	hoary mountain mint	Perennial	6	x		x		x	x	x	x			x		

The codes in the list columns are the same as in the brochures:

Uses

W = Wildlife
H = Horticulture
C = Conservation
D = Domestic livestock

Light Requirements

S = Shade
P = Partial Sun
F = Full Sun

Moisture Requirements

L = Low Moisture
M = Moderate Moisture
H = High Moisture

Region

M = Mountain
P = Piedmont
C = Coastal Plain



CALENDAR

Sunday	Dec 13	1pm	Earth Village Second Sunday Walk
Fauquier County near Marshall. Earth Village Education is a nonprofit organization dedicated to transforming culture and renewing the earth by empowering individuals through hands-on education that promotes nature awareness, environmental stewardship, and community development. It is based on a beautiful patch of farm and forest in Marshall, Virginia. For more information, email piedmontvnps@gmail.com .			
Sunday	Jan 10	1 pm	Jones Nature Preserve Second Sunday Walk
Rappahannock County. Explore a multi-acre garden of native Virginia plants and warm season grass fields at the private Bruce Jones Nature Preserve. Limited to 20 people. See the Jones Nature Preserve website at https://jonesnaturepreserve.wordpress.com/ . To sign up for the walk, contact piedmontvnps@gmail.com .			
Sunday	Feb 14	1pm	Second Sunday Walk
Fauquier County near Casanova. Ron Hughes, Lands & Facilities Manager, Region 4, Virginia Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries will lead a walk through the 271 acre Weston's variety of habitats. Mature hardwood forests predominate and are found on upland terraces and along the meandering Turkey Run. Once actively managed farmland has now reverted to dense cedar thickets and old fields in various stages of succession. For information, contact: piedmontvnps@gmail.com .			
Sunday	Mar 13	1-3pm	Weston Wildlife Management Area Second Sunday Walk
Being Planned. For more information, email piedmontvnps@gmail.com .			

VNPS Piedmont Chapter Winter Speaker Series

We are planning once again to have talks in January, February, and March at the Tri-County Feeds meeting room in Marshall. We will send out details as the plans are completed. For more information, email piedmontvnps@gmail.com.

More Adventures in Plant Identification—Richard Stromberg

I had a couple of trips this fall that gave me opportunities to identify flowers: a bus tour of southern England in September and a hiking trip to Acadia National Park in Maine.

The England trip did not offer many opportunities to look for wildflowers. As we drove through Dartmoor I saw the famous English heaths, masses of purple to the horizon, interspersed with some yellow. At Land's End we got to walk around in the heath. As usual I took pictures to use to identify the species later. A search online got me to a massive set of photographs at www.aphotoflora.com.

The heather I identified as Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*), and it was interspersed with a yellow-flowered pea, Western Gorse (*Ulex gallii*). I was delighted to be able to identify two yellow composites: Oxford Ragwort (*Senecio squalidus*) and Smooth Hawk's-beard (*Crepis capillaris*). (continued on page 7)





More Adventures in Plant Identification (continued from page 6)

As we rode along one day, I saw out the bus window a plant that looked like the skinniest pine tree I have ever seen. When we stopped in Abbotsbury I saw the plant against the remaining stone wall of the Abbey. Up close I saw it had flowers. The fuzzy cymes said to me, “Borage!” Looking through at www.aphotoflora.com, I came to *Echium*, and found the plant, Giant Viper’s Bugloss (*Echium pininana*). The pine tree analogy wasn’t far off as it is also called Pine Viper’s Bugloss and the specific indicates pine likeness. Inflorescences are just like the ubiquitous Common Viper’s Bugloss (*Echium vulgare*) back home.

Giant Viper's Bugloss
Echium pininana

On the trip to Maine I could use Newcomb’s Wildflower Guide. Maybe I could find some of those species I ignore in Newcomb because it says, “N.J., N.Y. north”. So when I saw an Aster on the first excursion, I thought, “Bog Aster” (*Oclemena nemoralis*). It wasn’t in a bog but it was along the shore. Later I saw it too many times, and rekeyed it to come up with New England Aster (*Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*). Of course, New England, except it grows all over the U.S. I have seen it in Virginia, but not often. Two other Asters I could recognize from back home: Flat-topped Aster (*Doellingeria umbellatus*) and Whorled Aster (*Oclemena acuminata*).

I saw a lot of Mountain Sandwort (*Minuartia Groenlandica*) plants (no flowers) growing in cracks in the rocks. It is common up there but rare in Virginia, but I am familiar with it because I monitor the populations on Old Rag Mountain in Shenandoah National Park. Similarly rare in Virginia but common along the trails in Maine is Bunchberry (*Cornus canadensis*). I recognized the whorls of four to six leaves without flowers or fruits from visits to Ice Mountain in West Virginia.

Walking along beaches I brilliantly figured out (with Newcomb’s help) that the Pea I saw growing in the rocks was Beach Pea (*Lathyrus japonicus*), which doesn’t grow as far south as Virginia, and the Goldenrod was Seaside Goldenrod (*Solidago sempervirens*), which only grows on the coastal plain in Virginia.

I did find a couple other northern species: Eyebright (*Euphrasia nemorosa*) and Three-leaved Solomon’s Seal (*Maianthemum trifolium*).

I found the fall colors up there more spectacular than at home for a couple reasons. First there are more evergreens for contrast. Second there are more maples and fewer oaks. I thought I would see Sugar Maples (*Acer Saccharum*), but, every time I checked a leaf, it had teeth, so it was Red Maple (*A. rubrum*) until I saw a large Maple on the Bar Harbor Village Green. It had smooth edges between the leaf lobes, so it was a Sugar Maple. Though I usually find that Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*) leaves are duller than Red Maple, as I scrambled up the Precipice Trail, I did see a Red Oak with leaves just as bright red as the Maple next to it, both growing out of cracks in the rock.

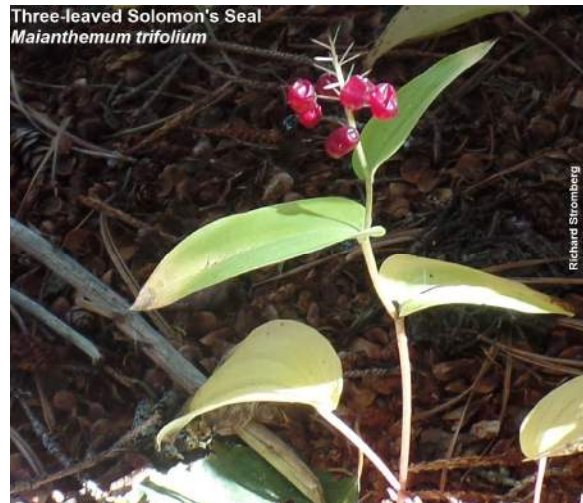


Richard Stromberg



New England Aster
Symphyotrichum novae-angliae

Richard Stromberg

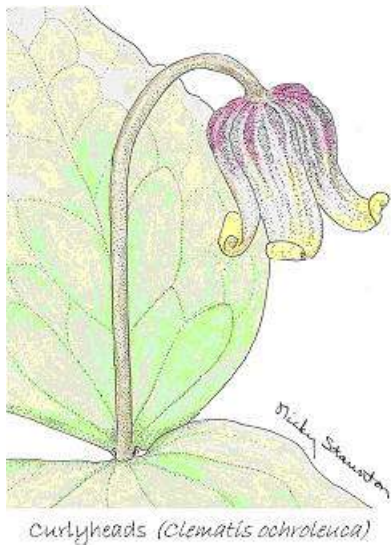


Three-leaved Solomon's Seal
Maianthemum trifolium

Richard Stromberg

The Leaflet

**PIEDMONT CHAPTER
VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT
SOCIETY
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Curlyheads (*Clematis ochroleuca*)

Nicky Staunton



Red Maple
Acer rubrum

Red Oak
Quercus rubra

Richard Stromberg