

NEWSLETTER OF THE PIEDMONT CHAPTER OF THE VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

The Leaflet



A "Spectacular" Second Sunday Walk at Hillwood—Diane Gulick

SPRING 2018

On the brisk and beautiful Sunday, December 10, Carrie Blair led a VNPS group to Hillwood, the home of Marjorie Merriweather Post in northwest DC. A tour of Hillwood begins with an orientation film introducing visitors to the historic house museum and its twenty-five acres of gardens and woodlands.



Many visited Hillwood's "Spectacular" exhibition, a collection of Mrs. Post's jewels which included Marie Antoinette's diamond earrings and a diamond necklace Napoleon gave to his second wife, Empress Marie Louise.

The group gathered on Hillwood's front lawn in the early afternoon to be guided by Carrie through the estate's gardens and grounds. Both native and non-native species at Hillwood were topics of discussion during Carrie's around the gardens and the estate's wooded acreage near Rock Creek Park. Carrie introduced the group to plantings in its formal Japanese, rose, and Four Seasons gardens, as well as Mrs. Post's French parterre and her intimate pet cemetery. Mrs. Post's love of gardening and nature was apparent and appreciated by all during the VNPS's December 2017 Second Sunday at Hillwood.

It was truly a spectacular day.

Mrs. Post's mansion is filled with priceless, historic artifacts she collected from eighteenth-century France and the Imperial Russia era. On this Sunday, Mrs. Post's home was elegantly decorated for the holiday season with Christmas trees laden with live orchids (the heiress's favorite flower) and blossoms from her gardens and greenhouse.

Hillwood's annual Russian Festival was in full swing during the tour. Members of the VNPS group joined other visitors to enjoy Russian dance, dramatic, and musical performances.





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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

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

The Leaflet

Using the Flora of Virginia App—Richard Stromberg



RESET Select characteristics. SHOW
Instructions 119 Found

Has basal leaves? Leaf arrangement: Alternate Leaf type: Simple Undivided

Types of florets: Ray and disk florets

Last October in Cumberland Gap National Historical Park, I saw this yellow composite. Choosing Aster/Composites in the Flora of Virginia App graphic key got me down to 363 possibilities.

Which group describes your plant?
(tap to select)

Asters/Composites
Dicots in the family Asteraceae (Compositae)
KEY CHARACTERISTICS
If your herb's flower or fruits are grouped in tight, colorful heads, you may have a member of the aster, or composite, family. This family includes daisies, goldenrods, pussytoes, sunflowers, and cornflowers, among many others. The grouped flowers are held inside a cuplike structure called an involucre. Look for leaf veins that branch or form a netlike pattern.

Other dicot wildflowers
Dicot wildflowers not in the Asteraceae
KEY CHARACTERISTICS
Plants in this large, diverse group are usually not woody or grasslike and lack asterlike flower heads. Look for leaf veins that branch or form a netlike pattern.

Pityopsis graminifolia (Michaux) Nuttall var. *latifolia* Fernald
Grass-leaved Golden-aster
Native
[Pityopsis \(Grass-Leaved Golden-aster, Silkglass\)](#)
[Asteraceae or Compositae \(Aster or Sunflower Family\)](#)

© DCR-DNH, Gary P. Fleming

Selecting October flowering period reduced it to 273. Choosing alternate, undivided leaves got it down to 187, and saying that it has both ray and disk florets reduced it further to 119 as shown above. Saying that both the rays and disk florets are yellow brought it down to 64. 42 of them were Goldenrods (*Solidago*).

Looking through the app's pictures got me to Grass-leaved Golden-aster (*Pityopsis graminifolia* var. *latifolia*). The name certainly fit those strappy leaves. The range map shows I was in the right place.



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Ferry Hill Forest, Sharpsburg, Maryland—Karen Hendershot

Ferry Hill Plantation, part of the Chesapeake & Ohio National Historical Park, sits serenely above the Potomac River near Sharpsburg, Maryland. On January 14, Rod Simmons, Alexandria Natural Resource Manager and Plant Ecologist, guided roughly fifteen Piedmont members, as well as Kathy Bilten of the Botanical Society of Washington, and Alonso Abugattas, Natural Resources Manager for Arlington County, through the undulating cove forest on the property.

Surrounded by agriculture, this old-growth forest is unique in the area because it has been relatively untouched by man over the past century or so. Dominated by limestone bedrock, it is characterized by a rich community of mature trees and few invasives.

Two Maryland State Co-Champion Cucumber Trees (*Magnolia acuminata*) grace the property. Like oaks, these trees can live 500 years. Rushing rainwater on the hillside has eroded the soil around one, resulting in thick, stilt-like roots.



American Beech
Karen Hendershot

The Maryland Champion Black Maple (*Acer nigrum*) is also located in this forest. Its leaves are three-lobed and deeply veined, compared to five lobes and thinner veins typical of the Sugar Maples (*Acer saccharum*) also on the property.



Karen Hendershot

A magnificent American Beech tree (*Fagus grandifolia*) stretched skyward. We noticed that the young Beeches below it hold their paper-like leaves in the winter, but not the mature tree, for which the smooth, silvery bark is enough of a show.

From the cliffs that hug the Potomac, we saw ice floats drifting gently downstream in the frigid weather. Ron pointed out the rare Leatherwood shrubs (*Dirca palustris*), which enjoy the calcareous, alluvial soil.

Two forms of evergreen trees clung to the cliffs, surviving on little more than the minerals in the stone and the sunlight of the open river bed. First was Eastern Redcedar (*Juniperus virginiana*), its leaves blue/gray and thin. Second was a healthy stand of American Arborvitae (*Thuja occidentalis*), less common in this area, with greener, flatter leaves.

Except for a chirpy Carolina Wren (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) and a quick darting Red-eyed Vireo (*Vireo olivaceus*) couple, the resident fauna made themselves scarce in the presence of humans but traces of other species were evident. Horizontal rows of Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus varius*) wells

 dimpled the Sugar Maples but don't harm the trees. Alonso explained that the released sugar also feeds a fungus which turns the bark black. Remnants of American land snails were frequently seen. Snails dine happily on calcium-rich plant leaves in this location, which help them build strong shells. Ron pointed out an old tree trunk decimated by the hammering of a Pileated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*), searching for insects.



Karen Hendershot

Lessons on aging with dignity were plentiful in the forest. Rod spoke with admiration of the strong outer wall of a gnarly old Beech. Though hollowed to a point that a man can crawl



Rod Simmons points to hollow Beech tree
Karen Hendershot

inside, it still is alive and growing. Nature's message: Never Give Up!



Pest Watch—Spotted Lanternfly

A new pest, the Spotted Lanternfly (*Lycorma delicatula*) was found in Frederick County, VA, in January this year. Native to southeast Asia, it was first noticed in Pennsylvania in 2014 and later in Delaware and New York State. It is frequently associated with sites containing Tree-of-Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) but is a significant pest of grapes, peaches, hops and other crops. The one-inch, mature insect is colorful and easily identifiable but watch also for its young which in early nymph stage are brown. More information may be found online and, if you find the pest on your property, report it to Virginia Cooperative Extension at <https://ask.extension.org/groups/1981/ask>



Spotted lanternfly adult (left) and nymph (right). (Photos courtesy of Lawrence Barringer, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture)

A VSU College of Agriculture Facebook post reported, “The spotted lanternfly *Lycorma delicatula* was detected in Frederick County, VA on January 10, 2018. Both numerous adults and egg mass were found. In addition, it was found at another site approximately 400 yards away. The owners of the site are cutting down and burning all Tree-of-Heaven on the site but it’s likely that it has spread from these sites.”

Short Takes on Books We Love (Do you have a nature book you love? Send us a short take.)

The Appalachian Forest by Chris Bolgiano (1998, 280 pp.)

Virginia Piedmonters often tread the Appalachian forest without fully appreciating its origins or attributes. Yet the Appalachians are among the oldest mountains on earth and are home to some of the most biologically diverse areas. In a style that often borders on poetry, Bolgiano reignites the sense of awe the forest richly deserves. Her scientific, human, and personal account spans both the wonders of creation and the destructive assaults the forest has faced. She examines the land and its creatures—including humans—with detail and understanding. Interviews with mountain people and scientists add balance to the historical research and photographs. An extensive bibliography contributes to making this book a wonderful resource, as well as a pleasurable read.

[review by Karen Hendershot]

The Forest: A Dramatic Portrait of Life in the American West by Roger Caras, with woodcuts by Norman Arlott (1979, 178 pp.)

Science and poetry converge beautifully in this ageless book. Dig up a second-hand copy if you can. Carefully, lovingly, actor by actor, Caras develops a drama—from the golden eagle who lands in the crown of the Western Hemlock to the microbes seething around its roots. Nearly every sentence hides a surprise turn of phrase or understanding, as he weaves the myriad lives of the Western forest into a whole. Once you read this book, you will perceive any forest anew.

[review by Kristin Zimet]



1969 Recommended Plants—Richard Stromberg, Ron Hughes & Emily Southgate

Emily Southgate found a U.S. Department of Agriculture Bulletin* that shows how different thinking was forty-some years ago. Here is an excerpt:

Multiflora rose is an outstanding shrub for use in fence rows and hedges wherever it can be grown. It is capable of forming a living fence that requires no wire, needs no hard-to-maintain braces to follow contour lines, and does not re-quire trimming or pruning. It is fast growing and attractive, makes good wildlife cover, and produces wildlife food. Because it sometimes spreads into pastures and abandoned farmland, multiflora rose is unacceptable to some landowners.

Where multiflora rose cannot be grown or is not wanted, one of the following shrubs will produce good hedge or fence-row cover: Red cedar, gray dogwood, American hazelnut, elder, silky cornel, highbush cranberry, bush honeysuckle, Russian-olive, pyracantha, chokecherry, trifoliate orange, buffaloberry, squawbush, or autumn olive. Ask your local soil conservationist for suggestions.

Autumn olive is an outstanding producer of food for birds. As a hedge, it makes a screen that shuts out an unpleasant view and discourages trespassers.

Ron Hughes responded,

Believe it or not multiflora rose, coralberry, and autumn olive, among others, were taught to me in a wildlife management class when I was a sophomore in college (1986) in Central New York. I wished I could recall when the tides changed on those species but I can't.

It is sad to me that even present day, with all the attention given to exotic-invasive species (even in the horticulture field), the vast majority of citizens seek out “experts” that have no clue (the “experts”) about native vs exotic vs invasive species of plants to landscape with. I’ve reviewed plans associated with constructing structures or having renovations done to VDGIF lands and facilities that when the soil needs stabilized or erosion controlled the seed mixtures recommended are nothing but exotic or engineered with ZERO native species in them. Kentucky 31 tall fescue is absolutely the most used and commonest seed in contractor mixes. In fact, I had one company claim KY31 was a native species!

The ring-necked pheasant, so iconic and ingrained in North American hunting heritage and featured on every old-time hunting magazine, pamphlet, etc. is: 1) not a native species to this continent and 2) is a hybrid. So ingrained is it that it is the South Dakota state bird! Crazy stuff. Although a few other states have non-native birds like chickens (Delaware and Rhode Island). I can imagine a number of states have non-native plants as their state flower. One might even have autumn olive or buckthorn as the state flower!

Richard Stromberg looked up state flowers. Thirteen states and DC have non-native state flowers, though seven of those also have a state wildflower, all native. Ronald Reagan proclaimed the rose the national flower in 1986, but non-native hybrids were intended, as is so in DC, New York, and Oklahoma. (The “Oklahoma Rose” is a hybrid tea.) Georgia has the Cherokee Rose, named after the tribe forced out in the Trail of Tears. Cherokees are said to have spread the rose, but it arrived in the U.S. from southeast Asia about 1780, and the Trail of Tears occurred in 1838. Georgia’s state wildflower is the azalea. No state has designated an invasive alien, but, while Pennsylvania’s state flower is Mountain Laurel, in 1982 it adopted a “beautification and conservation plant”, Crown Vetch (*Securigera varia*).

*Anderson, Wallace Lowell, 1913-. Making land produce useful wildlife, book, 1969; Washington D.C.. (digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc6271/; accessed November 16, 2017), University of North Texas Libraries, Digital Library, digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Government Documents Department

CALENDAR

Sunday	Mar 11	1pm	Sunday Walk: Thompson Wildlife Management Area
VDGIF employee Ron Hughes will lead a walk to the seep beside the Appalachian Trail to see Skunk Cabbage and other early bloomers. For more information, email piedmontvnpss@gmail.com .			
Sunday	Mar 18	2pm	Winter Speaker Series: Cultivating Unstraggly Natives
Fauquier County. Emmanuel Episcopal Church Parish Hall, 9668 Maidstone Rd., Delaplane. Sky Meadows State Park Naturalist Emily Sinclair will discuss her work at the Park to create essential pollinator habitat, with ideas on how similar techniques may be used to cultivate "unstraggly natives" in home gardens. Free, refreshments provided. For more information, email piedmontvnpss@gmail.com .			
Saturday	Mar 31	1pm	G. Richard Thompson WMA Walk and Invasive Removal
Fauquier County. Bring gloves and drinking water. We will look for early signs of spring while we work. For more information, email piedmontvnpss@gmail.com .			
Saturday	Apr 7	9am-3pm	Morven Park Plant Sale
Loudoun County. Plant sale at Morven Park, Leesburg, sponsored by Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy. If you can help us by sitting at a Piedmont Chapter booth please let us know at piedmontvnpss@gmail.com . More information at https://loudounwildlife.org/event/spring-native-plant-sale/			
Sunday	April 8	10am and 1pm	Calmes Neck Bluebell Walk
Clarke County. A walk for VNPS members & Calmes Neck residents only; register at piedmontvnpss@gmail.com .			
Sunday	Apr 15	1pm	Appalachian Trail Walk
Warren County. Join Master Naturalist Richard Stromberg for a walk along a fairly level section of the Appalachian Trail south of Linden. Early spring diversity rivals Thompson WMA. Limit 20; register at piedmontvnpss@gmail.com to get meeting instructions.			
Wednesday	Apr 18	1pm	Balls Bluff Walk
Loudoun County. Join Phil Daley for a walk at Balls Bluff above the Potomac. Limit 20; to get meeting instructions register at piedmontvnpss@gmail.com .			
Thursday	May 3	6pm	G. Richard Thompson WMA Trillium Walk
Fauquier County. VDGIF employee Ron Hughes will lead a walk to see millions of Trilliums and other spring flowers. Limit 20; register at piedmontvnpss@gmail.com .			
Saturday & Sunday May 5 & 6		Wildflower Weekend at Shenandoah National Park	
Appreciate the diversity of wildflowers growing in the Blue Ridge. More than 1,300 species of plants thrive in Shenandoah National Park, a haven for native woodland wildflowers. Choose from among many activities at the Park website, https://www.nps.gov/shen/upload/Wildflower-Weekend-Brochure.pdf .			
Sunday	May 6	1pm	Cedar Creek Battlefield Walk
Frederick County. Flower walk in Cedar Creek Battlefield in Middletown led by former VNPS president Sally Anderson. Email piedmontvnpss@gmail.com for details.			
Saturday & Sunday May 12 & 13		9am-4:30pm	State Arboretum Garden Fair
Clarke County. Another opportunity to help us by sitting at a Piedmont Chapter booth (includes free admission), contact piedmontvnpss@gmail.com . Several native plant vendors and lots of information available. See http://blandy.virginia.edu/our-foundation/fosa-annual-events for more information.			
Saturday	June 2	7am-5pm	Garden Fest
Frederick County. Northern Shenandoah Valley Master Gardeners' annual festival at Belle Grove Plantation on US rt. 11 north of Middletown. Educational sessions, children's activities, and plants and other items for sale. Details at http://nsvmga.org/projects/garden-fest/			
Sunday	June 10	1pm	Carson Trail Walk
Warren County. Join Master Naturalist Richard Stromberg for a walk through woods and fields above the Shenandoah north of Front Royal. Limit 20; register at piedmontvnpss@gmail.com to get meeting instructions.			



Restoring Virginia Grasslands—Jocelyn Sladen

Native grasslands, “the least protected biome on the planet”, are down by 99 percent nationally, taking birds, forbs, pollinators and other life forms with them. The January 21 Piedmont Chapter winter speaker was Dr. Amy Johnson, director of the Front Royal based Virginia Working Landscapes (VWL). Dr. Johnson recently received her doctorate on intensive studies of bobwhite quail. She shared insights into efforts to restore grasslands nationally as well as in our own region. A growing constituency of citizen scientists is helping to advance the efforts.

Dr. Johnson explained that the causes of grasslands decline are varied. Changing land use and invasive species, the usual suspects, are important factors. Agricultural practices that favor imported cool season grasses for hay and grazing have disrupted huge expanses of native grassland. Climate change is clearly a factor. However caused, the “loss of native plants with their deep roots” has been costly to the landscape and natural world around us.

Dr. Johnson talked of grasslands as ecosystems. Generally, the advantages of warm season grasses like Little Bluestem (*Schizachrium scoparium*) and Indian Grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*) for wildlife are many, including their habit of retaining structure in winter, which provides animals shelter and paths for movement, in addition to providing seeds. Most cool season grasses mat down or simply disappear. She has taken a special interest in winter life within grasslands, noting it has not been carefully studied here. As an ornithologist, she shared information on grassland birds dependent on varied grassland species, noting, as an example, that Indigo Buntings are grassland obligates; that is, no grasslands, no indigo buntings. Meadowlarks and grasshopper sparrows survive better in modern hayfields than some more specialized birds, but they too are decreasing. Among other reasons, they fall victims to hay machinery during their late spring breeding season. Amy cited a program in Vermont that pays farmers to mow later in the season. (Personal note: the author has hayfields that are not mowed until mid-July.) Valuable pollinating insects depend on diverse grassland ecosystems, particularly those dominated by native grasses. One-quarter of our bumblebees are now considered imperiled.

VWL operates under the auspices of the Smithsonian institution’s Conservation Biology Institute. An important program of VWL is the exchange of information among landowners wishing to encourage or restore biodiversity on property that is necessarily devoted to other uses, including agriculture. As Dr. Johnson pointed out, 80% of Virginia is privately owned. In its property surveys, VWL has worked in partnership with volunteer citizen scientists from the beginning. After some training, they are “feet on the ground” in VWL surveys of birds, pollinators and plants on selected plots in the region, many under agriculture. These enthusiasts are turning up new information previously missed, significantly advancing the cause of biodiversity and, in turn, learning about our region’s natural world. Interested volunteers may find contact information on the VWL website (<http://www.vaworkinglandscapes.org/>).



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