

The



Leaflet

Introduction—Emily Southgate

SUMMER 2020

While we humans are trying to cope with the pandemic impact of a miniscule piece of RNA, the rest of the living world is going about life as usual. Though the Native Plant Society has had to cancel plant walks this spring, and probably summer as well, the Commonwealth of Virginia has wisely encouraged its residents to enjoy the parks and other open spaces for exercise and fresh air, and to enjoy the natural beauty of the state. In this issue of the Newsletter, members of the Piedmont Chapter tell of their walks to bring to you a bit of their pleasure in our native flora. Other articles may help you to enjoy the plants that you will see on your forays into our natural areas this summer.

March 8 Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship (BRCES) Walk—Sally Anderson [The last Piedmont Chapter Event before cancelling the rest of the schedule because of Corvid-19]

In the past few years, since hearing that some of this land will become a state park, we have made more of an effort to get to know the plants, although at this time of year we usually also visit at least one pond to check on frog and salamander eggs (both were found). Our most frequent trail leads from the education building's parking through woods and past the pond, then on through the woods past a couple of nice old trees and into an area of historic buildings.

Since the chilly, early March date offered only a few blooming plants, we took a good look at woody plants and mosses. We noted an old tree with horizontal rows of holes where a yellow-bellied sapsucker has fed. A broken piece of Red Cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) allowed us to enjoy the fragrance of its deep red center. A landmark White Oak (*Quercus alba*) had fallen. It was present on old boundary surveys, and while it was a shame to lose it, it will offer a lot to animals and insects for years to come and offered us a good look at the overlapping sheets of white oak bark.

We found caps on mosses. These little stalks with spore capsules at their upper ends are the sporophyte stage of the plants, with two sets of chromosomes, and are part of the alternation of generations found in all plants, but only so noticeable on mosses. In most flowering plants the main plant has two sets of chromosomes, while the leafy moss plant is the gametophyte and has one set, or half the chromosomes of the sporophyte that grows right on top of it after fertilization.

Tiny butterfly larvae were wrapped in leaves on Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*) shrubs and bound to twigs with a few wraps of silk.



Spring Beauty

We found what might have been the very first Spring Beauty (*Claytonia virginica*) to bloom at BRCES. In the wet creekside area we found lots of Skunk Cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*) blooms along with the first unfurling leaves - a brilliant green in the late winter sun. We also walked out into a wetland to look at a clump of shrubs that turned out to be Black Elderberry

(*Sambucus canadensis*), one of which had the largest trunk we could remember seeing. On the edge of the opening was a notable Silver Maple (*Acer saccharinum*).



Skunk Cabbage



Northern-Western Loudoun County Native Plants—Emily Southgate

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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Twice in April I visited a small hold-out of native plants in far northern-western Loudoun County. Just before the Rt. 15 bridge over Point of Rocks, Furnace Mountain Road, a small dirt road, climbs up Furnace Mountain. The 1853 Yardley Taylor map of Loudoun County shows this road, as well as the woods that it cuts through, indicating that both the road and the woods predate 1850. The banks on both sides of Furnace Mountain Road are very steep, cut by deer trails and somewhat eroded. Continuous forest cover for over 150 years, absence of deer browse and the rich soil formed on the Catoclin Formation are major factors in forming this remarkable community of native wildflowers.



On April 8 I saw both White and Yellow Trout Lily (*Erythronium albidum* and *E. americanum*), Toadshade (*Trillium sessile*), Cut-leaved Toothwort (*Cardamine concatenata*), and Dutchman's Breeches (*Dicentra cucullaria*), among others. White Trout Lily is a state-ranked rare species (S2) which has not been documented at Point of Rocks since 1972. I had seen it in 2006.

I revisited the area on April 29 and was amply rewarded with a beautiful display of Wild Delphinium (*Delphinium tricorne*). In addition, there were Wild Phlox (*Phlox divaricata*), Wild Geranium (*Geranium maculatum*), Toadshade and Virginia Waterleaf (*Hydrophyllum virginianum*). I also walked along Lovettsville Road, which parallels the Potomac River and found several patches



of Twinleaf (*Jeffersonia diphylla*) which had fruits, so had bloomed earlier. Poison Ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*) is very abundant, so use caution if you visit this site.

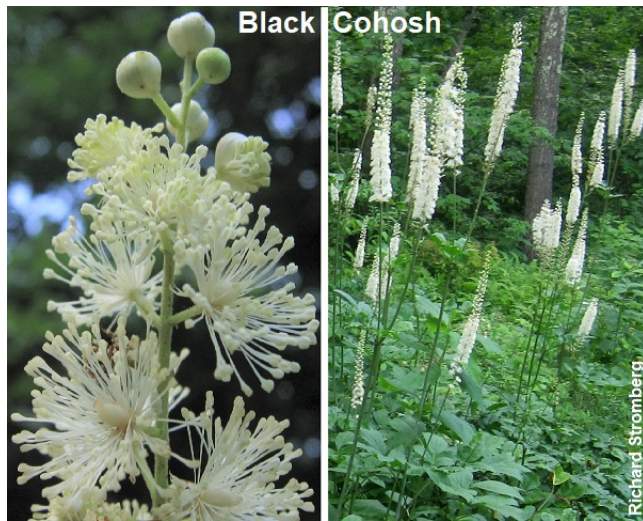
Over the years that I have visited this site, I have expected the very abundant Virginia waterleaf to overwhelm the other species, but it does not appear to be doing this, perhaps because of the erosion from deer trails up the bank. This is well worth a visit. One can park at the boat launch on the Potomac River. Be careful of traffic, even on the dirt road.



Summer Flowers—Sally Anderson

The flush of spring begins in late March. By late May, many spring flowers have faded. The late summer composites seem far away. What's left for June? Here are a few natives that might be found along smaller roadsides or around your yard in wooded or naturalized areas.

Venus' Looking-glass (*Triodanis perfoliata* formerly *Specularia perfoliata*), has the starry purple/blue flowers of the Bellflower (*Campanulaceae*) family. This annual plant is usually about 12 inches tall. Its habitat is dry open woods, outcrops and disturbed habitats. Its leaves are small and round and clasp the stem, forming a little cup, and the flowers sprout out of axils of these leaves. Like our violets, there are also cleistogamous flowers lower on the plant that remain in the bud state and pollinate themselves, ensuring seeds if insect pollination fails. The Plasterer Bee (*Colletes brevicornis*) uses the pollen of this flower.



Black Cohosh or Bugbane (*Actaea racemosa* formerly *Cimicifuga racemosa*) is one to two meters tall. It has a tall rosette of two or three times divided leaves,

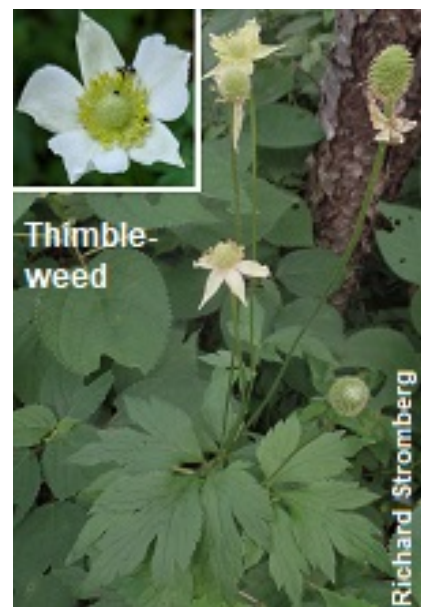
sometimes several feet long. It is a long-lived perennial growing from a knotty rhizome. The flowers are closely spaced at the top of the plant on long stalks. They have many white stamens forming a little puff. It is a member of the Buttercup (*Ranunculaceae*) family blooming between May and August. Look for this plant on

shady mountain roadsides or woods with moist, rich soils, where the white color stands out in shade and calls to mind another common name, fairy candles.

Thimbleweed (*Anemone virginiana*) is a smaller member of the *Ranunculaceae*. The seed heads resemble sewing thimbles, but before that the white or slightly greenish flowers with five petaloid sepals form on long stalks above wide, deeply lobed/divided leaves. They have many yellow stamens surrounding the raised green center, which gives away the shape of the fruit. The foliage contains blistering chemicals which can hurt animal mouths and stomachs, and so they are not usually eaten. This plant is common in slightly more rich soils. Look for it in naturalized areas around you.

Several Ground-cherry (*Physalis*) species, can be found in our area. The yellow flowers with dark center markings hang below the foliage. Ground-cherries belong to the Nightshade (*Solanaceae*) family, so the ripe fruits look like little tomatoes. The fruits are enclosed in papery husks, like tomatillos, but be careful - unripe berries are poisonous. Look for them in old fields, gardens, and on weedy roadsides.

(continued on page 4)





Summer Flowers (continued)

Our earliest sunflowers are Oxeye (*Heliopsis helianthoides*) and Woodland Sunflower (*Helianthus divaricatus*). Differentiating the two genera: the ray flowers of the *Heliopsis* are fertile so you can see a pistil in each ray, while *Helianthus* has sterile ray flowers. Both have bright yellow heads on tall stems with opposite leaves and can be found on woods edges and roadsides. They are most common in the mountains. They are wonderful pollinator plants like all *Asteraceae* plants with many disk flowers.



Eastern Prickly Pear (*Opuntia humifusa*) was the only member of the Cactus family (*Cactaceae*) in the eastern U.S., although recently the *O. humifusa* complex has been divided into three species. These species can be found on dry rocky outcrops and slopes and in sandy areas. The beautiful waxy flowers are yellow or may have an orange center. The pads are its stems, and they photosynthesize and store water. Little bumps on the pads with small stinging hairs and usually a spine are the actual leaves. With antifreeze types of chemicals in its pads, it can survive freezing though it collapses in winter and stands up again in the spring. The pollen of the plants is an important resource for certain groups of bees, who are responsible for its pollination.



Swamp Rose-mallow (*Hibiscus moscheutos*) is a

plant of moist or wet places, such as flood plains and wet ditches. One easy place to spot them is in the median of Route 50 on the east side of Winchester. The flowers bloom from June to September in a range of white, pink and occasionally magenta colors with a contrasting dark eye. This bee-pollinated plant may also be visited by hummingbirds. Several species of butterflies and moths feed on leaves and seeds.

I have been asked

several times this year about diamond shaped leaves with a dark reddish blotch. It is Jumpseed or Virginia Knotweed (*Persicaria virginiana* formerly *Tovara virginiana*) a native member of the *Polygonaceae*, identified in part by the ocrea or sheath at the joints of the stem., It is related to some nasty invasives like Lady's Thumb (*P. maculosa* and *P. longiseta*). Its tiny white flowers (June to September) are spaced along a long arching spike, and the tiny pointed seeds fly off if you run your hand along it, hence jumpseed.





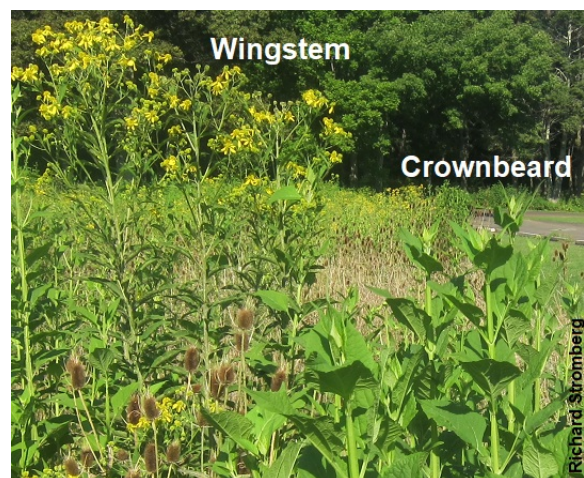
The Thompson in Summer—Cathy Mayes

The G.R. Thompson Wildlife Management Area contains one of the most precious wildflower habitats in the Piedmont Chapter. The property in northern Fauquier County rises in a series of steep inclines and benches from the southeast to the crest of Blue Mountain, thus comprising several distinct habitats. At its highest elevation, it is predominately a hardwood forest with some ecologically unique seeps. The spring wildflower display in the forest is world famous for its Large-flowered Trillium (*Trillium grandiflorum*). But visitors to the Thompson enjoy wildflowers all summer.

One of the lovely summer flowers found along the crest of the Blue Ridge is the Canada Lily (*Lilium canadense*). The showy, orange blossom is the classic lily shape, a hanging bell that opens wide to offer its pollen to passing bees and hummingbirds. The flowers attach to an unbranched stem with platforms of whorled, lanceolate leaves. (Lanceolate leaves are long and narrow, widest in the middle and pointed at both ends. Whorled leaves are attached in a circle around the stem.)

Another lily named for our neighbor to the north is the Canada Mayflower (*Maianthemum canadense*). This small plant is found at the seepage swamp and tends to grow in clumps. The white flowers are shaped like sputnik (or a coronavirus magnified) coming off an unbranched stem that turn into bright red berries. The two, occasionally three, leaves are cordate and alternate. (Cordate leaves are heart shaped, rounded at the stem end and pointed at the other.) The stem is slightly zig-zagged and sometimes the leaves clasp the stem.

In gaps in the forest canopy you will find both Wingstem (*Verbesina alternifolia*) and Crownbeard (*V. occidentalis*), giving you an opportunity to compare these two similar species. Both are tall, coarse plants with large, yellow, daisy-like flowers and winged stems. Both are important pollinator plants. The key difference between the two species is sharp: the leaves of wingstem are alternate; the leaves of crownbeard are opposite. But there are other differences that you can pick up when you look for them: Wingstem grows in moister soil; has more flower petals and they droop; and the leaves are lanceolate and rough, like sandpaper. Crownbeard leaves are ovate (wider at the base) and toothed.





The events below are subject to cancellation or may be restricted to ten people because of Covid-19.

Sunday	June 14	10am	Late Spring Grassland Walk
Fauquier County. Late spring walk led by Bert Harris, Clifton Institute Executive Director at Bird Hill near Orlean. Register at piedmontvnps@gmail.com .			
Thursday	July 9	6pam	Plant Uses
Join Tim McWelshon on a walk focusing on plant uses. Location to be determined. Register at piedmontvnps@gmail.com .			
Saturday	July 11	10am	Ice Mountain Walk
Hampshire County, WV. Ice formed in the winter in the thick talus of Ice Mountain creates a refrigeration effect providing habitat for plant species usually found in sub-artic regions. Join Kristin Zimet and Lisa LaCivita for a walk through these plants unusual for our region. To reserve a space, contact piedmontvnps@gmail.com .			
Sunday	August 9	10am	Summer Grassland Walk
Fauquier County. Summer walk led by Bert Harris, Clifton Institute Executive Director at Bird Hill near Orlean. Register at piedmontvnps@gmail.com .			

Massanutten in Summer—Richard Stromberg

The Massanutten Mountains are the eastern-most ridge of the Ridge-and-Valley geologic province west of the Blue Ridge. The poor, acidic soil of the Ridge-and-Valley mountains derived from the underlying sandstone yields vegetation different from the rich basalt-based soil of Thompson WMA. Most noticeable is the predominance of Heath (Ericaceae) family in the understory on the Ridge-and-Valley ridges: Mountain Laurel, Azalea, Blueberry, etc.

The Bear Wallow parking lot is on the west side of Fort Valley Road, VA-678, across from the Family Campground. The northern half of the Massanutten is pierced by Fort Valley. You enter the valley from the north on VA-678, wiggling along Passage Creek passing through a gorge dug by the creek.

The Piedmont Chapter has led walks there four times. A three and a half mile loop has been planned, but usually we see so much and go so slowly we go far shorter than that. Passing through the gate at the end of the parking lot we start out on the left fork.

Two Tick-trefoil (*Desmodium*) species can be found along this road: Dillenius' (*D. glabellum*) and Narrow-leaf (*D. paniculatum*). Their leaves have three, entire leaflets, *paniculatum*'s four times longer than wide and *glabellum*'s, wider. The quarter-inch flowers are in racemes. They have the typical Pea (*Fabaceae*) family papilionaceous form: a large upright banner petal with two white spots at the bottom and two, joined petals forming a protruding keel below with two wing petals often unfolded. The pods that form later are constricted with a single seed in each segment. The segments break apart to leave green triangles stuck on your socks later in the summer.



(continued on page 7)



Massanutten in Summer (continued)



Hyssop Skullcap

Richard Stromberg

Two Skullcaps (*Scutellaria*) grow here as well. They have blue-violet flowers on spikes atop the plant. The flowers have an arching, hooded upper lip and a flaring lower lip. Hairy Skullcap (*S. eliptica*) has a hairy stem and short-stalked, blunt leaves with rounded teeth. Hyssop Skullcap (*S. integrifolia*) has long, narrow leaves, the upper ones entire, the lower ones slightly toothed.



Hairy Skullcap

Richard Stromberg



Green-and-Gold

Richard Stromberg

Green-and-Gold (*Chrysogonum virginianum*) is a typical yellow-daisy Aster (*Asteraceae*) family flower except it usually has only five rays.

Yellow Stargrass (*Hypoxis hirsuta*) is three to six inches tall with six petals and grass-like leaves taller than the flower stalk.



Yellow Stargrass

Richard Stromberg

As this fork of the road turns right to rejoin the other fork, go into the woods on the left side of the campsite there to find a little stream feeding a small pond and beyond that a peat bog. Many Pink Lady's



Tassel-rue

Richard Stromberg

Slippers (*Cypripedium acaule*) grow to your right, though the flowers may have faded by June. Straight ahead are Tassel-rue (*Trautvetteria caroliniensis*). The basal leaves are up to 15 inches wide with several, palmate, pointed lobes. Flower stalks up to four feet tall have a few alternate leaves reducing in size up the stem. Several flowers on top seem to be balls of white stamens protruding from a green center. To the left peat moss is growing in the water.

At the pond and elsewhere, you will see the strappy leaves of Yellow Fringed Orchid (*Platanthera ciliaris*). Its flowers will start opening in July.



Yellow Fringed Orchid

Richard Stromberg

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page 8

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SPRING—pictures by Richard Stromberg

