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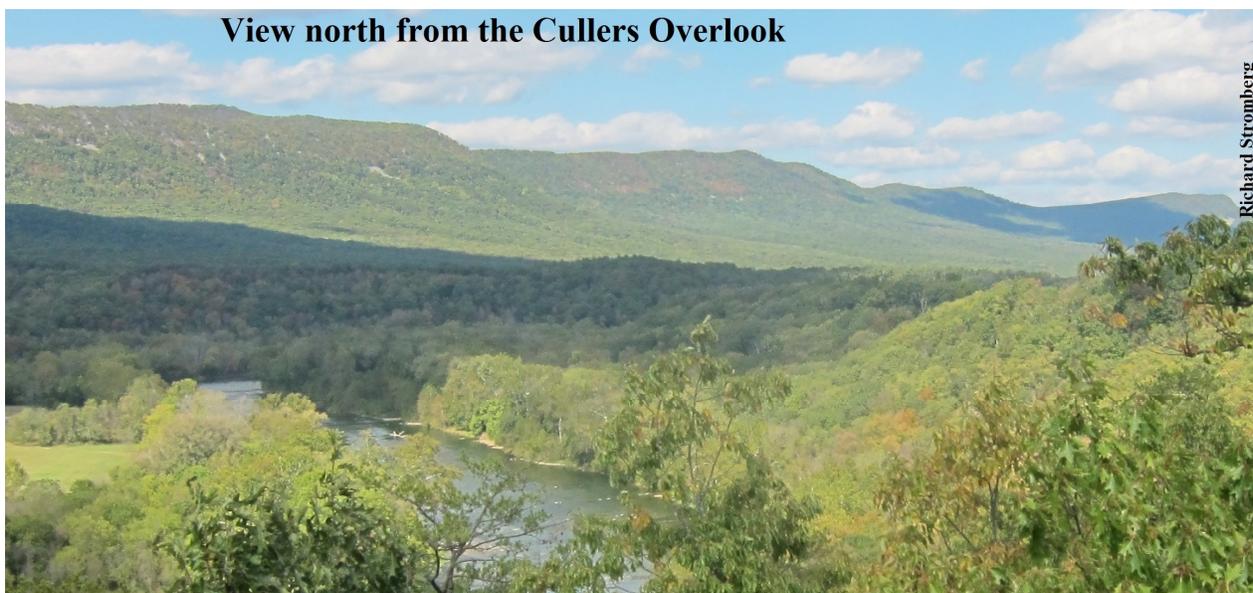
Leaflet

Shenandoah River State Park Walk—Richard Stromberg

SPRING 2015

Fifteen people enjoyed the unusually delightful weather for the December second Sunday walk, led by Richard Stromberg. We walked a flat mile along the South Fork of the Shenandoah and then headed up hill to the fantastic view from the Cullers Overlook of the bend of the river and the east ridge of the Massanutten mountains. We continued downhill past the Visitor Center and back to the cars.

View north from the Cullers Overlook

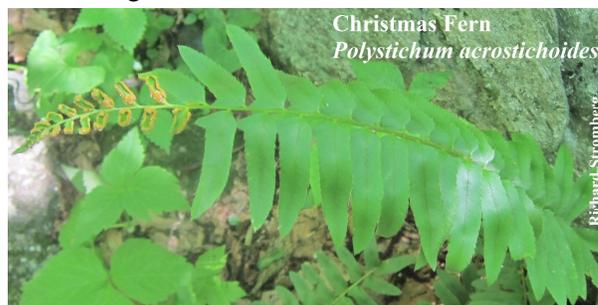


Richard Stromberg

We saw purple Coralberries (*Symphoricarpos orbiculatus*) near the parking lot and fluffy Goldenrod (*Solidago*) seed heads. Tangles of Japanese Honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*) still had leaves, which led to a discussion of whether or not only invasive alien vines were evergreen. Leaves on some Greenbrier (*Smilax rotundifolia*) proved the proposition untrue.

Kristin Zimet identified the ferns for us: Christmas Fern (*Polystichum acrostichoides*), Intermediate Wood Fern (*Dryopteris intermedia*), and Marginal Wood Fern (*Dryopteris marginalis*).

Carrie Blair gave us tips for identifying trees. Maples and Ashes have opposite leaves and branches. White Pine (*Pinus strobus*) has five leaves in each bundle while Virginia Pine (*Pinus virginiana*) has two and they are twisted. The smooth, lenticled bark of young Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*) trees breaks into scales as the tree ages. Eventually the scales resemble potato chips. The reddish-brown bark of non-native Bird Cherry (*Prunus avium*) does not get as scaly. Oak buds occur in clusters. The ground was covered with slow-to-decompose Oak leaves. We found Northern Red Oaks (*Quercus rubra*), White Oak (*Q. alba*), Chestnut Oak (*Q. montana*), and Post Oak (*Q. stellata*) leaves.



Christmas Fern
Polystichum acrostichoides

Richard Stromberg

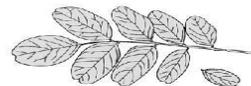
The Virginia Native Plant Society (VNPS), founded as the Virginia Wildflower Society in 1982, is a non-profit organization of people who share an interest in Virginia's wild plants and habitats and a concern for their protection.

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 online in color at www.vnps.org/piedmont

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The Leaflet Sky Meadows Walk—Kristin Zimet

Trees are the mainstay and solace of the native plant enthusiast in winter. They stand forth in their glory then, without distracting competition. On a rare mild Sunday afternoon, a reprieve from February's cold, 25 enthusiastic nature-lovers gathered at Sky Meadows State Park. Chris Lewis took us down to Gap Run Trail for a gentle introduction to identifying trees.

Chris has done a complete inventory of trees, shrubs and vines in Sky Meadows, finding remarkable diversity. There are 56 species visible from the Gap Run Trail alone. The trail's gentle gradient runs along a creek, offering both wet and dry habitat and both south and north-facing slopes.

Chris is a patient and careful teacher, pointing out the salient features that make tree species unique. He chose trees that disclose themselves in winter—by bark, bud, scar, or fruit. He compared members of the same family: for instance, in the birch family, the shreddy bark and staminate aments of *Ostrya virginiana* (Hop-horbeam) versus the muscled bark and lack of aments of *Carpinus caroliniana* (American Hornbeam). He helped us recognize the “fish scale” appearance of the branches of Blackhaw (*Viburnum prunifolium*), the pale lichen on the trunk of Yellow Poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), and the way thickened branches support the compound leaves of Hickory and Walnut and Ash. We learned to distinguish three kinds of Ash trees by their bud scars: the White Ash (*Fraxinus americana*) scar is crescent shaped and notched, cradling the new bud; the Black Ash (*F. nigra*) scar is rounder, with the bud sitting on top; the Green Ash (*F. pennsylvanica*) scar is also round, with a little distance between it and the new terminal bud. We practiced telling three Oak species apart by their acorn caps: long loose scales covering the Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*) cap, tighter scales upon the Black Oak (*Q. velutina*) caps, and “warty” scales marking the White Oak (*Q. alba*) caps.



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Some of us had a head start on trees, and some were starting from scratch, but all of us returned from the walk brimming. One of the participants has gone on three tree identification walks with Chris. She came back happily noting, “I learn something new every time.” Another participant, a self-proclaimed “newbie,” writes, “It was fascinating to put some order and name to all those brown and gray trees along the path. I can’t wait to practice again.”



Adventures in Plant ID—Suzanne Dingwell

Every chair was taken and extras had to be brought in for the first of the Piedmont Chapter’s Winter Speakers Series January 18th in Marshall, VA. An appreciative audience paid close attention as Richard Stromberg revealed tools, tips, and tricks he has used to identifying plants when away from home. He calls it his adventures in plant identification or solving the mystery of what a plant is.



Many of his tips were relevant to ID endeavors at home as well. Richard explained that you have to build from what you know, and he drew from his extensive photo library of plants to illustrate how he goes about the process of unraveling the mystery of a plant’s ID, whether here at home or further abroad.

First and foremost is a small camera. It enables you to record details to take home to use with books and online information to reveal answers. Handy as the camera is, he did admit that using it has, on more than one occasion, led to his not only being left behind on a hike, but becoming lost as a consequence!

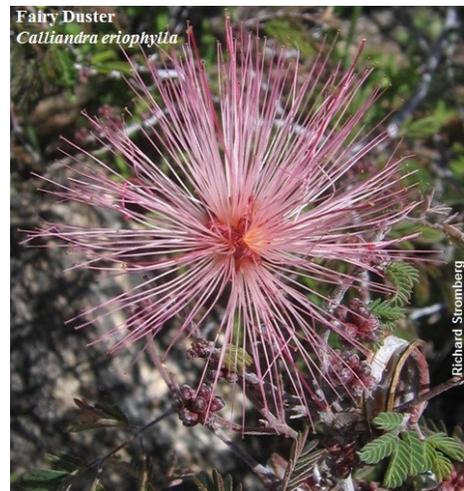
Recommended Field Guides were from Audubon Society and Peterson, which have separate volumes for different parts of the USA, and Newcomb’s Wildflower Guide, which covers only the northeast quadrant of the continent but spoils us with its unique keying system. The audience enjoyed a story of friends who carry an ice chest packed with field guides on the airplane. At the end of a day’s hike, the ice chest was converted to beer duty. Excellent recycling!

Richard showed the audience some of his favorite online databases, and used the USDA Plants Database and others to show how it is possible to search by many different criteria to find a particular plant. Online Floras are available in many places.



Making the effort to get to know a bit about the plant families is worth the time. Using the *Fabaceae* family as an example, Richard illustrated how knowing a few basic family characteristics, in this case, compound leaves with entire

leaflets, presence of banner and keel formation, and pea-like pods gives a starting point for searching. One example was Fairy Duster (*Calliandra eriophylla*) in Arizona. While it does not have a typical pea flower, the leaves and fruit indicate that it is *Fabaceae*.



The audience was treated to a world tour of flowers, as beautiful photos provided teaching examples. Richard gave specific examples of unfamiliar plants and then evaluated the similarities they bore to plants he already knew. Richard’s final Tip was, “Take extra batteries or a charger,” and his final Trick, “Take along someone who knows what they are looking at!” He also mentioned a Tip-in-the-making, which is the The Flora of Virginia App. Several VNPS members, including Richard and the Piedmont Chapter’s president, Sally Anderson, have volunteered to enter defining characteristics from the Flora into databases for each species. Sally explained that they are testing a model from High Country Apps, one that both Oregon and Yellowstone have had good success with.



Biscuit Mountain: If You Preserve It, They Will Come (To Learn)–Cindy Blugerman

What is one way to offer an outdoor environmental education to the public school students of your county? Purchase (unless a donation is involved) and preserve a large forested area to serve as their outdoor classroom. In 1967, the nonprofit Arlington Outdoor Education Association (AOEA) was founded for this purpose. Soon thereafter, the AOE A purchased 210 acres in the Broad Run area of Fauquier County and a couple of years ago the organization bought an adjacent 15 acres at the summit of Biscuit Mountain. They have set up the Phoebe Hall Knipling Outdoor Lab there.

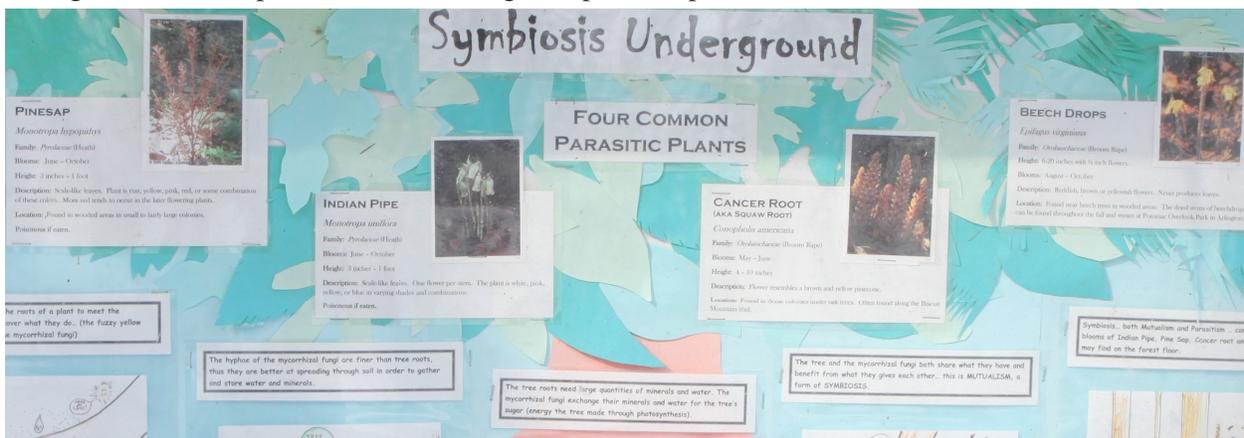
Its staff provides hands-on outdoor nature experiences to more than 9,000 Arlington County public school students. Arlington County's Outdoor Lab woodland campus, which encompasses the Glasscock Gap, includes a stream, springs, wetlands, Champ's Pond, hiking trails (one with a wonderful, well-built swinging bridge), laboratory, astronomy observatory, snake pit, butterfly garden, meadows, apiary, composting station, amphitheater, picnic shelter, tent areas for overnight camping and summer camps, a rock outcrop summit, and a large teepee. It is a really pristine forest without major nonnative infestations. We needed special permission to enter.



Nineteen people, many of them new or nonmembers, participated in Piedmont Chapter's first 2015 Second Sunday Walk on January 11 despite subfreezing weather. We had a clear day but walking was tricky on icy areas. Carrie Blair, tree expert and past chapter president, led the group hike after giving each of us a site map, fern checklist, and a list of the property's trees, shrubs and vines. We were instructed on how to identify woody plant species by observing their bark, bud, and branching characteristics. The flora

species represented in this woodland includes at least 35 tree species, 11 shrub species, eight types of vine, many species of herbaceous plants, several grass species, some ferns and more. The site also contains some orchid species, including a small population of Cranefly Orchid (*Tipularia discolor*), which flowers in the summer but puts out its leaf in winter. They were not visible this day due to snow cover but were seen by Carrie and me one month earlier.

One of the kiosk displays here contains a large artistic rendering of two types of flora symbiosis, mutualism and parasitism. This poster, completed in 1981 by a young man for his Eagle Scout project, provides photos and descriptions of four native woodland parasitic plants and has drawings depicting the ecological relationships between trees, fungi and parasitic plants.





Biscuit Mountain Pictures



Conservation/Preservation Coalitions—Emily Southgate

Sally Anderson reported in the last Leaflet about the formation of a the Blue Ridge Coalition, a group of non-profit organizations dedicated to preserving the natural and cultural heritage of the Blue Ridge from Shenandoah National Park to Harpers Ferry. I represented the Piedmont Chapter of VNPS at their December and January meetings. (Read more about the Coalition at <http://blueridgecoalition.org>.) Meetings so far have focused on organization and setting short- and longer-term goals. The Coalition will have two categories of membership: full members who will be most active and “partners” who may be less directly involved. Members will not be charged, but one of the early efforts will be fund-raising, especially to fund the webpage and publicity. Each member organization will be asked to provide two articles for the webpage, and VNPS has already started work on that with articles about the botanical treasures of this region. One of the first projects will be to write a summary statement describing the natural and cultural resources that we are trying to protect. I am on that committee.

The Piedmont Chapter also has just joined the 8-year-old Loudoun Preservation and Conservation Coalition (LCPCC), which provides a forum for discussing heritage and natural resource issues in Loudoun County. This coalition has been active, for example, in establishing development guidelines for the limestone area of the county and in initiating a belated county program to monitor conservation easements held by the county. Current efforts include protecting rural roads and commenting on proposed changes in zoning for development on steep slopes and floodplains. They work through committees that research a topic, interact with county administration, staff, and supervisors, and prepare position papers where appropriate. Members of the coalition are invited to sign on to position papers, but are not constrained to do so. You can read about the LCPCC at <http://loudouncoalition.org>. I have been on this coalition since its inception, representing various organizations, and am glad to represent VNPS.



Sunday	Mar 15	1pm	Red Rock Overlook Regional Park Second Sunday Walk
Loudoun County. Sally Anderson will lead a walk in this park on the Potomac near Leesburg. For more information contact piedmontvnps@gmail.com .			
Sunday	Mar 22	2-3:30pm	Winter Speaker Series: Spring Wildflowers
Fauquier County. Tri-County Feeds meeting room (upstairs), Marshall (No dogs allowed). Marion Lobstein, Professor Emeritus of Biology at Northern Virginia CC will talk about our spring wildflowers and their western U.S. relatives. For more information, email piedmontvnps@gmail.com .			
Sunday	Mar 29	10am-noon	Garlic Mustard Pull
Warren/Fauquier Counties. Participants are asked to come for any time period they have available to help eradicate Garlic Mustard on the Marjorie Arundel Trillium Trail at the G.R. Thompson WMA. Meet at the Trillium Trail Parking Lot on VA 638 north of Linden. For more details, please contact piedmontvnps@gmail.com .			
Sunday	Mar 29	2pm	The Ecological Regions and Natural Communities of Virginia
Fauquier County. A special program by Gary Fleming, Vegetation Ecologist VA Natural Heritage Program. At The Barn, Fauquier Campus of Lord Fairfax Community College. For more details, contact piedmontvnps@gmail.com .			
Sunday	Apr 12	1pm	Calmes Neck Registry Site Second Sunday Walk
Clarke County. Kristin Zimet will lead a walk at this VNPS registry site walk along the Shenandoah River. Rich mesic forest and ravines promise a spectacular show of Bluebells, Twinleaf, Blue Cohosh, Columbines, ferns and many other plants. The walk is moderate but expect to climb over downed trees. To register and request more information, email piedmontvnps@gmail.com . Limit 20 people.			
Saturday	April 18	9am-3pm	Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy Native Plant Sale
Loudoun County. Nature By Design (www.nature-by-design.com) & Watermark Woods (www.watermarkwoods.com) will bring a wide variety of plants for you to select from. To see plants that each nursery carries or to place orders ahead of time (all nursery stock is not present at the sale), visit their websites. Questions: Contact Ann Garvey at agarvey@loudounwildlife.org			
Tuesday	Apr 28	12:30-4pm	Trillium Field Trip
Professor of Biology Emeritus Marion Lobstein will lead a trip to Thompson Wildlife Management Area to explore spectacular wildflower displays featuring a sea of trilliums, sponsored by the Foundation of the State Arboretum. Meet at Blandy library to carpool. FOSA members \$10, nonmembers \$12. Registration required. Call 540-837-1758 Ext. 224 or visit http://blandy.virginia.edu/our-foundation/online_payments to register			
Friday	May 1	1-4pm	Invasive Plant Removal
Help with Invasive plant removal at the Northern Virginia Regional Park on VA Rt. 601 south of US Rt. 50, near Mt Weather. Light refreshments served afterwards. For more information, email piedmontvnps@gmail.com .			
Saturday & Sunday May 9 & 10		9am-4:30pm	State Arboretum Garden Fair
Clarke County. Perennials, small trees and fine items for garden and home for sale; children's activities, gardening information, food and more. Information at http://blandy.virginia.edu/our-foundation/2014-garden-fair .			
Saturday & Sunday May 9 & 10		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, http://www.nps.gov/shen/planyourvisit/index.htm .			
Saturday	June 6	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 and plants and other items for sale.			
Sunday	June 14	1pm	Massanutten Second Sunday Walk
George Washington National Forest. Join us on west side of Fort Valley as we seek Tassel Rue (<i>Trautvetteria carolinensis</i>), Skullcaps (<i>Scutellaria</i>), orchids, and other plants at the bottom of the east side of Green Mountain. For more information, email piedmontvnps@gmail.com .			



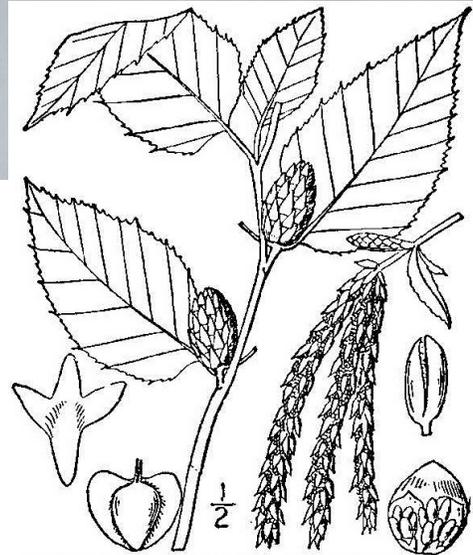
Another Adventure in Plant Identification—Richard Stromberg

The mountain trails where I hike have been snow covered for most of 2015. While hiking up Signal Knob Trail at the north end of Massanutten Mountain February 1st, I noticed brown seeds lying on the snow. Without snow they wouldn't have been noticeable. They reminded me of tiny jet fighter planes.

Sweet Birch seeds *Betula lenta*



Of course, I took a picture of the seeds. I saw them on and off as I hiked. I finally looked up to see where they were coming from. I saw some stubby catkins at the end of twigs and figured out which tree they were attached to—not easy among the tangle of branches up there. I found the trunk: shiny, dark bark with lenticels. Not a cherry. I know what those fruit look like. So probably a Birch, what I have always called Black Birch (*Betula lenta*). Back home I checked my Peterson and Sibley tree books, but they do not show seeds though the bark and catkins fit. It is also known as Sweet Birch. (It is used to make birch beer). I went on-line to the USDA Plant Database. There were no photographs of seeds but a drawing showed the winged seed I had seen on the trail.



USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / Britton, N.L., and A. Brown. 1913. *An illustrated flora of the northern United States, Canada and the British Possessions*. 3 vols. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. Vol. 1: 609.



Volunteer Opportunities with VNPS—Cathy Mayes

If you would like to do more to help preserve native plants and native plant habitats in our area, VNPS offers many volunteer opportunities. If you are eager for outdoor activity, we need help maintaining the Marjorie Arundel trail in the Thompson Wildlife Management Area and restoring the forest at Northern Virginia Blue Ridge Park. We need friendly people to staff booths at community events and creative people to photograph and write stories about our walks and the plants we see. If there's a special place you would like to share with other native plant enthusiasts, we are always looking for new hike leaders. Make a difference—volunteer with Virginia Native Plant Society. Contact Piedmont Chapter President Sally Anderson at rccsca@comcast.net or 540-722-3072 or the Piedmont Chapter email account piedmontvnps@gmail.com.

The Leaflet

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Curlyheads (*Clematis ochroleuca*)