

# *The* *Leaflet*

**President's Corner**—Marjorie Prochaska

**SUMMER 2011**

Ten years ago, my husband and I built a home in the middle of a corn field. We had thought we needed the sun for gardening, but we soon discovered that we needed shade more, both to shield us and to soften the harsh landscape of a newly built house. The enormity of what we had done—a house and its infrastructure exert a terrible toll on the land—settled in, and we have spent much of the past decade planting trees. The first few seasons we had nurseries plant the largest trees we could afford. We soon discovered the reality of survival rates, and we began planting smaller trees ourselves. There is an inverse relationship between our aging bodies and the size hole we can dig and the size root ball we can handle.

By last fall, some of the trees we were planting were mere whips. These were giveaways from the John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District. They included five Redbuds (*Cercis Canadensis*), planted along the edge between meadow and woods, a Hazelnut (*Corylus Americana*), planted on the cemetery fence line, and a Hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*), that went in where a Yoshino Cherry had died. The Hackberry leafed out and was immediately discovered by a non-hackberry caterpillar, which was duly removed and deposited on a nearby mulberry. The Hackberry put out new leaves, and now this season it is more than twice the size it was last year. It is one tough plant, and we have protected it and all our newly planted trees with deer-proof wire fencing.

The spring and fall garden fairs at Blandy Farm have proven an invaluable source of native plants. We have gotten to know some of the vendors who specialize in native plants and go immediately to them to see their offerings and to make choices. I have certainly come home with plants that tempted me when I did not have a clue where I was going to plant them. With trees, we have learned to identify the site first, and then to go shopping, much better—less tyranny, less panic. Last fall we came home with the Sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) I had long pined for, a Sourwood (*Oxydendrum arboreum*), a Scarlet Oak (*Quercus coccinea*), and an American Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*).

We chased down a White Oak (*Quercus alba*) that was small enough to plant (1-1.5' caliper) at a nursery in Gainesville. This was our third attempt at a White Oak, and we were determined. As you know, it was a tough winter. In fact, we have had two tough winters. Only the Sweetgum seemed to have succumbed, but even now it is putting out new growth around its dead main trunk. It bears monitoring to see what can be salvaged.

We have recognized from the beginning that we are not planting just for ourselves, we will not live to see these trees achieve their maturity, but we are planting for future generations. The house and its site are worthy of handsome trees, and it makes so much sense to go native. Our first year, we planted ten Japanese Yoshino cherries, and had to replace six of them. I will not replace them again, much as I love them. The natives will duke it out with the native insects, and I smile to think that one day our White Oak will be host to some of the 500+ species of *Lepidoptera* Doug Tallamy identified living on White Oak

**2011 Blandy Farm Garden Fair**—Sally Anderson

Thanks to all who participated in this year's effort at Garden Fair! The tent gang in particular should be thanked for their efforts. This Garden Fair was reported to be the best ever by the Foundation of the State Arboretum, who organizes and runs the fair, and the weather was more cooperative than usual. They estimate close to 6000 people plus vendors and volunteers were in attendance. (continued on page 2)



## 2011 Blandy Farm Garden Fair (continued from page 1)

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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This event is one of our best ways of reaching the public with information about native plants and habitat, and to let people know about invasive plants and the problems they cause. Many of us remember when we first began to discuss the invasive plant issue with the public, and the blank looks we got. That has changed, and while we still have a lot to do, more people are aware of the problem. Thanks to Kim Strader, curator of the Arboretum's native plant trail and VNPS Horticulture Chair, for her efforts in this area. She began the practice of prohibiting known invasive plants from being sold at Garden Fair, issuing a list to vendors and checking the booths (the list can be seen at [vnps.org](http://vnps.org)).

If you have not worked with us before at Garden Fair, please consider doing a shift at the booth next year. While we do our best to answer questions, you don't have to know everything, and we have plenty of reference materials and native plant growers there to help us.

## Piedmont Chapter Tour of the National Arboretum—Carrie Blair

Carla Overbeck, Kristen Zimet, Sally Anderson, and Robin Blair, sister of tour leader Carrie Blair enjoyed a nearly perfect, sunny day at the United States National Arboretum on April 17. Carrie drove the group east on I-66 onto Constitution Avenue in Washington and then on Maryland Avenue (US-50) through light traffic between 9 and 10 on a Sunday morning.

We marveled at the Bonsai Collection of table-top, mini-trees. We explored the recently threatened Glenn Dale Hybrid Azaleas in full bloom and admired a Lacebark Pine (*Pinus bungeana*) for its chartreuse and camouflage patterned bark. The National Grove of State Trees was disappointing as signage is poor and there is no landscaping to organize it. Since it is the one area of native trees, it could be a real showcase but did not impress us. We did find picnic tables there to enjoy our lunch.

The Asian Garden is very high maintenance, with many paths down a dramatic terraced hill which borders the Anacostia River. Giant, curled Jack-in-the-pulpits grew under gloriously flowering shrubs and a tall canopy of mature trees.

Finally, the Gotelli Collection of Dwarf and Slow Growing Conifers has a variety of evergreen varieties from prostrate to enormous and of every texture and color.

The Arboretum is a rolling, beautiful part of the District of Columbia just across the river from the Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens, where a summer trip would be fun.

## Trillium Celebration—Cathy Mayes

The Piedmont chapter helped celebrate the annual blooming of the Trillium by participating in a April 30<sup>th</sup> fundraiser at Fox Meadow Winery in Linden. Trilliums coat the forest floor adjacent to the winery, but we drove a half mile to the best place to view these magnificent beauties, the Marjorie Arundel Trail in the G. Richard Thompson Wildlife Management Area. (continued on page 3)



### Trillium Celebration (continued from page 2)

About twelve participants, mostly members of Fox Meadow Winery's wine club, enjoyed a delightful hike. We saw nearly every spring ephemeral in bloom in near-perfect weather. Upon returning to the winery, we gave a short talk about the Trillium. You cannot just go out and buy Trillium seeds at the hardware store. They take years to develop from seed, but once established, can live for scores of years.

On this day, \$1.00 for every bottle purchased was donated to the Virginia Native Plant Society to help in their efforts to bring awareness and preservation to Virginia's native plant species. The total donation was \$136.00. Many thanks to our friends at Fox Meadow Winery for helping others appreciate this beautiful plant and the equally beautiful Arundel trail.

### Annual Piedmont Chapter Trillium Walk—Sally Anderson

On this year's walk to the G. R. Thompson WMA on May 1<sup>st</sup> to see *Trillium grandiflorum*, we were right on target. The Trilliums were gorgeous, and I believe we went at peak bloom time. With the wet spring and sudden warmth, they may have all popped out at once!

Besides the grand display of trilliums, there are many other wildflowers to see. The Mayapples (*Podophyllum peltatum*) are prominent. Some worry that it is at the expense of Trilliums, and my own opinion is that it probably reflects the fact that deer prefer other plants to the Mayapples. The Violets were blooming in profusion—yellow, purple and cream colored. Several Showy Orchis (*Galearis spectabilis*) and Yellow Lady's Slippers (*Cypripedium parviflorum*) were spotted. The plants in the cold seep were a little behind schedule, except the giant leaves of skunk cabbage. As always, we were sharing the trail with birders.



We all noted the lack of Garlic Mustard, and while we can claim to have something to do with that along the VNPS trail, it may not have been in full bloom yet, and so was less noticeable in all areas. Unfortunately, since the fire road disturbance by logging trucks, stilt grass is becoming a problem along the road, and some effort may need to be made to prevent it from spreading and destroying habitat.

### Sky Meadows Winter Tree Walk—Marjorie Prochaska

Our Second Sunday walk in March dawned brisk, as usual, and fourteen of us gathered in Sky Meadows State Park to meet forester Chris Lewis, who led us on a winter tree walk. Several of us had met Chris last year when he went through the Virginia Master Naturalist program with us. For his individual project, he chose to inventory the trees in Sky Meadows. So impressed was the park staff with his work that they quickly turned his results into a handsome brochure delineating native species and also some planted non-natives, understory trees, and shrubs and vines as well.

Chris explained that Sky Meadows has three types of forest: Piedmont Mountain Alluvial Forest, Central Appalachian Basic Oak-Hickory Forest, and Piedmont Submesic Forest. We started in the first. Winter is a great time to learn to identify trees. We cannot depend on leaf shape, but must rely on other characteristics—the bark, the branching pattern, and in spring, the swelling bud. The first tree we discussed was the Bitternut Hickory (*Carya cordiformis*), distinctive not only because of its alternate branching pattern but for the distinctive sulfur yellow of its clamshell-shaped bud. Carrie Blair carried with her The Tree Identification Book, by George W. D. Symonds, a great resource for identifying trees using every part of the tree including bark, twigs and buds, and flowers and fruit. (continued on page 4)



## Sky Meadows Winter Tree Walk (continued from page 3)

Chris used the size of the branches to help us distinguish between the oppositely branched Maple and Ash. The Maple's silhouette is lacy compared to Ash. Ash has stout branches and stout twigs, to better carry the weight of its compound leaves. We also looked at leaf scars to distinguish one species from another. Ash has a semi-circular shape under the new bud. The Maple leaf scar is a shallow V.

Many trees lose their lower branches as they grow taller searching for light in the canopy. A young Black Gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*), which has not yet developed its characteristic alligator bark, can be identified by observing that its lower branches emerge at close to a 90° angle. The Black Gum prefers deep alluvial soil, which we left behind as we moved up into the Central Appalachian Oak Hickory Forest.

We came upon the Black Oak (*Quercus velutina*), a hard one for me to distinguish without its acorn, and the mighty Tulip Poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), which can reach 200' in height and whose samaras can live for seven years in the leaf litter before germinating! No wonder they are successful. We spied a shaggy-barked tree, and several of us guessed it was Shagbark Hickory (*Carya ovata*). Turns out it was an Eastern Hophornbeam (*Ostrya virginiana*), which also develops a shreddy bark with age.

Each tree seems to have some characteristic we can use to recognize it. The Box Elder (*Acer negundo*) has bright green twigs in the spring. Sometimes acorn caps are necessary to distinguish among the oaks. Some are shallow, some are deep, some are warty. The challenge is, always, trying to remember them all. We saw many trees. I was again impressed by how much diversity we have in Virginia.

In addition to Carrie and myself, participants were Sally Anderson, Carla & Julius Overbeck, Mary Keith Ruffner and Larry Coneen, Scott Johnston and Susy Neessen, Linda Murphy, Linda Pranke, Diane and Emily Gulick and Robin Williams.

## Calendar of Events

(Don't forget to put the State Annual Meeting on your calendar, Sep. 16-18)

<b>Sunday</b>	<b>June 12</b>	<b>1pm</b>	<b>Second Sunday Walk</b>
<b>Shenandoah National Park-North.</b> Richard Stromberg will lead a walk in the Jenkins Gap/Compton Peak area to see how the 2,000 acres that burned last February are recovering. Meet at Jenkins Gap at mile 12.3 of Skyline Drive. For information contact Richard at 540-631-0212 or <a href="mailto:risy@embarqmail.com">risy@embarqmail.com</a>			
<b>Monday</b>	<b>June 20</b>	<b>8:30am-1pm</b>	<b>Tree Identification Class</b>
<b>Fauquier County.</b> Carrie Blair will instruct on how to identify trees at her home from 8:30 to 10:30 followed by a short trip in her area to identify trees in the field from 10:30 to 12:30. Maximum 20 participants. Fee of \$30 to Carrie for the class including lunch at her place after the field trip. Call Carrie at 540-364-1232 to register.			
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>July 10</b>	<b>10am-2pm</b>	<b>Second Sunday Walk</b>
<b>Shenandoah National Park-Central.</b> Check out the flowers along two miles of the Mill Prong Trail from Milam Gap (mile 52.8 on Skyline Drive) to Rapidan Camp. Meet at Milam Gap parking at 10am. Pack a lunch to eat on President Hoover's Brown House porch. For information contact Marjorie Prochaska at 540-364-1029 or <a href="mailto:fujinewgrand@aol.com">fujinewgrand@aol.com</a>			
<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>July 13</b>	<b>9am-1pm</b>	<b>Grass Identification Class</b>
<b>Loudoun County.</b> Emily Southgate will show you grasses are fun. We will spend a couple of hours outside looking at field characters of grasses on the Middleburg Academy campus and collecting specimens. Then, in the lab, Dr. Southgate will discuss the parts of a grass flower and plant. You will use that information to key out the grasses that we have collected. Limited to 10 people. <b>Beginners encouraged.</b> Rain date on July 14. Contact Emily Southgate <a href="mailto:ewbsouthgate@gmail.com">ewbsouthgate@gmail.com</a> or 540-687-8291 to register.			
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>August 14</b>	<b>1pm</b>	<b>Second Sunday Walk</b>
<b>Fauquier County.</b> See what is blooming in Sky Meadows State Park. Cool off at Ramona Morris' home near the Park after the walk. Contact Marjorie Prochaska at 540-364-1029 or <a href="mailto:fujinewgrand@aol.com">fujinewgrand@aol.com</a>			

**Editor's Corner**

I have been impressed this year with the volume of flowers. By volume I mean size of plants, size of clumps, or area covered.

First to strike me was Pink Lady's Slippers (*Cypripedium acaule*). As the AOP (see column to the right) monitor for Old Rag Mountain, I know that a significant population grows up the hill from the Saddle Trail just below Byrd's Nest 1 shelter, but this year as I walked down the trail, a clump of about 20 popped into my eye, surrounded by some smaller clumps and



Pink Lady's Slippers  
(*Cypripedium acaule*)

individual plants scattered under the Mountain Laurel up the hill. A couple days later I was again impressed by large clumps of them on Hazle Mountain Trail in Shenandoah National Park—over a hundred along one stretch of trail.

Last week I went to Big Schloss, west of I-81. I know to look for Wild Columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*) there. Before getting to Big Schloss, we encountered Rock Harlequin (*Corydalis sempervirens*). Then a whole field of them cascading down the hill, which is not impressive because the flowers are so small. The Columbine did not disappoint either, big plants taller than I am, flashing red in the shady woods.

Please go on-line to see the pictures in color. — Richard Stromberg

**Taking Inventory—Richard Stromberg**

Piedmont Chapter members have increasingly become involved in projects to survey what plants grow in a specified place and monitor the status of species. These efforts have been documented in *The Leaflet* over the years.

In 2002 I started monitoring a section of the Appalachian Trail corridor along the Potomac near Harpers Ferry for the National Park Service **Appalachian Trail Natural Heritage Inventory and Monitoring Program**. There I monitored healthy Star-flowered Solomon's Seal (*Maianthemum stellatum*) populations and dwindling Smooth Wild Petunia (*Ruellia strepens*) populations. Now I count Nodding Trillium (*Trillium flexipes*) in Trumbo Hollow near Front Royal

In 2006 several people surveyed Piedmont Chapter member **Bruce Jones'** land over five separate months, listing 600 species.

In 2008 Fauquier County Forester Joe Rossetti invited volunteers from the Piedmont Chapter to survey the herbaceous plants at **Whitney State Forest** near Warrenton. The surveyors identified 166 plant species.

In autumn 2008 Shenandoah National Park started the **Adopt-an-Outcrop Program (AOP)** to monitor rare plant populations and communities documented in an earlier study. Besides recording data for each population, twice a year the volunteer checks out a camera to take pictures for comparison to the baseline.

VNPS Piedmont Chapter members Jocelyn Sladen, Carrie Blair and Marjorie Prochaska started to inventory the herbaceous plants and shrubs in Fauquier County Parks and Recreation Department's 70-acre tract of land east of Warrenton along Cedar Run adjacent to the **White's Mill** subdivision in 2008. They recorded over fifty plant species, none particularly unusual, but, sadly, many invasive

The **AT MEGA-Transect Chestnut Project**, a partnership of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and the American Chestnut Foundation started two years ago. Volunteers count American Chestnut trees three feet in height or taller within fifteen feet of the trail and record the location and description of large individual trees.

**Virginia Working Landscapes**, a grasslands restoration initiative, started last year. Fifteen demonstration sites are being surveyed for songbirds, pollinators, and plant communities. The plant survey requires us to identify the species growing in a square meter at thirty random spots around each field—challenging because we have to identify grasses and plants that have not yet flowered. We also estimate what percentage each species takes up. We have started identification sessions, gathering people together to look at samples brought back from the field. Many heads are better than one.

This year we have started a survey of **Sky Meadows State Park** to list all the non-woody plants growing there as we did for Bruce Jones' property. Woody plants have already been listed.





Wild Columbine  
*Aquilegia canadensis*

Please check the date at the bottom of your mailing label below. It is your VNPS membership expiration date. If your membership has expired, please contact VNPS at 540-837-1600.

*The*



*Leaflet*

**PIEDMONT CHAPTER  
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Rock Harlequin  
*Corydalis sempervirens*