

# The Leaflet

**Chestnut Tree Planted to Honor Marion Lobstein—Stacey Remick-Simkins**

**WINTER 2011**

November 8, 2011 was crisp and cool at the State Arboretum at Blandy, with the fragrance and splendor of green grass bathed in sunshine and crowned with all the rustic orange, deep purple, electric red and rich brown of our fall foliage. The stage was set for the dual celebration of the beginnings of a Chestnut renaissance and the well-spent life that occasioned it. VNPS in conjunction with the State Arboretum and the American Chestnut Foundation celebrated Marion Lobstein's life and work by planting a new Chestnut hybrid. As a biologist and prime instigator for the soon-to-be-published *Flora of Virginia*, she is widely known as a beloved teacher and mentor. The publication is the first of its kind for Virginia since the 18th century. Marion dedicated a second seedling to her husband, George, who cut a proud figure among those in attendance. Afterwards there was a reception held in the Peetwood Pavilion. There we were serendipitously entertained by the annual burning of the nearby native plant meadow.

Before retiring, Marion was Associate Professor of Biology at the Manassas Campus of NVCC, and University of Virginia Adjunct Professor of Field Botany at Blandy Farm. She has served on the Boards of Directors for the Flora of Virginia Project and Foundation of the State Arboretum and as Botany Chair of the Virginia Native Plant Society.

State Arboretum Curator T'ai Raulston warmly recalled outings Marion led in the Thompson Wildlife Management Area featuring extraordinary Trillium blooms. Sally Anderson, President of the Virginia Native Plant Society, praised her for the rich and unforgettable years of mentoring members of the Society, and Cathy Mayes, Chairman of the Virginia Chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation added more glowing remarks. Bursts of applause underscored the tributes.

The "Restoration Chestnuts" planted are hybrids: fifteen sixteenths American Chestnut wedded to the Chinese Chestnut for protection. Hopefully this hybrid will be blight-resistant so it can reclaim the once prominent place held by Chestnut trees throughout the eastern United States. Acknowledging the need these saplings have for constant vigilance and loving care, Marion emphasized to her husband, "We need to stay healthy so we can continue to come back and visit our children." Their "children" have joined 500 other fledglings at Blandy, thriving on tender loving care and record rainfalls with prodigious growth (five feet plus) and bristling burs.

I was inspired by Marion's story and buoyed by the hope inherent in these seedlings. Moreover, I was touched by the love of nature shown by those in attendance and the special place reserved in their affections for chestnuts and other plants. My enthusiasm even spilled over into hours of studying letters and articles documenting the triumphs and woes of our common cause.

I came away with a firm conviction that these scrawny seedlings were destined to become majestic monuments to the Lobsteins. I look forward to the restoration of the glories these natural wonders have to offer. With each successive planting, we move one crucial step closer to the day when we can once again gather at the foot of a giant Chestnut and gaze up in wonder





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](http://www.vnps.org/piedmont)

The Chapter's email address is [piedmontvnps@gmail.com](mailto:piedmontvnps@gmail.com)

#### **OFFICERS**

President, vacant  
**Brenda Crawford**, VP  
[brendacrawford90@gmail.com](mailto:brendacrawford90@gmail.com)  
**Blanca Vandervoort** Sec'y  
[cvanderv@nelsoncable.com](mailto:cvanderv@nelsoncable.com)  
**Carla Overbeck** Treasurer  
[overbecks@verizon.net](mailto:overbecks@verizon.net)

#### **DIRECTORS**

**Sally Anderson**  
[rccsca@comcast.net](mailto:rccsca@comcast.net)  
**Carrie Blair**  
[horseblanketcb@yahoo.com](mailto:horseblanketcb@yahoo.com)  
**David Roos**  
[davidmroos@aol.com](mailto:davidmroos@aol.com)  
**Mary Keith Ruffner**  
[cootehillfarm@aol.com](mailto:cootehillfarm@aol.com)  
**Sybille Seltmann**  
[Ssybille6@aol.com](mailto:Ssybille6@aol.com)  
**Robin Williams**  
[robinspony2@gmail.com](mailto:robinspony2@gmail.com)

## **Piedmont Chapter Annual Meeting—Marjorie Prochaska**

The Chapter's annual meeting was held at Loudon County's Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve in October. After a delicious buffet luncheon, the meeting opened with the election of officers for the coming year. Because our By-laws limit us to serving no more than two consecutive 2-year terms on the Board, six of our members have rotated off—Cathy Mayes, Ramona Morris, Marjorie Prochaska, Jocelyn Sladen, Richard Stromberg, Kristin Zimet. Brenda Crawford was elected Vice President, and Blanca Vandervoort, Secretary, and Carla Overbeck, Treasurer. Sybille Seltmann and David Roos joined the Board. Sally Anderson, Carrie Blair, Mary Keith Ruffner and Robin Williams are continuing Board members, and Richard Stromberg continues as our most excellent editor of *The Leaflet*. The president's position is temporarily vacant. We are hopeful that someone will soon step forward to assume the leadership and responsibilities of president. In the meantime, Board meetings will be chaired by non-voting past Board members on a rotating basis.

The Chapter presented your outgoing president with a beautiful American Snowbell (*Styrax Americanus*), which promptly found a home in a burgeoning native shrub border between an American Cranberry bush *Viburnum (Viburnum trilobum)* and an Arrowwood *Viburnum (V. dentatum)*.

Our speaker for the day was , friend of Blanca & Charles Vandervoort, Dick Marzolf. He was for a long-time the principal investigator of the Long-Term Ecological Research program at the Konza Prairie site in Kansas. The Konza Prairie is located in the Flint Hills of Northeastern Kansas and is one of the last remaining tracts of tall grass prairie in the US. Since 1980, with the first funding by the National Science Foundation, the site-based research program has recognized that fire, grazing and climatic variability are the three critical drivers affecting the system. We were intrigued by the patchwork of topographical plots, each treated individually with regard to its graze and burn schedules. Clearly some of us hadn't thought before how important aspect and moisture are to the ability of a grassland to recover following disturbance and at what different rates critical factors interact.

The prairie is owned by The Nature Conservancy and Kansas State University, which manages the field station there. It is always exciting for me to have my eyes opened to an ecological treasure elsewhere in the US that I can dream about going to and experiencing firsthand, as some of our members were fortunate to have done this past summer.



**American Snowbell (*Styrax Americanus*)**



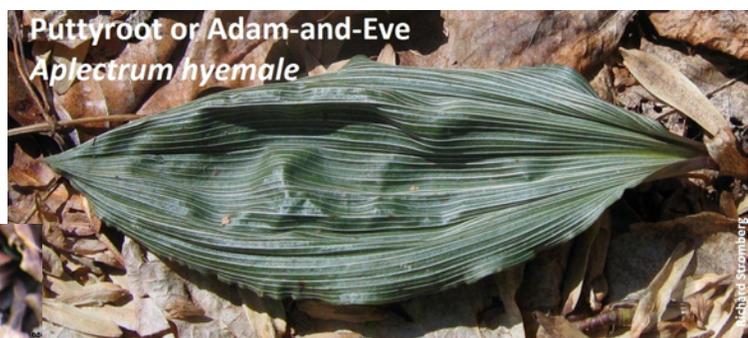
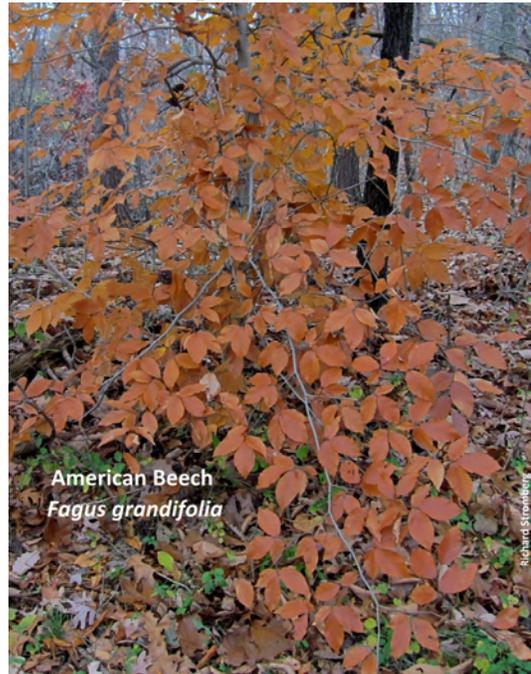
## November's Hike On Wildcat Mountain—Jocelyn Sladen

Early fallen leaves had reached perfect underfoot crunchiness, while leaves still clinging to Oaks, Beeches and Hickories displayed their wonderful hues of burnt gold and mahogany against the November sky. Piedmont Chapter's Second Sunday walk for November drew about 24 participants to Wildcat Mountain, Jocelyn Sladen's property just north of Warrenton.

We started out through old fields near the top of the mountain at 1200 feet, overlooking the broad sweep of countryside towards the Blue Ridge. The fields here are managed for warm season grasses and native forbs, none ever planted, all regenerating from the original seed bank. Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) and Indian Grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*), dominated the grass cover, while native plants such as Wild Bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*), Gray Goldenrod (*Solidago nemoralis*) and various Asters including Wavyleaf Aster (*Symphyotrichum undulatum*) grew among them. Hoary Mountain Mint (*Pycnanthemum incanum*), although dry, still held its heady fragrance.

Then we headed downhill along a steep and rocky path from 1200 feet to 600 feet, leading into the mixed deciduous woodlands of the Nature conservancy's Wildcat Mountain Natural Area. Conservancy trails led through a splendid hardwood forest dominated by oaks and hickories, typically over 80 years old. Botanical sightings on the ground can be elusive in November, but quick and observant eyes spotted a number of good finds, including the winter leaves of Puttyroot orchid (*Aplectrum hyemale*) and Crane fly orchid (*Tipularia discolor*). Spikes of Silverrod (*Solidago bicolor*) in seed were identifiable on a rocky slope.

Maple-leaved Viburnum (*Viburnum acerifolium*) grew abundantly on the slopes, along with *Vacciniums*, almost certainly Deerberry (*V. stamineum*), while Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*) and



PawPaw (*Asimina triloba*) were abundant near a stream at a lower area of the preserve. The PawPaw was of special interest because of its rapid spread through this woodland in recent years. This is a phenomenon that has been observed in many areas. It seems that deer, sadly responsible for preventing regeneration of many hardwoods, do not favor PawPaw in their diet. We rested briefly to investigate an old farmstead in the center of the preserve until finally undertaking a huff-and-puff, straight uphill hike to cider and cookies.



<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Dec 11</b>	<b>1pm</b>	<b>Second Sunday Walk</b>
<b>Fauquier County.</b> Master Naturalist Chris Lewis will lead a walk on the winding trails through meadows and woodlands while enjoying spectacular views of the Piedmont. The focus of the walk will be winter tree identification. We'll meet at the horse stables in the park, which are located in the section east of Rt. 17. We'll walk the Shearman's Mill Trail, which is one mile long and relatively easy. Sky Meadows has a \$4 entrance fee per vehicle. For more details, please contact Chris at <a href="mailto:cplewis2@comcast.net">cplewis2@comcast.net</a>			
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Jan 8</b>	<b>9am-4pm</b>	<b>Second Sunday Walk</b>
<b>National Mall, Washington, DC.</b> Visit the US Botanic Garden's "National Garden" of indigenous Mid-Atlantic plants labeled for self-discovery, between Maryland Avenue and Independence Avenue. Then cross 3rd Street. to explore green planted areas around the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI). Carpool from the Marshall Bloom grocery parking lot (left side). Museums open at 10am. Dress warmly and prepare to walk with Carrie Blair through garden areas and lawns with big oaks surrounding the Capitol Reflecting Pool. Spend time in the Botanic Garden and lunch on your own in Mitsitam Native Foods Café and shop in the Roanoke Museum store in the Museum. Contact Carrie Blair 540 364-1232 for carpool planning. Poor driving conditions will cancel this event.			
<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Feb 4</b>	<b>10am-4pm</b>	<b>Going Wild in Your Backyard</b>
<b>Culpeper County.</b> This open house by the Old Rag Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists is an opportunity for the public to learn about natural resource and conservation agencies and services in the state. Presentations will provide participants with practical ways to create habitats that will attract wildlife on their own property. It will be held in Eastern View High School, Culpeper, Virginia. Contact: Pam Owen at <a href="mailto:ormn.openhouse@gmail.com">ormn.openhouse@gmail.com</a> .			
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Feb 12</b>	<b>1pm</b>	<b>Second Sunday Walk</b>
<b>Frederick County.</b> Being planned.			
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>March 25</b>	<b>10am-1pm</b>	<b>Garlic Mustard Pull</b>
Help eliminate invasive Garlic Mustard at Thompson Wildlife Management Area. Meet at the Trillium Trail Parking Lot. Contact Richard Stromberg 540-631-0212/ <a href="mailto:risy@embarqmail.com">risy@embarqmail.com</a>			

Watch for information on our Winter Speaker Series being planned for January, February and March in Warrenton.



The Lobsteins with the Piedmont Chapter Board at the Peetwood Pavilion (l-r) Standing: Brenda Crawford, Carrie Blair, David Roos, Carla Overbeck, Jocelyn Sladen, Robin Williams, Marion Lobstein, George Lobstein, Marjorie Prochaska. Seated: Richard Stromberg, Kristin Zimet, Cathy Mayes, Mary Keith Ruffner, and Sally Anderson

**Editor's Corner**

It leapt at me from the new book shelf at the library: Weeds: In Defense of Nature's Most Unloved Plants, by Richard Mabey. Even though the author is British, much is relevant, after you unravel some of the names. For instance, I had never heard of "fat-hen", but from the glossary of plant names at the back of the book, I could get the scientific name, *Chenopodium album*. I looked that up and found an American name I recognized, Lambsquarters. I've pulled up enough of them in my time.

I agree with his definition of weed, "a plant in the wrong place". I also like the quote from Ralph Waldo Emerson, "a plant whose virtues have not yet been discovered." Mabey uses fat-hen as an example of how the view of plants can change over time. It first was a wild seashore plant that became a weed in Neolithic gardens. Later it was cultivated for its oily seeds, but then became a crop weed. Now people forage for it as a nutritious green.

The overall theme of the book is a chronology linking of weeds to man. Man and weeds are ecological partners. Weeds came to be when agriculture began. They love what we do to the soil. And we transport them all over the place, on purpose or accidentally.

Typical of Mabey's stories is *Senecio squalidus*, which became known as Oxford Ragwort because it was first spotted in the Oxford University Botanic Garden in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It was brought there from Mount Etna, where it grows naturally on the rocks. It escaped, growing along Oxford's ancient walls until it reached the railroad "the portal to a nationwide, interlinked network of Etna-like stone chips and clinker."

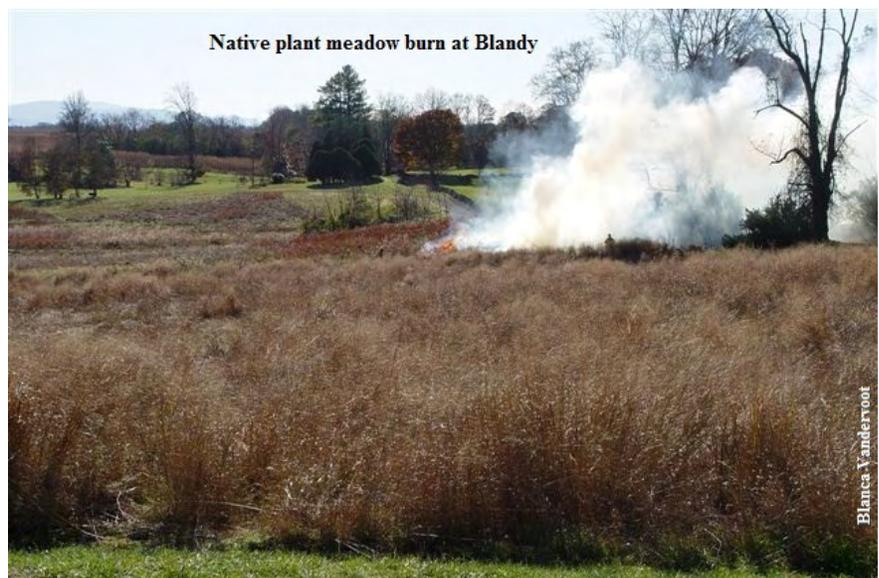
– Richard Stromberg

**Benefits of Native Species Lecture by Neil Diboll**

Piedmont Chapter member Bruce Jones invited Neil DiBoll, President of Prairie Nursery in Wisconsin to speak at Shenandoah University the evening of October 20, sponsored by Smithsonian Institute, Virginia Native Plant Society, Blandy Experimental Farm, and the Virginia Working Landscapes group. Neil fascinated an audience of about 100 people with a humorous presentation on the benefits of native species and why natives are the logical choice for landscapes. He showed us how native prairie plants can save energy, water, and landscaping cost. He focused on the economic and ecological problems of lawns and the chemicals used to maintain them, and how native plant landscaping can be a beneficial alternative. When he started his business, most people thought he was growing weeds. The breakthrough was Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*). It became a garden flower. Now he can show homeowners and businessmen that they can have beautiful grounds that don't have to be mowed every week. Instead of spending money on mowing equipment and people to run it, plant native plants and burn the area once a year to keep unwanted plants out.

He showed us beautiful yards full of flowers instead of lawns and larger fields around large buildings full of flowers or native grasses, all less boring and more economical than turf. Some of the most exciting pictures were burns done to replenish the native plant area and keep woody/unwanted plants out.

The following Saturday Neil joined Cole Burrell, Sally Anderson, and Peter Heus to lead tours Bruce and Susan Jones' property in Rappahannock County. Bruce has been working for years to restore the property with native plants.





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**PIEDMONT CHAPTER  
 VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY  
 P.O. BOX 336  
 THE PLAINS, VA 20198**



Curlyheads (*Clematis ochroleuca*)