

# The



# Leaflet

December Sunday Walk at Morven Park—Karen Newlun

SPRING 2020

On a bright, breezy December afternoon, thirteen native plant enthusiasts met our leader Phil Daley for a walk on Catoctin Ridge. As we started off with a short climb to the ridge, we observed many American Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) trees distinguished by light tan leaves remaining on the trees. Phil noted that the smooth grey bark of the Beech is often carved and scarred by people. We continued upward past Witch Hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*) still blooming and sites of vernal pools. Other forest plant inhabitants included large native hardwood trees. Observing the bark, fallen leaves and seeds we identified



American Beech

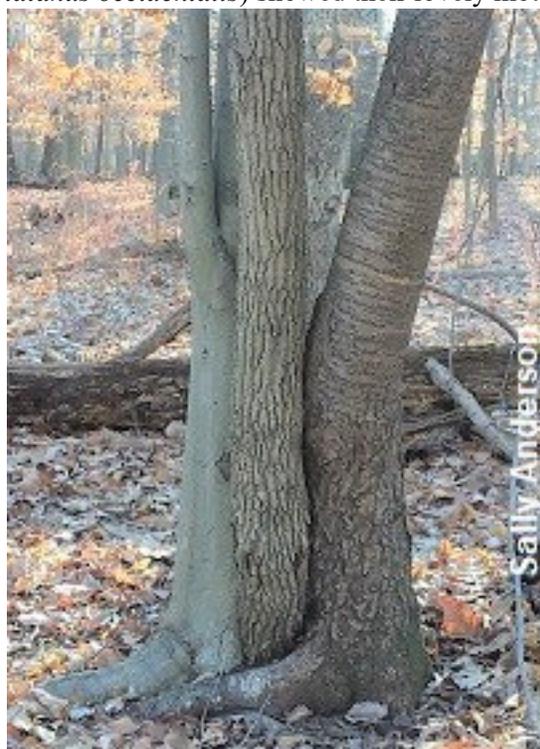
Richard Stromberg

White Oak (*Quercus alba*) with its wide over-lapping plates of bark, Northern Red Oak (*Quercus alba*) with dark and light bark ridges resembling ski runs and the rounded teeth of Chestnut Oak (*Quercus montana*) leaves. The tall expanse of trunk before any branching made the Tulip-Plomers (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), or tulip trees standouts. Large Sycamores (*Platanus occidentalis*) showed their lovely mottled and peeling bark. Hickories (*Carya* spp.) were numerous in the forest. Many Beechnuts (*C. glabra*) and Mockernuts (*C. tomentosa*) were on the forest floor. A tight cluster of three tree trunks of different species amazed us: a Beech, a Slippery Elm (*Ulmus rubra*) and a Bird Cherry (*Prunus avium*).



Witch Hazel

Richard Stromberg



Sally Anderson



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

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## Arlington Woods Walk—Sally Anderson

On a spring-like January 20<sup>th</sup>, more than 20 people gathered at the visitor center at Arlington National Cemetery to visit a VNPS Registry site on the grounds of the cemetery. Our leader was Rod Simmons, VNPS Registry co-chair and city of Alexandria Natural Resources Manager.

While the cemetery is controlled by Department of Defense, certain areas, including the old age woodland of the Registry site, are controlled by the National Park Service. [For more on the Registry program visit [vnps.org](http://vnps.org), click the Conservation tab and look for Registry. Piedmont Chapter registry sites include Calmes Neck, the G. Richard Thomson WMA and Carter Run.]

Until fairly recently the site was 26 acres, but now only 13 acres remain of this woodland in a ravine below the Arlington (or Custis-Lee) House. The oak-hickory forest has been selectively logged, but it was never clear cut, and many large old trees remain. A distinction was made between old age forest and old growth that hinges on its historic use to provide timber on the estate, notably the huge pillars of Arlington House, which are painted to look like stone.

Higher on the 'Mountains of DC', as the old gravel terraces from the ancestral Potomac River are sometimes called, the trees are similar to those of the Appalachian mountains. These terraces were not very suitable for agriculture and so were often spared plowing, but some of the hilltop (and not the ravine) would probably have been somewhat cleared to a savannah-like pasture. Similar mature forests exist at Mount Vernon, Chapman Forest in Maryland, the Gunston/Mason Neck area and Montpelier. Another forest Rod mentioned is an old pine barren forest in Beltsville Maryland.



White Oak (*Quercus alba*) is a dominant tree in the cemetery, though many other species are notable. One of the first trees we looked at on the way up to the woodland was a huge old White Oak with lightning protection. Many other large trees are found on the slopes within the cemetery and are carefully tended. Turning from the manicured gravesites, we entered a mixed mesophytic (moist) forest with enormous Oaks (*Quercus* spp.) and Hickories (*Carya* spp.). We were greeted by large flocks of grackles, robins and starlings, using ephemeral pools created by fallen trees as a winter water source. Some of the ancient trees have been damaged by storms, with a less than perfect appearance in contrast to the tended cemetery trees. But they are still alive and well, and providing habitat for many creatures. We passed a very large White Ash (*Fraxinus nigra*) that was probably no longer alive, but we will just hope that it can sprout again from the roots.



(Continued on page 3)



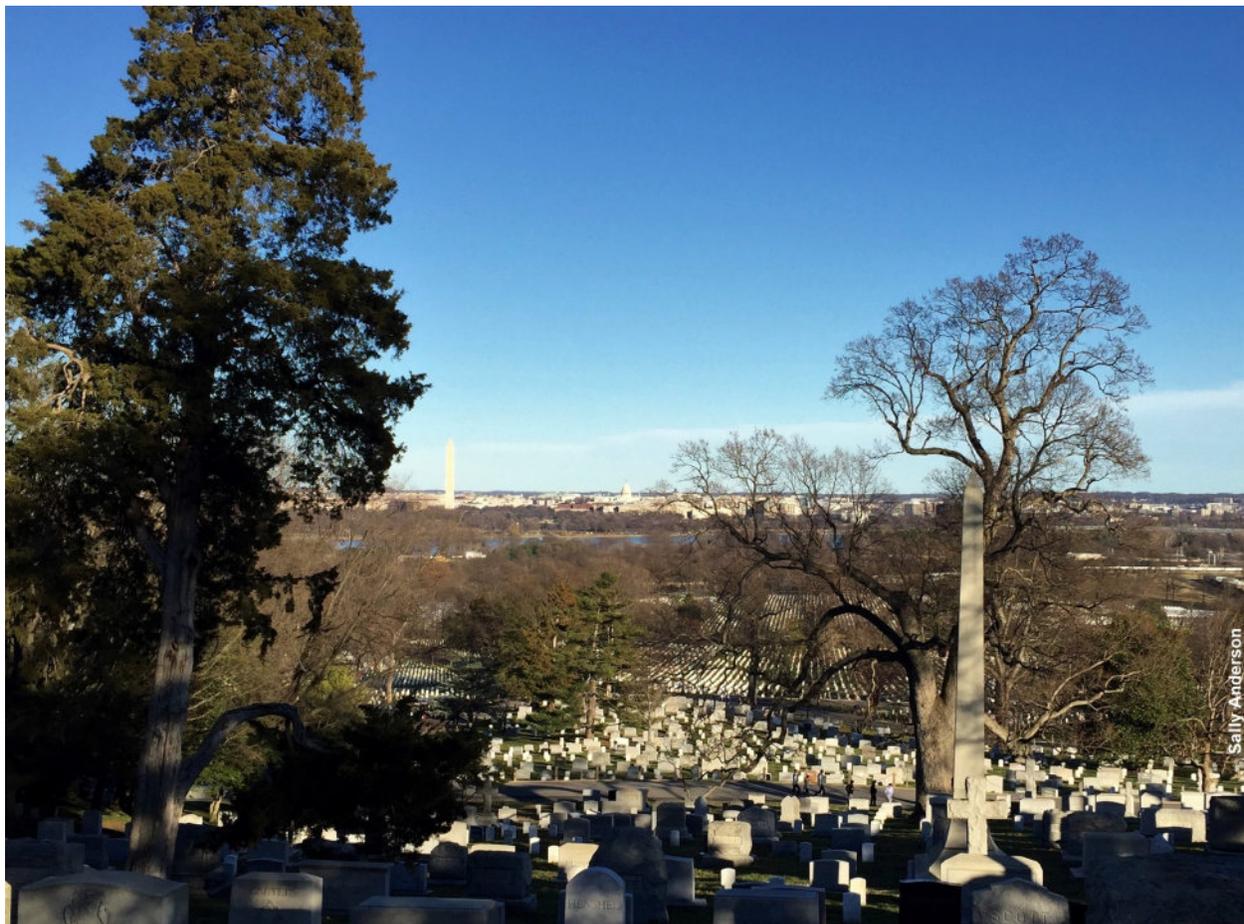
### Arlington Woods Walk (continued from page 2)

Another interesting feature of a natural forest is the close spacing of some of the large trees, something that is discouraged when we plant trees. The forest doesn't seem to mind these close neighbors.

We stopped by a very large Chestnut Oak (*Quercus Montana*), where the collar of the tree (the flaring area where the tree comes out of the ground) had pushed up cobbles. Several of these quartzite cobbles had been worked by prehistoric inhabitants. Some other larger stones on the hillside may be cobbles that were frozen in ice floes and deposited along the ancient river. Because it was winter, some of the problem plants like wisteria were not so noticeable, and it appears that the NPS has tried to control some invasives. Historic botanical records of past vegetation for this region going back to at least 1820 years list species that are no longer found here.

Topping the ridge, we walked around the Arlington House. On the sunnier western facing slopes, there is more diversity and more old Hickory trees are found. One Sweet Pignut Hickory (*Carya ovalis*) that we examined between a parking lot and a building on the terrace top was thought to be three centuries old. From the vantage of this 'mountain' we could see the matching terraces across the Potomac and many of our capital's monuments in between. Walking back through the more tended cemetery trees, we saw enormous Hollies (*Ilex* spp.), Redcedars (*Juniperus virginiana*) and Oaks among others.

We thank Rod Simmons for the chance to see this special site, and I encourage you to attend his field trips to some of these incredible forests that surround our nation's capital.





## Growing Hope: Back Yards and Beyond—Sally Anderson

Our Winter Speaker event this year featured two talks aimed to convey ideas about home landscapes and public spaces being planted to improve habitat.

Julie Borneman of Watermark Woods nursery in Loudoun County spoke about the importance of adding native plantings to our yards. She gave examples of plants she considers the worst garden invasives and some native alternatives. Virginia natives she likes best include plants of the Aster family (*Asteraceae*) and the Mountain Mints (*Pycnanthemum* spp.), because there are many species that can produce blooms over a long time period.



She emphasized considering how wildlife might use a space and how to integrate that in your design. She showed how to use paths, sculpture or hardscape to make a garden look more intentional in order to allay concerns in neighborhoods and where homeowner associations might demand a neater appearance. She also addressed plant height and spread needing attention in smaller spaces.



Matt Bright of Earth Sangha nursery in Springfield highlighted larger public spaces that are dedicated more to habitat than large scale ornamental gardening. This nursery collects and grows seed of regional natives, plants that can be found growing in the northern Virginia area. There is a companion nursery in the Dominican Republic, since Earth Sangha is concerned with the need to protect migratory bird habitat in all seasons and places.



Matt discussed the role of insect herbivores as a bridge for taking the food produced by plants to birds and other wildlife, which can only be accomplished if the insects are able to feed on plants they are adapted to. He recommended using plots data from the Virginia Natural Heritage Program and available on the DNH website as source lists. He also addressed the importance of structure in a landscape.

Some other methods he described included leaving good habitat alone, removing invasive plants first and seeing what develops, trying to connect spaces with corridor plantings, and choosing spaces that might be difficult to care for as the first spaces to add habitat. Ecotypes of native species can be a complicated subject, but these regionally adapted plants are thought to be important for restoration projects. He gave an example of collecting tree seeds from a lush, healthy population, and why choosing seeds from an area where poor conditions prevail might produce tougher plants.

A question and answer period followed, during which both speakers addressed the topic of using native plant cultivars. From Julie's perspective, varieties might be more appropriate for the space available, for example ones that limit plant size for small spaces. From Matt's point of view, cultivars are not ideal for restoration, but he discussed how frequent homeowners change in some areas, and how a neater garden might more likely be retained by a new owner and thus benefit existing wildlife.

Guests were also treated to an array of tasty snacks and informal discussions with the presenters.

If you would like to learn more: Watermark Woods: <https://www.watermarkwoods.com/>

Earth Sangha: [www.earthsangha.org](http://www.earthsangha.org)

Natural Heritage Program: <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/>



## Sky Meadows Winter Walk—Peggy Kenney

The February 8 walk at Sky Meadows State Park led by Vanessa Lewis, former ranger at the Park, was a chance to connect with both familiar and new friends (both human and plant) on a bright, chilly midwinter day. We walked from the picnic grounds and along the Hadow Trail stopping at frequent intervals to study the new growth of plants that are usually considered as weeds. We first saw the



early basal leaves of Motherwort (*Leonurus cardiaca*) on the side of the trail and learned that it is not native to North America and is considered invasive in some places. It was probably introduced by the early colonists for its medicinal properties. A member of the mint family, Motherwort has one or more upright, square stems clustered from the root crown. It can grow over four feet tall. The up to 4½ inch leaves grow in pairs stiffly opposite each other and decrease in size up the stem. They have three-to-five pointed lobes. The pale

pink-to-purple flowers grow in whorls of 6-12 around leaf axils. It blooms late June to early September.



We also saw early leaves of Poison Hemlock (*Conium maculatum*), a highly poisonous plant in the carrot family. Native to Europe and North Africa, it is the plant that killed Socrates. All parts of the plant are toxic. There is no antidote. Animals that mistake Poison Hemlock for edible plants in the carrot or parsley family can also be poisoned. It grows into a 5-8' tall plant with smooth, hollow stems streaked with red or purple on the lower half. The leaves are two to four pinnate, finely divided and lacy, with an overall triangular shape. The flowers are small and white and grow in an umbel. Poison hemlock grows in a variety of habitats and can be seen on roadsides, edges of cultivated fields and waste areas and likes wet areas. It flowers in late spring.



Eastern Skunk Cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*) flowers had sprung up in several wet areas. It is native to North America. It is found exclusively in wetlands. The flower is a large mottled brownish-purple and green shell-like spathe enclosing a knob-like spadix covered with minute flowers. The flower is less than six inches tall. It emerges first in early spring followed by the leaves which unfurl from a tight roll beside the flower in late spring. The flower is less than six inches tall. The leaves are basal and can be 20 inches long and 12 inches wide. Both the flower and the leaves have a strong, fetid odor reflected in its common name. The foul odor attracts its pollinators: scavenging flies, stoneflies, and bees. Skunk Cabbage generates so much heat while growing that it can melt

the snow, ice, or frozen ground around it. Although most wildlife does not eat Skunk cabbage, both bears and snapping turtles have been observed eating the leaves.

Common Wintercress, (*Barbarea Vulgaris*) was found growing beside the trail. The young leaves of this early-blooming mustard are edible before the plant flowers at which time they become bitter-tasting. Common Wintercress was also introduced from Eurasia and can now be found across North America in the cooler climates. It is classified as a weed in many places. It is biennial, grows a rosette of leaves in the first year, it. In subsequent years, clusters of small bright yellow flowers sit atop erect leafy stems giving Wintercress its common name, Yellow Rocket.





|   |                 |   |   |
|---|-----------------|---|---|
| <b>Sunday</b>   | <b>Mar 29</b>   | <b>1pm</b>  | <b>G. Richard Thompson WMA Invasive Removal</b> |
| <b>Fauquier County.</b> Joint effort with members of the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club. Bring gloves and drinking water. We will look for early signs of spring while we work. For more information, email <a href="mailto:pedmontvnps@gmail.com">pedmontvnps@gmail.com</a> .  |                 |   |   |
| <b>Thursday</b>   | <b>Apr 9</b>    | <b>10am</b>   | <b>Balls Bluff Regional Park Walk</b>           |
| <b>Loudoun County.</b> Join naturalist John DeMary and discover some of our earliest ephemerals like Harbinger-of-spring, Bloodroot, Dutchman's Breeches and others on a trail overlooking the Potomac River near Leesburg. For more information, email <a href="mailto:pedmontvnps@gmail.com">pedmontvnps@gmail.com</a> .  |                 |   |   |
| <b>Saturday</b>   | <b>April 11</b> | <b>10am-noon</b>                                      | <b>Calmes Neck Bluebell Walk</b>                |
| <b>Clarke County. VNPS members and Calmes Neck residents only.</b> Join chapter board members Dr. Emily Southgate and Sally Anderson for a guided walk to see early spring wildflowers along the Shenandoah River. Walk is moderate and a walking stick is recommended. Bring lunch, water and insect repellent. Limit 20, register at <a href="mailto:pedmontvnps@gmail.com">pedmontvnps@gmail.com</a> to get driving directions.  |                 |   |   |
| <b>Saturday</b>   | <b>April 11</b> | <b>2-4pm</b>  | <b>Bluebell Driving Tour</b>                    |
| <b>Clarke County.</b> Drive along the Shenandoah River across from Calmes Neck; register at <a href="mailto:pedmontvnps@gmail.com">pedmontvnps@gmail.com</a> .  |                 |   |   |
| <b>Friday</b>   | <b>May 1</b>    | <b>6pm</b>  | <b>G. Richard Thompson WMA Trillium Walk</b>    |
| <b>Fauquier County.</b> VNPS Piedmont Chapter board member Sally Anderson will lead a walk to see millions of Trilliums and other spring flowers. Limit 20; register at <a href="mailto:pedmontvnps@gmail.com">pedmontvnps@gmail.com</a> .  |                 |   |   |
| <b>Saturday &amp; Sunday May 9 &amp; 10</b>   |                 | <b>Wildflower Weekend at Shenandoah National Park</b> |   |
| 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. Information at <a href="https://www.nps.gov/shen/wildflower-weekend-youth-art-contest.htm">https://www.nps.gov/shen/wildflower-weekend-youth-art-contest.htm</a> .  |                 |   |   |
| <b>Saturday &amp; Sunday May 9 &amp; 10</b>   |                 | <b>9am-4:30pm</b>                                     | <b>State Arboretum Garden Fair</b>              |
| <b>Clarke County.</b> Several native plant vendors and lots of information available. Another opportunity to help us by sitting at a Piedmont Chapter booth (includes free admission), contact <a href="mailto:pedmontvnps@gmail.com">pedmontvnps@gmail.com</a> . The chapter is sponsoring a talk by Cole Burrell, acclaimed lecturer, garden designer, author and photographer. See <a href="http://blandy.virginia.edu/our-foundation/fosa-annual-events">http://blandy.virginia.edu/our-foundation/fosa-annual-events</a> for more information. |                 |   |   |

## In Memoriam

Three Piedmont Chapter stalwarts passed away recently: Mary Painter, David Roos and Ramona Morris.

Mary Painter was founder of the state VNPS organization and also the Piedmont Chapter. Mary's activities are covered in the Fall 2019 issue of *Sempervirens*, available on the VNPS website, as is her obituary.

Jocelyn Sladen says, "David Roos has been so active with us, formerly on the board and ever present as a volunteer." Carrie Blair adds, "David gave a lot of talks to garden groups and always started by saying that his grandmother sent him out to the garden to get carrots, and his grandfather pulled them out of the ground for him, whereupon he ran back to his grandmother breathless, saying, "Grandma, did you know Granddad kept the carrots in the dirt?" Cathy Mayes will always remember him saying, "It's not true that you can cut a worm in half and have two worms. If you cut a worm in half you have a dead worm."

(Continued on page 7)



David Roos

Nancy Vehrs



## In Memoriam (continued from page 6)



**Ramona Morris**

Carrie Blair wrote, “Ramona Morris served on the Piedmont board between 2004 and 2010. She had a huge garden, a charming potager, and diverse trees and shrubs. Her career as a dealer in Fine Tribal Art since 1979 includes being an approved appraiser for the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution. She had degrees in Anthropology & Art History, U New Mexico. Her home with Douglas near Sky Meadows State Park was filled with museum worthy artifacts. She had a sassy humor, responding to ‘How are you?’ with ‘Ornery as ever!’”

Mary Keith Ruffner remembers, “She and her husband Doug were dedicated beekeepers, doing much outreach and education. They did a ‘meet the beekeepers’ event at Sky Meadows State Park one day every month and managed the hives there. They taught classes to beekeepers. Ramona was interested in, and knowledgeable about what plants were beneficial for the bees and felt it was important to share that information.”

Sally Anderson says, “One of the things I remember best is her recipes. Ramona loved to make breads, jams, conserves and whatever else she could do with fresh fruits. I had never used native persimmons until she gave me a recipe, which I have brought to many Piedmont Chapter events since then, including our recent Winter Speaker event.”

After a Chapter fall walk in Sky Meadows, the group warmed up at Ramona Morris' house across from the park with hot tea and wild persimmon bread beside a glowing fire.

### Wild Persimmon Bread No. 1

|                        |                      |                        |
|------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| 3 c. whole wheat flour | 1 3/4 c. sugar       | 1 t. baking powder     |
| 1 c. oil               | 1 t. baking soda     | 1 1/2 t. vanilla       |
| 1 t. salt              | 3 c. Persimmon puree | 2 t. cinnamon          |
| 1 c. golden raisins    | 1/2 t. nutmeg        | 3/4 c. chopped walnuts |
| 3 eggs                 |                      |                        |

Grease and flour two 9"x5" loaf pans. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Mix eggs, sugar and oil together, beating until pale yellow and fluffy. Add flour and other dry ingredients. Add vanilla, Persimmon puree, raisins and nuts, mixing well. Divide between the two loaf pans. Bake for about 50 minutes or until the sides of the loaf draw away from the pan. Cool on a wire rack before slicing. Best served warm with butter or cream cheese. Stores well in refrigerator or freezer. Yield 2 loaves

### Wild Persimmon Bread No. 2

|                                  |                  |            |
|----------------------------------|------------------|------------|
| 1 1/2 sticks butter or margarine | 1 t. baking soda | 1 c. sugar |
| 1 c. Persimmon puree             | 1/2 c. nuts      | 2 c. flour |

Line two 8"x4" loaf pans with waxed paper. Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Sift flour and soda together. Cream butter and sugar together. Add 2 well beaten eggs to butter mixture. Add flour and mix well. Add Persimmon puree and nuts to make a stiff dough. Divide between the two pans. Bake at 325 degrees for ca. 1 hour. Yield 2 loaves

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*Curlyheads (Clematis ochroleuca)*



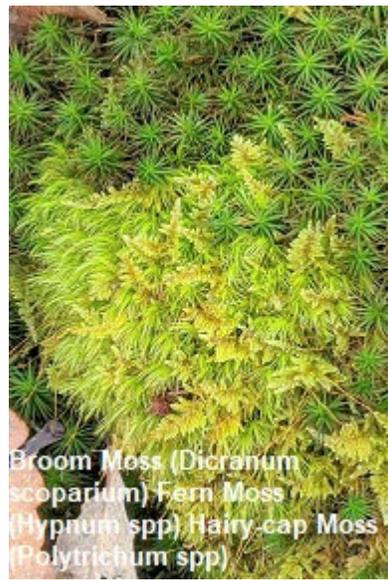
**Winter Is My Time to Look for Mosses—Richard Stromberg**



**Tree Moss  
(Climacium americanum)**



**Rose Moss  
(Rhodonbryum roseum)**



**Broom Moss (Dicranum scoparium) Fern Moss (Hypnum spp) Hairy-cap Moss (Polytrichum spp)**