



# THE POCAHONTAS CHAPTER OF THE VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

April 2021



## NOTE:

**Pocahontas Chapter VNPS programs will be shared via Zoom until further notice. We will not be meeting at Lewis Ginter. Our next meeting will be on Thursday April 1, 2021 starting at 6:45 PM. Information on how to connect to Zoom is on the bottom of this page**

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**The topic of the April Meeting will be  
“Botanical Art: illustrations, Watercolors and Nature Journals”  
by Lara Gastinger.**

Join the Pocahontas Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society on Thursday, April 1, 2021, as Lara Gastinger speaks about being a botanical artist, from her initial illustrations with the Flora of Virginia project to her paintings and perpetual journals. She is a member of the VNPS Jefferson Chapter and enjoys inspiring others to observe and draw plants around them.

Lara Call Gastinger is a botanical artist and illustrator in Charlottesville, Virginia. She was the chief illustrator for the Flora of Virginia Project after she received her master’s degree from Virginia Tech in Plant Ecology. She has been awarded two gold medals (2018, 2007) at the Royal Horticultural Society garden show in London and her work has been in numerous American Society of Botanical Artist exhibits, the Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation and published books such as the Peterson Field Guide to Mushrooms. She is widely known on Instagram for promoting and teaching how to create a perpetual journal.



This free zoom meeting is open to the public. The meet and greet starts at 6:45 followed by the presentation at 7 p.m. A short business meeting will follow the presentation.



## Chapter Meetings

**The April meeting will be via Zoom on April 1 at 6:45 PM.**

**To join the meeting go to zoom.com and join the meeting by clicking on "JOIN A MEETING" then entering the Meeting ID then following the directions.**

**For the April Meeting the Zoom Meeting ID is 893 1924 1328 and the Passcode: 307629**

If you need to download the zoom app, go to zoom.com and click on "RESOURCES", then "Download Zoom Client". If you have problems or questions concerning the Zoom connection, please contact Ashley Moulton or Richard Moss at the email or phone numbers given on page 2.

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## Presidents Message from Matt Brooks

Hello fellow native plant lovers. I'm excited to serve as the president of the Pocahontas Chapter. I've already attended a state board and chapter board meeting, and I quickly noticed the great collection of smart, informed people on the boards. I'm really excited to be part of it. For my first newsletter writeup, I'll give my background and summarize my journey with native plants.

I was born at a very early age. I first noticed native plants when I had to learn ten tree species for rank advancement in Boy Scouts in North Carolina. I knew I wanted to study biology but was stymied when I signed up for biology II in high school, only to be told they had canceled the class because only I had signed up.

My chances were revived when I moved to Asheville, NC, to start my undergrad at UNCA. However, I failed biology 101 my first freshman semester because I spent too much time hiking. No one told me you had to attend all the labs. I took it again and realized how lucky I was when the professor, Jim Petranka, announced he had just published his book *Salamanders of the United States and Canada*.

Eventually, I decided that ecology and field biology was my thing, and I took every plant class offered. I couldn't get enough—ID, ecology, wetlands, physiology—I loved it all. I volunteered at the botanical gardens and got a job at a plant nursery. The last class I took was an optional add-on 2-week trip to Puerto Rico for my tropical ecology class. That's when I learned to love the topics, wet or dry. My capstone presentation for the trip was called something like *Palm Trees, Tree Ferns, and Banana Trees: While None is a Tree* (answer: monocot, fern, and giant forb, respectively). Since then, if I can travel, I head south.

After graduating, I began my Kerouac-with-a-degree period, where my goal was to get as much natural resource field experience as possible in as many places as possible, and all I owned fit in my car. During my rambling years, I worked on research projects or environmental education in Hawaii, Peru, Ecuador, Colorado, Utah, Texas, the Great Smoky Mountains, and Louisiana. In all these places, I either worked directly with native plants or purchased the local flora guide and botanized while working with other organisms (mainly birds). While I'm no expert anywhere, I've developed a broad understanding of botanical biogeography.

I finally settled when I was offered a graduate position at LSU. I did my graduate work in LA and Mississippi,

### **The Pocahontas Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society**

serves the counties of Amelia, Charles City, Chesterfield, Dinwiddie, Goochland, Hanover, Henrico, King William, New Kent, Powhatan, Prince George and the cities of Ashland, Hopewell, Colonial Heights, Petersburg, and Richmond. It meets the first Thursday of September through April at 7:00 PM in the Education and Library Complex of the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden, unless otherwise stated.

#### **Chapter Officers**

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studying grassland birds and the cool fire-dependent forbs and graminoids they exploit in longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*) savannas and pitcher plant bogs. While at LSU, I was fortunate to take an Organization of Tropical Studies tropical plant systematics course with Brad Boyle, a former student of the late Alwyn Gentry, author of *A Field Guide to Woody Plants of Northwest South America*. Kind of like studying with Luke who learned from Yoda.

After LSU, I worked the next 9 years for a small, Native- and veteran-owned environmental consulting company based out of Albuquerque, NM. This was a great gig. Just biologists and archaeologists. It sent me all over the Southwest and beyond for projects I was proud of. We had cool gigs with the Forest Service, Park Service, tribal governments, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Fish and Wildlife Service, and other entities and agencies better expressed as acronyms. Unfortunately for me, the full-text version of *Flora Neo Mexicana* came out just after I moved to RVA!

Now I'm back in the Southeast Piedmont where I grew up. I missed the trees and water. I haven't lived in this region since I was 18 and am still learning and relearning the flora, especially the Coastal Plain flora, which is new to me. Whenever I go on a hike or naturalizing stroll in the woods, I get this weird feeling, like a flashback to my childhood playing in the patches of woods around my neighborhood—many of which were turned into housing developments. I'm proud to be part of a group that promotes conservation and works to introduce native plants to people who have yet to discover them.

## Random Observations and Some Virtual Plant Walks by Richard Moss

Bluets - 1. Last winter I suspected these little rosetts of leaves, photo taken Jan. 19, 2021, were overwintering bluets (*Houstonia caerulea*) since some bloomed at this location in the previous spring. 2. Now in March they are starting to bloom. I didn't realize bluet leaves persisted through winter.



3. These bluets (*Houstonia pusilla*) which appeared in a neighbor's yard are smaller and more intensely colored than *Houstonia caerulea*. They are also quite abundant in the cemetery in Chester, VA

4. The ice storm last February broke off a section of the crossvine (*Bignonia capreolata*) growing on the back of my house. I put it in a jar of water and after about 2 weeks the old leaves which normally persist over the winter fell off, but after several more weeks the vine began to sprout new leaves and flower buds. Here is a picture of it in bloom taken on March 24th.

**Virtual Plant walk to the John Radcliffe Appomattox River Conservation Area on March 10th.** This park is located in Chesterfield county below the Chesdin Lake dam and has a mostly wooded trail along the Appomattox river.



1. The dam at lake Chesdin. 2. The trail along the river. 3. The Appomattox river which parallels the trail. 4. Boardwalk where trail crosses a swampy section with red maple trees (*Acer rubrum*) in bloom (red tint at top of photo). 5. More boardwalk. Last year there were lots of trout lilies (*Erythronium americanum*) in this section of the trail.



6. Trout lilies (*Erythronium americanum*) just starting to come up. Later in the spring they are quite common along the trail. 7. This little creek flowing into the river is unfortunately over run with japanese stilt grass (*Microstegium vimineum*) in the summer. 8. A few Virginia spring beauty plants had appeared (*Claytonia virginica*). 9. This stand of alders (*Alnus serrulata*) in bloom was next to the river.



### Virtual field Trip of R. Garland Dodd Park in Chesterfield County on March 26, 2021

This park has a board walk over the Ashton Creek wetlands, then trails along the Appomattox river. It is more interesting in Fall when the wild rice, partridge peas, gerardia, pickerel weed and other plants are in bloom, but the weather was warm and I needed to get outside. Not a lot was out, but there still were interesting things to see.



1. The trail leading to the boardwalk. 2. The boardwalk crossing the Ashton Creek wetlands. 3. Along the boardwalk - mistletoe (*Phoradendron leucarpum*) in a tree. 4.

May apples (*Podophyllum peltatum*) coming up. 5. a stand of Mountain Laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*). 6. Eastern Red Cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) tree next to a meadow 7. A large trumpet vine (*Campsis radicans*).

