



# THE POCAHONTAS CHAPTER OF THE VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

January 2022



## **NOTE:**

**Pocahontas Chapter VNPS programs will be shared via Zoom until further notice. We will not be meeting at Lewis Ginter. We will not have a January meeting. Instead we will have a plant walk at Pocahontas State Park in Chesterfield county.**

Please join us for a winter plant ID walk at Pocahontas State Park at 11:00 am on Saturday, January 8, 2022. Mr. Joey Thompson has offered his guiding services and has located a little-used area to explore. We'll explore native plants via shape, bark, twigs, buds, and remnant fruits.

We will meet at the Lush Fire Trail off Woodpecker Road. The coordinates are 37.333636, -77.574340. You can copy and paste the coordinates into your internet map of choice. This trip is open to the public. Additional parking is available at surrounding, nearby trail heads.

**Please note there is a \$7 fee for park entry. One can pay either online via a smartphone using a QR code posted at the trailhead, or with cash at the trailhead.**

Please bring water, snack if needed, and adequate sun protection. I will be the trip point of contact. Please call me with questions, for directions, or if running late the day of the trip at 206-734-6919.

Matt Brooks

President, Pocahontas Chapter, VNPS

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## **January 2022 Pocahontas Chapter President's Message**

Matt Brooks

Happy New Year Pocahontas Chapter and Virginia Native Plant Society members. As a reminder, we will have no January meeting or guest speaker; instead, we have a winter plant walk scheduled January 8. Details are above in the newsletter. We will have monthly meetings February through April 2022, when we switch to monthly field trips, weather permitting. We plan to resume monthly meetings in September 2022.

We'll see what happens in the meantime. The chapter tries to participate in various events, where we set up our displays and talk with the public (e.g., state fair, nature festivals). We typically need volunteers for these events. For now, like last year, we'll play it by ear and variant. It looks like we may not return to Lewis Ginter this spring (for meetings), but we'll see. When we do, we hope to stream the meetings live to maximize attendance.

For now, I hope to see some folks this Saturday, January 8, at Pocahontas State Park for some winter botanizing. We'll be meeting Joey Thompson, who has located a path and offered to share his winter plant knowledge. For those thinking of staying home, I urge you to reconsider. January 8th is a notable day. Besides our field trip, it's Elvis's birthday—the Elvis. It was also a federal holiday from 1828 to 1861 celebrating the U.S. victory over the British in New Orleans after the War of 1812. The 8th of January is also an old timey fiddle tune that provides the melody to Johnny Horton's 1959 hit The Battle of New Orleans (written by Jimmy Driftwood). In addition, The Milliner-Koken Collection of American Fiddle Tunes contains seven different tunes titled 8th of January or 8th Day of January (all in key of D). It used to be a popular day.

## VNPS Pocahontas Chapter December Chapter Meeting Minutes, 2 DECEMBER 2021 /7:00 PM / Via Zoom

**Presentation:** Louise Seals was the guest speaker from Richmond Tree Stewards. Her presentation covered Richmond Tree Stewards' goals of the promotion and improvement of the "community forest" through public awareness, planning, planting for the future, tree maintenance, and many other successful initiatives.

**Chapter Business Meeting:** Board Members Present Matt Brooks, Jason Aldrich, Ginny Stone, Richard Moss, Lisa Hamilton, and Rachel Fortin (as Acting Secretary).

### Agenda Items

Winter Plant Walk- A potential winter plant identification walk was discussed. Due to the leaves having not fully dropped, January will remain the goal as discussed previously. More information and ideas (possibly via Joey Thompson) are necessary to decide on a location and date. Three Lakes Park was discussed as a possibility.

- Chapter Display Storage- The chapter has an ongoing need for physical storage for displays and materials. Lisa Hamilton agreed to house them along with other items as needed.

- January-April Meetings- The January meeting may be in-person or virtual, depending on the information Matt receives from Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden, due to the holiday lights. Also, the aforementioned plant ID walk may serve as the meeting instead, due to January meeting date's proximity to the holidays and pending information Matt will receive from Joey Thompson and LGBG. This will be determined at a later date. Regarding the last meeting of the season, May will remain the final meeting, and the possibility of it being a combined picnic-meeting event as is customary (ideally on a weekend) was brought up. This will be decided at a future meeting. The speakers for the January-May meetings will continue to be sought out by Jason Aldrich. Lisa Hamilton offered to share her contact list in order to assist.

- 2022 Newsletter- Continuation of the monthly newsletter was discussed, especially in regards to the "growing months" when the chapter does not meet. Richard Moss has agreed to continue to produce the newsletter each month from January through May. We will discuss the newsletter's status for the summer months at a future meeting.

### 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

**President**.....**Matt Brooks**  
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**Treasurer** ..... **Ali Baird**  
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meeting.

- Plant of the Month's Future- The future of the plant of the month initiative was discussed and the

- board will continue to encourage members to volunteer to present. If not, it will be discussed on a

- month by month basis until further action is needed.

- January Plant of the Month- Richard Moss volunteered to present January's P.O.M. He chose skunk cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*).

#### New Business:

- Lisa Hamilton brought up the quality of photograph uploads for uses in publications such as Facebook, especially the monthly meeting's speaker. Facebook's compression has made the photos poor quality if not the right size. Richard Moss has encountered the same issue in regards to the newsletter. Going forward all photo requests to speakers should mention the desire for the highest quality possible. Submissions to the newsletter and plant of the month photographs ideally should do the same.

- The status of the chapter Instagram account (or potential lack thereof) was mentioned. Rachel Fortin volunteered to take on this duty. This would also serve as a channel for the Plant of the Month to be shared.

#### Action Items

- Matt Brooks will contact Joey Thompson for further ideas on a January Plant ID walk location.

- Matt Brooks will contact Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden

regarding the future of in-person meetings for the months of January-April 2022.

- Lisa Hamilton will store the banners, materials, and displays, along with other meeting paraphernalia as needed, at her place of residence.
  - Lisa Hamilton will upload her contact list to the chapter's shared file for the benefit of booking future monthly meeting speakers.
  - The person who arranges the monthly speaker will request high quality photographs if possible for chapter publication use.
  - Rachel Fortin will contact Ashley for Instagram login information and other administrative guidance.
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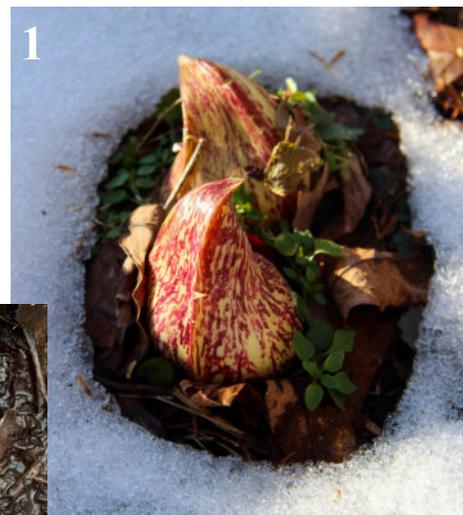
## **Pocahontas Chapter Plant of the Month - Skunk Cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*)**



*Skunk cabbage in bloom, Richard Moss*

Skunk Cabbage is a large-leafed member of the Arum family that grows in wet areas, especially near streams, ponds, marshes, and wet woods. It gets its name because the crushed leaves of the plant emit a distinctly skunk like odor. It is one of the first plants to bloom in the Spring, and can bloom anywhere from February to May and is unusual in that the flowers generates significant metabolic heat which can raise the flower temperature 25 degrees above ambient temperature. Several hypothesis have been proposed as to why the plant does this, including protecting the flower from freezing, acceleration of growth to allow early season flowering, attraction of pollinators by vaporizing attractants and providing shelter and warmth for potential pollinators. Any or all of these could be true. If skunk cabbage is blooming in snow, the heat generated can melt the surrounding snow (Photo 1). The first part of the plant to appear is the spathe which is an odd looking brownish-purple, shell-like pod with green splotches. As the spathe gets bigger, it will reveal another part inside, called a spadix. The spadix is a little knob covered with small yellow flowers. Like many other dark-colored flowers, skunk cabbage is pollinated mostly by flies. The seeds mature by the end of the growing season and some may sprout next to the mother plant producing

colonies of skunk cabbages. This plant has a massive root system (Photo 2) These roots are contractile and pull the plant deeper into the soil each year. The plant does not appear to spread by root propagation. The leaves which may be one to two feet long and a foot wide emerge after the flowers and usually die by late summer. They are at best marginally edible as they contain tiny needle like crystals of calcium oxalate which produces a strong inflammatory reaction in the mouth and esophagus. Cooking with changes of water may reduce this problem.



1. Skunk cabbage flower melting surrounding snow.
2. Root system of Skunk Cabbage
3. Old flowers with developing seeds (from Dory Park, Leslie Allanson)
4. Sprouting leaves with old flower (Dory Park, Lisa Hamilton)
5. Full growth leaves.

The range of Skunk Cabbage is from Eastern Canada to Wisconsin south to North Carolina. It is found in most counties in Virginia.

There is another species of skunk cabbage, the western skunk cabbage (*Lysichiton americanus*) which grows in the Pacific Northwest east to Montana and Wyoming. It has a more spectacular yellow spathe and has been introduced into Europe as a garden plant. Unfortunately it has escaped and is now considered an invasive species.

Photo 1,5 from <https://virginiawildflowers.org/2015/03/08/skunk-cabbage/>,

Photo 2. <http://www.realmonstrosities.com/2013/07/skunk-cabbage.html> by Cyndy Simms Parr.

