



# THE POCAHONTAS CHAPTER OF THE VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

February 2022



## NOTE:

**Pocahontas Chapter VNPS programs will be shared via Zoom until further notice. We will not be meeting at Lewis Ginter. The Zoom meeting will start at 6:30 on February 3rd.**

**Please Register in advance at**

**[https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZckdO-upzgtGdJQDG-DpKPQTf3FOzTOWJ\\_e](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZckdO-upzgtGdJQDG-DpKPQTf3FOzTOWJ_e)**

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

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Pocahontas Chapter is pleased to offer, for your educational delight, Ms. Katarina Spears. She will be presenting on the exceptional and significant Lee Park Herbarium, featuring collected specimens and artwork from the Petersburg Legends Historical Park and Nature Conservancy Wildflower Sanctuary as a special collection from the Lora M. Robins Archive at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden.

More information about the park can be found here: <http://forgottengarden.leeparkpetersburg.org/wpa.html>. This rare peek into this collection will be held Thursday, February 3rd at 7 pm via Zoom.

Katarina Spears is the current library and archives manager of the Lora M. Robins Library at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden in Richmond, Virginia. She holds a B.A. in art history, an M.A. in public anthropology, and is completing her master's in library and information science in May 2022. With 30 years of experience working in museums and libraries, Katarina has worked for a wide range of cultural organizations including the National Archives, National Gallery of Art, American Alliance of Museums, Edgar Allan Poe Museum, and Library of Virginia. She is also the author of four novels for young adults published by St. Martin's and Wednesday Books, both imprints of Macmillan.



## January 2022 Pocahontas Chapter President's Message

Hello Pocahontas Chapter members. It's almost spring, at least, that's what I'm telling myself. For the ancient Celts, February 2, Groundhog Day, was celebrated as the first day of spring. It's also called Candlemas and is a Cross Quarter Day. This is the seasonal calendar that gives us Midsummer Day on our first day of summer, the solstice. It's a stretch, I know, but the red maples are starting to bloom, and that's a sign that winter is departing, however slowly.

But speaking of winter, we had a most excellent turnout for our January 8 winter plant walk at Pocahontas State Park led by Joey Thompson, the new Natural Heritage Vegetation Ecologist. Approximately 40 people showed up! And one dog. Take a look at the group photo on our chapter website, and that was after some people left early. I might even call it a throng of plant lovers. It was cold, but the sun was shining, the air was still, and hardly a remnant plant or dormant twig went unidentified.

We are still looking for candidates for the chapter membership chair position. Ginny Stone will be stepping down due to her myriad other duties. Please contact me if interested.

On a frustrating note, all three invasive plant bills VNPS is supporting (HB311, HB314, and HB491) failed to move beyond the House Committee on Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources' Agriculture Subcommittee. VNPS President Nancy Vehrs testified on behalf of the bills. If you think you know why they failed, you're probably right.

Back to better things. Chapter Vice President Jason Aldrich has booked a great speaker for our February meeting. Katarina Spears, the library and archives manager of the Lora M. Robins Library at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden will speak about the Lee Park Herbarium. Herbarium specimens are perfect for a virtual meeting—they're already in two dimensions. Please register and attend. A chapter business meeting will follow the speaker, and we will discuss the 2022 chapter budget, among other things.

Matt Brooks

## January Field Trip

Instead of a January meeting we scheduled a plant walk on January third at Pocahontas State Park in Chesterfield County along the Lush Fire Trail. The day was clear but chilly and there were traces of snow left in shady spots but we had a turnout of about 40 people. See the group photo to the left. Our trip leader, Joey Thompson, is at the far right. We identified several species of pine and oak trees and several species of andropogon grasses (see plant



of the month below). Other plants we saw included: **1.** Southern Grape Fern (*Sceptridium biternatum*), left, with a small cranefly orchid on right. **2.** More Cranefly orchids (*Tipularia discolor*)

Note the warty and pleated appearance of these leaves. **3.** Numerous patches of this fern like moss, probably common fern moss (*Thuidium Delicatulum*) were



growing on the bank beside the trail.

### 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.

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4. This group of stalked puffballs (*Calostoma lutescens*) was also growing on the bank beside the trail



5. Lower left - Poverty Grass (*Danthonia spicata*) probably gets its name from its ability to grow on poor or sandy soil. The leaves tend to become curled as they dry out. It was suggested that a better common name would be

Curly Dan, "dan" from Dianthonia. On right, Strawberry bush (*Euonymus americanus*) in front of a white oak. In winter strawberry bush can be spotted by its distinctive green stems.



## Pocahontas Chapter Plant of the Month - Splitbeard Bluestem (*Andropogon ternarius*) by Joey Thompson



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# Splitbeard Bluestem

## Family

Poaceae

## Botanical Name

*Andropogon ternarius* Michx. var. *ternarius*

## Common Name

Splitbeard Bluestem, Silvery Bluestem

## Synonym(s)

*Andropogon ternarius* Michx.

## Flora of Virginia Name/Status

*Andropogon ternarius* Michx. var. *ternarius*

## Habitat

Old fields, clearings, and roadsides; less numerous in sandhill woodlands, openings in dune scrub and woodlands, maritime forests, shale or sandstone woodlands and barrens (in the mountains). Common in the Coastal Plain and Piedmont; rare in the mountains.

## Native Status

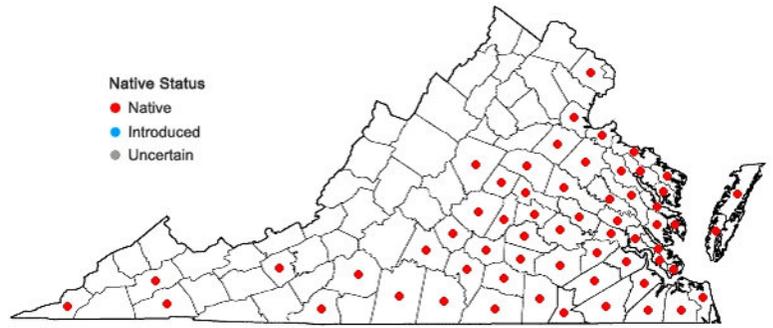
Native

## Flora of Virginia:

*Andropogon Ternarius*

Splitbeard bluestem, Silvery bluestem. D: Culms 5-15dm, erect, the upper 1/2 – 2/3 branching with the branches usually long and slender. Sheaths smooth or scabrous, sometimes pilose; Ligules 0.4-2mm, ciliate; blades 1-4 mm wide, glabrous, or the lower loosely villous, often purplish -glaucous. Inflorescence units 2-30+ per culm, well exerted from the subtending sheaths at maturity, with 1(2) racemes. Racemes 2-5.5 cm, terminating in a sessile -pedicellate spikelet pair, internodes sparsely villous, hairs about as long as but not obscuring the sessile spikelet, sessile spikelets 4.5-6.4 mm; callous hairs to 8 mm; first glumes scabrous between the keels; awns 10-25 mm twisted below' pedicellate spikelets obsolete or to 2 mm, sterile, the pedicells long-villous. Phenology: September to October. Habitat: open fields, clearings and roadsides' less numerous in sandhill woodlands, openings in barrens. Status: Common in Coastal Plain and Piedmont; rare in the mountains.

This clump forming, 2-5 feet tall native grass is adapted to full to part sun, poor, very acid to acid, well drained, sandy soil. It is easily cultivated; a pioneer adapted to frequent wildfires. However, fire followed by grazing can eliminate it. For garden accent, a 2 foot spacing is recommended. Blooming November through October, Splitbeard bluestem holds color well into winter before turning brown. It can be found naturally amongst longleaf pine and post oak, especially on dry embankments. For massing or restoration, 1/2 to 2 lbs pure live seed for every 100 ft. This grass guilds well with: downy phlox, oenothera spp., texas or sandhill bluestem, baptisia, yucca, conradina, little bluestem, wiregrass and pink muhly. Wildlife: seeds eaten by prairie chicken, junco, wild turkey, chipping sparrow, meadow mouse, deer browse. Propagation: seed, root division in spring. "Paired flower spikelets join where they meet the stem to form little V's that resemble fuzzy caterpillars locked in a passionate embrace when they go to seed" -p.128 Native Ferns Moss and Grasses, Cullina, William. 2008 New England Wildflower Society.



Range in Virginia



Photos courtesy of Joey Thompson, taken in November in Isle of Wight county, VA.