February Meeting
Thursday February 1, 2007 at 7:00 PM
at the Education and Library Complex of the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden
in Classroom 2
Our Presentation will be:
What is a Hebarium
by Greg Plunkett, the curator of the VCU Herbarium

Dr. Plunkett has a Ph.D. in Botany, from Washington State University, and is Associate Professor of Biology at Virginia Commonwealth University. He will discuss the basics of what an herbarium is, what people do with the collections, and information on some of the world’s most important collections. The VCU Herbarium is now housed in the Education & Library Complex at LGBG (in the basement), so perhaps we will have a small “field trip” downstairs to see it.

Chapter News
Future Speakers:
March - Rain Gardens.
April - Vicki Shufer, Native Plants & Their Uses - a close-up look at native plants and how they were used for food, medicine and crafts by indigenous cultures.

Field Trip: February 3 - In connection with the LGBG program on Indian use of Native Plants, plans have been made with Joyce Krigsvold who is the potter at the Pamunkey reservation museum to meet with a group of us at the Museum at the Pamunkey Indian Reservation (no facilities). Joyce will demonstrate and talk to us about traditional pottery making. Invite anyone else who you think might be interested. Contact Daune Poklis (e-mail daune@poklis.org, ph 741-7838) or Peggy Keefe at (W) 675-5000x3676 or (H) 285-0579.

Grasses For The Bay project
Dana Wiggens of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation needs volunteers for the Grasses For The Bay project. Dana was our September speaker and presented the project and its importance to us. Volunteers will be asked to grow grasses for replanting in the spring in selected tributaries to the Chesapeake Bay. Volunteers are not required to help with the planting. Initially we had at least 8 volunteers. We need them to step up and confirm their desire to participate in this activity. Interested persons should contact Peggy Keefe at 804-285-0579 H or 804-675-5000 x3676 W, or Daune Poklis at 741-7838 or by e-mail at daune@poklis.org for the details.
The Pocahontas Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society serves the counties of: Charles City, Chesterfield, Goochland, Hanover, Henrico, King William, New Kent, Powhatan and the cities of Ashland, Hopewell, 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
Peggy Keefe
Vice President
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Minutes of the January 4, 2007, Meeting of Pocahontas Chapter

President Peggy Keefe introduced the speaker, Joy Ware, Professor of Pathology at VCU School of Medicine and Director of the Conservation Medicine Program for the VCU Rice Center. Her presentation focused on the work she is conducting at several wildlife refuges where she is studying the diseases of amphibians and reptiles. Because these animals spend a portion of their lives in the water, later life close to the ground, and are long-lived, they may provide evidence of contaminants in water and soil, and can therefore be studied as environmental indicators. Monitoring wildlife not only provides baseline information about the animal’s health but may also serve to protect human health. An important feature of amphibians is that they produce anti-microbial secretions in their skin that kill pathogens.

Dr. Ware said there is evidence that a deadly fungal disease that invades the skin of salamanders and some frogs has spread from Australia and other parts of the world to amphibians in Virginia. She showed slides of healthy and infected tissue samples of salamanders.

A problem in this research is the lack of baseline information to determine if an infection is new to the species or if it has been around for a long time.

Dr. Ware discussed the snake research she is conducting at the Rappahannock River Valley National Refuge, the James River Wildlife Refuge, and the Presquile Island Refuge. Snakes have had...
symbolic meaning in medicine for centuries although tend to be under appreciated in the medical community. She showed slides of snakes with fungal infections. This research may have implications as to whether contaminants are greater in the agricultural setting of the Rappahannock River Valley or in the more industrial James River area.

Reptiles (snakes and lizards) can be bitten by ticks. Research has determined that the blood of the Western fence lizard will kill the spirochetes that cause Lyme disease, but it is not yet known if this is the case with the Eastern fence lizard. What we do know is that with more bio-diversity, fewer humans contract Lyme disease.

After the talk, Dr. Ware answered a number of questions. She said that she would like to collect 50 snakes per season from each study refuge in order to have a good representation for comparison, but catching snakes is labor intensive. She strongly suggested that we monitor animals before disaster hits the amphibian and reptile populations by gathering baseline information. She also discussed the impact of climate change on the health of animals.

She invited interested chapter members to join the VCU team collecting snakes in the spring and summer. She can be contacted at JWare@MCVH-VCU.edu

Peggy Keefe reminded members of upcoming events and to check the sign-up sheets. Members are encouraged to participate in the CBF sea grass workshop and to tell others who may be interested to contact Peggy or Daune.

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**Field Trip to Ferndale Park on the Appomattox River, Jan. 20, 2007**

We went to the park to see Skunk Cabbage (Symlocarpus foetidus) in bloom and we were well rewarded. Before we got to the skunk cabbage we passed a pond which had numerous water ferns (*Azolla caroliniana*) floating on the surface. These ferns have small flat scale-like floating leaves with roots hanging in the water, and in winter are bright red.

Getting to the cabbages involved traversing several swampy areas and an encounter with some overly friendly green briers, but was well worth the effort. Along the way we found alder in bloom, wild ginger, several crane fly orchids, hepatica, corydalis, Indian current, Christmas fern, and mullen. When we got to the area with the skunk cabbage we found a large numbers of them in bloom. The flowers can generate a significant amount of heat which probably serves to disperse their fragrance to attract pollinating insects. To humans the fragrance is distantly skunk-like.

After we left the park we went to see the cucumber magnolia (*Magnolia acuminata*) at Violet Bank in Colonial Heights. The Cucumber Magnolia is a deciduous magnolia and is the northernmost species of the Magnolia family. The tree at Violet Bank is supposedly the second largest one of its type in the world and was planted in 1718.
Virginia Native Plant Society Membership Application  
Pocahontas Chapter

Make Check payable to VNPS and Mail to:
Membership Chair, Blandy Experimental Farm, 400 Blandy Farm Lane, Unit 2, Boyce, VA 22620

Name: _________________________________________________________________

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___ Individual $30.00       ___ Sustaining $100.00
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___ Student $15.00          ___ Associate Groups $40.00
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I wish to make an additional contribution to ___ VNPS or ___ The Pocahontas Chapter,
VNPS in the amount of:

___ $10       ___ $20       ___ $50       ___ $100       Other _________

Pocahontas Chapter
Virginia Native Plant Society
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