

THE POCAHONTAS CHAPTER OF THE VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

March 2009

Spiderwort
(*Tradescantia virginiana*)



March Meeting

Thursday March 5, 2009 at 7:00 PM

at the Education and Library Complex of the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden in Classroom 2

The room is available at 6:30, come early and Socialize

**This Month's Presentation will be: *Wild Plants to Eat*
by Ernest Wilson PhD**

Dr. Wilson, now retired, was Professor of Life Sciences, Virginia State University 1968- 1999. He authored about a dozen research papers on plant science, taught General Botany for 25 years, General Biology for 31 years, and General Microbiology for six years. He has led numerous field trips for the VNPS and other organizations and is currently vice president of the Pocahontas Chapter, VNPS.

NOTE: Blandy Experimental Farm is searching for an Ecologist at the Research Assistant Professor level. Please share this information with your colleagues or anyone else you know who might be interested. Thanks!

For more information contact:

David Carr

Research Associate Professor, Environmental Sciences

Director, Blandy Experimental Farm

dec5z@virginia.edu

400 Blandy Farm Lane, Boyce VA 22620 Phone: 540-837-1758

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2009 Calendar of Events

March

- 7 **VNPS Annual Workshop: High Mountain Flora** - Saturday 9:15 AM to 3:15 PM, Gottwald Center for the Sciences, University of Richmond. Keynote speaker: Elizabeth Byers, West Virginia Natural Heritage Program. Additional speakers are Chris Ludwig, Virginia Natural Heritage Program; Tom Wiebolt of Virginia Tech's Massey Herbarium; Laura Neale, President of the Virginia Wilderness Committee. See <http://www.vnps.org/events/WKSHbrochure.pdf> for more information.

Welcome New Members

Nancy Farkas Richmond, VA

Suzanne Jenkins Midlothian, VA

Plants you might see in early March



Southern Twayblade Orchid (*Listera australis*). This small orchid is typically about 4 inches high and inhabit moist woodlands (and more open bogs along partially shaded margins), often growing amidst sphagnum moss or in the areas just slightly drier than where the sphagnum grows. They come up rather quickly, set seed and senesce all within the period of a month to a month-and-a-half.



Acer rubrum (Red Maple, also known as Swamp or Soft Maple), is one of the most common and widespread deciduous trees of eastern North America. Red maple is one of the first trees to flower in the spring, generally several weeks before vegetative bud break. The flowers are small, with slender stalks, red or rarely yellowish, with petals appearing usually in February or early March. Interestingly, the species is polygamo-dioecious. Thus, some trees are entirely male, producing no seeds; some are entirely female; and some are monoecious, bearing both male and female flowers.

See http://www.na.fs.fed.us/spfo/pubs/silvics_manual/volume_2/acer/rubrum.htm for more information.



Hexastylis virginica, commonly known as Virginia heartleaf - this one was in bloom in late March.

Skunk Cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*) is notable for its ability to generate temperatures of up to 15-35°C



above air temperature by cyanide resistant cellular respiration in order to melt its way through frozen ground, placing it among a small group of plants exhibiting thermogenesis. Although flowering while there is still snow and ice on the ground, it is successfully pollinated by early insects that also emerge at this time. Some studies suggest that beyond allowing the plant to grow in icy soil, the heat it produces may help to spread its odor in the air. Carrion-feeding insects that are attracted by the scent may be doubly encouraged to enter the spathe because it is warmer than the surrounding air, fueling pollination.

Eastern Skunk Cabbage has contractile roots which contract after growing into the earth. This pulls the stem of the plant deeper into the mud, so that the plant in

effect grows downward, not upward. Each year, the plant grows deeper into the earth, so that older plants are practically impossible to dig up. They reproduce by hard, pea-sized seeds which fall in the mud and are carried away by animals or by floods¹.

1. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Skunk_Cabbage



Alder (*Alnus serrulata*) blooms in winter - this picture was taken on February 26. A multiple-trunked, suckering shrub, 12-20 ft. tall commonly found at the edge of water. Flowers are purple catkins; males in drooping clusters, females in upright clusters. The fruit resembles a small, woody cone and persists until the next spring.



Trout lily (*Erythronium americanum*) is said to get its name from the speckled leaves, reminiscent of the speckled skin of a trout. It generally grows in groups of dozens to hundreds of plants and blooms from March to May. This one was in bloom on March 16. By June the above ground parts have withered away. Young plants are flowerless and have only one leaf, while older plants produce two leaves and a single flower. A plant's corm has to reach sufficient depths (10 to 20 centimeters below ground) before it will devote energy to making the additional parts

**Pocahontas Chapter
Virginia Native Plant Society
12565 Brook Lane
Chester, VA 23831**

