



THE POCAHONTAS CHAPTER OF THE VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Tradescantia virginiana

January 2014

Chapter Meeting 7:00 PM, January 9, 2014

at the

Glen Allen Branch Library, 10501 Staples Mill Road Glen Allen, VA.

**Beth Farmer, a Pocahontas Chapter Member
will speak on Growing Native Plants.**

Pocahontas Chapter Programs - Winter 2013

Feb 6 Daune Poklis on the VNPS trip to Smokies

March 1 VNPS Workshop at U. of R. –Topic Climate Change. Pocahontas Chapter will provide a continental breakfast and be responsible for box lunches for the speakers as in the past. The program will be held in the Jepson Center which is a larger venue but more difficult for us to set up. We will need lots of volunteers to help with set up and take down. **Contact Rubyjane Robertson at rubyjane1@aol.com if you can help.** Don't forget that to attend the workshop, you must register!

Mar 6 Emily Gianfortoni, chapter member, on identifying invasive plants and dealing with them.

Apr 3 OPEN

May Picnic at Amelia County Wildlife Management Area

Other events of interest:

The Winter workshop will be held on **March 1, 2014** at the **University of Richmond Jepson center**. The topic is Climate Change. The state will be sending more information and registration information in the near future.

Once again the Pocahontas Chapter will be responsible for morning refreshments and speaker lunches. Anyone interested in helping please contact Rubyjane Robertson at rubyjane1@aol.com She has agreed to coordinate the refreshments again this year.

Don't forget that to attend the workshop, you must register!

Message from Catharine Tucker

Our Chapter Officers have completed their terms and have either declined to serve another term or are now working on overtime.

Our Chapter is in danger of collapsing at the end of the April meeting without volunteers to provide leadership.

Please step forward to help. No one need do more than one of these tasks. Here's the minimum we need:

- Conduct meetings.
- Ensure the speaker is reminded of the date, time, location of meeting & has required equipment.
- Introduce the speaker at meetings.
- Take minutes at meetings.
- Keep our membership roll up to date using information from the state office.
- Schedule work days at the Garden
- Collect ideas for field trips for chapter.

Contact any of last year's officers to volunteer or learn more about the tasks.

Japanese Stilt-grass (*Microstegium vimineum*)^{1, 2}

Japanese stilt-grass, or Nepalese browntop, is an annual grass with a sprawling habit. Stilt-grass is native to Japan, Korea, China, Malaysia and India and was introduced into the United States in Tennessee around 1919, likely escaping as a result of its use as a packing material for porcelain. It is currently established in 16 eastern states, from New York to Florida.

It germinates in spring and grows slowly through the summer months, ultimately reaching heights of 2 to 3½ ft. The leaves are pale green, lance-shaped, asymmetrical, 1 to 3 in. long, and have a distinctive shiny mid rib, resembling a small, delicate bamboo. Hidden (cleistogamous), self-fertilizing flowers in axils and/or exposed (chasmogamous) flowers in terminal racemes of paired, hairy spikelets that open and are wind-pollinated are produced in late summer to fall, and dry fruits called achenes are produced soon afterwards.

Stilt-grass spreads both by seed and vegetative spread by rooting at joints along the stem—a new plant can emerge from each node; a single plant can produce 100-1,000 seeds that remain viable in the soil for at least three years, ensuring its persistence; seed germinates readily following soil disturbance. Although dispersal is not fully understood, seeds can be transported by water (e.g., surface runoff, streams, and floodwaters), in soil and gravel, in nursery grown plants, and on the feet of animals including humans.

It is currently established in 16 eastern states, from New York to Florida. It occurs on stream banks, river bluffs, floodplains, emergent and forested wetlands, moist woodlands, early successional



Stilt-grass leaves

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.

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fields, uplands, thickets, roadside ditches, and gas and power-line corridors. It can be found in full sun to deep shaded forest conditions and is associated with moist, rich soils that are acidic, neutral or basic and high in nitrogen.

Stilt-grass threatens native under-story vegetation in full sun to deep shade. It readily invades disturbed shaded areas, like floodplains that are prone to natural scouring, and areas subject to mowing, tilling and other soil-disturbing activities



A forest invaded with stilt-grass.

including white-tailed deer traffic. It spreads opportunistically following disturbance to form dense patches, displacing native wetland and forest vegetation as the patch expands.

Because it is similar in appearance to several native grasses, it is important to know how to recognize and differentiate stilt-grass from look-alikes. Look for asymmetrical leaves with a shiny midrib and the stilt-like growth form. Attention to new infestations should be a priority. Because it is shallow-rooted, stilt-grass may be pulled by hand at any time. If flowering, cut plants back using a mower, weed whip or other device to prevent seed production. For extensive infestations, herbicides are the most practical and effective method currently available. It has been reported cutting stilt-grass early in the season may cause it to flower and go to seed earlier than normal.

Look-alikes ³: Virginia cutgrass (*Leersia virginica*) a Rhizomatous perennial 12-18 inches tall with long, slender, weak, spreading stems often forming large sprawling patches. Nodes have distinctive long white hairs pointing backward toward the base of the stem. The alternate pale green 2-8 inch leaves feel rough when pulled through the fingers because of short, stiff hairs on their edges. Leaves at the tip of the stem point forward, often in a V or Y shape. Other similar looking plants include hairy jointgrass or small carpetgrass (*Arthraxon hispidus*), and possibly other delicate grasses and wildflowers like Pennsylvania knotweed (*Polygonum persicaria*).



Potential Biocontrol for Japanese Stilt-grass

Catharine Tucker

A leaf blight on Japanese stilt-grass (*Microstegium vimineum*) has been reported from a few locations in nearby states. This information appeared in the Mid-Atlantic Invasive Plant Council blog recently.

A fungal infection on stilt-grass has been reported from a Maryland site; another infected population was identified in West Virginia. Those of us who wrestle with this highly aggressive and invasive grass hope that this means a natural biological control for it may exist.

Dana K. Berner with the USDA, ARS, Foreign Disease-Weed Science Research Unit (FDWSRU) in Ft. Detrick, MD reported that two species of plant pathogens in the



genus *Bipolaris* have been described as the cause of leaf spots and necrosis (rot) of Japanese stilt-grass in the Eastern U.S. She adds, "Some evidence is that the disease may be suppressing local

populations. Host range of these species has not been fully tested, although limited symptom development was reported on a few important grass (grain) species in artificial tests (Kleczewski et al. 2012). Research is ongoing about this pathogen(s), its host, and the potential for use in biological control of Japanese stilt-grass.” You can help with the research by looking at stilt-grass plants wherever you find them and reporting any appearance of disease. Photos of blighted stilt-grass plants here, including a close-up, indicate what to look for. If you see any leaf blight on Japanese stilt-grass during the growing season please e-mail Catharine Tucker (cath.tucker@gmail.com). Sending digital photos helps. She will report your information to the research group. If you need more information, contact Catharine.

References

1. <http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/fact/mivi1.htm>
2. <http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/pubs/midatlantic/mivi.htm>
3. http://www.fnaturesearch.org/index.php?option=com_naturesearch&task=view&id=865

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