

EARLY SPRING

POTOWMACK NEWS

Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

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Cub Run Stream Valley Park

By Karen Monroe



VIRGINIA BLUEBELLS AT CUB RUN. ALL PHOTOS IN THIS ARTICLE BY KAREN MONROE.

If you are looking for a lesser known place to see carpets of Virginia Bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*) and other native wildflowers this spring, consider visiting Cub Run Stream Valley Park in western Fairfax County.

This 900-acre park, which is accessed through surrounding neighborhoods, has over 7.5 miles of mostly paved trails that cross Cub Run via four bridges and eight fair-weather crossings. Historic sites in the park include a historic marker for the “First Battle of Manassas Panic at Cub Creek Bridge” along with a nearby interpretive sign for the same event (titled “Retreat from Manassas - Panic at Cub Run Bridge”); and a historic marker for the “Manassas Gap Railroad – Independent Line” (ca. 1857) near two unfinished stone bridge abutments, one on each side of Cub Run. The park also has one full basketball court and one children’s playground.

In the spring Cub Run Stream Valley Park bursts with the color of native spring wildflowers. One of the first to bloom is the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Upcoming

Rod Simmons:

**Last Defense for Local Forests:
Edges of Woodlands**

*Thursday, March 8, 7 pm
Dolley Madison Library,
1244 Oak Ridge Ave., McLean*

Carrie Blair Walk:

A Taste of Spring at Scott’s Run

Sunday, March 25, 9 am-12 noon

Jim Waggener:

**Natural Discoveries: A Firsthand
Account of Citizen Science**

*Thursday, April 12, 7:30-9:30 pm
Horticulture Center, Green Spring Gardens*

**Alonso Abugattas Walk:
Trilliums at Thompson Wildlife
Management Area**

Saturday, April 28

Dr. Robert Musil

**President & CEO of the Rachel
Carson Council.**

*Tuesday, May 8, 7:30 pm
Horticulture Center, Green Spring Gardens*

**Dr. Sarah Chamberlain:
Field Guide to Grasses of the
Mid-Atlantic Region**

*Thursday, July 12, 7:30 pm
Arlington Central Library*

All events are free and open to the public. Walks require preregistration. Join our listserve at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/vnps-pot> to receive notices with walk registration links.

VNPS members can now manage their membership accounts online at: <http://vnps.org/membership-management/>. You can update your VNPS profile information, renew your membership, or change your preferences, for example, to receive this chapter newsletter and state *Sempervirens* newsletter by email:

1. Go to the VNPS Membership Management page: <http://vnps.org/membership-management/>.
2. Enter your VNPS login name and password. If you don't know your credentials, click on the "Forgot Password?" link to send a recovery email. If the system does not recognize your email address, please contact us at: <http://vnps.org/about/contact/>
3. After logging in, look at the "What would you like to do?" drop-down box on the right-hand side of the page.
4. Select "Update my Profile Information" from the drop-down list. On this page you can change your contact information and request Electronic Distribution (email) for your newsletters.

WHERE YOU CAN WHACK SOME INVASIVE EXOTIC PLANTS

Falls Church Habitat Restoration Team



Help restore the local ecosystem in city parks. Remove invasives and plant natives that will benefit local birds and butterflies. For more information contact Melissa Teates at 703-538-6961 or melanite@verizon.net

Arlington County's Remove Invasive Plants (RiP) Program

Help Rescue Arlington parks from alien plant invaders! Please bring your own tools. For more information, contact Sarah Archer at 703-228-1862 or sarcher@arlingtonva.us



Reston Association's Habitat Heroes Program



Help restore local wildlife habitat through invasive plant removal and replanting with native plants. For more information, contact Ha Brock at 703-435-7986 or ha@reston.org

Fairfax County's Invasive Management Area (IMA) Program

Help remove invasive plants and learn about new invasive species. For more information, contact Erin Stocksclaeder at 703-324-8681 or erin.stocksclaeder@fairfaxcounty.gov



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CUB RUN CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Round-lobed Hepatica, (*Anemone americana*). You can find this plant just a short way down the path on the south side of Lee Highway. The three-lobed leaves are present all year, but both leaves and flowers can be hard to spot among the leaf litter. Another early bloomer, Dutchman's Breeches (*Dicentra cucullaria*), can be found near the north end of the park, entering along the path from Snow Hill Lane, then turning left onto the path along the stream.

If you only have time for a short walk, a good plan is to walk counter-clockwise on the short loop (30 minutes walking without stopping) that starts on the north side of Lee Highway, where it intersects Prince Way (you can park on the access road). In just a short distance after the path turns to the right, bypassing the turnoff for the bridge across Cub Run, you can discover Spring Beauty (*Claytonia virginica*), Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*), Cut-leaved Toothwort (*Cardamine concatenata*, formerly *Dentaria laciniata*), Rue Anemone (*Thalictrum thalictroides*, formerly *Anemonella thalictroides*), Golden Alexanders (*Zizia aurea*), Violets (*Viola spp.*) and Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*). You will see a blanket of Virginia Bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*) on the islands and far bank of Cub Run and a few individual plants close by the path on this section of trail. There is some Early Saxifrage (*Saxifraga virginensis*) along the trail and more over the edge of the near bank of Cub Run, which you can see more easily when the powerline easement has been mowed.

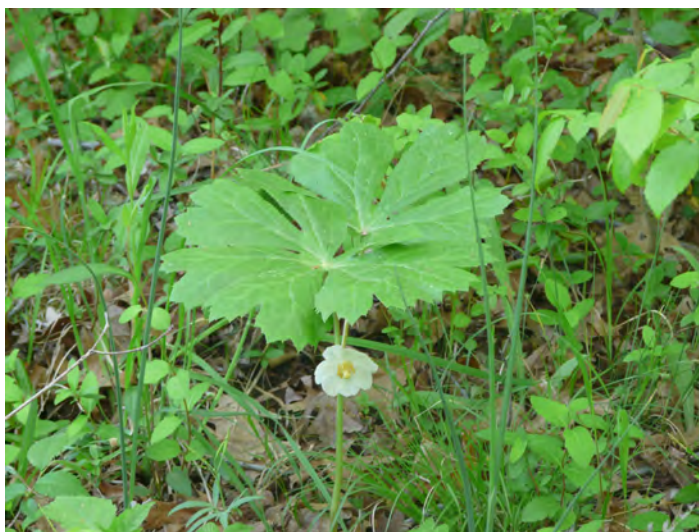


Yellow Trout Lily (*Erythronium americanum*) bloom along the path here as well, but it is worth walking a

little farther down the small hill to see hundreds blooming on the steep slope at the bottom.

If you have more time and continue to walk around the loop as it bends to the left, you will see the bluebells in the distance along Cub Run. When you come out of the woods halfway around the loop, you will find a large area of bluebells up close. An informal dirt path along Cub Run just before the fair-weather crossing leads you on a side trip off the small loop into the woods and on a magical journey through acres of bluebells all around you on both sides of the stream. There are also large areas of bluebells across the fair-weather crossing and farther north in the park, especially along the path that leads to Honsena Drive, where you can often find individual plants with white blooms.

As spring progresses, on the short stretch at the beginning of the short loop you will also see Jack-in-the-Pulpit (*Arisaema triphyllum*), Mayapple (*Podophyllum peltatum*), Star Chickweed (*Stellaria*



pubera), Wild Geranium (*Geranium maculatum*), Wild Ginger (*Asarum canadense*), Perfoliate bellwort (*Uvularia perfoliata*), Solomon's Seal (*Polygonatum sp.*) and Dogwood (*Cornus florida*).

Completing the rest of the short loop you will also find False Solomon's Seal (*Maianthemum racemosum*, formerly *Smilacina racemosa*), Bladdernut (*Staphylea trifolia*), Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*), Virginia Waterleaf (*Hydrophyllum virginianum*), Partridge-berry (*Mitchella repens*), Blackhaw Viburnum (*Viburnum prunifolium*), Tall Meadow Rue (*Thalictrum pubescens*), Green Dragon (*Arisaema dracontium*), and the leaves of the



FOUR-LEAVED MILKWEED, ASCLEPIAS QUADRIFOLIA

Crane-fly Orchid (*Tipularia discolor*), which will bloom later in the summer after the leaves die back.

On the south side of Lee Highway, follow the path over a fair-weather crossing, take the first right up a steep hill, and then turn left onto the path along the edge of the woods. You will be greeted by the beautiful sight of Fringetrees (*Chionanthus virginicus*) and Redbuds (*Cercis canadensis*) in bloom. Following the path into the woods, you can find Four-leaved Milkweed (*Asclepias quadrifolia*) and Maple-leaf viburnum (*Viburnum acerifolium*).

Park access is through surrounding neighborhoods, and there is no formal parking. One place to park is on London Towne Square, the Lee Highway Access road that intersects with Prince Way. The path into the park starts from Prince Way near the “London Towne West” sign. The park is on both sides of Lee Highway, reaching south to Compton Road and north almost to Braddock Road.

Trail map signs grace most trail intersections. A map of the trails south of Lee Highway can be found at <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/sites/parks/files/assets/documents/trails/trail%20maps/cubrunsv.pdf>. A map of all the trails in the park can be viewed using the online Fairfax Trail Buddy mapping tool at <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/trails/trail-buddy>.

Spring is a wonderful time to visit Cub Run Stream Valley Park to view wildflowers and be inspired to return and see what delights await you at other times of the year.

Karen Monroe has enjoyed living next to and exploring Cub Run Stream Valley Park for the past 27 years. Her volunteer work in the park includes being a site leader for a FCPA Invasive Management Area (IMA), participating in stream monitoring through NVSWCD, and participating in Stream Cleanups.

Botanic Names: On the (Leaf) Edge

By Margaret Chatham

Some plants' botanic names describe edges, mostly of their leaves. Smooth leaf edges are termed “entire” and rarely find their way into botanic names. *Aureolaria laevigata*, Entire-leaf Yellow False Foxglove, is an exception. However, “laevigata” just means “smooth” and does not guarantee entire leaves. As an example of a plant that is smooth but doesn't have entire leaves, *The Flora of Virginia* describes the leaves of *Boechnera laevigata*, Smooth Rock Cress, as “serrate to dentate or pinnately dissected or lobed.” All of those adjectives turn up in botanic names somewhere or other.

An otherwise entire leaf may come to a short, sharp, slender, abrupt point, in which case it is termed “mucronate” as in *Atriplex mucronata*, Sea-beach Orach. Mucronate tips also can be found on tepals.

Simple teeth on the leaf edge are dentate, as in *Viburnum dentatum*, Arrowwood Viburnum, *Castanea dentata*, American Chestnut, *Populus grandidentata*, Big-tooth Aspen or even *Ambrosia bidentata*, “twice toothed” Lance-leaved Ragwort.

Little teeth may be called serrate, or you can make the teeth even smaller by adding a “ul” in there, as in *Alnus serrulata*, Smooth Alder, or *Hypericum denticulatum*, Coppery St. John's-wort, though the St. John's-wort tiny teeth are on the edges of its petals instead of its leaves.

Leaves with rounded teeth are crenate. The only example of this term in a botanic name I could find is Japanese Holly, *Ilex crenata*, and its leaves are only sometimes crenate, sometimes entire.

Leaf edges may be turned under, as in *Thalictrum revolutum* — this does not translate to “revolting”

even though its common name is Skunk Meadow-rue. Or they may be curled, “crisped,” as in Curly Dock, **Rumex crispus*.

Leaves with deeply jagged edges may be called “lacinate” — think lacy or lacerated. Examples are *Rudbeckia laciniata*, the Cut-leaf or Green-headed Coneflower, and **Dipsacus laciniatus*, Cut-leaf Teasel. Or they may be called “dissected”, as in *Cardamine dissecta*, formerly *Dentaria multifida*, Fork-leaf

Toothwort (which has biternate leaves: divided into three leaflets, each of which is divided into three again) or *Sceptridium dissectum*, formerly *Botrychium dissectum*, the Cut-leaf Grape Fern. And if the leaves really get divided beyond what anyone wants to count, they may be called “thousand-leaved” as in *Achillea millefolium*, Common Yarrow.

*non-native



Both of these are Cut-leaf Grape Ferns, *Sceptridium dissectum*. The upper photo is of forma *dissectum*, the lower photo is of the more common forma *obliquum*. Clearly this is a highly variable species. Both photos were taken in November. This is a plant that marches to a different drummer. It comes up in August or September, possibly with a spore-bearing stalk coming out of the ground beside its sterile frond. By November, the spores are dispersed, but the sterile frond stays up for the winter, often turning maroon (for warmth? To hide among the dry leaves?) taking advantage of winter sunlight. In March and April, they share the ground with ephemerals like Spring Beauties (*Claytonia virginica*), but once the canopy closes in the spring, Cut-leaf Grape Ferns die back, to return in late summer or early fall. — M.C.

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Virginia Native Plant Society
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Word of the Month: **Circinate**



Circinate (adjective): coiled with the tip in the center, as a fern fiddlehead or the stipules of some hawthorns.

Shown here, fiddlehead of Christmas fern, *Polystichum acrostichoides*.

Photo by Laura Beaty

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