

WINTER

# POTOWMACK NEWS

*Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society*

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## Winter Annuals

By Margaret Chatham



SEEDS ALREADY SPROUTING IN NOVEMBER: CLEAVERS (*GALIUM APARINE*) WITH WHORLS OF LEAVES, COMMON CHICKWEED (*\*STELLARIA MEDIA*) WITH POINTED, OPPOSITE LEAVES AND IVY-LEAVED VERONICA (*\*VERONICA HEDERIFOLIA*) WITH ROUNDED LOBES  
ALL PHOTOS FOR THIS ARTICLE BY MARGARET CHATHAM.

We all love spring ephemerals, those hardy forest wildflowers that dare the cold weather to take advantage of the light coming through the bare canopy to bloom & set seed, all before canopy growth darkens the forest floor. Winter annuals could be regarded as a subset of spring ephemerals: they do the same dance, not backwards in high heels, but from seed to senescence, all in a few months. Yet for me at least, the term conjures up invasive weeds rather than beloved wildflowers: Common Chickweed (*\*Stellaria media*) hurrying to claim real estate; Hairy Bittercress (*\*Cardamine hirsuta*) racing to produce exploding seedpods before you think to weed your garden; Ivy-leaved Veronica (*\*Veronica hederifolia*) with each plant too small to bother pulling, but in their multitudes covering the ground.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

## Upcoming

### Charles Smith: Climate Change and the Need to Make Space for Nature

Thursday, Jan 14, 7:30 pm  
Zoom Meeting. Register at <https://bit.ly/3a4Ai9e>

### Laura Beaty: Life in Your Wild Garden

Thursday, Feb 11, 7:30 pm

Many gardeners add native plants to their yards to mitigate the global loss of pollinators & leaf eaters. Join us to see who's using a wild garden, & then take a deeper look at your own.

Zoom Meeting. See <https://vnps.org/potowmack/events/> for registration connection closer to the date

### Margaret Chatham: Successional Change at Fraser Preserve

Thursday, Mar 11, 7:30 pm  
Zoom Meeting. See <https://vnps.org/potowmack/events/> for registration connection closer to the date

### Walks:

Someday... Watch for announcements or check the website.

If you go out on your own and want help with plant identification, take a picture (show as much of the plant as you can: leaves as well as flower!) and post it to [iNaturalist.org](https://www.inaturalist.org) (free download) for assistance. Or send us all pictures of what you see.

All events are free and open to the public. Walks require preregistration. For email notices of upcoming events, subscribe to <https://vnps.groups.io/g/potowmack>. Or send a blank email to [potowmack+subscribe@vnps.groups.io](mailto:potowmack+subscribe@vnps.groups.io)

## Manage your VNPS Membership Online

1. Go to <https://vnps.z2systems.com/>
2. Enter your VNPS member username. This is usually your email address.
3. If you don't know or have forgotten your password, click on "Forgot Password?"
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5. Select "Update My Profile Information."
6. To request a paper newsletter, at the bottom of your Profile Information, set "Electronic Distribution" to "No."
7. Update any other profile information, then click "Submit."

## RED BARK PHENOMENON

By Margaret Chatham

Visiting Fraser Preserve on December 4, 2020, I was startled to see sycamore trees with red bark in the stream valley. It was a brand-new sight to me, and to everyone else who passed through that day.

A quick internet search found a site by Joe Boggs of Ohio State University describing the same thing seen near streams in Ohio in 2019, with reference to similar sightings in Indiana in 2019, and a longer report from Connecticut in 2016 detailing "RBP" Red Bark



Phenomenon on many tree species in several New England states. The cause appears to be an alga, possibly not-yet-named, growing on the surface of the bark, and doing no harm to the trees.

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Submissions to *Potowmack News* may be sent to The Editor at [vnps.pot@gmail.com](mailto:vnps.pot@gmail.com)

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## WINTER ANNUALS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Even among our native winter annuals, the first one that comes to mind is less than a favorite: Cleavers (*Galium aparine*). This is the scrambling, scratchy plant that taught me I needed gloves that cover my wrists if I want to pull Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) basal rosettes from its vicinity. I expect Cleavers to have eight leaves in most of their whorls, so at first I was confused by the seedlings I saw coming up in November. Their first whorls of true leaves had only four leaves apiece. Above these came whorls of six leaves. I conclude that whorls of eight leaves will be growing later on.

We do have some more charismatic native winter annuals around. Here is Yellow Corydalis (*Corydalis flavula*) just sprouting in November:



And here it is, blooming in March:



Here is Coville's Phacelia (*Phacelia covillei*) sprouting in early December:



And here it is, blooming in April



Can you think of others that grow on this schedule?

## Camphorweed

(*Pluchea camphorata*)

newly discovered for the City of Alexandria,  
VA

By R. H. Simmons



Camphorweed (*Pluchea camphorata*) at Telegraph and Duke Meadow Complex. Photo by R.H. Simmons

One of the Washington, D.C. region's rarest plants was recently discovered in the City of Alexandria, Virginia. This is a new addition to the Alexandria Flora and is only the third known station in northern Virginia for this plant. The Alexandria population consists of three plants, two with abundant seed.

A voucher specimen of diagnostic parts of a plant, not a whole or uprooted plant owing to its rarity, was carefully collected and is housed in the City of Alexandria Herbarium (AVCH).

*Pluchea camphorata* was previously collected in Fairfax County from "Eakin Park" by John Strohl in 1969 and "Mount Vernon" by William Hunter in 1877 (*W.*

*Hunter s.n.*, 23 Sep 1877, "Mount Vernon, Va."; *John R. Strohl s.n.*, 9 Oct 1969, "In Eakin Park"). The Strohl specimen is housed at Ted R. Bradley Herbarium at George Mason University (GMUF) and the Hunter specimen at US National Herbarium at the Smithsonian (US).

The D.C. region is the northernmost extent of this primarily southeastern U.S. species. "Maryland stations occur at the northern extent of the species' range and are localized to the Zekiah Swamp Run watersheds. Several older reports from salt marsh habitats are the common *Pluchea odorata*" (MD Natural Heritage Program 2019).

R.H. Simmons collected *Pluchea camphorata* in 1998 from a wet meadow and beaver impoundment at Chapman Forest South in the Mattawoman Creek watershed in Charles County, Maryland (*R. Simmons, s.n.*, Aug 1998, "Chapman Forest"). This specimen is deposited at US in the DC Herbarium and represents the only Maryland specimen in the collection within the geographical limits of the Flora of the Baltimore-Washington Area (DC Herbarium; see attached).

It was discovered in Alexandria at the Telegraph and Duke Meadow Complex during a site visit by R.H. Simmons, Mary Farrah, and Sara Tangren on October 23, 2020 to film a discussion of best practices and native biodiversity of managed meadows for the regional Meadow Working Group. The meadow complex is a 5-plus-acre suite of native successional meadow habitat that has been actively stewarded by Alexandria Natural Lands Management for nearly 25 years.

The entire complex of meadows overlies a massive lens of heavy, shrink-swell, hardpan clay of the Potomac Formation (Arell clay). The largest meadow parcel, where the *Pluchea* was found, overlies the heaviest clay and is seasonally wet.

This recent discovery underscores the importance of preserving and carefully managing open grassy areas and meadow habitat as critical refugia for native species requiring such conditions. It also shows the great wealth of native diversity in the seedbank that eventually re-emerges following the abatement of regular mowing practices and with the vigilant control of non-native invasive plants.

### References

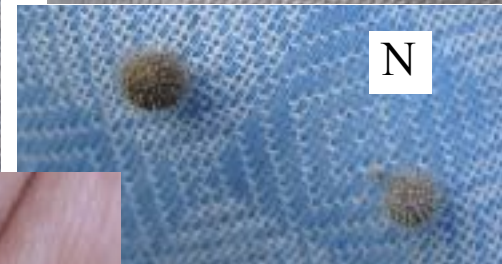
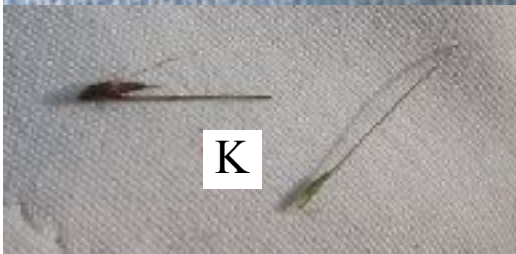
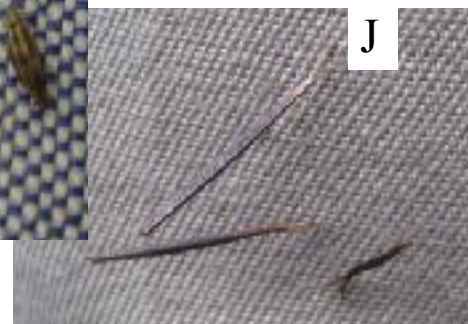
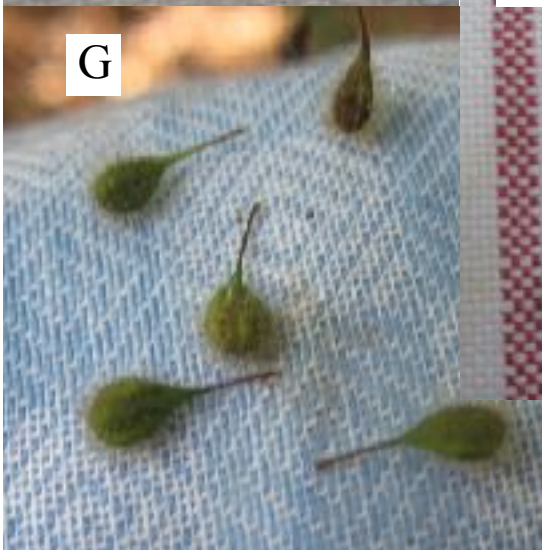
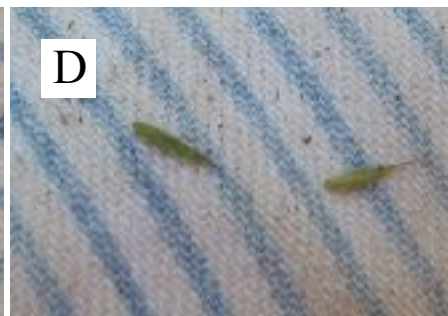
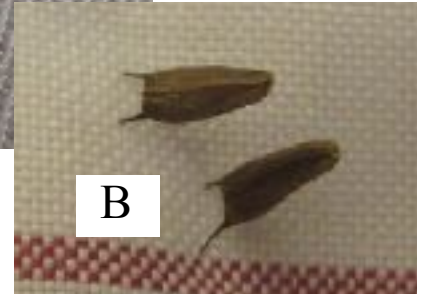
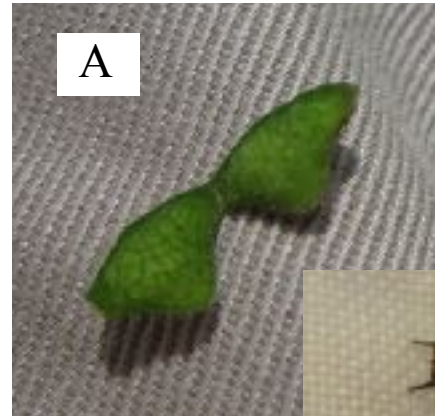
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Virginia Botanical Associates. 2020. Digital Atlas of the Virginia Flora (<http://www.vaplantatlas.org>, 20 November 2020). Virginia Botanical Associates, Blacksburg, Virginia.

## What's Sticking to Me?

Lots of seeds hitch a ride to a new home. All photos by Margaret Chatham. Answers on page 6.

- 1 Small-flowered Agrimony (*Agrimonia parviflora*)
- 2 Spanish Needles (*Bidens bipinnata*)
- 3 Beggar-ticks (*Bidens frondosa*)
- 4 Enchanter's Nightshade (*Circaea quadrisulcata*)
- 5 Honewort (*Cryptotaenia canadensis*)
- 6 Panicked Tick-Trefoil (*Desmodium paniculatum*)
- 7 Cleavers (*Galium aparine*)
- 8 Wild Licorice (*Galium circaezans*)
- 9 White Avens (*Geum canadense*)
- 10 Naked Tick-Trefoil (*Hylodesmum nudiflorum*)
- 11 Stilt Grass (*\*Microstegium vimineum*)
- 12 Wavy Leaf Grass (*\*Oplismenus undulatifolius*)
- 13 Black Snakeroot (*Sanicula canadensis*)



## POTOWMACK NEWS

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## Homegrown National Park



“In the past, we have asked one thing of our gardens: that they be pretty. Now they have to support life, sequester carbon, feed pollinators and manage water.”

— DOUG TALLAMY

Are you on the Homegrown National Park map? Plant some natives, then go to [homegrownnationalpark.com](http://homegrownnationalpark.com) and add your bit to biodiversity restoration.

**NEW ENGLAND ASTER (*SYMPHYOTRICHUM NOVAE-ANGLIAE*) WITH POLLINATORS, GREEN SPRING GARDENS PARK. PHOTO BY MARGARET CHATHAM.**

Answers to quiz on page 5: 1-H; 2-J; 3-B; 4-C; 5-I; 6-A; 7-N; 8-G; 9-L; 10-M; 11-D (it doesn't seem to have any way of clinging, but it rides along anyway); 12-K (sorry you can't see the bead of glue at the tip); 13-E