

# POTOWMACK NEWS

Volume 15, No.1

Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Winter 1996

## Do Not Use This Plant for Christmas Decorations

Ground pine *Lycopodium obscurum* is an attractive, evergreen ground-cover, native to the woodlands of the Eastern United States. Ground Cedar *L. tristachyum*, running cedar *L. clavatum* and running pine *L. flabelliforme*, are similar species. All resemble miniature conifers, but are closely related to ferns and reproduce by runners and spores.

Ground pine is often used at Christmas for wreaths and roping. Unfortunately, all plant material offered for sale has been collected from wild populations, because it is not currently being propagated and grown commercially. In some areas, over-collection has led to serious depletion of wild stands.

When used indoors, ground pine dries out quickly and becomes a fire hazard. Tiny, dust-like spores ignite so easily that they were once used in fireworks and for photographic flashes in the early days of photography.

Do your part to conserve native plants- don't use ground pine and related species in your Christmas decorations.

*Reprinted from Reston Association and the Prince William Wildflower Society*

## Open to Ideas

The Virginia Native Plant Society is trying to find new ways to increase its membership as well as its presence throughout the state. We want to let more people know about us and the wonderful things we accomplish. The larger our membership, the better we can educate the public and carry out our conservation efforts. If you have any ideas to help increase our exposure to the public statewide, such as magazines we should advertise in or other ways to publicize our endeavors, please let us know. We are open to ideas and suggestions to help keep our organization growing and expanding. Call Alonso at (703) 358-6535 during the day or (703) 528-8808 evenings and let your ideas be heard.



## Certificate of Appreciation Awarded

Certificates of appreciation were again awarded at the annual meeting held on October 5 at Potomac Overlook Park. Honored were members, who for the past year have served the chapter with outstanding dedication. The pale lavender matted certificates have a hand painted chapter logo (wood violet and spleenwort) in the left corner and the VNPS logo in the lower right corner. Some awards also included pressed wildflowers. Since 1993, 22 have been awarded.

Gerry Pratt (Outstanding Service). Gerry is a Charter member whose skill in the propagation beds at Green Spring Gardens Park is legendary. Under her leadership, every plant sale has been more successful than the one preceding it. (Charter members joined in 1982-83).

Laura Beaty and Beth Smith (Over 200 hours of Volunteer Service) Both Laura and Beth weeded, watered and potted faithfully with Gerry in the propagation beds.

Vivian Attermeyer and Sally Sieracki (Over 100 hours of Volunteer Service). Both labored with Gerry to grow the native plants sold at the plant sales.

Mark Etheridge (President) Mark was also honored in 1995 for having been the chapter's newsletter editor, Potowmack News.

Alonso Abugattas (Program Chairperson) Alonso has served on the Board since 1994. The programs and field trips he has arranged have been outstanding and well attended.

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## President's Message

First of all, thank you. I feel very lucky to be allowed to be the president of such a wonderful chapter in a great environmental organization like the VNPS. I can only hope to do as good a job as our previous presidents like Mark Etheridge. I am sure we will all miss him, but am also sure that he will continue to be involved in the society. Thanks Mark, for a great job (I have your E-mail and number, so I can ask for your help.) I promise to give my best efforts to fill his shoes as best I can. Luckily, I'll have some great advice and help. Many of our Board still remain the same and some great new folks have arrived as well.

Our new Program Chairperson is Beth Smith. Many of you know her from the plant sales and events which she has always supported. She is now in charge of the programs and events which we will have for the coming year. I'm sure she is eager for ideas and contact people, so don't be afraid to make suggestions.

Our new Conservation Chairperson is Kathleen Kust. She has already demonstrated her dedication and devotion to many projects, and she has planned many more. She can't do it alone, however, and I hope that we can all support her and our Chapter's efforts. I can attest that it is fun and educational to help out as well. So make sure to support the Chapter in its endeavors in more than just spirit.

We should also be thankful to have a Newsletter Editor again in Pam Newitt. She's responsible for what you're reading now. We all know how important a newsletter is to an organization and we now have one again. Pam is a co-worker with me at Long Branch Nature Center, so I know we'll all be happy with everything she does. She is always looking for items to include, so let her know if you have something the Chapter should know about or would enjoy reading. Her number, as well as all the Boards' are listed at right.

We still need a Vice-President to fill the vacancy created when Abby Duchon left for her new job up north. We all miss her, but we really need somebody to plan the annual meeting and fill in when the President is not able to attend a meeting. (Those are the primary responsibilities of the position). Anyone interested should contact me.

I know you have heard this before, but it bears repeating. **THIS IS YOUR ORGANIZATION!** It can only be as successful as you make it. Support your Chapter and organization. Go to the events, programs and field trips. Write short articles for the newsletter.

Attend the Board meetings. They are always open to you and we would love to hear from you. Let us know what we should be doing and then help us do it. We have a lot of great resources. The most important one is our members. We are the largest chapter and are capable of some great things, but only with your help. So join a Committee and attend some meetings. Don't be a member in name only. Help this organization continue to be as great as it has been, and even better.

Our meetings are held on the fourth Thursday of every month, except December at Green Spring Gardens Park. We start at 7:00 pm and you are always invited. I hope to see you there. My hope is that I will meet everyone of you at either a meeting or an event. I know that together we can make this organization continue to bloom.

Sincerely, Your President,

Alonso Abugattas.

**Potowmack Chapter  
Virginia Native Plant Society  
P.O. Box 161  
McLean, Va. 22101**

**Board Officers**

President	Alonso Abugattas	528-8808
Vice President	Vacant	
Secretary	Sally Sieracki	978-5865
Treasurer	Dustin Pratt	323-1094

**Committee Chairs**

Botany	Cris Fleming	(301) 657-9289
Conservation	Kathleen Kust	836-5868
Education	Nancy Luria	351-9723
Hospitality	Joan Van Ryzin	799-4520
Membership	Anne Crocker	437-0355
Native Plant Trail	Edith Bradbury	971-8878
Newsletter	Pam Newitt	(301) 949-5066
Program	Beth Smith	644-1760
Propagation and Sales	Gerry Pratt	323-1094
Publications	Liz Smith	768-1697
Publicity	Norma Vermillion	451-0577
Site Registry	Jane Collins	525-1304

**\*CALENDAR\*CALENDAR\*CALENDAR\*CALENDAR\***

What's coming up this winter?

**December**

Dec. 14

**WINTER PLANT IDENTIFICATION 2-4:30-pm.** Adults are invited to join volunteer naturalist for an informal walk, at Long Branch Nature Center to identify some of our native plants in winter. Reservations are needed for this free program. 358-6535. Arlington.

Dec. 17

**WILDFLOWERS IN WINTER 10am-12noon.** Adults can walk through edge and meadow habitats of Bon Air Park and learn to identify pods and seeds of last seasons wildflowers. We'll also collect some pods of interesting ones and make a winter bouquet to take home. Meet at Bon Air Rose Garden Parking lot. Call Long Branch Nature Center for information, directions and to make reservations 358-6535. Arlington.

Dec. 28

**WINTER PLANT IDENTIFICATION 2-4:30pm.** See Dec. 14 write-up for details.

**January**

Jan. 11

**WINTER PLANT IDENTIFICATION 2-4:30pm.** See Dec. 14 write-up for details.

Jan. 18

**TREE TREK 1-3:30pm.** Huntley Meadows. Call 768-2525 for information.

**BUDS AND BARK 2-4pm.** Adults can join a naturalist and learn to identify some of our common trees by buds and bark. After, we'll have hot beverages and review our discoveries. Dress for the weather. Long Branch Nature Center. Reservations: 358-6535. Arlington.

Jan. 25

**WINTER PLANT IDENTIFICATION 2-4:30** See Dec. 14 write-up for details.

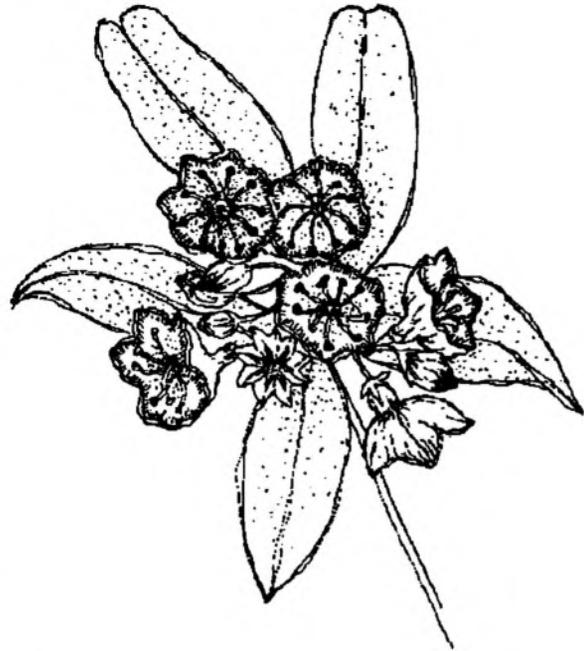
**February**

Feb. 6

**HIKE TO THE POTOMAC 3:45-4:45pm** Kids in grades 3-5 can join a naturalist for a winter walk to the Potomac River. We'll look for signs of animals and anything else that interests us. Gulf Branch Nature Center Reservations: 358-3403. Arlington.

Feb. 15

**WINTER PLANT IDENTIFICATION 2-4:30 pm.** See Dec. 14 write-up for details.

**SPRING NEWSLETTER DEADLINE**

The deadline to submit articles, events and special interest stories for the next Potowmack News will be Friday, February 28, 1997. I realize this is pretty early for a spring deadline. I want to make sure I can get all the information early enough to include the early spring walks, events and programs, and I am due to have a baby in the end of March, so I want to have the newsletter finished before the baby arrives.

You can either send me an E-mail at <pnewitt@erols.com> with anything you want included, or a disk with your submissions on it. (My computer is a Macintosh, but it will accept a disk from an IBM.) If you don't have access to a computer, and you want to send me the information via conventional means, you can send it to me at Long Branch Nature Center 625 S. Carlin Springs Rd. Arlington, Va. 22204. You may also fax me your hard copy at (703) 845-2654 (work) or (301)949-5066 (home). We have had some difficulty receiving information from some fax machines at the home number. I guess my fax machine is a little antisocial.

I urge all of you to contribute. We love to hear from our members, and I'm sure there are aspiring writers out there just waiting for a medium. It doesn't have to be long. As a matter of fact, a few short articles on native plant topics would be great. If you have any questions, give me a call at (301) 949-5066 or drop me an E-mail. Hope to hear from some of you soon.

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**Abbie Duchon (Vice President).** A member of VNPS less than three years, Abbie conscientiously served on the board as Conservation Chair before being elected to vice president. She is now employed by the New York Conservancy in Chatham, N.Y.

**Joan Van Ryzin (Hospitality)** Joan provides the delicious refreshments served at the general meetings, a job she has faithfully performed since March, 1994. Her beautifully painted wildflower note paper is available at the meetings.

**Norma Vermillion (Outstanding Service)** Norma, also a charter member, was the first Newsletter Editor. She has continued her service to the chapter over the years as program chair, historian and publicity chair.

Since 1993, the following have also received the Award Certificates

1993- Anne Haynes (President 92-93), Ben Fitzgerald (Treasurer), Lynda Heise (Newsletter Editor), and Margaret Pridgen (Outstanding Service as Hospitality Chair)

1994- Anne Van Ryzin (Secretary), Liz Smith (Outstanding Service. She has served on the chapter board and VNPS board for over 10 years), Laura Beaty (Secretary).

1995- Nancy Luria (President 93-95). Nancy has also served the chapter as Education Chair. She has worked to develop the Native Plant Trail. Dustin Pratt (Over 200 hours of Volunteer Service), Laura Beaty, Edith Bradbury, Gale Minnich-Blewis, Margaret Shutler and Beth Smith (Over 100 volunteer hours each.), and Aileen Smith ( Secretary).

## Welcome, Welcome, Welcome...

The Chapter would like to welcome its new members for last month. We hope to meet all of you very soon at some of our many upcoming events!

Beverly Byrne  
Frances T. Chandler  
Robert G. Deason  
Deanne Eversmeyer  
Douglas Varley Family  
Jody Marshall

James Moskowitz  
Dallas Peck  
Jim Thomson  
Joe Howard  
Peter Wilf  
Jefri Wood



## Thanks

A special thanks goes out to Robert Whitcomb of the U.S. Department of Agriculture for being our guest speaker at this year's annual meeting. Dr. Whitcomb delayed a trip to West Virginia in order to talk with us. He gave an interesting program on his work with various methods of meadow restoration. Thanks again, Dr. Whitcomb.

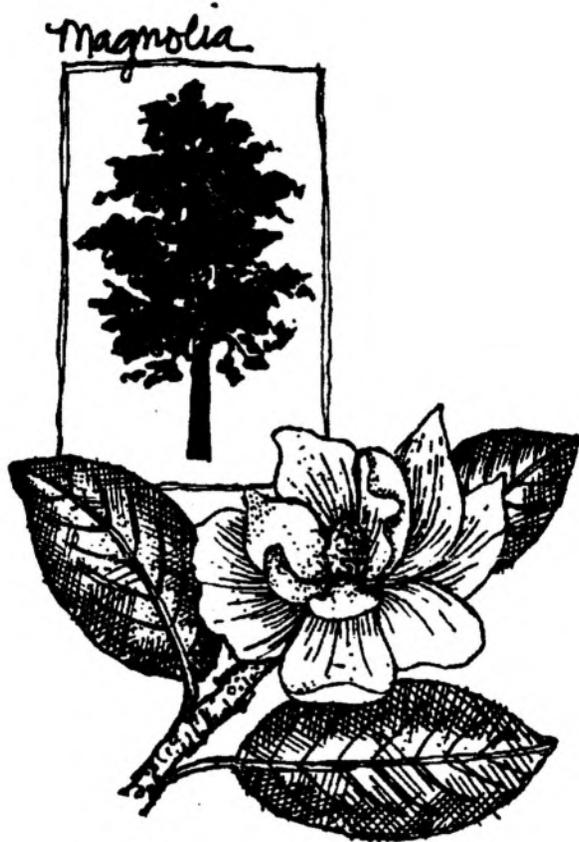
Another big thank you goes out to our friends at Potomack Overlook Regional Park for allowing us to hold our Chapter's meeting there. Martin Ogle and company treated us very well and also took time out of their busy schedules to let us know about some of their efforts at native plant restoration. We appreciate all their hospitality and are pleased with their efforts at promoting native plants.

Yet another thanks for our own Joan Van Ryzin, Hospitality Chair, for all the goodies she provided. Joan always is there behind the scenes helping to make all our programs more enjoyable.



## Recognition

The Potowmack Chapter has received a letter from the Bryant Adult Alternative High School in McLean, thanking us for the plant donation and the help it received from our Propagation Chair, Gerry Pratt. They are starting a native plant garden and intend to use it for ornamental and educational purposes. They have promised to keep us informed of their progress. Great job (as usual), to Gerry !



## Internship Position Available

An intern for The Green Spring Garden Park's 2 acre Virginia Native Plant Trail is needed. Under the supervision of the park education coordinator and the Chapter's Education Chair, this intern will develop a self-guided tour, brochures, labels and school programs to complement the native plant trail.

Preferred qualifications: basic knowledge of native plants, course work in botany, horticulture and/or education, experience conducting tours. 20-40 hours per week, beginning after March 1, 1997. Stipend: \$2000. For more information and to apply, contact Nancy Luria (703) 642-5173 (day) or (703) 351-9723 (evenings).

## Lorton Survey

Several members of both the Potowmack and Prince William Chapters of the VNPS started conducting bio-inventories of the plants and animals found at the Lorton Reformatory. The VNPS is just one of several organizations which are helping to inventory the fauna and flora on the prison's large land holdings. Others involved include the Fairfax Audobon Society, the Washington Butterfly Club and some local universities.

The staff at Lorton are as eager as anyone to document the plants and animals found on their holdings and have been very accommodating in arranging the surveys. It is hoped the surveys will help in any decisions made about what to do with the acres of land no matter who has possession.

The area is divided into various sectors which will be periodically searched to keep updated records of what is found there. The VNPS Chapters plan on continuing these surveys throughout the next year. Those of us who went, discovered a great diversity of plants and animals. There are sizable woodlands, many fields, several ponds and a few nice wetland areas. The area is quite beautiful and promises to hold many interesting plant and animal discoveries to record. If you would like to help out on future surveys, contact Kathleen Kust, our Conservation Chair at (703) 836-5868.



## In Memory

The Potowmack Chapter donated a six foot Washington Hawthorn, *Crataegus phaenopyrum* to Riverbend Park, a Fairfax County Park Authority site, in memory of beloved charter member Dorna Krietz. Ms. Krietz served the Potowmack Chapter and the cause of native plants with grace and dedication. She will be greatly missed.



## News from the Propagation Beds

After a slow start this spring and the loss of some plants because of excessive snow and the heaving of some beds, the propagation beds thrived due to a moderate summer and a great rainfall pattern.

The great effort of our committee members who faithfully showed up every Wednesday or Saturday deserve recognition from the chapter for a job well done. When asked, most will tell you that they look forward to coming and sharing their enthusiasm for native plants with fellow committee member.

The fall sale again broke all previous records. Responsible in no small measure were the members who called to donate plants and those who volunteered their time, both to prepare for the sale and/or to serve at the sale.

Those who worked to make the sale a great success were: Alonso Abugattas, Vivian Attemeyer, Laura Beaty, Edith Bradbury, Frances Chandler, Margaret Chatham, Joanne Krumvide, Lori Markoff, Ginny McNair, Marianne Mooney, Pat Murphy, Dust and Gerry Pratt, Gladys Quintero, Sally Sieracki, Beth and

Kevin Smith, Liz Smith, Billy Trump and Rachel Yungman.

Members who generously donated plants: Laura Beaty, Edith Bradbury, Margaret Chatham, Trish Hendershot, Joanne Krumvide, Ginny McNair, Marianne Mooney, Gerry and Dust Pratt, Beth Smith, Billy Trump, and Walker Newman.

Our seed program is progressing very nicely. Ginny McNair has taken on the responsibility of packaging the seeds we harvest from our propagation beds. In addition, we receive donations of seeds from some of our supporters. We sold over 130 packages of native plant seeds this fall. A great deal of effort goes into harvesting, cleaning, and packaging. Seeds are cold stratified before being put on sale the following year. We have used some of these seeds to bolster our own beds and have had very good germination results.

Join us! Getting involved in the propagation beds is a good way to become active in the organization, to meet VNPS members, and to share your interest and knowledge about native plants with others. Each season we add one or two new people and we are always looking for more. The work is fairly strenuous, but very satisfying.

We close down our activities each year in the end of October. If you would like to join us next year, give me a call (Gerry Pratt 703-323-1094) It will probably be mid April before we can work in the beds because of the weather but, don't hesitate to call!

## Well Represented

The Potowmack Chapter was well represented at the Volunteer Festival at the Springfield District Government Center on October 26. Kathleen Kust, our Conservation Chair was there to help the volunteers learn more about native plants.



## Bush Honeysuckle

Many types of shrub honeysuckle (*Lonicera sp.*) have long been recommended for planting in the home landscape. They are hardy, spread fast, attractive and provide food for wildlife. Unfortunately, most are not native and can become invasive, if not kept in check. Although white-tailed deer seem to prefer foraging on the native varieties, the benefits of incorporating them in your landscape instead of the ornamental varieties, far outweigh the drawbacks. In addition to promoting native plants, these shrubs produce very nice fruits, which in turn are eaten by a very diverse population of animals. As the fruits are digested, the seed of these plants are dispersed wherever the animal expels its waste. Thus, you are contributing to the spreading of our native resources.

The question arises then, how do you know if what you have is native or not? Well, an easy method is to look inside the twigs themselves. If you cut into a new growth twig and it is hollow, it is probably not native. Most of the native bush honeysuckle's have solid piths, whereas non native ones are hollow. Keep in mind though, as always with nature, nothing is absolute. It is certainly possible to perhaps find a native species with hollow pith and a non-native one with solid pith. It must be nature's way of keeping us on our toes.

## Thank the Ants

You can thank the ants that seem to pester you when you picnic, for many of the wildflowers you enjoy during the spring. Ants are responsible for spreading almost 70% of the spring ephemerals. In fact, many wildflowers "reward" the ants by providing them with a special food packet called an eliasome. This gift is attached to the seed coat and is grown specifically for the ants.

Some of the wildflower seeds that are spread by ants are: Spring Beauty, bloodroot, wild ginger, dutchman's breeches, squirrel corn, twinleaf, hepatica (liverleaf), trilliums, bellworts, yellow corydalis and many violets.

## A Fond Farewell

Edith Bradbury, one of our chapter's most active members and the Committee Chairperson in charge of our Native Plant Trail at Green Spring Gardens Park, is leaving for Japan in mid-January. Those of us who know Edith from her work at the Native Plant Trail, the Board, the plant sales, the Lorton surveys and the many other events she helped at, are sad to see her go. The Chapter will sorely miss her and we all wish her luck and happiness in promoting native plants in Japan.



POTOWMACK CHAPTER  
VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

New Membership

Membership Renewal

Name (s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (work) \_\_\_\_\_

Individual \$15      Family \$25      Student \$10  
Patron \$50      Sustaining \$100      Life \$400  
Associate (group) \$40: delegate \_\_\_\_\_

To give a gift membership: Enclose dues, name and address.

I wish to make an additional contribution to Potowmack Chapter  
in the amount of \$10 \$25 \$50 \$100 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Check here if you do not wish your name  
to be exchanged with similar organizations.       Check here if you do not wish  
to be listed in a chapter directory

Make check payable to VNPS and mail to:  
VNPS Membership Chairman, 3924 Cobbler Mountain Road, Delaplane, VA 20125



Potowmack Chapter  
Virginia Native Plant Society  
P.O. Box 161  
McLean, Virginia 22101

Please verify your address  
information and your renewal  
date on the mailing label!

