

POTOWMACK NEWS

Volume 15, No.2

Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Spring 1997

PREPARING FOR THE SPRING '97 PLANT SALE -Gerry Pratt

This newsletter will reach you as most of you are becoming restless to begin gardening in earnest. Mother Nature has provided ample moisture and moderate weather for us this winter. After the blizzard of '96, most of us welcomed a milder winter. Spring should be a blaze of azaleas and dogwoods.

We at the propagation beds will begin our hectic pace of potting for the spring sale in mid-April. The plant sale will be held on Garden Day at Green Spring on May 17th from 10am-3pm. To prepare for this important event, we could use some additional help. Our regular seasonal schedule is from 9:30am-noon, Wednesdays and Saturdays. If you can give us any time during these hours, please contact us.

This year, as always, we are looking for willing hands to help during the week of the sale. We can put your talents and energy to good use and we promise it will be a happy and rewarding experience for you. One of the best ways to profit from your membership in VNPS, is to be an active part of this activity.

If you cannot help at the sale, perhaps you can pot up some native plants for us, as you divide your own plants this spring. Not only will you be contributing to the sale, but you will reinvigorate your plants through division.

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LIMESTONE AREAS OF WASHINGTON COUNTY, MD -

Cris Fleming

Just north of Harpers Ferry, about a 1 1/2 hour drive from Arlington, the limestone areas of southern Washington County are a veritable wildflower garden in mid to late April. Many places on the Potomac River in Washington County harbor a lush display of wildflowers, including round-lobed hepatica *Hepatica americana*, twinleaf *Jeffersonia diphylla*, bloodroot *Sanguinaria canadensis*, dutchman's breeches *Dicentra cucullaria*, squirrel corn *Dicentra canadensis*, yellow corydalis *Corydalis flavula*, spring cress *Cardamine bulbosa*, false mermaid-weed *Floerkea proserpina-coides*, blue cohosh *Caulophyllum thalictroides*, slender toothwort *Dentaria heterophylla*, wild ginger *Asarum canadense*, and erect trillium *Trillium erectum*.

The really unique feature of the Washington County shoreline is the high limestone bluffs along the river. The limestone outcrops contain rich moist soil and the north-facing slopes are shaded and cool even in mid-summer. These conditions create a micro-habitat, hospitable to plants usually found farther north, in the mid-west, or in the southern Appalachian Mountains. Many species that prefer alkaline conditions have been found here, including ferns such as walking fern *Camptosorus rhizophyllus*, bulblet fern *Cystopteris bulbifera*, maidenhair spleenwort *Asplenium trichomanes* and wall-rue *Asplenium ruta-muraria*, as well as wildflowers such as shooting star *Dodecatheon meadia*, dwarf larkspur *Delphinium tricornis*, and green violet (*Hybanthus color*, all uncommon in Maryland. A natural stand of Northern white-cedar *Thuja occidentalis* was recently discovered on these limestone bluffs; this coniferous tree of New England and the Great Lakes states had not been reported previously in Maryland and is considered very rare in the state.

Many places along the river between Harpers Ferry and Williamsport are not easily accessible from the road. Some are too close to private property and others are blocked by the high cliffs. However, two areas that are easy to reach are Mountain Lock, at milepost 67 on the C&O Canal near Dargan on Harpers Ferry Road, and

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

My message this time around will be short. Another spring is fast approaching complete with all its wonderful changes. My own life has also undergone some wonderful changes. After over two years of struggling with Immigration, my 7 year old step-daughter was finally allowed to enter the country from El Salvador. That was back in February and the U.S. was quite a different world to Sandy. Some of her first questions involved why the days were so short and the trees so leafless.

I had to assure her that the days would not only get longer and warmer, but that the trees would eventually leaf out as well. I thought to myself how amazing the up coming seasons would seem and how we would spend so much time together hiking, fishing, and hunting. One can only hope that she learns to appreciate nature and that I can teach her what little I know about the plants and animals around us. Hopefully she too will end up loving the outdoors as much as I do.

So this spring is specially important to me. Soon the woods will start turning green again and the spring ephemerals will put on their show for us. I hope that this year's spring calendar of events will provide you with many opportunities to go out and learn about our native flora. We've worked very hard compiling it for everyone to use and I know my family will take advantage of it. So, get out there and enjoy this spring like it's your first one ever here in Virginia! For some folks it will be. Who knows, maybe you'll see a Latin couple with a beautiful little girl enjoying the outdoors along with you. If you do, please feel free to come over and say 'Hola!' We certainly would enjoy your company as much as our new spring discoveries...

Sincerely, Your President,

Alonso Abugattas

POTOMACK CHAPTER TREASURER'S REPORT

The Treasurer of the Potomack Chapter reports that he has received an audit of the FY 95-96 Financial Report on an independent review of the chapters books in accordance with VNPS bylaws. The audit was performed in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards by a Certified Public Accountant and states that:

"In my opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Potomack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society as of October 31, 1996, and the results of its operations for the year then ended in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles."

The FY 95-96 Financial Report and Audit Report have been provided to the State Treasurer, Virginia Native Plant Society, in accordance with VNPS Bylaws.

Any questions concerning the Potomack Chapter Treasurer's Report should be referred to Dustinn Pratt (703) 323-1094.

Dustinn E. Pratt

Treasurer, Potomack Chapter, VNPS

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

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Publications	Liz Smith	768-1697
Publicity	Norma Vermillion	451-0572
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CALENDAR*CALENDAR*CALENDAR*CALENDAR

What's coming up this spring?

MARCH**Thu. Mar. 27**

Past & Current Uses of Herbs w/ Ms. Jo Sellers, 7:30pm, Call Green Spring Gardens Park at (703) 642-5173. **Our March program**

APRIL**Thu. April 3**

Intro. to Spring Wildflowers, 7:30-9pm, Call Hidden Pond Nature Center at (703) 451-9588.

Sun. April 6

Wildflowers for Wee Ones, 2-3pm, Call Eleanor C. Lawrence Park at (703) 631-0013. For 3-8 year olds.

Tue. April 8

Wildflowers at Roundtree Park, 10-11:30am, Call Hidden Oaks Nature Center at (703) 941-1065.

Wed. April 9-May 28

USDA Spring Wildflower Course. with Cris Fleming 7-9pm. Field trips April 19, May 3 and May 17. Call (202) 690-4280.

Sat. April 12

Bull Run Wildflower Adventure, 10am-2:30pm, Call Ramsay Nature Center at (703) 838-4829. \$2.

Lillies and Bells at Riverbend, 10-11:30am, Call Riverbend Park at (703) 759-9018.

Wildflowers Along C& O Canal w/ Cris Fleming, 10am-12pm & 1-3pm, Call Smithsonian Associates at (202) 357-3030.

Sun. April 13

Bull Run Bluebells with the Maryland Native Plant Society, 10am, Call Richard Falcone at (301) 870-8038.

Sat. April 19

Pohick Wildflower Walk, 10:30am-12pm, Call Hidden Pond Nature Center at (703) 451-9588.

National Arboretum Garden Fair, 9am-5pm, Call Friends of National Arboretum at (202) 544-8733.

Sun. April 20

Wildflowers at Fort C.F. Smith, 2-3:30pm, Call Long Branch Nature Center at (703) 358-6535.

Wildflowers at Great Falls Va.-side w/ Marion Lobstein, 10am 12pm, Call Marion Lobstein at (703) 536-7150.

Wildflowers at Balls Bluff w/ Marion Lobstein, 2pm, Call Marion Lobstein at (703) 536-7150.

Bluebells at Bull Run, 2pm, Call Potomac Overlook Regional Park at (703) 528-5406 for info or to volunteer to lead walks.

Tue. April 22

Bluebell Bonanza, 9am-1pm, Call Hidden Oaks Nature Center at (703) 941-1065. \$5.

Wed. April 23

Edible Native Plant Workshop, 7-8:30pm, At Green Spring Gardens Park but call Hidden Oaks at (703) 941-1065. \$5.

Thu. Apr 24

Fairfax ReLeaf w/ Ed Mainland & Rod Simmons, 7:30pm, Call Green Spring Gardens Park at (703) 642-5173. **Our April Program!**

Wildflowers at Mountain Lock and Snyders Landing with Cris Fleming. Lecture 7:30-9:30pm. Field Trip Sun, April 27 10m-4pm. Call Audobon Naturalist Society at (301)652-9188

Sat. April 26

Lake Accotink Wildflower Walk, 10-11:30am, Call Hidden Pond Nature Center at (703) 451-9588.

Earth Day & Arbor Day Celebration, 11am-4pm, Call Fairfax County at (703) 324-5471.

Sun. April 27

Pink Lady Slipper Walk, 2-3pm, Call Hidden Oaks Nature Center at (703) 941-1065.

Potomac Overlook Spring Wildflower Walk, 2pm, Call Potomac Overlook Regional Park at (703) 528-5406.

Mon. April 28

Trillium Trek at Linden, 8:30am-4:30pm, Call Long Branch Nature Center at (703) 358-6535. \$15.

Tue. April 29

Trillium Trek, 9am-3pm, Call Hidden Oaks Nature Center at (703) 941-1065. \$5.

MAY**Sat. May 3**

Members Garden Tour, 10am -5pm, see write- up page 6.

Bluets and Buttercups at Scotts Run, 9-11am, Call Riverbend Park at (703) 759-3211.

Pink Lady Slipper Walk, 2-3pm, Call Hidden Oaks Nature Center at (703) 941-1065.

Tue. May 6

Trillium Trek, 9am-3pm, Call Hidden Oaks Nature Center at (703) 941-1065. \$5.

Sun. May 11

Mother's Day Wildflower Walk at Fort C.F. Smith, 1:30-3pm, Call Long Branch Nature Center at (703) 358-6535.

Mother's Day Wildflower Walk, 2-3pm, Call Eleanor C. Lawrence Park at (703) 631-0013.

Tue. May 13

Virginia State Arboretum, 8:30am-3:30pm, Call Hidden Oaks Nature Center at (703) 941-1065. \$10.

Sat. May 17

Spring Plant Sale, 10am-3pm. Call Green Spring Gardens Park at (703)642-5173. Come support your chapter.

Sun. May 18

Wildflowers at Great Falls Va.-side w/ Marion Lobstein, 10am-12pm, Call Marion Lobstein at (703) 536-7150.

Wildflower Gardens for Sunny Areas, 2-4pm, Call Eleanor C. Lawrence Park at (703) 631-0013.

Thu. May 22

Creating a Wildlife Sanctuary w/ Sherry Mitchell, 7:30-9pm, Call Green Spring Gardens Park at (703) 652-4138. **Our May Program.**

Deadline for submissions for the summer newsletter will be **Friday May 23**. Please send any articles, announcements or programs for the calendar to me at Long Branch Nature Center 625 S. Carlin Springs Rd. Arlington, Va. 22204. As usual, it is much easier if your information comes to me on disk. You can also fax me your info at (703)845-2654. or you can e-mail at <pnewitt@erols.com>. So many ways to contribute, is so easy. -Pam Newitt

REFERRAL SHEET FOR LANDSCAPERS

The chapter is updating a referral sheet for members with an interest and credentials in landscaping with native plants. It will be available at plant sales and other community events. The sheet reads as follows:

In response to community requests for referrals to persons who are knowledgeable about landscape design or cultivation requirements for Virginia native plants, listed are Potomack Chapter members available to work with homeowners and community planners. All business arrangements are to be made directly between the customer and the consultant.

Any members with these qualifications who wish to be included on the new list should call Sally Sieracki at (703)978-5865 after March 18.

HELP RESTORE FAIRFAX COUNTY'S NATIVE TREES AND HABITATS

Volunteers are needed this spring to plant native saplings on large ecological restoration sites along roadsides, in parks, at schools and on dumps in Fairfax County. Master gardeners can supervise planting and maintenance of on-going ReLeaf sites, others can help with educational outreach or assist in the ReLeaf office. Find satisfaction in directly and personally helping restore remaining natural beauty and public landscapes which still make Fairfax special.

Volunteers are welcome at numerous sites on public lands and neighborhood commons, Saturdays 10am-1pm during March, April and May. Substantial acreage of the urban forest can be renewed to foster diverse and beautiful native plant communities!

For further information, call (703) 324-1409
Fairfax ReLeaf
P.O. Box 6141
McLean, Va. 22106

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Our spring sale concentrates on woodland native plants, including groundcovers and ferns on the woodland floor. Our spring sales are always well attended and native plants are in great demand. Plants should be potted up no later than May 3rd and brought to the propagation beds at Green Spring no later than May 10th.

If you would like to work at the sale or in the propagation beds and/or have plants to contribute, don't hesitate to call Gerry Pratt at (703) 323-1094. In closing, I share this joyful scriptural verse with you:

"For lo,

The winter is past

The rain is over and gone

The flowers appear

On the earth;

The time of singing

Has come,

And the voice of the

Turtledove is

Heard in our

Land"

-Song of Solomon

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Snyders Landing, at milepost 77 a few miles west of Sharpsburg.

To quote Thomas F. Hahn in Towpath Guide to the C&O Canal, "Mountain Lock has one of the most picturesque settings along the canal with rocky slopes rising immediately behind the lockhouse and a panoramic view of the river in the foreground". The lock itself, lock 37, is built of limestone from the nearby quarries, and the smooth gray blocks look quite different than the red sandstone blocks of the locks near Washington. Calcium-loving ferns such as purple cliffbrake *Pellaea atropurpurea* and blunt-lobed woodsia *Woodsia obtusa* grow right on the limestone blocks of the lock.

Walking downriver from Mountain Lock, you will soon see the limestone bluffs rising on your left. Various trails lead across the dry canal bed and up the bluffs, but it is safer for you and better protection for the plants, to approach the bluffs from the low area farther down the towpath. Among the flowers growing on the high rocky cliffs are wild columbine *Aquilegia canadensis*, wild stonecrop *Sedum ternatum*, lyre-leaved rockcress *Arabis lyrata*, smooth rockcress *Arabis laevigata*, spreading rockcress *Arabis patens*, early saxifrage *Saxifraga virginensis*, round-leaved ragwort *Senecio obovatus*, heart-leaved alexanders *Zizia aptera*, hispid buttercup *Ranunculusispidus*, green violet, and shooting star.

Snyders Landing, ten miles upriver from Mountain

Lock at milepost 77, is the site of an old coal and grain warehouse where the canal boats picked up these commodities for delivery to Washington. Completely destroyed in the flood of 1936, the Snyders warehouse still gives its name to the nearby area. The massive limestone bluffs begin a bit downriver from the parking lot. An S-shaped bend in the river at Snyders Landing places the open bluffs on the cool, moist, north face of the hill.

In early April, the bottomland woods along the towpath are carpeted with Dutchman's breeches and squirrel corn. By mid April, the very wet canal bed harbors several clumps of the largest and droopiest red erect trillium that I have ever seen. Other wildflowers of this damp habitat include a nice stand of Virginia bluebells *Mertensia virginica*, early meadowrue *Thalictrum dioicum*, bishop's cap *Mitella diphylla*, False solomon's seal *Smilacina racemosa*, and Virginia waterleaf *Hydrophyllum virginianum*.

On the high bluffs several miles downstream from Snyders Landing, flowers of the drier, rockier uplands, such as wild columbine, early saxifrage, three species of rockcress, shooting star, and dwarf larkspur, are found.

Mountain Lock and Snyders Landing are both part of the C&O Canal National Historical Park and are administered by the National Park Service. For general information, contact the Superintendent, Box 158, Sharpsburg, Md. 21782, telephone (301)432-5124. I will be leading a foray for the Audubon Naturalist Society to Mountain Lock and Snyders Landing on Sunday, April 27 (with evening lecture and slides on Thursday, April 24). For more information, call ANS at (301)652-9188.

Mountain Lock is reached by taking Keep Tryst Road on the Maryland side of the Route 340 bridge over the Potomac River just downriver from Harpers Ferry. Make the first right turn onto Sandy Hook-Harpers Ferry Road and continue through the town of Sandy Hook, over the train tracks, under the old railroad bridge, and along Harpers Ferry Road for almost seven miles. Turn left on Limekiln Road and an immediate left on Mountain Lock Road. At the end of the road is a very small parking area.

To reach Snyders Landing, go to the town of Sharpsburg (site of Antietam Battlefield). Go north on North Mechanic Street for one block and left on Snyders Landing Road. It is about 1.5 miles to the parking area.

VNPS POTOMACK CHAPTER UPCOMING EVENTS

All programs will be held at Green Spring Garden Park from 7:30-8:30pm unless otherwise noted.

Mar. 27, 1997

Jo Sellers, S.E. District Delegate on the Board of the Herb Society of America will discuss past and current uses of medicinal, culinary, and fragrant herbs.

April 24

Ed Mainland, President of the Fairfax Releaf and Rod Simmons, President of Maryland Native Plant Society will present a program about Fairfax Releaf, a volunteer organization dedicated to planting and preserving trees in Fairfax County.

May 17

Spring Plant Sale 10am-3pm. Come to Green Spring Gardens Park to support your chapter.

May 22

Sherry Mitchell, author of "Creating Sanctuary". She will present a slide show on gardening to attract wildlife in the Washington metropolitan area.

June 21

Join Beth Smith at the Butterfly Garden at Pohick Regional Library in Burke. 10am-4pm. The landscaping at Pohick includes native plants donated and purchased from VNPS.

September 25

David Yost, Co-chair of Conservation for the Piedmont Chapter of VNPS will have a hands on demonstration of native, naturalized and invasive grasses. Member please bring a magnifying glass to actively participate in the program.



WILDFLOWER GARDEN TOURS

Two exceptional wildflower gardens are available for VNPS members to tour this spring. Trish Hendershot's garden will be open May 3 (raindate is May 4), from 10am-4pm. Tiana Camfiord's garden will be open both April 19 and 20, from 11am-5pm and again on May 3 and 4 from 11am-4pm. .

Trish's one acre wooded lot includes an understory of *Cornus florida* and an extensive collection of ferns and trilliums. A pond off her screened porch provides an intimate look at wildlife in her backyard.

Tiana's one and a third acre of mature hardwoods with an understory of dogwoods and viburnums, supports over 450 species of natives and cultivars. Perennials, mossy paths, ferns and trails lead to a pond that is surrounded by shade loving groundcovers and shrubs.

Directions to Trish's:

9005 Glen Ct., Fairfax. Take Rte. 50, turn south at Barkley Rd. Turn left onto Glenbrook. Turn right onto Glen Ct. OR Take Rte. 236, turn north onto Prince William Dr.. Wind along to stop sign. Turn right onto Hamilton. Turn left onto Glenbrook and left onto Glen Ct. (703) 280-2318.

Directions to Tiana's

13025 Compton Rd. Clifton. From the beltway, take Braddock Rd. passed the Fairfax County Pkwy interchange. Left onto Clifton Rd. At the next light, go approximately 2 miles to a sharp right onto Compton Rd. Go one block to a left onto Clifton Forest Dr. and parking. Garden tour signs will be posted on Clifton Rd. (703) 830-3783.

STATE ARBORETUM SEEKS HELP FROM VNPS MEMBERS

The State Arboretum of Virginia is seeking the involvement and expertise of Virginia Native Plant Society members in its efforts to establish and maintain a wildflower area. Located on 170 acres within the Blandy Experimental Farm near the Shenandoah River where it crosses Route 50, the natural beauty of the rolling piedmont countryside is impressive. The grounds include meadows, a pond, wetlands, outcroppings of lime-stone and areas of young and/or mature trees of many species. It boasts the largest collection of boxwood in America, is open all year, Monday through Friday, and the admission is free.

At a meeting of the two organizations December 10, 1996, chaired by former VNPS president, Mary Pockman, (also an outgoing board member of the arboretum), plans for the project were presented and the challenge delineated.

The location of the Native Plant or Wildflower area within the grounds has already been determined. The plan is not to create a garden, but to approximate a Virginia woodland with communities of indigenous plants. Donations of plants, including memorial trees are being sought, as well as volunteer

TRILLIUM WALK SCHEDULED EARLIER THIS YEAR

The annual spring walk through The Virginia Native Plant Society's first Registry site, The G. Richard Thompson Wildlife Management Area, is planned for Thursday, April 24. Due to the mild winter this year it is believed the flowers will be earlier than usual. This April date is a change from the May date previously scheduled.

The site is famous for its dense stands of *Trillium grandiflorum* and other spectacular native wildflowers. The State owned preserve straddles the Fauquier-Warren County line on the slopes of Blue Mountain near Linden. The walk is leisurely and informal. Participants usually spend 1 - 2 hours on the mountain. Lunch and rest stop are available at the Apple House Restaurant on Route 55 in nearby Linden.

A carpool is organized which meets at the Fair Oaks Mall. The trip to Linden is about an hour's drive from there via Route 66. For details and directions call Anne Crocker 437-0355 between 5 and 7.

Several species of migrating birds are usually seen in abundance at this time including scarlet tanagers, rufous-sided towhees and last year, wood thrushes.

