

POTOWMACK NEWS

Volume 16, No 1

Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Jan./Feb. 1998

Get Acquainted/Get Involved Membership Meeting Set For February 12

Honest Abe, February 12 is the date set for an important Potowmack Chapter general membership meeting to discuss plans for our future activities. The high turnout at our October annual meeting indicates a potential to become a really active group, serving both our members and our community.

We want to hear from you as to what you expect from the chapter in the way of lectures, nature walks, and education outreach, and we want to show you how you can become actively involved as members of committees, potential speakers, administrative assistants, or workers in the vineyard (i.e., propagation beds).

We will also discuss the exciting and challenging task ahead as we prepare to host the 1998 VNPS State Annual Meeting scheduled for September 18-20, 1998. Again, we will be looking for volunteers to help in the planning and administering of the program. Please consider what you can contribute to this undertaking.

There will be time after the meeting to visit and get acquainted with fellow members, enjoy refreshments, and try your luck at winning a door prize. Remember **THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 7:45 p.m.**, at Green Spring Gardens Park's Horticulture Center.

If you are unable to attend the meeting but are interested in helping either with general chapter affairs or in planning for the State Annual Meeting, please call Norma Vermillion, President, at 451-0572 or Liz Smith, Program Chair, at 768-1697.



President's Message

With the holidays out of the way, we've been mainly concentrating on laying the groundwork for the VNPS State Annual Meeting that Potowmack Chapter will be hosting September 18-20. We thought we had the National Wildlife building at Laurel Ridge reserved for this big affair but then I happened to read in the newspaper that they were in the process of selling that location to the McLean Bible Church, which is supposed to take over control of the grounds and building on September 1. So we are very busy looking for another site for the State's Annual Meeting.

Alonso Abugattas and Liz Smith are busy putting together many half-day and all-day field trips for the state meeting and as we go to press, we are pleased to tell you that we have booked a world-renowned author to speak at that Saturday night banquet. James Duke, co-author of the Peterson's Field Guide on Medicinal Plants and author of a just-published book, *The Green Pharmacy*, has agreed to come speak. Hopefully, we'll have a lot more to report in our March-April newsletter.

To begin the new year, we're giving you a general idea of Potowmack's events that are currently scheduled (see CALENDAR). More activities will be added as they are planned. Beth Smith has already planned our Chapter's Annual Meeting to be held at Pohick Regional Library with a garden walk and slide lecture on butterfly gardening. So mark your calendar for Sunday, October 11.

We currently have about 435 voting members in Potowmack Chapter, but few who come to meetings or volunteer to help with the work involved in running it. We desperately need help with chapter jobs (education chair, plant trail, site registry, and publicity). Doing the publicity isn't hard or time consuming. I've done it for years--it's easy to do. You type up a very brief notice before the plant sales, have copies made, and mail them to the newspapers (I have a list with their addresses) and mail plant sale flyers to the nature centers and libraries.

For the State Annual Meeting, we need volunteers to help with reservations as they come in next August; someone to type the list of members with reservations; and some to work at a registration table on September 18 as the guests arrive.

Please call to volunteer to help us. It isn't fair for a few faithful members to do all the work, all the time. And we just can't spread those faithful few out far enough to handle all that must be done this year. PLEASE CALL me at 451-0572 or Liz Smith at 768-1697. MAKE MY DAY!

I'm looking forward to seeing all of you at our Get Acquainted/Get Involved meeting at 7:45 p.m., Feb. 12 at Green Spring Gardens Park's Horticulture Center, 4603 Green Spring Road (off Little River Turnpike near Jerry's Ford and the Salvation Army building). Y'all come!

Norma Vermillion, President

BIOLOGICAL CONTROLS A Personal Opinion

By Alonso Abugattas

Biological controls have been praised by many people as a much better solution to "pest" problems than chemicals. Many of these controls, however, are neither better nor do they offer a permanent solution. It certainly is tempting to think one can simply introduce a natural predator to control a problem plant or animal and think we are "doing the right thing." Isn't any alternative better than using chemicals that can affect the environment? However, one must realize some of their shortcomings to really see if biological controls are a justifiable tool to combat potential pest problems. There are numerous examples of bio controls gone bad, but let's look at one possible example many people are familiar with and what may be some potential concerns.

Praying mantises have been sold for many years to supposedly eliminate insect pests in our gardens. Does it matter that they do not differentiate between insect species, eating the "good" along with the "bad" and even each other? Well, does it matter then that the types sold are Chinese mantids and that they are larger than many of our native species and therefore are capable of eating them out of existence where their ranges overlap? How about that they are very unlikely to eradicate all of the targeted pests in your garden anyway? Foodwebs are rarely so simplistic that one animal or plant exclusively affects just one other part of the web. Things in nature have a way of being quite interconnected.

Man is not really good at playing the role of Mother Nature. Sure, he can help the environment but he can also easily harm it, whether wittingly or not. Aldo Leopold once said that "*conservation is paved with good intentions which prove to be futile, or even dangerous, because they are devoid of a critical understanding ... of the land.*" That's one reason why I view the following development in attempted biological control with some concern.

Audubon magazine reports that scientists at Cornell University are rearing and releasing certain insects en masse in experiments to control the Purple Plague, purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*). These attempts stem from research conducted for over a decade in Europe in using several different predators of loosestrife. Three candidates were selected to lead the battle that herbicides and other usual control methods had failed to deal with effectively: two leaf-eating beetles (*Galerucella calmariensis* and *G. pusilla*) and a root-mining weevil (*Hylobius transversovittatus*).

Extensive tests have been run to ensure that these insects feed only on loosestrife and do not threaten any food crops so as to get the approval of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The weevil has been found to feed on winged loosestrife (*Lythrum alatum*) and swamp loosestrife (*Decodon*

verticillaris) but these, and perhaps other plants, were considered worth the risk of affecting or even expendable in the battle against the invader. Over 100,000 weevils have already been released in 26 states. Two million beetles have been released in 30 states and 6 Canadian provinces. Results have been very promising in Canada with purple loosestrife reductions of 95 percent in some areas. The beetles have been found to propagate readily on their own but the weevils require a bit of extra attention to reproduce.

While results are very promising and research has been conducted for more than 10 years in Europe, it is possible that the insects may some day evolve to harm even other native loosestrife species, if they are not capable of doing so already. It is therefore, I think, reassuring that the Virginia Native Plant Society does not automatically back biological control attempts. Every individual case should be judged on its own merits. There have been attempts to have the VNPS back a study using biological controls to fight garlic mustard in Shenandoah National Park. Since few board members can profess to be experts in entomology, caution is commendable. Considering the great variety of crucifer species which can potentially be affected and the wildlife that depend on these mustards, it is little wonder the board appears to have grave reservations about giving its blanket approval for this experiment. The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Nature Conservancy also have their reservations, so the VNPS is in good company.

Biological controls may not always be the best answer but certainly can be, in my opinion, yet another tool (along with chemicals and other methods) in the war against invasives and pest species. Extreme caution, however, should always be used whenever we release a new organism into areas where it was not found. There are many other members of any habitat, especially similar species, that can be affected. Man cannot always accurately predict how a new organism may affect the landscape. We certainly know many examples of what can happen with invasive exotics, now, don't we?

Mary Painter Comes to Town

On Sunday, March 15, from 2 to 3 p.m., Mary Painter, the founder of the Virginia Native Plant Society, will present a slide lecture at Green Spring. Mary grows a wide variety of native perennials, ferns, and grasses at her Virginia Natives business in Hume, VA. She will discuss their use in the garden.

Her lecture is one of the winter lecture series provided by Green Spring Gardens Park and FROGS (Friends of Green Spring). After the lecture, enjoy refreshments and an informal discussion with the speaker. Limited seating; for reservations, call (703) 642-5173. The cost is \$5 per lecture, payable to FROGS.

Volunteers Needed For Wildlife Art and Photography Show

The Wildlife Art and Photography Show will be held March 7th and 8th at the Lee District Park and RECenter, 6601 Telegraph Road in Franconia. Volunteers are needed to help at the VNPS display/information table by answering visitors' questions about native plants and VNPS. The topic of the display is choosing native plants instead of invasive plants. We will happily accept any offer of help, but hope volunteers can commit to at least a 2-hour shift. Sharing the work of both days with many volunteers results in no one being overburdened. The VNPS table at last year's show was very busy and visitors seemed genuinely interested in the subject of native plants. Volunteers provide a worthy educational opportunity for the community, and it's fun talking with so many enthusiastic gardeners!

Also needed are pictures of several invasives to be used for the display. We need good pictures, preferably photographs, of Japanese honeysuckle, English ivy, periwinkle, and multiflora rose. If possible, pictures should be 5 x 7". For more information about working a shift and/or providing pictures of invasives please call Lori Markoff at (703) 573-7121. Any help will be greatly appreciated.

Newsletter Assistance Needed

Is there any person or persons who would be interested in helping with the newsletter as an occasional or ongoing backup editor, article writer, idea person, or whatever? Computer skills would be helpful but are not necessary. I am using Microsoft Word to produce *Potowmack News* currently and am not very skilled; I would be happy to teach someone what I do know or learn from anyone who has more knowledge than I do. Articles for the newsletter, or proposals for articles, may be sent to Sally Sieracki, 4125 Elizabeth Lane, Fairfax, VA 22032. Send e-mail to Sieracki@erols.com or call 978-5865. The deadline for submission for the Mar/Apr newsletter is Feb 12. Your ideas are most welcome!

Potowmack Chapter Virginia Native Plant Society

<input type="checkbox"/> New Membership	<input type="checkbox"/> Membership Renewal
Name(s) _____	
Address _____	
City _____	State _____ Zip _____
E-Mail Address _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$15	<input type="checkbox"/> Family \$25
<input type="checkbox"/> Patron \$50	<input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining \$100
<input type="checkbox"/> Associate(group) \$ 40: Delegate Name _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Student \$10
<input type="checkbox"/> Life \$400	

To give a gift membership: Enclose dues, name, and address. (Non-voting memberships in any other than your primary chapter are \$5).

I wish to make an additional contribution to the 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 the chapter directory.

Make checks payable to VNPS and mail to:
VNPS Membership Chair, P.O. Box 844, Annandale, VA 22003

Member Profile ANNE CROCKER

The Potowmack Chapter of VNPS is the largest in Virginia. With membership at over 400, many of us do not know some of the most active members of our own chapter. To help remedy this situation, we plan to profile a member in each issue of the newsletter. If you have suggestions, please feel free to call Gerry Pratt (703-323-1094).

Although the society wasn't chartered until November 1982, Anne became a member in May of 1982. Her interest in wildflowers began as soon as she was old enough to pluck dandelions and violets from the roadside and the lawn.

Anne was born in New Jersey but when she was a year old, her family moved to Cambridge, Maryland, where Anne went to Cambridge High School and then to the University of Maryland. She majored in institutional management and minored in art. Between her jobs in industry, Anne served as a Girl Scout counselor in Massachusetts where her intense interest in and love of ferns was born.

Anne became membership chair of the Potowmack Chapter in 1985 and holds that position to this very day. She worked hard to master computer skills on her Macintosh and turns out a very useful and attractive directory that members of the board find invaluable. She distributes membership brochures far and wide and cranks out address labels for the newsletter and any other major mailing the chapter distributes.

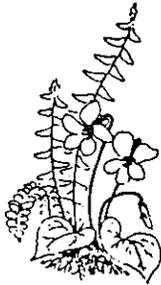
In addition to her work as membership chair, Anne has served many times on the nominating committee. Her knowledge of the achievements and talents of our membership is extremely helpful in selecting a good state of officers. Another of her contributions is to organize a May field trip to Linden, Virginia, to view the beautiful great white trilliums.

Besides her activity with VNPS, Anne is very active in her church, where she is an archivist and historian. She has published a cookbook based on recipes that appeared in a column she wrote for the *Herndon Observer*. Her passion is genealogy, and she devotes much of her free time to researching her family history.

When asked what she is most proud of, she doesn't hesitate to reply, "My family!" Anne has three surviving children, one grandson, and three granddaughters.

Welcome...

The Potowmack Chapter welcomes the following new members : **Cathy Greene, Alexandria; Melanie Keeley, Vienna; Jay Landers, Falls Church; and Jeanette Smyth, Washington.** We're glad you have joined us.



President	Norma Vermillion	451-0572
Vice President	Liz Smith	768-1697
Secretary	Marianne Mooney	534-8179
Treasurer	Bill Kreitz	620-4415
	Committee Chairs	
Botany	Cris Fleming	301-657-9289
Conservation	Kathleen Kust	836-5868
Education	-open-	
Hospitality	Joan Van Ryzin	799-4520
Membership & Recognition	Anne Crocker	437-0355
Native Plant Trail	-open-	
Newsletter Editor	Sally Sieracki	978-5865
Labeling/Mailing	Lori Markoff	573-7121
P.O. Box Mail Distributor	Enid Warner	527-0753
Programs	Liz Smith	768-1697
Propagation & Plant Sales	Gerry Pratt	323-1094
Publications	Roberta Day	560-5528
Publicity	-open-	
Site Registry	-open-	
State's Annual Meeting-1998	Liz Smith	768-1697
	Alonso Abugattas	(W)358-6535
Chapter Annual Meeting-1998	Beth Smith	644-1760
Immediate Past President	Alonso Abugattas	(W)358-6535

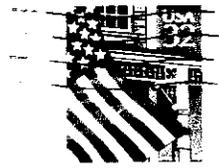


Calendar for 1998

(Tentative schedule to be updated in each newsletter)

- Feb 12 Board mtg. Newsletter deadline
General membership meeting
- Mar 12 Board mtg.
- Apr 9 Board mtg. Newsletter deadline
- May 14 Board mtg.
16 **Plant sale**
- Jun 7 Membership pot luck
11 Board mtg. Newsletter deadline
- Jul 9 Board mtg.
- Aug 13 Board mtg. Newsletter deadline
- Sep 10 Board mtg.
12 **Plant sale**
18,19,20 **Potowmack Chapter hosts State Annual Meeting**
- Oct 8 Board mtg.
11 **Potowmack Chapter Annual Meeting**
- Nov 12 Board mtg. Newsletter deadline

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



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