

# POTOWMACK NEWS

Volume 16, No 4

Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Jul/Aug 1998

## NEXT MEETING: SUNDAY JULY 26, 2 P.M. AT GREEN SPRING GARDENS TOPIC: LEARN HOW TO CREATE A FRAMED PRESSED-FLOWER PICTURE FROM BEGINNING TO END

**Joan Van Ryzin**, Potowmack Chapter member and artist, and her sister **Helen Van Ryzin**, gardener, will discuss everything you wanted to know about this subject. Specific topics include a historical perspective on flower pressing, selecting plants to press, pressing and drying, guidelines for specific plants, storage, selecting frames, framing supplies, design styles and tips, and finishing tips on framing. Call 642-5173 to register. Free.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We had a nice turnout at our June Pot Luck with lots of yummy foods furnished by the 40 attendees and 6 of their children. We missed our past president, **Alonso Abugattas**, who couldn't come because his wife had had a baby boy (2 months premature) on May 9. He and his wife have been spending a lot of time at the hospital bonding with **Alexander**, who weighed only 3 lbs, 3 oz at birth. I just checked with Alonso as we go to press and he says that Alexander now weighs 5 lbs, 2 oz and has been home from the hospital for about 10 days, sleeping all day and keeping his parents awake all night. We wish them all the best.

The Nominating Committee was activated at the May 14 board meeting. **Laura Beaty**, **Anne Crocker**, and **Gerry Pratt** are serving in that capacity and will present the proposed slate in our Sept-Oct newsletter.

Plans are coming together for hosting the State's Annual Meeting here in Northern Virginia on Sept 18-20. A lot of field trips are scheduled. **Mary Painter** and **John Trott** will speak on Friday evening and **Jim Duke** will be our Saturday night keynote speaker. Watch for your next VNPS State *Bulletin* for all the details and reservation forms. Our vice president, **Liz Smith**, has worked very hard to get this 3-day meeting planned and organized. THANKS, LIZ!

Did you see the Call of the Wild article in the *Sunday Journal* on May 16? It featured photos of my blooming pink Lady's-slippers that I had rescued from the bulldozers on John Trott's property in 1985. I seem to have more luck in getting pink Lady's-slippers to survive transplanting than most anyone else in Maryland or Virginia. Some have suggested that I share my "secrets" with you.

This beautiful *Cypripedium acaule* orchid (commonly called moccasin-flower or rarely, scrotum-flower) apparently has a symbiotic relationship with a root fungus in the soil and cannot survive without this fungus. Lady's-slippers ordered from a catalog are usually shipped without soil on the roots (to keep the shipping weight down) and probably will not reappear the next year. (Some that I once ordered from Tennessee did not.) I planted my rescued plants in pure, unadulterated Virginia acid soil, under oak or pine trees. I never use fertilizer, top soil, or mulch in the planting--they don't get any of that in the wild, do they? Every fall, I go and fill a bucketful of brown pine needles from under a big pine tree somewhere and spread them over the Lady's-slipper bed as a blanket for the winter. As the pine needles break down, I presume they add more acid to the soil that helps keep the root fungus alive. Also, during very dry spells, make sure to water that flower bed at least once a week or the fungus will die. When I moved to my present home in 1973, I brought 11 plants with me from behind my house where they were going to build Saratoga school. I knew nothing about them but tried to duplicate their natural surroundings by planting them under oaks and pine trees. They all survived for 14 years until we had a severe drought and Fairfax County curtailed watering yards. I did not water during all those weeks, thinking that since they were wild

(Continued on p.2)

creatures, they would survive. They did not--10 died. The 11th is still with me now even after 25 years --my darling grand old Lady, as I call her.

If you have any questions about transplanting Lady's-slippers, call me. Also, if you ever know of any lady's-slippers or other wildflowers that need to be rescued from the bulldozers, please call me or any other Board member as soon as possible. Potowmack chapter was once very active in rescuing wildflowers--that's why the Virginia Wildflower Preservation Society (now VNPS) was created in 1982. We had a Target chair who kept tabs with the county on where developers would next be ripping up the soil. Then we'd get written permission from the developer to go rescue the wildflowers. Our Botany team, headed by **Dave and Carol Natella**, would do a survey to identify and mark the plants to be rescued. Next, our Rescue team, headed by **Ari Bouter**, would go in with tools, wheelbarrows, and a truck to do the actual rescue in the morning. Then a Relocation team would replant what the rescue workers brought back. A lot of the rescued plants were relocated to Green Spring. Some went to Woodlawn Plantation and elsewhere. I had served as the Target chair and on the Botany and Rescue teams (I had good knees back then). It took me several years to convince the "powers-that-be" to allow our own members to take some of the rescued plants home with them. That was considered a "no-no," but I always felt that our members would take better care of them in their own yards than if we left them in a public place (where some were stolen). I suspect that a lot of the plants that our members donate for our plant sales now were originally part of our rescues from the wild that they were allowed to take home to plant.

I'd like very much to reactivate our entire rescue operation. If you'd be interested and willing to work on any of the jobs I've mentioned, please call me. I recently received notice of a trillium and native plant rescue but had no one to help call or organize the rescue--and that's a shame!

Another thing I'd like to accomplish before I leave office on October 31 is to pick everyone's brains to compile long lists of good program ideas, good speakers and their range of topics, a complete list of field trips in the D.C. metropolitan area, and special gardens for tours (either yours or someone else's). Give info on places, people, phones, etc. Try to get as much as possible to me by August 15. Thanks!

Norma Vermillion

### **BOARD OFFICERS**

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Treasurer	Bill Kreitz	620-4415
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Conservation	Kathleen Kust	836-5868
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Hospitality	Joan Van Ryzin	799-4520
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Publicity	Barbara Farron	354-9668
Site Registry	-open-	
State's Annual Meeting	Liz Smith	768-1697
	Alonso Abugattas	(w) 228-6535
Chapter Annual Meeting	Beth Smith	644-1760
Immediate Past President	Alonso Abugattas	(w) 228-6535

### VNPS DONATES PLANTS TO THE NATIVE PLANT TRAIL AT GREEN SPRING

A total of 132 plants and two understory trees were donated to the Virginia Native Plant Trail at Green Spring Gardens Park this spring.

Horticulturist Brenda Skarphol accepted the donations, which included spring ephemerals such as toothworts and toadshade trilliums as well as a wide variety of sun and shade loving native plants. Woody plants given were *Euonymus atropurpureus* (eastern wahoo) and *Staphylea trifolia* (American bladdernut).

Plants donated to the trail were either grown in our propagation beds or donated by members from their own gardens.

## THE SUN SHINES ON GARDEN DAY AT GREEN SPRING by Gerry Pratt

After 2 weeks of rain, the weather cleared and the sun broke through. We had a glorious week to prepare for Spring Garden Day on May 16th.

Over 2,000 plants were potted up for the occasion, representing 129 different varieties. Half of the plants offered were donated by members and friends of VNPS. Because of generous donations, we were able to offer a greater number and wider variety of native woody plants and ferns.

We concentrated on spring ephemerals and shade-tolerant plants. Our fall sale will feature meadow plants and fall shade-tolerant plants, as well as woody plants and ground covers.

Many of our more than 20 volunteers worked tirelessly to prepare for the sale as well as putting in an 8-hour day on Garden Day. It was a labor of love since most of us enjoy sharing our enthusiasm for native plants and helping our clients include them in their garden designs.

Financially we again exceeded previous spring records. Our financial success at these sales enables us to support chapter activities that promote the use of native plants. I want to take this opportunity to thank all those listed below who worked on the plant sale and/or donated plants.

### Committee members who prepared for the sale and volunteered on the day of the sale:

Nancy Adamson, Eleanor Anderson, Vivian Attermeyer, Laura Beaty, Helen Biggs, Karen Caine, Margaret Chatham, Debbie Crabtree, Shirley Gay, Carol Jori, Eleanor Kask, Lori Markoff, Marianne Mooney, Dust Pratt, Gerry Pratt, Sally Sieracki, Beth Smith, Elaine Squieri, and Billie Trump.

### Members of VNPS who volunteered for the sale:

Tiana Camfiord, Anne Crocker, Roberta Day, Barbara Farron, Joanne Krumviede, Gabriel Markoff, Gladys Quintero, and Liz Smith.

### Persons who donated plants for the sale:

Vivian Attermeyer, Laura Beaty, Carol Burdick, Tiana Camfiord, Margaret Chatham, Shirley Gay, Linda Hollenberg, Frankie Hull, Joanne Krumviede, Marianne Mooney, Walker Newman, Marie Olson, Dallas Peck, Andrew Pratt, Dust and Gerry Pratt, Brenda Scarpohl, Bob Schmidt, Sally Sieracki, Beth Smith, Liz Smith, and the Winkler Preserve in Alexandria.

Without the concerted effort of many dedicated members, our successful sales would not be possible. Thanks again for all your effort. We look forward to all of you repeating your great performance in the fall. Don't forget to mark Saturday, September 12th, the date for our Fall Garden Day, on your calendar.

## GARDENING WITH CHILDREN by Marianne Mooney

When planning a garden, or just putting in new plants, try involving young children whenever you have an opportunity. Kids get a thrill out of plants and that can easily translate to a varied learning experience. You can engage children at any level, from something as simple as planting seeds or learning about native plants to a more challenging study of plant and insect relationships. However small the project, it can connect the child to nature in a very hands-on way while leading to a broader awareness of the environment.

Many plants are interesting to the young gardener. Starting in spring, pussytoes are a favorite with their silvery, fur-like paws of flowers. Jack-in-the-pulpit draws attention with its unusual flower structure. Our native prickly pear cactus is a fun, spiny plant of interest to kids. Later in the summer, watching hummingbirds feeding at a cardinal flower is a real entertainment. Monarch butterflies feeding and laying eggs on the swamp milkweed teach metamorphosis. In late summer, goldfinches will hang on the dried heads of purple coneflower and the *Rudbeckias* (e.g., black-eyed susan), eating the seeds while swaying on the breeze. Several Joe-Pye-weeds are tall enough to create an outdoor summer room for kids.

All these plants are easy for a child to plant and grow. We will be selling seeds and many of these plants at our September 12 sale at Green Spring. Let your kids get their hands dirty and learn something about gardening and the natural world.

## POSTER CONTEST A SUCCESS DESPITE FEW ENTRIES by Anne Crocker

Only two posters were submitted in response to the "Do Not Pick The Wildflowers" contest held in conjunction with Great Falls Park this spring, but congratulations and appreciation are due both artists, **Ann Csonka** of Herndon and **Vivian Attermeyer** of Falls Church. The posters were excellent and both received awards and may be reproduced for use in other parks.

Ann Csonka assembled a colorful collage that proclaimed: "Take Pictures or Memories, Not Seeds of the Future." A photograph of a bright red butterfly milkweed from Runnymede Park was featured among other flowers and plants. The rangers at Great Falls were clearly excited when they saw the poster and pronounced it "powerful" and "awesome." The poster will be prominently displayed at the Visitor's Center. Ann won a copy of *Finding Wildflowers in the Washington-Baltimore Area* by Cristol Fleming, Marion Lobstein, and Barbara Tufty. Ann is a serious conservationist and activist in the Herndon area. Her garden was one of those featured in the Herndon/VNPS-sponsored Backyard Habitat tour in 1994.

Vivian Attermeyer, a Falls Church artist, drew her eye-catching poster in black on brilliant yellow poster board. Her "wildflowers = food for the wild things" message also met the criteria with style. It will be displayed near the ranger's desk in the Visitors Center. She was awarded the new video, *Spring Wildflowers of the Mid-Atlantic Region*, filmed by Marion Lobstein, John DeMary, and Suzanne Lohr.



## LETTER OF APPRECIATION DETAILS FAIRFAX COUNTY'S EFFORTS TO RID PARKS OF INVASIVES

As has been reported in this newsletter previously, members of Potowmack Chapter were involved in removing vines (Nov. '97) and planting trees (Apr. '98) in the Marie Butler Leven Preserve in Alexandria. The chapter received a letter of appreciation from the Fairfax County Park Authority from which the following excerpt is taken:

**"Thanks to the efforts of Virginia Native Plant Society and other organizations, 80 volunteers representing 14 organizations planted 400 trees in the event. The tree planting is part of an initiative to control foreign invasive plants, specifically vines. Foreign invasive plants are destroying or severely damaging the native vegetation within our County parks. The tree planting areas on the park were previously covered with invasive vines. Techniques used to control the invasives and the replanting of trees on the Marie Butler Leven Preserve Park will be applied to other parks within the 17,000-acre system.**

**The Park Authority is involved in other natural resource protection projects that require expertise of the Virginia Native Plant Society. We are looking forward to working with your organization on other projects."**

Members wishing to help in future efforts to aid Fairfax County in these efforts should call Kathleen Kust, Conservation Chair, at 836-5868 or call the Fairfax County Resource Management Division at 324-8695 and ask for Don Heine.

## HUNTLEY MEADOWS INVASIVES PROGRAM by Chris Lamond, Huntley Meadows Park Resource Manager

The introduction and spread of non-native plant species is becoming a prominent management concern at Huntley Meadows Park, a registry site for the Virginia Native Plant Society. The environmental threat posed by exotic plants is serious and often underestimated, particularly when compared to problems such as water pollution. When pollution stops, ecosystems usually begin to recover. However, stopping the introduction of invasive plants does not mean they disappear--they sometimes continue to spread and consolidate.

Invasive plants are often defined as exotics that spread (without the direct assistance of people) in natural or semi-natural habitats, causing significant changes in plant community composition, and structure or ecosystem processes. This definition distinguishes invasive species from weeds, which invade disturbed or agricultural habitats. Every backyard garden has its share of weeds. But the focus at the park is on *undisturbed* areas, i.e., the natural ecosystems of Huntley Meadows.

The primary concern over exotic plant invasions is the loss of biodiversity. Many of us have read about the effect of "slash and burn" agricultural practices in the tropics. When these fields are later abandoned, the plant species richness is considerably lower than the rain forest's original state. When fast spreading exotic plant species are introduced in Huntley Meadows, the ensuing invasion can cause a permanent loss of large numbers of plant species.

These plants can also cause structural changes in their habitat. For example, the exotic grass eulalia (*Microstegium vimineum*) is currently replacing the shrub/sapling layer in the park's young forest. Many songbirds including warblers and wood thrushes use this layer during the breeding season and are affected by these changes in their habitat.

The Huntley Meadows Park invasive species program addresses these concerns through the prevention and control of invasive-exotic plant species. The most efficient and cost-effective way

to stop the establishment of invasives is to prevent them from becoming a problem in the first place. Early detection can lead to quick control. Examples of invasive species headed off early at Huntley include the common reed (*Phragmites australis*), mile-a-minute (*Polygonum perfoliatum*), tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), empress tree (*Paulownia tomentosa*), mimosa (*Albizia julibrissin*), and golden bamboo (*Phyllostachys aurea*). Other quickly spreading species have become naturalized, or established in the park. These include eulalia and autumn olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*). All plant species monitored by the program are rated as "highly invasive" by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. These plants exhibit the most invasive tendencies in natural areas and native plant habitats. They establish readily in natural systems and spread rapidly.

Environmental threats come in many forms. The Huntley Meadows invasive plant program addresses the potential impacts of a "biological" threat through the prevention and control of a few disruptive species. This work is done in conjunction with other monitoring, research, and habitat management programs designed to protect the high-quality wildlife habitats in the park.

The most recent invasive plant initiative at Huntley Meadows involves a *Microstegium* eradication project. We recently submitted a grant application to the 1999 North American Wetlands Conservation Act Small Grant Program for the staffing and equipment necessary to treat over 200 acres of this invasive grass. This is an ambitious, but necessary project to protect the park's bottomland forest understory.

Activities for 1998 include ongoing invasive monitoring and small population control. The plant species mentioned before can reestablish and spread if follow-up visits to previously treated colonies are not made. Stray plants and new population are promptly controlled where they are found. Proper follow-up is the key to managing these plants on a long-term basis.

DISPATCHES FROM THE LORTON FRONT (The following information, slightly edited, came to us as e-mail from Kathleen Kust, Conservation Chair. Kathleen has been organizing and leading floral surveys of Lorton since last year. Her opinions do not necessarily represent those of the chapter.)

### May 9

Hi! Today the rain held off for the survey, and we had an exciting find--*Isotria verticillata*/large whorled pogonia--in the bright green rain-soaked woods.

We saw two or three other orchids, none in bloom; the crane-fly and rattlesnake-plantain. A small mystery orchid presented itself; we have an idea about it, and will return to the marked spot to watch it develop.

As last year, there were many bright yellow and orange fungi that we could not identify, and might not be there next week. Of course, we may be blessed (just kidding) with another rainy week, and a whole new generation.

Among the leaves of young trees and shrubs, hepatica, bloodroot, and Indian cucumber-root, were these blooming plants: pussy-toes, yellow-eyed grass, late rue anemone, wild geranium, rattlesnake-weed, and golden ragwort.

By an ephemeral stream grow lush stands of many ferns, including lady, interrupted, cinnamon, maidenhair, New York, and broad beech. There is also bracken fern on a dry knob, growing under Virginia pines with blueberries and huckleberries. It was such a satisfying day, I had to share it with you. This year, we have had some really productive surveys, with different people zeroing in on plants that others would not see. Thank you for making the time to come.

It is time to let our representatives know how healthy and diverse we have found the northern part of the site to be. Congressman Moran has put forth the idea of a land swap of this northern section with Mason Neck, to save the central part of Mason Neck from development. If he and State Senator Joe Gartland knew what we are finding here, they may realize that the Lorton land is also worth saving. It is my opinion that such a wheeling deal cheats the people of this area out of our natural heritage for no sensible reason.

Our representatives are simply not considering the real benefits and life-supporting value of nature to us in our over-developed region. If we conserve this land we won't have our taxes raised to support the new development, making saving this land, and as much land as possible from now on, a better deal for us all around. Only voting citizens in appreciable numbers, which starts with a trickle of communication at an EARLY ENOUGH stage, can ensure that such a deal isn't pushed through without real-world reasoning and factual background.

VNPS is not a political organization. It is up to us as individuals to speak to our representatives about this crucial matter. Virginia woods are becoming an endangered species. So if we want to be able to go out to a nearby woods and find something wondrous and rare like the whorled pogonia, or just enjoy the whole of it, we are going to have to make the effort to shield it from harm.

See you out there!

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### May 29

Hi! Going out earlier, and staying a shorter time is a very good idea for summer. We will go out a few times in the summer; working our way around the 10 ponds. In June, we may go twice. It has yet to be scheduled, and suggestions are welcome. Then in September, the frequency will increase, to catch blooming plants.

Two weeks ago we saw large twayblade/*Liparis lilifolia* in bloom, in seven or eight places, as we returned from the valley where so many ferns, bloodroot, and hepatica grow. This spring has been

extremely rewarding in this way, but not many of you are coming out more than once. I was disheartened, and thought of giving up. But a couple of dedicated souls saved the survey despite personal challenges, so it continues, and the database grows. Of course, every one is busy, and I don't intend to guilt-trip anyone.

I do hope that more people will make time for this valuable effort before our chance is up. It is truly the best way to learn (or reinforce knowledge about) the plants and ecology. No one should feel shy--and it is really a lot of fun. Just contact me for the latest schedule, via e-mail (KDKUST@aol.com), or by calling 836-5868. The perception is that this is a prison, so it must be a dead, valueless place that can be used as a political bargaining chip. Only a few of us (outside of the prison employees, who have been treated as if they don't matter) know the truth, so far.

Kathleen

[Note: To receive reports of plants being found or hear of seasonal surprises such as the remarkably lush bloom of the mountain laurels this year, call or e-mail Kathleen at the address just above.]

## WELCOME

The Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society welcomes the following new members who have joined between mid March and mid June: Michael Adams, Springfield; Robert F. Aldrich, Arlington; Jane R. Baldinger, Falls Church; Diane Adele Berndt, Fairfax; Ken Borghese, Springfield; Barbara Bricks, Falls Church; Mary S. Chaddock, Alexandria; Mark Cheverton, Vienna; Carmen and Richard Clelland, Clifton; Deborah Crabtree, Alexandria; Michael Dixon, Washington; David B. Donlon, Alexandria; Tim Donohue, Reston; Sharon Edwards, Arlington; Dolores Fairbanks, Alexandria; Susan Feller, Alexandria; David J. Gallina, McLean; Tonya Harmon, Alexandria; Barbara A. Hawley, Annandale; Ben Holmes, Springfield; William M. Kay, Arlington; Carla Langeveld, Fairfax; John Loyd, Falls Church; John C. Magee, Herndon; Mrs. G.F. Maguire, Falls Church; Gerry Martin, Washington; Mary McWhinney, Quebec, Canada; Ruth Montllor, Alexandria; Eunice and Willie Mustin, Annandale; Nancy-Elizabeth Nimmich, Herndon; Ben Osborn, Fairfax; Lisa F. Palmer, Arlington; Frances Plunkett, Washington; Regena Pratt, Clifton; Linda Schakenbach, Annandale; Paul and Lesa Schmidt, Oak Hill; Richard Schubert, Bethesda; Patrick Shea, Fairfax; Mary Sherman, Fairfax Station; Jan Taylor-Day, Springfield; Charles Veatch, Falls Church; Chris Von Schoening, Alexandria; and Sue Wickwire, Great Falls.



SPOTTED JOE-PYE WEED  
(*Eupatorium maculatum*)

## WHAT'S YOUR QUESTION?\*

Q. What wildflowers can be propagated from cuttings?

A. Chapter member **Margaret Chatham** advises that you may find the information you are looking for in a book titled *A Garden of Wildflowers: 101 Native Species and How To Grow Them* by Henry W. Art, Story Communications, 1986. The book is in print and available in paperback. Margaret reports personal experience and some success following the instructions in the book for propagating cuttings from partridgeberry and asters.

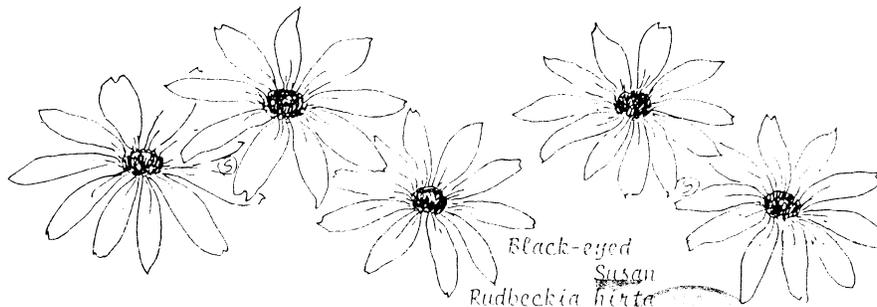
\*Send questions on native plants to the editor at Sieracki@erols.com or 978-5865.

**POISON IVY HINT from Norma Vermillion**

I've found the best way to treat a poison ivy rash is to cover each bump as soon as possible with clear nail polish. It stops the itch immediately and prevents the oozing that causes the rash to spread. I've used this for almost 25 years and it has worked far better for me than calamine lotion .

**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR MEMORIAL MEADOW MAINTENANCE**

Colorful wildflowers, donated in 1994 by the Potowmack Chapter from the propagation beds at Green Spring Park, are blooming at the CIA Living Memorial Wildflower Display and Butterfly Meadow. The memorial, which is located along Rt. 123 near McLean, is dedicated to victims of terrorism. Rod Simmons, the meadow's chief botanist, found at least 25 species flourishing on June 16. But the project, now managed by Fairfax ReLeaf, needs volunteers to clear away exotic invasives and plant more native flowers to enrich the meadow. If you can donate a few sunny hours of volunteer gardening time, you'll enjoy it. Please phone Ed Mainland (Fairfax ReLeaf) at 324-1409 for details.



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**Chapter Events Calendar**

Jul	9	Board meeting
Jul	26	<b><u>Flower arranging at Green Spring Park</u></b>
Aug	13	Board meeting; newsletter deadline
Sep	10	Board meeting
	12	<b><u>Plant sale</u></b>
	18-20	<b><u>Potowmack Chapter hosts State Annual Meeting.</u></b>
Oct	8	Board meeting
	11	<b><u>Potowmack Chapter Annual Meeting</u></b>
Nov	12	Board meeting; newsletter deadline

**Potowmack Chapter  
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