

# POTOWMACK NEWS

Volume 16, No 6

Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Nov/Dec 1998

## **POTOWMACK PRESENTS: NATIVES IN THE GARDEN**

**Sunday November 22, 2-4 pm at Green Spring Gardens Park**

(4603 Green Spring Rd off Little River Turnpike, between Jerry's Ford and the Salvation Army Thrift Store.)

Come to see a slide show on how you can transform your garden into an expression of some of the basic ecological niches of Northern Virginia. This is a deeply fulfilling approach to gardening the native way.

Kathleen Kust, a landscape architect and Potowmack Chapter Conservation Chair, will illustrate a few of the plant associations found in our locality. If you place these plants in a spot where they might naturally thrive, you are repairing the fabric of nature, and will reap benefits such as an amazing increase in insect and bird life. The experience of a hummingbird buzzing by, while you bend down to get a closer look at dragonflies or ladybugs, will become commonplace. And plants that grow together in a particular habitat tend to look good together, solving a few esthetic dilemmas. But because you are reading this, you probably know about these benefits already! So come to enjoy the show, and learn more about gardening with natives.



## **SUCCESS OF STATE ANNUAL MEETING DUE TO THE DEDICATED HELP OF MANY MEMBERS**

Thanks to the participation of our members, and under the leadership of Chapter President Norma Vermillion and Vice President Liz Smith, Potowmack Chapter successfully hosted the VNPS Annual Meeting over the weekend of September 18-20, 1998. Not only were there innumerable individual contributions, but over one-third of the registrants for the meeting were from Potowmack Chapter.

What a wonderful turnout! We enjoyed seeing familiar faces, but were delighted to find members who were first-time participants in our activities.

Mary Painter and John Trott opened the meeting Friday evening. Mary gave us a wonderful reminiscence of the early days of the Virginia Wildflower Preservation Society, sharing some secrets of how and why it all began, and charting its evolution to the Virginia Native Plant Society, citing as well her successors Mary Pockman, Nicky Staunton, Frank Coffey, and Marie Minor for their roles in the continuing success of the society. John Trott set the mood for the rest of the weekend with his lyrical slide pictures of the natural world across the United States.

On Saturday evening, James Duke "wowed" his audience with a discussion of medicinal plants from around the world, extolling their virtues and promoting their use. He finished with a short musical offering of original songs sung to his own accompaniment on the guitar.

Between those two evenings, almost 100 people traveled around Northern Virginia as they took part in over a dozen field trips, a program ably organized by

Alonso Abugattas. Kudos to him and to the following individuals for their many contributions to the success of the meeting. Alonso, Cris Fleming, Stan Shetler, and Lisa Williams, all chapter members, led field trips. Anne Crocker planned, purchased, and prepared the delicious bag lunches for the field trips, not only pleasing participants but saving literally hundreds of dollars over the cost of a catered lunch. She was helped in the preparation by Vivian Attermeyer, Camilla Clocker, Sally Sieracki, and Liz Smith. Barbara Farron performed invaluable hours of service by designing and completing the computer program that tracked registrations and produced name tags. We didn't lose a participant and everyone enjoyed the field trip of choice. Helen Biggs and Anne Van Ryzin helped prepare the registration packets that members received. Joan Van Ryzin supplied refreshments for the Friday evening program as well as the State Board meeting on Sunday, both held at Green Spring Gardens Park. Billie Trump produced the charming wild flower baskets used as centerpieces for Saturday's dinner, and Tiana Camfiord arranged the lovely bouquet that greeted us as we entered the room. Ten lucky members each took home a basket that included small potted plants from the Chapter's propagation beds. Roberta Day was responsible for the VNPS sale table, and Ginny McNair gave a real lift to the meetings on both evenings by moving a good bit of her shop, One Good Tern, on site. In addition, she donated a share of the profits to VNPS.

We're looking forward to next year's Annual Meeting, which will be hosted by the South Hampton Roads Chapter. Hope to see you there!

**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

My term as president ends on October 31. Marianne Mooney will succeed me for 1998-99. I wish her well.

I proposed and the Board approved my forming a new Steering Committee, which I, as a founding director of VNPS and Potowmack Chapter, will head this next year. If you have any constructive suggestions, criticisms, gripes, etc., that you would like to see addressed, call me (451-0572) or write me (6700 Caneel Ct, Springfield, VA 22152) and I will see that the Board gets a written presentation of your input. I've had a number of interesting calls this past year which led to this.

There are two items that I think would be improvements to the life of our Chapter:

- I would like to see a membership directory published and distributed to all our members, to help our 500 members get to know each other.
- I think our Chapter should have membership business meetings with our programs at least quarterly instead of just one annual meeting every October, so that all members would have the opportunity to see how the Chapter is run, hear the treasurer's and committees' reports, and maybe get more involved. From reading other VNPS chapters' newsletters, most of them do seem to hold regular membership meetings almost monthly. This is YOUR Chapter--make your wishes known.

Also, how do you feel about our Chapter speaking out on local environmental issues, such as Lorton prison grounds (3,200 acres) or the 800+ acres at the Engineers Proving Grounds (ball fields and tennis courts and development vs open 'wildlands')? The possible destruction of up to 2,500 trees at Pohick Regional Park for the nearby golf course? The over-development of what land is left in Northern Virginia? Should Potowmack Chapter form Environment and Legislative Committees to address these concerns???

Enid Warner, who has picked up our Chapter mail from our McLean P.O. Box on a weekly basis for many years, has moved from that area. Our Chapter is extremely indebted to Enid for doing this on a regular schedule for so many years. **THANK YOU, ENID!**

We are very thankful for having Anne Crocker serving as Membership chair since about 1985. In that time, our membership has doubled to nearly 500, so it's a big job now. She's also served as Recognition chair since 1993. **THANKS, ANNE!** And many thanks to Gerry Pratt, Propagation/Plant Sales; to our Hospitality chair, Joan Van Ryzin; Cris Fleming, Botany; Kathleen Kust, Conservation; Sally Sieracki, Newsletter editor and Lori Markoff, Newsletter labeling/ mailing and Display Exhibits; Roberta Day, Publications; and Barbara Farron, Publicity. To Beth Smith for planning our Chapter's Annual Meeting. Also a special thank you to Liz Smith for overseeing our Chapter's hosting the State's 3-day Annual Meeting with the help of Alonso Abugattas and the many others who helped her. To Marion Lobstein for always being willing to help out when she can; and to our Treasurer, Bill Kreitz and to outgoing Secretary/incoming President, Marianne Mooney. And thanks to any others I may have missed.

PLEASE REMEMBER--All Board meetings are open to any member wishing to attend.

BOARD OFFICERS		
President	Marianne Mooney	534-8179
Vice President	Robert Schmidt	243-2636
Secretary	Anne Van Ryzin	938-3227
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
Exhibits/Displays	Lori Markoff	573-7121
Membership/Recognition	Anne Crocker	437-0355
Native Plant Trail	-open-	
Newsletter	Sally Sieracki	978-5865
Labeling/Mailing	Markoff family	573-7121
P.O. Box Mail Distributor	Laura Beaty	534-8746
Programs	Shirley Gay	920-1913
Propagation/Plant Sales	Gerry Pratt	323-1094
Publications	Roberta Day	560-5528
Publicity	Barbara Farron	354-9668
Site Registry	-open-	
Garden Tours	Billie Trump	960-1476
Immediate Past President	Norma Vermillion	451-0572

Norma Vermillion

## **CHAPTER ANNUAL MEETING REPORT** by Norma Vermillion

Only 32 of our 500 members attended Potowmack's Annual Membership Meeting at Pohick Regional Library on Sunday, October 11 and only 12 absentee ballots were received so we did not achieve our hoped-for 15-percent quorum vote. The attending members brought a *spectacular* array of refreshments, which everyone seemed to enjoy.

- **Business.** The 1998-99 budget proposed by Treasurer Bill Kreitz was accepted. Nominating Committee chair Anne Crocker announced that Marianne Mooney had recently agreed to be added to the slate as president, with Robert Schmidt as vice president, Anne Van Ryzin as secretary, and Bill Kreitz continuing as treasurer. The vote to accept the proposed slate was unanimous. The proposed Bylaws change to Section 5: OFFICERS, 5.6 and 5.7 was tabled at the Treasurer's suggestion until he further researches the part requiring the bonding of the treasurer and president. Section 10: NOMINATING COMMITTEE, 10.1 was unanimously accepted as the proposed change was presented in the Sept-Oct newsletter.
- **Committees.** Reports were given by Anne Crocker, Membership; Kathleen Kust, Conservation; and Gerry Pratt, Propagation/Plant Sales. Vice President Liz Smith gave a final report on Potowmack's hosting the VNPS State Annual Meeting on September 18-20.
- **Steering Committee.** President Vermillion said that at her request, a Steering Committee was approved by the Board to be formed to accept constructive suggestions and criticisms from the general membership that will be helpful in guiding the Board in the future. As a founding director of VNPS and Potowmack Chapter, Vermillion will chair this new committee and will present recommendations in writing to the Board, as needed.
- **Recognition.** Anne Crocker presented thank-you gifts to Norma Vermillion, President; Liz Smith, Vice President and State Annual Meeting chair; Sally Sieracki, Newsletter Editor; Gerry Pratt, Propagation/Plant Sales; and Enid Warner, retiring P.O. Box Mail Distributor. Certificates of Appreciation were awarded to Enid Warner, Carol Jori, Margaret Chatham, Lori Markoff, Vivian Attermeyer, Marianne Mooney, Liz Smith, Frank Jankauskus, Sally Sieracki, and Norma Vermillion.
- **Door Prizes.** Four names were drawn for Keep-the Environment-Clean nylon shopping bags that fold up into small pocket pouches.
- **Program.** Beth Smith provided a slide lecture on Butterfly Gardening showing plants in the gardens at Pohick Library. Members were then invited to tour the gardens, which were created by Beth.

## **WANTED: PLASTIC FLOWER POTS**

As you clean out your garage or garden area, please gather your plastic pots (from 4-inch to 6-inch diameter) and bring them to the VNPS propagation beds any time you're near Green Spring Gardens Park. Place them near the VNPS potting table at our propagation beds. Since we

pot about 2,000 plants for the spring sale and about 1,500 for the fall sale, we need many pots each year. Recycling your pots keeps them out of the landfill, thus helping the ecology as well as VNPS. (Please, no market packs, ceramic or terra cotta pots, or hanging baskets.)

The new **Ocoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge** is now open to the public on weekends: Saturdays, 12 to 6 pm, Sundays, 7:30 am to 3 pm. The refuge, consisting of 586 acres acquired from the US Army (Woodbridge Research Facility) and 64 acres of the former Marumsco National Wildlife Refuge, offers tremendous diversity of habitats. It is one of the last undeveloped grassland areas in Northern Virginia and is a haven for migrating birds that follow the Atlantic flyway and the Ocoquan and Potomac Rivers. Call 703-690-1297 for more information.

**SUCCESSFUL FALL SALE DUE TO THE EFFORTS OF MANY** by Gerry Pratt

In spite of a record drought this summer, many gardeners attended Green Spring Fall Garden Day this fall. The VNPS sale of native plants benefited from this festive and successful event.

Each year we notice that more of the vendors at Garden Day offer native plants. This does not detract from our success. In fact, they are a testimonial to the increasing popularity and acceptance of native plants by the home gardener, and we welcome this development. For many years, many of our native plants were unknown or available only through small specialty mail order nurseries. In addition to generating funds for the chapter, our spring and fall sales are our best opportunity to educate members of the public in the many advantages of using native plants in their gardens.

Many thanks to the following members of the Propagation and Sales Committee who worked throughout the long hot summer and who almost "lived" at Green Spring the week before the sale to prepare over 1,700 plants:

Nancy Adamson	Shirley Gay	Sally Sieracki
Vivian Attermeyer	Carol Jori	Beth Smith
Laura Beaty	Eleanor Kask	Elaine Squieri
Helen Biggs	Lori Markoff	Billy Trump
Margaret Chatham	Marianne Mooney	
Debbie Crabtree	Dust Pratt	

In addition to the members of the committee, we are grateful for the help offered by the following persons:

Tiana Camfiord	Joanne Krumviede	Sylvia Orli
Jan Taylor-Day	Gladys Quintero	Gabriel Markoff

Kudos to our Treasurer Bill Krietz, our Membership chair Anne Crocker, and our Publications chair Roberta Day for their help and attendance during the sale.

We also want to acknowledge the following members and friends of VNPS who generously donated a total of 503 plants:

Nancy Adamson (and Dr. Swartz)	Joanne Krumviede
Laura Beaty	Lori Markoff
Helen Biggs	D.L. Peck
Tiana Camfiord	Andrew Pratt
Margaret Chatham	Gerry & Dust Pratt
Kathy Cochane	Sally Sieracki
Gary Hilbert	Beth Smith
Frankie Hull	

Every year we add a few more names to our list of benefactors. We urge you to consider becoming active in some way in this important and enjoyable event next year. If you have any inclination to join us, please call Gerry Pratt (323-1094).

There is a **native plant garden** at the Audubon Naturalist Society's new Webb Sanctuary in Clifton, VA. This garden needs work, and there is room for rescued native plants! Cliff Fairweather (703 803-8400) is in charge of Virginia ANS activities. To visit the Webb Sanctuary, take Clifton road into the town. Cross the railroad tracks, stop at the stop sign, and take the next right turn onto Chestnut Street. This is a narrow, twisting road up a steep hill. At the end of the road go into the sanctuary.

**DISPATCHES FROM THE LORTON FRONT** (The following information, slightly edited, came to us via e-mail from Kathleen Kust, Conservation Chair. Kathleen has been leading a survey of plant species at the Lorton Reformatory, which is to be closed. The opinions expressed here are her own and not necessarily those of the Chapter. **Call Kathleen at 836-5868 or send e-mail to her at Treemusic@aol.com for a fact sheet on how best to contact elected officials to voice your opinion on these issues.**)

Hello! I am looking forward to seeing some of you out at Lorton..... Would anyone be interested in winter woody plant i.d. at the site? It is a way to cut our teeth on winter i.d. and expand the list at the same time.

We are currently updating the [species] list from the spring, with the expectation of giving Fairfax County a preliminary list by the end of the year. Elaine Haug has single-handedly compiled the list to this point, with input from surveyors, so give her a big round of applause.

The clock appears to be ticking louder for our ability to conduct this survey unhurriedly. Decisions will soon be made concerning the ultimate use of this land. If we are told the survey is over today, we will have at least a partial inventory to give to decision makers.

Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, we have a decent grasp of the ecological range and locations of various habitats as we walk the site in search of new plants. But I feel the need to emphasize that we may have little time left to make a difference here, to help maintain a piece of natural legacy for our children and their children.

It will take more than a plant list to reserve this land, although facts are the best basis for responsible action. Please do what you can, including communicating with our representatives to find out what is going on, involving your neighbors in strategy sessions (especially if you live, or know someone who lives, near the site), or linking with other people who have a sense of regional responsibility. Without any input from friends and neighbors, our representatives may sincerely believe that what is needed is more lawns, recreation buildings, and a spaghetti of roads to bring us to it all.

It is a large tract, situated in the midst of suburban sprawl. I am sure you are all aware of the psychological, spiritual, and physical need for large areas of naturally managed open space in the metro area which, for the reason of our silence, has never been a priority for our representatives in making land-use decisions.

Again and again, it needs to be said that all forms of land use, other than open space and agriculture, TAKE money from a jurisdiction. Translated, this means that all development raises OUR taxes to pay for its true full cost. Taxes are then continuously raised to pay for it as the years go by. Politicians continue to tell us that new development is necessary to "increase the tax base" or the "economic base."

The reality is that new development will not help us economically. The full costs of previous development will not be covered with the brief infusion of money that follows the new development. And then, any economic gain is overwhelmed as the latest development starts costing more than it is bringing in. It is a vicious cycle.

Politicians are as misled by this mistaken notion as we are, but we are the ones called to awaken them to the facts, not the other way around. Do not be intimidated by the power of traditional assumptions, and have sympathy, because we have all been fooled. We will hear the familiar and strangely comforting phrase, "We need this new development to increase our economic base," past the point of functionality, until we let politicians know that it is a self-destructive form of sleepwalking.

### **LATIN NAMES MADE A LITTLE LESS MYSTERIOUS** by Margaret Chatham

Latin names: love them or hate them, you can't get away from them in the plant kingdom. But learning a few translations can make them a lot easier to remember and may add to your understanding of the plants named. I love the way that once I can identify a new (to me) plant, I start seeing it all over. My level of knowledge definitely shapes what I see. My understanding of plant names has been greatly increased by searching for plant identifications in *Flora of West Virginia* by P.D. Strausbaugh and Earl L.

Core, which translates each name as it describes a plant. There are other sources that translate as they go along, but this is the most approachable one I've found.

So I learn that the marsh marigold *Caltha palustris* is not named for its lustrous golden petals or its lustrous green leaves. "Caltha" comes from "calathos" meaning cup, and "palustris" means of swamps. Aha! So *Quercus palustris*, the pin oak, was named for its ability to grow in soggy places, *Rosa palustris* is the swamp rose, and *Lathyrus palustris* is the marsh pea or vetchling. But all is not consistency; for example, the Latin name for swamp milkweed (*Asclepius incarnata*) has nothing to do with swamps. "Incarnata" is related to "incarnation" and here it refers to color: the sad pink that suggested flesh-color to Linnaeus.

There are many names for habitats: arvense (of cultivated fields), pratens (of meadow), campestre (of fields), vineale (of vineyards), sylvatica or sylvestris (of woods, aquatica (water), riparia (river), montana (mountain), and marina or maritima (sea) are a few. Some examples of these easy-to-remember ones are given below, the Latin name of a plant first with a translation, if needed, followed by its common name:

- ☼ *Trifolium arvense* (field three-leaf: rabbitfoot clover), *Mentha arvensis* (field mint: wild mint), and *Equisetum arvense* (field horsetail: common horsetail)
- ☼ *Geranium pratense* (meadow cranesbill), *Phleum pratense* (meadow reed: timothy), *Poa pratensis* (meadow grass: Kentucky blue-grass)
- ☼ *Lepidium campestre* (field little-scale: field cress), *Acer campestre* (hedge maple), *Artemisia campestris* (field wormwood)
- ☼ *Allium vineale* (vineyard onion: field garlic)
- ☼ *Nyssa silvatica* (woods tree named for a water nymph: tupelo, black gum), *Rorippa sylvestris* (wood cress: creeping yellow cress), *Pinus sylvestris* (wood pine: Scotch pine)
- ☼ *Nyssa aquatica* (water tupelo), *Carya aquatica* (water hickory), *Gleditsia aquatica* (water tree named for German botanist J. Gleditsch: water locust)
- ☼ *Vitis riparia* (river grape), *Geum rivale* (brookside geum: purple or water avens), *Saxifraga rivularis* (little-river rock-breaker: brookside saxifrage)
- ☼ *Sisyrinchium montanum* (mountain blue-eyed grass: common blue-eyed grass), *Oxalis montana* (mountain sour plant: white wood sorrel), *Pycnanthemum montanum* (mountain dense-flowered plant: thin leaved mountain mint)
- ☼ *Prunus maritima* (beach plum), *Lyonia marina* (sea plant named for botanist John Lyon: staggerbush), *Rumex maritimus* (sea dock: golden dock)

### **ANOTHER VIEW OF PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE** by Cris Fleming

As Botany chair of Potowmack Chapter and a long-time board member of the State VNPS, I want to comment on a paragraph of the President's Message in the Sept/Oct issue of *Potowmack News*. In the last paragraph of her message, the author discusses her beautiful purple loosestrife plant and says "there is a simple, easy way to keep loosestrife from becoming invasive in your yard. As the bloom stems turn brown, go out once a week and snip off the spent stems before seeds develop."

I believe that this solution may be unintentionally misleading, because the real problem with purple loosestrife is NOT that it is invasive in yards, but that it is very invasive in our natural wetlands. Purple loosestrife spreads vegetatively as well as by seeds, and it very quickly crowds out native wetland vegetation such as cattails, grasses, sedges, rushes, and many rare native wildflowers.

According to the fact sheet "Invasive Alien Plant Species of Virginia," produced by our own organization and the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, "cultivars of *Lythrum salicaria* and the closely related Eurasian species *Lythrum virgatum* are widely sold by commercial nurseries. Many of these cultivars are advertised as being infertile. Recent research has shown, however, that these commercial cultivars are highly fertile both when crossed among themselves and with wild purple loosestrife populations."

Although snipping off the blooms may reduce seed dispersal in the garden, the pollen produced by the flowers has already been carried to other plants. Seeds formed by these plants may spread purple loosestrife into our wetlands. As an organization whose mission statement is "Conserving wild flowers and wild places," I believe that all chapters of VNPS should discourage the use of purple loosestrife. Garden alternatives suggested by the fact sheet include false dragon head (*Physostegia virginiana*) and several species of blazing star (*Liatris spp.*).

Norma Vermillion responds: My remarks in my President's Message (Sept-Oct *Potowmack News*) were based on the fact that purple loosestrife is still being sold around the beltway, and that some of our members may still be buying/growing it in their yards. I believe my method of control could be enough to stop these plants from spreading elsewhere. My 1/3-acre yard slopes down onto a golf course and a large pond. The loosestrife has never spread further than 10 feet from the one plant I bought 20 years ago and there are very few that have come up from seedlings. Q. I ask Cris how can the pollen spread to other plants if there's no other loosestrife in the entire neighborhood? Q. Are botanists and others doing anything to keep loosestrife off the market? Q. What steps need to be taken to prevent it from being sold? Q. Is legislation needed?

### **SOME FALL EVENTS OF POTENTIAL INTEREST TO MEMBERS:**

#### **Fairfax Relaf Fall Tree Planting Schedule**

- November 14, 9 am to 3 pm, **Roadside Planting** at Braddock Road. Contact Barbara White or Rod Young at 324-1489. 10 am to 2 pm, **Roadside Planting** at Nutley St./I-66. Contact Ed Mainland at 324-1409. 9 am to 2 pm, **Riparian Planting** at Colvin Run/Rt.7. Contact Judy Okay or Sara Doolittle at 324-1409.
- November 21, 9 am to 3 pm, **Riparian Planting** at Cub Run/FCPA. Contact Barbara White at 324-1489. 9 am to 3 pm, **Roadside Planting** at I-95/Prince Wm. Parkway. Contact Barbara White or Larry Dunn at 324-1489.
- December 5, 9 am to 3 pm, **Research Site** (to be selected). Contact Barbara White at 324-1489.

#### **Autumn Workshops and Walks Sponsored by the Prince William Wildflower Society**

(Call Nature's Wonder World at 703 490-0455 for reservations/more information.)

- November 15, 2 to 4 pm. **Forest Foods for Winter**, Accotink Wildlife Refuge. Walk led by Nicky Staunton to explore a wetland harvest of seeds and fruits and search for spicebush and holly in a new site. Fee \$15.
- December 5, 9 am to 1 pm. **Winter Weeds—Form and Structure**, Manassas National Battlefield Park. Workshop on identifying common winter weeds led by Stephanie Mason, Audubon Naturalist Society naturalist. Fee \$30.
- December 6, 2 to 4 pm. **The Woods in Winter**, Prince William Forest Park. Walk led by Nicky Staunton to identify nuts, fruits, and summer wildflowers gone to seed and to view several species of Lycopodium. Fee \$15.
- December 12, 9 am to 1 pm. **Winter Weeds—Seed Dispersal**, Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge. Workshop led by Stephanie Mason to look at the ways plants disperse seeds. Fee \$30.

### **RUNNYMEDE PARK, HERNDON, CELEBRATES 10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY** by Anne Crocker

Together with a live red-tailed hawk, screech owl and snakes, nature games, and giant cookies, this chapter helped celebrate the Tenth Anniversary of Runnymede Park along Sugarland Run in the town of Herndon Sunday afternoon, October 24. New member John Magee, a landscape architect, represented the chapter. We greatly appreciated his help.

In addition to the native plants growing naturally in the woods and meadow of Runnymede, a native plant demonstration garden is being planted with pinxterbloom azaleas, viburnums, fringe trees, flowers, sedges, ferns, and other natives rescued and transplanted from the site of the Reston Target Store and other sites. An attractive brochure written and beautifully illustrated by Potowmack Chapter member Ann Csonka interprets the garden areas.

Recognizing that more birds die from lack of water than from lack of food during the winter, a shallow concrete birdbath has been recently installed. Designed and built by earth scientist and Herndon Town Councilman John De Noyer, the unique bird "oasis" features moving water. It runs on a solar-powered pump; volunteers maintain the structure of concrete and local diabase rock.

Now surrounded by many residences, this stream valley park was originally slated for ball fields and other intense use. That it remains an example of some of the varied habitats that once prevailed throughout Fairfax County is a tribute to VNPS members Ann Csonka, John De Noyer, and other dedicated members of The Friends of Runnymede who have worked to preserve and interpret it.

**WHAT'S YOUR QUESTION?**

Q. What's the best way for a new member to get involved in VNPS activities?

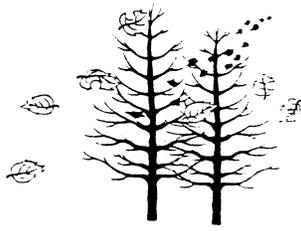
A. There is no best way, but here are some suggestions that have worked for other people:

A lot depends on what you hope to gain from your membership. For instance, if your knowledge of native plants is small (this is true of a large percentage of our new members) and you want to learn more, say how to use natives in your own yard, an excellent way to get involved and increase your knowledge is to volunteer at the propagation beds (see p. 4). True, you'll now have to wait till the season starts again next spring, but once begun you'll quickly learn to identify the plants grown for sale there, and the people you meet will be happy to share what they know as well as their excess plants. Another way for the novice to gain knowledge is to attend field trips to see plants growing in other people's yards or in their natural settings or to participate in the "pulling parties" that come up from time to time--it doesn't take long to become an expert on which plants are unwanted invasive aliens! Once you have acquired some expertise, you'll be in demand to fill any of a number of roles in the organization.

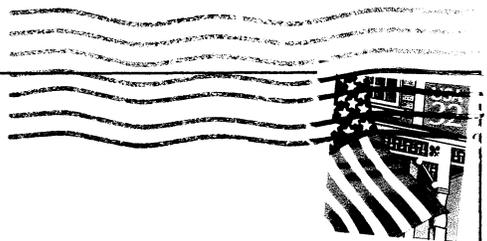
A person who already knows something of botany and/or native plant cultivation or has other related talents or interests and wishes to share his or her knowledge might choose to attend one or two Board meetings to get an idea of what the organization is all about and what needs doing (**Board meetings are always open to all members**). That person might also be very welcome to the Conservation Committee helping with or organizing plant surveys or rescues. (Send your questions to the editor at Sieracki@erols.com or call 978-5865.)

**Chapter Events Calendar**

Nov	22	Program meeting: 2-4 pm at Green Spring. Kathleen Kust presents slide show on native gardening
Dec	10	Board meeting Newsletter deadline
Jan	14	Board meeting



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



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