

# POTOWMACK NEWS

Volume 17, No 3

Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

May/June 1999

## POTOWMACK CHAPTER PROGRAMS FOR JUNE

**Thursday, June 17, 7:30 p.m.** Jim Long of the Maryland Native Plant Society will present a descriptive **slide presentation** on aspects of wetland ecology, including submerged aquatic vegetation. Jim is coordinator of Friends of Mattawoman Creek and will illustrate the talk with diverse examples from the watershed of this coastal plain tributary and tidal freshwater embayment of the Potomac River.

**Saturday, June 19, 10 a.m.–2 p.m.** Co-leaders **Jim Long and Rod Simmons** will guide us on a **follow-up walk** along the Mattawoman. Walk in an area designated a Maryland “Wildland” along a portion of the creek that would have been heavily affected if Chapman’s Forest had not been saved from development. Experience the marked biodiversity of the floodplain as one of Maryland’s most productive waterways makes the transition from a forested stream to an open tidal-freshwater estuary.

**Directions:** From Virginia, take the beltway across the Wilson Bridge and take the first exit after the bridge, to MD Route 210 south (toward Indian Head). Approximately 15 miles south of the beltway on 210, at the town of Bryan’s Road, is a McDonald’s restaurant on the right, just before the traffic light at the intersection of routes 210 and 227/224. Meet in the McDonald’s parking lot.

Bring lunch and be prepared for wet conditions by wearing waterproof boots or shoes. Insect repellent may be advisable as are long sleeves and long pants for protection from the greenbrier.

**Reservations are necessary for the walk.** There is a limit of 20. **Call 703-920-1913 or 703-534-8179** to save a place.

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## IT’S SPRING PLANT SALE TIME ONCE AGAIN

Our spring plant sale will be held on May 22, 1999, on Garden Day at Green Spring Park from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

This year the plant sale is about a week later than in previous years but the cold spring we have experienced and the delayed activity in the propagation beds makes this a welcome turn of events. We will again be offering spring ephemerals, donated by our members, which are so difficult to find through the usual local nurseries: Virginia bluebells, twinleafs, sessile trilliums, and bloodroots. Of course we will have a full assortment of spring, summer, and fall blooming natives as well as a variety of ferns and groundcovers for shady areas.

As you divide your perennial natives this spring, plan to put aside some for our plant sale. It is advisable to pot them up when you divide them and bring them to our propagation beds at

Green Spring. They should be potted up **no later than May 8<sup>th</sup>** to ensure their survival after the stress of division and transplantation.

In addition to your plant donations, we urge you to volunteer your time in helping us at the plant sale. It is a great way to become active in chapter events and to meet members who share your enthusiasm for native plants, as well as serve an eager public whose growing interest in natives we strongly wish to encourage.

We have a hard-working and dedicated propagation and sales committee but we always welcome VNPS members to this group. If you have any inquiries about plant donations or about volunteering to help in the propagation beds or at the sale, please don’t hesitate to call Gerry Pratt at 323-1094.

**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

It's the heart of spring now with warblers arriving and wildflowers blooming. There's still time to witness the most awe-inspiring trillium display in our region. Head for Thompson Wildlife Management Area in Linden and go to parking lot #6. You'll be amazed. Trilliums will be one of the many native plants available at our popular chapter plant sale, May 22 at Green Spring. Wetland plants and ecology will be highlighted at our June 17 program. Also in June, Fairfax County will hold public hearings regarding the future of the Lorton Prison land. Let your voice be heard on this and other conservation issues that protect native plant habitat.

**Marianne Mooney**

**TIPS FROM THE PROPAGATION BEDS** by

Gerry Pratt

Propagation can be a very rewarding activity. The easiest method of propagating plants is to divide mature plants. Division not only increases your supply, it reinvigorates the original plant. In many cases, it is vital to the continued health of the plant. Division is also a very convenient way to increase your number of ferns.

Some plants such as *Amsonia tabernaemontana*, *Baptisia australis*, *Aruncis dioicus*, and *Liatris spicata* can become very woody after several years and must be "ruthlessly" hacked to be divided.

Most plants need to be divided every 2 or 3 years to maximize their blooms and well-being. Plants that are allowed to grow without division suffer decline. It is also a good time to refresh the soil, adding humus and reducing any new compaction that might have occurred.

As you begin to schedule garden chores, plan to divide the flowering native plants:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <i>Aquilegia canadensis</i> --columbine         | <i>Jeffersonia diphylla</i> --twinleaf      |
| <i>Asarum canadense</i> --wild ginger           | <i>Oenothera</i> --sundrops                 |
| <i>Chrysogonum virginianum</i> --green and gold | <i>Penstemon</i> --beardstongue             |
| <i>Dicentra eximia</i> --wild bleeding heart    | <i>Tiarella cordifolia</i> --foam flower    |
| <i>Geranium maculatum</i> --wild geranium       | <i>Tradescantia virginiana</i> --spiderwort |
| <i>Iris cristata</i> --crested iris             |   |

Most native plants can be divided in early spring or in the fall. If time slips by, and you miss dividing these plants in the spring, you can safely do so in the fall with good results.

*Growing and Propagating Wild Flowers* by Harry R. Phillips is an invaluable reference, whether you are dividing existing plants or growing them from seed. If you have any questions concerning the propagation of native plants, please address them to Gerry Pratt, c/o the editor, *Potowmack News*, and she will try to answer them in subsequent issues.

BOARD OFFICERS		
President	Marianne Mooney	534-8179
Vice President	Robert Schmidt	931-1799
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	John C. Magee	478-9428
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	Sylvia Orli	979-3545
Site Registry	Rod Simmons	256-7671
Garden Tours	Billie Trump	960-1476
Immediate Past President	Norma Vermillion	451-0572

**BOOK REVIEW** by Cris Fleming

*Wildflowers of the Southern Mountains* by Richard M. Smith. The University of Tennessee Press, 1998. 262 pp. Softcover, \$24.95.

*Wildflowers of the Southern Mountains* is an ambitious book. The author, Richard M. Smith, has developed a unique system for identifying different groups of plants, has described approximately 1,200 wildflowers, and has included photographs of almost 600 species occurring in the Blue Ridge Mountains from Maryland to Alabama. For practical reasons of size and weight of the book, he has excluded trees, shrubs, grasses, sedges, and other plants with non-showy flowers.

The pictorial key to families and genera is based on the flower shape, the number of parts of the flower, and then the color. Having found many keys to be frustrating at times, I think this system looks quite promising. However, I was disappointed to discover that the key system breaks down when one gets to the genus. Except for a few large genera such as *Aster*, there is no way to accurately identify a plant except by reading throughout the descriptions of many similar species.

A good feature of this book is the arrangement of the species by family. This system is more accurate than those used in many popular field guides, such as arrangement by color or superficial similarities. It helps beginners organize new information and it is the system used by professional botanists.

The descriptions of the individual species are short and succinct. Smith writes in an objective manner, giving facts useful for identification, using some technical terms, and not succumbing to the tendency to use words such as "lovely" or "beautiful." Information about the flowers, leaves, and stem is usually given first. Often, but not always, a general blooming period and habitat is noted for each species. I think the descriptions would have been improved with a notation of commonness or rarity of the species in the range covered. Only occasionally is this mentioned.

The weakest part of the book is the photographic section. Although the quality of the individual pictures ranges from good to excellent, they are not very useful for identification purposes. First, species photographs are placed in the back of the book, away from the plant descriptions, obliging the user to flip back and forth. Second, often only the flower is shown, so the user is not able to visualize the leaves and stem of the plant. Third, no scale is given beside the pictures, so one could become confused about the size of the flowers. Lastly, although reference to a plate number is given in the written descriptions, no text page reference is given with the photographs, so it is difficult to move from a picture to a description.

Despite these shortcomings, I think this book is an admirable effort to facilitate identification of the many different wildflowers found in the southern Appalachians. It contains an interesting introductory section, an excellent glossary, and a well-designed user-friendly index. Nomenclature is up-to-date with synonyms given in parentheses. And I found no glaring errors.

*Wildflowers of the Southern Mountains* should be a nice addition to the library of the beginning wildflower enthusiast, particularly one who spends much time in the mountains. Be sure to try out this book if you are going to the Great Smokies. It nicely bridges the gap between the little picture books such as *Great Smoky Mountains Wildflowers* and the more technical books such as *Manual of the Vascular Flora of the Carolinas*. --Reprinted from the winter issue of the Audubon Naturalist Society's *Naturalist News*.

**WANT TO JOIN VNPS? Call Anne Crocker, Membership Chair, at 437-0355, and she will send you an application.**

**THE BUZZ ABOUT THE BEETLE** by Jessica Strother

The Asian long-horned beetle, an import from China via wooden packing materials, is posing a tremendous threat to some native trees in the United States. The beetle was first detected in Brooklyn in 1996 and has since been discovered in warehouse ports on the west and southeast coastlines. In the fall of 1998 an infestation occurred in Chicago, necessitating the removal of hundreds of trees.

The beetle is a wood borer and goes through different life stages inside a host tree until it eventually emerges. Signs of the long-horned beetle include piles of sawdust at the base of a tree

from chewed exit holes slightly larger than a 25-cent piece and oval dark wounds where adult females have chewed a place to lay eggs.

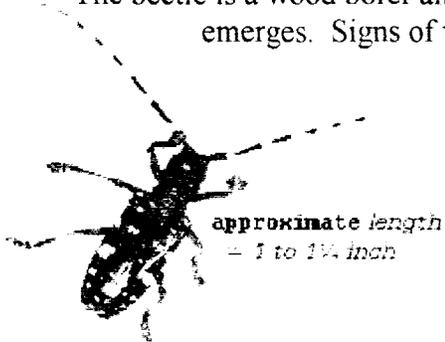
The beetle is large--over an inch long with 2-inch-long antennae--and it has spectacular black and white body coloration.

Native trees that have been decimated include elm, maple, poplar, and green ash. Some ornamentals are documented as being affected

as well. In an effort to stop new infestations, the United States Department of Agriculture has, since fall 1998, imposed import

restrictions on the use of wooden packing materials coming into the United States from China.

If you think you see the beetle, please contact one of the following authorities as soon as possible: Virginia Department of Forestry at 703-324-1498, USDA Forest Service at 603-868-7709, or the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) at 508-563-9303.

**MAY EVENTS OF INTEREST TO VNPS MEMBERS**

**Saturday, May 8.** 9 a.m.-12 p.m. **Native Plant Sale** sponsored by the Prince William Wildflower Preservation Society. Bethel Lutheran Church at Sudley Road and Plantation Lane in Manassas. Call Nancy Arrington, 703-368-8431 for more information. **Program: Ants in our Pants.** 9:30-11:30 a.m. Outdoor program to be held on Plummer's Island along the C & O Canal on the habits and roles of ants and their contribution to the seed dispersal of early spring wildflowers. Audubon Naturalist Society, 301-652-9188. Fee.

**Saturday, May 15.** **Spring Plant Identification Walk.** 2-4:30 p.m. Adults. Join volunteer naturalist Melvin Little for an informative walk and learn about native flowers, shrubs, and trees. Long Branch Nature Center. 228-6535.

**Saturday, May 15-Sunday May 16.** **Wildflower Weekend.** Children and adults. Ranger- and volunteer-led hikes to destinations with different plant habitats. Shenandoah National Park, call 540-999-3500 for information. No reservations necessary; free except for park entrance fee of \$10.

**Sunday, May 16.** **Great Falls Walk,** 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Contact Marion Lobstein at 536-7150 or e-mail mblbst@mnsinc.com. **Lady's Slipper Walk.** 2 p.m. Nicky Staunton will lead a free walk to view the pink and yellow lady's slippers at Conway Robinson Memorial State Forest. Call Nicky at 703-368-9803 to make a reservation.

**Saturday, May 22.** **Gardening for Galapagos,** 10 a.m.-5 p.m. A seven-garden tour of native plant gardens designed by John C. Magee using ecologically sound, low-maintenance landscape design. The \$10 fee will benefit the Charles Darwin Research Station and Galapagos National Park in Ecuador. Call the Charles Darwin Foundation at 538-6833. (See also p.5, *Potowmack News*, Mar/Apr 99.)

**Sunday, May 23.** **Preventing Erosion Around Home, School, and Park.** 2 p.m. A homeowner's workshop sponsored by the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority at Potomac Overlook Regional Park. For reservations call 528-5406. Free.

**Saturday, May 29. Wetland Ecology.** Class led by Bill Sipple and sponsored by the Prince William Wildflower Society and Nature's Wonder World. Call 703-490-0455 for information and registration form.

## **RESOURCES FOR NATIVE PLANT LOVERS: A MAGAZINE AND SOME INTERESTING WEBSITES**

**Wild Garden Magazine** - You might wish to take a look at this. Published in Eugene, Oregon, it is a quarterly that bills itself as "your resource for gardening with native plants and for wildlife." According to chapter member John Spencer, "since it's a national magazine, much of what it describes is native elsewhere. But the articles are interesting, nevertheless, and the ads identify new and useful sources of plants." Look for it at larger magazine racks or call toll free for a subscription at 877-628-4832 (\$23.95 for 6 quarterly issues.)

**VNPS State** - [www.vnps.org](http://www.vnps.org) Ours and other chapters' newsletters are or will soon be included along with the information about our state organization offered here.

**DC Flora** - [www.nmnh.si.edu/botany/projects/dcflora/](http://www.nmnh.si.edu/botany/projects/dcflora/) A highlight of this web site is a list of 100 common spring wildflowers of the greater Washington-Baltimore area arranged by date of blooming. It also offers pictures and where to find wildflowers. The site was developed by the Department of Botany, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution.

**Blandy Experimental Farm** - [minerva.acc.virginia.edu/~blandy/](http://minerva.acc.virginia.edu/~blandy/) You can find out about Blandy's mission, read a calendar of events, get directions there, find out what's in bloom, and read about the research and education programs.

**National Arboretum** - [www.ars-grin.gov/ars/Beltsville/na/](http://www.ars-grin.gov/ars/Beltsville/na/) Among the valuable offerings here is a USDA plant hardiness zone map and information on horticulture and pest management.

**Maryland Native Plant Society** - [www.geocities.com/rainforest/vines/2996/](http://www.geocities.com/rainforest/vines/2996/) This site lists the organization's upcoming events, including speakers and walks, and you can access its newsletter if you are willing to download the Acrobat/Adobe reader offered.

**Botanical Society of Washington** - [www.fred.net/kathy/bsw.html](http://www.fred.net/kathy/bsw.html) You will find membership information and a list of upcoming speakers for this organization.

**American Horticultural Society** - [www.ahs.org](http://www.ahs.org) You can subscribe to a list serve with other gardeners in the area.

**Brooklyn Botanical Garden** - [www.bbg.org](http://www.bbg.org) This is a good site for reviewing and ordering gardening books, including those on native gardening.

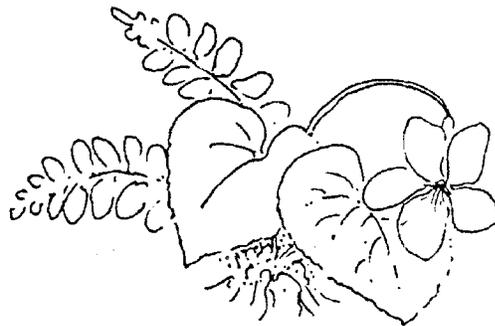
*Members John Spencer, Sylvia Orli, and Lori Markoff provided material for this article. Do you know of any good websites or other sources of information that would be of interest to our readers? If so, please send them to the editor at [Sieracki@erols.com](mailto:Sieracki@erols.com) or call Sally at 978-5865.*

## **WELCOME**

The Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society welcomes the following new members: Rosemary Bernier, Alexandria; Paul Cornwell, Sterling; Emily Diccio, Arlington; Lisa Holt, Alexandria; Susan W. Kosiur, Reston; Mike Leydon, Centreville; Kathleen Michels, Silver Spring; Diane S. Pavak, Washington; Janet Saadian, Oakton; Shirley Street, Washington; and Laurel D. Wanrow, Reston.

**MEADOWLARK PARK PLANS POTOMAC RIVER VALLEY NATIVE PLANT GARDEN**

According to an article in the Meadowlark Gardens newsletter for Spring 1999, the regional park, located in Vienna, Virginia, will “initiate work on an entirely new native plant garden featuring the flora of the Potomac River Valley.” The Potomac flows through five “physiographic provinces,” from the mountains of West Virginia to the lowland marshes of Pohick Bay. Each includes diverse flora in unique plant communities. The display and interpretation of native species will be a central goal of the new collection. Through this new garden feature, the focus of Meadowlark Gardens will expand to include interpretation of the conservation needs of native species throughout the Potomac Valley. This will foster interaction with Federal, State, and local agencies concerned with conservation of regional biodiversity and will support the efforts of the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority in cataloging native species on all of its properties. Garden administrator Keith Tomlinson reports that the trail has been established in a wooded area near the visitors center and introduction of additional plant material and signs will be proceeding over the summer. Mr. Tomlinson would welcome donations of appropriate plants; call him at 255-3631, ext. 302, for additional information.



<b>Chapter Events Calendar</b>		<b>Potowmack Chapter Virginia Native Plant Society P.O. Box 161 McLean, VA 22101</b>
May	13 Board meeting, 7pm 22 Plant Sale 10am-3pm	
Jun	17 Board meeting 6:45 Program meeting: Jim Long speaks on wetland ecology, 7:30 pm 19 Follow-up walk with Jim Long & Rod Simmons, Mattawoman Tidal Estuary 10am-2pm	
Jul	No meetings	
Aug	12 Board meeting 7pm	
		<i>please verify your address information and your renewal date on the mailing label</i>