# POTOWMACK NEWS

Volume 19, No 4

Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Jul/Aug 2001

### **ROD SIMMONS TO LEAD WALK AT HERNDON'S RUNNYMEDE PARK ON AUGUST 4**

Site registry chair Rod Simmons is uniquely qualified to lead a chapter walk at our Society's newest registry site as he is the author of the recently completed "Flora and Plant Communities of Runnymede Park." Meghan Tice, Ann Csonka, and John DeNoyer, who will help with identifying butterflies, birds, and plants, will be there to assist. Participants will meet at the parking lot/park entrance off Herndon Parkway at 9 a.m. on Saturday morning August 4 and may expect to finish about 1 p.m. After the walk, spicebush tea will be served at the Carroll House (a historic site within the park), and you may wish to bring a bag lunch to enjoy with it.

Reservations are required: call Marianne Mooney at 703-534 -8179. Directions to the park are as follows: Take Leesburg Pike (Rt. 7) west past Tyson's Corner to Baron Cameron Ave. Make a left onto Baron Cameron (Rt. 606) and continue for several miles until you reach Herndon (Baron Cameron becomes Elden St. in Herndon). Make a right onto Herndon Parkway (there is a sign). Proceed slowly and look for the entrance (only one) to Runnymede very shortly on the right. The parking lot is fairly small but overflow parking is available within the park. A more southern approach would be to take Fairfax County Parkway (or the Dulles Toll Road to its Fairfax County Parkway exit), make a right at the parkway end in Herndon, take the next right onto Herndon Parkway, proceed a short distance across Elden St., and look for the park entrance on the right.

# SOME BACKGROUND ON RUNNYMEDE PARK AND WHY IT IS IMPORTANT

Runnymede Park is a 58-acre park in western Fairfax County owned and operated by the town of Herndon and preserved as a natural area used for nature education and passive recreation.

The park preserves a small but irreplaceable remnant of a "diabase community" in Northern Virginia and in recognition of this, was registered as a significant natural area under the Virginia Native Plant Society's Site Registry Program in 1999.

Diabase is a mafic, igneous rock that intruded as magma into cracks and faults of underlying sediments of an ancient freshwater lake that once covered the greater Herndon-Centerville area, forming large dikes and sills. Over millions of years, uplift and erosion have exposed diabase bedrock and boulders in many places.

Diabase communities are generally characterized by rich soils with high magnesium and calcium content, a flat rocky terrain, and a great diversity of plant species. Oaks and hickories are especially diverse in the park, as well as grasses, sedges, and other herbaceous species. Eastern red cedar is also abundant.

Over 400 native vascular plant species have been documented in the park, including purple milkweed (*Asclepias purpurascens*), a highly rare, state-listed species (S2); Bush's sedge (*Carex bushii*), a state watch-list species (S3); and short-fruited rush (*Juncus brachycarpus*), a Fairfax County record. Many other species that occur in the park have become uncommon or rare in Fairfax County as a result of urbanization. Several of the park's natural communities that are associated with diabase soils have also become rare, both globally and in Virginia.

As we look for new plants, we should see many legume species; downy carrionflower; over 11 species of oaks, including shingle oak and swamp white oak; Virginia snakeroot; curly heads clematis; several agrimonies; ninebark; flowering spurge; sundrops; green milkweed; slender mountain mint; wild petunia; cardinal flower; tall coreopsis; field thistle; dense blazing star; rosinweed; and many others. Also, folks interested in meadows may wish to come to see one of the nicest natural meadows in Fairfax County.

#### Potowmack News

# PRESIDENTS MESSAGE:

The path of our organization can be traced through the many people who have served on the board or contributed their time in other ways. Many of these people have been with us since the Chapter's inception and bring with them a sense of history and continuity. A stalwart example is Bill Kreitz who joined VNPS in 1982. He has been involved for years, most recently as our treasurer for the last 4 years. Another is our beloved newsletter editor, Sally Sieracki, a member since 1992, who has put the newsletter together for the past 4 years. We thank Bill and Sally and many others for their generosity in keeping the flame burning.

It's with great pleasure that I introduce our newest board members, Lisa Palmer and Rob Aldrich. They are the husband and wife co-chairs of the conservation committee. Rob is the director of information services for the Land Trust Alliance, a D.C.-based non-profit organization dedicated to providing leadership and support to land trusts nationwide. Lisa is a museum specialist in the Division of Fishes of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History, caring for the fish specimen and image collections and researching freshwater fish of South America. We welcome them to the board and thank them for helping the chapter to carry on. We couldn't do it without them and the dedication of so many wonderful people.

**Marianne Mooney** 

## CHAPTER'S INVASIVES SLIDE SHOW AVAILABLE TO GROUPS

On April 25 the Sleepy Hollow Woods Civic Association enjoyed a viewing of the VNPS slide show on invasive plants. Long-time state board member, Ted Scott, created the slide show, which highlights problem plants in Virginia. The problems these plants pose may be well known to us, but many people seemed genuinely surprised at the damage done to natural areas by invasive plants. For instance, seeing a slide of porcelain berry smothering the woods just outside of Dumbarton Oaks where it is grown as an ornamental always takes viewers aback. While the Sleepy Hollow Woods Civic Association was kind enough to make a donation to the Chapter, we are happy to present the slides to any interested group at no charge. We also provide informational materials about invasives and natives. This is all part of our mission to educate the public about our native flora and conservation issues. If you know of a group that would wish to see this program, please call one of our board members to request it.

······································	BOARD OFFICERS						
President	Marianne Mooney	534-8179					
Vice President	John C. Magee	478-9428					
Secretary	Liz Nalle	698-7606					
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	Beth Smith	644-1760					
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Site Registry	Rod Simmons	256-7671					
Garden Tours	Billie Trump	960-1476					
(All numbers should include the 703 area code unless otherwise noted.)							
Potowmack News is published 6 times per year, in Jan, Mar, May, Jul,							
Sep, and Nov. The deadline for submissions is the 15th day of the							
month prior to publication. Call Sally Sieracki for more information.							

- WANT TO JOIN VNPS? Call Linda Haller, Membership Chair, at 703-938-8504, and she will send you an application. Already belong but want to know your expiration date? Check your mailing label on page 8.
- WANT TO JOIN THE CHAPTER LISTSERV? Send an e-mail to Sylvia Orli at stone.sylvia@nmnh.si.edu and in the message section write subscribe to vnps-pot, your e-mail address, and your full name. Or visit www.onelist.com/subscribe.cgi/vnps-pot.

Potowmack News

#### TOUGH, STURDY, & LONG-LIVED-NO, NOT OAKS, PINK LADY'S SLIPPERS!

Dr. Douglas Gill, evolutionary ecologist and professor from the University of Maryland, enthralled and astonished Chapter members and their guests at the April 26 program at Hidden Oaks Nature Center. He first led a walk where the *Cypripedium acaule* (Pink lady's slipper) was displaying its delicate beauty under pine trees in the woodland. Then with an excellent slide presentation, he proceeded to debunk all our preconceived ideas about the fragility of pink lady's slippers.

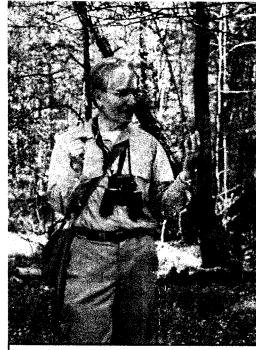
After 25 years of research on over 6,000 plants in the Powhatan National Forest in western Virginia, Dr. Gill has reached the conclusion that the reason lady's slippers have such poor pollination records and set so few seeds is they actually thrive in sun and are most fertile after the canopy is opened up by fire. This explains why they are found mostly under pines which are among the early successional vegetation that occurs after fires. Under the shady canopy of the eastern deciduous forest, they may wait years and years before a fire or storm or logging opens the canopy and they can reproduce. As a result, a single



plant can be well over 100 years old or possibly much older. Dr. Gill is writing <sup>©</sup> USDA, NRCS a book about his research and findings. We eagerly await its publication.

#### **BANSHEE REEKS—A LOUDON COUNTY PRESERVATION GEM**

It was the song of the red-headed woodpecker, rather than the wail of a banshee that treated Chapter members during a glorious May wildflower walk at the Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve in Loudon County, Virginia, led by Dr. Stanwyn G. Shetler, Curator of Botany Emeritus for The Smithsonian Institution. The 695-acre preserve is in the heart of Loudon County. Goose



Dr. Stanwyn Shetler, Curator of Botany Emeritus, The Smithsonian Institution

Creek, a State Scenic River, flows along the southern border of the preserve.

The types of habitat at Banshee Reeks range from old farm fields to meadows, to forested edges to oak/ hickory forest with wet bottomlands and uplands. Dr. Shetler led members through these habitats informing and delighting them. They saw spring beauty (Claytonia virginica), star chickweed (Stellaria pubera), skunk cabbage (Symplocarpus foetidus), arrow arum (Peltandra virginica), green dragon (Arisaema dracontium), pawpaw (Asimina triloba), and countless other native plants. They learned the differences among the stemmed and non-stemmed violets (Viola spp.). They learned that members of the pea family, such as the redbud (Cercis canadensis) often have diadelphous stamens - 9 filaments fused and one separate. Thev learned that opossum and thrushes eat the berries of the spicebush (Lindera benzoin). Above all they learned to appreciate the people of Loudon County for preserving this gem of a natural area.

Chapter President Marianne Mooney recently sent a letter to Thomas Farley, Administrator of the Northern Virginia District of the Virginia Department of Transportation, to comment on the redesign of the Route 50/Route 27 (Washington Boulevard) interchange in Arlington. She asked that VDOT workers protect the native tree and meadow areas during reconstruction and that they eradicate all the *Ailanthus altissima* (tree of heaven) close to the bridges. She recommended that in landscaping the interchange, VDOT use the species for Virginia listed in the U.S. Department of Transportation's 1999 book *Roadside Use of Native Plants.* If you know of similar VDOT proposals in your neighborhoods and would like VNPS to send a letter, please let Marianne know.

#### PARKFAIRFAX DONATION

Last fall, under the guidance and organization of Barbara Farron, the Chapter engaged in a plant rescue from a site across from the Fairfax Government Center. Many plants were rescued and distributed to various nature centers, public gardens, and school habitat areas. Among those receiving plants was ParkFairfax, a community in Alexandria with a large woodland area for residents' use. Although it is the policy of VNPS never to sell rescued plants, ParkFairfax expressed its appreciation to the Chapter by donating \$500 to VNPS. The Chapter board agreed that this gift should go to the state treasury as part of a \$1,000 donation already approved for the state. The money will assist in offsetting the expenses incurred in running the VNPS office at Blandy.

We would like to thank ParkFairfax for its generous donation. Hopefully, we can save more plants through education and conservation efforts.

#### FOUR MILE RUN WORKSHOP A SUCCESS

Four Mile Run, which begins in Fairfax County and runs through Falls Church, Arlington, and Alexandria before it flows into the Potomac, is an important natural resource for area residents. Over 130 people chose to spend a beautiful Saturday indoors at a workshop to learn about Four Mile Run and to share their ideas about how to improve it. Friends of the Potomac, the National Park Service, and the Environmental Protection Agency sponsored the May 5 workshop. The Virginia Native Plant Society along with numerous other organizations, including the City of Alexandria, Arlington County, the Alexandria Seaport Foundation, and Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment were involved in planning the workshop.

A highlight of the morning's activities was the showing of the first segment of the film "Four Mile Run--Reviving an Urban Stream," which was sponsored in part by the Virginia Native Plant Society. The first segment is a documentary history of Four Mile Run. Attendees then heard about a successful watershed restoration effort in Pittsburgh, PA, and an overview of the Four Mile Run watershed with the results of water quality testing before breaking into groups to discuss their priorities for improvements.

When the breakout groups reported the results of their discussions, it was clear that enhancing the natural area by finding a more environmentally friendly means of flood control was the highest priority. The current Corps of Engineers requirement to remove vegetation is deemed too harsh. Many of the groups also cited the importance of eliminating invasive exotic plant species and restoring native vegetation. Congressman Jim Moran spoke before lunch and mentioned VNPS and our work on invasives. He succeeded last year in getting funds to re-examine the flood control requirements of Four Mile Run and look at ways to improve the watershed.

The workshop was capped off by opportunities to take boat rides downstream, to learn about wetland plants, and to do a little birding with experts from the Fairfax Audubon Society. Friends of the Potomac will compile and publish a report on the workshop.

## MANY CONTRIBUTIONS MAKE SPRING PLANT SALE A SUCCESS

The May 19th plant sale at Green Spring Garden Day was a big success and not just because huge numbers of plant lovers showed up like weeds on a rainy day. No, although the turnout was great, it was a big success because of the many contributions made by our own VNPS members. We had a bumper crop of volunteers and many fine plant contributions, making our plant offerings interesting, diverse, and plentiful. We sold a total of 1,037 plants: 118 ferns, 50 woody plants, 52 grasses, 209 sun plants, and 608 shade plants.

The Chapter wants to thank all the volunteers who gave so freely of their time for the Friday afternoon set-up and/or for the Saturday sale: Priscilla Adams, Vivian Attermeyer, Laura Beaty, Tiana Camfiord, Margaret Chatham, Roberta Day, Carol Flint, Shirley Gay, Linda Haller, Jane Hansen, Eleanor Kask, Christine King, Paul Kovenock, Bill Kreitz, Mary Ann Lawler, Ginny McNair, Marianne Mooney, Louis Nichols, Deborah Sabourin, Sally Sieracki, Beth Smith, Elaine Squeri, and Billie Trump.

Likewise, the chapter would also like to give a special thanks to those who contributed so many wonderful plants for the sale: Gerry and Dust Pratt, Beth Smith, Frankie Hull, Margaret Chatham, Kathy Cochrane, Sandy Austin, Deborah Crabtree, Marianne Mooney, Lori Markoff, Eleanor Kask, Mary Pockman, Barbara Stewart, Shirley Gay, Laura Beaty, and others who left us some fine plants without leaving their names.

Special thanks are due to Margaret Chatham for "computerizing" our list of plants. This is a time consuming process, and we greatly appreciate the effort she put into it.

We are now weeding the propagation beds and potting up plants for the September sale. Please remember to save some of your native plant divisions as you garden this summer. And if you are interested in learning more about native plants and acquiring hands-on skill in their propagation and care, come to the propagation beds at Green Spring Park on Wednesday mornings from 9:30-12. Call Laura or Beth with questions. New workers are always welcome.

The Potowmack Chapter is making plant contributions from the beds to the Healing Garden of the Whitman Walker Clinic in Arlington and to the Chesterbrook Elementary School's native plant gardens.

-Co-chairs Laura Beaty and Beth Smith

#### FASCINATING TOUR OF REFUGE PROVIDED BY DR. WELLS

On May 5, Dr. Elizabeth Wells led Chapter members on a plant tour of the Accotink Bay Wildlife Refuge on Ft. Belvoir. Dr. Wells teaches botany at George Washington University and has done extensive field research at the refuge and at Mount Vernon. The walk started in an upland forest and from there the group passed through many different habitats in just a couple of hours. Marshes, beaver ponds, creeks, plateau forests, and tidal wetlands provided a variety of native fauna and flora. Past pale trees of beech, encircled by skeletons of last year's beechdrops (*epilagus viginiana*), the flower stalks of golden club (*Orontium acquaticum*) looked like yellow torches amid the marshy muck. Later in the summer the marsh will be full of rose mallow (*Hibiscus moschuetos*). Prothonotary warblers sang from river birches and osprey circled overhead. Blueberry, dewberry, huckleberry, and wineberry bushes promised a bounty later in the year. Dr. Wells' expertise in the study of colonial plants provided fascinating insights into some common "weeds." Henry VIII once wrote a treatise on gill-over-theground, lobbying for its traditional use in brewing beer over the newer hops. Seventeenth century ships navigated the now shallow Accotink Creek, and carbon dating of ragweed pollen in the creek's sediment attributes much of the sediment deposition to the 18th Century farming era. Accotink Bay Wildlife Refuge proved to be an area full of interest to a lucky group of people, thanks again to Dr. Wells.

#### AUDUBON NATURALIST SOCIETY WALKS TO BE LED BY SHETLER, FLEMING

Sat. July 21, 8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Summer Wildflowers of Great Falls. Cris Fleming will explore the varied habitats of Great Falls Park to look for summer-blooming wildflowers. Wear sturdy shoes; bring a field guide, lunch, and water.

Sat. Aug.4, 8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Summer Wildflowers of Clark's Crossing Park, VA. Stan Shetler will lead participants through the wet and dry meadow habitats of Clark's Crossing Park along the W. & O.D. Bike Trail near Vienna, VA. Field conditions will be open sun in tall vegetation. Bring a field guide, lunch, and water.

Fridays, Oct 5, Oct 19, and Nov. 2, 10:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Fall Flora at Great Falls, VA. Join botanist Cris Fleming for one, two, or all of these weekday walks, observing the progression of flowers turning to fruits and leaves changing from green to gold.

Fees range from \$12 and up, depending whether you are a member of ANS and the number of walks you select. Call the Audubon Naturalist Society, 301-652-9188 for information and reservations, or visit its Web site at www.audubonnaturalist.org.

#### CONFERENCE ON INVASIVES TO BE HELD IN PA

The Mid-Atlantic Exotic Pest Plant Council, Inc., along with The Nature Conservancy of Pennsylvania, the Morris Arboretum of the University of Pennsylvania, and others are sponsoring a conference on "Invasive Plants: Action on all Fronts," August 14 and 15, 2001, at Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA. The symposium is intended for various professionals, gardeners, and homeowners. For information and a brochure call: (215) 247-5777 ext. 156 or 125 or visit their website:

http://www.upenn.edu/morris/symposia.html.

#### ARLINGTON'S PROJECT WATERSHED OFFERS ACTIVITIES FOR VOLUNTEERS

As a result of our work with the parks department and community feedback from the Four Mile Run Workshop (see article on p.4) in which the Virginia Native Plant Society participated, Arlington County and Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment will be including invasive plant removal as part of its Watershed Watch volunteer program. The first focus will be on kudzu at Barcroft Park and a first opportunity to help will be at the picnic described below:

#### Project Watershed Watch Summer Picnic

Sunday, July 8, 1 to 4 p.m. Barcroft Park, 4100 S. Four Mile Run Drive. Arlington Learn about the Four Mile Run watershed and new opportunities to volunteer! After a work session to clean up the stream and remove invasive plants, there will be representatives on hand from Arlington County and area organizations to describe the Project Watershed Watch volunteer programs, including Adopt-A-Stream, stream monitoring, invasive plant removal, storm drain marking, and educational outreach. There will also be educational activities and food/beverages. The event is free. To register contact Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment at 703-228-6427 or ace222hq@aol.com.

VNPS representatives will be at the picnic. We will keep you informed of future dates to volunteer your help. Let's all try to support this effort.

#### **VOLUNTEERS REMOVE GARLIC MUSTARD AT RIVERBEND PARK**

A very successful garlic mustard eradication event was held at Fairfax County's Riverbend Park on Saturday, April 28th. Thirty-two volunteers, including VNPS members, brought back about 30 large garbage bags filled with garlic mustard. By removing the plants in flower, they prevented seeds being deposited in the soil, thus reducing numbers of plants for the future. The effort, organized by Single Volunteers of D.C., was followed by socializing; participants are eager to repeat the event next year.

# FREE YOUR TREES; CUT DOWN THE IVY by Mary Ann Lawler

Arlington County's Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Resources has published a brochure called "Invaders in Our Backyards-Help Save Arlington's Parks from Invasive Vines." It describes several invasive exotic species of vines, which are taking over many of the natural areas in parks throughout the county. The brochure says that English ivy is the worst problem for parks, because it "can take over and destroy wildflowers, shrubs, and native groundcover in its path. It eventually kills the trees it climbs." Ivy is detrimental to trees for several reasons. It can pull down small trees. Vines climbing up tree trunks spread out and surround branches and twigs, preventing most of the sunlight from reaching the leaves of the host tree. They keep the bark damp and make trees vulnerable to fungus and insect pests. The added weight of vines makes infested trees susceptible to blow-over during storms. Loss of host tree vigor becomes evident within a few years and is followed by death a few years later. English ivy also serves as a reservoir for bacterial leaf scorch (Xylella fastidiosa), a plant pathogen that is harmful to native trees such as elms, oaks, and maples. Furthermore, once ivy climbs trees, it produces dark blue berries

that fall or are eaten by birds further spreading the vines.

To prevent its spread and to save your own trees, cut ivy at about eye-level and pull it away from the trunk. The ivy above eye level will die and fall off. After cutting, you can also paint the lower portions of the stems and foliage with an herbicide that contains the active ingredient triclopyr without wetting the tree bark. Follow label directions carefully. Because English ivy is an evergreen vine, and remains active during the winter, herbicide applications can be made to it any time of year as long as temperatures are above 55 or 60 degrees Fahrenheit for a few days. Fall and winter applications will avoid or minimize impacts to many native plant species. Repeat herbicidal treatments are likely to be needed.

For our Arlington members, the County Cooperative Extension Office in Fairlington has copies of the brochure, which also provides information on controlling porcelain berry, milea-minute weed, and other invasive vines. Alternative ground covers are listed in the brochure and will soon be on display at the Rock Quarry Garden at Bon Air Park. VNPS also publishes brochures on invasive vines; these are available at our meetings and plant sales.

#### **INVASIVES AGAIN HIGHLIGHTED IN INTERIOR APPROPRIATIONS BILL**

Our continued thanks to Congressman Jim Moran for his support for native plants and control of invasive exotic plants on Federal lands. Mr. Moran is on the Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee for Interior and Related Agencies. In response to testimony from the Virginia Native Plant Society, the following language is contained in House Report 107-103 on the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations bill for fiscal year 2002:

INVASIVE SPECIES CONTROL ON PUBLIC LANDS

In the appropriation for Interior and Related Agencies for fiscal year 2001, the Congress provided an increase of \$8,000,000 for invasive exotic species control for the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, the U.S. Geological Survey, and the U.S. Forest Service. These bureaus should report to the Committee by October 1, 2001, on the uses of these funds, related proposals for fiscal year 2002, and the extent to which site managers have been using native plants in their wild land restoration and rehabilitation activities and landscaping.

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# AN EXPLANATION OF HOW RARE NATURAL RESOURCES ARE CATEGORIZED

As an aid to members who are not familiar with the category notation presented in the Runnymede article on p.1 and often seen elsewhere, we provide the following information:

The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation set protection priorities for Natural Heritage Resources (NHR's) and assigns a state rank (the letter S followed by a number). NHR's are rare plant and animal species, rare and exemplary natural communities, and significant geologic features.

- S1 Extremely rare; usually 5 or fewer populations or occurrences in the state; or may be a few remaining individuals; often especially vulnerable to extirpation.
- S2 Very rare; usually between 5 and 20 populations or occurrences; or with many individuals in fewer occurrences; often susceptible to becoming extirpated.
- S3 Rare to uncommon; usually between 20 and 100 populations or occurrences; may have fewer occurrences, but with a large number of individuals in some populations; may be susceptible to large-scale disturbances.
- S4 Common; usually greater than 100 populations or occurrences, but may be fewer with many large populations; may be restricted to only a portion of the state; usually not susceptible to immediate threats.

# LISTSERV SWELLS TO 100 MEMBERS

According to Sylvia Orli, publicity chair and listserv keeper, there are now 100 Potowmack Chapter members signed on to receive messages via e-mail. This enables members to easily send messages of general interest and to receive timely information. If you have e-mail and would like to join, see the box on page 2. You will not be overwhelmed with excessive mail.

2		oter Events	Potowmack Chapter Virginia Native Plant Soci	aty STRO	Contraction of the second s	Top of a strategy
July	C	alendar No meetings	P.O. Box 5311 Arlington, VA 22205			
Aug	4	Rod Simmons walk, Runnymede Park, 9 am-1 pm			All and the second s	<b>34</b>
Aug	9	Board Mtg, 7:30 pm, Green Spring Park				
Sep	13	Board Mtg, 7:30 pm, Green Spring Park				
Sep	22	Fall Plant Sale, Green Spring Park, 10-3				
Oct	11	Chapter Annual Mtg, Cris Fleming program speaker	Please verify your address information and your renewal date on the mailing label.			
Oct	13	Follow-up walk Great Falls with Cris Fleming	-	Printed on recycled po	aper	