

POTOWMACK NEWS

Volume 19, No 5

Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

Sep/Oct 2001

FALL PLANT SALE SET FOR SEPTEMBER 22

Come to beautiful **Green Spring Gardens Park** from **10 am to 3 pm on September 22** and enjoy the day. We will have our usual tents offering woody plants, ferns, plants for sun and shade gardens, and advice on how to grow them. Many other vendors will also be there selling plants as well as crafts and food. Also come if you would like to volunteer to assist at the sale. We will be setting up the plant sales tables on Friday, September 21 around 12 pm if you would like to help then. Or, have twice the fun and join us on both days. It's always good to see the excitement when the sale begins.

Anyone who has plants to donate should get them to the beds about 2 weeks before the sale so we can add them to the inventory and make labels. The weather is suitable right now for dividing some of those natives in your garden. Remember, we are looking for perennials, woody plants, ferns, or whatever--surprise us! If you have difficulty getting the plants to the beds, just give us a call and we'll make arrangements to pick them up.

As a reminder, fall is the best time to put new plants in your garden. The soil is not too wet, it is nicely warmed, and it provides good growing conditions for plant roots. Become familiar with a new plant. Plant a spring-blooming native and watch for it next spring. We look forward to seeing you. Call Laura Beaty 703-534-8746 or Beth Smith 703- 644-1760 if you have any questions. See below for directions to the park.

CHAPTER ANNUAL MEETING OFFERS PROGRAM AND COMPLEMENTARY WALK

This year's Chapter Annual Meeting will be held at **Green Spring Gardens Park** on **Thursday, October 11th at 7 pm**. A short business meeting and presentation of service awards will be followed by a lecture and slide show given by well-known botanist and chapter Botany Chair, **Cris Fleming**. Cris will speak on the tremendous floral variety of the land bordering the Potomack River in our area. Many rare plant species are found there in an amazing range of habitats. After her talk, refreshments will be served. Reservations are not needed for the meeting.

On Saturday, Oct 13 from 9 am-12 pm, Cris will lead a morning walk at **Great Falls** that will complement the slide show given at the Annual Meeting on Thursday. Plan to meet at the Visitor Center area between the two buildings. We are hoping to succeed in having the park fee waived for our group. Bring water, binoculars if you have them, and any field guides that you use. Wear comfortable shoes, as we will be walking in some rocky places out on the bedrock terrace. **To register for the walk, call Cris at (301) 657-9289.**

Directions to Green Spring Gardens Park: From Rt. 236 in Alexandria turn right at Green Spring Road and proceed 1 block north to the park entrance.

Directions to Great Falls: From the beltway, take exit 44, Georgetown Pike (Route 193) toward Great Falls for about 4 miles and turn right at the sign for the park (also a stop light for Old Dominion Road). The entrance booth is about 1 mile from Georgetown Pike.

If you are unable to attend the Chapter Annual Meeting, please mail us the ballot that you will find on page 7. We need at least 10% of the membership to vote in order to validate the election.

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE: The Potowmack Chapter board strives to accommodate its membership by providing a wide range of programs, walks, plant sales and information in our newsletters. We hope that this best serves our members and promotes the philosophy of the Virginia Native Plant Society, which centers on conservation and education. We don't ask much from our members besides paying dues on time and taking advantage of our offerings. I'll ask you this month, though, to join us at the plant sale in September and/or the annual meeting in October. Bring a friend and encourage them to join VNPS. Pressing issues like the destruction of our natural areas by invasive plants need the attention of as many people as possible. And the rewards are learning about and appreciating our fabulous native flora.

Marianne Mooney

BUDDLEJA WARNING

Most of us in VNPS are aware of the decline of pollinators, and we try to grow plants in our gardens that will provide nectar or caterpillar food. We know that native plants are the best, but butterfly bush has a special allure, because it is so prolific and attractive to pollinators. But the July 15 issue of *American Nurseryman* warns nursery professionals to avoid *Buddleja davidii* in an article entitled "Beware of Butterfly Bush" by Dr. Tomas Anisko of Longwood Gardens and Uncha Im of Chollipo Arboretum in the Republic of Korea. Many species of buddleja exist, but the species *davidii* is the most likely to escape from gardens and become invasive in natural areas, particularly along streams. Gardeners introduced it to England at the end of the 19th Century and it is now ranked as one of the top 20 invasive weeds in Great Britain.

How does it spread? The seed set is prolific with up to 40,000 tiny seeds per infructescence, and seeds are easily dispersed by the wind. Its rapid growth, resistance to drought, and ability to out-compete other plants have enabled this shrub to colonize natural areas from Pennsylvania south to North Carolina, and it is a particular problem in Washington State. Several specimens were recently spotted in a woodland edge along the Potomac River off the southern portion of the George Washington Memorial Parkway.

If you live near a natural area, extirpate any *Buddleja davidii*, and plant something else. Rod Simmons, our Registry Chair, says that Joe Pye weed (*Eupatorium fistulosum*) and all the *Eupatorium* species rival the *Buddleja* in attracting butterflies. The current issue of *Virginia Wildlife*, published by the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, says Joe Pye weed is "an absolute magnet for butterflies and bees," and "all of the Joe Pye weeds are useful to wildlife."

Even if you don't live near a natural area, please consider replacing your *Buddleja* because, like purple loosestrife (*Lythrum* species) seeds could also spread in bird feathers and feet, in animal fur, and by mowers. At the very least, deadhead the inflorescences after they bloom. The *American Nurseryman* article also recommends "pruning in fall rather than in spring (despite the risk of increased cold injury)." Here are some woody alternatives recommended by Sam Jones of Atlantic Star Nursery for nectar, for larval hosts, or both: bottlebrush buckeye, Dutchman's pipe, hackberry, New Jersey tea, passionvine, paw paw, sassafras, spicebush, sweetbay magnolia, and summersweet.

BOARD OFFICERS		
President	Marianne Mooney	534-8179
Vice President	John C. Magee	478-9428
Secretary	Liz Nalle	698-7606
Treasurer	Bill Kreitz	620-4415
COMMITTEE CHAIRS		
Botany	Cris Fleming	301-657-9289
Conservation	Lisa Palmer/Rob Aldrich	526-0535
Awards/Recognition	Anne Crocker	437-0355
Membership	Linda Haller	938-8504
Newsletter	Sally Sieracki	978-5865
Labeling/Mailing	Markoff family	573-7121
Programs	Mary Ann Lawler	684-8622
Education	Shirley Gay	920-1913
Propagation/Plant Sales	Laura Beaty	534-8746
	Beth Smith	644-1760
Publications	Roberta Day	560-5528
Publicity	Sylvia Orli	528-5618
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.

RUNNYMEDE PARK—A DIABASE PLANT COMMUNITY

On August 4 **Rod Simmons**, Potowmack Chapter's Registry Chair and field botanist extraordinaire, led a group of members through the many natural communities at Runnymede Park in Herndon. Over millions of years the igneous diabase rock under Runnymede uplifted and eroded, creating soils rich in calcium and magnesium. Plant life in the area is remarkably diverse with over 400 species in its 58 acres. No other natural diabase plant community remains in Fairfax County and the site is a Virginia Native Plant Society Registry Site.

Much of the land is still original oak/hickory forest, and there are special forest communities as well. Part of the area is considered "Piedmont-Mountain" forest with bottomlands containing sycamore (*Plantanus occidentalis*) and ironwood (*Carpinus caroliniana*), swamps with very large swamp white oak (*Quercus bicolor*) and hazelnut (*Corylus americana*), and alluvial forest with large numbers of shingle oak (*Quercus imbricarius*) and black walnut (*Juglans nigra*). In addition there is an Upland Depression Swamp with numerous diabase outcrops and scattered sedges and woodreed (*Cinna arundinacea*). Rocky sections of Sugarland Run contain black willow (*Salix nigra*) and bladderhut (*Staphylea trifoliata*) and other species adaptable to frequent flooding.

The park retains early succession meadows by mowing once a year in winter to contain the woody species. Gray goldenrod (*Solidago nemoralis*), also called old field goldenrod, the first of the goldenrods to bloom, was just beginning. The elm-leafed goldenrod (*Solidago ulmifolia*), which is a diabase indicator, was not yet in bloom. Marsh pink (*Sabatia angularis*) popped out brightly among the poverty oat grasses.

Throughout the walk, chapter members kept their eyes out for potential landscape plants beneficial to birds and pollinators and found orange coneflower (*Rudbeckia fulgida*), boneset (*Eupatorium perfoliatum*), oxeye sunflower (*Heliopsis helianthoides*), compass plant (*Silphium perfoliatum*), ironweed (*Vernonia novaboracensis*), and (*V. glauca*).

Rod recommended Joe Pye weed (*Eupatorium fistulosa*) as a great magnet for butterflies instead of butterfly bush (*Buddleja davidii*), which has become invasive in natural areas. He also noted that the green coneflower (*Rudbeckia lacineata*) is excellent to attract goldfinches and the narrow-leafed mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum flexulosum*) to attract skipper butterflies.

Runnymede is particularly fortunate to have two VNPS members as champions for its preservation and as volunteers: **John DeNoyer** and his wife **Anne Csonka** were instrumental in establishing the park as a natural area and in the environmental programs now conducted there. Thank you both for all your wonderful work, including the delicious spicebush tea served after the walk. And thanks to **Rod Simmons** and **Meghan Tice** for their significant work to produce the written guide "Vascular Flora and Natural Communities of Runnymede Park."

Addendum: The list of native plants for the park has grown to 423! Seven new species were discovered on the day of the field trip and two on more recent visits. They are hairy angelica (*Angelica venenosa*), whorled milkweed (*Asclepias verticillata*), false pimpernel (*Lindernia dubia*), switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*), yellow passionflower (*Passiflora lutea*), marsh pink (*Sabatia angularis*), horse-gentian (*Triosteum angustifolium*), maple-leaved viburnum (*Viburnum acerifolium*), and heart-leaved golden alexanders (*Zizia aptera*).

- ❖ WANT TO JOIN VNPS? Call Linda Haller, Membership Chair, at 703 938-8504, and she will send you an application.
- ❖ WANT TO JOIN THE CHAPTER LISTSERV? Send an e-mail to Sylvia Orli at stone.sylvia@nrmnh.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.

A MEADOW FROM A DIFFERENT VIEW by Mary Ann Lawler

The meadow is not large. It's about 100 feet long and 25 feet wide on a sunny slope above the rocks along the easternmost portion of Four Mile Run. It was planted with the help of the Virginia Native Plant Society and others to create a haven for birds and pollinators, where an Alexandria park had had grass. A sign reads: "Native Plant Meadow. Do not mow." The meadow abuts a bicycle trail, many of whose users have called out cheery support like "Love the flowers!" "Thanks for doing this!" "Great work!"

But there was one negative reaction. On this particular morning in early June when the *Rudbeckia hirta* (black-eyed susan) was just beginning to bloom, a woman walking her two dogs came down to the edge of the meadow. "Who is responsible for this? Do you know why they put this here?" "Well, several people. The Alexandria Parks Department approved it. The idea is to create a place that will benefit butterflies, birds, and bees. "Oh, I see the bees. Just what we need—more bees to sting us. I wouldn't let my dogs in there. There are probably ticks and other things, too. I'd be careful if I were you."

"Actually, most bees don't sting. Honeybees do, but they are in serious decline. These are mostly bumblebees; they're really harmless."

"I think this looks terrible," she said. "It's so weedy. Look at the dandelions."

"It takes time; some things just aren't in bloom yet, and I'm working on getting rid of the dandelions."

"You need to know that I don't like it, and I'm one of those people who call." She paused. "What's that orange stuff?"

"It's called butterfly weed and it was planted especially for the monarch and other butterflies."

"I guess everyone has their causes, but I don't see why they put it where people walk by. The birds can go over to the other side," she gestured to the far bank.

"The problem is that they spray that area with herbicide to keep the vegetation down because of the Corps of Engineers requirement."

"Well, this just doesn't look good. They could at least put in some poppies."

"Hm. Now there's an idea."

A few weeks later when the *Rudbeckia hirta* (black-eyed susan) and *Aesclepias tuberosa* (butterfly weed) were all in full bloom, she came along again. I said: "Hi, there. What do you think of it now? See the purple flowers blooming?" I pointed to the *Monarda fistulosa* (bee balm).

"Yes, I see. I guess all your work is paying off."

"And those will be goldenrod over there," I said.

"Oh, that'll be great for people's allergies."

"Actually, goldenrod doesn't"---

"I still think it's misplaced," she interrupted. "I don't mind wildflowers along the highway when I'm in my car. But not here close to the trail. Look how tall it's getting. Somebody could hide in there. I'd be careful if I were you."

As she walked away, I could hear some song sparrows and the distinctive "sip sip sip seeee saay" of a savannah sparrow, which I had not heard there before. If only the sparrow were able to call the Alexandria Parks Department.

THANKS FOR HELPING

If you read the board members names on page 2, you've probably seen "Markoff family" listed under newsletter. The family members in question, consisting of mother **Lori**, home-schooled children **Gabriel** and **Rachel**, and college student **Jonathan** have been responsible for 5 years worth of stamping, labeling, and mailing your newsletter. However, this fall the Markoffs will be moving on to other things. We thank them for their service!

POTOWMACK CHAPTER REGRETS THE LOSS OF TWO SPECIAL MEMBERS

Walker Newman, who died on June 28 following surgery, was a charter member of VNPS and a valued participant in chapter affairs. During the early years of the chapter when the propagation beds were getting started, he supplied excellent compost from his own yard. He made many contributions, especially redbud seedlings, to the plant sales. He donated the materials and labor to make a potting bench needed by the propagation bed workers. After a long career with the U.S. Forest Service he had an extensive knowledge of plants, and his advice was often asked and cheerfully given.

In recent years, Walker, a Master Gardener, created and maintained a native plant garden at Fairfax County's Thomas Jefferson Library on Rt. 50 (See *Potowmack News*, Jan/Feb 2000), to which he donated his own plants. He was president of the Friends of the Thomas Jefferson Library group and he volunteered at Green Spring Gardens Park at the Manor House and at the Horticultural Center answering visitor questions and taking phone calls. He was loved for his good spirits, kind heart, and hard work.

It is with great sadness that we say goodbye to **Gerry Pratt**, a long-time member of the Potowmack Chapter, who died July 19th. She and her husband Dust joined the chapter in 1983, shortly after the society was established. Her contributions to the chapter are endless. Her love of native plants extended beyond her own beautiful garden, which was twice on the chapter's spring garden tours, to the chapter's propagation beds where she initiated many improvements. For 9 years Gerry chaired the Propagation Committee, attracting and working with many volunteers who maintain the chapter's beds at Green Spring Gardens Park, expanding the offerings of plants at the chapter's biennial plant sales, and improving the propagation beds themselves.

Before Gerry began pouring her seemingly endless energies into the beds, the chapter was clearing approximately \$1,500 annually from its plant sales. She changed all of that with sales that reached \$9,500 annually. In the process, members were offered a large number of selections for their sunny/shade gardens not available at local nurseries. She started the seed program for the chapter, which became an inexpensive way for new gardeners to grow native plants. Other types of plants were also offered in great number under Gerry, including woody plants and grasses. She, Dust, and the volunteers worked together to plant a demonstration meadow adjacent to the propagation beds at Green Spring. Dust made the beautiful sign for the meadow.

Early in the chapter's years she and her husband participated in plant rescues around the region. It was during those years that Green Spring's native plant trail was given a major boost with plants saved from the bulldozer. Her commitment to the cause of conservation was the driving force behind much of her work at the beds. Part of her success at the beds was her organization and management skills. There were never too many volunteers, as she had jobs for everyone regardless of skill. She challenged her staff with new jobs that netted them increasing confidence in working with native plants. She herself gained tremendous skills on her computer by keeping detailed records of the plants that were offered and sold at the sales. These records now guide us in determining how many of what plants to offer at the sales.

We were all sorry when she decided to retire from the post of Propagation Chair in 1999. A real tribute to Gerry is knowing that no fewer than three people are doing the work she did alone. Gerry's presence is missed, but there are signs of her contributions all around us at the propagation beds. In fact, while she was still there, we dedicated our new shed to her with a plaque that reads:

*To Gerry Pratt - Our Fearless Leader
From the Volunteers*

She taught us well. Our plant sales have been good and we hope we are helping our members select just the right plant for their gardens, just as Gerry would have done. We are grateful for all of the energy she poured into the beds and for the opportunity to get to know her and work with her. Thanks Gerry.

AN INTERN TELLS HER STORY by Aleta Gadino

What's it like to be a native plant intern at Green Spring Gardens Park? Very educational! I came to this job seeking to complete 80 hours of required internship experience for my Associate's Degree in Horticultural Technology at Northern Virginia Community College. I am now well beyond those required hours but am still garnering invaluable, hands-on experience in site selection, culture, and maintenance of a broad collection of native plants.

Under the direction of Brenda Skarphol, the curatorial horticulturist at Green Spring Gardens Park, I began my adventure in early April when the spring woodland plants were coloring the understory with broad strokes of yellow, violet blue, and white (from yellow wood poppy [*Stylophorum diphyllum*], Virginia bluebells [*Mertensia virginica*], and spring beauty [*Claytonia virginica*], respectively). I became a native plant enthusiast from that moment, and have continued to be impressed with the changing moods of our woodland areas as the season progressed.

As the weather warmed into May, weeding and mulching around the emerging perennials became a high priority. The siting and planting of new additions to the garden demanded our attention as well. Of all my tasks, I think I learned the most from keeping a weekly bloom record of all the plants in the Native Plant Trail. I became intimately acquainted with the botanical names, common names, origins, sites, and bloom times of our native plants.

As summer arrived, we added the task of watering areas that became stressed when there was little rain, all the while continuing our usual maintenance to remove invasive alien plants (such as English ivy, garlic mustard, and ground ivy) and to keep invasive native plants (such as poison ivy and pokeweed) in bounds. While much of the job involved outdoor work, there was plenty of indoor work to do as well. I was able to assist Brenda in editing an educational plant information sheet on recommended native herbaceous perennial plants for shade gardens in our area. In addition to herbaceous perennials, we included ferns, ornamental grasses, sedges, and wood rushes in this publication.

As I finish up in late September, I will have had the opportunity to observe our Virginia natives grow from young shoots to fully mature, fruiting plants. I am grateful to the staff of Green Spring, and Brenda in particular, for the excellent intern opportunity they have provided me. I have learned much more than I would have in any classroom environment. *Editors note: Potowmack Chapter pays the salary of an intern for Green Spring as part of our education mission.*

USDA GRADUATE SCHOOL OFFERS COURSES TAUGHT BY FLEMING, SHETLER

Autumn's glory is created by woody plants, so fall is the ideal time to study techniques of woody plant field identification. Participants learn the use of keys and the principles of taxonomy as exemplified by the Central Atlantic's diverse forest communities. Field trips feature the exploration of this diversity in local woodlands.

- ❖ Wednesday, September 19, 2001 to November 14, 2001 (Session 101426); 7 to 9 pm.
Location: Woodend Sanctuary, Chevy Chase, MD
Instructor: **Cristol Fleming**; Tuition: \$204
- ❖ Wednesday, September 19, 2001 to November 07, 2001 (Session 102228); 7 to 9 pm.
Location: Rust Nature Sanctuary, Leesburg, VA
Instructor: **Stanwyn Shetler**; Tuition: \$204

For more information about these or other courses offered, visit the USDA Graduate School web site at <http://grad.usda.gov> and click on "evening and weekend programs" and then "summer and fall 2001." To register by phone call (202) 314-3320 or E-mail registrar@grad.usda.gov.

REPORT OF THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The 2000-2001 Nominating Committee, consisting of Brenda Skarphol and Liz Smith, is pleased to present the following slate of candidates for offices in the Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society for 2001-2002.

OFFICERS

President - Marianne Mooney: Marianne has been president of Potowmack Chapter since 1998-99, was secretary in 1997-98, and has been an active propagation committee member since 1995. She was named 1998 Volunteer of the Year at Huntley Meadows Park and currently serves on the Arlington Urban Forestry Commission.

Vice President - John Magee: John has been Vice President since 1999 and served as Education Chair the year before that. He is a landscape designer and founder of the Charles Darwin Foundation and Gardening for Galapagos campaign, which collects money to support the native plants of the Galapagos Islands.

Secretary - Liz Nalle: Liz has been chapter secretary for the past year and has kindly agreed to continue for another. She holds a degree in Environmental Science and worked in the landscaping industry for 15 years. Her native plant garden was opened to members on the chapter's spring garden tour.

Treasurer - Vivian "Dusty" Dukes: Dusty holds an MBA with a specialty in finance and worked for 15 years for area hi-tech firms pricing, negotiating, and administering contracts for computer equipment and software. She has been a member of VNPS for several years but has not previously held an office. She is looking forward to this opportunity to become more active in the Potomac Chapter.

AT LARGE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Sally Sieracki - Sally has been newsletter editor since 1998 and has also served as secretary and as a propagation committee member.

Eleanor Kask - Eleanor has been a faithful and hard-working member of the propagation committee since 1998.

IF YOU WILL BE UNABLE TO ATTEND THE CHAPTER ANNUAL MEEING ON OCTOBER 11, PLEASE MAIL THE FOLLOWING BALLOT BY OCTOBER 9 TO:

 Liz Nalle, Secretary
3900 Malcolm CT.
Annandale, VA 22003

----- ✂ ----- Cut here -----
-----2001-2002 Potowmack Chapter Ballot (For use of spouse in family membership)
_____ I approve of the slate of nominees _____ I approve of the slate of nominees

Signature _____

Signature _____

NEED AN OUTING? TRY MARYLAND'S ADKINS ABORETUM'S FALL NATIVE PLANT SALE

On Saturday, September 8, 2001, 9 am-1 pm, at Adkins Aboretum (which is not very far past the bay bridge on the Delmarva Peninsula) you can join in the joy of fall colors – purple asters, yellow sunflowers, orange butterfly milkweed, translucent grasses, vibrant red and golden shrubs and trees! This year's sale features some special plants grown from locally collected seeds – Maryland golden aster, shaggy blazing star, downy blue lobelia, swamp sunflower, rose mallow, bushy bluestem grass, and many others. The sale also features fun crafts and educational activities for children, guided woodland walks, a gift shop full of books and art, and assorted staff and Master Gardeners to answer your questions and add to the fun and learning.

Adkins Arboretum is a non-profit organization that is dedicated to the conservation of the native flora of the Delmarva Peninsula. The Arboretum is located at 12610 Eveland Road, Ridgely (Caroline County), Maryland, 2 miles north of Route 404. The Visitors Center is open Monday-Saturday, 9 am-5 pm, and (through October) Sunday, 11 am-3 pm. The grounds are open daily year round. For more information, please call the Arboretum at 410-634-2847 or visit the website: www.adkinsarboretum.org.

PUBLIC INVITED TO LEARN ABOUT CREATING WILDLIFE HABITAT IN ARLINGTON

On Tuesday, September 25, at 7:30 pm at the Arlington Central Library at 1015 N. Quincy St., you can join other Arlington residents, businesses, churches, and schools in creating a National Wildlife Federation Community Wildlife Habitat. This project is designed to make Arlington more wildlife-friendly and create landscapes that promote neighborhood beautification, safety, and resource conservation. The program will include a slide show demonstrating examples of backyard, schoolyard, and workplace habitats; presentations by David Mizejewski, Manager of the National Wildlife Federation Backyard Habitat Program and others; free information on how to create a wildlife habitat by providing food, water, shelter, and places to raise young; door prizes; and refreshments.

This event is sponsored by the National Wildlife Federation and Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment. For more information, call 703-228-6427 or e-mail office@arlingtonenvironment.org.

Chapter Events

Calendar

- Sept 13 Board meeting 7:30 pm, Green Spring Park
- Sept 22 Plant Sale, Green Spring Park, 10am-3pm
- Oct 11 Chapter Annual Meeting, Green Spring Park, 7 pm
- Oct 13 Cris Fleming walk, Great Falls Park, 9am-12 pm



**Potowmack Chapter
Virginia Native Plant Society
P.O. Box 5311
Arlington, VA 22205**



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