

POTOWMACK NEWS

Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

VOLUME 41, No. 4, SEPT-OCT, 2023

Fringetree or Old Man's Beard

Chionanthus virginicus

By Margaret Chatham



FRINGETREE IN FLOWER IN MAY. ALL PHOTOS FOR THIS ARTICLE BY MARGARET CHATHAM.

Chionanthus virginicus translates to “snow flower of Virginia,” an apt name for Fringetree, though according to plants.usda.gov it is native from Massachusetts to Texas.

I was completely unaware of its existence while growing up in New Jersey, where it is listed as native but rare in the Flora of the Southeastern United States. When I first encountered it here, I wondered at it being called a tree. Like the Bladdernut (*Staphylea trifolia*) Laura Beaty wrote about in March, Fringetree is often a shrub less than 12 feet tall. Only when I saw the trees at the Virginia Visitor Center at Great Falls Park did I agree that it might sometimes merit the name of “tree.” In the 1998 version of Michael Dirr’s *Manual of Woody Landscape Plants*, he lists co-champion trees: one 41’ by 31’ in Florida, and one 32’ by 35’ at Mount Vernon right here in Fairfax County. I don’t know what happened to these trees, but currently American Forests’ Champion Trees Registry only recognizes one champion *Chionanthus virginicus*, in Salt Lake City.

Fringetree is part of the Olive Family *Oleaceae*, as are the ashes (*Fraxinus*), which explains the reports we sometimes hear of Emerald Ash Borers attacking Fringe Trees. Parenthetically, Autumn Olive *Elaeagnus umbellata* is in its own family of *Elaeagnaceae*.

Upcoming

Rod Simmons:

Virginia Goldenrods Examined

Thursday, Sept 14, 7:30-9 pm

By Zoom

Rod Simmons, plant ecologist and VNPS Board member, will give a presentation on the diversity of goldenrods in Virginia, especially regarding their associated natural communities and habitats. Identification will also be discussed.

Ferns at Riverbend

Led by Kit Sheffield

Friday, Sept 15, 8:30-11:30 am

Learn what makes a fern a fern and how to identify some on this 2-mile walk. Space limited.

Deborah Barber:

Getting Started on iNaturalist

Thursday, Oct 12, 7:30-9 pm

By Zoom

Whether you’ve used iNaturalist extensively or not at all, there’s more that you can do with it and learn from it.

Fall Colors at Dyke Marsh

Led by Alan Ford and Margaret Chatham

Monday, Oct 23, 1-3 pm

Turning leaves and perhaps a few late flowers — who knows? Space limited: register by sending an email with “Fall Colors Walk” in the subject line to info@fodm.org.

Potowmack Chapter Annual Meeting

Sunday, Nov 5, 1-3:30 pm

In person at Green Spring Gardens Horticulture Center. Program TBA, but save the date now!

All events are free and open to the public. Walks require preregistration. To receive email notices about upcoming events, subscribe to our mailing list at <https://vnps.groups.io/g/potowmack> You can also send a blank email to potowmack+subscribe@vnps.groups.io.

Manage your VNPS Membership Online

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7. Update any other profile information, then click "Submit."

Remembering John Dodge



The Grass Bunch notes another of John's contributions to VNPS and the study and preservation of natural ecosystems in Virginia. He helped get the Grass Bunch started. He was our elder statesman, lending us a degree of botanic knowledge and connection that we sorely needed in our quest to figure out how to identify grasses, sedges, and rushes. Thank you, John!

See his obituary at <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/name/john-dodge-obituary?id=37237805>.

FRINGE TREE FROM PAGE 1

Knowing little about Fringetrees, I read all that Dirr had to say about them



when I first planted mine years ago. I took to heart his statement that they are dioecious or polygamo-dioecious, with the males being preferred because their flowers are larger. My tree bore nice, big flowers (and no fruit), so I assumed it was a male, and searched in vain for years for a known female tree to plant with it. Surprise! This year it is growing just a few fruits. Now I've read in William

Cullina's *Native Trees, Shrubs, and Vines* that when he tried to use petal length as a way to sex his plants, he was successful about half the time.

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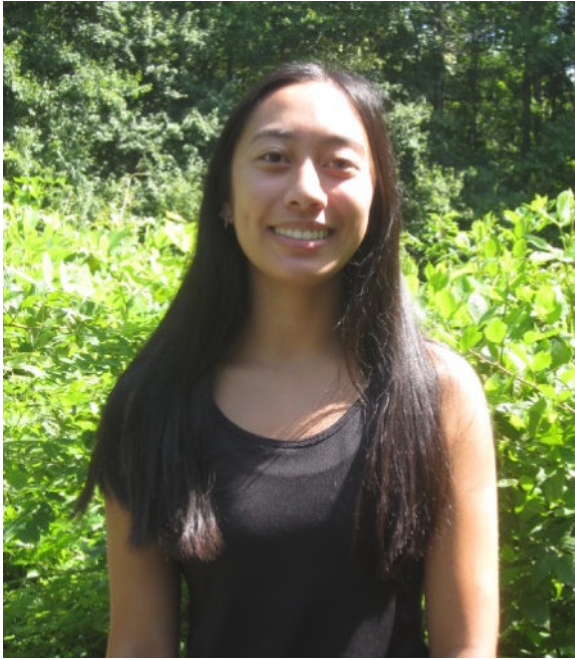
Walks

Submissions to *Potowmack News* may be sent to The Editor at vnps.pot@gmail.com

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2023 VNPS-Sponsored Interns



My name is Renee Ok, and I was honored to hold the position of the 2023 Virginia Native Plant Society Intern at Huntley Meadows Park. I'm a rising senior at Virginia Tech studying Ecological Restoration with a minor in Environmental Science. During my 12-week internship, I've gained experience in a wide array of activities to support the park's biodiversity and community, such as pulling invasive species like false hawksbeard and purple loosestrife, managing cattail populations, restuffing mallard tubes with hay, and shearing overgrown plants/removing fallen branches out of trail paths. Along with everyday environmental management, I've participated in studies including vernal pool monitoring, dip netting to identify macroinvertebrates for water quality testing, turtle trapping for population and diversity, as well as snake scale swabbing for fungal diseases and their microbiomes.

I also devised my own study to better understand the health status of the beech trees within Huntley Meadows. I was specifically looking for any signs of a newly emerging disease affecting beeches, known as Beech Leaf Disease (BLD). This disease is thought to be analogous to the American Chestnut Blight, which has completely wiped out the once expansive American Chestnut tree. Cases of BLD in Fairfax County were discovered in 2021, so I found it significant to try and survey the population of beech trees in Huntley Meadows as the Virginia Native Plant Society intern. Simultaneously, I was also recording any other beech tree diseases and/or ailments. Out of my sample group of 100 beech trees, I can happily say that there were no signs of BLD! I found common diseases and ailments such as anthracnose, erineum patches, and rolling beech leaf, but they did not pose significant health threats to any of the trees.

Having the opportunity to intern at Huntley Meadows Park is something that I will always be grateful

for. I have gained experience in the world of environmental park management, ranging from turtle and insect rescuing, to removing a plexiglass barrier in the visitor's center. I've even learned the important skill of dodging spiderwebs in the forest while simultaneously scanning the ground for wasps and yellow jackets! As I approach my last year in college, my one goal was to be able to apply what I've learned in school to a real-world occupation, and I think my experience at Huntley Meadows was just the right job for that. Lastly, I'd like to thank Chris King - the Natural Resource Manager, the Huntley Meadows staff, the Virginia Native Plant Society – Potowmack Chapter for sponsoring the internship, the Friends of Huntley Meadows, and the incredibly knowledgeable volunteers for providing me with such valuable insight and support along this journey.



My name is Yasmin Zarabi, and I've been working this summer as the Virginia Native Plant Garden Intern at Green Spring Gardens. I'm a rising senior at New York University, where I am double majoring in Environmental Studies and Public Policy. During my internship I've been working with Brenda Skarphol to help remove invasives from the Native Plant Garden and plant more native species at Green Spring, as well as other tasks like limbing up trees, other pruning, and watering. I've also had the wonderful opportunity to work with members of the Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society every Wednesday morning and help them with propagating and potting the various native plants they grow. I've been able to learn so much more about native plants and how important they are to our ecosystems. I'm thankful to the Virginia Native Plant Society for this enriching experience, as well as to all the staff and volunteers here at Green Spring!

PHOTOS BY MARGARET CHATHAM

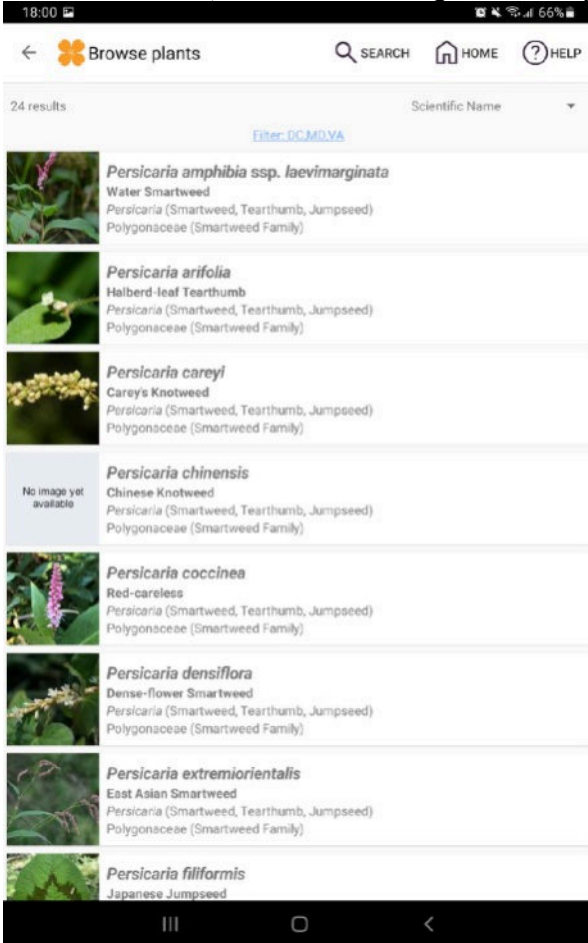
FloraQuest: Northern Tier

Reviewed by David Gorsline

VNPSers familiar with the *Flora of the Southeastern United States* (FSUS) from Alan Weakley et al. will be pleased to know that the first mobile app derived from its database was released in May, under the name **FloraQuest: Northern Tier**.

Covering Virginia north to Pennsylvania and west to Kentucky and the unglaciated parts of Illinois, the app has much the same look and feel as the app for the *Flora of Virginia* (the same software team worked on both) -- with some interesting differences.

You can limit the app's entries to specific states from the wider region, as in the first screen shot, where I restricted search to just Virginia, Maryland, and the District. FloraQuest has entries for 24 *Persicaria* species from the DMV, while *Flora of Virginia* has only 17.



An unscientific sampling of the two apps suggests that FloraQuest has more photos on its Images tab, compared to the same species in *Flora of Virginia*.

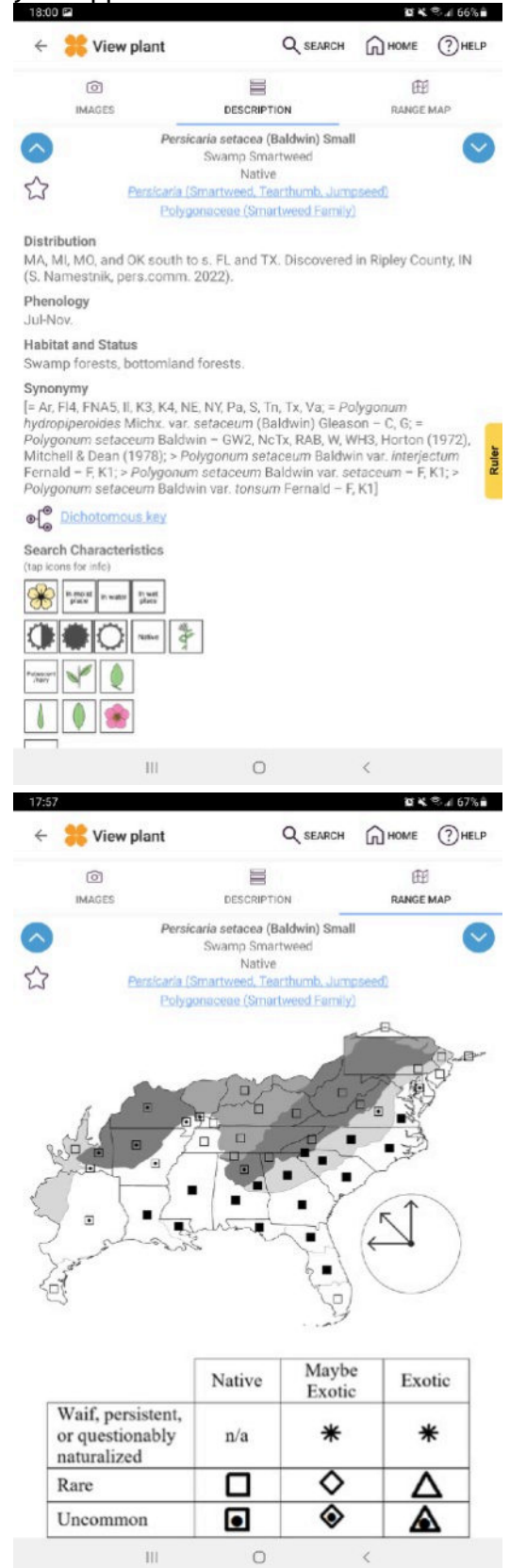
The Description tab lacks a detailed description, so you'll depend more on the dichotomous and graphical keys. (See second screen shot.) Sections for Phenology, Habitat and Status, Synonymy, and so on are comparable between the two apps.

The Range Map tab shows the most striking difference between the two apps. (See third screen shot.) Rather than colored dots by county, FloraQuest marks each geophysical province of a state with a more elaborate symbol: various squares for natives and triangles for exotics.

The map symbols take some getting used to, but a legend for the symbols appears with each map.

between the two species of non-native *Youngia* found in our area, along with look-alikes from related genera.

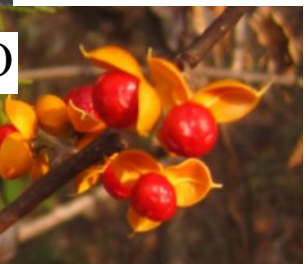
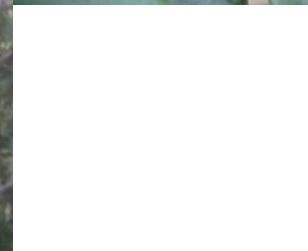
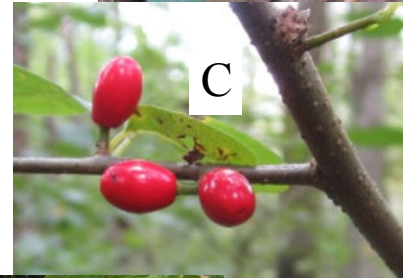
Look for **FloraQuest: Northern Tier**, from High Country Apps, LLC, in your app store.



Red Fruits

Red fruits say, "Eat me!" These are all endozoochors: plants that spread by going through the gut of an animal or bird, some native, some invasive exotic. How many do you recognize? Photos by Margaret Chatham. (I'm only willing to nibble five.)

- 1 *Arisaema triphyllum*, Jack-in-the-Pulpit
- 2 **Berberis thunbergii*, Japanese Barberry
- 3 **Celastris orbiculatis*, Oriental Bittersweet
- 4 *Cornus florida*, Flowering Dogwood
- 5 **Euonymus alatus*, Burning Bush
- 6 *Euonymus americana*, Hearts-a-burstin
- 7 *Hydrastis canadensis*, Golden-seal
- 8 *Ilex opaca*, American Holly
- 9 *Ilex verticillata*, Winterberry Holly
- 10 *Lindera benzoin*, Spicebush
- 11 **Lonicera maackii*, Amur Honeysuckle
- 12 *Mitchella repens*, Partridgeberry
- 13 *Rhus glabra*, Smooth Sumac
- 14 *Symphoricarpos orbiculatus*, Coralberry
- 15 **Viburnum dilatatum*, Linden Viburnum



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Word of the Month: Polygamo-dioecious



Adjective describing a plant that is mostly dioecious (each individual bearing only one sex of flowers) but with a few perfect flowers (bearing both male anthers and female stigma) or a few flowers of the opposite sex. In addition to *Chionanthus*, the Shining Sumac (*Rhus copallinum*) shown at left (this one clearly female) and other Sumacs are described by missouriplants.com as “sometimes incompletely” dioecious.

PHOTO BY MARGARET CHATHAM

Answers to the puzzle on page 5: 1-B; 2-J; 3-O; 4-L; 5-H; 6-D; 7-I; 8-K; 9-N; 10-C; 11-G; 12-A; 13-E; 14-F; 15-M. The ones I’m willing to put into my mouth are: A, Partridgeberry (tasteless, but harmless); C, Spicebush (fatty, tastes to me like black pepper); E, Sumac (used by Native Americans to make a tea, said to be best steeped in cold water, as heat will release tannins); L, Flowering Dogwood (called poison control once after my son ate a bunch & was told “no problem”); and M, Linden Viburnum (tart, good source of vitamin C.)