

# POTOWMACK NEWS

*Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society*

VOLUME 41, No. 5, NOV-DEC, 2023

## Cranefly Orchid

*Tipularia discolor*

By Margaret Chatham



CRANEFLY ORCHID IN BLOOM 8/12/21. ALL PHOTOS FOR THIS ARTICLE BY MARGARET CHATHAM.

*Tipularia discolor* is named for the insect crane-fly (*Tipula*) in both its common and scientific names, an insect like an oversized, non-biting mosquito that I most often notice flying around an invisible hamster wheel at about knee-level. Crane-fly Orchid flowers are a little more substantial than crane-fly insects, but certainly can be hard to spot against a background of leaf litter. “Discolor” means two-toned, for the tops of its leaves are green but the bottoms are purple. You’ll never see Crane-fly Orchid leaves and flowers at the same time, since the leaves come up in the early fall and spend the winter photosynthesizing when light can come through the open canopy, and die back once the canopy closes, while the flowers only emerge in mid-summer, the better to attract armyworm moths (*Mythimna unipuncta*) and other moths to pollinate it. [Thank you, <https://www.backyardecology.net/cranefly-orchid-tipularia-dicolor-a-cryptic-native-orchid/> ]

Like other orchids, Crane-fly Orchid produces tiny seeds that need the help of

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## Upcoming

### 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](mailto:info@fodm.org).

### Potowmack Chapter Annual Meeting

Sunday, Nov 5, 1-3:30 pm

In person at Green Spring Gardens Horticulture Center

1 pm Social Time and Refreshments

1:30 pm Annual Business Meeting and Elections

2 pm Presentation by Botany Chair:

#### Nelson DeBarros: Our Native Asters

We have so many native asters, from Aug-Sept blooming White Wood Asters (*Eurybia divaricata*) to Oct-Nov blooming New England Asters (*Symphotichum novae-angliae*) — how do we know who’s who?

### Annual Winter Solstice Field Trip & Hooley at Chapman State Park, MD

Sunday, Dec 17, 10 am-3 pm

No registration required to follow Rod Simmons around Chapman Forest’s old-age forest from water-willow shrublands by the Potomac to marl cliffs and ravines. Co-sponsored by MNPS, Botanical Society of Washington, and VNPS.

### January Program: Charles Smith

Thursday, Jan. 11, 7:30-9 pm

By Zoom

Not sure yet what his topic will be, but we again look to Charles Smith to start us off on a new year with native plants.

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](mailto:potowmack+subscribe@vnps.groups.io).

## Manage your VNPS Membership Online

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Subscribe to our Potowmack Chapter email discussion group to receive and send email about native plants in our area including questions, answers, and discussions. You don't have to be a VNPS member and there are no ads. Over 350 members strong! Just send a blank email to [potowmack+subscribe@vnps.groups.io](mailto:potowmack+subscribe@vnps.groups.io). Visit <https://vnps.groups.io/g/potowmack> to look around.

CRANEFLY ORCHID FROM PAGE 1



NEW LEAVES EMERGING 9/15/23

just the right fungus to germinate. From the time the orchid germinates until it puts a leaf out into the upper world, it is called a protocorm. It appears that Cranefly Orchid needs a fungus that grows in rotting wood to germinate, but may associate with different fungi as an adult plant, and so may continue to grow after the rotting wood is gone. See "Protocorm-Supporting Fungi Are Retained in Roots of Mature *Tipularia discolor* Orchids as Mycorrhizal Fungal Diversity Increases" <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8233912/>

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Submissions to *Potowmack News* may be sent to The Editor at

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Virginia Native Plant Society**

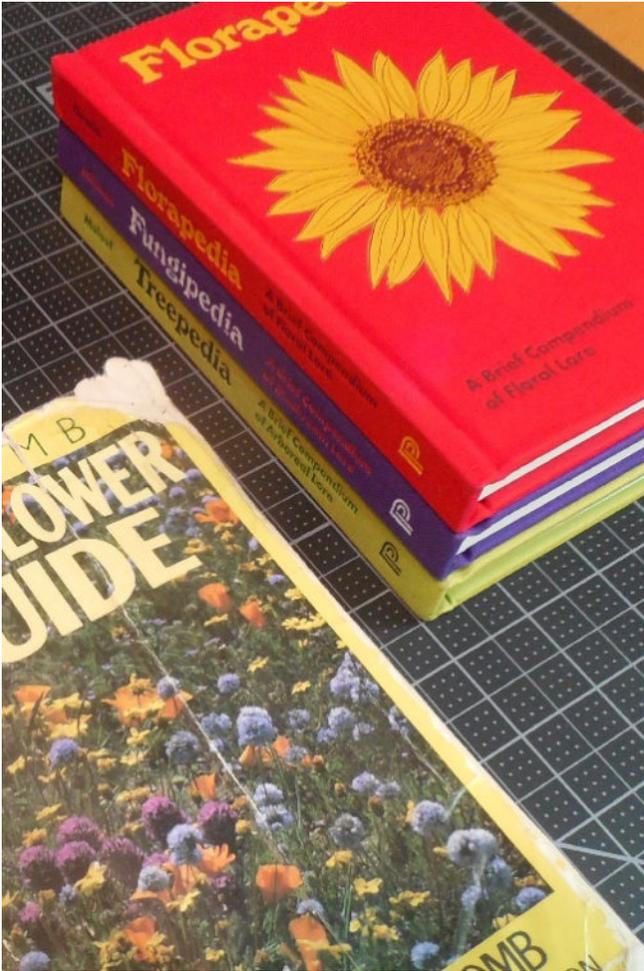
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## -Pedia Series Reviewed by David Gorsline



A volume or two of the "pedia" series from Princeton University Press may have popped up in your various feeds of recommended books. I looked into the three volumes of most interest to VNPS members:

*Florapedia*, by Carol Gracie (2021); *Treepedia*, by Joan Maloof (2021); and *Fungipedia*, by Lawrence Millman (2019). On the whole, I liked what I read.

Each of these "brief compendia of lore" follows a set format: in the space of a small hardcover field guide (about 5 by 7 inches and 165 pages), about 120 articles are alphabetically arranged, covering aspects of flowers, trees, or fungi, respectively. Articles range from the basics (there are entries for Maple and Ash in Maloof's *Treepedia*) to the delightfully obscure. Consider the Train Wrecker fungus (*Neolentinus lepideus*), kin to our tasty shiitake mushrooms. There are pieces on historical figures (Lucy Braun and Peter Kalm, for examples), economic uses, aspects of biology (Elaiosomes, Hydathodes), and so on. The

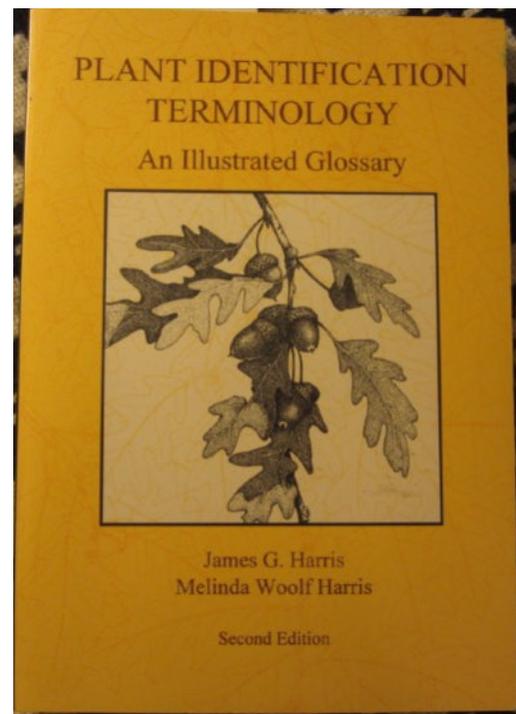
tone is light (Millman slips in a reference to TV producer Paul Hennings), but the science is solid, with binomials used throughout. Illustrations, scattered through each book, are generally helpful. A few pages of references round out each book.

The format doesn't allow space for a table of contents or index, and this lack is the biggest weakness of the design. Not every important concept gets its own entry, so whenever "bract" shows up in Gracie's *Florapedia* the uninitiated reader must scamper back to Bunchberry for an explanation of the term – or look to a different book altogether for a definition of "disjunct" or "dehiscence." Granted, Millman and Maloof make limited use of "See alsos" to assist the reader.

Don't mistake these books for encyclopedic references. However, any of them would provide a tasty snack of a few entries at the end of your reading day.

See <https://press.princeton.edu/series/pedia-books> for more information on these books and others in the series.

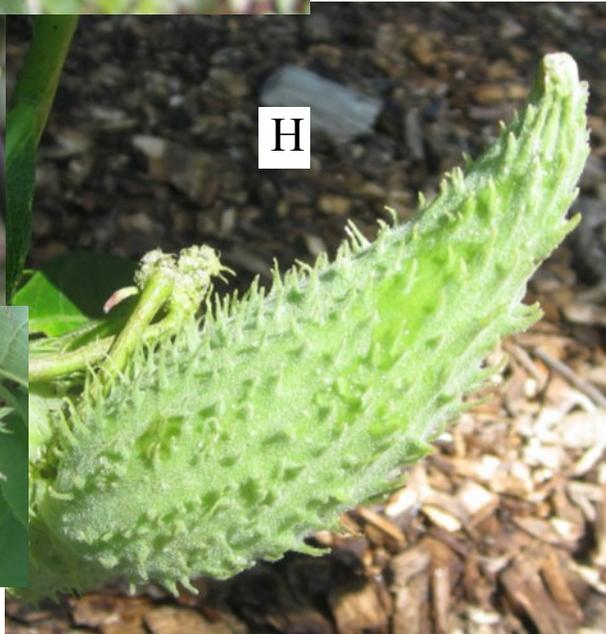
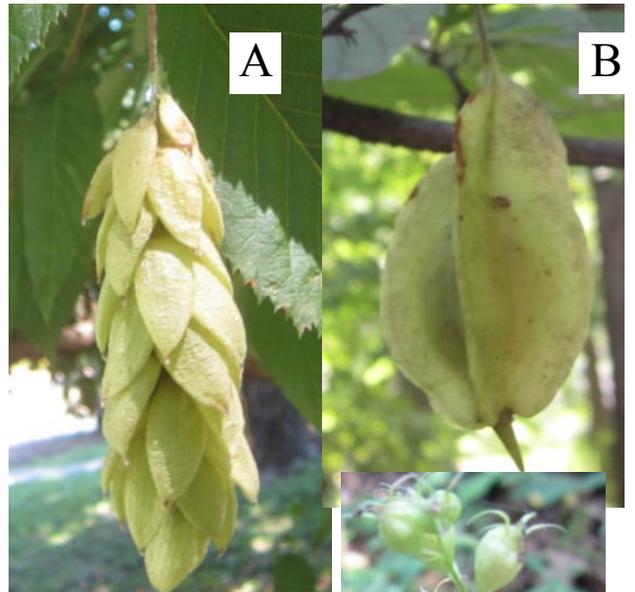
[Editor's note: for help in figuring out all those peculiar botanical terms, I highly recommend *Plant Identification Terminology: an Illustrated Glossary* by James G. Harris and Melinda Woolf Harris. Spring Lake Publishing, 2nd edition, 2001. According to Amazon, it contains over 1900 line drawings to illustrate more than 2700 taxonomic terms — I haven't counted.]



## Seed Casings

Some seeds grow inside odd casings, pods, bladders, what have you. How many do you recognize? Photos by Margaret Chatham.

- 1 *Asclepias syriaca*, Common Milkweed
- 2 *Calystegia sepium*, Hedge Bindweed
- 3 *Carpinus caroliniana*, Hornbeam
- 4 *Corylus americana*, Hazelnut
- 5 \**Halesia tetraptera*, Carolina Silverbell
- 6 *Hibiscus laevis*, Halberd-leaf Rose-mallow
- 7 *Lobelia inflata*, Indian Tobacco
- 8 *Ludwigia alternifolia*, Seedbox
- 9 *Ostrya virginiana*, Hop-hornbeam
- 10 *Staphylea trifolia*, Bladdernut



## POTOWMACK NEWS

Virginia Native Plant Society  
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### Words of the Month: Pedicel/Peduncle/Petiole



**Pedicel:** stalk of a single flower in an inflorescence or of a grass spikelet

**Peduncle:** stalk of a solitary flower or of an inflorescence

**Petiole:** stalk of a leaf

Monkey Flower, *Mimulus ringens*, on the left, has long peduncles and no petioles. Winged Monkey Flower, *Mimulus alatus*, on the right,

has visible petioles and no peduncles. Both grow in our area.

PHOTOS BY MARGARET CHATHAM

Answers to the puzzle on page 5: 1-H; 2-F; 3-J; 4-G; 5-B (a lovely small tree, native along the New River within Virginia, but not in our area); 6-C; 7-E; 8-I; 9-A; 10-D