

EARLY FALL

POTOWMACK NEWS

Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

VOLUME 42, No. 4, SEPT-OCT, 2024

Upcoming Potowmack Chapter Events

1st Wednesday Plant Sales

Wed, Sept 4, and Oct 2, 10 am-1pm

VNPS propagation beds at Green Spring Gardens Park

There will be no Green Spring Fall Garden Day this year, so please come on a Wednesday for your fall plantings (best time to plant woodies and perennials!) For more native plant sales, see <https://www.plantnovanatives.org/local-native-plant-sales>

Potowmack Chapter Quarterly Get-Together

Sunday, Sept 8 1-3 pm

Earth Sangha's Native Plant Nursery, north end of Cloud Dr, Franconia.

Matt Bright has agreed to speak to us after their usual Sunday plant sale closes.

Margaret Chatham: Translating Botanic Names

Thursday, Sept 12, 7pm

Zoom: watch for registration announcement

Cut through the Latin — or Greek, or whatever — to find bits of useful information about our plants in their scientific names

Walk: Ferns at Turkey Run with Kit Sheffield

Sunday, Sept 15 9-11:30 am

Turkey Run Parking lot C-1

Kit will discuss how ferns are different from other plants and what to look at to identify them while walking about 2 miles on natural surface trail that is sometimes steep or muddy. Walking sticks recommended. Space limited: watch for registration.

Composites Walk with Nelson DeBarros at South Run District Park

Saturday, Sept 21 10 am

7532 Reservation Dr, Springfield

Explore the power line corridor in search of asters, goldenrods and thoroughworts, and perhaps a few locally uncommon plants. No restrooms; please take precautions

against tick bites and sunburn. Space limited: watch for registration.

Laura Beaty: Native Plant Visitors

Thursday, Oct 10, 7pm

Zoom: watch for registration announcement

Laura says she no longer photographs flowers unless they have bees, butterflies, spiders, or other small companions.

Nature Journaling at Meadowood Special Recreation Area with Jen Brown

Sunday, Oct 20, 1-3:30 pm

View a variety of habitats, starting from Mustang Trailhead. Space limited: watch for registration.

Walk: Fall Colors at Dyke Marsh with Margaret Chatham and Alan Ford

Monday, Oct 21 1 pm

Celebrate the changing season with a walk by the riverside. Space limited. To register, email info@fodm.org with "Fall Colors Walk" in subject line.

Potowmack Chapter Annual Meeting

Sunday, Nov 17 12:30-3 pm

Green Spring Gardens Horticultural Center

12:30: social time; 1 pm: business meeting and elections; 1:30 pm: speaker and program to be announced.

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.



CUT-LEAF GRAPE FERN, SCEPTRIDIUM DISSECTUM
PHOTO BY MARGARET CHATHAM

Manage your VNPS Membership Online

1. Go to <https://vnps.app.neoncrm.com/login>
2. If you don't know or have forgotten your password, click on "Having trouble logging in?" To receive a password reset email.
3. Once logged in, you can update your name, address, email, renew your membership, make a donation, etc.



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. Visit <https://vnps.groups.io/g/potowmack> to look around.



Check out the Potowmack Chapter Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/vnpspot>.

President's Message from Alan Ford

At our Annual Meeting in November, Potowmack Chapter members will be asked to vote for the Executive Officers of the Chapter Board as well as approve the proposed budget for next year. While this may often seem pro forma, it is in fact an important part of the chapter governance and is worthy of some attention.

Nominations for the positions of President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary are welcome. This year Scott Knudsen, our Treasurer, resigned after eight years in the position. Kit Sheffield has volunteered to step in as acting Treasurer, and has agreed to stand for the position in November. Jen Brown, Mark Murphy, and I have all offered to continue in our respective positions and will stand for election.

The Board includes a dozen additional positions covering the scope of our chapter activities. We currently have vacancies in Programs Chair and Propagation Chair, following the resignation of our long time and supremely capable Laura Beaty from the position.

We also have At-Large positions which allow members to step up into governance without a specific role in mind. It is a great opportunity to explore the options and see if there is a position that fits your interests.

We welcome all who desire to get more involved in the many programs and activities the chapter supports. Your participation will be appreciated.

Potowmack Chapter Board Officers

President

Alan Ford 703-732-5291

Vice President

Mark Murphy

Secretary

Jennifer Brown

Treasurer

vacant until Sept 5 Board Meeting

Committee Chairs

Botany

Nelson DeBarros

Conservation

Rod Simmons

Membership

David Gorsline

Newsletter

Margaret Chatham

Publications

Ginny McNair

Site Registry

Rod Simmons

Technology

Mark Murphy

Walks Coordinator

Karen Sheffield

Members-at-Large

Margaret Fisher

Donna Murphy

Vacant:

Education

Programs

Propagation/Plant Sales

Publicity

Social Media

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

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

<http://www.vnps.org/potowmack>

VNPS-sponsored Summer Interns



GREEN SPRING INTERN KATY SCHURTZ
PHOTO BY BOBBY BAUER

Hello, my name is Katy Schurtz, and I am the Native Plant Intern at Green Spring Gardens this summer. I am about to enter my second year at Virginia Tech, where I am majoring in Environmental Conservation and Society. I am very grateful to have been able to closely work with and learn from Brenda Skarphol, who has taught me that plants thrive under the conditions of sun, water, and persistence. We often moved struggling plants to more promising areas, filtered out rocks from soil before planting, put down sprinklers, and pruned branches with hand pruners and saws. I have gained a couple of new enemies from weeding that seem to

follow me everywhere, including porcelain-berry, akebia, ground ivy, english ivy, nutsedge, river oats, mulberry weed, and stiltgrass (also known as *Microstegium vimineum* - thanks Jennifer!).

I am appreciative of the time I have been able to spend with the VNPS, whose members have kindly shared their knowledge about and passion for native plants with me. I enjoyed wandering around the pristine beds and potted plants, as I could examine each native plant and make a mental note to look for them in my neighborhood and around Green Spring. My favorite things about native plants include that they are less water-intensive than most non-native plants, they attract local pollinators, and they provided me and Brenda with oasis-like shade on hot days. The only complaint that I would file with native plants would be in the poison ivy department, which I have luckily avoided due to Brenda's selfless bravery when she removes it from our work areas.

In addition to the vast hands-on work the interns were able to help with, Adam Bucher also coordinated several opportunities for us to travel off-site in order to experience the diversity of the horticulture industry firsthand. Next semester, I plan on taking a tree identification course, which I am now much more prepared for due to Brenda, Kara, and Jennifer's fantastic plant identification and teaching skills. Thank you to the VNPS, the entire Green Spring staff, and FROGS for making this summer such an enjoyable hands-on learning experience!



HUNTLEY MEADOWS INTERN AURORA WOOD
AMONG THE PURPLE MILKWEED
PHOTO BY JENNY WANG

My name is Aurora Wood, and I had the privilege to be the Virginia Native Plant Society Intern at Huntley Meadows for the summer of 2024. I will be finishing my undergraduate degree in Environmental Science this year at Virginia Tech with a major in Ecological Restoration. I grew up close to Huntley Meadows, and I've visited many times through the years. The park stimulated my interest in ecology from an early age, and it's been such an honor to join the resource management team this summer to provide for my local community.

The team enlisted me to help with trail maintenance and invasive species control to help beautify the park. I've gotten to try out a variety of different monitoring techniques, including vernal pool tracking, dip netting for macroinvertebrates, and acoustic monitoring of bat populations. I helped set up the summer camp's tent, which required a team effort from nearly 20 staff members. I learned from experts about dragonflies, graminoids, and birds. I discovered the complex land use history of the park and worked on my nature-drawing skills. These experiences helped me see the ecosystem in new ways, focusing on different groups of species that never caught my eye before.

Most of my time has been dedicated to my very own project: surveying purple

milkweed (*Asclepias purpurascens*) populations at Huntley Meadows Park. Previous population studies for this rare species were conducted in 2012 and 2015, and newer data was needed to assess their growth or decline over time. The survey involved counting stems at significant sites for purple milkweed, particularly the large meadows within the park. I am thrilled to report that in nearly every location, the purple milkweed population increased significantly. We found that periodic controlled burns and bush hogging positively impacted populations in open meadows by decreasing competition from invasive weeds. However, even the more forested, unmanaged habitats showed

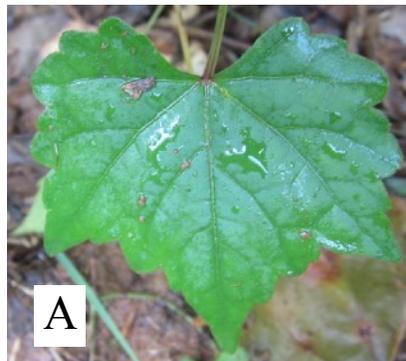
population increases. We discovered that purple milkweed had spread to a few new spots. The most spectacular finding was a stunningly dense patch in the forest that was too populous to count with a normal transect approach. Huntley Meadows undoubtedly retains its status as the largest center of purple milkweed in the state.

I am incredibly grateful for my opportunity to intern at Huntley Meadows Park this summer, with a focus on native plants. Plants have always been my favorite thing to study in an ecosystem, but problematic invasive species get the spotlight too often. It was uplifting to focus on native plants and their unique additions to the ecosystem. I can use the field experiences from this internship to better my chances in the workplace, and I will always have great memories and connections from Huntley Meadows Park. I want to thank Chris King and the rest of Huntley Meadows staff and volunteers for teaching me. I'd also like to thank the Friends of Huntley Meadows and the Virginia Native Plant Society for sponsoring this internship. This has been an invaluable experience, and I'm excited to see where my career will take me next.

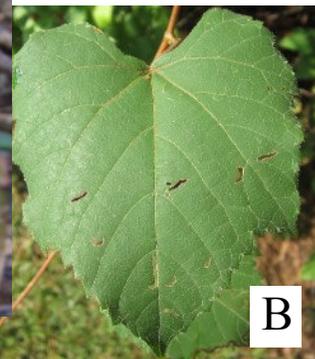
Maple or No?

We all know what a maple leaf looks like — or do we? How many do you recognize? Photos by Margaret Chatham. Answers on page 6.

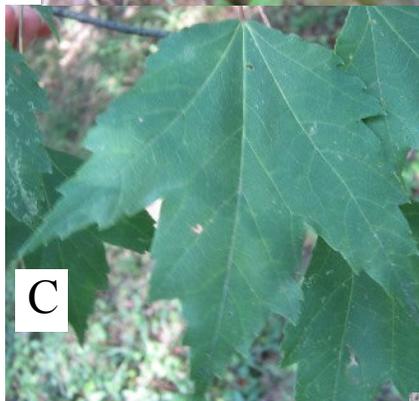
- 1 *Acer negundo*, Boxelder
- 2 *Acer nigrum*, Black Maple
- 3 **Acer palmatum*, Japanese Maple
- 4 **Acer platanoides*, Norway Maple
- 5 *Acer rubrum*, Red Maple
- 6 *Acer saccharinum*, Silver Maple
- 7 *Acer saccharum*, Sugar Maple
- 8 **Ampelopsis brevipedunculata*, Porcelainberry
- 9 **Hibiscus syriaca*, Rose-of-Sharon
- 10 *Platanus occidentalis*, Sycamore
- 11 **Rubus phoenicolasius*, Wineberry
- 12 *Viburnum acerifolium*, Maple-leaf Viburnum
- 13 *Vitis riparia*, Riverbank Grape



A



B



C



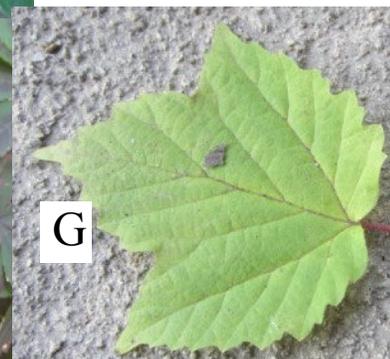
D



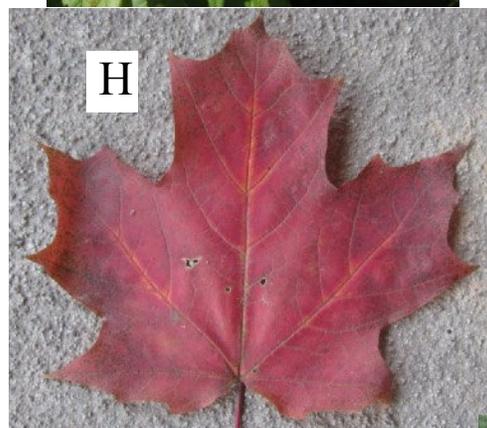
E



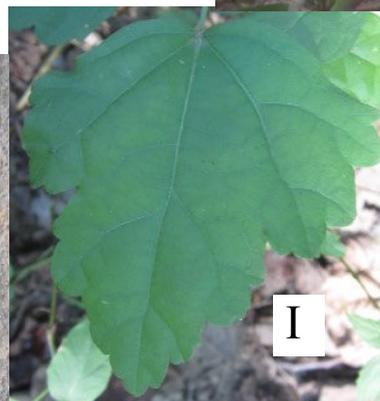
F



G



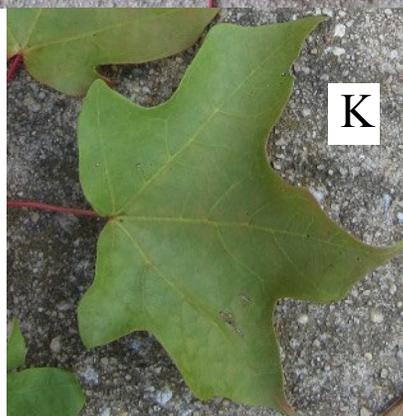
H



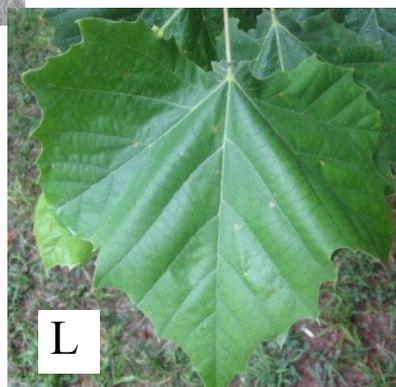
I



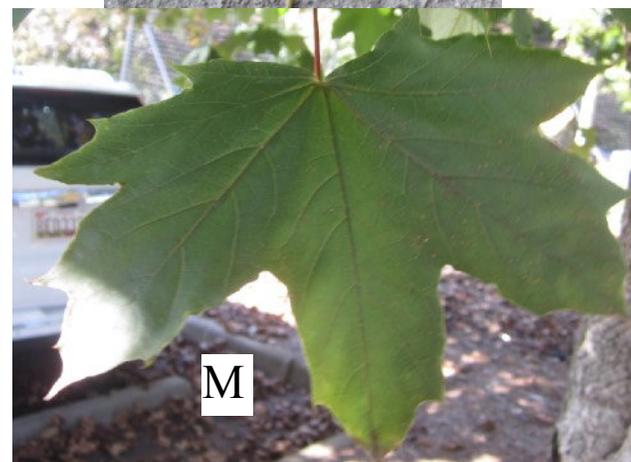
J



K



L



M

POTOWMACK NEWS

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



Please verify your address and your renewal date on the mailing label

Printed on recycled paper

Word of the Month: Lithophyte



A plant that grows on rocks or in a crack in rocks, also called epipetric plants. Examples include many mosses and hornworts, and some ferns. Shown at left: Common Rock Polypody, *Polypodium virginianum*.

PHOTO BY MARGARET CHATHAM

Answers to the puzzle on page 5: 1-E (also called Ash-leaf Maple; may have 3 or 5 leaflets); 2-K; 3-F; 4-M; 5-C; 6-J; 7-H (fall color); 8-A (leaf shape highly variable); 9-I; 10-L (this genus is the source of Norway Maple's specific epithet); 11-D; 12-G; 13-B (back of leaf hairs on veins identify it, not seen here).