

POTOWMACK NEWS

Potowmack Chapter of the Virginia Native Plant Society

VOLUME 44, No. 5, NOV-DEC, 2026

Eastern Redcedar, *Juniperus virginiana* By Margaret Chatham



EASTERN REDCEDAR (JUNIPERUS VIRGINIANA) FEMALE CONES
IN SEPTEMBER. ALL PHOTOS IN THIS ISSUE BY MARGARET
CHATHAM

Redcedar, Red-cedar, Red Cedar, what's in a name? All three forms are used, but I'm following *Flora of Virginia's* usage. In any case, it is not a cedar, but a member of the Cypress family. Young plants sport awl-shaped, quarter-inch needles sharp enough to pierce our skin (and deter most browsers, as William Cullina notes in *Native Trees, Shrubs & Vines*.) More mature plants bear the tiny scale-like leaves shown in the photo above, which makes them much less scratchy to brush up against.

Eastern Redcedar is dioecious. Male plants may look yellow while spreading pollen from their tiny cones. Female plants may blush blue in the fall when covered with "berries" like those above. They are relished by Cedar Waxwings, though other birds may leave them until little else is available to eat.

EASTERN REDCEDAR CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

UPCOMING

Saturdays at Green Spring Gardens

Years ago, the propagation crew used to work on Saturday mornings as well as Wednesdays. We lost our Saturday workdays when our Saturday leader moved out of state, and have felt the lack of weekend meetings ever since. Our propagation season normally ends with October, but with a new Propagation Chair (thank you, Cory Giacobbe!) we're gung-ho to get something going on Saturdays. So we'll start with some sessions on removing invasives from the Green Spring Native Plant Trail, under the supervision of Brenda Skarphol. No dates yet but watch for announcements, possibly as early as November or as late as January.

Potowmack Chapter Annual Meeting

in person at Green Spring Gardens Horticulture Center

Sunday Nov 15

1:30-2 Social time

2-2:30 Business meeting, election of officers, discussion & vote on chapter budget for 2027

2:30-3:30 Presentation by the Grass Bunch (we don't limit our botanizing to grasses, and are willing to share the fun we have going out and looking together).

No registration needed.

Annual Solstice Walk

Sunday Dec 20, 11 am-3 pm

Location to be determined: watch for announcements. The most sprawling native plant walk of the year, co-sponsored by Maryland Native Plant Society, Botanical Society of Washington, and VNPS-Potowmack Chapter. No registration required.

Charles Smith: Grasses and Grasslands

Thursday, January 14, 2027, 7 pm

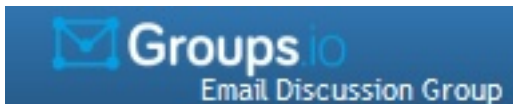
Exploring Northern Virginia's regional variation of grass species, the roles they play in native plant communities, and how they can be used in landscaping and restoration.

By Zoom; watch for registration info.

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

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>.

Revising Potowmack Chapter Bylaws

Dull nitty-gritty: at the Potowmack Chapter Annual Meeting, we will be voting on three "deeply uncontroversial" revisions to our bylaws (as one board member put it.) To see the entire bylaws, go to <https://bit.ly/4jj0KQ0>

Section 5.7 currently says "Both the Treasurer and the President shall be bonded." Proposal is to strike this sentence as being expensive and unnecessary, since VNPS State theft insurance covers them.

Section 8.4 currently says that the Treasurer and the President need advance Board approval to pay any expenditures in excess of the budget. Proposal is to allow them to pay expenditures that exceed the budget by a small amount without prior approval, so as to reduce the amount of time the board needs to spend on minor expenses.

Section 8.5 currently says "The Board shall each year designate a qualified person or persons, who shall not be on the Board, to conduct an audit of the Chapter's financial records. Proposal is to change the word "audit" to "review." The Treasurer currently conducts an annual financial review with the help of a volunteer treasurer from another nonprofit organization. This practice is in line with the State VNPS Bylaws, but does not meet the standard of a true financial audit. Cost and availability have kept us from making a true audit in recent years.

Potowmack Chapter Board Officers

President

Alan Ford 703-732-5291

Vice President

Mark Murphy

Secretary

Jennifer Brown

Treasurer

Kit Sheffield

Committee Chairs

Conservation

Rod Simmons

Grass Bunch Coordinator

Jenny Meyer

Membership

David Gorsline

Newsletter

Margaret Chatham

Programs Coordinator

Margaret Chatham

Propagation/Plant Sales

Cory Giacobbe

Publications

Ginny McNair

Site Registry

Rod Simmons

Technology

Mark Murphy

Walks Coordinator

Karen Sheffield

Members-at-Large

Margaret Fisher

Donna Murphy

Cheryl Roesel

Vacant:

Education

Publicity

Social Media

Submissions to Potowmack News may be sent to The Editor at potowmack@vnps.org

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

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

Potowmack Chapter Annual Meeting will be held Sunday, Nov. 15, 2026 at 1:30 PM, in the Horticulture Center at Green Spring Gardens Park. If you cannot attend to vote then, please send in this ballot by Nov. 5 to Potowmack Chapter VNPS, PO Box 5311, Arlington, VA 22205, or email your vote to vnps.pot@gmail.com

ELECTION OF OFFICERS FOR 2027

The Board of the Potowmack Chapter VNPS presents the following slate of officers for the 2026 year, with terms beginning January 1. Contact Alan Ford for further information at amford@acm.org

SLATE OF OFFICERS

President:	___Alan Ford	Write-in _____
Vice President:	___Mark Murphy	Write-in _____
Secretary:	___Jennifer Brown	Write-in _____
Treasurer:	___Kit Sheffield	Write-in _____

Proposed 2027 Budget

	2026 budget as amended	2027 proposed budget	
Income			
Regular donations	1,400	1,600	Average of 2022-25 actual donations received
PNN donations	-	-	
Member dues	8,400	8,000	Average of 2025 plus 2026 YTD annualized
Interest earned	500	500	2026 year-to-date annualized
Plant sales	21,500	21,000	Average of 2025 plus 2026 YTD annualized
PNN Book Sales	9,000	7,150	Average of 2025 plus 2026 YTD annualized
Other Sales	450	600	Average of 2025 plus 2026 YTD annualized
Tax Refund	-	-	
Total income	41,250	38,850	
Operating Expenses			
Donations to Others	3,900	3,900	\$3000 base plus six honoraria
Internships	10,000	10,100	same as 2026 actual
Marketing and Promotion	300	-	
Meetings and Events	1,850	1,950	2 events at \$250, 2 at \$600, \$250 food
Propagation Beds at Green Spring	11,000	1,650	Average of 2022-2025 plus 10% inflation
Newsletter Printing and Mailing	2,375	2,500	Five newsletters at \$500 each
Printing and Publications	800	1,100	Average 2022-2025 plus 10% inflation
PNN Guides	9,000	5,300	Based on estimated copies sold
Supplies, Materials & miscellaneous	250	100	
Programs - Talks	900	900	6 at \$150
Programs - Walks	1,000	1,000	6 at \$150 plus \$100 for permits
Computer & internet services	500	500	Zoom, Quickbooks, Access, licenses
Postal Services and Shipping	300	275	Average 2022-2025 plus 10% inflation
Commissions to Green Spring	3,225	3,225	15% of estimated sales at Green Spring
Bank Fees	-	-	
Merchant Service Fees	800	850	2026 YTD annualized
PNN Sales Tax	540	215	6% of PNN sales, assuming 50% tax exempt
Plant Sales Sales Tax	1,290	1,260	6% of Plant Sales
Other Sales Tax	27	36	6% of other sales
Total Operating Expenses	48,057	34,861	
Net Income (loss)	(6,807)	3,989	

Check one: **I approve**_____ **I do not approve**_____ **the proposed FY 2027 Budget**

EASTERN REDCEDAR CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

We have relatively few native evergreen plants suitable for screening home property lines, which makes Eastern Redcedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) all the more valuable. It is a pioneer tree, readily popping up in old fields or along roadsides. In full sun situations, it can live 150 years and reach up to 100 feet, though we usually see it not more than 30-40 feet tall. It is a slow grower and may die when overtopped by taller, usually deciduous trees. In youngish forests, you may find dead Eastern Redcedars still standing, white, stripped of their red, fibrous bark, for years. Only very young trees can deal with dense shade, but if one comes up in a shady spot in your yard, they're fairly easy to move to a sunnier location. Otherwise the tree is quite adaptable, drought resistant, and not particular about its soil.



Eastern Redcedar is variable in appearance, not only between the spiky young growth shown above and the flattened scales seen on page one, but also ranging in color from gray to bluish to dark green, and in shape from columnar to broadly pyramidal. Not my family's tradition, but there are places where it is used as a Christmas tree. Regardless, it offers good nesting sites for many birds. It is the larval host plant for Juniper or Olive Hairstreak butterflies among thirty or so Lepidoptera.



Unfortunately, Eastern Redcedar is also an alternate host for cedar/apple rust, a fungal disease that alternates generations between the two kinds of trees. On Eastern Redcedar, the galls it grows extend orange, gelatinous telial horns after a rain, ready to spread

spores on the wind to search for an apple, crabapple or serviceberry tree to complete its life cycle. These impressive horns will shrivel to threads in a dry spell, only to extend again after the next rain, multiple times. On apples, crabapples, and serviceberries it can cause early leaf drop and seriously disfigured fruit, or even the death of the tree.

Slow growth makes tough wood, valued for long-lasting fence posts. Eastern Redcedar supplies the fragrant wood used to line cedar chests and closets.

You can read more about Eastern Redcedar in *Seeing Trees* by Nancy Ross Hugo with wonderful photographs by Robert Llewellyn, a book always worth revisiting. Available at Fairfax County Public Libraries.

Congratulations, Margaret Fisher

Fairfax County Park Authority awarded Margaret Fisher the Sally Ormsby Environmental Stewardship Award at this year's Elly Doyle Awards ceremony. The award is richly deserved for Margaret's over 30 years of volunteering and leadership in a wide range of roles: as a stream monitor, an IMA site leader, tireless promoter of Plant NoVa Natives, Plant NoVa Trees, and the Fairfax Tree Rescuers PRISM. We're grateful for all her de-vine work.

FCPA also recognized the late Harry Glasgow with a Chairman's Choice award for Environmental Steward and Park Advocate.

Leave Stems for Bees to Nest In?

We've heard about native bees using hollow or pithy plant stems as places to stack their egg chambers, but which plants are used by which bees? I just came across the following list of plants and genera of native bees that have been recorded as using them from E. Youngstaedt and M. Favre's "How to Operate a Successful Bee Hotel" (tinyurl.com/bee-hotel-ncsu) This is clearly not a complete list. To accommodate the bees, stems do not need to be left as they stand. If you want a tidier garden appearance, you can cut the stems maybe a foot off the ground and gather the cut stems into whatever out-of-the-way corner or sculptural creation best pleases you.

Ambrosia (Ragweeds) used by Megachile bees

Cirsium (Thistles) used by Megachile bees

Erianthus alopecuroides (Silver Plumegrass) used by Ceratina bees

Erigeron canadensis (Horseweed) used by Ceratina bees

Helianthus (Sunflowers) used by Hoplitis and Megachile bees

Lactuca biennis (Wild Lettuce) used by Ceratina bees

Phytolacca (Pokeweed) used by Megachile bees

Rhus (Sumac) used by Ceratina, Heriades, Hoplitis, Hylaeus, and Megachile bees

Rosa (Rose) used by Ceratina, Megachile and Osmia bees

Rubus (Blackberry) used by Ceratina, Hoplitis, Hylaeus, and Osmia bees

Sambucus canadensis (Elderberry) used by Ceratina, Hoplitis, Hylaeus, and Osmia bees

Vernonia (ironweed) used by Megachile bees

Grass Flowers, by Margaret Chatham

No quiz this issue, since I doubt this subject would have wide appeal. Instead, just a bunch of photos of grass flowers in hopes that some of you will then think it worthwhile to look at grasses more closely. Yes, grasses are flowering plants. Because grasses are wind pollinated, you can think of the male parts of their flowers (anthers) as salt shakers, scattering pollen on the wind, while the female parts of their flowers (stigmas) are like feather dusters, sweeping up that pollen. These parts come and go quickly, so as well as looking closely, you have to time your examination right. *means a non-native species.

A **Bromus inermis*, Smooth Brome 6/25/22

B **Poa compressa*, Canada Bluegrass 6/17/23

C *Sorghastrum nutans*, Indian grass 9/19/21

D *Phalaris arundinacea*, Reed Canary Grass 6/16/26

E *Tripsacum dactyloides*, Eastern Gamagrass, male (top portion of spike) 9/6/26

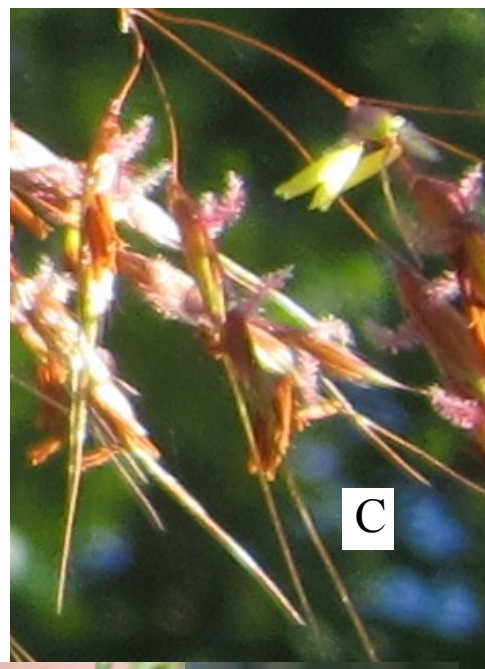
F female(bottom portion of the same spike)

G *Coleataenia anceps*, Beaked Panic Grass 8/13/26

H *Andropogon gerardii*, Big Bluestem 8/13/26

I *Leersia virginica*, White Grass 8/27/26

J **Phleum pratense*, Timothy 8/27/26 most bloom in June, sometimes lavender



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Word of the Month: Anastomose



Of leaf veins: dividing and rejoining
to form a network.

At left, a leaf of Canada
Horsebalm, *Collinsonia*
canadensis, showing its
anastomose veins. This is a
species I usually think of for its
unusual flowers, shown below.
Photos by Margaret Chatham.

